

INVESTIGATION OF TRANS-REGIONAL RELATIONS OF QASR-E GOLCHEHREH IN TORBAT-E JAM BASED ON TYPOLOGY OF HISTORICAL POTTERY

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Abstract:

Torbat-e Jam Plain in the east of Great Khorasan due to fertile soil, two seasonal rivers such as Harirud and Jamrud, and branches of the Silk Road in this region, was a suitable area for cultural settlements during the history. Therefore, studying in this area provides researchers with valuable information about economic, commercial, and even cultural and artistic history. Meanwhile, Qasr-e Golchehreh is one of the archaeological sites in the east of Great Khorasan in Torbat-e Jam Plain, 2 km southeast of Langar village, which has always been a suitable environment for settlements due to its favorable climatic and communication routes. The presence of pottery and brick walls on this site points to the richness and human settlements in this historical site. Unfortunately, so far, this site has just been identified and introduced to the list of historical monuments. Therefore, it is necessary to study this very important site in Torbat-e Jam Plain, which has not been addressed so far, and also to determine the date of its settlement. Accordingly, this research, which is carried out with a descriptive-analytical approach, has attempted to answer the following research questions: 1- According to the Ceramic chronology which period does this site belong? 2- With which regions has it had the most cultural interactions? Accordingly, after selecting the diagnostic shreds and conducting a typological and comparative study, the following results were obtained: the pottery shreds belonged to the Parthian, Sassanid, and Middle Islamic periods. Most of the trans-regional connections of this region can be considered with the northeastern regions of Iran such as Dargaz, Sarakhs, Neyshabur, and Tous, and in the east with Birjand, and in the southeast with Sistan and Makran.

Keywords: pottery, Torbat-e Jam, Qasr-e Golchehreh, Typology, Chronology

چکیده: دشت تربت‌جام در شرق خراسان بزرگ، به دلیل خاک حاصلخیز و وجود دو رود مرزی و فصلی هریرود و جامرود و همچنین وجود شاخه‌هایی از جاده ابریشم در این منطقه، محل مناسبی برای استقرار مراکز فرهنگی در طول تاریخ بوده است. بنابراین مطالعه در این منطقه اطلاعات ارزشمندی در زمینه تاریخ اقتصادی، تجاری و حتی فرهنگی و هنری در اختیار پژوهشگران قرار می‌دهد. در این بین محوطه قصر گلچهره در ۲ کیلومتری جنوب شرقی روستای لنگر در دشت تربت‌جام یکی از مناطق باستانی خراسان بزرگ است که به سبب برخورداری از شرایط اقلیمی و ارتباطی مناسب همواره محیطی مطلوب برای استقرار بوده است. وجود سفالینه‌ها و دیوارهای خشتی به جای مانده، نشان‌دهنده استقرارهای انسانی و غنای فرهنگی در این محوطه تاریخی است، اما متأسفانه تاکنون محوطه مذکور تنها در حد شناسایی و معرفی در فهرست آثار تاریخی باقی مانده است. بر این اساس، هدف از انجام این پژوهش که به شیوه توصیفی-تحلیلی انجام می‌پذیرد، پاسخ به این پرسش‌ها می‌باشد: ۱- این محوطه در چه دوره‌ای دارای استقرار بوده است؟ و بیشترین برهمکنش فرهنگی این محوطه با کدام مناطق بوده است؟ بر این اساس، پس از انتخاب سفالینه‌های شاخص و انجام مطالعات گونه‌شناسی و مطالعه تطبیقی مشخص شد که سفال‌ها متعلق به دوره‌های اشکانی، ساسانی و اسلامی میانه هستند و همچنین بیشترین ارتباطات فرامنطقه‌ای این محوطه را می‌توان با منطقه شمال شرقی ایران: درگز، سرخس، نیشابور و توس، منطقه شرق: بیرجند، و منطقه جنوب شرقی: سیستان و مکران مطرح نمود.

کلمات کلیدی: سفال، تربت‌جام، قصر گلچهره، گونه‌شناختی، گاهنگاری.

I. Introduction

Torbat-e Jam County with an area of 8879 square kilometers is located in the geographical area of East Khorasan. The center of this county is Torbat-e Jam city. It has a strategic and special location because this Plain is located on the communication routes of three countries: Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan.

According to archeological studies, this area has been the habitat of ancient tribes for thousands of years, and the banks of Harirud, Kashafud, and Jamrud rivers have preserved traces of the passage of immigrants and invaders, which show that this area has been inhabited since prehistoric periods (Karimian Kozgooh, 2018: 45). According to Ghirshman, a branch of the Aryans discovered the north strait of Kashafud at the beginning of the second millennium BC, crossed the southern passage that leads to the banks of Jamrud, and gradually spread throughout the ancient land of Iran.

The high wall located on the bed of Harirud in the east of a deep valley that separates the two mountain ranges of Binalood in the west and the Hindu Kush in the east has made human movement impossible from this point. According to the available evidence, the Harirud coast is probably one of the crossings of ethnic migration that came to Iran from the northeast in the early second millennium BC (Ghirshman, 2015: 52-53). The favorable agricultural, military, and economic situation of this plain has hosted different human cultures in the past and has played an important role in the cultures of the Near East from prehistory to the present. Plain of Jam is bounded on the north by Farhadgerd and Tous, on the east by the Harirud River (border of Iran and Turkmenistan), on the west by the Binalood and Bakharz plains, and on the south by the plain of Taybad and the border of Iran and Afghanistan. Torbat-e Jam County is the largest human settlement in the plain of

Jam and was formed on the shores of Jamrud. (Khodadoost, 2015: 110). According to Alireza Ghiamati (a member of the researchers of the ECO Cultural Institute), Qasr-e Golchehreh is the most valuable and oldest monument in the history of Khargerd, which is over 2,000 years old and dates back at least to the Parthian and even the Achaemenid period. Its geographical area from Hajiabad village to Taghiabad is under the historical hills of Khargerd. There are about 11 km of historical cemeteries, which shows the high antiquity of this region. The hills around the village of Langar, which cover the ancient city of Khargerd, indicate the history of the region (Ghiamati, 2017, interview with Quds Online). Meanwhile, Qasr-e Golchehreh is a historical mound located in the village of Langar, 20 km southwest of the Torbat-e Jam county, which is next to Jamrud and near the historic town of Khargerd, along the old Silk Road, and one kilometer southeast of Mahmudabad castle. This castle is very important because of its antiquity. In addition, the discovery of part of a wall to the south of the mound shows that it contains a huge architectural structure. The mound belongs to the pre-Islamic (historical) and Islamic periods and has been repeatedly looted by illegal diggers (registration file). Qasr-e Golchehreh mound was nationally registered on 7/03/2006, Number 14314 with historical antiquity (information base of Torbat-e Jam Cultural Heritage Office). What is important in this research is the chronology of the historical potteries of this hill and its connection with other areas. Accordingly, after surveying in Qasr-e Golchehreh, from among the pottery collected in the study, only 10 pieces of diagnostic pottery that provided the most information to researchers were selected, which were studied typologically and comparatively. The purpose of this research, which is done in a descriptive-analytical approach and with a historical nature, is to be aware of the settlement periods and cultural relations of this region with other regions. Since no one has dealt with this so far, the need for research becomes self-evident.

II. Research method

This is a basic research with descriptive-analytical method. The studies were conducted in the form of field and library research. In the field method, after referring to the Qasr-e Golchehreh mound, the authors recorded the characteristics of this site and then systematically collected the shreds of pottery needed for study in this research from the surface of the site. After being transferred to the cultural heritage center, all potteries were washed, labeled, and drawn.

III. Research background

Numerous scientific studies have been carried out in the field of recognizing and introducing the historical

sites of Dasht-e Jam. The following archaeological excavations can be mentioned. 1- Survey of the Germans in 1983, 2- Archaeological survey of the area by the Archaeological Research Institute under the direction of Rajabali Labbaf Khaniki in 1985, which led to the identification of important sites from prehistoric times, especially Bronze Age and Islamic Period, 3- Ariace and Tibalt (Arie and Thibault, 1975) studies led to the identification of important sites from the Paleolithic period in the northern part of the Torbat-e Jam County near Kashafrud.

Other studies in this region include the study of Anbazak mounds: New findings from the Achaemenid and Parthian periods in East Khorasan - Torbat-e Jam by Javad Khodadoost (2015). Regarding the research background of the Qasr-e Golchehreh site, it should be acknowledged that Qasr-e Golchehreh site was nationally registered in 2005 only as the ancient site in Torbat-e Jam, the report of which was presented by Hossein Asghari. No study and chronology was done on the potteries of this area for the periodization and cultural connections of this area with other areas. In 2021, by order of the cultural heritage of Torbat-e Jam County, the authors surveyed and collected the potteries of Qasr-e Golchehreh site for typology and chronology.

IV. Geographical location of Qasr-e Golchehreh mound

Qasr-e Golchehreh mound is located in the village of Langar. The village is part of the county Torbat-e Jam, which leads from the north to Sarakhs county, from the west to Fariman and Torbat-e Heydariyeh, from the south to Taybad, from the east to the Harirud River and to the border between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan (Fig. 1). In fact, this village is located 25°23'25.4"N and 60°26'.12"E. (Asghari, 2005: 8).

The climate of the county is mountainous in the north and plains and flatlands in the south and west. The altitude of the Jam area is 928 meters above sea level. This county leads from the north to the Shahneshin and Dal mountains and from the south to the Bazed mountain range. The eastern margin of county Torbat-e Jam is limited to the Harirud border river and is located between Jam Plain and the seasonal Jamrud River, which runs from west to east and joins Harirud at the Khatun Bridge.

Jam Plain is very fertile thanks to Jamrud sediments. A line of the historic and famous Silk Road that connected the ancient city of Neishabour to Herat crossed the river and connected several habitats and cultural centers, the remains of which are now in the form of ancient monuments and mounds. The village of Langar is located near the historic town of Khargerd, on the Silk Road, one kilometer southeast of Mahmudabad Castle (Fig. 2).

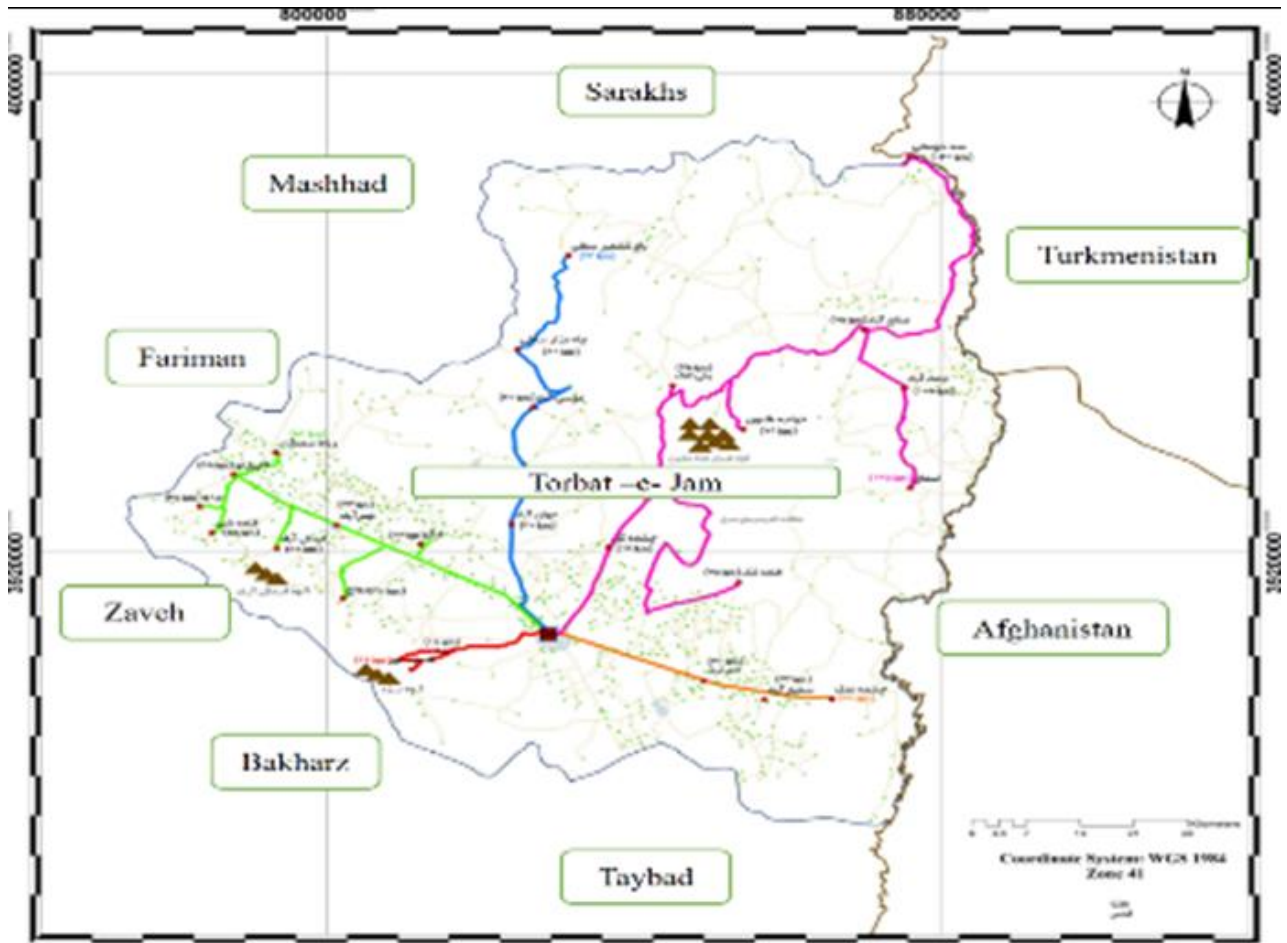


Figure 1. Geographical location of Torbat-e Jam (<http://torbatjam.razavichto.ir/torbatjam.aspx>).



Figure 2. The location of the village of Langar in Torbat-e Jam County (<https://earth.google.com/>).

In description for the archaeological hill of Qasr-e Golchehreh, we can say that the general shape of the

mound is oval. It consists of two adjacent parts and is 90 meters long in the northeast to southwest direction

and 40 meters wide in the west to east direction. This hill is 18 meters high from the surrounding land. The site is a series of hills from south to east and west and leads to agricultural lands from north and northeast. In fact, agricultural lands are located between Jamrud and Tepe. The distance from the river to the hill is about 800 meters. The historic town of Khargerd is located 1 km west of the hill (Fig. 3). The closest source of water in the past could only be the Jamrud because there are

no springs or qanats near the hill (Asghari, 2005: 8). Illegal excavations have been carried out on the hill at several points and also the southern part of the mound has been dug, where a part of an architectural structure has been discovered (Fig. 4).

This structure is a wall made of mudbrick and rubble in the lower layers. The mudbricks are 40 cm long and 10 cm in diameter. The mortar used was mud (Fig. 5).



Figure 3. Location of Qasr-e Golchehreh mound (Khorasan Razavi Cultural Heritage).



Figure 4. Views from the south of Qasr-e Golchehreh mound (Authors).

V. Typology and comparative study of Qasr-e Golchehreh potteries

V.1. Technical features

All cultural materials collected from the Qasr-e Golchehreh mound are limited to a number of potteries. Although there is not much variety in them, even these small data can be very valuable. Unfortunately, due to illegal excavation, a lot of potteries has been scattered on the surface of the hill, especially in the northern and northeastern part of the hill. In the process of study, 76 pieces were collected, of which 10 pieces were selected for typology and

comparative study. Accordingly, the potteries obtained were all wheelmade. It seems that their temper was from the surrounding soils because the soil and sand particles are in it. Also, the lime particles were observable in the constituents of potteries, which is disturbed in contact with moisture and has caused pores on the body of potteries. The potteries obtained from this hill are simple and unglazed, except a bottom of one of the pieces from Islamic period which is glazed (Table 3, number 10). The paste of potteries is made of clay. Clay is actually a material that consists of the decomposition of feldspar rocks and has aluminosilica and in

combination with water and other materials can be used to make pottery (Naghshineh et al., 2013: 75). The general variety of colors in the potteries of this area was buff, buff-yellow, buff-orange, brick, and brown colors. In terms of firing rate, the pottery had sufficient firing and adequate heat. These potteries were wheelmade in terms of the type of construction technique. All of the potteries have clay slip or clay wash and in one piece belonging to the Islamic period, the outer surface has been glazed.

2), which corresponds to the Sassanid potteries of the Tous area of the Dastgaran site (Kouhestani, 2016, plan 1, number 1).

V.2.d. Jugs without neck

Jugs without neck have two kinds of rims, one is simple grooved (Fig. 2: 3), and the other is diagonally (Fig 5: 4).

Potteries with a simple grooved rim in terms of form and surface color are consistent with the shreds of Parthian potteries of the Nokhandan area of Dargaz (Mohammadifar and Fallah Mahneh, 2015: 13, Table 1-No. 8) and Sassanid pottery obtained from Sharshar tepe in Tous (Kouhestani, 2016: plan 6). The pottery with a diagonal rim is comparable to the sample of Makran Parthian pottery (Alizadeh, 2012: plan 110) and the pottery of the Kahour Langar area of the Persian Gulf coast (Khosrozadeh, 2006: plan 3: 7).

V.2.e. Bottoms of dishes

During the studies, 4 types of bottom were obtained, of which 3 samples belong to the historical period and one number belongs to the Islamic period. The shape of the bottoms is as follows: 1- Flat bottoms with a diagonal edge - convex body (Fig. 5: 5) correspond with a sample of Sassanid floors from the area of Sharshar in Tous (Kouhestani, 2016: p. 96 - No. 5, plan 4-7). 2- Flat bottoms with a rounded edge - convex body (Fig. 5: 6) correspond with a sample of bottoms belonging to the late Parthian period of Sistan Plain (Roostaei, 2012: 109-No. 258) and Tepe Gori of Sistan (Mehrafarin, 2007: 192- No. 016). 3- Flat bottoms with rounded edge and body close to vertical angle (Fig. 5: 7) correspond to the Sassanid pottery sample of the Dastgaran area in Tous and Kohandej of Neishabour and Bandian Dargaz (Kouhestani, 2016: 133 - No. 6 - Plan 4-1). 4- The last bottoms belong to the Islamic period, which has a base (Fig. 5: 10), and can be compared with an example of Islamic pottery in the Malin region in the Bakhazr county (Khodadoost et al., 2017: p. 13, No. 62), the sample of Islamic pottery in the area of old Zahedan of Sistan (Mousavi Haji, 2004: p. 75, number 43), and the sample of Islamic pottery in the southern Makran region (Nikshahr and Chabahar) (Zour, 2012: 201, number 157).

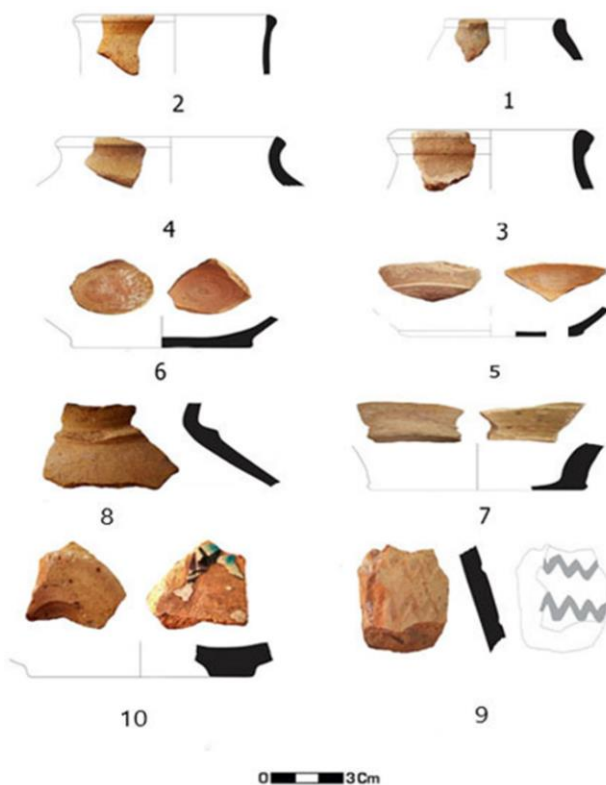


Figure 5. Photos and drawings of Qasr-e Golchehreh mound potteries.

V.2. Forms of studied potteries

V.2.a. Flagons

One of the most common forms obtained was flagons with round rim (Fig. 2: 1). This pottery with Parthian pottery of the Sistan region (Roostaei, 2012: No. 236), pottery of the Bakhazr region of Malin site (Khodadoost et al., 2017: fig. 4 No. 11), Sassanid pottery of Tous area and Toope Derakht site (Kouhestani, 2016: 158, plan 16) has been comparable.

V.2.b. Jug: The jugs studied in this study were divided into two categories, one is jug with neck and the other is without neck that has several kinds of rim. Thus, we classified and did a typology analysis of potteries in this way.

V.2.c. Jugs with neck: The jugs with neck studied in this study have a simple rounded rim (Fig. 5:

VI. Decorations of the studied pottery

Examining the potteries, only 3 types of decoration were visible: 1- added design, 2- carved pattern, 3- and potteries with painting and glaze sprinkled under the transparent glaze. Pottery with added design: In explaining this method, it can be said that after making pottery, the desired decoration is made separately and when the pottery is semi-dry, it is attached to the body of the vessel (Kambakhsh Fard, 2010: 457). This technique in the pottery studied in this study is in the form of an added strip (Fig. 5: 8), which is comparable to the sample of Parthian and Sassanid pottery in areas such as Dastgaran (Kouhestani, 2016: 84, fig 1-4 No. 2),

Abderaz area in Sarakhs Plain (Behroozifar et al, 2020: fig 13) Bardsir Kerman (Khosrozadeh and Aali, 2005: second chapter B, plan 4: 2), Khajeh Sistan mountain (Mehrafarin et al., 2011: fig. 11, No. 2), and Eddor of United Arab Emirates (Lecomte, 1993: fig. 10: 4).

Carved pottery: This is another widely used pottery motif in this area. In this technique, which has been one of the most common decorations in pottery workshops, potters created the desired designs using sharp tools (Tohidi, 1390: 25). The designs of carved pottery in the studied pottery are as follows: Parallel and wavy carved lines (Fig. 5: 9) which are comparable to the samples of Parthian and Sassanid pottery in areas such as Dastgaran area (Kouhestani, 2016: 84, Plan 4-1 No. 6), Turang Tape and Qoms region (Kambakhsh Fard, 2010: Plan 9), Malin area (Khodadoost et al., 2017: 167, No. 17),

Tepe Maud A (Behdad, 2012: Table 23 No. 94) and the area of Khajeh Sistan mountain (Mehrafarin et al, 2011: fig. 10, No. 5). Pottery with painting and glaze sprinkled under clear glaze: In this method, the pottery is baked and then painted on the pottery and then the surface is covered with transparent glaze and colorless or colored (Mousavi Haji et al., 2013: 129). This pottery has a black pattern and is sprinkled with turquoise or glazed turquoise on a white background (Fig. 5: 10). They are comparable with the example of medieval Islamic pottery belonging to Marlin area in county Bakhezr (Khodadoost et al., 2017: 167, number 67) and old Zahedan of Sistan (Mousavi Haji, 2004: 627, fig 23), Tous (Reza Nejad, 2001: 218, design 17), and Islamic pottery of Tarough Rajab (Fehervari, 2000: 80, No 95).

Table 1. Typology and chronology of the studied potteries.

No.	No. plate	Type of piece	Historical period	Measurement criteria				Comparison	
				Form	Decoration	Design	Glaze color		
1	1	edge	Parthian - Sassanid	*				Sistan Malin Tous Toop Derakht	(Roostaei, 2012: No. 236), (Khodadoost et al., 2017: fig 4 No. 11), (Kouhestani, 2016: 158, plan 16)
2	1	edge	Sassanid	*				Dastgaran-Tous	(Kouhestani, 2016, plan 1, number 1)
3	1	edge	Parthian - Sassanid	*				Nokhandan - Dargaz Sharshar -Tous	(Mohammadifar and Fallah Mahneh, 2015: 13, Table 1- No. 8), (Kouhestani, 2016: plan 6)
4	1	edge	Parthian	*				Makran Kahoor area	(Alizadeh, 2012: plan 110)
5	2	bottom	Sassanid	*				Sharshar	(Kouhestani, 2016: p. 96 - No. 5, plan 4-7)
6	2	bottom	Late Parthian	*				Sistan Plain Tepe Gori	(Roostaei, 2012: 109- No. 258), (Mehrafarin, 2007: 192- No. 016)
7	2	bottom	Parthian - Sassanid					Tous Khandaj Neishabour and Bandian Dargaz	(Kouhestani, 2016: 133 - No. 6 - Plan 4-1)
8	3	body	Parthian - Sassanid		*			Dastgaran Abderaz Bardsir Kerman Khajeh Mountain Eddor of United Arab Emirates	(Kouhestani, 2016: 84, fig 1-4 No. 2), (Behroozifar et al, 2020: fig 13) (Khosrozadeh and Aali, 2005: second chapter B, plan 4: 2), (Mehrafarin et al., 2011: fig. 11, No. 2),
9	3	body	Parthian - Sassanid		*	*		Dastgaran Toorang Tepe and Ghoms Malin Tepe A mod Khajeh Mountain	(Kouhestani, 2016: 84, Plan 4-1 No. 6), (Kambakhsh Fard, 2010: Plan 9) (Khodadoost et al., 1396: 167, No. 17), (Behdad, 2012: Table 23 No. 94)
10	3	bottom	Middle Islamic	*				Old Zahedan Malin South of Makran	(Mousavi Haji, 2004: 75, fig 43), (Khodadoost et al., 2017: 13, number 62), (Zour, 2012: 201, No. 157)
11	3	bottom	Middle Islamic		*	*	*	Malin Tous Old Zahedan Tarough Rajab	(Mousavi Haji et al., 2013: 627, fig 23), (Khodadoost et al., 2017: 167, number 67), (Reza Nejad, 2001: 218, design 17), (Fehervari, 2000: 80, No 95).

VII. Chronology and analysis of trans-regional cultural connections of Qasr-e Golchehreh mound

As we know, Khorasan, as the first birthplace of the Parthians, had suitable environmental, biological, cultural, geographical and even political components. This created special settlement conditions for this geographical region in the Parthian, Sassanid, and even later in the Islamic period. Qasr-e Golchehreh mound in Torbat-e Jam is also one of the historical sites of ancient Iran, which shows the settlement of ancient peoples in this area. Typology and comparisons show that this hill was established in the Parthian, Sassanid, and Middle Islamic periods. Although it is not possible to attribute some pieces to a specific period (Parthian-Sassanid), it can be seen that the pottery does not belong to before the Parthian period. In the pottery of the Islamic period,

pottery that is from the 1st to the 3rd century AH has not been found.

By comparative study of this pottery with Islamic pottery of Tous, Malin, old Zahedan and southern Makran, a history between the 4th and 10th centuries AH can be attributed to them. According to the typological comparisons and location of places based on aerial maps, it can be seen that this area had the most trans-regional connections with ancient sites in northeastern and eastern Iran such as Dargaz, Sarakhs, Neishabour, Tous, Ghaen, Bakhazr, and Birjand (Fig. 6) and from the southeast with Sistan and Makran South (Fig. 7).

In terms of the type of construction, form, and execution of technique, although they were made like other large pottery centers of ancient Iran, in terms of quality, they are lower and have been imitated and built locally.



Figure 6. Map of trans-regional connections of Qasr-e Golchehreh area with northeastern and eastern regions of Iran (Google Earth).



Figure 7. Map of trans-regional relations of Qasr-e Golchehreh region with the southeastern regions of Iran (Google Earth).

VIII. Conclusion

Qasr-e Golchehreh mound is one of the historical sites of Dasht-e Jam, on which no specialized studies have been done so far with the aim of typology and chronology. Accordingly, in this research, in accordance with the research questions and objectives, chronology, determination of pottery species, and trans-regional relations of this area were studied and analyzed. Accordingly, at first, a methodical study was performed to collect pottery and study them. In this regard, after collecting pottery, only ten pieces of flagship pottery that provided the most information to the authors were studied. At first, the pottery was identified based on the type of form (edge and body), type of glaze, and type of decoration and then based on characteristics such as

paste type, chamotte type, construction type, surface color, etc. Then, based on typological comparisons, the settlement periods and cultural relations of the Qasr-e Golchehreh mound were determined. Based on this, it can be said that this area belongs to the Parthian and Sassanid periods and no pottery that is characteristic of the Achaemenid or Seleucid period has been obtained. Also, according to the painting technique and glaze sprinkled on a white background under the transparent glaze, it is probable that this area was also established in the Middle Islamic period. In terms of trans-regional cultural relations, it had the most connections with the northeastern, eastern, and southeastern regions of Iran, especially Sistan and southern Makran (Nikshahr and Chabahar).

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