

## **Study of Iron Age Burials Ceramics at Khanghah Gilvan Cemetery in Northwestern Iran**

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### **Abstract**

**Chronology of northwestern Iran is principally based on archeological excavations of the area located around Urmia Lake. Although plain and filled with water, and the outcomes of these excavations are extended to the whole northwestern region. However, northwestern Iran despite having geographical diversities with mountainous plains and low stretches, systematic and comprehensive studies have been lacking until today. Khanghah cemetery in the province of Ardebil has been one of the important archeological enclosures in Iran from where graves of the Middle Bronze Age, Iron Age, and the Parthian period have been unearthed.**

**The excavated Iron Age graves in this cemetery are of pit grave with generally individual form of burial, but in some cases, double burials are also seen there. It seems that direction was not observed in the burials.**

**The form of potteries are comparable with ceramics found from places such as Marlik, Lamehzamini, Ghalekuti, Hasanlu V, Kordlore Tepe, Yanik Tepe, Sialk V, Qeytariyeh, Geoy tepe B, Dinkha III, Shahiryeri, Sagzabad, Lasulkan, Mariyan, Chir Chir, Ghabrestan, Khurvin, Haftavan V, Agh evlar, Chilakhaneh and Uzbeki.**

**Keywords: Khanghah Cemetery; Iron Age Graves; Chronology; NW Iran.**

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## **Introduction**

Khanghah Gilvan cemetery is located in the town of Khalkhal in Ardabil province. This cemetery came into light during a road construction project in the village of Khanghah. To date, four archeological excavations have been carried out there and obtained graves from periods between the Middle Bronze Age to Parthian. The current paper intends to focus on four graves related to the Iron Age that were excavated during the first season.

## **Background Studies**

From the excavated enclosures related to the Iron Age in North-West Iran, one can point to Hasanlu Tepe (Dyson, 1989), Haji Firuz Tepe (Voigt, 1983), Dinkhah Tepe (Muscarella, 1968), Kordlar Tepe (Lippert, 1976), Geoy Tepe (Burton, Brown), Haftavan Tepe (Burney, 1969, 1970, 1973, 1975, and 1979), Geoy Masjid cemetery (Hojabri Nobari, 2004), Qalla Khosrow (Rezalo, 2007). And from the excavated Iron Age sites in rest of Iranian region, following sites can be mentioned: Sagzabad Tepe (Malek Shahmirzadi, 1977), Sialk A&B Cemeteries (Ghirshman, 1939), Marlik (Negahban, 1996), Qeytariyeh (Kambakhsh Fard, 1991),

Khurvin Cemetery (Vanden Berch, 1964), Giyan Tepe (Young, 1969), Godin Tepe (Young, 1969).

## **Khanghah Gilvan Cemetery**

The Gilvan Cemetery is located in the northwestern side of Khanghah village and is attached to it. The area is 60 kilometers southeast of the city of Khalkhal in Shahrud division and about 180 kilometers south of the city of Ardabil (Map 1). During the road construction project in May 2006 in the village of Khanghah, the remains of some ancient graves became evident (Fig. 1). In August 2006, a group under the supervision of the author was appointed to oversee and explore the area (Map 2). During the first season, 16 burials were excavated where Burials 12, 15, 16 and 25 belong to the Iron Age I, which will be discussed below (Rezaloo, 2012: 97)

## **Burial 12**

This grave is located in the northern part of Trench A. This is a pit grave lacking any structure. In other words, this type of graves has no particular architectural feature and was created by digging a hole and placing the dead there. Their dimensions are 200 ×175×160 cm. This

grave belonged to 30 to 35 years old man and buried semi closed in north-south direction with face toward the southeast. The skeleton was found open above the waist and the lower parts i.e. pelvic and feet were folded and placed to the left side (Fig. 2). It seems that during the burial there was no deliberate attempt to create a smooth surface to place the dead. In a way, legs were placed on the higher level whose difference from the waist was more or less 35 cm. Hands were folded and placed on the chest (Plan 1). Gifts (Plan 2) were placed in the grave in the following ways:

**B12: N1:** Bronze dagger was placed on the highest level of 30+cm from the skeleton.

**B12: N2:** Open vertical rim ware was placed in the eastern part of the grave (Plan 2, No.11). Samples of this ware are comparable with the Iron Age I pottery vessels obtained at Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 4, No. 0) and Qeytarieh (Kambakhsh Fard, 1991: Plan 110 - No. 2024). **B12: N3:** Open inverted rim ware was placed at the eastern edge of the skeleton and on the right of pelvic (Plan 2, No. 13). Samples of this ware are comparable to the Iron Age I potteries from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 1, No. k), Lameh zamini (Fukai and Matsutani,

1982: Plan, 63, No. 4) and Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: Plan LXII, No. 17). **B12: N4:** Open rim ware with upright rim was at the eastern side of the skeleton towards its right leg (Plan 2, No. 8). This sample is comparable with the Iron Age I pottery from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 4, No. D) and Lameh zamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 62, N 30). **B12: N5:** vessel with vertical opening rim was placed attached to pelvic in the eastern part of the grave. The pot's with opening rim is inclined to west and the skeleton (Plan 2, No. 12). Sample of these ware is comparable to the Iron Age I vessels from Lasulkan (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, XXXIX, N1), Silk V (Ghirshman 1939: PL XLVI, No.664b), Khurvin (Vanden Berghe 1964: PL 88) and Marlik (Negahban 1996: Fig 22, No. 552). **B12: N6:** A jar in the eastern part of the grave, and attached to the body. **B12: N7:** A short necked jar is placed on the west side of the grave (Plan 2, No.1). The sample can be compared with the Iron Age I pottery from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: No. 4 m), Silk V (Ghirshman 1939: PL XLVII, No.443) and Aaq Oler (Schaeffer, 1948: Fig 217, No. 39). **B12: N8:** An inverted rim vessel placed in the line the

elbow on the western side of the grave (Plan 2, No. 3). The vessel is comparable with samples from Mariyan (Khalatbari, 2004: Disc 6, No. 6), Qeytarieh (Kambakhsh Fard, 1991: Plan 110 - No. 1926) and Khurvin (Vandenberg, 1964: PL 59). **B12: N9:** A short necked jar was placed in the eastern part (Plan 2, No. 4). It can be compared with vessel of the Iron Age I from Qeytarieh (Kambakhshfard, 1991: Plan 115 - No. 942), Uzbeki Tepe (Majidzadeh, 2003, Fig. 16) and Chilakhaneh (Schaeffer 1948: Fig. 219, No. 5). **B12: N10:** Vessel with inverted rim was placed in the western part of the grave (Plan 2, No. 2). This is comparable with the Iron Age I samples found from Lameh zamini (Fukai and Matsutani, 1982: PL, 58), Yanik Tepe (Burney, 1961: PL. XLIV, No. 28). **B12: N11:** Vessel with inverted rim but with two handles was placed in the eastern part of the grave (Plan 2, No. 10) which is comparable with Iron Age I vessels obtained from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 4, No. K). **B12: N12:** An open mouth vessel with vertical rim was placed in the eastern part (Plan 2, No. 6) which is comparable with the samples obtained from Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani, 1982: PL, 58, No.4, No.4).

**B12: N13:** An open mouth vessel was placed at the western part of the grave. **B12: N14:** One dark brown and circular agate bead is discovered which was placed around the neck of skeleton. **B12: N15:** A vertical long neck vessel was placed in the eastern corner of the grave (Plan 2, No. 5) that can be compared with the Iron Age I vessels discovered from Hasanlu V (Dyson, 1964: Fig 3, No.7) and Khurvin (Vandenberg, 1964:PL 165). **B12: N16:** An open mouth vessel with outright rim that was placed in eastern corner (Plan 2, No. 7) can be compared with vessels form Lasulkan Tepe (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, LXXXV.III, No. 2). **B12: N17:** A Bronze earring was found in the eastern part and on the right side of the face. **B12: N18:** A Bronze pin with a circular loop was placed at the western fringe of the grave. **B12: N19:** A vessel with an inverted opening was located in the eastern part (Plan 2, No. 9). This can be compared with vessels from the Iron Age I which were discovered in Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 4, No. G), Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 62, No. 7) and Hasanlu V (Dyson, 1964: Fig 3, No. 8). **B12: N20:** A closed mouth vessel was placed at the right side of the skeleton in

the eastern part of the grave (Plan 2 No. 15). Sample vessel is comparable to the Iron Age I pottery vessel obtained from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 1, No. f) and Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 59, No. 4). **B12: N21:** A number of light blue ferrite beads and almost circular were found inside Bowl 20. **B12: N22:** A vessel with an opening and outright rim was found in the northern side (Plan 2 No. 14) which is comparable to the Iron Age I vessels found at Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 2, No. u) and Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda, 1965: PL, XLVIIa, No.7). **B12: N23:** An open mouth vessel that was placed at the distal limb. **B12: N24:** And a vessel with an opening was found placing below the feet at the northern part of the grave.

### **Burial 15**

This grave is located in the Trench B and is a kind of pit graves. Thus, after digging the hole and the burial ritual, it was covered with a combination of dark brown clay and rubble. The dimension of the grave is 88 × 140 × 145 cm. This grave belongs to a 20 to 25 years old woman. The burial was in north-south direction with skeleton found in semi-folded position. The body was

facing east and a small stone was placed below the skull which seems to be intentional. The skull was placed to the right. Upper part of the body was open and placed in north-south direction (Fig. 3). The legs were folded in a way that the right leg was placed on the left one. Hands are free (Plan 3). Gifts in the grave (Plan 4) are placed in the following ways:

**B15:N1:** Big circular clay bead in the light blue color was placed on the west side of the grave near the left shoulder and scapula bones. **B15:N2:** A cylindrical glass bead of dark blue and yellow was placed on the western side, at a 3cm distance from the clayed bead. **B15:N3:** A bronze statue with quite sterile form associating with a female body was placed on western side near the upper left shoulder and scapula of the dead. **B15:N4:** Three frit beads of blue color and nearly circular and cylindrical were placed on the chest. It seems that these all beads are related to a necklace that was tied around the neck of the dead. **B15:N5:** A bronze needle was found in the eastern side near the shoulder. **B15:N6:** An Iron bead lacking a specific form and shape which has been broken and deformed bones was placed on the chest along other beads. **B15:N7:** Four

decorative beads of different shapes –three of which are light blue color ferrite and one dark brown cornelian have also been found. These were scattered on the west side of the grave. **B15:N8:** A bronze spearhead was found in the western part. **B15:N9:** A bronze dagger also found in the western part of the grave. **B15: N10:** Two u-shaped bronze objects were placed on the western side. **B15: N11:** A high neck clay vessel was also located in the western part (Plan 4, No. 4). This object is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels obtained from Qeytarieh (Kambakhshfard, 1991: Plan 107, No. 1546), Uzbeki Tepe (Majidzadeh, 2003: Fig. 20), Sialk V (Ghirshman 1939: PL XXXVIII, No. 451b), Khurvin (Vandenberg, 1964: PL 147) and Marlik (Negahban 1996: Fig 17, No. 496). **B15:N12:** A clay vessel with an opening and inverted rim found in the western part (Plan 4, No. 2). This sample is comparable to the Iron Age I pottery vessels obtained at Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig.4, No. D), Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 57, No.1). **B15: N13:** A clay vessel with one handle was placed on the western plank of the grave. **B15: N14:** A short-neck jar was placed in the western part (Plan 4, No. 6) which can

be compared with the Iron Age I vessels from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 8, No. d) and Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, XL VIII, No. 34). **B15: N15:** Another short-neck jar in the western part are comparable to vessels obtained Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 4, No. n) and Sialk V (Ghirshman 1939: PL XLIII, No. 530b). **B15: N16:** An open-mouth vessel with a single handle found in the western side. **B15: N17:** Long-neck clay vessel placed on the western side of the grave. **B15: N18:** A clay vessel with vertical rim was placed in the western side (Plan 4, No. 3) which is comparable to the Iron Age I vessels found at Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, LXII, No. 17) and Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 60, No.10). **B15: N19:** A clay vessel with an opening and inverted rim was placed in the western side (Plan 4, No. 1). This can be compared to objects of the Iron Age I obtained from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 5, No. c) and Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 63, No. 3). **B15: N20:** A short-neck clay jar was located in the western part (Plan 4, No. 5) which is also comparable to the Iron Age I vessels from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 8, No. n),

Lameh zamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 60, No. 4) and Kordlore Tepe (Lippert 1979: ABB 6, No. 1).

### **Burial 16**

The grave is located in the northern part of the Trench B. This is also a kind of pit graves where none of the distinguishable features is seen from the surface. It has a dimension of 80 × 85 × 100 cm and belonged to a 25 to 30 years old man. It is hard to ascertain due to its chaotic condition. It seems to be a secondary burial in a way that the skeleton was placed elsewhere but later transferred to this place and its burial rite was performed. The skeleton is lying on the left side in the north-south direction with face towards south (Fig. 4). Among body skeletal, only spine and chest are remaining. With respect to the bodily remains it can be guessed that the burial direction is southwest-northeast. Hand bones are unclear. The leg bones are placed the north-south direction (Plan 5). Gifts inside the grave are scattered (Plan 6) as follows:

**B16: N1:** A bronze dagger was found in the southern part of the grave. **B16: N2:** An arrowhead -shaped bronze pendant with a circular loop that was placed inside a clay vessel and kept on the eastern side.

**B16: N3:** A clay vessel with inverted rim was placed on the east (Plan 6, No.1). The sample vessel is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels collected from archeological sites of Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 3, No. f) and Lameh zamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 62, No. 3). **B16: N4:** A vessel with open bore vertical edge was located in the eastern side (Plan 6, No. 2) which is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels collected from archeological sites of Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 2, No. n), Qeytarieh (Kambakhsh Fard, 1991: Plan 110, No. 2023), Uzbeki Tepe (Majidzadeh 2003: Fig. 17), Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, XLVIIa, No.6) and Dinkha III (Muscarella 1974: Fig 47, No. 863).

### **Burial 25**

This burial is located in the northwestern section of Trench A. This is also a pit-type burial with a dimension of 180 x 160 x 160 cm. In this grave, double burial was performed. Due to chaotic nature of skeletons it seems that a secondary burial was performed in this grave. One of the burials belongs to a woman aged between 25 and 30 years and the other is that of a male of 30 to 35 years old which is placed below the first one. The female skeleton

was assembled state in the east-west direction and face towards the north. Only upper thoracic spine and chest limbs are remaining that with due attention to evidences can be guessed that the upper part of the body was places as open vault. The condition of hands and feet is unknown. As skeletons are damages, it can be said that there was a secondary burial in this grave. The distance between the two skeletons in the grave, there are about 15 cm layers of dirt and rubble. Burials are in assembled state in the north-south direction and face towards the east. With respect to existing evidences, the upper part of the body was laid as open vault (Fig. 5). Nothing much has been left from limbs from hands and feet (Plan 7). Following gifts were put inside the grave (Plan 8):

**B25:N1:** A vessel with inverted rim was placed in the northern side. **B25: N2:** A vessel with inverted rim in the northern side (Plan 8, No. 7) can be compared with the Iron Age vessels obtained from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig.1, No. AA) and, Geoy Tepe B (Burtun Brown 1951: Fig 32, No.18). **B25: N3:** The pottery with inverted rim which is located in the northern part (Plan 8, No. 4) is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels found at

Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig.1, No. k) and Marlik Tepe (Negahban 1996: Fig 27, No.602). **B25:N4:** A vessel with open inverted rim in the northern part is closed to vessels 2 and 3 (Plan 8, No. 5). These samples are comparable with vessels obtained from Haftvan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig.1, No. II) Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 59, No. 2). **B25: N5:** A closed-mouth ceramic pot placed on the northern side. **B25: N6:** A clay jar with an average neck is located in the northeast (Plan 8, No. 11). This is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels obtained from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 1, No. f), Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 59, No. 2) and Aaq Oler (Schaeffer 1948: Fig. 217, No. 25). **B25: N7:** An open mouth and inverted rim vessel was placed in the northeast (Plan 8, No. 3) which is also comparable with the Iron Age I vessels obtained from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 3, No. h), Uzbeki Tepe (Majidzadeh 2003: Fig. 17) and Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, XLV, No. 6). **B25: N8:** An open mouth and inverted rim vessel was placed in the northeast (Plan 8, No. 1) is also comparable with the Iron Age I vessels obtained from Haftvan V (Talaie,

2004:Fig. 1, No. GG), and Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 57, No. 1). **B25:N9:** A vessel with modest neck was placed in the northeast. **B25:N10:** An open mouth and inverted rim vessel was placed in the northeast (Plan 8, No. 2) is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels obtained from Haftvan V (Talaie, 2004:Fig. 3, No. h), and Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, LXXX III, No. 8). **B25:N11:** A clay vessel with an opening and inverted rim in the eastern part (Plan 8, No. 8). This sample is comparable with the Iron Age I pottery vessels found at Qeytarieh V (Kambakhshfard, 1991: Plan 110, No. 1714) and Khurvin (Vandenberg, 1964: PL 59). **B25:N12:** A vessel with medium neck was kept at the eastern side of the burial. **B25:N13:** A vessel with an opening and inverted rim also kept in the eastern side. **B25: N14:** The vessel with an average neck in the eastern side (Plan 8, No. 10) is comparable with the Iron Age I vessels obtained from Qeytarieh (Kambakhshfard, 1991: Plan 1150, No. 942) and Lamehzamini (Fukai and Matsutani 1982: PL, 61, No. 7). **B25:N15:** A clay vessel with an opening and inverted rim was placed in the middle of the burial. **B25:**

**N16:** The vessel in the middle (Plan 8, No. 6) is comparable with the Iron Age I pottery found at Shahryeri Tepe (Ebtehaj 2004: Plan 3, No. 16), Ghalekuti (Egami, Fukai and Masuda 1965: PL, LIX, No.1), Khurvin (Vandenberg, 1964: PL 84) and Marlik (Negahban 1996: Fig 27, No.607). **B25: N17:** A pot with an opening placed in the middle. **B25: N18:** A clay dish with upright rim was placed in the northern part. **B25: N19:** A short-neck jar on the northern side. **B25: N20:** A clay vessel with inverted rim on the northern side. **B25:N21:** A bronze pin with a circular hole at one of its end was placed in vessel number 1. **B25: N22:** A medium neck vessel on the northern side (Plan 8, No. 9). This is comparable with the Iron Age I potteries acquired from Haftavan V (Talaie, 2004: Fig. 2, No. s) and Geoy Tepe B (Burtun Brown 1951: Fig 33, No. 1904). **B25: N23:** A bronze earrings grave found at the southern part. **B25: N24:** A bronze brooch was placed on the chest of the dead.

### Conclusion

Khanghah Gilvan cemetery is one of the unique examples of ancient cemeteries in the country. Initial studies showed that

these burials cover an area of about 300 hectares. Furthermore, the proposed cemetery was used for a longer period of time. As such, with a limited study conducted there, the group headed by the author could find the presence of burials ranging from the Middle Bronze Age to the Parthian period.

Among the most important burials unearthed there, a majority of them belong to the Iron Age. The current paper has tried to evaluate four burials found during the first season of archeological excavation. As a whole, all of the burials related to this period are pit-type. In other words, burial rites could be performed after digging the pit. The dimension of the burial was in accordance to the stature of the dead person as well as space needed to place gifts offered to the dead. It seems that rubble, stones and rock pieces were used after the burial rites in order to identify the place of burial. Usually, there were single burial but in some cases double burial (Burial 25) performed too. It seems that a particular direction was not observed in the burials. The secondary burial at Burial 16 is one of the unique examples of the Iron Age burial practices which could not be seen in other cemeteries.

Objects obtained from the aforementioned burials are comparable with data obtained from other the Iron Age I sites such as Marlik Tepe, Lamehzamini, Ghalekuti, Hasanlu V, Kordlar Tepe, Yanik Tepe, Sialk V, Qeytariyeh, Geoy Tepe B, Dinkhah III, Shehryeri, Sagzabad, Laslukan, Mariyan, Chyr Chyr, Ghabrestan, Khurvin, Haftavan V, Aq Ovler, Chilakhaneh and Uzbeki.

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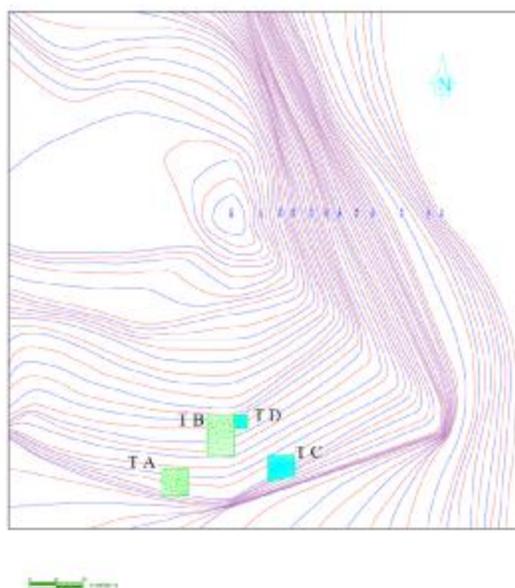
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**Map 1** location of Khanghah cemetery in Iran



**Map 2** Topography of Khanghah Cemetery and Excavated



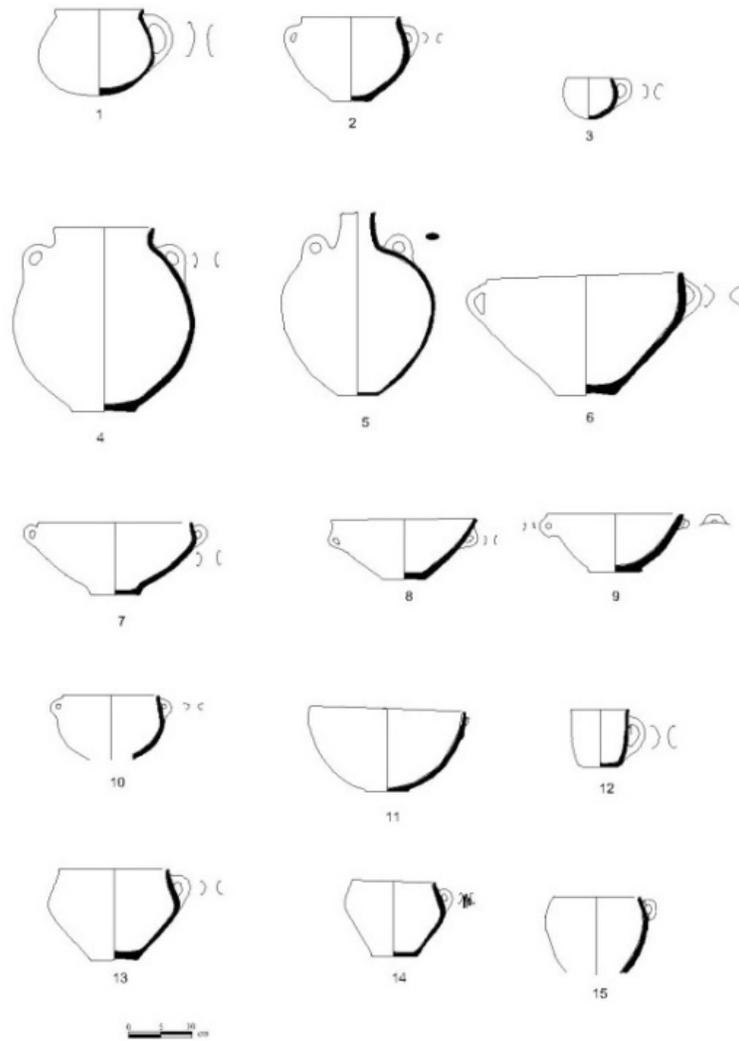
**Fig 1** Representing entire Khanghah Cemetery from Northern Side



**Plan1** Burial 12



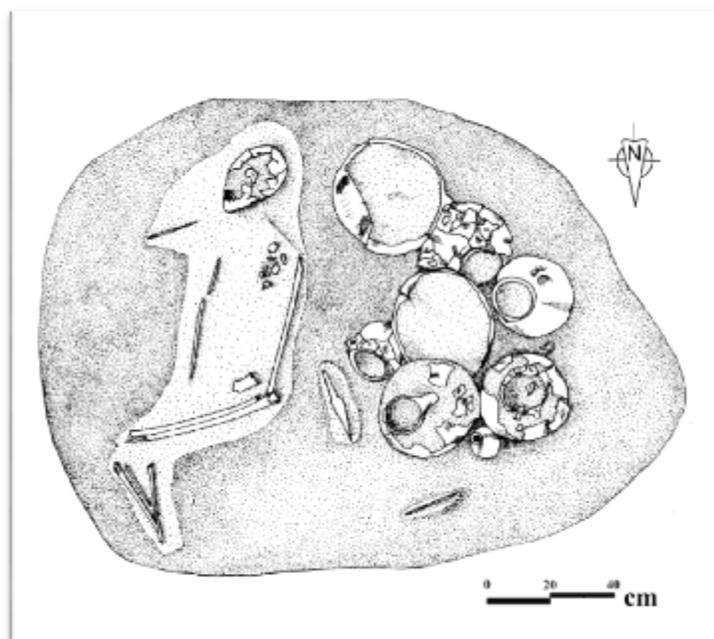
**Fig 2** Burial 12



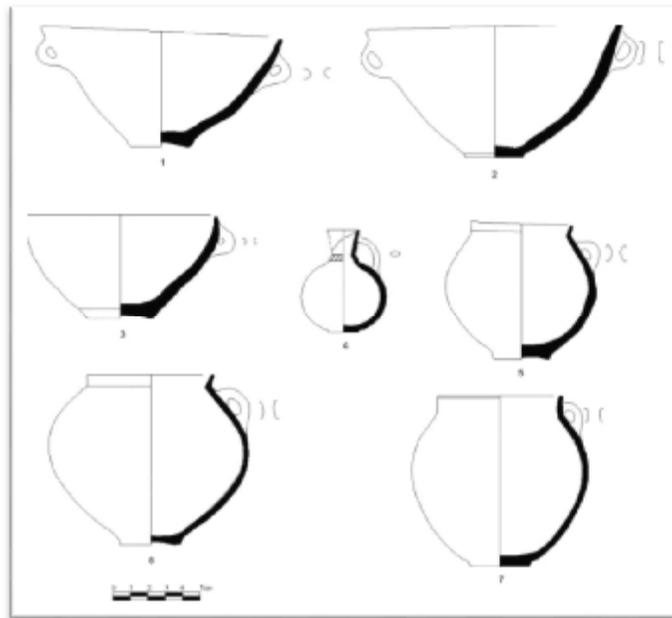
**Plan 2** Pottery at Burial 12



**Fig 3** Burial 15



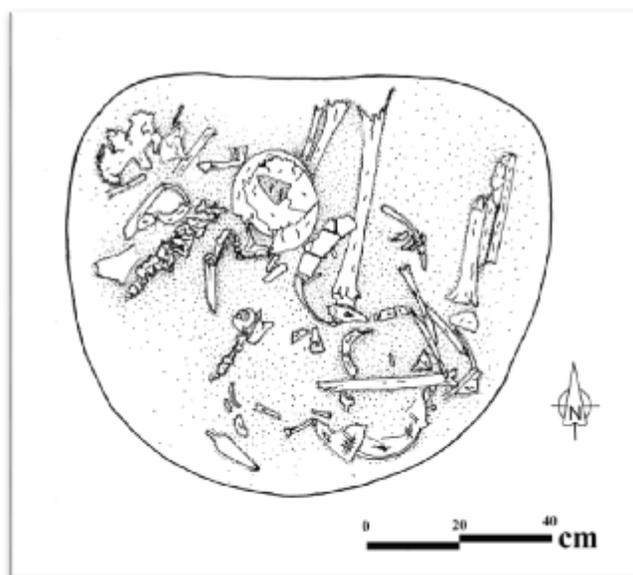
**Plan 3.** Burial 15



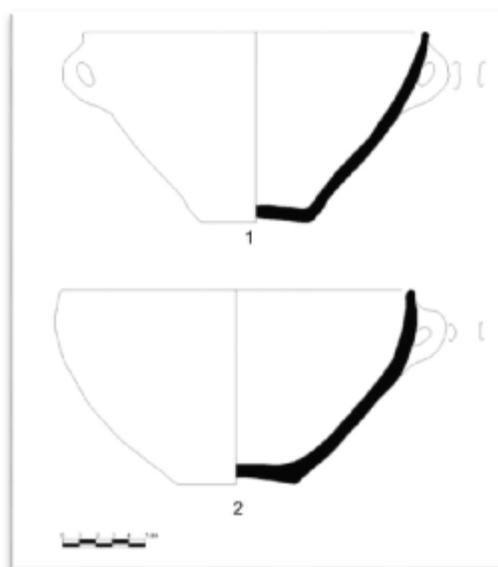
**Plan 4** Pottery at Burial 15



**Plan 5** Burial 16



**Plan 5** Burial 16



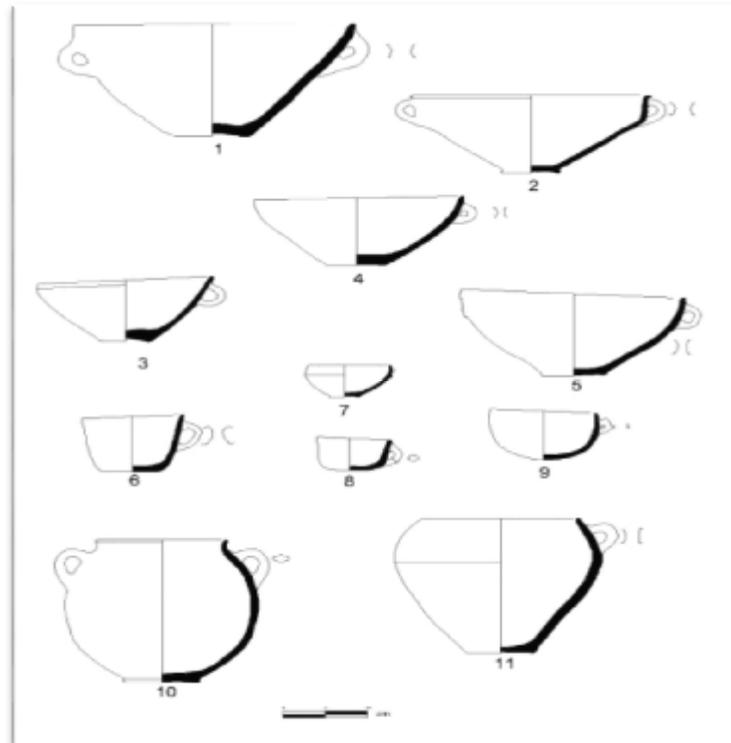
**Plan 6** Pottery at Burial 16



Plan 7 Burial 25



Fig 5 Burial 25



Plan 8 Pottery at Burial 25

## بررسی ظروف سفالین تدفین های عصر آهن گورستان خانقاه گیلوان - شمالغرب ایران

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گاهنگاری شمال غرب ایران عمدتاً بر اساس نتایج کاوش محوطه هایی است که در اطراف دریاچه ارومیه واقع است. این ناحیه تقریباً جلگه ای و پر آب است و نتایج این کاوش ها به کل منطقه شمال غرب ایران تعمیم داده شده است. این در حالی است که شمال غرب ایران دارای چهره های مختلف جغرافیایی از قبیل نواحی جلگه ای و کم آب و کوهستانی بوده و در بیشتر این مناطق تا به امروز مطالعات جامع و روشمندی صورت نگرفته است. گورستان خانقاه در استان اردبیل یکی از مهمترین محوطه های گورستانی در ایران بوده که در آن گورهایی از عصر مفرغ میانی، عصر آهن و دوره پارتنی بدست آمده است.

گورهای عصر آهن کاوش شده در این گورستان، از نوع گورهای چاله ای است. تدفین ها عموماً بصورت انفرادی بوده ولی در برخی موارد به صورت دو نفره نیز دیده می شود. به نظر می رسد که یک جهت مشخص در تدفین ها رعایت نشده است.

اشیاء و ظروف سفالی از نظر شکل و فرم با نمونه های بدست آمده از محوطه هایی مانند مارلیک، لمه زمینی، قلعه کوتی، حسنلو V، کردلر تپه، یانیق تپه، سیلک V، قیطره، گوی تپه B، دینخواه III، شهر یری، سگزآباد، لاسلوکان، مریان، چیرچیر، قبرستان، خوروین، هفتوان V، آق اولر، چپلا خانه و ازبکی قابل مقایسه می باشد.

واژگان کلیدی: گورستان خانقاه، عصر آهن، گورها، گاهنگاری