

The Environment of Tepe Hissar, Iran: Using Material Culture to Illustrate a Society's Relationship with its Surrounding Environment

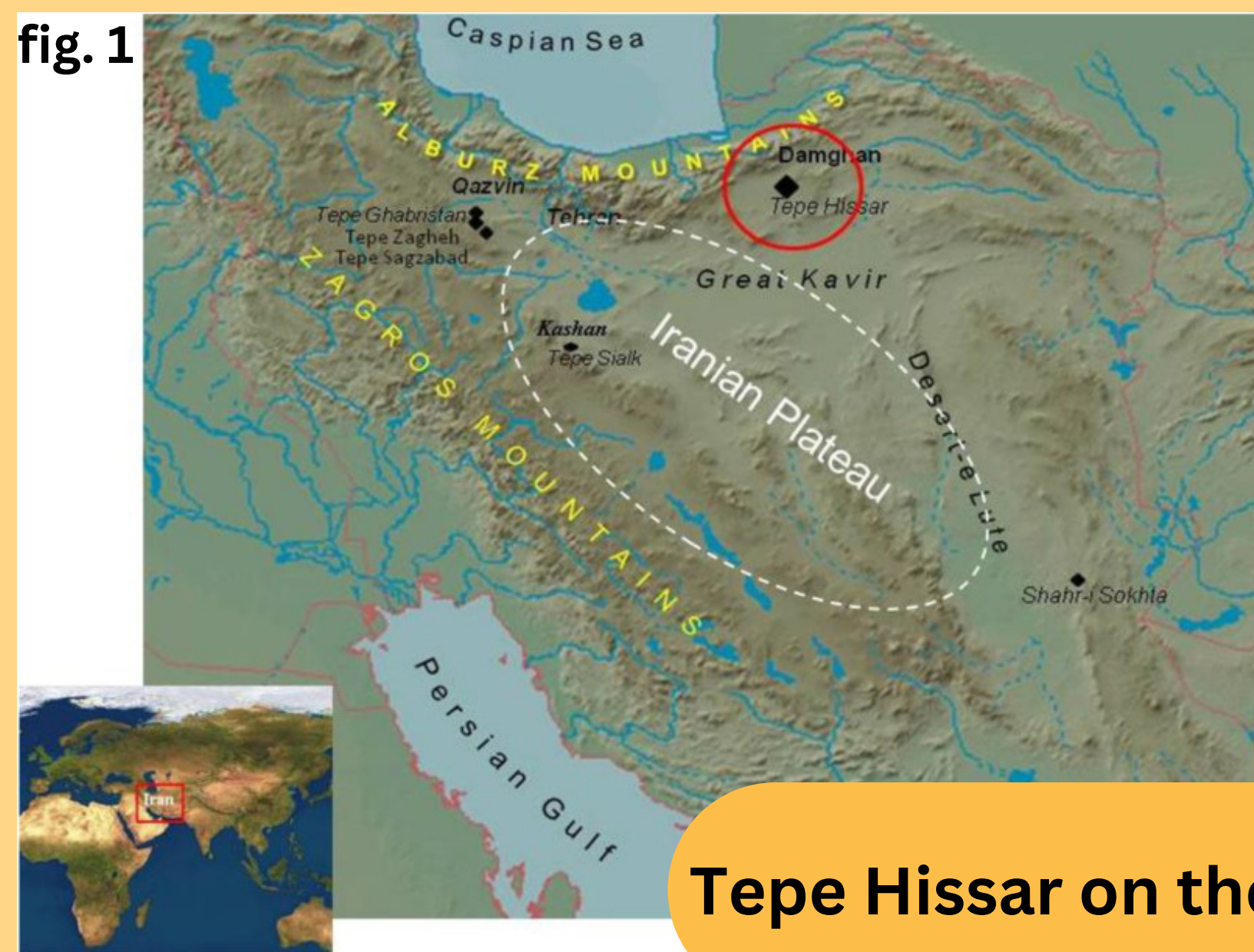
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Field Site: The Penn Museum

Tepe Hissar

Tepe Hissar was one of the largest prehistoric urban settlements in the Central Iranian Plateau and is located just outside of the modern city of Damghan (fig. 1). This fertile region did not only support the agricultural and pastoral practices that the people of Tepe Hissar relied on for food but also supported populations of wild animals such as gazelles, ibexes, and leopards with which the people of Tepe Hissar often came into contact with. In 1931 and 1932, Erich Schmidt excavated Tepe Hissar with support from the Penn Museum, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Many of the artifacts obtained from this excavation were brought back from the Penn Museum; these artifacts include animal figurines, potsherds, vessels, bone tools, spindle whorls, and a large assortment of beads. Most items come from burial assemblages.



Tepe Hissar on the Map

Interacting with the Animals of Tepe Hissar at the Penn Museum

- Took inventory of the drawers in which objects were stored
- Rehoused objects to ensure they are well-preserved and easy to access
- Photographed artifacts using both shot-on and shot-down set ups
- Drew pottery sherds
- Visited the museum's archives
- Updated the museum's online data-base



fig. 2

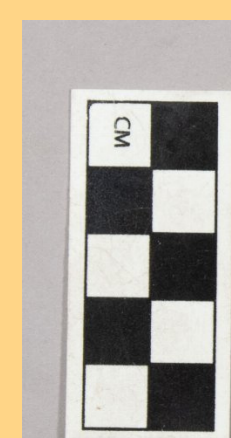


fig. 3 33-60-113K

Shot-Down Setup
and Photo

Shot-On Setup
and Photo



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6

33-15-44

fig. 8



33-21-197

fig. 7



33-21-592

fig. 9



Findings

- Pottery sherds tended to depict wild animals while animal figurines tended to depict domestic animals.
- In both figurines and pottery sherds, mammals are the most frequently depicted animals followed by birds
- Both iconography and secondary products suggest a high reliance on caprine animals
- Animals may be used to represent certain values such the ibex being equated to strength
- Animal figurines may be used as administrative tools
- Animal figurines composed of different materials may have different functions

Top: Items that illustrate the importance of caprines in Tepe Hissar
Right: Drawing from Archives depicting an animal figurine made of stone



fig. 10