

A Study of Protohistoric and Historical Settlement Patterns in the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn Plain, Iran

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La piccola valle di Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn giace nell'Iran nord-occidentale. A dispetto delle sue modeste dimensioni, che potrebbero suggerirne un ruolo marginale nello sviluppo storico della regione, la valle ebbe considerevole importanza. Essa rappresentò un raccordo fondamentale nella connessione fra aree molto distanti fra loro quali il Lago Van, la valle del fiume Araxes e il bacino del Lago Orumiyeh. Scopo del presente contributo è la messa in risalto di tutte le evidenze archeologiche note in una prospettiva diacronica e l'analisi dello sviluppo dei modelli insediativi nell'area attraverso l'uso di tecnologie GIS. Attenzione particolare è stata riservata al complesso delle strutture fortificate – costruite generalmente in posizioni strategiche –, che garantivano alta difendibilità e il controllo delle direttrici di ingresso alla pianura. Fine ultimo è la comprensione dei meccanismi di interazione tra la popolazione e l'ambiente nei tempi antichi all'interno di questa importante area.

INTRODUCTION

The small Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn valley (from now on QZD) is located in the mountains of Northwestern Iran (Fig. 1).¹ Despite its modest size, which might suggest that it had a modest role in the historical developments of the region, in truth this place was of considerable importance. The small valley constituted a fundamental hub in the connection between very distant areas such as Lake Van, the valley of the River Araxes and the basin of Lake Orumiyeh. Archaeological investigations were conducted for about a decade in the late 1960s and '70s, during which archaeologists concentrated their efforts on the investigation of the great fortress of Bastam (Fig. 2). Much of the area's archaeological potential has yet to be investigated. The aim of this contribution is to consider all currently known archaeological evidence from a diachronic

¹ The authors would like to thank Stephan Kroll for the precious material and information shared over the years, to which this study is deeply indebted. The authors produced the content of this article jointly. Specifically, R. Dan wrote 'Geographical features of the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn plain', 'History of Archaeological investigations in the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn plain', 'Prehistoric and protohistoric period sites in the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn plain (Neolithic-Early Iron Age)', 'Historical period sites in the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn plain (Middle Iron Age – Middle Ages)', 'Uartian sites and inscriptions in the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn plain: an archaeological and historical assessment', 'Site catalogue: the archaeological data', and 'New archaeological sites in the Qara Žiā'-al-Dīn plain', while D. Salaris wrote 'The study of the settlement pattern', 'Viewshed and Intervisibility Analyses' and 'Data Acquisition and Procedures'. 'Introduction', 'Results and discussion' and 'Conclusions' were written jointly. Figures 1, 3, 12-16 were produced by D. Salaris; Figures 2, 4-8, 10 were made by R. Dan in the QZD plain in 2015 and 2018. Figures 11 and 17-20 were made by R. Dan.