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LOUVRE MUSEUM I. IRANIAN ANTIQUITIES IN THE COLLECTIONS

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In 1793, when the Louvre Museum (Musée du Louvre) was created under the name of Central Museum of Arts (Musée Centrale des Arts), antiquities were exclusively represented by Greek and Roman sculptures. The items of Sassanid gold and silverware (which were not recognized as such) from the royal abbey of Saint Denis had been placed in the Medal Room of the National Library. That was where, among other things, the famous cup of Khosrow II was preserved. This cup had been traditionally attributed to Solomon and was said to have been sent to Charlemagne or to Charles the Bald.

The true nature of ancient Persian civilization was to be revealed in the 19th century thanks to archaeological explorations in which the Louvre Museum participated. The Department of Oriental Antiquities was created in 1881 as a separate section from the “Antiques” because of the discovery of Sumerian art at Tello. In the following year, the engineer Marcel Dieulafoy, was sent on a mission to Persia subsidized by the Administration of French Museums, which gave him the opportunity to explore the site of Susa. Two campaigns of

excavation, in 1885 and 1886, led to locating the palace that the inscriptions in Old Persian referred to as the *Apadāna*, built by Darius the Great or Darius I and restored by Artaxerxes II in the fourth century B.C.E. The work could not be carried on beyond a wall adorned with an enameled frieze representing lions, which had fallen on the ground of the adjoining courtyard. The other elements of the polychrome decor had been dismembered in antiquity and were discovered lying in a heap. After being sent to France, the bricks had disintegrated and had to be consolidated at great cost before the friezes could be assembled. These immediately became famous due to their featuring certain colors that had been lost elsewhere. They were exhibited on the first floor of the gallery south of the Colonnade built during the reign of Louis XIV. Displayed within this framework was the only capital which could be repaired, with its double protome of a bull above the voluted element, as at Persepolis. The two halves of the frieze of lions facing one another preceded it. The black and white archers have been identified as the *Immortals* mentioned by Herodotus. Above these friezes were merlon against a white background, “showing that this was an open-air decoration.” Dieulafoy also mentions that apart from an Elamite stela dating from the twelfth century B. C., there was a statue from the Parthian period that may be attributed to the art of the Elymaïde (*Ir. Ant*. XXXVI; 2001; p. 252, ill. 24).

What was known at the time was only the Iran of the Medes and the Persians, although the Assyrian texts had revealed the importance of the old kingdom of Elam that had preceded them. Iranian antiquities usually reached Europe by way of the Ottoman Empire and, as a result, the merchants assumed that they were of Armenian or Anatolian origin. The first of the bronzes of Luristan which arrived at the Louvre in 1893 after having been acquired in Tehran, is a curious “standard” consisting of a round of figures within a ring (AO 2397). Upon analyzing it, Léon Alexandre (1831-1922) and Heuzey, a great Hellenist, thought that “the movement is such as Greek art has given to the Gorgons” and, as a result, he recognized it as a work of the Parthian period. Shortly afterward, the first Luristan “idols” (AO 3075; 3086; 4720; 6267) were acquired and were considered to be “sceptre heads of a Cappadocian style,” although it was cautiously noted: “period and style to be clarified.” This took another thirty years.

Remarkable objects, which remained incomparable among the Louvre collections, were acquired during the late nineteenth century and, oddly enough, did not appear to have awakened any particular enthusiasm. This was

because the prejudice regarding the pre-eminence of Greek art was strong and that scholars knew hardly anything about the Achaemenid art of jewelry. An expert on ancient art objects, Gaston Migeon, was unaware of the "Oxus Treasure," which had been acquired by the British Museum shortly before this. He merely wrote a brief article in 1902 in the *Revue des Arts*, where he published the famous vase handle in gilt silver representing a winged ibex. This object belonged to the Tyszkiewicz Collection and was said to be of Armenian origin (AO 2748). Its base in the shape of a Silenus mask showed the influence of Greek art that had been well assimilated by the Iranian craftsman. In addition, a large rhyton in ribbed silver with a deer's head, and a deep silver cup were acquired, apparently from a tomb in Erzerum. Their attribution (AO 3095 and 3094) to Persian art was confirmed by the similarity of the decor of the cup to that of the base of the Susa column found by Dieulafoy shortly before: the reference to field archaeology thus proved to be decisive.

At the time, the Susa excavations were greatly stimulated by the initiative of Jacques de Morgan (De Morgan, Jacques) who managed, through French diplomatic means, to obtain a monopoly for France with regard to "scientific" research throughout the Persian Empire territory. Morgan's aim was twofold: first, to reveal the evidences of Elamite civilization, the importance of which was indirectly known by allusions from the Assyrians who destroyed Susa in 648 B.C.E. Second, to discover the very "origins" of eastern civilization, which Morgan assumed to have stemmed from Susiana. Consequently, Darius's palace was considered as "low period" and the work was centered on the thirty-eight-meter-high Acropolis. To start with, however, there was the surprise discovery of a series of impressive examples of Babylonian civilization brought as war booty in the twelfth century B. C. by an Elamite conqueror. No immediate decision was taken about these findings but in 1900, Moẓaffar al-Din Shah signed a special treaty granting to France (see Délégations Archéologiques) all the antiquities that had been, or would be, discovered in Susiana. Thus, the Louvre was to function as the depository of a complete set of archaeological material, which was unprecedented among archaeological expeditions. The initial shipment in 1901 was of unique importance, containing the Code of Hammurabi, the victory stele of Naram-Sin and Elamite antiquities such as a large bronze table displaying the unique skill of the Elamite metalworkers of the time. These great monuments were appropriately displayed with those of Mesopotamia in an Assyrian room. A number of them also belonged to Elamite history, according to an inscription

added by the conqueror who had brought them to Susa. New space had to be found at the Trémouille Pavillon, west of the Louvre counters display cases. Finally, contrary to the habits of those days, they had to refrain from exhibiting all of their finds. The *Galérie de Delphes*, under the seventeenth-century Colonnade, was devoted to archaeological material and reserved exclusively for archaeologists. This became or proved more indispensable, as more and more discoveries were made in the course of the following years. The originality of Elamite art was thus confirmed, with the enormous bronze statue of Queen Napir-Asu, the fragments of the stele of her royal spouse (later repaired), and the astonishing *ex voto* called *sîtshamshi*, which, oddly enough, suggests a Canaanite "high place."

Above the level of these objects, one of the rare testimonies to the Achaemenid occupation of the Acropolis was discovered: the tomb of a prince, dating from the mid-fourth century on the evidence of Phoenician coins. It contained the only complete and truly remarkable treasure of jewelry that has so far come down to us. The large coil and the golden bracelets with colored inlays, the silver cup and the multiple necklaces in gold, carnelian and agate are masterpieces, though, for some odd reason, despised by J. de Morgan. According to the latter, "Achaemenid art, if this incoherent amalgam, which was favored at the court of Cyrus's successors can by any means be qualified as art, was nothing but a mixture of Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, Lycian, Cappadocian and Phrygian... These diverse elements were often associated with the worst taste." (*Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse*, VIII; 1905, p. 46). Although the judgment may be wrong, the analysis was quite right.

Anxious to discover the origins of Susa, Morgan reached virgin soil in 1906 and thus discovered the pre-historic necropolis. This created a sensation with its elaborately decorated painted vases, the study of which was entrusted to the great specialist of Greek ceramics, E. Pottier (*Mémoires* ... XIII; 1912). J. de Morgan handed over the project to his disciple R. de Mecquenem, who continued exploring and expanding the excavation of Darius's palace, of which Dieulafoy had merely recognized the columned hall called the *Apādana,* which resembled the one at Persepolis. Thus, the levels of the mud-brick dwellings were explored, revealing further elements of the decor in enameled brick. This called for a reconstruction of the displays installed at the Louvre. At the same time, just after World War I, the works were extended to the other *tells* of the vast Susan agglomerations termed "Royal City" and "Artisan's City." Thus, examples from all the periods of Elamite history were gradually sent to

the Louvre and, beginning in 1928, divided with the Tehran Museum according to the new law concerning antiquities that had been promulgated in Iran under the Pahlavi dynasty.

From then on, the extension of archaeological research to the Iranian plateau, combined with the acquisition of scattered antiquities, made it necessary to re-organize the entire presentation of the collections. On the one hand, the opening of Iran to modernity inevitably led to the disaster of illicit excavations, which were almost unknown before then. On the other hand, this led to the appearance of the "Luristan bronzes," which could hardly be ignored. The Louvre acquired a modest series of them that were representative in principle but still difficult to classify. In order to attempt a more precise approach towards understanding the archaeological history of the plateau, a mission from the Louvre museum, led by Georges Contenau and Roman Ghirshman, set out in 1931-32 to explore Tepe Giyan, which had already been greatly disturbed by clandestine searchers. An institutional authority connected with archaeological research was, in this case, greatly acclaimed. This excavation was difficult, but it led to establishing provisionally "the succession of the ceramics (major witnesses of civilizations), of which similar ones were known at Susa, ... and at Sumer." (M. Rutten, *Guide des Antiquités Orientales,* 1934, p. 83).

Clandestine excavators, still tolerated, discovered Tepe Sialk, near Kashan, much further to the east. Roman Ghirshman explored this new site in 1933, 1934 and 1938. The two cemeteries near the large prehistoric *tell* testified to the immigration of Iranians from the end of the second millennium. Very beautiful painted vases or gray lusterware of this period, which were already scattered among collections, thus found their relative place within history. The display at the Louvre of so many acquisitions called for a radical reorganization. This began in the thirties but was interrupted by World War II. Following the war, André Parrot took over from G. Contenau as Head Curator, while the latter remained honorary director of the Susa excavations, which were entrusted to R. Girshman. The work proceeded according to a better method until 1967, with the aim of establishing the precise stratigraphy of the periods called "late," and finally Elamite, as immediately recognized by R. de Mecquenem. At the same time, the royal city founded by Untash Napirisha, i. e. Choğa Zanbil, with its famous ziggurat, was being explored. As in previous years, half of the objects discovered, with the exception of unique pieces that remained in Iran, were sent to the Louvre annually. This, for the most part,

consisted of material tending to illustrate the archaeological environment of the antiquities previously collected by early excavators. All of this material had to be distributed within the rooms preceding the ones where the vast enameled décor of Darius's palace had been permanently reinstalled around the great capital, which had also been taken out of the old rooms on the first floor of the Colonnade.

Meanwhile a diplomat, J. Coiffard, had bought a considerable number of Luristan antiques that the Louvre was able to acquire from him in 1958. In this way, it became possible to illustrate the great periods of the civilization of nomadic metalworkers. These were, to begin with, Sumerians and early Babylonians, and from the end of the second millennium, contemporaries of the Iranians, who presumably had settled on the stratified sites of Tepe Giyan and Tepe Sialk. This was shown with reference to the Belgian excavations led by Louis Vanden Berghe. The "orphan antiquities" scattered around illicitly thus recovered their identity.

In the course of the thirty-odd years preceding the Islamic Revolution the foreign missions were exceptionally active, expanding their plundering of Luristan to the north-eastern provinces, especially Gilān, which was rich in easily found graveyards. From about 1955, the furnishings of these tombs revealed new aspects of an art that provided fresh questions by their novelty and needed a good scholar to sort them out. Edith Porada provided an example of a serious classification .In 1956, the Louvre acquired a large goblet in electrum (AO 20281), the décor of which showed similarities with those of Kassite Babylonia and the Mitannian. The village of Amlash temporarily lent its name to other examples from the same civilization. The great collector Mohsen Foroughi donated the characteristic bull-shaped vases, concerning which the Iranian archaeologist E. Negahban was soon to prove that Marlik was their site of archaeological reference.

At the same time, research was continued further east, towards the region bordering on Gorgān. That is how Jean Deshayes was able to send a fine series of gray luster-ceramic vases to the Louvre. These might appear as ancestors of the Marlik vase, which was more recent by several centuries after their demise at the end of the great period that may be called that of "Inter-Iranian exchanges."

The extension of the area of research in central Iran, in Kermān and Sistān, was to reach modern borders in Afghanistan where the Soviets explored the

urbanized sites of the Bronze Age, and in ancient Bactria. Immediately, clandestine thieves, who were completely tolerated, began to plunder the tombs of the nearby cemeteries and to offer the contents in the Kabul bazaar. V. Sarianidi was shrewd enough to take an interest in them, in order to complete the information he had gathered from his own excavations. Similarly, the Louvre did so to acquire a modest series to serve as reference before the material was all dispersed by the international antiquities trade. This highly varied material: “bronzes” (in fact arsenized copper), alabaster vases, etc., was found by the Iranian archaeologist ʿAli Ḥākemi to have affinities with Elamite civilization and similarities to what was then discovered at Šāhdād on the edge of the Lut desert. What could be acquired from the Louvre could lead to restoring the exchange network at the time when the law about dividing the antiquities discovered by the archaeological missions in Iran had been suspended.

As a result, the series of archaeological materials discovered at Susa by J. Perrot’s mission remained in place after Ghirshman’s departure. Those that had been previously sent to the Louvre have become the object of special interest, owing to the vicinity of complementary institutions: libraries, laboratories, etc. The prestigious antiquities and the materials for study were collected in 1993 in new areas of the “Grand Louvre,” i.e., in the northern wing of the “old Louvre,” thanks to the donors (R. and B. Sackler).

Although Susa, its vast plain extending eastward towards Mesopotamia, may appear marginal within the whole of the Iranian highlands, its rank as the capital of ancient Elam, the only historical entity before the Persian period, stands out as a major reference to illustrate Iranian history. That is why the relics from its founding period, or Susa I, at the end of the fifth millennium, are exhibited near the most ancient mountainous sites. The earliest Susans were their close relatives, as testified by the strictly stylized art of the potters, featuring the ibex with its immense horns, as well as other animals, such as the panther.

However, in the mid-4th millennium, Susa joined the antithetical world of the proto-Sumerians of Uruk, the creators of writing and of an expressive art of an entirely new form of humanism, breaking with those stylizations that were current in prehistoric societies. This is expressed by a small, very delicate and indeed humorous statuary, contrasting with the elaborate repertoire of cylindrical seals affixed to bookkeeping documents. One of these seals bears the effigy of the potentate who might be defined as the “King-priest,” well

known at Uruk and revealing the advent of an archaic but incontestable form of a potentially historical state. This second period of the history of Susa ended when the mountain dwellers, who came down from present-day Fars, seized power and created, in a preliminary way, the specific civilization that we call *Proto-Elamite* or "Susa III." This civilization, with its script and a highly original art almost exclusively depicting animals, had two major centers: Susa on the plain, and Anshan, today's Tal-e Maliān, in the highlands where it was difficult to lead an urban life. Hence, there was a return to nomadism, which defies archaeological investigation. At the same time, a network of inter-Iranian exchanges was already being formed. Susa, in the middle of the third millennium, was a small city of a Sumerian type with temples on its acropolis. Here the inhabitants perpetuated their presence as worshippers by statues exactly resembling those on exhibit in the Louvre's Mesopotamian rooms but in an awkward, stylized form often suggesting "cubism." The religious appurtenances were often made of artificially hardened resin. They consisted mainly of supports for offerings, which displayed their rough Elamite origins. This specifically Susan art may have been inspired by that of the carvers working in the soft green or black stone called chlorite, which was also used outside of Elam, in present-day Kerman. At the same time, the people of the Luristan Mountains created a rich metallurgy of early bronze, decorating their ceremonial weapons with figures in high relief. An example is a small war chariot placed on a mass of tubular arms, belonging to the David-Weill collection. Their painted vases resemble those of the Susans. This "second style," as defined by the first excavators of Susa, was quite different from that of the period when the city was founded, although it was related to the most authentic mountain tradition. One such vase served as a small treasury or "hiding-place" containing bronze utensils and dishes, alabaster vases imported from eastern Iran, and Mesopotamian cylinder seals and tokens, testifying to the survival of the most archaic accounting system. Susa thus appears as well situated at the crossing place of roads linking the highlands with the lowlands.

After 2300 B. C., the Semitic emperors of Agade annexed Susiana, the administrative practices of which were adopted by the vassal princes. One of them paid homage to his suzerain by presenting to him a statue with his name inscribed on it. Finally, the prince of Susa, Puzur-Inshushinak, recovered his independence. He patronized an official art, while adopting a linear script adapted to his Elamite language, along with the cuneiform script recording that of his Semitic Akkadian subjects. Thus, the ethnic duality was clearly expressed, explaining Susiana's alternate integration within the two antithetic

and complementary worlds of Mesopotamia and the “Iranian” highlands. The statue of the great goddess enthroned on lions, (Sb 54) having thus been inscribed in both languages, still reflects a dependence on the characteristic art of the so-called Sumerian renaissance, at this period contemporary with the great Gudea of Lagash. Puzur-Inshushinak’s ambition was premature, for soon afterwards the kings of Ur, who built the temples of the Poliad couple, Inshushinak “Lord of Susa” and Ninhursag called “Susienne,” reconquered Susa. The builder, Shulgi, dedicated among other things a hammer decorated with birds’ heads similar to the ceremonial axes discovered as far away as Bactria. In the hinterland, the Elamite princes lived as seminomads. Combining their dynamism with the literary culture of the Susans, they initiated the royal Elamite tradition by assuming the title of “King of Anšān and Susa,” and later the imperial title of *Sukkalmah*. Their seals represented the god-patron of Elam enthroned on a coiled serpent and the queen dressed in a “crinoline.” In the early second millennium, bronzes must have been dedicated to the temples and later collected in funerary deposits. In these varying figures, Sumerian humanism alternated with Elamite austerity as shown in the effigy of the god seated in his chariot with a serpent decorating his tiara. The luxury dishes in bitumen mastic featured highly stylized animals in low and high relief.

Exchanges with far-away countries brought to Susa Egyptian and Levantine objects on the one hand, and objects from India and Oman on the other. At the same time, Elamite culture shone forth from Šāhdād, in central Iran, as far as Bactriana and Margiana. This is illustrated by composite statues of ladies dressed in the Elamite fashion, highly elaborate ceremonial axes, gold and silver dinner service, and metal seals. However, these civilizations beyond the twin kingdom of Elam disappeared in the seventeenth century, at the same time as did that of India. Yet, Susa continued to be a great city that even grew, and in the vaulted family tombs of the mid-second millennium, Mecquenem and Ghirshman found portraits of the dead in painted earth, of a sober realism, side by side with much furniture.

In the fourteenth century, a new dynasty under King Untash Napirisha sponsored an official art in the new city with its ziggurat at the top, decorated with enameled tiles. Steles and statues were later sent to Susa: the statue of Queen Napir-Asu and the table for offerings, masterpieces in bronze, as well as the high stele on which the king was shown at the top, facing his god, while the base was protected by entities composed of genies with fishes on the one hand

and men with mouflons on the other.

In the 12th century, the Elamite conquerors brought to Susa the masterpieces of Babylonian sculpture, the effigy of the king of Elam being replaced by that of a vanquished Kassite on a stele (Sb 9). Royal effigies in enameled green and yellow brick decorated a temple, while ancient and contemporary mementoes, such as gold and silver statuettes, were collected in tombs that were probably royal.

At the same period, the gold and silver dishes from Marlik that are on view at the Louvre, together with vases in animal shape, showed the creativity of the Iron Age immigrants (without iron!), who lent their name to Iran. Some time later, the majority of the Luristan mountaineers returned to nomadism and resumed the tradition of decorated “bronzes,” which had ceased in the 17th century, having reached their peak between the 12th and 7th centuries. The Louvre collection provides a good idea of their art, which expresses a culture inherited from prehistoric times with the theme of “the master of animals,” while at the same time preparing for the advent of Mazdean ideology, as witnessed by the votive pins. In addition, at the same time, the old kingdom of Elam blossomed forth once more, even after the destruction of Susa by Assurbanipal in 648. The enameled dishes and the polychrome decoration of a temple revealing great technical mastery, testify to this fact. It was Darius I (522-486) who again made Susa a capital, a kind of twin city of Persepolis, replacing the deserted Anšān. The syncretism he sponsored in the architectural conception as well as in the decoration of his palace is illustrated at the Louvre by the friezes featuring symbolic archers of the Persian people and king upholding the nations of the empire, also shown in detail in the décor at Persepolis. The animals borrowed from the Assyro-Babylonian repertory were from then on devoid of mythological symbolism, but the lions with human heads connected with the winged disk may have had an astrological meaning. The *Founding Charter* of the palace, inscribed on a clay tablet and stone slabs, explains the imperial ideology of this décor by presenting the Persian Empire as a haven of universal peace.

Susa continued to be a great city after Alexander’s conquest, but it lost its rank as a capital. Its Hellenized population attracted excellent artists, as witnessed by the fragments of fine terracotta objects and sculptures. Here we notice how the rough Elymean mountain folks, who were hardly cultured, developed into superficially Hellenized Iranians. A royal bust in bronze and a ewer in gilded silver illustrate the Iranian reaction against Parthian philhellenism under the

reign of the Sassanids, with its décor featuring a nude female dancer. This recalls the age-old tradition of terracotta figurines in popular art.

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