

The Iron Age III of Urmia Lake Basin in the Light of New Research

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Abstract

Bari Castle is located on the western side of Urmia Lake. The castle enclosed with stony walls measuring several meters high, encompasses a widespread area. It was used in the first millennium BC considering the castle's architectural features and potsherd remains found on its surface. For almost 150 years, from the middle of the 9th century to the end of the 8th century, the Urartian areas in Iran did not witness any attack from Assyrians. It was only during the reign of Sargon II, clashes erupted between Urartu and Assyria. The reason was that Urartu interfered more and more in the affairs of the kingdom of Mannea, which Assyria considered a tributary. The first half of the 7th century is when Mannaeans seized the power in that area. It was the time which saw the expansion of Mannaeans more than ever, especially its dominance on the Urmia plain, hence; the Bari castle was of the Mannaeans Empire.

Keywords: Bari Fortress, Iron III, Triangle Ware, Urmia Lake, Mannaeans.

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Introduction

The construction of enclosed habitation with various designs and plans had been commenced from 3000 BCE in Iran. There are examples of such castles in Bolourabad, located on the northern edge of Ghare Ziaeddin. Generally, fortress is an important sub-class of Iranian architecture but little studies have been done on the subject due to some problems. Although, design and building of these kinds of architecture built almost on arduous and uneven land in a wide scale. Although most of these castles have been destroyed, historical literature indicates many of them, especially in northwestern Iran. The presence of castles and defensive structures in the northwest of Iran are largely due to its geographical and mountainous conditions. Always, key principles of such castles were higher walls, ramparts and watch towers in order to deal with invading forces although, valleys and downhill did not require much enforced and solid construction. Several ancient castles around Urmia, such as *Bardouk*, *Dam Dam*, *Ghoushchi*, *Bardeh Sour*, *Kazem Dashi*, *Bakhshi*, *Esmail Aqa*, *Koan Mesh* and *Mirdavoud* indicate the significance of the region.

Archaeological Studies in Urmia Lack Basin

Western Azerbaijan encompasses a widespread area of northwestern Iran. Urmia Lake is located on the east, in an area between Western Azerbaijan and Eastern Azerbaijan. It has an outstanding topographical status because of its proximity to Nakhjovan on the north, the Anatolian plateau on the south and north of Mesopotamia.

In 1973, Swiny collected different pottery sherds during his survey of west and northwestern Iran sites (Swiny, 1975). Haftvan, located at the northwest of Urmia Lake, has been excavated several times since 1968 (Burney 1970, 1972, 1973).

Yanic Tepe, located at the eastern side of Urmia Lake, were excavated under the leadership of Charles Burney several times in 1960, 1961 and 1962. The area was also surveyed by a team of Pennsylvania University under Robert Dyson (Dyson, 1956), an Italian Archaeological team under Pecorella and Salvini (Pecorella and Salvini, 1984). Soecki surveyed the region, too (Soecki, 1999). In recent years, Iranian archeologists such as Khatebshahedi (Khatebshahedi, 2006), Bahman Kargar (Kargar, 2004; Binandeh and Kargar, 2008; Kargar and Binandeh, 2009), Reza Heidari (Heidari 2007) also carried out some excavations.

The most serious archeological project performed in the Lake Urmia basin, up to the present, is the Hasanlu project. Hasanlu is located in the south of Lake Urmia near a village with the same name. In 1963, it was briefly excavated by Stein; and later by Hakemi and Raad. However, fundamental excavations supervised by Dyson between 1956 and 1974. Hasanlu excavated sites include Dalma (Hamlin, 1975), Hasanlu (Dyson, 1989), Hajji Firouz (Vigot, 1983), Dinkha (Muscarella, 1974), Agrab Tepe (Muscarella, 1973), Pisdeli (Dyson and Yong, 1960), Dinkha (Muscarella, 1968, 1974), Se Gridan (Muscarella, 1971a, 2003), and Qalatgah (Muscarella, 1971b).

The Landscape of Bari

The site is situated in modern West Azerbaijan Province, in the district of Urmia, near the village of Bari, at an

elevation of 1750 meters. The coordinates of the site are 38° 01' 30" longitude and 45° 05' 49" latitude (Fig. 1-2).

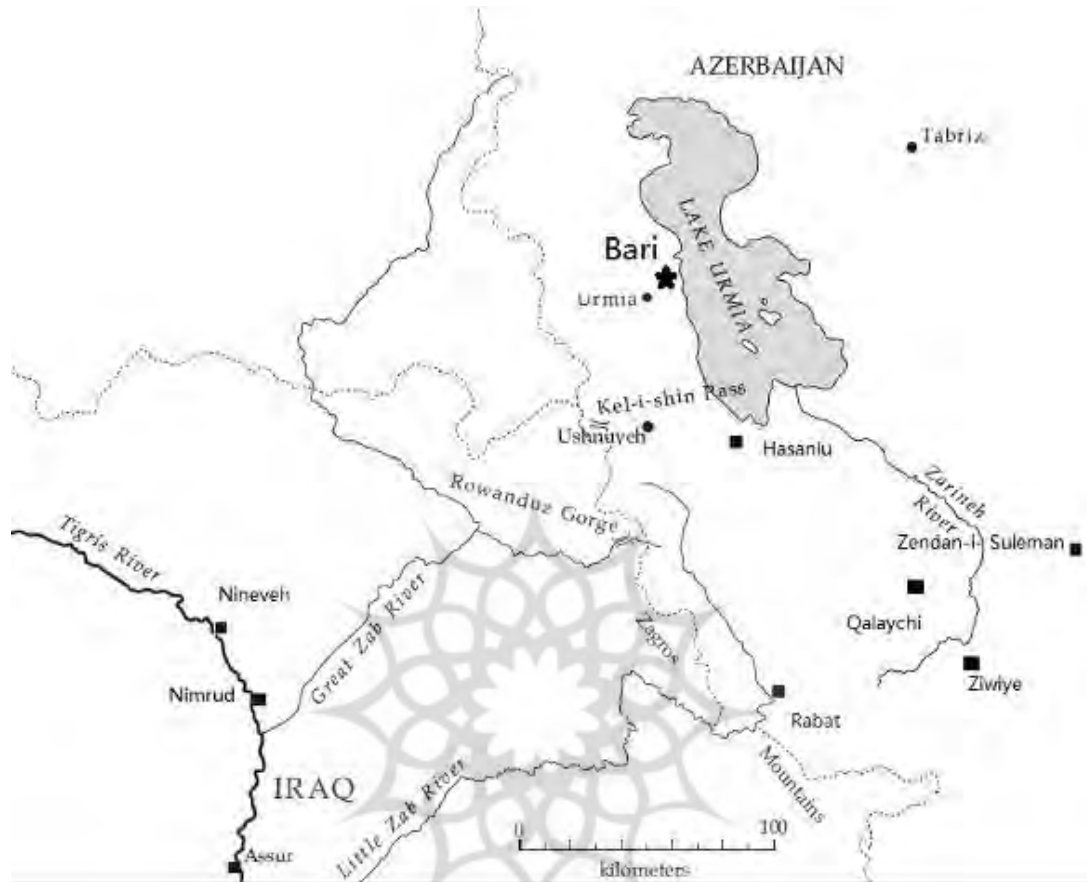


Fig. 1 Location of Bari in Northwest of Iran

Qezel Geyh, Wareh and Gara Geni are three isolated peaks lie in the mountainous area between Urmia and Salmas, which overlook a gorge through which the Zola Chaei river is flowing. The site has been built on a rocky ridge overlooking the eastern Plain of Urmia and the banks of the Bari valley, hence; has an advantage from a military point of view. On the western ridge, there lies Urmia Lake. On its eastern flank, the defensive Bari fortress is located.

The Site Description

Bari Castle has been built on the western heights of Urmia Lake with a view on the most important passageway in northwest of Iran. This passageway connects Urmia Plain to Salmas Plain and then, to Caucasia. Shapour Relief found on this passageway indicates its significance at that time.

The castle, with a large dimension of about 450x600 meters, was built at the highest point irregularly and almost triangular in shape, based on the mountain topography (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2 Position of Bari (Google Earth Satellite Image with Places of Interest Marked).

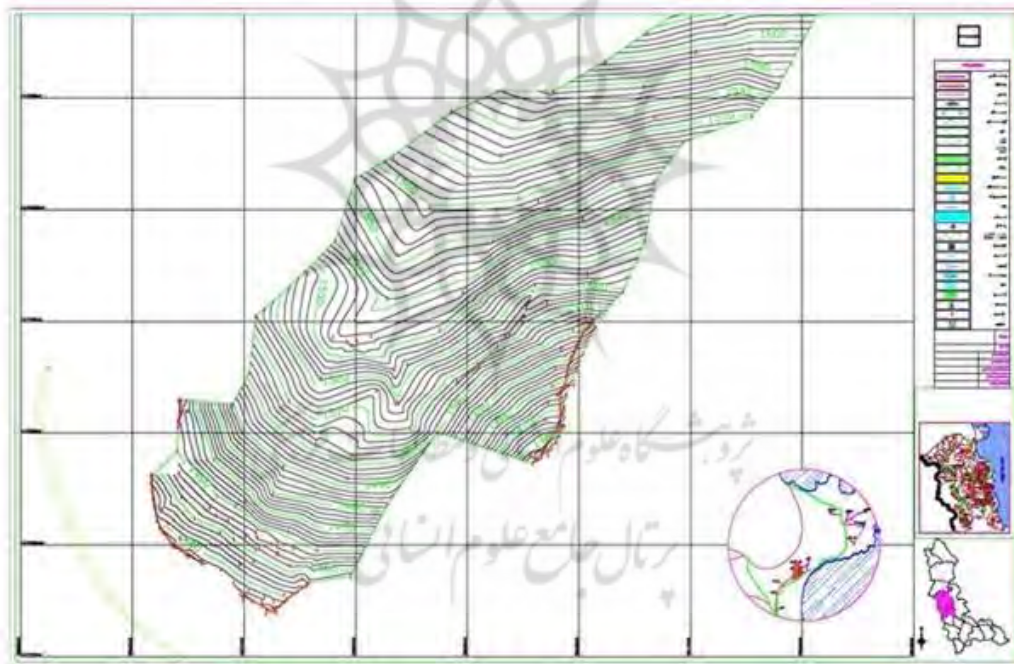


Fig. 3 Topography and Plan of Bari

The location of the castle is difficult to assess and topographically (Fig. 4), its southern and eastern sides are on the glaci and accessible. There are some traces of cutting off stones and using them for defensive foundation. Remnants

of the castle wall are scattered and are the most penetrable point. The northern and western sides are cliff and quite arduous. On these parts, the wall remained with several layers of ruined stones visible on the sharp rocky edge.



Fig. 4 The Landscape of Bari

Defensive Wall: The remnant is the outer wall built as irregular in polygon shape. Northern and northwestern walls of the complex have largely remained intact (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: The walls of the northern and northwestern of the complex.

The castle was built with big stones with no mortar and the height of desiccated wall and the outer wall reaches to 4 meters at some points. The height of the most intact part of the wall reaches to 4.5 meters (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5 The Walls of the Northern and Northwestern of the Complex.



Fig. 6 Outer Wall Reaches to 4m at Some Points

The wall thickness varies at different points. On the northern side, it is between 2m and 2.5m and even lesser. The wall constitutes several layers of rubbles in all directions. Apart from rubbles, its composition and components include gravels as well as small and large rocks arranged in rows as layers (Fig. 7). The length of the remaining wall on the northern side is about 600 meters (Fig. 8). On the eastern side, the ruins are observed as well and the only remainder includes stony rows. For enforcement purposes, certain gaps were created into the wall and the thickness of some rocky points and cliff and longitude supports were increased in order to prevent impulsion and destruction of the rampart (Fig. 9). Across and underneath the walls, some canals are provided to determined spaces to transfer excessive rain water to outer area (Fig. 10).

Entry Point: Considering the extensive destruction of the fortress, its entry point

could not be identified certainly. It is very likely a glacis, natural and topography of the location, and also the glacis of the southern and eastern sides was the entryway. The scattered remains of the stony wall and the most penetrable of the castle is located at this eastern and southern sides, that is a place located at the glacis of the mountain slope, and traces of natural rocks for the defensive wall foundation are observed in this part.

Architectural Units: Traces of individual and continuous architectural units are in both northern and northeastern sides. Considering a long wall, extending over the north and northeastern side, is on a parallel with the main wall. It seems that all units have been enclosed inside another complex, but the destruction volume and the accumulation of rubbles make them too difficult to make the precise determination of form and plan. Thickness of these places varies from 2 to 2.40 meters. Small rocks and gravel are also used between the layers of stones.



Fig. 7 Composition, Components of the Wall

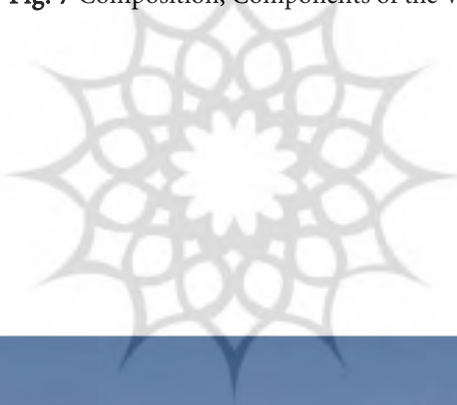


Fig. 8 The Wall Remnants on the Northern Side.



Fig. 9 Eastern Side of the Wall



Fig. 10 Canal to Transfer Excessive Rain Water to Outer Area.

Pottery Sherds

Potteries are among the most important cultural data obtained from Bari Castle (Fig. 11). There are various pottery sherds scattered around the castle and on its surface. Some of them are related to the Islamic period. Some pieces are burnish.

This type was found in various regions, especially from the Urartian site such as Hasanlu, Zanbi and Esmail Aqa Castle in the Urmia region. Pottery sherds included common ware, fine ware, burnish ware and 2 painted sherds. The

pottery from Bari is comparable to Iron Age III sites like Kul Tarikheh (Rezvani and Roustaei, 2007), Hasanlu IIIB (Dyson, 1999), Zendan-i- Suleiman (Boehmer, 1988; Thomalsky, 2006), Ziwiye (Young, 1965; Motamedi, 1977) and Qalaichi (Mollazadeh, 2008). The only patterns painted on the edges and necks of two pieces of this group are geometrical design and brown-colored patterns which are painted continuously on the surface of pottery sherds. Around the site there are different pottery pieces that belonged to Islamic period.

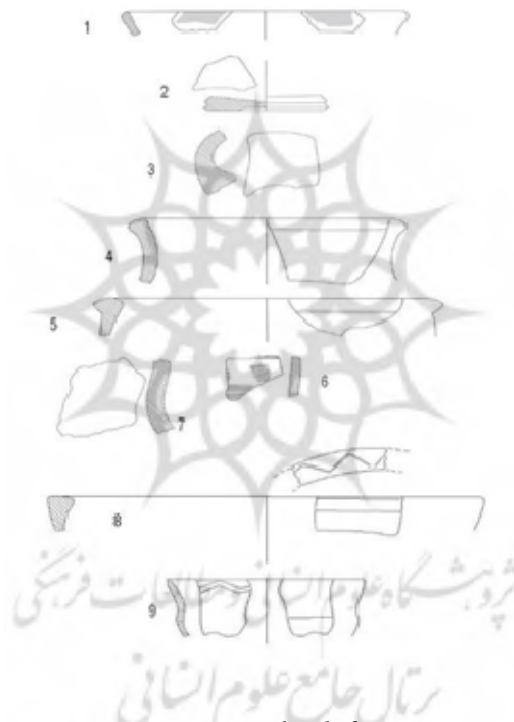


Fig. 11 Pottery Sherds from Bari

Discussion and Conclusion

Bari Castle is among the most important ancient castles of the Urmia region and belongs to the first millennium BC. The high and solid walls of the castles were used during various periods and regarding the architectural style and similarities with the other neighboring Urartian castles such as Zanbil Castle and Esmail Aqa Castle. Later, during the

Islamic era, this place was used again due to its special position, solidity and aristocracy and probably, it had been repaired and reconstructed by newcomers. Islamic single-colored glossy pottery sherds, in blue or green color, indicate that the castle once belonged to Ilkhanid and probably, Seljuk.

Here, the significant point is that some pottery sherds with triangle design

(triangle ware), has been found among other types. The term triangle ware was used by Dyson to describe patterned pottery of Hasanlu IIIB (Dyson, 1958). Although such potteries have rarely found at ancient sites, they are important for chronology of the northwestern sites. Other researchers used this term to describe different forms of pottery ware. These pottery ware have been found in widespread geographical area in west and northwest of Iran, east of Turkey, Caucasia, and also in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the early 8th century, Hasanlu was abandoned after an attack. Later, new constructions were made in a section of the old wall. This is the period of the triangle ware with combination of a fine levigated fabric, a highly polished surface and basic color of tan or buff, decorated usually with plum-brown or dark brown painted hanging triangle designs (Dyson, 1999). Later, Dyson put triangle ware in Hasanlu III and classified them into two groups of classic and non-classic (Dyson, 1999). Swiny, who widely surveyed Iran's northwest, suggested that these potteries belong to the Iron Age III and their sources are Bokerd and Sup Tepeh (Swiny, 1975). Regarding the abundance of such pottery in the south of Urmia Lake and findings in Hasanlu, Ziwiye and Qaltgah, Swiny concludes that pottery can be categorized in Mannaean potteries type (Swiny, 1975). Also, the potteries from Bari are very similar to painted pottery from Qalaichi, that described by Mollazadeh (Mollazadeh, 2008).

Kroll believes that these potteries prevailed in post-Urartian period because there were no patterned potteries in Bastam at that time (Kroll, 1975). Later,

he generalized his conclusion to the northwest of Iran as whole and suggested that the chronology of pottery of places he had ascribed belonged to the Achaemenid period (Kroll, 1976, 2004).

The evidence of the Achaemenid settlement in eastern Turkey and to publish the sherds from two sites, Altin Tepe and Cimin Tepe II collected by Burney during his survey in 1955 (Summers, 1993, 85).

For identifying the Achaemenid sites, three criteria are proposed: 1- inscription, 2- architecture, 3- pottery (Summers, 1993, 85). In northwestern Iran, especially the Urmia Lake basin, evidence is very limited. Although a number of sites such as Kul Tepe I (Abei et al., 2014) and Hasanlu IIIA (Dyson, 1999) have been attributed to this period. The fact is that most of these attributes are based on pottery sherds, which of course is debatable. So far, the evidence of architecture and inscriptions from this period that shows that it is certainly related Achaemenid has not been discovered. So, we do not have a good understanding of the Achaemenid period in the northwest of Iran.

Such sherds probably prevailed between 700-500 BC. Now, considering the fact that such sherds have been found in the north of Urmia Plain, some arising questions need wide researches. If we accept that such pottery sherds are among the Mannaean type, then how can we justify the attendance of Mannaean people in the north of Urmia Plain and Bari Castle?

The kingdom of Urartu eventually expanded into an empire that engulfed the entire Eastern Anatolia, Armenia and

the northwestern of Iran around Lake Urmia.

For almost 150 years, from the middle of the 9th till the end of the 8th century, the Urartian areas in Iran were not attacked any more by Assyria. It was only during the reign of Sargon II of Assyria that Urartu and Assyria clashed in Iran again. The reason was that Urartu interfered more and more in the affairs of the kingdom of Mannea, which Assyria considered a tributary (Kroll, 2011). In 714 BC, Sargon II conducted a major military campaign across the Zagros Mountains into western Iran. It was the eighth campaign of his reign, and the fourth into Iran (Muscarella, 1986). In fact, we learn from other sources that the Urartians ruled in the area, south of Lake Urmia until Sargon's eighth campaign

(714 BC) (Salvini, 2009:501) that resulted in the defeat of Urartians and end of their dominance on eastern, southern and western regions of Urmia. They just dominated the north of Urmia Lake, and by far, any Urartian epigraphy has not found in this place after the year 714 BC (Khatibshahidi, 2006). The construction style of Bari is closely comparable to Mannaeen forts such as Jan Aqa (Binandeh and Kargar, 2008), Qal'e Bardine (Hasanzadeh, 2009) and Jowšātū (Mollazadeh, 2015).

The first half of the 7th century is when Mannaeen seized the power in that area. It was the time which saw the expansion of Mannaeen more than ever, especially its dominance on the Urmia plain, hence; the Bari castle was of the Mannaeen Empire.

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عصر آهن ۳ حوضه دریاچه ارومیه در پرتو مطالعات جدید

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چکیده

در مطالعات اخیر باستان شناسی در حوضه دریاچه ارومیه، قلعه باری در غرب دریاچه شناسایی شد. این قلعه بر فراز ارتفاعات صعب العبور قرار گرفته و بقایای آن شامل دیوارهای مرتفع با چندین متر ضخامت و تاسیسات وابسته، وسعت محوطه، ساختار مستحکم، ضخامت و طول برج و بارو و دیگر ویژگی های قلعه نشان می دهد که در زمان آبادانی از اهمیت سوق الجیشی و استراتژیک خاصی برخوردار بوده و مردمان زیادی را در خود جای داده است. علاوه بر این بقایای معماری حصار خارجی و بنا های داخلی و و استحفاظی آن هنوز قابل شناسایی و پیگردی است. وجود قلعه زنیبل و قلعه اسماعیل آقا در نزدیکی باری دلیل خوبی بر حضور به نسبت گسترده اورارتوها در منطقه دارد. مطالعه قطعات سفالی و شیوه معماری نشان می دهد که این محوطه به نیمه اول قرن هفتم پم تعلق دارد و این مصادف با زمانی است که اورارتوها ضعیف شده و ماناها در منطقه قدرت می گیرند و بر قلمرو خود می افزایند و تاسیساتی در منطقه ایجاد می کنند.

واژه های کلیدی: باری، عصر آهن ۳، سفال مثلثی، حوضه دریاچه ارومیه.

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