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Tang-i Bulaghi Reports 4: TB 85-34
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An Achaemenid pavilion and other remains in Tang-i Bulaghi

Summary

As part of the International Joint Project of the Sivand Dam Rescue Excavations, the Iranian-French team focused on the remains of the Achaemenid period. To this end, soundings and excavations were carried out on several sites suspected to belong to this period. At one of these, a small pavilion with two columned porticoes was excavated in 2006 and 2007; two rock-cut passages ('canals'/roads) were investigated in 2005. Both of these passages run for more than 10 km along the banks of the Pulvar river, while others follow different

directions. These constructions were built at the time of the Achaemenid occupation of the valley, and also possibly later.

Before fieldwork began, the Iranian-French mission was aware of the potential of the Tang-i Bulaghi for the study of the Achaemenid period. Another Iranian-French archaeological team, surveying the site of Pasargadae and its environs in 2002-2004, mapped two long 'canals,' which were quite visible on both sides of the valley, and launched a general survey of the sites in Tang-i Bulaghi.[1] When the Iranian archaeological authorities decided to organize an international archaeological salvage project because of the threat created by the modern Sivand dam, they commissioned the Pasargadae office of the Parsa Pasargad Research Foundation and M. Atai to conduct a more systematic survey in the spring of 2004. M. Atai was able to map some 130 points belonging to various periods from the 5th-4th millennia BC onward. They should not all be designated archaeological 'sites'; some of them are no more than a cluster of pottery sherds.

The joint mission decided not to concentrate on only one site but to explore several of them, in order to contribute as much as possible to the reconstruction of human occupation in this area during the Achaemenid period.

1 The joint team was organized by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation and the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research. In Pasargadae, the Parsa Pasargad Research Foundation organized accommodation, labour force and transportation. The French team was granted a special budget from the French Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs.

Fig. 1: General view of the narrowest part of Tang-i Bulaghi. On the right above, the longest section of the rock-cut passageway runs along the Pulvar river.

In fact some sites of this period were already known to us: a severely damaged building, probably with columned rooms or porticoes (TB 34), and a series of impressive structures on both sides of the Pulvar river. In some places, dozens of metres of a passageway cut in the rock, like a canal or a narrow road, can be seen (fig. 1); elsewhere, walls with a length of several hundreds of meters run in many sections parallel to the river, but are located 15 m higher than the river level; others climb the slopes and finally two walls block the valley. The sections cut in the rock had for some time been tentatively dated to the Achaemenid period, and therefore deserved our interest.

1 TB 85: a 'ghost' Achaemenid site

Scattered Achaemenid sherds and some column base fragments were noticed at TB 85, which is located in the wider part of the valley, between TB 91 and TB 73. The former is an important site of the 4th millennium BC that also yielded the isolated find of a stone torus of a column base, probably to be dated of the Achaemenid period. TB 73 has been identified as an Achaemenid building (presented in the contribution of the Iranian-German team = ARTA 2009.007).

At TB 85, the Achaemenid remains consisted of several distinctive sherds including carinated bowls, numerous pieces of square column bases, fragments of tori and one complete torus. All these objects were found on the surface. Unfortu-

nately, the soundings (about a dozen) carried out in 2005, distributed over more than one hectare, did not reveal any Achaemenid level. Beneath an Islamic graveyard and a level dated to the Sassanian period (contemporary to the main occupation at TB 63, investigated by the Iranian-Polish joint team; see ARTA 2009.003), there was always virgin soil.

The origin of the Achaemenid remains concentrated on TB 85 remains unclear. Nevertheless, these sherds and remains of columns are evidence of the importance of this period in this part of Tang-i Bulaghi.

Fig. 2: The natural terrace on which the Achaemenid pavilion was erected.

2 TB 34: an Achaemenid pavilion

The small pavilion at TB 34 is certainly the most conspicuous building dated to the Achaemenid period in the whole of Tang-i Bulaghi. A bell-shaped base found in a refuse heap, two square plinths still *in situ* in a portico, and many sherds of Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid date are clear evidence of an elite building.

The pavilion is located on the left bank of the Pulvar river, about 6 km south of the Tomb of Cyrus, at the foot of a 180m-high cliff. The building overlooks the river by some 15m, on an irregular rectangular natural terrace of about 120 × 70m (figs. 2 and 3).

Fig. 3: The top of the terrace before the excavations.

Fig. 4: An almost vertical view of the site (above) with the location of the Achaemenid pavilion beneath the bulldozed area (below).

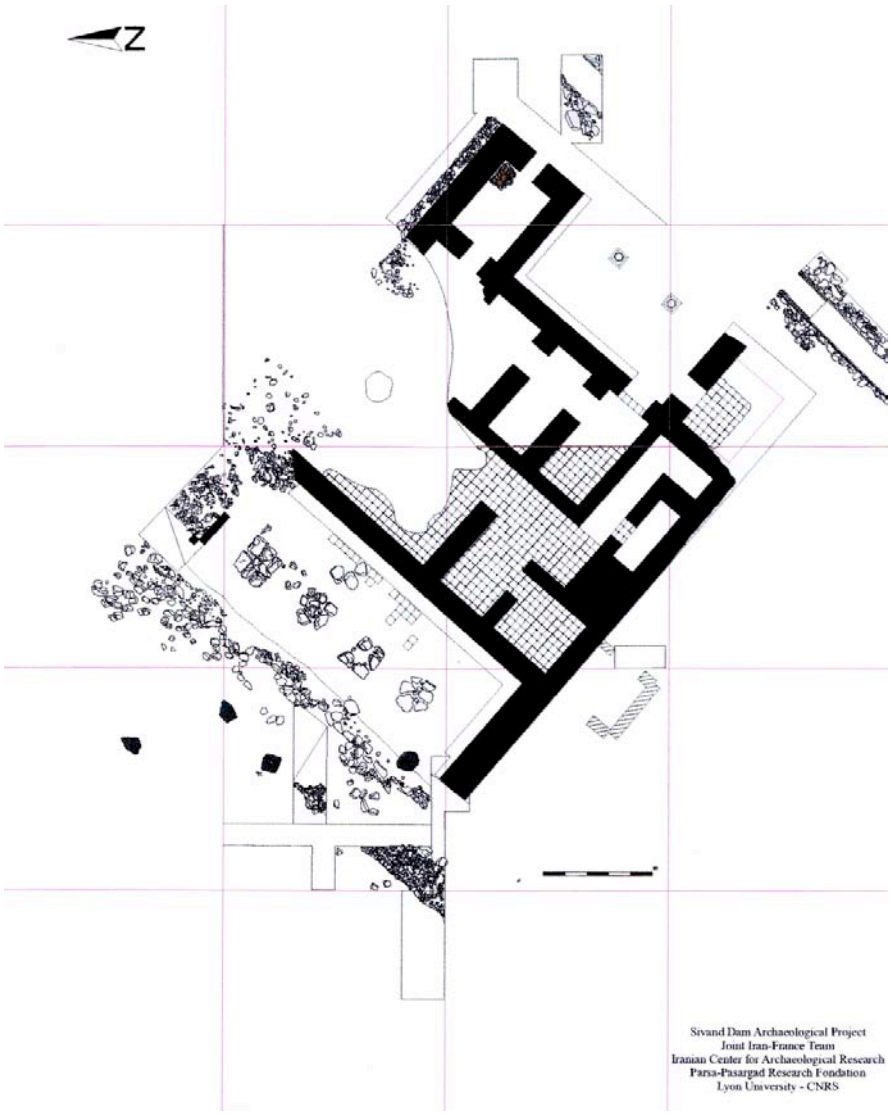

Fig. 5: Plan of the excavated pavilion. The western portico with four column bases is represented by the four groups of stone slabs. Inside, the three parallel rooms and the L-shaped staircase are the only clear part of the plan. The northern part has been completely destroyed.

The pavilion could still be seen when the excavations started in the spring of 2006. Some mud brick walls, stones and gravel foundations had been previously visible, until the site was badly damaged by bulldozing (fig. 4). Two short seasons were necessary to clear the remains and to reveal the almost complete plan of this building, which was apparently isolated.

The building – The plan of the pavilion (fig. 5) is nearly square with two opposing porticoes dissimilar in size. The multi-roomed internal plan is much more sophisticated than the two known pavilions A and B of Pasargadae, which have a unique central room. The whole building measures 24.60m EW × 19m NS, comparable to Pavilions A and B of Pasargadae (21 × 19.75m and 24 × 21m respectively); it is oriented according to the corners (precisely 42° W), an orientation that differs from that of the section of the river in that area or from that of the cliff. However, this orientation is roughly similar to that of the distant palaces of Pasargadae. The two porticoes on the NW and SE sides do not extend beyond the edges of the central part; this is another remarkable difference from Pavilions A and B with their two long porticoes, and from the two palaces at Pasargadae.

The internal space is not a single large hall as in the buildings of Pasargadae, but contains a series of three parallel rooms in the rear part with an L-shaped structure, probably corresponding to a staircase, on the south. The western part is completely destroyed down to the gravel foundation (fig. 6). Between the front portico and the three rooms, apart from a small room in the west corner, there seems to be a single

space, which is too wide to be roofed without columns. However, no trace of bases or foundations for columns has been found.

Fig. 6: Aerial view of the excavatated pavilion.

The construction materials and techniques generally fit with Achaemenid architecture. The 2.50m-deep foundation is constructed with gravel and pebbles, filling an area larger than the building itself (35 × 32m) and defined by a containing wall of large boulders. On the west side, because of the natural east-west slope, this wall is a terrace wall; on the east side, the wall is quite impressive and was protected by a second wall at a distance of 1.20 m, which blocked the alluvia rolling down from the cliff. Together these two walls define a moat, 2.50 m deep (fig. 7).

Fig. 7: The 2.50m-deep moat built of two stone walls. The left wall is the eastern edge of the foundation for the pavilion. The right one is a containing wall for the alluvia from the mountains.

The mud brick walls of the building rest upon wider stone foundation walls set in the pebbles, and the column bases lie upon a square foundation made of 3 to 6 large slabs also embedded into the gravel foundation (fig. 8). Each of these squares supports a stone block, 0.65 m per side, which supported the actual column base. These bases are entirely missing in the NE portico, but they were obviously square plinths similar in size to the two bases of the SE portico. The foundation technique used in our pavilion cannot be compared to that of the buildings of Pasargadae or Persepolis; there is usually a uniform foundation of large slabs in Pasargadae, and the natural bedrock or large stone blocks in Persepolis. The foundation technique is more comparable to that of Achaemenid buildings at Susa.

Two courses of mud bricks (33 × 33 × 10cm) make up the foundation of the floors. The floor itself, which was probably made of rectangular baked bricks (45 × 33 cm) combined with half-bricks (33 × 17 cm), was laid upon these mud brick courses; none were *in situ* but numerous fragments and some complete bricks were found during the excavations.

Very little is preserved of the remains above floor level, apart from some brick courses of the walls in the eastern part (maximum height 1.10m in a very limited area) and the two column bases of the rear portico. The square bricks of the walls (33 × 33 × 10/11cm) are made of a brownish clay mixed with much straw; they can be easily distinguished from the yellowish bricks supporting the floors. The thickness of the walls varies from 5 rows for the main external walls, to 3 or 2 bricks (0.70m) for the inner walls.

Fig. 8: The Western portico with the foundation slabs corresponding to the location of four column bases.

The size of the mud bricks is quite standard in Achaemenid architecture. Conversely, the use of rectangular baked bricks is rather unusual for this period. Although none were found in place, we assume that they belong to the architecture of the building, probably to the floors.

The column bases were of three types. First, there were bicolour (according to the fragments found) square plinths in the front portico (?). Their height is unknown; the side would have measured 0.65m according to the size of the block resting upon the foundations (fig. 8 on the left and fig. 9). In the rear portico two stepped plinths of grey limestone measuring 0.65 × 0.65 × 0.22m. With the torus they formed bases of 30.5cm high (fig. 10). A unique bell-shaped dark grey

Fig. 9: A squarish cube rested upon the foundation and supported the column base; the actual bases have not survived.

limestone base (height 0.31m, diam. 0.50m at the bottom, diam. of the torus 0.35m) is decorated with stylized leaves (fig. 11). It was found in the bulldozed layer at the beginning of our excavations. Despite the complete clearing of the building we are left without a satisfying hypothesis concerning the original location of this third type of base.

The floor level of the pavilion, in the porticoes and in the inner rooms, was at the level of the natural surface in the east, but higher elsewhere, reaching an elevation of 1.40m at the front of the western portico. Consequently, a staircase should have existed somewhere, most probably on the western side, but no remains were found.

There are no traces of wall decoration. To be noted is, however, the usual thin green clay plaster which often covered the walls of Achaemenid buildings. There was well-preserved plaster on the walls of the rear portico, on the bench and above it, as well as in the three inner rooms and on the floor of the east portico.

Fig. 10: The Eastern portico with two square plinths in situ.

Remains of the roof are indicated by a wooden beam found along the rear wall of the east portico. With a preserved length of 3.40m it almost corresponds to the distance between the two column bases or between the bases and the side walls. Since almost nothing has survived of the elevation above the floors, the access to and the circulation within the building are little understood. Concerning the doorway between the

front portico and the inner space behind it, we suggest a an off-axis location. In the rear facade, there is an entrance on the east for the NE corner room, while the SE corner room opens onto the portico (see fig. 5). A door is also preserved in the southern part of the rear wall. Inside the building, apart from the staircase and a way to the small corner room, the other walls were so poorly preserved that no passage could be found.

Fig. 11: A unique bell-shaped column base found in the refuse heap left by the bulldozer.

The squatter occupation – A second occupation period was discovered in several parts of the building; it is particularly important — or better preserved — in the southeast area. Some floors are below the Achaemenid floor level which was already washed away in the southern part, others lie directly on the Achaemenid floors. This occupation is marked by the installation of rough stones, re-use of baked bricks and many large pieces of big storage jars in fragments on the irregular surfaces.

The natural terrace and its features – Given the location and type of building, the environment deserved our attention. In view of the possibility that a garden was created on the natural terrace, soundings were carried out at several spots between the pavilion and the edge of the terrace overlooking the river.

Before the excavations began, a geomagnetic survey had been conducted on one half of the surface. The resulting map shows some weak anomalies, which seem to follow the orientation of the pavilion. The geomagnetic survey was not rewarding in the sense that various soundings at the location of geomagnetic anomalies produced no evidence. It can nevertheless not be excluded that some of the anomalies correspond to flimsy features not visible in the excavations.

On the surface of the terrace itself, remains of a NE-SW channel and a small perpendicular derivation (0.40 and 0.30m wide respectively) were cleared in the southern part. The existence of the main channel across the terrace is deduced from the micro-topography and from the concentration of stones on the surface. It is located in the middle of the terrace at a distance of about 40 m from the pavilion and parallel to the NW portico; it is made of unworked stones. Given the lack of distinctive material, this structure cannot be dated, but it is probably related to the canal system which runs along the left bank of the Pulvar river from the entrance of the gorge down to the exit where the modern dam is located (see below). The elevation of this main canal (as measured north and south of our site) would correspond to the small channel on the terrace.

The workshop – The area forming a gentle elevation in the NW corner of the terrace above the river presented a high concentration of sherds, with fragments of baked bricks and burnt fragments of clay. The excavations and soundings brought to light some features that are very probably connected with the pavilion.

Beneath the surface an occupation floor was found that consisted of hundreds of sherds and several fireplaces, a circular oven, and two small rectangular platforms made of large pieces of storage jars. No tool was found on this floor, which, nevertheless, appears to be that of a construction site.

The fill of a large pit 2m deep appears to correspond to the function of the structure: the pit contains a series of regular sloping layers of gravel. As a hypothesis, we suggest that this pit and probably a second one nearby were dug in a matrix of rather pure clay, which was used to make the mud bricks and/or the baked bricks of the pavilion. Later on, these pits were filled up with refuse material in order to re-establish the general flat surface of the terrace.

The material – Most of the pottery is a common ware, light in colour, varying from buff to orange and brown. It is rarely black-slipped. About 20% consists of storage jars which come mainly from the bulldozed layers above the building.

Among the distinctive shapes in the common ware, there are carinated bowls (fig. 12), and two bowls with horizontal handles which are the first evidence of a 'Median' shape in Fars. The shape of the numerous pilgrim flasks is very distinctive with a dissymmetrical body, one side almost

Fig. 12: A distinctive carinated bowl of fine orange pottery from the workshop.

flat, the other deeply convex. This is close to a type found at Pasargadae and at Persepolis.[2] There are also small jars with narrow necks as well as storage jars.

The small finds are few: two three-flanged socketed bronze arrowheads, a knife blade, a bracelet, some iron nails. Ivory and bone fragments belong to undetermined objects. Finally, 5 pairs of life-sized eyes are made of small coloured stones set into frit (fig. 13).

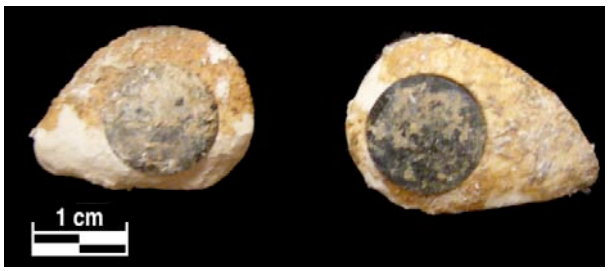

Fig. 13: A pair of eyes made of frit, about 2cm long, found in the pavilion.

2 Pasargadae: Stronach 1978: fig. 115.2. The other types are symmetrical. Both shapes have been found at Persepolis, see Schmidt 1957: pls. 72.12-13 and 73.2.

Reconstruction of the pavilion – Given the poor preservation of the building, the reconstruction is necessarily speculative. The external aspect of the pavilion differs from the buildings of Pasargadae, which appear widely open with porticoes on their four sides (Palace S, Pavilions A, B), or with two long porticoes and recesses on the short sides (Palace P).[3] We suggest that the access to the building was a short staircase, about 1 to 1.50m high, in the destroyed northern part of the front portico, since no traces have been found along the portico itself. The access to the rear portico would not have required a staircase, since it is situated at the level of the outside surface. It would, however have required a bridge for crossing the moat, which was certainly not covered.[4]

The internal layout of the pavilion is rather unusual for Achaemenid architecture: instead of a single hall, as in the buildings of Pasargadae, or one main room, as in many buildings of Persepolis, our pavilion is a multi-roomed structure. For the general plan, a two-porticoed and multi-roomed building, the only possible comparandum would be building A in the south complex of Persepolis (Tajvidi 1976: fig. 22). In our pavilion, the enigmatic long space behind the NW portico is 6 m wide; therefore it could not have been roofed without a

3 It should be noted that the position of the external row of columns in the two pavilions is fully reconstructed (Stronach 1978: fig. 50 and 52 to be compared to fig. 50 and pl. 91). However, this reconstruction is highly probable for technical reasons.

4 Neither complete or broken long slabs (more than 1.30m) nor traces of pillars have been found in the excavated part of the canal.

row of intermediate pillars or partition walls. Since no trace of a foundation has been found in the mud brick floor, as is the case for the bases of the two porticoes, we suggest that partition walls did exist, but have completely disappeared.

Concerning the height of the building, a calculation based upon the proportions of the diameter or side of the column bases, the proportions of the porticos from known examples in Pasargadae and Persepolis, and the thickness of the foundations leads us to reconstruct the columns and walls to a minimum height of 6m and probably more. Since there is not a single fragment of stone column drums, wooden pillars are a possibility, as in the majority of Achaemenid buildings.[5]

Chronology and function of the building – Since our pavilion is close to Pasargadae, it is tempting to date it to the main period of the construction and occupation of that residence, *viz* the reign of Cyrus or Darius.

Yet, for the period of Cyrus, there are no known examples of bell-shaped columns. At the same time, we have found no traces of toothed-chisel marks, indicators of a technique that appeared during Darius' time and that could support a date in the later Achaemenid period.

The slightly rectangular plan is not significant in terms of chronology. Pasargadae and Persepolis both have rec-

5 Stone columns are restricted to the most important constructions, namely the two palaces of Pasargadae, the Apadana, the Gate of Xerxes and the Hall of One Hundred Columns at Persepolis, and the Apadana and Darius Gate at Susa

tangular *and* square buildings, the major ones at Pasargadae being rectangular, the Apadana at Persepolis being square. Considering the inner plan, the only viable, general comparison is, as already mentioned, with Building A in Persepolis South, which cannot pre-date Darius I. Note that the latter structure has no toothed-chisel marks on the stone bases.

Dating of the ceramic material cannot be precise, because the Achaemenid pottery is still poorly defined. Moreover, the pottery recovered *in situ* comes mainly from the squatter occupation, probably soon after the abandonment of the building. Therefore, on the grounds of the architecture and the location of the pavilion, we tentatively attribute its construction to the reign of Darius, before the toothed-chisel tool was widely used.

Darius was active in Pasargadae, although it was no longer the first royal residence in Fars. He is assumed to have built the mud brick building on the Tall-i Takht and to have completed Palace P (use of toothed-chisel) and possibly Pavilion B. In Darius' time and later, Pasargadae remained of central importance for the Achaemenid dynasty, as well as an active city. The king himself or a high-ranked Persian could have been the builder of our pavilion. Located in a pleasant environment near the river, not far from Pasargadae, it may have been built as a retreat, and was probably more than a hunting pavilion, offering accommodation and rooms suitable for storing goods and objects. In this respect, the question of the numerous storage jars found in and around the pavilion remains open, since they were found in the squatter levels and in the refuse heap which resulted from the destruction.

3 Canals and roads: Achaemenid land use of Tang-i Bulaghi

Some of the rock-cut passageways which are visible in the narrowest part of the Tang-i Bulaghi were reported, but always briefly, by E. Herzfeld, by A. Stein, and with some comments and illustrations, by D. Stronach (1978: 166-167, pls. 141-144). More details were provided by W. Kleiss (1991) The joint Iranian-French mission at Pasargadae instigated mapping of these passageways in 2002 and the Iranian-French mission of Tang-i Bulaghi carried out several soundings on the so-called roads or walls in 2005, whereas the Iranian-Japanese team mapped both the rock-cut sections and the constructed roads/walls/canals and has recently published its observations (Tsuneki & Zeidi 2008: fig. 11.5-11.13).[6]

6 It is difficult to find a proper term for these structures, designated as 'canals' and/or 'roads' in the present publication, the two authors of which are not in full agreement regarding the function of the remains. Boucharlat estimates that both the rock-cut sections and the constructed ones belong to a single water system, one on either side of the Pulvar; excluded from this system are the walls which are not parallel to the general line of the valley. Atai agrees with the hypothesis of a canal for the rock-cut sections, but considers the constructed sections to be remains of walls on both sides of the river which defined a hunting park (see Atai 2007). Regarding this last point, both authors agree that the gorge and perhaps the entire Tang-i Bulaghi may have been a kind of 'paradise,' comprising a hunting park and/or gardens, orchards, etc.

Fig. 14: The longest section (250m) of the rock-cut canal on the right bank of the Pulvar river.

The alluvial terrace of the Tang-i Bulaghi is quite suitable for cultivation if irrigated. The water cannot be directly taken from the Pulvar since the riverbed is too deeply incised into the terrace (10 to 15m below its surface). It is tempting to see the sections of rock-cut passageways which run along both sides of the river as parts of a canal system intended to irrigate the natural terraces. As mentioned above, the 'canal' running along the left bank might have also provided water for our pavilion.

Both canals start at the very entrance of the gorge, exactly 2 km south of the Cyrus tomb.[7] The canal on the right bank is much more impressive than the one on the left bank, especially in its rock-cut sections. Its length is more than 10km and it disappears downstream in the vicinity of TB 63 (cf. ARTA 2009.003). The second canal on the left bank possesses shorter rock-cut sections and its constructed sections are often hardly visible. Measured at the two ends and in many places where the construction is preserved, the general gradient is about 1%, which is quite normal for a canal.

For the two 'canals,' the path dug into the rock is usually 1.20-1.50m wide, rarely wider and sometimes as small as 1m on the right side or even 0.70m on the left side. Such a width definitively demonstrates that they have nothing to do with a 'Royal Road,' as the right side canal has been frequently called. Although they are not very wide, these 'canals' represent a huge effort; in some parts the natural rock slope or the cliff has been cut down to 2-3m or more. The maximum recorded in a curve of a 250m-long sector reaches 10m in height (fig. 14). Despite this large investment, the rock-cut passageway on the right side was left unfinished, which is clear in several sections where the central part of the floor remains higher than the average (fig. 15).

7 The question of the method used for bringing water into the canals from the Pulvar river upstream remains unanswered. The results of the survey in the Pasargadae plain are in process. Possibly there existed a kind of aqueduct built on an embankment one or two meters above the surface.

Fig. 15: An unfinished section of the canal on the right bank.

The constructed parts — the 'road,' or 'wall,' or 'canal' — are also impressive (fig. 16). Except for some differences in the building techniques of the foundations or lower parts, the basic building techniques are: on a ground of natural earth, a clay embankment with sloping sides, 2.50m wide at the bottom, is built up to about 1m high. On this foundation two parallel rows of boulders are erected forming a double wall 2 to 2.20 m wide (fig. 17). Between the walls the fill consists of pebbles and earth. Where the ground is higher along the cliff or on the alluvial slope, the two parallel walls are directly set upon it (fig. 18). The height of the earth embankment varies in order to retain a constant elevation, while the layout of the canal/road was intended to follow the contour lines for the same reason. In these constructed sections, nothing is preserved of the upper part: nothing of the top of a wall or an U-

Fig. 16: A part of the "wall" (supporting a canal) built of stones onto the natural surface on the right bank.

shaped canal or a paved road has survived. Whatever its function was, this upper section was probably not very wide, in any case less than 2m.

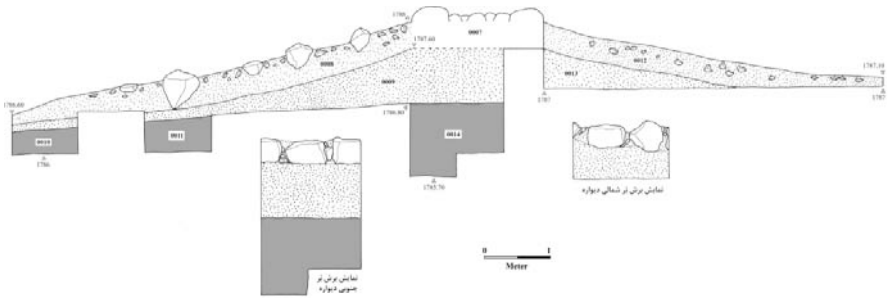

Fig. 17: Section on the "wall" (canal) built onto a very large clay foundation, on the left bank of the river.

Concerning the chronology of the canal or wall, the rock-cut sections of the right side present evidence of stonecutting techniques distinctive of the Achaemenid period. Moreover, on both sides, the constructed sections are connected with

Fig. 18: A long rectilinear part of the "wall" (canal) on the left bank. It is made of two stone alignments together 2.20m in width.

Fig. 19: One of the cairn burials set onto the built canal and reusing some boulders from its walls.

cairn burials which were built upon them, often re-using some stones and boulders from the original construction (fig. 19). Cairn burials are usually dated in Iran to the Parthian and also to the Sassanian period. One of these cairn burials excavated in Tang-i Bulaghi by the British expedition at Pasargadae yielded a pilgrim flask of the 2nd century BC, which fits with the date of many cairn burials in south-eastern Iran. Therefore, these cairn burials provide a terminus *ante quem* for the constructed sections which we assume are to be dated to the Achaemenid period.

Tsuneki and Zeidi (2008: 212-215) suggest that some of these works are water systems, others roads and yet others walls; they are followed in the last suggestion by Atai (2007).

When looking at the maps (see Tsuneki & Zeidi 2008: 11.35 for a general view) one wonders how a canal can turn into a road or a wall and vice versa. It is true, in some parts, that there are two lines of constructed works, but not frequently. Certainly, some constructions that are not parallel to the river are walls. All commentators including the authors of the present article agree that the very narrow rock-cut passages are canals. For the rest, it is matter of debate. If they are canals, it may be thought that such huge works as water systems for irrigating a few hundred hectares in a small valley are hardly worthwhile, because there are several large plains and valleys nearby, including Pasargadae, which are more suitable for agriculture. In our opinion, the canals were not only used for irrigating crops but also for gardens, as we have suggested for the terrace on which our pavilion stands. The hypothesis of roads is not convincing, because the width is never more than 2m and often less. Finally, the hypothesis of walls for some structures cannot be ruled out.

The pavilion, TB 34, is to be added to the list of Achaemenid buildings that have recently been found in Tang-i Bulaghi. As the map of the area shows (see Fazeli's introduction to the Tang-i Bulaghi project, *ARTA* 2009.001, fig.1), the pavilion is the first Achaemenid building encountered when travelling from Pasargadae. Then, 5km downstream, where the valley is much broader, other constructions of that period appear, including the building at TB 64 (see the report by Asadi & Kaim = *ARTA* 2009.003), which is probably related to agricultural activities, having no characteristic of an elite building. Then there is TB 73, with a

building which was apparently collective or economic in function (see Helwing & Seyedin in ARTA 2009.006). Farther west lies the enigmatic TB 85, which provides evidence for the presence of a columned building somewhere in the plain. Finally, on the left side of the valley, closer to the modern dam, there is the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid village excavated by the Iranian-Italian team (Askari, Chaverdi & Callieri in ARTA 2009.004).

The hundreds of hectares of arable land in Tang-i Bulaghi may have comprised one or several estates on which the owner — whoever he was, the king or a nobleman — built a house, a mansion or pavilion with a garden in a pleasant place, while the farms, domestic buildings and village(s) were located downstream. This favoured area was probably crossed by a road, but there is very little evidence that it was a constructed road. As for a wall enclosing the valley (Atai 2007), precise mapping and a description of each section of the existing structures is necessary.

The above picture remains hypothetical, as the archaeological evidence is minimal and because it cannot as yet be directly connected with written evidence such as the Persepolis Fortification tablets. However, the discoveries made in Tang-i Bulaghi may tentatively be related to some tablets mentioning Batrakataš/Pasargadae and associated toponyms. For now, any more definitive reconstruction should await publication of the data from all the joint expeditions in Tang-i Bulaghi. The results of this rescue excavation project may serve in the future to reconstruct everyday life in an area

situated between two royal residences and cities in the heartland of the Achaemenid empire.

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