



Archaeological Research of Kani Shinka Dam Basin, Piranshahr County

Bairam Aghalary¹, Hamid Norasi², Salah al-Din Ebrahimipour³, Salah Salimi⁴

¹ PhD in Archaeology, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Hajar Tepe University, Ankara, Türkiye.

² PhD student in Archaeology, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. Corresponding author: hamidnorasi@yahoo.com

³ PhD student in Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary; Research Associate at Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie (UKSW), Warsaw, Poland.

⁴ MA in archaeology, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 31 August 2023

Revised 25 September 2023

Accepted 8 October 2023

Published 21 July 2024

Keywords:

Archaeological Studies

Piranshahr County

Kani Shinka Dam

ABSTRACT

The archaeological studies of the Kani Shinka Dam basin in Piranshahr County were carried out in two phases. In the autumn of 2017, the inaugural phase of the studies concluded with a meticulous archaeological field survey specifically focused on the dam's drainage. The subsequent phase of our studies encompassed the investigation of the historical and cultural layers of the identified sites, including archaeological excavations in five sites. A total of 27 archaeological sites, including caves, settlements, cemeteries, and fortifications, were identified during the archaeological field survey. Due to the dam's reservoir size and the potential impact of construction proceedings on the archaeological sites, five sites were selected for archaeological studies to be conducted. The investigations in Kani Shinka revealed a varied spectrum from different eras including prehistoric to late Islamic periods. This article aims to present and review the inspected archaeological settlements behind the dam's reservoir, in the meantime, it tries to address significant factors that impacted the site's formation and diffusion in such an environment. Of the five excavated sites, Gird-i-Shaytan has the richest cultural-historical layers ranging from the Chalcolithic period namely Dalma culture, Bronze Age, and Historical periods, while Gird-i- Murwan a single-period site has indicated evidence from the Early Bronze Age (EBA), also known as Hassan-Ali Ware culture. Much of the extent and layers of the site Bawleh have been wiped out due to agricultural activities in recent years, and currently there is little evidence of its historical period. The sites of Qalat Shakhtan and Qalat Marah also have evidence of the historical and Islamic era. Other sites can be documented and studied in a single period with few cultural finds. In this study, the landscape, as well as the watershed, are among the significant factors considered in the quantity, quality and the sites' dispersal.

Citation: Aghalary, B., Norasi, H., Ebrahimipour, S., & Salimi, S. (2024). Archaeological Research of Kani Shinka Dam Basin, Piranshahr County. *Payām-e Bāstānshenās*, 16(30), 49-76. (In Persian)

<https://doi.org/10.30495/peb.2023.1995129.1027>

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Payām-e Bāstānshenās

Introduction

Kani Shinka Dam is located on the Little Zab River in Piranshahr County, south of West Azerbaijan Province. The construction of this dam is part of the Ministry of Energy's plan to save and revive Lake Urmia, manage border waters, and provide irrigation to nearby agricultural lands. In the autumn of 2017, a project was conducted to identify historical sites in the Kani Shinka Dam watershed, as well as to assess and predict the areas and sites that are at risk. In this project, 27 sites were identified and registered; however, five essential sites were selected for further excavation. The dam construction spot is in a narrow valley covered with lush vegetation and surrounded by national meadows and farmlands of the village of Bawaleh. Due to the significant number of running water branches that lead to the dam reservoir, the watershed can be divided into two eastern and western major parts. The vegetation in the southwestern part is a forest with dense oak trees and other trees native to the region, and in the western part, the vegetation is mainly in the form of pastures with shallow valleys, in which agricultural and agricultural activities are carried out. The southeastern part of the dam is a thin forest with local shrubs, and the eastern and northeastern parts are mainly pastures and limited agricultural lands. Piranshahr is a relatively vast county with running perennial water resources located in the southern part of West Azerbaijan province. This county is laid on the international border with Iraq to the west. The surrounding cities in the north are Naqade and Oshnaviye and it is bordering with Mirabad and Sardasht in the south and Mahabad in the east. The county is a strategically significant city due to its proximity to the border of Iraq and Turkey (Nasiri Hind Khale *et al.*, 2017: 10). The Zab River is a perennial water resource in the Piranshahr plain, stemming from the uplands of Qandil mountains and it is the most important environmental feature of the area. This river after joining several branches such as Chom-i Laven on the way and crossing the lowlands of Sardasht and Alan pass, enters Iraq. If the Zab basin is in the path of the rain-bearing winds, the vegetation takes the form of a thin and dense forest comprising oak, fir, and occasionally wild pistachio, almond, and gorse forests. As we move from west to east, according to the amount of rainfall, plant and forest density decreases

(Khzari, 2000: 17-23). The extension of the Little Zab River Basin is stretched in a relatively vertical strip parallel to the international border of Iran and Iraq and the small Zab River. Its longitudinal and transverse expansion is respectively northwest-southeast and westward-eastward. The urban areas of Piranshahr, Sardasht, Girdikshaneh, Mirabad, and Rabat and the rural areas of Paswe, Nalas, Jaldian, Shinave, and Begiweh are among the densely populated areas of the Little Zab River Basin. This research aims to identify and investigate the historical sites and recognize the significant and influential factors in the pattern of settlements and their distribution. We seek to answer the following questions:

- Based on the findings of the archaeological study in the Kani Shinka Dam watershed, what is the nature of the settlements?
- What historical and cultural periods do the explored sites in the Kani Shinka Dam watershed belong to?

Discussion

Archaeological Studies' History in Piranshahr

Rawlinson was one of the first Western globetrotters to visit the northwest of Iran and Piranshahr. He tried to introduce the livelihoods and geographical evidence of the region (Rawlinson, 1840: 31). Jean Jacques de Morgan visited various regions and briefly described their geographical condition, customs and traditions, language, culture, dialects, poems, and other matters (De Morgan, 1960: 1-48). Sir Aurel Stein, in his Western Iran studies, while visiting some significant historical sites and villages in the vicinity on his way from Saqqez to Lahijan, briefly described the number of sites, the agricultural situation, and the irrigation system (Stein, 1940: 353-361). In 1975, Kroll and Klaiss visited several sites in Piranshahr County and wrote a brief report on them (Kroll, 2005: 71-73). Most of the archaeological research conducted in Piranshahr County relies on salvage projects. The salvage project of Silweh Dam, the salvage studies of Kani Sib Dam, and the salvage studies of Kani Shinka Dam.

Archaeological survey of the Kani Shinka Dam

The survey method in the Archaeological prospection in the first phase was based on field survey and random sampling. Therefore, the

determined area was studied with intensive surveys. In the first phase of the investigation, 27 sites were identified and recorded (Fig. 1). Finally, in the second phase five sites including

Gard-i Shaytan, Gard-i Marwan, Qalat Merah, Qalat Shakhtan, and Bawale, were selected for archaeological excavation, stratigraphy, And cultural-material studies (Fig. 2).

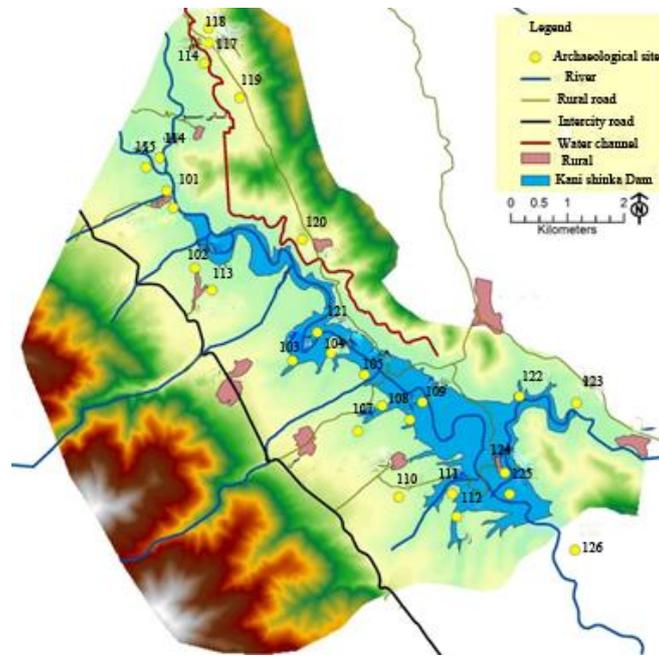


Figure 1: The distribution map of the areas identified in the Kani Shinka dam basin (Authors, 2017).

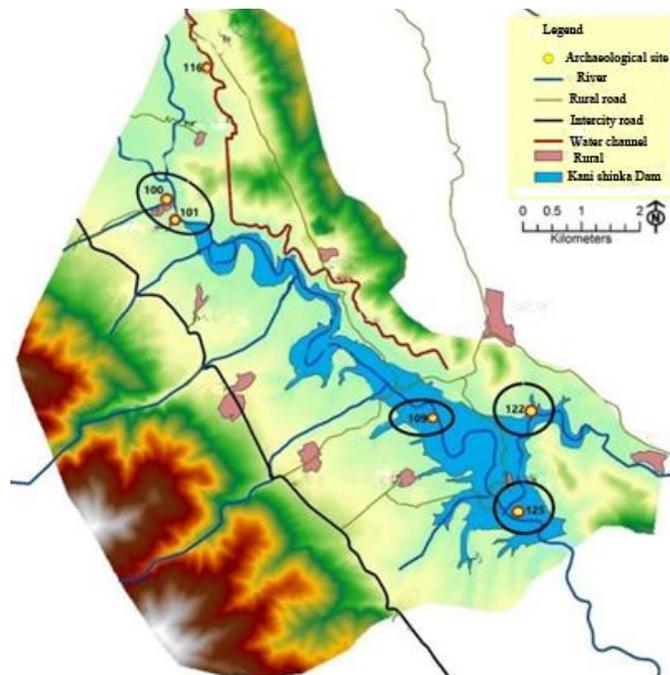


Figure 2: Scattering map of excavated areas in the Kani Shinka dam basin (Authors, 2016).

Conclusion

Archaeological studies of the watershed of Kani Shinka dam were carried out in two phases with an interval of three years. In the first season, 27 historical and cultural sites were identified and documented. The yielded information from the first stage indicates human habitation in this area from the Chalcolithic era to the end of the Islamic period. The most influential factors affecting the distribution of sites in the Kani Shinka Dam watershed were topography, access to primary resources, agricultural land, and surface water control. The sites identified in the southern and eastern parts mainly belong to the historical and Islamic periods and have poor cultural and historical remnants. Gard-i Shaytan has evidence from the Chalcolithic era (Dalma and Pizdali), the early Bronze Age, and the historical period (Ashkanians). The evidence from Gird-i Murwan indicates an Early Bronze Age settlement. The archaeological material from Qalate Marsa pertains to a late Islamic settlement. Qalat Shakhtan contains evidence from both the historical and Islamic periods. Last but not least, the archaeological evidence from Bavaleh clearly illustrates a Parthian settlement. According to the preset plans and archaeological research, all endangered sites will be thoroughly explored before the dam's impoundment. Moreover, there is hope the yielded information from salvaged sites would contribute to expanding our knowledge of the little Zab River Basin as part of the rescue mission.

Acknowledgments

Our sincere appreciation goes to Dr Hamideh Choubak the former head of the RICHT during our field survey for her support. Also, our extended appreciation to Dr Shirazi former head of ICAR at the time and his deputy executive Mr Sardari who was the head of the rescue unit. We would like to thank Dr Farzad Mafi, archaeological consultant of the Ab Niro Company, and other colleagues in this company for their help and for providing additional information. We are extremely grateful for the cooperation and companionship of Mr. Suleiman Bashiri, the head of the Piranshahr Cultural Heritage Department, and Anwar Aryamnesh, the head of the Piranshahr Cultural Heritage Protection Unit. In the end, we thank Mr Obaid Sorkhabi for providing GIS maps and other cooperation.

References

- Binandeh, A. (2008). *Archaeological Study of the Little Zab River Basin*. Master's Thesis in Archeology, under the guidance of Hamid Khatib Shahidi, Tarbiat Modares University, Faculty of Humanities (unpublished).
- Khezri, S. (2000). *The natural geography of Mokri Kurdistan with emphasis on Zab basin*. First Edition, Tehran, Naghoos Publishing (in Persian).
- Kroll, S. (2005). The southern Urmia basin in the early Iron Age. *Iranica Antiqua*, 40, 65-85.
- Nasiri Hende Khale, Esmaeil and Jalalian, Eshaq and Ganji, Nasrin, (2017). Study of the feeling of social security in border cities (Case study: Piranshahr city). *Border Science and Technology*, 8(3), 129-148 (in Persian).
- Rawlinson, H. C. (1840). Notes on a Journey from Tabríz, Through Persian Kurdistán, to the Ruins of Takhti-Soleimán, and from Thence by Zenján and Tārom, to Gilán, in October and November 1838; With a Memoir on the Site of the Atropatenian Ecbatana. *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 10, 1-64.
- Stein, A., Sir, & Andrews, F. H. (1940). *Old routes of Western Iran: narrative of an archaeological journey / carried out and recorded by Sir Aurel Stein*. Antiquities examined, described, and illustrated with the assistance of Fred H. Andrews. Macmillan and Co., Limited, London.
- Jeyhani, Boalqasem Ibn Ahmad, (1989). *Ashkal-ol-Alam. Translated by Ali Ibn Abdul Salam*, Mashhad, Astan Quds Razavi (in Persian).
- Domorgan, J. (1960). *Geographical studies*. French faculty in Iran. Translated by Kazem Vadie. Tabriz: Chehr, Bita (in Persian).