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Achaemenid Settlement in Shiraz Plain: Tol-e Sefid Sadra

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Abstract: Shiraz plain is one of the most important plains adjacent to Persepolis. Tirazziš place have been mentioned in the Persepolis Archives many times. For further research on the place name of modern Shiraz with what is mentioned in the Achaemenid's Archives, it was necessary to carried out an archeological survey in this plain. Objective and methodical archeological researches had not been carried out in the Shiraz plain until 2008. In the process of this new methodical archaeological survey, one of the most important ancient sites of the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods was identified in the Shiraz plain. According to the ceramic documents, this site was inhabited in the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods. Shiraz is mentioned in the Persepolis Archives under the Elamite form Tirazziš. This site attests to the situation of the Shiraz plain in the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods. The introduction of this ancient site provides a new perspective to understand the relationship between the Shiraz plain in the Achaemenid period and its connection with Persepolis.

Key words: Archeology, History, Iran, Shiraz, Tirazziš, Tol-e Sefid, Achaemenid, Post-Achaemenid

Introduction

As one of the important central communication plains, Shiraz Plain is situated among the plains of Persepolis (Marvdasht), Firuzabad, Kazerun and Sarvestan area. The preliminary archaeological survey carried out in this plain show that there are archaeological sites of different periods in the Shiraz plain. Although due to the expansion of Shiraz town, the main part of the available archaeological sites buried under the new urbanism construction but identifying a part of the Archaeological sites showed that certain historical and important archaeological sites are detectable in Shiraz plain [Fig. 1].

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askari_chaverdi@yahoo.com; The author carried out this archaeological field survey with a permission letter from the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research, ICAR, and the financial support of the National Heritage base of Shiraz office, ICHHTO, in 2008.

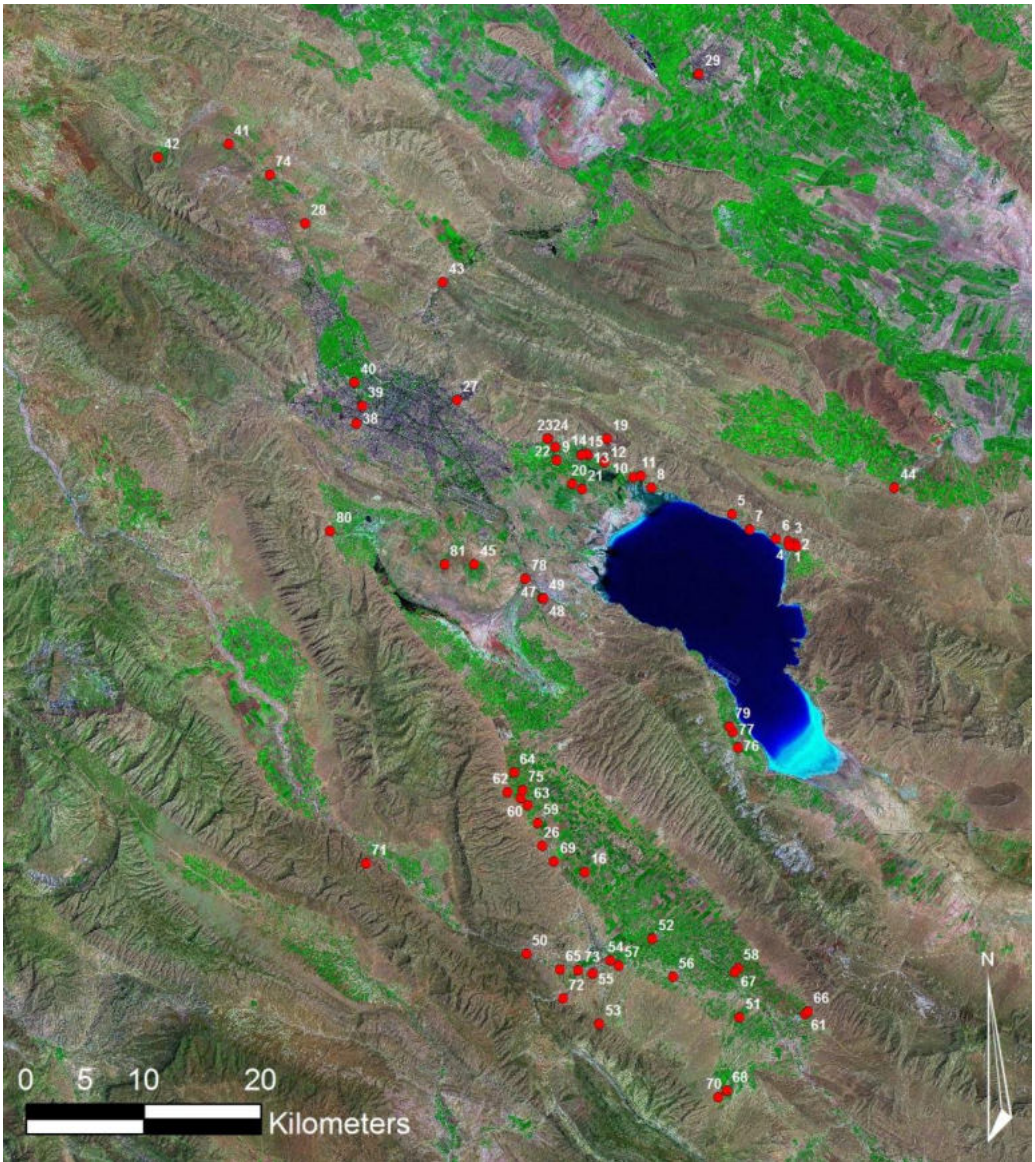


Fig. 1. Location of Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra site, Shiraz Plain, No. 28 (Landsat 7, Google Source; Elaboration by A. Askari Chaverdi)

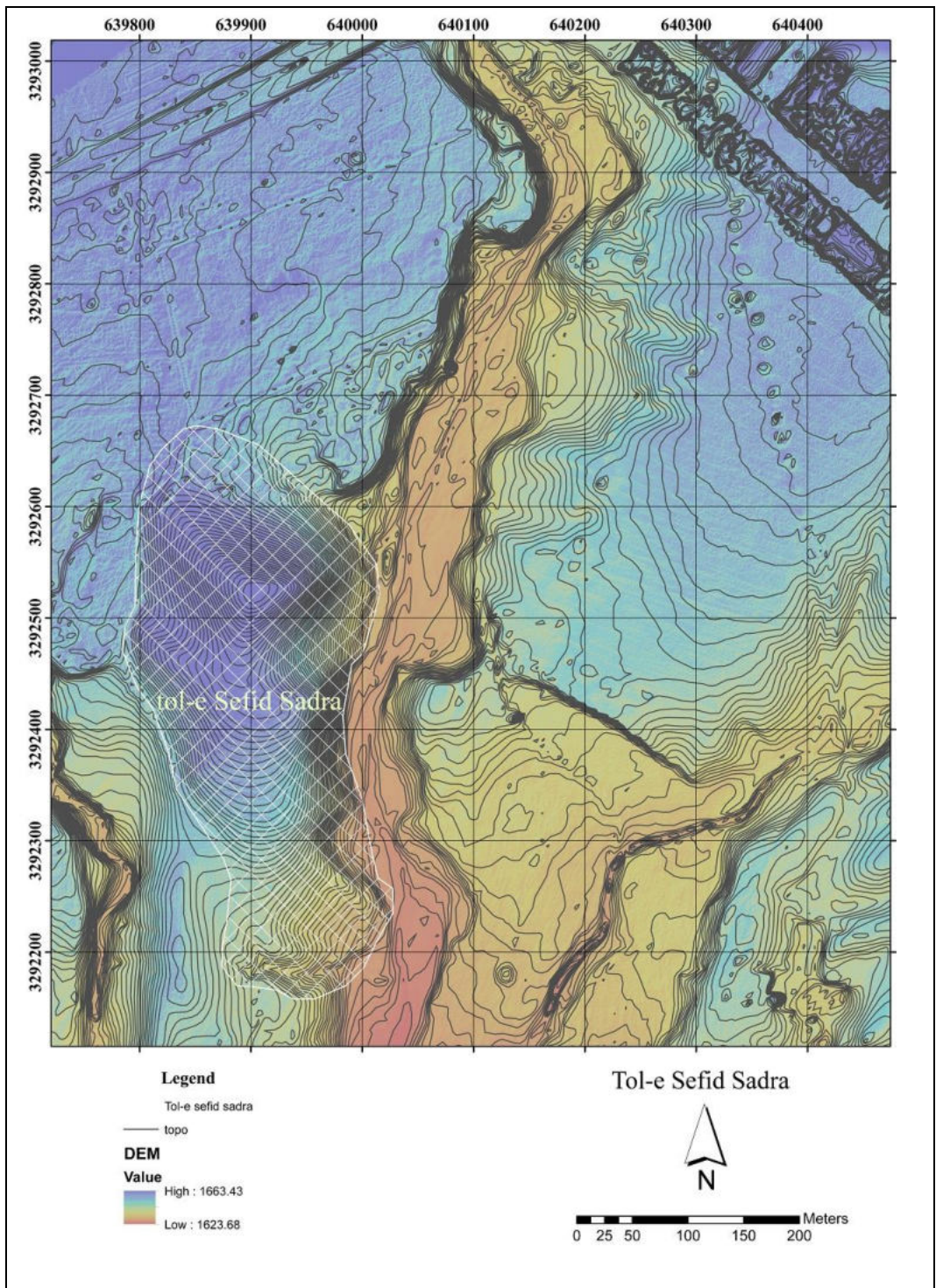


Fig. 2. Topography map: Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, Shiraz Plain (by A. Egra)



Fig. 3. Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, Shiraz Plain (photo by A. Egra)

Shiraz plain is extended from the northwest to the southeast with an approximate length of 65 km and width of 15 km. The average height of this plain is 1500 meters a.s.l. A wide expanse of this plain is covered by Shiraz city. Maharlu Lake is situated in the southeastern part of it. There are freshwater springs in most of the foothills of this plain. Its fertile plain and grounds are arable. Due to the recent development, the archaeological sites of the central part of the plain are affected by urbanism constructions are not evident. Therefore archaeological research was mainly focused on the visible area in the foothills ranges and agricultural lands. This report does not include Islamic sites such as monuments of Islamic periods in the range of the modern town of Shiraz and tries to introduce an unknown site, Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, from Achaemenid Period surrounding the cultural landscape adjacent to Shiraz [Figs. 1, 2, 3].

The priority of this field survey in terms of methodology was to conduct a full coverage survey to identify the historical-archaeological settlement of this region from the prehistory period to historical periods. This survey was carried out in full coverage in a relatively intensive scale throughout the region and even in more intension rate in the area where there were more fertile environment conditions. As a result of applying this method of field survey, specific settlement patterns were identified which have played a major role in the formation phases of archaeological sites in each period, from the early historical to historical and Islamic periods, which in turn

illuminated the distribution of sites and settlement sequence in each of these periods [Fig. 1].

After analyzing the data and identifying the settlement phases of occupation, one can safely conclude that 81 sites are discovered in Shiraz plain, dated from Pre-Historic to the Safavid period. An Achaemenid site, Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, is one of the large archaeological mounds discovered in this survey.

Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra Site

The number of this site is determined on the archaeological map in the geographical coordinates table (39 R 063 99 11) with the situation of 92 535 UTM 32 with number 28 [Fig. 1]. On the right side of the Golestan district street toward Sadra town, at the 2 kilometer of this road in right hand, a high hill is visible on the surface of flat grounds, which looks more like a natural hill. This site is known as White Hill (Tol-e Sefid). Its width is about 250 by 300 meters, and its height is about 20 meters from the surface of the surrounding grounds. Next to this site is a spring called Joshanak River which flows into this part from upstream [Figs. 1, 2, 3].

The site is a high hill whose surface soil has been softened and affected by various agricultural ploughs. The remains of rive-stone structures are more or less evident throughout it. Still, there is no evident coherence due to the disturbed surface of these structures [Fig. 3]. This site is situated on the migration route of Qashqai nomads, and nomads use this site for temporary residence for a season per year. There were surface ceramics throughout the site. For ceramic sampling from the surface, this site was gridded in four plots: Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, and Southeast. In each area, a number of ceramic sherds were sampled and then drawn and documented. The ceramics were classified into bowls, jars, and unknown shapes. In the categories of jars, the main vessels were necked, and their rims were plain-shaped. The ware fabric and texture inclusion of these ceramics were fine-tempered with well-fried. The colour of the ceramics in this group was reddish-orange, and in the group of jars without necks, most of the rims were plain in shape and had flatted articulated shapes. The standing of rims to the body was almost out of flaring shapes. In all categories, the permanent colours of the ceramic wares were yellowish-orange and yellowish-red on the exterior and interior surfaces coated by slip and wash on the outset surface [Figs. 4-6].



Fig. 4. Ceramics from the surface of Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, Shiraz Plain (photo by A. Askari Chaverdi)

In most of the jars, in the edge below the rim and in some samples under the neck of the jar, there was a smoothed ridge with a height of 2 to 3 mm, which was around the neck and or in the edge below the rim and parallel to it in a row. In the bowls, the colour of the wares was in the same colour spectrum of yellowish-red or orange with appropriate fire and manufacturing quality. In most cases, the bowl bodies were kept simple. However, on a number of ware bodies, most of which belonged to jars, the main decoration was pinch relief and/or pinch incised [Table 1. no. 2, 8, 11]. In all ceramic categories in this site, the smooth relief ridges on the edge of the neck and rim were proposed as a common style of decoration. The bodies of some ceramics were coated with a slip orange colour in the exterior and interior body of the vessels and the paste colours were grey. There are wash and slip wares that turned blackish-brown and/ or burnt brown [Figs. 4-6].

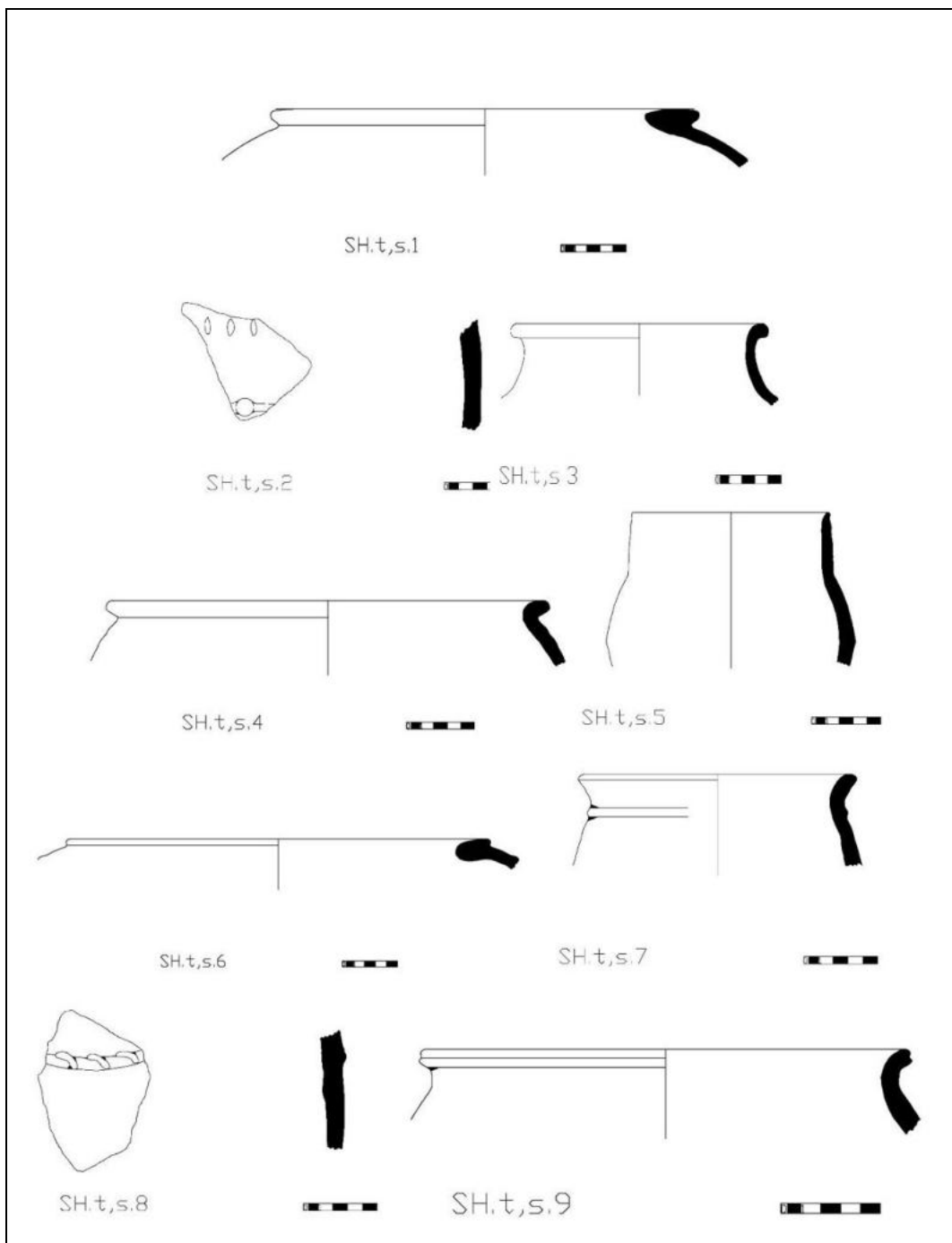


Fig. 5. Ceramic Forms from Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, Shiraz Plain

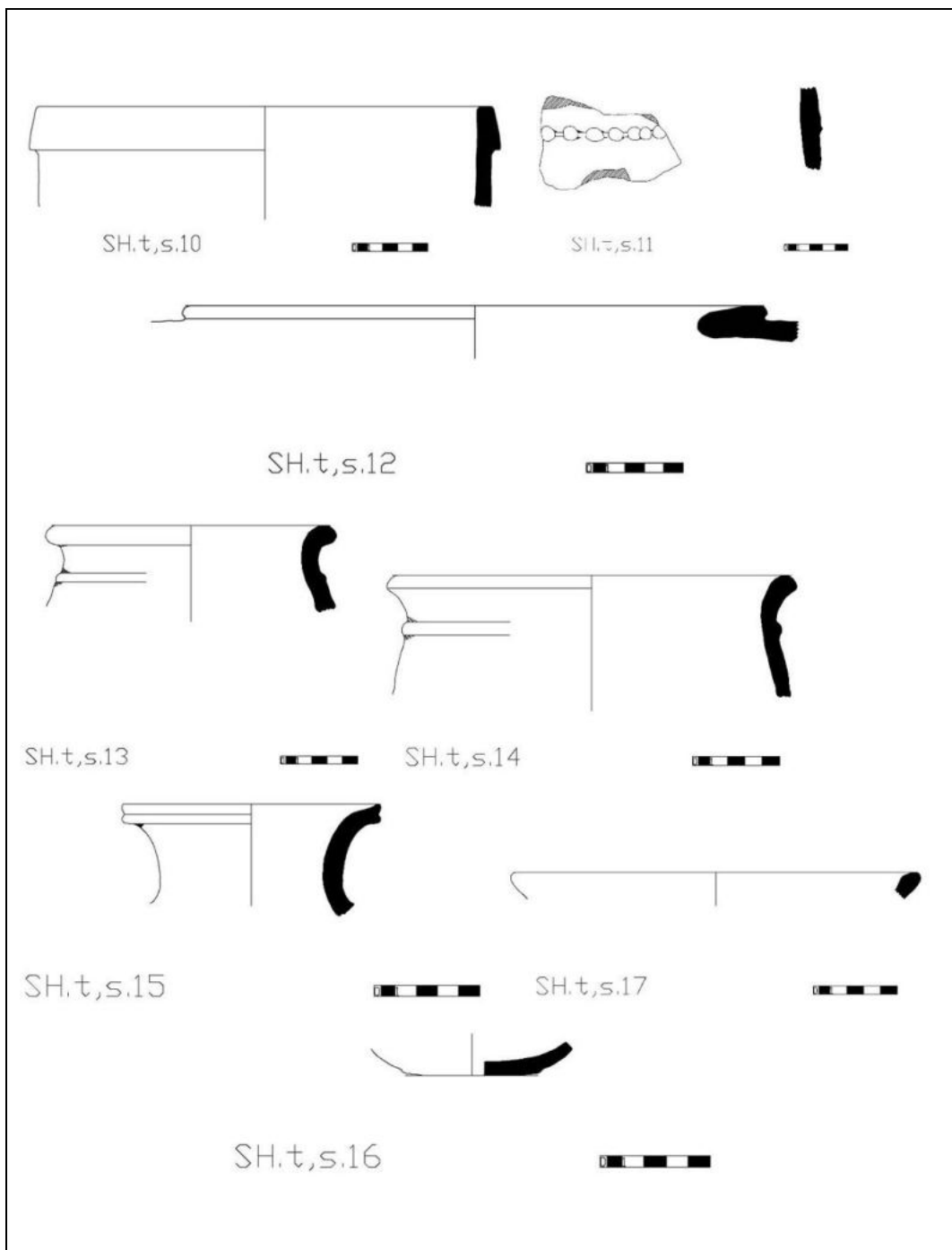


Fig. 6. Ceramic Forms from Tol-e Sefid-e Sadra, Shiraz Plain

In terms of Typology, the sampling sherds from Tol-e Sefid are classified into the colour spectrum of organist-red and yellow, accompanied by the flatted and convex relief ridges, decoration in the edge below the rim and around the neck of the vessels. In some cases, the ceramic coating is a wash clay coating in the same colour as ceramic paste, and in some cases, a slip clay coating with brown colour has been used. The ware fabric of the ceramics is well-fired with high quality. The rims have a variety of plain, flattened, flat, incised round rim, triangular or articulated shapes in the categories.

According to relative chronology, the main sampling ceramics studied from this site's surface is comparable to the ceramics sample of the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods from Pasargadae and Persepolis. For example, Neck vessels with round rims decorated with a smooth, plain ridge around necks (Nos. 3, 7, 13, 14) are similar to the same neck vessels from phase 2 in Tr. 4 at Persepolis West. A sample from SU029 gave the radiometric date of 40 BC-AD 174, while a sample from SU033 in the same Trench⁴ gave the anomalous radiometric date of AD 376-592.¹ The ceramic Nos. 7 and 14 are similar to the Pot No. 28 from Pasargadae that dated to the Late Achaemenid period.² The Ceramic Nos. 9 and 15 with especially rims are close to vessels Nos. 8, 11 and 12 of Pasargadae that dated to the Late Achaemenid and Post- Achaemenid periods.³ Another piece, No. 5, is a Pot with an upright neck close in shape to the same Pot from Pasargadae that dates to the Achaemenid period from Pasargadae.⁴

¹ Askari Chaverdi & Callieri, 2017: 50, 162, 163, no. P00329, P00341, P00421, P00613; 280.

² Stronach, 1978: 344-5, no. 28.

³ Stronach, 1978: 348-9, nos. 8, 11, 12.

⁴ Stronach, 1978: 348-9, no. 1.

Tab. 1. Ceramic description for Figures 4, 5, 6

No	Description: 1. Vessel Form; 2. Manufacture; 3. Firing; 4. Fabric Color (ext./in. /core); 5. Inclusions; 6. Finish (ex. /int.); 7. Exterior Coating and Treatment; 8. Interior Coating and Treatment; 9. Decoration (ext. /int.).
1	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 9. Simple.
2	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 9. Carved and ridge.
3	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange and Dark Brown slip; 8. Buff Clay; 9. Simple.
4	1. Pot; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 8. Orange slip; 9. Paralled incised band.
5	1. Pot; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 8. Orange slip; 9. Simple.
6	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Red Slip and Dark Brown Clay; 9. Simple.
7	1. Pot; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 8. Orange Clay; 9. Simple.
8	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Red slip and Dark Brown Clay; 9. Parallel pinch incised band.
9	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 9. Simple.
10	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Buff, Buff, Buff; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange Clay; 8. Dark Brownish Orange Clay; 9. Simple.
11	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 9. Carved and impression ridge.
12	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Brown slip and Brown Clay; 9. Simple.
13	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 9. Simple.
14	1. Pot; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Brown slip & Dark Brown Clay; 8. Orange Clay; 9. Simple.
15	1. Jug; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Red, Red, Red; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Brown Clay; 8. Brown Clay; 9. Simple.
16	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Orange slip; 9. Simple.
17	1. Jar; 2. Wheel; 3. Well Fired; 4. Gray, Gray, Gray; 5. Grit; 6. Fine; 7. Buff slip; 9. Simple.

Conclusion

According to the ceramic documents, this site was inhabited in the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods. The large dimensions of the site show that a large archaeological site of the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods in the Shiraz Plain can, for the first time, gain the attention of researchers to the place of this plain and the management system of the Shiraz Plain in the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods. Shiraz is mentioned in the Persepolis Archives under the Elamite form Tirazziš.⁵ This site attests to the situation of the Shiraz plain in the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods. The location of the site next to the spring and in the north area of the plain show us a system of administrative management in Shiraz Plain, especially in the production of fruits in the lowland of the plain that were completely fertile for fruit trees in the Achaemenid times such as modern time.⁶

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⁵ See (for instance PF 0018) Hallock, 1969: 90 and Henkelman, 2014.

⁶ See Henkelman, 2021 and also Henkelman & Stolper, 2021.

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