



FARR-E FIROUZ

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS OF
CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF IRAN (VOL 5)

SPECIAL EDITION
IN HONOR OF
DR. FIROUZ BAGHERZADEH

EDITED BY:
SHAHIN ARYAMANESH

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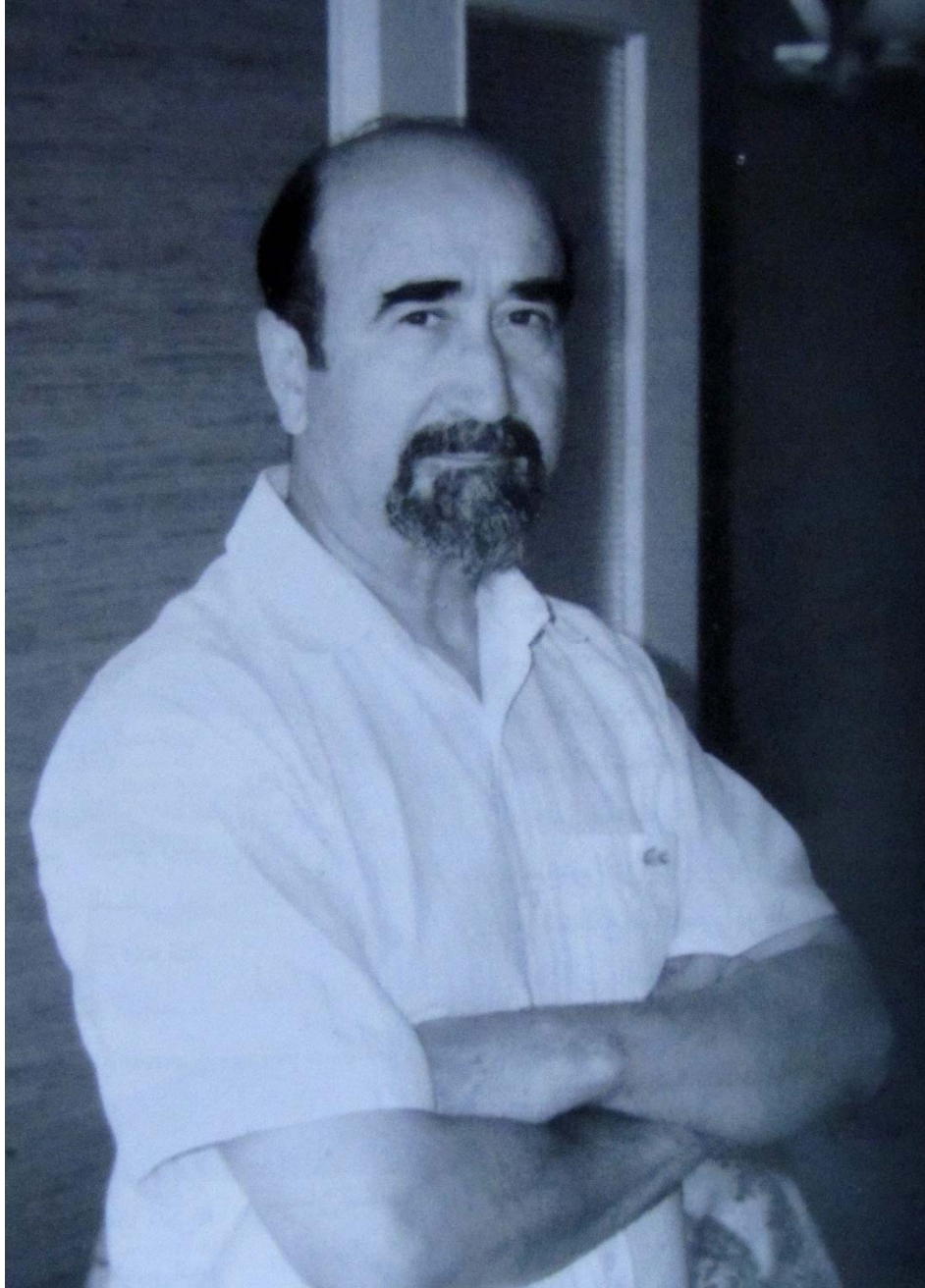
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Farr-e Firouz

Firouz Bagherzadeh was born on 31 May 1930 in Tehran, Persia. He graduated in the Major of literature and English in 1344 and was recruited at the General Directorate of Fine Arts in 1335. Then, in 1959, he went to the United States through the Fulbright Scholarship and received his Master's Degree in Art History from the University of Illinois. Bagherzadeh then studied in the archeology and history and art of Iran in Paris and then returned to Iran, where he founded the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research on December 19, 1959.

Several archaeologists have studied the management of Dr. Bagherzadeh at the Iranian Archeological Center and have been focusing on his valuable activities. Most of the work done by Dr. Bagherzadeh during the presidency of the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research is worthwhile. Preventing the exodus of ancient objects from Iran, preventing commercial Excavation, and the regular holding of archaeological conferences, are some of the important actions of Dr. Bagherzadeh.

Farr-e Firouz includes scientific Archaeology articles in Honor of Firouz Bagherzadeh.

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The Nomadic Alternative and the Iranian Occupation of the Plateau

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University of Naples

Introduction

The Iranian occupation of the Plateau is a controversial and long debated issue dealt with by differing scholars during the last century. The quantity and the political nature of those aggregations of peoples, widespread over the plateau some of which called Iranians, has characterized the studies and research activities of the historical, philological and archaeological different scientific perspectives, which did not yet have elaborated fully satisfying answers on the matter: the recognized ethnic identity; the exact chronological collocation and the complex relationship with the other Indo-Europeans people.

One of the perspective with which to look at the possible those Iranian groups of peoples may certainly be the one of the so-called Nomadic Alternative. This is a concept very well known in modern socio-anthropological literature and evidenced in the last twenty years by the contributions of W. Weissleder (1978) and T.J. Barfield (1993).

Inside the theoretical debate inspiring those volumes, the pastoral nomadism has been considered a very specific socio-economic phenomenon, one of the greatest forms of human adaptation; in other words, a sort of “another” life-system, alternative to the agriculture, with a productive economic character as well. This viewpoint had fully merged

already in the scientific archaeological debate a little bit before, in the 1960s and 1970s of last century. In this respect it is important to remember the contributions of Cohen and Service (ed. 1978), Claessen and Skalnik (1978; 1981), specially as far as the lines of the human social evolution were concerned, either on the trends of the western “social anthropology” (Fried 1965; Service 1962; 1971; 1975) or of the east-European historical archaeological tradition (Khazanov 1981; 1982; ed. 1984).

More than twenty years later, those interpretative criteria adopted and suggested in those contributions, have not been very much followed in the historical archeology of Asia, and did not widespread outside of the geographic and chronological traditional grounds of the Eurasian steppes, and of the proto-historical studies. Nonetheless, this approach could have been differently utilized in the archaeological research, especially regarding geographical and cultural areas, like the Iranian plateau, where a strong nomadic influence always occurred across the long history of such a sedentary civilization, as the Iranian. There were some exceptions as the pioneristic works of Mc Adams (1965; 1981) Mc Adams and Nissen (1972) Johnson (1972; 1973; 1980; 1987) related to the proto-historical periods in Susiana, or of Maurer Trinkaus to the Parthian and Sasanian periods (1981; 1983; 1987) in Khorasan.

In the Iranian plateau, as is very well known, there were many aspects to be considered and investigated to the light of a nomadic perspective of study in the archaeology of historical times as well. A “territorial history” of the archaeological remains of ancient Iran has not yet been written, though a related landscape archaeological approach could have contained aspects suitable for developing particular perspectives of studies, including those related to the earliest character (nomadic ?) of the ancient Iranian society. Very rarely scholars of ancient Iran discussed, in fact, such particular perspectives regarding the relationships between the civilization of the sedentary and nomadic Iranian peoples and their cultural relationships to the Eurasian steppes and in the particular the possible “nomadic” character of the early Iranians in the plateau as well.

Telling the truth the relationships between ancient Iran and the cultures of the steppes have been much more investigated as regards as the Sasanian epoch, when a large amount of particular archaeological items (like belt-fittings, saddles, swords, arrow-heads, stirrups etc.), were found in the whole Eurasia. These relationships allowed one to particularly emphasize the technical-stylistic and cultural affinities between the mediaeval nomads of the palaeo-Turkish origin (i.e. Huns, Avars, Bulgars, Khazars) and Magyars and the so-called late Sasanian style (Balint 1978; Genito 1989; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1996; Genito and Madaras 2005).¹

¹ The belt fittings, as we know, were the most common material remains and the most characteristic of typical horsemen's belongings amongst the finds of the Eurasian middle ages grave-goods. The techniques, decoration and style of these objects are valuable to help with attempts to reconstruct the historical cultural foundation of the social hierarchy of these peoples. The techniques with which these objects were made, and the combination of the decorative themes of a far-away animal style tradition (in particular in the use of griffin), with the more modern vegetal tendril in a wonderful synthesis of tradition and innovation, are all elements on which the typological and chronological interpretations of scholars are based in recent years. In a way connected to the Avar world are the very famous silver belt fittings of the Martinovka-type in Ukraine, those of the Saltovo-Majaskaja culture of the sphere of Khazarian influence, as well as other objects coming from the treasures of Mala Pereščepina, also in Ukraine, and of Nagyszentmiklós in to-day's Romania. This last treasure, kept in Vienna and once attributed to the Huns, Avars and Sasanians, is made up of 23 objects, belt fittings, vases, cups and dishes in gold, decorated with different themes, both animal or vegetal. The general style of these objects recalls three different cultural tendencies: 1. the ancient steppe cultural tradition; 2. the silver plates and dishes of the Sasanian period and 3. the local cultural "substratum". A very large number of bibliographical references have been dedicated to the treasure, but there are still many unsolved related problems. In any case the whole set of objects of the treasure seems to be stylistically inspired by a sort of barbarian-Baroque cultural world, very different from those previously used, whereas pure linear forms prevail, very rich in ornaments, where the so-called *horror vacui* dominates. The general style of the objects quite easily leads one to link them to the Avars, especially owing to the use of punching, and the richness of the vegetal decoration. What is really difficult to interpret is the incomplete and unfinished character of most of the decoration of the objects, though the detail appears to have been meticulously worked.

It would have been significant in the archaeological ground to analyze with this perspective also the formative processes of the Achaemenian state, whose understanding and comprehension could enhance that very complicated historical moment of the human peopling and the economic and social history during the middle and late Iron Age (8th-4th century BCE) in the Iranian plateau.²

The Pastoral Nomadism in Ancient Eurasia. Outline of the Research Trends

The history of the nomadic movement in ancient Eurasia is, in its general lines rather understandable, very less detectable, nonetheless, in details, in particular as far as the analyses of the archaeological data are concerned. The related historical frame, still today at disposal is, in fact, essentially based on the field data collected up to the 1960s by an archaeology now completely out-of-date, both for the premises, methods and aims. The whole consequent historical-methodological reconstruction is marked by some evident interpretative paradoxes³ amongst which the ones perhaps more significant are certainly represented by two necessities, each other certainly convergent, but often also contrasting:

² A methodological approach partially oriented in this direction is certainly that present in the book of Vogelsang (1992) where it is evident the author's effort in investigating differing theories and ideas regarding the origin and nature of the Achaemenid state.

³For a worldwide history of the documentation of the archaeological research on Eurasia in the ex Soviet Union cf. *Archeologija SSSR* 1981; for the scytho-sarmatian period *Archeologija SSSR* 1992 and for the central Asian geo-cultural areas *Archeologija SSSR* 1989. Completely different appears today the archaeological approaches in Russia and Central Asia, where many different international joint field activities started either to re-consider and re-think the old complex of data or to initiate new projects to the light of more updated methods and strategies. The complexity (in number and in contexts) of the researches today in course in Russia and central Asia does not allow one to synthesize in a unique historical perspective, though particular importance have new editorial initiatives like the review *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia*, new editorial dress to the *Rossiskaja Archeologija* etc.

1. to propose, on chronological basis, the comparisons of numerous typologies of artefacts, in search of elements of similarity and dissimilarity characterizing classes of materials and, then, possibly differing cultures;
2. to try to recognize in those classes ethnical correlates, historically already pre-constituted.

The culture of the nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppes in its main historical chronological and ethnic-cultural coordinates, the Iranian (Iron Age, 10th-1st century BC ca.) and palaeo-Turkish (4th-10th century AD ca.), has prevalently been the subject of historical research. The archaeological data have largely been utilized in order to reconstruct the first and the second type of research, even whether those cultures, nonetheless, have not sufficiently been analyzed to the light of an autonomous and detailed field archaeological approach. A symposium on the methods and work strategies and on the significance of an archaeology of the steppes, held in Naples in 1992 (Genito ed. 1994), was aimed at putting in evidence the enormous potential of the archaeological data, widespread over the Eurasian steppes, still to be analyzed and exploited to the light of an archaeological interpretation.⁴

Generally, these societies with a primary social stratification have been put, at the interpretative level, between the so-called “chiefdoms” (Earle 1987; Carneiro 1982), political structures where an initial formative process of a political leadership starts to prevail, and the proto-state communities (Guidi 2000). Time by time dominant classes would have been started to be formed, and in the pastoral world they would have been characterized as military élites destined to emerge amongst tribal groups (Genito 1995a; 1995b; 2002a; 2002b; Genito 2006).

⁴ Most recently a volume of the BAR series edited by Jeannine Davis-Kimball, Eileen M. Murphy, Ludmila Koryakova and Leonid T. Yablonsky (2000) has developed points on the topic and it seems to have gone more in details as regards as the Iron Age is concerned.

The Evidence of Material Culture: The State of Art

Between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE new phenomenon in Eurasia realized, in particular in relation with the evolution of the role of the horse and with its definite transformation from a draught to a riding animal (Sereni 1982). Starting from the 8th century BCE in their movement these nomadic peoples had a close contact, often in conflict, with all the main sedentary peoples of the period like Greeks, Assyrians, Persians, and Chinese, who were going to realize state political sedentary systems. These peoples with major or minor details have left in their inscriptions, chronicles and literary works a large evidence of those contacts. The first and the most important of these nomadic groups described with different names by Greeks, Assyrians, Persians, has been referred to that of the Scythians. They are described amongst the first skillful horsemen to have introduced in Asia and the whole ancient near-eastern area the horse fighting techniques, the use of the arc and of the trefoil socketed arrow-heads as well. They were famous for horses and for an admirable and an exceptional material production, artistic in character as well, prevalently expressed through golden and precious metal objects. The animals sculptured in stone, incised in wood and bone, cast in bronze, hammered in gold and even tattooed on the skin, are the preferred subjects of this production; for the technical and stylistic modes of this representation it was defined “Animal Art” or “Animal Style” (Rostovcev 1922; 1931). The most important works in this style, known in the whole Iron Age cultures, widespread over Siberia up to the Black Sea in the steppes comprised between Mongolia and Carpathian mountains. These are objects datable between the 6th and the 3rd century BC ca., mainly representing elks, deers, rams, ibexes, roe-deers, antelopes, wild boars, tigers, panthers, wolves, hares, eagles, swans, geese, ducks, cocks and, amongst the domestic animals, the horse, certainly produced for a political leadership, since little time formed. The successfully later definition of *Art of the Steppes* (Jettmar 1967) was able to synthesize a cultural complexity, made of styles, iconographies, religious beliefs, myths etc., having the animal figure in its center. The exceptional dominance of

the animal representation and the particular technique used in reproducing it, did not exclude, nonetheless, the use of geometric and of vegetal world ornaments (rose-windows, rosettes, palmettos, lotus flowers etc.). The figurative cultural trait mostly characteristic is, nonetheless, that animal representation either naturalistic or fantastic: naturalistic in the forms and in the anatomical details and fantastic in the original compositions utilized. Confederacies were formed and broken, tribal names borrowed, changed or mutated into a different form. The fluidity in those cultures consequent of their instable and dynamic socio-economic nomadic character, made both the written and archaeological related records difficult to be interpreted with certainty. It may seem strange that a material production, figural in character could have travelled so far inland and appeared with no apparent signs of early development in more than one place at about the same time. It is worth considering that the “Scythian art production” may be evidence not just of the influence of artisans but of actual population groups living in different areas with the same life style. These groups may have been more than one people of different ethnic origins having similar or at times indistinguishable styles. The “Animal style” of these “Scythians” is evident in a large amount of artefacts found in kurgans (burial mounds), thousands of which were constructed in burial areas across the steppes of Ukraine, southern Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and extending all the way to the border of China. According to the most of the scholars this “Scythian figural production” burst upon the scene around 700 BCE; the

earliest phase being the Karasuk (Mallory 1997)⁵ and Tagar⁶ material culture. Much of what has been collected is gold jewellery, horse ornaments (often gold or bronze), some weaponry, and some silver and gold vessels. The richness of these artefacts confirms ancient reports that those peoples who crossed the trade routes of Asia were fabulously wealthy. Amazingly, in addition to metal artefacts, fabric items have been found. Among them, highly decorated horse gear made of colorful felt, blankets with felt appliqué and rugs. These artefacts had been preserved in frozen tombs until their discovery in Siberia in the Altaj area near the border of China (it is the case of the famous Kurgans of Pazyrik) and in the graves of the very dry Tarim and Taklamakan areas in Xinjiang, China. In a nomadic society where wealth must be easily portable, the artisan's

⁵ The Karasuk culture comprises a group of remains of the Bronze Age, distributed from the Aral sea up to the upper course of the Enisej river, chronologically comprised between 1500 and 800 BCE circa. The remains are exclusively funerary and are represented by circa 2000 burials. It has been proposed that the Karasuk culture formed by the combination of local Siberian cultures with possibly Indo-Iranians elements. The economy was based on primitive agriculture and herding. In the eastern areas the Karasuk culture, beared by nomad herdsmen, comes later of the Afanes'evo and Andronovo cultures. The material production of Karasuk is similar to the "Animal Art" of the Scythian-siberian tradition, though with distinctive traits remembering the Chinese production of the Shang period. The rare settlements were formed by sub-terranean houses, whilst the inhumation occurred in urns covered by tumulus surrounded by a stone square recinct. The metal working process was very advanced, as the artefacts like curved knives in bronze with decorated hilt and horse fittings.

⁶ Tagar culture takes the name from a homonymous site located on an island in the Enisej River nearby Minusinsk in southern Siberia. This important steppe culture, developing from the 7th to the 3rd century BCE, is well documented by numerous funerary tumulus. Tagar culture, contemporary to the "Scythians" and later than the Karasuk culture, continues and develops the metallurgic experience, and contributes to the formation of the Scythian-Siberian style of the steppe "Animal Art". Characteristic of the Tagar culture are artefacts, weapons, in bronze with zoomorphic representations, which, according to the most of the scholars, can represent a meeting point between the eastern bronze production tradition of Ordos and the western one of Luristan.

efforts were put into small items such as gold jewellery, bridle ornaments, horse gear, hand mirrors, arrow cases, swords and battle-axes. Scythian clothing was often decorated with many small wafer thin gold plaques chased with geometric or animal shapes. They were attached to the fabric in such a way that when they moved with each movement of the wearer it created what must have been a dazzling sight in bright daylight. In this “Scythian art production” the multitude of animal representations well illustrates the preoccupation of this nomadic people with animals in their surrounding environment. Usually only wild animals are represented. Commonly depicted are: stags and deer, lions or other large cats, eagles, birds heads (perhaps of ravens), cranes, swans, griffins, snakes, hounds, wolves, hares, rabbits, fish, goats, ibex, rams, boars, moose (elk), yak, sheep and bears. The occasional exception to the wild animal rule is the domesticated horse - important because the “Scythians” were horse breeders and their whole culture revolved around their dependence on the horse. Representation of humans is relatively rare, but the few pieces that have been found show these people in a realistic style. Scholar's debate the purpose and meaning of the animal motifs used in these ornaments. The original motivations, aims and regional variants of these objects, defined according to the very different modes and interpretation are still to be understood. In some cases the work was intended to be purely ornamental. Others scholars underlined in those representations the presence of animals, typical of the natural environment of the nomads, hunters, and herdsman. Others, instead, emphasize that they had symbolic meaning (such as the successful dominance of the aggressor over the victim portrayed in the attack scenes), believing that a particular animal may have been a clan symbol, amulet, totem distinctive or a mark of a tribal or group identity (Tchlenova 1962a; Tchlenova 1962b). Others yet think that the animals incarnate the forces of the nature and that their struggle were the symbol of the fight between the elements of the universe and of the eternal fight between Good and Evil (in Italy basically Silvi Antonini 1994; 1998; 2001). Magical use of symbols may have been intended to guarantee the power of the aggressor. Others scholars, finally,

underlined that the particular expressivity of these representations was the results of a not ordinary state of consciousness (Bussagli 1988) and others, that those signs could be also the vehicles of a communicative oral circularity (Cardona 1988).

There are several characteristics of this “Scythian art production” that make it unique from other art styles. Some of these can be found in the objects of other cultures, but taken together they represent what scholars have generally considered as examples of that production and, in a way, why they called it a Scythian art:

1. Profusion of animals used in one piece or device. The animals are primarily used in a decorative fashion as opposed to a narrative fashion;
2. Lively depiction of animals, much movement expressed as opposed to the stiff, formal form used in the art of adjacent Near Eastern cultures;
3. “Zoomorphic juncture” - animals combined with parts of other animals or animals depicted within other animals;
4. Attack scenes of predator upon prey;
5. Circular manifestation of animal shapes especially cats or several identical animals in circular formation;
6. Distortion or contortion of animal to fit a preconceived shape of ornament such as a rectangle or circle;
7. Preference for deer motifs;
8. Reclining deer depictions with folded legs (recumbent);
9. Exaggerated formation of antlers on deer often in curled form or with points ending in bird heads (beak heads);
10. Animals with head facing back over shoulder (inverted) often in reverse pairs;
11. Head to head pairs of animals;
12. Crouching lioness or cat, nose to the ground;
13. Decorative circular swirls, crescents or oval forms drawn on the haunches of animals indicating muscles. Sometimes rib cages are also indicated;
14. “Flying Leap” posture of deer or cats;
15. Frequent addition of bird’s heads (known as beak heads) to extremities of animal form;

16. Queued or stacked animals;
17. The “contortionist” position (the animal in a unnatural position, amongst which that with the head completely turned back);
18. The “flying gallop” (animal with all the legs folded under the abdomen, or extended to the maximum);
19. The dancing woman-like animals (animals standing on their foot as a dancing woman).

The interpretation of such a multiform cultural aspects of the Eurasian steppes as an ethnic-cultural, socio-economic and anthropological practically unitary mosaic has been possible thanks also to the characteristics of the related archaeological documentation: very much fragmentary, insufficient for number and for almost exclusively funerary character, of difficult availability and bibliographical accessibility.

Nearby this conspicuous production of objects, few are, instead, the monumental evidences, amongst which the characteristic “stag-stones” and the funerary *tumuli*, “Kurgans”. The first have been variously interpreted as the symbol of the temporariness of the human presence in the enormous space of the steppes or of the intra-mountains valleys of Tjan’ Šan or Sajjan-Altaj. These “stag-stones” somewhat anticipate those elements of a religious or ritual-funerary context present, later, as *stelae* with human figures in the steppes with the name of Bal Baly up to the Turkish epoch. Amongst the most important and macroscopic Kurgans, though of different chronology, one can remember those in Russia, like Pazyrik in Altaj (Rudenko 1950), Aržan in Tuva oasis (Grjaznov 1980), those in Kazakhstan, like Issyk in Semireč’e (Akisev 1978), Berel’ in eastern Kazakhstan (Samashev, Par e Francfort 1998), those in the areas of the northern Black Sea shores (Sulimirski 1985), like Kul’Oba near Kerch,⁷ again in Russia, like Filippovka (Milano 2001). All these numerous and precious remains, certainly give evidence of the presence in the area

⁷ For a re-consideration of the whole set of findings see Grach 2001a; 2001b; 2001c; 2001d

and in the period of an already segmented social organization and political Kinship.

The Kurgans are earthen monuments, forms of individual and or collective burial, consisting of artificial mounds dominating geographic space of the plains of the pastures.

Of particular interest are the collective kurgans, real boxes of ancestors constituting new forms of symbolical representation of both territorial and genealogical dimension. These special “containers” appear, in fact, as the material and symbolical evidence of operations of familiar affiliation which, probably, constituted through the construction of genealogical spaces, one of the main strategies of social aggregation. Their individuation has allowed one to reconstruct, starting from the symbolical value of the material structures, those original of the lineage (Genito 1995b; 1995c; 2002a; 2002b; Genito 2006).

Problems and New Methodological Approach

This vast figural production, basically inside the development of the “Animal Style” is particularly interesting also because it could have something in relation with the still debated question of the formative process of ethnic and cultural identities of one of the Iranian groups, at that time still nomadic in character. That production was able to affirm over such vast territory through consistent socio-economic and territorial integration processes and characterized, in the same time, by common cultural and linguistic values, relatively stronger and more stable than previously never occurred.

Ancient Iran and the Steppes: The Sources

The geographical location of the Iranian plateau, bridging, in a way, east with west, has contributed to enrich the economy and the culture and in the course of time, many groups entered Iran and were soon absorbed by, and became part of the Iranian civilization. The traditional Indo-Iranian society, inside the wider Indo-European world, is generally considered a

tribal structure certainly based on a patrilineal descent. Not always this general historical assumption is clear within the archaeological documentation, which unlikely from the others, is much more fragmentary by definition.

The area inhabited by the peoples of Iranian origin (who certainly of the great Indo-European family constituted the most important part), has been enormous; those peoples spread over from Europe to the western and central Asia, from the Chinese borders to the southern Russia up to the Indus delta. Medes and Persians, Scythians and Sarmatians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, Bactrians and Kušans, Saka and Eftalites and the inhabitants of the Chinese Turkestan oasis were the peoples of the Iranian ethnos, who, in different time developed and constituted significant state-political unities, creating their own autonomous and original civilisations. This vast ethnic complex, partly sedentary and partly nomadic and mobile, divide the ancient world in three parts: occupying the centre separated the West, where the Semitic and Greek-Roman civilisations flourished, from the Far East with China and India. It is easy, thus, to understand the importance of the mediation role effected by these peoples who facilitate the contact and made closer the western and oriental cultures and collaborate to elaborate the world civilisation.

Differing are the crucial aspects of the Early Iranian cultures, archaeologically documented within the plateau and some of them are also doubtfully connected to the general question of the ethnic attribution.

The problems related to the archaeology of the early Iran has been “pour cause” related to the Indo-European arrival into the Plateau, and for that to the general aspects of the prehistoric and linguistic approach to the matter as well⁸.

The coming of the Indo-Europeans and the Iranians to the plateau from one hand, and the realisation of the long, controversial and

⁸The linguistic prehistory related to the early Iranians has been many times in the past dealt with by different scholars among which one may mention Harmatta (1981) Mallory (1989) Renfrew (1987) Erdosy (1995 a; 1995 b), Sinor (ed.) (1990), Dani and Masson (eds.) (1992).

macroscopic dynastic historical process from the other - though the distance in the methodology, study and research of these two grounds is very ample - do not provide at the moment, much help in resolving some of their interrelated questions⁹. Those two issues, nevertheless, appear, very much linked each other and related to a cultural continuity much stronger than expected. The main cultural moment of continuity between the coming of the Iranians and the realisation of the Empire, would have been certainly the “Median” period. It, chronologically, would belong to the Early Iran, and being historically an expression of a dynastic, though legendary, line of kings, would pertain, from the other, to the dynastic Iran as well. For this point of view one may conventionally define the Median period as an early-dynastic phase of the historical period in Iran.

The beginning of Iron Age in the Iranian plateau is generally considered as the cultural expression of the newcomers of Iranian ethnic identity. It is marked by major dislocations of cultural and historical patterns in western Iran, whilst, very little is known of the eastern half of the plateau in the same age. Differing are the crucial aspects of the Early Iranian cultures, archaeologically documented in the plateau and some of them are also doubtfully connected to the general question of the ethnic attribution. The Iron Age is generally divided into three periods: Iron Age I (c. 1300-c. 1000 BC), Iron Age II (c. 1000-c.800/750 BC), and Iron Age III (c. 750-c. 550 BC) (Young 1967; 1985). The latter would have constituted the archaeological horizon which, according to the variously accepted chronology of the Median Kings, could correspond to their historical period. Different are the chronological distinctions in NW and NE Iran and looking at the following scheme one can see how similar both

⁹ They are related to the ethno-linguistic sphere of the Iranistic specialisation (Rossi, 1981; 1984) Rossi tried to combine these two methods with interesting and fruitful success, especially as far the concrete linguistic reality of the Achaemenid time is concerning (1988, in particular, 219). See also, nonetheless, the interesting analyses about the serious difficulties and the real impossibility scholars have in the reconstruction of the linguistic systems in antiquity (224-225).

the areas have been considered in their historical development, though few significant variants still exist.

Though isolated groups speaking Indo-European languages had appeared and disappeared in western Iran in the 2nd millennium BC, it was during the Iron Age that the Indo-European Iranians rose to be the dominant force on the plateau. By the mid-9th century BC, two major groups of Iranians appear in cuneiform sources: Medes and Persians. Medes were the more widespread and, from an Assyrian point of view, the more important group. When Assyrian armies raided as far east as modern Hamadan, they found only Medes. In the more western Zagros, they encountered Medes mixed with indigenous, non-Iranian peoples. Early in the 1st millennium, Iranian Medes already controlled almost all of the eastern Zagros and were infiltrating, if not actually pushing steadily, into the western Zagros, in some areas right up to the edge of the plateau and to the borders of lowland Mesopotamia. Persians (Parsua, Parsuash, Parsumash) also appear in roughly the same areas, though their exact location remains controversial. At times they seem to have settled in the north near Lake Urmia, at times in the central western Zagros near Kermanshah, later certainly in the south western Zagros somewhere near the borders of Elam, and eventually, of course, in the province of Fars. It has been argued that these various locations represent a nomadic tribe on the move; more likely they represent more than one group of Persians. What is reasonably clear from the cuneiform sources is that these Medes and Persians (and no doubt other Iranian peoples not identified by name) were moving into western Iran from the east. They probably followed routes along the southern face of the Elburz Mountains and, as they entered the Zagros, spread out to the northwest and southeast following the natural topography of the mountains. Where they could, as, for example, along the major pass across the mountains from Hamadan to Kermānshāh, they infiltrated farther west. In doing so, they met resistance from the local settled populations, who often appealed to Urartu, Assyria, and Elam for assistance in holding back the newcomers. Such appeals were, of course, most welcome to the great powers, who were willing to

take advantage of the situation both to advance their interests at each other's expense and to control the Iranian threat to themselves.

It has been suggested that the introduction of grey and grey-black pottery into western Iran from the northeast, indicator of the start of Iron Age, is the archaeological manifestation of this pattern of a gradual movement of Iranians from east to west (Deshayes 1969; Grantowsky 1970; 1971; 1988; 2007). The case is, by no means, proved but it represents a reasonable reading of the combined evidence. If it is so, then the earliest Iranians in the Zagros can be dated to Iron Age I, about 1300 BC. Archaeologically, the culture of Iron Age II can be seen as having evolved out of those of the Iron Age I, and, though the development is less clear, the same can be said of the relationship between the cultures of Iron Age II and III. The spread of Iron Age I and II cultures in the Zagros is restricted and would appear to fairly well correspond with the distribution of the Iranians known from the written documents. The distribution of Iron Age III cultures on the other hand is, at least by the 7th century, more widespread and covers almost the whole of the Zagros mountains. Thus, the argument that links these archaeological patterns with the Iranian migration into the area, associates the Iron Age I and II cultures with the early penetration of the Iranians into the more eastern Zagros and with their infiltration westward along the major routes crosscutting the main mountain alignments.

Those areas where traces of Iron Age I and II cultures do not appear, were the regions still under the control of non-Iranian indigenous groups supported by Urartu, Assyria, and Elam. The widespread of Iron Age III is then associated with the rise to power of the Median kingdom in the 7th and early 6th centuries BC and the Iranisation of the whole of the Zagros.

Relatively few Iron Age sites have been excavated, most of them in the west, and the standards of earlier excavation and publication were not necessarily those of the present (for a good summary of the history and archeology of the Iron Age in western Persia, see Levine, 1973; 1974; 1977; 1987). Surveys of very uneven intensity have been concentrated in the southwestern and central western regions, and much material remains

unpublished. Some areas and cultures (essentially defined by ceramic assemblages) are known primarily from clandestine excavations, and discussion must be deferred until material from properly controlled excavations becomes available (Muscarella, 1977a; 1977b). Second, attempts to coordinate archeological assemblages, usually consisting primarily of ceramics, with historically documented ethnic or sociopolitical groups have yielded highly ambiguous results, especially in relation to the circumstances and date of the arrival of Iranian peoples in the west (Young, 1985). Written sources are more abundant for the 1st millennium B.C.E. than for earlier periods, but even they are difficult to match with archeological data. As interpretation of both local cultural sequences and correlations among regions is refined, historical links must continually be rechecked. Finally, it has become progressively more difficult to work with terminology established for periods and assemblages in western Persia. T. Cuyler Young (1965), building on the Hasanlu (Ḥasanlū) V-III sequence from the northwest, described three successive ceramic horizons: early western gray ware, late western gray ware, and late western buff ware. Robert H. Dyson proposed the respective terms Iron I-III for these horizons. As archeological fieldwork proliferated in Persia after the mid-1340s Š./1960s, however, new assemblages contemporary with but distinct from Hasanlu V-III were recognized in both the northwestern and central western parts of Persia. Applying the terms Iron I-III to such assemblages can be confusing if they are taken to designate specific phases of material culture, rather than simply chronological divisions. L.D. Levine (1987) has proposed that they be used in a strictly chronological sense: Iron I, ca. 1450-1100BC; Iron II, ca. 1100-800 BC, Iron III, ca. 800-500 BC

Construction of detailed regional sequences must provide the foundation for definition and clarification of broader cultural trends.

The Iron Age started in eastern Iran later than it did in the Near East and western Iran, where its beginning is dated to the middle of the 15th century B.C. This was due to the fact that, in Central Asia, copper deposits were more widespread than iron deposits, and tin deposits also were

available and mined. A developed bronze metallurgy had perfectly provided the demand for metals, especially since the manufactured iron was softer than bronze. Nonetheless, acquaintance with iron products from areas to the west and availability of sufficient iron deposits in various regions of Central Asia (mountain ranges around the Farḡāna valley, mountains of the Hissar led to the development of local iron metallurgy.

Ancient iron objects in Central Asia were found for the first time at the southern mound of Anau (Turkmenistan) by the expedition of R. Pumpelly (1905); fragments of an iron sickle and an iron knife were unearthed there. According to modern understanding, these objects should be dated to the 9th-8th centuries B.C.E. Together with some other findings, they give evidence for the availability of iron products that probably had appeared for the first time much earlier. The Iron Age reached its developed phase by the 6th-4th century B.C.E. Iron objects for mainly household purposes, such as knives, sickles, needles, etc., were uncovered at the sites of the ancient settlements of Parthia and Margiana (Yaz depe, Elken depe), Bactria (e.g., Qal'a-ye Mir, Qyzylcha, Takht-e Sangin), Sogd (Daraḡš Tepe, Afrasiāb-Samarqand, Lalazār), and Farḡāna (Dalbarjin, Aktam). There were also weapons made of iron, but such findings at ancient settlements are only represented in the collections from the Temple of the Oxus (Takht-e Sangin). Artifacts of the nomads (the Sakas) of the 6th-4th centuries B.C.E. include many examples of iron weapons. For example, Pamiri burial grounds contain iron-bronze daggers of two types: (a) those with an iron blade fit into a bronze handle richly decorated in the Animal Style; (b) those with an iron blade, an iron handle tightly covered with bronze leaf, and a bronze crossguard. The great majority of the daggers of the 6th-4th centuries B.C.E. were made of iron. From the burial ground of Taghskan are also known long iron swords with gold foil on the hilts with Animal Style motifs. Iron battle-axes, arrow points, and other items have come down in wide ranges.

The earliest group of Eurasian nomadic movements is usually considered Indo-Iranian. There are no contemporary reports about their migration, but it has been supposed to be reconstructed from the traces of

their language. It is reasonable to think that at the beginning of the second millennium BCE, the speakers of a Proto-Indo-Iranian language moved from Ukraine to southeast. From an archaeological point of view, their migration is probably attested in the change from the Yamnaja into the Andronovo culture (Mallory 1989; Kuz'mina 1981; Kuz'mina, Vinogradiva 1983; Kuz'mina 1985; Kuz'mina 1994; Lamberg-Karlovsky 2002). They spread over the southern areas, where they separated in an Iranian and an Indian branch.¹⁰

Ancient sources, amongst which mainly Herodotus, have given, though still under scrutiny, a rather complete account of the history of the Iranian nomadic tribes, moving from East to West, and in particular of the Scythians.¹¹

These Iranian nomads frequently had military conflicts with the urbanized regions to the east, south or west; usually this created great havoc, reflected inside the sources's description. After some time, according to the waving character of the nomadic movement, as the fights started, so they finished. However, the urbanized civilizations in their territorial expansion started to initiate, constructing their frontiers which served basically to attack rather than to defend. The Indians in any case did not construct any frontier walls, because they considered to be protected by the Himalaya, the Chinese built the "Wall of ten thousand miles", one of the most impressive human construction, both utilised as an offensive and as a defensive mean symbol as well, the rulers of the Achaemenid Empire, may have built regional walls as well, of which,

¹⁰ The controverse and still debated question related to the movement and arrival of the Indo- Europeans, and of the Iranians in particular constitutes an historical and methodological premise. In the historical period enormous was the area inhabited by the peoples of Iranian origin and language (those, i.e, that constituted the eastern distribution of the great Indo-European family): from the Euphrates to the western and central Asia up to the boundaries of China, and from southern Russia up to the Indus's delta.

¹¹ The historical origin of the Scythians is a very complicated historical puzzle. The similarities amongst the narrative tales are enough evident and have been considered to date back to the Indo-European ideology.

unfortunately there is no archaeological evidence. It is probable, however, that both Cyrus and Alexander built garrison towns along the river Syrdar'ja or Jaxartes; the sources call them Cyreschata and Alexandria Eschatê.¹²

Comparing the information of the Achaemenid inscriptions (6th-5th century BCE) with the Histories of Herodotus (5th century BCE) one can argue that the Scythians were a part of the whole set of the Saka group. To the Greek and Latin traditions, nonetheless, was more familiar the form "Scythians", because they had territorial contiguity and closer relationships with the Greek cities of the Pontus's seacoast. However, the first possibly reference to those peoples in chronological terms goes back at least to the first half of the 7th century BCE, in the Assyrian documents of the epoch of Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE), where the presence of a people called Is-ku-za-ai/As-gu-za-ai, term, in a way, considered connected to the Iranian and Greek name of the Scythians, is clearly documented. Of

¹² The existence of boundaries wall around the Iranian empires is still a long debated question. The only presumed "archaeological" evidence are related to the Alexandrine time: the so-called Alexander's wall in Hyrcania (Kiani 1982) and the Anthiocus's wall in Margiana (Vjaszigin 1949). The first mud-brick wall called Alexander's Wall (Sadd-e Eskandar), consists of a mud-brick wall stretching out like an embankment, built in the Parthian and Sasanian period as a rampart against attackers. The Turkmans call the wall Qizil Alan, and in Persian it is also called Sadd-e Piruz and Sadd-e Anushirvan. The Gorgan wall is 175 km long, extending from the Caspian Sea to the Alborz and the north-eastern mountain chains of Persia. The wall is, at present 2 to 5 m high and about 10 m wide. A ditch 3 m deep and up to 30 m wide runs along the outer side of sections of the wall. The wall itself is constructed of unbaked bricks (50 × 50 × 10 cm) and baked bricks (40 × 40 × 10 cm). Excavations along the wall and in the forts belonging to it have produced Parthian gray ceramics, Parthian red ware, and glazed Islamic pottery. The identification of the so-called Anthiocus's wall is still under scrutiny and recent test-trenches on the area did not reveal anything structural remains for sure (Bader, Callieri and Khodzhaniyazov 1998). The very particular open character of the northeastern Iranian frontier has been already suggested and put in evidence (Genito 2003, 403-406) as a theoretical problem, and more recently on a concrete archaeological evidence for the Murghab delta (Cerasetti and Tosi 2004).

the "Scythian" ethnonym different etymologic interpretations have been proposed: amongst all the most acceptable would seem that of "bowmen" (Vasmer 1971, 119; Szemerényi 1980; Cornillot 1981a; Cornillot 1981b; Daffinà 1982, 6).

These "Scythians", located nearby the Urmia Lake (Iranian Azerbaijan), are mentioned for their conflicts and changing alliances - according an atavist costume common to the nomadic tribes. One can know, thus, some names of the Scythians leaders as *Ispakai* or *Bartatua*, identifiable with *Protothyes* of Herodotus, also them taken back to ethyms of Iranian origin. Some confirmation to this is mentioned in the Jeremy's Book (LI, 27), even whether with some chronological approximation. Generally speaking the most secure information relates their activity to the Anterior Asia certainly in the 7th century BCE, but perhaps also in 8th, whether the Cimmerians, another group of Iranian origin, attacked Urartu and the reign of Phrygia, respectively at the time of the Assyrian Kings Sargon (722- 704 BCE) and Sennacherib (703-681 BCE), because pushed by the Scythians. Notwithstanding Herodotus attributes to the Scythians a dominion in Asia for a 28 years period, until Cyaxares (625-585 BCE), the King of the Medes (I, 95-110), did not massacre the leaders (I, 106); the oriental sources did not mention, instead, such stabile hegemony of the Scythians with regular tributes.¹³

¹³ Recently the question has been put (Genito 2005, 327 ff.), and unfortunately, there are no clear archaeological evidence of the Scythian presence over the plateau. That period of 28 years remains rather controversial, the nomadic archaeological traces on the plateau are very scarce and characterized by much uncertainty, relating both to the real consistency of the discoveries, and the importance of historical references dealing with the Scythian domination; the tumuli of Sé Girdan, at first erroneously attributed to Iron Age III and recently, more correctly, to the 4th millennium BCE, on the one hand, and the funerary stelae from the Meskhin plain on the other, seem to be the only material evidences of somewhat nomadic in character in north-western Iran. Another, though controversial, contribution to the Scythian presence in Iran was given by the discovery in 1947, of the Ziwiye treasure. Without going into the details of the story of the find and of its interpretation, collected in the Mannean territory, but at the top of a

The Iranian nomadic peoples inhabited a vast geographic area without precise boundaries, except perhaps tribal or clan space appropriation, whose identification it is quite difficult to recognize (whose main material evidences could be represented by the distributions of

fortified hill, interpreted as possibly being a Scythian manor, it is worthwhile to take it into consideration, at least, with regard to some aspects. After the initial welcome in scientific circles at the time of the discovery, the treasure, became one of the most intricate and controversial archaeological cases of ancient Iran. This combination of stylistic elements was, furthermore, interpreted as the synthesis of a new figural style, which, given the geographical location of the treasure, could only be related to the local people in the area, the Medes. The only proper investigation made on Ziwiye, was carried out years later and gave to the light archaeological traces of the Late Buff ware cultural horizon of the Median period. Recently the hill has been revisited and investigated and the architectural remains displayed after the work led to the conclusion that their quality was very low and poor; this has been interpreted as one of the reasons for a decadence of the structures, also evidenced by traces of a widespread fire in different parts of the structure. The find of several triangular-shaped arrow-heads usually attributed to the Scythian nomads, led one to consider possible that their invasion took place in 650 BCE. The capital city of Media, Ecbatana/Hamadan, would obviously have been the key-site for the period, but the ancient traces of settlement there uncovered and also recently excavated, seems to belong mostly to the post Achaemenid Age (i.e. Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian), and a real "Median" level, up to now, has not been found. According to the same group of sources Persia and not Media results to be the real heir of Elam, having a long tradition in statehood, centralized administration, written records kept in formal archives and as centre of large coalitions of peoples and states on the Iranian plateau, and of a network of relationships with the surrounding areas, not only with Susiana but also with regions in central, northern, and eastern Iran. Persia inherited the Elamite state organization and administration, and inherited the Elamite network of relationships, not a quite improbable network centred on the poor and illiterate pastoral tribes of the central Zagros. In the Greek reconstruction of the sequence of empires, Media was given a role that belonged to Elam. The Greeks - and especially the Ionians of Asia - were well aware of the role of Media since Cyaxares' foray against Lydia, and could have received information through the Lydian channel. They were, on the contrary, completely ignorant about Elamite power and Elamite history, so that Elam was excluded from their sequence of empires and from their reconstruction of the genesis of the Persian Empire.

Kurgans, petroglyphs etc.). Since the first centuries of the 1st millennium BCE, a set of peoples known by the sources under differing names widespread over Eurasia from Ukraine to West, up to China to East. Amongst them the group of the Saka for more than one millennium seems to prevail, and it can be considered as the "major actor" of the cultures of the Eurasian steppes. Their vast, complex and dynamic culture was the result of a combined communicative interaction and agreement of unities, either individual or social, on the ground of common knowledge, beliefs, costumes, rights, rites, arts, expressive and symbolic languages. It has been hypothesized that behind the old Iranian denomination of *Saka* a vast ethnical group existed; emphasizing its homogeneity that group has been indicated as "Scythians" (Parlato 1994). With the same Iranian language, of which some names of persons and rivers are known, and in continuous contact each other, these nomadic tribes certainly could have reached a given uniformity in the material and spiritual culture, artistic production, economic development and in social organisation. This was hierarchically structured, as the variety of Kurgans different in size, richness and grave-goods, easily show. One can imagine the Saka component interacting within the history of the central-Asiatic nomadic world, with different touches, at its opposite geographic terminals: eastern and western, i.e. Chinese and Greek-Pontic. Inside this big ethnical group of Saka (Narain 1987; Szemerényi 1980, 40-45) it is possible, through the references related to the Classical, Persian and Chinese sources to single out some peoples of great historical-cultural interest certainly amongst the most ancient nomadic societies equestrian in character: the Scythians, the Sauromatians, the Massagetae, the Saka Haumavarga, the Saka Tigrakhauda (cf. below), the Issedons (cf. below), or the Yueh zhi, Wusun, Sai, Xiongnu, etc. These tribes were very loose organizations. Even when, in the 6th century, the Achaemenid Empire was at its most powerful moment they still remembered their earlier, nomadic life style: the Persian people contain a number of tribes and the ones which Cyrus assembled and persuaded to revolt were, according to Herodotus, the Pasargadae, Maraphii, and Maspii, upon which all the other tribes are dependent. Of

these, the Pasargadae were the most distinguished and contain the clan of the Achaemenids from which the Persian kings spring. Other tribes were the Panthialaei, Derusiaei, Germanii, all of which are attached to the soil, the remainder - the Dahae, Mardi, Dropici, Sagarti, being nomadic (Herodotus, I, 125). The second group of nomads known to have gone south is the tribe of the Cimmerians, who destroyed the kingdoms of Urartu and Phrygia (in Turkey) in the first quarter of the 7th BCE. As already told, according to Herodotus, the Scythians ruled Asia (probably in the Herodotus's mind Media) for twenty-eight years.¹⁴

In the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries BC, the Persians discerned several nomadic tribes on the Central-Asian steppes. The names of the main tribes we know are both deriving from the Persian royal inscriptions and the information from Herodotus and other Greek authors. Here one can find a very general and synthetic list of their main ethnonyms:

1. The *Sakâ haumavargâ* ('haoma-drinking Sacae'), subjected by Cyrus the Great. Herodotus calls them *Amyrgian Scythians*.¹⁵
2. The *Sakâ tigrakhaudâ* ('Sacae with pointed hats'), defeated in 520/519 BC by the Persian king Darius I the Great, who gave this tribe a new leader.¹⁶

¹⁴ The archaeological documentation of the period is rather different; meanwhile the material evidence of the early Iranians is little known and it is for the major part practically unattributable, that of the dynastic Iran is much more known, at least as far as the objects and the monumental artistic, architectural and epigraphic remains are concerned (Genito 1996; 2000). For the early dynastic Iran, i.e. the "Median" period it is hardly possible to single out archaeological horizons not always ethnically attributable from the viewpoint of its material culture (Muscarella 1987; 1994; Genito 1986; 1995c; 2005). Also at the philological level there are different new perspectives of research which seem to give confirmation of a rather reduced historical role of the Medes (Lanfranchi ed. 2003; Rossi 2010; 2017).

¹⁵ Herodotus informs us that they wore trousers and pointed caps; they fought as archers. He also mentions their use of the battle ax.

¹⁶ One of the earlier leaders was killed, the other, named Skunkha, was taken captive and is represented with his name on the relief at Behistun. Herodotus

3. The *Apâ Sakâ* ('Water Sacae') also known as the probable *Pausikoi*, as Herodotus call them.¹⁷
4. The tribe that Herodotus calls 'Massagetes' must have been called something like *Mâh-Sakâ* in Persian, which means 'Moon Sacae'.¹⁸
5. The nomadic tribe known as *Dahâ*, which means 'robbers', is mentioned for the first time in the Daiva inscription of Xerxes; he must have subjected them.¹⁹
6. The *Sakâ paradrayâ* ('Sacae across the sea'), living probably in Ukraine.²⁰
7. The *Royal Scythians* lived in the southern part of Ukraine, immediately north of the Greek towns.

calls the Sakâ tigrakhaudâ the *Orthocorybantians* ('pointed hat men'), and informs us that they lived in the same district as the Medes. This suggests that the Sakâ tigrakhaudâ lived on the banks of the ancient lower reaches of the Amu-dar'ja

¹⁷ Later authors like Arrian of Nicomedia (in his *Anabasis*) and Ammianus Marcellinus (in his *Roman history*) call them the *Abian Scythians*; still later, we encounter them as the Apasiaki, first east and later southwest of Lake Aral. They must be situated along the ancient lower reaches of the Amu- dar'ja

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¹⁹ Ma-Sakâ means Moon Sacae, and it is known that the Massagetes venerated only one god, the Sun. The Massagetes were responsible for the death of the Persian king Cyrus the Great. From Herodotus' description, it is clear that they lived along the Syr-dar'ja (Jaxartes). Frankfort 1985, also was dealing with this question.

²⁰ Herodotus calls the Dai a Persian nomadic tribe, but they cannot have lived in Persia proper, because they are mentioned in the *Anabasis* of Arrian as living along the lower reaches of the Syr- dar'ja. In the days of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great, they were famous for their mounted archers. It is possible that this tribe disintegrated after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire; one of the tribes that came into being, was that of the Parni, who went south in the third century BCE and founded the Parthian empire. These are the nomads that the Greeks called Scythians. In 514 or 513 BCE, king Darius launched a disastrous campaign against the Sakâ paradrayâ. Herodotus gives a long description of their way of life and discerns many tribes in the neighbourhood

8. The *Scythian-Farmers*, identifiable with the archaeological culture known as Černoles, which has been related to the Iron Age Slavs.
9. The *Neuri*, the so-called Milograd culture, the archaeological remains of which have been found on the confluence of the rivers Dnepr and Pripjat, north of modern Kiev. They may be the ancestors of the Balts.²¹
10. The *Argippaeans*, sometimes identified with the ancestors of the Kalmuks.
11. The *Issedones*, may be identical to the Wu-sun who (according to Chinese texts) lived on the shore of Lake Balkash.
12. The *Sauromatae*, mentioned by Herodotus as the descendants of Scythian fathers and Amazon mothers. Of course, this is a legend, but the tribe did exist and was to move to the west after 130 BCE. In the process, they assimilated the Royal Scythians (above). In the late first century BCE, the Sarmatian coalition consisted of four tribes:
 - a)The Iazyges, which had once lived on the shores of the Sea of Azov, and then on the northern bank of the Danube. They were to move to what is now eastern Hungary, where they settled in ca. 50 CE. They were defeated by the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (in 175).
 - b)The Urgi, who lived on the banks of the Dnepr, south of Kiev.
 - c)The Royal Sarmatians, who were living in the south of Ukraine and had become the most important Sarmatian tribe. They and the Urgi became known as the Sarmatians. The Romans seem to have accepted their settlement in Hungary, but the situation was sometimes tense. The Sarmatians were, for example, responsible for the destruction of the Twenty-first legion Rapax in 92.

²¹ Herodotus' story about the *Man-eaters* seems to have received some confirmation with the excavation of human remains that were gnawed at by human jaws; these excavations were along the river Sula, to the southeast of Kiev.

d)The Roxolani, initially living between the Don and the Dnepr, and settled later on the lower reaches of the Danube, where the Iazyges had been living before they migrated to Hungary.²²

A Socio-anthropological Point of View

A somewhat "nomadic character" of the socio-anthropological structure of the Achaemenid Empire, though only as an historical paradox, has been discussed and dealt with by different scholars of differing tradition of studies. In his book devoted to the rise of that Empire, Vogelsang (1992) in the introduction (pp. 1-18) was specifically dealing with the different theories about the nature of the Achaemenid state and amongst the others scholars (Gardin, Moorey, Briant, Thapar, myself and others) was mentioning the ideas of Khazanov (1981; ed. 1984, 228-302), regarding the close territorial contiguity of sedentary and nomadic peoples in ancient Eurasia. The author (Vogelsang cit., 7-9) lists two alternatives in relation with the nomadic and sedentary life. The nomads generally had to exploit their subject lands, depending on the question whether the nomads and sedentary continued to live separately or not. In the first case the integration process of the nomads seems to be mainly political in character and the land exploitation took place on tributary relations; in the second, sometimes a development of the first, the integration of the nomads in the original socio-economic structure becomes full and consistent. The Khazanov's perspective was suggesting to Vogelsang, for the Iranian tribes arrived in the plateau, the possibility that the nomadic and the original rulers often soon formed a new élites and the original

²² Eurasian nomadism continued to exist into the 1st and 2nd millennium CE. Several tribes may be mentioned: the Alani - whose language lives on in modern Ossetian - are known from the 1st century CE. Later, they moved to the west, being pushed forward by the Huns, which are known from Chinese texts as the Xsiungnu. Later tribal formations were the Avars, Khazars, Bulgars, Turks, Magyars, Cumans, Tatars, Mongols and the Cossacks. See for this work perspective medieval in character the activity of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Hungary from 1983 to 2001 (Genito 1988; Genito and Madaras 2005).

tribute relationship between them disappeared, giving way to a system of taxation, not very different from the situation before the nomadic incursions (Vogelsang cit., 8). The topic under discussion is crucial and fundamental for our perspective, mainly because it is related to the archaeological evidence of an empire, whatever nature it had.²³ Vogelsang as well was questioning if a "nomadic empire without many traditions... in ceramic production etc., necessarily be less successful as an empire than a political entity developed along lines..." and yet "whether if a nomadic conquest and an ensuing amalgamation of invaders and subject population... could lead to the foundation of an empire which could be as enduring as an empire grown organically out of an important economic and political center" (9-10).²⁴

Without going into the details of this argument which could bring the topic very far from the present discussion, one can assume that the Achaemenians retained at length their original social character of a tribal nature, without transforming it completely in an urban direction at the level of their clan-kinship identity. This analysis should be made even though they initiated that immense process of the Iranian tribes which transformed and overwhelmed the old socio-political organization and *equilibrium* on the highlands and elsewhere. The case of the great Achaemenid dynasty almost always raises enormous, often

²³ In this research trend see Genito (1996; 1998); in the first there were basically emphasized the main aspects of a new archaeological perspective in studying the Iranian Empires, amongst which of course the first of them, the Achaemenid. I am very pleased to see that years after in 2003 the GDR 2538 RIERA (Réseau international d'études et de recherches achéménides) in France, thanks to the particular and enthusiastic activity of Pierre Briant, organised the «Colloque international sur "L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide" (Collège de France, 21-22 novembre 2003)», practically following those research perspectives in order to analyse the archaeological consistency of the Achaemenid state.. The symposium at the college de France, in Paris in 2003, of course, had a more ample geo-historical perspective related to the whole Empire, including the western areas.

²⁴ See in this respect what was dealing by me with (1995c, basically cf. addenda, 114-115)

insurmountable, difficulties of interpretation as far as the archaeological attributions are concerned. This could possibly be explained by the fact that socio-cultural units or clan tribal groups or families may have rapidly seized extensive political power, imposing rules and collective behaviours on multi-ethnic social structures different from themselves. The family system of the dynasty which was probably still of nomadic character, that is, based on the principle of "lineality" and "locality", i.e. on direct descentance on a local basis, gradually begins to be extended also towards the exterior with the creation of social relations based on a tributary type of dependency. The extension of the social base allows the groups of conquered peoples to survive, at the same time acknowledging the principle of supremacy and royalty imposed by the victors. At the top of the social pyramid, precisely as in the case of the nomadic-tribal populations, there resists a "royal" clan, the descent of which would be ensured by the exclusive father/son relationship while the supreme power is the prerogative of the entire dominant clan. The latter was probably in a position to implement a principle of power sharing by delegating each member of the clan to administer a given group, region, etc. The preservation of several necessary traditional forms of mutual help and cooperation inside the family did not prevent the political-social growth of a now inter-family system that had very swiftly extended from local control to control over a wider area. This grandiose political-social transformation inevitably produced, at the level of a productive demand, an elite capable of directing it in accordance with precise ideological rules governing a transmission of the values specific to the preservation and identification of power. At a lower level, on the other hand, there was possibly a continuity with a traditional productive activity that had been flattened to such an extent as to no longer be perceivable and such that it revealed no sign of political and dynastic "imperialization". In the archaeological history of ancient Iran this particular aspect is, in my opinion, of fundamental importance, while the archaeological data cannot be clearly contained within any definite ethno-cultural coordinates. The 'imperial and dynastic' character is visible only in a few odd cases of

specific architectural-territorial units and not on a larger scale, as in the case of other imperial forms in the ancient world. Also at the level of linguistic evidence the nomadic character of some expressions seems to be interpreted to a socio-anthropological perspective.²⁵

The Figural Documentation of the Nomads in the Achaemenian Period

Though very little the related figural documentation in the Achaemenian period is very much important. Starting from the Bisutun and the Apadana reliefs, one has a disposal a very fixed and standardized characterization of the Scythian and nomadic peoples as well. The particular historical value of the trilingual inscription of Darius at Bisutun gives to the images there represented an historical and cultural value as well. The representation of the chief of the Scythians by name Skunkha, made prisoner, a part from the linguistic aspects, somewhere else already discussed,²⁶ gives us evidence of the correlation between the epigraphic and the figural documentation; the pointed cap is a clear remind of the word Tigrakaudâ. Much more ample is the archaeological figural documentation in the Eurasian steppes, where different finds amongst

²⁵ “la terminologia palaziale achemenide, risentendo della (ancora recente) localizzazione e stabilizzazione del potere achemenide, comprendeva termini iranici derivanti dal lessico del potere di una diversa cultura (probabilmente a base ideologica nomadica) che potevano indicare (con diversi insiemi referenziali) i complessi palaziali anche in quanto sedi dell’ autorità regia e che venivano tradotti in elamico e in babilonese assimilandoli a diversi termini delle lingue d’ arrivo a seconda delle connotazioni che venivano focalizzate per le particolari circostanze della produzione del testo” (Rossi 2003, 696)

²⁶ The pass in the inscription is the following (§74. 5.20-30) “Saith Darius the King: Afterwards with an army I went off to Scythia, after the Scythians who wear the pointed cap. These Scythians went from me. When I arrived at the sea, beyond it then with all my army I crowed Afterwards, I smote the Scythians exceedingly; another (leader) I took captive; this one was led bound to me, and I slew him. The chief of them, by name Skunkha - him they seized and led to me. Then I made another their chief, as was my desire. After that, the province became mine” (translation by Kent 1950).

which swords, bow scabbards, golden and silver vessels remind very much the figural representations in the Persepolis reliefs as well. It is the case of the Kelermes and Čertomlyk sword, almost identical to those depicted in the Apadana and to that in the Oxus treasure, or the vessels from Filipovka and the treasure of Oxus similar to that of some delegation in Persepolis and from Achaemenian time. By a paradox all these items have been interpreted as Scythian in character even if they are represented in the official figural Achaemenian art; it is evident that the combination of the nomadic and achaemenid character in the same kind of objects offers many points to be discussed for a research perspectives and studies.

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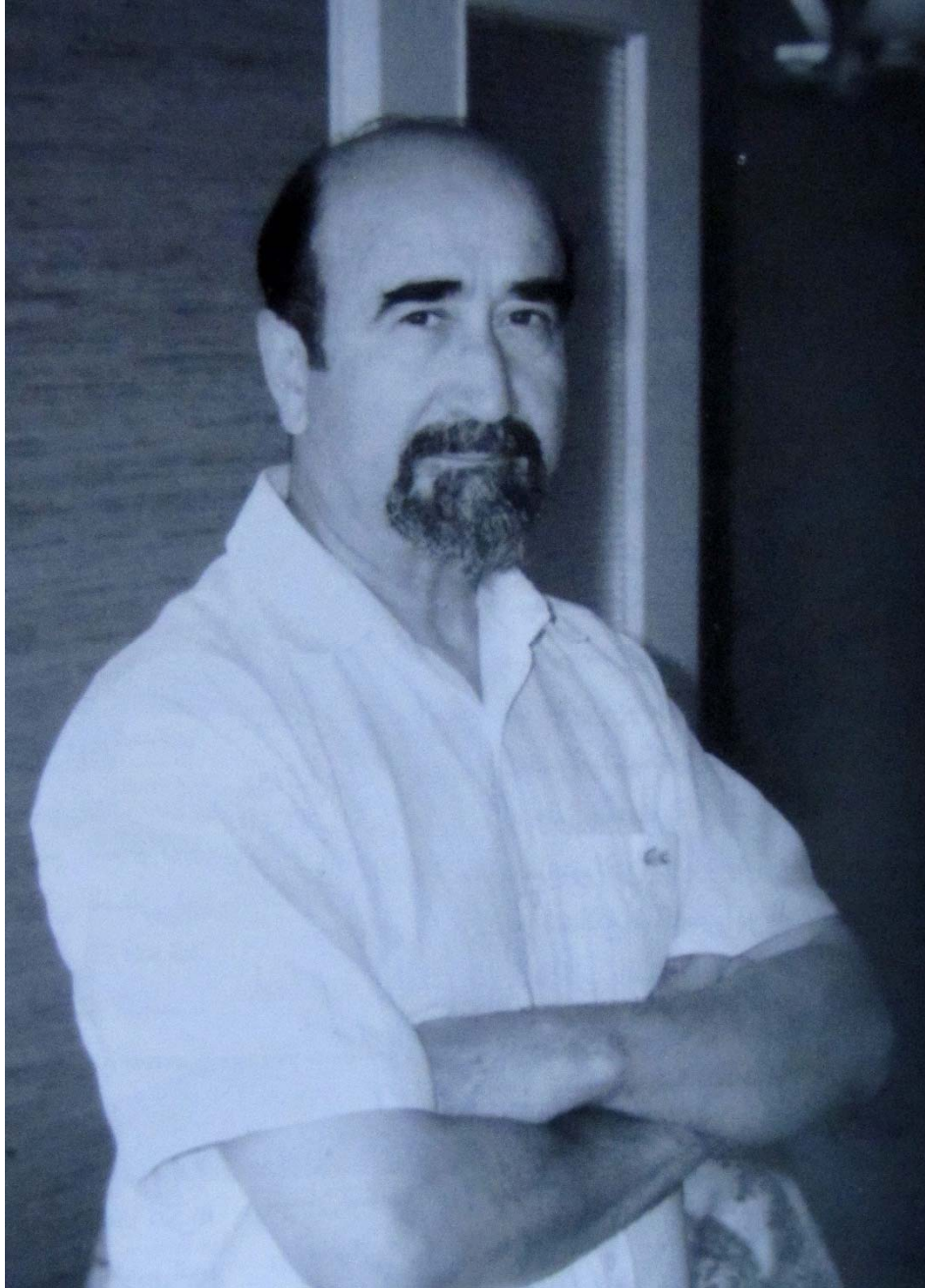
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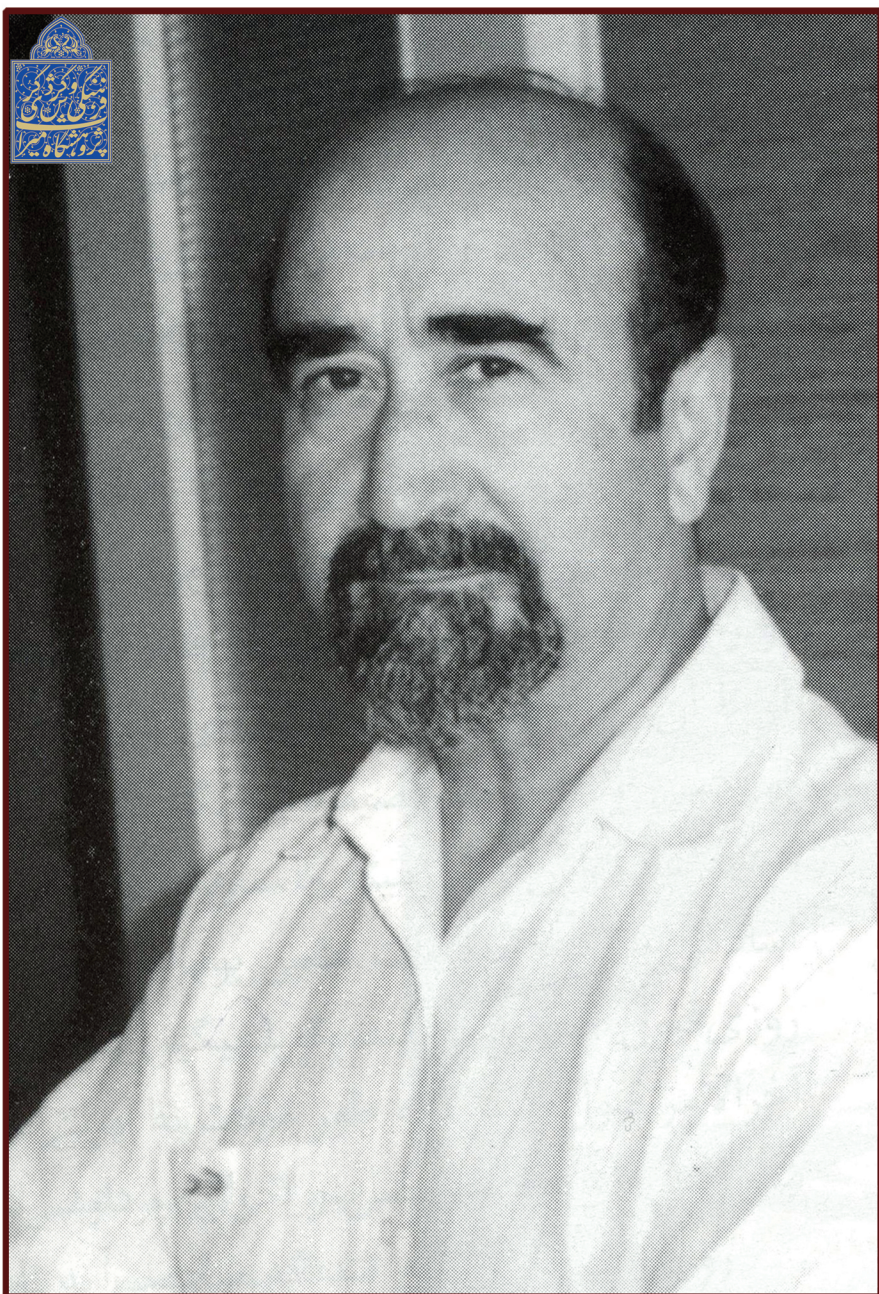
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