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Preliminary Report on the Salvage Excavation at the Kolàšeg, Guilan-E Gharb of Kermanshah, Iran

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Abstract- Kolàšeg is located at about 6 kilometers southeast of the modern town of Guilan-e Gharb in west of Kermanshah Province. The site lied in between Mià-khesh and Tagh-toogh mountains; the Kolàšeg River was passing through the valley during the near past, Locating in the reservoir of the Kolàšeg dam and in order to do rescue excavation, the site was excavated by the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR) expedition for a season in 2004. The site is composed of two parts; a residential area and a cemetery on a platform locating at the foothill of the Mià-khesh Mountains. The residential part is situated downward, at the south of the graveyard close to the Kolàšeg River located in the south. We could not excavate the whole site because of large span of the site and time limitation; especially the cemetery of the site has almost remained intact. The excavation method leads to revealing the vast architectural remains. The architecture was made of stone both foundation and walls. The excavation has revealed us a large number of noticeable abject related to the Iron Age III such as Pendants, Armament, Potsherds and Glass sherds and Objects; of them, are Fibulas and a Cylindrical Seal which are very important for dating the site. The comparative study of the material has also proved that the site can definitely be related to the Iron Age II, III relying on some marks on the Assyrian appearance in the region by the given time.

Keywords: *guilan-e gharb, kolàšeg, architecture, Iron age iii, new assyrian.*

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Preliminary Report on the Salvage Excavation at the Kolàšeg, Guilan-E Gharb of Kermanshah, Iran

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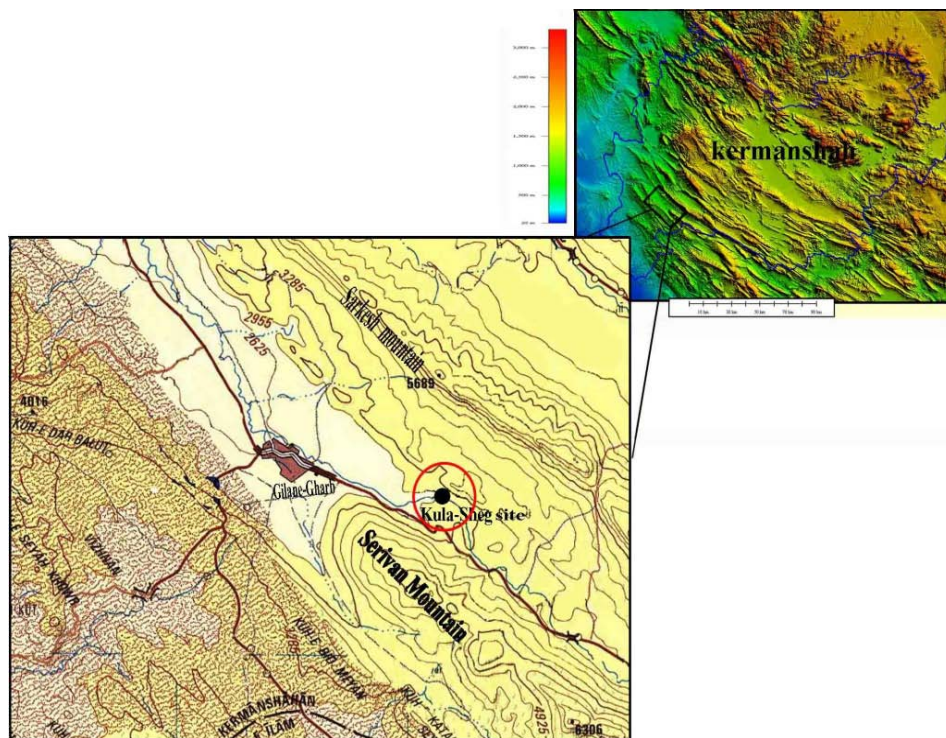
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I. INTRODUCTION

Doing huge constructive projects such as Dams has always been a serious challenge for archaeological sites; another archaeological site toke risks to be submerged establishing the Kolàšeg Dam. Sadly, the site was heavily damaged before any scientific excavation as the surface was heavily evened and the soil was dumped at the corner of the site; the south and southwestern part, however, were completely destroyed (Fig.1). After all, the expedition team from the ICAR has started to excavate the site for a season in 2004.



Pl.1: Map showing the location of Kolàšeg

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II. DESCRIPTION AND NAMING OF THE SITE

KolāšĒg is located at some 6 kilometers south of the Guilan-eGharb Town, on the most western edges of the Iranian Central Zagros in Kermanshah province (Fig.1). The site is situated in between Miā-khesh and Tagh-toogh mountains at the bank of the KolāšĒg River (Fig.2). The site has varied topography and elevation as the lowest part is 900 meters and the highest part is 1000 above sea level.

As mentioned, the site has two different components; the first part is located in the river bank to the foothill of the mountain and the other which is the most northern part, located at the foothill of the Miā-khesh Mountain. This has some artificial terraces on which some Megalithic graves have made. The excavators have named these parts as A, B and C; part A and B are residential while part C has used for graves (Pl. 2). The Miā-khesh Gorge is located at the northeast of the site in which a waterway is passing; in this part of the Gorge there are some symbols on platform-making and architectural remains. On the foothill and behind of the Tagh-toogh on the southern part of the river, there is very rare archaeological evidences, including residue of platforms and megalithic graves in part C.

a) Part A

This part is located on the down of the foothill (adjacent to the part C; Fig. 2; Pl.3) which is caused to be covered with thick layer of natural sedimentations. The starting of the project was from this part of the site. Trenches were selected in the North- South direction as the joined trenches. The dry-alignment of stones was recovered in most of the trenches.

b) Part B

This part is the most southern part of the site relating to the Part A from the North and to the River from the South (Fig. 2; Pl.2). The excavation was carried out with part A simultaneously which lead to open some new trenches after recovery of some architectural remain in the beginning. Sadly, most of these remains have removed before the excavation by the construction activities in the area.

c) Part C

Here, is the most northern part of the site (Fig. 2; Pl.2) locating on the foothill of the Miā-khesh which can be divided to 2 apart sections morphologically; one is the platform and another is the natural piedmonts of the mountain. The platform is located on the starting point of the piedmont including some artificial terraces (Fig.4). The surface of the terrace has covered by the natural sediments washed from above slopes. Some parts of the stone walls have revealed, since the sediments have washed out by down-coming water (Fig. 5). The excavation at part C aiming to know the

relation among the graves and the Architecture in Parts A and B was necessary, but it was sadly refused because of the shortage of time and budget; so, overall only 2 graves which were partly appeared in the section of tow illegal pits were excavated. In addition, on the foothill of Miā-khesh there is some traces of the modern pastoral living structures such as stone alignments were found; here, some platform and stone alignments were assessed by flattening the slope surface of the area (Fig.6).

III. ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of the site has continued from the very edge of the river bank to the very slope of the Mountain. The excavation was limited to the small portion of the site, Because of the shortage of time. The architectural remains were extensive as covers the area with 6 hectares in size (Pl.2) and the architecture was made by stone dry alignment. At the northern part of the site (Part A) there are huge, long and wide spaces with thick walls without any partitioning inside (Pl.3).

These buildings were probably been made with better quality and stronger because of their situation at the foothill and the risk of natural sedimentation during the wet seasons. Alongside of the walls and the space among them there are irregular dumps of angular stone architecture were made by the natural floods and sedimentation deposited over features. This can almost be seen at all over the trenches. At the northern part, there some keeping rooms made for keeping food which were angular and made of cobbles and slabs, as jars and other features were recovered alongside the walls, groceries and jars.

At the Part B, the architecture remains more complex and spanning over trenches (Pl. 4). Here, the architectural remains were less strong than those from part A. Downward to the River, at the south of the site the remains have attested daily life such as living or workshop, while, as we take north of the site, and the architectural remains are more genuine and could be public with different functions. Most of these spaces are rectangular laying in North-south direction (Fig. 7). In the foundation of walls big pieces of stone and the rest of wall smaller pieces have been used. Sometimes used stones have retouched and sometimes not. The outer surface of the wall is made by bigger and more regular pieces of stone while the inner surface made by smaller pieces, meanwhile inside the wall have filled by much smaller pieces of rubbles. The only exceptions are the doorways, here, is the only part of the architecture that retouched and regulated pieces of stone is visible (Fig. 8). The floor of these spaces has covered by compacted soil mixed with lime although some floors have covered by soil, rubble, lime and grit beneath the compacted soil. Sometimes at the different spaces of these spaces, floors have also covered by potsherds cutback by grit

and lime. Actually this simple architecture without any installation is the characteristic of this part while at the southern part there are more detailed structures inside spaces, as we can call here the sector with occupational architecture.

The architecture of Kolāšeg is fully stone made which is clearly different from what we know from the contemporary sites in western Iran such as Nushijan, Babajan and Godin Tepe, but the Iron Age III architecture have already recovered and published from Sorkhdom-e Lori (Schmidt et al, 1989), Sorkhdom-e laki (Shishegar 2005) Kamtarlan (Schmidt et al, 1989, Vol.I, 15-22. Vol.II, pls. 14-16), ChoghāSabz (Schmidt et al, 1989), Vol.II, pls.18-23), BabajanTepe (Goff 1968), Malehfoothill (Mo'tamedi 2000: 351), TepeGiyan (Contenau&Ghirshman, 1935, 5-10, 80 pl.4), Godin Tepe (Young 1969: 12; Young & Levin, 1974), Ziwyieh, Zendan-e Soleyman (Van der Ston 1994).

The given architecture from mentioned sites includes short walls with stone basements while Kolāšeg's architecture the whole architecture is of stone from the base to very top. This, is made of local material and completely adapted with environment as can be seen in the modern abounded village close to the site in the southeast direction (Fig. 9). Dating of the architecture have based on the material recovered inside on the floors.

IV. POTTERY

Over 5000 sherds were found from this season of excavation at Kolāšeg; moreover, some complete vessels were also found from the graves. These sherds have been collected either form the surface or the contexts. The fabrics of the potteries are red, Brick, Buff and Gray (Fig. 10) and they are wheel-made except some rare cases. Most of the sherds are from the *Common Wares* and Jars, however, some fine sherds were also found. Most of the sherds were low-fired as 29/52 percent has enough firing and 59/22 percent are low-fired (Pl.5).

Curved and relief decorations are parallel, circular or crescent which were applied on the rims and higher part of the body. Among the recovered sherds, bodies with 82/9 percent are the most pieces. Sherds with curved and finger-impressed ropes are 32 percent and applique decoration has 1/7 percent. In terms of form, 82/9 percent are body, 3/6 rim, 2/8 percent base and 0/6 percent are handles.

The Kolāšeg potteries are similar to those published from the Iron Age III and Achaemenid sites of Western Iran; of them, a type of bottom-like convex base (Fig. 11). This type of base is attesting that the pottery was legged. These bases have already been presented from Babajan (Goof 1978. Fig. 12: No 6), Sorkhdom-e Laki (Shishe Gar 2005) and the Iron Age III layers of Babajan (Goof 1978. Fig. 3: No 38; Pl.7). Using of these potteries was continued to the Achaemenid period as

there are some metallic examples. Of the decoration of Kolāšeg potteries is applique decoration in different motives and rope decorations. There are some similar examples recovered from many sites. Crescent applique decoration has introduced from the Iron Age III layers of Babajan (Goff, 1978, fig: 12). Of the Kolāšeg potteries there is a stoup pottery vessel that with open-mouth and circular base. This kind of pottery is known as Lamp potteries which is similar to what has publishes from Assyria Palace of Khurs-Abad (Wilson, & Allen pl. 63).

Another different type of the potteries is "Micaceous Buff Ware"; among the whole assemblage of collected potteries from the foothill of Kolāšeg, only 2 percent doesn't contain Mica and the rest has some trace of it at least while in the trenches 3/62 percent contains Mica (Pl.8). This kind of Buff Ware is wheel-made plain pottery and known as "Micaceous Buff Ware". Here, this ware belong to the first phase of the Iron Age III as published from Nushijan (Stronach 1978: 13-16), Babajan (Goff 1978), Sorkhdom-e Laki (Shishe Gar 2005), JameShouran (Levine 1987), Median Castle of Bisotun (Alizadeh 2003) and some other sites of the region attribute this ware to the Iron Age III. Mica particles in the Babajan III potteries have never occurred but it's fairly common by the period II and some in the Period I of Babajan as well (Goff, 1978: 36).

There are different ideas on this pottery, some my attribute it to the Median; as Levine believes that the early and late "Micaceous Buff Ware" during the Iron Age III has transferred to the Mahidasht and Northern Luristan from Malayer and could reach Hamadan by the time probably He believes that the appearance of "Micaceous Buff Ware" in Luristan is a symbol of the Ellipies (Levine, 1987: 229-250). It was previously assumed that the most western site on this pottery is ChoghāMaran in Mahidasht from the Iron Age III graves. But new evidences showing that this type of pottery has spanned to the Guilan-e Gharb and eastern part of the northern Mesopotamia as well, so its geographical distribution must be reviewed.

The next group of found potteries from Kolāšeg is *Grey Ware*. This group is 1/36 percent of the whole assemblage. The distribution and effluence of this Ware in Western Iran by the Iron Age I has invoked some theories on the Iranian migration by the time. There are different ideas on the appearance of Grey Ware in Pusht-I Kuh, some are believe that there is no trace of this Ware in the Region while in the Northwest is not. But there is some Grey War evidences could be related to the Iron Age of the region (Overlaet, 2005: 7). It is to be said that the Grey Ware of the If this idea can be approved and accepted that these sherds are definitely belong to the Iron Age III. To sum up, it can be said that the Kolāšeg potteries are the local type with some similarity with contemporary type over the region. Some of these sherds can be compared with published

material from Sorkhdom-e Laki, Babajan and Median castle of Bisotun; some can be compared to Persepolis sherds although are not completely similar with the Achaemenid sherds, but they can be somehow between Iron Age III and Achaemenid Periods.

V. OBJECTS

There some recovered object from this season Excavation; although they are too few, but have enough diversity. They are including ornaments, armaments, pottery, Glass, cylindrical seal and small objects. Metallic ornaments are including pendants, bracelet, anklet, finger ring, buckle and fibula. Of the ornaments, there are some red, light and dark brown and orange agate beads were found (Fig.12). Metallic objects are from Iron, Bronze, Silver and Gold of which, Iron objects are heavily rusty and eroded as it is difficult to recognize their function, while Bronze objects have better condition. Iron objects including arrowhead and bayonet, knife, dagger, macehead and ax (Fig. 13). All of armaments are made of iron which is found from different parts of the site especially from the graves of Trench B1. Of the finds, there are some small objects which are mostly made of bronze having any special shape.

VI. CYLINDRICAL SEAL

One of the most important objects found from this season of excavation is a Cylindrical Seal which has a silver axis inside. The diagonal of this axis is 2/5 millimeters which is a handle of the seal in same time; this conical handle is horizontally incised. The motif is drilled which includes a horned human with 4 wings in between to mythic animals. Nose, beard and hairs of this human are long and he has a long clothes on his upper part can be seen from the front. His left leg is a bit forward and his clothes elongated to his knee. On the both side there are two wild animal attacked him. These animals have human head as their profile has depicted. They have round tailed hat as the hair can be partly seen from below and the right animal is better preserved. On the bottom of the pattern between the winged human and the right animal, there is an abject like a glob having to horn on top while has a base. The horns are diagonal and pointed. Behind the mythic animal on top of the scene a crescent is depicted. The motives of this seal leading us to attribute it to the New Assyrian period. The most similar parallel is a seal keeping in the British Museum. This seal shows that a horned four wing god with long shirt is located in the middle of the scene. Four wings of the gods were common by the New Assyrian period while in Iran firstly known from the Achaemenid period from Pasargadae. On the heads of the invade animals to the god there is a tailed round hat which is similar to the Median hat as known from Persepolis. This hat has known from

nowhere else and the dating could be somehow between 800-615 B.C.

VII. FIBULA

From this season of excavation at KolāšĒg 3 fibulas were found which only one was intact and the rest are without gear. These fibulas made of Bronze and completely oxidized as no detail can be recognized (Fig. 15). Fibula were found in a vast area from the Mediterranean to the Mesopotamia and Iran from sites such as Marlik (Negahban 1964), Hasanlou (Muscarella 1965), Nushijan (Stronach 1969), Babajan (Goff, 1978: 38), Ziwyieh (Muscarella 1965), Tepe Godin (Young, 1969: 31), Zagros Graveyard of Sanandaj (Amelirad, & Others, 2011:48) and Luristan Graveyards (Gerishman 1964) such as Dowreyah (Overlaet, 2005, pl. 14) as well. These fibulas can be paralleled to those recovered from Sargon Palace, New Babylonian and Luristan and TepeNushijan. Investigations have shown that the fibulas with arch rainbow are earlier than those with triangular rainbow while both have appeared by the Iron Age III. Fibula with arch rainbow is disappeared by the late 7th century or early 6th century B.C, while the fibula with triangular rainbow have continued for more 200 years (Stronach, 1959: 185). Thus, recovered fibulas from KolāšĒg can be attributed to two phases of the Iron Age III.

VIII. BURIAL

Part C of KolāšĒg is a graveyard which because of shortage of time and its location close to the water levels, was not excavated. Here, there are some simple pit and megalithic graves. This vast graveyard is extended to the whole foothill of the Miā-khesh Mountain. Most of the graves have plundered over time (Fig. 16) and many of them are covered by the natural sedimentations currently. During this season of excavation we could excavate only 4 graves; 2 of which are located in part C, 1 in Trench A4 and 1 in Trench B1.

A4 Burials: this grave is located at the middle of the Trench close to a wall in 50 cm depth of surface. The grave has lying in northeast-southwest direction and its type is a simple pit. The skeletal remain was intact and there were an intact vessels close to the legs (Fig, 17). These vessels were buried by the interment time. The first vessel was a buff with button-base bowl and the other is a wide mouth jar-like jug with buff color. The relation in between this grave and the architecture of the Trench A was remained unclear, but it seems that the burial is later.

The social grave of Trench B1: the social grave of this trench has contained 9 people buried squatted and each lied on other. The space of the grave is 3×2 meters (Fig. 18). Of these skeletons, one is belonging to a child. Along with these skeletons there are some armaments, pottery vessels and ornaments were found.

Armaments are including dagger, macehead, ax, arrowhead cylindrical seal, buckle and bayonet (Fig. 13). Close to the head of a skeleton there are 2 pottery vessels. The interesting point of this grave is the existence of some bayonets in the back of the skeletons (Fig. 19). Some of these objects show the Assyrian art.

Part C graves: as above mentioned in the part C there are number of pits dug by the Dam constructions caused serious damage of this part of the site (Fig.20). The section of 2 of these pits has cleared 2 graves for us (Pl.9). One of them was almost destroyed, however, some parts of the skeleton were remained although the grave had architecture as below the skeleton was paved by small slabs and surrounded by pebbles (Fig. 21). 2 meters from this grave, there was another grave discovered by artificial section (Pl.9). Parts of the skull along with a part of a pottery vessel were obvious and the rest was removed by the constructions. The skeleton was buried supine as the head was oriented to the west and the legs to the east. Right hand was below the chine and the left hand was on stomach (Fig. 22). There were 3 iron rings on the left hand and the legs were diagonal to the west. Some agate beads and a golden pendant were found around the neck (Fig. 12). There were some anklets on the legs as well. The architecture of the grave was unclear because of the serious destructions, however, trace of a wall on the northern part and a compacted floor of the grave were discovered. The recovered anklets and rings found from KolāšĒg are similar to those from the western Iran and Luristan.

The results of the Pusht-I Kuh excavations have approved that the iron ornaments (Fibula and finger rings) were appeared to use by the Iron Age I and being continued to the Iron Age II and by the Iron Age III were no longer used (Haerinck & Overlaet, 2004: 113). Using iron rings is a characteristic of the late Iron Age I / II (Ibid: 112); however, mass use of iron is backed to the Iron Age II and III. But the anklets are belonging to the Iron Age II and they do not exist by the Iron Age III (Ibid: 113). In Khatunban, these anklets were recovered only from the women's graves (Overlaet 2003: 198).

IX. CONCLUSION

KolāšĒg is one of the big sites of the western edge of the Central Zagros locating on the margin of the

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Khorasan High Road to the Mesopotamia. Regarding to the information vacuity of the Iron Age III of the region it is very important. Adaptive comparison is the base of the chronology of the site. These data are including architecture, pottery, ornaments and armaments. Of the helpful finds dating the site are fibulas. These are broadly discovered from many sites of (western) Iran and Mesopotamia while all attributed to the Iron Age III. Recovered objects from the site attribute it to the Iron Age II and III; objects with Iron Age II characteristic were found from the northern part of the site with low quantity. Because it was not possible to excavate some parts of the site and the lack of more architectural remains, it is unclear that the Iron Age II occupants were pastoral or sedentary. However, the majority of the objects can be attributed to the Iron Age III. Most of them are recovered from the central and southern parts. Recovered evidences showing that some very important changes were happened by the time. The existence of Assyrian pottery and objects are a symbol of the Assyrian existence in the region by the Iron Age III. Of the recovered material is a cylindrical seal on which tailed round hat is depicted similar to the Median hat depicted in Persepolis relieves. After collapse of Assyrians, KolāšĒg was remained occupied till the Achaemenid period; however, there is no evidence to prove the Achaemenid occupation, although there is some evidence showing the Parthian occupation after Iron Age III.

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Figure 1 : A view of the destroyed parts of the sit, view to the west

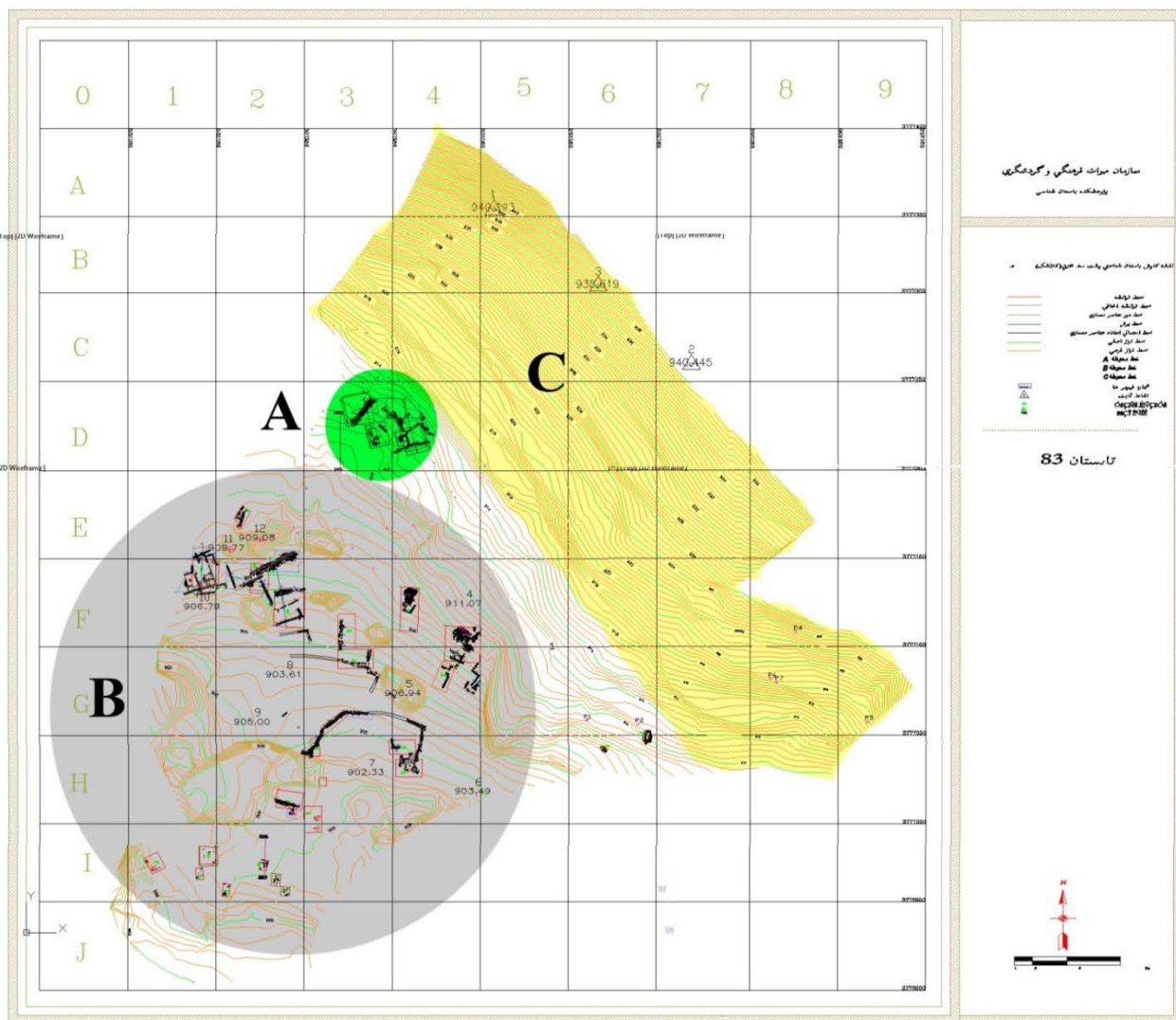


Figure 2 : The satellite image of KolahSheg's Site (<http://Google earth>).



Figure 3 : The satellite image of KolahSheg site and its division to Parts A, B and C (<http://Google earth>.)





Pl.2 : The topography map of the site and Parts A, B and C



Figure 4 : Terraces for the necropolis in Part C

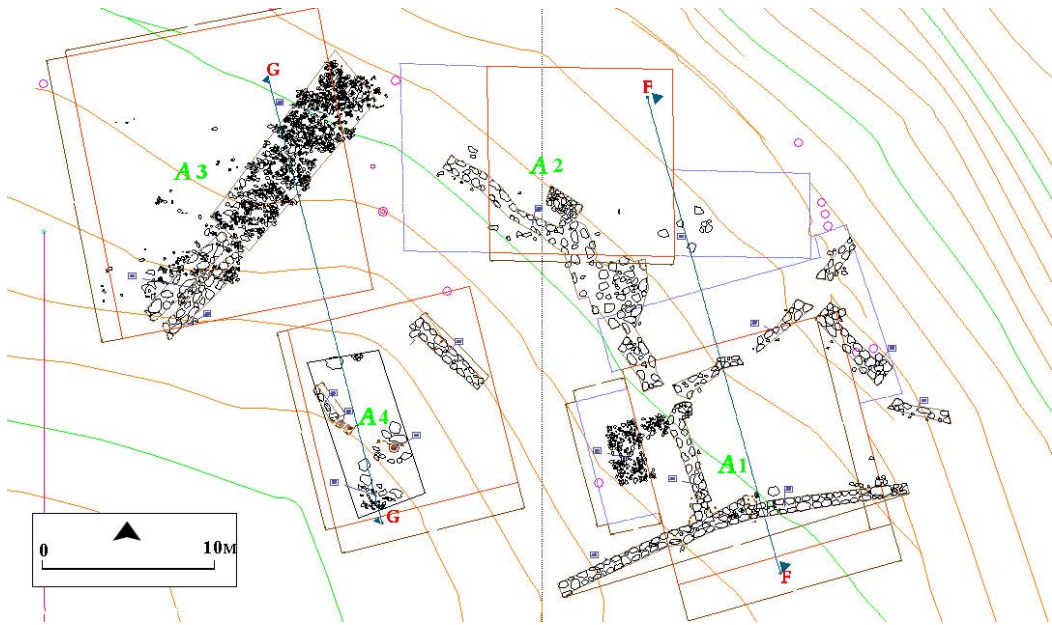


Figure 5 : view of one of the Terrace's wall of Part C

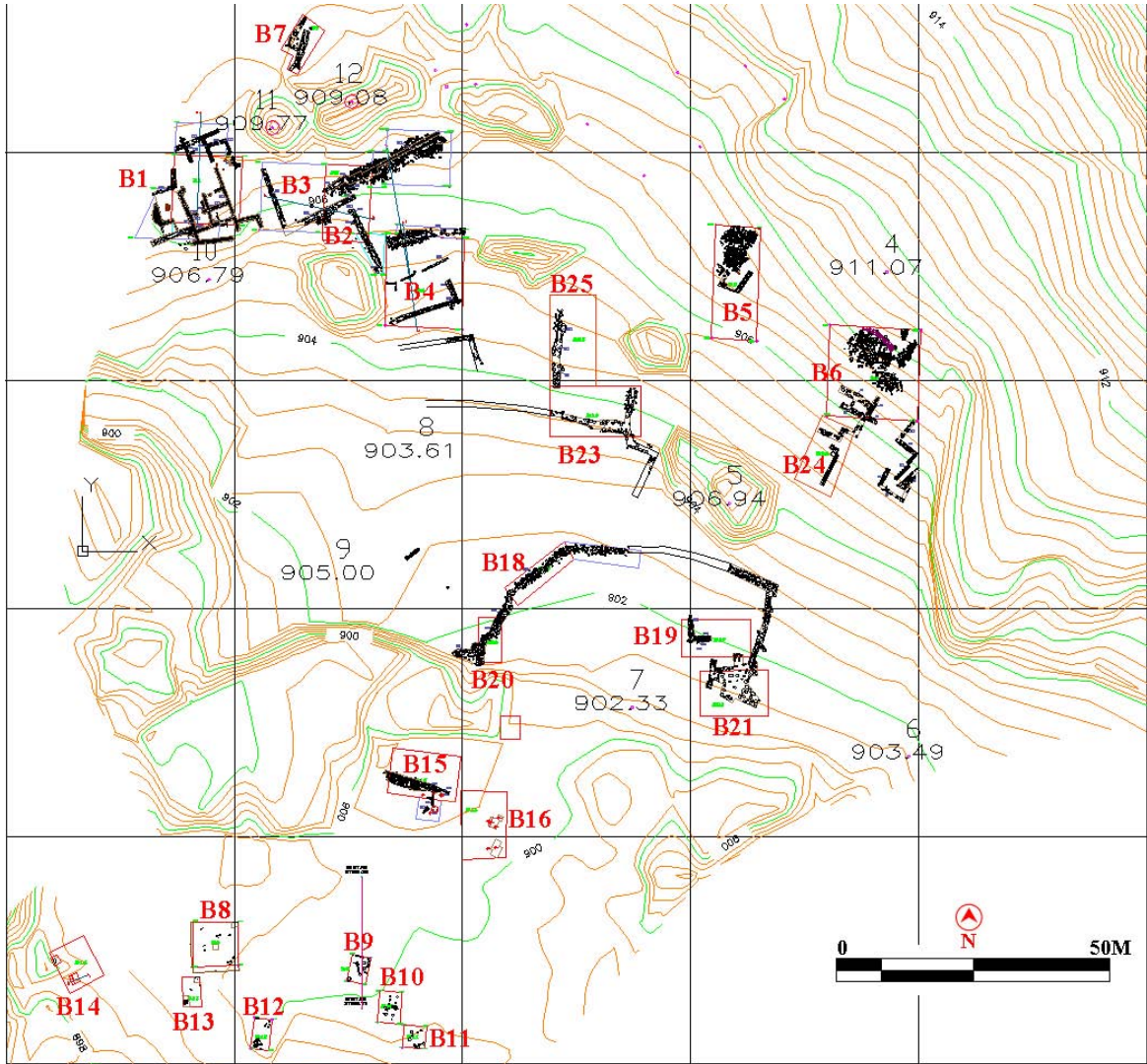


Figure 6 : Remains of recent Immigrants





PI 3 : Architectural remains' map of Part A



PI 4 : The map of Excavation workshops and Architectural remains of Part B



Figure 7 : A view of Architectural spaces(part B)



Figure 8 : View of the of Trenches' western wall gate- view to the east

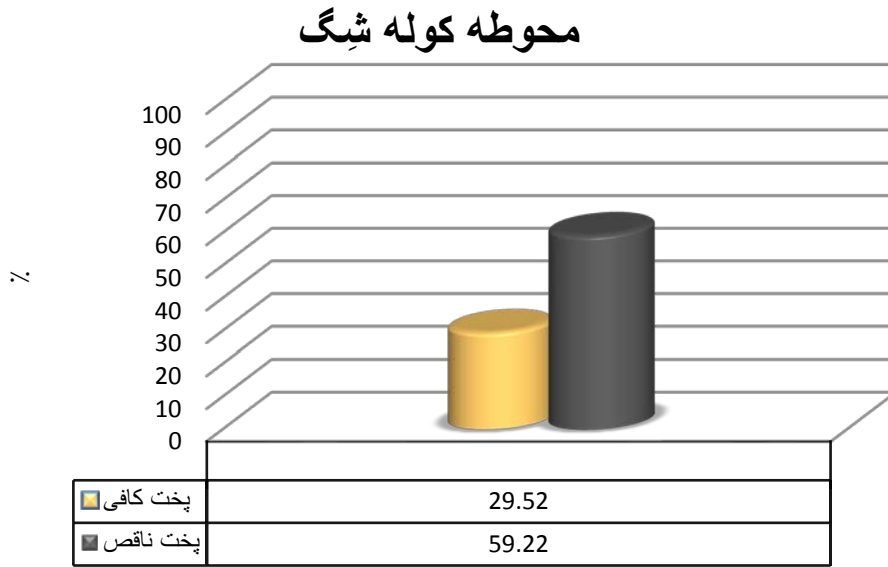




Figure 9 : a view of The ruined village of KolahSheg's Architecture- View to south-west



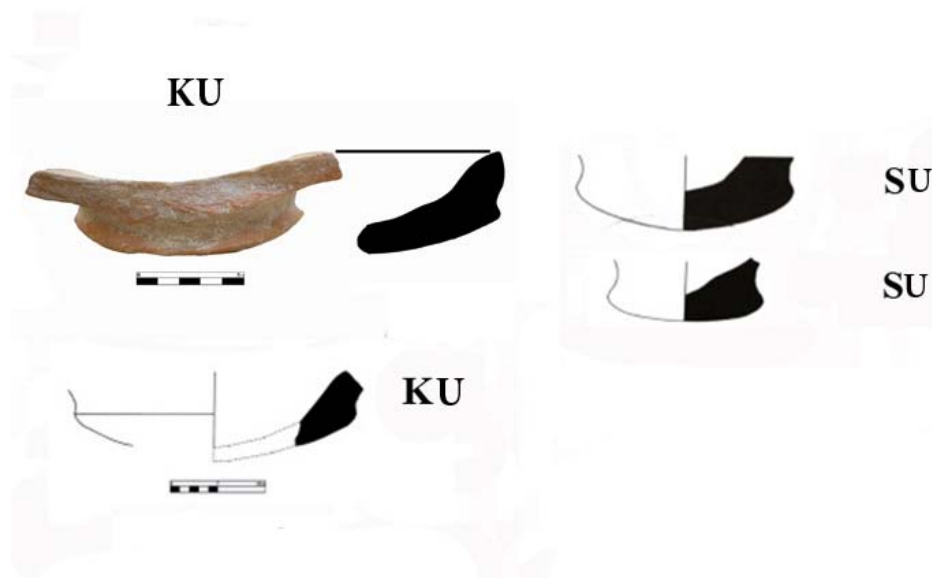
Figure 10 : a selection of KolahSheg's potteries



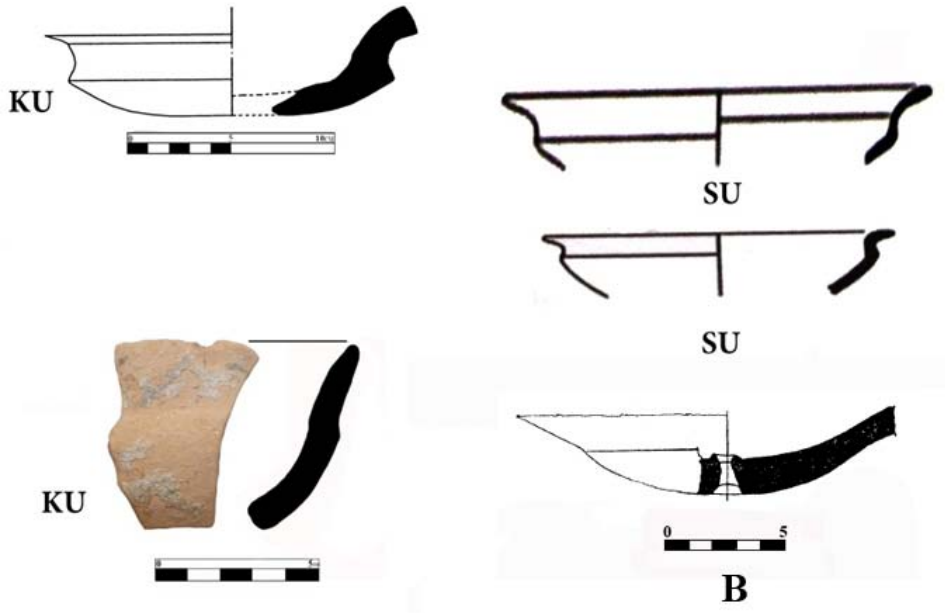
PI 5 : The diagram of display of cooking the potteries of KolahSheg Site



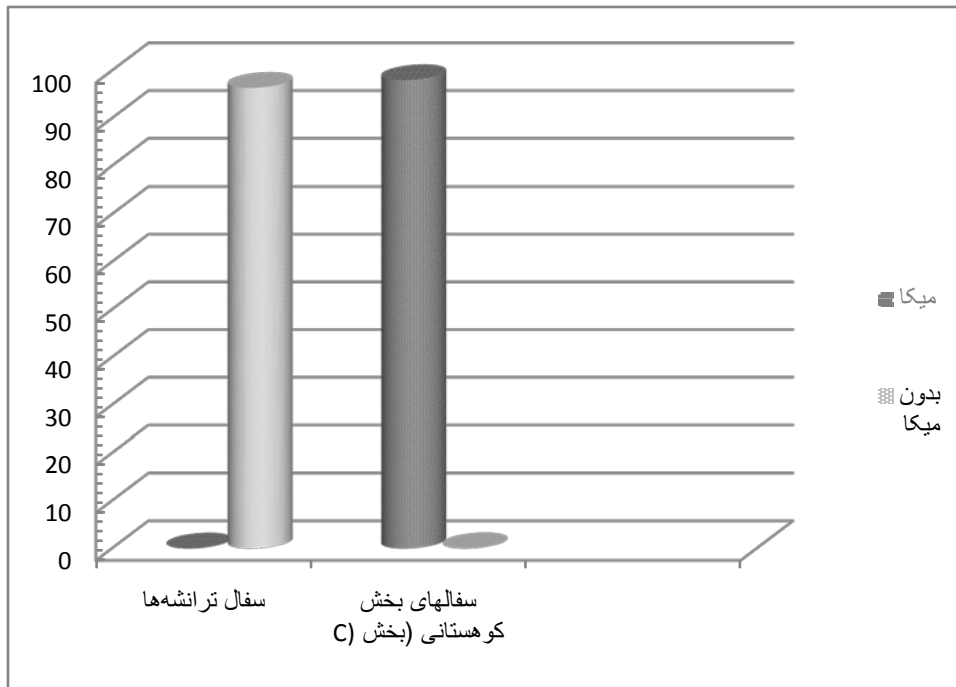
Figure 11 : a sample of knobbed floor found from KolahSheg



PI 6 : Sample of similar found from KolahSheg and Sorkh Dome Laki(Shishegor, 1384)



PI 7 : Sample of similar bowls found from KolahSheg(KU), Sorkh Dome Laki(SU) and Babajan(B)



PI 8 : The frequency chart of using mica in the pottery's mettle in KolahSheg Site



Figure 12 : A selection of KolahSheg's decorating items



Figure 13 : A selection of KolahSheg's armaments



Figure 14 : Cylindrical seal (trenches B1)



Figure 15 : Fibula, KolahSheg



Figure 16 : A sample of a tomb, looted by unauthorized excavators



Figure 17 : The Trenches A4's tomb



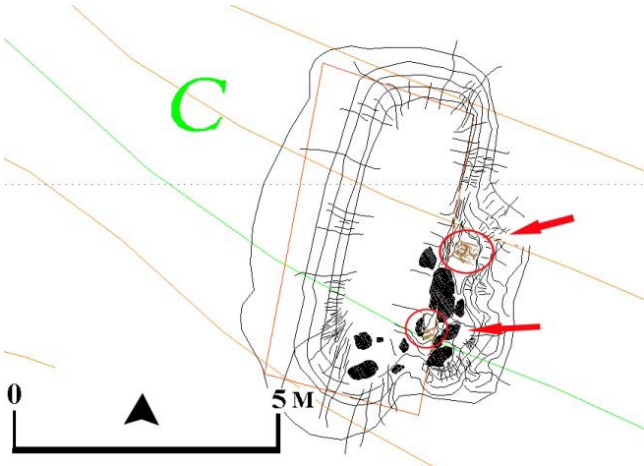
Figure 18 : The mass grave of the Trenches B1



Figure 19 : The bayonets interned in the body of one of the Trenches B1's corpse



Figure 20 : View of dug pit in Part C



Pl 9 : The location of the two tombs in the pit's cutting of part C





Figure 21 : Display of the tomb C1\s number 1 state funeral



Figure 22 : Display of the tomb C1\s number 2 state funeral