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GREAT BRITAIN VIII. BRITISH ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

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Excavations began in Persia before the so-called “French monopoly” on archeological excavations (1895-1927; see DE´LE´GATIONS ARCHE´OLOGIQUE FRANÇAISES). They were small-scale and focused on clearing sculptures and retrieving plans at the major sites of Persepolis and Susa. These investigations were primarily British and represented a developmental stage beyond the 17th and 18th-century antiquarian tradition of observation and recording of standing remains championed by early European travelers to Persia.

This first phase was intermittent but spans the 19th-century. The opening decades witnessed a minor flurry of excavation at Persepolis, as the following examples illustrate. In 1811 Robert Gordon discovered a slab showing a charioteer during excavations below the north facade of the Apadana and in 1826 Colonel John Macdonald Kinneir excavated along the reconstructed north facade of Palace H, exposing the first complete figure of a sphinx (Curtis, 1998). A year earlier, Colonel Ephraim Stannus excavated and made the earliest molds of reliefs. His casts were soon displayed with sculptures in the British

Museum and appear to have made a major public impact as Persian art contemporary with the newly displayed Parthenon sculptures (Simpson, 2000).

Between 1811 and 1888 British travelers and residents excavated Sasanian ossuaries on the Bušehr peninsula and provided rare archeological evidence for Zoroas-trian funerary practices (Simpson, forthcoming). Between 1817-20 Sir Robert Ker Porter traveled around Persia, making watercolors of rock reliefs and discovering the sites of Taḵt-e Solaymān in Azarbaijan and Karaftu Caves in Kurdistan (Vasilieva). Between 1835 and 1847, Henry Rawlinson succeeded in copying the trilingual inscriptions at Bisotun, thus paving the way for the decipherment of cuneiform (Rawlinson). Austen Henry Layard recorded Elamite rock reliefs at Šekaft-e Salmān and Kul-e Farah̠ in Ḵuzestān (1840), but he did not excavate in Persia. However, William Kennett Loftus, a member of the British boundary commission, conducted the first investigations at Susa (1850-52), discovering the Apadana and retrieving pottery, terracottas, glass and faience from the prehistoric-Islamic periods (Laf-tus; Curtis, 1993). His success inspired the later French excavations.

The discoveries at Susa also triggered an expedition to Persepolis in 1891-92. This was directed by Herbert Weld-Blundell, who was later to found the cuneiform tablet collection in the Ashmolean Museum and spon-sor the Oxford Field Museum expedition to Kish. Weld conducted problem-oriented trenching across the major buildings as well as on the adjacent plain at Persepolis and at Pasargadae. With the assistance of men familiar with making molds of Meso-American reliefs, Weld also achieved his objective of creating a permanent record of decaying sculptures through making extensive plaster piece-molds from which casts could be made (Simpson, forthcoming). The Franco-Persian agreement of 1895 and the ensuing concession of 1900 that gave the French the exclusive right of excavation in the country prevented further British excavation, yet mention should be made of casual discoveries of a Bronze Age cemetery at Ḵenā-mān near Rafsanjān and an Iron I cemetery at Qeyṭariya near Tehran (1900), finds from which were later presented to the British Museum (Curtis, 1988; idem, 1989).

The cancellation of the earlier Franco-Persian archeological agreement saw the resumption of formal British archeological interest in Persia, albeit with limited fieldwork as British interests remained focused on Iraq and northeast Syria with the creation of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq shortly before. In the same year (1931), a popular Exhibition on Persian Art was held at the Royal Academy in London, and Weld's Persian Casts were for the first

time exhibited in the British Museum (1931). Shortly afterwards, Aurel Stein surveyed sites in southeast Persia from Bampur to Kermān, making soundings wherever possible (1932), followed by a survey along the Persian Gulf coastline (1932-33) and a survey of sites in eastern Fārs (1933-34). Stein's fourth Persian expedition was a survey of western Persia, including the first excavations at Ḥaṣanlu (1935-36). Stein's pioneering surveys remain of lasting importance to Persian archaeology (Stein, 1936; idem, 1937; idem, 1940).

The third phase of British archaeology in Persia began immediately after the Second World War and lasted un-til the Revolution of 1978-79. This was fundamentally aided by the foundation of the British Institute of Per-sian Studies in Tehran (1961). Fieldwork was conducted in most provinces but largely focused on Palaeolithic, Bronze-Iron Age and Islamic highland sites. Surveys were occasionally conducted but, unlike those of Stein or later American archeologists, these were generally aimed at locating sites for excavation rather than for published analysis of settlement distribution and density patterns. The excavations themselves were partly geared towards providing occupational sequences, for which there was a basic need in most regions, but also to expose architecture; environmental data retrieval was a low priority as this was widely considered to be less important for periods after the beginnings of agriculture.

Theodore Burton-Brown produced the first sequence for western Azarbaijan spanning the 3rd-1st millennia B.C.E. following his brief excavations in 1948 at Geoy Tepe (q.v.; Burton-Brown, 1951). Burton-Brown's views on cultural transmission through population movement were soon outdated, yet his fieldwork helped trigger later excavations in northwest Persia, not least by Charles Burney, who, following a survey around Lake Urmia (1958-59), excavated an important prehistoric, to 3rd-millennium sequence at Yāniq/Yanik Tepe (1960-62) and a sequence extending to the Sasanian period at Haftavān Tepe (1968-71, 1973, 1975, 1978; see Burney, 1964; idem, 1976). Peter Willey, following in the writer Freya Stark's footsteps, led an Oxford University expedition to explore and map Alamut (q.v.) and other medieval castles in the Alborz mountains (1959-61; Willey). Closer to Tehran, Burton-Brown's excavations at Qara/Kara Tepe (1957) revealed the first evidence of a northern Iranian prehistoric painted pottery tradition (Burton-Brown, 1979, 1981). Further east, David Stronach, the first director of British Institute of Persian Studies, co-directed Anglo-American excavations at the Gorgān plain (q.v.) site of Yarim Tepe (1960, 1962); the results provided an important

sequence spanning much of the Chalcolithic-Parthian periods and paralleling that at Tureng Tepe (Crawford). Stronach subsequently joined John Hansman in excavations at the early Parthian capital of Hecatompylos at Šahr-e Qumes (1967, 1971, 1976, 1978; Hansman and Stronach).

In southeast Persia, Beatrice de Cardi conducted soundings at Bampur (1966), creating an important 4th to 3rd-millennium pottery sequence into which Stein's survey finds could be better understood and demonstrating trade links with southeast Arabia (de Cardi, 1970, 1983). In the meantime, A. D. H. Bivar and G. Fehérvári followed their survey of the Islamic city of Tamiša in the Gorgān plain (1964) with excavations of medieval remains at Ḡobayra (q.v.), south of Kermān (1971-72, 1974, 1976; Bivar; Bivar and Féhérvari). Further south, Andrew Williamson explored Old Sirjān (1970), the Late Sasanian-Early Islamic capital of Kermān, where he found important evidence for painted stuccoes and glazed ceramic production. He followed this with excavations at the medieval site of Dašt-e Deh (1970-71) and a survey from southeast Persia along the Persian Gulf coast (1968-70; Williamson, 1971; idem, 1972). This survey laid the foundation for David Whitehouse's excavations at the Early Islamic port of Sirāf, where he exposed the remains of a large 9th-century mosque above an earlier fort, houses, the *bāzār*, a bath-house, warehouse, potters' quarter, and the cemetery (1966-73; Whitehouse).

Other investigations in Fārs and western Persia added important new information on the Iron Age. David Stro- nach's excavations at Pasargadae (1961-63) proved an Achaemenid date for the Tall-e Takt̲, confirmed the existence of planned gardens between the royal pavilions, and revealed a hoard of splendid gold jewelry. Further west, his excavations at the Median site of Tepe Nuš-e Jān/Nush-i Jan near Malāyer (1967, 1970, 1973-74, 1977) revealed a spectacularly well-preserved clus-ter of buildings including two temples, a columned hall and a fort, as well as Parthian domestic architecture, thus filling an important gap in the understanding of Iron Age architecture in this region (Curtis, 1984). Further south, Clare Goff's survey of settlement sites in eastern Lorestān (1963-64) set into a clearer context earlier discoveries of cemeteries, whence the eponymous "Luristan Bronzes" were first discovered in the late 1920s, and confirmed the existence of a contemporary agrarian society (Goff, 1968). Goff's excavations at Tall-e Noḵodi in Fārs (1961-62) produced a useful sequence of 4th-3rd-millennium B.C.E. painted pottery (Goff, 1964). This was followed by excavations at Bābā Jān Tepe in Lorestān (1966-69), where an exceptional view was made of an Iron III village with a

central “manor house” and “fort,” plus firmly stratified evidence for the contemporaneity of archetypal “Luristan Bronzes” with “Genre Luristan” painted pottery (Goff, 1978).

Last, but not least, mention should be made of Edward Keall’s dramatic discovery of painted Parthian stuccoes at Qalʿa-ye Yazdegerd (1965, 1975-77, 1978-79; Keal), Stuart Swiny’s survey of Iron III sites in northwest Persia (1971; Swiny), Rosalind Howell’s survey of the Malā-yer plains (1978; Howell), Charles Burney’s Meškin-šahr survey in Eastern Azarbaijan (1978; Burney, 1979), and Charles McBurney’s important surveys and soundings of Palaeolithic rock-shelters in the Zagros and Alborz mountains (1962-64, 1968-69; McBurney).

Since 1980, there have not been any British excavations within Persia. Ironically, despite the important role that British archeologists have had, this subject has rarely been taught in British universities other than as a sideline to courses on the Ancient Near East. Nevertheless, ancient Iranian studies have continued to be promoted through the Ashmolean and British Museums, notably by P. R. S. Moorey and John E. Curtis (e.g., Moorey, 1971; idem, 1972; Curtis, 2000), whereas the British Institute of Persian Studies has maintained its premises, library, and hostel in Tehran, and continued to publish its journal *Iran*.

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