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The pottery from Chia Sor, the Qara-Su River basin (Kermanshah, Iran)

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Abstract: *Chia Sor is a hill located 2 kilometers from the Qarasu River and on the northern slopes of Kuh i Sefid (Kyva Charmi) and south of Kermanshah city. The pottery of this area, is related to Godin III₄, III₅ and III₆. During the author's visit to this site, a number of surface pottery sherds was collected, which the comparative study of the pottery shows that they belong to the Godin III₆ period.*

Key words: Archeology, Iran, Central Zagros, Kermanshah, Awan, Godin III, Chia Sor, pottery

Introduction

An Archaeological perspective, Kermanshah province is one of the well-known cultural areas in Central Zagros.¹ Chia Sor is one of these areas on which the core of Kermanshah was formed. It has also facilitated the communication between the western parts of Kermanshah to the eastern regions. It was indirectly connected with the major centers of this period in these plains, including Chogha Gawaneh,² Godin Tepe and Sharif Abad mound,³ and Giyan in Godin III₄₋₆.

The author visited this site several times in 2005, during the last visit, the pottery collection discussed in current article was gathered. One of the reasons for the decision to gather the pottery was that during these visits, the author noticed that the workers and officials of the municipality are excavating and planting grass and ornamental plants on the level of Chia Sor (Sorkh), and that the level of this hill, which had been left uncovered for years, was being used for exploitation.⁴

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¹ See e.g. Keall, 1977; Keall & Keall, 1981; Keall, 1982; Dibble, 1984; Trinkaus & Biglari, 2006; Young & Levine, 1974; Levine & Young, 1986. Mirghaderi & Niknami, 2022.

² Abdi, 1999, 2003; Abdi & Beckman, 2007.

³ Nourallahi, 2022.

⁴ Nourallahi, 2015.

Geographical setting

The Chia Sor is a natural elevation located in 2 kilometers of Qara Su River (on the northern bank of one of its branches) and on the northern slope of the Kuhi Sefid (mountain), south of Kermanshah city, located at the geographical coordinates of 34°18'40.34"N and 47°3'38.99"E. The area is considered to be part of the old context of Kermanshah's barn, in recent years it has been turned into an amusement park and named Shirin Park [Figs. 1-2].

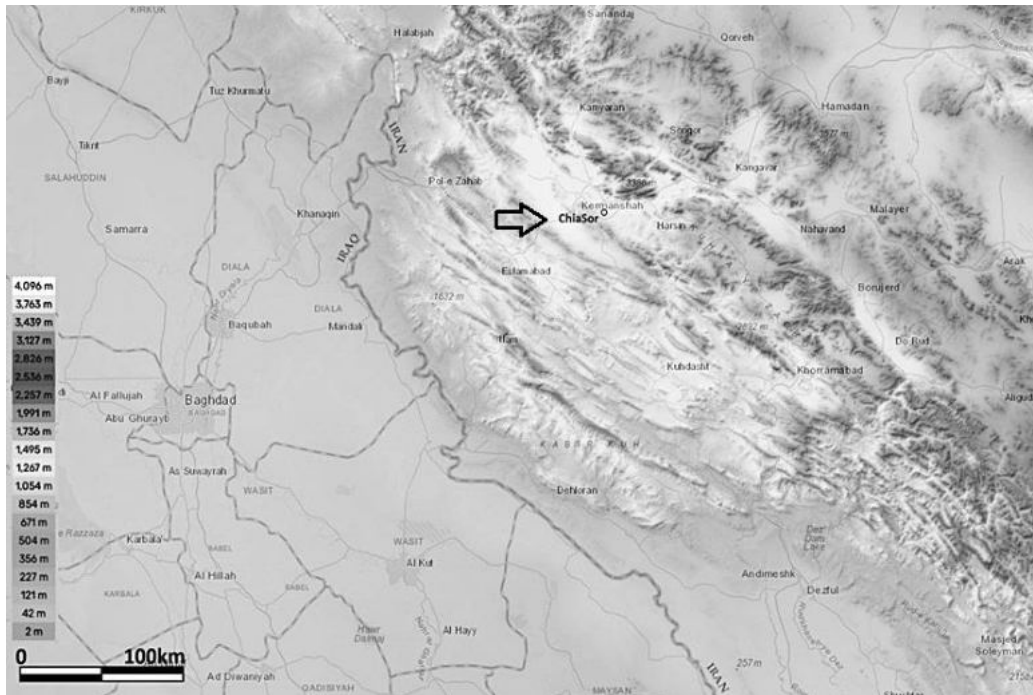


Fig. 1. Map showing location of Chia Sor (A. Nourallahi)

This site is 400 meters long (east-west) and 300 meters wide (north-south), and its height is 15 meters from the surrounding land. It is connected to the surroundings with a steep slope from all directions. From the geological point of view, this area was created on a rock bed made of red sediments.

It seems that this area was wider in the past, and many parts of this area were destroyed since the visit (2007) due to tree planting and urban activities (street construction and building construction).



Fig. 2. Landscape and position of Chia Sor (Park e Shirin) (A. Nourallahi)



Fig. 3. Chia Sor (Park e Shirin) and location of pottery assemblage (A. Nourallahi)

However, due to the side cuts created for the street, the thickness of its cultural layers is less than 1 meter. Perhaps one of the reasons, is the texture of the houses of the old neighborhood of Chia Sor, which were destroyed and removed by the municipality after the urban planning, and the construction of a bridge and an asphalt road was carried out on it [Fig. 3].

Archaeological phases of Chia Sor (GodinIII_{4,6})

From the middle of the 3rd millennium to the middle of the 2nd millennium BC, the transition to the Iron Age, pottery with colorful motifs appear in the central west of Iran, which represent the Godin III period.

These pottery vessels and fragments, which were first introduced from several graves scattered from Tepe Giyan (II-IV) and were the basis of the chronology of the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC in western Iran for a long time,⁵ are found in more complete shape in Godin Tepe. Kangavar covered this part of the cultural sequence of the history of the material culture in central west Iran.⁶

Inscribed painting buff pottery sherds are characteristic for this type in all its phases. Although pottery belonging to older or local cultures can be seen in all phases as well.

Dishes with angular bodies in different sizes are the most important forms of vessels of this period. These dishes are handmade and only the final work was done on a pottery wheel; only the small vessels were made directly on the pottery wheel. To make the larger containers, sequential connection methods have been used for making and rotary plate for final work on them. The remarkable thing about this pottery is that, in this period, all of it was produced by proficient potters.⁷

The percentage of engraved vessels decreases from the old to the new phases, which Henrickson estimated to be 60% in phase VI, 30% in phase IV, and 8% in phase II.⁸

The gray pottery of the Godin III period increases from phase III₄ onwards, and from phase III₁ there are samples that are similar in form to the Elamite pottery of the same period in Khuzestan.⁹ The pottery of Godin III period has similarities in general and differences in details due to specific regional characteristics.¹⁰

Henrickson believes that in the period of Susa IV_A (Old Elam), the pottery of the southwestern region of Iran is similar to the pottery of its counterparts in the high Zagros regions (Godin III_{5,6}), and that while this similarity decreases with the passage

⁵ Contenau & Ghirshman, 1935.

⁶ Young, 1969a; Henrickson, 1986; 1987; Voigt & Dyson, 1992; Talai, 2002: 12-7; 2006: 96-107.

⁷ Henrickson, 1982: 291; Motarajem, 2007: 75.

⁸ Henrickson, 1982: 291; 1987.

⁹ Henrickson, 1982: 292.

¹⁰ Henrickson, 1982: 291; 1986: 28; Motarajem, 2007: 77; Nourallahi, 2022.

of time, in the following periods, they become more comparable to Mesopotamian pottery. Also, he assumes that in the 3rd half of the millennium BC, due to the wide commercial connection between the South Zagros and Southwest of Iran, Godin III pottery penetrated the South Zagros, however this influence did not last long.¹¹

Also, he believes that during the period of Godin III, the population of this part of Central Zagros (Kangavar) and the neighboring areas was increasing, which is reflected in the large number of sites of this period.¹² But the archeological evidence of a fundamental change in the pottery of the region around 2600 BC.¹³ Apart from the existing simple pottery, the most important feature of the ceramic of this period is the appearing of the pottery with the black motifs on buff, and, sometimes, the boat vessels and the jugs with a cream color coating, which have a combination of geometric motifs (crossbones, horizontal stripes, spirals) and plants.

Levin and Young have pointed out three important points in the study of the archaeological collections of the third millennium of Lorestan, which are a reflection of a historical entity called Evan. They can be listed as follows: firstly, the materials that are characteristic of the Godin III₆ period and were found in most of the southern and eastern valleys of Lorestan along the main routes connecting these areas to the plains of Khuzestan; secondly, they have close similarities with Susa Dc-d or Susa IV_A monochromatic pottery; finally, the pottery shreds of Godin type III₆ were found in Al-Haiba (ancient Lagash), along with plates and seals of En-anna-tum or E-annatum and Lumatur.¹⁴

Based on the research conducted on the ceramic of Godin III₆ period, Potts believes that the pottery tradition of this phase from Godin and central Zagros is related to Awan from the states of Elam; Because this type of pottery has a strong representation in the Susa IV_A period. They have penetrated even as far as Lagash in southern Mesopotamia, and in the western region of Iran, which includes the provinces of Kermanshah, Lorestan, Kurdistan, Hamedan, and even more eastern lands, it has a strong and integrated presence.¹⁵

Also, from the central region of this kingdom to the west (west of Pishkuh and Poshtkuh region) in the cemeteries that excavated by Vandenberghe and Haerinck, ceramic related to the pottery tradition of Godin III₆ was obtained.¹⁶

Archaeological remains in Chia Sor included pottery and stone tools that were collected in the southwest part of the area that was less exposed to erosion. Pottery consists of three groups: patterned pottery, red coated pottery, and kitchen pottery [Figs. 5a, 5b].

¹¹ Henrickson, 1982: 292; 1986: 21.

¹² Henrickson, 1987; Nourallahi, 2022.

¹³ Renette, 2015; 2018.

¹⁴ Levine & Young, 1986: 50; Potts, 2004: 92; Renette, 2015; 2018.

¹⁵ Potts, 2004: 92-9.

¹⁶ Carter & Stolper, 1984; Haerinck, 1987: 68; Potts, 2004: 92-3.

Patterned pottery: includes the rim, body and pedestal of the container. They have the shape of a turned edge, a broken edge outwards, a medium-sized vessel, and open-mouthed bowls with an angular body and a flat pedestal. To make these dishes, first the different parts of the dish (shoulder, body and pedestal) are made separately and then they are connected together with clay wicks before baking. Traces of that process can be seen as scratches on the inner part of the sherds. This method can be seen in Godin III₅, where large vessels were made in several separate parts and then connected together.¹⁷

Decorations include horizontal strip motifs, horizontal wavy strip, strip pattern on the edge with added rope pattern on the body [Fig. 5a.4], this type of decoration continued in Godin Tepe until layer III₅.¹⁸ The stylized pattern of the bird [Fig. 5a.5] and the decoration with the pattern of a fish swimming from left to right, the details of which are clearly visible. It has six fins on both sides of the body (three fins on each side) and the dorsal fin is drawn with a wide line. The painter was very careful in drawing the details, so that the scales of the fish are drawn with crossed lines, while the head with the eyes and the tail of the fish in greater detail as if it depicted a swimming fish, and the painter himself was an observer of this scene [Fig. 5a.6].

The motif decoration is concentrated just above the angle or the largest diameter, while the horizontal stripes cover this motif. This pottery is similar in form to the angular pottery (on the shoulder of the vessel) of Godin III₆.¹⁹ The fish design is also introduced by Godin III₄²⁰ [Fig. 7]. It is similar to the pattern on the vessels excavated in the Temple of Sin in Khafajeh (early dynasties II and III) [Fig. 8],²¹ which consists of the rectangular frames on the body of the vessel and their direction is to the left and from the side, and there is no movement in their design,²² and also a fish motif is painted on the shoulder of a dish belonging to the Susa Dd period [Fig. 9] in which there is no naturalism.²³

¹⁷ Henrickson, 2011: Fig. 6.31, 6.32.

¹⁸ Henrickson, 1987: 208 and Henrickson, 1984: Fig. 66-68.

¹⁹ Henrickson, 2011: Fig. 6.34b, Gd71-2169.

²⁰ Henrickson, 1984: Fig. 121.7.

²¹ Henrickson, 1987: 209.

²² Kambakhsh Fard, 2000: 133-4.

²³ Le Breton, 1957: Fig. 40.

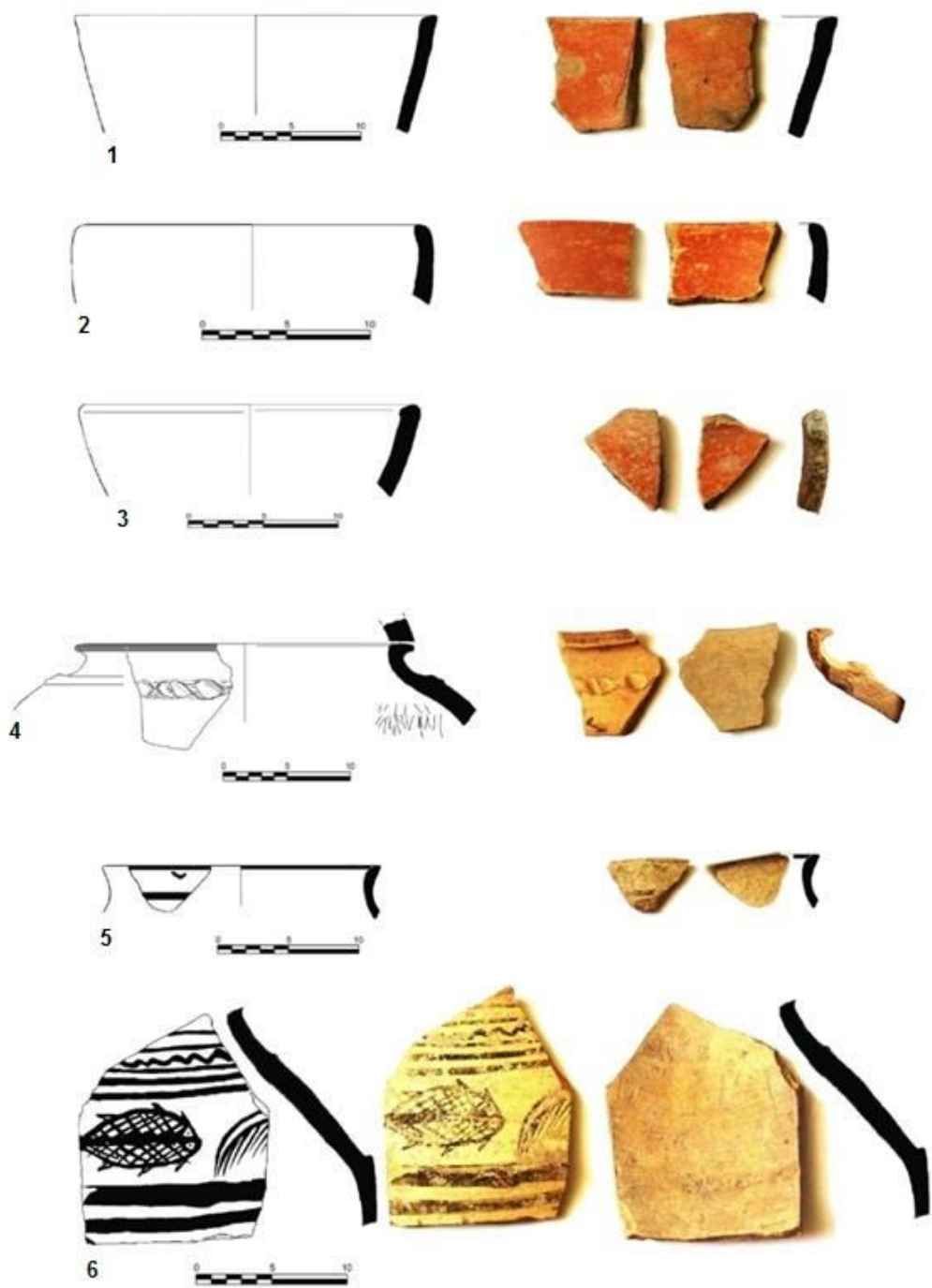


Fig. 5a. A selection of Chia Sor pottery sherds (A. Nourallahi)

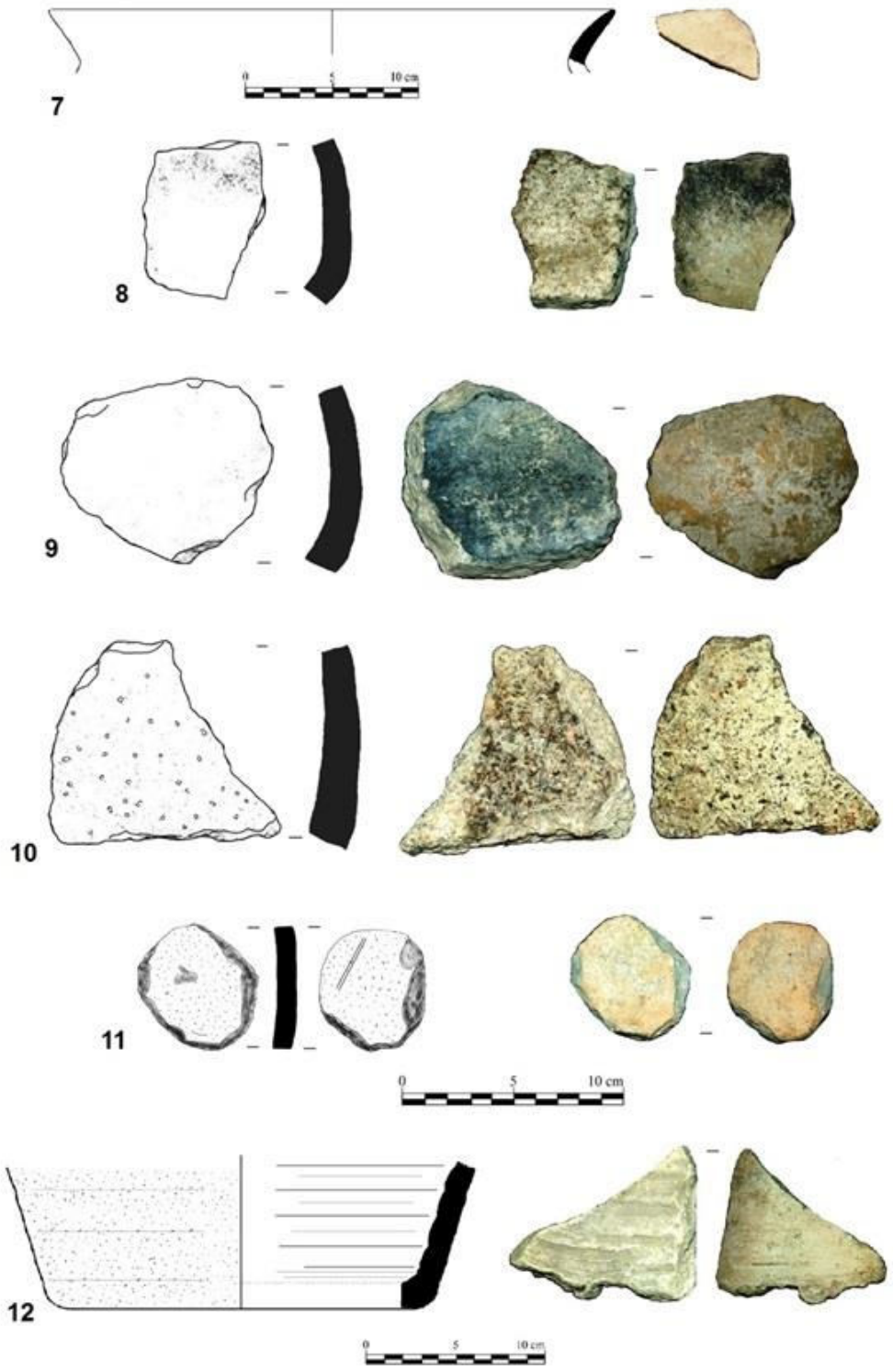


Fig. 5b. Chia Sor pottery sherds (A.Nourallahi)

Tab. 1. Chronology of West Central Iran 2600-1400 BC

BC	Godin Tepe	Chia Sor	Tepe Giyan	Baba Jan	Pusht-I Kuh	Susa, Ville Royale	Mesopotamia
1400	III:1		Giyán II (graves 64,65,71,72, 73,77,79,82)	Trench C Grave 3	Late Bronze	Ville Royal I	Kassite
1500							
1600	Post-III:2 Graves Gap		Giyán III (graves 83-101,105-107, 108,110,112, 115)	Level 4 Op. F Graves 1-4		Strata 3-6	Old Babylon
1700	III:2						
1800							Isin-Larsa
1900	III:3						
2000	Gap		Giyán IV (graves 111,113,114, 116-119)				UrIII
2100	III:4					Early Bronze II	Post Akkadin
2200	Gap						Akkadian
2300	III:5		Giyán IV (grave 102)				
2400			Level 5 Graves 1-2		Strata 9-12	Early dynastic IIIB	
2500	III:6				Early Bronze I		
2600						Strata 13-15	Early dynastic IIIA
2700	IV						Early dynastic II

Tab. 2. Description shreds of the Site of Chia Sor

N ^o	color dough, tamper, made method (wheel or hand), heat for baked, thickness	chronology	Parallels
1	rim, buff, straw, insufficient heat, handmade, clay slipped, burnished red, rough	Godin III ₄ , III ₅ , III ₆ ; Early dynastic II, III	Henrickson, 1987: Fig. 59.3, 5, 12, 2011: Fig. 6.27, 6.38b: Gd 69-2021; Levine & Young, 1986: Fig. 27
2	rim, buff, insufficient heat, handmade, straw, red clay slipped, burnished red, rough	Godin III ₅ , III ₆	Henrickson, 1987: Fig. 59.3, 5, 12; Levine & Young, 1986: Fig. 27
3	rim, buff, insufficient heat, handmade, straw, red clay slipped, burnished red, rough	Godin III ₄ -III ₅ , III ₆	Henrickson, 1987: Fig. 59:1, 3, 5; 60.6,7; Levine & Young, 1986: Fig. 27
4	rim, buff, insufficient heat, slowly wheel with tournette, soft sand with mica, painted (strip line on rim, additional rope strip on body), rough	Godin III ₅ -III ₆ ; Jemdet Nasr period.	Young & Levine, 1974: Fig. 18-25
5	rim, buff, enough heat, wheelmade, straw, painted (black strip and stylized bird pattern under rim), fine	Godin III ₄	Henrickson, 1984: Fig. 66-68; 2011: Fig. 6.38a: Gd71-125; Levine & Young, 1986: Fig. 31; Young, 1969b: 289, 7, n 3
6	body, buff, enough heat, tournette, soft sand, painted (on body by dark brown, horizontal and wavy strip and fish pattern), medium	Godin III ₆ ; Early dynastic II, III, the Temple of Sin in Khafajeh	Henrickson, 2011: Fig. 6.34b, Gd71-2169; 6.31, 6.32; Kambakhsh Fard, 2000: 134; Le Breton, 1957: Fig. 40
7	rim, cream, enough heat, wheel made, tiny straw, fine	Godin III ₆	Young, 1969a: 107, pl. 32.9
8	body, buff, insufficient heat, handmade, sand & straw, medium, kitchen ware		
9	body, buff, insufficient heat, handmade, soft sand, kitchen ware		
10	body, cream, insufficient heat, handmade, sand, kitchen ware, rough		
11	pottery sherds token, buff, wheel made, insufficient heat, soft sand, fine		
12	flat pedistal, light greenish cream, enough heat, straw, wheelmade (with tournette), rough	Godin III ₆	Henrickson, 1984: 500, Fig. 77, n 12



Fig. 6. Chia Sor Sherds with fish pattern (A. Nourallahi)



Fig. 7. The paint of fish in Godin III pottery (after Henrickson, 2011: 121, Fig. 7)



Fig. 8. The vessels from the temple of Sin in Khafajeh (after Kambakhsh Fard, 2000: 134)



Fig. 9. The pottery, Susa Dd period (after Breton, 1957: Fig. 40)



Fig. 10. Carps caught from the Saimarreh River (A. Nourallahi)

According to the decorative design of fish on the pottery obtained from this area, it probably reflected one of the ways of providing food for the residents of this place. The aquatic animals of the Qara su River have also been allocated a place in their food basket and their appearance in art may be related to the increase of population in this period [Figs. 5a.6, 6].

Pottery sherds with a thick burnished and red slipped buff ware originate from the bowls with an open mouth and an inward edge. Due to insufficient temperature to bake pottery, their brains have turned black. This group is similar to Maran phase pottery with a burnished and red slipped buff ware and Godin III₆. But well-made, burnished pottery with red coating appears for the first time in layer III₅,²⁴ and Godin period III₄ continued.²⁵ They coincide with the Susa A period²⁶ [Figs. 5a.1-3].

Kitchen pottery were mostly used for cooking. This type of vessels has a coarse grain sand temper and a thick yellowish-cream mud glaze, the core of the pottery has turned black due to insufficient heat to cook them. Also, their outside is smooth and their inside is wavy due to the movement of the pottery wheel [Figs. 5b.8-10].

Other objects

A piece of ceramic token was also found in the surface survey, the size of which is 4.9 x 2.5 cm and it is made from a piece of pottery sherds. Pottery wheel marks can be seen on it [Fig. 5b.11]. Several pieces of rubble with impact marks were also found, which were made of gray chert and river bed rubble. There were no signs of any kind of retouching or use on them.

Conclusion

Chia Sor is located next to the Great Khorasan highway and in the southern part of the Kermanshah plain and on the western bank of the winding Qara Su River, which played an important role in the formation of human settlements.

This site was a one-period settlement on the southern edge of the Kermanshah plain, and due to the single-period pottery, it can be considered as belonging to a small village in the Bronze Age.

Because, this site was destroyed by the city expansion, it has not been subjected to investigate archeologically. It is not possible to give an exact opinion about it, and the opinions are mostly based on probability and guess.

This area is located in a straight line with a short distance (about 80 kilometers) from the important and key areas of Godin Tepe Kangavar in the east and

²⁴ Henrickson, 1987: Fig. 59.7, 9, 12.

²⁵ Henrickson, 1987: 209-10.

²⁶ Voigt & Dyson, 1992: 163; Nourallahi, 2022.

Chogha Gavaneh in the center of the Islamabad plain in the west.²⁷ It is also located at the intersection of the roads that connect Khuzestan (Susa) to the Great Khorasan highway through Hulailan Valley, Kohdasht, Rumeshgan and Saimarreh.

The surface pottery of this area, which are related to Godin III₄, III₅ and III₆, reflect the communication and cultural exchanges between this region with more distant regions (Mesopotamia during the Old Dynasty, III, II and Susa Dd) and the regions located on the route of the Great Khorasan highway. Daniel Potts relates this pottery to the Awan dynasty, which was able to take control of this region during this period. Unfortunately, due to the expansion of the urban space (street construction and tree planting), today this area has been largely destroyed.

A look at the excavations of Chogha Gavaneh and Godin Tepe, which are sites that have settlements from different Bronze Age periods, and extensive excavations have been carried out in them, which indicates their centrality in this period. They are located next to Khorasan highway.²⁸ Also in Chogha Gavaneh, the surrounding areas, the Godin III period settlements have not been identified, and in fact, due to the influence of the old dynasties in this area, the Godin III culture has spread to the east. The site of Chia Sor and other sites of Godin III actually reflect the western border of the Godin culture in this period. Therefore, Chia Sor and other small areas have been peripheral areas along this route that have facilitated these cultural-economic exchanges. Because the surface pottery found from this area only shows the settlement in Godin III_{4,6} period. It can be related to the prosperity of commercial exchanges between the main centers such as Godin, Susa and Mesopotamia, resulting in increased need for the trade exchanges including procurement of the raw materials and fulfilling the demand for the finished goods.

²⁷ Abdi, 1999; Abdi & Beckman, 2007.

²⁸ Abdi, 2003.

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