



Qolam Tepe of Jafarabad: Recognition of the Sialk VI Satellite Site in Kashan Foothills

Mehrdad Malekzadeh¹, Reza Naseri²
(199-225)

Abstract

Until recently, the culture of the late Iron Age in the central Iranian Plateau had only been identified at the southern mound of Sialk. In this study, a newly discovered site, called Qolam Tepe, is introduced in the foothills of western Kashan at a very close distance to Sialk. None of the surface findings of Qolam Tepe show any era other than the Iron Age III, or there is no Sialk VI, so we have ascertained one of the satellite sites of Sialk VI. Since the Qolam Tepe is exclusively a single-period site (Iron III), given the apparent fact that the decorative bricks found in Qolam Tepe in every aspect match the decorative bricks of “la Grande Construction” of Sialk. They can be attributed to a single cultural period and are surveyed as a single chronological horizon, thus again leading to the attribution of the “la Grande Construction” of Sialk to the end of the Iron Age. Surface survey finds from this site indicate that it is contemporaneous to the Iron Age, layers 5 and 6 of the southern mound of Sialk (and Cemeteries A and B).

Keywords: Kashan, Qolam Tepe, Sialk, Sialk VI, Iron Age, Decorative Bricks.

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1. Corresponding Author Email: malekzadeh.mehrdad@gmail.com
Assistant Professor, Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism (RICHT), Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research (ICAR), Tehran, Iran.
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Art and Architecture, University of Zabol, Zabol, Iran.

Introduction

Most of the southern parts of the Central Iranian plateau (i.e., the Kashan and Isfahan districts) are still unknown from the perspective of Iron Age archeology apart from the southern mound of Sialk, which was excavated more than eight decades ago (Ghirshman 1935, 1938, 1939). Recently, a reconsideration was carried out through renewed excavation (Malek Shahmirzadi 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2012). There have been only a few archaeological field projects on the cultural effects of the Iron Age in the cultural zone of Kashan¹. According to previous studies of the Iron Age in the southern parts of the Iranian Plateau, nothing could be said except Sialk of Kashan². Due to the cultural credibility and significance of Sialk both in prehistoric and historical periods of the region, its meticulous investigation is required since it was (and is) an essential site in cultural climate of Kashan (also more comprehensive than that area: the center of the Iranian Plateau).

Thus, Kashan and its surrounding areas are waiting for a comprehensive archaeological survey to be fully legible on the archaeological map of the country, and to allow for near or far future field research. With such a consideration of the insignificance of the presently-available archeological knowledge, the survey and introduction of Qolam Tepe of Jafarabad of Kashan—as part of an extensive research on the geographic range of the Iron Age III cultures in the center of the Iranian Plateau—is our goal in this article. In short, all of the surface finds from Qolam Tepe indicate that we are likely to encounter one of the Sialk VI satellite settlements at this site. The site's introduction, with its remarkable surface findings—specifically decorative bricks—can play an essential role in improving our understanding of the puzzle of cultural evolution in the Iron Age of the Iranian Plateau.

Sialk: The Past and future research

Before talking about Qolam Tepe, we have to make a brief mention of Sialk; Sialk has a well-known cultural position and, perhaps there is no doubt that Sialk was a particular cultural center in the southern regions of the Iranian Plateau (Helwing 2010; Nokandeh *et al.* 2019; Fazeli Nashli and Nokandeh 2019; Fazeli Nashli *et al.* 2022; Matthews and Fazeli Nashli 2022: 396-466). A large part of the cultural reconstruction, stratigraphy, and settlement sequence, as well as our understanding of cultural evolution from the prehistory to the end of the Iron Age, are owed to the excavations of Sialk in the center of the Iranian Plateau and the excavations of Roman Ghirshman, as well as the results of the “Sialk Reconsideration Project” under the direction of Malek Shahmirzadi. What is important is that for almost 80 years, Sialk has been the only and exclusive indicator of the cultural change and transformation and evolution in this area.

Archaeology requires many comparisons and examinations to understand how many cultural changes happen, as reflected in archaeological evidence; undoubtedly, archaeological material reflects the degrees of cultural evolution. If archeology excavates only a single site of a single period, no matter how important and valid the site is (like Sialk), naturally, it will be insufficient for comparative reconstruction of its degree of cultural development and we will not be able to talk about the process of change and evolution. This is because it will not have a benchmark or criterion to measure against.³ For a long time, due to the

lack of continuous excavations and field surveys, the archeological problem of the Iron Age was the same in the center of the Iranian Plateau. In the region, the Iron Age II and III periods were known almost exclusively from the Cemeteries A and B of Sialk and its concurrent layers on the Southern mound (Sialk V and VI).⁴

Though from about ten to fifteen years ago, with the flourishing of targeted field programs, surveys and excavations, a new door was opened to our understanding of the cultural transformation of the Iron Age in the center of the Iranian Plateau. Archaeologists succeeded in discovering and identifying other sites that were comparable to Sialk (at the same time, a bit older and slightly newer), and now, in the context of comparative research, the process of cultural change in the center of the Iranian Plateau could be rebuilt much more clearly. In the meantime, the most critical archaeological researches were in the plain of Qom and its western foothills, especially the long excavation of Qoli Darvish of Jamkaran (Sarlak and Aqili Niyaki 2004, 2005; Sarlak 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011). Moreover, there were excavations of the single stone building of Zarbolagh of Ali Abad and the survey around it (Malekzadeh *et al.* 2014); the introduction of the single stone building of Vasoon Kahak (Malekzadeh 2004a); the excavation of the Cemetery of Sarm of Kahak⁵ (Sarlak 2003); the first introduction of the stone fortress of Shamshirgah of Khouzabad (Kleiss 1983) and its excavation (Fahimi 2003a; 2012b), as well as targeted surveys of the Iron Age of the Iranian Plateau (Manouchehri *et al.* 2013; Naseri and Malekzadeh 2013b; Naseri *et al.* 2013). The most important achievement was the recognition of the tremendous cultural complex of the “*Šahr-e Šalamūt*” of Khouzabad (a set consisting of: the Stone Fortress of Shamshirgah of Khouzabad, the Sarm Cemetery in Kahak, Šalamūt A Cemetery and Šalamūt B stone Platforms) where each of them reflected more unknown sides than the cultural evolution of the Iron Age in the broader perspective than our intended area.

Most importantly, the cultural materials from Qoli Darvish and the “*Šahr-e Šalamūt*” showed cultural similarities with the Iron Age known from Sialk. Archaeology has succeeded in acquiring such cultural material that for the first time that it has been possible to make the proceeding comparisons (Sarlak and Malekzadeh 2005, Malekzadeh and Naseri 2005). Sialk V and VI, and the enumerated sites of Qom, witnessed the evolution of a local culture of the Iron Age. This local culture has its own clear and distinctive signs.⁶ These signs that are the traits of this culture,⁷ and thus are not confused with other cultures of the Iron Age.⁸⁻⁹ The diagnostic trait of this culture, which was known only from Sialk beforehand, has now been identified at Qoli Darvish, Shamshirgah, and Qolam Tepe, is brick architectural decorations.

Qolam Tepe: Field survey

Qolam Tepe of Jafarabad of Kashan was first identified in the field survey of the manager of the Sialk Research Center, Ms. Zahra Saroukhani, in early 2006 (Qolam Tepe, later numbered 23035 and on July 23rd, 2008 was listed in the national monuments register of Iran). Considering the importance of subsequent surface findings in the middle of March 2007, on the invitation and suggestion of the Sialk Research Center, Qolam Tepe was again surveyed more carefully by Mehrdad Malekzadeh and Reza Naseri. The surface findings of the site indicated that we were faced with the material culture of the Sialk VI period, which was

very important. Our archeological studies in Kashan, except for the southern mound of Sialk and its massive mud-brick platform (“la Grande Construction”) and the Cemetery B, we did not¹⁰ and do not¹¹ know of another site of this culture. Given this critical issue, for more serious research of the site and its surface findings, especially samples of decorative bricks of the Iron Age, a plan was designed and organized and carried out with the support of the Sialk Research Center under the title “Study of decorative bricks of Sialk and Qolam Tepe of Jafarabad”.

Qolam Tepe is located at the latitude and longitude 33°59’01.55” and 51°16’41.98,” and is 1178 meters above sea level, about 11 km west of Kashan, after the Suk-e Cham crossroad and south side of Kashan-Mouneh road (Fig. 1). The site is an 80 × 180 meter ellipse that is located 80 meters from the south side of the asphalt road (Fig. 2); on the southwest side of the mound, aviculture and on its eastern side, there are remnants of a half-ruined workshop of sand production. The site was built up on a natural stone bed, where rocks are visible on the eastern side of the mound (Fig. 3). Almost the entire surface of the mound is covered with cultural materials (Fig. 4); the abundance of potsherds of Sialk VI type (simple and painted buff ware) and fabulous and impressive pieces of decorative bricks. The Roads and Urban Development Department of Kashan have worked on modernizing and improving the communications of Kashan city with Niasar and other western neighboring areas in the Kuhsar-e Karkas mountains. The old axis was the third class asphalt road which is absolutely necessary nowadays to reconstruct due to increasing traffic volume between Kashan and these areas. However, road expansion between the village of Jafarabad and the Barownaq village has disturbed the delimitation of the Qolam Tepe. Before that, the fate of Qolam Tepe was like Tepe Shurabe, a mound with material culture (perhaps) older than Sialk I, which was destroyed (Malek Shahmirzadi 2003: 177-169). We should avoid further destruction by performing rescue excavations. The first goal of the probable excavation of Qolam Tepe in the future is to save the site from destruction (if this has not happened already), and in the next stages, the recognition of the action and reaction of the site with the Iron Age Sialk will be taken into account.

Architecture

The Iron Age architecture of the central Iranian Plateau has been surveyed and studied in two local architectural forms of mud brick and stone: for example, at the southern mound of Sialk, the large hilltop platform is a mud-brick structure (Hardy 1939: 25-23), as well as a recognized architectural collection similar to the structure in Qoli Darvish, is a mud-brick platform (Sarlak 2010: 167, Fig. 19; Sarlak 2011: 430, Fig. 1). Also, north of the Qom plain, in the Tehran plain, at Tepe Sofali Mamurin, everything that has been introduced and published has been indicative of mud-brick architecture (Mehrkian 1996). Besides these adobe architectures, two single structures at Zar Bolaq (Malekzadeh 2003) and Vasoon (Malekzadeh 2004a), as well as from the Shamshirgah Khowrabad fortress (Fahimi 2010), are examples of stone architecture of the Iron Age. The remnants of the destroyed architectural structures of Qolam Tepe, as it is shown on the surface, indicate the existence of a stone structure (or structures), but among the surface evidence, there is no indication of mud-brick buildings or probable adobe

structures. According to the recent dating of the stone architecture (Iron III) to the adobe architectures (Iron I and II) in the architectural traditions of the Iron Age of the central Iranian Plateau, perhaps before excavating, the buried architecture in Qolam Tepe can be related to Iron Age III.

As mentioned, unfortunately, the site was severely damaged during the adjacent road operation, and its soil was used by bulldozers for the roadbed construction. The volume of destruction was so great that there was nothing left but some rows of a stone foundation. Fortunately, the remains of stone walls can still be seen on the surface, and if the rescue excavation program is carried out, can be somewhat recognized, and the site's plan can be reconstructed (Fig. 5). A remarkable point among the architectural ruins, and indeed, across the entire mound surface is the scattering of architectural decorative bricks. The finding of these decorations of architectural structures shows that there might have been a building (monument) concurrent with "la Grande Construction" of Sialk, though of course, of smaller dimensions. We said that the change in cultural material reflected the level and degree of cultural evolution. In the archeology of the Iron Age of the central Iranian Plateau, besides changing the pottery styles—which is very much considered and analyzed by archeologists—we are also faced with other cultural materials that help us analyze the level and the development process of the cultures of the Iron Age of the region.

This collection of cultural materials contains architectural brick decorations that Ghirshman called *briques de revêtement* (Ghirshman 1939: 216), as we have previously named "decorative bricks of the Iron Age of the central Iranian Plateau" (Sarlak and Malekzadeh 2005; Malekzadeh and Naseri 2005; Naseri 2011). Such brick decorations were first discovered in the excavations of the southern mound of Sialk in the 1930s, and the first excavator of Sialk considered that they were related to great architecture of the southern mound: "la Grande Construction" of Sialk (Ghirshman 1939: pl 21, Figs. 6-5, pls 98 and 99). For seventy years, only the known samples of these architectural decorations were the same samples from Sialk (in addition to several bricks newly discovered from the same place (Noruz Zade Chegini 2002; Fahimi 2004: 87, 2005: 137), and other samples of such bricks found in that area during the continuous excavations of Qoli Darvish (Sarlak 2010:168, Fig. 20, Sarlak 2011: 500, Drawing 2) were related to the size of the architectures that the excavator of Qoli Darvish called it an "Adobe Platform" (Sarlak 2010: 163, Sarlak 2011: 395-397). In this way, along with "la Grande Construction" of Sialk and its brick decorations, the "Adobe Platform" of Qoli Darvish and its brick decorations became known (Sarlak and Malekzadeh 2005). A little later, more than 60 such architectural decorations were discovered from the stone fortress of the Shamshirgah, somewhere south of Qoli Darvish, during targeted surveys of the Qom Iron Age (Malekzadeh and Naseri, 2013). Until that moment, these architectural decorations were recognized only at three sites: Qoli Darvish and Shamshirgah in Qom district, Sialk in Kashan district. We are adding here another site with its surface findings, including such architectural decorations, to this list: Qolam Tepe of Jafarabad of Kashan.

Decorative Bricks

Decorative bricks of the late Iron Age are one of the most critical surface findings from Qolam Tepe. Previously, these decorative bricks were found only at Sialk (Fig. 7), Qoli Darvish (Fig. 8) and Shamshirgah (Fig. 9), and now Qolam Tepe is another site, which provides an indicator of architectural brick decoration traditions of the Iron Age. What is the significance of these bricks? These bricks decorated the (perhaps external) facades of large and important monuments such as “la Grande Construction” of Sialk and the “Adobe Platform” at Qoli Darvish. The finding of bricks such as the decorative bricks of “la Grande Construction” of Sialk at Qolam Tepe could probably show that a (perhaps memorable) building of the Late Iron Age was located here.

The quantitative dispersion of decorative bricks among the cultural materials of Qolam Tepe surface is considerable, but since all of these bricks are of the same type and contain very similar motifs, only a limited number (19 pieces) was selected for the research.¹² The blend of bricks has mineral materials with a variable size in gray, black, and brown color, and sometimes white particles of lime, and the correct temperature was used to bake them. All of these bricks were made from red paste and have a regular buff to reddish-brown slip. Nineteen samples of the selected bricks from the surface of Qolam Tepe were of two types; the first type was the bricks that can be called decorative frames. These brick frames were composed of a simple or decorative margin along with a deep groove in the interior, and some had geometric motifs along the margin. Based on the arc of the outer and inner corners, these types of frames were likely to be used in the corners (Fig. 10a). However, the second type might contain a motif or motifs of a more central scene framed with the mentioned bricks of the first type and thus formed a picture or scene. These bricks were decorated with various combined or individual geometric designs such as parallel and crossing grooves, triangles, diamonds and circles (Fig. 10b and Fig. 11a). Among the bricks related to “la Grande Construction” of Sialk, there were samples reported in both simple brick frames and bricks with geometric decorations (Fig 11b; Ghirshman 1939, pl. 19). Unlike the semiotic typology of Sialk decorative bricks, which contained a diverse collection of geometric, plant, animal, and human motifs (Malekzadeh 1383: 21-18) the motifs of the bricks (so far found) of Qolam Tepe were totally geometric. Considering the importance of these architectural decorations, we will describe them. [Pieces are numbered like this: S.Q means Surface of Qolam-Tepe, and the number is Registration Number].

Piece S.Q.001. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.001, 12×17.4×7.8 cm), a brick of length 21, width 17.4, and thickness 7.8 cm, which is broken from four sides; the paste of this brick is reddish yellow (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow), and its outer slip is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 7/3 very pale brown). The motifs of this brick are horizontal with the vertical carved lines, which in some places crossed each other and made square and rectangular shapes (Fig. 10; drawing 1).

Piece S.Q.002. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.002), a brick of length 17.1, width 12.3, and thickness 4.5 cm, which is not broken from the top but other sides are broken; the paste of this brick piece is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow) and its outer slip is colored from buff to pale brown (on the

Munsell chart: 7.5YR 6/4 light brown). This piece is a frame made up of a simple edge along with a deep groove at the bottom (inner side). It is probably placed in the corner depending on the arc of the outer and inner corners (Fig. 10; drawing 2).

Piece S.Q.003. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.003), a brick of length 14.7 cm, width 10.5, and thickness 4.8 cm, it is not broken from the top, but the other three sides are broken; the paste of this brickbat is buff (on the Munsell chart: 7.5YR 6/3 light brown), and its outer slip is red (on the Munsell chart: 7.5YR 6/6 reddish yellow). This piece is a frame made of a simple edge and a deep groove at the bottom (inner side) (Fig. 10; drawing 3).

Piece S.Q.004. (Registration number: QT.85.S.004), a brick of length 10.5, width 10.2, and thickness 6.3 cm, it is not broken from the top, but three other sides were broken; the paste of this brick is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/4 light reddish brown), and its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 2.5Y 7/3 pale yellow). This piece consists of a simple edge and a deep groove at the bottom (inner side) (Fig. 10; drawing 4).

Piece S.Q.005. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.005), a brick of length 27.6, width 13.2, and thickness 4.6 cm, which is not broken from top but three other sides are broken; the paste of this brickbat is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow), and its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 6/4 light yellowish-brown). This piece is a brick frame consisting of a grooved edge and a deep groove at the bottom (inner side). On the right side of the frame, the arc shows that the brick was likely to place in the corner (Fig. 10; drawing 5).

Piece S.Q.006. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.006), a brick of length 13.2, width 12, and thickness 4.6 cm, which is not broken from top but three other sides are broken; its paste color is buff to red (on the Munsell chart: 7.5YR 6 / 4 light brown), and its outer slip is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10yR 6/3 pale brown). This piece consists of a simple edge on the side and a deep groove at the bottom (inner side) (Fig. 10; drawing 6).

Piece S.Q.007. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.007), a brick of length 13.5, width 11.4, and thickness 3.7 cm, broken out of four sides; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 5/6 yellowish-red) and outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 6/3 light yellowish-brown). The motifs of this piece are the horizontal grooves on the surface. (Fig. 10; drawing 7).

Piece S.Q.008. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.008), a brick of length 10.8, width 9 and, thickness 3.2 cm, broken from each of the four sides; its paste (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow) and the outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 2.5Y 7/3 pale yellow). The motifs of this piece are the additional stripes and circular impressed decoration in the form of a circle; the additional decorations collide with each other forming triangles in which the small circles (impressed) are decorated in it (Fig. 10; drawing 8).

Piece S.Q.009. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.009), a brick of length 16.5, width 10.8, and thickness 4.5 cm, which is not broken from the top but three other sides are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow), and the outer slip color of the brick is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 6/6 brownish yellow). This piece is a frame that consists of a grooved edge and a deep groove at the bottom (inner side) (Fig. 10; drawing 9).

Piece S.Q.010. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.010), a brick of length 11.7, width 9.7, and thickness 4.2 cm, broken from all four sides; its paste is red (on Munsell chart: 7.5 YR, 7.4 pink) and the outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 2.5Y 6/4 light yellowish-brown). The decoration of this piece is horizontal grooved designs. (Fig. 10; drawing 10).

Piece S.Q. 011. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.011), a brick of length 16.5, width 12.6 and thickness 5.8 cm, it is not broken from the top and the left side, but the other sides of it are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 7.5YR 6/4 light brown), and its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 2.5Y 7/3 pale yellow). This piece is a frame made of a simple edge on the sides and a deep groove in the inner side. Given the arc of the outer and inner corners of the left, it is likely placed in the corner (Fig. 10; drawing 11).

Piece S.Q.012. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.012), a brick of length 18, width 21, and thickness 5.4 cm, which is not broken up from top but other sides are broken; its paste color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 5Y 7/3 pale yellow) and the outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 5Y 7/4 pale yellow). This piece is a frame made of a painted edge on the sides and a deep groove in the inner side. Considering the arc of the outer and inner corners of the right, it was probably located in the corner. The decorations of the edge of the frame contain the crescent and semicircular lines that were probably created by hand (Fig. 10; drawing 12).

Piece S.Q.013. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.013), a brick of length 12.9, width 13.5, and thickness 4.4 cm, it is not broken from the top, but other sides are broken; its paste color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 6/4 light yellowish brown); its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 7/4 very pale brown). This piece is a frame made up of a simple edge on the side and a deep groove on the inner side. Considering the remains of the arc of the inner corner on its left, it was likely placed in the corner (Fig. 10; drawing 13).

Piece S.Q.014. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.014), a brick of length 10.5, width 9.3, thickness 6.7 cm, it is not broken from the top, but the other sides are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow) and the outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 6/4 light yellowish-brown). The motifs of this piece are horizontal and vertical incised (scratched) lines that form rectangles and squares, decorated with small circles impressed Fig. 10; drawing 14).

Piece S.Q.015. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.015), a brick of length 15.9, width 15.3, and thickness 5 cm, all four sides are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow) and its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 7/4 very pale brown). The motifs of this brick are horizontal and vertical incised lines that form squares that are approximately the same size. (Fig. 10; drawing 15).

Piece S.Q.016. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.016), a brickbat of length 11.7, width 11.1, and thickness 5.6 cm, that is not broken from top but other sides are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 7.5YR 6/6 reddish yellow), and its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10YR 6/4 light yellowish-brown). The motifs of this piece are the decorative impressing lines created in the form of small circles (Fig. 10; drawing 16).

Piece S.Q.017. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.017), a brick of length 14.1, width 13.5, and thickness 6 cm, which is not broken up from top but other sides are broken; its paste color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 5Y 7/3 pale yellow), and the outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 2.5Y 7/3 pale yellow). The motifs of this brick contain grooved lines in the shape of oblique (Fig. 10; drawing 17).

Piece S.Q.018. (Registration number: QT.85 / S.018), a large brick of length 43, width 39, which is not broken up from top but other sides are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 5Y 5/6 yellowish-red), and its outer slip color is buff (on Munsell chart: 2.5Y 7/4 pale yellow). There is a groove in the lower part of the brick that the brick is broken from this part; the function of this brick is unknown (Fig. 10; drawing 18).

Piece S.Q.019. (Registration number: QT.89 / S.082), a large brick of length 8.7, width 6.2, and thickness 5.8 cm, it is not broken from the top and the left but, other sides are broken; its paste is red (on the Munsell chart: 5YR 5/4 reddish brown), and its outer slip color is buff (on the Munsell chart: 10.YR 6/4 light yellowish-brown). The motifs of this brick are horizontal grooved lines (Fig. 6).

Ceramics

Eighty years ago, Roman Ghirshman introduced the pottery culture of Sialk VI during the archaeological excavations of Sialk (“la Grande Construction” and the Cemetery B), which was related to the beginning of the first millennium BCE (Ghirshman 1939: 94ff.). These imprinting ceramics, as the basis for the dating of “la Grande Construction” and the cemetery, were cited by later researchers (Boehmer 1965; Dyson 1965; Young 1965, 1967; Goff Meade 1968; Stronach 1974; Medvedskaya 1983, 1986). However, for relative and comparative chronology researchers compared the sites with such pottery types with adjacent cultures nearby or sometimes far away since these sites were not found in the regional context. For example, Robert H. Dyson Jr., who considered the culture of Sialk VI painted pottery as a part of the tradition called the “Triangle Ware”, and since this tradition dates back to Iron Age III, he assigned Sialk VI to around 700 BCE or fifty years thereafter (Dyson 1965: 201-200, pl. 41, pl. 2). T. Cuyler Young Jr. also believed in such a chronology; he dated the Sialk VI to about 900/1000 to 700/750 BCE (Young 1965: 61-62, Fig. 14, 1967: 27-29). Because Clare Goff Meade was involved with another painted pottery of the Iron Age (i.e., the pottery “Luristan Genre” in her excavations in Babajan), she had a great deal of concern about the dating of such a tradition in the heart of the Iron Age. She believed that Sialk VI required needed to be revision, but it seemed that she was more conservative to publicly put it (and the Luristan Genre) in Iron Age III and only knowing it from the late Iron Age II (Goff 1968:125). By comparing the pottery styles, David Stronach analyzed the painted ceramics of the Achaemenid village of Susa and concluded that the Sialk VI dated back to the ninth and eighth centuries BCE (Stronach, 1974: 242).

The dating of Sialk VI itself was the subject of several independent pieces of research. First, Rainer Michael Boehmer, with a typological analysis of the painted pottery of Cemetery B of Sialk VI, recognized two relatively distinct periods and named them Sialk B1 and Sialk B2 (Boehmer 1965). He believed that the Sialk B1 culture was characterized by an abundance of gray-black potteries,

the absence of the teapots that did not have a flange at the junction of their spout to the body, and the presence of a large group of vessels with grooved spouts. He considered this culture to belong from the end of the ninth century to the middle of the eighth century BCE (e.g. the objects of graves 31, 53, 61, 62, 123). Boehmer also believed that the Sialk B2 culture included painted pottery, horse equipment decorations that were not older than the Tiglath Pileser III period (745 to 728 BCE), and the presence of teapots that had a flange at the junction of their spout to the body; He considered this culture to belong to the middle of the eighth to the beginning of the seventh century BCE (for example, the objects of graves 1, 3, 7 b, 15, 21, 38, 52, 66, 74, 78, 94).

Inna Nikolaevna Medvedskaya also tried in two separate articles—from two different viewpoints—to provide a more reliable chronology for the Sialk VI culture. First, she began to study the horse equipment in the Sialk Cemetery B, and after a long comparative discussion, she indicated that the dating could not be older than the middle of the eighth century BCE (Medvedskaya 1983: 78). Her research on motifs of the Cemetery B ceramics and their examination with the Greek geometric style also yielded a similar result, and this time, she proposed dating of the second half of the eighth century BCE (Medvedskaya 1986: 120).

Fortunately, in recent years, much more information has been obtained about this pottery type. With the onset of a new period of research and excavations at Sialk, entitled “Sialk Reconsideration Project”, once more attention has been paid to this important ancient site. However, the excavator, surprisingly, almost immediately after the first days of excavation, declared that massive mud-brick platform of the southern mound was not a construction of the Iron Age but a Proto Elamite Ziggurat (Malek Shahmirzadi 2002: 27ff.) despite all the disagreements and criticisms and protests (Malekzadeh 2002:17, 2004b, 2004c; Azarnush and Helwing 2005: 226; and especially P.S 172; Potts 2006; Pfälzner 2008: 422; P.S 75; Herles 2012). Over the past decade, he has still insisted on his opinion. What is important now is not whether the ziggurat was or not itself of “la Grande Construction” of Sialk, but the important thing is the large volume of publications that the “Sialk Reconsideration Project” provided on cultural materials (including the Sialk VI Pottery Culture) of the Iron Age of the Southern mound (Fahimi 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2012; Helwing 2006). However, the presentation of the new theory of “Sialk VII”, like the result of the recent field research on the Southern mound of Sialk (Fahimi 2012a), is a bit confusing and slightly misleading.

At the same time as the first exciting news on the discovery of the Ziggurat of Sialk, more serious research was carried out on the cultural materials of the Sialk Iron Age. The examination of one of the motifs of Sialk VI types of pottery vessels with a spout (now it is kept at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston) showed that the famous dagger (short sword) of the Iranian world of the Median and Achaemenid period, Akinakes (Ακινάκης), provided a more documentary and reliable criterion for the dating of the Sialk VI pottery typology in the early decades of Iron Age III (850-550 BCE) (Malekzadeh 2002).

In these years, archaeological research and discoveries at Goortan, Esfahan (Javari 2004: 41 and 44-43, drawings 3-1), in the collection of “Šahr-e Šalamūt”. (Naseri and Malekzadeh 2013b), at Qoli Darvish (Sarлак 2010: 211, drawing 607,

280 Fig. 1, 281 Fig. 1, 295 Fig. 2; Sarlak 2011: 500, drawing 2) and in Milajer, Kashan (Fahimi 2009, 2011)¹³ showed that this pottery type¹⁴ was not a culture that was limited to Sialk, but rather, it included a broader range in the center of the Iranian Plateau (especially around Kashan and Qom). Of course, we have to admit that so far, our knowledge of this pottery culture is related to its painted type, and its plainware pottery is not well-presented and studied. This pottery culture is nothing but the same horizon as The late western buff ware (Iron Age III). Both types (simple and painted) are found together at Sialk and the sites mentioned above. Currently, the ceramics of the Sialk VI culture were not only observed in Sialk itself but also in its satellite site in Qolam Tepe, and we have the opportunity to study and introduce this pottery culture in a good regional context.

The ceramics obtained from Qolam Tepe can be divided into four types in terms of slips and motifs. The first is the painted pottery which used red (Jujube red) on buff to create the motif, and the motifs are geometric (Fig. 13b, drawings 072 and Fig. 14, drawing 054, 056, 058, 060, 061, 065, 071, 090). The second type is pottery, one side of it (more exterior), and sometimes both sides are covered with a thick red slip (Fig. 12, drawings 035, 076, 075, 077, 079, 087). The third type is monochrome buff pottery or sometimes brick red pottery (Fig. 12, drawings 020, 023, 025, 030, 033, 034, 075; Fig. 13b, 019, 059; Fig. 14, Plot 053). The fourth type consists of gray pottery, which is statistically (according to the surface distribution of the site) less than the other types (Fig. 13a, drawings 046, 045, 043, 042). In terms of morphology, it should be said that the Qolam Tepe ceramics are the same as the familiar forms of the Sialk VI culture, which can be simple downspout pottery teapots, painted and with button decorations around the neck, simple and painted cups with a handle and without a handle, simple carinated ware bowls and with red slip that sometimes marked with small handles beneath the edge, deep bowls, campanulate bowl and simple and painted jars. Ceramics paste are made of dense mineral material and golden shining particles; the exterior of most of ceramics are polished.

Among the Qolam Tepe surface finds, along with the dominant pottery culture of this site (i.e. Sialk VI), samples of gray ware with additional decoration and burnished ware are similar to sites of the Iron Age II in the central Iranian Plateau (e.g., Shamshirgah / Sarm / Qoli Darvish / Milajer). The finding of this pottery type, along with a ceramic assemblage of the late western buff ware horizon at a single period site, may indicate that the Sialk VI pottery culture is more related to the beginning of Iron Age III than its end.

In the end, it can be said that along with Sialk, we now know Qolam Tepe in Kashan along with the other sites of the province of Isfahan and Qom, which presents some corners of a coherent cultural type. This inclusive cultural horizon, which is the same as the dominant pottery culture of the Iron Age, and in addition to its local features can be recognized as well: Sialk VI painted pottery typology, a typology that is believed to be rooted in the ancient pottery of the central Iranian Plateau.

Conclusion

We have seen that the collection of surface finds of Qolam Tepe, including ceramics and decorative bricks, indicates a single-period site except for some of the slightly older pottery materials (i.e., Sialk V), None of the surface finds of

Qolam Tepe show any era other than Iron III, so we have achieved one of the satellite sites of Sialk VI. Since Qolam Tepe is exclusively a single-period site (of the Iron Age III), given the apparent fact that the decorative bricks found at Qolam Tepe are in every aspect matched with the decorative bricks of “la Grande Construction” of Sialk, they can be attributed to a single cultural period and surveyed in a single chronological horizon, thus again the attribution of “la Grande Construction” of Sialk based on other and newer examinations is confirmed to the end of the Iron Age.

The cultural materials of Iron Age III during the Sialk VI period show the flourishing of such a culture in the area (cf Ghirshman 1974: 77). During this period, a large mud-brick platform was constructed with the function of a memorial on the southern mound (“la Grande Construction”), its exterior was decorated with decorative bricks, the architectural context of the Iron Age III extends at the highest point of the southern mound of Sialk and somehow an Iron Age city emerged here. Such a culture with such works is logically impossible to manifest itself only at a single site with no satellite or peripheral sites; for example, in the northern regions of Qom plain and its adjacent foothills, as it is known, the Iron Age city of Qoli Darvish and its nearby satellite sites are the well-known cultural complex of “Šahr-e Šalamūt.” A comprehensive survey of the Kashan plain and its surrounding foothills in search of such collections as Sialk, has not yet been accomplished. Qolam Tepe is known only because of the destruction brought by road construction. It is possible that targeted surveys in search of Sialk VI satellite sites in the Kashan plain and its adjacent foothills may also reveal other sites. Until then, we must be content with recognition of Qolam Tepe.

It should be said that the location of Qolam Tepe and the importance of its surface findings, first enable us to discuss a few ideas about the site. What was the function of a small mound such as Qolam Tepe in the late Iron Age at a distance so close to a large and authentic base like Sialk? What has been the great cultural institution that set up “la Grande Construction” at Sialk (with those brick decorations)? Why was a monument built with the same decorative bricks at Qolam Tapeh? “La Grande Construction” at Sialk is a mud brick building, but the surface evidence of Qolam Tepe suggests a stone building that was not as big or wide. How could this little palace-like building be decorated with these memorial decorative bricks? Was there the same relationship between Sialk and Qolam Tape as is known between Qoli Darvish and Šahr-e Šalamūt? These and other related questions remain to be answered through further fieldwork.

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Notes

1. We are referring precisely to the targeted field programs of the Iron Age; otherwise Kashan has hosted archaeological groups in Arisman, Noushabad, etc. in the last few decades.

2. Few known materials of the Iron age of the cultural zone of Kashan, such as the findings of Milajer, appeared completely randomly on the archaeological horizons and were not the result of any scientific and predicted program! (Fahimi 2009, 2011).
3. Here is the claims of some archaeologists seem ridiculous when they naively talk about their "unique" discoveries; the discovery of something unique and incidentally, incomparable and incommensurable with other artifacts and cultural data is the discovery of something unfounded (and archaeologically worthless)!
4. Based on the first report of the "Sialk Reconsideration Project" shows the director and members of this project from the beginning, did not think and seek the cultural materials of the Iron Age in Sialk (Malek Shahmirzadi 2002, especially the description of the goals of the project: 23).
5. Unfortunately, the preliminary sounding report, three seasons of extended excavations by Khosrow Pourbakhshandeh, and the supplementary excavations of Siamak Sarlak in the Sarm Cemetery (Kahak) have not yet been published; only one or two Master's thesis on the Cultural Materials of this Cemetery have been written in these years (Bahranipour 2006, Dolati 2012).
6. We define the **sign** as: "something that implies the existence or presence of reality, quality, or another situation", and its plural is signed.
7. We define the **trait** as: "any feature that can be observed by an artifact or a structure or any other cultural material."
8. We define the **archaeological signature** as: "the form of a feature that helps to recognize a phenomenon in archaeological evidence."
9. We define the **diagnostic trait** as: "any trait that distinguishes a group of artifacts or structures or cultural materials from another group."
10. Especially see Danti survey in 2006, that his work results are disappointing.
11. Fahimi introduces only a piece of painted pottery of Sialk VI type from a place other than the southern mound of the Sialk, from *Khazāq* (Fahimi, 2003b: 91 and 125, pl. 18, no. x), and of course a single piece of pottery (if so?) One can never be the basis of conclusions.
12. All samples were rendered to the Sialk Research Base after being washed, photographed and, drawn (Brick 19 [QT.89 / S.082] was removed in a separate visit).
13. Of course, the data of these last two sites (Qoli Darvish, Milajer) are historically and culturally earlier and closer to the Sialk V pottery traditions.
14. And its predecessor: Sialk V (Iron Age II or the horizon of the late western Gray ware); About the Continuity or Discontinuity of the Sialk V and Sialk VI pottery types. See also: Turovets 1989.

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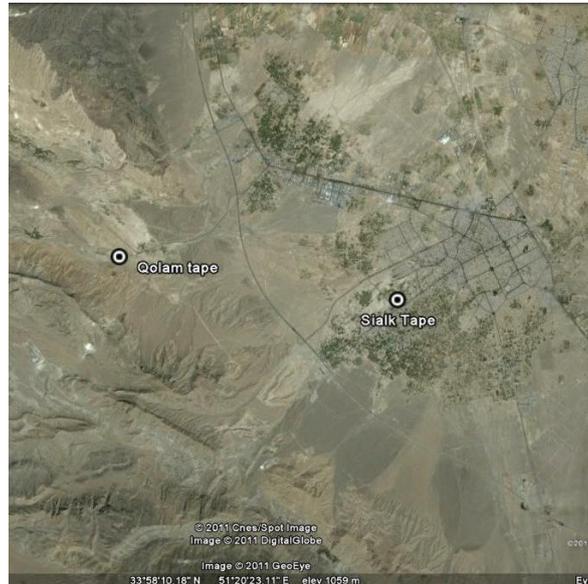
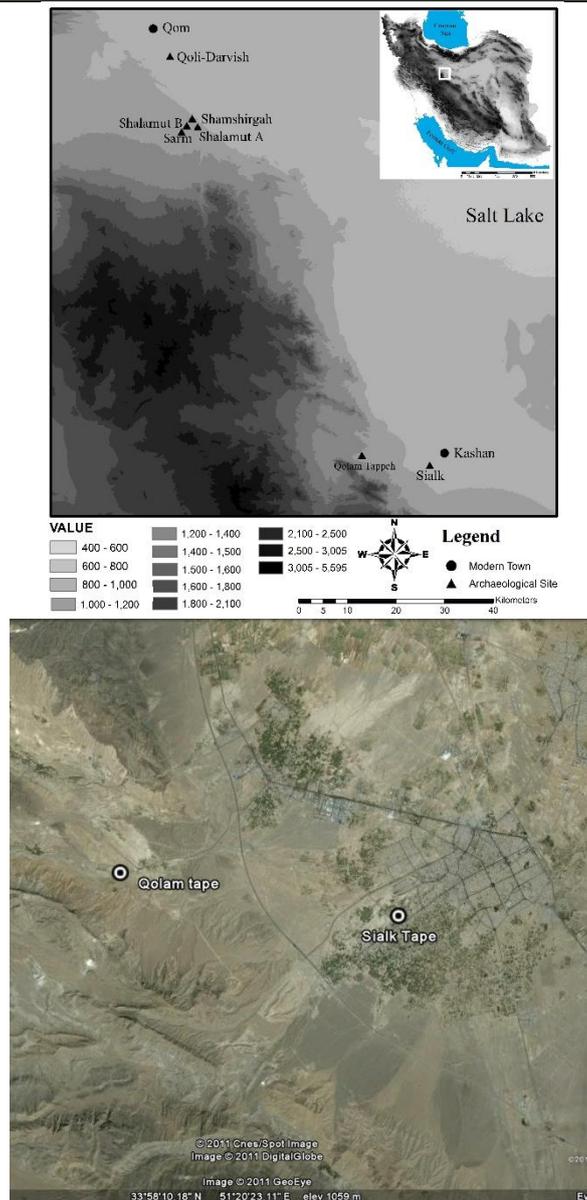


Figure 1 (above): A map of the dispersal of some sites of the Iron Age in Kashan and Qom plain (Malekzadeh and Naseri 2013: Fig. 1) / Figure 2 (bottom): Aerial photo of Qolam Tape location toward Sialk (Google Earth).



Figure 3: The Qolam Tape prospect, view from the East (By Reza Naseri).



Figure 4 (above): Surface distribution of cultural materials (By Reza Naseri) / Figure 5 (bottom): Remnants of architectural monuments on the mound surface (By Reza Naseri).

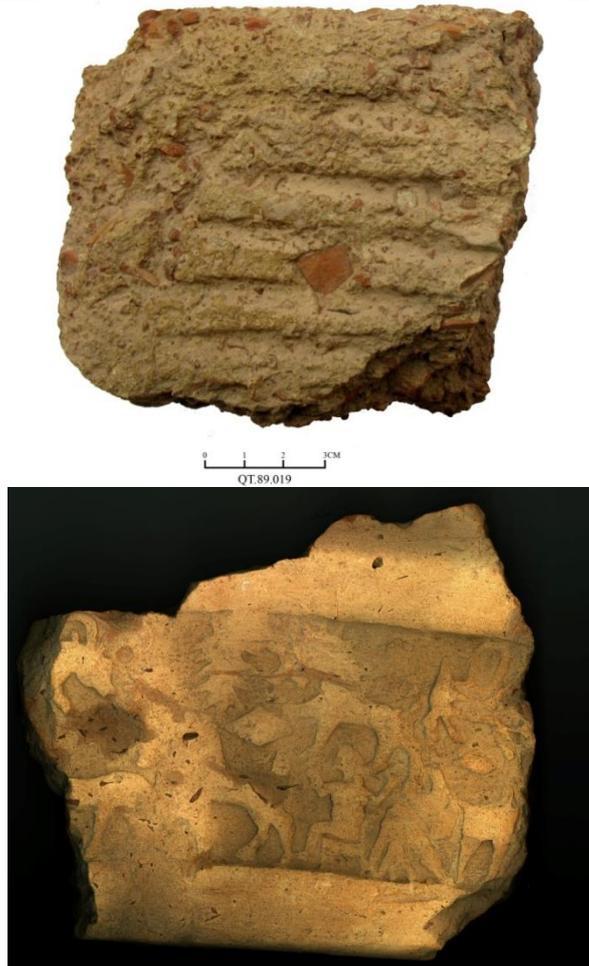


Figure 6 (above): A sample of brick obtained from a surface survey of Qlam Tepe of Jafarabad, Kashan (visiting in 2019). Figure 7 (bottom): A sample of decorative brick obtained during the researches of the Sialk Reconsideration Project (Malek Shahmirzadi, 2002: 206, pl. 8A; Malekzadeh and Naseri, 2013: Fig. 3).



Figure 8: A brick sample obtained from the excavation of Qoli Darvish of Jamkaran (Sarлак and Malekzadeh, 2005; Malekzadeh and Naseri, 2013: Fig. 4).



Figure 9: A bricks sample obtained from a surface survey of the stone fortress of Shamshirgah of Khourabad (Malekzadeh and Naseri, 2013: Fig. 5).

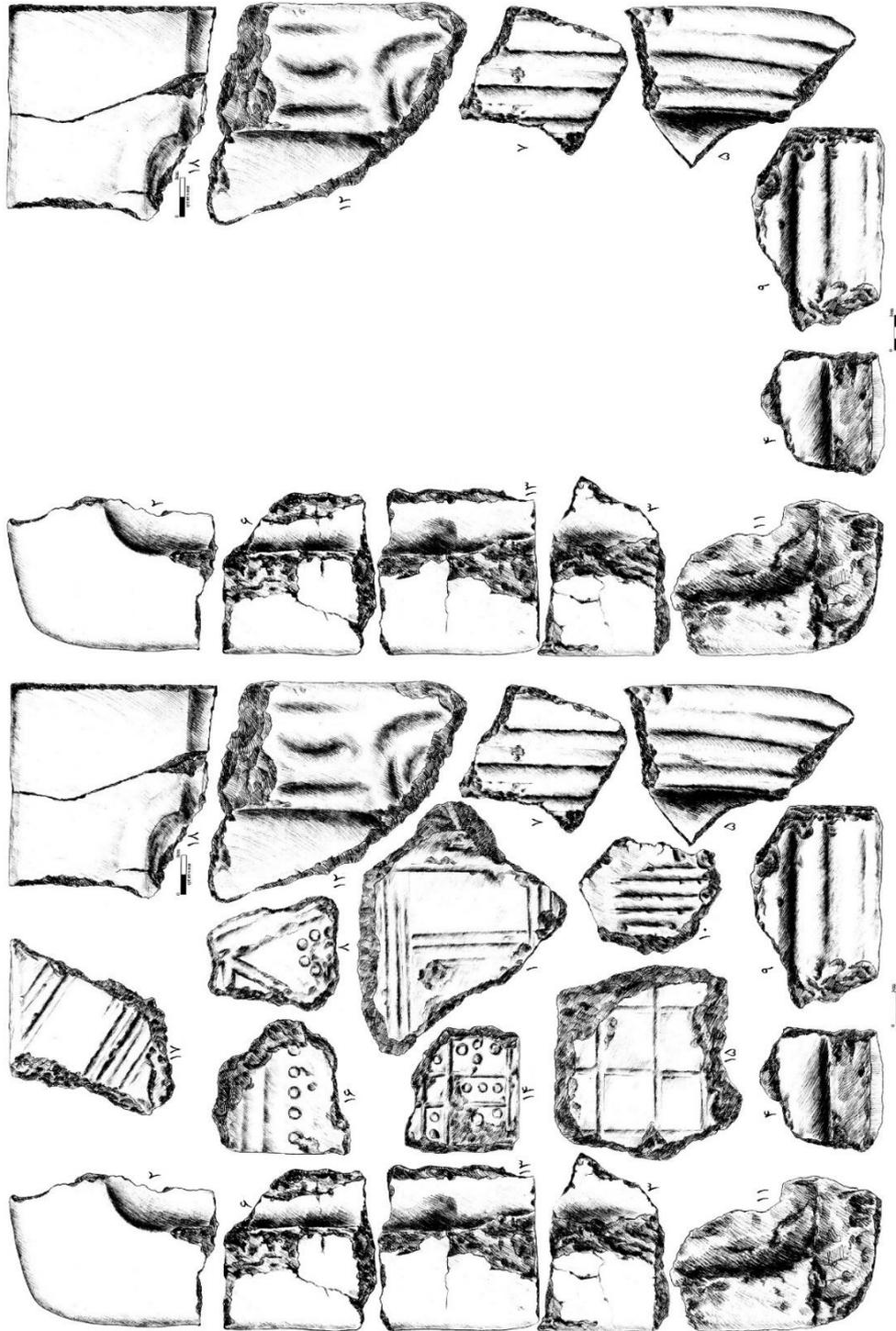


Figure 10a (above): Proposed arrangement of brick frames of Qolam Tepe (Drawing by Ali Naseri). Figure 10b (bottom): Arrangement of brick frames of Qolam Tepe along with other surface samples (Drawing by Ali Naseri).

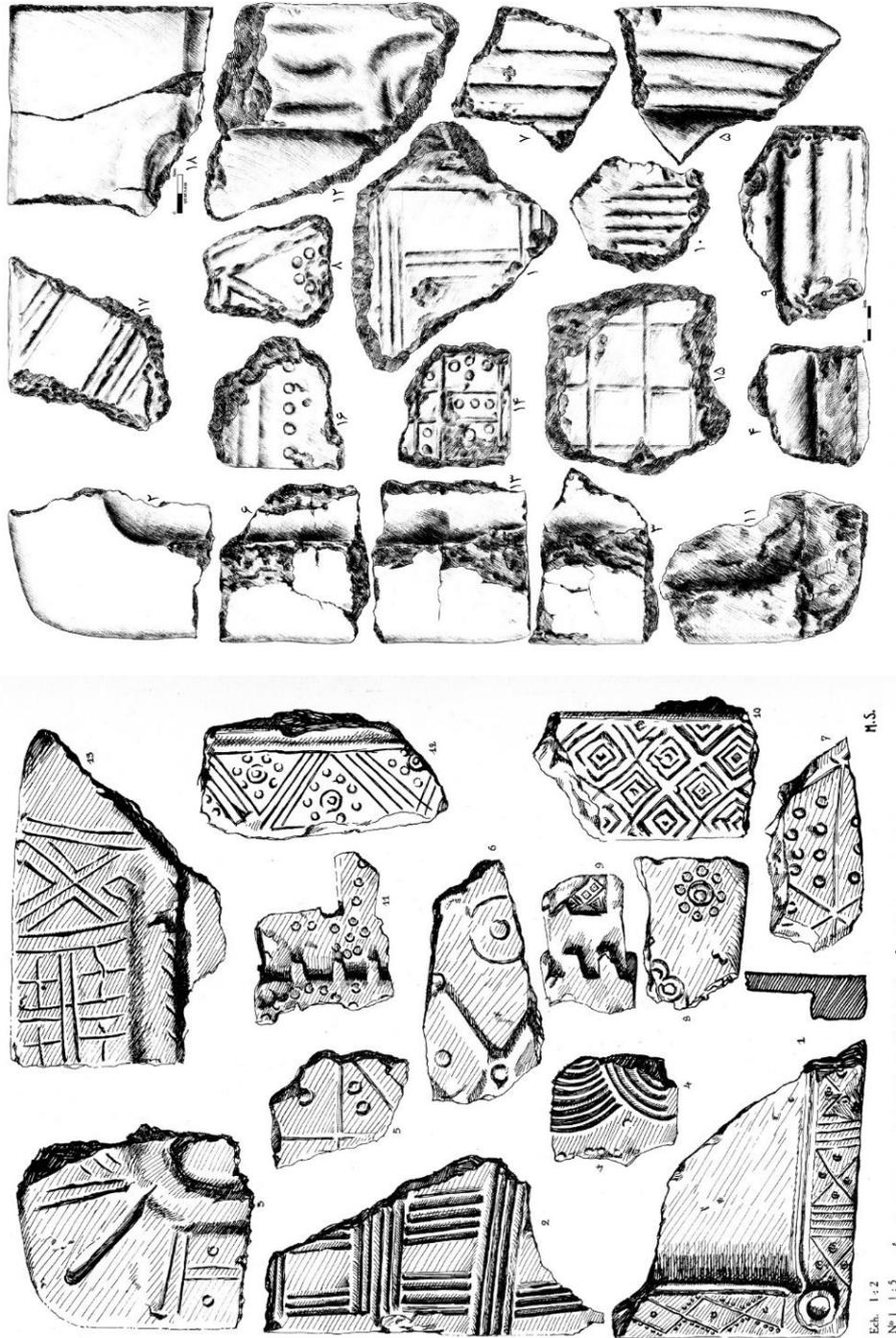


Figure 11a (above): Arrangement of brick frames of Qolam Tepe for comparison with similar pieces in the southern mound of Sialk (Drawing by Ali Naseri). Figure 11b (bottom): Arrangement of brick frames of “La Grande construction” of Sialk (Girshman 1939: pl. xcix).

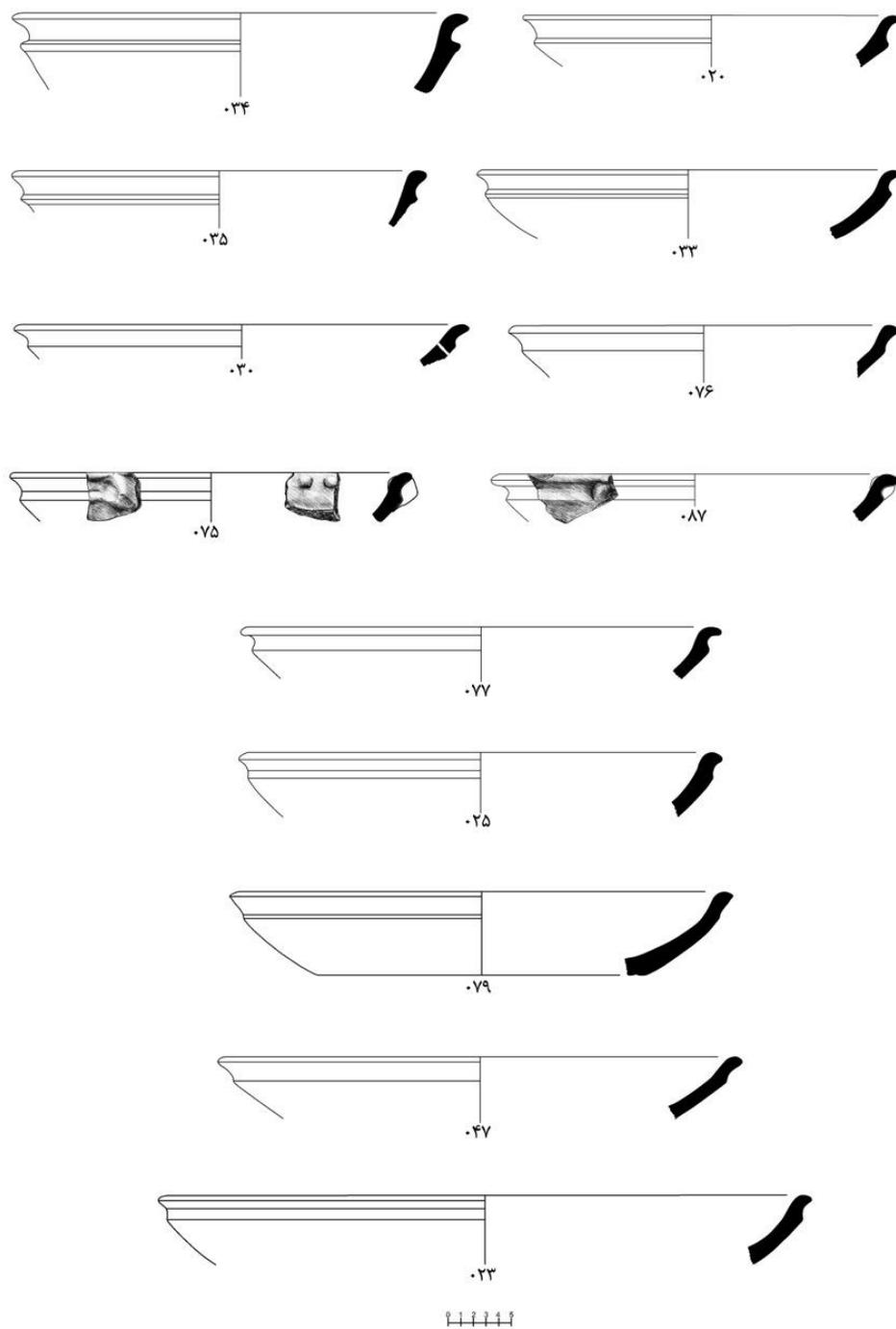


Figure 12: A sample of buff and red S-carinated rim bowls of Qolam Tepe surface (Drawing by Reza Naseri).

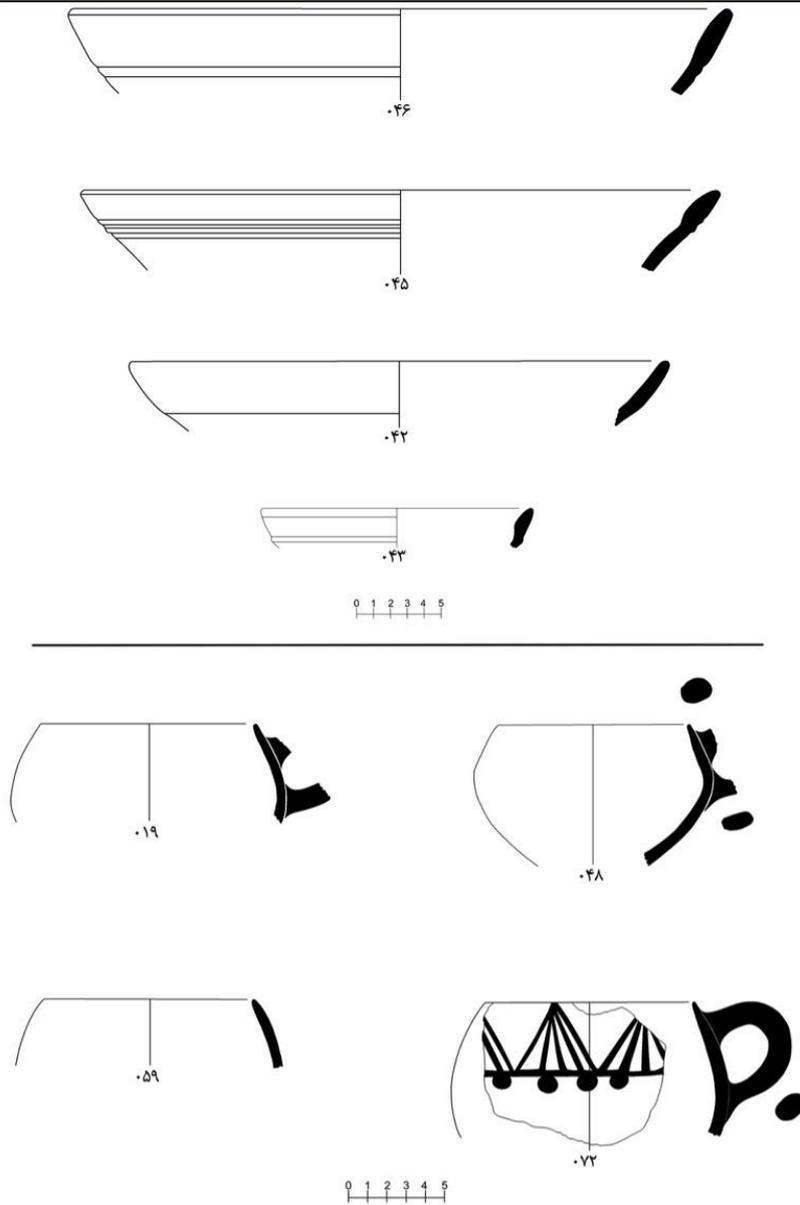


Figure 13a (above): A sample of the gray ware of Qolam Tepe Surface (Drawing by Reza Naseri).

Figure 13b (bottom): A sample of simple and painted pot-sherds of Sialk VI culture obtained from Qolam Tepe Surface (Drawing by Reza Naseri).

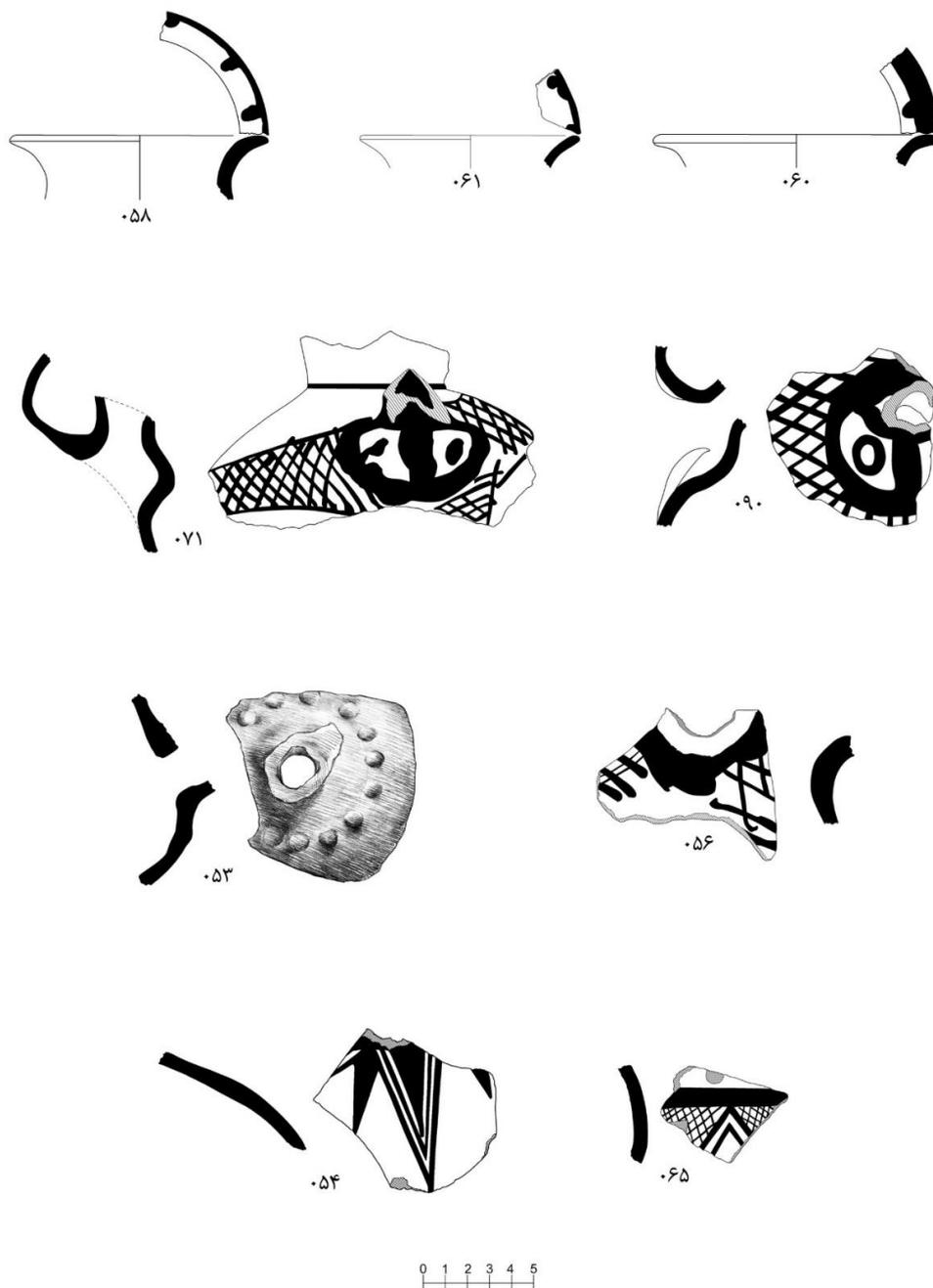


Figure 14: A sample of various ceramics of Sialk VI culture obtained from Qolam Tepe Surface (Drawing by Reza Naseri).

غلام تپه جعفرآباد: بازشناسی یک محوطه اقماری سیلک 6 در کوهپایه‌های کاشان

مهرداد ملک‌زاده¹

استادیار، پژوهشکده باستان‌شناسی، پژوهشگاه میراث فرهنگی و گردشگری، تهران، ایران.

رضا ناصری

استادیار، گروه باستان‌شناسی، دانشکده هنر و معماری، دانشگاه زابل، زابل، ایران.

چکیده

تا همین اواخر فرهنگ عصر آهن پایانی در مرکز فلات ایران تنها در تپه جنوبی سیلک شناسایی شده بود. در این تحقیق، محوطه تازه کشف‌شده‌ای به نام غلام تپه در دامنه‌های غرب کاشان در فاصله بسیار نزدیک به سیلک معرفی شده است. هیچ‌یک از یافته‌های سطحی غلام تپه دوره‌ای به غیر از عصر آهن 3 (یا سیلک 6) را نشان نمی‌دهد، بنابراین ما به یکی از محوطه‌های اقماری سیلک 6 دست‌یافته‌ایم. از آنجایی که غلام تپه منحصرأ یک مکان تک‌دوره‌ای (عصر آهن) است، و با توجه به این واقعیت آشکار که آجرهای تزئینی یافت شده در غلام تپه از هر نظر با آجرهای تزئینی «سازه بزرگ» سیلک مطابقت تمام دارند، آنها را می‌توان به یک دوره فرهنگی واحد نسبت داد و در یک افق زمانی بررسی کرد؛ بنابراین باز دیگر انتساب «سازه بزرگ» سیلک بر اساس بررسی‌های دیگر و جدیدتر به عصر آهن پایانی تأیید می‌شود. یافته‌های بررسی سطحی این محوطه نشان می‌دهد که هم‌زمان با فرهنگ عصر آهن پایانی (لایه‌های 5 و 6 بر روی تپه جنوبی سیلک و گورستان‌های الف و ب) بنایی سنگی به همراه با چندین نمونه از تزئینات آجری در غلام تپه برپا بوده است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: کاشان، غلام تپه، سیلک، سیلک 6، عصر آهن، آجرهای تزئینی.

