



ČĀL TARĶĀN

ČĀL TARĶĀN (Čāl Tarĵān-‘Ešqābād), a site about 20 km southeast of Ray with remains from the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods. In the 1920s clandestine excavations first brought to light a group of carved stuccoes said to come from the site, which was then called Čahār Tarĵān or Čāl Tarĵān. Čāl Tarĵān-‘Ešqābād was partly excavated in 1936 by the Ray Expedition under the direction of Erich F. Schmidt; George C. Miles, who was a member of the expedition, incorporated the excavated coins with Ray mint marks into his *The Numismatic History of Rayy*. The stuccoes were published by Deborah Thompson in 1976; she also included some illustrations of Pahlavi and Arabic ostraca from the site. They are comparable to ostraca from nearby Nežāmābād (Menasce, IV, V, Portfolio I, pls. i-xxiv; Weber, 1974). All other finds—pottery, glass, small objects, seals, and other coins—have remained unpublished.

The site consists of an unexcavated rectangular mound with two partly excavated large buildings to the south of it; these three components were respectively designated Citadel Mound, Main Palace, and Subsidiary Palace by the excavators. The central unit of the Main Palace is a three-aisled hall, that of the Subsidiary Palace a square room with piers and columns. Because of substantial rebuilding, other features of both structures are less clear. The buildings were extensively decorated with polychromed stucco sculpture. The repertoire included small figural relief plaques, large-scale human and animal reliefs, and statues. There were also numerous ornamental pieces. A few fragments of wall painting were found in both buildings. Construction was probably begun in late Sasanian times, but there appears to have been



continuous settlement on the site through the Omayyad period, to which most of the stucco decorations belong. The finds at Čāl Tarḵān-‘Ešqābād have much in common with those from Tappa Mel 6 km to the north, particularly the columned halls and stuccoes, as well as with those from Nežāmābād (Kröger, pp. 148ff.). It has been argued that the buildings at Čāl Tarḵān-‘Ešqābād may have served the needs of the Zoroastrian community, rather than having had a residential function (Kröger, pp. 272ff.), but only further research can answer this question decisively (see [architecture](#), sasanian: palaces).

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