



Bardestan's Bardoo: A Parthian-Sasanian Site in Bushehr Province, Persian Gulf


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Abstract


On the northern shore of the Persian Gulf, not far from the coastline of Bandar-e Dayyer (Dayyer Port) in Bushehr Province, remains of a large archeological site can be seen in the form of dense piles of the rubble as well as architectural remnants scattering over approximately 27 hectares, which is known as Bardoo. The remaining and main parts of the site are located in the south and southeast of the city of Bardestan, between a road leading to Bandar-e Dayyer and the western flank of salt marshes on the west bank of huge Bay (xowr), located about 2200 meters from the coastline of Bandar-e Dayyer itself. Archaeological excavations at this site reveal three periods, ranging from Parthian to the early Islamic era.

Keywords: Persian Gulf; Bandar-e Dayyer; Bardestan; Bardoo Site.



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Introduction

For years, archaeologists and historians have been writing about the Persian Gulf and the culture and civilization emerged around it (Rahbar, 2023a; Rahbar, 2023b; Poodat, 2023; Kavousi, 2024). As such researchers have widely examined the political relations between Iran and the Arabs in the Persian Gulf region during the Sasanian Empire (Rostami & Ghasebian, 2023). Also, Mehdi Rahbar's excavations in Khuzestan led to the discovery of Elymaean tombs at Gelalak, south of the city of Shushtar (Rahbar, 2024). Moreover, the archeological survey by Hozhabri and his colleagues on the Persian Gulf shores led to the discovery of rock-cut tombs, which are very important (Hozhabri *et al.*, 2024). However, the Persian Gulf shores still hold many secrets and invaluable treasury beneath it that are being revealed through archaeological excavations over time. On the northern shore, not far from the coastline of Bandar-e Dayyer (Dayyer Port) in Bushehr Province, a large ancient enclosure with massive remains can be seen in the form of dense piles of the rubble and architectural remnants in a site of approximately 27 hectares, which is known as Bardoo. This area, which is adjacent to the residential texture of the present Bardestan city on its north and west, and the salt fields of huge Bay (xowr) on the east and south, is one of the most notable archaeological enclosures on the shores of the Persian Gulf repeatedly mentioned and referred to references of historical geography of the recent centuries. The archaeological excavations in this site reveal three architectural periods - from Parthian to the

early Islamic era. Some archaeologists have visited the area since long ago (see Sarfraz, 2005; Tofighian, 2009; Parsaei Borazjani, 2022).

Bardoo Site

The Bardoo site is a collection of interconnected piles over a wide area of approximately 27 hectares. The scattered and accumulation of piles of rubble and architectural remains on the surface level shows the density of the architectural texture during its settlement phase. The remaining and main parts of the site are located in the south and southeast of the present city of Bardestan, between a road leading to Bandar-e Dayyer and the western flank of the salt marshes on the bank of huge Bay (xowr) of Bardestan, about 2200 meters from the coastline of the port (Fig. 1). It is surrounded from the west by facilities of Dayyer city electricity distribution network and an asphalt road, on its north, there is the residential texture of Bardestan city, and on the east, there is the salt marsh area of the western edge of Bardestan Bay (Fig. 3).

The physical structure of the Bardoo site can be divided into two main parts including the pile of the debris and dense texture in the northern and middle parts of it and scattered architectural terrains in the southern part. The main core and the dense terrains of the site's texture, which constitute a large area, is formed on a platform of natural interconnected piles which, due to the height difference with the salt marsh, have been largely safe from seasonal floods and humidity, making an appropriate natural platform for the

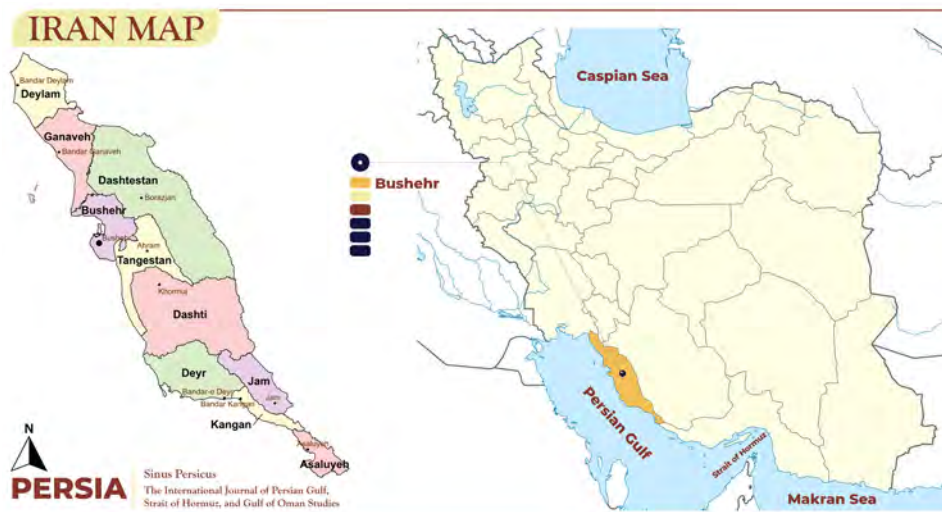


Fig. 1. Map of Iran and Bushehr Province

(Adapted by *Sinus Persicus* from a Map from Wikimedia Commons under a Creative Commons Licence CC BY-SA 4.0)



Fig. 2. Map of Iran and Bushehr Province and Bardoo Site (Google Earth)

residential areas near the seashore. The southern part too, which constitutes barely one-fourth of the area, is at the same height as the estuary's salt march, on which, traces seemingly of industrial structures such as furnaces and piles of ash can be seen.

For the first time, the excavation of Bardoo site was carried out under the supervision of Mehrdad Parsaei in the summer of 2022. Following the archeological survey, the first season of the excavation of the Bardoo was carried out under the supervision of Houshang

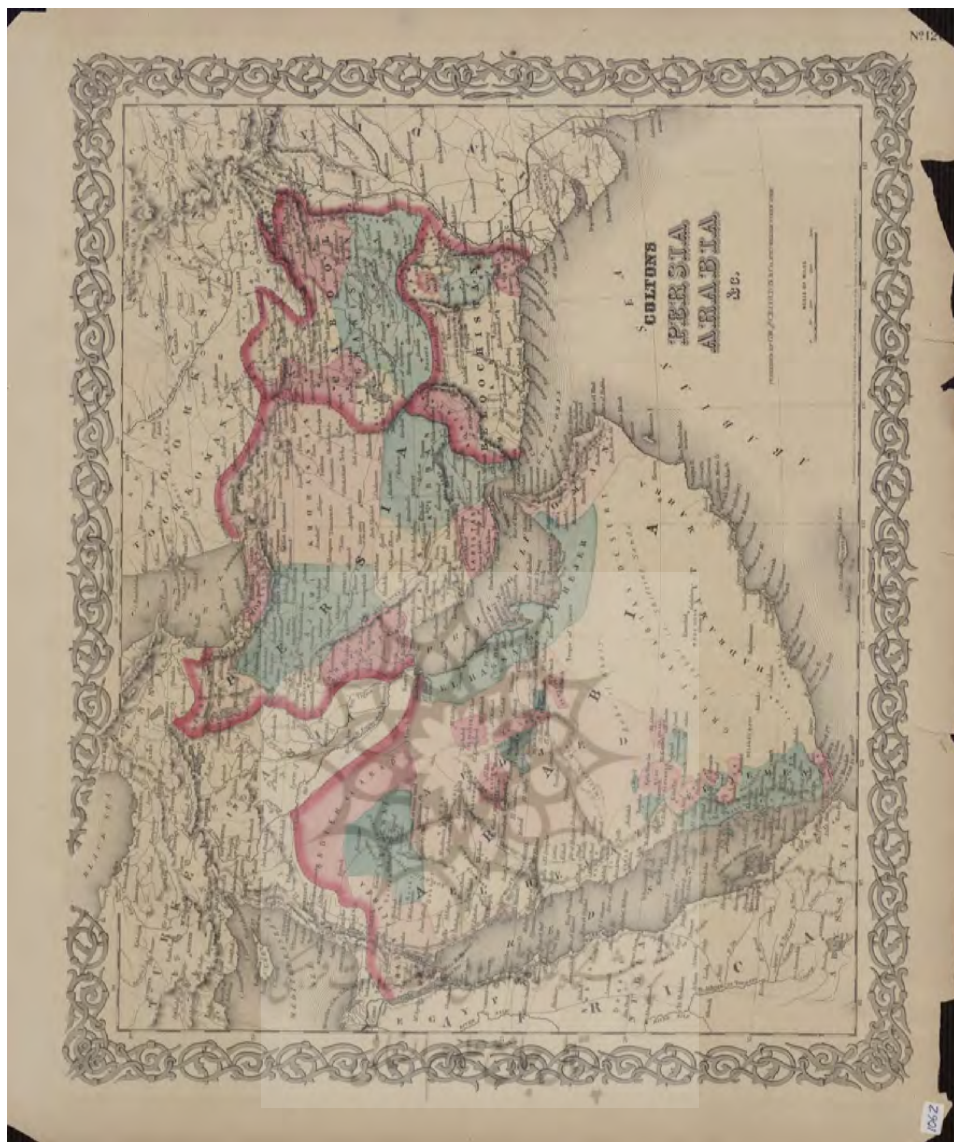


Fig. 3. Historical Map of Iran and Bushehr Province (Colton, G. W. & J.H. Colton & Company Copyright Holder, 1855)

Rostami in the autumn of 2023. The initial goal of excavations was to focus on removing the debris and revealing the architectural remains beneath, and then the effort was made to identify and separate its cultural layers and complications. Thus, a test trench “BD I”, with

5×5 meters in size in the highest part of the site, along the eastern front of the electricity network facilities excavated in two stages by adding the leading parts to the northern side, which increased the dimension of the area to 5×9 meters (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Excavation in the Ruins of the Ancient Structure of the Bardoo Site to Extract Stone and the Plan of Some Buildings that Emerged under its Influence (The Location of Trench BD. I is Marked with an Arrow) (Google Earth Pro, Date: 2011/02).



Fig. 5. Location of Trench BD. I in the Middle of the Central Core Area of the Bardoo Site (View from the East).

The excavation process of the Bardoo site in "BD I" trench continued to a depth of 205cm from the base level and reached the terrain of its virgin bed, which led to the identification of 16 separate loci in the form of four ar-

chitectural phases and three historical periods. The architectural elements identified in the exploration process, regardless of the phasing and layering, were carried out in line with the secondary directions and following the main



Fig. 6. Architectural Features Emerged in Trench BD. I, Phases II (Yellow) and IV (Green).



Fig. 7. Architectural Features Emerged in Trench BD. I, Phases III (Blue).

architectural texture of the surface area, which was undoubtedly influenced by environmental factors and to make maximum use of the climatic capacities such as wind velocity, and has remained intact.

The first phase identified in the test trench consisted of a pile of surface de-

bris on the remains of the plastered floor, which was built with a mixture of beach sand on the debris of the previous phase and revealed while stones were extracted from the rubble. All the remains of the walls were destroyed in this phase and only the floor could be seen. Most of the pottery obtained from the layers and



Fig. 8. Location of Trech BD. I in the Middle of the Central Core Area of the Bardoo Site (View from the East).



Fig. 9. Location of Trech BD. I in the Middle of the Central Core Area of the Bardoo Site (View from the North).

masses of this phase can be attributed to the early Islamic era.

The second phase of the excavation process revealed a composed consist-



Fig. 10. Pottery from the Bardoo Site

ing of a plastered floor at a depth of 88 cm, from which a single step measuring 30×30×150 cm in the southeast-north-west direction rose to a higher level sur-

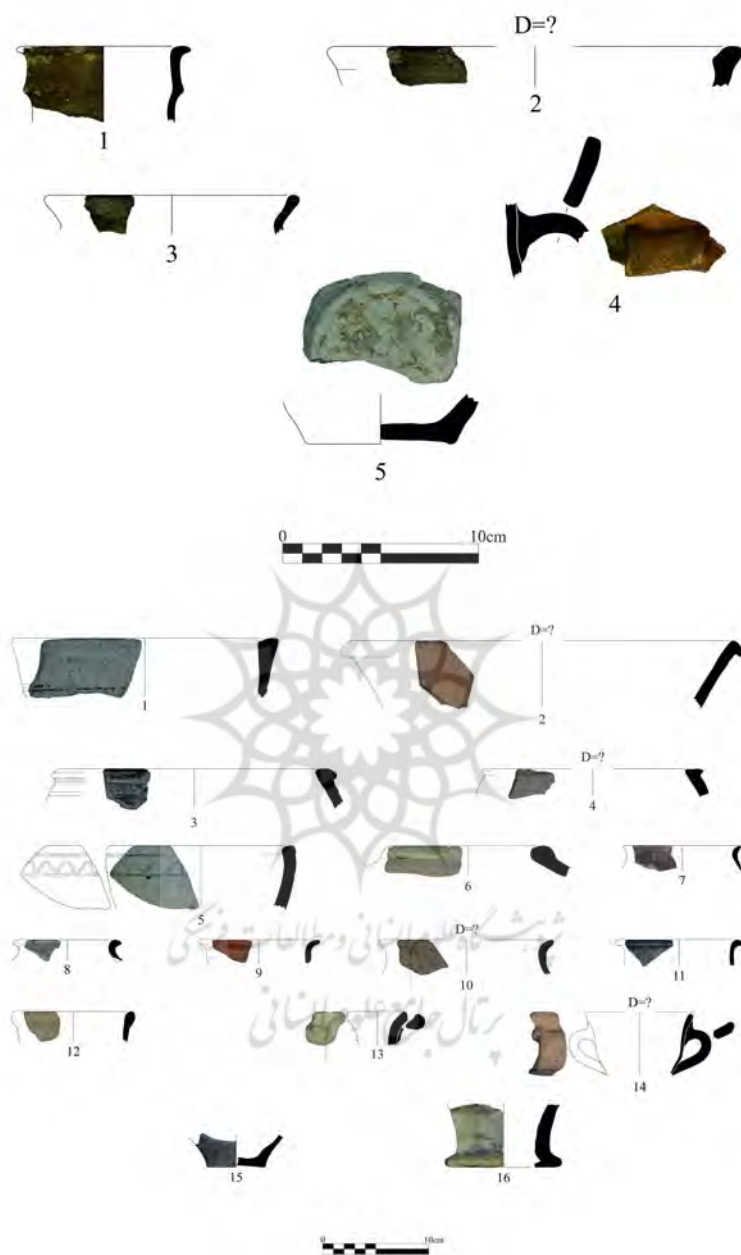


Fig. 11. Pottery from the Bardoo Site

rounded by the rubble stone and 65 cm thick plaster mortar. Some parts of the mentioned walls were destroyed similar to the previous phase and its stone was

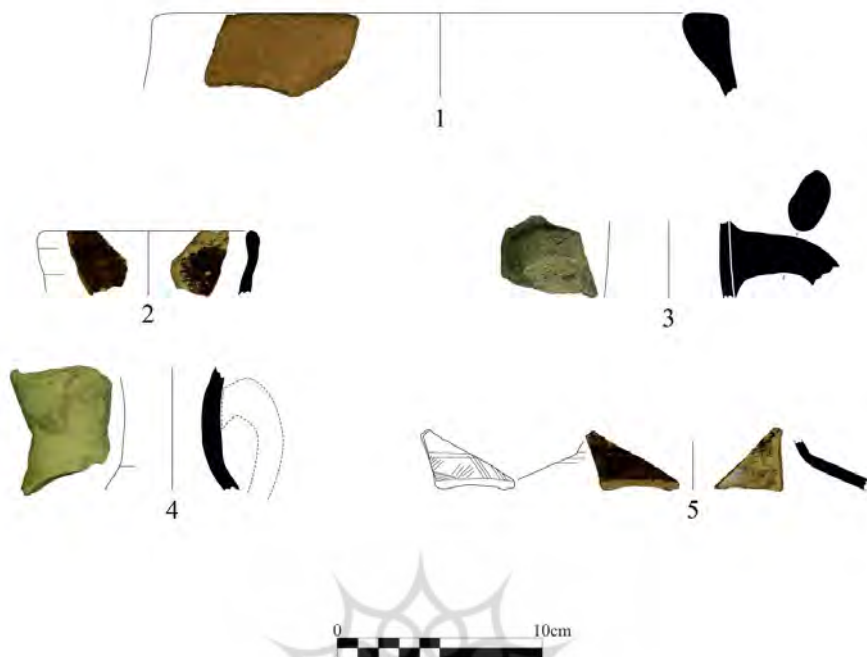


Fig. 12. Pottery from the Bardoo Site

taken away. A precise look at the structural details of the exposed architectural remains and the few pieces of pottery obtained from there can also be traced back to the early centuries of the Islamic era (Fig. 5).

After the second phase and under a not-so-thick layer of clay mixture and scattered masses of debris, the third architectural phase was exposed in the "BD I" trench and emerged from a depth of 104cm, which was a set of walls with a thickness of 50 to 60 cm made of rubble stone, and mortar, which formed a separate space in line with the main directions, parallel to each other. Its signs could be observed up to a depth of 140 cm. The floor of this phase was covered with crushed soil, and in the corner of

one of the spaces, a pile of ash mixed with pieces of pottery and broken stone was discovered. The collection of pottery obtained from this phase, regardless of the analysis of the mentioned spaces, consists of pottery type of the Sassanid period (Fig. 6).

The features of the fourth and last phase in this trench are in the form of a 55 cm long wall made of rubble stone and mortar in the northeast-southwest direction, which appeared at a depth of 158 cm and continued to a depth of 193 cm from the surface of the trench (Fig. 5).

The terrains of this phase are formed on a virgin bed of soil and sand mixed with broken pieces of oysters and saltwater abalone, and the distance between it and the upper phase is covered by lumps

of soft clay with small pebbles. The small number of potteries obtained from the layers of this phase shows the continuation of pottery traditions from the Parthian period to the middle of the Sasanian period.

Conclusion

Bardoo in the south of the Bardestan city is one of the most important sites on the northern shores of the Persian Gulf, although in comparison with the coastal areas, such as the historical port of Siraf and the port of Bataneh (Bandar-e Bataneh, the ancient port of Najirom) and Lian on the Bushehr peninsula and the ancient port of Mahruban on the northern borders of Bushehr province, it is not equally important. Due to its features such as being adjacent to the huge Bay of Bardestan, at a short distance from the coastline, and being located near the ancient port of Bataneh (the ancient port of Najirom), the Bardoo site has become a valuable and prominent example in the geographical area of the Persian Gulf, which seems to be a strategic base. It is located next to the ancient port of Najirom,

nevertheless has gone through many ups and downs with the development and prosperity of this port in the early Islamic era. As mentioned earlier, based on the archaeological excavation, four distinct phases of architecture were identified, which can be traced back to the three periods of the Islamic era, the Sasanian period, and the early Sasanian period/late Parthian period, based on the comparison of pottery samples obtained from each phase. The architectural terraces found in the mentioned phases were also a combination of substructures created with coarse sand or a combination of clay and crushed stones, plastered floors and walls built with crushed stones and carcasses as well as plaster mortar. The small distance between them shows the density and compactness of the architectural texture of the area, especially in the excavated area and its central core. The excavation process in the later seasons to understand the spatial elements of the architectural texture can shed light on new dimensions of its structure and quality.

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