A Preliminary Report of Excavations at Aveh Plain, Islamic Period

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Aveh archaeological site, is located in Saveh Plain, and it is one of the lesser-known sites in the Iranian Central Plateau. The chronological sequence of this site extends from prehistoric periods till Timurid time. It is worth mentioning that here, except for the Islamic settlements, neither prehistoric nor historic settlements are of big proportions. Our subject settlement developed so much in size over the middle Islamic centuries reaching its zenith in Ilkhanid period. According to the archeological excavations conducted by Tarbiat Modares University team at this site, its significant archaeological materials such as ceramics have been found and documented. In 684 A.H. the luster tiles were discovered in this area being the first particular scientific indicator proving this site is an Ilkhanid one. Through performing numerous field works, the authors could determine Aveh town's basic structure including arg (citadel), sharestan (peripheral areas of the city center), and rabaz (outskirts and farmlands which are farther than the main urban parts of the city/town) which were generally similar to the other royal/ ruling Ilkhanid towns. On the other hand, the discovery of potsherds as well as luster tiles in this area showed the artistic and cultural power of the artists residing here. Through laboratory work and electronic microprobe method, the authors also found out that the important particles of the clay in Aveh besides its richness, which both make the soil very suitable for making luster wares, existed in the area. All the previously-mentioned facts as well as the decoration, designs, and motifs applied on luster wares make us consider Aveh as a center for making luster ware and producing style. The present study was done using a description - method in addition to library studies, field and laboratory works.

Keywords: *Middle Islamic centuries; Ilkhanid period; Islamic architecture; luster ware; luster tile; laboratory studies; Aveh style*

Introduction

The archaeological site of Aveh is located near Saveh, 25 km from the southwest, in Markazi Province, and it is considered one of the most significant historical places of the township it is situated in (this site is located in the northern part of Aveh village). The extent and dispersal of the artifacts on the one hand and the evidence from the historical and geographical texts on the other hand both corroborate that Aveh has been a relatively big town from Sasanid to Ilkhanid times. This town was part of Jibalin in the Islamic period. Unfortunately, the name of Aveh has not been mentioned in the existing texts about Mongolian campaigns over Genghis Khan and his successors' time up to Hulagu Khan who, after Khwarazmian, had ravaged Jibal several times.

Based on the results of the three seasons of excavations done under Khatib Shahidi's supervision from 2007 to 2010, the upper layers belong to the Islamic period -Ilkhanid time in particular. The mentioned excavations showed that in this period of time Aveh was composed of three major parts i.e. 1. arg (citadel), 2. sharestan (peripheral areas of the city center) and 3. rabaz (outskirts and farmlands which are farther than the mail urban parts of the city/town). The arg and sharestan and its defensive walls were all discovered through field work. The vast area of the town which is about 220 hectares could be an absolute indicative for the fact that this town has had a third part, i.e. rabaz which could be known more and studied through performing more field works. During the excavations, finds including luster wares tiles, kiln slags, and also a particular type of tripod equipment for making pottery were found. In corporation with the University of Nottingham and using electronic microprobe, the authors could recognize the fact that the clay of Aveh, due to its richness, has great potential for such finds. This fact, as well as the specific way of decoration applied on the luster wares and also

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the tiles of Aveh, all proclaim a fresh and of course forgotten local style buried under layers of soil which is going to be explained in detail as follows (khatib shahidi 2010: 44).

The objectives of the present study

Considering the precious findings (potsherds, luster wares, and Ilkhanid architecture) discovered through three seasons of excavations conducted by Tarbiat Modares University team as well as the obtained results, it appears that it is possible for us to find more worthy pieces of information about the construction and architecture of the town (since it is one of those rare ones bearing a castle remaining from the Ilkhanid period) and also some other artifacts like pottery, tile and related decorations as well.

Method

This study has been carried out with a descriptive-analytic procedure in addition to library and field work. The field work in three stages included: performing several excavations at Aveh Plain, sending luster ware samples to the University of Nottingham for laboratory studies through the electronic microprobe method, and eventually drawing the architectural remnants and potsherds.

Literature Review of Aveh

Except for a couple of scattered surveys, this site had not been studied systematically until 2007. The first scientific Work on this area was taken by Erich Schmidt in 1935-36 in the course of his flights over ancient areas of Iran in which he had also taken some aerial photos from Aveh (Schmidt 1940: 27). After that, the largest systematic archaeological program was conducted on this area between 1967 and 1974 by Houshang Azimzadeh over several survey seasons including surveying and detecting the archaeological sites in both Saveh and Zarandieh plains (Azimzadeh 1975). W. Kleiss, a German archaeologist, visited this site in 1975 and recorded a description of its remnants (Kleiss 1975). During the recent years, with the attempts of by the Research Center of the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran, this site which covers an area of more than 220 hectares was delimitated over some seasons and its topographic maps were drawn and prepared by Khatib Shahidi and the University of Arak. In 2003, an agreement was signed between Tarbiat Modares University and the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran based on which this place was announced as a student training site for Tarbiat Modares University and it was started to be excavated by Khatib Shahidi during three seasons of archaeological excavations from 2007 till 2010 (khatib shahidi 2010: 48).

A Brief Overview of the Natural and Historical Geography of Aveh

If we move 24 km from Saveh to Salafchegan, a bypass to Qom which is known as Jafarabad-Qom is separated. Aveh village is located 6 km off this road (Hashemi 2007: 125). One of the most important historical spots of Saveh township is the historical mountains of Aveh lying 40 km from the southeast of Saveh (Saeidian 2003: 56).

As Qom was the residential place of a few Arab Muslim tribes as well as the first and the most major Shiite centers in Iran since the very 1st century A.H., Aveh,which was placed less than 50 km from Qom and was not separated from it by any natural obstacles, rapidly joined the Islamic community and, as the documents bear out, it could become the second Shiite place in Iran (Alviri 1999: 50). Although in the first two centuries A.H. the name of Aveh has not been reported, since the 3rd century this town was noticed by both the contemporary rulers and the others, particularly the Shiites. The 4th-century sources written in 372 A.H.say that Saveh and Aveh "….are crowded, prosperous and developed towns with an appropriately nice weather, and they are located on the way to Hadjaj of Khorasan" (Hudud al-'alam 1973: 142). In the historical texts listing the Buyid Shiite towns, considering this dynasty's being Shiite as well, these towns were in a proper status, we face this town names as following: Qom, Kashan, Karaj, Aboudolaf, Aveh, Tafresh, Farahan, and a town named Eram in Mazandaran near Sari (Kashani 1967: 90). It seems that despite the fact that the Seljuq kings were Sunni and supported Sunni ideology, the Shiite Aveh had not missed its

significance; however, it was not as important as it used to be in the time of Buyid dynasty. The book Masalek-ol-Mamalek was also written in this priod of time (5th and 6th centuries) and speaks about the diverse climates. Where it begins to describe the mountainous areas and illustrates its maps, it has mentioned the name of Aveh in the south of Saveh (Kashani 1967: 99), which shows the importance of this town at that time. Apparently, in this period of time, the Seljuq kings would appoint one of the princes to rule and manage some Jibal (mountainous areas) including Aveh. When the Seljuq became weak as the result of the constant interference of the Atabegs and Khwarazmian who had the power in their hands over the 6th century, the Khwarazmian started interfering in the state affairs at different places such as Jibal (kashani 1967: 80). After the Mongols settled down in Iran, Aveh, Saveh, and Jahroud all became parts of Qazvin (Mostofi 1983: 77). One of the most remarkable incidents related to Aveh during Hulagu Khan successors' reigns was the dominance of KhajehSa'd Al-din Avaji who worked along with the well-known vizier,Khajeh Rashid Al-din Fazollah, the vizier of Uljayto, for a while. While this Shiite man was a vizier, lots of efforts such as constructing a dam, paving paths, renewing fortification and the town fence were done as well as rebuilding the ruined parts of the town; however, it could not gain back the former prosperous status again and it remained devoid of constructions and crowds (Kashani 1967: 96). Contrary to what was just stated about prosperity and destruction of the town, the recent excavations revealed that Aveh was a relatively big and burgeoning town at least during Ilkhanid dynasty up to its last ruler's time named Abu Sa'eed. Discovering an eight-sided tile which was hung on one of the graves near the tomb of the holy shrine of FazlIbn-e Soleiman as well as other adobe tiles and other eight-sided luster tiles and also similar cases in the other graves dating back to 684 A.H. show that the town of Aveh must have revived its glory much before Mongolian invasion (Khatib Shahidi 2005: 45). Woefully, the excavations done at this site were not efficient enough to prove destruction or prosperity of Aveh during Mongolian invasions. The items found till now include eight-sided tiles dating back to 684 B.C. from around the holy shrine and a bronze coin with the name of Abu Sa'eed Bahador which was discovered from the sewer of a house belonging to the Mongolian era. Aveh was pretty prosperous and burgeoning in the Ilkhanid period since 653 A.H. the time of Hulahu entrance to Iran till 736 A.H. the time of Abu Saeed's death, (Khatib Shahidi 2005: 45).

Geographical Position of Tappe Aveh

The site is a mound 400 m long and wide located in the middle of the northern side of a site which is referred to as"Ghal'eKhak" by the locals (Fig. 1), but it has been recorded under the name GhelichTappe in the written sources of Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran; this name is unknown and meaningless to the locals. This mound is about 30 m higher than its adjacent ditch and has a rather flat surface on its top which ends in the nearby previously-mentioned ditch in a very steep slope. According to the excavations done on the upper layers of 410, Tappe Aveh dates back to the Islamic era -Ilkhanid period in particular.

Emergence of human communities in the Saveh plain is evident since the 7-6th millennium B.P. However, in the early Islamic sources, the names Saveh and Aveh are mentioned several times, which is the evidence for their importance, especially at specific periods (Fig. 2).

Despite the rare mentioning of the city in historical-political events of the era, Aveh has been a relatively big and important city during the Ilkhananid period. Aveh has been situated on the most active trade route of Soltanie from Saveh, Aveh, Qom, Kashan, Ispahan, Shiraz and coast of Persian Gulf. The route from Rey to Saveh Was also connected to this road and Marco Polo of Venice also traveled along this road to Kashan and Yazd (Schmidt 1940:40).

Research Background

The site covers an area of approximately 220 hectares, and has been archaeologically recorded as the Aveh site. The archaeological excavations date back to the Qajar period, which local people dug the site and sold the findings to the foreigners pursuing the antiquities. Unfortunately, this has been the same up until the present period (Afshin



Fig.1: *Markazi province situation in the map of Iran and Saveh political situation (Photo by Authors).*

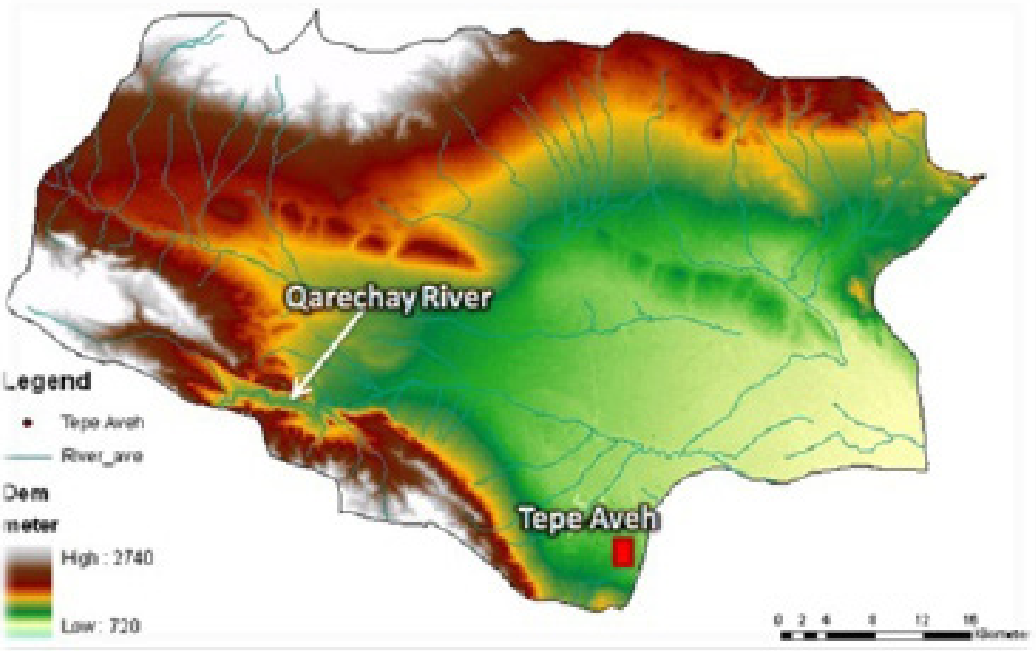


Fig. 2: *Elevationmap of Savehcity (After: Google Earth 2013.8.14).*

1994: 485).

By the Qajar period, the European people, those who were interested in buying antiques, increasingly traveled to Iran and, as a result, illegal excavations have been started since then and thousands of small holes were dug in the citadel and old city. The first scientific work was done by Schmidt, who flew over Iranian sites, one of them being Aveh. He took aerial photos from Aveh and emphasized the importance of excavating the site (Schmidt 1940: 27).

Description of the Site

Aveh mound being 200m. (Fig. 3).in dimensions in the middle of the northern side is known as QalehKhak by the local people (Fig. 4). This mound is about 30m higher than the ditch and, fortunately, is disturbed less than the other part of the whole site. This mound summit is approximately level, with steep edges around it, that reaches the mentioned ditch. At the northern part, there is a rampart which has been washed away and its remaining part is a narrow and long mud brick-like mound. There is a holy shrine, Fazl-Ibn-Soleyman- with a circular tower at the southeast of the area with an Ivan-like entrance, regarding its brick works dating back to Seljuk period, renovated in later periods specially Ilkhanids. A new cemetery is located in the middle of the southern border, with a holy shrine, Shahzadeh Mohammad. The shrine's original structure is completely ruined, and the new one comes with no historical and artistic value.

There is a cemetery in a part of the southern zone of the old settlement which had been used by the local people. In the Safavid-Qajar period, A relatively small caravanserai was built entirely of brick with a contemporary water storage in front of its gateway, in the south axis of the citadel, toward

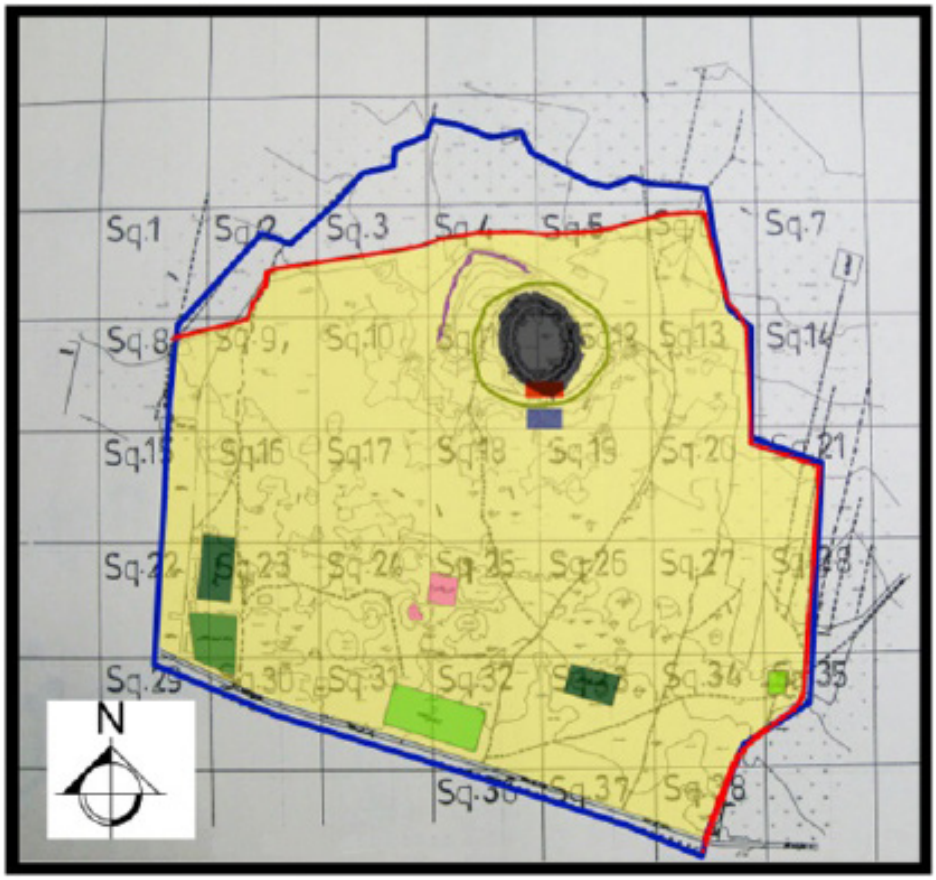


Fig. 3: *Topographic plan of Aveh historical site.*

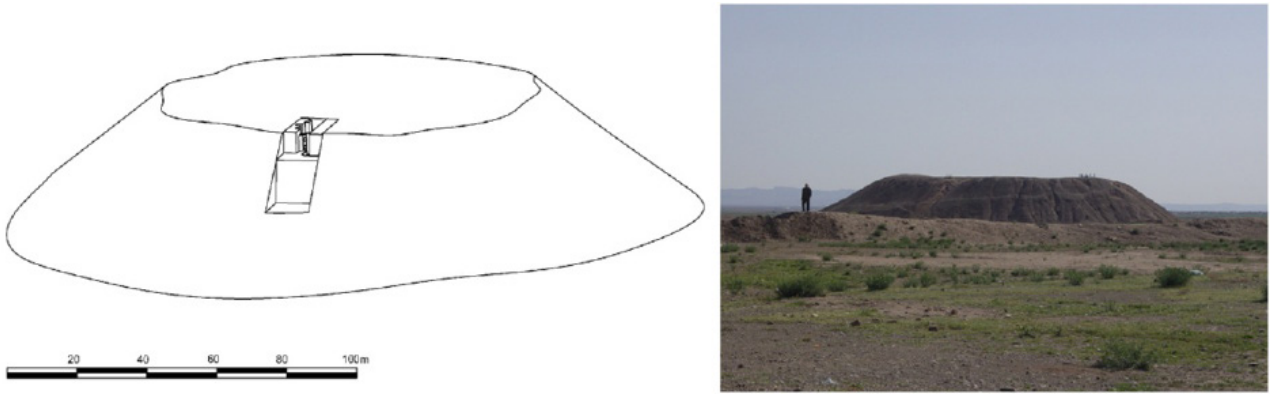


Fig. 4: *The ancient hill of Aveh (Photo by Authors)*

the modern village (Aveh), situated on the old settlement. Fortunately, a Safavids' Caravanserai which is located in the south and near its southern border, is another 4-Ivan structure, relatively small with a 20×20 courtyard and 20 portico room around it. There are docks at the back of the rooms which are crossed by the four Ivan. Probably, this structure dates to Safavid era. Fortunately, we noted that top of the site and citadel has undergone less damage than the other parts. There are some pictures depicting the current situation of the Aveh's old site, before the backhoe tragedy.

Based on the evidence from the potteries, we found this settlement a small village belonging to the Timurids period for a short time. This Sparse and Temporal Layer was destructed due to backhoe activities.

Finally, after an unknown period of time, people were moved to a village situated in the south of the suburb (sharestan) and have been living there since then (Fig. 5). The modern Aveh village, which is located in the south of ancient area, has features like the holy area Panjtan, and an old cemetery in the southern part of the village, no sign of which can be seen today. Considering the local information, some pot shreds gained by digging wells, structure foundation and other structural activities, which may date back to the Safavid era or even before.

The surveys on the area and mound, the information about the antiquarian and also the collected samples from the area surface illustratemany periods where the area had been occupied, including:

- motifs, horizontally, the same as Sialk III at the central plateau.

- Red and brown seared ware, with no decoration which can be related to Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze age.

- Iron Age gray ware.

- Historical plain ware, regarding the local information and antiquarian findings, some of them certainly date back to Sassanid's era.

- Seljuks' enameled ware

- Ilkhanids' luster ware

According to the topographic map which was prepared by the Markazi province ICHTO[1] office, the 220-Hectare area is divided into 200×200 squares. These divisions were the excavation crew's base, which was labeled Sq. (an abbreviation of square) and numbered from 1-38. Each square was subdivided to 10×10 squares labeled A-T at the N-S axis, and I-XX at the E-W axis. Consequently, there would be 400 of 100-m^2 potential trenches within each main square (Fig. 3). Since then, three seasons have been conducted in the area (Feb.2005 to June 2006, and the Spring 2008 respectively). The excavation was carried out in three different areas; at the citadel's slope edge, on top of the site, at the

1. Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO).



Fig. 5: *Areial image of Aveh historical site. (After: Google Earth 2007.9.16)*

Sharestan immediately after the ditch in the south of the citadel, and finally around the Fazl-Ibn-e Suleiman shrine. In the first excavation season, the first designated unit, Sq. II-JXIX, was on the level part of the mound and the second one was after the ditch designated as Sq. I8-BXIX, which started to be excavated at the same time. Regarding their locations along the N-S axis, labeled XIX, these two units are 110m distance from each other. After reaching the virgin soil, the other 2 units named Sq. II-KXIX and Sq. I8-AXIX were excavated. Continuity of excavation at this partto reach virgin soil will be conducted during the next seasons. If possible, it will be attempted to complete full dating of the site.

According to the evidence obtained from the excavation in the Citadel, yard, and graves around the shrine, there was an extensive and long-lasting settlement in the Mongol era. However, after a relatively long settlement, the city was abandoned so that all the objects were carried away by the people; even potsherds can't be easily found. After a while, some areas of the site have been established sparsely again.

Background State in Aveh

The vastness of the site and scattered relics on one hand, and the historical and geographical evidences on the other hand, imply that Aveh has been a relatively big and important city, from Sassanid period till the aforementioned period. In The Islamic period, this city was part of Iraq Ajam, or Jebal. In written texts, evidence about Aveh is very imprecise and scattered, in maps along with scripts, the place of Aveh is shown in Avaj, which is between Takestan and Hamadan in modern day. In (1219AD/616AH), Genghis started his onslaught to Iran. After him, his sons were giventhe power and for their western conquered territories, which Iran also was among them, they sent rulers like CitadelOose and Citadel Hoon. After Holakoo, his children and grandchildren got to be in power and the last of them was Abu Saeed Bahador, which like two of his predecessors, Oljaito and Ghazan, had become a Muslim. The era of Ilkhanids came to an end after the death of Abu-Saeed in (1345AD/736AH), but scattered and non-centralized presence of Mongols in different parts continued until (1360sAD/736sAH). A pewter coin of Abu Saeed obtained from the well of a house in this city shows that until the last days of AbouSaeed reign, relative calmness dominated Aveh and an ordinary life was going on. Finding star-shaped tiles from a grave near ImamzadehFazl-Ibne-Suleiman, which according to its inscription dates back to (1285AD/684AH), indicates that Aveh has calm enough during the first year of Citadel hoon Khan's reign, so that people could order plaster modeling and dedicated tiles for their relatives' graves.

Aveh Architecture

Excavations have proved that during Mongol era, especially during the Ilkhanid period, Aveh had been a very habitable and active city (Fig. 6). Unfortunately, in the existing texts about Mongol armies during Genghis khan and his successors until the emergences of Holakoo Khan, which was after Kharazmshahian, have several times swept through Iraq Ajam, nothing is mentioned about encountering Aveh. Excavations also are not enough to demonstrate anything about the occurrence of any war like Bokhara and Nishabour.

At the excavation area, on the hill, and within two 100-m^2 units, there was a kind of ordinary architecture with several overlapped floors and no designated maps. The structure's depth was less

than 1m characterized with bricks being 1.5×18×18 in dimensions. During Ilkhanates, Aveh had a royal citadel on top of a castle-hill which had some prehistoric settlements. The obtained pottery from this site show the prehistoric settlement (Fig. 7). The citadel was separated from the city by a deep and wide moat. There was a defense wall after the moat which northern and western parts are still visible. The city was formed around the citadel, mostly at the south of citadel and moat. Because of the acute slope, it is a difficult job to reach the citadel. Looking at the hill from a correct angle, from west and north-west, one can see the shadow of the sloped road on the north-west part of the hill, which has started from the flat plain and with a gentle slope, has reached the southern entrance



Fig. 6: *Aerial Image of the Aveh (After: Google Earth 2013.8.14).*



Fig. 7: *Potteries of Settlement Prehistoric (Photo by Authors).*

door.

The slope of this accessing road is so that one can reach the door on a horseback. According to the excavation in front of the door, there was an adobe-made wall at the end of the sloped road and in front of the entrance, which covered the all 10 meters of the trench and has gone so deep. As the platform is located at the age of the hill, its western ledge is washed out by rain and wind, and the bricks are worn-out. The open space in front of the entrance was dock-like and might have been used as a place for the formalities of entering and exiting, to and from the citadel. Fortifications around the citadel were more than 6 meter thick and had been made from adobes with some rows of bricks to keep the external view perpendicular. The entrance of the citadel has recessed about half of the fortification thickness and there has been created a place of 280×350 cm for the entrance (Fig. 8).

The piers in both sides of the door are made with boulder and as a quarter-circle connected to fortification wall. The roof side piers, with a thickness of around 85 cm, are made with cricks of 25×25×5cm which are laid on side wall and zigzag from the width of the entrance from (the port) of the door is 190cm and has a threshold from a rock. This threshold is 10cm higher than the outer stop for the entrance place. Passing the door, people enter a porch, at the first there is a recess and then a bulge and again a recess. The right side is flat and both sides are made of brick. Most probably this porch has been roofed, but nothing has remained from the roof now. The floor at the porch is tiled, and there was a gutter under its brick-stone tiled floor which its walls have been made of big bricks covered with brick and stone. This gutter passing under threshold enters into the stop for the entrance place and after turning 90 degree and with a gentle slope, continues toward east and then vanishes in unexcavated wall of the trench. Most probably this gutter led the train and other matters out of citadel. Continuation of entrance porch and its access to the yard and other space is not clear as it is not excavated.

A rampart that was constructed of mud brick and brick was found. It appears the mentioned rampart surrounded mound at the conjunction with the terrace. In unit Sq. II-KXIX, a threshold with herring-bone like vault was found, preserved, which cut the rampart solidity. Regarding its dimensions, it cannot be the area's main entrance. Its width

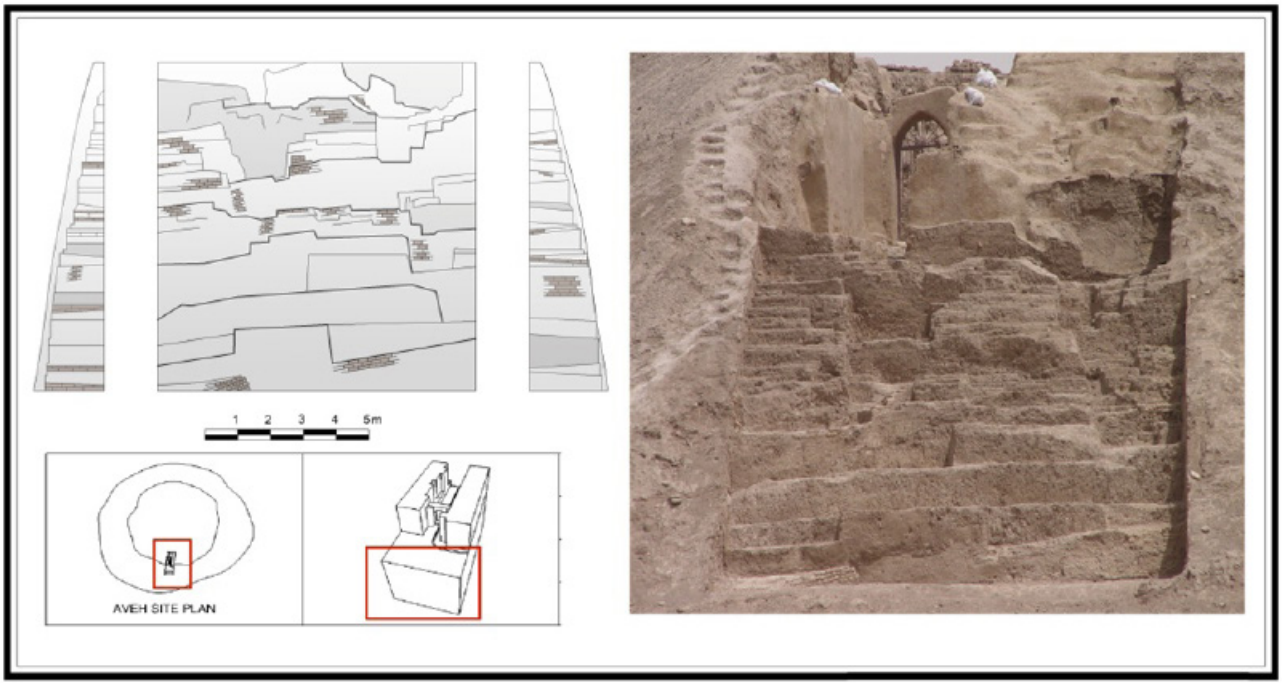


Fig. 8: *Aveh excavation site (Citadel in top of mound) (Photo by Authors).*

is190 cm and it has a trimmed rock structure at the lateral bases, at the rise point of vault is made of 25×25×5 cm bricks. The (tare chini style) caused the arc shape. There are 2 gradient projections with a quarter circle forms which one of its ends reaches to rock bases; the other linked to rampart that make a beautiful and shapely appearance, added to façade strength. The mentioned façade is completely plastered. At the unknown time an ambiguous text was engraved on the plaster. Regarding the pottery evidence, the rampart and façade belong to Ilkhanid period and all the evidence and documents say there had been a fort or castle on the mound, surrounded and protected by the ditch (Fig. 8).

At the low excavation area with 2 units, one can see signs of an ordinary feature, mentioned earlier, completely disturbed by loader trucks. Beneath this level, there was found 2 residence remains. The northern structure was excavated relatively completely, but the southern one was left half way through. According to what was discovered from northern structures, its general outline can be described as:

1-A corridor ended to a small square courtyard with a right angle turn. At the southern side of the courtyard, there are kitchen and latrine on the 2 ends of corridor. At the north there is a big room with full-length windows tripartite door, and a small closet with no entrance to the yard, beside it. At the east and west ends of the courtyard there are rooms for an oven and a stove, probably under the ceiling (Fig. 3). In these 2 units, 4 wells were recovered, which were excavated to virgin soil. Every 2 of them belonged to one residence, one of them being for the kitchen, and the other for the latrine. There were myriad recovered pot shreds from wells, which are evidence for this structure attribution to Ilkhanids period.

Unfortunately, no similar citadel or fortress (Fig. 9) has reminded from the Mongol era to be compared with this citadel and decipher shape and application of different spaces. Even in historical texts, there is no hint of the rulers who lived in this citadel. Through extending the excavation in different directions, remnants of a dwelling house were unearthed, which is unique in its type. This house has an area of 100 m^2 and with regard to its dimensions and also the evidences obtained from excavation, it seems that it must have belonged to people of lower ranking Aveh society during the Mongol era. This house was situated at the end of a 2-meter-wide alley and on top of a small mound which is created because of digging the moat. At the back of the northern wall of the house, there is a wall which possibly belonged to the fortification of a noble part of city and separated it from the citadel and the moat around it. Because of the destruction of the loader machines, it is not clear that the ally was dead-end or had access to moat and citadel. The building of house is at the west of ally and its entrance had a curved step from brick with 30cm height. After passing the entrance, we reached a long 1-meter-wide porch which had access to the yard after a 90º turn. The porch situated so that if the door was opened, it was impossible to see the inside from the outside. At the right side of the porch, there has been a lavatory with a door to the yard and its well had been excavated by illegal excavators. At the left side of the porch, and again, with a door to the yard, there was a kitchen which its floor was made of compressed soil and almost in its center there was a clay jar installed whose edge was leveled with the floor and there was a hole toward the well at a distance of 50cm from it (Fig. 10).

Maybe this was something like a syphon to prevent emission of unpleasant smells from well. The kitchen well was intact and at a depth of 3 meters of its shaft, there was a tunnel toward the south which connected to neighbor well at a distance of 2 meters. The neighbor's well also was intact as well as its ring and cover stone. This kitchen was among space which remained after Mongol era and its floor rose about 60 cm in the aforementioned scattered and small settlement, and its walls were plastered with chalk to use it as a living room. Remnants of this room wave on the surface and its signs appeared immediately after cleaning of the trench, and for this reason it suffered the most damage from the activities of loader machines.

The house yard with the dimensions of 550×450cm was fully tiled with brick and was probably not roofed. The central part of the yard was excavated and damaged by illegal excavators

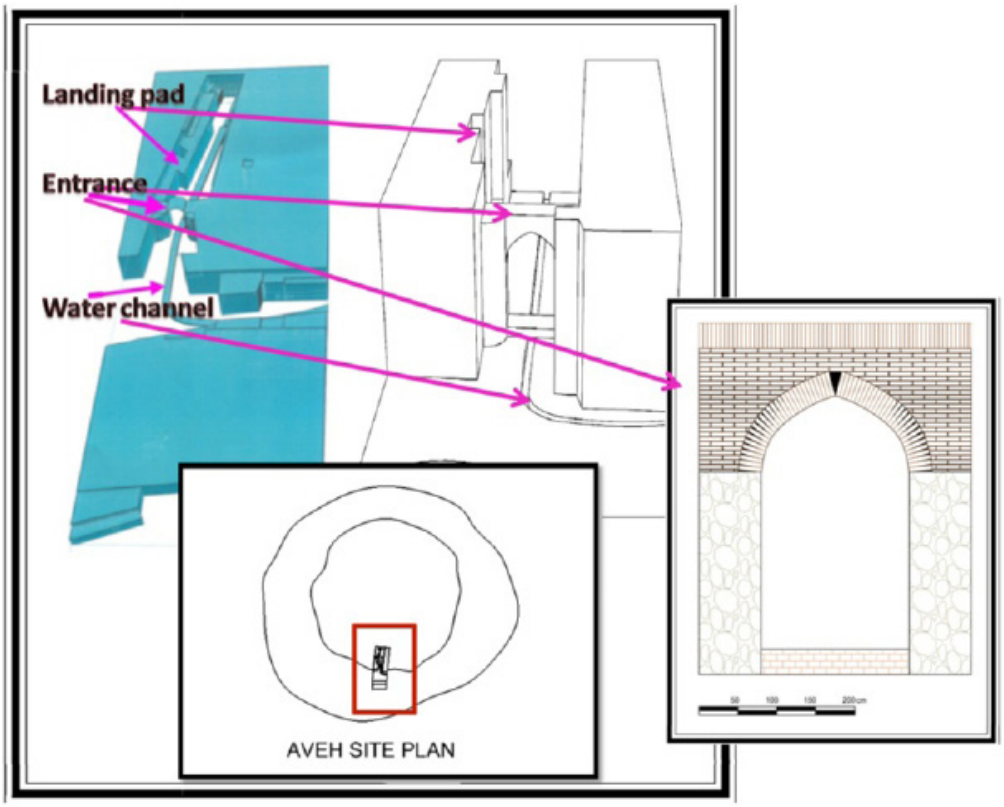


Fig. 9: *An Ivan-like entrance (Citadel Plan) (Drawing by Authors).*

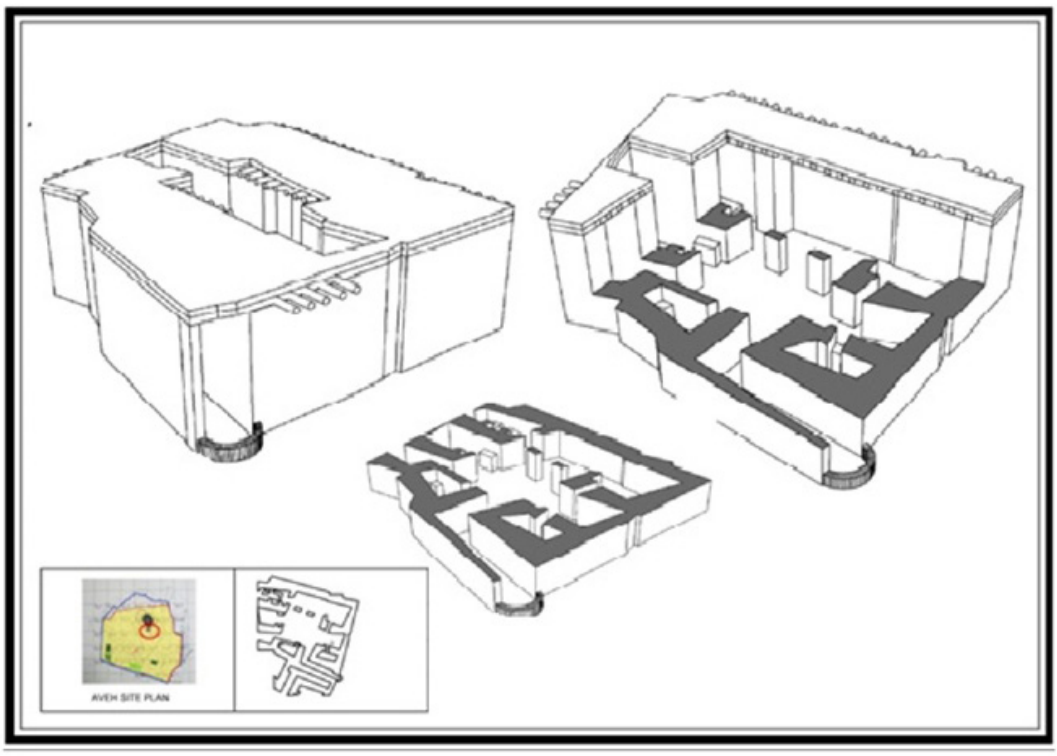


Fig. 10: *Architectural Structure of Aveh (residental Part) (Drawing by Authors).*

who were searching for a well there. At the northern end of the yard, there was a rectangular room which covered the entire northern wall. It was 3×14 meters at whose west there was a closet with an adobe wall which decreased the main room's unusual length. Room floor was made of compressed soil and captured the light from the yard. Despite 2 separating piers, these windows-ports were in the form of 3 doors which was common in Safavid, Qajar and early period of Pahlavi architecture. There were two spaces on both eastern and western sides of the yard and between the walls of the lavatory and the room from one side and the kitchen and the room from the other side which it is not clear if they were roofed or not, but in front of the lavatory there was a fire place and in front of the kitchen an oven that must have been used for cooking during hot seasons. Unfortunately, there was nothing similar to this house among the buildings from Mongol era. This house was made from adobe and bricks used for the foundation and in some piers. There was no brick layer to prevent clay from washing out. This layer was possibly favoured by wealthy people.

Doors, windows and the roof of the house were made from wood which there could be found no signs of them, only some parts of joints and fitting like doornails were found. Donaldo Wilber believes that the architecture of Mongol era is a continuous stage of Iranian architecture which is a reflection of previous eras' details. He believes that the architecture of the Ilkhanate era is derived from that of the Seljuqs. When Seljuq architecture reached its zenith, it was 4 or 5 centuries after the Arabs conquered Iran. The experimental form of the earliest centuries ended up with a precious and clear style of Seljuqs. As stated by Wilber, Seljuqs and Mongol architecture were similar from the viewpoint of their status and condition of emergence. Before entering Iran and inhabiting there, Seljuqs also, like Mongol, had a nomadic life and had no architectural style. After a relative calmness during their period,Iranian architecture reached its zenith thanks to its proficient architects (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: *Excavation Area both (city & citadel) (Photo by Authors).*

During Seljuqs and Mongols era, building religious construction, like mosques, schools and shrines, were preferred as a sign of economic development. We know nothing about palaces and luxuriance buildings, which were surely built during the era, because they were built from ephemeral or weak materials which didn't last long and there is no sign of them (Wilber 1955: 129-131).

Aveh Ceramics

Recovered potsherds include kinds of Ilkhanids' common type, especially luster ware with small and middle-sized bowls. It can be said that, as a primary result, Aveh ceramics at the Ilkhanid period were carried out by a unique style with typical characteristics, some of which transferred to the museum as Soltanabad wares by A. E. Pope. He collected some potsherds in Markazi province (Fig. 1), and named the Soltanabad wares, Arâk old name. One of these wares is a representation of four women sitting on a camel litter a typical Mongolian appearance, but on the outside face there is an ambiguous script written in golden letters on a white background. Another type of these vessels, locally known as (Green Pen), there are green repetitive scripts of the Holy Quran on inside face of the vessels (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12: *Aveh is luster tile with scripts of the Holy Quran on inside face of the vessels (octagon/ hasht-par) (Photo by Authors).*

Luster ware of Aveh

Some relatively intact Mongol luster ware was found in three wells belonging to two houses. Every house in Aveh had at least two wells, one in the kitchen and one another in lavatory. All the garbage and trash, including useless potsherds, were dumped into the wells. Illegal excavators found the same wells in Islamic sites. During an excavation in the citadel and Sharestan, some relatively imperfect or broken star-shaped tiles (octagon)(Fig. 12)were also found. In addition, some intact and brick-shaped eight-winged tiles, as well as some parts of the Altar and some other parts were found around the shrine. In each of the 3 sections of the site, a lot of separator vanes (Persian=Sarpareh; a device used to prevent sticking pottery together in kiln) were found. According to the materials found, pottery and tile ovens existed in Aveh.

Later, we will discuss the similarities and differences between the pottery in Aveh and other important sites in the Mongol era. Most researchers consider three different periods in terms of applying this technology for producing tiles and pottery:

- The primary luster tiles belong to the third and the fourth centuries AH, in Nishapur, Susa, and Ray.

- The middle luster tiles belong to the fifth and the ninth centuries AH, in Kashan, Ray, Saveh, Gorgan, and the thakht-e-solayman.

- The late luster tiles belong to the tenth and the twelfth centuries AH, in Kashan, Isfehan, Kerman, Yazd, and Shiraz.

The best luster tile belongs to the sixth and the seventh centuries AH (Tohidi 2000: 274). Based on the existing studies, Egypt was the origin of luster ware, and the technology was transferred to Iran and Mesopotamia. A number of researchers believe that Iran is the origin of this industry. In the middle ages, cities like Kashan, Rey, Saveh, Qom, Gorgan, Takht-e-Solayman, etc. were of the centers of luster ware and most researchers, including Tohidi, mentioned Soltanabad too. Tohidi even

referred to the European explorers of Soltanabad (Tohidi 2000: 275). However, during the reign of FathAli Shah, the modern city of Arâkand the Soltanabad were built as a fortress and there is no city named Soltanabad in this reign. This name was used by Pop for the pottery he bought in this region. In recent years, excavations in Aveh and Zulfabad proved that Markazi Province is an important center for the production of luster tile, and the origin of Soltanabad golden tile can be determined by considering the technology, the decorations used, and the differences between styles. Based on plenty of illegal excavations occurred in two recent centuries, it is obvious that the region's luster pottery were sold by local antique dealers under the name of something else and finally were sold to museums and private collectors. It seems that Kashan was a manufacturing hub of luster pottery during the Mongol era and some other centers which currently are known as manufacturers of luster tiles, in fact were the importers of potteries produced in these centers. Other centers were somewhat under the influence of Kashan style too. Ray also was one of the main manufacturers of golden potteries before being destroyed by Mongols. Generally, researchers believe in a distinction between the Kashan and Ray style. They believe that Kashan style is recognized by fine decorating and miniatures while Ray style has citadel decorating and figures. Despite fine figures, the entire surface of pottery was full of decoration in Kashan, while in Ray there were empty spaces along citadel figures without any decorating (Kiani *et al.* 1984: 50).

Considering the vicinity of Aveh to Qom, Saveh, Ray and Kashan, the luster potteries of Aveh were under the influence of the combined style of the above-mentioned centers, although Aveh had its own innovations. One can say Aveh was mostly under the influence of Kashan style. The golden potteries in Aveh were made of kaolin.

Moreover, the tiles and potteries found in Aveh were decorated in two different styles:

- White surface with luster motifs

- luster surface with white motifs

Aveh luster potteries had a wide range of colors including: olive-green, copper brown, golden brown, tan, dark brown, turquoise blue, azure blue. This kind of motifs also were applied on potteries like as star-shaped tile, brick tile (Fig. 13) and the other type of pottery as well as citadel e and small



Fig. 13: *Several kinds of eight tiles in Aveh (Photo by Authors).*

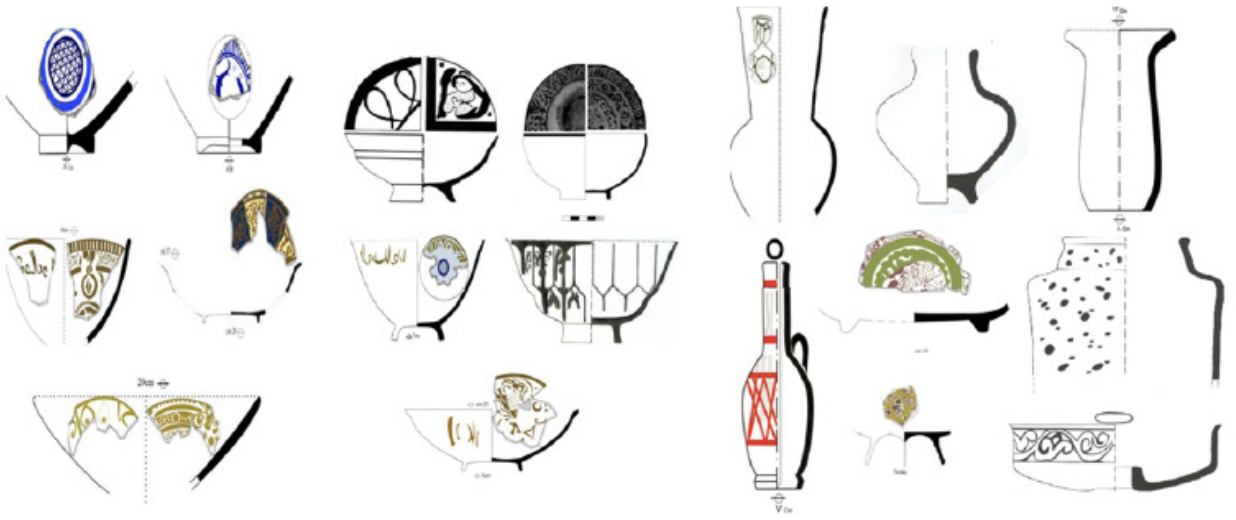


Fig. 14: *The common from of Aveh potteries with different color spectrum (After: Authors).*

bowls, frames, vases and dishes with a long neck (Fig. 14).

Along with geometrical figures, plant motifs, and arabesque traceries, common motifs in Aveh golden potteries were pictographies of women sitting in litter mostly depicted inside the bowls (Fig. 15).

These women had dresses with floral motifs and full of decorations (Fig. 15), and they had small eyes and mouth with long eyebrows with a plutocrat gesture (Fig. 16). Great care was applied in their hairdressing and fillets. Their faces were pretty and similar to that of Mongols'. In Saveh, women were not drawn beautifully, but most of them had facial nevusin Kashan. Image of women in Saveh and Kashan were drawn with stretched and downward nose, while women of Saveh came with a small pretty nose. The star-shaped tiles in Aveh were comparable with a similar sample found in Takht-e-Solyman. These tiles were mounted vertically around the grave walls. The other content posted on the tiles were paradigms of the holy Quran (Fig. 17); while some tiles from the citadel and the main site were inscribed around the edges with poems, especially the ones by Firdowsi. Eight-winged tiles were decorated by plant, arabesque traceries constitute human and different birds and animal motifs, and in Painted tiles birds' motifs were especially dominant, in addition to plant and animal motifs. Here, as previously mentioned,

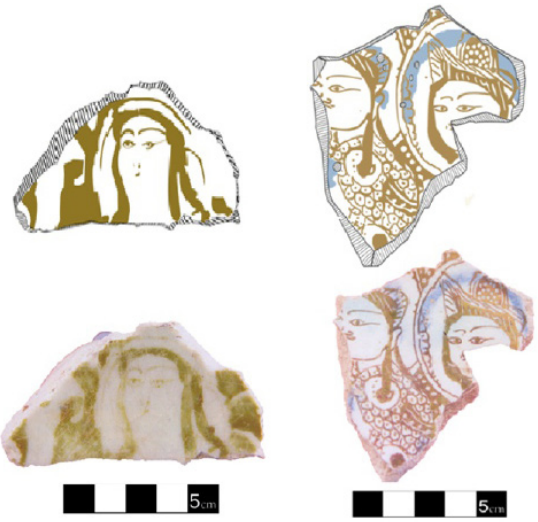


Fig. 15: *Motif of women on Aveh luster potteries (After: Authors).*

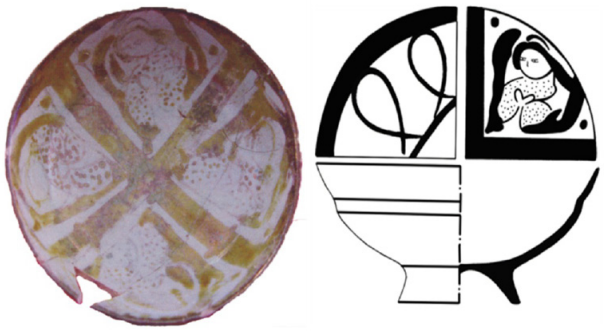


Fig. 16: *Small eyes and mouth with long eyebrows in Aveh's Motif women(After: Authors).*



Fig. 17: *Aveh's star-shape (octagon)tiles (Photo by Authors).*

we have both procedures to design tiles as were used by those people (Wilber 1955: 129-131).

Conclusions

According to historical documents and results from 3 seasons of excavations in citadel, city and rampart of historical site of Aveh as well as the results from analyzing the soil and luster pottery in Aveh, it was proved that Aveh was a developed city in terms of social, political and economic conditions in Ilkhanid period. Citadel, city and rampart were principal components of the city in the Pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. Excavations in citadel of Aveh denotea giant and considerable citadel. Pottery found in shrines and houses, particularly the golden pottery, demonstrates the existence of a style specific to the region, a style similar to that of Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods. According to the experimental results from the region's pottery and soil, we believe that Aveh had its own pottery. One may ask "Why Aveh's pottery has been unknown till now?"It is surely because no other excavations were done, except the excavations in 2006, 2007 and 2009. Of course illegal excavations in previous years are excluded which were to find objects and golden pottery. It seems that objects found through illegal excavations in Aveh are spread in the museums across the world under the name of other cities, so it is necessary to identify them again, with regard to the specifications of Aveh's pottery, and represent them as Aveh's culture.

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