

Pottery Classification, Typology and Chronology at Tepe Yalfan, Hamedan

Tayebeh Almasi¹, Kazem Mollazadeh^{1,*} and Abbas Motarjem¹

¹*Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Art and Archaeology Bu_Ali Sina University. Hamedan. Iran*

(Received: 18/ 03/ 2016; Received in Revised form: 06/ 06/ 2016; Accepted: 01/ 02/ 2017)

Tepe Yalfan is one of the Iron Age III sites at the southeast of Hamedan, at the junction of the Simin and Yalfan rivers. This site was excavated in 2006 and 2007, in the frame of the activities related to the construction of Ekbatan Dam, and revealed remains of a mud-brick wall. Potsherd recovered from the excavation indicate an Iron Age III chronology for the site. Comprehensive studies on Iron Age III pottery have rarely been conducted; therefore, the present paper attempts to study classification, typology and chronology of the regional pottery to understand part of the pottery production during the Iron Age III. Typological studies of the pottery from Tepe Yalfan led to a classification into three types: buff, gray and cooking wares. These ceramics were compared to the ones from sites of the Iron Age III, including Nush-i Jan, Godin II, Baba Jan II, Sialk VI, the cemetery B at Sialk, and Ozbaki IV. Based on comparative studies, one could date Yalfan to circa 800-600 BCE.

Keywords: *Iron Age III, Median period, Tepe Yalfan, Median pottery.*

Introduction

Material evidence is the most important element in archaeology to describe societies and to make induction or deduction for reconstructing them (Alizadeh 2001: 153). Classification is among the most fundamental analytical methods in archeology since it permits to obtain an advancement in our knowledge starting from a dataset. Archeological excavations usually reveal different categories of materials suitable for classification. One type of classification consists in the division of particular sets of data into several standard “classes”. Typology, in fact, classifies data in specific separate groups which could be compared with other groups of the same kind (Adams and Adams 1991: pp. 47-49). Pottery provides the most important archaeological field-work data for dating the archaeological sites and determining cultural chronology. A clear understanding of pottery in relation to its context has a key role in the evaluation of cultural, stylistic and chronological issues.

Iron Age III (800-500 BCE) coincides with the Median period (circa 750-550 BCE) as well as with events reported by historical sources such as

the alliance between western and northern Iranian tribes, the “rise” of the Medes, the treaty between the Medes and the Babylonians, the fall of Assyria, the establishment of Ecbatana as the Median ruling center, the collapse of the Medes (Mollazadeh 2014: 55-57). Studies on this period began with Girshman's excavation at Sialk in 1933 (Ghrishman 1939) and were + by Young's article (1965) on the division of the Iron Age pottery into three horizons: early gray western wares, late gray western wares, and late buff western wares. In the same year, Dyson (1965), on the basis of his excavations at Hasanlu, subdivided the chronology of the Early Iron Age into Iron Age I, Iron Age II, and Iron Age III. Later on, excavations were carried out at other different sites such as Godin, Baba Jan, and Uzbaki in order to investigate Iron-Age cultures.

The study area is located in the southern part of the Hamedan plain and is surrounded by Mt. Alvand and its foothills in the south, west and east, and by Bahar and Lalejin ranges in the north. Appropriate environmental conditions for farming and animal husbandry, mineral resources, and a strategic location on a main east-west route are among the potential factors which attracted human settlement to this area since the Chalcolithic period up to now.

*Corresponding author. E-mail address: Mollazadeh@basu.ac.ir



Moush Tepe (Mohammadifar *et al.* 2015), Aqdash Tepe, Piseh, and Yalfan are some sites dated to Iron Age III. Pottery from the Iron Age III is not well known, and related studies are rare. The main reasons for this can be listed as follows: neglecting the importance of Early Iron Age settlements when identifying archaeological sites during surveys, the scarce number of ceramics found from related strata during excavations, the delay in the publication of studies from significant sites, the lack of specific pottery studies concerning key sites such as Sialk and Uzbaki, the low degree of differentiation between the common ware pertaining to the Iron Age III and the plain pottery from the Achaemenid period possibly leading to data confusion in a comparative framework. On the basis of bibliographic researches and by virtue of the comparison between the pottery from Yalfan and that from Nush-i Jan, Baba Jan, Godin, Sialk, Uzbaki, and Zarbolagh, the present article represents an attempt to typify the Iron Age III pottery and to define the chronology of the site.

The Studies of Iron Age III

It is assumed that Iron Age III coincides with Median period, based on excavations at Sialk in 1933 (Girshman 1939), where Girshman attributed plain buff wares to new immigrants. Excavations at Sialk also raised questions about people associated with that culture and their political, economic structure. Later excavations were carried out to answer such questions.

One of the most outstanding Median sites is Nush-i Jan in Malayer plain, excavated by Stronach during 1965-1975. The discovery of a temple, a hypostyle hall, storage rooms and methods of storing demonstrate the importance of the site in the field of religion and religious architecture. Despite the scarcity of ceramic data¹, pottery from the site was categorized within four groups: buff ware, gray ware, kitchen ware and a class of fragile wares. Pottery production used the wheel-made technique, mica temper and was intended to obtain vessels chiefly characterized by a functional purpose.

Godin is another western Iranian site, located on the Khorasan High Road with a chronology

stretching from the Chalcolithic to the Islamic period. Level II² includes a hypostyle hall, storage rooms with connected chambers and towers. It yielded three groups of wares: coarse, medium and fine, produced in buff, red and gray colors (Gopnik 2011). Godin pottery indicates the importance of this administrative building on the High Road through the variability of its ceramic forms.

Tepe Baba Jan is another western Iranian site, excavated by Claire Goff in 1967-1969. Levels II³ and I of this mound are contemporary to the Median period. Pottery finds from this site were classified into five groups: plain, coarse, medium, fine and unusual wares, comparable to those from Godin and Nush-i Jan (Goff 1985).

In the Central Plateau of Iran, Girshman excavated Sialk during 1933-1937 and established a sequence based on six cultural periods. Level VI consisted of a mud brick structure on the southern mound, while Sialk cemetery B represented the Median period, characterised by a local pottery culture. This site's pottery can be divided into the four following groups: painted/decorated, red, gray and black wares. Sherds from level VI and cemetery B that are related to Iron Age III resembled those of Nush-i Jan, Godin and Uzbaki (Helwing 2006: 39; Fahimi 2004).

Uzbaki at Savaj-Bulagh, in the Iranian Central Plateau is another site bearing evidence from the same period. It was excavated by Majidzadeh in 1998. It has four periods of settlement from the 6th to the 1st millennium BCE. Level IV dates to the Iron Age III (Majidzadeh 2010: 40-49) and consists of a governor's building, storage rooms and hypostyle

1- Nush-i Jan has both two main and some peripheral settlement phases. Pottery data generally concern peripheral settlement (Mollazadeh 2014: 140).

2- Level II consists of two main (800-670 BCE) and peripheral settlement (580-480 BCE) phases (Gopnik 2011: 343). Crabtree (2011: 324-335) confirms a general homogeneity of the pottery in both phases on the basis of the presence of the same pottery types.

3- Goff suggests IIb and IIa as Median; she dates Ib of Baba Jan to 600-500 BCE interpreting it as Median and Persian, while she dates Ia as Achaemenid (1985, 5).



halls similar to those at Godin. Recovered wares include buff, red, and gray, which are comparable to those from Sialk, Nush-i Jan and Godin (Majidzadeh 2001).

Zarbalagh, excavated in 2006, is an archaeological site in Qom Province that has a structure largely made of stone. This structure was later intentionally filled with mud brick and stones. The wares were divided into buff, red, and gray on the basis of their color, while were subdivided into bowls, jars and kitchen wares according to their form. Also this pottery assemblage is comparable to those of Nush-i Jan and Godin (Malekzade *et al.* 2014).

Studies at other sites, including Saram in Shamshirgah (Fahimi 2003b), Vasoun of Kahak in Qom (Malekzade 2004), Moush Tepe (Mohammadifar *et al.* 2015) and Piseh in Hamedan, and Gunespan in Malayer (Naseri *et al.* 2016) indicate that also elsewhere in the Central Plateau of Iran the archaeological evidence from the Iron Age III can be considered as pertaining to the sphere of political and cultural influence of the Medes (Fig. 1).

Geographical Position of Yalfan

The mound of Yalfan or Senekh Dag (meaning “Broken Mountain” in the local language) is located 6km southeast of Hamedan, at the north of Yalfan village (2-3 km away), on the junction between the Yalfan and the Simin rivers. The mound became isolated like a peninsula after the Ekbatan Dam was built in 1961. The base of the hill has an elliptical shape, while the profile has an unchanging steep slope. Tepe Yalfan was 40 m high originally, but after the construction of the dam, it rises only from 7 to 10 m out of water. (Fig. 2) (Motarjem 2006: 2-3).

Its location in Sirjan–Sanandaj zone, on a bed of metamorphic rocks, represents a particular geographical feature. Considering the geological map, the larger part of the Yalfan river basin is situated on granite, andalusite, silimanite and schist, with high rate of erosion, as seen in quartz and mica samples (Khanlari 2010: 59). The location of the site on the junction between the Yalfan and the Simin rivers provides permanent water and sand. Moreover, Yalfan is located 10.5 km from Tepe Hegmataneh, 43 Km from Nush-i Jan and 55 Km from Godin Tepe.

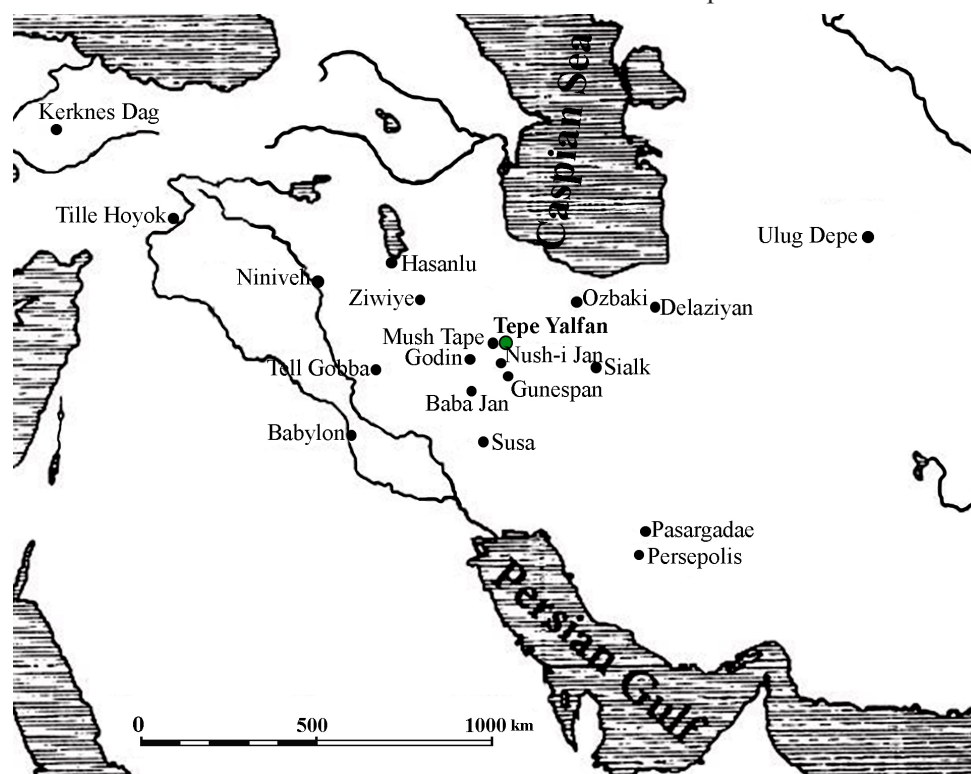


Fig. 1: Location of Tepe Yalfan in relation to other the first millennium BC sites
(adapted from Stronach and Roaf 2007: Fig. 1.1)





Fig. 2: TepeYalfan as seen from the east.

Excavations History and Study at Yalfan Tepe

After increasing the height of Ekbatan Dam, the site was discovered through a survey carried out in 2005 behind the dam (Mohammadifar and Motarjem 2006). Then Yalfan underwent two seasons of rescue excavation in 2006 and 2007 (Motarjem 2006). The excavations were conducted by Bu Ali Sina University under the direction of Abbas Motarjem and unearthed remnants of a structure made by 30×30×10 cm mud bricks with stone foundations, a cemetery of Islamic period in the upper part, and also a mud brick platform in the western part. Chronologically, the site has three occupation periods from Iron Age III, Parthian and Islamic period (Motarjem 2006: 1-12). During excavations, parts of 12 horizontal rows of mud brick walls were recovered. Considering the limits of excavations which showed only a small part of the walls, it is impossible to determine what kind of structure it was. 1060 potsherds were recovered from Iron Age III layers barely from the exterior of the structure. Farmihani in his M.A. dissertation

(Farmihani 2008), and Mollazadeh, in another individual research, both studied this pottery (Mollazadeh 2015: 235-242).

Typology

The 1060 potsherds dating back to the Iron Age III were studied according to color, function, finishing techniques and production techniques. Each type was separately compared to samples from other sites in order to date the site and to understand the function of the vessels (Table. 1).

Table. 1: Types of Yalfan pottery

No	Name of Types	Characteristics of Types
1	Buff ware	From buff to red, temper of mica and sand, wheel-made, well fired, slipped
2	Gray ware	From gray to black, temper of mica, wheel-made, burnished surface, without decoration
3	Cooking ware	From buff to red, temper of mica and grained sand, hand-made, under fired



Type 1: Buff Ware

Buff wares, including different colors such as buff, pink, orange and red, represent the 87% of the whole collection. They are wheel-made, well-cooked, with temper of quartz, mica, and fine-ground sand. The collection includes 51% of rims; 7.5% of rims with handles; 17% of potsherds pertaining to the vessels' body; 16% of bases; 5.5% handles; 3% of spouts. 75% of handles are horizontal and close to rim, while the rest are vertical. The collection totally consists of 25% burnished, 36% thick mud and 33% diluted mud covers, whereas the rest 8% remains unknown.

Buff wares of Yalfan are wheel-made, well fired and tempered with mica and quartz. Regarding production quality and function of buff wares, they are divided into three classes: high quality, plain, and coarse buff. At minor scale, it appears that there is heterogeneity in the color of wares, diluted mud cover, burnish and decorative techniques. Accordingly, one could suggest a classification of the buff wares in 14 types (Fig. 3 and 4), as seen in table 2 (Table. 2).

-High quality buff ware: it embraces 34% of buff wares and is shown as groups 1 to 4 in table 2. Burnishing decoration techniques dominantly appears on the mud cover. The main forms are bowls and jars.

-Plain buff ware: it embraces 52% of all buff wares and is shown as groups 5-11 in table 2. The main forms are bowls, jars and jugs. Mud cover has been dominantly used in this type, which displays rarely decorated or painted potsherds.

-Coarse buff ware: it embraces 14% of buff pottery and is shown in table 2 as groups 12 to 14. Forms include bowls, pots, and vats, with a predominantly cooking and storage function and decorated with augmented and incised designs.

Buff wares are generally plain, undecorated, or with limited decorations. The decorations include repetitive linear incisions, finger and linear designs on the body, theriomorphic augmented motifs of ram and bird on handles, and brown painted linear designs. The pottery is functionally kitchenware including bowls, vats, and pots in form.

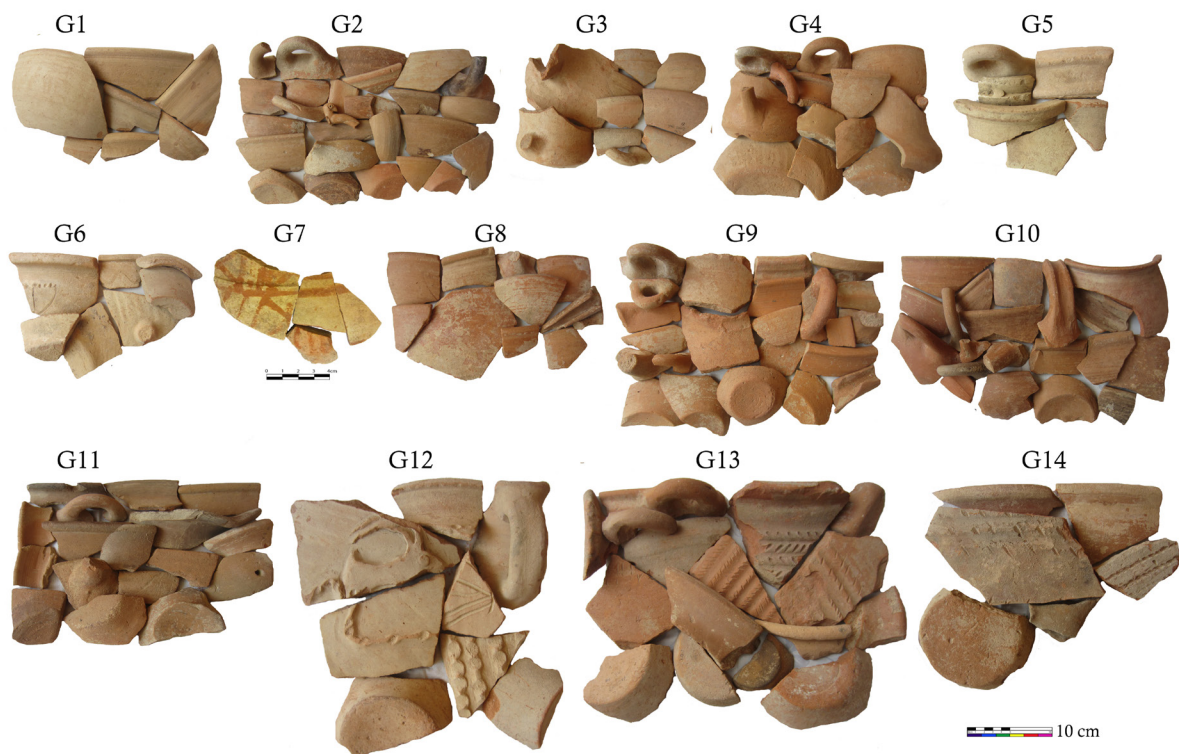


Fig. 3: Overview of samples of the 14 types of buff wares



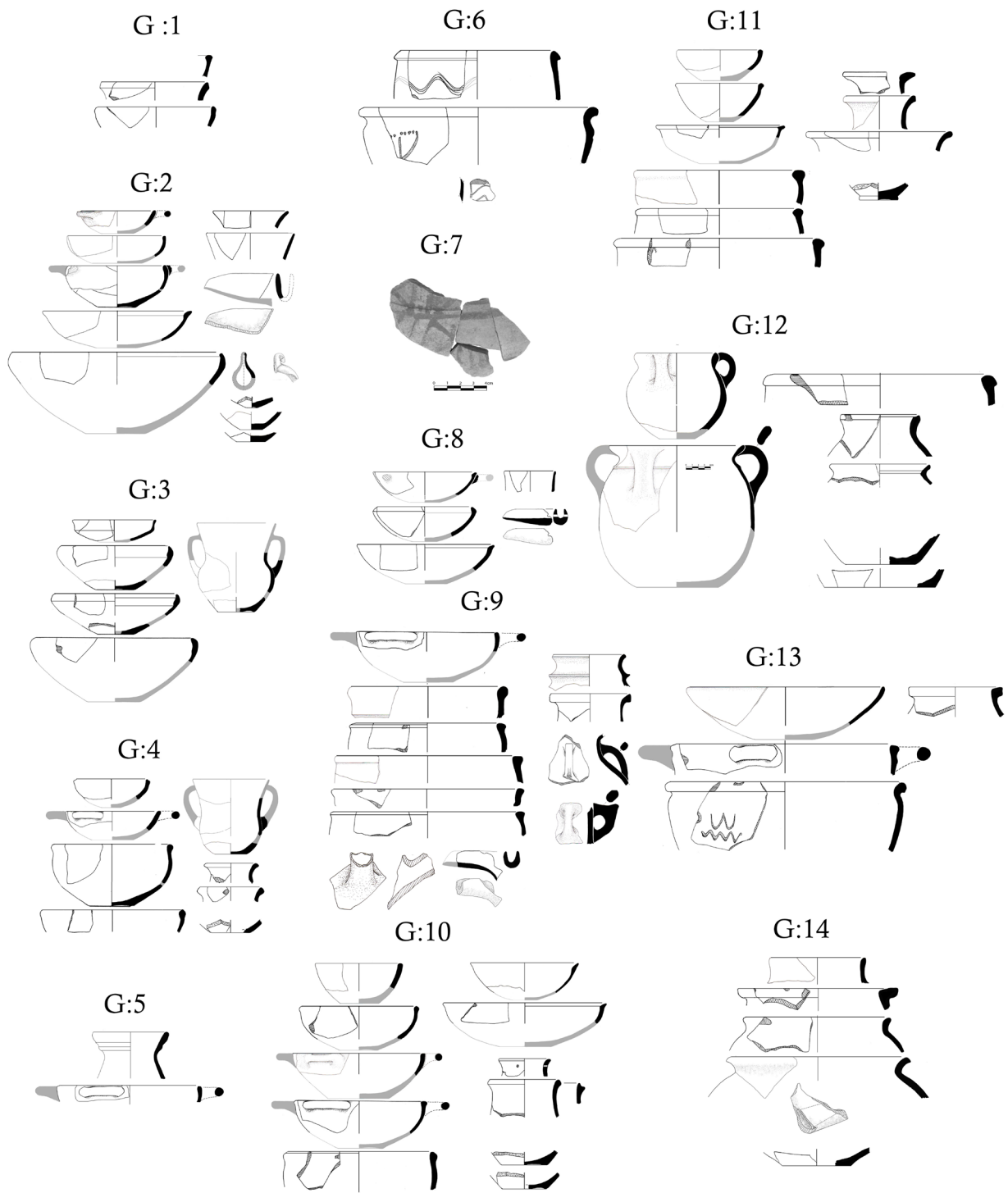


Fig. 4: Drawings of a selection of the 14 types of buff wares



Bowls: they are relatively thick, with temper of quartz and mica, quite well fired. The variants include: bowls with horizontal handles (one or two), with folded inside rim, carinated bowls. Few painted potsherds possibly pertaining to bowls are attested as well (Fig. 4- G: 1.2.3.5.10).

Jars: they are relatively thick, with diluted mud cover and in some cases burnished surface. Variants may include or exclude handles. There are several handles of jars with horn appendix and augmented bird motifs attested in the assemblage (Fig. 4-G:5.7).

Tubs: they are relatively thick, with diluted and thick mud cover, and sometimes burnished. Tubs are categorized in two groups: handled and without handles; they are decorated with incised designs or undecorated (Fig. 4- G: 4, 9, 11-13).

Pots: they are thick, with mica and sand temper, buff and orange thick mud cover with two vertical handles. The body of wares is sooty (Fig 3-G:11.12).

Vats: they are thick, with additional temper of mica and sand with pink and red mud cover, and their body incised with linear finger designs (Fig. 4- G: 14).

Table. 2: The 14 types of buff wares subdivided on the basis of clay, temper and surface treatment

Class	No	Core Color	Temper	Surface Treatment						description	
				External Color	thick mud		diluted mud		burnished		
					inside	out	inside	out	inside		out
Thick buff wares	1	Buff	Mica	Buff	*	*			*	*	
	2	Buff	Mica	Pink	*	*			*	*	The body of wares are sooty
	3	Pink	Mica	Buff				*			
	4	Pink	Mica	Pink			*	*	*	*	burnished effect
Plain buff ware	5	Buff	Mica	Buff	*	*					
	6	Light pink	Mica and fine-sand	Buff			*	*			Incised decoration
	7	Pink	Mica	Buff		*			*	*	Painted
	8	Pink	Mica	Dark Pink	*	*					
	9	Orange	Mica	Orange			*	*			
	10	Red	Mica	Red	*	*			*	*	The body of wares are sooty
	11	Red	Mica and sand	Orange	*	*					The body of wares are sooty
High quality buff ware	12	Orange	Mica and grained sand	Buff		*					Applied decoration and Incised decoration
	13	Red	Mica and grained sand	Pink			*	*			Incised decoration
	14	Red	Mica and grained sand	Red		*					Incised decoration



In order to study the probable location of different workshops and their relationship with each other, an XRD experiment was conducted on all fourteen groups. The results indicate presence of mica, quartz, chlorite, calcite, and plagioclase minerals in the soils of the region (Fig. 5-6), indicating a local

production (Fig. 7).

Mineralogy and elemental experiments show varieties of potteries and heterogeneity in techniques that suggest variation of workshop and/or temporal variation through Iron Age III.

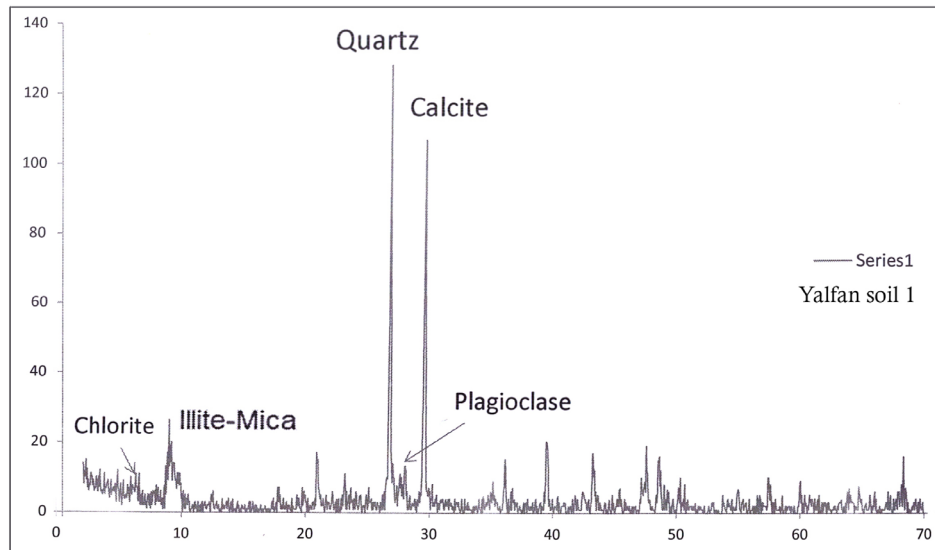


Fig. 5: XRD results: soil elements of Tepe Yalfan included Mica and Quartz

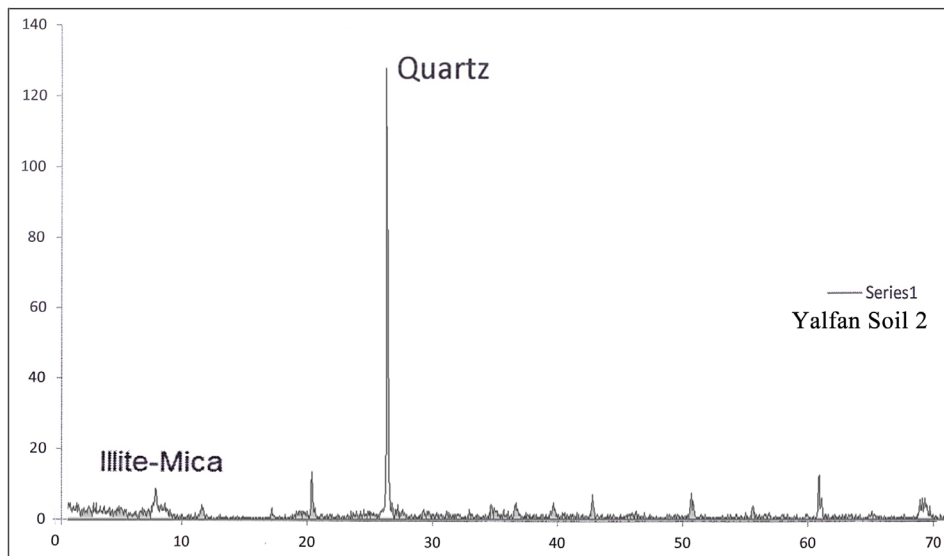


Fig. 6: XRD results: soil elements of Tepe Yalfan included Mica, Quartz, Chlorite, Calcite, and Plagioclase



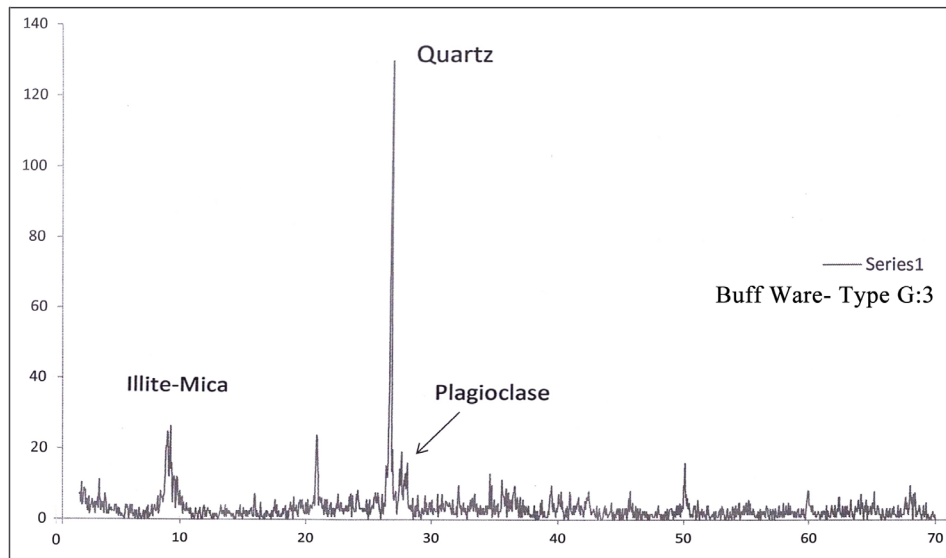


Fig. 7: XRD results: soil elements of type G3

Type 2: Gray Wares

Gray wares with gray temper (106 pieces) represent 10.1% of the entire assemblage. Lack of penetration of oxygen into the kiln resulted in spectra of light to dark gray. Potsherds of gray ware show temper of mica and quartz; they were wheel-made, quite well fired and externally burnished. Vessels were mainly common kitchenware in the forms of bowls and jars. Jars had outward folded rim and bowls were in two forms of inside oriented rim and body (Fig. 8-9). The mineralogy analysis of gray wares revealed presence of quartz, mica and plagioclase, similar to buff wares. Gray wares were produced locally during settlement period in site (fig. 10).

Type 3: Cooking Ware

2.7% of the assemblage is kitchenware with heated outer surface. The mica and sand temper are rougher and coarser in this type than the two previous ones. The vessels are rough, hand-made, insufficiently cooked, porous and having a soft paste in reddish buff and superficial color ranging from red to black. Inner blackness of the items indicates

penetration of air inside the kiln during the last stage of the firing process. There are two kinds of finishing techniques on the outer surface: polishing and wet-handed. Wet-handed finishing techniques are seen on the inner surface in all examples. Vessels include pots and small pots, sometimes with a handled lid (Fig. 11).

Comparison and Dating of Common Pottery Types from Yalfan in Relation to Other Iron Age III Sites

Bowls of different size in buff and gray wares are predominant in the assemblage from Yalfan and can be classified into the ones with horizontal handles adjunct to rims and the ones with carinated profile with one or two horizontal handles show an incurved rim, similar to examples from Nush-i Jan, Godin, Baba Jan, Sialk, Uzbaki, and Zarbolagh. Among decorative elements of bowls with inside oriented rim is existence of appendix on the rim that emerges in both groups. Lack of intact vessels obscures number of appendixes. Carinated bowls are comparable to examples from other sites including Sialk (Fahimi 2004) (Fig. 12-Bowels).





Fig. 8: selection of gray ware potsherds

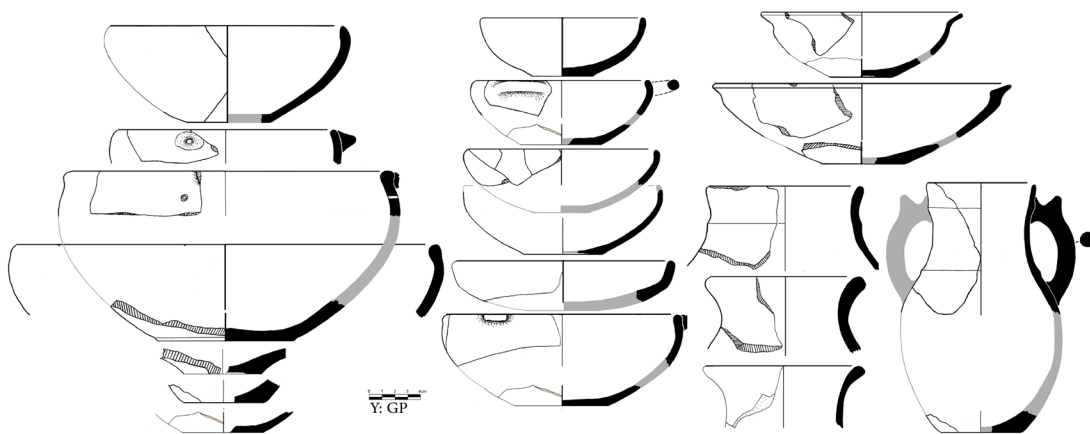


Fig. 9: Drawings of selected gray ware vessels

Beakers also appear among buff and gray wares. Kitchenware presents two forms: beakers with occasional zoomorphic lug on handle; forms reported from Yalfan and Sialk VI (Ghirshman 1939), and with lower quality from Godin II (Gopnik 2011: 362). Beakers with augmented bird decoration

were recovered from Baba Jan I (Goff 1985: fig. 9), Godin II (Gopnik 2011: 362) and Nush-i Jan (Stronach 1969: 186) and are comparable to those of Yalfan. The beakers of Uzbaki was decorated with augmented lions (Majidzadeh 2001: Pl 7. fig 9) (Fig. 12-beakers).



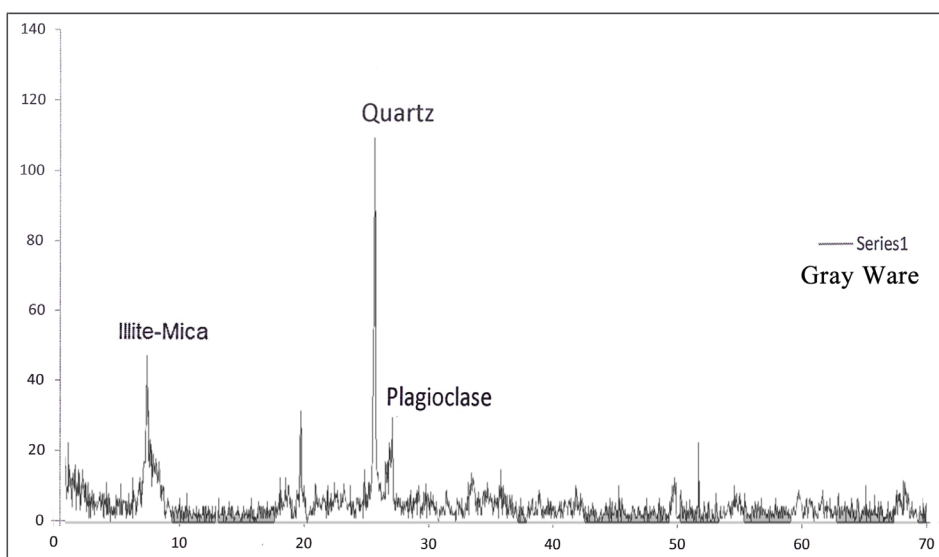


Fig. 10: XRD results: soil elements of the gray wares included Mica, Quartz and Plagioclase

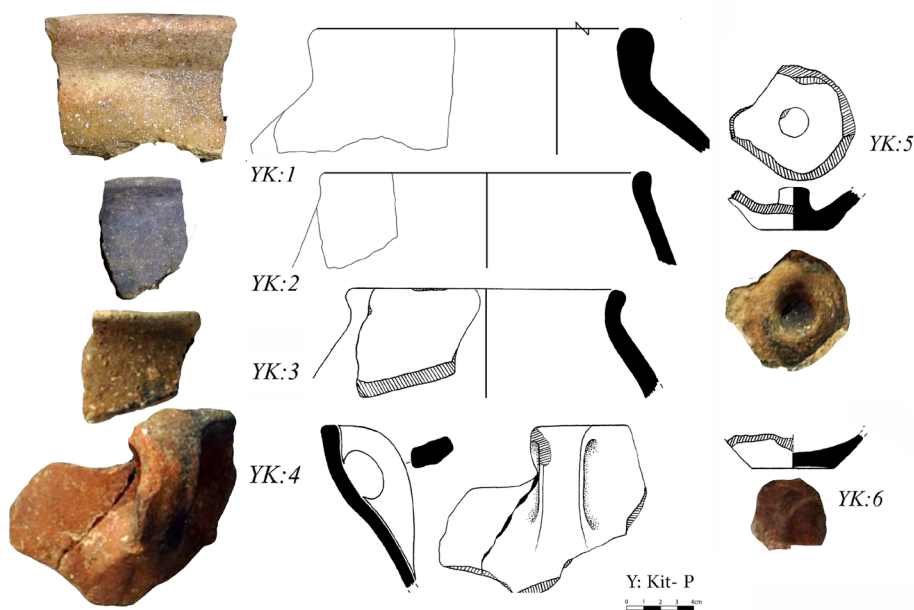


Fig. 11: Picture and drawings of a selection of cooking ware potsherds

Among other pottery items are pots with vertical handles and outward folded rims that typically appear as buff kitchen wares and are comparable to vessels from Nush-i Jan (Stronach *et al.* 1978: 18) and Baba Jan Ib (Goff 1985: fig. 6), dated to Iron Age III (Fig. 12-pots).

One potsherd with outlined design of a ram was recovered from Yalfan. It has a thick cover of buff mud on pink paste. A potsherd comparable to this one from Yalfan is attested among the objects which were brought back to Belgium and said to have come from Khurvin. However, the uncertainty of the



chronology of Khurvin - Iron Age I and II (Vanden Berghe) or Iron Age III (Dyson) (Talai 2007: 69) - should not be forgotten. The fragmentary sample of Yalfan relatively helps to establish a chronology for Khurvin data (Fig. 13).

Three types of spouts were recovered from Yalfan: horizontal, clover and upward. The first two types appear at the same time at Sialk VI (Fahimi 2003a: 121, Pl 13). Due to the fact that complete profiles of spouted vessels have not been recovered from Yalfan and Sialk VI, we could not carry out definite comparative studies about them (Fig. 13).

Most of the potsherds from Yalfan are wheel-made and well fired. They have mineral tempers such as quartz and mica particles. Only the cooking wares are handmade and low-fired. Although some scholars have considered mica and quartz as like as sand and grit as a temper, it seems that sometimes their presence in the raw material used by the potter was so much that there was no need for the use of a separate additive material. However, in the sites compared in this article quartz and mica have always been considered as temper, and their presence (beside other factors) can be proposed as a characteristic attribute of the pottery of this period (Alizadeh 2004: 92-93). The classification of the Yalfan potsherds that was based on the study of the core and surface color, coating, surface treatment, and the forms of the vessels, indicates that there is only one style among them. However, this style, due to some formal differences, can be subdivided into fourteen smaller groups. Such a variety, based on the elemental composition analysis of ceramics, suggests the possibility of the existence of multiple local production workshops. Furthermore, this can be attributed also to a production carried out during a long-termed timespan. A similar diversity can also be seen in the Godin II period (Gopnik 2011: 331). While most of Yalfan's potsherds are undecorated, only 4 pieces of them are painted, while incised decoration is only applied to large storage vessels. The study of similar sites such as Baba Jan and Godin shows that the number of their painted potteries in Iron Age III (Baba Jan I, II & Godin II) decreased in comparison to their previous phases

(Baba Jan III & Godin III)¹. Typical forms of Yalfan ceramics are bowls, beakers, jug, pots and jars that probably according to their simple and undecorated appearance had not a ceremonial usage. Moreover, some vessel forms from Yalfan during the Iron Age III (Fig. 12), including various types of vessels with a horizontal handle on rim, some carinated bowls and some beakers with occasional zoomorphic lug on handle, are new forms which are more frequently found at Achaemenid sites.

The relative chronology of Yalfan is based on the morphological comparisons of its ceramics with other sites of the Iron Age III. Similarity of Yalfan samples with Squatter levels of Nush-i Jan (Stronach *et al.* 1978: 11), dated to 8th-6th centuries BCE, includes the fifty percent of its known forms. But the most important similarity (about 80%) is with the second period of Godin, which dates to 800-650 BCE, with a peak occurring during the phase of Godin II2 (Gopnik 2011: 351-361). However, it should be stressed that the published assemblage from Nush-i Jan is not as large as the one from Godin, and this certainly affects the result of comparisons. Baba Jan Ib and Iia, which were dated to 7th century BCE and later (Goff 1985: 5), are less similar to Yalfan in comparison to Nush-i Jan and Godin. In the case of Sialk VI and Sialk B (cemetery), dated to the 8th and 9th centuries BCE and later (Girshman 1939: 98), the similarity with Yalfan samples is more evident in the case of the Sialk B burial vessels. Among the other related sites,

1- Only one painted vessel is reported from Nush-i Jan (Stronach *et al.* 1978, 32). Godin revealed buff painted vessels with plain geometrical designs, as well as gray handmade undecorated vessels from strata III₁.

2- Recovered pottery pieces from stratum II are undecorated buff, red, and gray wares (Henrickson 2011: 262-266). Strata III and II_c of Baba Jan date to Iron Age II and late 9th to 7th centuries BCE and revealed painted buff pottery comparable with the pottery tradition of Luristan Type. Strata I and II3-2 date to 7th century BCE and later on. They are buff, plain, and rarely painted. The stratum V and cemetery A of Sialk date to 2nd millennium BCE and consist of gray wares (Talai 2011: 249). Later phases of cemetery B in Sialk yielded painted wares (Ghirshman 1939), whereas stratum VI of Sialk revealed red and gray wares with scarce decorations (Helwing 2006, 55-63). Level III of Uzbaki revealed painted wares with geometrical and theriomorphic designs, however, they reduce at level IV (Majidzadeh 2010).



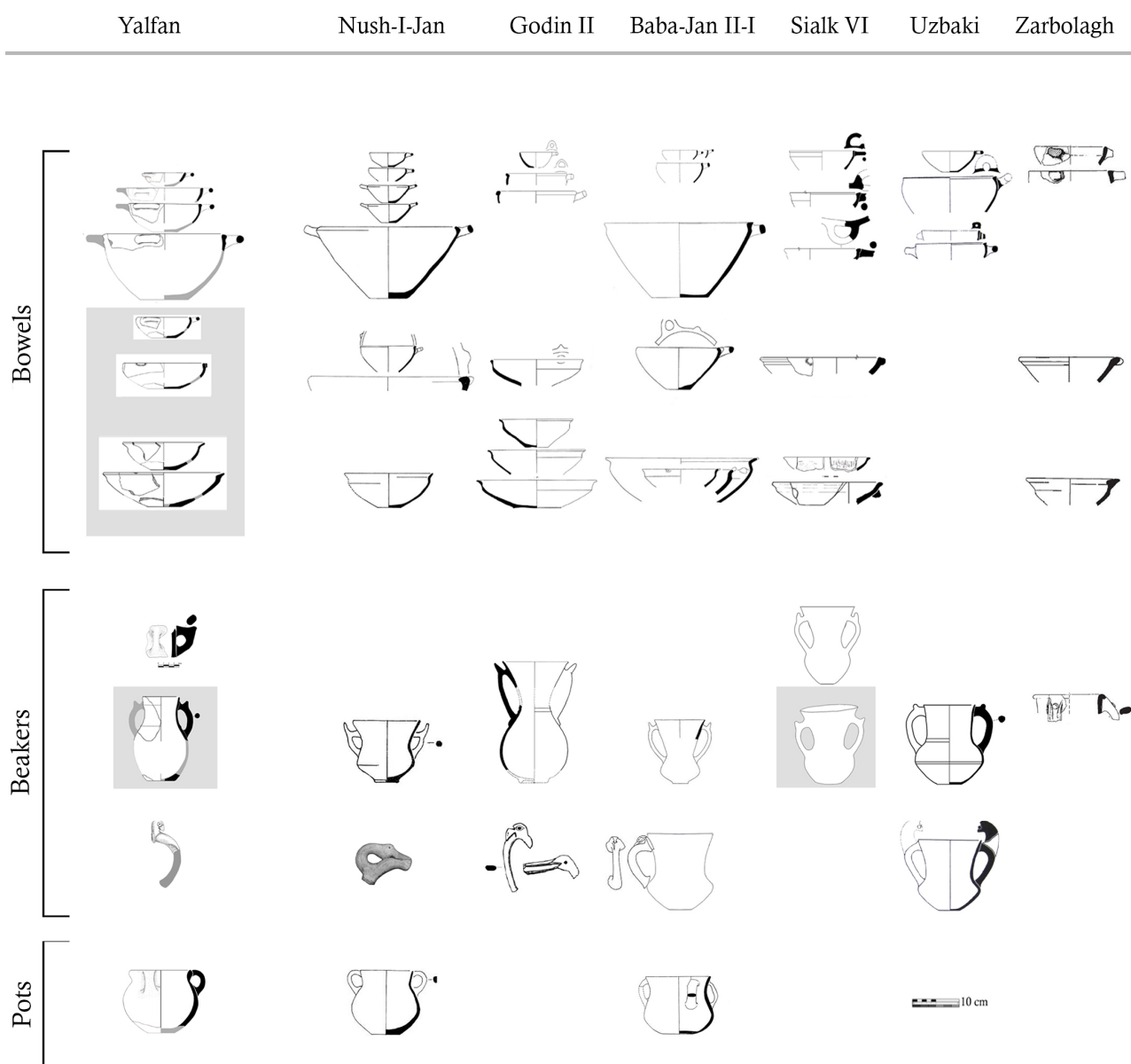


Fig. 12: Catalogue of pottery parallels

we can mention Uzbaki IV from the first millennium BCE and Zarbolagh, which dates to the late 8th to the early 5th century BCE (Malekzadeh *et al.* 2014, 172). However, because of the paucity of their published samples, these sites show a few similarities when compared with Yalfan. Therefore, on the basis of a major similarity of the ceramic assemblage from Yalfan with pottery collections from Iron Age III

sites such as Nush-i Jan and Godin in the west of Iran, we can date Yalfan approximately between 800 and 600 BCE. Similar ceramic horizons of Iron Age III sites are represented in the following table (Fig. 14), which also includes the uncertain chronology of Uzbaki¹.

¹-Excavator only assigned to Medians and points to 1st millennium BCE (Majidzadeh 2010: 38-49).



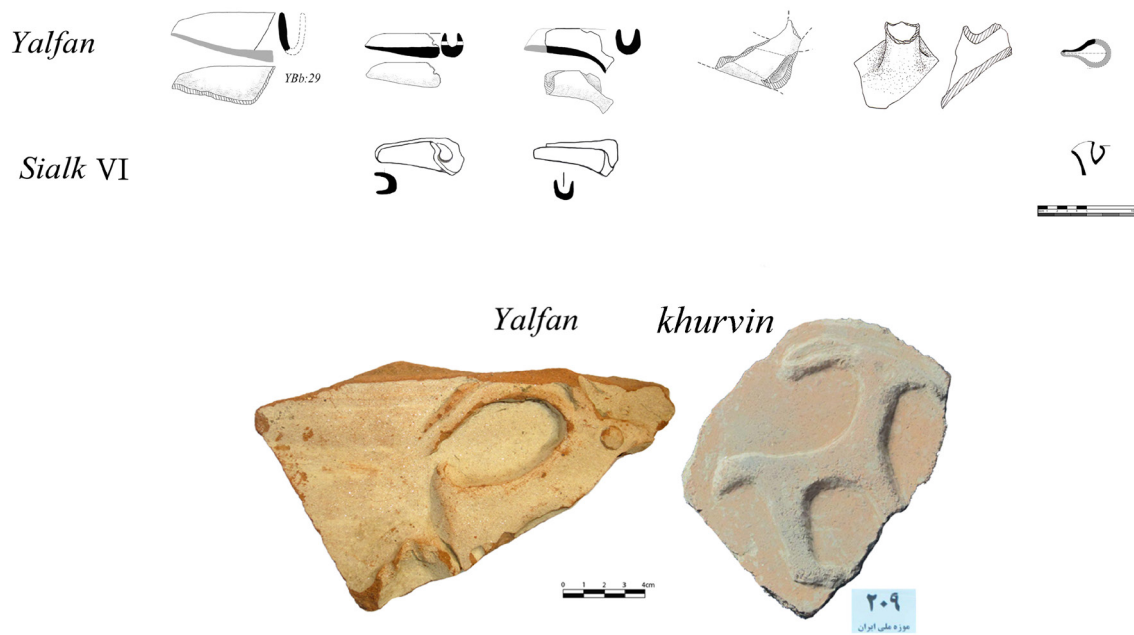


Fig. 13: Yalfan's spouts compared with examples from Sialk and potsherd with applied motif of an ibex compared with Khurvin

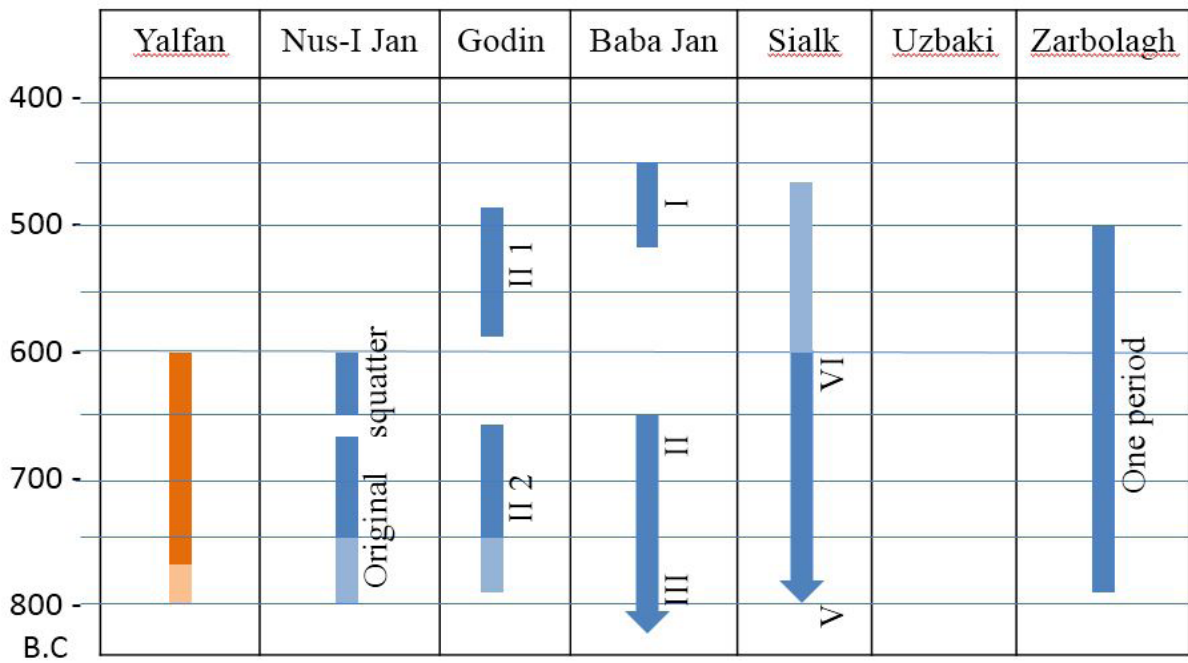


Fig. 14: The chronology of Tepe Yalfan compared with other Iron Age III sites



Conclusions

Yalfan, near Hamedan, is one of the significant sites of Iron Age III that was excavated in 2006 and 2007; however, the excavations did not go on. Pottery recovered from Iron Age III in the Hamedan Plain shows common features. On the basis of a classification according characteristics such as core color, slip, and temper, three classes were identified: buff, gray, and buff cooking wares. The existence of fourteen sub-types of buff wares indicate varieties of pottery production at Yalfan, suggesting the presence of different workshops or long-term occupation at the site. The simultaneous presence of buff and gray wares, not only at Yalfan, but also at other Iron Age III sites, indicates continuation of gray ware tradition from earlier periods. Yalfan pottery shows characteristics of well fired, wheel made, temper of quartz and mica, plain and undecorated appearance. Stylistically, pottery examples from Yalfan are comparable to the ones from Nush-i Jan, Godin II, BabaJan I and II, Sialk B and VI, Uzbaki IV and Zarbolagh. They revealed forms which are indicators of Iron Age III, i.e. bowls with horizontal handles, bowls with appendix on rims, carinated bowls, beakers with occasional zoomorphic lug on handle, as well as small pots. According to pottery, Yalfan can be dated to a timespan encompassed between circa 800-600 BCE, coherent with the traditional Median chronology.

References

- Adams, William & Ernest Adams
1991 *Archaeological Typology and Practical Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alizadeh, Abbas.
2001 *Methods and Theories in Archaeology*, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, Tehran (in Persian).
- Alizadeh, Karim.
2004 An Introduction to the Pottery from the Excavation of the Median Fortress at Bistun near Kermanshah, in: Fahimi H. (ed.) *Archaeological Reports (2)*. Tehran. Iranian Center for Archaeological Research, pp. 87-107 (in Persian).
- Fahimi, Hamid.
2003a Iron Age at Sialk: Preliminary Report on the Iron Age Pottery of Sialk, in: Malek Shahmirzadi S. (ed.) *the Silversmiths of Sialk, Sialk Reconsideration Project, and Report No. 2*, Tehran: Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, pp. 79-127 (in Persian).
2003b "A Settlement Related to the Cemetery of Sarm, report of shamshirgah in southern Qom", *Iranian Journal of Archaeology and History*, Vol.18, No.1: 61-69 (in Persian).
2004 "Remains of Sialk VI Period (Iron Age III): The South Mound of Sialk (Excavation Report of Trench R19)", in: Sadegh Malek Shahmirzadi (ed.), (The_Potters_of_Sialk), *Sialk Reconsideration Project 3, Archaeological Report Series V*, Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), Tehran: Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization: 55-89 (in Persian).
- Ghirshman, Roman.
1939 *Fouilles de Sialk, près de Kashan, 1933, 1934, 1937*", Vol. II. Musee du Louvre — Departement des Antiquites Orientales, Serie Archeologique V, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
- Goff, Clare.
1978 "Excavations at Baba Jan: The Pottery and Metal from Levels III and II", *Iran*, Vol.16, pp. 29-65
1985 "Excavations at Baba Jan: The Architecture and Pottery of Level I", *Iran*, Vol. 23, pp. 1-20
- Gopnik, Hilary.
2011 "The Median Citadel of Godin Period II", *On the High Road, the history of Godin tape, Iran*. (Ed.) Hilary Gopnik and Mitchell S. Rothman. Royal Ontario Museum. Pp. 285-364



- Helwing, Barbara.
2006 *"Tappeh Sialk sound mound: Operation 3", On the The fishermen of Sialk (Sialk reconsideration project)*, By Sadegh Malek Shahmirzadi. I.C.H.T.O, Iran
- Henrickson, C. Robert.
2011 "The Godin Period III Town", *On the High Road: The History of Godin Tape, Iran*. Edited by Hilary Gopnik & Mitchell Rothman, Royal Ontario Museum: 209-282
- Majidzadeh, Yousef.
2001 "First and Second Seasons of Archaeological Excavations in Ozbaki Site: Savejbolagh", *Archaeological Report Series I*, Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), Tehran, (in Persian).
2010 *"Excavations at Tepe Ozbaki, Iran", Vol. 2: Pottery*. Tehran: Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (in Persian).
- Malekzadeh, Mehrdad, Sa'di Saeedyan & Reza Naseri.
2014 "Zar Bolagh: A late Iron Age site in central Iran", *Iranica Antiqua*, vol. XLIX, pp: 159-191
- Mohamadifar, Yaghob, & Abbas Motarjem.
2006 *Archaeological Surveys of Hamedan plain, Hamedan*, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (in Persian)
- Mohammadifar, Yaghob, Mohammad Rahim Sarraf & Abbas Motarjem.
2015 "A Preliminary Report on Four Seasons of Excavation at Moush Tepe, Hamedan", *Iranica Antiqua*, Vol. 50, p233-250
- Motarjem, Abbas.
2006 *Excavations at Tepe Yalfan, Hamedan*, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (in Persian).
- Mollazadeh, Kazem.
2014 *Median Archaeology*, Tehran (in Persian)
- Naseri, Reza, Mehrdad Malekzadeh & Ali Naseri.
2016 "Gunespan: A late Iron Age site in the Median heartland", *Iranica Antiqua*, Vol: LI, pp.104-139
- Stronach, David.
1969 . "Excavations at Tepe Nush-i Jan, 1967", *Iran VII*: 1-20.
Stronach, David, Roof, M, Stronach, Ruth & S. Bökönyi
1978 Excavations at Tepe Nush-i Jan, Third Interim Report, *Iran XVI*: 1-28.
Stronach, David and Roof, M.
2007 *Nush-I Jan_ I: The Major Buildings of the Median Settlement*, London, Leuven Paris Dudley, MA: British Institute of Persian Studies and Peeters.
- Talai, Hasan.
2007 *Iranian Art and Archaeology in the first millennium BCE, (7th Ed.)*. Tehran (in Persian)
2011 *Eight Thousand years of Iran Pottery*, Tehran (in Persian)
- Young, Culyer.
1965 A comparative ceramic chronology for western Iran, *Iran 3*, pp. 53-85

