

Archaeological and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives on the Zich Site: A Seasonal Nomadic Campsite of the Early Islamic Period

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Abstract

The archaeological excavation of the Zich site formed part of the salvage archaeology program conducted in the reservoir area of the Kangir Dam, located in the Zarneh district of Iwan County, in the northwestern part of Ilam Province. The results of this investigation, based on the systematic survey of nine 100×100 m grid units, the excavation of eight test trenches measuring between 2×2 m and 3×3 m, and the excavation of four trenches ranging in size from 5×5 m to 10×10 m, ultimately led to the identification of a temporary settlement, or nomadic campsite. The study of the architectural remains and surviving architectural features exposed in the excavation trenches, together with their comparative analysis against contemporary regional examples, indicates that Zich was a single-phase, short-term temporary settlement used by mobile pastoralist groups. The settlement pattern at the site appears to have consisted of tents, each enclosed by one- or two-course dry-stone walls and separated from one another by the same one- or two-row stone alignments. Comparative analysis of the ceramics and other materials recovered from all four excavation trenches dates the occupation of the site to the early Islamic centuries, specifically the 2nd to 3rd centuries AH. Zich appears to have developed because of several favorable locational factors; its suitable topographic setting, proximity to a perennial spring and the Kangir River, nearness to the Guriyeh structure, the presence of dense pastureland, and its position along one of the old tribal routes running parallel to the Kangir River, which connected the Kermanshah region to the warmer areas south of Iwan County. The study of the structures and built remains of present-day nomadic communities constitutes one of the most effective and precise scientific approaches for achieving a better understanding of the architectural organization of ancient mobile pastoralist societies, and it falls within the scope of ethnoarchaeological research. On the basis of the settlement practices of a contemporary tribal community, the present study examines the settlement pattern of a nomadic campsite within its local landscape. The data were collected through field survey and excavation, following the conventional methods of archaeological and ethnoarchaeological research carried out in the region.

Keywords: Zich Site, Salvage Excavation, Kangir Dam, Nomadic Campsite, Early Islamic Period.



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Introduction

Across the broad expanse of the Iranian plateau, communities may be classified into three subsistence-based categories: urban, rural, and mobile pastoralist (nomadic/tribal). The first two are found throughout the world; the third, however, whose economy is primarily grounded in traditional pastoralism and livestock products, has a historical presence extending from Central Asia to the Middle East and adjacent regions, a legacy that has persisted from the distant past to the present ([Safinejad, 2019: 21](#)). Iran's tribal nomadic population occupies a distinctive position in global scholarship; consequently, numerous researchers from different countries have traveled to Iran to study such communities. In recent years, however, Iranian nomadic groups have increasingly abandoned pastoral mobility under the influence of various factors and have become sedentary in villages or cities. In the not-so-distant past, these communities sustained themselves without dependence on urban society or modern technology. Drawing upon the accumulated knowledge of their forebears, they endured some of the most difficult natural constraints and overcame them through considerable hardship and resilience. Although the development of this way of life proceeded gradually prior to the advent of modern technology, its relative stability and close coexistence with nature generated valuable experiences and innovations that could be transmitted to subsequent generations.

Until only a few decades ago, seasonal migration was one of the fundamental requirements of nomadic life and played a central role in the subsistence of mobile pastoralists. This was largely due to climatic fluctuations and the need for access to water and fodder for herds. Migration enabled both pastoral communities and their livestock to escape extremes of heat and cold and to exploit pastures in different regions during different seasons of the year. At first glance, the migration of pastoral nomads may appear to be a form of wandering, as if they were moving from place to place in search of grazing land; in reality, however, nomadism constitutes part of a highly organized system. Each tribe possesses its own clearly defined summer and winter pastures. [Frederik Barth \(1965\)](#) compares this system to the movement of trains, noting that each train has the right to travel along a designated route and to stop at specific stations at a particular time and for a specified duration ([Mansuri-Moqaddam, 2019](#)).

This way of life has a long history in the Zagros and continues to the present day ([Yousefvand, 2022: 330¹](#)). Nomadic lifeways, whether fully mobile or semi-mobile, began in the Central Zagros and Northern Khuzestan during the Aceramic Neolithic and still persist across substantial parts of the region ([Hole, 2023](#); [Gilbert, 1983](#); [Bernbeck, 1992](#)). Of the two principal forms of migration, vertical and horizontal, the nomads of Lorestan have more commonly practiced vertical migration ([Alizadeh et al., 2004](#); [Alizadeh, 2010](#)). Vertical migration refers to the movement of pastoralists between lowland plains and higher elevations. In seasonal terms, these groups spend part of the

year in low-lying warm regions (garmsir/qeshlaq, winter quarters) and another part in upland mountainous zones (sardsir/yeyleq, summer quarters). This pattern is linked to the elevational difference between the two zones, which averages up to 1,200 m. The route followed during migration is known as an il-rah, or migration route (Shishehgar, 2005: 40). In most cases, these routes represent the most suitable, convenient, and direct passages for movement between summer and winter pastures, having developed in accordance with geographical conditions and factors such as proximity to and access to basic resources for habitation and subsistence. Archaeological excavation at this site identified evidence of a nomadic campsite dating to the early centuries of the Islamic period. The present article reports the results of the archaeological investigations conducted at this site. This campsite still lies along a tribal migration route currently used by groups moving from Kermanshah toward Ilam. Contemporary nomadic communities likewise construct features using the same materials and substances that were employed in the more distant past.

Research Questions and Hypotheses: The primary aim of this study is to introduce and document this newly identified nomadic campsite and the architectural remains and associated installations located along its migration route, while critically evaluating the available material evidence to establish a reliable chronological framework. To achieve these objectives, the research is guided by the following core questions: What is the nature and extent of the archaeological remains and material evidence preserved at this campsite? What are the structural characteristics of these remains, and to what extent do they demonstrate continuity or variation when compared to contemporary nomadic architectural practices? Correspondingly, this study operates under the hypothesis that the site functions as a specialized, seasonally occupied installation within the long-term tribal migration network of the region. We further hypothesize that the structural remains identified at the site, despite being from the early Islamic period, will exhibit a high degree of technological and functional congruence with the traditional nomadic architectural forms still utilized by modern pastoral communities in the Zagros. Establishing this potential continuity is essential for understanding how nomadic subsistence and land-use patterns have persisted, and adapted, over the *longue durée*.

Methodology

In terms of its scholarly nature, the present study is designed as basic, evidence-based research. The methodological framework integrates a multi-scalar approach, combining rigorous field investigation with comparative ethnoarchaeology. Data collection was executed through a systematic two-phase process: First, field survey and controlled excavation were conducted at the site, adhering to standard archaeological protocols. This involved precise site inspection, mapping of surface features, and excavation to recover diagnostic artifacts and architectural data. This phase was focused on documenting

the archaeological signature of the site, including identifying the spatial distribution of residential and auxiliary features. Second, the archaeological data were synthesized with ethnographic evidence gathered through direct observation of contemporary nomadic campsites currently active along the same migration routes, specifically those used by groups moving between the Kermanshah and Ilam regions. By adopting a dual lens, anthropological and archaeological, this study examines the material culture of the region's nomadic communities not merely as static remains, but as living manifestations of a dynamic, historically grounded tradition. This integrated methodology allows for a more nuanced interpretation of nomadic land-use strategies and site function than would be possible through archaeological analysis alone.

Location and Environmental Setting of the Zich Archaeological Site

The Zich archaeological site is situated at the geographical coordinates of (33° 54' 54.2" N) latitude and (46° 08' 32.6" E) longitude. Politically division, the site is located 700 meters east of the dam wall and 2 kilometers from the village of "Sartang-e Olya", within the "Sartang" District of "Zarneh", "Iwan" County (Figs. 1 and 2). The site stands at an elevation of (1,014) meters above sea level and lies approximately 16 kilometers northwest of the city of "Iwan" in a straight line.

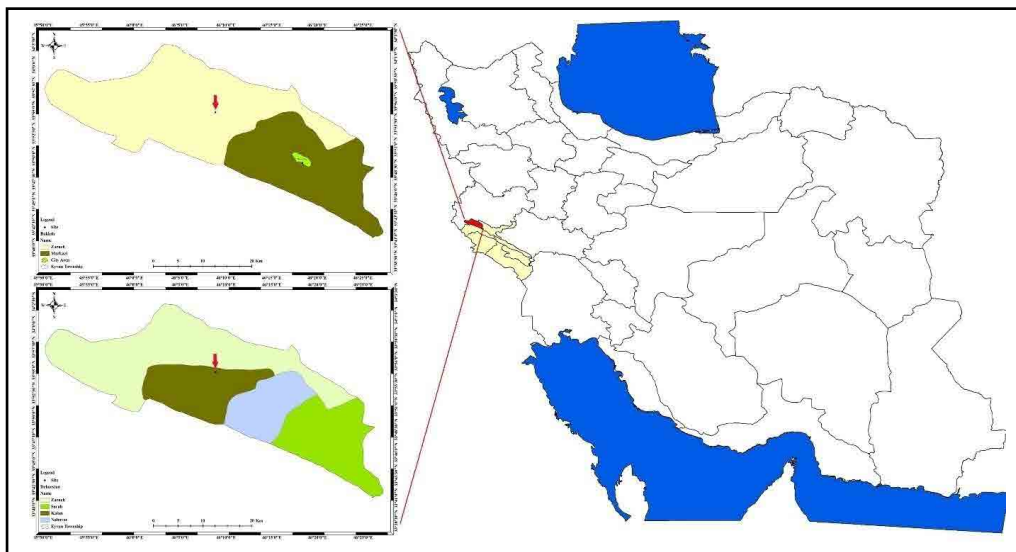


Fig. 1: Location of the Zich site on the political administrative map (Author, 2021).

The Zich site is situated on the southwestern foothills of the mountains, along the margin of the "Kangir River", within a relatively enclosed valley of the same name. Geological studies indicate that the area lies within the folded Zagros range; the surrounding geological context is characterized by the "Asmari-Shahbazan" and "Gachsaran" formations, alongside Quaternary deposits (Darvishzadeh, 2004: 80). The local bedrock consists of the "Asmari" and "Gachsaran" formations. The site is characterized by a rocky, uneven surface located on a slope with an average gradient of 7.8 degrees. Soil and land resource studies identify five major land types in the region;

mountains, hills, plateaus and upper terraces, piedmont plains, and gravelly alluvial fans. Historically, water for the site was supplied by a perennial spring located to its southeast, with a seasonal watercourse passing near the site. The “Kangir” River served as an additional water source; originating from the “Manesht” and “Shareh-Zol” highlands, the river flows through the city of “Iwan”, irrigating extensive agricultural lands before entering the “Sumar” Plain. Within this plain, the construction of numerous barrages significantly reduces the river’s flow before it enters Iraq through a narrow gorge.

In terms of climatic classification, the region is categorized as semi-arid to temperate Mediterranean ([Darvishzadeh, 2004: 81](#)). Meteorological data indicate significant annual fluctuations; the absolute minimum temperature is (15°C) in February (Bahman), and the absolute maximum temperature reaches (47°C) in August (Mordad). Annual rainfall averages (595 mm), with winter being the wettest season. There are 51 frost days per year, accounting for approximately (13.9%) of the year. Mean relative humidity ranges from (21.8%) to (58.9%) (minimums) and (37.4%) to (73.9%) (maximums), while the overall mean relative humidity varies between (25.1%) and (71.3%). The maximum wind speed recorded is (21.4 m/s) in December, blowing from the west. The annual potential evapotranspiration is (1,423.5 mm) ([Tamava Consulting Engineers Co., 2005: 3–26](#)). These natural features have facilitated the growth of semi-dense vegetation in the plains and foothills, as well as a semi-dense distribution of oak forests at higher elevations. The favorable environmental conditions, combined with an ancient migration route (il-rah) running parallel to the “Kangir” River, which connects the Kermanshah region to the warmer lowlands (garmsir) south of “Iwan”, provided an ideal setting for the formation of human settlements, particularly temporary encampments.



Fig. 2: Location of the Zich site ([Google Earth, 2019](#)).

Research Background

Due to its proximity to the “Guriyeh Structure” (Banā-ye Guriyeh), the “Zich” site had long been regarded as part of that complex. In general, from the perspective of archaeological research, the “Zich” site had been investigated in two phases prior to the present study. It was first identified and introduced by “Pīrānī” in (2001) during the first season of the archaeological survey and identification of “Iwan” County, in which the “Guriyeh site” of which “Zich” was considered a component, was recorded (Pirani, 2001: 159–183). Subsequently, the archaeological survey of the “Kangir” Dam reservoir basin in (2004), conducted by “Ebrāhīm Morādī” as a rescue operation prior to inundation, marked a new stage in the study of the sites in this area; during this survey, “Zich” was introduced as an independent site separate from the “Guriyeh structure” (Moradi, 2004: 40–53). In 2014, “Shahla Ahmadi” carried out research for her MA thesis, entitled “A Study and Survey of Archaeological Sites of the Sasanian-to-Islamic Transitional Phase around the Kangir River in the Iwan Plain”. As part of that research, she examined the “Guriyeh structure”, of which the “Zich” site had been regarded as a component (Ahmadi, 2014: 125–129). A report on the “Guriyeh” ceramics has also been published (Bagh Sheikh et al., 2015²). None of the aforementioned studies, however, addressed the architecture of nomadic groups or offered any interpretive framework in this regard. In the field of ethnoarchaeological studies, particularly on the subject addressed in the present research, an article entitled “Typology of the Architecture of Qashqai Mobile Pastoralist Communities” has been published (Aghaei et al., 2018). The studies by “Lafāfchī” (2012) and “Afshari” and “Pourdeyhimi” (2014) should also be noted. The archaeological excavation of the “Zich” site, carried out as a rescue operation, constituted another step toward its scientific introduction prior to the flooding of “Kangir” Dam and the destruction of the site. This excavation was conducted in October and November 2015 (Lashkari, 2016).

Archaeological Research on the Zich Site

The archaeological investigation of the “Zich” site was carried out in several stages. One of the first activities was the archaeological survey of the site and the determination of its extent, with the aim of identifying the different areas and any possible surrounding remains, as well as establishing the site’s surface area. These activities showed that the “Zich” site covered approximately (0.45) hectares and that the “Guriyeh” structure was the only visible feature in its vicinity. A large-scale excavation designed to obtain more extensive and scientifically robust data was the final phase of the fieldwork. Accordingly, four excavation trenches measuring (10×10 m) were initially established. Ultimately, of these four trenches, two trenches (O17 and P13) retained dimensions of (10×10 m), while the other two trenches (T17 and Q15) were reduced to (5×5 m) in response to the cultural stratigraphy encountered during excavation.



Fig. 3: Distribution of excavated trenches at the Zich site (Author, 2021).

Trench O17

Excavation in Trench (O17) ultimately led to the identification of a series of spaces composed of roughly rectangular, right-angled enclosures, separated from one another by dry-stone walls constructed in one or two courses and, likewise, in one or two rows (Figs. 5 and 6). These spaces were arranged in a stepped manner across three terraces. The investigations demonstrated that all of the partition walls defining these spaces were constructed contemporaneously and, on the basis of the finds recovered from this trench, belong to a single occupational phase dating to the early Islamic centuries (second to third centuries AH). The principal architectural remains identified in Trench (O17) consisted of three stepped terraces, several spaces intended for the erection of tents, and one area containing an accumulation of ash and heat-altered soil together with three hearths. It is likely that the architectural remains in this trench represent the winter occupation architecture of the site, characterized here by relatively solid and more permanent construction.

Trench P13

Excavation in Trench (P13) ultimately resulted in the identification of only a single architectural space (Figs. 7 and 8). This space appears to have formed part of an open area located on the slope of the hill-and-foothill terrain (i.e., the mountain flank). No wall or partition wall constructed specifically to delimit or create an enclosed space was recovered in this trench. Owing to the trench's position on the slope, excavation was carried out in a stepped manner. The investigations indicated that all of the stone features defining this space were constructed contemporaneously and belong to a

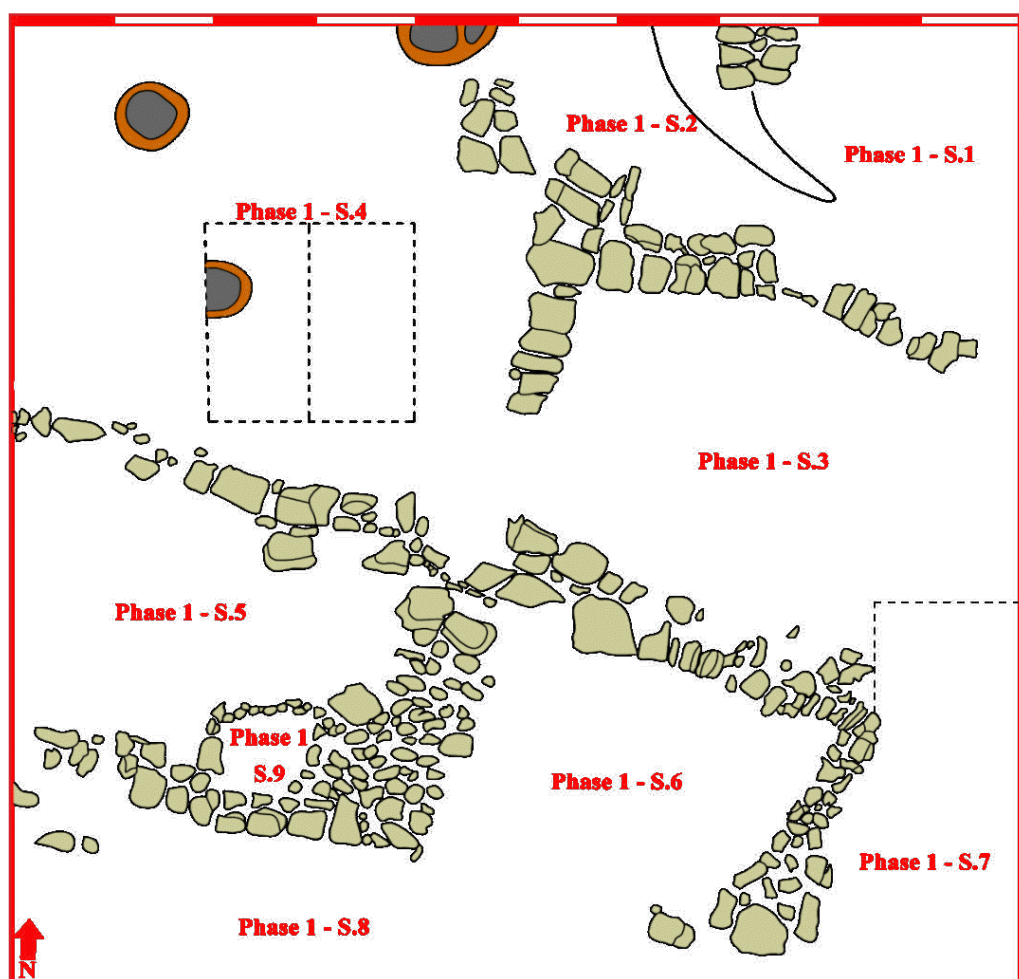


Fig. 4: Plan of Trench O17 (Author, 2016).



Fig. 5: Architectural features in Trench O17 (Author, 2016).

single occupational phase dating to the early Islamic period (second to third centuries AH). Several dry-stone features, together with three hearths, constituted the principal architectural remains identified in Trench (P13).

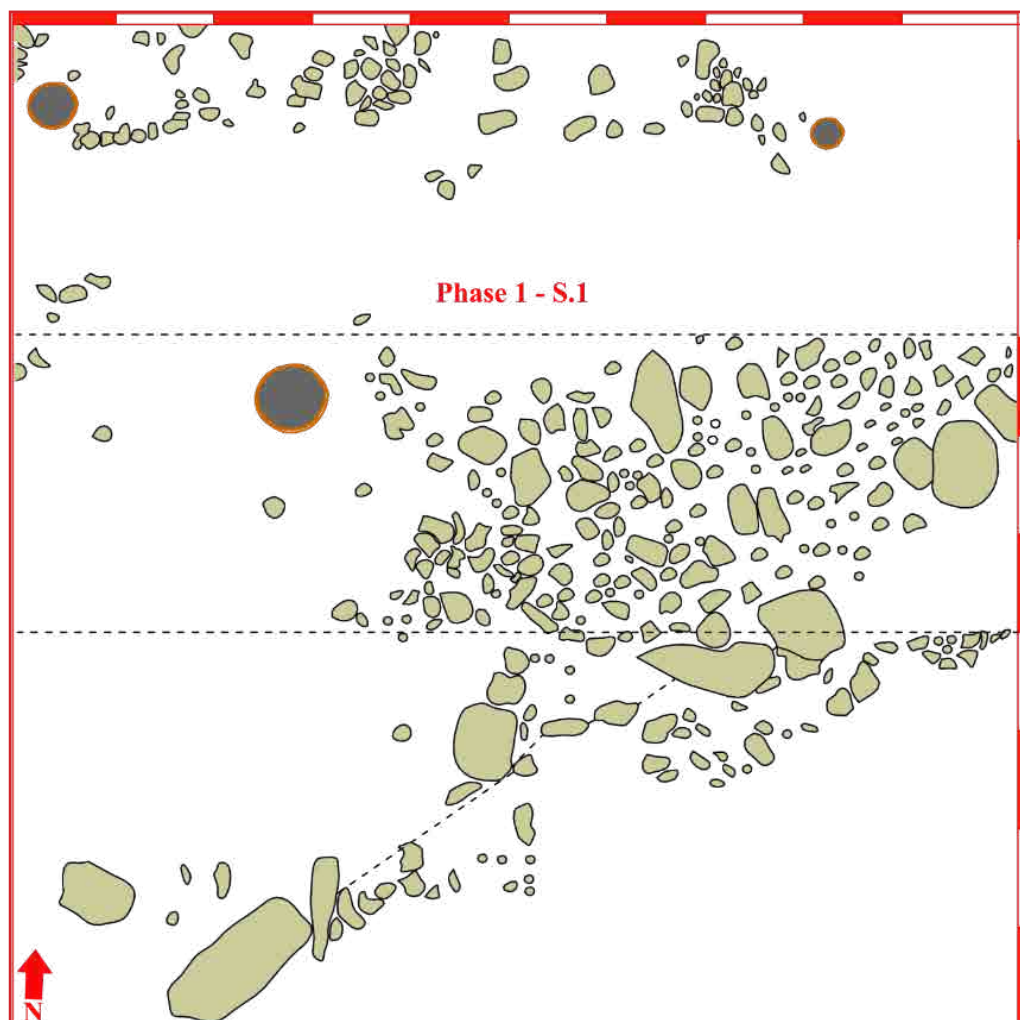


Fig. 6: Plan of Trench P13 (Author, 2016).



Fig. 7: Features recovered in Trench P13 (Author, 2016).

Trench T17

The excavations conducted in Trench (T17) did not reveal any architectural remains or identifiable architectural spaces (Figs. 9 and 10). This area appears, in fact, to have constituted part of the peripheral zone surrounding the “Guriyeh” Structure and the “Zich” site. Comparative analysis of the ceramics recovered from the trench indicates that they date to the early Islamic period (second to third centuries AH).

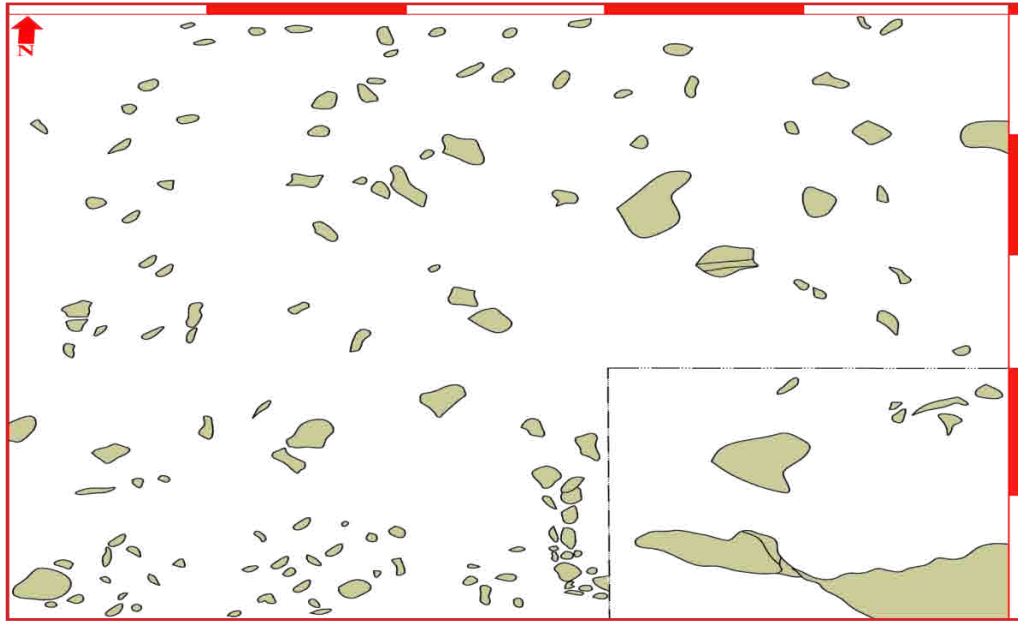


Fig. 8: Plan of the trench (Author, 2016).



Fig. 9: View of Trench T17 (Author, 2016).

Trench Q15

Excavation in Trench (Q15) resulted in the identification of a total of three architectural spaces (Figs. 11 and 12). These spaces consist of rectilinear and approximately rectangular enclosures, separated from one another by double-course, double-row dry-stone partition walls. The analyses undertaken indicate that all of the structural elements forming these spaces were constructed contemporaneously and belong to a single occupational phase dating to the early Islamic period (second to third centuries AH).

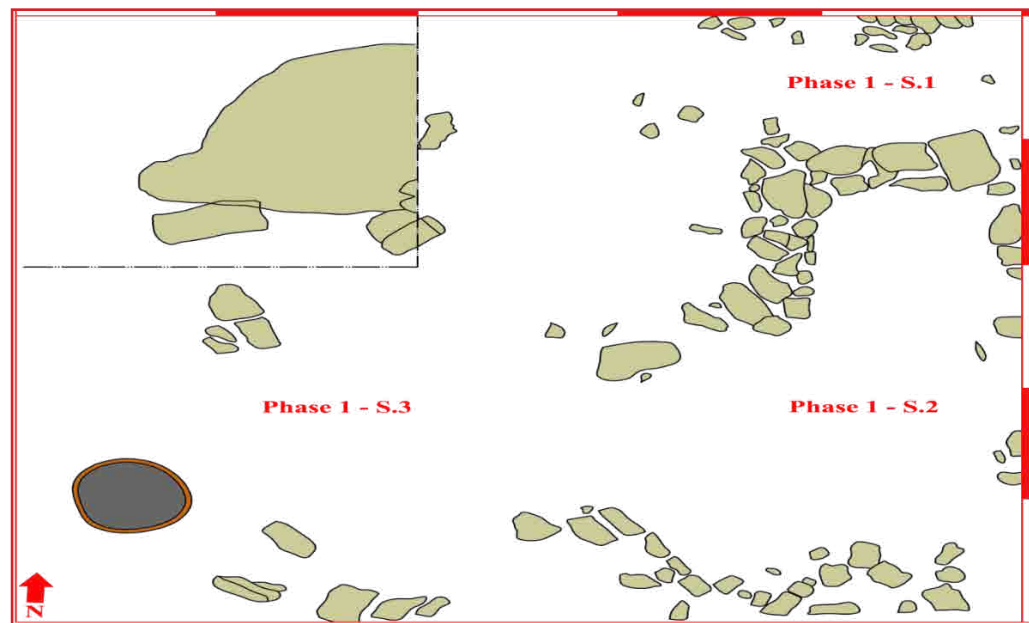


Fig. 10: Plan of Trench Q15 (Author, 2016).



Fig. 11: Architectural structure in Trench Q15 (Author, 2016).

Findings

Excavations in the four trenches at the “Zich” site yielded a total of (1,496) ceramic sherds, while survey of the site produced an additional (734) sherds. In addition, (1058) bone fragments, with a total weight of (7,997 gr), were recovered. Approximately 90 percent of these bones derive from animals such as goats and sheep, which are still kept and herded by nomadic pastoralists in the region today. The remaining 10 percent of the faunal remains belong to domestic fowl and equids. Comparative analysis of the ceramic assemblage against parallel examples demonstrated that all of the pottery finds are contemporaneous and date to the early Islamic period (second to third centuries AH) (Fig. 13 and Table 1).

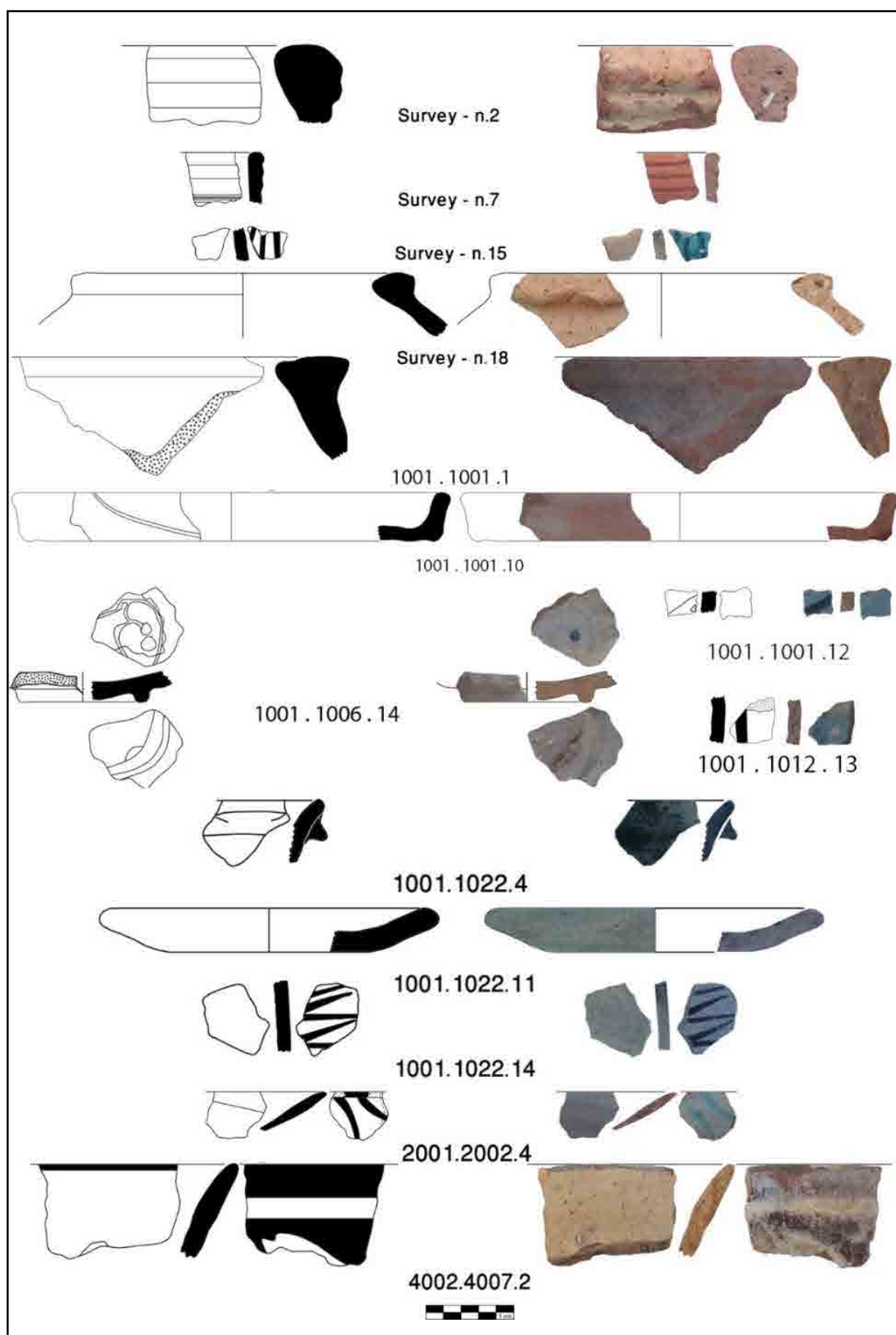


Fig. 13: Sample ceramics from the Zich site (Author, 2016).

Table 1: Technical specifications of ceramic samples from the Zich site (Author, 2016).

Technical Specifications of Ceramic Samples from the Zich Site									
Sherd No.	Context No.	Registration No.	Sherd Type	Fabric Texture	Location of Decoration	Manufacturing Technique	Temper	Cultural Period	References (Remarks)
n.2	Surface Survey		Rim	Coarse	Oblique	Hand made	Grit/Lime	Late Sasanian	Hasanpour & Sadeghi-Rad (2013, p. 202, Plan 18, No. 6)
n.7			Rim	Medium	Oblique	Hand made	Grit/Lime/Mica	2 nd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 597, Plan 43, No. 278)
n.15			Body	Medium	Paint	Hand made	Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Rosen-Ayalon (1974, fig. 483)
n.18			Rim	Coarse	***	Hand made	Grit/Lime	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 649, No. 232)
n.1	1001	1001	Rim	Coarse	***	Hand made	Sand/Lime	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Wilkinson (1973, p. 248, fig. 39)
n.10		1001	Complete profile	Medium	***	Hand made	Grit/Lime	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 571, Plan 17, No. 90)
n.12		1001	Body	Medium	Incised	Hand made	Grit/Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 575, Plan 21, No. 116)
n.14		1006	Base	Medium	Glazed/Painted	Hand made	Grit/Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Kleiss & Kalmayer (2006, p. 161, No. 15)
n.13	1012	1012	Body	Medium	Paint	Wheelmade	Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 575, Plan 23, No. 126)
n.4		1022	Rim	Medium	***	Hand made	Grit/Lime	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Kleiss & Kalmayer (2006, p. 323, No. 45)
		1022	Complete profile	Medium	***	Hand made	Grit	3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 649, No. 232)
n.11		1022	Body	Medium	Paint	Wheelmade	Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Wilkinson (1973, p. 248, fig. 39)
n.14	2001	2002	Rim	Medium	Paint	Wheelmade	Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 618, Plan 64, No. 415)
n.4	4002	4007	Rim	Medium	Paint	Hand made	Sand	2 nd 3 rd c. AH	Lakpour (2010, p. 586, Plan 32, No. 195)

Ethnographic Data on Nomadic Dwellings in Iwan County

The nomadic community, as one of the three principal social formations in Iran, possesses forms of dwelling that are both adapted to its subsistence system and shaped by the natural environment (***). In this way of life, shelter is selected in accordance with environmental conditions and the practical requirements imposed by the mode of production and the geographic setting. Dependence on housing in this form of life does not carry the same meaning that it does in sedentary contexts. Over many centuries, the “Kalthor” tribal nomads of “Iwan” County have acquired, through processes of trial and error, a body of experience closely tied to local climatic conditions and their way of life. These experiences have enabled them to develop a deeper understanding of their living environment, acquire the skills necessary for survival, and choose forms of shelter appropriate to their mode of life and subsistence practices. The nomads of the region refer to every type of dwelling they use as a “mal”, a term that, given its broader semantic associations, may also be understood as a form of property or asset. Among the nomads of this region, dwelling space is not merely, as in urban contexts, a place for family gathering and activities related to food preparation and household hygiene. In addition to these functions, it also serves as a place for drying fruit and vegetables, storing provisions, accommodating both humans and animals, housing livestock, storing agricultural produce, and functioning as an animal pen and poultry shelter.

The nomads of “Iwan” County select a natural setting for their settlement locations according to several essential criteria: a suitable slope to allow the passage of rainwater runoff, enclosure by natural features to protect against the prevailing regional winds, which generally blow from specific directions, and adequate exposure to sunlight, especially in winter encampments, in order to benefit from freely available thermal energy. Influenced by their subsistence strategy, the nomads of this region have long favored portable dwellings, namely the “black tent” (siah-chador), and this clearly demonstrates the effect of livelihood patterns on architectural choice. Indeed, this may be regarded as evidence of the full adaptation of this form of shelter to a migratory way of life. Over long periods of time, no substantial changes have occurred either in the “black tent” itself or in the materials used for its construction. It may therefore be argued that nomadic groups have long prepared the tent covering in the form of woven strips, which are joined together when the tent is erected; because these components are relatively lightweight, they are easily transported and do not create particular difficulties during seasonal movement. Based on the foregoing, it may be concluded that freedom of movement, ease of transport, and adaptation to a nomadic way of life are the principal requirements

that, over the course of history, have made it possible to rely on soft and flexible materials to meet the needs of this mode of existence.

For nomads, making minor adjustments to the tent is generally sufficient to adapt it to changing weather conditions. When the weather is warm, three sides of the tent are opened widely, and its front awning is extended to its maximum size. During strong winds and rainfall, the front poles of the tent are set at an oblique angle and the lateral poles are removed, so that the edges of the tent hang downward. The orientation of the tents in relation to one another is such that the entire surrounding landscape remains under observation” ([Mansuri-Moqaddam, 2010](#)).

Nomads require one another’s assistance in erecting and dismantling the black tent and in carrying out seasonal migration, since these tasks cannot be performed individually. At the same time, because both they and their herds are exposed to various dangers, they must pitch their tents in close proximity to one another. In general, the nomadic dwellings used in “Ilam” Province may be classified into three categories; “Siyah-mal”; This is the black tent itself, which is used by nomads during most seasons of the year. “Kula and Kapar”; These are summer dwellings of the nomads and are sometimes erected alongside the black tent as complementary structures. This type of architecture was not identified at “Zich”. “Zamgeh”; This is the winter dwelling of the nomads and serves as a measure for coping with “veshkeh-zaqam”, that is, severe, bone-piercing cold.

Ethnoarchaeological Framework for Interpreting Zich Architecture

Nomadic dwellings in the “Iwan” region provide an important ethnographic framework for interpreting the archaeological remains at the “Zich” site. Among these, the black tent (siyah-mal) represents the principal mobile dwelling of pastoral nomads and is especially relevant for understanding the organization of temporary encampments. Because the structural elements of the black tent were made largely from perishable materials, including goat-hair textiles, wooden poles, and woven screens, their direct archaeological visibility is extremely limited. As a result, the principal material traces likely to survive are stone arrangements, hearths, and partition features associated with the tent and its immediate surroundings.

The internal organization of the black tent is also significant for archaeological interpretation. Ethnographic observations indicate that the area around the hearth formed the main domestic space, used for cooking, food preparation, eating, and everyday social interaction. In this respect, the hearths identified in Trenches (Q15) and (P13) may represent spaces within, or immediately adjacent to, black tents. Other internal divisions, such as storage areas or enclosed spaces for young animals,

may also be reflected archaeologically in small partitioned spaces. In Trench (Q15), Spaces (S1) and (S2) may tentatively be interpreted as belonging to such functional subdivisions, possibly related to storage or the keeping of newborn livestock. By contrast, more formal and socially differentiated spaces known ethnographically from some tents could not be identified with confidence in the excavated remains.

Seasonal variation in nomadic architecture is likewise important. In addition to black tents, nomads of the region used lightweight summer shelters made of wood, branches, or reeds, but these were constructed almost entirely from perishable materials and are therefore unlikely to leave clear archaeological traces. No unequivocal evidence for such structures was identified at “Zich”.

Of greater relevance to the excavated evidence is the winter dwelling known as “zamgeh”. This type of structure was built for protection against severe cold and typically made use of more durable materials, especially stone, combined with wood and branches. Ethnographic examples show that such dwellings could include substantial dry-stone walls, hearths, and enclosed spaces arranged to provide shelter for both people and livestock. This pattern offers an important comparative model for interpreting Trench (Q17), where the presence of a hearth, relatively thick rectilinear walls, and stone arrangements possibly associated with a tent suggests a form of winter occupation. Accordingly, (Q17) may represent a more substantial seasonal installation comparable to a “zamgeh”, whereas the lighter architectural traces in other trenches are more consistent with temporary occupations centered on black tents.

Conclusion

The archaeological investigation of the “Zich” site was carried out in three distinct yet interrelated stages: systematic survey, trial sounding for the determination of site boundaries, and extensive excavation across the site. Taken together, the results of these investigations led to the identification of the site as a temporary settlement, that is, a seasonal occupation. Study of the architectural remains and the architectural character of the spaces uncovered in the excavated trenches, together with their comparative assessment against contemporary regional examples, indicates that “Zich” was a temporary settlement or, more precisely, a nomadic campsite, belonging to mobile pastoral groups. The site appears to have been occupied in a single phase over a short-term span, seasonally but recurrently over a number of years. Among the defining features of this settlement was residence in tents, the surrounding spaces of which were demarcated by one or two-course, and likewise one or two-row, dry-stone walls separating them from one another. Outside the tented areas, hearths had been constructed for cooking and other daily activities. In order to mitigate the natural

slope of the hillside and facilitate habitation, the occupants created stepped terraces on which they erected their tents. Notably, well-preserved and complete examples of such settlement forms, associated with the lifeways of contemporary nomadic groups, have continued in use in essentially the same manner up to the present, and their traces remain clearly visible around the site.

Comparative analysis of the ceramics and other finds recovered from all four excavated trenches dates the occupation of the site to the early Islamic period, specifically the second to third centuries AH. Accordingly, the flourishing phase of the “Zich” site may be placed within an interval of approximately (10 to 20) years between the second and third centuries AH, although a shorter duration is also possible. Chronologically, this period corresponds either to the final phase of occupation at the “Guriyeh building” or to a point shortly after its abandonment. To date, 11 sites contemporary with “Zich” have been identified in the “Kangir River basin”. These settlements were predominantly permanent in character. The presence of a perennial spring and the stream flowing from it along the southwestern part of the site, command over the horseshoe-shaped valley and location at its entrance, the shelter of the southwestern slope from strong winds, proximity to the “Gouriyeh building” as a permanent and secure center, nearness to the “Kangir” River, the existence of dense pastureland, and the site’s position along an ancient “il-rah” (tribal migration route), together with similar factors, may be regarded as the principal reasons for the formation of the “Zich” site in this location.

The ancient “il-rah” along which the archaeological site of “Zich” is situated continues to be used today by the nomads of “Iwan” County, especially groups affiliated with the “Kalhor tribe”. During the cold seasons, the mobile pastoralists of “Iwan” leave the elevated mountain zones and migrate to the lower winter pastures located in “Somar”, “Tang-e Kushk”, “Kiyaneh”, “Charowzard”, “Shireh-Paneh”, “Shavaleh”, “Dalgān”, and other such areas. Conversely, during the warm seasons they move to the upland summer pastures of “Bankul”, “Shivereh Zivol”, “Gamiyar”, and elsewhere, while some also take refuge in the environs of villages. These movements, and the necessity of adapting to climatic conditions, are likewise governed by the condition of pasture vegetation. Because the permanent residence of human populations in high mountain zones is extremely difficult under severe winter conditions, population concentration in these upland areas has remained very limited. The influence of nomadic life on the settlement system is therefore evident; given the necessities of migration and the movement of people and livestock in order to exploit seasonal pastures, settlement was predominantly temporary, resulting in the formation of small and dispersed habitations across the territory of the county and other parts of the province, particularly in the lower wintering zones and the upland summer pastures.

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Conflict of Interest

In accordance with ethical publication standards, the author declare that they have no conflicts of interest, either personal or financial, that could have influenced the content or conclusions presented in this research.

Endnote

1. see: Yousefvand, Y., (2022). "The Khalilabad-Nomkol tribal route: A Safavid-period migration route in eastern Lorestan (Aligudarz County)". *Parseh Archaeological Studies*, 6(22): 329-349. <https://doi.org/10.30699/PJAS.6.22.329> (In Persian).

2. see: Bagh-Sheikhi, M., Esmaceli-Jelodar, M. E., Khosravi, L. & Khosrozadeh, A., (2024). "Classification and typology of Sasanian ceramics from the Guryeh site, Ilam Province". *Parseh Archaeological Studies*, 8(29): 75-104. <https://doi.org/10.22034/PJAS.8.29.75> (In Persian).

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واکاوی باستان‌شناختی و قوم‌باستان‌شناختی محوطه زیچ: سکونتگاه فصلی جوامع کوچ‌رو در سده‌های نخستین اسلامی

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چکیده

کاوش‌های باستان‌شناسی محوطه زیچ، بخشی از برنامه باستان‌شناسی نجات بخشی در محدوده مخزن سد کنگیر، واقع در بخش زرنه از شهرستان ایوان (شمال غربی استان ایلام) است. نتایج این بررسی که بر پایه پیمایش سیستماتیک ۹ واحد ۱۰۰×۱۰۰ متری، کاوش هشت گمانه آزمایشی (۲×۲ و ۳×۳ متر) و چهار ترانشه اصلی (۵×۵ تا ۱۰×۱۰ متر) به دست آمده، منجر به شناسایی یک سکونتگاه موقت یا اردوگاه عشایری شد. مطالعه بقایای معماری مکشوفه و تحلیل تطبیقی آن‌ها با نمونه‌های هم‌عصر در منطقه، نشان می‌دهد که زیچ، یک سکونتگاه تک‌دوره‌ای و کوتاه‌مدت متعلق به گروه‌های کوچ‌رو (دامداران متحرک) بوده است. الگوی استقرار در این محوطه شامل چادرهایی بوده که هرکدام با یک یا دو ردیف چینش سنگ‌های خشکه چین محصور شده و به وسیله دیواره‌های سنگی مشابه از یک دیگر تفکیک شده‌اند. تحلیل تطبیقی سفال‌ها و یافته‌های فرهنگی حاصل از ترانشه‌ها، تاریخ‌گذاری استقرار در این محوطه را به سده‌های نخستین اسلامی (به ویژه قرون دوم و سوم هجری قمری) قطعی می‌کند. شکل‌گیری استقرار در زیچ مرهون عوامل مساعد محیطی از جمله موقعیت توپوگرافی مناسب، دسترسی به چشمه دائمی و رودخانه کنگیر، مجاورت با بنای گوریه، وجود مراتع غنی و قرارگیری در مسیر ایل‌راه قدیمی موازی با رودخانه کنگیر (که کرمانشاه را به مناطق گرمسیر جنوب ایوان متصل می‌کرده) بوده است. مطالعه ساختارها و بقایای معماری جوامع عشایری معاصر، یکی از کارآمدترین و دقیق‌ترین روش‌های علمی برای درک سازمان معماری جوامع کوچ‌رو باستانی و در زمره مطالعات قوم‌باستان‌شناسی است. پژوهش حاضر برپایه شیوه‌های استقرار جوامع عشایری معاصر، به بررسی الگوی استقرار این اردوگاه کوچ‌رو در بستر طبیعی آن پرداخته است. گردآوری داده‌ها با استفاده از روش‌های متداول پیمایش میدانی و کاوش‌های باستان‌شناسی و قوم‌باستان‌شناسی در منطقه صورت گرفته است.

کلیدواژگان: محوطه زیچ، کاوش نجات بخشی، سد کنگیر، اردوگاه عشایری، سده‌های نخستین اسلامی.

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