

The Renovation Program of Iran Bastan Museum





Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



*General Directorate
for Development Cooperation*

Iranian Cultural Heritage, Tourism
and Handcraft Organization



National Museum of Iran

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Persepolis, bas-relief of Darius (Inv. n. 1 from Elamite Museum)

Italy and Iran share the privilege of having been ancient civilizations and therefore also a responsibility before the world and mankind: namely, to preserve and underline their immense cultural assets. The Governments and institutions of both countries are facing problems in managing these vast assets on a sustainable basis. It is therefore of great significance, for both countries, to exchange valuable experiences and expertise and to implement joint activities in a comprehensive, friendly, enthusiastic and professional spirit. This is the case of the *Renovation Program of Iran Bastan Museum*. Italy has decided to share with Iran its own experience in designing and restructuring the Archaeological Museum, an essential endeavor in order to fully recover and promote the cultural identity of the country.

For two years our joint teams have been engaged in "rethinking" spaces and collections on the basis of the most modern and updated museological criteria, in defining and discussing – also through international seminars – new technologies to safeguard museum buildings and collections against seismic risks, and in establishing the chronological-technical routes for visitors to the Museum.

This volume aims at presenting the results of the joint efforts carried out in the past two years. It also marks the conclusion of the preliminary project phase of a program that has been for Italy the source of great satisfaction since it has allowed a most valuable exchange of knowledge and cultural experiences. We are proud of having had the honor to contribute to a project inspired by the wish to promote the best possible enjoyment by the public of the splendid cultural heritage preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Iran.

History, culture, beauty. Preserving the past, embodied in precious objects, and delivering it to future generations. An extraordinary common task, an exciting foundation for the friendship and cooperation of two countries and two peoples.

Roberto Toscano
*Ambassador of Italy
in the Islamic Republic of Iran*

Whenever and wherever the imagination of mankind has taken wings, blown by time and history into the uncharted regions between the Caspian sea, the Euphrates Plain, Baluchistan and the Persian gulf, it has had a single take-off point, a singular point of reference. And that place is ancient Persia.

How can this unique legacy of one of the most ancient civilizations be actually represented within a museum, even in a building as extraordinary as *Iran Bastan Museum*? How can one building span the space between heaven and earth, between the delicacy of the animal-type illuminated pottery of the 5th millennium BC and the hieratic image of Emperor Darius the First? A place where such gold treasures as the rhythón of Ecbatana may find a home? Certainly, redesigning the Museum in this direction with this goal is a unique challenge and an unprecedented opportunity for our beloved country.

With the support of the Italian Development Cooperation, we have decided to afford this challenge. And now is the time to conceive this new space, capable of linking the immemorial past with the expectations of the new generations in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I would like therefore to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to the diligent efforts of the staff of the Museum and their Italian counterparts within the context of this project. It is my wish that our joint effort be rewarded with great success that can efficiently contribute to preserve, show and disclose to the public our historical and cultural heritage.

Esfandiyar Rahim Mashaei

*Chairman of Iranian Cultural Heritage,
Handcraft and Tourism Organization*





An Archaeological Approach

Bruno Genito and Mohammad Reza Kargar

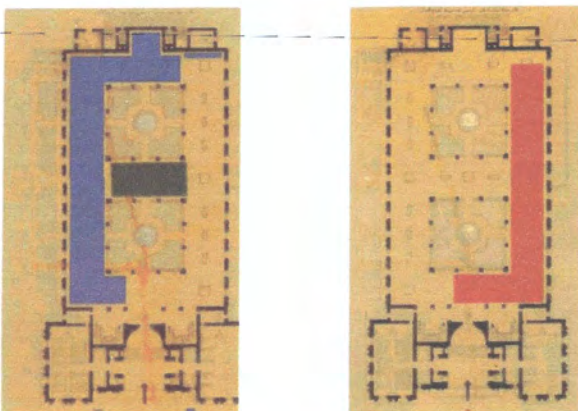
The Present Galleries of Iran Bastan Museum

The materials of the present galleries in the Museum cover a long span of time and come from several sites located within the limits of the territory of present Iran. These items, including mainly small sculptures, reliefs, ceramics, figurines, tablets, common objects, jewels and metal objects, offer an ample view of the succession of cultures marking the complex history of the plateau.

The galleries are organised according to a chronological criterion, interrupted by thematic inserts and repetitions. They are divided into two ample sections defined “Prehistoric” and “Historical”, whose separation, marked by two labels does not correspond to a modern scientific distinction between Prehistory/Protohistory and History. From a museological point of view both sections are uniform, the exhibitory systems are identical and the showcases as well; most of the latter date back to the opening period of the Museum in the 30’s of the past century. The room is illuminated through ample windows and, at night, by a lighting sys-

tem on the ceiling. The single showcases do not have autonomous lighting from within.

Both sections have more or less the same extension, each of which occupy half of the present surface available. The “Prehistoric” section, consisting of c. 34 showcases (table and normal showcases) (of which three for the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic ages), plus a certain number of objects (mainly ceramics, architectural ele-



The present prehistoric gallery (right), the present historic gallery (left)



The present prehistoric gallery

ments of gates, a cartwheel and 3 stelae), located outside them, shows artefacts up to the 1st millennium BC.

The “*Historical*” section, consisting of c. 20 normal showcases, stone inscriptions and sculptures (Achaemenid Period), 13 wall showcases (with stucco and mosaic remains), 3 large parts of columns (Sasanian Period), a base and capitals of columns (1 Sasanian and 2 Achaemenid), contains objects dating from the Achaemenid (end of the 6th century BC) to the Seleucid (4th-2nd century BC), Parthian (2nd century BC - 3rd century AD) and Sasanian Periods (end of the 7th century AD). This section, though not particularly rich quantitatively, contains important (glass objects, jewels, ceramics, bronzes) and spectacular items, such as the famous statue of Darius with the hieroglyphic and cuneiform inscriptions from Susa, the bas-reliefs of Darius from the treasure hall, a staircase from Persepolis, wall glazed bricks from Susa and the great bronze statue of the so-called “Parthian Prince”.

In the unique path created for the visitors, a strict chronological sequence has not always been followed; the complexity of the history of the region, subject to many cultural influences in protohistoric as well as historical times, led, in fact, many settlements to have a very long historical sequence. From an archaeological point of view, this means an historical and cultural stratification, throughout the millennia. In the present museological organisation it has therefore been very difficult to make a choice between a chronological and a geographical option.

The organisation of the Museum reflects the criterion of a museological communicative system in use during the forties and fifties of the past century, consisting in exhibiting, in a series of showcases, objects collected more or less in thematic groups; each object is accompanied by a very short description, yielding indications about the age and the place of its finding. The explicative panels are quite limited for some items considered to be fundamental (Sargon’s stele, the bas-reliefs of Persepolis, etc.), and the general present museological effect is considerably lacking in information, so that, although the visitors may admire the objects, they can hardly understand, without a guide or a catalogue, the history they represent.

Museological Proposals

In fact, if it is true that a museum can be read as a critical synthesis of each related epoch (the evolution of the form “museum” is always an index of important cultural modifications), one cannot overlook the cultural climate that produced first the collections, and subsequently the conservative formalities of the fruition and preparation of the collections, to understand the steps that led to the birth of the great 19th century museums.

Accordingly, the history of an archaeological museum, is first of all the history of values and the relation a people has to its “ancient times”. These values and perceptions are at the base of the antiquarian market, on the one hand, and tightly tied to the birth of the concept of historical monument and the recognition of its values, on the other.

From an archaeological point of view, the orientation of the most up-to-date museology goes in a completely different direction from the time when *Iran Bastan Museum* was realised and organised. Today, a museum aims to be more informative and adopts an approach which allows the visitors to better understand the material exhibited. This is done by choosing the subjects, topics and themes to be treated, the nature of the visiting paths and the subdivision of the arguments into the different exhibitiv bodies (showcases), according to their succession and internal organisation, as well as to the nature of the didactic-educational supports.

A new and more ample exhibit of *Iran Bastan Museum* should strive to communicate information more naturally; it should, that is, be realised with the intention of illustrating, through the original archaeological material, the history of the plateau in its different aspects: economic, political, cultural-artistic, as well as those connected to its international relations, etc. This long history, mainly as regards the Protohistoric Period, developed in a very complex way, owing to the relations between Iran and the eastern and western neighbouring civilizations. Furthermore, the territory comprised

part of the Mesopotamian valley as well as the plateau, which has original historical and cultural characteristics that were strongly influenced by the North and East for centuries.

The archaeological history of ancient Iran bears particular characteristics which are related to different components:

1. the landscape and the geomorphologic settings
2. a consequent strong cultural regionalization
3. a long, profound, and unique political state-building process which came to a conclusion, at the end of 6th century BC, with the rise of the Achaemenid Empire

The central role of the Iranian plateau, between Central Asia, the Hindu region and Mesopotamia, is an undisputable fact that conditioned the history of the area. The Iranian Civilization has, thus, represented one of the most complex socio-economic, political and cultural phenomena of antiquity. Starting from the early protohistoric cultures, certain regional characteristics became widespread, strongly marking the whole history of the plateau.

The history of Iran, with its succession of invasions and overlapping of different cultures and with, in some cases, a chronological continuity (first of all Susa), developed with great complexity over a long period of almost six millennia. This certainly makes it very difficult to create a linear exhibit with a strictly chronological set up, which would have been best for an historical illustration.

On the other hand, the realisation of a strictly linear chronological path, would constitute an historical manipulation, because it would not correspond to the real complexity of the events, and would have the limit of utilizing the materials exhibited only as documents, diminishing their historical and aesthetic qualities.

Considering the need to enlarge the exhibit, including the 1st floor and the basement, and the considerable size of the present galleries, a main visiting path could be designed in a basically chronological manner and devoted to prehistory (with materials dating from

the Paleolithic to the 6th century BC, including the Elamite and Median Period) and to history (from the Achaemenid Empire to the 7th century AD, including Alexander's invasion, the Seleucid Kingdom, the Parthian and the Sassanian Empire). All these sections would not have the same size and spectacular appeal.

The exhibitory path could, nevertheless, be intersected by *thematic* aspects devoted to further information: e.g. particular historical events (*urban revolutions*), the development of artistic techniques (*Luristan and its Bronze production*), the appearance and development of new instruments and technologies (*writing*), political changes (*state organisation under the Achaemenids*), particular archaeological finds (*gold and silver from the Iron Age cemeteries in Amartik, Marlik, Kakhuz, Kialbir etc.*). Each of these *thematic* aspects would intersect the main path on the basis of chronological correspondences.

In order to explain the exhibit to the visitors, the objects should not only be accompanied by an essential description, a background should also be provided to the archaeological items and artefacts, contextualizing them in a sort of visual narration: the objects should become the means to illustrate a concept, an idea, an event, an artistic expression. The exhibit should be

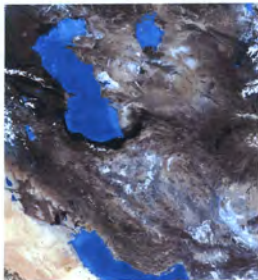


Photo: satellite of the Iranian plateau

conceived as a series of showcases, some of which would contain precise topics in succession that would form an organic tale. Inside the showcases, the archaeological background of the objects should be described and shown with the help of maps, images and texts: this would bring about the need for a graphic pagination of each showcase and require a study how the support for each item could be created.

An illustration of the history of the objects cannot but have a relation with the territory, and the archaeological sites where it actually developed. These relations should thus be highlighted in the galleries, placing side by side in the showcases the objects and the sites they have been extrapolated from. This could be done by using panels of different sizes, and also reproductions of old prints and reconstructions.

The showcases, as the fundamental element of the exhibit, should be studied and planned so as to include a background upon which to place texts, images and objects side by side. As regards the internal lighting system, it should allow for the positioning of several points of illumination to be directed according to necessity (the use of the light being functional to the meaning one wants to give to an object).

The scheme of the new galleries

The present preliminary museological project takes into account the distinctive elements that characterize *Iran Bastan Museum*: the status of the National Archaeological Museum; the galleries rich with objects from all the regions of the country that span the long period of time from the Palaeolithic to the end of the Sasanian Empire in the 7th century BC, and testify to its particularly complex history; the necessity for these new galleries, which have for the most part never been shown to the public, to be opened; the need for the Museum to be expanded in order to assume a leader position in the country and an important role on the international scene; the nature and the diversification

of the potential public of the museum; the need for the Museum to be, at the same time, an educational instrument, an institution of cultural promotion, a place of pleasure, an element of national pride and the image of Iranian culture throughout the world.

The project for the renovation of *Iran Bastan Museum* will certainly increase the number of cultural and artistic items to be exhibited in the new galleries. This enlargement will pose museological and archaeological problems as well, and will require ingenuity in conceiving novel ideas and perspectives to make all these items narrate the long archaeological history of Iran. In order to propose *Iran Bastan Museum* as one of the most important and up-to-date elaboration centres for culture-based attraction and strategic perspective for cultural tourism and social development of the area, the organisation of the new galleries should consider both the true dynamics of the country's archaeological history, and the cultural background of the museological discussions which the international community has been debating since the 1960's.

Starting from these considerations the new exhibit should aim to illustrate the historical and cultural evolution which took place on the Iranian territory, as documented both by the archaeological finds and the historical and epigraphic sources. Consequently, the main objective of the exhibition should be not only to highlight the aesthetical value of the objects, but to use them as an instrument to enable the public to understand the development of the civilization and matters related to it. It is therefore through the original items



A schematic evolution of the Iranian archaeological cultures

that the exhibition should provide an explanatory and iconographic apparatus (prints, photos, sketch maps, geographic maps). An effort should also be made to explain the meaning of the items themselves and illustrate the original archaeological sites, the development of science and techniques and so on.

The history of Iran, as already mentioned, is particularly complex, and its evolution from the 8th millennium up to the 7th century BC can be visually interpreted as a kind of historical-chronological double funnel, with the narrow central part representing the Achaemenid Empire. This view-point underscores the particular socioeconomic and cultural history of the plateau, from the first settled communities, through the long process that led to the formation of the first political state on the plateau.

After the rise of the Achaemenids, the history of the plateau changed dramatically; the territory definitively took on the name of Persia, developing through the

almost rhythmic scanning of the other two dynasties of the Parthians and Sasanians.

The entrance to the new exhibit will follow the concepts already expressed by the architect André Godard (see in this volume the contribution of La Torre, Giannarusti, A. Milaninia, and K. Milaninia) who, by building the entrance to the Museum in the form of a traditional Iranian *dyvân*, wanted to create a clear introduction to the contents of the museum. One could therefore place, at the back of the first courtyard of the Museum and directly in front of the entrance, the great bas-relief from the treasure hall of Persepolis, representing Darius, receiving the homage of dignitaries (see in this volume the contribution of La Torre, Giannarusti, A. Milaninia, and K. Milaninia). This would immediately have a spectacular impact on the visitors upon their entry to the museum while providing, at the same time, a clear indication as to the nature and contents of the exhibit they are about to visit: the



The *dyvân* of the Gate of the Museum

point of convergence (conceptual and visual) of the historical-cultural double funnel described above.

Actually, it is not an easy task to characterize the museum with the addition of items and objects in the projected expansion, the exhibitory space being three times larger than the present one (keeping the present ground floor, the 1st floor, and the basement) and the number of objects twice the amount (almost 4000) of that exhibited in the present galleries (almost 2000). Nevertheless, it seems realistic and convincing to choose the topics so as to respect the chronological development of the cultures on the one hand, while maintaining the possibility of dealing with related topics in sufficient detail on the other.

The permanent galleries would exhibit, together with the items, an informative apparatus (texts, maps, drawings, models, videos etc.), aimed at illustrating the meaning of the objects, the general features of the archaeological sites, the history of the ancient cultural communities, the creation of chiefdoms, states and empires, and the development of the most important characteristics of the civilization (handcraft production, writing systems, religious beliefs, ideology, etc.). Furthermore, it should illustrate the historical and cultural evolution of ancient Iran in order to explain the development of human civilization in the country, as documented by the archaeological evidence, as well as by historical and epigraphic sources.

The new galleries of the museum would therefore have a historical-cultural approach, without denying special attention to other elements regarding the items exhibited, so as to meet the demands of the people interested in this aspect of the cultural heritage.

From a historical and archaeological point of view, the large sections are quite different: the first characterized, at least up to the period of the Medes, by a whole set of cultures with their geographically differentiated nature (most of the strongly regionalized areas being: 1. *North-western Iran*, 2. *The mountain valleys of the central Zagros*, 3. *Southern Iran (Fārs)*, 4. *The lowland of western Iran*, 5. *North-eastern Iran*) that have been influenced differently and that, at times, have entered into conflict with one another, but that have often had their own autonomous evolution. This was characterized by the

first political unification of the plateau under the rule of a dynastic line, which, at least at a socio-political level, also gave it a geographic and administrative unity.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that on the plateau the remains of cities with a millenarian history have also been found, including, as at Susa, both the Protohistoric and Historical Periods. From a museological point of view, in a narrative perspective, the latter aspect considerably complicates exhibition because, in these cities, there are gaps in the succession of periods. On the basis of this situation the exhibit must obviously continue to be divided into two large sections, which will be organised on the basis of the quantity and the characteristics of the exhibitory material: one devoted to the span of time that goes from the Palaeolithic to the Median Period (on the ground floor), the other comprising the epoch of the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian Empires (on the 1st floor). Each section will be, in turn, divided into numerous sub-sections. For the millenarian cities, as for the brief Seleucid Kingdom, a solution has been found for this particular exhibit.

Considering the manifold roles that the National Museum has to assume, and the nature and diversification of the potential public, consisting of students, citizens and Iranian and foreign tourists, we have elected to create in both sections several visit-paths specially created so as to overlap, thus making it possible for the visitor to follow the paths separately and contemporaneously.

Starting from the description of the lower levels of the museum building one could provide the basement with sections having a strong impact, such as the *History of Archaeological Research in Iran*, where it would be possible to illustrate the history of the main activities of the relative institutions through a series of panels; related reproductions of the original drawings and photos of the epoch, and of objects from different sites, will also be provided. A *History of Travellers* would follow, showing work instruments, drawings and panels illustrating the history of the most important travels, starting with Marco Polo's, and including, if possible, the reproductions of the original drawings and photos of the time. A section devoted to the *History and Activ-*



Persepolis. Bas-relief of Darius (Inv. n. 1, Iran Bastan Museum)

Hämändön, gólden
rythón (inv. 1390, Iran
Bastán Museum)



ities of Iran Bastan Museum would also be presented, with particular emphasis given to the description of the organisation and the history of the Museum (*photos of the period, inauguration, original drawings of Godard, Maquette of the Museum, first objects entering the Museum, etc.*).

As far as the first section (dedicated to protohistory, located on the ground floor) is concerned, there will be a general narrative path for the people who want to learn about the history of the country, with an archaeological-scientific description, combined with a faster and shorter visit-path, educational panels, photos, maps, and a maquette.

The second section (dedicated to history, located on the 1st floor), would provide a more historical-cultural path, taking into account however, also the artistic and architectural features which are very significant for later times.

The articulation of this exhibition, which would have the great advantage of addressing a diversified public,

would be further livened by inserting along the chronological paths a series of spaces to interrupt the chronological sequence, thus creating a new point of interest for the public.

Some spaces would not be articulated according to the chronological sequence of the general visit-path, and several "windows" on particular aspects of the history or the evolution of the culture would be placed along this path. Three of these "windows" would be devoted to the millenarian cities, Sialk, Susa, and Hämändö, whose history transcends the limits of the exhibitory path.

Particular emphasis will be given to other matters concerning the history of special discoveries, such as the deciphering of the cuneiform writing. The centrality of the famous Bisutün relief (the most important historical document and monument of the Achaemenid Period) would be emphasized by the insertion of its reproduction, by means of a long and large panel, in the passage area between the ground floor and the 1st floor.

Introduction to the landscape of Iran

In geological terms, the Iranian plateau is a late formation. As late as the Mesozoic era, most of the land was covered by a large sea called the *Sea of Tethys*. This sea was eventually drained and its remainders became the Caspian and the Black Sea. The lasting effect of the *Tethys* has been the persistence of salt deserts in Iran and the existence of at least one highly condensed salt lake, *Urmiyeh*. The Caspian Sea, the largest lake in the world, also has one of the highest amounts of salt in cubic meters in the world. The Iranian plateau today is a land surrounded by high mountains and is dotted with warm lowlands.

Two important mountain ranges, each with peaks over 5,000 meters high, stretch from the north-western corner of the plateau, the current Azerbaijan province, to the South and East. The eastern branch, *Alborz*, boasts the highest peak of the two ranges, Mt. Damavand. The

Alborz range creates a high barrier to the South of the Caspian Sea, which has a serious impact on the climate of the plateau. While lush forests and pastures abound South of the Caspian and give it a mild, humid climate, the *Alborz* prevents the passing of the rain-rich clouds into the plateau, causing very low rainfall and thus creating a dry and mostly warm climate to the South of the mountains.

The second mountain range, *Zagros*, stretches from the northwest to the South and deviates to the East just North of the Persian Gulf. It does not cause as many complications as the *Alborz*, since the height of the *Zagros* peaks decreases around the Persian Gulf, allowing more clouds to move over the mountains. In the areas where the *Zagros* forms two branches, just to the South of Azerbaijan, an inhabitable area has been created that shows some of the earliest signs of settlement on the plateau. Inside the country, there are two major deserts, one of them, *Dasht-e Kavir*, at about 200 km to the East of modern Tehran and at the foot of the *Alborz* range, is covered with sand and is mainly uninhabited. The



Students looking at the plastic map of Iran in the entrance hall of the Museum

smaller desert, *Lut*, is not as dry as the larger one and provides enough resources for the survival of small communities. These two deserts, both extending eastward, have caused the shift of population to the West, North, and South of the plateau. In addition to the southern Caspian region, two more regions are agriculturally very prosperous: the one located North of the Persian Gulf and East of the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates, and the other at the meeting point of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

These three areas, corresponding respectively to the Caspian Coast, Khūzestan, and to Fārs, have thus provided some of the earliest settlements on the Iranian plateau. Iranian rivers are few and mainly seasonal. Among the major rivers, only Karūn in the South, Araxes in the northwest, and Sepid-rūd in the North all the year round, and only Karūn is deep enough for modern navigation.

The Protohistorical Period

The time span before the Achaemenid period will be distinguished in different sections, corresponding to chronological-thematic periods (Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Proto-Elamite and Early-Elamite, Bronze Age, and Middle-Elamite, Iron Age and Luristan, Neo-Elamite and Median), or also in sections which correspond to periods which become shorter and shorter as one gets closer to the time, since the evolution of cultures accelerates within the different regional areas.

All these aspects will be illustrated with objects coming from different sites, having different origins and, perhaps, also different ages, since in this section it is particularly important for them to show the evolution of the above mentioned characteristics.

Furthermore, as one of the main characteristics of prehistoric Iran is its strong cultural regionalization, the exhibit of this part will be organised for almost every section, also in geographical-cultural areas, each

of which should have enough space for the description of its fundamental characteristics.

This will not only give people an idea of the socio-economic and cultural level reached in the given period, but also make it possible to compare the existing differences among separate geographical areas.

For each site, information will then be given about its geographical position, archaeological features, and its nature and ethnos, which will be illustrated by the archaeological material.

The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic

These two sections will be configured according to an arrangement showing materials coming from different sites and giving particular emphasis to the life-systems of the periods, with regard to the food supply (*resources, hunting (animal bones) and gathering*), the use of shells coming from the Persian Gulf (as evidence of long-distance trade), the living spaces (*cave and rock-shelters*), their typology and related use of materials (*with some examples, and the manufacture of a shed*). A special place will also be given to the famous fragment of the *neander* bone of a Neanderthal man from Bisutūn, with the reproduction of a model from the original (today at the Philadelphia Museum in Pennsylvania). The social organisation of the family, with different forms of specialisation of hunting, defence and exchange (*trade*) instruments will be evidenced as well.

The lithic industry (*evolution of the techniques, examples of flint instruments made of different stones*), will be the subject of some showcases and panels and finally, some space will be devoted to the signs and evidence in this period which can indicate burial ceremonies and rituals and religious thoughts.

Human archaeological evidence on the Iranian Plateau as early as the Lower Palaeolithic comes from southern Kermanshah, Khorasan, Gilan, Sistan, Azerbaijan, Luristan and Kurdistan. The oldest well-documented evidence of human settlement in some deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites, mainly located in the Zagros Mountains, is datable to the Middle Palae-

olithic or Mousterian times. The Mousterian flint-tool industry related to the Neanderthal period is characterized by a more advanced production of flint-stone in the Middle Palaeolithic Period.

The most important technique for producing flint-stone tools in the Neo-Palaeolithic Period is called *Buraulation*. Radiocarbon dates suggest that this is one of the industries for producing flint-stone tools in the Neo-Palaeolithic Period; it may have begun as early as 36,000 BP. However, its relationship with neighbouring industries, remains unclear. Possibly, after some cultural and typological discontinuity, perhaps caused by the extreme cold of the last phase of the Würm glaciations, the *Buraulation* was replaced by a local Late Palaeolithic industry called the *Zarqian*. This tool tradition, probably dating from 12,000 to 10,000 BP, marks the end of the Iranian Palaeolithic sequence.

In the early epi-Palaeolithic, evidence of significant changes in tool manufacture, settlement patterns, and subsistence methods (including the timid beginnings of domestication of both plants and animals), comes from such important western Iranian sites as Asiāb,

Gurān, Ganj-e Dareh, and Ali Kōsh. Similar developments in the northern Zagros, on the Iraqi side of the modern border, are traceable also in sites such as Karim Shahr and Zawi Chemi-Shanidar Cave.

After this phase of early experimentation with sedentary life and domestication, a period of agriculture in the form of permanent settlement emerged in the Zagros regions such as Jarmo, Sarab, Ali Kōsh, and Gurān. All these sites date wholly or in part to the 8th and 7th millennia. By approximately 6,000 BC these patterns of village farming were widely spread over the Iranian Plateau and in lowland Khuzestan. Tepe Sābz in Khūzestān, Hajji Firūz in Azerbaijan, Kangavar, Godin Tepe in north-eastern Luristān, Kāshan Tepe Sialk on the rim of the central desert, and Tepe Yāhyā in the southeast have all yielded evidence of fairly sophisticated patterns of agricultural life. Although distinctly different, they all show general cultural connections with the beginnings of settled village life in neighbouring areas such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Soviet Central Asia, and Mesopotamia, Khuzestan Plains and the south-eastern part of Iran.



Gauvin
Statuette of a woman
with child (inv. n. 7345)
Iran Bastan Museum

The Neolithic

As far as the general characters of the section are concerned, the materials illustrating the Neolithic Revolution should be highlighted by showing the tools and containers related to agriculture (*possibly with reconstruction of baskets*), ancient painted terracotta vessels decorated with wild animals, terracotta figurines of men and domestic animals, instruments for economic activity. Life in the Neolithic should also be significantly underscored, showing the elements which give evidence of food production (*resources, and conservation methods*), living spaces (*the controversial evolution from village to town*), social organisation (*aspects of the family, tribe, conflicts and warfare specialisation*), exchange (*middle and long-distance trade*), artefacts (*industrialization, work specialisation and techniques evolution*) and artistic production (*development of the techniques*).

The earliest Neolithic phase on the plateau took place before the use of hand-made pottery which appeared around 10,000 BP. The Neolithic ends with the appearance of new pottery styles, generally with designs painted in black on a buff background.

Good conditions for agriculture came about when the need for a change in economic production and a good environment in terms of soil and water resources was felt. Early farmers employed only hand tools for cultivation. All known Neolithic sites were located in regions where rain-fed agriculture was possible. Settlements were few and often sparse, usually in areas with a good source of water, arable land, fuel, as well as wild plant and animal foods, which people continued to gather and hunt. A typical settlement consisted of only 50-100 inhabitants living in dwellings of mud brick, or brush shelters where livestock was kept. Perhaps one cannot truly speak of a class structure in the early Neolithic Period. However, in the Neolithic Period the social privileges used as a basis for social classes can be investigated. In the Neolithic Period there is no solid evidence of purely religious or social structures.

The early Neolithic presents tools made exclusively of flint or wood and bone. Crude figurines of sheep, goats, pigs, dogs, cattle and people were often made

of unbaked clay. Well after the introduction of agriculture and the building of villages, clay was first used to make pottery vessels. Burials were normally placed under the floors of houses or in an open part of the settlement, usually within the walls of an abandoned house. Tools for harvesting crops, butchering, working hides and for other tasks were made from flint, while grinding stones, mortars, and pestles were made from different stones such as limestone. Pure native copper from the central Iranian plateau was hammered into beads and pins. Obsidian from central Anatolia, turquoise from Afghanistan, and shells from the Persian Gulf are all found in Neolithic sites, indicating widespread contacts through trade and other means.

The Neolithic sites are mainly located in the central Zagros mountain valleys and in adjacent lowlands. The lowland edge of the Mesopotamian plain, Khūzestan and Deh Lurān, has also yielded objects from the Neolithic Period. The region of Kurdistan, on the other hand, has a number of important early Neolithic sites. Most of central Iran is too arid and the mountain zones are either too rugged or too high to support agriculture. Therefore early farmers were concentrated in the flat, mid-level and lower valleys of the Zagros where conditions were most favourable.

Because of its size and geographic diversity, it is useful to think in terms of core areas, each of which is large enough to have fostered distinct and thriving societies throughout the Neolithic and beyond. Most of southern Iran, which is likely to have been important in the Neolithic, has not been sufficiently investigated.

Only very few Neolithic sites have been excavated and published in sufficient detail to give information on the process of Neolithization and on its regional variations. From North to South, these sites are Hajji Firūz on the Solduz plain of Azerbaijan (*1. North-western Iran*), Tepe Sārāb on the Kermanshah plain, Tepe Gurān in the Hulailan valley, Tepe Abdul Hosein and Ganj Dareh in the high mountains in northern Luristān (*2. Mountain valleys of the central Zagros*), Tāll-i Jari and Tāll-i Mushki in Marv Dasht (*3. Southern Iran (Fars)*), Tepe Ali Kosh and Chōghā Sefīd, in Deh Lurān, and Tepe Tula'i and Chōgha Bōnūt in Khūzestan (*4. Lowland of western Iran*).

The Chalcolithic and Proto-Elamite

The general characters of this chronological phase are evidenced by the description of the Proto-state social-structures (*figures and objects which illustrate the production and use of seal bricks, formation process of Tepe*), by the specialisation of craft activities, by the introduction of techniques and of series production (*objects in pottery and bronze*) and by the recording techniques and administrative control (*bullae, tablets and seals*).

During this period profound socioeconomic, political, and cultural changes occurred. Settlements began to develop in many regions, with a few larger villages growing among smaller ones. This trend was most pronounced in the south-western lowlands. Such small polities probably had a population with some differ-

entiation in status, power, and, perhaps, wealth. Settlement patterns suggest use of irrigation. Specialized nomadic pastoralism became important in the Zagros highlands. Painted pottery, mostly made in households or by part-time potters, exhibits considerable regional diversity and includes some very fine wares, such as middle Chalcolithic Bakūn A and late Chalcolithic Susa A.

The origin and the early development of writing will also be the special subject of the section, as well as the materials, the productive and decorative techniques, and the evolution of the wheel (*with examples of different types of work, and of wheel models*). Along the visit-path a selection of sites should be presented, starting from some of the most representative such as Tepe Sāng-e Chākhmāq, with its very famous big pottery vessels, the house model, models, axes, objects made in bone,



Tepe Sāng-e Chākhmāq, painted pottery model of house (Inv. no. 9098, Iran, Basileu, Museum).

agate rings, or Tepe Qomroud, Ismailābād with great and medium sized vessels, metal and stone objects; Shāhriyār, Abdul-Hosseini and Chesmeh-Ali. Northern Iran and the north-western Central Iranian Plateau will be represented by the important remains from Rey (*pottery*) and Qasvin (*pottery and bronze*), central-western Iran

will have among its main sites, Ganj Dareh, Ali Kosh-e Deh-Lurān, the area of Luristān (*bronze and pottery*) and Godin Tepe (*pottery*), the famous Kudurru (*Kassite-Babylonian boundary stone*) from Sar-e Pol and the artefacts from Tepe Giyān (*large-sized vessels*). Southern Iran will be represented by the remains from Tāll-i Mālyān.

Igher Bolāgh, painted cone-sh vessel (Inv. no. 5383, Iran Bastan Museum)



Tepe Sāng-e Chāqmāq, painted large painted biconical jar (Inv. no. 9700, Iran, Bastan, Museum)



Ismailābād Qazvin, (Inv. no. 5377, Iran, Bastan, Museum)



Zemlëbâd Qazvin,
(Inv. no. 11040, Iran,
Bastan, Museum)

Sialk

The first interruption in the chronological sequence of the cultures of the plateau documented in the visiting path will be represented by remains, panels, photos and maquettes of Tepe Sialk. The site is located in the Kashan plain, on the western edge of the great central desert, on one of the most ancient routes connecting the North to the South of the plateau. The route, amongst all the foot-paths that cross the desert, certainly constituted the easiest one, since it coasted along the mountainous chains. Around the southwest of Kashan Tepe Sialk was found, partially dug up in the thirties of the past century. The area presents two hills, one to the North and the other to the South, about 600 meters from one another. Two cemeteries were also found: the most ancient, A (from Iron Age I), South of the southern hill and the most recent, B, in the western part of the site, two hundred meters from the southern hill, and traditionally attributed to Iron Age II and III (Median). The site constitutes one of the main sites of the plateau for its long recognizable chronological sequence in 6 periods, datable from the 6th millennium BC up to the Median period in the 8th-7th century BC. The excavations and the study of the remains of Sialk have made it possible to reconstruct the chronology of prehistoric Iran and to recognize, through the long stratigraphic sequence, different horizons and chronological phases. Architecture in the first phase of Sialk I consists in a village with huts covered with vegetable branches. The corpses, in refolded position, are buried under the houses, covered with red ochre and accompanied by a simple and rudimentary



Sialk, General view

funeral outfit. Through a perhaps external new cultural break, a progressive cultural evolution can be observed toward phase 2, during which the constructions are made in coarsely modelled raw bricks with the inside walls covered with red painting. The following phase 3 (Sialk III) is full of new developments: house bricks are cut out and cooked, and stone makes its appearance in architectural constructions. Phase 4 (Sialk IV) introduces other new aspects, which appear strongly marked by external cultural influences. Marble vessels, bijoux in gold, silver, copper, pencil-lazuli and carnelian and cylinder-seals start to replace the stamped seals with animal representation. The proto-Elamite tablets in clay and a great quantity and variety of ceramics and domestic utensils in clay, stone and bone can certainly be ranked among the most interesting Sialk IV recoveries. Sialk 5 and 6 are represented by their cemetery, situated at 150 meters from the *tepe (cemetery A)*. In the last residential and cultural phases of Sialk V, there are remains of a consolidated fortress



Sialk, Human figurine in bone (Inv. no. 138, Iran, Bastan, Museum)



Saka, painted vessel (Inv. no. 1070, Iran Bastan Museum)

and residential areas in addition to a cemetery; there silver and bronze objects have been recovered, some of which comparable to those of the Scythian tradition. Also present are the characteristic painted ceramics, among which the ritual vases with a long horizontal spout and the stylization of a bird beak, that testify to the cultural wealth of the Iron age in Iran. A new project was initiated by the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organisation in 2001. The project has been

trying to reconsider and reinterpret the Tepe Sialk excavations. Among the main results of the work, the new interpretation of the “*Massive Clay Construction*” must be mentioned. It had previously been considered by Ghirshman as one of the most ancient terraced mounds of the Indo-European people. In the reinterpretation of the Sialk Mound, the massive clay structure of Iron Age VI in the southern mound is introduced as one of the pre-Elamite ziggurats.



Sialk, painted pottery vessel (Inv. no. 173, Iran, Bastan, Museum)



Siak, paired vessel (Inv. 2702, Iran Bastan Museum)

The Bronze Age and Middle Elamite

The general characters of this chronological phase are represented by items (*middle size pottery, human figurine, axes in smoothed stone and other items*), aspects regarding the administrative control and recording system (*tablets and bullae, seals, weights*), the remains from Dāsht Khūzestan (*cylindrical seals and bricks with inscriptions*), and by the Ziggurat from Chōgā Zanbil (*metal and stone objects, weapons, wheel, architectural decorations, bull, Maquette*). Tāll-i Mālyān and other Elamite sites (*pottery, tablets*) will also be documented by different materials and archaeological documentation.

Socioeconomic and political organisation was highly varied across the Iranian plateau, with a pronounced division between its eastern and its western regions. Some large areas with socio-economically differentiated populations, were prominent in the North as in Tureng Tepe and Tepe Hissar, in the East in Shāhr-i Sōkhtā (the Burned City), in the South Mālyān, and in the southwest. In the larger inner Zagros valleys, set-

tlement systems consisted of relatively large sites, such as Godin Tepe (of about 15 ha.) in the centre of larger valleys surrounded by villages. In contrast, the smaller and drier outer Zagros valleys and the piedmont of Luristān had a strongly nomadic pastoral economy, with a paucity of settlements and isolated cemeteries apparently not associated with nearby settlements. “Industrial” areas within large settlements, or entire small settlements, were devoted to specialized crafts: copper smelting and/or “bronze” artefact production (*Shāhr-e Sōkhtā, Tepe Hissār, Godin*); pottery making (*Shāhr-e Sōkhtā, Tepe Hissār*); lapis lazuli and other semiprecious stone bead production (*Tepe Hissār; Shāhr-e Sōkhtā; Shabdad*); stone vessels (*Shāhr-e Sōkhtā*); bitumen and bitumen vessels and carved chlorite vessels (*Tepe Yāhyā*). Chlorite vessels carved in the “Intercultural Style” were traded to lowland Mesopotamia. Copper came from Māgān and later from Dilmūn through the Persian Gulf, as well as from the local mines on the outskirts of the desert. Among the first sites excavated in the country that continue to be reference points for

Shahr-i Sokhta,
photo-satellite



the chronological sequence of the area, Shāh Tepe, Tepe Hissār, and Tureng Tepe, in north-eastern Iran, will be well represented, as well as eastern Iran, by the remains of *Shāhr-e Sūkhtā* (architecture, pottery, metals), and its cemetery, including the reconstruction of a grave. Among the main important sites Tepe Yāhyā, Bampūr, Shāhdād will also be represented (statues, bronzes, painting

settlement and cemetery) and the most recent finds from Jiroft (stone and pottery vessel). Tin reached Mesopotamia through Susa and probably also by some routes across central or northern Zagros as far as Assur. The Hābūr ware assemblage at Dinkhā Tepe in north-western Iran reflects strong contacts with northern Mesopotamia in the early 2nd millennium.



Mandaanī, silver cup (inv. no. 9038, Iran Bastan Museum)

Susa

According to archaeological evidence and written documents on Mesopotamia and Elam, Susa is a city with a several thousand year history. Cities in southern Mesopotamia established a network of settlements and trading centres, stretching to northern Mesopotamia, far into the mountains. As one of the capitals of Elam, Susa was a large city and the second millennium texts, mostly private legal documents, provide detailed data on land tenure and on the agriculture of that period. The culture of Susa was heavily influenced by Mesopotamian culture. However Susa was considered to be the main trade centre for the southern and south-western parts of Iran. Early states emerged in the Susiana lowlands and southern Mesopotamia, at the end of the 4th millennium BC and extended into the Bronze Age. A shared cultural complex, the “Proto-Elamite horizon“, linked sites across much of the plateau. These sites presented some parallelisms with those of Jemdet Nasr and of the Early I Dynasty in Mesopotamia but earlier than the Late Uruk in lowland Mesopotamia centres such as Uruk and

other city-states indicate cultural and political developments. Although, at this time, a small centre, Susa seems to have had some contacts or influence across the Iranian plateau. In the light of present evidence, Susa spread its influence to Tepe Hissar, in Damghan, to the north-east; Tepe Sialk, in Kashan, in Central Iran; Shāhr-e Sokhtā, in Sistan, to the East; Tepe Mālyān in Fārs and Tepe Yāhyā in Kerman, to the South, and even to the Mosul area of northern Iraq. Evidence indicates cultural and economic development in Susa, such as Proto-Elamite tablets, cylinder seals, seal-impressed artefacts and sealing, and distinctive pottery types. The development of writing can be traced in Susa from the early third millennium BC until the Neo-Elamite Period.

King Silhaha (1845-1831 BC) founded the dynasty of the Elam kingdom; his son Kudur-Mabuk conquered the city of Larsa. Already in 1175 BC Susa was the capital of the Elamite kingdom. The sovereign Shutruk-Nakhunte brought there the booty taken from the ancient city of Babylon, among which the famous diorite on which the code of Hammurabi had been engraved and later recovered by the French archaeological



Susa, gray stone (Inv. no. 522, Iran Bastan Museum)

mission in 1901. A copy of this code will be exhibited. Pūbir-Isisan (1300 BC) and his nephew Hūbannumera (1273-1254 BC) re-launched the ancient dynasty, while Untāš-Hūban (1253-1233 BC) enriched the cities with great architectural works, inspired by the Mesopotamian style. Šūdrūk-Nakhūnte I (1207-1171 BC) conquered Babylon, Kūdūr-Nakhūnte II (1170-1124 BC), followed by two dark centuries of tensions between the arrogant ascent of the Assyrians and the Babylonians who tried to retake the city. Already around 1150 BC, Elam entered a deep political crisis and only from the 7th century BC will the name of the city be quoted again in the texts,

with reference to a small hostile dominion over Assyria. King Hubannugas (742-717 BC) rejected the attacks of the Assyrian King Sargon II (722-705 BC) and Urtakū (675-663 BC) was the last ruler before the Assyrian advance. Nevertheless, in 636 Susa was sacked, and its ziggurat which constituted the most luminous religious and national symbol, was razed to the ground, while the Elamite divinities were taken to Assur, the imperial capital of the conquerors. Elam thus became a province of the Persian Empire, and this is where in 324, Alexander the Great celebrates the end of the great conquests of the East.



Susa, mud tablet with training text (Inv. no E138, Iran Bastan Museum)

The Iron Age and Luristān

Starting from the 1st Millennium BC, it was argued that nomadic tribes of Iranian origin migrated to the Iranian plateau from the Eurasian steppes and the northern deserts. The area inhabited by the peoples of Iranian origin was huge: from the Euphrates to western and Central Asia, up to the Chinese borders, and from southern Russia up to the Hindūs. In different epochs this vast ethnic complex of Persians and Medes, Scythians and Sarmatians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, Bactrians, Kushāna, Sākā, Ephtalites and inhabitants of the Chinese Turkestan oasis, contributed to form chiefdoms, states, empires, to create civilizations, and to shape an artistic language.

Partially sedentary and partially nomadic and mobile, these ethnic groups succeeded in dividing the ancient world into several parts: occupying the centre, it separated the West, where the Semitic and Greek-Roman civilizations flourished, from the Far East, represented by China and India but also served as a bridge between the two worlds, thus aiding the flourishing of both.

The Iron Age on the plateau has been distinguished by scholars in various ways and periods, according to pertinent geographical areas. A division of the Iron Age into Iron Age I (1000 – 1500 BC), Iron Age II (800 – 1000 BC) and Iron Age III (550 – 800 BC) is the most acceptable division in the Iron Age cultural period of Iran.

That period represents one of the most controversial and complex points of the entire history of ancient Iran, both on account of insufficient archaeological documentation and the interpretative problems on the matter that are yet to be solved: the arrival of the Iranians, the concrete presence of “iron” in the related sites, the birth and the development of the first Iranian political state-formations. The Iranian migration into the plateau and adjacent areas, was certainly followed by that of the Indo-Europeans. To that migration, first of all, belonged the “western” Iranians (*Medes and Persians*), whose migration is generally placed at the end of the 2nd millennium (11th or even 10th century BC). Last to arrive would have been the “eastern” Iranians, es-

tablished in the regions among the Merv oasis, Bactriana (*north-eastern Afghanistan*) up to Arachosia (*central-southern Afghanistan*) and Baluchistan. The motivations and the routes of these groups of populations are still today a hotly debated matter.

The Medes, attested for the first time in the 836 BC Salmanassar III' Assyrian annals, would have occupied central Iran, especially the region around Hāmādān; the Persians, attested some years before, perhaps in 843, would have been located in the southwestern area of the Urmya Lake. In 639 BC Assurbanipal destroyed the Elamite Kingdom and marched against Cyrus I, who from the royal Assyrian annals appears to have been both King of Parsumaš and Anšan (*probably Tāll-i Mālyān*). This means that the Persians had already nearly reached their historical country of Fārs.

Nevertheless, despite these important general matters related to the period at hand, the centrality of the Iron Age on the plateau remains indisputable, not only considering the previous periods such as the end of the Bronze Age cultures and the immediately following ones, more specifically, the medo-Achaemenid culture. Iran was characterized by deep and rooted regional cultural differences due either to topographical, climatic and ecological phenomena and to the quality and quantity of its natural resources. If during the Proto-historic Period these differences characterized the whole Iranian plateau, in the Iron Age they gave rise to a “regionally” diversified mosaic of subsistence and economic potential.

The high peaks of the Zagros mountains on the one hand, and the central deserts on the other, strongly conditioned the formation and the development of communication routes, both inside and outside the area, toward the adjacent regions. The inseparable interlacement between natural routes of communication and commercial exchange, was obviously combined with those strong geographical limits, giving light, in the East-West direction, to the historical “Silk Route” or the “Khorasan Road” (*from Hāmādān, through Kāngāvar and Kermanshah, to Sār-e Pol-e Zobāb and Baghdad*). These routes and their inevitable stopping places, constituted the main transportation networks,



Luristan, golden mask (Inv. no. 9722, Iran Bastan Museum)

directly or indirectly guaranteeing transit to a large amount of essential resources which in other areas, such as the lowlands of Mesopotamia were completely lacking. The cultures of the Iranian plateau remain, also in the Iron Age, substantially without writing, with the only exception of the Elamite area and the southeast of Iran, where, besides its more ancient tradition, a written contemporary documentation is attested. The transition from the late Bronze to the early Iron Age, at the end of the 2nd millennium BC, remains obscure, particularly in the western areas. In this epoch, a strong economic decline is evident on the one hand, and a greater cultural discontinuity, on the other, besides some probable ethnic movements. Elam remains the greatest political power in the area and only few pre-median cultural horizons of the Iron Age have been identified and recognized in western Persia. The settlements on the Zagros Mountain plateau consisted of citadels and shed villages, where there is evidence that the sedentary population seems

to have significantly decreased; much information is gleaned exclusively from cemeteries. The north-western Urartian and Mannean remains will also be represented in this section (*stele of the Urartian King Argisti, from Bastam*) as well as the Sarگون Stele, the important finds of Qalaichi, near Bukan with its interesting and beautiful glazed bricks, and the remains of Sürkh Dum with its famous disc-headed bronze pins, though variously dated by scholars from 10th to 7th century BC. The western external portion of the Luristān area (Luristān Poshtkūh) seems to stay particularly bound to a nomadic-pastoral economy and strongly points out a particular Bronze production, characterized by objects for horse harnesses, weapons, standards etc. It has been interpreted in the light of a new warlike elite formation, which will be highlighted by a particular thematic and diversity of the chronological time considered, this production will be sufficiently highlighted by a special visit-path inside the section.



Luristān, silver plaque with repoussé giffin design (Inv. no. 0755, Iran Bastan Museum)



Luristān's human figurine (Inv. no. 1436, Iran Bastan Museum)



Luristan, bronze (Inv. no. 538, Iran Bastan Museum)

Hāsānlù

The long chronological sequence of Hāsānlù, the possibly Mannean citadel, destroyed by the Urartians, which was strategically important for the access routes into the plateau, gives evidence of the essential lines of that long process of territorial integration of the population on the plateau. This occurred at a historically fundamental moment, contemporary to the first mention of Iranian tribes in Assyrian sources. Among the great and complex material culture, there is evidence of contacts also with northern Mesopotamia.

Hāsānlù Tepe is the largest site in the Qadar River valley and dominates the small plain known as Soldūz. The site consists of a 25m high central “Citadel” mound surrounded by a low outer town, 8 meters above the surrounding plain (Hāsānlù IV).

At Hāsānlù, the stratigraphic sequence produced a number of ceramic phases. The sequence began with a Neolithic village better known from excavations near Hāji Firūz, and continued through the Dalma and Pisdeli Period occupations of the 4th millennium BC, characterized by distinctive geometric painting styles. These ceramic phases were followed by a phase with rare pottery sherds painted with parallel vertical lines interspaced with circles having a dot in the centre. In the mid-3rd millennium BC, the settlement ex-



panded to include the outer town area and a new kind of pottery, *Painted Orange Ware*, appeared. Then, in the second quarter of the 2nd millennium BC, a period with the characteristic painted *Khābur Ware* followed. This pottery reproduced shapes, fabrics, and designs identical to those known from northern Mesopotamia at this time.

In the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, a major change took place in burial customs, ceramics, and architecture with the appearance of burnished grey, black, red, and brown pottery made in a variety of shapes, including stemmed goblets, spouted jars, and vessels reproducing metal techniques. At the end of the 2nd millennium BC, the top of the Citadel mound was occupied by a series of monumental buildings, of which at least one was a large public columned hall, measuring 18 by 24 meters with four rows of six columns each, a forerunner of later columned halls in Media and Fārs.

Due to the suddenness of the sacking, most of the buildings retained their contents, especially the materials stored on their second floors. Over 7,000 objects were identified including a wide range of utensils, weapons, jewellery, decorative wall tiles, metal and ceramic vessels, horse gears, seals and sealing, and so on. The materials represented include iron, bronze, gold, silver, antimony, shell, ivory, bone, amber, glass, wood, and stone. No written tablets were recovered, but stone mace-heads and vessel fragments preserve names connected to Assyria and Elam.

After a hiatus in the 8th century, the site was occupied by Urartians, who built a massive fortification wall with towers and buttresses to house a garrison meant to anchor the southern frontier of their territory. At a certain moment, probably in the later 7th century, this fortress was abandoned. There was another hiatus, followed by the final ancient occupation of the Achaemenid-Early Parthian Period.

Hāsānlù, air-photo during excavation (courtesy of the Pennsylvania Museum of Philadelphia)

Hasanlı, golden cup
(Inv. no. 2712,
İzmir Bastan Museum)



Hasanlı, pectoral of
horse, bronze; (Inv.
no. GM 8670 Izmir
Bastan Museum)

Golden Objects from the Iron and Late Iron Age

This window will show very famous and prestigious objects with its golden, silver and electrum remains from cemeteries and sites of northern Iran: Marlik, Hāsānlū, Kālār Dāsht, Amarlū, Arjan, Ziwiye, Kalurāz, Rudbār, Hāmādān etc. The iconographies represented on these objects anticipate and develop the cultural contents related both to the symbols of an increasing surplus economic-productive activities, and to myths

and religious ideologies. Furthermore these items anticipate the ideological reflexes of the deep social and economic changes which took place on the Iranian plateau on the cusp of the 1st millennium BC. Although not yet datable with certainty, these objects express, from the figurative to the technical-stylistic point of view, the contents and the themes of an increasingly complex society as well as some of the most meaningful socioeconomic and political-cultural phenomena to appear on the plateau with the arrival of the Iranians.



Hāmādān, golden cup with cuneiform inscription (Inv. no. 1323, Iran Bastan Museum)



Achaemenid, golden beaker (Inv. no. 4363, Iran Bastan Museum)

The Neo-Elamite and Median Period

Amongst the archaeological sites of this period, Arjan will be sufficiently documented (*with its bronze sarcophagi, textiles, dishes, bronze vessels and golden objects*). The "Arjan tomb," a rich burial of Neo-Elamite date, came to light not far from the ruins of Arjan, a Sasanian and medieval town in the Zagros mountains of southern Iran 10 km North of Behbāhān and 250 km southeast of Susa. While excavating in Arjan, a number of metal objects were recovered. Now it is known that at least four of them present the same Elamite cuneiform script which can be reliably ascribed to a period between the mid-7th and the mid-6th centuries BC.

Moreover, in line with this finding, the iconography and style of art in the Elamite area provide a series of independent clues which suggest a date which most scholars would now place at some point between the late 7th century and early 6th century. The previously discovered coffins pertaining to the Elam era were made of clay, whereas the Arjan coffin is the only important bronze example considered in this group.

Concerning the birth of the state-formations the matter related to the Median people is essential since, on

the one hand, it is founded on undeniable, consistent, traditional historical documentation (*Greek, biblical and Mesopotamian sources*), while, on the other, it appears little documented by archaeological evidence. The capital city of the Medes Ecbatana / Hāmādin, could obviously have been the key-site for the whole period, but the ancient part of the area, which can still be seen in the city today, seems to belong to much later periods. On the contrary, the archaeological activity in the heart of ancient Media (*i.e. the area between Kermanshāh and Hāmādin*), has been particularly intense and has yielded rich results with the excavations of three citadels, Godin Tepe, Nūsh-i Jūn, Bābā Jān. These sites show, above all, architectural structures of notable interest for the quality and the importance of the social, political and religious buildings.

Some fortified Media citadels will give evidence of the material and architectonic culture of the Median period: Godin Tepe (*pottery and architectural maquette of the hypostyle hall*), and Bābā Jān, in Luristān (*Roof reconstruction of a room with the faience painted tiles, architectural maquette of the hypostyle hall*), Nūsh-i Jān (*pottery and architectural maquette of the hypostyle hall*), Orzābāh near Teheran, and Kalak with its graveyards.



Nūsh-i Jān, the stronghold of the Median period



Baba Jari, plan of the hypostyle hall from the Median period

From the Achaemenids to the Sasanians

With the Achaemenids and the formation of the first Persian Empire, a political unification of the territory took place under only one ruler leading to a general uniformity of the cultures which remained up to the Sasanians' fall, with some negligible exceptions.

The exhibit related to this period will be divided into three large sections, corresponding to the empires which followed one another: the Achaemenids, the Parthians and the Sasanians. Between the sections de-

voted to the Achaemenids and the Parthians, the brief historical interval of the Seleucids will be inserted.

In this section, for each of these three sections (Achaemenids, Parthians and Sasanians) the organisation and the extension of the empires will be documented, as to their economic-cultural and main historical context, etc. Objects of various origins will be exhibited, whose function it will be to illustrate the concepts they express. They will also be accompanied by an explanatory apparatus and images, often essential because of the impossibility to visualize certain characteristics (e.g. *the royal graves, the art of war, the divine legitimation, drawings on the rock reliefs*). Each section will treat the fundamental characters of the relative empires.



Persepolis, bull head from a capital (Inv. no. 397, Iran Bastan Museum)

The Achaemenid Empire

The section will be introduced by a particular exhibitory choice. Between the protohistorical and the Achaemenid Empire sections there is a clear discontinuity, a historical-cultural hiatus that must be highlighted so that it can be clearly understood by the visitors. Rather than proposing complicated explanatory panels, introductory titles or other information about this discontinuity, the second exhibitory section will begin directly with the “treasure hall” bas-relief from Persepolis and the Bisutun relief reconstruction, both important for their monumental and documental relevance.

This will immediately give the visitors the perception of a radical change, that a new era has begun, that a powerful unifying empire has been founded. Compared to the relatively short time referable to this dynasty, there will be an adequate amount of reference to the organisation of the state in the provinces, the seals, tablets, royal archives, to Cyrus King of Kings (eventually a small showcase containing the seal borrowed from the British Museum), to the origin of the Persian language (lexis, seals, tablets, column base with inscription, from Susa) and to writing used as political instrument (trilingualism, Old Persian, Elamite and Akadian).

The general characters of the Achaemenid Empire will be clearly documented in the section, clarifying the aspects of the rise and organisation of the Empire (*its extension, state infrastructures, military campaigns, warfare specialisation*), its economy and trade (*royal routes, internal and external links*), the objects it imported and exported (e.g. *Egyptian and Greek objects found in Persepolis, the so-called statue of Pausanias*), the birth of a monetary economy (*coins: daric and siglos; Greek-Persian coins*).

Central to the organisation of the visiting path will be the overall structure of the dynasty, its chronology and succession of Kings (*imperial powers, image of the royal figure*), the description of Court Life (*daily court objects*), the production of artefacts (*pottery, metal, work industry diversification and specialisation, techniques refinement, spirituality, religion, rituals*), the monumental architecture and sculpture with the famous basalt column and the capital fragments and bas-reliefs from Persepolis, the royal palaces (*with emphasis on the transformation of building material, from mud-brick to stone*), the bas-reliefs and sculptures (the King with the Lion, the Lying Lion), the palace stairway, various fragments of architectural decoration, Darius's “Egyptian Statue”, and the maquette of Persepolis. There will also be a space strictly assigned to the architectonic history of the time, with panels and photos regarding the birth of the concepts



Persepolis, lateral air view of the terraces



Persepolis, plan of the buildings

of “private” and “public”. An especial place will be set aside illustrating the affirmation of the hypostyle hall (*apadana*) with panels, a maquette and photos. The material culture of the main centres such as Persepolis, Pasargade and Susa, will be represented by exhibiting weapons, daily objects, ritual objects, ornaments, cosmetics, objects made of lapis lazuli in different showcases etc., also including inscriptions on bricks as well as stone. The massive pieces, the bas-reliefs of glazed brick (*warrior, frontal sphinxes, wall decoration, column bases*) and a reconstruction of the Tomb of Darius I at Nāqsh-i Rustām will add to the visit-path a particular role and significance.

The archaeological evidence of the Empire, aside from the macroscopic remains of Persepolis, Pasargade and Susa, is documented to a much lesser degree. The cultural material and the structure of this period belong to the Achaemenid Period, though not related to any particular dynasty. The industrial and artistic products of this period indicate an extra-regional style, which shows a relation between an international style and Iranian thoughts and ideology in proportion to the political structure of the times. In western Iran there is evidence of Jameh Shurān in Māhi Dāsht of Kermanshāh and Ziwiyè of Kurdistan which shows that Achaemenid art has roots in the previous periods (Iron Age III).

Notwithstanding the excavation of Achaemenid levels at different sites in Iran, the great mass of objects from controlled contexts still comes from three sites: Pasargadae, Susa, and Persepolis. Pasargadae, Susa and Persepolis are obvious points of reference for any study of jewellery. Fine stone vessels are well represented at Persepolis, though the looting of the site before it was burned in 330 BC could explain the absence of examples of Achaemenid gold and silver plate. Persepolis has also yielded handsome horse-bits and, among various weapons, thousands of barbless trilobate bronze arrowheads that seem to attest to a standard issue in the Achaemenid army. For seals and seal impressions it is again appropriate to look at the rich material from Persepolis, particularly since the many sealings from the fortification tablets promise to reveal much about the beginnings of Achaemenid iconography.

In addition, certain recently discovered seal impressions from Persepolis no longer depict the once-

canonical scene of a “royal hero” dominating animals and therefore call attention to changes in seal design that took place during the Achaemenid Period. Evidence for those two special Persian luxury items, cut glass and gold plate, is rare indeed. Fine glass was recovered from Persepolis, but sumptuous gold vessels of the kind that accompanied the Persian king both at home and on the march are today known only from a number of examples reportedly found during clandestine excavations at Hāmādān.

In view of present evidence, the eastern provinces were chiefly inhabited by Iranian peoples. Yet for all the linguistic, religious, and cultural ties that presumably linked the East Iranians to the Medes and Persians, there are strong archaeological indications that they possessed a particular material culture of their own. Most of the pottery remains of the north-eastern provinces, for example, is particularly distinguished by wheel-made cylindrical-conical jars such as begin to appear in the region around 600 BC. Direct echoes of Persian rule, such as the fragment of an Achaemenid Elamite tablet found at Kāndāhār, or a clay seal impression from the Merv oasis, in neo-Babylonian style are, at the present time, very rare. In the regions beyond Iran in particular, the Achaemenid period is often one of the least archaeologically explored and understood.

This condition appears to derive in part from the nature of Persian dominion. One of the most important lasting effects of the Achaemenid Period was a set of fundamental changes which took place in political relations and the formation of government institutions. These developments could be seen in the exercise of freedom of opinion, religious thoughts and civil rights. Nevertheless, detailed research into the once far-flung Persian presence constitutes a prime historical and cultural requirement. New archaeological discoveries can reveal and complete a collection of administrative, economic and social documents revealing the political and social thoughts of the Achaemenid Empire. A full understanding of the resources of the Achaemenid court and the satrapies can account for the emergence of deep oriental ideas in Europe and in Asia. Looking at the periphery of the Empire, particular emphasis will also be given to Dāhān-i Ghālāmān (Sistān) a site,

which, though not yet published, testifies to the large extension of the Achaemenid Empire.

The name of this eastern territory, first attested in Old Persian in the great Bisutun inscription of Darius I as "Zr̄nka," is reflected in the Elamite, Akkadian, and Egyptian versions of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, as well as in Greek and Latin sources (Drangiana). In the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, Zr̄nka 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.

The discovery of Dāhān-i Ghāllāmān (Sistān), ca. 40 km northeast of Shāhīr-e Sukhtā, revealed the macroscopic remains of a city that was considered to be the old Zr̄nka of the Achaemenid inscriptions, Zarin of the later classical sources, the capital of the satrapy of Drangiana.

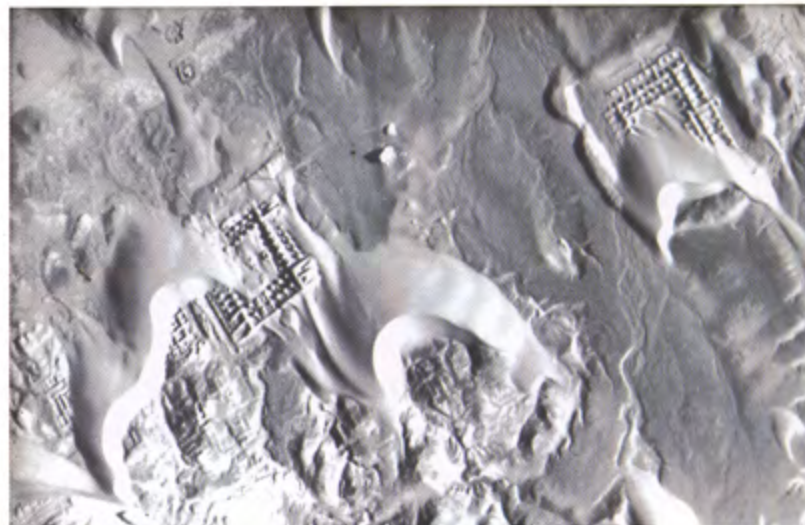
The presence of roads, private houses, and public buildings testifies to the urban character of the remains which has been useful in analysing the spatial architecture of the Achaemenid Period. A religious building (no. 3) relates the town to a possible fire cult in the area, later related to Zoroastrianism. The location of Dāhān-i Ghāllāmān in a peripheral area, far



Persépolis, Humān
 Head, figurative
 (inv. no. 1294, Iran
 Bastan Museum)



Hāmādān, golden dagger (Inv. no. 1321, Iran Bastan Museum)

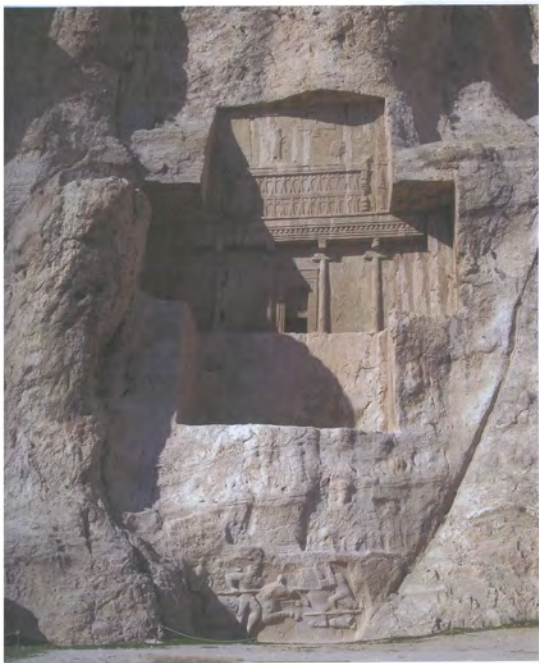


Dāhān-i Ghūlāmān, air-photo of the main buildings (Photo Gestner 1977)

from the centre of the empire, allows one to consider it from a different perspective compared to the one usually applied to Achaemenid culture. A new conception of the first half of the 1st millennium BC in Iran emerges, of which the main features can be summed up as follows: an urban texture surrounded by single groups of buildings, frequent use of water supply canals; a precise distinction between public and private spaces.

The city would have had a complex system of functions, amongst which one would be ceremonial-religious (no. 3), another civil-ceremonial (no. 2), yet another economic (Nāmāki), and finally, a military-administrative one. The palatial architecture of Dāhān-i Ghālāmān 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 Susiana. All of these seem to be reflected in a perfect synthesis at Dāhān-i Ghālāmān. The particular nature of building no.3, with the presence of fire installations, leads one to think of a building in some manner related to a fire ideology. In the last few years, new excavations and trenches at Dāhān-i Ghālāmān have been carried out by the Iranian Cultural and Tourism Heritage Organization. The first results seem to confirm the extraordinary importance of the site, adding significant new information to our knowledge of the material culture.

Nāqsh-e Rostām, cut-rock grave of King and a relief from Sassanian period



The Seleucid Empire

This section must be built, both graphically and spatially, differently from the other large sections of this second part of the museum. It will be destined to the narration of the end of the Achaemenids, following Alexander the Great's invasion, the subsequent splitting up of the empire and the brief kingdom of the Seleucids. It will also be destined to the exhibition of objects related to this historical period.

Very few monuments from this period have been discovered in Iran, and probably none from the time of Alexander the Great, though it has been argued that the life-size stone lion of Hāmādān was erected by Alexander as a cenotaph for his male-lover Hephaiston. The only other monument which could perhaps be attributed to the period is the town of Aī Khānūm in the East of Outer-Iran, in what is today known as

Nihavand, silver breastplates (Inv. nos. 1244+1245, Iran Bastan Museum)



Afghanistan. The famous capital of this Greco-Bactrian kingdom, Bactra, modern Bālkh, might also date to Alexander; however, the few excavations carried out there have produced no evidence concerning the post-Achaemenid period.

The Hercules relief in Bisūtūn with a Greek inscription dating to 148 BC can be considered one of the earliest finds from that period.

Most of the discoveries regarding this time can be attributed to the Seleucid Period only roughly, and some may even belong to the Parthian Period. The famous marble stele with two Greek inscriptions found at Nāhāvānd on the edge of town, will have a central location within the section. Graphical representations of some reliefs in Kurdistan will be highlighted for this period such as the one at Dokkān-Dāvūd, beneath the well-known rock-cut tomb (Achaemenid?) which may belong to the Seleucid period, that of Sakāvand, where there are three rock-cut tombs, one of which decorated with a relief, or of Karaftū, where a cave was used for cultic rituals and containing a Greek inscription dedicated to Hercules. Photos and panels must also be devoted to the well-known Frātadāra temple at Persepolis which occupies an extensive site below the palace terrace. A similar description should be made for Estākhr, where few portals, columns and remains of bases have come to light. Whether they date from the Seleucid Period is not certain, nor do we know their exact purpose. From Tall-a Zohhāk (Fārs) a marble head is supposed to have originated datable to 250-150 BC. At Khūrhā the ruins found may be those of a temple, but there is no evidence for the common assumption that they date from the Seleucid Period. In Khūzestān one of the most important Seleucid cities in Iran was Seleucia on the Eulaios, modern Susa. Particular emphasis will be given to the site of Bard-e Nešānda (Khūzestān) located in the Bākhtiāri Mountains, one of the most important compounds, used for religious ceremonies and consisting of a terrace, to Majed-e Solaymān (Khūzestān) used for cultic purposes as well. It is said to have originated in the pre-Achaemenid Period and to have been considerably enlarged in the Hellenistic Period. Šam-i (Khūzestān),

a site discovered with statues and statuettes found in a shrine whose chronology is still disputed, will also be documented. Some believe that Šam-i could be one of the two temples of the Seleucid ruler Antiochos IV Epiphanes which Mithridates I destroyed when he liberated Elymais. Others date the bronze statue back to the second half of the 1st century BC and maintain that the temple could have been rebuilt after being razed by Mithridates, and that it belongs to the Parthian Period. The precise function of the temple is also a matter for speculation. Hecatompylos (Khorassan), a town mainly known as one of the Parthian capitals, probably founded by Seleucus I, and probably coinciding with the ruins of Šahr-e Qūmes, some 32 km to the West of Damghan in Khorāsān, will be documented by the remains of the excavations carried out there, focusing mainly on the Parthian remains, though some minor evidence of a Hellenistic settlement has also come to light.

The Parthian Empire

This section, which covers a very complex historical period, will be introduced by a description of the Parthian tribes, the first capital of the Kingdom Nisa Parthica (Turkmenistan), with particular emphasis placed on the famous bronze statue of a Parthian prince from Šam-i. The Parthians and war, describing and showing weapons, cuirasses, and eventual representations (based on literary and historical sources) of the famous battle between Orodes I and Crassus at Carrhae will be the subject of a very interesting historical presentation. Important space will be also devoted to the development of the Iranian language, and to the end of cuneiform writing (*in cuneis and epigraphic fragments*). Parthian sculpture and relief, and its characters, will also be described with the famous head of a Parthian warrior, the statue of Aphrodite (from Baj-dokht) from the Bakhtiari mountains. Great impor-



Qeřān-i Yazdgerd.
Agured capital, statue
Inv. no. 52, from
Gasteh Museum

tance will also be given to Vologeses III and religion (*with the representations of fire altars on coins*).

As far as the very considerable amount of monuments dating from the Arsacid dynasty is concerned, one can start the section from the very beginning of the formative process of the ruling dynasty. Numerous excavations in the Soviet Union have given a fairly clear picture of this epoch and this should be emphasized with panels, photos, drawings etc. Most of the Parthian monuments currently known in Iran are to be found in the provinces of Kurdistan and Khuzestan. For the particular nature of most of the monuments of this period the section will have objects of different sizes and also many panels, a maquette, photos and reconstructions related to the very large amount of rock reliefs, statues, inscriptions widespread over the territory; these cannot be exhibited directly, yielding nonetheless very important historical and archaeological information on the period.

Special and articulated space will be given to the finds from Būhlahyāh (Khūzestān), with pottery and several *sarcophagi*, Dāstova (Khūzestān), Bard-e Nešānda (Khūzestān), a great cultic terrace also used in the Seleucid period, dedicated to Anahita and Mithra, erected on the lower terrace and from Majed-e Solaymān (Khūzestān), a religious building, with the “Grand Temple” rebuilt after its destruction at the end of the 2nd century AD and dedicated to Anahita and Mithra. Qal’a-ye Bardī (Khūzestān) with a terraced site in the Bakhtiari mountains which has not yet been investigated in detail, will have a special place, as well as the famous find of Šam-ī (Khūzestān), where it is debatable whether the famous statue of the so-called prince dates from the Parthian period. The dates of the Parthian statues and statuettes found in the shrine are hotly disputed. Representations or reconstructions will be planned for the famous reliefs of Tāng-e Sārvāk (Khūzestān), where a group of rock reliefs with inscriptions depict scenes of investiture, paying homage, hunting and a battle, and an individual warrior as well. The same organisation should be planned for the reliefs of Khong-a Nowrūzī (Khong-an Azdar) (Khūzestān), where a rock relief on the edge of the plain of Izeh (Malamir) depicts, on the left, a horseman with an attendant and, on the right, four figures, perhaps of vassal princes. Those at Khong-an Yār `Alīvand (Khūzestān), barely 2 km to the West of Khong-a Nowrūzī, where there is another rock relief, showing an investiture for which the 1st century BC was

proposed and tentatively suggested, and those at Khong-a Kamālvand (Khūzestān), 1.5 km northwest of Kong-an Yār `Alīvand, where a rock relief depicting two figures – a horseman, and someone standing to his right – was discovered, will be also described.

The context and the finds from the Kārun Dam (about 25 km directly North of Izeh), where there is a site consisting of one fairly large and two smaller tepes, will be described. The several rock reliefs (*investiture scenes, including a depiction of Hercules*), a small site and the Aramaic inscriptions of Šimbār (Tāng-a Būtan) (Khūzestān), located in a valley, some 60 km northeast of Masjed-a Solaymān, will be described, as well as that of Tarāz (Khūzestān), a badly worn rock relief discovered northeast of Šimbār, depicting an investiture scene. The other rock relief, ravaged by wind and weather, showing two people, one of them reclining from Kūh-a Tinā (Khūzestān) 100 km west of Tarāz, will also be described by photos and drawings, as well as the famous great Anahita temple at Kangāvar (Kermānšāh). The results of the discovery of 95 Parthian settlements in the Kangāvar valley (Kermānšāh) will be illustrated, as well as the study of two Parthian rock reliefs found at Bisutūn: the first, on which four satraps render homage to Mithridates II the Great, is badly damaged, but the design can be reconstructed thanks to a drawing made in the 17th century; the second, a well-known “Parthian stone”, is a large square block, with among other figures, a Parthian (perhaps a king) depicted on one of its sides.

A settlement that seems to have reached the peak of its prosperity in the Parthian Period uncovered at the eastern corner of the Bisutūn massif, above the famous Hercules relief, a Parthian cemetery in close proximity to the well-known Sasanian grotto, the rock-reliefs of Tāq-e Bostān (Kermānšāh), and a Parthian settlement 50-60 meters West of Tāq-e Bostān, on a hill called “Kūh-a Pārū” will be also briefly represented in panels and photos as well. Qal’a ye Yazdgerd, a large site some 40 km East of Qasr-Šīrīn and a relief with inscriptions, depicting a horseman and a figure standing in front of him at Sār- e Pol- e Dohāb, (Kūrdīstān), with inscriptions on the basis of which the horseman was believed to be Gotarzes I will also be described.

Enough documentation will be provided for a settlement at Nūsh-i Jān, discovered near the extensive and long-known Median site, whose origins date back to

about 100 BC, to a graveyard in the Hämädän province, near the famous stone lion, dating from the 1st century BC - 1st century AD, and to a tower site at Nürübäd (Fân), whose dating and purpose are debated.

Two "Palm-tree" rock graves belonging to the Parthian period (2nd or 3rd century AD) in Khäng Island, Persian Gulf (Hörmozgân) and a temple found at Rey (Tehran), ascribed to a period ranging from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, will also be documented by panels and photos.

A large Parthian cemetery discovered at Garmi (Azarblâjân), 120 km northeast of Ardâbil, probably dating to the 1st century AD, will also be illustrated with panels, photos and materials.

The extensive site of Kûh-a Khwâjâ (Sistân va Baluchestân), a basaltic island in the Hämün Lake Helmand with inside a majestic palace/sanctuary, first datable to the Achaemenid period, has revealed, on the basis of the pottery found there, a later dating to the Hellenistic-Parthian Period. According to the findings, the palace and the fire temple were already in existence in the Parthian Period.

Qal'a-ye Sâm (Se-Kûba) (Sistân va Baluchestân), 32 km south of Zabol, a large fortified site was investigated and thought to have originated in the Parthian Period. Besides the characteristic painted pottery collected (useful for dating the deepest layers of Kûh-a Khwâjâ), other pottery evidently related to Hellenistic ware and a number of *astata* with Greek epigraphy were brought to light. These inscriptions reveal that the citadel dates to the 3rd - 2nd century BC. Particularly interesting were the archaeological activities at Qal'a-ye Tepe, where a long chronological sequence from the 3rd century BC to the 11th - 12th century AD was recognized.

Halimehjan and Eskivaz in northern Iran, Toreng Tepe (*pottery and glass?*) in north-eastern Iran, Amlash, Sang-Shir (*lion head*) in north-western Iran (*or sarcophagus with golden objects, ivory dish, small glazed vessel, pottery*), Naurûz Mahalleh, other remains from Rash-Gilan, from Hasan Mahalle Gilan (*pottery, glass and metal*) will be documented as well; in western Iran special mention should be given to the site of Ghailalâch, possibly with the reconstruction of a tomb with sarcophagus and stane.



Qal'a-ye Yazdgerd, protome of sarmure - golden lion (Sistân Museum)

The Sasanian Empire

The section will start with the description of the history of the dynasty and of its origin in the city of Estākhr. Besides small finds and pottery, there were also fragments of sculpture and architectural decoration and mud-brick walls, and near Nāqš-a Rostam fortifications comparable to other Sasanian ones, although no precise date has been confirmed by excavation. Apart from the well-known rock reliefs at Naqš-e Rostam and Naqš-e Rajab and the inscriptions on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt and in the Hājjābād grotto, the most characteristic Sasanian remains are the countless burial sites, exposure platforms, *astodans*, for which the mountain ridges of the Estakhr region are unparalleled in Iran.

The reconstruction of the Firuzabad, Naqš-e Rostam, and Naqš-e Rajab reliefs, a short presentation of the war organisation and campaigns of the time will be realized in different spaces devoted to this first part of the section, including showcases and panels. The architecture with the famous palaces of Firuzābād, Sarvistan, Qal'a-ye Dokhtar will also be central in this section devoted to the history and development of the Sasanian culture.

Excavations on the palace-fortress of Qal'a-ye Dokhtar with small finds of jewellery, metal, sculpture, glass and coins show that it eventually served as a stronghold against the Arab invaders. The famous circular-shaped city of Ardašir-Khorra (Firuzābād) which



Gūr/Firuzābād, air-photo

became the actual cradle of the new empire when Ardašir I built it in the plain and his fortress and palace nearby, will be also represented, possibly through maquettes and descriptions with photos and panels.

The centrality and the importance of Bishapur city with its architectural decoration built by Ardašir's son Shapur I will also be highlighted by the few archaeological remains collected there. The city has a bridge, a castle, an enigmatic grotto (Mudan) with a statue of Shāpūr, possibly to be located in the second courtyard of the museum on a special pedestal, and a nucleus of rock reliefs, to which others were to be added by his successors. The architectural remains from Tchāl Tharkhan and especially its column base will be exhibited together with the Qal'eh-i Yazdgird and Hājjābād wall stuccoes and fragments, and the reconstruction and some examples from the most recently excavated Pavillon of Bandian in north-eastern Iran.

Of less certain, probably later date are the ruins in Bozpar, Gerra, and Farrāšband valleys to the east. In the Shiraz area with its early relief at Gūyom and Barm-a Delak, an important, strongly fortified Sasanian settlement has been excavated at Qāsr-i Abū Nāsr, apparently founded in Parthian times. The Sasanian layers have yielded, among coins and other small finds, a large number of clay sealings with Middle Persian inscriptions, apparently containing the name of Shirāz.

At Ghobayrā the remains of a Sasanian settlement and a nearby Sasanian city have been found. However, the majority of Sasanian sites, frequently marked by impressive ruins, especially in Fārs and Kermān, have never been archeologically excavated, not even, for example, for the enigmatic building at Sarvestān.

The early importance of the Mesopotamian lowlands Khūzestān and, the Khvārvarān province (today known as Iraq) for the Sasanian emperors was demonstrated by Ardašir I's foundation of a city of his own, Weh-Ardašir, next to the Parthian residence of Ctesiphon, and by the foundation of Jondīšāpūr and Ayvān-a Karkha by Shāpūr I and Shāpūr II. The latter two cities, notwithstanding their most remarkable city plans, have so far been the subject of only limited excavations.

Archaeological research in the city compound of Ctesiphon has seen the discovery of the site of Seleucia and of a circular city nearby, at the time thought to be both Ctesiphon and Weh-Ardashir together. Excavations of the circular city have revealed part of the fortifications, a late Sasanian fire-temple, and large areas for living quarters. Large-scale occupation of the site appears not to have taken place until the beginning of the Sasanian period; earlier, Seleucid-Parthian finds consist of burials only. This is seems evident that the round city must be Weh-Ardashir, also called Kōkhē and Māhōzā, not Ctesiphon. In the area to the East of the circular city the layout of Tāq-i Kisra, the main residence of the late Sasanian Emperors has been identified.

During the excavations of ancient Kik, besides five smaller, probably domestic Sasanian structures, three extraordinary buildings with abundant stucco decoration, among which busts of Perōz, were uncovered. The buildings have very distinctive layouts, with columnar halls, *issar*, and rooms arranged around a central courtyard and basin. They have been dated to the 5th century AD or later and interpreted as palaces, although the excavation failed to give a clear idea of their context. Sasanian occupation has been reported from Mesopotamian excavations at sites such as Babylon, Uruk, and Susa. According to coin findings, occupation seems to have been interrupted or at least decreased during the 4th century AD in many of the ancient centres, such as Uruk, Susa, Majēd-e Soleyman, and Bart-e Nesānda, and only in some cases, for example in Susa, revived to a certain degree during the late phase of the empire.

Excavations in Bisutun have revealed mostly pre-Sasanian remains. The late Sasanian date of the Bisutun capitals indicates a correspondingly late date for the unfinished program.

The terrace of Kangāvar, East of Bisutun, with its border of columns which until recently was regarded as a Seleucid temple, after excavation turned out to be a late Sasanian palace mentioned in early medieval chronicles.

At Tāq-e Gerā, halfway between Bisutun and al-Mada'eni, there is a small, cragmatic *ayvan* with a horse-

shoe-shaped archivolt. It was originally dated as Parthian, and even mid or late Sasanian, but recent excavations have brought to light dovetail pinnacles from its crenulations, a familiar shape in early Islamic architecture.

The vast palace and temple complex and fortress of Qasr-e Širīn, further west, on the way to al-Mada'eni, is attributed by literary tradition to Khosrow II (AD 590-628). Surveys of these ruins have disclosed several, contradictory plans.

A number of Sasanian sites, cities, fortresses, *dashir-tāq*, and burials were discovered in the Zagros valleys of Lurestān. Excavations at Takht-e Soleyman indicate that the first large-scale buildings are no earlier than the 5th century, although unconnected, small-scale settlements from Parthian and Achaemenid dynastic eras were uncovered underneath. The early temple was built with mud-brick and surrounded by mud-brick fortifications; all the structures were successively replaced by stone and brick masonry.

The general picture of major Sasanian sites changes towards the central and eastern parts of the Iranian plateau. Late Sasanian and early Islamic remains came to light under the Friday Mosque in Esfāhān, and a strong mud-brick fortress was surveyed near the city. A palatial, middle or late Sasanian structure with rich stucco was excavated at Tepe Hissār/Dānghūn, and related buildings, which are dated to the early Islamic Period in a continuation of Sasanian tradition, were partly excavated at Neẓāmābād, and Tepe Mīl in the



01019.jpg - Muslim photo,
Shah of Sogd I

Rey area. In Rey itself, the north-easternmost Sasanian rock relief, possibly of Shapūr II, had already been erased by Fath`Ali Shah Qajar.

Excavations in Nišāpūr, the former capital of Khorāsān (founded by Shāpūr I or II), produced little Sasanian material and its early topography is still hypothetical. Excavations at the so-called *Wall of Alexander*, which is generally thought to be a late Sasanian, point to a possible Parthian origin. The brick wall of Tammīša and the fortifications of Darband on the Caucasian shore of the Caspian where excavations have uncovered the mud-brick predecessors of the present stonewalls, are of Sasanian date. In Sīstān archaeological research has been continued at the mud-brick fire-temple of Kūh-e Khwāja, one of the chief monuments of Partho-Sasanian religious architecture, and more fragments of its formerly outstanding wall paintings have been discovered.

A special place along the visit-path will also be given to the highly standardized coins of the Sasanian Empire, most of which are *drabms*, *tetradrabms* and *obols* are rare.

An adequate space will also be given to the seals and sealing, consisting of stones, mostly semi-precious, and having a somewhat hemispherical shape, perforated for suspension with metal or cord. There are metal seal rings, with a bezel made of metal, stone, or glass, and complete rings made of stone.

The Sasanian clay bullae with seal impressions are of greater archaeological significance. They differ sharply from the common Seleucid clay sealing by their larger size and often their great number of impressions. Clay bullae were found, partly in the form of hoards, at excavations such as those at Qāsr-i Abū Nāsr, Takht-a Solaymān, Susa, Tell Abā Sha`āf, Dvin (Armenia), Kōkhē, and Tūreng Tepe.

Pottery, in view of its lack of formal and decorative elaboration was apparently not an object of social es-



Tāq-i Bostan, relief from the central grotto

teen in Sasanian Iran. Although its study has advanced considerably during recent years, its typology is still insufficiently known. There seem to be considerable differences in ceramic traditions in the various regions of the Sasanian Empire, especially dividing Mesopotamia from the Iranian plateau. The scarce finds on the plateau, of blue-to-green-glazed pottery, very common in Sasanian Mesopotamia, make it questionable whether this ware was produced in the highlands before the 8th century AD; the specimens found there may have been imported. Large, well-fired storage vessels, partly with characteristic Y-shaped rims for domed covers, are among the few seemingly common features at least in the western areas of the plateau. Some of the early *pitloi*, e.g. from Firuzābād, carry incised potters' inscriptions. The simple decorative patterns include protruding bands, horizontal grooves, flatly waved and cross-hatched incisions often made by combs.

Glass was rather widely used. Beads and gambling stones from multicoloured glass pastes of different techniques are frequently found; glass sometimes even replaced precious stones in gold mountings of jewellery. The production of blown-glass discs for windows is attested, e.g., at Takht-e Soleyman. Among the glass vessels, small *haliamaria* are frequent. Besides thin-walled beakers there are hemispherical goblets made of a thick material with wheel-cut facets or circular facets covering the outside body.

In consideration of the fact that the exhibition of *Iran Bastan* closes with the end of the Sasanian Empire, and in order to have an emotionally lasting impact on the visitors, making a visit to the Museum a memorable experience, the exhibition will conclude with some spectacular elements, which could include a vast and abundant exhibit of the Museum's splendid collection of famous Sasanian silver artefacts.

This exhibit will be followed by a true and final end to the entire exhibition, which should invite the visitors to proceed to the Islamic Museum in an adjacent building. This makes it necessary to forge a connection between the two museums, or rather between the end of the Sasanian Empire and the Islamic conquest, that could be represented by the Early-Islamic Period.

The Late Sasanian and Early Islamic

This period will represent a real introduction to the following Islamic Period with its general characters, architecture, a maquette of the Thürük-Khine (Damghan), now exhibited in the Islamic Museum, some remains from the Masjid-i Jurm, of Isfahan, specially related to the stucco-decoration items, where the Persian Style and Samarra Style are combined, pottery and other materials, and Late Sasanian-early Islamic coins.



Figurine of Dove from
Iran, ca. 500-600 AD.
(Iran Bastan)

