

SATTARNEZHAD, Saeid – PARVIN, Samad – RUYANDEZGH, Ali Mehri. Lokalizácia starovekého mesta Barzand na podklade archeologických a historických písomných prameňov. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2023, roč. 27, č. 1, s. 170-183, ISSN 1338-7219, DOI: DOI: 10.17846/SHN.2023.27.1.170-183.

Štúdium archeologických prameňov v prípade starovekých miest zohráva dôležitú úlohu pri rozpoznávaní ich vzniku, vývoja a zániku v rôznych historických obdobiach. Historické mesto Barzand bolo jedným z miest v severozápadnom Iráne, ktoré malo v islamskom období významné miesto. Názov mesta a jeho poloha na svahoch hory Sabalan sa spomínajú v písomných textoch z 9. až 13. storočia. Predložená štúdia bola realizovaná deskriptívno-analytickou metódou. Boli porovnané výsledky terénnych výskumov a písomných historických prameňov s cieľom odpovedať na nasledujúcu otázku: Ktoré archeologické nálezisko obsahuje zvyšky mesta Barzand? Výsledky archeologických výskumov a analýzy historických textov zodpovedajú geografickej polohe mesta Barzand v meste Germi, na svahoch hory Sabalan.

Kľúčové slová: lokalizácia; mesto Barzand; provincia Ardabil; archeologické dôkazy; historické texty;

Keywords: Localization; Barzand City; Ardabil Province; Archaeological Evidence; Historical Texts;

Introduction

The study of the history of architecture and urban engineering in different historical periods with an Archaeological approach is one of the fields of study of Archaeologists; however, identifying the location of Archaeological cities can be considered as one of the first goals of traditional Archaeology, which later continued in the historical-cultural approach.¹ In the Islamic period, due to the existence of historical written sources, Archaeologists have used these sources in their studies. In historical sources, the names of cities have been mentioned several times, and their religious, political, social, and economic characteristics, as well as their studies of urban engineering and architecture, have been mentioned. The study of the remained texts of historians and geographers of different centuries of Islam indicates the existence of cities in the northwestern region of Iran that no longer exist today. Research on these cities by tracing the writings left over historical texts and using Archaeological studies and adapting them to the left ruins, to some extent can cause the discovery of the location of these cities and valuable information about them.²

Northwestern Iran, better known in historical sources as Azerbaijan, is one of the most important regions of Iran, and the names of many of its cities mentioned in historical sources. A number of cities in this region, including Barzand³,

¹ VELAYATI, Rahim - MEHDIZADEH, Behzad - KHANALI, Hamid. Location of Ojan Ilkhanid City Based on Historical Resources and Archaeological Investigations (Research on Sites of Koller and Dali Darasi in Bostan Abad City). In *Bagh-e Nazar*, 2015, vol. 12, no. 34, p. 83.

² PAKBAZ, Daivid - NEYESTANI, Javad - KARIMIAN, Hasan. Localization of Ziz city based on historical sources and archaeological surveys. In *Journal of Archaeological Studies*, 2019, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 38.

³ MUSTAWFI, Hamdallah. *Nuzhat al-Qulub*. DABIR SIYAGHI, Mohammad (ed.), Qazvin, 1952, p. 69.

Varsan⁴, Bilqan⁵, Badzhiravan⁶, have declined and been destroyed for various reasons in different centuries of Islam, and today only the names of these cities have remained in the historical texts. The historical city of Barzand was located on the northern slope of the Mount Sabalan on the Ardabil-Varsan communicative route and served as an intermediate commercial city and caravanserai in the region of Azerbaijan. This specific location, as well as the rich ecology of the region, made Barzand a prosperous and flourishing city. In this research, an attempt is made to determine the exact location of Barzand city by analyzing the information left from the written historical sources of the Islamic period and using the data obtained from Archaeological studies.

Objectives and methodology

The present study is based on studying the texts of the 10th to 14th centuries AD, which are considered as first-hand sources of this research; it is based on Archaeological findings obtained from the results of the survey of 2015. A comparative analysis of Archaeological data and written sources was performed by selecting the descriptive-analytical method.

So far, little research has been done on the city of Barzand in the field of Archaeology. Few studies conducted in the field of local historiography and new authors' references is in this field, including the studies of Baba Safari, who referred to the city of Barzand in his book *Ardabil dar Gozargahe Tarikh*, but did not investigate the location of the city of Barzand.⁷ In 2015, Massoud Khancherli studied the pottery of the first Islamic centuries in the Ardabil region. In these studies, some pottery of the site of Barzand Castle were also studied and examined.⁸

The city of Barzand in historical sources

The importance of this city's studies in the reconstruction of early Islamic events in the northwestern region of Iran is significant. The northwestern region of Iran in early Islam was the site of a battle by the Arab Army, commanded by Afshin. Afshin's army was acting in this region intending to spread Islam. The Arab army settled in the city of Barzand and rebuilt the wall of defense in this city. To understand the political situation of the region in the early days of Islam, it is needed to identify the city of Barzand and then the commercial connections between the

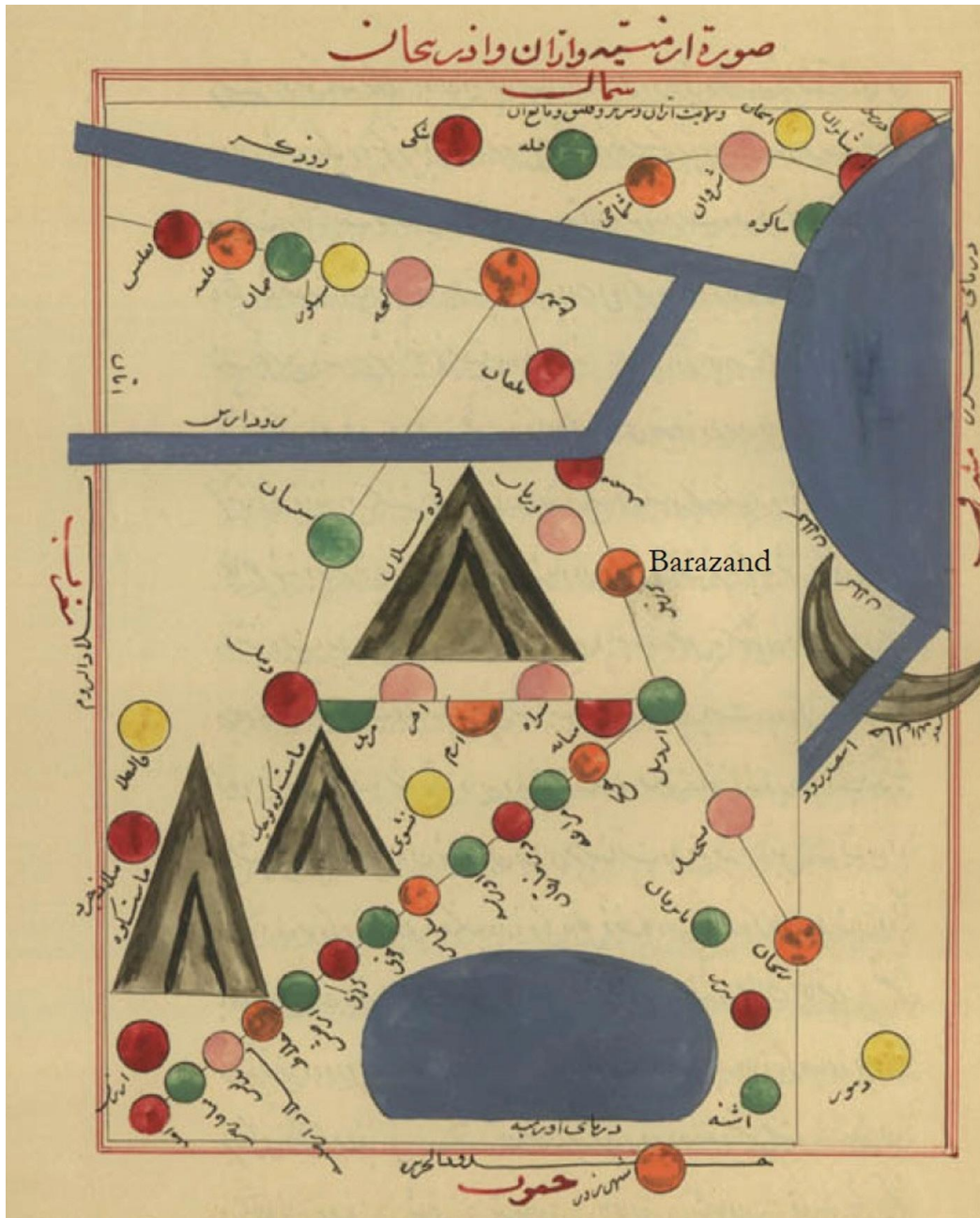
⁴ POURIANEZHAD, Farhad – SATTARNEJAD, Saeid – PARVIN, Samad. Localization of Varsan City of the Islamic Period in Iranian Azerbaijan Based on Archaeological Evidence and Written Sources. In *Kratkiye soobshcheniya Instituta arkheologii*, 2022, vol. 268, p. 407; ABULFEDA, Isma'il Ibn ,Ali Ibn Mahmud Al-malik Al-mu'ayyad ,imad Ad-din. *Taqwim al-Buldan (A Sketch of the Countries)*. Cairo: Al-Thaqafa Al-Diniyah Publications, 2006, p. 462.

⁵ YA'QUBI, Abū I-'Abbās. *Kitab al-Buldan*. Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Almiya Publications, 2001, p. 462.

⁶ MUSTAWFI, Hamdallah. *Nuzhat al-Qulub*. DABIR SIYAGHI Mohammad (ed.). Qazvin: Hadith Emrooz Publications, 1952, p. 69.

⁷ SAFARI, Baba. *Ardabil in the passage of history*. Ardabil: Azad University Publications, 1992, p. 8.

⁸ KHANCHERLI, Massoud. *A Study of Pottery of the Early Islamic Centuries of Ardabil Province*. Master's Thesis in Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, 2015, p. 175.



Map 1. The location of Barzand city in the historical map from the 11th century AD drawn by Abu Zayd al-Balkhi.⁹

northwestern cities of Iran and the south of the Caucasus can be traced. There was a connection between other important Islamic cities including Worthan and

⁹ ANVARI, Amir Hushang. Historical Atlas of Geographical Maps and Images of Azerbaijan. Tehran: Nama Tarikh Publications, 2015; GALICHIAN, Rouben. Clash of histories in the south Caucasus. Redrawing the Map of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Iran. London: Bennett & Bloom, 2012.

Billeghan (in the Republic of Azerbaijan) and there have been many commercial connections between these cities. So far, no research has been conducted on the location of these cities and the communication path of the northwestern region of Iran, so by identifying the location of the city, a lot of information can be obtained about the history of the region.

One of the cities described in the historical texts of the early and middle centuries of Islam is Barzand city. Ahmad ibn Yahya Al-Baladhuri (10th century AD) writes in his book *"Futuh al-Buldan"* (the Conquests of Lands): *"Barzand is a village where Afshin settled his army during the war with Babak Khorramdin and built a castle there"*¹⁰. Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani described the city of Barzand in the state of Azerbaijan in the 10th and 11th centuries AD¹¹ (Map 1.).

According to the book *"Hudūd al-Ālam min al-Mashriq ilá l-Maghrib"* (*"The Boundaries of The World from The East to the West"*, 11th century AD), Barzand is located in the region of Azerbaijan and the needed water by the village is supplied by the river.¹² Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Istakhri, one of the writers of the 11th century AD, has quoted the location of Barzand as follows: *"... there are six parasangs from Ardabil to Barzand. Barzand was a ruin city that Afshin rebuilt it and turned it into a city, and then settled there"*.¹³ Ya'qubi (11th century AD) mentioned Barzand on the communicative route to Ardabil.¹⁴ According to Ibn Rustah (11th century AD), the location of Barzand was between Ardabil and Varsan.¹⁵ According to Abu'l-Fida (13th and 14th AD), the distance between Ardabil and Barzand is about 10 parasangs¹⁶. Hamdallah Mustawfi (14th and 13th AD) introduced Barzand in the region of Azerbaijan and from the fourth tribe, which was a middle city that is now a village. Its weather is as warm as Mana and its water is from the spring.¹⁷ Other historians and geographers of different Islamic centuries have referred to the city of Barzand as indicated in table 1.

¹⁰ AL-BALADHURI, Ahmad ibn Yahyā ibn Jabir. *Futuh al-Buldan*. Translated by Mohammad Tavakol, Tehran: Neghreh Publications, 1988, p. 462.

¹¹ IBN AL-FAQIH, Ahmad ibn Muhammad. *Al-Buldan*, Beirut: Alam Al-Kitab Publications, 1995, p. 528.

¹² *Hudūd al-Ālam*. Al-Hadi Research, Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafiyah Publications, 1999.

¹³ ISTAKHRI, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi. *Al-Masalak and Mamalak*. Tehran: Book Translation Company Publications, 2014, p. 41.

¹⁴ YA'QUBI, Abū l-'Abbās. *Kitab al-Buldan*. Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Almiya Publications, 2001, p. 79.

¹⁵ IBN RUSTAH, Ahmad. *Aalaq Nafsiyyah (Precious Records)*. Beirut: Dar Sader Publications, 2019, p. 271.

¹⁶ ABULFEDA, Isma'il Ibn ,Ali Ibn Mahmud Al-malik Al-mu'ayyad ,imad Ad-din. *Taqwim al-Buldan (A Sketch of the Countries)*. Cairo: Al-Thaqafa Al-Diniyah Publications, 2006, p. 462.

The *parasang* is a historical Iranian unit of walking distance, the length of which varied according to terrain and speed of travel. The European equivalent is the league. In modern terms the distance is about 3 or 3½ miles (4.8 or 5.6 km).

¹⁷ MUSTAWFI, Hamdallah. *Nuzhat al-Qulub*. Edited by Mohammad Dabir Siyaghi, Qazvin: Hadith Emrooz Publications. 1952. p. 139.

Historical sources	Author	Dated	The form of city name	City location	Explanations
The History of the Prophets and Kings	Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari	10 th – 11 th AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	The events of Babak Khorramdin
Futuh al-Buldan	Al-Baladhuri	10 th – 11 th AD	Barzand/ Barzeh	Azerbaijan	The events of Babak; Create a historic castle
Masālik wa'l-Mamālik	Ibn Khor-dadbeh	800 and 900 AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	City location
Kitab al-Buldan (Book of the Countries)	Ahmad ibn Ya'qubi	11 th AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	Ardabil communicative route
Precious Records (Aalaq Nafsiyyah)	Ibn Rustah	11 th AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	City location
Taqwim al-Buldan (A Sketch of the Countries)	Abu'l-Fida	13 and 14 AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	Distance to surrounding cities
Al-Kharaj va sanaya (the book on taxation)	Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadi	11 th AD	Barzeh and Barzand	Azerbaijan	City location
Al-Kamil fa al-tarikh (The Complete History)	Ibn al-Athir	12 and 13 AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	Babak's story-mentioned in Moghan region
Al-Buldan	Ibn al-Faqih	10 th – 11 th AD	Barzeh	Azerbaijan	City location and communicative route
Nuzhat Al Qulub	Hamdallah Mustawfi	12 and 13 AD	Barzand	Azerbaijan	In the 7 th century AH, it was called the village

Table 1. Information about the city of Barzand in historical texts.

The location of Barzand city based on historical sources and Archaeological research

The location of the city has been mentioned around Ardabil and the slopes of Mount Sabalan.¹⁸ In these texts, Barzand city have been mainly mentioned in an area that is also historically related to the events of Babak Khorramdin¹⁹; therefore, considering the spatial location of Barzand based on these sources, Barzand city is located in the northern slope of Mount Sabalan and Mugan plain. Today, in Mugan plain, there is a village called Barzand.²⁰ This village is located 12 km away from Germe city in Ardabil province. In fact, the village today known as Barzand is located next to vast historical sites. This historical site, which is better known as the historical castle of Barzand, is located in geographical coordinates of 47°54'49.68"E longitude of 39° 0'8.57"N latitude and height of 928 meters above sea level.

The relics of the historical castle of Barzand remained until the Qajar period (1789 – 1925), which has been completely destroyed over time. Barzand Castle is not a so high hill which is located 1 km away from Barzand village. The height of this area is about 5 meters from the surrounding lands and about 11 meters from the bed of Barzand Chay River. The maximum length of the site is 115 meters in the northeast-southwest direction and 95 meters in the northwest-southeast direction. In the surface survey of the site, evidence of Islamic pottery, broken bricks and part of the ruins of the architectural spaces of demolition can be seen (Figure 1).

Pottery findings

In addition to the evidence of the vestigial architecture in the area of Barzand Castle, the dispersal of pottery pieces has been very large in the surface Archaeological study of the site. The study of surface pottery obtained from the site of Barzand Castle shows a range of glazed and simple pottery of the Islamic period (fig. 2 and 3). These potteries have a better cooking quality and mainly has a mineral chamotte. In terms of form, pottery can be classified into edge, body, handle and floor. The general specifications of some of the pottery of this site have been presented in table 1. One of the relatively well-known types of pottery of the Islamic period is Sgraffiato pottery, which has been produced in the traditional way in the Christian realm in the Middle Ages and throughout the Islamic lands and Central Asia for a very long time. A vessel called "AqKand" is one of the local styles of making Sgraffiato potteries in the northwestern regions of Iran. These vessels were produced in the color spectrum of yellow, brown and green. The decorations of this type of pottery mostly include scroll and plant motifs, which

¹⁸ YA'QUBI, Abū l-'Abbās. *Kitab al-Buldan*. Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Almiya Publications, 2001, p. 79.

¹⁹ AL-BALADHURI, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Jabir. *Futuh al-Buldan*. Translated by Mohammad Tavakol, Tehran: Neghreh Publications, 1988, p. 462.

²⁰ KIANI, David. *The culture of the villages of Mugan city, Ardabil*: University of Mohaghegh Ardabili Publications, 2015, p. 92.



Figure 1. Vista of the site of Barzand Castle. (Photo: Saeid Satarnezhad).



Figure 2. Some of the pottery of the site of Barzand Castle. (Photo: Saeid Satarnezhad).

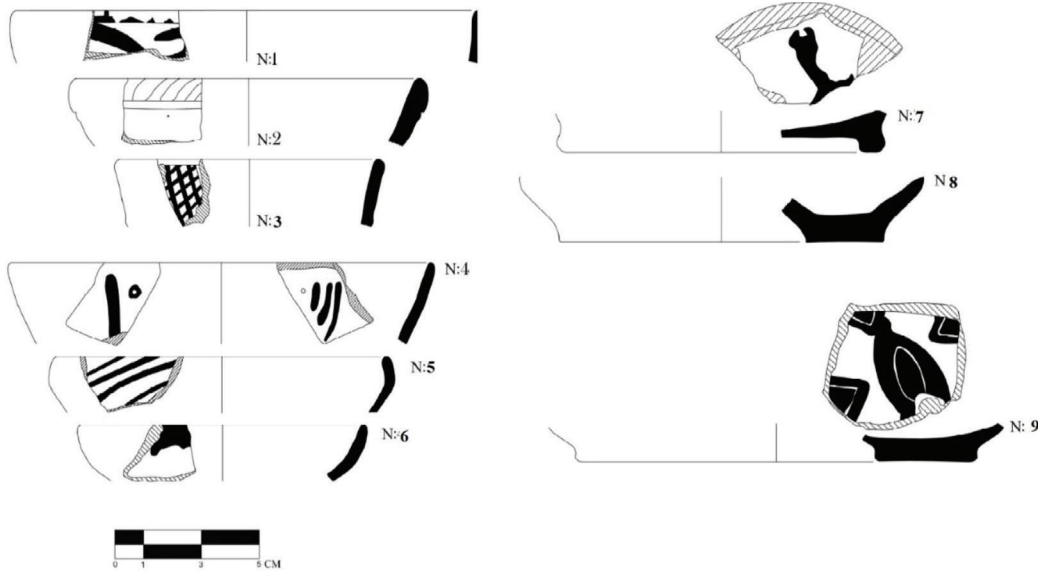


Figure 3. Some of the pottery of the site of Barzand Castle. (Photo: Saeid Satarnezhad).

in some cases have been associated with animal motifs and in rare cases with human motifs.

The potteries of Barzand site is comparable to the potteries specimens of the Islamic period sites such as Nishapur²¹, Varamin,²² Yelsui²³ and other Islamic sites

²¹ WILKINSON, Charles. Nishapur: pottery of the early Islamic period. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973, p. 280.

²² CHUBAK, Hmideh. Report of Islamic Pottery, Povinik Castle. Tehran: Cultural Heritage Organization, 2000, p. 54.

²³ TAHMASEBI, Fariborz. Report of the first chapter of the archeological excavation of Yelsui site, Cultural Heritage Organization, 2014.

in the region. These potteries represent a kind of connection with the pottery of Samarra in early centuries of Islam, the most important reason of which was the events of the uprising of Babak Khorramdin and the arrival of the Islamic legion in these areas²⁴; therefore, to study the surface pottery of the Barzand site shows that this site was one of the areas where the Afshin' legion was settled. Historical texts have also mentioned the construction of facilities by Afshin, the commander of the Islamic legion in Barzand²⁵.

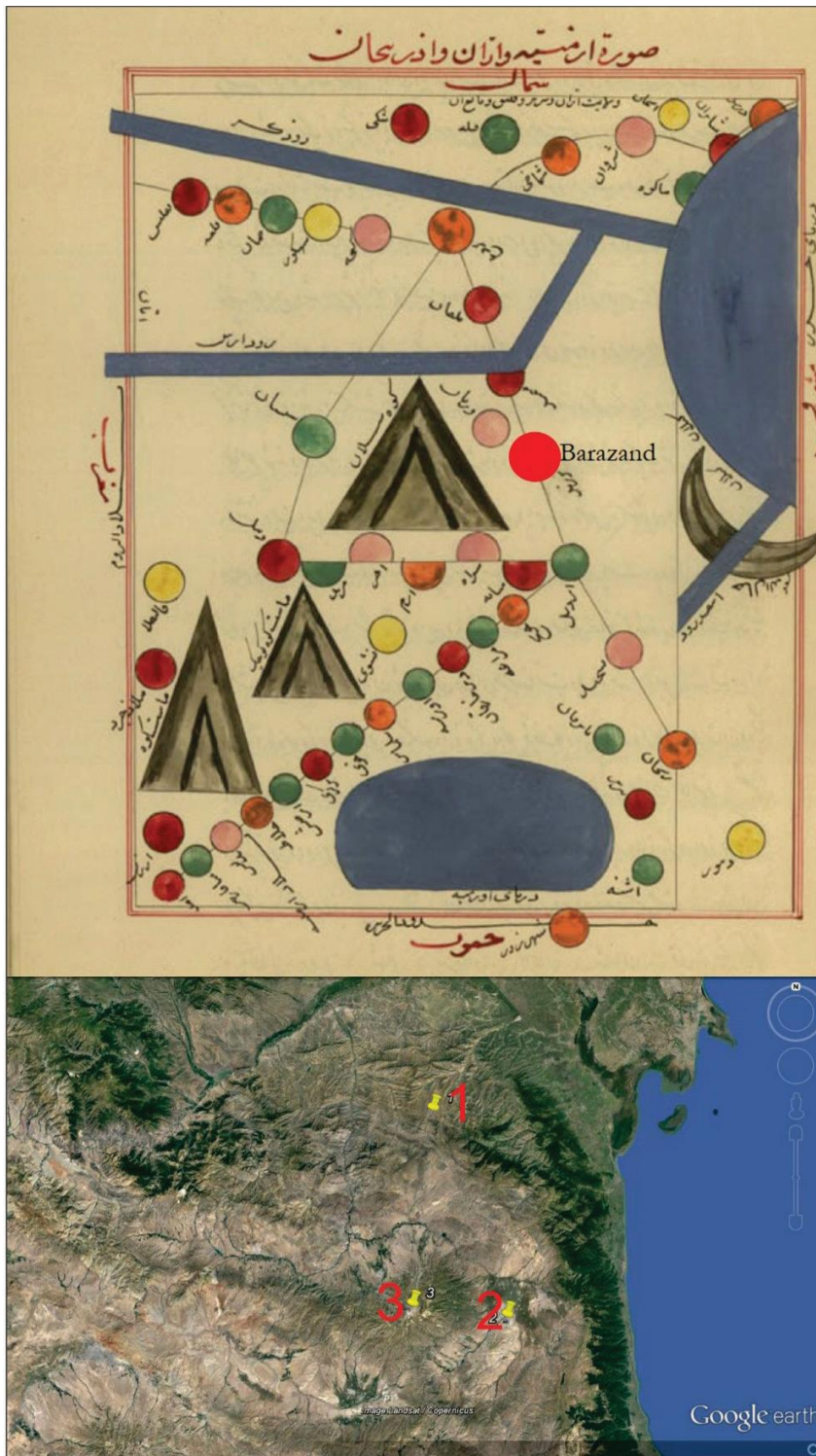
R	Shape	Construction quality	Construction	Chamotte	Covering		Motif
					Inside	Outside	
1	Edge	Good	Wheel made	Mineral	Glaze	Glaze	Yes
2	Edge	Medium	Wheel made	Mineral	No	Glaze	Yes
3	Edge	Medium	Wheel made	Mineral	No	Glaze	Yes
4	Body	Delicate	Wheel made	Mineral	Glaze	Glaze	Underglaze carving
5	Body	Delicate	Wheel made	Mineral	Glaze	Glaze	Underglaze painting
9	Body	Medium	Wheel made	Combination	Thin earthen	Thick earthen	Yes
10	Floor	Medium	Wheel made	Mineral	Glaze	Glaze	Yes
11	Floor	Medium	Wheel made	Mineral	Glaze	Glaze	Yes
12	Floor	Medium	Wheel made	Mineral	Glaze	Glaze	Yes

Table 2. Registration of some potteries of the site of Barzand Castle.

Based on Archaeological survey and the results of pottery data, the site of Barzand Castle was used from the early Islamic centuries to the Middle Ages; therefore, the most important reasons according to which this site can be identified with the remainders of the old city are as follows: 1. The location of the current site of "Barzand Castle" on the slopes of Sabalan and Ardabil city, which corresponds to the references of historical texts about the location of "Barzand city"

²⁴ KHANCHERLI, Massoud. A Study of Pottery of the Early Islamic Centuries of Ardabil Province. Master's Thesis in Archaeology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, 2015, p. 197.

²⁵ AL-BALADHURI, Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir. Futuh al-Buldan. Translated by Mohammad Tavakol, Tehran: Neghreh Publications, 1988, p. 488.; AL-TABARI, Muhammad ibn Jarir. The History of the Prophets and Kings. Translated by Abolghasem Payandeh, Tehran: Asatir Publications, 1952, p. 5805.



Map 2. Adapting the location of Barzand in the map belonging to the 11th century AD (Abu Zayd al-Balkhi) to the map of satellites. 1. Barzand, 2. Ardabil City, 3. Sabalan Mountain. (Photo: Saeid Satarnezhad).

(Map 2); 2. The spatial location of the site of “Barzand Castle” in the old communicative route (Ardabil to Mugan); 3. The historical events of the third century AH and the story of Babak Khorramdin in Mugan region can be matched with the historical castles of Germe city and Anguti region; 4. The singleness of the name of Barzand village and maintaining its old form (Barzand) until today; 5. The ruins of the “Barzand Castle” area, which are the remainders of many buildings relics, the density of pottery evidence and the relatively large scope of the site, indicate the flourishing of this area in the distant past. These ruins can be seen as hills and protuberances in the corners of the site.

The city of Barzand has continued its social life until the middle centuries of Islam. Hamdallah Mustawfi, a historian of the 10th and 14th centuries AD, has named this city as a village in his book “Nuzhat Al Qulub²⁶”; therefore, Barzand has lost its social and political position in the Islamic Middle Ages and has become a village, so that Zakaria Qazvini, one of the historians of the Islamic Middle Ages, while pointing to the important areas of the slopes of Mount Sabalan such as Mugan, Ardabil, Baz, Bilqan, has not mentioned the city of Barzand²⁷. Accordingly, after the 8th century AD, Barzand completely lost its political and social position and has gradually declined.

Final thoughts

In this period, there was a connection between the cities of the northwestern region of Iran to the south of the Caucasus, and cities like Bezand and Worthan were in this direction. Located on the caravan passing route, it led to the development of these cities and in the 9th century AD these cities became the center of settlement for the Arab Army. Based on the pottery studies collected in 2016 from the middle and marginal parts of the enclosure, these potteries are comparable to the pottery obtained from the early Islamic lands of the region such as The Yile-Sui, Jorjan, Varamin area in Iran and Samarra located in Iraq. There are many similarities between the clay style of Barzand city and Samarra located in Iraq. These potteries have been imported to the region by the Arab Army. In written sources of the Islamic era such as Fotouh al-Baldan al-Baladhuri and tabary history, the settlement of the Arab army in this region has been mentioned. According to studies, Barzand was one of the cities of the state of Azerbaijan, which flourished between the 10th and 14th centuries AD, due to its location on the trade route and caravanserai of the cities of Ardabil to Mugan and Varsan. In general, the remained texts of historians and geographers of different Islamic centuries have considered the location of Barzand city on the slopes of Mount Sabalan and Ardabil to Varsan communicative route. According to conducted surveys, Barzand area, which still retains its former name and is still called by the same name, is located in the current area of Germe city. The old site of Barzand, which corresponds to the old city of Barzand, is located along the Barzand Chai River and the

²⁶ MUSTAWFI, Hamdallah. *Nuzhat al-Qulub*. edited by Mohammad Dabir Siyaghi, Qazvin: Hadith Emrooz Publications. 1952. p. 139.

²⁷ QAZVINI, Zakariya. *Āṭār al-Bilād wa-ḥbār al-Ibād*, Tehran: Amirkabir Publications, 1994, pp.568-654.

southern front of the current village of Barzand; this large historical site had been left with pottery and broken bricks. The study of the pottery pieces of Barzand area places the dating of this area in the time period of the early Islamic centuries to the middle of the Islamic centuries. Based on field surveys, Archaeological studies and analysis of pottery data of the site Barzand Castle, this historical site can be considered the same as the old city of Barzand, which historical sources of the 9th and 13th centuries AD have described it. Understanding the location of this city helps archaeologists of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan to learn more about the early cities of Islam in the region. By recognizing these cities, the history of Azerbaijan can be rebuilt in the early Islamic stages and settlement sites of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and commercial routes.

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