



**Tang-i Bulaghi Reports 5: TB 73**

Edited by Rémy Boucharlat & Hasan Fazeli Nashli

**Barbara Helwing** German Archaeological  
Institute, Eurasian Section  
**Mojgan Seyedin** Iranian Centre for  
Archaeological Research

**The Achaemenid period occupation  
at Tang-i Bulaghi site 73**

The flood zone of the Sivand Dam in Fars province in southern Iran, which also known as Tang-e Bolaghi or Dar-e Bolaghi, is a rich archaeological area which provided an excellent opportunity for several seasons of rescue work by the joint international archaeological missions in this region. This endangered area included ancient settlement sites, cemeteries, iron-smelting sites and water canals.<sup>1</sup> Four prehistoric sites, called TB 91, TB 119, TB 73 and TB 131 were excavated by the Iranian-German joint expedition. This team

<sup>1</sup> M.T. Atai 2005, *Archaeological Survey at Tange Bolaghi*, unpublished report delivered to the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research [in press in *Pazhueshkadeh*].



conducted two seasons of field work at Dar-e Bolaghi, the first in 2005/1384 and the second in 2006/1385.

Dar-e Bolaghi is located in Fars province in southern Iran. It is a small plain lying at an altitude of 1800 m, enclosed by high mountains. The plain represents a naturally protected area, and is accessible through two narrow gorges in the north-east and in the south, where the river Polvar, called Sivand further downstream, enters and leaves the plain. The climate is dry and hot in summer and cold and wet in winter.

As a joint project, the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization together with the German Archaeological Institute carried out two seasons of field work at four Chalcolithic sites (TB 91, TB 119, TB 73 and TB 131), within the flood zone.

Besides the team's foremost objective, which was focused on the nature of the Bakun period occupation, the excavations also revealed several other occupation periods. These included the remains of a large Achaemenid period building complex at TB 73, with a canal which supplied water to the building, in use over a long period of time with several construction phases.

**Site 73** - The site extends on both sides of a small dry drainage area at the foot of the slope below the Hāji Bahrām Cave (TB 75). Large stone boulders scattered across the surface are indicative of earth slide events. There is no vegetation on the site; bushes and shrubs, among them wild almond and other trees, grow at the northern and eastern edges.



Figs. 1-2: grids G25 (above) and I20 (below) at TB 73.



Before excavation was begun at TB 73, a geometric plan of the site was mapped. It indicated the existence of rectangular buildings, oriented in a NW-SE direction. The map also revealed the remains of a water canal, which leads into the site from the northwest and runs parallel to the northern wall of the largest western building. After about 120 m, the canal then disappears under the gravel layer to reappear on the eastern side.



*Fig. 3: grid J20 at TB 73.*

In order to establish the date and function of the building, four  $9 \times 9$  m trenches in grids G25 (Fig. 1), I20 (Fig. 2), J20 (Fig. 3), and H21, were opened, one of which was later extended.

It appears that the building was very regularly planned. The excavation of four grids revealed that the





uniform construction was composed of a variety of walls, mostly not joining each other, each constructed with a slightly different technique.

A variety of construction techniques were used: the walls were constructed from non-dressed limestone slabs arranged in two lines at the outer edges of the wall. In between was mud with smaller stones or gravel. The size of the stones and the width of the walls vary in neighbouring walls. It is possible that the building consists of several construction phases.

The largest wall in trench G25 measures 1.30 m wide, with three buttresses on the northern side, and a crosswise corner joint. North of the wall much gravel had accumulated; this side was considered to be the outside of the building. Several Achaemenid potsherds were found south of the wall. In the south three other trenches were opened in close vicinity to each other, and again stone walls of different size and technique were discovered. Unfortunately, no floor levels related to the building could be recovered. These floors were destroyed probably due to the strong erosion of the area.

The finds indicate a date in the Achaemenid period for the building complex. Pottery collected from the Achaemenid building in squares G25, H21, I20, J20, as well as from upper layers of the Chalcolithic trenches, included varieties of fine, medium and coarse wares.

The coarse ware is tempered with mixed minerals of various colours, indicating that mixed fine gravel deposits were probably the source for these tempering materials. Firing at high temperatures resulted in a reddish or orange



Fig. 4: pottery from TB 73.

colour of the surface and the body of the ware. Large pithoi with flat broad relief bands around the body were made in this coarse ware.

Among the medium wares is a cooking pot ware tempered with sand. This ware is fired in a reducing atmosphere to obtain a grey or black colour. The cooking pots were made as holemouth jars with a ridge around the rim or as jars with an out-turned neck.

A small ovoid jar was found complete in a fill underneath wall collapse in J20. This jar is made from a clay tempered with coarse black minerals (**Fig. 4**). The most interesting examples among the fine wares are carinated bowls, typical for the Achaemenid period. The clay is reddish, and a shiny red slip is applied to the surface.



Among the metal objects are two arrowheads (Fig. 5); one is a three-flanged point with a hollow shaft.

Since only the foundations of this building complex were preserved, it is difficult to interpret the function of the building. It is probable that this building was part of a farmstead of the Achaemenid period that existed within the wider context of agricultural production in the Bolaghi valley, which supplied the capital at Pasargadae.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 5: arrowheads from TB 73.

Barbara Helwing  
bh@eurasien.dainst.de

Mojgan Seyedin  
mojganseyedin@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Full results of second season of the Irano-German rescue excavations in Tang-e Bolaghi, are in press at the ICAR (Iranian Center for Archaeological Research).