

Sar-Gandāb

Yaghobb Mohammadidar *

Bu Ali Sina University, Department of Archaeology



**Sasanika
Archaeology 9
2012**

Location

Sar-Gandāb is located in the western part of Iran, in the Zagros Mountains, close to the border between the provinces of Ilam and Lorestan (Fig1). The geographical coordinates of the sites are 33°30'21.17"N, 46°53'44.29"E. Sar-Gandāb is 36 km northeast of Seymare^h Dam, as the crew flies (Fig2). It is possible that the strategic significance of the site in antiquity was more than what present conditions suggest: Sar-Gandāb is located on a natural northwest-southeast passage through a narrow valley of Zagros. At some locations, valley is as narrow as three kilometers. But, at the vicinity of Sar-Gandāb, the valley widens and reaches a maximum width of four kilometers (Fig3). Water is abundant. In addition to the River Seymare^h, a Sulphur spring originates near the site and its water is used for irrigated agriculture (Fig6).

Goal of Research

Survey and test trenching at the site of Sar-Gandāb was undertaken as a part of the Seymare^h Dam Salvage Project, in the spring of 2011. The archaeological site of Sar-Gandāb had been identified in the national cultural heritage list. This study aimed at investigating the full extent of the site and at refining our understanding of the periods of occupation on the site and the nature of possible archaeological remains.

Archaeological Setting

The site of Sar-Gandāb is buried beneath a village of the same name (Fig 2). The area of the site was estimated about four hectares. Our survey suggested that the site was probably a much larger one. But, the area is extremely disturbed, especially around the central mound, as a result of deep plowing, construction activities and extensive illicit digging. Therefore, it was hard for the team to define the actual edges of the occupation area. Archaeological remains seem to spread between the Gavar Mountain to the east and north, and the Seymare^h River to the west. Some 600 m northwest of the site on a natural outcrop, remains of what was perhaps a fortified site with stone enclosure are visible (Fig3, 5, 7). This northern site is called *Qala Kūški*. The investigators think that this possibly defensive site supports the idea that Sar-Gandāb was an important site on a strategic location in the antiquity.

Archaeological Research

The salvage investigation was confined to the mound, overlaid by the village. Archeological remains are abundant in and around village houses (Fig9,10). At some locations, villagers have excavated the

* yamohamadi@yahoo.com

remains in their house and reused them for various purposes (Fig11). Unfortunately, we were not given permission to excavate or document remains in the houses. Therefore, further archaeological investigation after the evacuation and before the inundation is highly recommended. Two locations for test trenching were chosen: operation A and B, in the northeastern and southwestern sides of the mound, respectively (Fig8,9,16). These locations were chosen because they lay outside the village, and because remains of stone structures were visible on the surface.

Trench A

At first, a test trench, 2m×10m, was excavated where surface topography suggested the existence of a wall. A stone wall, with gypsum mortar and gypsum plaster was uncovered. The wall features four deep niches on the southern side (Fig12). Spring of an arch was preserved on one of the niches. Given the utterly disturbed nature of stratigraphy and deposits, excavation focused on revealing the full extent of the architecture. So, operation A was gradually expanded by four more trenches, 300 m² in total, until a full structure was uncovered. Both sides of all walls had gypsum plaster, about 6cm thick. The excavated structure seems to expand in all direction beyond the operation area (Fig13-15).

Trench B

Excavation in the operation B did not uncover major architectural remains, and finds were limited to objects, mostly pottery, fragments of stucco, and a few iron objects (Fig16-18).

Dating

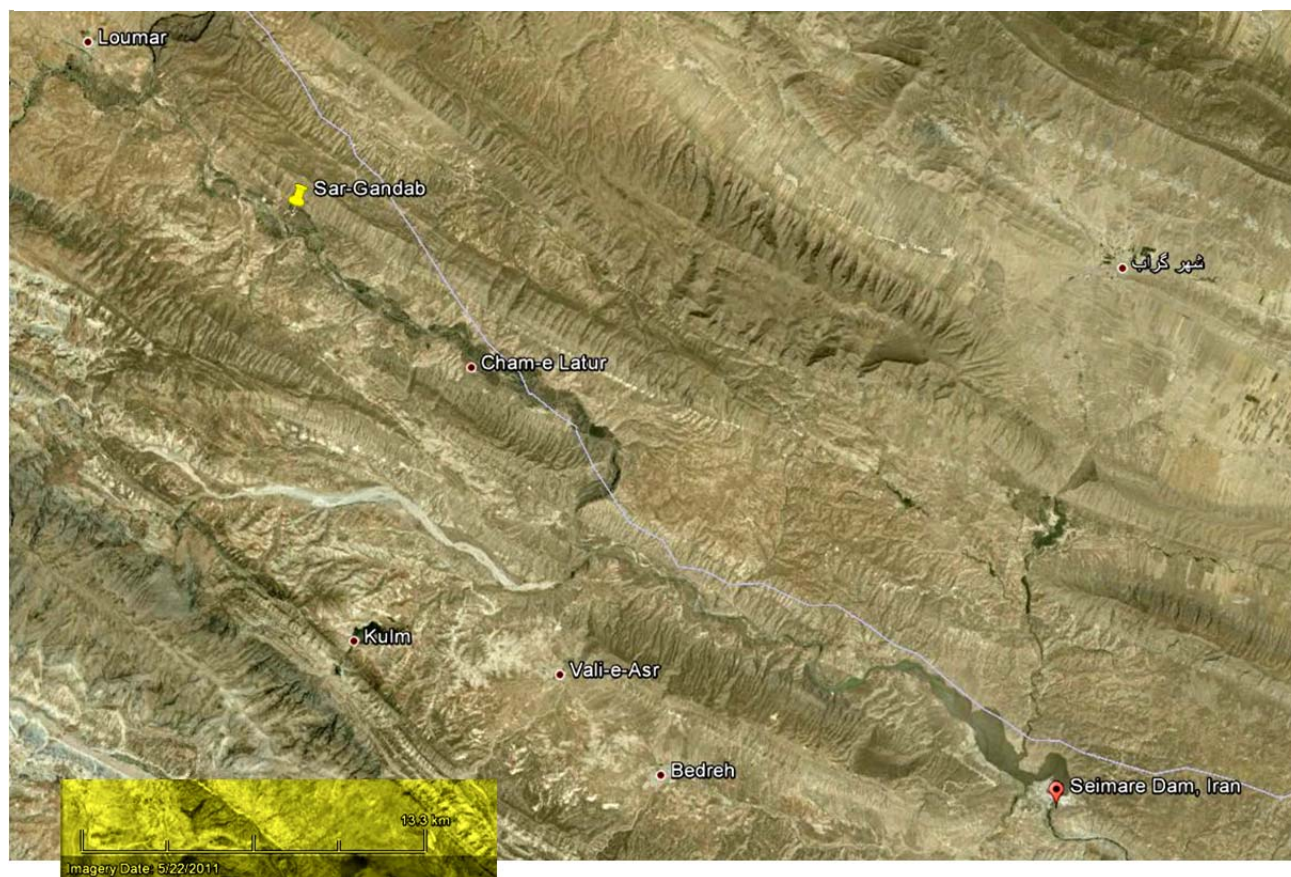
The disturbed nature of deposits and the limited time did not allow a full understanding of stratigraphy and of dating of the monument. Most of diagnostics date to the Early and Middle Islamic period. However, the pottery recovered from the site are mainly simple forms-- bowl, plates and cooking ware-- which were very durable and were used from the Sasanian to the Islamic period. Building technique is similarly datable to such a long period. Therefore, the foundation of the site could be dated as early as Sasanian-Early Islamic period. Occupation on Sar-Gandāb seems to have continued well into the Middle Islamic period. *

* Summarized and translated to English by Mehrnoush Soroush, New York University



Figure 1. Location of Sar-Gandāb (Imagery from Google Earth)

Figure 2. Location of Sar- Gandāb and the Seymare^h Dam (Imagery from Google Earth)



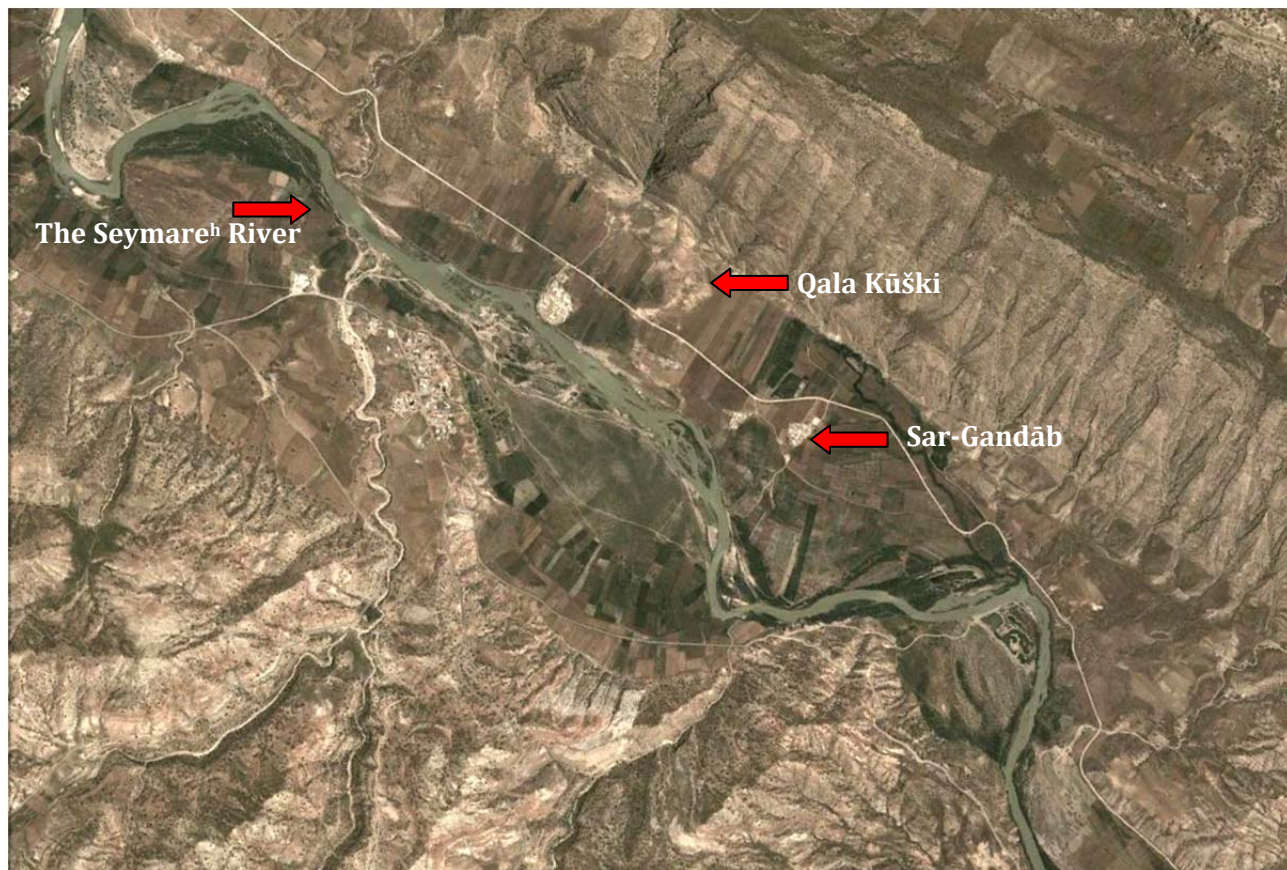


Figure 3. The Seymare^h River, the mound and vilalge of Sar-Gandāb, and Qala Kūški
(Base imagery from Google Earth)

Figure 4. The mound and vilalge of Sar-Gandāb, and Qala Kūški (Base imagery from Google Earth)

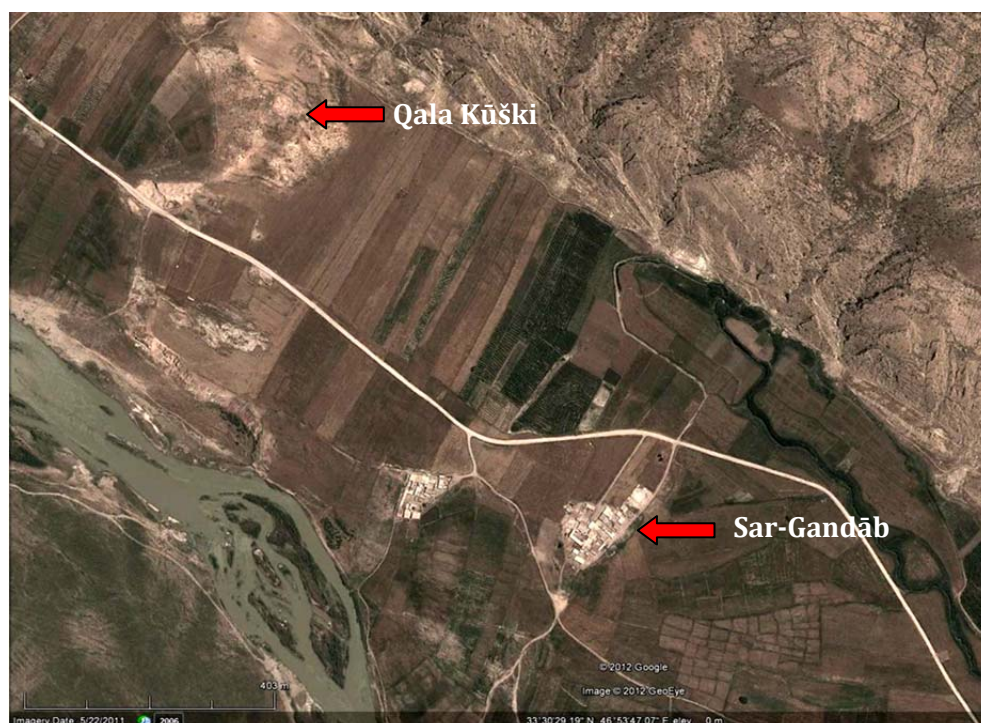




Figure 5. Qala Kūški



Figure 6. Remains of ancient canals near Sar-Gandāb Spring

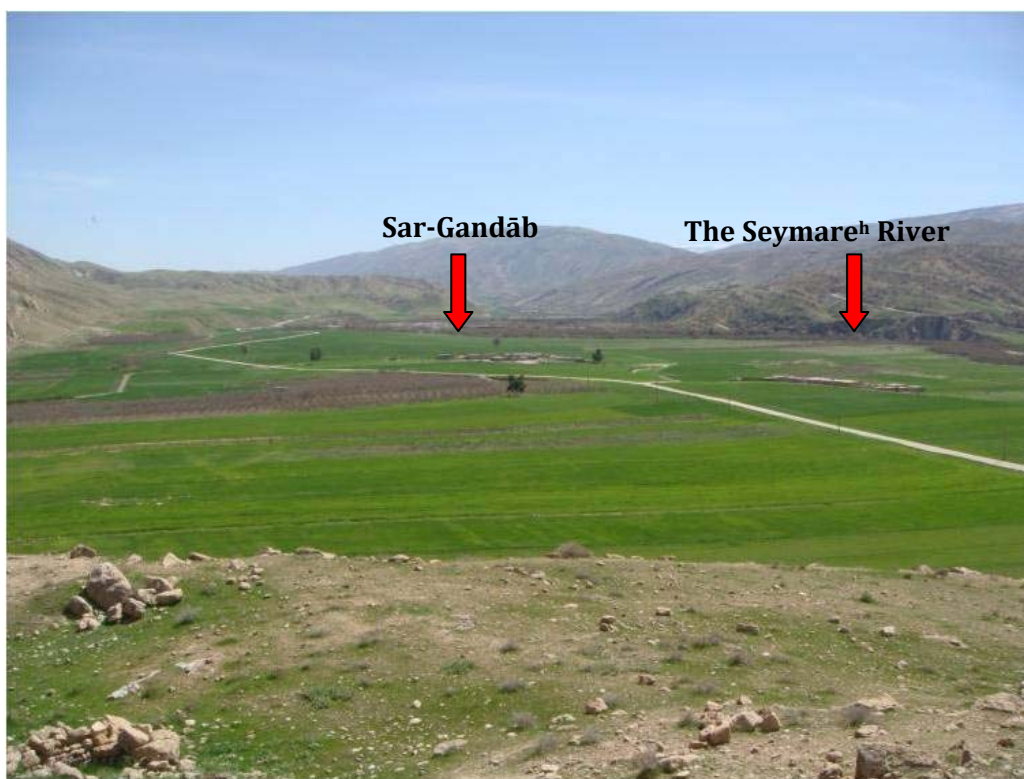


Figure 7. View to the site and valley from Qala Kūški (north)



Figure 8. Trench A before excavation

Figure 9. The village and operation areas





Figure 10. Archaeological remains visible in the village houses

Figure 11. Archaeological remains excavated and reused by villagers. In this example, a whole room was excavated and reused. Ancient plastering is still preserved.



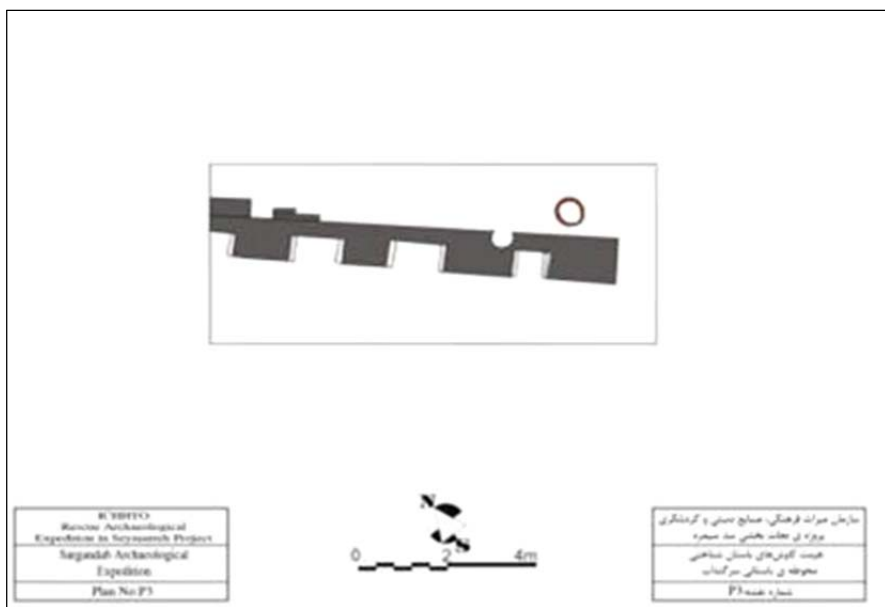
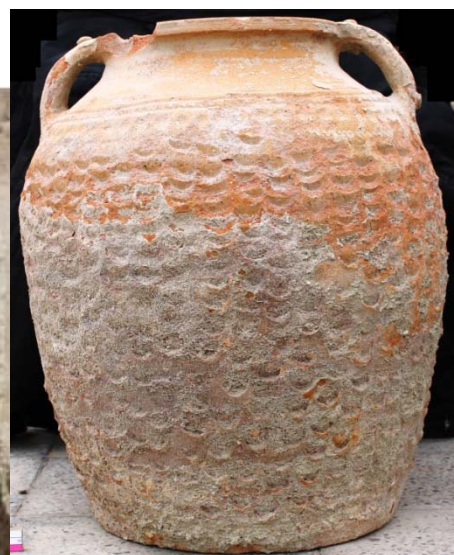


Figure 12. Above and right: First trench in the Trench A, which revealed a wall.



Figure 13. Big storage jars were excavated in the Trench A



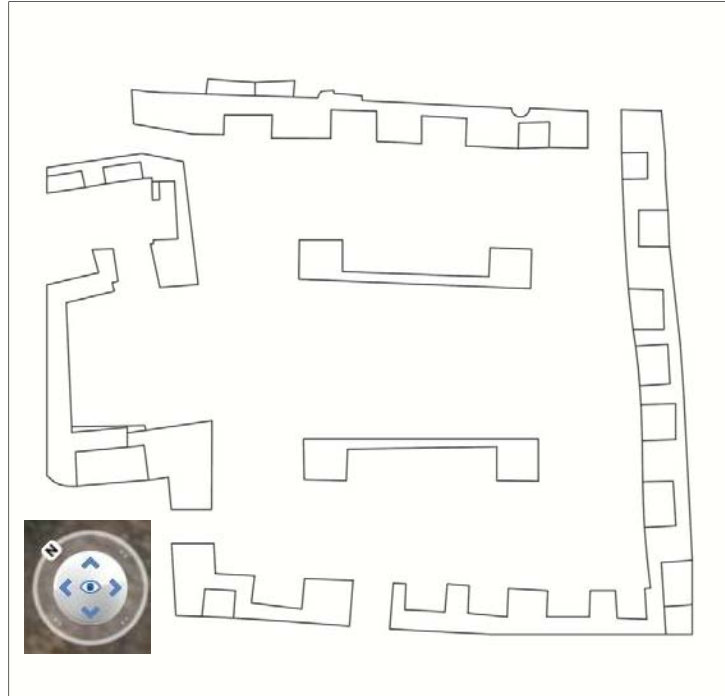


Figure 14. Trench A at the end of excavation

Figure 15. Trench A at the end of excavation, view from the south





Figure 16. Trench B before excavation

Figure 17. Trench B at the end of excavation





Figure 18. Stucco fragments from the Trench B