

# A Concise Report on Some Newly Found Sasanian Sites in Kazerun\*

Sirus Barfi, Mosaib Amiri,  
Soodabeh Malekzadeh, Touraj Daryaee



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## Introduction

Archeological surveys conducted in the valley of Kazerun show that this plane is one of the areas in Fars that has enjoyed human interest since prehistoric times, especially the Neolithic period which gained profound importance during the Sasanian era. The establishment of the city of Bishapur, ordered by Shapur I is one of the reasons pertaining to this planes rise in importance. In the summer of 2005, the monuments and remnants of the Kazerun plane were studied and prepared to be registered<sup>2</sup>. Ultimately registration dossiers were provided for some of the findings. Among the identified remnants and findings were some Sasanian areas which have not yet been introduced.

**Key words:** Kazerun, Sasanian, Bishapur, Galeh-Seifabad mount, clay stamp, Mohammad Jafar Mount, enclosure, Golandam Palace.

## Historiography

The initial archeological research on Kazerun started with early visits to the ancient city of Bishapur and the rock reliefs of Tang-e-Chogan. Tang-e-Chogan rock reliefs had triggered the attention of travelers such as James Morier (1809), Sir Gore Ouseley (1811), Eugene Flandin (1845), Pascal Coste (1851), Andreas and Stults (1877) and Jane Dieulafoy and Marcel Dieulafoy 1884. Ernst Hertzfeld had conducted an early study at Tang-e-Chogan which he resumed in 1928. During 1935-6 and 1936-7, Roman Ghirshman and George Sale did a series of excavations at Bishapur. Maxime Siroux studied the remains of a Sasanian fire temple 10 km south East of Kazerun in 1938. During 1940-41 he carried on Sale's excavations, while he also served as the head of the Bishapur excavations at the time. Twenty seven years after Ghirshman, Ali Akbar Sarafraz took up the Bishapur excavations again. During 1959-61 Vanden Berghe started excavation in Bala-deh, a town situated 50 km east of Kazerun. In 1964 he conducted further

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\* Touraj Daryaee visited the site with Sirus Barfi in 2006. At the time the bullae had been stored at the Kazerun Museum and were inaccessible.

<sup>2</sup> This research was planned and signed to be carried out by Sirus Barfi and The National Heritage Organization in 2005. The practical work started a month after that with the help of Mohammad Hasan Paknezhad and Hemmat Mohammadi. Registration files were ready by the fall of the same year and were sent to the national heritage organization to be officially registered in The National Heritage list. The second phase of research was carried out in 2006 with an emphasis on the three newly found areas that will be introduced in this report.



research at Dasht-e-Bozpar of Kazerun. In 1969 Sarafranz discovered the Sasanian rock reliefs of Sarab-e-Ghandil; 3 km away from Bishapur. Schippmann later resumed the studies in 1971 and Hintz took them up in 1973. Aside from the previously mentioned studies, two prehistoric surveys have also been conducted in this area, one by Judith Pullar in 1975 and another by Alireza Dashtizadeh in 2002, which resulted in finding a number of cave areas and rock shelters in the mountains around Kazerun. In the summer of 2005 Sirius Barfi carried out a survey in the region of Lake Parishan, which resulted in discovering a number of Epipalaeolithic areas. In 1975 the Shekarchi Cave was found by Ali Akbar Sarafranz during a renovation of the Tang-e-Chogan rock reliefs. Following the 1979 revolution, the Kazerun plane did not witness any other significant excavation. The only post-revolution excavation carried out in the area was in 2004 by Naser Nowruzzadeh Chegini in Bishapur. Chegini also visited some other Sasanian archeological sites such as the Galeh-Seifabad Mount<sup>3</sup>.

### **Kazerun and Bishapur in Historical Texts**

In the Sasanian era, Fars was divided into five areas; Arjan, Ardeshir Khore, Estakhr, Darabgard, and Shapur Khore which was also called Kureh and was the smallest of all. The latter's boundaries started from and did not go beyond the branches of the Shapur River. The capital of this province, that is Fars was Bishapur, also called Vehshapur. Ibn Hawgal states that: "Shapur is a large city, as large as Estakhr but more prosperous and populous, with a wealthier populace." By the mid-fourth century AH Moghadasi states: "Bishapur is on the verge of demolition. Its inhabitants are leaving town and moving to Kazerun." However, even then, Shapur was a blessed city with a lot of sugarcane, olive and grape production, plus fruits and flowers such as fig, jasmine and *kharnub*<sup>4</sup>. During Hamdollah Mostofi's era, that is two centuries after the Farsnameh of Ibn Balkhi was compiled, Vehshapur's name was given to Kazerun. Mostofi says: "As this city (Kazerun) started off as three villages, even now they are still separate." The three villages are Nodar, Darist<sup>5</sup> and Rahban.

### **Qale Seifabad Mount**

In 2003 The National Heritage Organization received a report that a number of stamps which bore Sasanian designs were found on a mount near Seifabad village. Qaleh Seifabad Mount is ten km south east of Kazerun and northwest of Seifabad village and is located near the Kazerun-Firuzabad road. This area is located in 51 42' 486" longitude and 29 31' 625" latitude, is 909 m

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<sup>3</sup> Chegini's visit took place in winter of 2000, which was prior to the illegal excavations of Qaleh Seifabad Mount.

<sup>4</sup> A tree similar to a walnut tree. It has yellow grape like flowers it's fruit are small like lentils and are covered with a layer of skin, like that of broad bean. The fruit is sweet, like honey. The fruit is used as candy and is also used to produce a kind of paste (Amid Persian Dictionary, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Deris is the name of a village in the west of the Kazerun valley. It is located between Kazerun and the ancient city of Bishapur, which is now part of Kazerun. Archeological remnants show that Deris was a very prosperous city in the early Muslim period (eyewitness observations 2005).

above sea level and is 200 m long and 115 m wide. Kazerun is a place with many natural hills and this mount is perceived to be located on top of one of these natural hills. On the east bank the mount is 25 m higher than ground level, which decreases to 4 m on the western side. The planes around the mount are used for agriculture and are at times plowed for rain fed wheat planting. The type of pottery scattered around the mount are all typically Sasanian-style pottery. Most are either red or beige, with either thin or thick clay coating. Most found items are large crocks known as *pithos*<sup>6</sup>. The scattered clay *pithos* found in the area are all made of thick clay with very thick edges which were used to store food and supplies<sup>7</sup>. The clay objects are designed with parallel slots/lines on their neck and snakelike lines on the main body. Finer clayware are designed with carved geometric designs. A small percentage of the objects are simple, with no design. Illegal excavations have led to a lot of broken crocks and scattered clay pieces found on top of the mount. A number of holes have been illegally dug on the western banks of the mount. They are mostly 1 m wide and 1/5 m deep. There have also been glass findings in the illegal excavation area which are believed to belong to the Sasanian era. These glass pieces are light brown with circular designs and slightly deep oval shaped marks which are called finger designs or beehive designs. Illegal excavations are not the only calamity that has befallen this mount. Recently a gas corporation has divided the mount into eastern/eastern sides in order to be able to pass gas lines.

### **Bullae Found at Qaleh Seifabad Mount**

More than 27 clay bullae and many clay pieces have also been found near the illegally dug holes. Each bulla bears the impression of at least 2 to 5 stamps. The design on two pieces of clay found there is of most significance. Together they are part of a clay dish that was broken during an illegal excavation is beige in color and has thick clay coating with deep circular shapes on its outer surface. Among the 27 clay bullae, used to stamp and seal the dishes, 13 are in good condition and the rest are broken. The designs on the stamps include camel, stag, oxen, ram, scorpion and a palm tree plus two types of crowns which were the imperial Sasanian insignia. In the Sasanian era such insignia were used to signify and identify royal families and the elite. When it comes to simple stamps we must separate the insignia of ordinary people from those of the royal and the elite. The elite insignia were used in the Sasanian era for distinguishing the great families. These insignia included simple geometric shapes, crowns and plant/animal designs which have a very long historical precedent in the Middle East. Sasanians favorite animal designs included the ram, horse, camel, lion, deer, gazelle and birds such as the rooster, peacock, eagle, and some water birds with webbed feet. Among the plant designs vine leaves and branches plus palm designs were very recurrent, which shows their popularity in this

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<sup>6</sup> *Pithos* are very large clay dishes used in ancient Greece to store food or liquids.

<sup>7</sup> The edges of some types reach a thickness of 10 cm.

era<sup>8</sup>. Plant and animal designs were used in different artistic forms in the Sasanian era. These forms consisted of rock reliefs, metalwork, plaster work, tile work, textiles and stamp carvings. Among the designs found in Qaleh Seifabad Mount, ram and camel designs recur most. Some of the stamps bear Middle Persian inscriptions, which are to be studied and transliterated by Professor Touraj Daryae<sup>9</sup>.

## Conclusion

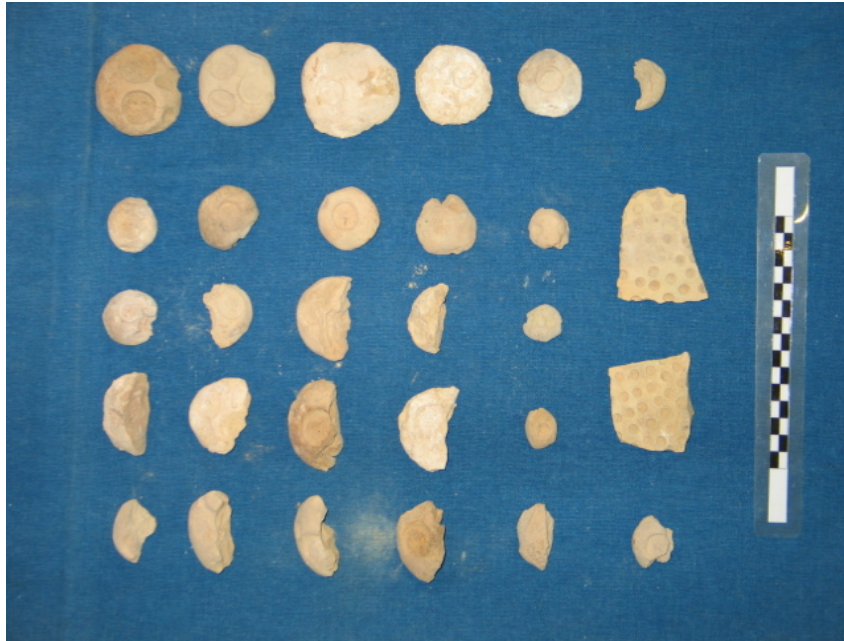
It is difficult to provide an approximate chronology for these archeological sites. Regarding Qaleh Seifabad Mount, we must wait until the completion of the reading of the excavated bullae. What we know regarding the use of this mount is that based on the pieces of large clay crocks and the number of clay stamp prints found in the area, Qaleh Seifabad Mount was used as a storage and warehouse during the Sasanian era. Because of its strategic location on a rocky mountain, it is assumed to have been a structure of important defensive value. Further excavation in this ancient site is needed and can help us better evaluate the use of this structure in the Sasanian era. The valley of Kazerun needs further intense research to reveal the connection between the structures and buildings and how each was connected to Bishapur.

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<sup>8</sup> The popularity of the vine and palm designs continue into the Islamic period and started to be known as Eslimi designs.

<sup>9</sup> Talk with Professor Touraj Daryae, summer of 2007.

## Photos of Bullae Found at Qaleh Seifabad Mount



An overall of 27 bullae found at Qaleh Seifabad Mount. Plus two pieces of broken glass with beehive designs. Most stamps are circular. They bear an image in the center and Middle Persian inscriptions on the borders.



A Bulla bearing imprints of three stamps. The upper imprint resembles a camel in motion. The lower right bears an insignia impression and the lower left is not recognizable.



close up of Insignia impression from the triple impression bulla.



Close up of camel impression from the triple impression bulla.



A Bulla with the impression of a bust and crown. It most probably belongs to a royal persona. The crown has a crescent on top with upward pointing wings or rays on sides.



Bust impression close up.



Insignia impression.



Palm tree impression.





Palm tree impression close up.



Frontal view of wedge shaped bulla with Stag impression.



Right side view of stag impression.



left side view of stag impression.



Stag impression close up.



A bulla with two impressions. Bottom impression is that of oxen. Top impression is unrecognizable.



Oxen impression close up.  
pł'mtn'  
Frāmtan



Bulla with bird impression.



Bird impression close up.



Bulla with camel impression. Edges of bulla have been chipped off.



Bulla with camel impression.



Bulla with double or triple impression. Only camel impression is recognisable.



Bulla with triple impressions. All have been eroded, and not recognizable.



Bulla with Double impressions. Both impressions are eroded and unrecognizable.



Boar impression.



Unrecognizable impression of four hoofed mammal. Most probably a ram, with its head turned back.





Unrecognizable impression of four hooved mammal close up. Most probably ram.



Unrecognizable impression. Most probably insignia.



Unrecognizable impression (close up). Most probably an insignia,



Unrecognizable impression. bulla attached to a broken piece of clay dish/crock



Unrecognizable impression. Bulla attached to broken piece of clay work close up.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.



Unrecognizable impression.

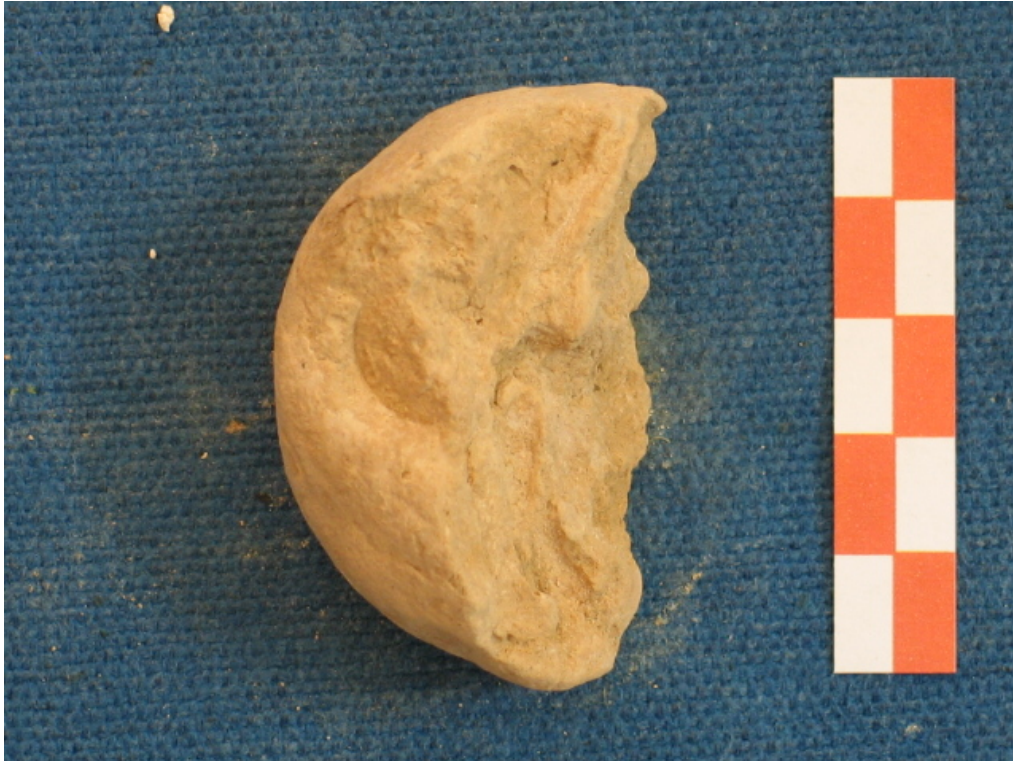


Broken bulla with unrecognizable impression.





Broken bulla with unrecognizable impression.



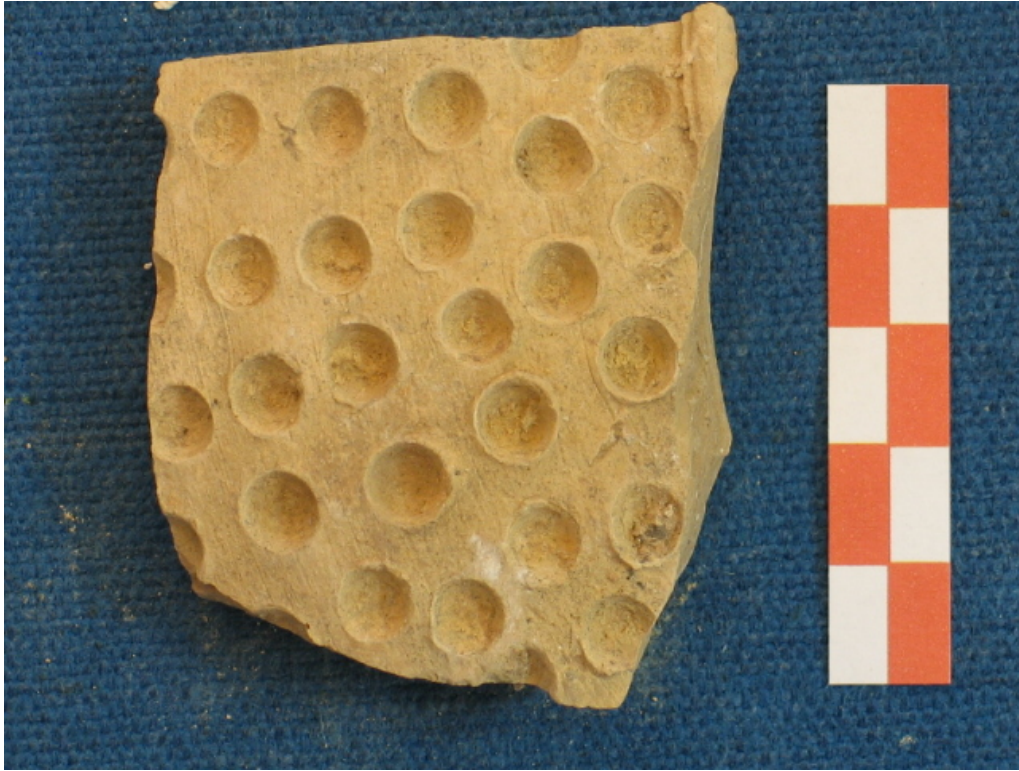
Broken bulla with unrecognizable impression.



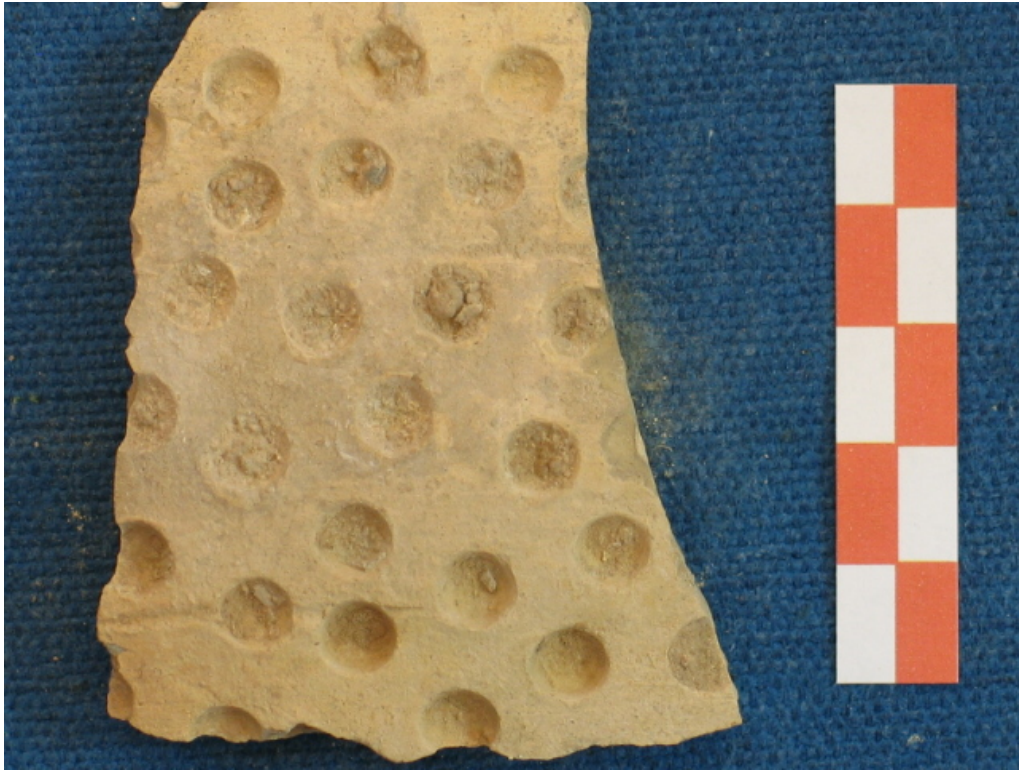
Broken bulla with unrecognizable impression.



Broken bulla with unrecognizable impression.



Piece of glass with beehive designs.



Piece of glass with beehive designs.

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