



BARD-E NEŠĀNDA

BARD-e NEŠĀNDA, a complex of ancient ruins in Kūzestān, situated 18 km northwest of the town of Masjed-e Solaymān (where similar ruins exist) at 675 m altitude on the edge of the Baḳtīārī mountains. The name means “erected stone.” The earliest mention of this site is in a brief statement by J. M. Unvala in *Revue d’Assyriologie* 25, 1928, p. 86. R. Ghirshman visited it in 1947; he began excavations in 1964 and continued in 1965 and 1966. The complex is 700 m long and 250 m wide. Ghirshman describes it as made up of three parts: a “castle” (château) which was the ruler’s residence, a terrace 250 m to the east which was used for religious rituals, and a village or “lower town” 100 m to the north (R. Ghirshman, *MDAFI* 45,1976, pp. 9-10). The “castle” is a building 29.80 m long and 18.60-19 m wide with a central courtyard or hall measuring 9.70 x 6.75 m, around which large chambers are grouped. Ghirshman, who could only devote five days to excavation of the “castle,” found evidence that it had been constructed in three phases. In this reckoning, the first phase was contemporaneous with the start of the terrace construction, which he placed in the pre-Achaemenid period, and the last phase extended into the early Islamic period. As regards the village, a plan was published (op. cit., fig. 2), but not a report.

Throughout the excavations, the principal aim was to explore the great terrace. Finding differences in the methods of construction, Ghirshman distinguished a “lower terrace” and an “upper terrace.” A sloping roadway ca. 150 m long gives access to the lower terrace. The total length of the two terraces is 157.20 m. The upper terrace is the oldest structure in the complex.



The excavators noted two different constructional phases. From phase 1 there are only a small “podium” and an “annex” of roughly the same size. Ghirshman thought that religious ceremonies in honor of Ahura Mazdā were performed around a fire altar which existed on the podium (op. cit., p. 50). In the light of certain finds of small artifacts, Ghirshman felt able to place the commencement of the podium in the 7th-6th century b.c. (op. cit., p. 28; in another context, on p. 50, he speaks of the 8th-7th century). It remains questionable, however, whether these finds provide adequate evidence for such an early dating. The phase 1 part of the terrace must have been still in existence in the Hellenistic period (op. cit., p. 39). This upper terrace was later extended, probably during the reign of Camniscires I, king of Elymais in the mid-2nd century b.c. (op. cit., p. 36 n. 1, p. 39). Finally the whole structure was again greatly enlarged, increasing its length to 157.20 m. The most important building in this part of the terrace is a four-pillared room, the “tetrastyle temple” (op. cit., pp. 39ff.). Two reliefs on pillars of the portico fronting this temple are thought by Ghirshman to represent Anāhitā and Miθra. He therefore infers that the temple was dedicated to these two deities, and he places the date of construction in the 1st-2nd century a.d. (op. cit., p. 225). The whole complex, in his opinion (p. 50), probably remained in use up to the mid-4th century a.d.

The ruins of Bard-e Nešānda, together with those at Masjed-e Solaymān, provide important clues for identification of temples in Elymais mentioned by ancient Greek and Roman writers (see Schippmann and Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres*, pp. 16ff., 20). The temple of Ahura Mazdā at Bard-e Nešānda may well be the same as the temple of Bēl (the Semitic equivalent of Ahura Mazdā) at which Antiochus III met his death in 187 b.c. while attempting to plunder its treasure (Strabo 16.1.18). The temple of Anāhitā and Miθra at Bard-e Nešānda might likewise be viewed as the precursor of the temple of Artemis-Nanaia which Antiochus IV (175-64 b.c.) attempted to plunder (Polybius, 31.9), but such an identification would not accord with Ghirshman’s dating of the construction in the 1st-2nd century a.d. Also mentioned in the sources (Justin, 41.6.8; Strabo, 16.1.18) is a temple of Artemis, called Ta Azara by Strabo, which lay somewhere in Elymais and was plundered by Mithridates I after his conquest of Susa in 139-38 b.c. Anāhitā is simply an Iranian name for Artemis-Nanaia.



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