

RESEARCH PAPER

Investigation of burial patterns in Iron Age of Gilan, Iran

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The province of Gilan situated in northern Iran is extremely rich in Iron Age cultural sites especially cemeteries. This article throws light on the Iron Age Culture of Gilan, with special reference to the study of burial patterns.

Introduction

The Iron Age in Iran and Gilan is divided into three sections: Iron Age I, II and III. This Period includes from 1500 B.C to 550 B.C, of course some archaeologists believe the existence of Iron Age IV, which continues until middle of Parthian (Ashkanian) period (end of 1st Millennium B.C).

Burial customs include the structure of the graves, the direction and condition of human or animal skeletons and placement of objects in the graves. The main aim of this article is to identify Iron Age Burial culture in Gilan. All major discoveries from selected Iron Age sites in this area have been explained and classified. This investigation shows that at least there are three different Iron Age burial cultures in Gilan and is divided into three domains. Each domain has been explained, with reference to its burial culture and how it differs from the others.

Research area

Gilan province is located in north of Iran, under Caspian Sea (**Map. 1**). Study area covers whole of Gilan province, but 99 percent of Iron Age sites in Gilan just are located in parts of Alborz Mountain in the Veldt hills. Ten complex Iron Age sites have been selected for study. Marlik (N 36° 54' 5/4" & (E 49° 33' 26/4"), Kalouraz (N 36° 55' 12/4") & (E 49° 29' 6/3"), Jamshid Abad (N 36° 56' 15/7") & (E 49° 30' 31"), Shahran (N 36° 56' 18/3") & (E 49° 32' 55/8"), Ghale Kouti, (N 36° 54' 26") & (E 49° 57' 00"), Ghias Abad (N 36° 51' 57") & (E 50° 51' 27"), Boye (N 36° 51' 34/4") & (E 50° 06' 20"), Vaske (N 37° 32') & (E 48° 50'), Maryan (N 37° 51') & (E 48° 40'), Toul (N 37° 44' 07") & (E 48° 36' 25") (**Map. 2**).

1. Burial Patterns in Significant Sites in Iron Age of Gilan

Generally, Iron Age cemeteries were distributed in three cultural and geographical divisions of Gilan- including the south central highlands, the eastern highlands and the mountains of northwestern Gilan. The first domain that is discussed here is the Iron Age burial customs in significant cemeteries located in the south-central highlands known



Map 1: Political Map of Iran showing all provinces, with Gilan highlighted



Map 2: Map of Gilan that show Iron Age three Cultural Domain and some Important Iron Age Sites

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as cultural domain of Roudbar (Sefidrood). Later on, cemeteries located in the highlands of east Gilan known as the cultural domain of Deilaman and Amlash (Polrood) will be discussed. Finally, cemeteries located in the northwestern mountains of Gilan known as cultural domain of Tavalesh (Shafarood and Karganrood).

1.1 The cultural domain of Roudbar or Safidrood

This domain covers the south-central highlands of Roudbar in Gilan. The main geographical and separating factor of this domain apart from the mountainous parts of Gilan is the large Sefidrood river along with other minor rivers leading to it. Sefidrood has two main branches called the Ghezel Ozan and Shahrood. A part of Shahrood domain and whole part of Sefidrood will be studied and discussed here which matches the political geography of Roudbar city and Gilan province (Map. 2).

The largest and most important archeological sites of Gilan Iron Age including cemeteries and settlements have been found in this precinct. A number of Iron Age sites such as Marlik, Kalouraz, Jamshid Abad, Shahran, Halima Jan, Estalkh Jan, Joboun, Shimam, Sandas, Nave, Chereh, Vatel and Rashi have been excavated and studied. Burial customs in the significant sites of Iron Age of this domain known Marlik, Kalouraz, Jamshid Abad and Shahran are discussed here.

1.1.1 Marlik

Marlik have been explored from 1961 to 1962 by team from Tehran University headed by Dr. Negahban. Marlik located at 425 meters above MSL and equal to (N 36° 54' 5/4") & (E 49° 33' 26/4"), (Fig. 1).

A significant number of golden, silver and bronze cups, mosaic, porcelain, ceramic container, terracotta and animal figurines (Fig. 2) have been found in Marlik excavations. Some of these discovered cups are unique in the excavations all over the world, like a cup known as "Marlik Cup" made of pure gold. Various ceramic objects, different golden and silver objects, cylindrical beads, stone and glass beads, stone tools made of flint, obsidian and human and animal figurines made of clay and bronze and hundreds of other objects- within a total of 53 graves- have been discovered from Marlik. The discovered figurines in Marlik



Fig. 1: View of Marlik site



Fig. 2: Cattle figurines, which have been beside of one Human Graves in Marlik

can be classified into three categories: human figurines, animal ceramic figurines and animal metal Figurines.

Fifty three graves have been discovered in Marlik excavations differing in size, shape, quality and quantity. General burial methods indicate that it was a practice in which a dead body placed on the bottom of the tomb or on a long and large boulder placed on the bottom of the tomb. The obtained evidence shows that generally corpses were buried with formal dress with decorative buttons and other ornaments in the tomb. In the women's tomb one can especially find earrings, rings, necklace, bangles, and decorative pins, while weapons such as sword, dagger, bayonet, arrows, wands and other martial instruments such as helmets, martial belts, wrist protectors and sometimes precious ornaments may be found in men's tombs mostly under the foot or on the skeleton.

The discovered graves of Marlik are divided into four groups as follows: the first group including the large graves; the second group including the average tetrahedral graves; the third group including the small graves; and the fourth group of horse graves (Negahban 1999: 68)

1.1.2 Kalouraz

Kalouraz is the name of a village in the central part of Roudbar city in Gilan. The cemeteries in this village generally called Kalouraz are located at an altitude of 400 meters above MSL. They have been excavated and studied by the Iranian delegation in 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1991 in several stages.

The Kalouraz were found in 18 graves which are divided into three groups based on the shape and architecture as following: Simple Vacuolar Graves, Stack Stone Graves and crock graves. Most of graves were thought of belonging to human, but letter some of them were identified as horse burials (fig. 3).

Skeletons are placed on the left shoulder or right shoulder and feet are bent or straight. Overall, 10 women and 12 men had been buried both on left and right shoulder in supine position with bent legs and feet in these graves. The study of the condition of skeletons indicates a custom of resting the body on the left shoulder and bent



Fig. 3: Horse Burial, Discovered from Kalouraz (Hakemi 1968)

legs both for women and men almost more than other features. Burials were both in mass graves (3 graves) and in individual graves (15 graves) respectively. Most of burials had east-west orientation. Only 3 graves out of 18 had north-south direction (Khalatbari 1991: 67). Objects found in the graves were mostly of earthenware, bronze objects, iron, shell and agate necklaces, etc. Some of these objects are important from religious aspect and had daily usage and some others were used for hunting and warfare and some of them were decorative tools. Pottery dishes along with the dead bodies included jugs, bowls, platter, burial containers, cups, milk serving jars, and *dizzy* (similar to bowl) dishes. Bronze objects, golden objects (**Fig. 4**) iron objects, stone beads and plant seeds have been found along with corpses in the discovered graves. The bronze objects included daggers, arrow heads, figurines, bangles, earrings, necklace and bell. But the greatest and the most complete information of the Kalouraz cemetery sites are related to the metal objects of excavation in 1968 and 1969 divided into metal cups and containers, figurines, weapons, decorative items, horse saddles and decorative instruments groups (Hakemi 1968: 8).

1.1.3 Jamshid Abad

Kararood or Jamshid Abad village is of the central district of Roudbar township in Gilan province located in the western side of about 1500 meters in a position near Sefidrood and altitude of 293 meters above MSL. The GPS is (N 36° 56' 15/7") & (E 49° 30' 31"). The ancient cemetery of Jamshid Abad is covers an area of 6 acres approximately and is located within a residential context. The present author



Fig. 4: Gold cup, discovered from Kalouraz



Fig. 5: Some objects, discovered from Jamshid Abad

was part of the teams that carried out the first excavations in 2000, and was also head of the delegation in 2005 that has provided a full report of the findings.

Of the seven discovered graves in Jamshid Abad excavations in 2000, five graves were simple vacuolar graves and the other two had a number of stone pieces on itself (stack stone). The other had a row of dry constructed wall. All graves were discovered at a depth of 1 to 3 meters about 270 cm above ground level like that of the average mass graves. In addition, all nine discovered graves in Jamshid Abad in 2006 were of simple vacuolar graves. Most of discovered graves in Jamshid Abad had a corpse, but in cases, some graves with the corpses of two dead man or woman had been achieved. A condition which is almost common in Jamshid Abad graves is the burial of corpses as flank burial and bent feet. It is worth mentioning that no buried object discovered adjacent to a corpse seems to belong to a woman in the second grave of seventh trench. (Fallahian 2009: 134).

Most of the discovered objects from Jamshid Abad were made either of clay or bronze. (Fig. 5) In the first season of excavation, 42 pieces of ceramic objects had been found as the 78% of the total amount of discovered objects. On average, 6 pottery artifacts have been found in each of the

Jamshid Abad graves. Among them, the discovery of the two types of pottery including a series of narrow-mouthed urns sometimes with different colors and the wide mouth containers in various forms were considered as the most discovered artifacts.

In the second season, metal objects had been discovered that also all are made of bronze including three groups of weapons (swords and daggers) ornaments (bracelets, rings and barrette) and tools with specific applications (awl) (Fallahian 2003: 218).

1.1.4 Shahran (*Lame Zamin*)

There are three Iron Age sites in Shahran named: Lamezamin, Painmahal and Mohtesham. Lamezamin is one of Iron Age site in Shahran village which located in the Roudbar Township. Thirteen graves were discovered in the first season of excavation at shahran (*Lame zamin* site) by the Japanese team in an area of several hundred square meters, all of which were of vacuolar type. But in the second excavation in 1978, the foreign explorers had discovered twelve graves in an area of two hundreds square meters of land. In this excavation, graves have been discovered were of a simple vacuolar and stone heap vacuolar graves. Some of these graves were elliptic which actu-

ally belonged to adults. The other type was a rectangular vacuolar grave mostly belonging to children. The discovered objects and artifacts from adults' graves was mostly black and gray pottery. Generally, the objects discovered in Lame Zamin graves mostly include gray and red pottery in the form of rounded bottom pottery (needing a tripod to stand) with large covers like a large funnel and large lavers as well as other objects such as humanoid pottery figurines. It is worth noting that the metal objects discovered in the graves in Lame Zamin of Shahran were just of copper. The human bones were studied in this site, and was expressed that most of them are belonged to Mesocephalic. (Fig. 6) (Fukai & Matsutani, 1982: 82)

Generally, three types of graves have been discovered during the excavations in Shahran. The first type was of vacuolar graves discovered in the low-lying neighboring area at Shahran. The second type was crypt graves mostly found from high neighboring areas in Shahran. The third type was stone cavity graves mostly have been discovered at the Lame Zamin site in Shahran.

1.1.5 The features of Iron Age burial culture in Domain of Roudbar (Sefidrood)

1. Generally, the oldest cemeteries related to Iron Age can be traced in the cultural domain of Roudbar in Gilan. In other words, the number of Iron Age1 sites in this domain is more than any other domain of Iron Age in Gilan. The significant Roudbar sites are namely Lame Zamin of Shahran, Kal-

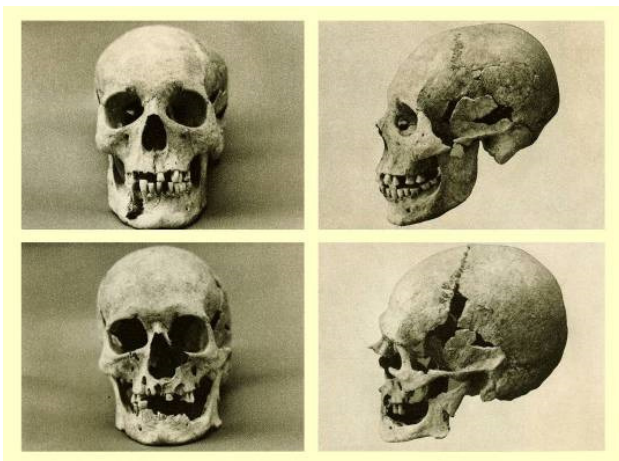


Fig. 6: Human skull, which excavated from Iron Age Graves in (Shahran)

ouraz and Jamshid Abad which doubtless belong to the Iron Age.

2. It appears that there is a direct relation between the vacuolar graves and the chronology of Iron Age sites in Gilan (Fig. 7). This means that the vacuolar graves usually belong to the earlier Iron Ages and large percentage of these graves in the cultural domain of Roudbar and the depth of these graves are distinct and significant than those of the graves of the Deilaman, Amlash and Tavalesh domains. The vacuolar graves are also frequent in Halima Jan, Jamshid Abad, Joboun and Shirkooh sites. Of course, this type of burial can be observed in some other sites such as Ghale Kouti and Boye in Amlash and Deilaman domains as well, but their total number is less especially in Tavalesh domain.
3. Figurines of all kind such as animal or human, or combinations thereof (Griffon) have been discovered largely from the Iron Age cemeteries in this domain. The abundance of cattle figurines known as zebu is considered as the characteristic of the Iron Age of this domain, while this feature is not totally seen or (like Eshkor Bala from Deilaman and Amlash domain) or has a lower frequency in the two other domains in Gilan. Considering the number of figurines, Marlik, Kalouraz and Halima Jan sites are exemplary.
4. More gold and silver objects had been discovered in the Iron Age cemeteries in the cultural domain of Roudbar than any other area till the present time. Overall, the richness and abundance of the Iron Age cemeteries in Roudbar domain is more than that of the two other domains, and even the average number of discovered objects is greater.
5. Large numbers of weapons, especially swords and other combat tools in this domain are more comparable to Deilaman, Tavalesh and Amlash domains. This is likely due to the occurrence of violence in the domain.

1.2 The Cultural Domain of Deilaman and Amlash (Polrood)

This domain includes the mountainous parts of Siahkal, Langrood, Amlash and Roodsar townships in east of Gilan province that covers the watershed and river catchment areas of Polrood. However, some parts of Polrood in Deilaman and Amlash area are called Chakrood.



Fig. 7: Grave types in Sefidrood domain (1: Lamezamin, Fukai 1982) (2: Jamshid Abad, Fallahian 2006)

This precinct contains the remains of many residential areas particularly the Iron Age cemetery of Gilan. Some of these sites include Ghale Kouti Kohpas, Lasulokan, Khosrokhani (Fallahian 2004), Pirkoh, Zarchal, Bonzamin, Ghias Abad, Ghale Kouti Komoni, Miarkashe, Lashkistan, Sanjeddare (Mousavi, 1995), Tomajan, Boye, Omam, Marbo, Shirchak, Motalla Kooch (Jahani 2010), Divrood, Naftkhani Dimajankash and Ghalegardan had been explored archeologically. Here, burial customs in three significant sites as Ghale Kouti Kohpas, Ghias Abad and Boye are discussed.

1.2.1 Ghale Kouti Kohpas

The cemetery of Ghale Kouti consists of four separate and interconnected sites at a distance of about 1500 meters northwest of Kohpas village and 2000 meters away from the Deilaman city. The altitude varies between 1600 to 1700 meters above open MSL and GPS is equal: (N 36° 54' 26") & (E 49° 57' 00").

The first excavation of Ghale Kouti carried out by Japanese group at during 1960 to 1965, and the second excavation carried out by Iranian group in 2008. Totally, 25 graves were identified and explored by the archeological team from University of Tokyo in Ghale Kouti. Overall dimension of the grave in this site is smaller than the other graves.

There are three types of Graves Structure in Ghale Kouti as follow:

1) The enclosure grave. **2)** Simple Vacuolar Graves. **3)** Crock Graves (Egami, Fukai & Masuda 1965: 4).

Pottery has been found in almost all the graves. In all phases of excavation in the site, dark brown, dark red and gray potteries were found in most cases with a sleek body. The pottery had made of clay and sand particles in some cases. The discovered plates, bowls, jars, pitchers and cups are the most common varieties of pottery found in Ghale Kouti Kohpas. Tube containers with and without handles, painted and simple, open mouth and close mouthed and even containers with a lid have been found from this site.

Most metal objects from the Ghale Kouti include bronze artifacts (**fig. 8**) and Iron is rarely found in this site. Generally, it can be said that metal objects have a low percentage in this site. Tools and implements of war such as swords, knives, daggers, spearheads, arrow and axe are the bronze artifacts discovered commonly from these graves in this area. Furthermore, bronze deer figures, mirrors and bronze rings, had been discovered from this site as well. In excavation at 2008 have not been discovered any perfect earthen objects and all of them were form pottery pieces have been found. However, a spoon and a spear of bronze and necklaces, beads, and cylinder seals made of stone and gypsum are found (Aslani 2008: 55).

1.2.2 Ghias Abad

Ghias Abad or Gheis Abad is a cemetery of the Iron Age located in the north face of Chakrood River. In 1961 this cemetery and other sites like Omam, Pirkoh, and Bonzamin had been excavated by archaeologists from Iran.

In 1961 excavations, three large graves were discovered. Three large enclosure graves were discovered without

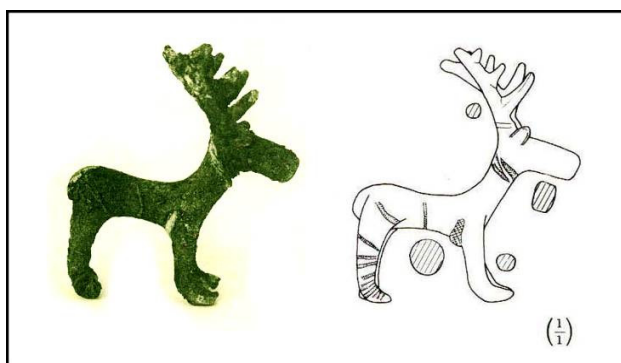


Fig. 8: Animal figurine (deer), is discovered in Ghale Kouti

flooding which were of square shape of 350 cm length and width. These graves had four rows of stone walls with large, irregular flat stones. Large boulders had been placed on top of the graves as well. The mud and lime mortar was used in the cracks and gaps between stone walls. Another architectural feature of these graves is that a row of circular short stone walls had been built around them. According to the explorer of the site, they were symptoms of the graves and cemetery. In other words, they indicated the range of the cemetery (Kambakhsh Fard 1994: 21).

Pottery in full color, glossy black, gray or brown color had been found from the cemetery. All of the pottery was generally black with black edges. Weapons and hunting equipment such as daggers and bronze swords with button handles mostly made of bronze and less commonly of iron had been discovered there. Three special cases of the remnants of one of the graves in this site include: First, four bronze daggers had been buried in the four corners. Second, a relatively large turtle shell was located near the corpse, (**fig. 9**) split with an axe. Third, some remains of animal bones as meat (feeding) for the dead were found in the pottery dishes (Kambakhshfard 1993: 22).

1.2.3 Boye

In terms of political subdivisions, Boye village is located in Rankoh district in Amlash thowship. Site of Gardaneh Sar in Boye with GPS equal (N 36° 51' 34/4") & (E 50° 06' 20"), and at an altitude of 1478 meter above open MSL were excavated several times by Iranian archaeologists (Moghaddam 1961, Sadr kabir 1996 and Aslani 2008).

During the conducted excavations in Boye, four types of the graves including: enclosure graves, Simple vacuolar graves, stone stack graves and crock graves.

Most of the pottery had been discovered in the second stage of the conducted excavations in Gardaneh Sar of Boye. However, other works such as bronze, iron, stone and plaster objects had been found in the site as well. The found pottery from the site in can be divided into three groups of red, gray and red-brown clay pottery.

In the Boye excavations, metal objects made of bronze and iron had been discovered. Bronze artifacts include various dagger and several arrows and spears in two different types; one of which is a spearhead with a tube handle and the other straps or wooden handle. In addition to the above mentioned objects, some bronze objects such as bracelets, rings, pins, and beads were found there. Four numbers

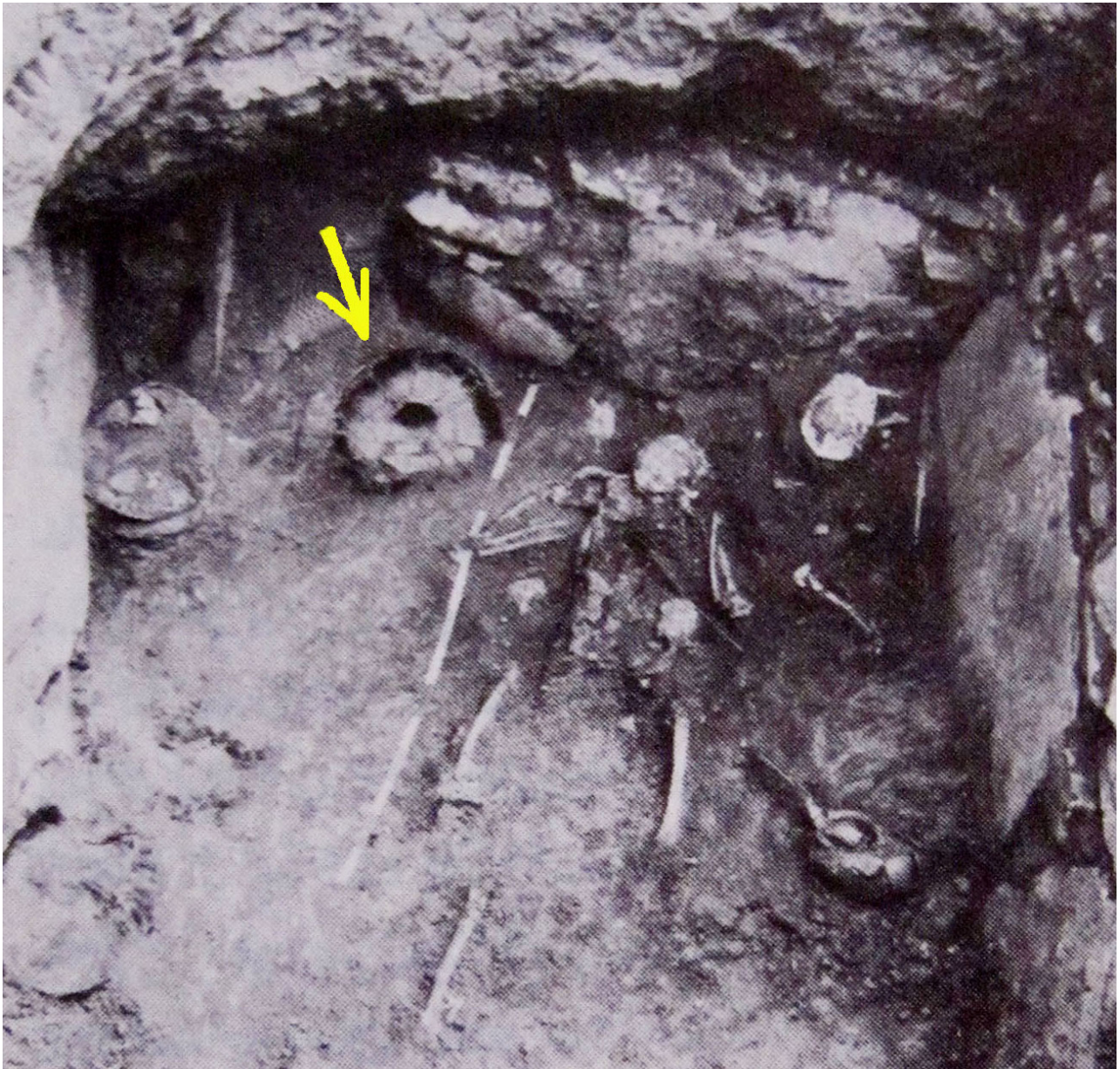


Fig. 9: Remains of large Turtle body at Iron Age grave in Ghias Abad

of iron daggers or swords with a relatively maximum and minimum length of 44 cm and 34.7 cm mostly bent and damaged were found. Furthermore, nine spearheads of iron have been discovered in the excavations as well.

In the third phase of Boye excavations, different objects ranging from pottery (**fig. 10**), small bronze jewelry and accessories such as rings, bracelets, beads, stone and glass, bronze weapons including swords and arrows and a piece of gold wire had been discovered.

1.2.4 Features of Iron Age burial culture in domain of Deilaman and Amlash (Polrood)

1. Megalithic graves, cyst graves are observed in this domain more than in the cultural domain of Roudbar. Generally, stone had been widely used in the construction of walls or in building most of the graves in the cemeteries in these regions (**Fig. 11**). In this regard, Omam, Boye and Ghias Abad graves are exemplary.

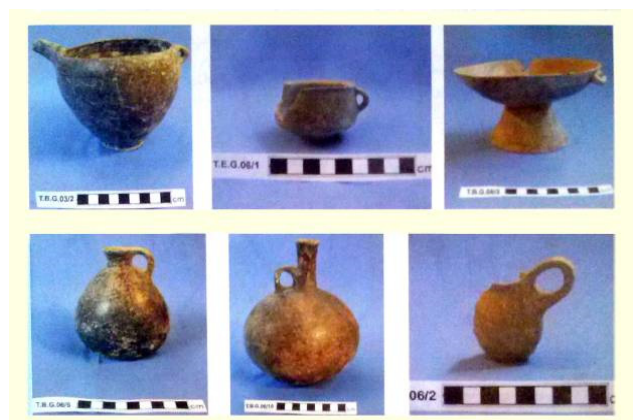


Fig. 10: Some Potteries, findings from Boye (Gardane Sar)

2. Graves known as honeycomb have been recorded specifically from Bon Zamin and Lasulokan cemeteries locating in this domain.

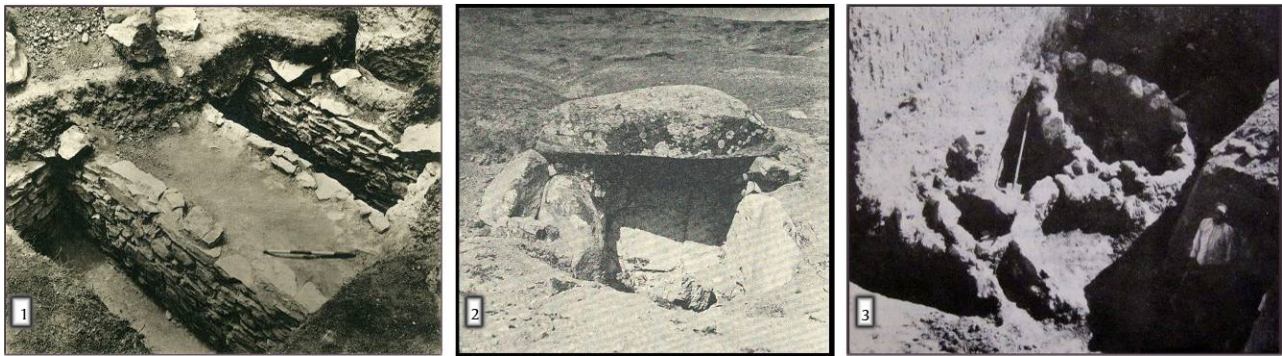


Fig. 11: Kind of Iron Age graves in polrood domain (1: Ghale kouti, Egami 1965), (2: Deilaman, Egami 1965), (3: Zarchal, Kambakhfard 1993)

3. The large number of figurines is less than the other two domains of Gilan as no effigy known as Zebu had been discovered from Komoni cemeteries so far. Furthermore, the large number of discovered containers with tube spout is less than the two other domains of Gilan.
4. Most of the Iron Age cemeteries of this domain assigned to the Iron Age II and 3 periods means they are in fact later. In most cases, other settlements had been established in or near these cemeteries in later Parthian and Sasanian dynasties and Islamic periods. In fact, life has been persisted after the Iron Age.
5. Considering the investigation in some sites of these regions including Ghias Abad, Ghale Kouti and Lasulokan sites, the discovered bodies are mostly of a racial type called brachycephalic (round heads).

1.3 The Cultural Domain of Tavalesh (Shafarood and Karganrood)

This domain covers sites located in the northwestern mountains of the Talesh range in Gilan. In contrast, the two previous domains of Gilan (Sefidrood and Polrood) were not only based on a large river basin, but several major rivers roughly with the same width and the same size are present in the region. The largest rivers include Karganrood and Shafarood namely. However, all these rivers have originated in the mountains of a geological point of Gilan known as Tavalesh. A few of sites have been excavated in this domain among which Chilakhaneh, Khajeh Davood, Hassanzamini, Vaske, Mianrood, Maryan, Aghevlar, Asbsara, Tandevin and Toul. Here, the pattern of burials in the significant cemeteries of this domain namely Vaske, Maryan and Toul will be discussed.

1.3.1 Vaske

Site of Vaske located in the Vaske village in Rezvanshahr Township. The site is 40 KM away from the Rezvanshahr city in the Talesh Mountains on the shores of Shafarood River. The GPS of site is: (N 37° 32') & (E 48° 50'), and at an altitude of about 1000 meters above open MSL. The excavation in Vaske cemetery had been conducted in two phases during 1992 and 1994 years by which a total of seven graves have been discovered.

The discovered graves in Vaske are four types; 1) enclosure graves, 2) vacuolar graves, 3) stone stacked grave and 4) crypt grave.

Burial conditions are inconsistent in the discoveries of the cemetery of Vaske, but generally, they were rested on the left shoulder with bent legs or on the right shoulder with bent legs or supine with legs straight or bent legs. Of the sixteen discovered skeletons, 15 skeletons were on the left shoulder and bent legged (flexed) condition (31.12 percent) and 2 skeletons were on the right shoulder with bent legs (12%) and 5 skeletons were supine with legs straight (12/31 percent). Burial condition of five skeletons which have been damaged and anxious in the lower layer of the graves had been identified as well (Khalatbari 2004).

Most of discovered potteries are bowls as 71 pieces of the total number of 153 discovered pottery include the bowls having a ratio about 46.6 percent. After that, 52 pieces of jars (34 percent) and 28 cups (18%) and 13 small bowls (8.4 %), and finally 2 glasses (1.3 percent) can be placed in the next ranks.

1.3.2 Maryan (Aghevlar) and Tandevin

Maryan Village (Aghevlar) is located in the rural district of south Karganrood from the central part of Talesh Township in Gilan. Maryan is the eastern part of the village and Aghevlar is the western part of that. However, many local residents prefer to use the name Maryan since that is more authentic. Essentially, segregating Maryan and Aghevlar cemeteries is not an easy job. GPS of Maryan (Aghevlar) is (N 37° 51') & (E 48° 40'), and at an altitude of approximately 1100 meters from open MSL. Tandevin is a small village away from the aforementioned village in an area entirely covered with a range of meadows and apples orchards, hazelnut and walnut plantations.

The history of exploration of these sites goes back to the first excavations in Gilan by a French delegation in 1901. Later stages of explorations had been conducted during several occasions by an Iranian delegation in 1999 to 2003 in Maryan and Tandevin areas (Khalatbari 2004).

From Tandevin and Maryan cemeteries include 34 skeletons (forouzanfar, 2004). Preliminary studies indicate that most of the discovered skeletons were of Brachycephalic, while some were Dolichocephalic or Mesocephalic types. Nine skeletons belonging to men from the total of 34 discovered skeletons and 17 skeletons belonged to women. Eight skeletons' gender was unknown due to their disintegrated condition. The age group varies from minimum 14

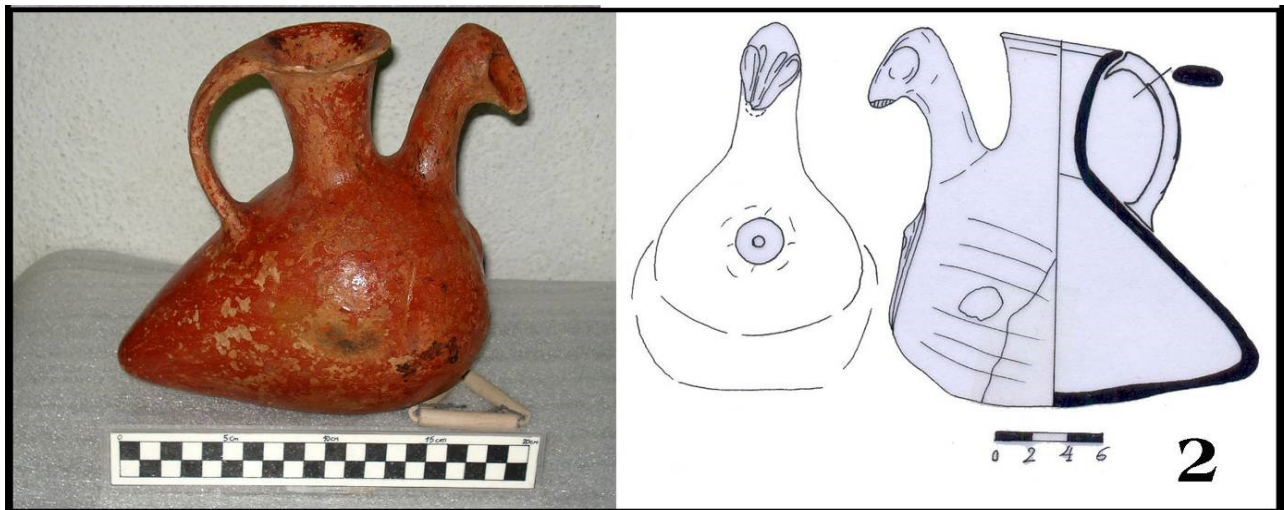


Fig. 12: Bird rhyton, discovered in Maryan site

to maximum 55 years among men. Totally, the minimum age is 19.9 years, the maximum age is 35.7 years and the average is about 32.8 years. The status faces some changes in the women's group in which the minimum age is 8 years and the maximum age is 65 years.

Clay pottery is the most prominent artifact discovered in the Tandevin and Maryan archeological excavations. In terms of shape, they include: Jugs, bowls, cups, pitchers, animal figurine (Rhyton) (**Fig. 12**), Dizzi dishes (similar to bowl), fat-burner lights and burial dishes

A large number of bronze objects and tools had been discovered in the explorations in Tandevin and Maryan cemeteries respectively include: cups, daggers, horse harnesses, bangles, mirrors, buttons and head pins, arrows and so on. Some objects such as spears, swords and helmets had been discovered in excavations in Maryan cemetery made of iron.

The explorer of Tandevin and Maryan sites believed that Tandevin cemetery had been formed during 1250 to 1300 BC (Iron Age I), (Khalatbari, 2004), but the explorer of the first phase of excavation at the site generally believes that the discovered objects, especially those objects found from the Dolmeni graves, were related to 1450 - 1000 BC period.

1.3.3 Toul

Toul of Gilan is a migrational village in the central part of Talesh township in Gilan. It is located at a distance of approximately 42 Km. from the city center (Hashtpar) in the West of Karganrood Valley in a high mountainous area. The GPS of cemetery is (N 37°44'07") & (E 48°36'25") and an altitude of 1640 meters above mean MSL. The archaeological excavations in Toul cemetery during 2003 to 2004 by the Iranian team had led to the discovery of Iron Age graves with a large number of burial objects. (Khalatbari 2004)

Totally, 47 graves had been identified and explored in the ancient site of Toul in Gilan. The discovered graves can be divided into three distinct groups in terms of shape, form and used materials in the study including: **1**) enclosure Graves (four walls), **2**) Simple Vacuolar Graves, **3**) Large Stone or Megalithic Graves.

Forty seven skeletons had been excavated and discovered in Toul cemetery that can be divided into 3 groups in terms of direction of burials including: The first skeletons that are buried in the east and west direction were more numerous than the other skeletons since 22 discovered skeletons had been buried in East and West direction having a ratio of 46.6 percent. The second group of discovered skeletons refers to those that had been buried in the north and south direction including 18 skeletons. The group had a ratio about 38.3percent. The last group of the discovered skeletons consists of 7 individuals buried entirely in the North- South direction. The group had a ratio about 16.6 percent of the discovered skeletons only.

From the 47 explored graves in Toul cemetery in Gilan, a large number of objects and cultural material had been discovered mostly made of clay, bronze, iron, silver, glass paste, onyx, stone, and bone. (**fig. 13**) The most important artifact that had been discovered in the excavations of Toul is a bronze bracelet as The Gift of Argishti the first son of Manva, (Orartoe King) 766 to 789 BC" is written on this bracelet. (Khalatbari, 2007: 28)

1.3.4 The features of Iron Age burial culture in Tavalesh (Shafarood and Karganrood)

1. The Dolmen and Menhir graves, megalithic graves and cyst graves show a higher ratio in these regions even in comparison to Deilaman and Amlash domains. Megalithic graves of this domain especially in sites such as *Chilakhaneh*, Maryan and Aghevlar are so large and extensive that they can be considered as houses and settlements before or after the burial (**fig. 14**).
2. Shiny black pottery with ridges in this domain has a higher average than in the other two domains of Gilan. Animal and human figures and Rhytons are generally less. Decorative objects including all types of beads and necklaces and bangles shows more frequent ratio. It means that the Iron Age peoples of these regions have lived in peace with more opportunity to create the decorative instruments.
3. Richness and abundance of such monuments and objects in the grave near Talesh sites had a lower



Fig. 13: Some Objects, which are discovered in Toul



Fig. 14: Kind of Iron Age graves in Tavalesh domain in Galan (1: Vaske, Khalatbari 2004), (2: Maryan or Aghevlar, Khalatbari, 2004)

average especially in comparison with the graves in Roudbar domain. Overall, the average of 4 objects (mostly pottery dishes) can be considered for the burial objects in these regions.

4. The depth of Iron Age graves in these regions is less than those of Roudbar regions mostly belonged to Iron Age II, 3 and 4 periods (newer periods of Iron Age). Conversely, the cemeteries of Roudbar and Deilaman and Amlash domains mostly have been established in fertile and pasture lands.
5. Specifically, the remains of strong houses, buildings and settlement have been discovered from none

of the sites of Iron Age. Only an indication of settlement was found adjacent to cemetery layers in these sites.

Summery and Conclusion

The Iron Age is considered a new era due to the creation of new and varied forms of metal and ceramic objects, development and use of Gray earthenware with tube spouts, updating and expanding the use of iron, developing the tradition of burial settlements. Logically, it has more or less common features in most regions of the Plateau of Iran and its surrounding regions. But without a doubt,

each of the sites and each of the regions have some different features. The study of each of these can be effective in restoring the culture of that era. However, the features of burial culture of the Iron Age in Gilan can generally be summarized as the following cases:

While the burial tradition of the Iron Age is still placed near the settlements in almost all sites of the central plateau of Iran such as "Sagz Abad" and "Gholi Darvish" sites in all regions of Gilan, the burials are usually moved into the non-conducive and steep, uninhabited lands in the cultural domains of Luristan, the West of Mazandaran and in a number of areas in the central part of Iran including silk, Khorvin and Ghaitariyeh.

In Gilan Iron Age, horse burial was common in all the three cultural domains as its examples can be observed in some sites such as Marlik, Kalouraz and Shahran from Roudbar domain, Kafarkosh and Tomajan from Deilaman and Amlash domain and "Asb Sara" Maryan and Toul sites from Tavalesh domain. However, the burial sites of horses were relatively less common. But in any case, the percentage of horse burial tradition in Gilan is much higher than in the rest of Iran. Horses were buried in tombs buried near their owner with their saddles and harnesses in some sites including Marlik, Shahran, Kalouraz and Toul. However, horses have been seen in Tomajan site which were buried in separate graves as well.

The form of Iron Age tombs was not the same in Gilan. It includes various types such as vacuolar graves, cyst graves, huge stone graves, stack stone graves, honeycomb graves, crock graves, simple two-floor graves. Loosely, these graves can be divided into two basic categories:

In general, it seems that simple vacuolar graves are the most common ones in Gilan. However, this abundant number of graves is of Cyst graves and Megalithic graves in some of the domains such as Deilaman, Amlash and Tavalesh domains. But almost everywhere in Gilan, vacuolar graves had been discovered which belonged to the earliest periods of Iron Age and had been dug to a greater depth. All or part of the graves were simple vacuolar graves in other sites such as Jamshid Abad, Kalouraz, Lame Zamin, Joboun, Lasulokan and many other Iron Age sites in Gilan. Examples of the Stack stone graves can be observed in Boye and Jamshid Abad cemeteries. (Stacked stone graves are those simple vacuolar graves but with a difference above the grave; a pieces of stone to mark it or for any other reasons).

Most of the works belonged to Megalithic graves in the cemeteries of Tavalesh domain such as Chilakhaneh, Asb Sara, Maryan, Tandevin, Vaske and Mianrood. However, the existence of Megalithic graves has also been reported in the cemeteries of some other domains in Gilan such as Shimam in Roudbar domain and Omam Cemetery in Amlash Deilaman domain.

The cyst graves are found almost in all domains of Gilan. However, their abundance is relatively more than Tavalesh domain in particular sites such as Marlik, Jokin and Kalouraz in Roudbar domain and in sites such as Tomajan, Ghale Kouti Kohpas in Amlash and Deilaman domain. Such graves had been built with four walls on four sides of the grave either with dry stratigraphic or with mortar.

The material to construct the walls of these graves was of natural rocks like Marlik graves, of carried stones like Boye graves and of bricks like Ghale Kouti Kohpas graves.

The rest of the Iron Age graves in Gilan had not been encompassing as most of them had exceptional applications. It can be said that Bon Zamin and Lasulokan sites have reported the sites with honeycomb graves. Khorgam Rood Cemetery in Deilaman and Shahjan Komoni are of the cemeteries with crock graves. In addition, some of the Boye graves are of crock grave types and some of the graves in Zardkam Shaft cemetery were simple two-floor graves. some of the graves in Shirchak cemetery of Amlash were of irregular graves.

In almost all Iron Age sites in Gilan, the dead had been buried on right shoulder or on left shoulder and bent legs with low and high curvature degrees. Only a small number of bodies had been buried supine (face up) in some cemeteries. A particular conclusion cannot be drawn on this relationship at the present time.

The graves had no specific direction in the Iron Age cemeteries in Gilan. The graves had been built in the four major and minor directions. Burials in different directions can be seen even in a single cemetery. Of course, the burial of corpses in east-west direction in Kalouraz cemetery or the burial of corpses in the Northeast and Southwest in Boye cemetery could possibly have a special meaning.

Less writing and script works had been found in the remnants of the Iron Age in Gilan than in the rest of Iran. However, three of these findings were related to all three cultural domains of Iron Age in Gilan. One of them was a cylindrical bead with carved cuneiform artifacts in Marlik site in Roudbar domain. Another one was a bronze bracelet with cuneiform lines in Toul site in Tavalesh domain found during the excavations. The third one was two bronze wide eyes with cuneiform lines found from Amlash region in unauthorized excavations.

Almost in all Iron Age cemeteries of Gilan, the tradition of burying objects as grave goods, near the dead bodies, was common. In most cases, these objects included: pottery, porcelain and metal objects, pottery and metal figures, metal weapons including daggers, spear, axes, swords, maces, ornaments made of stone, metal, etc. It seems that their richness and abundance was related to the degree of wealth or social position of the person. This means that more valuable objects are more show that the person has died was of a higher social standing. Since the present time, no site was as abundant and rich as Marlik site in Gilan. Even it can be said that the volume of gold and silver objects, jewelry and artifacts from Marlik site are notable and unique compared to other Iron Age sites in Iran and in the world.

The gray pottery and tube porcelain which are of the characteristic of the Iron Age had been more or less achieved in the graves in all three domains of Iron Age in Gilan. Grey pottery and tube porcelain discovered in Gilan are indeed comparable to other objects discovered in other Iron Age sites in the north-east and north-west of Iran.

Placing food for the dead has been extensively discovered in Iron Age graves in Gilan. Perhaps, this is a conse-

quence of fast decomposition of the foods since there is no evidence left behind. However, the reports of Deilaman and Lasulokan explorations show that vertebrate animal bones had been discovered in a container placed there as food for the dead body.

Putting weapons and decorative objects (jewelry) in the graves of both men and women was common in the Iron Age sites of Gilan. However, the total percentage of weapons (sword, dagger, spear, mace, etc.) in the grave of men is more than that in the graves of women. On the contrary, the percentage of festive objects (rings, necklaces, earrings, pins, etc.) in the grave women is more than that of men. In some cases, it has been observed that the discovered graves had no burial object. For example, the seventh and tenth graves excavated at Jamshid Abad had no burial objects as these graves were of infants and children.

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How to cite this article: Fallahian, Y 2013 Investigation of burial patterns in Iron Age of Gilan, Iran. *Ancient Asia*, 4: 5, pp. 1-13, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/aa.12311>

Published: 13 November 2013

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