

Human remains from Sarm, Iran, 2015

Javad Hosseinzadeh^{*1}, Siamak Sarlak², Ammar Kavosi²,
Hadi Rafie¹, Arkadiusz Sottysiak³

¹ Department of Archaeology, University of Kashan,
Qotbe Ravandi Blv., Kashan, Iran

email: javadhoseinzadeh@gmail.com (corresponding author)

² Iranian Center for Archaeological Research,
30 Tir St., Imam Khomeini (RA) Avenue, Tehran, Iran

³ Department of Bioarchaeology,
Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw,
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warsaw, Poland

The Cemetery of Sarm ($34^{\circ}30'03''N$ $50^{\circ}57'18''E$) is located c. 20km southeast of Qom, near the village of Khowrabad (**Figure 1**) and covers a natural hill that is 200m long, 120m wide and 6m high (Fahimi 2004). The site was found during road construction in 1996 and archaeological excavations began in 2001 under the supervision of Khosrow Poorbakhshandeh (Iranian Center for Archaeological Research). During the first three excavation seasons approximately 300 graves were explored (Poorbakhshandeh 2003). In three other seasons (2004, 2014 and 2015) the excavations were directed by Siamk Sarlak and then by Ammar Kavosi who excavated 70 other



Figure 1. Location of the cemetery of Sarm. Map data: Google, CNES/Airbus.

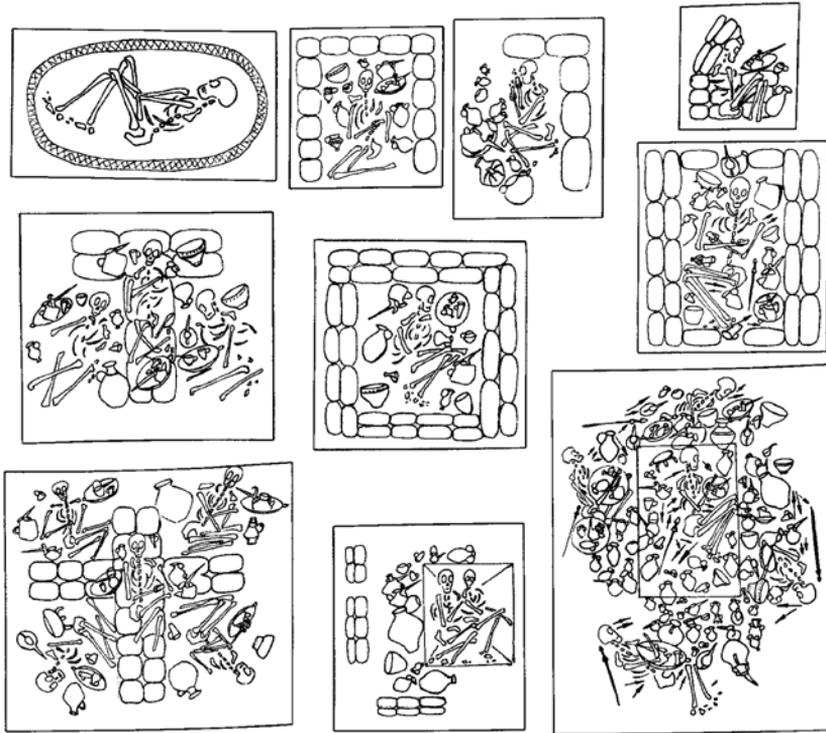


Figure 2. Examples of grave types found at Sarm (Sarlak 2003).

graves and extended the project to a nearby settlement site called Shamshirgah that was contemporary to Sarm (Fahimi 2004, 2010).

While most graves at Sarm contained single burials, multiple graves were also present, and in terms of construction, there were mainly pit graves, shaft graves and graves having rectangular mudbrick walls (Figure 2). All excavated objects were dated to the Iron Age I to III (c. 1200-500 BCE) (Poorbakhshande 2003; Fahimi 2004). Primary burials dominate, with no standard burial position, although a flexed position on the right or left side is most common. Occasionally individuals were found in a squatting position (Sarlak 2003), which was also recorded at contemporary Estark 1 (Sołtysiak et al. 2017).

Although several hundred skeletons were excavated at Sarm and some of them were relatively well preserved (Figure 3), only a few pieces of strongly eroded bones that represent four individuals excavated in 2015 were available for bioarchaeological study. Most complete was the skeleton from grave 553, with large pieces of pelvis and lower extremities embedded into soil, some articulations still present (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Graves 609 (right) and 612 (left) during excavations (photographs by Ammar Kavosi).



Figure 4. Selected bones of the skeleton from the grave 553. Scale bar 1cm.

Based on overall robustness, this skeleton belonged to a male individual. Also a shaft fragment of a femur from grave 556 was robust.

Strongly eroded fragments of long bone shafts were also retrieved from grave 561, together with a few mandibular teeth still in the alveolus. The teeth were not strongly worn and the third molar was still not completely formed (roots almost complete, apex open). Based on this information the skeleton belonged to an adolescent. A few elements (mainly fragments of femora and the cranial vault) from the grave 562 represented an adult individual of unknown sex.

References

- Fahimi H. (2004), *Sokunatgah-e gurkhoft-e gan-e Sarm: Gozareshi darbareye mohavate-ye Shamshirgah dar jonoub-e Qom. Ordibehesht 1382*, Majale-ye Bastanshenassi va Tarikh 18:61-68. [in Persian]
- Fahimi H. (2010), *An Iron Age fortress in Central Iran. Archaeological investigations in Shamshirgah, Qom, 2005. Preliminary report* [in:] "Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, volume 2: Excavations, surveys and restorations: Reports on recent field archaeology in the Near East", P. Matthiae, F. Pinnock, L. Nigro, N. Marchetti (eds.), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 165-183.
- Poorbakhshandeh Kh. (2003), *Preliminary report of the third season of excavation at Sarm cemetery*, Tehran: ICAR. [in Persian]
- Sarlak S. (2003), *Avamel moaser dar sheklgirie anvae memarie ghobore va shivehaye tadfin dar gorestane asre ahane Tepe Sarm-Kahak, Qom*, ICAR Archeological Reports 2:129-165.
- Sołtysiak A., Hosseinzadeh J., Javeri M., Bebel A. (2017), *Human remains from Estark, Iran, 2017*, Bioarchaeology of the Near East 11:84–89.