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(2) Excavations in Sistān

The Italian archeological activity of IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente), Rome (now

Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, ISIAO), in Iran began in 1959 when Prof. U. Tucci opened a long and rich series of activities that ended only in 1978. Three geographical areas constituted ISIAO's main interest in Iran: Sistān, Fārs, and Isfahan. In Sistān, G. Gullini and U. Scerrato started surveying the whole territory, one of the most important regions for Iranian history. The starting point was the work of Tate in 1906, who had identified many archeological sites in the area that were later also investigated by Sir Aurel Stein and E. Herzfeld (q.v.). The Italian activities from 1959 to 1978 were mainly at the following sites: Šahr-e Suḡta (Bronze Age), Dahan-e Ḡolāmān (q.v., Achaemenid period), Kuh-e K'āja (Parthian), Qal'a-ye Sām (Parthian), Qal'a-ye Tappe (Sasanian and Islamic), Tappe Šahrestān (Parthian), and Bibi Dust (Islamic). In order to understand the regional history of Sistān, the Italian fieldwork and studies were at first devoted to the historical and geographical context of ancient Drangiana (q.v.). The name of the territory, first attested in Old Persian in the great Bisotun (q.v.) inscription of Darius I as "Zranka," is reflected in the Elamite, Akkadian, and Egyptian versions of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, as well as in Greek and Latin sources. The Drangians were listed among the peoples ruled by the legendary King Ninus, before the Achaemenids, but there is no evidence for the situation of the country during the Median period; it may well have belonged to the Median Empire, or it may instead have been part of an eastern Iranian proto-state centered on Mary (Marv) and Herat (q.v.). In the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, Drangiana is listed as a separate province, but its position varies. The land was historically characterized as rich in tin, a crucial element for the manufacture of bronze weapons.

First in the chronological sequence of Italian activities was the work on a basaltic island in the Hāmūn-e Helmand (see HĀMUN, DARYĀĀE-YE), the location of a majestic palace/sanctuary, Kuh-e K'āja, first dateable to the Achaemenid period. Successive trenches on the site revealed, on the basis of the pottery found there, a dating to the Hellenistic-Parthian period. Particularly significant was the removal and restoration in 1975-76 of a small fresco from the Kuh-e K'āja palace. In 1963 an excavation was carried out at the fortified center of Qal'a-ye Sām, whose encircling wall has approximately the same shape as that at Parthian Nisa. Besides the characteristic painted pottery (termed *dipinta storica sistana*) which is useful for dating the deepest layers of Kuh-e K'āja, other pottery evidently related to Hellenistic ware and a number of ostraca with Greek epigraphy were brought to light. These inscriptions reveal that the citadel dates to the 3rd-2nd century B.C.E. Particularly interesting were the activities at Qal'a-ye Tappe, where a long chronological sequence from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 11th-12th century C.E. was recognized.

The Islamic period was the subject of the field survey at the site of Bibi Dust. The site takes its name from the grave of a saintly woman located under a large, miraculous tree. The pottery collected there, which is dateable from the 'Abbāsīd period to the 15th-16th century, in-

dicates that the Timurid invasion, contrary to what had been believed up to then, was not the main reason for the abandonment of Sistān.

Amongst the most important sites investigated and extensively excavated by the Italians in Sistān are Šahr-e Suḡta and Dahan-e Ḡolāmān.

The excavation of the protohistoric center of Šahr-e Suḡta, identified earlier by Stein, began in 1967. A well-established set of cultural relations with various, and distant, geographical and cultural areas is documented from its foundation at the end of the 4th millennium B.C.E.; thus the city is one of the key sites for the study and analysis of the formative cultural processes of Central Asian civilization between the end of the 4th and the 3rd millennium B.C.E. and for the study of the recent prehistory of Central Asia. From Period I, the material culture is known either from settlements or from an extensive cemetery, which shows close connections with the late Chalcolithic centers of southern Turkmenistan, the Kandahar (Qandahār) region in Afghanistan, the Quetta valley in southern Baluchistan, the Bampur valley in southeastern Iran, and the Proto-Elamite cities of Kūzestān and Fārs. During Period II, the city kept in contact with the pre-Harappan centers of the Indus valley, the cities of southern Turkmenistan, and the Bampur valley. It seems highly likely that relations with Mundigak in Afghanistan were close, and it was probably from here that lapis lazuli came during this period, reaching Šahr-e Suḡta from the distant mines of Badakṣān. For that reason, scholars began to speak of a "Helmand Civilization."

Period III (phases 4, 3, and 2) is marked by great change in the archeological sequence. The city changes its architectural form completely with the construction of large buildings enclosed by massive encircling walls. The pottery production becomes standardized and loses the characteristic painted ornamentation of the previous period; in the burials one can note a widening socio-economic gap between the various sectors of the population. At the end of Phase 4, the materials imported from Mesopotamia and western Iran disappear, and this suggests an interruption in the relationships with those regions, while the communication and trade routes with Mundigak, Bampur, and the Indus valley cities remain open. In Period IV, up to now known only through the excavation of the so-called "Burnt Palace" and of the pottery kilns of Tappe Rud-e Biābān 2 in the southern delta of the Helmand, Šahr-e Suḡta maintained contacts with only the Bampur valley (as shown by numerous close relationships with typical Bampur V-VI pottery) and the Kandahar area. A group of lapis lazuli processing sites was discovered in 1972 in the western quarters of the city. On the surface, a consistent concentration of flint, lapis lazuli, turquoise, and other types of stone fragments was observed. These workshops still remain unique in the whole Near and Middle East with regard to the level of conservation thirty years after their discovery. The excavations at Šahr-e Suḡta yielded other important evidence about the role played by the process of working semi-precious stones. In some graves, instruments and half-

finished products were buried along with the corpse; the chalcedony and lapis lazuli cutters thus exercised their profession for the "other world" as well as for this one.

About 2500 B.C.E., the area of the old settlement and many other city quarters were occupied again by a large building, of which, unfortunately, only the massive foundation walls remain. In traditional societies, both European and Oriental, craft specialization was an economic activity of a familiar type, organized within precise urban spaces around courtyards, and it involved adults and children, both male and female. Probably, with the birth of the State at the end of the 4th millennium B.C.E., the most specialized manufacture was placed under the control of the elite, and workshops started to develop around the palace and temple areas. The study of the wooden remains collected during the excavation of the eastern, residential area should provide evidence of the industrial activities within family units. Up to now, we have known of no other proto-urban settlement anywhere in the Middle East that has preserved hundreds of wooden finds in residential deposits.

Around 2700 B.C.E., the major part of the city was destroyed by a fire, which marked the end of Phase 7. Rooms with burnt plaster, filled with ash and burnt remains of roof beams have been excavated in the eastern residential quarter and in the central quarter. The reasons for the disaster are unknown, but there is no evidence that the fire was due to an enemy attack. The old cities were easy prey to fires, and Šahr-e Sūkta was probably not an exception. During phase 6, the city was soon reconstructed, although some destroyed houses were left abandoned for more than a century, until the time of the great expansion of the site during phases 5 and 4.

In 1962, the discovery of Dahan-e Gōlāmān, ca. 40 km northeast of Šahr-e Sūkta, revealed macroscopic remains of a city that was considered to be the old Zranka of the Achaemenid inscriptions, Zarin of the classical sources (see DAHAN-E GŌLĀMĀN), the capital of the satrapy of Drangiana. The presence of roads, private houses, and public buildings testifies to the urban character of the remains, something unusual for the Achaemenid period in Iran. A religious building (no. 3) relates the town to a possible fire cult in the area, later related to Zoroastrianism. The location of Dahan-e Gōlāmān in a peripheral area, far from the center of the empire, allows one to consider it from a very different perspective from the one usually applied to Achaemenid culture. A new conception of the first half of the 1st millennium B.C.E. in Iran emerges, of which the main aspects can be summed up as follows: (1) an urban core with groups of buildings around it; (2) frequent use (though not very well attested) of water supply channels; (3) precise distinction between public and private spaces.

The presence of a zone close to the urban center where numerous remains of pottery production (Namaki) have been identified, and of a square precinct, suggest in the first case a craftsmen's quarter, and in the second, a military garrison. The city would have had a complex system of functions, amongst which one would

be ceremonial-religious (no. 3), one ceremonial-civil (no. 2), one economic (Namaki), and finally, one military-administrative. The basic idea underlying the foundation of Dahan-e Gōlāmān was clearly related to the history of an Oriental satrapy progressively and slowly absorbed into the political and administrative system. The palatial architecture of Dahan-e Gōlāmān represents a sort of meeting point of different building traditions and experiences from widely separated geographical areas, that is, those of the palaces of Bactria and Chorasmia, of north-western Iran, of Fārs, and of Susiana. All of these seem to be reflected in a perfect synthesis at Dahan-e Gōlāmān. The particular nature of building no. 3, with the presence of different fire installations, leads one to think of a building in some manner related to a fire-oriented cult.

In the last few years, new excavations at Šahr-e Sūkta and some trenches at Dahan-e Gōlāmān have been carried out by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization. The first results seem to confirm the extraordinary importance of the sites, adding significant new aspects to our knowledge of the material culture.

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(BRUNO GENITO)

vii. IRANIAN STUDIES, ISLAMIC PERIOD

The earliest known references to Persia by Italian writers are gleaned from numerous notes in the oldest medieval travel accounts, dating from the 13th century onwards. Marco Polo's *Il Milione* (comp. 1298), which is a great inventory of literary traditions (see Gabriel, pp. 35-39), contains interesting observations on Persia, particularly on the cities Tabriz, Solṭāniya, Sāva, Kāšān, Yazd, and Kerman). So does the *Itinerarium* of the Dominican monk Ricoldo da Monte Croce (1243-1320). The first scientific study of the Persian language began in the context of Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in Iran, Armenia, and the Crimea, from which originated the so-called *Codex Cumanicus* (Cod. Mar. Lat. DXLIX, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice). This is a Persian-Latin-Cuman Turkish dictionary, which was probably redacted around 1330 (it may have belonged to the personal library of Francesco Petrarca, 1304-74). The first attempt to render a formal transcription system of Persian in Latin characters, and with diacritic signs, has been found on the margins of a manuscript of a Persian translation of the Four Gospels dated 738/1338 (Vatican Apostolic Library, MS Borg. Pers. 19). The glosses, especially those inserted in St. John's Gospel, reveal a deep knowledge of Persian lexicon and syntax, and show an advanced method of transliteration. The author of the glosses may possibly be identified as Giovanni of Florence (d. 1347), a Dominican priest who served as the bishop of Tiflis and was active for many years in the monastery of Kirmē in Azerbaijan (Piemontese, 2000, p. 125).

Outside of these restricted circles, knowledge of Persian long remained superficial. In cultivated European milieus, the existence of another literary language of the Islamic Orient distinct from Arabic was not really clear. A new process of conscious political observation and of the cultural discovery of Persia emerged with the accession of Uzun Ḥasan (r. 1457-78). The interest, particularly of the Republic of Venice and the Papacy, in the possibility of establishing a common alliance with Persia against the Ottomans, led to an active exchange of embassies (see above, ii). A secondary result of this activity on the Italian side was the publication of numerous accounts of Persia, mainly geopolitical in character. The travel diaries of the

Venetian envoys Giosafat Barbaro (1413-94, q.v.) and Ambrogio Contarini (1429-99, q.v.), although mainly concerned with the figure of Uzun Ḥasan and his reign, also recount the general situation of the country and contain detailed descriptions of the towns they visited (Lockhart et al., 1973). The documents and considerations collected in the *Diarii* of Marin Sanudo il Giovane deal with the rise to power of Shah Esmā'īl (see Scarzia Amoretti, 1979), and Michele Membré's *Relazione di Persia* (1542) is a most objective source on Safavid power under Shah Tahmāsp I. The period between the rise of Uzun Ḥasan and the death of Shah Esmā'īl is also treated in an interesting, firsthand chronicle ascribed to Giovanni Maria Angiolello (d. 1525, q.v.), a Venetian merchant enslaved by the Ottomans and then sent twice on missions to Persia. The accession of Shah Esmā'īl, the "Sofi," was widely noticed in Italy, where he was even popularly seen (as a recently discovered note by Leonardo da Vinci indicates) as a "new prophet" (Ponte, 1977). (For bibliography of the travelers and their works, see above, iii.)

From the middle of the 16th century, the acquisition of an increasing number of Persian manuscripts laid the basis for direct research on Persian language and literature as distinct from Arabic and Turkish, and thereby for penetration into the heart of Persian culture. A first step was taken in 1548 when Stefan V, patriarch of the Christian province of Greater Armenia, whose capital was at the time Tabriz, presented Pope Paul III with a rare Persian Gospel, now conserved in Florence. Of greater impact was the introduction inside an erudite Venetian circle, via a certain Cristoforo Armeno, of the reworked translation of some Persian text that was based, it appears, primarily on the poem *Hašt behešt* (comp. 700/1301) by Amir Ḳosrow Dehlavi (q.v.). The translation was published as *Peregrinaggio di tre giovani figliuoli del re di Serendippo* (Pilgrimage of the three princes of Serendip; Venezia 1557). This, the first Persian literary text to be published in a European language, was an enormous success and was translated elsewhere in Europe (Cerulli, 1975), contributing to the birth of the genre of the detective novel and occasioning the coinage (by Horace Walpole in 1754) of the new word "serendipity."

Also in the 16th century, some Oriental works were published, for the first time in Europe, in several Italian towns. In 1584 Giovan Battista Raimondi (ca. 1536-1614), professor of mathematics and philosophy, founded in Rome the Medici Oriental Press (Stamperia orientale Medicea), which printed several Arabic and Persian texts; these included the first printing of Avicenna's (q.v.) medical Canon (*al-Qānun fe'l-ṭebb*) in 1593. Raimondi, the "greatest Italian Orientalist of the age defined the Persian language as the most beautiful in the world, divinely endowed with the spirit of expression of concepts in poetry" (Piemontese, 1988, p. 101). Yet the majority of Raimondi's editions and translations of Persian texts and lexicons, as well as his studies, including a noteworthy Persian grammar, remained in draft form. His print sample of a *gāzal* by Šāhi Sabzavāri (d. 857/1453) survives in Florence, even though not published, and repre-