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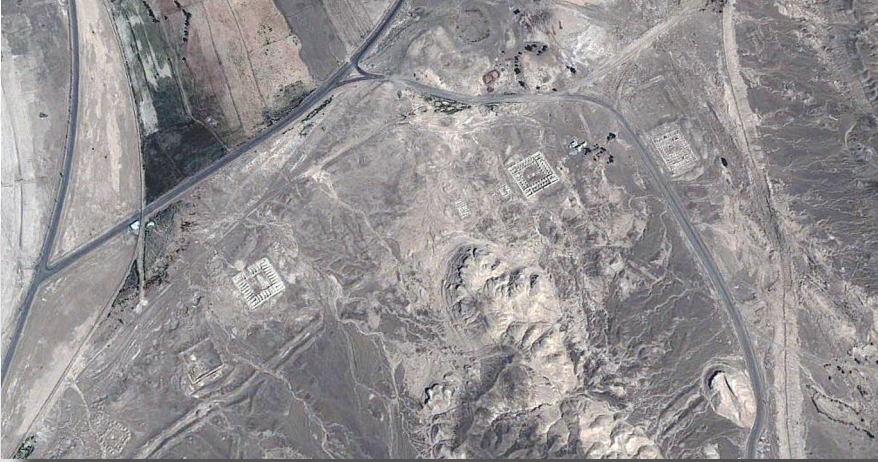


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DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO
ISMEO/ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI SUL MEDITERRANEO E L’ORIENTE
Series Minor
LXXX

**DIGITAL ARCHAEOLOGY
FROM THE IRANIAN PLATEAU (1962-1977)**
Collected Papers on the occasion of the 10th anniversary
of the demise of Umberto Scerrato

edited by
BRUNO GENITO



Bruno Genito, Professor of Iranian and Central Asian Art and Archaeology at the Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”

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NAPOLI 2014

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Giulio Maresca (UNO)

BYTES FROM INK/INK FROM BYTES: THE COMPLEXITY OF DATA FROM THE
ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES AT DAHĀNE-YE GHOLĀMĀN,
QAL‘A-YE SAM AND QAL‘A-YE TEPE¹

In the autumn of 1959, IsMEO (Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente) started its archaeological activities (1959-1978) in the eastern Iranian region of Sistan (Fig. 1) with a survey carried out by its Co-Founder and President, Prof. Giuseppe Tucci (*Anonymous* 1959). After two preliminary campaigns in 1960 and 1961 (*Anonymous* 1961a; *Anonymous* 1961b), from 1962 IsMEO's attention focused on the site of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, in the vicinity of the village called Qal‘a-ye Now, about 30 kms south-east of the city of Zabol. Preliminary analysis both on pottery fragments collected during surface surveys and on the plans of the buildings detectable at the site² (Fig. 2) soon led to the conclusion that it

¹ I met Umberto Scerrato for the first time in the early summer of the year 2001 at the Centro Scavi of the former IsIAO (Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente) in Rome. I was introduced to him by Prof. Bruno Genito (in that period supervisor for my MA thesis) in order to join the activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission at masjed-e jom‘e in Isfahan. During those summer days (we used to meet at Centro Scavi almost every two days), the team headed by Scerrato concentrated exclusively on the organisation of the mission at Isfahan (planned that year in September-October) and on the study of the extant data. One morning, however, after Prof. Scerrato learned about my interest in pre-Islamic Iran, he called me to his desk and told me: “I’ll show you some interesting stuff!” He showed me three pottery fragments: a fragment of a “Dipinta Storica Sistana”, a fragment of “Sistan Ribbed Ware” and a fragment of “Sistan Burnished Ware”, only adding, “Sistan is such a great place!” and then started talking about his fieldworks in Sistan during the previous decades. That was my first contact with Iranian Sistan. Unfortunately, the international crisis following the World Trade Center attack on 11 September prevented us from leaving for Isfahan that autumn and Scerrato was too ill to join the Mission at Isfahan the following season. I deeply regret that I did not have a chance to work with him in the field and that he passed away before I started working on the materials from IsMEO archaeological activities in Sistan for my Ph.D. dissertation at UNO (Maresca 2008).

² The plans of the buildings at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān were in fact detectable at the site even before the first excavations, thanks to characteristic saline outcrops which had left some well-defined whitish traces on the terrain at the points where the old walls were buried.

was probably an important site of a possible Achaemenid age (Scerrato 1962). At Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, the late Prof. Umberto Scerrato directed several seasons of excavations (1962-1965 and 1975-1977) and restoration activities (Scerrato 1966a; 1966b; 1970; 1972; 1974a; 1979; Mariani 1977; 1979), revealing a huge complex of buildings – including some of a monumental character (Fig. 3) – which could have represented the main urban centre of ancient Zranka/Drangiana and one of the few archaeologically documented urban settlements on the Iranian Plateau for the Achaemenid period. Alongside with its historical and archaeological importance, the significance of the site from the point of view of the history of religions soon also emerged, particularly after the evidence brought to light at building QN3 (Gnoli 1966; 1967).

Besides the main archaeological activities at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, the scientific interest of the IsMEO team headed by Scerrato was attracted by two other smaller sites. The first one was the fortified citadel of Qal‘a-ye Tepe (Fig. 4), located in the upper Posht-ab area, about 20 kilometres north-east of the city of Zabul, in the vicinity of the village of Kazemabad and near the ruins of the Islamic sanctuary known as Bibi Dust, some kilometres north of the site of the ancient Zahedan.

In 1961 and 1962 the site was the scene of a series of soundings aimed at investigating the development of its fortification system, characterised by a double curtain wall. Excavations only made it possible to detect three phases in the life of the citadel with certainty (each one divided into several sub-phases), dating back to a very wide time span between the 3rd century BC and the 15th century AD. A fourth and more ancient phase was very partially detected by the excavator at some of the trenches but, unfortunately, the high level of the aquifer (and also the need to direct more logistics operations towards the important discoveries that had been made at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān in the meantime) prevented any deeper excavation.

More limited in time and also in space, on the other hand, were the activities carried out at the fortified citadel of Qal‘a-ye Sam (Fig. 5), located some kilometres west of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, about 33 kilometres south-west of Zabul, towards the western limit of the present-day Hilmand delta. After a preliminary survey carried out during the 1960 campaign, the IsMEO Archaeological Mission dug some trenches in 1964 and drew a rough plan of the structures visible inside the perimeter of the citadel (thanks to the same saline outcrop phenomenon as Dahāne-ye Gholāmān). Three phases were

detected at the site by Scerrato, who proposed a chronology dating back to the very first Parthian (or even late Seleucid) period for the most ancient of them.

The aims of the activities at Qal'a-ye Tepe and Qal'a-ye Sam were to investigate the development both of the settlement pattern and the ceramic sequence during the Seleucid, Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic post-Achaemenid historical phases in that area. Unfortunately the results of these soundings, were never published in detail; they were just hinted at in the publication regarding building QN3 at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān (Scerrato 1966a, 466-467), in the communication written by Scerrato for the Dante Alighieri Society in Florence (Scerrato 1970, 136-139) and in the brief communication on IsMEO archaeological activities in Sistan read during the Fifth International Congress on Iranian Art and Archaeology held at Teheran in April 1968 (Scerrato 1972, 202-203).³

Even if the political events leading to the Islamic Revolution in 1979 marked an end for Italian field activities in Sistan at a moment when the publication of these efforts was only at a preliminary stage, the attention of IsMEO (later IsIAO) and (from 2003 onwards) of the Chair of Iranian Archaeology and Art History (Prof. Bruno Genito) at UNO towards these archaeological excavations never ceased during the following decades, as testified by the publication of several contributions regarding various issues related to these scientific activities, as recently summarized (Genito 2012a, 365-366; Genito, Maresca *et alii* 2013, 183-184).

Many questions, nevertheless, remain still open and a further scientific effort is needed in order to give a more useful and well-defined form to the complexity of data from this archaeological work.

The massive documental legacy of those excavations is represented by a huge (even if, unfortunately, incomplete) “multi-stratified” archive which reflects not only the complexity and the considerable duration of these archaeological activities but also the long period of time that has passed since they were carried out. In addition to more than one hundred pages of documents (sometimes both in the first handwritten and in the second revised and typewritten versions) such as working notes by Scerrato,

³ In recent years, nevertheless, the writer carried out a preliminary reappraisal of the results from the excavation trenches at Qal'a-ye Sam (Maresca 2008, 68-70) as well as a preliminary study of the pottery brought to light during these activities (Maresca 2008, 135-139; Maresca, *in press*). The data from the soundings at Qal'a-ye Tepe and the related pottery fragments were also the object of some preliminary studies (Maresca 2008, 70-72 and 123-130; Olimpo 2009).

inventory lists of the most significant finds⁴ and, unfortunately, only a very few excerpts from the excavation diaries, the great bulk of the archive is made up of photographic materials⁵ and, to a lesser extent, of excavation drawings.⁶

In 2003, on the basis of an agreement between IsIAO and UNO, the entire documental archive of the IsMEO archaeological missions at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, Qal'a-ye Tepe and Qal'a-ye Sam started to be gradually transferred to CISA (Centro Interdipartimentale di Servizi di Archeologia) at UNO in order to be properly archived in digital format (Genito, Maresca *et alii* 2013, 187-189).

In addition to the documental dataset, the “material” legacy of these archaeological excavations is represented by thousands of artefacts (mainly pottery but also some examples of choroplastics, metal and stone objects) selected from the whole corpus of excavated materials (or materials collected during preliminary surveys) and transferred to Italy in the late 1960s on the basis of an agreement between IsMEO and the former Imperial Iranian Antiquities Service.⁷ While some objects were stored at MNAOr (Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale) – today MNAO (Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale “Giuseppe Tucci”) – in Rome, by far the greatest part of the objects were stored at the *Centro Scavi* of IsMEO (later IsIAO), in Rome.

As far as pottery is concerned, the assemblage at our disposal in Italy is represented by 3216 ceramic fragments coming from the excavations of some rooms of buildings QN2, QN3, QN4, QN5 and QN6 at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān,

⁴ Two inventory lists were compiled during those years: an inventory list of some finds (234 entries) from the 1962-1965 excavation campaigns at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān and another inventory list of some finds from the soundings carried out in 1964 at Qal'a-ye Sam (232 entries), both with photographs and, in some cases, drawings.

⁵ This photographic dataset consists of over one thousand films with different numbers of frames relating to the activities at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān (932 films), Qal'a-ye Tepe (41 films) and Qal'a-ye Sam (96 films), thousands of excavation photographs and photographs of finds (printed from the original films over the years) and hundreds of slides taken during those years, probably to be shown during conferences, university lectures, etc.

⁶ Besides some general maps of Sistan and of the areas in which the three excavated sites are located, this part of the archive consists of 125 drawings and preliminary sketches of excavation and restoration activities at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, sixteen drawings from the activities at Qal'a-ye Tepe and by only five excavation drawings from the activities at Qal'a-ye Sam.

⁷ Unfortunately the criteria on the basis of which this division was made could not be determined precisely. Scerrato's decision, of course, was firmly guided by scientific considerations but it was also probably affected by some logistic and bureaucratic issues.

by 1271 ceramic fragments from trench QT and from sounding QT11 carried out at Qal'a-ye Tepe and by about two hundred ceramic fragments from the preliminary survey and from the soundings carried out at Qal'a-ye Sam.⁸ The study of these three *corpora*, started in 2005 in the framework of the activities carried out by the Chair of Iranian Archaeology and Art History at UNO (Maresca 2008, 100-139; Maresca 2010; Olimpo 2009), is still ongoing in the framework of ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S., with special attention to archaeometric issues, thanks to the collaboration between the Chair of Iranian Archaeology and Art History and a team of scholars from DiSTAR (Dipartimento di Scienze della Terra, dell'Ambiente e delle Risorse) at Naples Federico II University, headed by Prof. Vincenzo Morra (Maresca in press).

An overall re-interpretation of the data from these archaeological excavations, also taking into account the particularly long time that has elapsed since the end of the field activities carried out by IsMEO in Sistan,⁹ could only be considered completely accurate and effective if it were supported by a meticulous reconstruction, re-organization and re-examination of the extant paper dataset by means of modern technological tools. In this perspective, the activities of ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S., will provide a powerful and indeed essential research instrument for the overall digital management of the documentation produced during the excavations at the sites of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, Qal'a-ye Tepe and Qal'a-ye Sam (Fig. 6).

Being a systematic digital method for storing, organizing and managing the printed photographs and (together with them) the huge amount of spatial-related archaeological information produced by the Italian archaeological activities at those three sites by means of a WebGIS¹⁰ (Genito Maresca *et*

⁸ After IsIAO ceased its glorious activity between the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, all the ceramic fragments from Qal'a-ye Sam and all the "diagnostic" fragments from Dahāne-ye Gholāmān (already selected in 2006 from the extant materials: Maresca 2008 and 2010) previously stored at Centro Scavi were transferred to CISA at UNO. The "un-diagnostic" fragments from Dahāne-ye Gholāmān as well as the entire *corpus* of ceramic fragments from Qal'a-ye Tepe were instead transferred from Centro Scavi to be stored at MNAO in Rome.

⁹ In addition to scientific advances affecting the specific field of Iranian archaeology over such a long time span, we must also bear in mind that IsMEO's archaeological activities in Iranian Sistan started over five decades ago, when standard methodological procedures of excavation were, generally speaking, completely different from those typical of contemporary stratigraphic archaeological approaches.

¹⁰ The idea of implementing a WebGIS platform in order to manage the documental dataset from the excavations at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān was investigated for the first time thanks to the work of a young student at UNO, who wrote his MA thesis about the topic (under the

alii 2013; Genito *et alii*, in press), ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S. can be considered a continuation in some way of another scientific project, promoted in 2003 by CISA at UNO and directed by Prof. Bruno Genito. This project, called *DI.AR.IN.S. - DIgitalizzazione ARchivio INformatizzato Sistan*, focused on the digital acquisition of the main bulk of data regarding the IsMEO archaeological activities at historical sites in Sistan and developed in the framework of a broader-based effort by CISA to create a Web Portal called “ArcheoZone: Portale dell’Archeologia Classica ed Orientale” (www.archeozone.it Fig. 7).¹¹

The present ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S., which focuses on making the large amount of data already digitally processed progressively but systematically available online,¹² is intended to be a fundamental step in a more thorough process which will eventually lead (within a few years) to the publication of the final, comprehensive results of these archaeological activities carried out by IsMEO.¹³ In addition, the WebGIS technological framework will permanently remain as a system susceptible of continuous improvement, since any new data produced in the future will be constantly uploaded into the system to be processed and “re-queried” in order to gain new information so that a “virtuous circle” of information can begin (Fig. 8) which, in its turn, could lead to the publication of other forms of additional information and/or more up-to-date information, both online (by means of the already existing WebGIS ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S. platform, on which it is already planned to have a specific section for the publication of documents) and on paper (conference proceedings, thematic papers etc.). Moreover, since such scientific objectives as

supervision of Prof. Bruno Genito), exploring the possibilities offered by open source standards (Franzese 2012).

¹¹ This project was made possible thanks to financial support from the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) in the framework of the Italian operational plan for scientific research, technological development and higher education for the years 2000-2006.

¹² In this respect, one of the main aims of ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S. is to ensure that both the scientific results of research and a substantial amount of raw data can be shared as extensively as possible.

¹³ This last stage of the activities will be carried out also thanks to the kind availability of Prof. Adriano Valerio Rossi (UNO), Scientific Director of the research projects of pre-eminent Italian national interest entitled *Organizzazione territoriale e ideologia nello stato achemenide: gli insediamenti di Persepoli* (PRIN 2007ZKPPSM) and *Sedi del potere, comunicazione politica e società nell’Iran achemenide: ricerche e studi archeologici ed epigrafici* (PRIN 2009JHSEE7), a substantial part of which is devoted to the retention, study and publication of data from Dahāne-ye Gholāmān.

these have never been achieved by archaeological investigations of historical sites in the region of Sistan, the results that ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S. is expected to provide also a new scientific and methodological framework into which any future archaeological activities in the area could be included and compared or even conceived and planned.

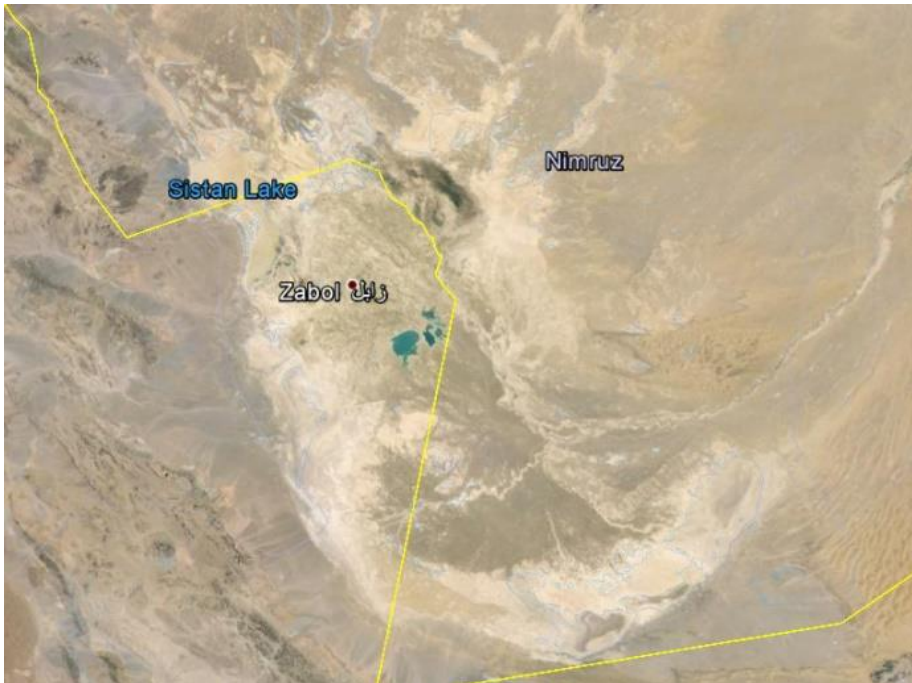


Fig. 1 - Satellite view of the eastern Iranian region of Sistan (after Google Earth)



Fig. 2 - Saline outcrops in correspondence of the buried walls of the building QN6 at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, from MAI, IsMEO, Dep. Cs. no DG4770



Fig. 3 - Excavations at building QN2, Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, from MAI, IsMEO, Dep. Cs. no DG4721



Fig. 4 - Profile of the walls encircling the citadel of Qal'a-ye Tepe, from MAI, IsMEO, Dep. Cs. 1097, 03850003



Fig. 5 - The monumental tower-like entrance at Qal'a-ye Sam from MAI, IsMEO, Dep. Cs. no FB3067-11

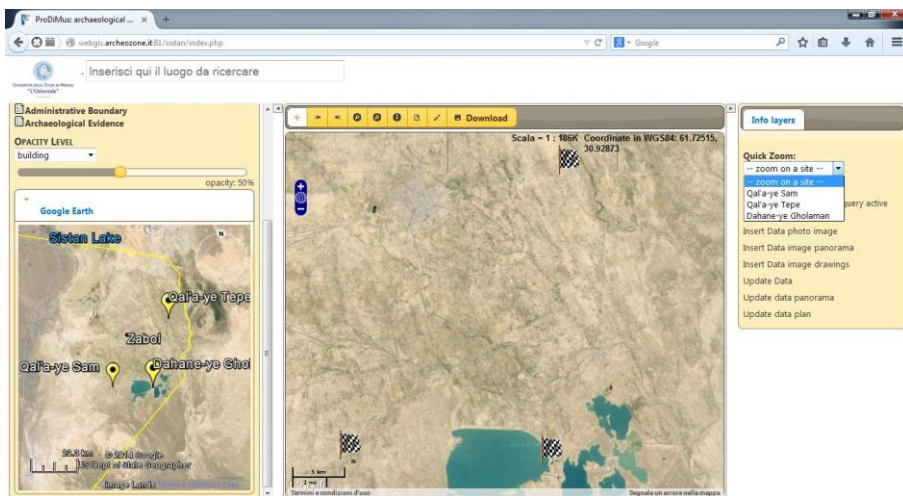


Fig. 6 - Flags and pinpoints indicating the sites of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, Qal'a-ye Tepe and Qal'a-ye Sam as shown through the ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S. WebGIS interface

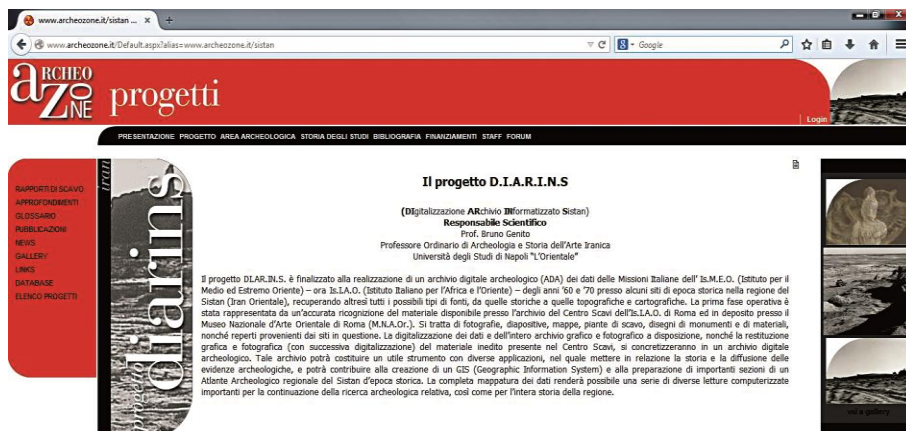


Fig. 7 - DIAR.IN.S. Web page on the ArcheoZone portal



Fig. 8 - Diagram showing the “virtuous circle” of information: information gained archiving and processing extant data, if considered as a new dataset itself, can be archived in its turn and consequently produce, after being properly processed, fresh data and new information, (Diagram by the author)

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