

Abstract

The volume represents the final report of the field work carried out at the site of Persepolis West in Central Fars (Iran), in the area where the town of Parsa has been located on the basis of written sources and surface surveys. The activities carried out by the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission in Fars have included the excavation of stratigraphic trenches in areas indicated by the geophysical study. Along with the description of the trenches and of their stratigraphy, the report includes the geophysical investigations on the topographical context and the study of the materials from the excavations, ceramics and other finds. Thus the volume represents the first study of the town of Parsa and its material culture based on up-to-date multidisciplinary archaeological methods. The relative chronology deriving from the archaeological study has found absolute references in a series of radiocarbon datings.

The geophysical investigations discussed in the volume have been the basis for an interpretation of the vast area of the site of Persepolis West as well as the primary step for the selection of the excavation areas and the interpretation of their topographic context.

The information resulting from the excavations of the eleven trenches, grouped in Areas A to Area E, bears a particular importance for the archaeology of Persepolis, being the first work based on stratigraphic methodology specifically dedicated to the town of Parsa. The stratigraphic sequences thus obtained provide a solid basis for the study of the architectural features and particularly for finds.

The section of the volume dedicated to ceramics comprises the investigation of physical features, with a quantitative study of all the recovered potsherds, and the detailed study of diagnostic ceramics from the trenches which yielded more material, Trench Tr. 4 and Trench Tr. 6; the diagnostic fragments are described and illustrated through tables and plates. The detail of the published information, supported by the stratigraphic information, allows for a better definition of the "Late Plain Ware" of the Early Historic Central Fars. The other finds

are presented through a catalogue raisonné of the inventoried objects, which represents an innovative tool for the study of the material culture of the area.

The chronology deriving from the archaeological study is supported by the radiocarbon analyses carried out by Accelerator Mass Spectrometry at the Center for Isotopic Research on the Cultural and Environmental Heritage (CIRCE), Dept. of Physics and Mathematics, University L. Vanvitelli and INNOVA, Caserta (Italy) which are given and discussed in detail.

The results of the two excavation seasons at Persepolis West have shown the appropriateness of the methodology adopted since stratigraphic excavation has allowed checking many of the inferences deriving from geophysical investigations. They have also produced the first actual evidence of the existence of an inhabited settlement next to the Persepolis Terrace.

Prefaces

The World Heritage Site of Persepolis represents one of the most important archaeological sites not only in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but in the whole world. Conservation of this site calls not only for commitment to preservation of the masterworks of Achaemenid architecture concentrated on its Terrace, which is the main attraction for visitors, but also efforts to preserve the extensive “buffer zone” which is necessary for the integrity of the whole topographical context and which corresponds to the limits of the ancient town mentioned in the sources. The Parsa-Pasargadae Research Foundation has always been fully aware of the importance of the “buffer zone”, to the extent that as from 2003 it has launched a series of geophysical surveys in order to locate the most important archaeological sites within it and provide the local authorities with a precious tool for implementing the law. When the “From Palace to Town” project was first presented to me I was extremely happy about the fact that an international team would be

working with a twofold view to preservation studies on the Terrace monuments and investigations into the “buffer zone”, to my mind an area neglected by archaeologists. Since the Iranian-Italian project came underway in 2008 our strategy for preservation associated with research has gone from strength to strength. The first stratigraphic excavations aiming at locating the town of Parsa have produced new and very precious archaeological evidence. We can now link the abundant information obtained through geophysics with stratigraphic contexts, providing the lacking information on the related material culture. Even though the discovery of the extraordinary monument of Tol-e Ajori has prevented continuation of the stratigraphic excavations at the site of Persepolis West, the results obtained in the two seasons of work are solid enough to be considered a new step on the way to reconstruction of the history of our great past.

Mohammad Hassan Talebian
Deputy, ICHHTO

The results of the activities of the Joint Iranian-Italian Archaeological Mission in Fars, in the area of Persepolis, are among the most recent advances in our knowledge of a place fundamental for the history of humanity. The Research Centre for Cultural Heritage and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the aegis of which the activities are being carried out on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2008 and renewed in 2013, is particularly glad to have approved this Iranian-Italian collaboration, which has proved methodologically sound and fruitful. The volume presented to the scientific international community provides for the first time information on the commoners’ town lying around the imperial citadel on the Terrace in which surface investigations of various natures, including geophysical surveys, are supplemented by stratigraphic excavations: thus, despite the fact that the field work at Persepolis West lasted only two seasons, the results are extremely important and show how use of state-of-the-art investigation methodologies can help reconstruct

the glorious history of ancient Iran. The value of this activity is enhanced by the fact that it is the outcome of international collaboration, bearing out my agreement to such collaboration framed within the Iranian strategy of development of archaeological research. I am thankful, on one hand, towards the two co-directors, who have been able to produce such a valuable contribution in this perspective, and on the other towards all the researchers engaged in this work, be they Iranian or Italian. My thanks also go to the Persepolis archaeological authorities, particularly Dr M. Rezaei Monfared, director of the Persepolis World Heritage Site, for the spirit of support and collaboration shown to the joint team during the field work and study of the material, and for authorisation to use the Pardis premises after their refurbishment in 2008.

Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti
Director, RICHT

The Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research is happy to see the publication of this volume for several reasons. The first and foremost is the fact that it is a detailed excavation report fulfilling the task of the archaeologists who were offered the possibility to carry out important research at a prestigious site: the wealth of detailed information contained in these pages assures the scientific community that the results of the activities are fully described and interpreted in the report. The second reason for satisfaction, of a scientific nature, is the fact that these activities have been carried out following a multidisciplinary approach and that their extremely important results are methodologically sound: thanks to the close collaboration between geophysics and excavations, the Iranian-Italian approach to the site of Persepolis West

represents an excellent example of how study of the past in the 21st century can profit from the available techniques and investigation approaches.

A third reason for satisfaction, of a specifically archaeological nature, lies in the wealth of information on ceramics, which comes to fill a gap in our knowledge of the Achaemenid period: this material, thanks to its origin in safe stratigraphical contexts, has finally made available to us a reliable sequence of the ceramic evolution, which will also be extremely useful for all surface survey activities in Central Fars. I must therefore congratulate the two co-directors of the Joint Mission and thank them on behalf of my institution for their contribution to this advance in the archaeology of Ancient Iran.

Hamideh Choubak
Director, ICAR

Introduction

Alireza Askari Chaverdi and Pierfrancesco Callieri

“From Palace to Town” is the name of the five-year project of field work in Persepolis that was started in 2008 by the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission, including both archaeology and conservation works: the name suggests that the focus of the work would have shifted from the “Palaces” of the imperial Terrace, which had exclusively attracted the attention of archaeologists in the past, to the inhabited settlement known from the written sources, the “Town”, at the same time without forgetting the urgent needs of conservation on the Terrace. While Volume 1 of the series “From Palace to Town”¹ is dedicated to the diagnostic studies necessary for subsequent interventions in conservations on the monuments of the Terrace, Volume 2 is dedicated to field work concerning the inhabited settlement.

The scope of the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission is not the first in the history of research on the ancient site of Parsa - as the Elamite tablets call the site for which Western scholars use the Greek name of Persepolis: after having been mentioned by E. Herzfeld in the report published before starting the excavations of the Chicago Oriental Institute (Herzfeld 1929-1930), the everyday inhabited settlement complementary to the official buildings was the object of surface surveys and subsequent elaborations by William M. Sumner, who had the privilege to name the various sites in the plain to the west of the Terrace (Sumner 1986).

“Persepolis West” is the current denomination of one of the Achaemenid settlements that have been identified by Sumner in the Persepolis plain (Sumner 1986: 9), and namely within the broad area that Rémy Boucharlat et al. have named “Persepolis settled zone” (Boucharlat, De Schacht and Gondet 2012: 253) or indicated as the “Territory of Parsa” by Mohammad Hassan Talebian (Talebian 2008: 182), extending from the Persepolis Terrace and the Naqsh-e Rostam royal necropolis 6 km further north. The site has its eastern limit about 500 m from the foot of the Persepolis Terrace and extends for about 1 km in a westward direction, corresponding to what Boucharlat et al. have more precisely called “Persepolis Northwest area” (Boucharlat, De Schacht and Gondet 2012: 260). It is likely that it was this site that E. Herzfeld referred to when he wrote “À l’Ouest de la terrasse, vers la plaine, l’étendue de la ville peut être déterminée par la nature du sol, qui se distingue visiblement de celle de la plaine: la couleur de la terre des décombres diffère de celle

de la terre végétale naturelle, et toutes les deux produisent des végétations différentes. En outre, le sol jadis occupé par des édifices est parfaitement parsemé de petits éclats de matériaux de construction et de poteries” (Herzfeld 1929-30: 32). Sumner, who surveyed this site before the extensive earth works caused by the construction of the irrigation canals starting from the Dorudzan Dam and the successive dramatic modification of the Persepolis plain, described the site as a “complex group of low mounds” (Sumner 1986: 9). The high concentrations of archaeological structures and materials on its surface, as well as the topography, had suggested Sumner to locate here the everyday city of Persepolis: “Although Persepolis West is much disturbed, it appears originally to have been a single mound or dense cluster of contiguous mounds, topographically comparable to ordinary Near Eastern town sites, in contrast to the more dispersed, open topography of Firuzi” (*ibid.*). Taken together with Firuzi, Sumner considered Persepolis West to constitute “a provincial city or town” (*ibid.*), which he identified with the locality of Matezzish frequently mentioned in the Fortifications Elamite tablets (Sumner 1986: 23) and that, for him, has been “temporarily galvanized by the construction of Persepolis” (Sumner 1986: 28).

Geophysical investigation in this area began in 2003 thanks to the efforts of the Parsa-Pasargadae Research Foundation (PPRF), then directed by Dr Mohammad Hassan Talebian, with the geomagnetic surveys carried out by Babak Aminpour (Aminpour 2006; Talebian 2008: 182-184). Being this area part of the Persepolis Main Buffer Zone “Harim-e Yek”, as defined in the frame of the inscription of the site on the Unesco World Heritage List, the need was felt to provide the local office of the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) with documents of the existence of buried archaeological remains not visible on surface. With such “documents” the local land-owners would have accepted the limitations to the use of their lands imposed by the need to preserve the site. At the same time, the scientific importance of these investigations was very clear since the start, being they a possible solution to the many questions remaining unanswered, from the position of the Persepolis lines of fortifications as described by Diodorus of Sicily (XVII, 71.3; hypothesis concerning their location in Mousavi 1992, 2012: 10-14; Aminzadeh and Samani 2006) to the location of the everyday town of Parsa, mentioned by the same writer (XVII, 70.1) as well as by the Elamite Fortifications Tablets administrative documents.

In Spring 2008 the activities of the Iranian-French Joint Archaeological Mission, directed by Rémy Boucharlat and Kouros Mohammadkhani, included the “Harim-e Yek” area in its project of study of the Persepolis plain,

¹ The important results of the conservation section of the project are contained in Volume 1 of the present series of project reports; along with Volume 4, dedicated to the archaeometrical investigations on finds, they are published in digital format due to the high number of colour illustrations necessary for publications in those disciplines. Volume 3, dedicated to field work in the area of Bagh-e Firuzi, will be published after the end of the excavations of the gate at Tol-e Ajori.

introducing the use of other geophysical methods that widened the scope of the research (Gondet et al. 2009; Boucharlat, De Schacht and Gondet 2012). Despite the unfortunate halt to the scientific collaborations between France and Iran in 2009, the geophysical surveys were resumed from 2012 to 2014 by S. Gondet and K. Mohammadkhani in the frame of the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission, thanks to the support of a European IEF Marie-Curie project (SELOPerse) managed by S. Gondet (fellow) and P. Callieri (supervisor). This second stage of surveys gave excellent results: the report is part of this volume.

In Autumn 2008 also the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission, directed by the authors of the volume, selected the site of Persepolis West for its program of excavations. This project aimed at discovering traces of the everyday town of Persepolis and obtaining ceramic material from reliable stratigraphic contexts necessary to outline a ceramic sequence of historic age for Fars, which was still missing. Before that, two excavation seasons on the Toll-e Takht of Pasargadae carried out by the Iranian-Italian team in 2006 and 2007 had produced results of great interest but of limited statistical value given the

limited number of sherds found (Askari and Callieri 2010). Even though the scope of the new project was to be mainly archaeological, it was felt the need to urgently update the approach to conservation then applied by the local restorers managed by Hassan Rahsaz, still based on methods and techniques in use in Italy during the 1960' and 1970'. This "Italian" approach was the result of 15 years of uninterrupted presence in Persepolis of the Italian team of restorers and conservators headed by Giuseppe and Ann Britt Tilia, up to 1979. Therefore, the five-year project that was submitted in 2007 to the Iranian authorities, approved in 2008, included both archaeology and conservation works, and was named "From Palace to Town". This title suggests that the focus of the work that was to be started on Persepolis, differently from the previous research programs, should concentrate on the "Town", but at the same time should not forget the Royal Terrace and its vicinity, the "Palace". In this way, the project had two main objectives, respectively in the fields of conservation and archaeology. The collection of information regarding diagnostic on stone as a basis for subsequent pilot conservation tests on the main problems met on the Persepolis Terrace (the "Palace") have represented the strategy of the conservation section of the project (Guidi

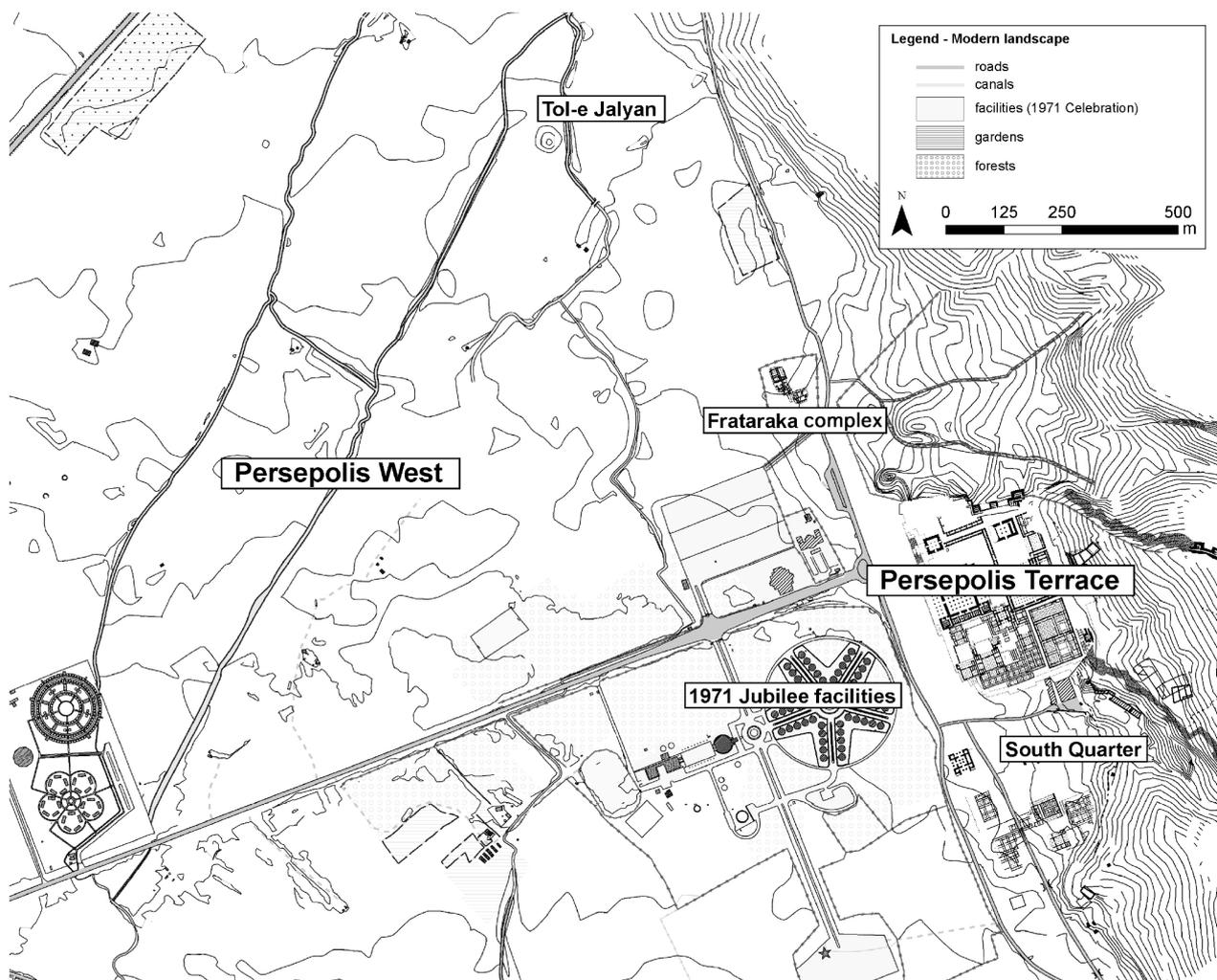


Fig. 1 - Map of the Persepolis area, showing the position of the Persepolis West site (drawing S. Gondet).

et al. 2012; Askari Chaverdi, Callieri, Laurenzi Tabasso and Lazzarini 2016). The archaeological section of the project has concerned stratigraphic investigations in the promising areas evidenced by the previous geophysical surveys over Persepolis West, one of the supposed areas in which to study everyday life in a settled environment (the “Town”) (Askari Chaverdi and Callieri 2012). They have also resulted in archaeometric researches on ceramics and other finds (Amadori et al. 2012).

While the archaeological part of the project was being carried on, an exceptional discovery in the area of Bagh-e Firuzi came to halt the explorations at Persepolis West: the discovery at Tol-e Ajori of what after four excavation seasons was understood to be a copy in larger dimensions of the Babylon Ishtar Gate, built in the Early Achaemenid period (Askari Chaverdi, Callieri and Gondet 2013; Askari Chaverdi, Callieri and Matin 2016). The urgent need to explore this monument, also given its state of preservation, regretfully forced the authors to stop the exploration at Persepolis West, where the preservation needs were less urgent. It is hoped that after the end of the excavations at Tol-e Ajori, the exploration of the site will be resumed, with the same methodological approach that has proved fruitful.

The two seasons of excavation carried out at Persepolis West in 2008 and 2009, indeed, have confirmed the great potentiality of the site. The present volume includes the results of geophysical investigations, the excavation reports, the archaeological studies of the finds, particularly ceramics, as well as the results of radiometric dating. The value of this contribution, particularly in view of the light it throws on the actual nature of the anomalies previously evidenced by the geophysical surveys, is evident. At the same time, it represents the first publication of a relevant ceramic corpus from reliable stratigraphic sequences with

several links to absolute chronology, which illuminates the development of the Late Plain Ware as defined by Sumner (1986).

We wish to thank in this regard all the scholars who collaborated in the project, in particular the Iranian and Iranian-French geophysical teams: Babak Aminpour, Rémy Boucharlat, Sébastien Gondet and Kourosh Mohammadkhani, then all the Iranian and Italian scholars and students who participated with generosity and commitment to the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission: their names are listed in the report of each one of the activities. Without them, as without the skilled workers of the villages around Persepolis, these activities would not have been possible. Using a musical comparison, the activity of the project, in the spirit of contemporary archaeology, has been more that of a choir than that of soloists, and the authors of the volume have been only the conductors.

We have to thank the Institutions which between 2008 and 2013 made this project possible through scientific and financial support: in Italy the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, University and Scientific Research, the University of Bologna and its Department of Cultural Heritage, the Fondazione Flaminia-Ravenna, the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient; in Iran the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, at the start of the project guided respectively by Dr Taha Hashemi and Prof. Hassan Fazeli Nashli and now by Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti and Dr Hamideh Choubak, as well as the Parsa-Pasargadae Research Foundation, guided at the time of the work by Dr Mohammad Hassan Talebian, the Shiraz University and the Embassy of Italy: to all of them our most sincere gratitude.