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Volume I

Studies on Pre-Islamic Iran
and on Historical Linguistics

Scholarly editor Pavel B. LURJE

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The volume incorporates articles presented by the participants of the Eighth European Conference of Iranian Studies (in St Petersburg 14–19 September 2015) which were focused on Pre-Islamic Iran and on historical linguistics. The collected papers mirror the wide scope of Iranian studies of the present day: from business documents of Tumshuq in Xinjiang to those of the Syrian wars of the early Sasanians, from the etymology of the place-name Sudak to the pottery assemblages of Sistan of the Achaemenian period. The volume is addressed to Iranologists and specialists in neighbouring fields.

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On the front cover:
Medallion with camel on a Sogdian
silver lamp, 8th century, State
Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Eighth European Conference on Iranian Studies, organized by the *Societas Iranologica Europaea*, took place in Saint Petersburg, Russia, September 14th – 19th 2015. It was hosted by the State Hermitage Museum and by the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. At the closing session of the conference, the plans for the publication of the proceedings were announced, and many participants submitted their papers for publication.

As has been customary for previous European Conferences on Iranian Studies which took place in various research centers of Europe once in four years, the proceedings are divided into two volumes, the first on the Iranian peoples of the pre-Islamic period and the second on the Islamic period. We followed this tradition with little modification: three articles technically from the later period are included in the first volume. The two papers on historical linguistics of modern Iranian languages – Kurdish (Sebastian Heine) and Pashto (Matteo De Chiara) – are included in the first volume because the editors' experience suggests that subjects on historical linguistics are of greater interest for the scholars working on Old or Middle Iranian philology rather than those specializing in Persian literature. Camilla Insom's investigation of sacred places in Kurdistan, although focusing on the very recent period, is also included in the first volume since the underlying research was conducted in the framework of the Italian archeological mission to Iraqi Kurdistan, and the main results of that mission are presented here by Julian Bogdani and Luca Colliva, naturally in the first volume.

The wide range of the volume, in chronology, geography and variety of subjects reflects the state of the art in Iranian studies in various centers today. It is important to note that, amid the contributions of senior active scholars, we see the first papers of younger researchers who will form the landscape of Iranian studies in future decades.

Some technical notes are in order. The papers are organized alphabetically by author. We attempted to make a uniform system of notes and references. We did not pursue the goal of making uniform transcriptions or transliterations of Persian, Avestan, Russian or other languages. The different aims of research often dictate different system of rendering of foreign languages.

We are grateful to Doug Hitch (Whitehorse) for his correction of the English grammar and style of the papers as well as for many valuable suggestions on the subjects of many articles on linguistics, to Aleksandr Stadnik (the Hermitage publishers) for careful layout of the volume, to Julia Redkina and Daria Gaskevich for much advice on the final shape of the book as well to the Hermitage publishers in general for accepting for publication the volumes of the proceedings of the Eighth European Conference on Iranian Studies.

Bruno Genito

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

BUILDING No 3 IN DAHĀNE-YE GHOLĀMĀN, EASTERN IRAN (SISTAN): AN ACHAEMENID RELIGIOUS PUZZLE?

Summary

The text presented here tries to take stock of the religious history of ancient Iran on the basis of the archaeological evidence. In particular, it deals with the problems of building no 3 identified in Dahāne-ye Gholāmān in the 60s of the last century by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Sistan (East Iran) directed by Prof. Umberto Scerrato. The building seems to reflect both the pre-Zoroastrian ideological-religious background of the area and the practical-ritual aspects and structures associated with the use of fire. 50 years after the discovery of that building questions still remain open as to its real function and the religiosity of the Achaemenid period, to which, however, it and the archaeological context in which it is located, refer to.

Introduction

The archaeology of religions¹ is a particular, rather recent, and specialized scientific topic. It generally deals with the material traces which are somehow related to the ideological-religious sphere, and to ritual and cultic practices. This type of approach² aims to reconstruct a religion, a religious thought pertinent to a people, a human culture, etc. It also tries to identify the ideological-religious thought followed or worshipped by the political ruling élites, of which constitutes, in some way, the higher cultural expression. As one can imagine, this issue *per se* simple and clear has been, always, in time and in the various fields of the related studies, connoted by differing, difficult and evanescent aspects, depending on the degree of the complexity of the religious thoughts, and basically on the varying quality of the archaeological documented related evidence. There are other considerations, furthermore, to be dealt with in relation to the reconstruction of a religiosity on archaeological basis, concerning the nature of the archaeological record in itself and of the material evidence more precisely related to a religious sphere.

The archaeological record is fragmentary and even when you are in front of an architectonic monument, clearly religious in character, problems in interpretation still remain. With regard to the concrete evidence of the archaeological materials connected to the cultic and rituals affairs, the situation is more and more complicated. The fragmentary nature of the related data³ often combines with the equally fragmented and, sometimes, even contradictory, documentation of the sources, especially for the earliest times and for some specific types of cults. Another aspect is the overlapping of the aspects of a given religiosity over those of the religion *tout court*, which is not always clearly reflected in the archaeo-

logical record. Whether we are facing direct evidence of an ‘Official Religion’, such as those of political and dynastic character for example, or whether, instead, we are facing different manifestations of religiosity of a not determined and codified ‘public religion’. A large amount of un-official expressions of moments, of collective celebrations, solemn in character, easily occurred in ancient times; they belong to a social reality not ever politically superimposable! If archaeology is the study of the past through the analysis of archaeological materials, it is also about the present. Where scientists go, what they dig up, what they keep, and how they interpret are all inextricably linked with their own ideas about the world. When archaeologists dig up religious areas and sites, the spirituality of the researcher influences his approach to the work as well.

An element particularly confusing in the religious sphere within the archaeological background, is the indiscriminate and un-critical use of terms belonging to particular cultural traditions and automatically transported in completely different geographical and cultural contexts. It is the case, for example, with words such as *temple*, as well as that of *sacrifice*, *altar*, *cella*, *naos*, *pronaos*, *chapel*, etc. These are western concepts, and cannot always find a corresponding meaning in different ideological backgrounds and differing geo-cultural areas. The ideological-religious reconstruction has always been related to a state-type urban community. Consequently, each community of that kind must be able to match a particular religion, a language, an artistic production, and so on. It is clear, in this way, that the possibility of credible interpretations remains problematic. The religious thought of ancient Iran is difficult to reconstruct and analyse on the basis of the literary, historical and archaeological grounds.

Religious activities at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān

It is still particularly significant that, 50 years after its excavation, building No 3⁴ at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān in Sistan (Eastern Iran)⁵, still arouses differing evaluations about its nature and function, chronology, and cultural affiliation. The set of the historical and archaeological questions can be summarized in the following controversial interpretative aspects:

1. clear collective and celebrative nature of the large (53 m×53 m) solemn building (Fig. 1);
2. possible ideological-religious cultic aspect expressed by the widespread use of fire and the related installations (Fig. 2);



Fig. 1. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, general view colour slide in 1975 from south-west of Building no 3 (MAI, IsMEO, Neg. Dep. n. 2670_09, by Umberto Scerrato; see colour image on Plate IV)

3. possible chronological attribution to the Achaemenid time and dynasty^{6!}

These points should, of course, be considered within a rather more general framework related to the religious activities on the Iranian Plateau in general for the time constituted by:

- A. the religious cults in that period and, in particular, in the eastern part of the plateau;
- B. the typology of the architectural remains, somewhat related to a ritual worship of the time⁷;
- C. the archaeological contexts of the presumed related religious monuments found.

As far as the first point is concerned, the religion used within the Achaemenid dynasty (*Schwartz* 1985; *Kellens* 2002; *Kellens* ed 1991) and even the same cultic and ritual practices in the related period, are not very clear, and their possible reconstruction, on the basis of the sources⁸ has not had a clear archaeological reply (*Keall* 1972). As far as the religious practices of the peoples living on the plateau are concerned, one does not have precise documentary and archaeological evidence, with few exceptions. The remains evidenced recently at Veshnaveh⁹ demonstrate (*Rose* 2011. P. 140) once more the central role of the landscape in the religious and popular beliefs in ancient Iran. Since the Iron Age and most probably also during the Achaemenid period the natural landscape provided the space for religious ideological practice for the Persian, pre-Persian (Mede) and Elamite populations (*Henkelman* 2008; *Potts* 2010). What is more, those spaces are not always strictly integrated in any urban layout, but are mostly located within a more or less simple urban-scape.

It is worth noting here the particular attention given to the water and springs since the Achaemenid time. At Bisotun the most important epigraphic and artistic rock-relief was built dominating a spring and facing a probable water area, as at the monumental terrace at Qadamgah in the south-eastern portion of the Kuh-e Rahmat in Fars¹⁰. As is known in the later dynastic period, the connection between the Sasanian rock-reliefs and the water, and the water and kingship was definitely established. It is preliminarily to be stressed that in a mountainous territory such as the Iranian plateau and the Zagros areas¹¹, there are many passes, torrential rivers, caves, springs, wide rocky walls, etc. These particular landscape features have been marked by humans with *stelae*, rock-reliefs, inscriptions and cave-sanctuaries, from the 2nd millennium BC (*Kozad* 2012). It is evident that the presence of the water courses in such mountainous areas, has contributed to naturally determine a kind of sacralisation of the territory, with sometimes also a monumentalisation of the water and their sources as well. This kind of specialisation of the territorial use would have found the highest level of development during the Sasanian time, as e.g. in Bishapur and Dezful (not to mention *qanats*, wells, dams, and bridges). The groundwater areas in the rocky regions and in a semi-arid climatic environment almost automatically became sacred spaces and possibly often places of worshipping, including in the later Islamic time. It is not rare to find a simple Shiite sanctuary built very close to an ancient place with water springs, as in the Sarabshir water source not far from the capital Bishapur, which most probably existed already in the Sasanian period at the time of Shapur I.

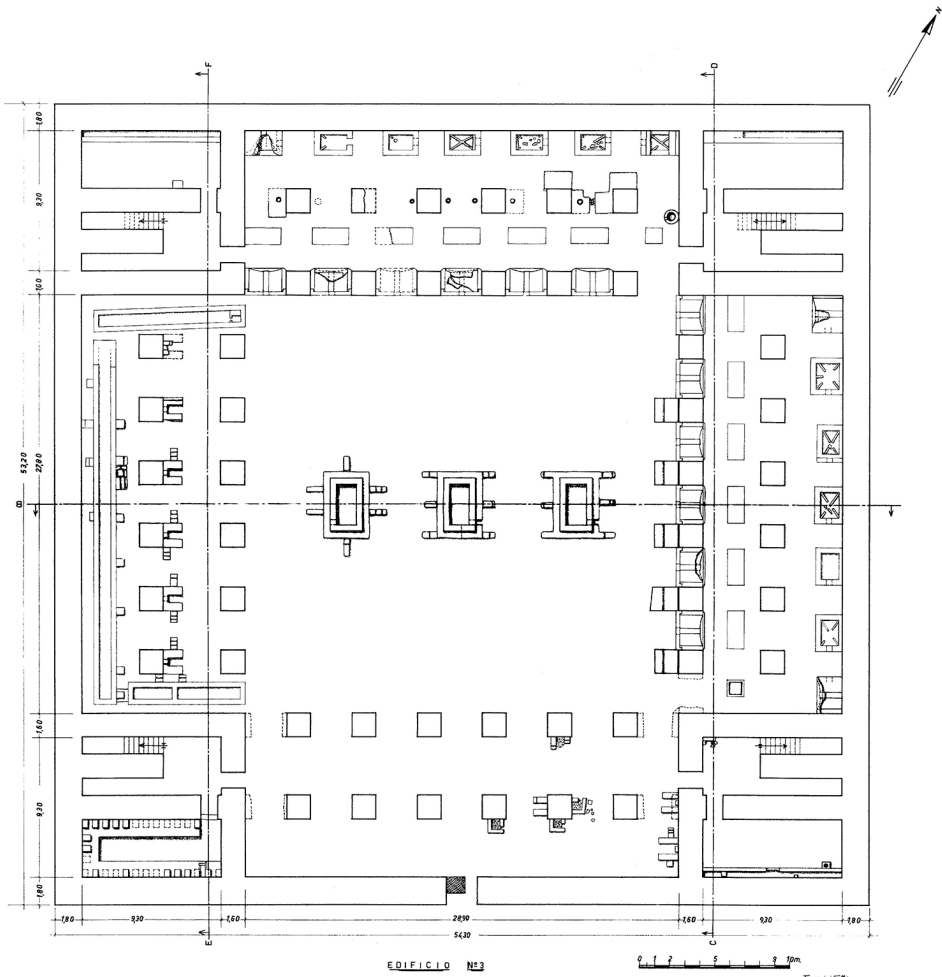


Fig. 2. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, general map of Building no 3, with the fire installations (MAI, IsMEO, Neg. Dep. C.S. no 1083 bis, by Tullio Tamagnini)

We can but stress the fact that many of these rock-reliefs, which have enriched the Iranian landscape and beyond¹², have often been observed and studied as isolated phenomena of importance in the history of art and of commemorative and celebrative significance. Less emphasis has been given to them as the significant elements of a successful attempt to institutionalise or sacralise a territory. This way of occupying a territory, the creation of an urban-scape, may be dated back to very early times and which does not have often anything to do with the western concept of city. The Zagros and Elburz mountain chains have, from the beginning, constituted crucial physical aspects of a difficult, impervious landscape, sometimes also characterised by forbidden heights. These landscape features were ideologically and religiously glorified, until they became co-essential to all the political events which occurred in those areas.

Evidence of an extensive use of figural representations on a rock surface, which cannot have taken place by chance, comes from different periods within the plateau. Examples come from the Elamite period¹³, as well as the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid ages¹⁴. Archaeological remains containing precise ideological and religious character come from the Hellenistic period¹⁵, as well as the Parthian period¹⁶. In the Sasanian era we have many examples of monumentalisation of springs, important river passes (bridges) and even of the urban landscape at Bishapur¹⁷. These remains are some of the most successful and scenically impressive examples of figurative art. These works were carefully designed and cut into the most durable already existing material support, rock, which miraculously turns into the most sensational. They were intended as instruments of political propaganda. The territory certainly remains unfortunately one of the most neglected areas in the traditional approach to the archaeology of the dynastic period in the Iranian Plateau (*Genito* 2016).

As far as the second point, it is interesting how the ancient dynasty or its courtly circle meant to exercise their rituals, and in which kind of architectonic monument they thought to conduct their own worshipping activities. According to Herodotus (I, 131–132), the Persians did not usually worship their deities in ‘temples’, but only in open elevated spaces. And this information has caused not a few problems in the interpretation of the historiographical tradition related to ancient Iran. Such a type of building is not very frequently found in ancient Iran and the typology of the monuments up to the 70s (*Schipman* 1969; 1971), needs to be revised.

As far as the third point, one should say that in the last decades archaeological research in general has undergone large changes in methodological, technical and study perspectives, but that the archaeology related to the Achaemenid dynasty and time seems currently to live still in its adolescent stage. Too few are the sites of the period in the Iranian plateau and the related areas which have been regularly excavated and published on¹⁸. In our specific case, the archaeological and historical perspectives on the matter do not seem independent from the premises, purposes and methods of the long, strong and rigorous tradition of Iranian studies. The consequence of this has been a generalized flattening of the archaeological above the philological interpretations and vice versa. These two traditions appear to have separately traveled without having found in their own disciplinary itinerary, from time to time, the most appropriate synthesis. The issue, however, should be faced from a different perspective, because those two major categories of documentation should never be neglected, and not be subjected to undue straining when one does not fit well with the other. It was at the end of the 60s, with the so-called ‘New Archaeology’ coming out from the social anthropological school of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, that the break with the old style, art-historical methodology first was most striking. The publication of ‘Analytical Archaeology’ (Clarke 1968) starkly revealed the differences between the approaches, but it also set out to be a political and ideological *manifesto*, proclaiming the ‘loss of innocence’ for any archaeological research which had to take into account the pure field data. According to this program, it was no longer enough carry out an historical reconstruction of the events and economic structures of ancient societies. A more reliable approach

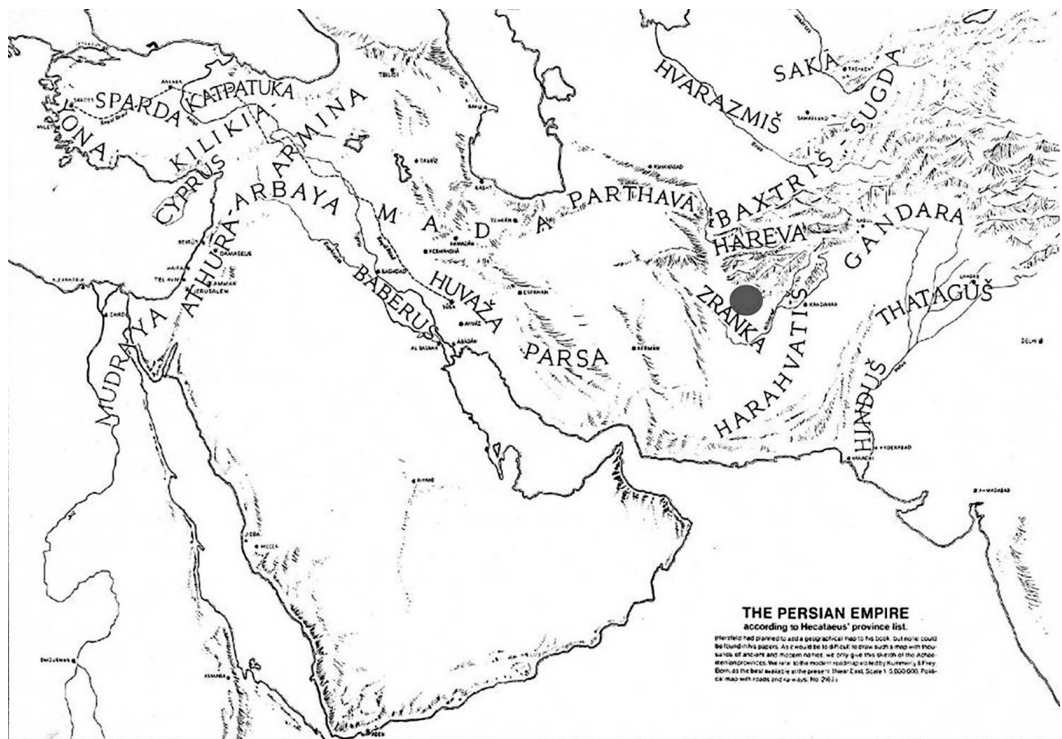


Fig. 3. General map of the Achaemenid Empire and satrapies by Herzfeld 1968, digitally corrected by Bruno Genito

seemed to be the extensive study of the human patterns of behaviours that could be deduced from the archaeological materials and organized according to the anthropological schemes. This research perspective could not fit very well to the reassuring, albeit contradictory framework of the information provided by the epigraphic evidence and the philological reconstruction and the assumptions regarding the ancient languages.

The Archaeological and territorial context of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān

The macroscopic archaeological and architectural remains at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān belong to a settlement with a clear ‘urban layout’¹⁹. At the time of the discovery (in the 60s of the last century), it was proposed to recognize here the ancient Zarin of the later classical sources as the regional capital (*Gnoli* 1966; 1993) of the Achaemenid *dahyu* (satrapy) of Drangiana (Zranka of the imperial inscriptions)²⁰ (Fig. 3).

Umberto Scerrato considered dating this ‘urban layout’ back to a period between the late 6th and the 4th century BC, belonging to the Achaemenid time, although with some doubt about the dynastic affiliation. The reasons for this dating were the chronological interpretation of the architectural remains, including building No 3²¹, the comparative and chronological analyses of the pottery fragments, the presence of a small cylinder seal in green glassy

paste (Fig. 4)²², of three-aisled bronze arrowheads (*Genito* 2012c. Fig. 22) of the Scythian tradition (Fig. 5)²³, of a *bullā* from Building No 2, (*Genito* 2012. Fig. 23, left) and of a seal impression of possibly neo-Babylonian age with an adoring man standing before an altar on which three staves are placed from Building No 2 as well (*Genito* 2012. Fig 24, left)²⁴.

At that time the tools for absolute chronology were not very much in use. A few soil samples were collected in the field, but unfortunately never analyzed. Above all, however, epigraphic and artistic traces were not found at the site. The tradition of archaeological studies nevertheless considers them crucial materials and characterized as historical. Neither coins, nor seals were found, and attempts at a more precise chronological and cultural interpretation have had limited success.

The ‘palatial’ architectural typology of the Achaemenid dynasty, as is evidenced in its main sites, is based on a central unit with a pillared covering, inserted within arcades in Pasargadae, or within porches and rooms in Persepolis²⁵, in which the high stone columns supporting the ceilings constitute one of the characteristic elements. The buildings are often constructed on an artificial terrace, and present bas-relief sculptures as an integral part of the architecture. This latter, in its lithic elements, is treated as a large sculpture; doorways or windows, for example, are designed and often are monoliths.

The sculptural and artistic evidence in Persepolis²⁶ and, to a lesser extent, and with different characteristics, also in Pasargadae, represent, in a large scale, mainly on the two northern and western stairways of the place of assembly, the apadana, human figures constituting a kind of iconographic anthology with important ethnographic, or ethno-archaeological implications and a sort of summa encyclopaedica of the cultural knowledge of the time. The groups depict, according to the majority of the different scholarly interpretations, the so-called delegations of the empire belonging to the different entities covered by old Iranian term *dahyu* (pl. *dahyāva*, Greek name *satrapēiē*), the list of which (a controversial issue) is found on some of the most important dynastic official epigraphic remains (Old Persian, Accadian and Elamite inscriptions). The figures bring different clothes, personal belongings and objects, and animals. They are ‘embassies’ bearing gifts, or taking part in ritual, in a wider scenario of a collective solemn ceremony that possibly occurred for the New year in Persepolis, which, in the 50s of the last century, was supposed to be a ritual city (Pope 1957). The identification of these delegations has been the subject of scientific debate (*Junge* 1942; *Jacobs* 1982; 1994; 2003; *Roaf* 1983; *Tourovets* 2001). On the basis of the lists of the peoples described in the literature, including the classical sources (Hecateus, Herodotus, etc.) and the epigraphic direct evidence of the Empire²⁷, scholars have tried to find out a complicated correspondence between the order of the geographic-territorial location and of rank.

Among these representations, there are also those of the delegation representing, according to some scholars, Drangiana (Greek and Latin rendering of ancient term of *Zranka*)²⁸, modern Sistan. Scerrato maintained the identification of the city (*Zranka/Zarin*) and expressed views on its chronology, even if absolutely incontrovertible data on both the issues there did not exist at that time, but still today one is not able to have exhaus-

tive answers on these points. Although one has more possibilities to use extensively sophisticated methodological approaches and interpretations on the field, both in terms of the social and political complexity, and in those of diverse territorial meanings of a settlement, which, at that time, were certainly not manageable as today.

Dahāne-ye Gholāmān is located on the alluvial plain of the inland Hilmand river in Sistan. It constitutes elements of both strong cultural discontinuity and continuity in the area; the first given by the ‘urban’ character of the remains that are unprecedented in the area²⁹, and the second by the massive use of the traditional material of construction: the mud bricks and paxa (blocks of clay used together with the shaped bricks). Stones were not used there very much, and baked bricks were used only in later periods. The urban pattern of the new settlement and its buildings presents, amongst other characteristics, the maximum precision in the alignments and a widespread use of the right angle, etc.

The archaeological remains are located at the foot of the desert plateau and, further south, there is the canyon which cuts through the natural terrace and that gives the name to the site: ‘Gate of the Slaves’. The remains, not very far from Hamun Lake, extend for about 1.5 km in length from east to west over a width between 300 and 800 m, are constituted, at the present state of research, by twenty-eight buildings. Part of them are excavated and part not yet. All are exposed to the violent winds of the north-west and, with one exception, have the entrance on the southern side. To the south stands a natural mud tower called, by local people, *Gabr-e Zardusht* ‘tomb of Zoroaster’. The specific plans of the buildings uncovered suggest the use of architectural principles that had already guided the positioning



Fig. 4. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, small cylinder seal in green glassy paste, engraved with a stylized tree and a running deer (MAI, ISMEO, Neg. Dep. no. FB191-8-I)



Fig. 5. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, three-barbed arrow-head (MAI, ISMEO, Inventory DG 1963, no 2, Neg. ep.C.S.: 2765/5; 2764/3)



Fig. 6. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, general view from Google earth 2015, central part (see colour image on Plate VI)

of buildings at Persepolis and Pasargadae. An ideological-religious building, No 3, since the beginning has been interpreted as related to the cult of fire (Figs. 1, 2).

This ‘layout’ is the only archaeological remnant currently interpretable as ‘urban’ of that period on the plateau. Even the new trial trenches conducted in recent years by the *Iranian Cultural Heritage Organisation* on the site and in particular in building No 15 seem to confirm the extraordinary importance of the site (*Sajjadi* 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2007a; 2007b; *Sajjadi, Moqaddam* 1382/2003; 2004; *Mohammadkhani* 2012). Answers to such a delicate historical and archaeological puzzle seem more easy than one could imagine.³⁰ In order to make comparisons between Fars and Sistan, and their respective architectural remains, one should take into consideration the following and not secondary aspects. One is that the Persepolitan and Pasargadae plains are partially irrigated by small and torrential rivers such as the Kur and its main tributary the Pulvar, in the Marvdasht valley. This contrasts with the long inland Hilmand river (more than 1000 km) and its terminating lakes. And going into the details of the architectural layout, one cannot forget several features. Another is the use of a stone architecture with a sophisticated technical tradition (of Mesopotamian origin?), of using columns (Greek-Ionic origin?), and of decorating staircases and plinth of entrances with human and animal figures in high and bas-reliefs (of Mesopotamian origin?). This contrasts with the use of mud architecture with a sophisticated technical tradition of pillars, without columns and any figural decorative patterns (Zranka/Drangiana, Bactriana, Margiana, Sogdiana).

The differences and similarities between the two archaeological contexts and the two sets of representative buildings in Fars and Sistan, can paradoxically help to shed light on some of the interpretations related to Dahāne-ye Gholāmān which are going to be proposed

here. The remains at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān (*Scerato* 1966) are quite different from the ruins of Susa, Persepolis and Pasargadae. The first are an ‘urban layout’ of an important settlement of possibly Achaemenid time. The second are palatial manifestations of the recognized state-power located in big valleys (Karun, Kharkha and Diz rivers) with a long urban tradition, and in an inner smaller valley of the Kur river where the geomorphological conditions are less favourable for an urban settling.

Those macroscopic archaeological remains in Sistan belong to a unique archaeological context in a dry, desert area. The presence of routes, private houses and public buildings show, nonetheless, an urban planning completely unusual for the Achaemenid period (Figs. 6, 7). There is no exaggeration if one affirms that Dahāne-ye Gholāmān dates to the end of the 6th with a partial re-use in the 4th century BC (*Genito* 1986; 1990), it is, so far, the only ‘urban layout’ of the Achaemenid period on the plateau. The plans of the public buildings (Nos. 2 and 3 in particular) generally recall the palaces of Persepolis and Pasargadae, and lead one to think that in this peripheral area architectural principles were perhaps inspired by a dynastic and imperial order. Whether or not there was direct dynastic control in the area, as its status as an Achaemenid satrapy suggests, Dahāne-ye Gholāmān in Sistan constitutes from a certain point of view a unique cultural assemblage and, apart from certain other considerations, its evidence gives the strong impression that the architectural remains belong to a settlement capital or something rather similar.

The ‘urban’ layout present in Dahāne-ye Gholāmān is not a random result, but a synthesis between the new political unit on one hand and the typical traditional cultural regionalization widespread over the plateau and the adjacent areas on the other. The final analyses and interpretations

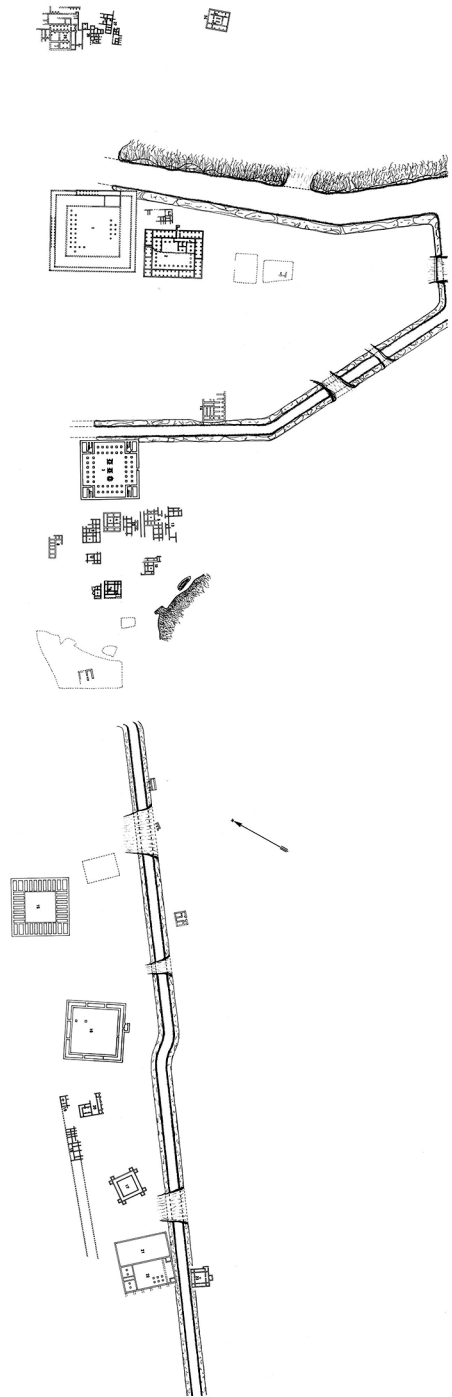


Fig. 7. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, general map 1963–1964 (MAI, IsMEO, C.S. Inv. 1082A, 1082Bis)

will allow one, then, to understand some of the basic criteria which the builders followed. Despite the two main phases archaeologically recognized, it is evidently a unitary framework of urban planning, whose most significant aspects can be summarized as follows:

1. an 'urban layout' around which individual groups of buildings are arranged;
2. extensive use, even if not yet well documented, of channels for water supply;
3. a clear functional distribution and differentiation between public and private spaces.

The surface exploration and excavations conducted during three successive campaigns in the 60s of last century have allowed one to identify actually the plan of many buildings of an "urban layout":

1. a possible 'treasury', located in building No 2, both on the basis of the typical plan of a warehouse, and the discovery of several ingots of lead or lumps, evidently precious metal in Drangiana (*Genito* 2012c. XCII, fig. 25; *Genito*, forthcoming; *Morra* forthcoming; here Fig. 8);
2. the grandiose sacred building No 3;
3. a large space, building No 1, not yet excavated, in some way comparable on the basis of the apparent layout with the Apadana of Persepolis;
4. quarters of dwellings (buildings Nos 4, 5, 6, 7);
5. the building No 15, where new trial trenches have been carried out.

Dahāne-ye Gholāmān is the only known extended 'settlement' of ancient Iran³¹ in the historical period. The reason for all this looks very clear. The Sistan region is not on a plateau. On the easternmost side, where our site is located, it consists mostly of a floodplain arisen due to the deposits of a great inland river, the Hilmand coming from the Afghan highlands³².

The poor 'urban' traces of the ancient imperial period in Iran have brought many interpretative difficulties. To analyze an empire, among the greatest in antiquity, without 'urban traces' is not an easy task. Even today, it is increasingly difficult to propose, notwithstanding the case of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, an archaeological definition of the Achaemenid Empire.³³ When, the remains of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān were first identified, the discovery was greeted with much enthusiasm and attention, and, at the same time, with great surprise. Since then, no architectonic urban site, with public and private buildings and even roads, for the period between the late 7th and early 6th centuries, which usually is defined as pre-Achaemenid, has been found. However, since then the documentary methods and the interpretative criteria in archaeological research have changed a lot. The numerous historical and archaeological issues that Dahāne-ye Gholāmān posed at the time of its discovery, and which arise still today are crucial for the Achaemenid era.

Dahāne-ye Gholāmān is located in an area far from the main centers like Susa, Persepolis and Pasargadae. As such, it embodies the contradictions of the controversial and, for many aspects, unknown relationships between the center and the periphery of the empire.

Even how to clearly define the macroscopic archaeological traces of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, extending for about 100 ha., remains an open question. It is difficult to say if they represent a settlement tout court, or a city, and then what kind of city (central or

peripheral capital, suburbs etc.), and especially which city, known from the sources, do they represent. One hundred hectares or less, nonetheless, can only belong to a big center of a very particular significance.

Dahāne-ye Gholāmān stands so very different from the ruins of Persepolis, Pasargadae and Susa, where a monumental typology based on a plan obsessively repeated is predominant. It consists, there, of central hypostyle halls, with tall stone columns as one of the main characteristic elements. The macroscopic mud remains of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān do not involve either the columnar party or the hypostyle hall. They do feature the general use of the right angle, square halls surrounded by side pillared porches (public buildings) and central pillared rooms (private buildings; in one case also circular) surrounded by oblong rooms and the presence of ideological-ritual traces with the fire as central element (building no 3). These plans belong to an ‘urban layout’, unique, particular, and quite unusual for the Achaemenid period (Fig. 6, 7). It is safe to say that Dahāne-ye Gholāmān represents, so far, clear urban traces of the Achaemenid period (*Genito* 1987; 1990; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2013).

Building No 3

Building No 3 at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān has always called into question certain distinguishing features of the cultic practices of the time and of the religiosity of the Achaemenids and of the Achaemenid time and of the settlement typology as well.

Scholars dealing with the religion of the Achaemenids or Achaemenid time have not taken into account the fact that the building and the site have never been totally published and that in such a controversial issue, the relevant elements remain:

1. the fire cult of the Achaemenid time and dynasty;
2. the religion of the Achaemenid time within a peripheral eastern area;
3. the interpretations of the excavated building, clearly related to the ideological ritual sphere.

It should be enough to recognize and emphasize the existence of a monumental architecture, with monuments such as building No 3 (ca. 53 × 53 m), or building No 1, not yet excavated, but still larger than the first, and others such as Nos 2, 15 and 16, that are not a small thing in the regional Sistan context. Such planned, monumental architecture made of huge monuments, whose buildings are clearly planned, might not appear originated out of nowhere, but it must be the result of programmed ‘political’ activities, which can be attributed both to a dynastic power, or another one independent from that. The particular nature of this building, with the presence of different fire installations distributed according to a precise scheme



Fig. 8. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, lead or lumps plano-convex ingot, from the building No 2 (MAI, IsMEO, Inv. 65.55 a; see colour image on Plate V)

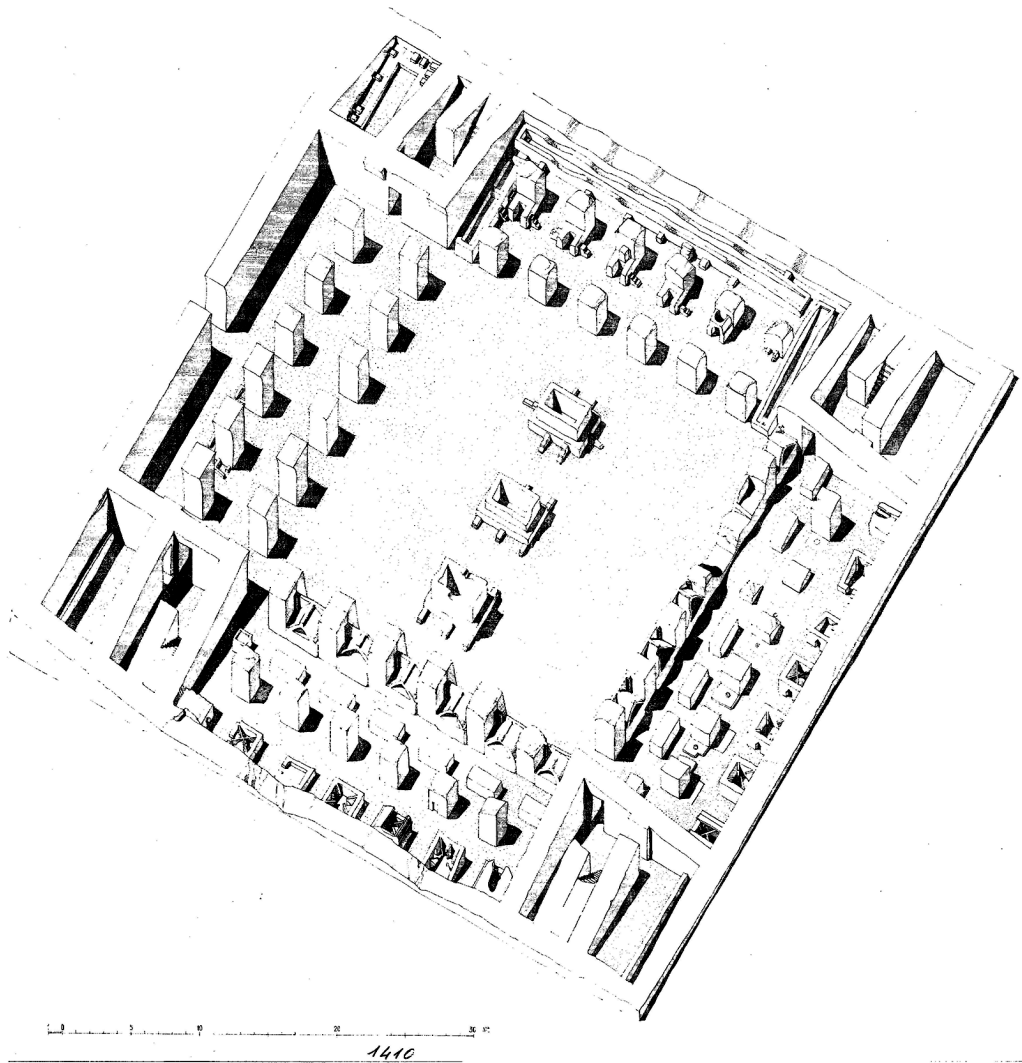


Fig. 9. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, axonometric reconstruction of Building no 3 (MAI, IsMEO, C.S. Inv. 1082A, 1082Bis, by Tullio Tamagnini)

in the four porticoes and courtyard, leads one to think of a fire ideology (*Genito* 2001a; 2001b; 2007). The building with a large square courtyard surrounded by porticoes and rooms (towers) in the corners, was described by Scerrato as ‘sacred’ on the basis of the archaeological and architectonic evidence (*Scerrato* 1979. P. 712). In the earlier phase (A) the building contained forty-seven fire ‘containers’ (*ibidem* 716) (Fig. 9). In the second phase (B), the complex was completely re-modeled, and the porticos housed ‘large ovens’, ‘stoves’ and ‘fire-places’ (Fig. 10). In the middle of the courtyard there were three rectangular tanks, each standing on a wide base and having small stairways (perhaps present in Phase A as well)



Fig. 10. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, 'large ovens', 'stoves' and 'fire-places' in East Portico
(MAI, IsMEO Dep. Neg. no 2060_04)



Fig. 11. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, three tanks for fire in the court of building no 3
(MAI, IsMEO, Dep. Neg. no 2044_04)

(*Scerrato* 1979, 724, 719) (Fig. 11). *Scerrato* still suggested that a continuous fire burned inside each tank. In a slightly later Phase B1, ten to twelve low rectangular platforms, each having a hemispherical depression in its center to contain fire, were installed in the northern portico (Fig. 2, upper part). *Scerrato* (1979. P. 725, 731–33) suggested that the building provided the earliest evidence for the worship of three deities and the ‘Indo-Iranian doctrine of the three fires’ (*Boyce* 1968a; 1968b; 1975; 1982. P. 128–31; *Boyce, Grenet* 1991). The inner articulation of the fire installations and the presence of burnt animal bones and the remains of ashes mixed with grease in the north-western portico, are inadmissible by the rules of Zoroastrian purity, and give evidence of a non-Zoroastrian character of the complex. The scientific debate at the first appearance of the results, has been particularly focused on that building, which reflects a typology of a very special kind that seems to exclude a secure Zoroastrian interpretation. The ritual use of fire and of animal sacrifices is, however, documented from both of the phases characterizing the history of the building. A tripartite scheme, the three central tanks (i.e. empty mud basins; Fig. 9, in the center) and the furnishing of three of the porticoes (excluding the entrance portico on the south) with special structures, could indicate a cult devoted to three deities, possibly Ahura Mazdā, Anāhitā, and Mithra. An inscription of Artaxerxes III naming those three deities has been interpreted as the expression of a cult devoted to them, but this has never been certainly demonstrated. The special other fire structures in the northern and the north-eastern porticoes (like pyraea, furnaces with a vaulted ceiling and ‘sacrificial’ podia; Fig. 9, lower center), suggest articulated, though not yet fully understood, local forms of ritual. Alternatively they may suggest the survival of an earlier religious sensibility, still respected and included through an institutional, political, and perhaps administrative act, inside the physical perimeter of the building. It is also possible that the building could have constituted an example of the kind of āyadana ‘cult place’ to which Darius I (522–486 BC) referred in the Bisotun inscription (DB I, ll. 63 ff., p. 118). The building seems actually to have been a cult place, rather than a true ‘religious building’ in the Babylonian or Greek style (*Gnoli* 1967. P. 107 ff.). Thus, it probably attests to local religious forms (*Scerrato* 1979. P. 731 ff.; *Gnoli* 1980. P. 71 ff. and fn. 80) or perhaps the survival of a still earlier religious sensibility, still respected by the political/dynastic or similar administration.

A more accurate interpretation of the remains of building No 3, and of others in the same site which are not the subject of reflection here, depends to a large extent on general considerations that one can make about the general archaeological context of the site.

The site has also yielded some other finds of ideological-religious character like the stepped base of a ‘fire altar’ (house QN6;)³⁴ and a complete ‘fire altar’ with stepped top and hemispherical depression for fire or fire container (Fig. 16)³⁵, this one similar to the fire-altar found at Nush-i Jan in Media (*Stronach, Roaf* 2007). The excavators feel that both of these fire installations can be of possible Achaemenid date but that they may represent a kind of popular and even domestic cult practice given the archeological context of the find (*Genito* 1982).

In the meantime it is also to be considered that the whole set of the building seems to accommodate a ritual of a somewhat pre- or Zoroastrian community (*Scerrato* 1966a; 1979).



Fig. 12. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, fire altar (stepped fireplace) in house no 6 to left, and upside down stepped fire altar in building no 16 (MAI, IsMEO, Neg. Dep. no FB2551-12 (left), and MAI, IsMEO, Dep. Neg. no 4259_24, (right))

The presence of such particular ritual installations inside building No 3 (*Scerrato* 1966a) is most probably evidence of the beginnings of an ideological Zoroastrian system of beliefs, which probably started to be widespread over Iranian territory (*Scerrato* 1979). At this point, there is no strong necessity either to blindly adhere to the enormous interpretative potential of the field archaeology on one hand, or to slavishly follow the textual information derived from the direct Old Persian and the indirect (Greek, Roman etc.) sources. The preliminary observations of the 60s of last century (*Scerrato* 1962; 1966; 1970) suggested that the building, as within the site as a whole, presented at least two distinct but related chronological phases. The size and the architectural floor plan of the monument did offer some elements suggesting an earliest date going back to the 6th and 4th centuries BC. Before going into the details of some design, architectural, and ritual aspects regarding the construction of building no 3, you need to address other issues that, in my opinion, contain in themselves the arguments for and against its correct, typological, functional, and perhaps even chronological interpretation.

The traces of such a ritual in the building represent the archaeological evidence of the development and dissemination of a religious ideology that both connects to the growing role of Zoroastrianism, and absorbs and channels, within fixed routes of a complex floor plan, typical irregularities and fragmentary evidence of a not yet codified ritual-religious experience.

Building No 3 highlights an ideological traditional ritual of a community (*Scerrato* 1966a, 1966b; 1979), which probably dealt with the ideological unification processes of popular local beliefs, only partly comparable to the successive ideological codification, evidently being widespread over the territory. Regardless of other considerations, the religiosity that is observed in that monument reinforces the idea that the ‘urban layout’ where

Dahāne-ye Gholāmān is located may have constituted that of a very important ‘capital’ or of a center of a very similar character.

These are the main scientific aspects from which to start, even though much of what one may see at Susa, Persepolis³⁶, Pasargadae, does not exist at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, and this is an incontrovertible fact. If there is no artistic evidence, one knows now that it is not true that one cannot talk about a ‘capital city’. And another generally accepted consideration states that if there is no epigraphic evidence, one cannot talk about a ‘capital’. The ‘urban layout’ on one hand and the particular characterization of the canals, of public and private buildings on the other, in Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, including the one definitely religious in character, suggest much more than one might think on the reality of a complexity that one may define, for an order above, political, the nature ethnic and political of which remains still to be attributed.

The origin and development of the ancient ‘urban’ traces in the ancient Near East, have always been particularly fascinating even when they apparently and systematically conflict with the comprehensive concept of the ‘city’.

In this difficult methodological and theoretical issue, what in my opinion characterizes the ‘urban’ aspects of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, and, in same way, the consequent ideological-religious dimension of building No 3, lies just between the well consolidated and well documented city tradition of the ancient Near-East, and the diverse peripheral ‘urban’ tradition of Central Asia.

¹ The theoretical approach within the archaeology of religion encompasses a broad range of historical and anthropological perspectives. Among these we can mention Émile Durkheim’s functionalist understanding of religion as serving to separate the sacred and the profane (1998); Karl Marx’s idea of religion as ‘the opium of the masses’ or a false consciousness; Clifford Geertz’s loose definition of religion as a ‘system of symbols’ that makes ordered the world (1973); Victor Turner’s work on rituals, including rites of passage (1995); Max Weber’s religious types and thoughts on the relationship between economics and religion (2002); Claude Lévi Strauss’ structuralist understandings of totemism and myth (*Tremlett* 2008); and Mary Douglas’ idea of the division of ‘purity and danger’ (*Douglas* 2003). The meaning of ‘religion’ generally is considered related to that set of beliefs, feelings, and rituals that bind an individual or a group of people with what it considers sacred, especially with the gods, or the complex of *dogmas*, precepts, and rites that make up a given religious cult. The modern western term comes

from the Latin *religio*, whose etymology has been for a long time discussed, and with which the ancient Romans indicated a kind of attitude in the face of certain things (e.g., tombs or parents). With Christianity the term was extended to everything about man’s relationship with God. The historical origin of the concept has long prevented a proper understanding of those cultural formations commonly called religion. It is not necessary that a religion implies a concept of God, articles of faith, including acts of worship, nor forms of moral character. As the greatest common denominator of each complex called religion, it can be considered the relationship of a human group with what it considers ‘sacred’. This research combines archaeological and anthropological method and theory with historical ones.

² In addition to recovering, recording, and analyzing material culture, archaeologists use archives, oral histories, ethno-historical accounts, and read texts critically, emphasizing the historical context of the documents in order to better understand religious practices that may have been discouraged

or even severely punished. Combined archaeological, historical, and anthropological data sets may contradict each other, or the material record may illuminate the details of covert or syncretic religious practice, as well as resistance to dominant religious forms (Bowie 2000; Insoll 2004).

- ³ Consider, for example, human remains and burial assemblages, religious buildings (exact architecture, floor plan of a temple, church, mosque, stupa etc.), sacred landscapes, religious iconography, symbols (Robb 1998), ethnographic texts and ethnographic analogy, cultic installations, fancy goods, common artifact and ecofacts classes.
- ⁴ Originally the buildings uncovered were numbered by Umberto Scerrato as QN1, QN2, QN3 etc., according to the small village nearby the site of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, named Qal‘a-ye Nau. I prefer to use the number alone.
- ⁵ Umberto Scerrato excavated the site in the 60’s of last century and the most important contributions are: Scerrato 1966a; 1966b; 1966c; 1966d; 1970; 1972; 1974; 1979.
- ⁶ My contribution will not be related to the courtly circle of the Persian kings of the 6th-4th centuries BC, and it does not deal with the issue of the more complex aspect of the religion of the peoples living on the Iranian plateau during the Achaemenid time. It mainly tries to deal with aspects of a religious activity not necessarily expressed as an official cult, that can be considered as somehow institutionalized and incorporated into an architectural, and then, perhaps ideologically, coded system.
- ⁷ The relationship between the results of the archaeological research and the religion of pre-Islamic Iran has been and still is a long debated question. The lack of clear material evidence on one hand, and the scanty, philologically uncertain and sometimes also controversial evidence in the sources on the other, has been one of the main reasons for the interpretative difficulties in defining a ‘religion’ of the Achaemenid dynasty, other than certifying only the presence of the great unique divinity Ahura Mazda (Gnoli 1974). The problem is not new, and for the last decades the basis for the discussion seems to remain the same. The greatest advance in knowledge on the subject has come from the study of the Persepolis tablets texts rather than from new archaeological discoveries or interpretations. Still unknown are the cult places of the Achaemenid dynasty, and still one does not know the elements

related to the religion of the dynasty, to the old Persian ‘religion’, or to Zoroastrianism (Bouchard 1984). Given the chronic lack of archaeologically secure and reliable evidence in Iran and for the Achaemenid time in particular, most scholars are involved in chronologically and geographically improbable comparisons, feeding a sort of vague and uncertain determination of even simple aspects of the issue. We refer in particular to the widespread use in making comparisons of architectural remains most probably dating back to the Hellenistic period, and found in areas far from the Achaemenid empire’s heart, such as Dahāne-ye Gholāmān and others, located mostly in Central Asia (Rapin 1992), such as the so-called sanctuary in Ai-Khanum (Litvinskiy, Pichikyan 1981; 1983; 1984; Zeymal 1979). More recent contributions use a new interpretative approach, clearly distinguishing the pre-Hellenistic (Shenkar 2007) and the post-Hellenistic aspects of the religiosity (Shenkar 2011) of the so-called Iranian world. Still, the interpretative leaps are remarkable, when you consider the enormous chronological and geographical distances that separate the structural, architectural and probably ritual elements.

- ⁸ In the Achaemenid inscriptions there is a clear relationship between the King and Ahura Mazda, who receives merits and honours on the basis of the successes of the King. The palatial architecture of the Kings, if possible, reflects more or less the same situation as well, even if there is not any archaeological evidence of religious construction dedicated to the worship of Ahura Mazda. The religious conceptions of the Achaemenids and, perhaps, of the Persians as a whole, seems to be particularly different from those of the other cultures of the ancient world. It does not include buildings specifically related to divinity (Razmjou 2005; 2010; Razmjou, Roaf 2013) as the Herodotean account reveals. Ahura Mazda is never identified as the king, as is, in contrast, Assur in the Assyrian ceremony of enthronization of the new earthly king (Holloway 2001. P. XV).
- ⁹ The discoveries at *Chale Ghar 1 and 2* and *Veshnaveh* in the Isfahan region to the southeast of Kashan, inside a sacred cave where offerings were most probably dedicated to the water, with finds dated from the 8th century BC to the 8th century AD, represent some of the major archaeological evidence for understanding the common Iranian religious background and cult practices

(Stöllner 2011). Scientific data collected there enabled the reliable recognition of various phases between the early 3rd and the late 2nd millennium BC. Based on comparative studies and on stratigraphic analyses, the site also gives an outline of the chronology of the jewellery finds that were collected during the excavation. It is not possible to give a very detailed chronology of the whole set up, due to the insufficient state of research on Arsacid and Sasanian personal ornaments. Furthermore, the site has been investigated by means of scientific examinations of amber and glass. An interpretation of the popular belief and the religious meaning of the site is put forward on the basis of single find groups and objects, as well as with the help of the comparison to other sanctuaries that reveal similar characteristics such as the mines from *Veshnaveh*. One sensational find was an early sacrificial altar in a submerged section of mine 1 in the Chale Ghar district. This was one of the few archaeological items found in Iran related to a rite connected with water and probably with fertility. It was practised by a rural population, most likely from ancient Veshnaveh, from the first half of the 1st millennium BC and on into the early Islamic period. It is of great importance for an understanding of the 'local' religion which could have been, somehow, related to Zoroastrianism too.

- ¹⁰ The monument is carved into the body of a rocky cliff and consists of three overlapping rectangular platforms of equal width. The lower platform is located above a basin, now dried, which contained water. It can be accessed by climbing and walking on rocky surfaces next to the monument. The second platform has a larger surface area, and can be reached at the sides by two very damaged staircases (one on each side), also cut directly in the rock. Using these stairs, one may climb directly to the top platform, located about four meters higher. The upper deck has the largest surface area and dominates the other two. The floor and the walls show various rectangular niches that are of 10 and 30 cm deep; above and next to the monument, you can see several holes cut in the rock, in which cables were probably inserted for an elevator. On the basis of the royal tombs of Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam, it was initially believed that the monument had a funerary function. Recently it was clarified that the poor quality of the rock already existed at the time when the monument was built. This friable rock,

already known in Achaemenid era, is clearly incompatible with the creation of a royal tomb and must be connected to the ideological functions related to the nearby spring (Bessac 2007).

- ¹¹ We are referring mostly to the Iraqi Governorate of Sulaymanya, Erbil and Dohuk, and to the Iranian regions of Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Western Azerbaijan.
- ¹² A rather recent discovery at Rag-i Bibi in north-east Afghanistan of an important rock-relief of Sasanian tradition (Grenet *et alii* 2007), located, as usual, on the right bank of a river, gives new light to the proper extension of the related culture much beyond the political limits of the Empire and exhibits a particular set of new iconographies.
- ¹³ Compare the rock reliefs at Kul-e Farah, at Eshkaft-e Salman in Khuzestan, at Sar-i Pol Zohab in the Kermanshah region, at Kurangun in Fars, etc.
- ¹⁴ Compare the already mentioned famous rock monument/document in Bisutun, the rock tombs in Naqsh-e Rostam, and the rock building in Qadamgah.
- ¹⁵ Compare the macroscopic rock sanctuaries at Shami, Masjed-e Suleyman, and Bard-e Nishandeh in Khuzestan.
- ¹⁶ Compare the rock-reliefs in Tang-e Sarvak, Hung-e Nauruzi, Hung-e Adzhar, etc., all in Khuzestan.
- ¹⁷ Seven rock-reliefs, which, in practice, introduce the 'town' (Genito, Amiri 2013, Genito *et alii* 2014).
- ¹⁸ Including Dahāne-ye Gholāmān.
- ¹⁹ I prefer not to use the term 'city' or 'town' in order to methodologically avoid assuming a Eurocentric characterization tied to the Greek-Roman tradition, and instead to emphasize that of the urban function that shows the type of buildings unearthed and not a terminology that sometimes can be misleading. It is clear that the urban traditions of the ancient world, such as those of the Minoan and Mycenaean, Mesopotamian, Greek-Roman or Chinese palaces and cities are quite divergent. The urban-type phenomena on the Iranian plateau, because the Iranian civilization was neither of a river nor of marine type, are even more particularly different with the sole exception of those areas which have been able to develop different characteristics: Susiana (to the south-west), Sistan (to the east) and the coastline along the shores of the Caspian Sea (to the North).

- ²⁰ This interpretation has not been yet disproved. From the historical point of view, scholars generally agree that the first epigraphic mention of Iranian territory around Lake Hamun and the Hilmand river can be found in the Bisotun inscription by Darius I (522–486 BC) (DB col. I 1.16; Kent 1953. P. 116–135; Lecoq 1997. P. 83–96 and P. 187–217). In the Old Persian version of this inscription, the name of the country and its inhabitants is attested in the form *z-r-k* (to be read as *Zranka*), apparently its original name (Schmitt 1996. P. 535). Of particular importance is also the mention of the capital of Achaemenid Drangiana, Zarin (Ζάρην), in a passage from Ctesias' *Persiká* (Gnoli 1967. P. 45 and n. 1), in the frame of some events that occurred during the reign of Darius II (424–405 B.C.). Beside the Zarin mentioned by Ctesias, some cities bearing the same name and reported as the capital city of Drangiana are mentioned in the *Stathmoí Parthikoí* by Isidorus of Charax (Schoff 1914) and in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Levi and Levi 1967), but these refer to contexts differing both chronologically and topographically from the previous Ctesias' attestation. As a consequence, one can argue that during the Achaemenid period the administrative center of the region, even maintaining the same name, probably shifted topographically several times, possibly to face gradual and progressive changes in the ecological and environmental balance of the region. On the basis of the information from the historical sources, from the very first IsMEO excavation campaigns at Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, the hypothesis of a possible identification with Zarin, the capital of Drangiana mentioned by Ctesias was put forward (Scerrato 1966b. P. 11; Gnoli 1967. P. 103–107).
- ²¹ From the historical-architectonic point of view the remains of Dahāne-ye Gholāmān recall, as proposed already by Scerrato, those of Persepolis, mainly in regard to its architectural floor plans. In Sistan they were made in mud clay, profoundly different from the stone in use in Fars. Such bold comparisons with the great palaces of Darius, Xerxes etc., which lack artistic evidence and epigraphic documentation, have hinted elements of certainty of chronological interpretation, that still crop up here and there in different proposals (cf. Mohammadkhani 1388/2009; 2010; 2012; 2014). These can be put to the test with a more careful reading of the aspects that have emerged from the context of excavation.
- ²² The seal (Genito 2012. P. XCII, fig. 24) recalls a neo-Babylonian style of the 6th century BC with animal decorative patterns (*D'Amore* forthcoming).
- ²³ The issue of the spread of the three-barbed arrow heads and their chronological and cultural affiliation is a long debated question. It goes back to the old Soviet school and the related first western interpretation (Cleuziou 1977). The centrality of these items in the attempts of chronological attribution does not seem more convincingly accepted by scholars, who emphasize also their role of simple objects independently from the original warfare character.
- ²⁴ All these items are going to be published in a special volume (*D'Amore*, forthcoming; *Genito* forthcoming; *Genito* forthcoming a; forthcoming b).
- ²⁵ This is the Greek name of one of the main architectural complexes of the Achaemenid dynasty. The Old Persian name was Pārsa, and the current toponym is Takht-e Jamshid, drawing upon the tradition of the legendary mythical king Jamshid of the Shāh Nāme. The site is on the road between Isfahan and Shiraz, north of the latter on the left bank of the river Pulvar. It was the main administrative center of Fars, the cradle of Persian civilization, and especially the most emblematic place of power of the 'King of Kings'. Founded by Darius I, it was enlarged by his successors, ending with Artaxerxes III. After occupation by the Macedonians it continued to be inhabited and was still relevant under the Sasanians. The remains of the magnificent royal palaces, treasury, administrative and residential architectonic structures arise on a wide rectangular terrace. The buildings, in part based on solid rock, had brick walls, door frames and doors in cut-stone, and were decorated by beautiful artistic reliefs. It also kept three royal tombs of the last Achaemenids, carved into the rock.
- ²⁶ The artistic production is essentially courtly glorification of the royal power, the hypostasis of the stability and immutability of the power of the sovereigns, acting in harmony with the will of the great god, Ahura Mazda. It is therefore symbolic and not narrative, focusing on a few essential unequivocal symbols, such as the king who fights against the monster (evil) and kills him, the king on the throne, the king who receives the homage of the peoples of empire, the servants supplying the banquet, and the ranks of the immortals. The same iteration of the symbols is,

thus, programmatic and substantive, inspired by great clarity. That same ordering clarity governs the distribution of the buildings in the town plan, whether it be Pasargadae, Persepolis or the capital of a distant satrapy, such as Drangiana, rightly discovered in the sixties by a Italian team. In all we find the same rigid palatial pattern and the almost maniacal precision in the alignment of the buildings, where the right angle is the constant rule, whether of stone construction or of raw brick. And this ordering clarity appears very obvious even when you adopt a palatial Mesopotamian model, which will be, so to speak, re-organized and reshaped, as in the case of the palace of Susa. Unfortunately we do not have from Dahāne-ye Gholāmān any evidence that art could be of significant importance when compared with the remains of Persepolis and Pasargadae. It would have been very useful to compare the imperial character of courtly art of the central capital with another similar one in a regional center. This lack of artistic evidence in one example of an urban center in the farthest outskirts of the Empire reinforces the idea that imperial culture has almost exclusively concentrated in the center of the state and that peripheral regions did not participate effectively in the movements of the culture of the time.

²⁷ Prof. A.V. Rossi at our university is working at re-interpreting the data (*Basello, Filippone, Giovinazzo, and Rossi* (ed) 2012; *Basello, Rossi* (ed) 2012).

²⁸ In the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, Drangiana is listed as a separate province, but its position in the lists varies; it was located either between Parthia and Aria (DB, DPe, and the restored portion of DSm), between Chorasmia and Arachosia (DNa, the restored portion of DSe, and the late tomb inscription A?P), or even, owing to an awkward rearrangement of the text, before Parthia and Aria and after Armenia (XPh). On the other hand, in Herodotus' tribute list (*Fausti* (ed) 1984a. Vol. II, Libri, III–IV, 3.93.2), the Sarangians, Sagartians, Thamanaeans, Utians, Mycians (i.e., all the peoples living in the lands extending from the Iranian central desert through Baluchistan to the Persian Gulf), and neighboring islanders were included in the fourteenth tax district, obliged to pay the relatively high amount of 600 talents annually. In Xerxes' army the Sarangian contingent was led by Pherendātēs, son of Megabazus; the men were armed with Median bows and lanc-

es and wore brightly colored clothes and knee-high boots (*Fausti* (ed) 1984b. Vol. III, Libri, V–VI–VII, 7.67.1). Barsaēntēs, satrap of Arachosia and Drangiana, was one of the accomplices of the usurper Bessos against the last Achaemenid king, Darius III (*Sisti* (ed) 2001, *Arrian* 3.21.1; *Atkinson, Gargiulo* (ed) 2000, *Curtius Rufus* 6.6.36); the combination of these two provinces in a single satrapy cannot be dated exactly.

²⁹ There exists in the area only the one macroscopic exception, the proto-historic Shahr-i Sokhta, c. 40 km to the southwest and chronologically distant more than 1500 years.

³⁰ An Italian team of scholars directed by myself is going to publish the excavations of the site of the 60s of last century, including building No 3, after having, however published many articles and essays in recent years. On these projects promoted by myself and Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale' and entitled D.I.A.R.I.N.S. (*DIGitalizzazione ARchivio INformatizzato Sistan*) and ARCHAEO.Pro.Di.Mu.S. (*Archaeological Project Digital and Multimedia Sistan*) many contributions have been published with different degrees of detail (*Genito* 2001a; 2007; 2010a; 2010b; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2013; 2014a; 2014b; *Genito Maresca et alii* 2014; *Cocca, Genito* 2014; *Cocca, Genito A., Genito B., Maresca*, 2016). Cf. also the contribution of Maresca in this volume.

³¹ The geomorphological setting of the Iranian plateau is less suitable from a general point of view to develop large urban centers when compared to the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and China areas where the great plains of the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, Indus, Yellow and Yangtze Rivers are located. The Iranian plateau is not made up of large floodplains, but prevalently of mountainous and desert regions in which small and medium size rivers flow, predominantly torrential and often seasonal in character. The plateau does not present large cities of the historical period, but basically great monuments, large and numerous iconographic remains, but even larger architectural traces. The forms of the peopling and of territorial occupation over the plateau present a quite different character from those of the traditions of the great sedentary civilizations, widespread over the whole of the ancient Near East. The Iranian plateau has certainly allowed one to establish villages, which in Neolithic, Bronze and Iron ages were very numerous.

³² The particular catchment area of Sistan is composed by three sub-geographical units: the upper delta plain inside the Hilmand river, which is mostly drained and used for agriculture, the marshes (Hamoons) covering the lower delta plain and hypersaline terminal lakes (once Gowd-e Zereh in the southern part of the basin partly still in Afghanistan, Hamun lake where the famous basal mountain of Kuh-i Khwaga is located, more to north-west and full of water till the 70s of last century and now three artificial Chahnime 1–4 in east part of the region; *Fairservis* 1961). There is no run-off from the first terminal lake: the water of Gowd-e Zereh and the Hamoun are lost completely due to the particular conditions of strong evaporation. The river is the largest drainage system of Sistan, but also other smaller rivers feed the marshes, which are, from the environmental point of view, the most important parts of Sistan. The basin is one of the driest regions in the world and has played and plays a very important role in the area, especially since it does drain the waters of the melting snow from the mountains of the south of the Hindu Kush. Three tributaries contribute to the balance: the Kash, Farah and Ardaskan (Harut), which collect the waters of the western part of the Hindu Kush. The Hilmand River (*Erymandrus*; *Pliny*, Natural History, VI, 25, 23), is located in the south-west of Afghanistan and eastern Iran and is about 1150 km long. Its width varies between 200 and 900 m., and the depth from 2 to 5 meters. Originating from the Bābā Range to the east in central Afghanistan, the river flows southwest through more than half of the length of Afghanistan, before flowing north for a short distance into Iranian territory in the swamps on the border between Afghanistan and Iran. It occupies an area of 160,000 square km. The satellite data (Landsat 7 ETM), the geomorphological indications, the geological surveys and field observations indicate that the river

course has often varied on the basis of tectonic factors. Historical and archaeological sites in the area confirm that the river has moved north so that the delta is now active in the northern part of the basin. The deviations of the river Hilmand over the past thousands of years can be considered a neo-tectonic phenomenon due to the lifting of the southern regions and/or subsidence of the northern parts of the territory. Seven different deltas are recognizable; their formations belong to different periods.

³³ How to archaeologically define an Empire is a historical and political-anthropological issue which in recent decades has been debated. As far as the Achaemenid Empire is concerned, the situation is particularly difficult because of the lack of a clear ‘urban’ character of its remains (*Genito* forthcoming c).

³⁴ *Scerrato* 1979. P. 727, fig. 16; *Genito* 1987. P. 480–81, pls. 1, 3; *Kleiss* 1981; *Yamamoto* 1979; 1981; *Genito* 1982; *Houtkamp* 199

³⁵ In the building QN16; *Scerrato* 1979. P. 727, figs. 18–19; *Genito* 1987. P. 480–81, pls. 2–3

³⁶ The Italian-Iranian joint mission of the Università Alma Mater di Bologna directed by Pierfrancesco Callieri and A.R. Askari Chaverdi, has been working for years at the foot of the Persepolis terrace in order to find some signs of settlement contemporary to the buildings of the terrace, as suggested might be there by classical sources such as Diodorus Siculus (Vol. III, Libri XIV, XVII). Something very interesting and chronologically located in the Achaemenid period has been specially found in the area of Firuzi, at Tall-i Ajori; one should consider that the Pulvar plain is full of settlements from the proto-historical to the historical times. The remains identified up to now seem significant but do not suggest the existence of a city (*Askari-Chaverdi*, Callieri 2009; 2012; *Askari-Chaverdi*, Callieri, Gondet 2013).

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Fig. 1. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, general view colour slide in 1975 from south-west of Building No 3 (MAI, IsMEO, Neg. Dep. n. 2670_09, by Umberto Scerrato)



Fig. 6. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, general view from Google earth 2015, central part



Fig. 8. Dahāne-ye Gholāmān, lead plano-convex ingot, from the building No 2
(MAI, IsMEO, Inv. 65.55 a)

ABBREVIATIONS

AAASH	Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae	CRAIBL	Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
ACSS	Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia	DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
AH	Anno Hegirae	EaS	Eurasian Studies
AI	Acta Iranica	EI NE	The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition.
AM	Asia Major	EIr	Encyclopaedia Iranica. Vol. I–XIV.
AMI(T)	Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran (und Turan)	EIr online	Encyclopaedia Iranica. Online edition. Available at http://iranicaonline.org/
An. Isl.	Annales Islamologiques	EW	East and West
An. ION	Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli	FO	Folia Orientalia
AOASH	Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae	HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik / Handbook of Oriental Studies
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen	HUS	Harvard Ukrainian Studies
APAW	Abhandlung der (Königlichen) Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse	IaC	Iran and the Caucasus
Ar. As.	Arts Asiaticques	IAK	Известия (императорской) археологической комиссии
ARTA	Achaemenid Research on Texts and Archaeology	IJCT	International Journal of the Classical Tradition
AY	Anno Yazdigerdi	IPNB	Iranisches Personennamenbuch
BAI	Bulletin of the Asia Institute	Ir. Ant.	Iranica Antiqua
BAR IS	British Archaeological Institute. International Series.	Ir. St.	Iranian Studies
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research	Izd AN (SSSR)	Издательство Академии наук (СССР)
Blr	Beiträge zur Iranistik	JA	Journal Asiatique
BO	Bibliotheca Orientalis	JAAS	Journal of Asian and African Studies
BSL	Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique	JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
BSO(A)S	Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies	JCOI	Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute
CHI	Cambridge History of Iran	JIES	Journal of Indo-European Studies
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum	JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies

ABBREVIATIONS

JPS	Journal of Persianate Studies	St. Ir.	Studia Iranica
JRAS	The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland	TAVO	Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients
KSIA	Краткие сообщения института археологии.	TGÉ	Труды Государственного Эрмитажа
MRDTB	Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko	TIES	Tocharian and Indo-European Studies
MSS	Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft	TPhS	Transactions of the Philological Society
NTS	Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap	Trudy YuTAKE	Труды Южно-туркменистанской археологической комплексной экспедиции.
OIJa	Основы иранского языкознания	VDI	Вестник древней истории.
OLP	Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica	VÖAW	Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
Or. Ant.	Oriens Antiquus	WMO	Written Monuments of the Orient
Or. Ar.	Oriental Art	WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
PV	Петербургское востоковедение	XYWS	Xiyu Wenshi 西域文史 [Literature and History of the Western Regions]
RHR	Revue de l'histoire des religions	ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
Rig. Ber.	Riggisberger Berichte	ZGAIW	Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamisches Wissenschaften
RO	Rocznik Orientalistyczny	ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
RSO	Rivista degli Studi Orientali	ZVORAO	Записки восточного отделения российского археологического общества
SA	Sovetskaya arkeologiya		
SBE	Sacred Books of the East		
SIAL	Studies on the Inner Asian languages		
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der (königlich) Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften		
SR	The Silk Road		
SRAA	Silk Road Art and Archaeology		
St. As.	Studia Asiatica		

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