



Tang-i Bulaghi Reports: Preface

Edited by Rémy Bouchariat & Hasan Fazeli Nashli

Hasan Fazeli Nashli

Director of the Iranian Center for
Archaeological Research, Tehran

**The Achaemenid/Post Achaemenid
Remains in Tang-i Bulaghi near
Pasargadae: A Report on the Salvage
excavations conducted by five joint
teams in 2004-2007**

In memoriam Dr. Massoud Azarnoush,
former director of the
Iranian Center for Archaeological Research

For several years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been engaged in a huge program for providing the country with both large and medium-sized dams in all the provinces, mainly for agricultural purposes. Archaeologists are very much concerned with this building program, since as much archaeological information as possible must be gathered before an area is flooded. For this reason, the Iranian Center



for Archaeological Research (ICAR), the archaeological branch of Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO) has regularly sent teams of archaeologists from the Tehran centre and from the regional ICHHTO offices to conduct surveys and salvage excavations in the endangered valleys. They have carried out this work for several

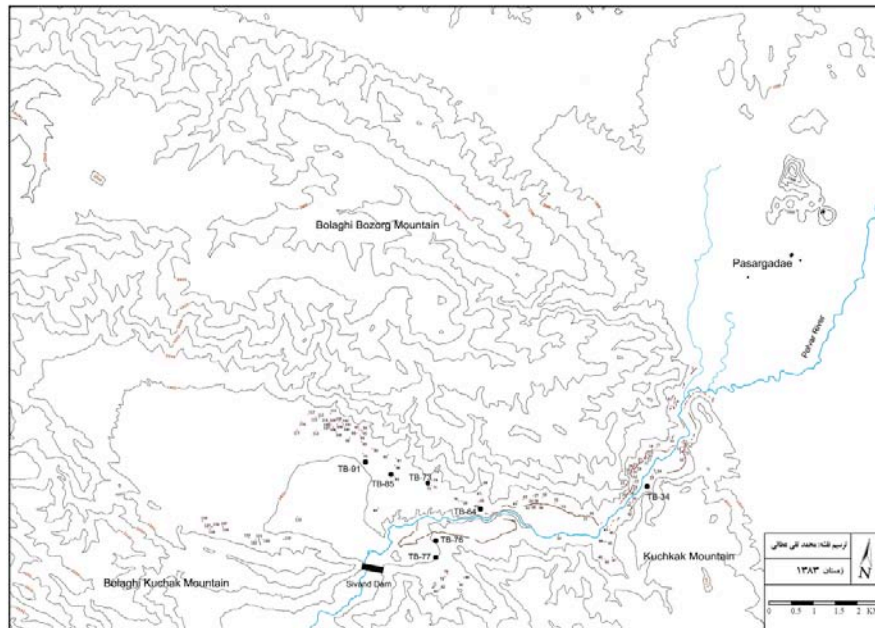


Fig. 1: Map of Tang-i Bulaghi showing the Achaemenid/post-Achaemenid sites and buildings mentioned in this series of articles

years or at least many months before the completion of the dams under construction, when the reservoirs began to fill.

The Sivand Dam Archaeological Salvage Project was one of these operations. It concerned the so-called Tang-i Bulaghi (TB) gorge and valley, located 2 km south of the Tomb of Cyrus at in Pasargadae. The area concerned covers some 17 km from the entrance of the gorge down to the modern dam



which overlooks the Sa'datshahr plain, from which a road joins the Marvdasht plain where Persepolis is located.

In this specific case, ICAR decided to request international cooperation. This first experimental initiative has been very successful. The call was launched in 2004 by the late Dr. Massoud Azarnoush, former director of ICAR; the same year a general survey was made throughout the valley. Some 130 points were recorded, each being the location of artefacts, from a modest handful of sherds or parts of walls to larger archaeological sites.



Fig. 2: The upper part of Tang-i Bulaghi along the Pulvar river.

Five countries responded to the call – France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Poland. Then six joint teams were formed (the Iranian-German mission provided two teams), each num-



bering from 8 to more than 15 people, having an Iranian and a non-Iranian co-director, and including archaeologists and other specialists from both countries. The teams conducted two seasons, sometimes three, between autumn 2004 and winter 2007, each season lasting from 3 to more than 6 weeks.



Fig. 3: The plain of Darreh Bulaghi as it was in 2005-07 before the completion of the dam. The fields were productive thanks to mechanical irrigation. The piedmont and the slopes of the mountains were covered with bushes and terebinth trees

Because this was a special operation to be completed at short notice, ICAR provided important support to all the joint missions, with the efficient help of the *Persepolis-Pasargadae Research Foundation* (PPRF), which has a permanent office at Pasargadae. Every team was provided with full accommodation, transportation to the sites, labour force, equipment for the excavations, and so forth. For the analyses to be



carried out in laboratories, the two co-directors decided whether processing was to be carried out in Iran or abroad; the expenses were shared between the two countries involved in each operation.

On the request of ICAR all teams made annual reports on their fieldwork. Also, ICAR organized three gatherings, one in Shiraz and two in Tehran, to share the results with Iranian senior and junior archaeologists, as well as concerned Iranian authorities and media. For these occasions, a booklet was published by ICAR. After completing their fieldwork, the joint teams were requested to deliver their final reports. We are satisfied to have this year one final report already published by ICAR and the University of Tsukuba in Japan (261 pp. in English with a summary in Persian), two others in press, and the rest to be published soon.

This experience, the first one implemented in Iran so far at this scale, was positive in many respects. It provided a very interesting opportunity to create teams which mixed Iranian archaeologists, especially young ones, with senior and junior specialists from foreign countries who have expressed their interest in Iranian history and heritage. Everyone has enjoyed this valuable human and scientific experience. This is important for the future, creating a new generation of Iranian and foreign specialists who know each other and will be eager to cooperate in Iran and elsewhere.

The other very important aspect, which should not be underestimated, is the enormous scholarly advances the results have brought to us. Considering the limited area under study and the volume of results, this project cannot be



compared to programs carried out in other regions or micro-regions in Iran. A dozen archaeological sites have been examined by trial trench or have been extensively excavated, sites dating from Prehistory to the 17th century AD. The results are particularly valuable for the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic periods, the so-called Bakun period (5th-4th mill. BC), the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid periods, the Sasanian-Early Islamic period and finally the Safavid period. Such a concentration is without equivalent in Iran, including the best known regions such as the Persepolis area and the Susiana. The results include not only the data collected by the various joint missions, but also their publications. ICAR has encouraged each team to produce its final reports quickly and aims at the widest accessibility by publishing these as English volumes, with summaries in Persian. Such is now the policy of ICAR for any archaeological research carried out in Iran, in the knowledge that archaeological excavations are of little value unless they are published and accessible. We hope that this experience at Tang-i Bulaghi will be only a first step in the pursuit of archaeological research, and will encourage the collaboration of any persons or institutions interested in taking part in the advancement of our knowledge of Iran's past. We conclude by thanking the national and international teams who worked in sometimes difficult conditions (during a hot summer and a cold winter) in the Sivand salvage excavation.

Hasan Fazeli Nashli
hfazelin@ut.ac.ir