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Reassessing the Distribution of Lapui Pottery Across the Highland Zagros: Archaeological Evidence from Khanmirza

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Abstract

The natural environment of Khanmirza County, including access to permanent and seasonal watercourses, fertile soils, and favourable topography, has contributed to the formation of important settlements from prehistoric times to the present. With the onset of the Neolithic and the emergence of regional and interregional networks, which intensified during subsequent periods, particularly in the fifth and fourth millennia BCE, the southern part of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, and Khanmirza in particular, became especially well-suited to investigating these cultural and economic interactions. In the southern Zagros, corresponding broadly to present-day Fars Province, the fourth and third millennia BCE are represented in more specific archaeological terminology by what is known as the Lapui phase, regarded as one of the most important phases in the prehistoric chronology of the region. Published archaeological fieldwork concerning the social, economic, political, and religious dimensions of life during this period in the Central Zagros, particularly southern Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, remains extremely limited and, in many cases, incomplete. Much of the existing information on the characteristics of the Lapui phase in the Bakhtiari region derives from Zagarell's early reports, which have subsequently served as sources for numerous publications. The conclusions of some of these studies, however, differ markedly from the new archaeological evidence. Drawing on recent archaeological findings, this study characterises Lapui pottery from the southern Highland Zagros and reassesses the distribution, geographical extent, and sphere of influence of the Lapui phase in this region. Field-survey results and the typological study and classification of the ceramic material undertaken by one of the authors in southern Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari indicate that Lapui pottery from the study area can be classified into two groups: fine and coarse wares. Comparative analysis reveals close similarities between these assemblages and Lapui pottery from Fars. Surface collections from 27 archaeological sites, some preserving evidence of occupation from the Neolithic through the Islamic period, yielded diagnostic Lapui pottery. The mapped distribution of Lapui sites indicates that the cultural influence of the Lapui phase extended beyond Fars in the southern Zagros into parts of the Central or Highland Zagros, reaching its southernmost sector along the border with Khuzestan.

Keywords: Lapui Phase; Khanmirza; Late Chalcolithic Period; Pottery; Highland Zagros.

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Introduction

The Chalcolithic period has long occupied a distinctive place in Iranian archaeology because of its central importance for understanding the development of urban culture and civilisation and the processes underlying the transition towards urbanism. Existing archaeological knowledge of this cultural period is based on absolute and relative chronological frameworks, the results of which have been published for different geographical regions. Owing to its strategic location and distinctive natural and cultural resources, the Central Zagros, also referred to as the Highland Zagros, has accommodated diverse human groups since the Paleolithic, as attested by the presence of several prominent archaeological sites. Within this broader geographical zone, archaeological research has concentrated heavily on Khuzestan and Luristan and, to a lesser extent, Fars, while the southern Highland Zagros has received comparatively little attention. Given the region's importance as a corridor of communication, the historical role of mobile communities in cultural exchange between the Bakhtiari highlands, the lowlands of the Khuzestan Plain, and the plains of Fars, and the subsistence practices that continue to characterise the region, examining successive phases of human occupation, particularly the Chalcolithic Period, is essential for understanding the nature of these interactions.

Much of the available information concerning the prehistoric chronological sequence of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari derives from the work of Alan Zagarell. Zagarell began his archaeological investigations in the Bakhtiari region in 1974. Through comparative analyses of the region's Stone Age lithic assemblages, particularly those dating to the Paleolithic and Epipaleolithic, his research team identified and described the technological characteristics of stone-tool production during these periods. The results concerning the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, however, followed a somewhat different pattern. Zagarell employed local names and terminology to designate these cultural phases, using the Qaleh Rostam culture, the Eskandari culture, the Chellegah and Qaleh Afghan cultures, and the Shahrak culture to denote, respectively, the Neolithic and the Early, Middle, and Late Chalcolithic periods (Zagarell, 1982: 33, 35, 40).

Over the past two decades, the introduction of new methods and comparative analyses of archaeological material has demonstrated that many of the attributes originally used to define the region's ceramic cultures, the Qaleh Rostam, Eskandari, Chellegah and Qaleh Afghan, and Shahrak cultures, display close affinities with contemporaneous cultural traditions in Fars and Khuzestan. Laboratory analyses and absolute dating can therefore provide a firmer basis for examining the interactions associated with each

phase. One of the most important chronological phases of prehistory in Fars and the southern Iranian Plateau takes its name from Lapui, a site in the Kur River basin of Fars Province (Langsdorff & McCown, 1942). This phase was initially distinguished based on marked differences in the ceramic material recovered from the upper level of Tall-i Bakun A, which differed from the underlying strata and was designated Bakun A.V. During Sumner's surveys of the Kur River basin and the Marvdasht Plain, pottery comparable to Bakun A.V was identified at several archaeological sites around the village of Lapui in the Zarqan district of Fars, close to the Kur River. Because remains dating to this phase were particularly concentrated around the village, Sumner named the phase after Lapui.

Sumner and other researchers date the Lapui culture to approximately 3900–3400 BCE, placing it within the fourth millennium BCE and between the Bakun and Banesh cultures (Qasemi *et al.,* 2019: 42). On the basis of ceramic evidence from his field surveys, Zagarell attributed several sites on the Khanmirza and Lordegan plains to the Late Chalcolithic Period and compared their pottery with Lapui ceramics and the pottery from Tall-e Geser (Ibid: 43). During surveys conducted in 2010, 2011, and 2012, Hassan Rezvani classified diagnostic Lapui pottery as Late Chalcolithic and attributed 14 sites in Khanmirza County to this period (Rezvani, 2011). In 2024, one of the authors conducted two field seasons under the title "Reassessment of Archaeological Surveys in Southern Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari" and identified 27 sites in the Khanmirza region as belonging to this period on the basis of diagnostic Lapui pottery. Published information concerning the Late Chalcolithic ceramics of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, particularly those from Khanmirza County, and the Lapui ceramic tradition of Fars demonstrates that these two ceramic traditions are directly comparable.

Research Questions and Objectives: To what extent do the ceramic characteristics of the Lapui culture in Fars resemble those documented in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari? How can the new findings support a reassessment of the geographical extent of the Lapui culture and the identification of a broader sphere of influence?

Research Method: The field survey of Khanmirza Plain was designed with consideration for the region's topography, geographical extent, practical constraints, and archaeological potential. Our approach was based primarily on pedestrian survey across different landscape zones. For this purpose, the survey area was divided into three principal environmental units: mountains, valleys, and plains. Different proportions of each unit were examined according to the time available, the number of team

members, and the prevailing topographical conditions. To develop a more detailed understanding of the region, we used 1:25,000-scale topographic maps. Before beginning each day's fieldwork, the relevant section of the map was carefully reviewed. Consequently, no part of the survey area represented on the maps accompanying this report remained unexamined on foot.

Surface sampling at the sites was conducted randomly, although efforts were made to include examples from every ceramic group in the collected assemblage. Once an archaeological site had been identified, sherds representing all ceramic categories were initially collected. After an on-site ceramic reference collection had been established, priority was given to diagnostic types; non-diagnostic sherds were not retained and were returned to the site surface. Overall, efforts were made to collect diagnostic examples from every ceramic category. Their attributes were recorded on purpose-designed forms, and the sherds were digitally drawn using Corel software. Finally, the locations of the archaeological sites were recorded with a GPS device, while the photographer assigned to each team took and organised general photographs of the sites from the cardinal directions.

Research Background

A review of the history of archaeological research in Fars Province shows that numerous Iranian and international scholars have contributed to identifying and characterising the Lapui culture. Nearly all these studies are discussed, either directly or indirectly, in the sections addressing Lapui chronology and cultural characteristics. By contrast, relatively little research has been conducted in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and most available studies have focused primarily on presenting the results of earlier surveys. This section therefore considers only the research directly relevant to the subject of the present article.

In 2019, Alirezazadeh Nowdehi and colleagues published an article entitled "The Lapui Culture and Its Sphere of Influence in the Mountains of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari." Drawing on the published results of surveys and excavations conducted by Zagarell, Khosrowzadeh, and Jolaei, they attempted to define the sphere of influence of the Lapui culture within the province (Alirezazadeh Nowdehi *et al.,* 2019). In another article, entitled "A Comparative Study of Lapui Pottery from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and Northern Fars Using Petrographic Analysis," the authors (Alirezazadeh Nowdehi *et al.,* 2020) presented the results of their laboratory investigations. In 2019, Qasemi and colleagues (Qasemi *et al.,* 2019) published "A Brief

Review of Cultural Similarities and the Distribution, Expansion, and Influence of the Lapui Period in Fars Based on Archaeological Evidence." Alongside examining the geographical extent of the Lapui culture in Fars, they reviewed published evidence from neighbouring regions, including Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. Their study, however, largely reiterated the conclusions of earlier researchers. This latest study referred only to sites attributed to the Late Chalcolithic Period during Zagarell's and Rezvani's field surveys. By contrast, the present article re-examines the available information and draws on archaeological evidence from recent fieldwork to introduce additional sites that extend the documented distribution and sphere of influence of the Lapui culture. It should be emphasised that previous publications addressing the geographical reach of the Lapui culture relied exclusively on information derived from earlier surveys. The present study instead focuses on new archaeological evidence, which provides the basis for reassessing the distribution and geographical extent of the Lapui culture.

An Overview of the Chronology of the Lapui Phase

The fourth millennium BCE was a crucial period of social, economic, and political transformation in Western Asia, including Iran. In Fars Province, the Late Chalcolithic Period represents an important stage in the emergence of early complex societies. The chronological sequence of Fars is based largely on the soundings undertaken by Louis Vanden Berghe in 1950 (Vanden Berghe, 1952). Although his investigations remain valuable because of the quantity of data they produced, they also present several major problems, particularly regarding the classification of the chronological sequences of Fars and the Marvdasht region. Even the subsequent excavations and research conducted by Sumner did not fully resolve these difficulties.

Sumner was the first archaeologist to examine systematically the sequence of prehistoric cultures in Fars. Through his survey of the Kur River basin and his reassessment of earlier excavations and surveys, he proposed a general chronological framework for Fars that remains an important reference for archaeologists working in the region (Sumner, 1972: 162). In Sumner's classification, the cultures of the fourth and third millennia BCE in Fars are known respectively by the local names Lapui, Banesh, and Kaftari (Mansouri, 2019: 228). The Lapui culture has also been identified in the stratigraphic sequences of several archaeological sites in Fars dating to the fifth and fourth millennia BCE (Habibi *et al.*, 2015: 2).

Following its identification and study, the Lapui phase was incorporated into the archaeological chronology of both Iran and Fars Province as an important prehistoric period. Nevertheless, despite several decades of research, relatively little is known about its defining material and cultural characteristics or its duration, conventionally placed between 3900 and 3400 BCE. According to Sumner, the origins, persistence, and decline of this phase remain poorly understood. Even less is known about the extent of its cultural connections, traditions, industries, and material characteristics (Qasemi *et al.,* 2019: 41). This period witnessed the emergence of some of the world's earliest urban centers, hierarchical administrative structures, and writing systems in several regions. These developments ultimately contributed to the formation of powerful states and flourishing civilisations, including Elam in the third millennium BCE (Petrie, 2013: 1).

Characteristics of Lapui Pottery in Fars Province

The discovery and identification of Lapui pottery, together with establishing the criteria that distinguished it from the ceramics of other periods, constituted the most important step in the initial study of this phase in the archaeology of the southern Zagros and Fars. Plain red pottery, subsequently designated "Lapui pottery," was observed and documented during surveys in Fars and neighbouring regions by Stein, Vanden Berghe, Schmidt, and Herzfeld. Diagnostic red-burnished Lapui pottery was first identified in the disturbed upper levels of Tall-i Bakun A[1]. On the basis of its findspot and stratigraphic context, this phase was initially designated Bakun A.V (McCown & Langsdorff, 1942). Sumner, however, identified a cluster of sites yielding red Bakun A.V pottery near the village of Lapui in the Zarqan district and consequently adopted the name "Lapui" for the phase (Sumner, 1988: 23–41). Following his study of the pottery, Sumner divided it into two groups: 1) fine ware, characterised by a uniform red or buff fabric containing calcareous inclusions. The vessels were generally fired sufficiently to produce a uniformly red or buff core, and their surfaces were usually polished or bore traces of firing; and 2) common ware, characterised by a red fabric with black sand inclusions and a coarser texture than the fine ware. Its core was invariably grey, while its vessel forms resembled those of the fine ware. The principal differences were that hole-mouth or narrow-mouthed storage jars occurred less frequently, whereas low-pedestal bases were considerably more common.

Aspas ware constitutes one subgroup of Lapui pottery. On the basis of soundings at Tall-e Kureh, Alden assigned this ware to the Late Lapui

phase (Alden, 2003: 187–198). Aspas ware has a buff fabric containing sand inclusions and is generally well-fired, while its vessel forms resemble those of the fine Lapui ware. Painted decoration in red, brown, and black occurs on the upper parts of these vessels. Sumner made the most extensive contribution to the identification and study of Lapui pottery. Of the 101 Lapui-period sites he identified during his survey of the Kur River basin, 35 yielded red pottery displaying characteristic Lapui attributes (Sumner, 1972: 41). Gotch identified 18 sites containing characteristic Lapui pottery during his survey of the Persepolis Plain (Gotch, 1968: 16). Zeidi divided Lapui pottery into "fine" and "coarse" wares (Zeidi, 2004: 58). During the systematic survey of Tepe Lapui, its pottery was classified into three groups: "fine," "medium," and "coarse" wares (Habibi, 2013).

Yashmi's study of pottery from Tepe Lapui introduced minor revisions to the conventional classification, dividing the pottery into "coarse" and "fine" wares, five further subtypes, and an additional problematic ceramic category (Yashmi, 2015: 149–150). A general review of the classification and typology of Lapui pottery therefore reveals several competing schemes; a situation also encountered in the study of most diagnostic ceramic traditions. Most archaeologists agree on the necessity of studying pottery recovered from excavations and surface surveys; their principal disagreement concerns how these valuable materials should be analysed. This lack of consensus has led to the development of numerous methods and approaches to ceramic analysis. A review of published corpus reveals considerable variation in ceramic description, classification, and typology. These differences arise from the absence of a standardised method and general analytical framework and, in some cases, from the influence of individual preferences. Because archaeological research in Iran consists predominantly of field surveys, ceramic sherds inevitably constitute the largest category of recovered material. There is therefore a pressing need for a clear scientific framework for ceramic analysis, encompassing description, classification, and typology. Such a framework cannot be established without consultation and cooperation among specialists. Qasemi and colleagues also addressed the divergent approaches to the typological study and classification of Lapui pottery. They observed that, alongside the architectural evidence, the diverse material assemblage from Tepe Lapui, of which pottery forms the largest sample, includes numerous forms belonging to fine, medium, and coarse wares. Typologically, the ceramic vessels can be classified into several principal groups: open forms, including various bowls and cups;

vessels with vertical or upright rims, such as goblets; and closed forms, including simple jars and storage jars. Differences among the proposed manufacturing categories, thick or coarse, medium, and fine wares, whether plain or coated, and their respective subtypes are minimal. More importantly, the potters do not appear to have reserved particular vessel forms for specific ware groups; instead, ceramic attributes and vessel shapes were applied with broadly comparable frequency across the assemblage (Qasemi *et al.,* 2019: 18).

Mirzaei also discussed the difficulties associated with the typological study, classification, and identification of Lapui pottery and provided a more detailed account of the Lapui ceramics recovered from Jelian. The second category of prehistoric pottery identified at Jelian consists of the widely attested ceramics of the Lapui period, named after the village of Lapui (Vanden Berghe, 1954: 401). Based on surface survey evidence, subsequent publications classified Lapui pottery into common ware and fine ware, both distinguished principally by their red color and polished surfaces. The use of monochrome red as a defining criterion for this period was intended to distinguish it from the predominantly buff pottery of the preceding Bakun period. Archaeologists employed this contrast in their reports to separate the two chronological phases. The distinction was first introduced by the excavators of Tall-i Bakun and was subsequently adopted by Vanden Berghe in differentiating these phases within the prehistoric chronology of Fars. Painted decoration clearly played little role in the new ceramic tradition designated as Lapui, except in a limited number of cases such as Aspas ware.

Recent archaeological investigations and excavations of Lapui-period deposits have nevertheless revealed a considerably broader range of ceramic colors at sites such as Tall-e Nurabad (Roustaei & Potts, 2006: 174), Tall-e Espid (Petrie *et al.,* 2007), Tepe Mehr Ali and other sites (Sardari, 2013), Tall-e Khari (Sardari & Mousavi, 2018), and possibly Tepe Lapui, Tall-e Suzu, and Tall-e Bandu. These assemblages include buff, red, orange, brown, and grey Lapui pottery, although orange is the predominant color, followed by red. Accordingly, when analysing and classifying the excavated Lapui pottery from Jelian, the authors followed Sumner's classification and distinguished between fine Lapui ware and common or coarse Lapui ware, irrespective of variations in fabric and surface color (Mirzaei & Sardari, 2021: 42). Unlike Bakun pottery, Lapui vessels are generally plain and display marked uniformity in their rim forms, together with traces of regular striations. These characteristics

may indicate that Lapui potters used the potter's wheel and sought to standardise vessel forms (Petrie, 2006: 175). Lapui pottery appears to have included both handmade and wheel-made vessels. At Jalian, the predominance of homogeneous and standardised forms with regular, rounded, and smooth rims and bases further supports the use of the wheel in ceramic production (Roustaei & Potts, 2006: 175). This evidence may also indicate specialised mass production in response to population growth (Sumner, 1988; Petrie, 2011: 174). The Jalian assemblage also contains sherds bearing mesh-like textile or basket impressions, comprising eight body sherds and one vessel base. These impressions may indicate that baskets or coarse sackcloth-like textiles were used to support vessels during manufacture. The extent to which this classification can serve as a foundation for broader studies of Lapui pottery ultimately depends on the analytical approach adopted. Given that only a few Lapui-period sites have been excavated and that Lapui pottery displays relatively limited variation, as is also evident at Jalian, it remains difficult to propose a typological system substantially different from that developed by Sumner (Mirzaei & Sardari, 2021: 43).

Geographical Extent and Sphere of Influence of the Lapui Culture in Fars Province

Pottery is particularly important because it provides valuable information about subsistence practices and the political, economic, cultural, and technological conditions of ancient societies. As one of the earliest and most enduring forms of human material production, pottery has remained a fundamental source of archaeological evidence for identifying cultures and cultural periods. It has been used so extensively to classify and date other finds and archaeological contexts that ceramic traditions are often treated as direct expressions of the material culture of a particular period or ethnic group. Perhaps more than archaeologists working in any other region, specialists in the Southwest Asia have used pottery and ceramic styles to interpret cultural, sociopolitical, and economic change. This approach has become so deeply embedded in archaeological practice that cultures are sometimes implicitly equated with the colors and types of pottery associated with them. This interpretative model, however, has long been questioned. Accurate interpretation of ceramic assemblages requires modern scientific analysis and ethnoarchaeological research into the mechanisms of pottery production and their relationship with broader cultural systems (Alizadeh, 2004: 1). Before Sumner's investigations, knowledge of the Lapui phase

was limited to general observations concerning settlement patterns and its diagnostic pottery, while discussions of its economic and social organisation remained largely speculative (Alizadeh, 2004: 78).

Despite the research outlined above, the geographical extent and cultural influence of the Lapui phase have yet to be clearly defined. Scattered evidence exists concerning ceramic and cultural similarities between Lapui sites and neighboring settlements in the Kur River basin, the southern plains of Fars, and even the northern frontier zones represented by the intermontane plains of the southern Zagros in Fars, situated between cold, temperate, and warm climatic regions. Unfortunately, this evidence has not yet been systematically assembled and classified. Information from the limited number of excavated sites in Fars preserving archaeological deposits and material culture from this phase, together with surface material recovered through archaeological surveys, has nevertheless contributed to explaining the formation and extent of the Lapui cultural sphere. Before proceeding further, the geographical distribution and sphere of influence of the Lapui phase, long examined primarily through surveys of the Kur River basin, generally regarded as its principal center of origin, must be considered from both internal and external perspectives. The internal category comprises sites located within the modern geographical boundaries of Fars and its constituent counties. The external category encompasses the much broader distribution of pottery, the principal diagnostic feature of this phase, throughout neighbouring regions, extending from northern Fars southwards and across both western and eastern Iran (Qasemi *et al.,* 2020: 46).

In considering the geographical distribution and cultural influence of the Lapui culture, it should also be recognised that archaeologists such as Sumner and Alizadeh proposed a transformation in settlement patterns and a shift towards pastoral mobility during this phase. Evidence indicates that Lapui settlement patterns differed from those of the preceding Bakun phase. Drawing on a model of increasing mobility, Alizadeh and Sumner interpreted this transformation as an abrupt response to the rapid decline in environmental productivity. They attributed this decline to the adverse consequences of excessive exploitation of agricultural land, environmental resources, and irrigation systems (Sumner, 1972). Pastoral mobility during the late fifth and early fourth millennia BCE has also been identified as an important factor in the socioeconomic and political development of inland regions and in the transmission of cultural traditions to neighbouring areas. The mountainous regions of Iran, particularly Fars Province and

the highlands of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, were not excluded from this process (Alizadeh, 2004: 21).

Within the internal geographical zone, evidence of the Lapui phase has been documented through surveys of the mounds and sites of the Murghab Plain at Pasargadae; the plains of Shiraz and Marvdasht (Gotch, 1968–1969); and the Marvdasht Plain and Kur River basin (Sumner, 1972). Further evidence derives from the renewed survey of the Marvdasht Plain, the Kur River basin, and Sivand, including Tall-e Charkhu, Tall-e Balguni, Tall-e Ashki, Tall-e Bakan, Tepe Qasr Dasht, Tall-e Aq Qaleh, Tall-e Gap-e Nazarabad, Tall-e Shanguli, Tall-e Kharistan-e Sofla, Kushk-e Zar B, and Tall-e Kamin (Alizadeh, 1997). Additional sites were identified during the joint Iranian–French survey of the Marvdasht Plain in 2005 and 2006 (Boucharlat & Feyzkhah, 2006); the 2006 survey of the Shiraz Plain, including Tall-e Tit, Tall-e Poustchi, and Tall-e Badi (Barfi & Bidari, 2006); the 2006–2007 archaeological survey of the Kamfiruz district of Marvdasht, including Tall-e Gorgi (Asadi, 2007); and the 2002 survey of the Dorudzan district of Marvdasht, including Tall-e Qadamgah (Heydari & Soltani, 2002).

Surveys of the Sarhad region and Eqlid County conducted between 2005 and 2009 identified further evidence at Tepe-ye Gharbi-ye Kharistan-e Sofla, Tepe Sabz Ali, Tall-e Pasgah-e Aspas, Tepe Raeisi, Tepe Havakhsh, Tepe Bidi, Tepe Naqqareh Khaneh, Tepe Leh Cheraghi A, and Tepe Mehr Ali (Sardari, 2011; Rezaei, 2009). Lapui material was also recorded during the 2006 survey of the Ramjerd district of Marvdasht at Tall-e Ziyareti A (Asadi, 2006); archaeological surveys of the Fasa Plain at Tall-e Na‘laki A, Domaneh, Tall-e Zahhak, Seh Tall, and Tepe Qobadi (Miroschedji, 1973–1974; Asadi, 2009; Mansouri & Asadi, 2012); and the 2010 survey of the western slopes of Kuh-e Rahmat, which included renewed investigations of Tall-i Bakun A, Tall-i Bakun B, Tepe Hajiabad, Tall-e Nokhodi, Tall-e Shamsabad, and Tall-e Qaleh Hasanabad (Zare, 2010). Archaeological surveys in Mamasani County identified six sites on the Rostam 1 Plain and seven on the Rostam 2 Plain.

Lapui pottery and other associated material were also identified by Khanipour during archaeological surveys conducted in 2014–2015 in the central and Mazayjan districts of Bavanat County. The sites included Kol Hashem, Kotkotu, Tall-e Pashangi, Jafarabad-e Sofla, Qanat-e Now 2, Pahrin, and Tonb-e Qaleh (Khanipour, 2015). Tonb-e Qaleh is one of the most prominent Lapui-period sites in the Bavanat region. The presence of several Late Bakun sherds, the high concentration of Lapui pottery,

and several meters of cultural deposits suggest that the transition from the Bakun to the Lapui phase may be preserved at this site (Qasemi *et al.,* 2020: 49). All sites yielding Lapui pottery have been included in this section to provide a clear understanding of the distribution of the Lapui culture across the geographical region of Fars.

Environmental Setting of the Study Area

Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province covers 16,532 km² and lies between 31°09′ and 32°48′ N and 49°28′ and 51°25′ E of the Greenwich meridian, in the southern Zagros of south-western Iran. The province has highly rugged terrain: mountains and hills account for approximately 74% of its area, while its plains consist primarily of small intermontane basins (Gitashenasi Provincial Atlas). Khanmirza County borders Borujen County to the north-east, Kiar County to the north-west, Falard County to the south-east, Lordegan County to the south and south-west, Semirom County in Isfahan Province to the east, and Ardal County to the west. The county covers approximately 936 km² (Fig. 1; Deputy Directorate for Remote Sensing and Geography, General Directorate of Geography, 2000: 437–440). Until 2019, Lordegan County comprised three districts: Central, Khanmirza, and Falard. Following subsequent administrative reorganisation, Khanmirza was separated from Lordegan in 2019, followed by Falard in 2023.

The study area encompasses two markedly contrasting environments: its northern sector is dominated by mountains and elevated foothills, whereas its southern sector consists of extensive, level plains (Fig. 2). This part of the Zagros follows the range's general northwest–southeast orientation and comprises a series of parallel valleys. Geomorphologically, the landscape combines high mountains, deep valleys, and alluvial plains that support diverse forms of land use (Zagarell, 1982: 23). The area encompasses varied geomorphological and geological landscapes and lies within the central and, to some extent, southern Zagros. Its principal morphological characteristics reflect those of the Zagros as a whole: intermontane plains and valleys occur alongside parallel mountain ranges or anticlines. The relief of this part of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province consists primarily of limestone mountains. These mountains contain various geological formations, some of which, notably the Bakhtiari Conglomerate, are archaeologically significant because they contain high-quality lithic raw materials exploited by prehistoric communities for stone-tool production. A clear example is Kuh-e Sorkh, which comprises the eastern highlands of the Rig Valley. The mountain derives its name from the numerous red chert

cobbles embedded within its conglomeratic deposits, which give it a reddish appearance. The mountainous Bakhtiari region, which forms the northern and north-eastern boundary of Khuzestan, is crucial to understanding cultural developments across Iran's alluvial plains. It has traditionally played an important role in the economic and political life of the plateau's lowland regions and, to a lesser extent, the Central Iranian Plateau. The Bakhtiari region encompasses a substantial part of what Flannery termed "Greater Mesopotamia". It provides an ideal setting for a mixed economy centered on livestock herding. Its fertile intermontane valleys are generally well watered and highly suitable for a mixed subsistence economy combining extensive agriculture with pastoral nomadism (Ibid: 24). Agricultural potential nevertheless varies considerably between valleys. Several provide excellent conditions for cultivation, while some areas and valleys are intensively farmed and produce substantial quantities of rice. Even so, mixed farming and livestock herding remain widespread because some valleys possess only limited agricultural potential. Elsewhere in Bakhtiari area, the terrain is suitable only for herding, as the land is too rocky or arid for cultivation.

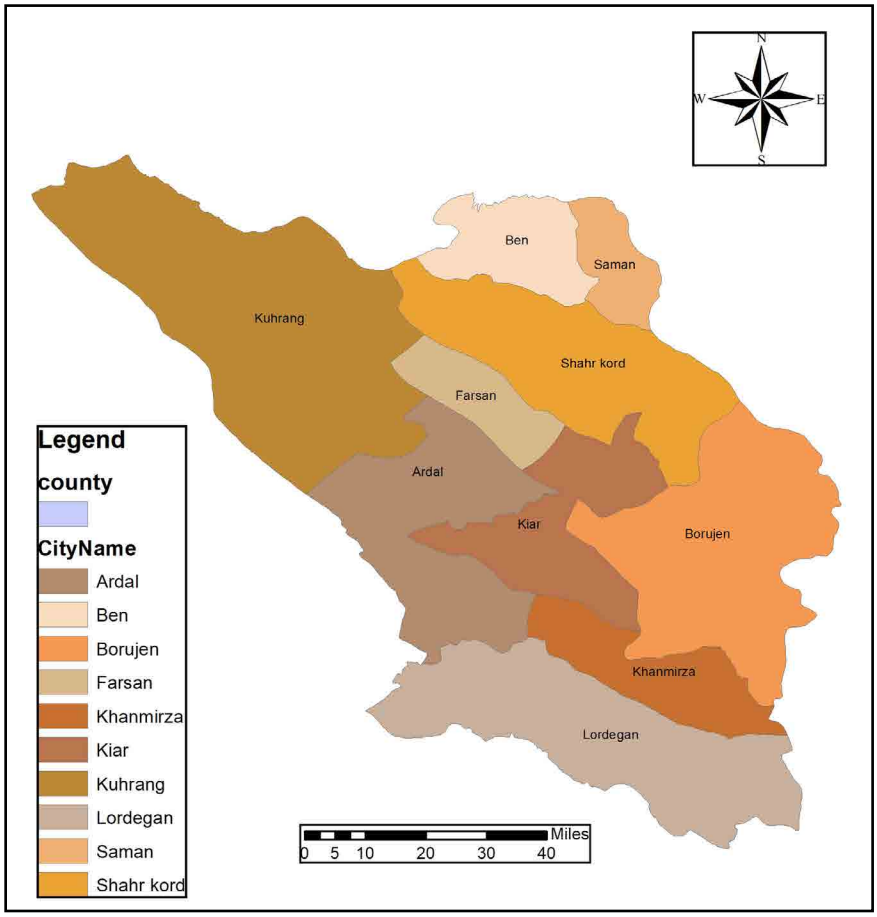
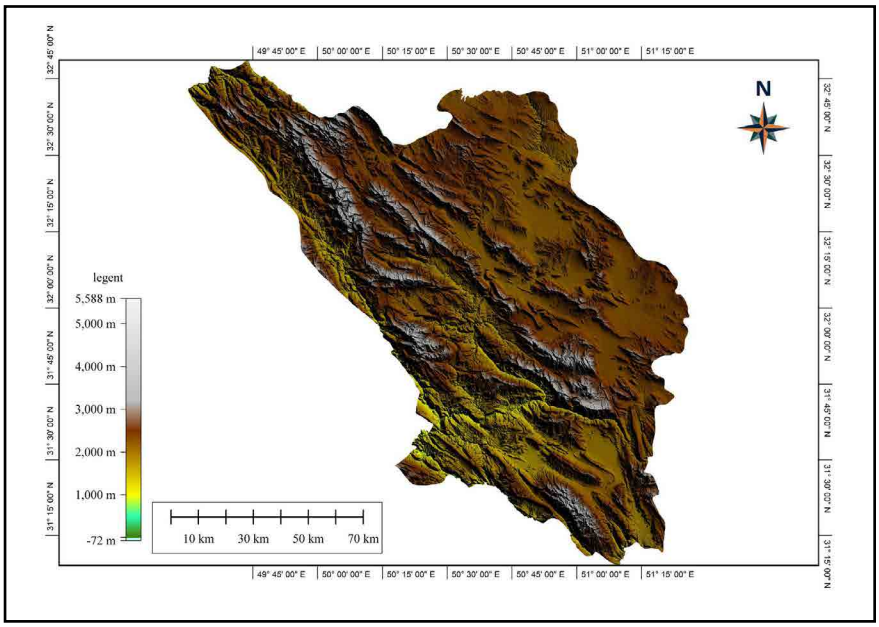


Fig. 1: Location of Khanmirza County within Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province (Authors, 2024). ▶



◀ **Fig. 2: Topographic map of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, showing Khanmirza County (Authors, 2024).**

Sphere of Influence and Expansion of the Lapui Culture in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

This section first briefly introduces the areas that previous archaeological studies have identified as forming part of the sphere of Lapui cultural influence. It then describes the ceramic evidence recovered during the field survey and reassesses the geographical extent of this cultural tradition. During the fourth and third millennia BCE, the economic, political, and cultural relations between Fars and neighbouring regions, including Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, facilitated the transmission of Lapui cultural traits and ceramic traditions into these areas. Ceramics constitute the most important category of material evidence for examining regional and interregional cultural interactions. Shared technological attributes and ceramic correspondences documented at other sites, including close and occasionally direct parallels, provide the basis for the present investigation of cultural affinities and the geographical reach of the Lapui period beyond present-day Fars into the adjacent region of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari.

Archaeological interpretations of the emergence and development of the Lapui culture in Fars have focused primarily on changes in subsistence practices. Based on settlement data from the Kur River basin, Sumner identified evidence of a continuous decline in settlement from the fourth millennium BCE, at the end of the Bakun period, to the late third millennium BCE, corresponding to the beginning of the Kaftari period. He argued that this pattern reflected a sustained decline in the productivity of the regional

agricultural system, which he attributed principally to the area's saline lands. Although Sumner maintained that the observed decline in settlement could not be explained by a continuous decrease in the regional population, he proposed that it might reflect a gradual transition from an economy based on irrigated agriculture during the Bakun period to one centred on nomadic pastoralism during the Banesh period. He further argued that the expansion of nomadic groups and their subsequent attainment of political and economic influence during the Proto-Elamite period arose from a new and distinctive form of organisation in the highlands. Tribal political systems incorporated both sedentary and mobile elements, which were sometimes organised separately and at other times united into cohesive confederations under the authority of tribal khans (Sumner, 1986: 209). Although detailed, systematically organised information concerning the duration of the Lapui period, its interactions with preceding and subsequent phases, and its regional and interregional connections remains unavailable, resolving these questions requires a comprehensive study of its material culture and more detailed comparisons with other sites and regions. Further investigation of other plains and valleys in Fars, combined with comparisons with surveys conducted in the Kur River basin, would be particularly valuable. Comprehensive surveys are also required in the northern highlands, the intermontane plains of the Zagros, the southern plains, and adjacent environmental zones that served as routes for nomadic and semi-nomadic groups during this period. Comparing evidence from these areas with the defining characteristics of the Lapui culture may help resolve some of these questions.

If the prevailing hypothesis concerning the emergence and transmission of the Lapui culture is accepted, the Bakhtiari region has historically been, and remains, environmentally well suited to mobile pastoral occupation. Its proximity to the principal homeland of the Lapui culture in Fars, together with its diverse natural resources, including abundant perennial and seasonal watercourses, high precipitation, fertile soils, varied vegetation and wild plants, suitable pastures, and intermontane plains, would have attracted Lapui pastoralists and mobile communities seeking fodder for their livestock. The southern plains of the region, including Rig and Khanmirza, contain several Lapui sites and scatters of ceramics dating to this period. The southernmost areas of Chaharmahal, owing to their proximity to the Lapui heartland, consequently, preserve more numerous and sustained traces of occupation associated with this culture (Alirezazadeh Nodehi *et al.,* 2019). The northern part of the Bakhtiari region likewise contains rich

intermontane plains suitable for herd movement. These plains lay along the northern margins of the Lapui cultural sphere and appear to have been extensively used by communities associated with this tradition. As noted above, evidence from the Lapui period has been recovered throughout this geographical area. The sites are predominantly situated on intermontane plains and near mountain slopes, a distribution that may support the proposed settlement model for the Lapui period. They are located beside perennial and seasonal water sources, particularly the waterways of the Farsan Plain and Lordegan County. The plains lie between mountain ranges, while the adjacent slopes provided suitable conditions for both seasonal and sustained pastoral mobility. Nevertheless, given the quantity and quality of the ceramics and the volume of visible archaeological deposits at some sites, not all Lapui settlements in this region can be attributed to mobile communities; further extensive research is therefore required. Archaeological investigations in the Bakhtiari region have largely demonstrated the connections between this period and the regions and mountains farther north. However, the precise relationship between Lapui ceramics and the painted wares of Bakhtiari remains unclear and requires further research and systematic comparison between sites in the two regions. Significantly, recent fieldwork has shown that many newly-identified sites represent permanent settlements with multiperiod occupational sequences. This evidence casts doubt on the proposition that communities associated with the Lapui culture were exclusively nomadic or mobile. It should also be noted that only a limited number of sites have been identified on the Rig Plain, although previous studies cited in the literature review described it as particularly favourable for communities associated with the Lapui culture.

In his surveys of the Lordegan and Khanmirza plains, Zagarell identified Late Chalcolithic ceramics whose characteristics corresponded closely to those of red Lapui ware. He also noted similarities between Aspas ware and ceramics recovered from the Bakhtiari region (Zagarell, 1982: 29–30). During surveys of the Farsan Plain and the districts of Miyankuh and Ardal in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Khosrowzadeh identified Lapui-period ceramics at several sites, including Ar185, Ar143, Fs85, Fs123, Fs139, Fs156, Fs178, Mk84, Mk118, Mk65, and Mk12 (Khosrowzadeh, 2009: 8). Other surveyed sites in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari include Shahrak S10 and Qaleh Afghan, where large quantities of Lapui-period ceramics were recovered (Zagarell, 1982: 38).

Research Findings

Zagarell's field investigations identified nine sites as Late Chalcolithic settlements. Rezvani's archaeological survey similarly attributed fifteen sites to the Late Chalcolithic period, although some yielded no evidence of Lapui ceramics and were assigned to this period solely on the basis of their lithic assemblages. During the present field survey, ceramic evidence enabled twenty-seven sites to be associated with the Late Chalcolithic, or Lapui, period. These settlements occupied a combination of foothill, intermontane, and open-plain settings. Some preserve occupational sequences extending from the Neolithic to the Islamic period, whereas others were inhabited exclusively during the Late Chalcolithic period (Table 1).

Table 1: Sites identified during the 2024 field survey (Authors, 2024). ▼

Razgah Valley	Sites with multiperiod occupation	Sites with two-period occupation	Single-period occupation sites (Lapui)
Darreh-ye Bid-e Bagh-e Behzad	Tol-e Kochir-e Aluni	Kuh-e Dalan	Tol-e Barmi
Imamzadeh Shah Abd al-Azim, Bagh-e Behzad	Tol-e Boland-e Sini	Borjuyi	Gushki Site
Tol-e Afghan	Mazargah-e Sini	Tol-e Aqa Ayaz	Muradan
Chel-e Gushki	Mazargah-e Deh Sahra	Sefilan	East of Borjuyi
Eshkaft Gushki 3	Tol-e Bandar	Kort-e Gol Cemetery	Deh Sahra Site
Gushki Cemetery	Sartang-e Dinar-Ali	Ahmadabad-e Bardbor	Bard-e Jilan
Tol-e Ka Khodadad	Tol-e Bardbor	Tol-e Khargushi	

Table 2: Sites identified during Rezvani's field survey (Rezvani, 2010). ▶

Aluni 1	Musa Khani	Tol-e Malu
Aluni 2	Tang-e Mirzavand	Mazari-ye Sini
Chel-e Gushki	Kamrad Ali	Tol-e Bandar
Ka Khodadad	Deh Sahra	Ka Khodadad
Abd al-Azim	Sefilan	Sartang

Table 3: Sites identified during Zagarell's field survey (Zagarell, 1982). ▼

Borjuyi	K60	K96
Tol-e Boland	K74	Kuh-e Dulab
Shahruyi	K75	Qaleh Afghan

Description and Analysis of Lapui Ceramic Characteristics in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari

No typological or classificatory study has yet been undertaken of the Lapui-type ceramics recovered in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. It is therefore currently necessary to employ Sumner's classification of Lapui ceramics from Fars. The Bakhtiari assemblage has provisionally been divided into fine and common wares. The ceramics recovered at Shahrak

◀Fig. 3: General view of the Tappeh Raisi site (Authors, 2024).

◀Fig. 4: General view of the Ka Khodadad site (Authors, 2024).

◀Fig. 5: General view of the Qaleh Afghan site (Authors, 2024).

Fig. 6: General view of the Mazargah-e Sini site (Authors, 2024). ▶

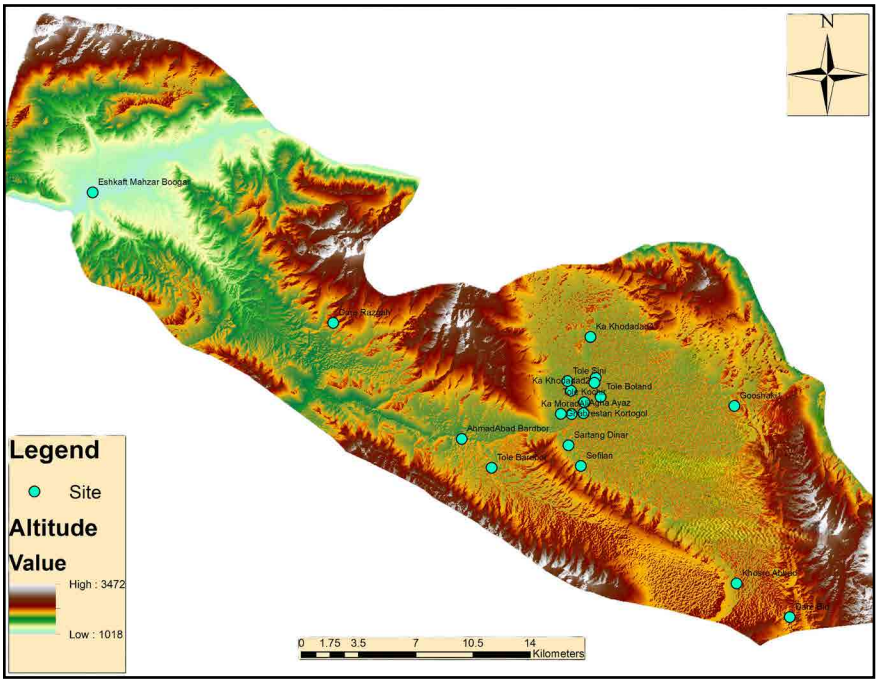


Fig. 7: Map showing the settlement pattern of Lapui-period sites in Khanmirza (Authors, 2024). ▶

clearly date to the Late Chalcolithic Period. The mound lies immediately north of Shahrak village, amid agricultural fields. Based on the ceramic evidence, the Shahrak assemblage may be divided into three principal categories: painted buff ware, red-slipped red ware, and plain buff ware. All three groups contain abundant vegetal temper, and their exterior surfaces bear a red clay slip. It remains unclear whether these vessels were hand-made or wheel-made. The assemblage includes several bowls with globular bodies and incurving rims (Zagarell, 1982: 41). The ceramic assemblages from the Khanmirza, Rig, and Lordegan plains bear no direct relationship to the Late Chalcolithic assemblage of the Shahr-e Kord region. In general, the Late Chalcolithic phase in these plains is characterised by a distinct ceramic assemblage, although several close parallels occur at Shahr-e Kord. Interpreting the archaeological evidence from these plains is more difficult because red wares predominate. Both red ware and red-slipped

ware occur and, unfortunately, cannot readily be distinguished. Broadly, the ceramics of this region may be classified into Borjuyi ware and buff ware. At Borjuyi, red and red-slipped wares constitute the overwhelming majority of the assemblage. A fragment of a small, handled jug recovered from the upper part of the site may be dated to the Late Chalcolithic period. Fragments of bowls with distinct rims were also recovered from this area of the site. Like several other sherds from Borjuyi, they contain mineral temper, and their fabrics include abundant fine white particles. This diagnostic ware can be used to date most of the red ceramics from Borjuyi and, consequently, those from other sites in the region (Zagarell, 1982: 46). Caldwell identified several ceramic innovations in Levels 36 and 38 at Tall-i Ghazir. Some ceramics recovered during surveys of the Khanmirza and Lordegan plains appear comparable to Borjuyi ware. At Qaleh Geli on the Lordegan Plain, for example, two pedestal bases were recovered, one of which bears an incised decoration comprising two lines on its unslipped interior surface. According to Zagarell, these examples have parallels at Tall-i Ghazir (Caldwell, 1961: fig. 34) and Susa 14–16b. Comparable rims recovered during the Kur River basin survey have likewise been dated to the Lapui period (Sumner, 1972).

▲ Fig. 8: Ceramic finds from the Tappeh Raisi site (Authors, 2024).

A study entitled "A Comparative Petrographic Study of Lapui Ceramics from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and Northern Fars" examined material from several sites. Because one of the sampled sites, Qaleh Afghan, lies within Khanmirza County, the relevant laboratory findings are presented here. Rock fragments were not commonly added to the examined Lapui ceramics as either fillers or temper. Limestone and calcite inclusions occur much more frequently in ceramics from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari than in those from Fars. Several samples display a fluidal fabric attributable to the vessel-forming process. Variations in color within individual vessels, as well as differences in colour between vessels, are unrelated to their composition. Instead, they reflect oxidising and reducing conditions and the availability of oxygen during firing. The analytical results demonstrate that the manufacturing techniques, ceramic fabrics, and even firing temperatures employed in producing Lapui ceramics were highly similar in Fars and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. Such close correspondence is unlikely to be coincidental, although the proportional composition of the samples differs. Given that the Lapui ceramic tradition originated in the Kur River basin of northern Fars, and that laboratory analyses reveal strong similarities between samples from Fars and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, particularly those from Gerchgah 5 and Mian Talan, the authors argue

▲ Fig. 9: Ceramic finds from the Ka Khodadad site (Authors, 2024).

▲ Fig. 10: Ceramic finds from the Qaleh Afghan site (Authors, 2024).

▲ Fig. 11: Ceramic finds from the Mazargah-e Sini site (Authors, 2024).

that Lapui ceramic technology was transmitted from the Kur River basin in Fars to Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. Potters from the Kur River basin subsequently produced Lapui ceramics within the territory of present-day Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. They could carry their technical knowledge with them, but not the clay itself. This explains why the composition of Lapui ceramics from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari differs slightly from that of the Fars samples. Some Lapui vessels from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari were even fired at approximately 800°C (Alirezazadeh Nowdehi, 2019).

Based on preliminary examination, cataloguing, and classification, the Lapui ceramics recovered during the survey of Khanmirza County were divided into two categories. 1) Fine wares generally have red, light brown, occasionally dark-brown, or orange fabrics containing limestone and calcite particles. Firing usually produced uniformly red, orange, or brown cores, although some vessels have dark cores. Vessel surfaces are generally burnished or fire clouded. 2) Common wares have red fabrics containing black sand temper and are somewhat coarser than the fine wares. Their cores are generally brownish orange, orange, or dark brown. Preliminary examination of manufacturing techniques indicates that most ceramics of this type in the Bakhtiari region were wheel-made, although a smaller quantity of handmade pottery was also recovered.

Archaeological investigations and surveys conducted across Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari indicate that, with the exception of Ben, Saman, and Kuhrang counties, the province preserves material and cultural evidence attributable to the Lapui period. The Shahr-e Kord and Farsan plains may therefore be regarded as the northernmost extent of the Lapui cultural sphere in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari (Alirezazadeh Nowdehi *et al.,* 2019). It should also be noted that the 2024 field survey conducted by the present authors in the southern part of the province extended the known distribution of the Lapui culture to the province's southernmost area, along the border with Khuzestan. In light of recent research within the administrative boundaries of Khuzestan Province, this geographical range may extend farther south into northern Khuzestan.

Conclusion

Zagarell distinguished three phases in the prehistoric development of the Bakhtiari region. During the first phase, associated with the Neolithic Period, an early mixed economy and a particular form of social organisation prevailed, characterised by a high degree of mobility. This was followed by a more sedentary phase characteristic of the Late Neolithic and Early

Chalcolithic periods. By the end of the Middle Chalcolithic Period, however, a new phase of mobile lifeways appears to have emerged. This increased mobility developed across a broad geographical setting and involved a degree of economic specialisation, as highland lifeways became increasingly differentiated from those of the lowlands. It was also accompanied by a growing tendency towards political centralisation. This phase differed fundamentally from the Neolithic pattern and represented a distinct form of nomadism. According to Zagarell, during the Middle and Late Chalcolithic periods, a distinctive highland way of life emerged, with its own social rules and subsistence mechanisms, bearing greater similarity to lifeways practised in the region today. During the Late Chalcolithic Period, both the total number and average size of sites declined. This decrease coincided with the appearance of a new site types, probably associated with pastoral activities. As noted above, however, recent archaeological evidence contradicts Zagarell's interpretation. The ceramics recovered during the survey constitute the principal evidence for the presence of the Lapui culture in the High Zagros, particularly in the southern part of the province. Their detailed description and publication are therefore essential for defining the cultural characteristics of the Lapui tradition.

Although substantial differences occur among ceramic assemblages from different parts of the High Zagros, or Bakhtiari region, the local Lapui-type pottery displays close affinities with corresponding ceramics from other highland areas. Based on preliminary examination, cataloguing, and classification, the Lapui ceramics recovered during the survey of Khanmirza County were divided into two categories. 1) Fine wares generally have red, light brown, occasionally dark-brown, or orange fabrics containing limestone and calcite particles. Firing usually produced uniformly red, orange, or brown cores, although some vessels have dark cores. Vessel surfaces are generally burnished or fire clouded. 2) Common wares have red fabrics containing black sand temper and are somewhat coarser than the fine wares. Their cores are generally brownish orange, orange, or dark brown. Preliminary examination of manufacturing techniques indicates that most ceramics of this type in the Bakhtiari region were wheel-made, although a smaller quantity of handmade pottery was also recovered. Rock fragments were not commonly added to the examined Lapui ceramics as either fillers or temper. Limestone and calcite inclusions occur much more frequently in ceramics from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari than in those from Fars. Several samples display a fluidal fabric attributable to the vessel-forming process. Variations in colour within individual vessels, as well as

differences in colour between vessels, are unrelated to their composition. Instead, they reflect oxidising and reducing conditions and the availability of oxygen during firing. Laboratory results indicate that the manufacturing techniques, ceramic fabrics, and even firing temperatures employed in producing Lapui ceramics were highly similar in Fars and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. Such close correspondence is unlikely to be coincidental, although the proportional composition of the samples differs. The Lapui ceramic tradition originated in the Kur River basin of northern Fars, and laboratory analyses demonstrate close similarities between samples from Fars and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari.

The geographical extent conventionally attributed to the Lapui culture in the southern High Zagros has largely been defined on the basis of Zagarell's and Rezvani's surveys, the limitations of which have been discussed in the preceding sections. Although Zagarell's work constituted one of the earliest archaeological investigations of the Bakhtiari highlands, some of its conclusions require substantial and fundamental reassessment. Many prominent sites escaped detection, and it may reasonably be inferred that Zagarell's survey strategy favoured elevated and readily visible sites. As Zagarell himself acknowledged, the survey was conducted rapidly and under considerable time constraints; consequently, only nine sites were identified as Late Chalcolithic settlements. Rezvani's 2010 survey identified fifteen Late Chalcolithic sites. However, many yielded no diagnostic Lapui ceramics and were assigned to this phase solely based on their lithic assemblages. The two-season reassessment of the southern part of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, conducted by the present author in 2024, identified twenty-seven sites containing Lapui-type ceramics. The discovery of these additional sites necessitates a reassessment of the geographical extent of the Lapui cultural sphere. Archaeological evidence indicates that, except for Ben, Saman, and Kuhrang counties, other parts of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari preserve material and cultural remains attributable to the Lapui period. The Shahr-e Kord and Farsan plains may therefore be identified as its northernmost extent, while Lapui remains also occur in Lordegan, the province's southernmost region bordering Khuzestan. Recent investigations within Khuzestan further suggest that the distribution of the Lapui culture may extend into the northern part of that province.

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Author Contribution

This research is derived from the first author's doctoral dissertation. The primary data collection, encompassing all observational and analytical components, was conducted by the first author under the direct supervision and mentorship of the second and third authors.

Conflict of Interest

In adherence to ethical publication standards, the authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest, either personal or financial, that could have influenced the content or conclusions presented in this research.

Endnote

1 The Bakun period takes its name from the site of Bakun, which is incorrectly rendered as Bākun in the archaeological literature.

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بازشناسی پراکندگی سفال لپویی در حوزهٔ جغرافیایی زاگرس مرتفع، براساس یافته‌های باستان‌شناختی خانمیرزا

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چکیده

قابلیت‌های محیط طبیعی شهرستان خانمیرزا، نظیر در دسترس بودن منابع آب (رودهای دائمی و فصلی)، خاک حاصلخیزو توپوگرافی منطقه از عوامل اثرگذار در شکل‌گیری استقرارهای مهم و شاخص از دوران پیش‌ازتاریخ تا عصر حاضر است.با شروع دورهٔ نوسنگی و شکل‌گیری تعاملات منطقه‌ای و فرامنطقه‌ای و شدت گرفتن آن در دوره‌های بعد به‌خصوص در هزاره‌های پنجم و چهارم، جنوب استان و به‌ویژه منطقهٔ خانمیرزا مکان مستعدی برای بررسی و مطالعهٔ این ارتباطات و برهمکنش‌های فرهنگی و اقتصادی است. هزارهٔ سوم و چهارم، در زاگرس جنوبی (استان فارس کنونی) با اصطلاحی تخصصی‌تر، با نام فرهنگ لپویی معرفی‌شده و به‌عنوان یکی از مهم‌ترین مراحل گاهنگاری پیش‌ازتاریخ این مناطق شناخته می‌شود. نتایج منتشر شده از فعالیت‌های میدانی باستان‌شناسانه درخصوص چگونگی زندگی اجتماعی، اقتصادی و سیاسی و مذهبی این دوره در نواحی زاگرس‌مرکزی (جنوب استان چهارمحال‌وبختیاری) بسیار محدود و در بسیاری از موارد ناقص است. حجم زیادی از اطلاعات موجود درخصوص ویژگی‌های فرهنگ لپویی منطقهٔ بختیاری مربوط به گزارشات قدیمی زاگارل است، که از این گزارشات به‌عنوان منبع اطلاعاتی مقالات متعددی استفاده شد. نتایج برخی مقالات منتشرشده با یافته‌های جدید ناهمگونی محسوسی دارد. در این پژوهش قصد داریم با اتکا بر یافته‌های باستان‌شناختی جدید، ضمن معرفی مشخصه‌های سفال لپویی جنوب زاگرس مرتفع، پراکنش و حوزهٔ نفوذ و گسترش این فرهنگ را در این محدوده مورد بازنگری قرار دهیم. طبق نتایج بررسی‌های میدانی و مطالعات گونه‌شناسی و طبقه‌بندی یافته‌های فرهنگی (سفال) که یکی از نگارندگان در بخش جنوبی چهارمحال‌وبختیاری انجام‌داده است، سفال لپویی در منطقهٔ موردمطالعه در دو گروه ظریف و خشن قابل طبقه‌بندی است که طبق مقایسات صورت‌گرفته مشابهت بسیار زیادی با سفال لپویی فارس دارد. باتوجه به یافته‌های سطحی بررسی میدانی از تعداد ۲۷ محوطهٔ باستانی، که برخی از آن‌ها دربردارندهٔ شواهد استقراری از دورهٔ نوسنگی تا دوران اسلامی هستند، سفال شاخص دورهٔ لپویی به‌دست آمده است. بنابر نقشهٔ موجود درخصوص الگوی پراکنش محوطه‌های لپویی حوزهٔ نفوذ فرهنگ لپویی علاوه‌بر منطقهٔ فارس (زاگرس جنوبی) تا بخش‌هایی از زاگرس‌مرکزی (مرتفع) و جنوبی‌ترین بخش آن، که هم‌مرز با خوزستان می‌باشد، گسترش یافته است.

کلیدواژگان: لپویی، خانمیرزا، مس‌وسنگ جدید، سفال، زاگرس مرتفع.

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