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HORMOZ: A SITE BELONGING TO THE PARTHIAN TO ISLAMIC PERIODS IN KHĀSH COUNTY

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Introduction

Geographically, Khāsh County is located at W 61° 12' and N 28° 13', south of Mount Taftan (Fig. 1). This region is situated at an altitude of 1415 metres above sea level, about 185 km south of Zahedan on the Zahedan-Iranshahr road. This county has a moderate climate tending to warmth and drought. Agriculture is not very developed in the area, due to specific environmental conditions such as the shortage of water and inappropriate land for agriculture. Rainfed agriculture is scarcely performed because of low precipitation. Ranching has long been common in this region, and as provender, hays and weeds have compensated for the weak flora of the region. In addition, the southern and western hillsides provide a rich place for grassing. Because of its location at a higher altitude compared to other cities situated in the vicinity of Taftān Mount, Khāsh has a pleasant climate; hence it has attracted inhabitants. From the viewpoint of archaeological investigation, Khāsh is an enigmatic area.

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Survey method and results

The archaeological survey of Khāsh County was performed during a two-month period between late December 2009 and mid-February 2010. A simple and compressed field survey method was applied to identify sites. Different data were recorded during the survey, including GPS location, dimension of sites, local natural and geographical data such as flora and landscape, and any information such as local alternative names of the place. GPS locations were measured in the approximate centre of each site and site positioning was performed using maps with 1/25000 and 1/50000 scales as well as aerial photographs and satellite pictures. Photographs of the site were taken by a digital camera with 10 megapixel resolution. To illustrate the location of the site relative to the nearest habitat (villages, city etc.), we used the satellite pictures as templates to draw a plan of the site. The surface data were collected using the random sampling method and the dating was performed based on the surface data taken from the sites. The most observed object was pottery, and in rare cases stone objects and other data were also obtained.



Figure 1. Geographical position of Khāsh County, Iran.

For the pottery gathered during the investigation, a specific code was assigned to all data in the following format: the letters Kh (the two beginning letters of Khāsh), survey year (1388), design number. Identified relics and sites were specified with their local name, numerical relic code e.g. *Kh010*, etc.

During the survey, a total of 213 sites from the Bronze Age until the late Islamic period were identified, and different types of sites including single-period or multi-period site, cemetery, castle and rock shelter were recorded. In this paper, we intend to demonstrate one of the identified sites – viz. Hormoz.

Location of the site

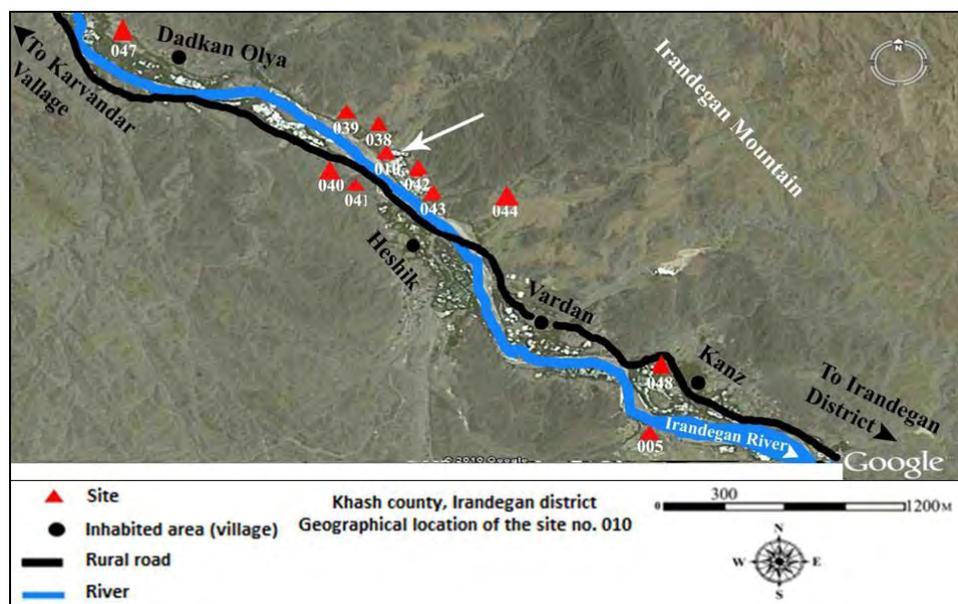


Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the Hormoz site (*Kh010*).

The Hormoz site is located at the E 60 38 35 longitude and N 27 35 38 latitude, at an altitude of 1177 metres above sea level on the northern side of Irandegan river (Fig. 2). This site is 400 metres north of Hashik village in Irandegan District of Khāsh County. With dimensions of about 120×100 m, the site is composed of four linked hills (Fig. 3, 4). Hill no. 1 is the north-western one in this collection. On the western surface of this hill, a 3×4 m enclosure has been built by rubble around a soil pile 0.5 m in height. A small section of the eastern side of this hill has been graded by local inhabitants and is used as a stack place. On the southern side, signs of a pit related to an unauthorized excavation

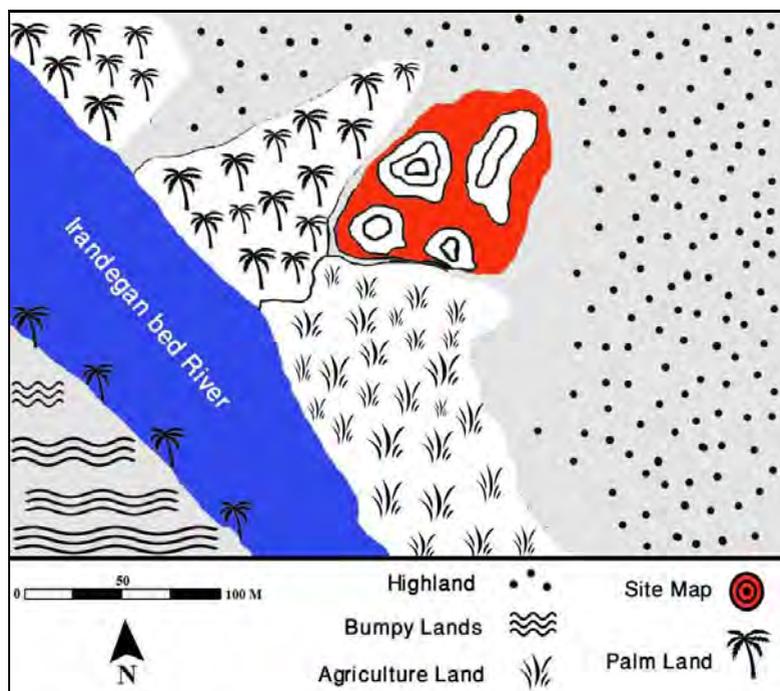


Figure 3. Location plan of Tepe Hormoz.

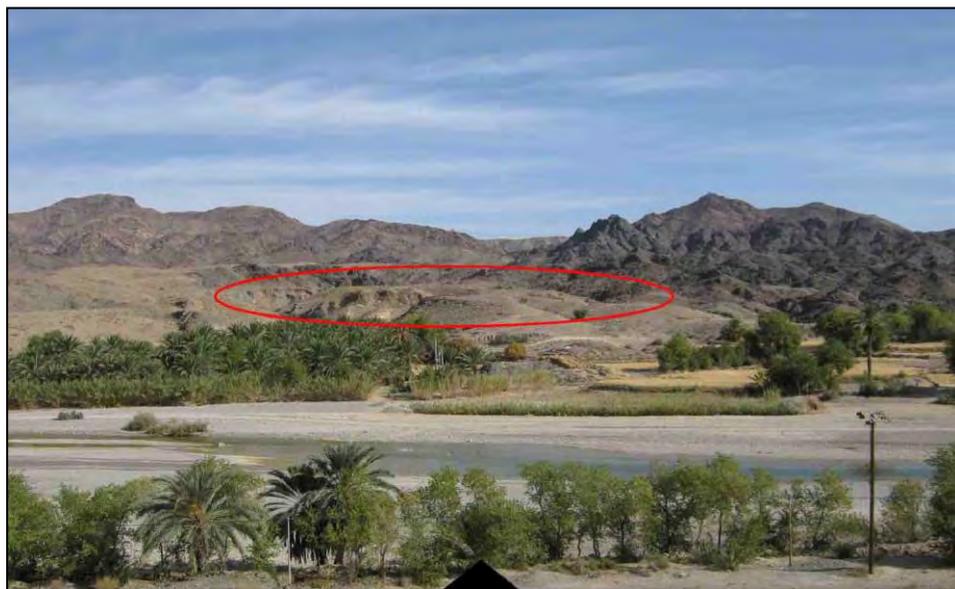


Figure 4. Hormoz site, viewed from the southwest.

with 1×1 m dimensions were observed. Hill no. 2 is located to the northeast, and shows relics of a stone wall built without mortar 55 metres in length; its preserved height reaches 30 cm. On the northern side of this hill, a completely plain surface with 20×15 m dimensions is observed with a lighter soil in comparison with other parts of the hill. The top of this area is also used as a stack place. Hill no. 3 is to the southwest, and is higher than other hills in the site. The southern part of this hill has been widely excavated, and the soil colour in the excavated parts is much lighter than that on the hill surface. On the south-eastern side of the site is located hill no. 4. This hill is a completely plain surface with dimensions of 10×10 m, and has also been graded as a stack place. On hill no. 1, relics from the Islamic period can be found, while the other hills hold relics from the early historical and Islamic periods.

Description of findings

Pottery

Pottery is the only movable cultural data which remained within this site. It shows a high degree of diversity and density. Based on their coating, potteries can be divided into two types: glazed potteries and non-glazed potteries with clay slip. Among glazed potteries, single-colour ones in dark blue and brown, those with patterns cut out under the glaze in green, and those with paintings under the glaze could be identified (Fig. 5, 6).



Figure 5. Potteries obtained from the Hormoz site.

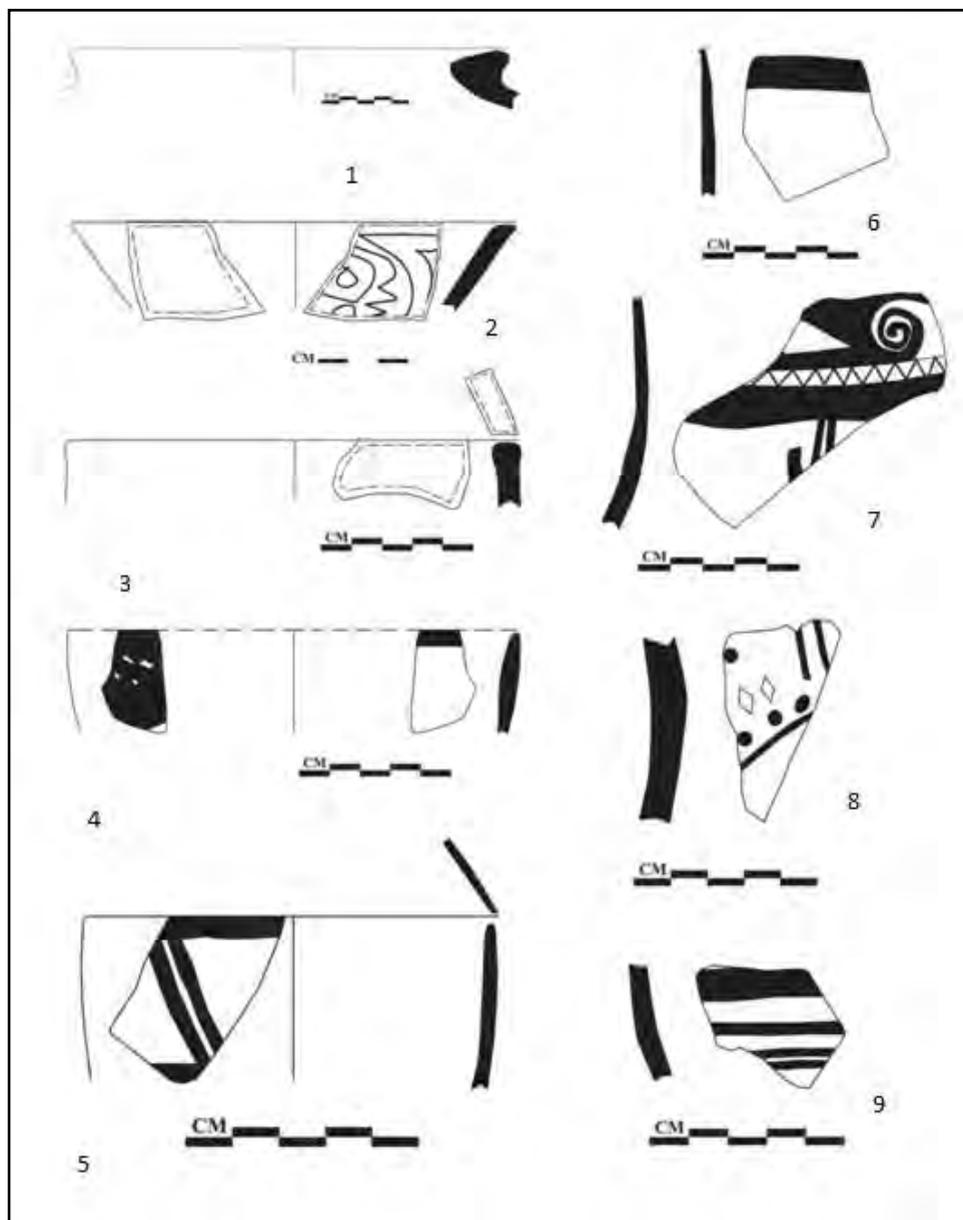


Figure 6. Sketch of the potteries from Hormoz site.

Table 1: Catalogue of potteries

<i>Tell- Hormoz (Kh010)</i>											
Labelno	Form	Manufacture	Production quality	Firing	Decoration	Texture	Interior Cover	Exterior Cover	Temper	Chronology	Parallels
1	Rim	Wheel	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Plain</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Islamic	Kāmbakhsh Fard(1379; 2000)
2	Rim	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Ingrave under Glaze</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Islamic	Karimi & Kiāni(1364; 1985)
3	Rim	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Plain</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Islamic	Kāmbakhsh Fard(1379; 2000)
4	Rim	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Painted</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Historic (Parthian)	Haerinck,1983
5	Rim	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Painted</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Historic (Parthian)	Haerinck,1983
6	Rim	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Painted</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Historic (Parthian)	Haerinck,1983
7	Body	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Painted</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Historic (Parthian)	Haerinck,1983
8	Body	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Moulded</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Islamic	Karimi & Kiāni(1364; 1985)
9	Body	Wheel	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Well Fired</i>	<i>Moulded</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Orange</i>	<i>Sand</i>	Islamic	Karimi & Kiāni(1364; 1985)

Non-glazed potteries are all wheel-thrown; their paste is brick red and is adequately annealed to provide the required density and strength. Based on their embellishment, these can be divided into two groups: potteries with colour pattern embellishment and potteries with moulded embellishment. The latter type is wholly different from other pottery in the non-glazed group, and belongs to the Islamic period. The potteries embellished with colour patterns have brown or cherry red patterns on their surface. One of the most significant of these potteries is that of the "londo" type with inverse wave patterns drawn in black on the outer surface of the pottery, which is the typical pottery of the Seleucid and Parthian periods in the south-east of Iran (Fig. 5, 6).

Conclusion

One of the important factors in the formation, dynamics and broadness of a settlement pattern in each region is its ecology and geomorphology (the appearance of the natural geography). For instance, from a logical and scientific viewpoint, formation of a developed civilisation with one or a few large central sites and places is unexpected, though possible. This is because the geomorphologic mountainous context of the area does not allow populations to concentrate, thereby prohibiting the development and growth of establishments. On the other hand, it would be logical to expect vibrant and significant relics and sites from the oldest periods till now in regions with appropriate geographic and living conditions like plain land and water resources.

In the archaeological survey of Irandegan District of Khāsh County, a total of 63 sites were identified, most of which belong to Islamic and then historical ages, with a great difference from other periods, and a few relics belong to pre-historical periods. Almost 70 percent of the registered sites are located along the Irandegan River. Regarding the obtained pottery data from the Hormoz site, we can suggest that the establishment history in this site could be traced to the Parthian age and the settlement would continue its existence until the late centuries of the Islamic period.

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Abstract

Essential factors in the formation, dynamics and broadness of settlement patterns are ecology and geomorphology. These elements have been taken into account in the archaeological surveys of Irandegan District of Khāsh County. A total of 63 sites were identified, most of which belong to Islamic and pre-Islamic historical ages. A few relics are datable to the pre-historical periods. Almost 70 percent of the registered sites are located along the Irandegan River. Regarding the obtained pottery data from the Hormoz site, we can suggest that the settlement history in this site could be traced back to the Parthian age and the settlement would continue its existence until the late centuries of the Islamic era.