University of Sistan and Baluchestan

Iranian Journal of Archaeological Studies

Print ISSN: 2251-743X Online ISSN: 2676-2919

Archaeological Sciences Research Centre

Survey and Excavation at the Jowšātū Fort (Šāhīndezh, West Āzerbāyjān, Northwest Iran)

Kazem Mollazadeh[*,1] and Ali Binandeh[1]

[*]*Corresponding Author,* [1]*Department of Archaeology, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran.*
E- mail: Mollazadeh@basu.ac.ir

Received: 14/ 07/ 2021; Received in Revised form: 28/ 10/ 2021; Accepted: 10/ 11/ 2021; Published: 20/ 12/ 2021

Abstract

The southern Lake Urmia Basin witnessed significant political, military, cultural, and artistic transformations in the first millennium BCE. The region was an integral part of Manna right from the formation of the kingdom. Assyrian records contain allusions to some important and central Mannean fortresses. Jowšātū fort perches on an isolated mountain next to Šāhīndezh in southwestern West Āzerbāyjān Province. The fort covers a total area of about 13 hectares, and includes architectural remains visible on the surface as a defensive wall system of two outer and inner circumvallations constructed in a unique style in a strategic location. The attested surface pottery and architecture support a date in the Iron III. Architectural and pottery evidence suggests two construction phases belonging to a single period. Occupation at the site apparently continued into the Achaemenid period as is evidenced by the presence of a pottery flask.

Keywords: Archaeology of Northwest Iran, Jowšātū Fort, Iron Age III, Manna.

Article Type: Research Article

Introduction

Thanks to its copious water resources, fertile soil, diverse vegetation and animal species, and rich pastures, the southern Lake Urmia Basin held a special allure to different human groups since prehistory, thus the emergence of several rich cultures in the region. Hajji Firuz, Dalma, Pisdeli, Hasanlu and Takht-e Suleiman are but only a few chief sites that attest to the claim and give the region a conspicuous place in Iranian archeology.

In the southern Urmia Lake, the Zarineh Rud basin that was home to various human groups since the Paleolithic, saw in the first millennium B.C the rise of the earliest local polity, viz. the Mannean kingdom, which would play a crucial part in the ensuing developments of the region and beyond. Emergence of the kingdom and the expanding sways of the supra-regional powers Assyria and Urartu and their subsequent rivalry and conflicts of interest would precipitate multiple campaigns to and struggles in the region. Such set of circumstances called for fortifications to provide shelter for local population. Ruins of a multitude of forts and fortresses in southern Urmia Lake region are a reflection of such state of affairs. The last great Assyrian king Ashurbanipal had apparently failed in his 663/4 BCE campaign at subduing the indomitable central Mannean fortresses (Luckenbill 1927: 326–327).

Its prominence notwithstanding, the Zarineh Rud basin has not been subject of many systematic archaeological investigations. The region's traditional importance is corroborated by the profusion of sites, ruined fortresses, and rock-cut architectures. A notable example is the fort of Jowšātū, which is remarkable by dint of its strategic location, dimensions, and unique architecture, and offers invaluable insights into the southern lake region during the first millennium BCE.

With this in mind and given the severe damages by clandestine excavations, a team from the Bu-Ali Sina University led by K. Mollazadeh carried

© The Author(s):

DOI: 10.22111/IJAS.2021.6851

Publisher: University of Sistan and Baluchestan

out a sounding program at the site in the spring of 2016 to pin down its plan and architectural details, occupation level(s), pottery types, and relative chronology. This limited excavation was actually planned as a complement to the surface survey carried out in 2013 by the same director (Mollazadeh 2015).

Geographic Location

The fort of Jowšātū sits atop the isolated Mount Maghāreh, next to the villages of Jowšātū-ye Bālā and Jowšātū-ye Pāyin, about 5 km east of Mahmudābād and about 12 km northeast of the city of Šāhīndezh in West Āzerbāyjān Province (Figures. 1a-b). The fort takes its name from a cave on the slopes of the same mountain (maghāreh is an Arabic/Persian term for a cave). The small river of Khalaj runs to the north and a second smaller, seasonal river runs to the south of the mountain. On the southern flank of the mountain rises a spring. Below the mountain is a natural cave yet to be studied systematically (Figure. 2c). Mount Maghāreh offers an excellent place for a large and central military installation due to its high elevation, rocky cliff sides, isolation, water resources, and command of the surrounding areas, particularly the Zarineh Rud valley. With an elevation of 1717 m above the sea level, it rises about 250 m from the surrounding plain.

The fort lay in a naturally defensible spot, on a high hill with precipitous, rocky cliffs on the north, west, and south sides. The eastern fairly gently sloping side provides much easier access to the summit. The main gateway of the fort was apparently on this side as were the original ramparts (Mollazadeh 2015).

History of Research

In this and the neighboring regions a few localities have been investigated in recent decades, among them being Agha Jan (Binandeh and Kargar 2008), Qalaichi (Kargar 2004), Ziwiye (Motamedi 1997), and a few cemeteries (Amelirad *et al.* 2017). Yet, barring the survey by Mollazadeh, who identified the fort of Jowšātū and attributed it to the Iron III (Mollazadeh 2015), no fieldwork covered the site prior to the excavation reported here.

Survey and Excavation

The present fieldwork sought to identify the plan, architectural features and pottery of the fort, and to establish its chronology and stratigraphic sequence. Accordingly, a twofold project was planned that incorporated both a surface survey and soundings. First, the entire expanse of the fort was surveyed intensively in quest of architectural remains and pottery sherds. Attempts were made to collect as much information as possible on the architecture, plan, pottery, and occupations of the site from the findings of the survey as well as the ensuing

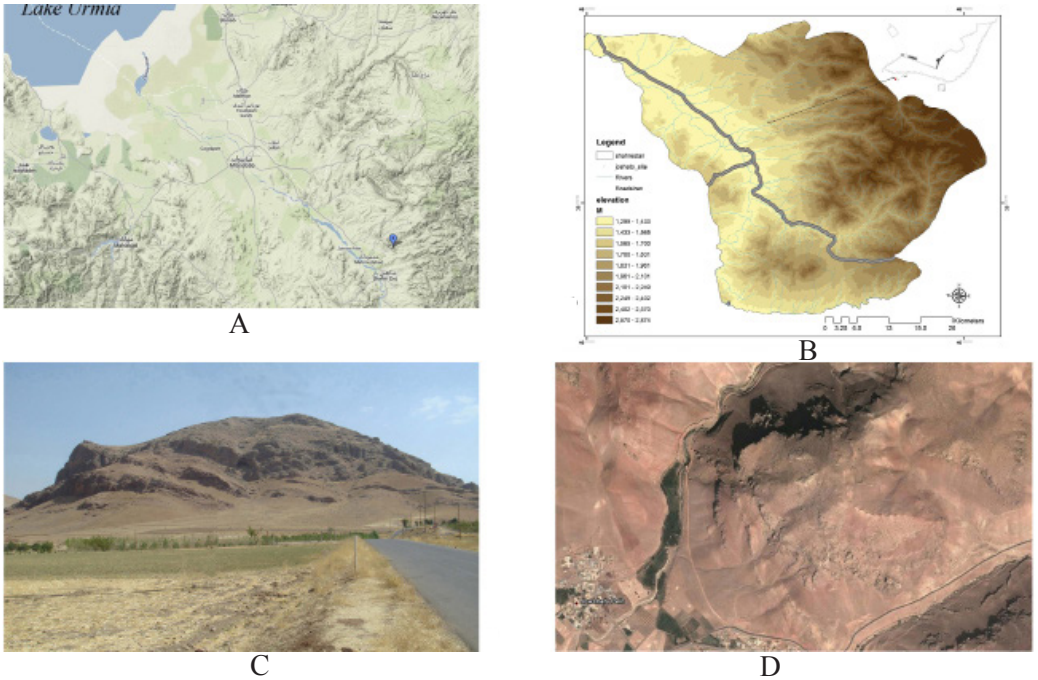


Figure. 1: *The Jowšātū Fort* ***A:*** *Location* ***B:*** *Topographic Map* ***C:*** *West View* ***D:*** *Aerial Figure (After: Google Erath 2018/ 7/ 17)*

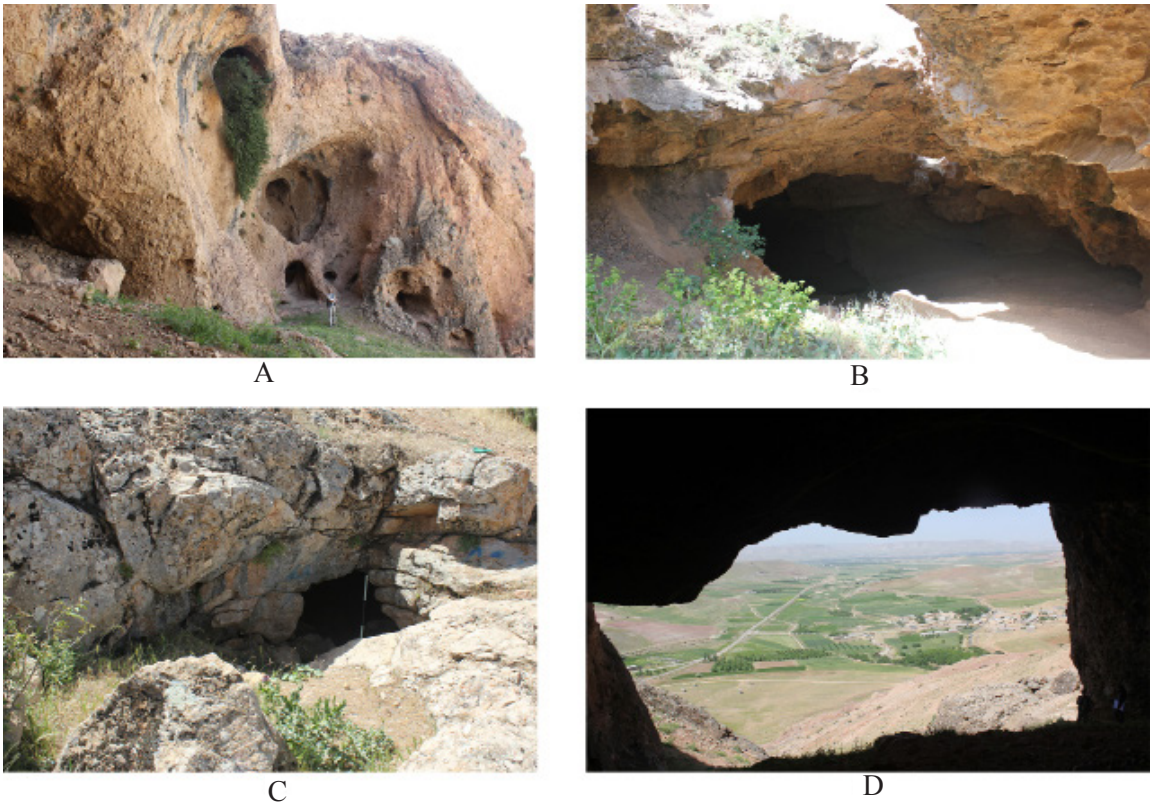


Figure. 2: A, B: *Rocky Slopes;* ***C:*** *Cave of the Western Side of the Jowšātū Mountain;* ***D:*** *Rocky Slopes.*

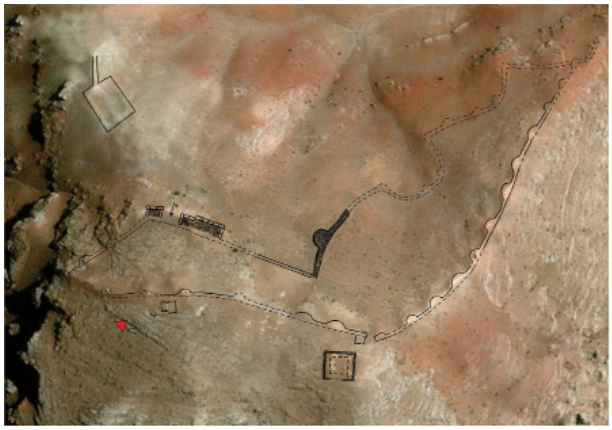
soundings and the illicit diggings that had pitted the site thoroughly. The survey provided a precursory understanding of the plan and the extent of the fort and the so-called "ruler's residence," architectural details of the defensive walls and pertinent towers, and occupational levels alongside a small pottery assemblage. To improve the resolution of this preliminary picture of the site's stratigraphy, chronology, and architecture, and to obtain some in situ ceramic evidence, five soundings (designated as A to E) were opened at different points where presence of occupational deposits were indicated by surface sherd scatter, architectural remains, or sections of the clandestine pits.

Plan and Architectural Remains

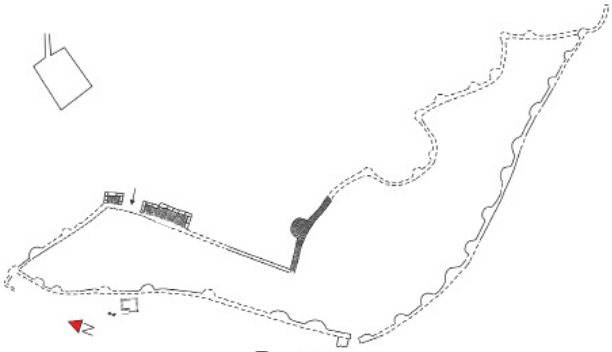
The discernible architecture connected with the fort included two circumvallations along with a few buildings within the area they enclosed. Recovered on the east side was a large stone wall associated with remains of other smaller walls as its extensions, and remains from a defensive wall of mudbrick with stone footings running almost parallel to the large wall. In the naturally protected western side, the exposed points were also blocked or reinforced by some stone-built walls. The walls on the east side represented a defensive wall system with about 35 towers intended to protect the open eastern edge from invading armies. Judging by variations in architectural style and technique, the wall system exhibits two different construction phases. A plausible scenario is that the major stone-built central part of the defensive wall was originally completed using huge stones. Yet, this exorbitant approach had later to be abandoned for uncertain reasons, and the remaining stretches of the wall system would be accomplished in a simpler, cost-effective way. The outer gate was perhaps at the northeastern end of the mountain, where people and possibly chariots could easily enter the fort. A large structure with two rectangular rooms visible in aerial images in this part of the mountain might have been used for keeping horses and chariots.

At short distance away from this outer ward lay a second wide gate flanked by square towers on both sides, giving access to the main buildings on the mountaintop (Figure. 3). This inner ward is a relatively small enclosure running a maximal length of 200 m and a width of 40 m. Surface finds and soundings indicate that it lacked both extensive

constructions and a long occupation history. The most notable architectural remains here, exposed in illegal diggings and a sounding, are the so-called ruler's residence, an enclosed space on the north side, and a few other trivial ruins.



A



B

Figure. 3: A: *Aerial Image,* ***B:*** *General Map-Plan of the Jowšātū Fort.*

Defensive Wall System

The fort was hemmed in by two outer and inner defensive walls(Figure. 3b). The outer wall was about 570 m long and contained 16 buttresses/ towers at regular intervals, while the inner wall possessed 19 regularly spaced buttresses along its almost 670 m stretch. Judging from the surviving parts and the involved construction approaches, four distinct parts are distinguishable: 1) a large stone-built structure or the central part of the outer wall, 2) this outer wall' northern stretch, 3) the southern stretch of the outer wall and the inner wall, and 4) the walling intended to fortify the vulnerable points in the steep western slope.

Central Outer Wall

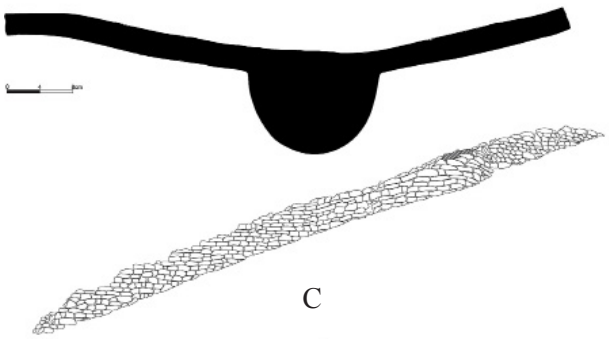
The site's extant architecture of utmost importance is a resilient defensive wall system on the eastern flank (Figures. 3–4). The standing parts measure 67 m long and 3.2–3.4 m thick, reaching a maximum height of 3.6 m. The wall system was probably confined only to the exposed parts of the eastern side and did not extend along the mountain's other flanks. Midway through the wall there is a semicircular buttress/tower of 16.5 m diameter, which gives an overall thickness of 13 m to it at this point. Built of stone slabs sometimes reaching a length of 2.50 m, it exhibits a high level of expertise in construction and stone laying. The wall runs across a relatively steep slope and lack any footings, instead of which the builders cut out steppes into the bedrock as a measure to ensure the overlying superstructure's stability. Both internal and external facades consist of large slabs in varying dimensions, while smaller stones were used for the core. Indeed, the exterior facade features an elaborate architectural technique and contain larger slabs (Figure. 4). The now completely missing superstructure was probably of packed clay or mudbrick.



A



B



C

Figure. 4: *Strong Defensive Cyclopean Wall of the Jowšātū Fort* ***A:*** *Exterior View,* ***B:*** *Interior View,* ***C:*** *Plan and Exterior Design*

Northern Stretch of the Outer Wall

The northern extension of the large stone wall is traceable through its footings as stepped cuts made into the bedrock, remains of the stone-built walls, large towers abutting the potential gate (Figure. 5a), and humps formed by the collapsed towers.

The extant walls and towers in this part, represented by at most six courses of stones with a maximum height exceeding 2 m, consist of drylaid ashlars and boulders, and are inferior to the central wall in building technique and stone dimensions (Figure. 4). The construction technique as used here is reminiscent of the walls at Zendān-e Solaymān (von der Osten and Almgren 1994: 104–108).

Southern Stretch of the Outer Wall and the Inner Wall

These walls survive at some points only in the form of stone footings and small humps from the collapsed towers. Clandestine diggings (Figure. 5) and an excavated tower (Sounding C) provided indispensable insight into the structure of the circumvallations and the towers. Thus, the main footings were set directly on the bedrock and worked of boulders bounded together with a clay mortar. A layer of rubble was then applied atop the footings to form a smooth bedding for the erection of the superstructure (Figure. 5b-c).

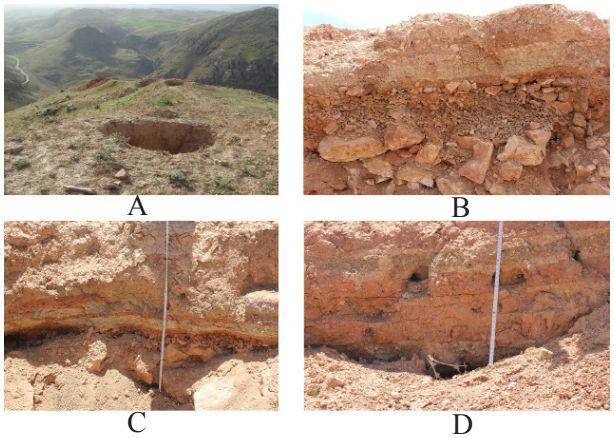


Figure. 5: A: *Wall Defense Towers and Their Architectural Details* ***B,C,D:*** *Identified in Illegal Excavations.*

The raw material for mudbricks was resourced from the very surface of the mountain itself, which is mostly generated from the erosion of rocks, hence the poor quality of the mudbricks. Apart from the square instances flanking a gate, the towers appear to have been semicircular-to-semioval in profile. To gain a better picture of the their structure, the footings of a tower was excavated. Similar to the stone-built tower of the main structure, these towers were found to have been erected against the wall's outer façade, on rectangular footings (unlike the conceivable profile of the towers themselves) that projected from the wall and measured 10 x 5.3 m. The footings were raised up to the level of the bedrock' surface (in the case of the excavated example at least 2 min height), and consisted of cobbles overlaid by a rubble layer followed in turn by a layer of clay mortar on which the mudbrick superstructure sat. The curtain walls were indeed made of stone at least in lower parts as is evidenced by the surviving stubs(Figure. 6).

Walling in Western Side

Whilst the mountain is characterized by rocky and almost impenetrable cliffs on three sides, erosion and water flow have formed several clefts on the western side. These exposed points had been walled in by stone to eliminate the potential threats (Figure. 7).

Buildings within the Fort

In spite of the size and importance of Jowšātū Fort, in light of the available evidence the site did not experience any protracted occupation, nor there were large numbers of substantial buildings. The excavated soundings also corroborate the observation. From the surface evidence and results of the excavation, two isolated buildings and a few consistent minor structures (in Sounding D) were identified.

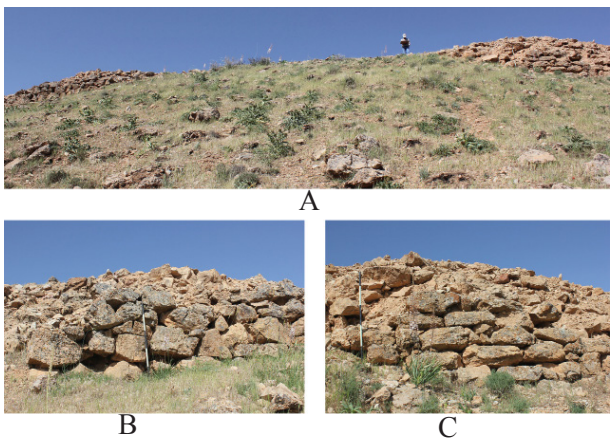


Figure. 6: A:*The Main Entrance of the Fort,* ***B, C:*** *The Masonry Details of the Surrounding Towers*

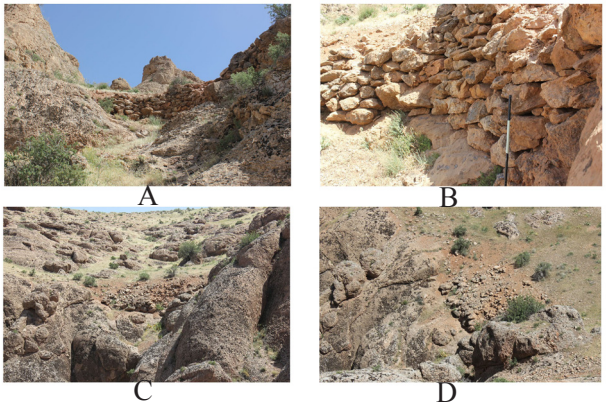


Figure. 7: A: *The Walls blocking western Passages of Mountain*
B: *Their Architectural Details*
C,D: *The Walls blocking western Passages of Mountain*

Ruler's Residence

Within the fort at a point providing a good command of the surrounding lands occurred ruins of a 26.5× 18 m rectangular building, with possible corner towers (Figure. 3). The building lay on an artificial terrace formed by boulders measuring about 26 × 37 m. With its fluctuating height following the contours of the mountain, this low terrace was presumably meant to provide a flat site for the erection of the overlying building.

Judging from the aerial images and the rectangular structure identified on one corner, the building probably had tower-like structures on its corners, and is somewhat reminiscent of the Achaemenian apadana. To explore its architectural details, two soundings were opened, one in the southeast corner (Sounding A) and the other in the central building. The first operation was located so that to expose a part of the wall and assumed tower of the building. To the original 7 × 1.5 m sounding was later added two extensions on the eastern and western sides, each measuring 1.5 × 3 m and 1.5 × 2 m, respectively.

At the depth of 40 cm were revealed remains from a wall of mudbricks in two varying dimensions: 37 × 37 cm, and 40× 40 cm. Individual courses were separated by an 8 to 10 cm thick clay mortar. Whilst mudbricks in other dimensions, namely 33 × 33 cm and 36 × 36 cm, were detected, their poor quality and strength made any accurate measuring impossible. In general, the mudbricks, especially those of the defensive wall's towers, are 38 to 40 cm squares of about 12 cm thickness, and the identified wall is about 150 cm thick (Figure. 8). The location, dimensions, and plan of the square building and the nonexistence of any similar structure suggest that it was the prominent building inside the fort area, and probably functioned as the residence of the regional ruler during his stay at the fort.



Figure. 8: *Operation A and Remains of Discovered Architecture.*

North Building

Above the main gateway of the fort occur the remains of a rectangular building, measuring about 9 × 11 m, made of boulders. While its architectural details and exact function are uncertain, it perhaps served as a sort of gatehouse given its domination over the entry area of the fort (Figure. 3).

Buildings Amid the Fort

Sounding D was opened in the central fort at a point that overlooks the eastern slope of the mountain and was pitted with illicit excavations, which were sometimes carried down to the depth of 1.9 m and responsible for the scatter of a large number of boulders and pottery sherds over the surface (Figure. 9). The sounding aimed to provide information on the nature of possible occupations at the site. The 3 × 3 m operation was continued to the bedrock, reached at the depth of 2 m. It revealed part of a building alongside many sherds and animal skeletal material. Exposed architecture consisted of two walls each orienting almost north-south and east-west, respectively. Represented by two courses of 25 to 15 cm boulders, the north-south wall (Locus 103) was up to 0.55 m thick and the extant parts ran a length of 2.35 m. The east-west wall (Locus 108), now 2.2 m long and 0.4 m thick, was built in

a similar way but in less regular arrangement. The two walls enclosed a floor level of 2.3 m long and about 0.8 m wide, possibly forming a rectangular space or room.

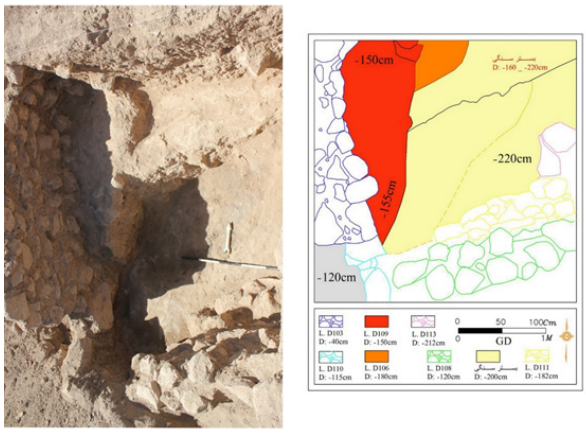


Figure. 9: *Operation B and remains of discovered architecture.*

Pottery

To the small collection of 92 sherds obtained and studied as part of the 2013 surface survey (Mollazadeh 2015), the recent fieldwork added another 200 pieces (Figures. 10–13). Statistical analysis shows that above 90% of the available sherds represent the Late Buff Ware Horizon (Young 1965) of the Iron III and its possible continuation into the Achaemenid period. The remaining 10% is divided between gray (greenish light gray in fine fabric), brown, red, and black varieties. The analyzed sample, while on no account is wholly representative of the site, exhibits fine (about 30%), coarse (13%), and common (57%) fabrics. The relatively high frequency of fine and low frequency of coarse pastes can be justified by the nature and type of the settlement at Jowšātū Fort. The higher attestation of fine ware parallels the situation attested at Ziwiye and Qalaichi (Mollazadeh 2008: 111).

Except for a few cases, the pieces were all wheel-made often coated in a clay slip in the same color as the paste (Table 1; Figures. 10–12). The pinkish buff variety with a finished or polished surface stands out from the remaining types in quality. Over 90% of sherds are plain and lack any sort of ornamentations. Attested decorations include simple incised bands, applique bands with finger impressed patterns on the body of jars, and three or four instances of painted motifs, including two instances of hanging triangles (Figure. 12: 12–13), a tradition typical to the Iron III. While the original forms will remain indefinable in most cases, bowls and jars are predominant. An intriguing form is a large flask coming from Sounding D (Figure. 13: 1–2). The form finds parallels at Persepolis (Figure.13: 3; Schmidt 1957, pls. 72–73), Pasargadae (Figure. 13: 3: Stronach 2000: 338) and Yanik Tepe (Figure. 13: 4; Summers and Burney 2012: 296, 304, 311) in Achaemenid contexts. The absence of the form from the Iron III centers of northwestern Iran and its close similarity to the piece from Persepolis make the Achaemenian attribution more plausible. Yet, given the differences in details and the polished surface, a date in the late Iron III cannot be totally ruled out. This example probably represents a forerunner of the Achaemenian flasks(Figure.13) (Schmidt 1957:PL.72-73; Stronach 2000: p.338; Summers and Burney 2012: 296,304,311).

Discussion

The Simineh Rud basin and the adjacent Zarineh Rud basin formed part of Manna proper in the first millennium B.C. and were home to such important centers as Qalaichi, Ziwiye and Zendān-e Solaymān. Assyrian sources mention the presence in the region of strong Mannean fortified bases, that occasionally proved incapturable for the Assyrian army (Luckenbill 1927: 212–213). The Mannean territory was also an arena of conflict between the regional superpowers of Assyria and Urartu and a target of their frequent military campaigns. Such circumstances would encourage erection of fortified centers wherein the Mannean kings or local rulers could took refuge. However, Qalaichi lacked any sort of fortifications, Zendān-e Solaymān served mainly as a sanctuary, and Ziwiye was more of a palace-fort than a military fort.

Jowšātū overlooks the fertile valley of the Simineh Rud and served as a communication corridor with Miandoab, a region apparently controlled by Urartu at the time (Zimansky 1985: 20). This corridor functioned as the foremost route in their intrusions into Manna proper by the Urartians, who had probably used it for their campaigns against western Iran at least as early as the reign of Argishti I.

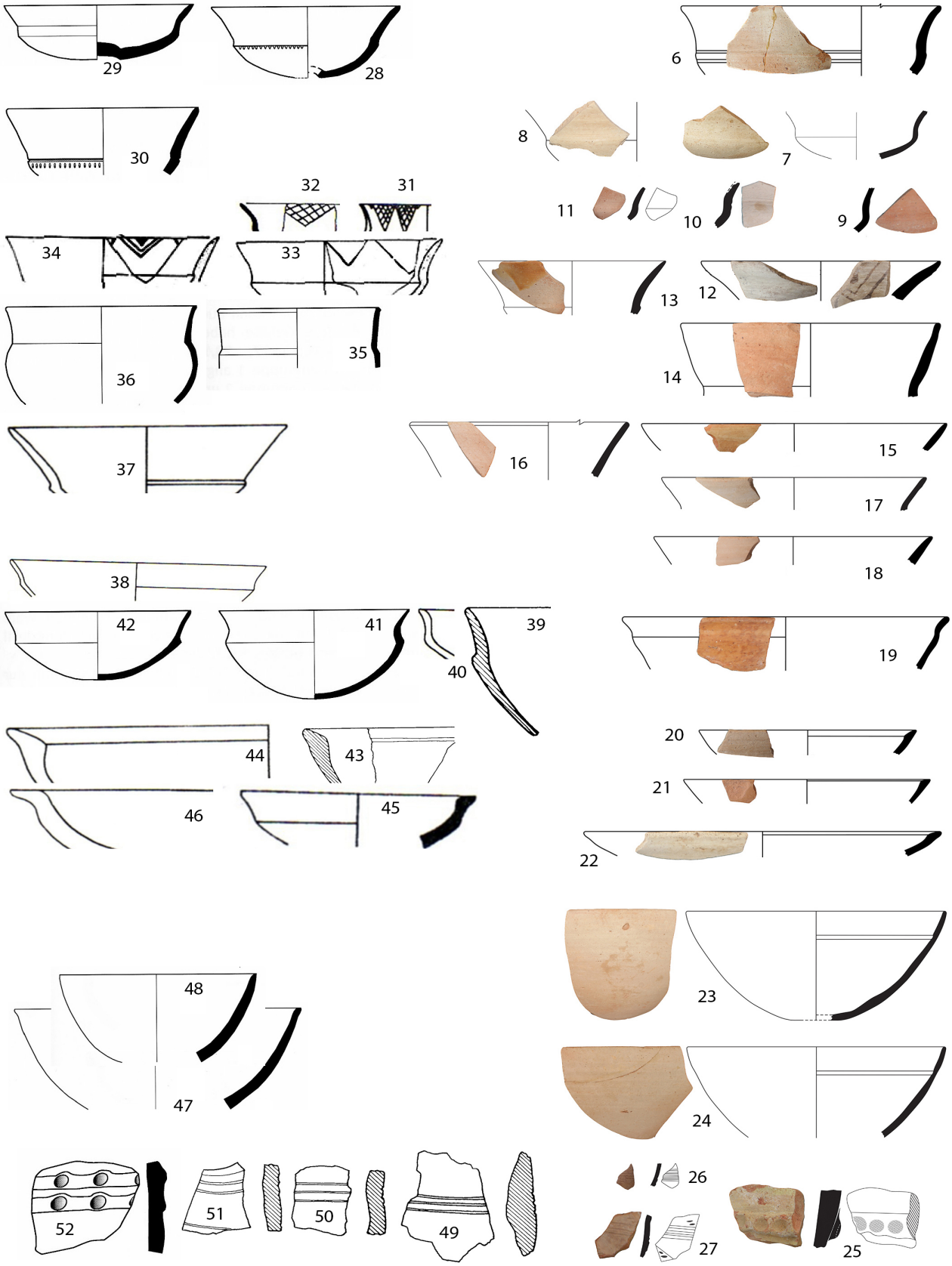


Figure. 10: *Designs and Images of Jowšātū Pottery(Right Side) and Comparable Pottery Designs From Other Iron Age III Sites(Left Side) (After: Zendan-e Soleman, No.28-30,35-37,41-42,45,48-49,52. Bonab Area, No.33-34. Ziwiye,No. 32,37,44,46. Hasanlu, No. 31, 40, 38).*

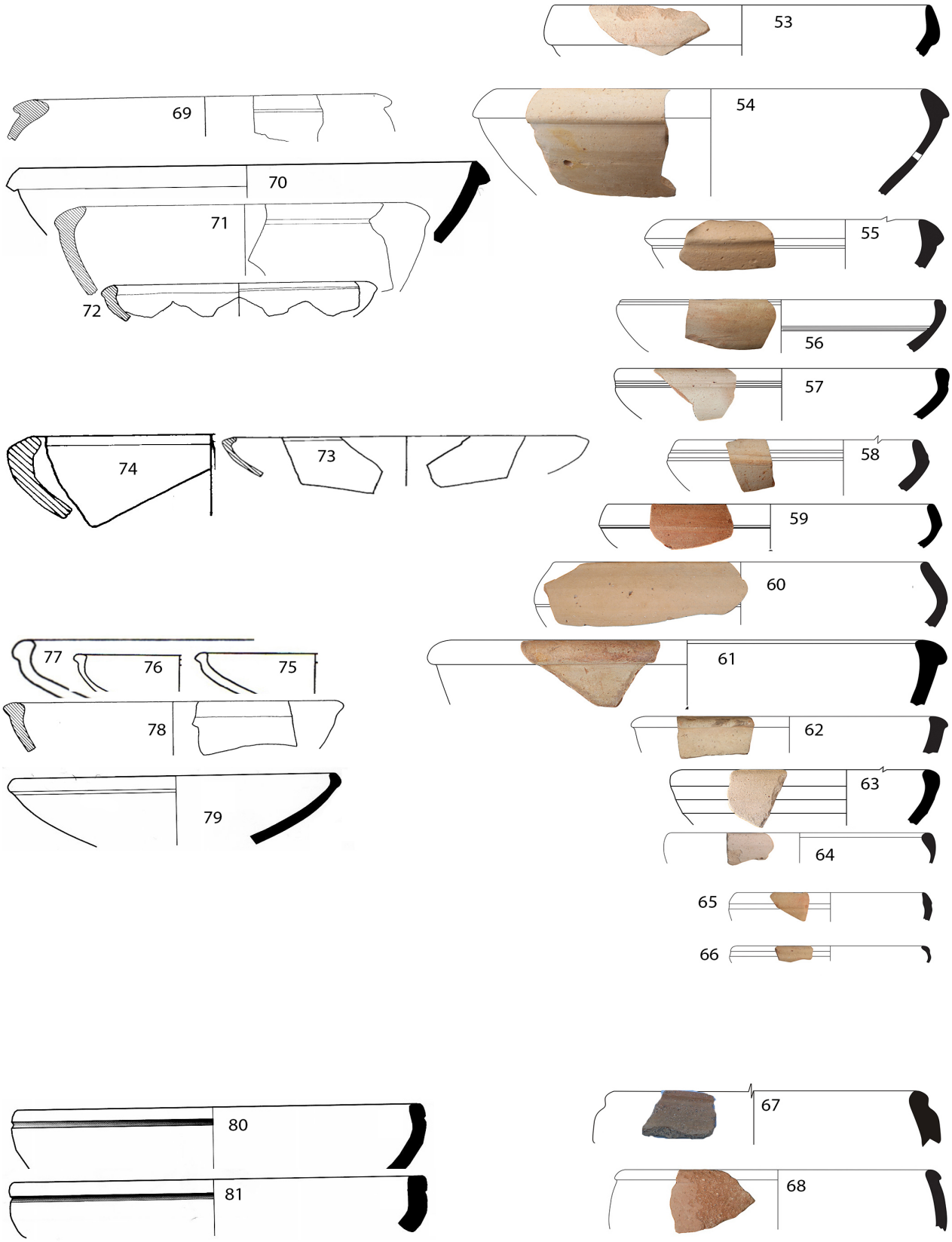


Figure. 11: *Designs and Images of Jowšātū Pottery(Right Side) and Comparable Pottery Designs From Other Iron Age III Sites(Left Side) (After: Zendan-e Soleman, No.70,79-81. Mala Mcha, No.104-107. Ziwiye,No. 77. Hasanlu, No. 75-76. Qalaichi, No. 71-74, 78, 94-95, 97).*

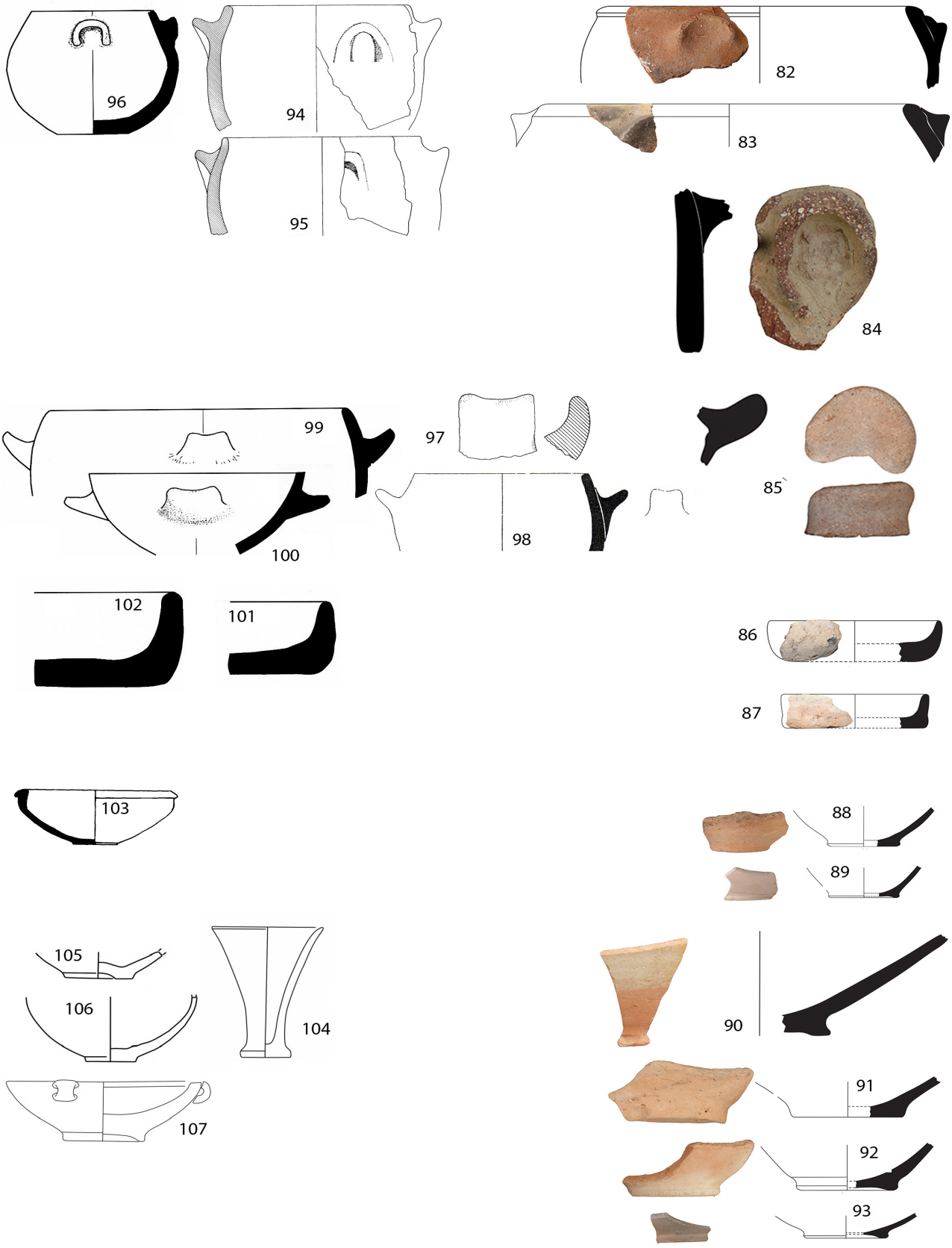


Figure. 12: *Designs and Images of Jowšātū Pottery(Right Side) and Comparable Pottery Designs from Other Iron Age III sites(left side) (After: Zendan-e Soleman, No.96,98-102. Mala Mcha, No.104-107. Hasanlu, Qalaichi, No.94-95, 97).*

Table. 1: *Pottery Fragments Descriptions.*

No	Operation	Description	Comparable
1	D	Flask, buff, organic tempered,	Schmidt 1957: pl.71-72; Summers and Burney 2012,p. 311,314; Stronach 2000, 338
6	Surface	Rim, fine, buff, sand tempered	Thomalsky 2006, p.243, abb.10.
7	D	Rim, fine, cream, , sand tempered	
8	D	Body sherd, fine, buff, sand tempered	
9	Surface	Rim, fine, buff – orange, sand tempered	Dyson1999, 131; Young1965, p.54
10	Surface	Body sherd, fine, buff- brown, organic tempered	
11	E	Body sherd, fine, buff-, sand tempered	
12	Surface	Rim, common, buff – orange, organic tempered	Swiny 1975,p. 90
13	E	Rim, fine, buff – orange, sand tempered	
14	Surface	Rim, fine, buff – orange, sand tempered	Thomalsky 2006, p.243, abb.10.
15	Surface	Body sherd, common, buff, organic tempered	Young 1965, p.58
16	B	Rim, fine, buff – pinkish, sand tempered	
17	Surface	Rim, fine, light-grey, sand tempered, triangle decorated	
18	Surface	Rim, fine, buff, sand tempered	
19	Surface	Body sherd, common, buff, organic tempered, incised decorated	Young 1965, p.54; Mollazadeh 2008,p. 123, pl.9; Thomalsky 2006, p.243, abb.10.
20	Surface	Rim, coarse, buff-grey, organic tempered	Thomalsky 2006, p.235 abb.4
21	Surface	Rim, normasl, buff, organic tempered	
22	Surface	Rim, fine, buff, sand tempered	
23	D	Rim, fine, buff-pinkish, sand tempered	Thomalsky 2006, p.235 abb.4
24	D	Rim, fine, buff-pinkish, sand tempered	
25	E	Body sherd, common, buff, finger print decorated	Mollazadeh 2008,p.125, pl.11; Thomalsky 2006, p.235 abb.4
26	E	Body sherd, fine, buff-brown, incised lines decorated	
27	E	Body sherd, fine, buff, incised lines decorated	
53	Surface	Rim, fine, buff-orange, sand tempered	Mollazadeh 2008,p. 122, pl.8
54	D	Rim, common, buff, organic tempered	
55	B	Rim, common, buff, organic tempered	
58	D	Rim, common, cream-buff, organic tempered	Mollazadeh 2008,p. 122, pl.8
59	Surface	Rim, common, buff-red, organic tempered	
60	D	Rim, common, buff, organic tempered	
61	Surface	Rim, fine, buff-brown, sand tempered, incised decorated	Swiny1975,p. 90; Young 1965, p.58; Mollazadeh 2008,p. 122, pl.8
62	D	Body sherd, common, buff, organic tempered	
63	Surface	Body sherd, common, buff, organic tempered	
65	E	Rim, fine, buff, sand tempered	
66	E	Body sherd, common, buff, organic tempered	
67	Surface	Rim of pot, buff- brown, , organic tempered	Thomalsky 2006, p.236 abb.5
68	D	rim, common, buff, organic tempered	
82	Surface	Rim of pot, buff- red, organic tempered, applied decoration	Mollazadeh,2008,p. 121-125; Thomalsky, 2006, p.264 abb.25
83	B	Rim and Handle, coarse, brown-red, organic tempered	
84		Body sherd, fine, buff, sand temperd	Mollazadeh 2008,p. 121-125; Thomalsky 2006, p.264 abb.25
85	Surface	Rim and pip, coarse, buff, organic tempered, hand made	
86	D	Rim, coarse, buff- grey, organic tempered, hand made	Thomalsky 2006, p.
87	D	Rim, coarse, buff- grey, organic tempered, hand made	

88	D	Body sherd, common, buff, organic tempered	Dyson 1965, pl,XLIV
89	D	Body sherd, fine, buff- grey, sand tempered	
90	D	Body sherd and base, fine, buff- cream, sand tempered	Amelirad *etal,* 2017: p.194,193,189,181
91	D	base, common, cream-pinkish, organic tempered	
92	D	base, common, buff-grey, organic tempered	
93	D	base, fine, grey- buff, sand tempered	

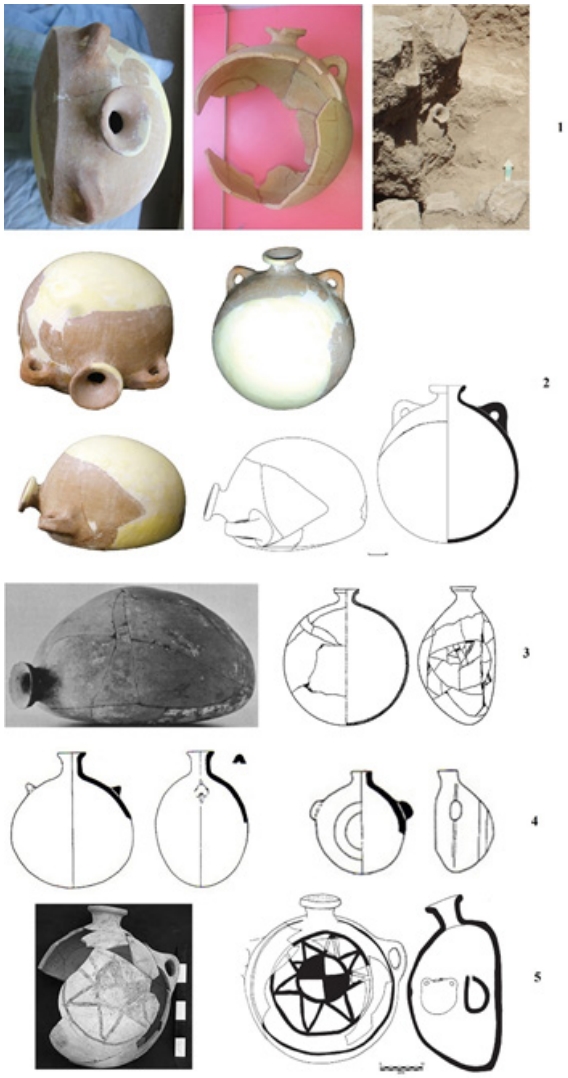


Figure .13: *The Pottery Flask Recovered From the Jowšātū(No.1-2) and Compare Able Pottery From Persepolis(No.3), Pasargad(No.4) and Yanik Tepe(No.5).*

Given its location and double fortification that made it quite unconquerable, Jowšātū fort could have served as a major outpost against the attacking enemy armies and a temporary settlement and refuge for local rulers in time of emergencies.

Drylaid stone-walled architecture typifies the region in the first millennium B.C. as is evidenced by the walls and towers of the nearby center of Zendān-e Solaymān. Indeed, the main part of defensive wall at Jowšātū exhibits a unique architecture reminiscent of the 2 millennium B.C. traditions of Anatolia attested, among others, at Alacahüyük, and as yet remains unparalleled at any contemporary sites even in the Urartian world. The semicircular tower in the main part of the defensive wall is also unique in the Iron Age contexts, and occurs only at later (Parthian and Sasanian) fortified complexes. The application of such scheme at Jowšātū can be related to the steep slope of the mountain and interpreted as a thrust prevention measure. Large square mudbricks were common at the Mannean centers of Qalaichi, Ziwiye and Hasanlu in the first millennium B.C. Further, the ceramics in buff ware are parallel at the Iron III sites (most notably Zendān-e Solaymān). Therefore, architecture, ceramics and other small finds all provide support for a dating in the Iron III.

Conclusions

The location, architecture, distinctive plan, vast expanse, control over the Zarineh Rud valley and the north-south line of communication as well as the higher frequency of fine pottery suggest that Jowšātū was built as a military and administrative fort. In light of variations in technique and quality between the central part (Figure. 4) and other stretches of the defensive walls (Figure. 6), the fort was built in two phases, which given the architectural details and homogenous pottery assemblages were by no means separated by a considerable span of time. Alternatively, certain contingent political and military developments might have interrupted the construction work, prompting a hasty completion of the remainder of the circumvallations.

On the other hand, the meager occupation level, the scarce constructions within the fort and the paucity of ceramics raise the possibility that the fort at Jowšātū was not a conventional settlement but was reserved for times of emergencies and contingencies, and it simply hosted a small garrison in peacetime. The attested mudbricks compare in

dimensions with those at Qalaichi (Kargar 2004), Ziwiye (Motamedi 1997), and Hasanlu IV (Dyson 1989: 118). The construction manner of the wall is paralleled at Zendān-e Solaymān (Thomalsky 2006), and most notably the sherds find close parallels in the Iron III assemblages (in particular from Zendān-e Solaymān). We assume the second half of the Iron III period as the most plausible date for Jowšātū. This swathe of northwest Iran at the time was included in the Mannean territory, and in the vicinity of Jowšātū there are several major sites (Ziwiye, Zendān-e Solaymān, Qalaichi), which have already been excavated and published. Jowšātū possibly remained in use for an uncertain duration in the Achaemenid period as is suggested by ceramic evidence, specifically a flask form.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank the anonymous referees constructive comments. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Iranian Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism, the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), and the Bu-Ali Sina University for providing partial support for this research as well as West Azerbaijan Cultural Heritage Directorate, and Šāhīn Dezh Governorship and local Cultural Heritage Office. Special thanks are also due to Abbas Razmpoush, Salahaddin Ebrahimipour, and Behroz Khanmohammadi.

References

Amelirad Sheler, Abdolreza Mohajerynezhad & Masoume Javidkhah. 2017. A Report on the Excavation at the Mala Mcha Graveyard, Kurdistan, Iran. *Iran*, Vol. 55, no. 2, pp. 171–207.

Dyson Jr, R.H. 1965. Problems of Protohistoric Iran as seen from Hasanlu. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 24(3), pp.193-217.

Dyson, R.H. 1989. The Iron Age Architecture at Hasanlu: An Essay. *Expedition* 31(2-3) pp.107-27.

Dyson, R.H. 1999a. Triangle-Festoon ware reconsidered. *Iranica antiqua,* 34(1), pp.115-144.

Dyson, R.H. 1999b. The Achaemenid painted pottery of Hasanlu IIIA. *Anatolian studies*, 49, pp.101-110.

Kargar, B. 2004. Qalaichi: Zirtu Center of Mannea, Period IB. *In Proceedings of the International Symposium on Iranian Archaeology: North Western Region, 17th to 20th June*, pp. 229-245.

Kroll, S. 2005. The southern Urmia basin in the early Iron Age. *Iranica Antiqua,* 40, pp.65-85.

Luckenbill, D.D. 1927. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia,* vol. I. University of Chicago Press.

Mollazadeh, K. 2008. The Pottery from the Mannean Site of Qalaichi, Bukan(NW-Iran). *Iranica Antiqua,* 43, pp.107-125.

Mollazadeh, K. 2015. Study and dating of the Jowšātū Fort: the largest Mannean Fortress in Northwestern Irān. *International Journal of the Society of Iranian Archaeologists,* 1(2), pp.55-72.

Motamedi, N. O. 1997. Excavations at Ziwiye, (In Persian) 1995, *Archaeological Reports* (1), ICHO.

Nobari, A.R & K. Mollazadeh. 2004. A Comprehensive View to History and Histoircal Geography of Mannea, *Journal of Humanities of The Islamic Republic of Iran*, 11(1), pp.81-92.

Schmidt, Erich F. 1957. *Persepolis II:Contents of The Treasury and other Discoveries*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois

Stronach, D. 1978. *Pasargadae: a report on the excavations conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963.*(In Persian),Clarendon Press. (Translated by H. Khatib Shahidi, 2000).

Summers, G.D. & C.A. Burney. 2012. Late Iron Age pottery from Northwestern Iran. The evidence from Yanik Tepe. *In The proceedings of the Seventh Anatolian Iron Ages Colloquium held at Edirne, 19-24 April 2010,* edited by Altan Çilingiroğlu and Antonio Sagona, Peeters Leuven – Paris, pp. 269-315.

Swiny, S. 1975. Survey in north-west Iran, 1971. *East and west*, 25(1/2), pp.77-97.

Thomalsky, J. 2006. Die Eisenzeitliche Keramik von Zendan-e suleiman in Iranisch azarbaijan, *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan* 38: 219–89.

von der Osten, H.H. & R. Naumann. 1961. *Takht-i Suleiman: Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen 1959.* (In Persian) Trans. by F. Najde Samei, 1994.

Young Jr, T.C. 1965. A comparative ceramic chronology for western Iran, 1500–500 BCE. *Iran*, 3(1), pp.53-85.

Zimansky, P.E. 1985. *Ecology and Empire: The Structure of the Urartian State*. University of Chicago Press.