



ĠOBAYRĀ

ĠOBAYRĀ, medieval township in Kermān province, located at 57° 29 E and 47° N, 70 km by road south of Kermān City (historical Bardsir) at the intersection of the medieval eastern highway and the route from Kermān to Bāft, Esfandaqa, and Jiroft. The name is Arabic, feminine diminutive from *ġabara* “to be dusty.” The township is sited in the angle of the perennial Čāri and seasonal Ġobayrā rivers. It was overlooked by Percy Sykes, who passed further west (p. 426, on nearby Bahrāmjerd) and by Aurel Stein, whose surveyor, Moḥammad Ayyub Khan, recorded Ġobayrā village (also called Kovayra) west of the confluence, but not the medieval ruins (Map no. II, Section III). Eventually these were reported by David W. Chase and Géza Fehérvári in 1966, when the spread of glazed Islamic pottery called attention to their interest as an excavation prospect (Caldwell, pp. 102-7; Fehérvári, 1968, pp. 74-82).

These notes summarize information gathered during excavations sponsored by the Iran Center for Archaeological Research and the University of London in 1971, 1972, 1974 and 1976 (Bivar and Fehérvári, 1974, pp. 107-41; idem, 1975, pp. 255-62; Fehérvári, 1974, pp. 35-40). Prehistoric settlements by the confluence represent the Tall-e Eblis culture, dating back to the 4th millennium B.C.E. The system of shafts, tunnels, and underground (presumably funeral) chambers (Bivar and Fehérvári, 1972; idem, 1980, pp. 19-22) which honeycomb the citadel, a central feature of the site, may be proto-Elamite from the third millennium. They were cleared and re-used as funeral repositories in later, especially Sasanian, times, when a coin-hoard



closing with a dirham of Ardashir III (628-29 C.E.) was left in one of the tunnels (Bivar, pp. 89-92). The Islamic development of the site received a stimulus with the advent of the dissident Samanid general Abu ‘Ali Moḥammad b. Elyās (Bosworth, pp. 107-24, especially p. 114; Morton, pp. 152-56), who soon after 326/937-38 consolidated his control of Kermān City, and sought to fortify its approaches, especially against the Buyids in Shiraz. He built castles at various sites, and according to Moqaddasi (p. 462), also a market outside Ġobayrā. The discovery during excavation in the underground systems of iron shovels, leather buckets, palm-leaf ropes, an Islamic bronze openwork, and several slip-painted pottery, lamps, suggests extensive treasure-hunting in the tunnels at this time. The copious glazed pottery on the site — splashed ware, slip-painted, early “electric” sgraffiato of the initial Saljuq occupation, Saljuq fine wares, lustre, *minā’i*-ware, *lājwardena*, and the underglaze-painted wares (“Sultanabad” and imitations, and wares painted in black-on-turquoise or cobalt)—together with several bronze vessels and other artifacts (Fehérvári, 1976a, pp. 99-105; idem, 1976b, pp. 366-73; Woolley, pp. 51-56), suggests prosperity down to the end of the 8th/14th century. Subsequent blue-and-white pottery of the 16th century and later was found only in nomad hearths of the post-destruction phase. The latest stratified coin find was in the name of Timur (771-807/1370-1405), possibly of his earlier suzerainty. Another copper coin, of the period of Jahānšāh Qara Qoyunlu (r. 841-72/1438-67), appeared in a secondary habitation (Bivar, 1980, pp. 7-19). The conclusion seems clear that the township was destroyed by Timur’s forces in the years following 795/1393, when Sirjān, which was under Mozaffarid rule, was besieged and taken. A millstone and a spherical stone projectile for ballista or cannon indicate how the mud walls of Ġobayrā may have been demolished. Except for nomadic visitations and continuing use of a mosque, there is little evidence for later activity on the site.

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