

Kuh-e Khwaja, Iran, and Its Wall Paintings: The Records of Ernst Herzfeld

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THE BLACK BASALT MOUNT of Kuh-e Khwaja, rising out of the marshes of Lake Hamun, is one of the most striking landmarks of the province of Sistan in eastern Iran, a vivid exception in the desolate panorama of the Helmand Basin. The eastern slope of the dark outcropping is marked in its upper reaches by a large pale area, the weathered remains of Ghaga-shahr, a complex structure consisting of a maze of courts and rooms built of mud brick (Figure 1). The dramatic setting may be in part responsible for the construction of this enigmatic complex, which has been associated with Caspar (Gondophares), one of the Three Wise Men.¹ The numerous Moslem tombs on top of the rocky ridge testify to the continued sanctity of the place, which was still the objective of *Now Ruz* (New Year's) pilgrims into the twentieth century.²

Kuh-e Khwaja was visited by many travelers in the

nineteenth century,³ but the first thorough examination of the site, by the Hungarian-born British archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein, did not occur until December 1915. Stein mapped the large complex, photographed the painted decorations that remained in some rooms, and removed many of these paintings. He was then working for the Archaeological Survey of India and the wall paintings were sent to the National Museum in New Delhi, where they remain. Stein first published his discoveries in 1916, but full documentation had to wait until 1928, with the publication of his work *Innermost Asia*.⁴

The second archaeologist to inspect Kuh-e Khwaja was the eminent German scholar Ernst Emil Herzfeld (1879–1948), who first came in February 1925, and returned with a small crew in 1929 to spend February and March measuring and mapping the rooms and removing the wall paintings he found. These

A list of frequently cited sources appears at the end of this article.

1. Ernst Herzfeld, "Sakastan," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 4 (1931–32) pp. 115–116; and Herzfeld 1935, pp. 61–66. For a summary of the history of Christianity in Sistan see C. E. Bosworth, "Sistan Under the Arabs: From the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Saffarids (30–250/651–864)," *IsMEO Reports and Memoirs* 11 (1968) pp. 6–10.

2. Herzfeld 1935, pp. 59–60; Herzfeld 1941, p. 291; Stein, II, pp. 922–923; and George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London, 1892; repr. London, 1966) I, p. 226. Illustrations of the festive pilgrims are found in the Herzfeld Archive, Photo File 29, nos. 49–51.

3. Faccenna, pp. 83, 84, n. 1. For the geology of the site see Walter A. Fairservis, Jr., "Archaeological Studies in the Sistan Basin of South-West Afghanistan and Eastern Iran," *Anthropo-*

logical Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 48, pt. 1 (1961) pp. 14–21 and esp. fig. 3, where the distinctive igneous character of the Kuh-e Khwaja outcropping is noted; and Klaus Fischer, "Field Surveys in Afghan Sistan, 1969–1974," in "Prehistoric Sistan I," *IsMEO Reports and Memoirs* 19 (1983) pp. 31, 41, figs. 45, 46. For recent archaeological surveys of the entire Helmand Basin see Fischer, "Field Surveys," pp. 3–4; and Klaus Fischer, "Types of Architectural Remains in the Northern Parts of Afghan Seistan," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 2 (1971) pp. 40–72.

4. Stein, II, pp. 909–925; III, pl. 54. For an account of Stein's life see Jeannette Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein* (Chicago, 1977), esp. pp. 390–391 for Kuh-e Khwaja. A few years after Stein's *Innermost Asia* was published, his friend and colleague Fred H. Andrews provided a fuller description of the paintings in *Catalogue of Wall Paintings from Ancient Shrines in Central Asia and Seistan* (Delhi, 1933) pp. 57–59.



1. View of Kuh-e Khwaja, looking south over the ruins of Ghaga-Shahr, photograph taken by Herzfeld in spring, 1929; in the foreground to the left, the North Gate (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 4057)

paintings were taken to Berlin for conservation.⁵ Their subsequent history is unknown and they are assumed to be lost. Only the two small fragments that remain in Herzfeld's possession survived. These were subsequently acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Though Herzfeld published a historical study of Kuh-e Khwaja in 1932,⁶ his actual description of the site did not appear until 1941 in *Iran in the Ancient East*, in which some of the paintings, including the two fragments in the Metropolitan Museum, were illustrated for the first time.⁷

It has been assumed that Herzfeld published all his information about Kuh-e Khwaja, but this is not the case. The Herzfeld Archive in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., contains not only Herzfeld's 1925 notebook and sketchbook and his 1929 sketchbook, but also a large

number of unpublished photographs and forty-one Uvachrome color lantern slides taken at Kuh-e Khwaja in 1929.⁸ Comparison of these photographs with the illustrations published by Herzfeld demonstrates that the published pictures had been retouched. The photographs and sketches in the archive are a rich source of new information about the site, and are particularly valuable in view of the thirty-two years that elapsed before the site was visited again, by an Italian expedition, in 1961.⁹ By then

5. In a letter to Herzfeld dated Nov. 6, 1929, Stein mentions having seen the paintings in Berlin in September (Bodleian, fol. 176r).

6. Herzfeld, "Sakastan."

7. Herzfeld 1941, pp. 291–297, 301, pls. xcvi, civ. MMA acc. nos. 45.99.1, 45.99.2.

8. Herzfeld bequeathed most of his papers to the Freer Gallery. On the Herzfeld Archive in the Metropolitan Museum, acquired on Herzfeld's retirement in 1944, see Margaret Cool Root, "The Herzfeld Archive of The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *MMJ* 11 (1976) pp. 119–124.

9. The work of this Italian expedition was published by Gulini. (See the list of frequently cited sources.)

even more details had been lost to the weather. The chance discovery by an Italian restoration team of a new painting fragment, during the winter of 1975–76,¹⁰ has made Herzfeld's records central to any attempt to understand Kuh-e Khwaja and its place in the history of Iranian art and architecture.

The date of the Ghaga-shahr ruins has never been clear and no two excavators have produced quite the same chronology. Stein speculated that the site was Parthian,¹¹ but did not commit himself in print. He merely called attention to Greek, Sasanian, and Central Asian Buddhist parallels.¹² Like those of Stein, Herzfeld's first impressions regarding the date of the ruins differed from his later published statements. In a notebook and a letter recording his 1925 visit, he clearly describes the building phases—an earlier phase containing paintings and sculpture, and a later, simpler phase without paintings. He placed the first in the Sasanian period and the second in the early Islamic.¹³ Herzfeld's 1929 sketchbook implies the same dating. But almost immediately Herzfeld changed his mind, influenced by the Hellenic characteristics he noted in buildings of the first phase and by his identification of Kuh-e Khwaja as the site of Zoroaster's preaching.¹⁴ Thereafter he considered the initial phase, including the paintings and the stucco sculpture, a Parthian development of the first century, and the later phase a Sasanian alteration of the third century.¹⁵ In 1932, three years after his last visit to the site, he attributed the first phase to the reign of Gundofarr-Rustam, a regional ruler he dated between A.D. 20 and 65 and identified with Gondophares of Christian legend.¹⁶

The Italian investigation of 1961, led by Giorgio Gullini, uncovered a sequence of six levels, ranging from Achaemenid to Islamic date, based on a series of trenches sunk in the south side of the main courtyard.¹⁷ These levels not only paralleled the two phases noted by Herzfeld (Herzfeld's first-century phase the equivalent of Gullini's level IV, and Herzfeld's third-century phase Gullini's level III), but refined the chronology. Gullini noted a second Sasanian phase, level II, dated to the sixth century A.D., and uncovered evidence of earlier structures having a different orientation (level VI, Achaemenid; level V, early Parthian, mid-second century B.C.). Gullini also described the most recent or top layer, level I, as Islamic with evidence of occupation as late as the fifteenth century.

Despite these examinations, the date of any particular segment of Kuh-e Khwaja is difficult to determine. The site was very "clean." Only potsherds have been found, and our present ignorance of the eastern Iranian ceramic sequence makes the fine red ribbed fragments difficult to analyze.¹⁸ The absence of other datable material compounds the problem and makes the actual, rather than theoretical, correlation of the various excavators' phases extremely uncertain. This study will provide new evidence concerning the architecture and its paintings, including detailed documentation of the Ghaga-shahr remains in 1929, and will underline the importance of this unique site to the history of art in the Near East.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The main ruins of Kuh-e Khwaja, called Ghaga-shahr as distinct from the other remains on the mount, are approached by a narrow path that zigzags through the ruins of the lower slope¹⁹ to reach the

10. Faccenna, pp. 85–87.

11. Mirsky, *Stein*, p. 391.

12. Stein, II, pp. 924–925. Stein modified a 1916 suggestion that the site had been a Buddhist monastery in response to objections expressed by Herzfeld in a letter (Bodleian, fol. 144r).

13. N-85, pp. 12a, 15; Bodleian, fol. 147.

14. Bodleian, fols. 161, 163v.

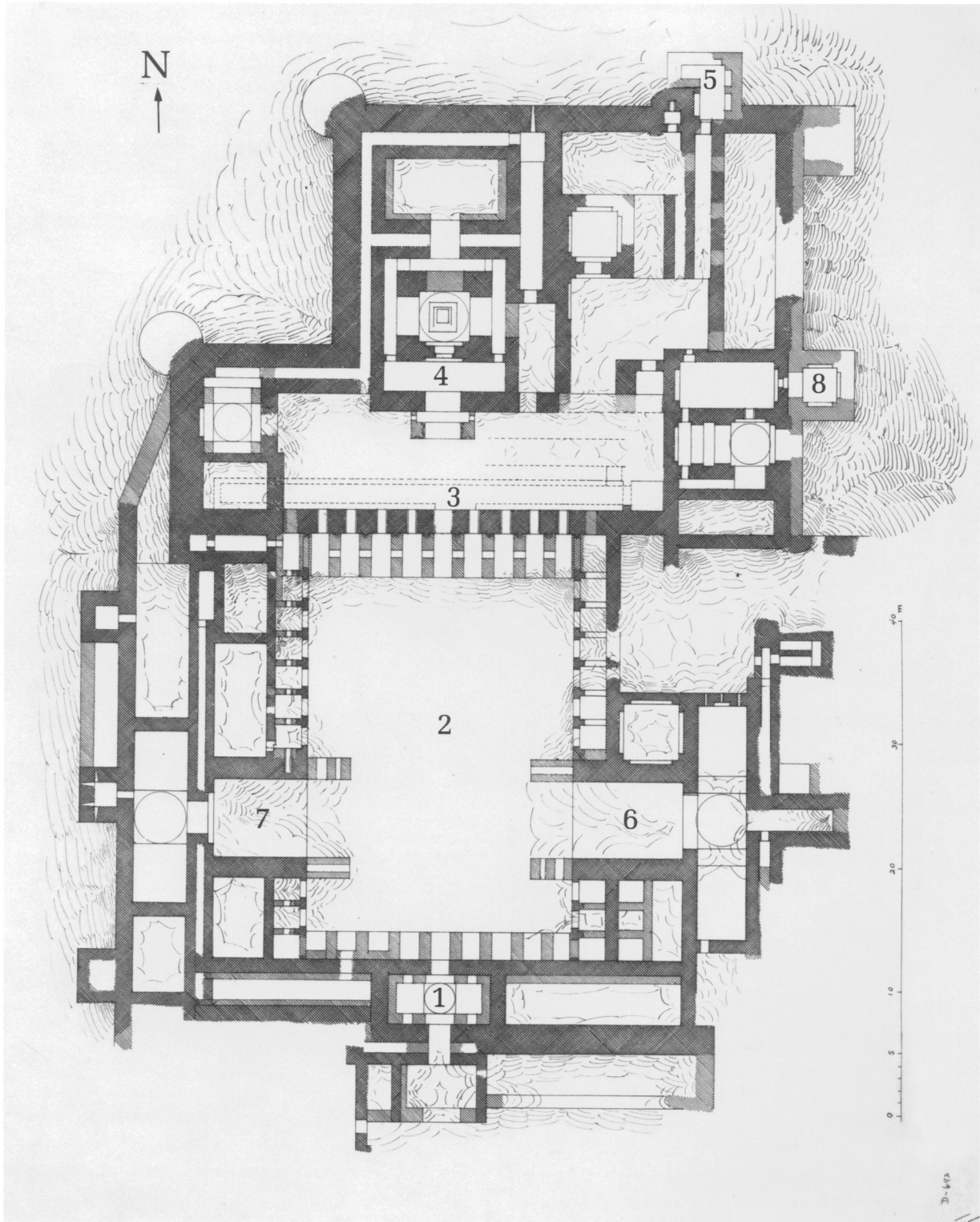
15. Herzfeld 1935, pp. 67, 74; and Herzfeld 1941, pp. 292–293.

16. Herzfeld, "Sakastan," pp. 115–116. For the dates of Gondophares see A. D. H. Bivar, "The History of Eastern Iran," in E. Yarshater, ed., *Cambridge History of Iran: III. The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge, 1983) p. 197. For the documents and legends of early Christianity in eastern Iran see also Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India* (Cambridge, 1984).

17. Gullini, p. 354, figs. 53–56. For a detailed review of Gullini see G. Tucci, *East and West* 16 (1966) pp. 143–147; I am indebted to Mas'oud Azarnoush for this citation. For a summary of the excavation see Faccenna, pp. 91–92. Regarding the supposed Achaemenid level see Rémy Boucharlat, "Monuments religieux de la perse achéménide: Etat des questions," in *Temples et Sanctuaires*, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient VII (Paris, 1984) pp. 129–130.

18. E. Haerinck, *La Céramique en Iran pendant la période parthe* (Ghent, 1983) pp. 221–223. The pottery that Herzfeld collected was sent back to Tehran, but its location is no longer known. Herzfeld's drawings of the ceramics are found in Sk. XV, pp. 39–43, 46; neg. nos. 1102, 1106, 1111–1116, 423. Other examples are shown in Gullini, pp. 223–250, figs. 168–175.

19. Neg. nos. 2066, 2069, 2070.



2. Herzfeld's plan of Ghaga-Shahr, Kuh-e Khwaja: 1. South Gate; 2. Central Court; 3. Painted Gallery; 4. Temple; 5. North Gate and Tower; 6. East *Iwan*; 7. West *Iwan*; 8. Tower A (photo: Herzfeld Archive)

east side of an almost triangular terrace.²⁰ Supported at least in part by vaults, this terrace once bore an arcade along its edge, but the eroding mud brick²¹ made details of plan (Figure 2) and elevation difficult to determine. Near the northwest corner of the terrace, a sequence of two high-vaulted rooms, called by Herzfeld the South Gate, formed a passageway between the terrace and the open court, one of the major features of the complex. The first room was in a state of partial collapse, with only a thin arch remaining over its entrance.²² Nonetheless, remnants of crenellations could be seen along the parapet at the top of this arch, and a thin rectangular opening remained high on the east side of the gate. The exterior of the South Gate was also notable because the bricks had deteriorated at a more rapid rate than the mortar, leaving the horizontal lines of the courses in relief against the eroded brick. In an early phase, one door jamb of this entrance bore a decorative stucco panel with bands of geometric patterns.²³

The second room of the South Gate, rectangular in plan, retained more of its vaults. The central square was covered with a dome on hooded squinches and was lighted by four arched windows.²⁴ The remaining space at each side was covered with a tripartite vault constructed in the pitched technique.²⁵ The upper story of each side was enhanced by a continuous series of round niches framed by thick, applied colonnettes²⁶ that supported a simple molding around the arch of each niche. A string-course ran above the niches at some distance.²⁷ Weathering subsequent to Herzfeld's visits has revealed that this ornament was added later, and in fact covered wall paintings in the upper story.²⁸

While the ground plans of the two rooms of the South Gate show them to be rectangular, the domes and vaults delineated spatial squares within the rooms, and, at least in the structure's later phase, the colonnettes and niches in the upper story reinforced the verticality of the spaces. The viewer, then, moved from the open, "external" space of the terrace, through the tall constricted entrance rooms, to the open, "internal" space of the courtyard.

This courtyard, originally some thirty meters long and twenty wide, was edged on all sides with small chambers, presumably vaulted, that had been worn down to stubby mounds of disintegrated mud brick. No clear evidence remained to indicate the exact height of these rooms, or their exterior ornament, if

any.²⁹ These rooms were interrupted on the east and west sides of the court by two huge *eivans* (rectangular vaulted rooms left open on one of their shorter sides, in this case the side of the court), whose main supporting walls jutted into the court. When the vaults, built by the pitched-brick method, were intact, these *eivans* would have been the dominant feature of the courtyard.³⁰ Their placement, slightly off center to the south, and their projection into the courtyard suggest that they were an addition to the original plan; Gullini's findings support this interpretation.³¹ The construction of the *eivans* altered the symmetry of the court and diverted the viewer's eye from the logical focal point, the north wall of the courtyard with its terrace, stairs, and domed buildings. The north wall, some seven meters high, was the primary view as the observer moved through the South Gate into the courtyard.³²

The north face of the courtyard, like the east and west sides, had been changed from its original appearance. At first it was a mud-brick wall articulated with applied "Doric" columns having bases and capitals of baked brick.³³ These columns supported a simple architrave with a narrow scroll or volute pattern in white plaster,³⁴ fragments of which remained above the two center columns on the eastern half of the wall in 1929.³⁵ Each intercolumniation was pierced by a window with an elliptical, offset arch

20. Gullini, figs. 44–50, 265.

21. According to Stein, the size of the bricks at Kuh-e Khwaja varied from 22 × 15 × 5 in. to 17 × 12 × 4 in. (Stein, II, p. 910).

22. Neg. nos. 2072, 3988, 3989, 3993. Gullini, fig. 99, shows further weathering. The arch collapsed in the winter of 1974–75; see Faccenna, p. 85, n. 2.

23. Sk. XV, p. 5; neg. nos. 3973, 3974. Kröger, pp. 226–227, fig. 135 (a reconstruction sketch), pl. 103; and Herzfeld 1941, pl. xcix.

24. Neg. nos. 2076, 2085.

25. Neg. nos. 2076, 2077.

26. Sks. XIII, p. 10; XV, p. 36; neg. no. 2078.

27. Neg. no. 2075.

28. Faccenna, p. 84, fig. 11.

29. Neg. nos. 2085 (south side), 8345. For a different interpretation see Faccenna, p. 91. Stein's plan, Stein, III, pl. 54, is also unclear as to the extent of the surrounding chambers.

30. Neg. no. 3992.

31. Gullini, pp. 187–193.

32. Neg. nos. 2080, 3969.

33. Neg. no. 1158.

34. Sk. XV, pp. 5a, 24.

35. Neg. nos. 1172, 4002.



3. North facade of the Central Court, with remains of a stucco figure on the east side of the doorway (left) and a painting (right); Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 1173)

only half as high as the columns. The wall above the windows was slightly recessed. An opening or door in the center of the wall was reached by a staircase that Herzfeld described as having separate flights to the east and west.³⁶ Unfortunately no trace of this stair can be seen in the Herzfeld Archive photographs, and all that remains as documentation is Herzfeld's sketches.³⁷

On each side of the door was a life-size stucco figure modeled in very high relief.³⁸ Only drapery fragments of the westernmost figure survived, but the opposing image was better preserved, retaining por-

tions of the left shoulder, arm, torso, and leg, as well as a mass of curly hair and several ribbons (Figure 3). The plastic modeling of the figure, the thin clinging clothing with its rippling edges, the vigorously modeled curls, and the animated flutter of the ribbons are all characteristics of Sasanian rather than Parthian style.³⁹ Since the ornamental straps crossing the torso are a royal Sasanian device, the figure may be identified as a Sasanian king. The chronological implications of this identification are crucial to the dating of the Painted Gallery and will be discussed later.

Directly to the east of the column against which this figure stood was a section of flat, plastered wall with a painting of rippling ribbons and a circle or ring.⁴⁰ This painting was noticed by Stein,⁴¹ though other visitors have not mentioned it.

At some later time, the entire north wall was covered with a double arcade some five meters deep. The vaulted chambers formed by this addition were connected by small doorways in each pier. The new facade was decorated—at least on the portion that still remained in the northwest corner of the courtyard—with vertical moldings and a horizontal course of thick, doughnutlike forms that marked the division between the stories.⁴² This frieze was still visible in 1961.⁴³ The arched windows of the earlier phase were sealed and the stairs were modified into a single straight flight.⁴⁴ Whatever the aesthetic reason for this major change, there may have been a structural one as well. The north side of the court supported a terrace that was itself partially hollow. A vaulted gallery rather like a Roman *cryptoporticus* ran the length of the north side.⁴⁵ Lit by the windows of the first phase and ornamented with extensive wall paintings, the narrow Painted Gallery, about two and one-half meters wide and three high (see Figure 9), was

36. Sk. XV, p. 26.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

38. Herzfeld 1941, p. 292, pl. xcvi bottom; and Kröger, pl. 104.

39. For related stucco pieces see M. Azarnoush, "Excavations at Hajiabad, 1977: First Preliminary Report," *Iranica Antiqua* 18 (1983) pp. 171–175, pls. I, III.

40. Neg. no. 1173.

41. Stein, II, p. 913.

42. Sk. XV, p. 5; neg. nos. 966, 2082.

43. Gullini, p. 389, fig. 219.

44. Sk. XV, p. 44. See also Stein, p. 912.

45. Neg. nos. 3970, 3991.

at some point reinforced internally with mud-brick walls whose bricks were narrower and thinner than usual.⁴⁶ These secondary walls covered not only the paintings but also the simple two-step molding that marked the springing point of the vault.⁴⁷

On the terrace, Herzfeld recorded another set of buildings whose state of extreme disintegration obscured their plans. The best-preserved structure, its main entrance directly in line with the stairs and the South Gate, featured a square central room once covered with a dome. Both the domed room and the chamber behind it were encircled by a corridor or ambulatory that also connected with a small domed structure on the western edge of the terrace and, through a series of doors and small rooms, with the east side of the terrace. Herzfeld and most subsequent writers have considered the set of rooms in line with the South Gate to be a fire temple.⁴⁸ This domed Temple with its reliefs, elevated above the north wall of the courtyard, was the ultimate goal of any progress through the complex from the outer terrace.

The entry to the Temple was framed by a pair of buttresses decorated with shallow semicircular niches. Each niche had a simple three-step profile modeled into the surface coat of clay.⁴⁹ The western wall of the Temple facade bore blurred remnants of a stucco relief showing a horseman meeting the attack of a rearing feline.⁵⁰ The horseman faced away from the entrance to the Temple. The motif of a horseman facing an attacking lion was popular in Iran and neighboring regions during the first millennium B.C. The scene appears on such disparate objects as the chalcedony cylinder seal of the Elamite Ayanakka (seventh century B.C.),⁵¹ the Oxus scabbard (sixth century B.C.),⁵² and an amphora now in the Archaeological Museum, Ankara (fourth century B.C.).⁵³ Later painted versions are known from tombs at Marissa near Jerusalem (first century B.C.)⁵⁴ and at Kertsch (ancient Pantikapaeon, first century A.D.) on the north coast of the Black Sea.⁵⁵ Seal impressions from the Arsacid capital at Nisa⁵⁶ and rock reliefs in Xuzestan⁵⁷ show that the scene continued to be popular during the second and third centuries A.D.

An adjoining wall farther west had an equally worn relief of three horsemen facing in the same direction as the equestrian hunter. One wonders if these three figures are responsible for the association of the site with the Magi. Equestrian processions,

however, are known in Iranian art as early as the seventh century B.C., to judge from a carved ivory plaque said to have been found at Ziwiye.⁵⁸ While stately processions are a major feature of the Achaemenid reliefs at Persepolis, no mounted figures appear there. A procession of female riders does occur on an Achaemenid relief from Eregli in Anatolia,⁵⁹ male figures in line ride around the edge of a knotted carpet from the tombs at Pazyryk,⁶⁰ and it is likely that other Achaemenid examples once existed. Curiously, no Parthian processions are known, though a Sasanian parallel has been excavated at Bishapur.⁶¹ Thus, both of the equestrian reliefs are traditional in their content; the weathering-away of details has removed other possible indications of date.

The east facade of the Temple was totally worn down, but presumably also had reliefs.

46. Neg. no. 2100. The bricks averaged $24 \times 13 \times 3$ in.; see Stein, II, p. 919.

47. Sk. XV, p. 5.

48. Herzfeld 1941, p. 301; Klaus Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer* (Berlin, 1971) pp. 62–63, 399–402; and Mary Boyce, "On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975) pp. 461–462.

49. Sk. XV, p. 13; neg. nos. 1172, 1173, 2090.

50. Sk. XV, p. 29. Herzfeld 1941, pl. xcvi middle; and Kröger, p. 7, figs. 1, 2.

51. British Museum 89009. D. J. Wiseman, *Cylinder Seals of Western Asia* (London, 1959) no. 107. For a slightly earlier version see M. Noveck, *The Mark of Ancient Man* (New York, 1976) p. 63, no. 47; and Pierre Amiet, *Elam* (Auvers-sur-Oise, 1966) p. 569.

52. O. M. Dalton, *The Oxus Treasure* (London, 1926) pp. 9–11, pl. ix. For other Achaemenid examples see A. Farkas, "Horse and Rider in Achaemenid Art," *Persica* 4 (1969) pp. 65–74.

53. Ark. Muz. 26067. M. Mellinck et al., *Art Treasures of Turkey* (Washington, D.C., 1966) no. 143.

54. J. P. Peters and H. Thiersch, *The Painted Tombs of Marissa* (London, 1905) pp. 23–24, pl. iv.

55. M. I. Rostovtzeff, "Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art," *Yale Classical Studies* 5 (1935) fig. 66:1,2.

56. M. E. Masson and G. A. Pugachenkova, "Ottiski parfianskikh pechatei is Nisi" [Impressions of Parthian Seals from Nisa], *Vestnik Drevneye Istorii* [Bulletin of Ancient History] 4 (1954) p. 167, nos. 2–6, 8.

57. Kawami, pp. 95–96, 104–105.

58. A. Godard, *Le Trésor de Ziwiye* (Haarlem, 1950) p. 102, fig. 87.

59. Roman Ghirshman, *The Arts of Ancient Iran* (New York, 1964) p. 348, fig. 441.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 360, fig. 466.

61. Ghirshman 1971, pl. xxxv:1–3.

The special setting of Kuh-e Khwaja, the marshes and the mountain, makes comparison with other sites difficult. Because the architecture of Ghaga-shahr is a specific response to a unique location, parallels with other structures will be sought on a somewhat wider scale than might be expected. The typical is easy to understand; the unique, by its very existence, poses problems.

No Near Eastern site has a generally comparable situation, and none such a subtly modulated approach. The Athenian Acropolis is one of the other rare sanctuaries in which the main focus of the approach, the Parthenon, is visible at a distance, disappears as one climbs upward, and then suddenly reappears as the viewer passes through a clearly defined gate.⁶² The complex at Ghaga-shahr is further distinguished by the fact that, once inside the court, the viewer continues to ascend, from the court to the terrace and from the terrace to the Temple. This rhythmic progression, alternately forward and upward, from open spaces to enclosed transitional zones, stands in contrast to the simple, direct approach more common in Near Eastern religious architecture.

The Parthian period in Iran (ca. 250 B.C.–A.D. 224) provides little for comparison because, for the most part, only single buildings or parts of buildings are known at various sites.⁶³ The Parthian capital of Nisa, in what is now Soviet Turkmenistan, preserves no evidence that its monumental structures followed a carefully organized arrangement.⁶⁴ The terrace shrine, an Iranian development of the Achaemenid period, is clearly an antecedent of the Ghaga-shahr plan, but neither the late Achaemenid example at Pasargadae (fourth century B.C.)⁶⁵ nor the later Parthian versions at Masjid-e Sulaiman and Bard-e Neshandeh⁶⁶ have the dramatic setting and spatial sophistication of the ruins at Kuh-e Khwaja.

Farther to the east, the Kushan shrine at Surkh Kotal in northern Afghanistan (first–second century) has a hillside setting, though it lacks the rocky peak and surrounding marshes.⁶⁷ Its approach is along a single axis up the terraces, without any counterpoint of open and closed spaces to modify the steady upward progression. The Sasanian period in Iran (224–647), likewise, has few comparable sites. Only the sanctuary of Takht-e Sulaiman in northwestern Iran has a striking mountaintop setting in any way comparable to Kuh-e Khwaja. But, unlike Kuh-e Khwaja, the site itself is level and the buildings of Takht-e Su-

laiman focus on a seemingly bottomless lake that dominates the complex enclosing it.⁶⁸ Here the goal of the pious pilgrim was not a temple or altar, but a natural phenomenon.

The three basic elements of the first phase at Ghaga-shahr—an entrance suite, a central court bordered by small rooms, and a raised terrace containing a vaulted gallery, all arranged along a single axis—find few Iranian parallels. Only two such parallels present themselves: the central court at early Sasanian Firuzabad,⁶⁹ which is about the same size as that of Ghaga-shahr, and the late Sasanian ruins at Qasr-e Shirin near the Iraqi border.⁷⁰ Neither site, however, corresponds closely in other ways to Kuh-e Khwaja. A symmetrical central space around which other architectural elements are arranged appears in the “Great Hall” at Sasanian Bishapur⁷¹ and earlier in the “Treasury” at Parthian Nisa.⁷² But both the Bishapur and Nisa examples are only single buildings and do not dominate the complexes of which

62. William Bell Dinsmoor, *The Architecture of Ancient Greece* (New York, 1950; repr. New York, 1975) pp. 197–198; and Vincent Scully, *The Earth, the Temple and the Gods* (New York, 1969) pp. 179–181.

63. For a survey see Colledge, pp. 21–79; and Trudy S. Kawanami, review of Colledge, *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979) pp. 471–472.

64. Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 60–117; and Pugachenkova 1967, pp. 34–41, 208, pls. 12–16. More accessible plans may be found in Herrmann, pp. 34–35; and Colledge, pp. 23, 38, 53.

65. David Stronach, *Pasargadae* (Oxford, 1977) p. 144.

66. Roman Ghirshman, *Les Terrasses sacrées de Bard-e Nechandeh et de Masjid-i Sulaiman*, Mémoires de la délégation archéologique en Perse XLV (Paris, 1976).

67. Gerard Fussman, *Surkh Kotal*, Materialien zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Archäologie XIX (Munich, 1983) pp. 14, 15; Burchard Brentjes, *Das alte Persien* (Vienna, 1978) pp. 196–198, pls. 102–105; Daniel Schlumberger, “Le Temple de Surkh Kotal en Bactriane,” *Journal Asiatique* 240 (1952) pp. 435–436, pl. II; and idem, “Le Temple de Surkh Kotal en Bactriane,” *Journal Asiatique* 243 (1955) p. 272, pl. I.

68. For color photographs of the site see Herrmann, pp. 113–118. For the excavations see R. Naumann, D. Huff, and R. Schnyder, “Takht-i Suleiman: Bericht über die Ausgrabungen 1965–1973,” *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1975) pp. 109–204.

69. Herrmann, p. 84; and Lionel Bier, “Sasanian Palaces in Perspective,” *Archaeology* 35:1 (1982) pp. 31, 33–35.

70. Gertrude Bell, *Palace and Mosque at Ukhaidir* (Oxford, 1914) pp. 45–51, pls. 54, 59, 62, 63:1; and Oscar Reuther, “Sasanian Architecture: History,” *SPA* 1, pp. 540–541, fig. 153.

71. Ghirshman 1971, pl. II; and Roman Ghirshman, “Les Fouilles de Chapour, deuxième campagne,” *Revue des arts asiatiques* 12 (1938) pp. 15–17, pls. X, XII, XIII. See also Herrmann, pp. 102–103.

72. Colledge, p. 53, fig. 24; and Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 69–78.

they are a part. The large court in the Parthian palace at Assur in Mesopotamia might at first seem a parallel, but that structure was formed over a period of time, the addition of one element after another transforming an open space into an articulated, if somewhat asymmetrical, central court.⁷³

Shifting the search for parallels to the east is somewhat more productive, for comparable features appear in eastern Iranian and Central Asian buildings before the Parthian period. A geographically closer parallel to the spatial configuration of the first phase of Ghaga-shahr may be the "Sacred Building" (building no. 3) at Dahan-e Ghulaman, some thirty-five kilometers southeast of Kuh-e Khwaja.⁷⁴ The ruined mud-brick structure consists of a large court containing three altars surrounded by a walled portico. The building is entered through a single narrow door, suggesting that the interior space was not generally accessible to casual visitors. Dahan-e Ghulaman has been called Achaemenid and its plan compared to portions of Persepolis,⁷⁵ but it is an inversion of the usual Achaemenid building form, with an open space where the densely columned hall would be.

The monumental complex of Altyn-10 in northern Afghanistan presents larger, more complicated versions of the Dahan-e Ghulaman type. Building I at Altyn-10 is a large double court with porticoes.⁷⁶ Building II, an apparently palatial structure with a well-marked entrance, a central court with pool, and an ambulatory corridor,⁷⁷ also echoes the plan of Kuh-e Khwaja. Dated to the early Achaemenid period (late sixth–fifth century B.C.),⁷⁸ Altyn-10 shows the Central Asian preference for centralized courts as early as the middle of the first millennium B.C.⁷⁹

This regional preference continues in later centuries, to judge by the ruins of Saksanakhyr (Saksanokur) on the upper reaches of the Amu Darya (ancient Oxus) in Bactria. Located about forty kilometers from the Seleucid site of Ai Khanum on the Russian-Afghan border, Saksanakhyr contains, among other structures, a palace/temple complex with an open court approximately the same size as that of Ghaga-shahr. Dated either to the post-Alexandrine period (third–first century B.C.)⁸⁰ or to the Kushan period (first–third century A.D.),⁸¹ Saksanakhyr displays both the central court and the axial organization seen at Kuh-e Khwaja.

The combination of the central court, a subterranean gallery at one end of the court, and subsidiary rooms symmetrically placed on a unified axis is

found at another Bactrian site, the Buddhist shrine at Kara Tepe, also on the upper Amu Darya. At Kara Tepe, the two courts have rectangular subterranean ambulatories cut into the living rock that rises above the court. These two courts plus a third are arranged along a central axis that ends in a square, constructed ambulatory. Dated between the second and fourth centuries A.D.,⁸² Kara Tepe is one of a number of shrines or *viharas* of similar organization in the area. The Buddhist complexes of Takht-i Bahi in Gandhara and Gul Dara near Kabul present other parallels to Ghaga-shahr even farther east.⁸³

The first phase of Ghaga-shahr thus finds its nearest parallels not in Parthian and Sasanian buildings

73. Oscar Reuther, "Parthian Architecture: History," *SPA I*, p. 434; Trudy S. Kawami, "Parthian Brick Vaults in Mesopotamia, Their Antecedents and Descendants," *Journal of the Ancient Near East Society* 14 (1982) p. 62; and Walter Andrae and Heinz Lenzen, *Die Partherstadt Assur* (Leipzig, 1933) pp. 25–54, pls. 9–11.

74. U. Scerrato, "Excavations at Dahan-i Ghulaman (Seistan, Iran), First Preliminary Report (1962–63)," *East and West* 16 (1966); and Sylvia Matheson, *Persia: An Archaeological Guide* (London, 1976) pp. 284–286.

75. Matheson, *Persia*, p. 285.

76. Viktor Sarianidi, "Bactrian Centre of Ancient Art," *Mesopotamia* 12 (1977) p. 101, figs. 46–50.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 102, fig. 45.

78. Viktor Sarianidi, *Drevnie Zemledel'chi Afganistana* [Ancient Agriculturalists of Afghanistan] (Moscow, 1977) pp. 122–126, 165.

79. Architectural centrality based on an open square is a characteristic of Central Asian architecture in general. It is also manifested in the solid symmetry of Buddhist stupas. The large square court with circumambulatory corridor at the Dashli Oasis (site 3) in northern Afghanistan dates this architectural feature as early as the late second millennium B.C. The site also reveals the use of pitched brick vaulting. See Sarianidi, "Bactrian Centre," pp. 97, 100–101, figs. 35, 42, 43; *idem*, *Afganistana*, pp. 42–45, 161; and G. A. Pugachenkova, "K Tipologii Monumentalnogo Zodchestva Drevnikh Stran Sredneaziatskogo Regiona" [Towards a Typology of Monumental Architecture in the Ancient Countries of the Central Asian Region], *Iranica Antiqua* 17 (1982) p. 40.

80. Herrmann, p. 35; and G. Frumkin, "L'Art ancien de l'Asie Centrale soviétique," *Arts Asiatiques* 39 (1977) pp. 185–186.

81. Vadim M. Masson, *Das Land der tausend Städte* (Munich, 1982) p. 86.

82. Stawiski, pp. 106–107, fig. 101; Frumkin, "L'Art ancien de l'Asie Centrale soviétique," p. 188; and Rehka Morris, "Some Observations on Recent Soviet Excavations in Soviet Central Asia and the Problem of Gandhāran Art," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983) pp. 562–564.

83. W. Zwalf, *The Shrines of Gandhara* (London, 1979) p. 13; and H. G. Franz, "Stupa and Umgangstempel in Zentralasien," *Das Altertum* 27 (1981) p. 159.

of central and western Iran, but in the palaces and sanctuaries of Central Asia—and particularly of northern Bactria—in the early centuries of the Christian Era. The only site that, like Kuh-e Khwaja, combines a central court with a subterranean gallery on a unified axis is a Buddhist shrine of, at the earliest, late Parthian date.

Apart from site and general plan, the individual buildings of Ghaga-shahr present many problems of interpretation and analysis, not the least of which is the lack of differentiation between the various building phases that remain above ground. All who have considered the site agree that there are two main phases, the earlier one encompassing the South Gate, the Central Court, and the north terrace and Temple, and the later one the addition of *ivans* to the court, the reinforcement and alteration of the terrace, and the remodeling of the South Gate. But human and seismic activity, not to mention the innate vulnerability of mud brick, must have necessitated numerous repairs, reinforcements, and additions at each phase; when a specific detail is examined, it can be difficult to determine to which phase it belonged. With this in mind, aspects and details of the architecture will be considered individually, in an attempt to unravel a few of the tangled elements that made up the complicated structure.

The vaults of Ghaga-shahr are distinctive for their high degree of preservation. Although brick vaults were widely used throughout the ancient Near East, specific details of construction and use can serve as chronological markers and so help to establish a date for the first phase of the site. The domed entrance chamber of the South Gate is an architectural feature without parallel in Parthian times, either in Iran, Mesopotamia, or Central Asia. Domed entrance suites appear primarily in Islamic architecture,⁸⁴ the only Sasanian example being the very late structure at Qasr-e Shirin.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the dome on hooded squinches, a specific device for accommodating the round dome on the square chamber, is also common in Islamic structures, the best-known examples in Iran being those in the post-Sasanian palace at Sarvistan.⁸⁶ It appears that the dome of the South Gate was a replacement, reflecting the building practices of a period later than that in which the basic plan of the entrance suite was determined. The tripartite vaults of the side chambers of the South Gate may be earlier, however, for their simple

pitched construction is based on vaulting techniques used in Mesopotamia from the late third millennium B.C. and widespread by the Parthian period.⁸⁷

The Painted Gallery on the north side of the court was also constructed of pitched rather than radial courses and thus can be distinguished technically from the dome of the South Gate and related to the tripartite vaults of the side rooms. The windows of the Painted Gallery, closed by the additions of the second phase, have a distinctive inset or keyhole form: the arch does not spring smoothly from the top of the jamb but cuts into the wall above the jamb, which as a consequence projects into the opening. This window shape, unknown in the Parthian period, occurs in the early Sasanian buildings (third century) at Firuzabad and in the temple at Takht-e Sulaiman⁸⁸ and continues throughout the Sasanian period. The vaulting of the Painted Gallery and of its windows suggests construction at the earliest in the Sasanian period.

The applied architectural elements of the north wall are not so secure a guide to the date of the building, for they are not structural and could, theoretically, have been added later. But since the entire north wall was covered by the buttresses of phase two, the engaged columns and the running scroll must antedate that later construction.

The “Doric” capitals on the columns raise the possibility of Greek influence in eastern Iran and are one of the reasons that Herzfeld dated the first phase of Ghaga-shahr as early as the late Parthian period (first–third century). The general scheme of engaged brick columns alternating with smaller arched windows was in use in Mesopotamia before A.D. 110, and

84. John D. Hoag, *Western Islamic Architecture* (New York, 1963) pp. 16–17, pls. 22, 24, 26; Aptullah Kuran, “Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Mosques in Turkey,” *Archaeology* 24 (1971) pp. 236, 241, 244, 250; and Reuther, *SPA I*, p. 503.

85. Arthur Upham Pope, *Persian Architecture* (New York, 1965) pp. 64–65; and Reuther, *SPA I*, pp. 540–542, figs. 153, 154. The Sasanian date of Qasr-i Shirin is questioned by Lionel Bier, *Sarvistan: A Study in Early Iranian Architecture* (University Park, Pa., 1986) p. 70.

86. Bier, *Sarvistan*, esp. pp. 48–53, where numerous parallels to the Islamic palace at Ukhaidir are noted. See also Herrmann, pp. 108–109, where it is dated to the reign of Khosro II (591–628); and Bier, “Sasanian Palaces,” p. 36. I am indebted to Dr. Bier for his helpful comments.

87. Kawami, “Parthian Brick Vaults in Mesopotamia,” pp. 61–67.

88. Herrmann, pp. 86, 114, 116–117.

the production of terracotta capitals and bases there can now be documented.⁸⁹ “Doric,” “Ionic,” and “Corinthian” architectural elements in terracotta have also been excavated at the Parthian royal capital of Nisa.⁹⁰

Classical influence in architecture was not limited to the Parthian period in Iran, but continued into the Sasanian. Hellenic architectural elements appear as decoration in early Sasanian buildings at Bishapur,⁹¹ Hajiabad,⁹² and Qasr-i Abu Nasr,⁹³ and “Corinthian” capitals of stone are found at Istakhr near Persepolis⁹⁴ and at Takht-e Sulaiman.⁹⁵

The use—and misuse—of the classical orders spread from Iran through Parthia and Central Asia, as Ionic-style bases from Nisa (first–second century),⁹⁶ Khalchayan (first century B.C.–first century A.D.),⁹⁷ and the Buddhist shrine of Kara Tepe,⁹⁸ among other sites, show. The “Doric” columns of Ghaga-shahr are just one example of the widespread use of imperfectly understood Greek architectural elements that persisted throughout the Near East and Central Asia well into the Sasanian period.

The volute or scroll pattern on the architrave of the north wall is a Greek decorative motif known in Hellenistic mosaics,⁹⁹ vase painting,¹⁰⁰ and textiles,¹⁰¹ but very rare in architecture. Its association with water, in fact, would have made it less suitable in Greek eyes as an architectural ornament.¹⁰² At present, we do not know when the running volute was introduced into Iran, but it does occur in the pavilion at Kaley Zohak, whose date, Parthian or Sasanian, is uncertain.¹⁰³ The motif ultimately spread into Central Asia, where it remained in use, at least on ceramics, as late as the sixth century.¹⁰⁴ Its occurrence at Ghaga-shahr is another sign that the artisans responsible for the structure were already far removed from the Hellenic world. Taken together, the applied “Doric” columns and the running scroll in the architrave point to no precise date of construction. They merely suggest a time in the late Parthian or early Sasanian periods and link the complex at Kuh-e Khwaja to numerous other structures in Mesopotamia, Iran, and Bactria.

The general plan of Ghaga-shahr, the simple vaulting of the side chambers of the South Gate, the keyhole windows of the Painted Gallery, and the applied ornament of the north wall, particularly the stucco figure, indicate that the initial construction, the first phase, took place in the early Sasanian pe-

riod (third–fourth century), not the late Parthian. While the architectural details link the structure to Sasanian buildings in central and western Iran, the

89. For instance, the facade of the Gareus Temple at Uruk (Warka). See Colledge, p. 36, fig. 9c, pp. 74–76, fig. 37; and Antonio Invernizzi, “Trench on the South Side Archive Square,” *Mesopotamia* 12 (1977) pp. 9, 10, figs. 1, 2.

90. Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 82–83, 96–97, 101–102; Pugachenkova 1967, pp. 38–39, pls. 12–13, 15–16, col. pl. III; and Herrmann, p. 36.

91. Ghirshman 1971, pl. XL:3.

92. M. Azarnoush, “Excavations at Hajiabad,” pp. 172–173.

93. Joseph M. Upton in Richard N. Frye, ed., *Sasanian Remains from Qasr-i Abu Nasr* (Cambridge, 1973) p. 15, fig. 11; and Donald S. Whitcomb, *Before the Roses and Nightingales: Excavations at Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Old Shiraz* (New York: MMA, 1985) pp. 44–45.

94. Paul Bernard, “Les Chapiteaux corinthiens d’Istakhr,” *Journal Asiatique* 262 (1974) pp. 254–258, figs. 1–6.

95. Dietrich Huff, “Takht-i Sulaiman, 1965–1973,” *Archäologische Anzeiger* (1975) pp. 171–172, figs. 63, 64.

96. Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 86–91, 99–100.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 99, figs. 22, 25; and G. A. Pugachenkova, *Khalchayan* (Tashkent, 1966) pp. 44, 48, 61–62, 132.

98. Stawiski, pl. 101. See also Fussman, *Surkh Kotal*, pp. 26, 28, 49; Schlumberger, “Le Temple de Surkh Kotal,” pp. 439–440, pls. III:2, IV:2; Mortimer Wheeler, *Flames over Persepolis* (New York, 1968) p. 118; and G. A. Pugachenkova, “Novie Dannii o Khudozhestvennoi Kulture Baktrii” [New Data on the Artistic Culture of Bactria], *Iz Istorii Antichnoi Kul’turi Uzbekistana* [Towards a History of the Ancient Culture of Uzbekistan] (Tashkent, 1973) pp. 88–89.

99. D. S. Robertson, *Greek and Roman Architecture* (Cambridge, 1971) p. 300, pl. xxxii:a; T. B. L. Webster, *The Art of Greece: The Age of Hellenism* (New York, 1967) p. 156, pl. 47; and Gisela M. A. Richter, *A Handbook of Greek Art* (London, 1963) p. 276.

100. Pierre Devambez, *Greek Painting* (New York, 1962) pp. 156–157; Richter, *Handbook*, pp. 350, 353; and Rodney S. Young, “Early Iron Age, Classical and Roman Empire,” in Thomas C. Witherspoon, ed., *Art Treasures of Turkey* (Washington, D.C., 1966) pp. 33, 93, pl. 143.

101. Manolis Andronikos, “The Royal Tombs at Vergina,” in *The Search for Alexander* (Boston, 1980) pp. 36–37, fig. 19.

102. On the choragic monument of Lysikrates, the running wave refers directly to the myth illustrated in the frieze. See Dinsmoor, *Architecture of Ancient Greece*, p. 238.

103. Wolfram Kleiss, “Bericht über Erkundungsfahrten in Iran im Jahr 1971,” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 5 (1972) p. 164, pl. 442. See also Reinhard Pohanka, “Zum Bautyp des Pavillons von Qal’eh Zohak, Nordost-Aserbeidschan, Iran,” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 16 (1983) pp. 237–254.

104. Martha L. Carter, “Royal Festival Themes in Sasanian Silverwork and Their Central Asian Parallels,” *Acta Iranica* 1 (1974) pl. XI; Boris Stawiski, *Iskusstvo Srednei Azii* [Art of Central Asia] (Moscow, 1974) pp. 176–177; and Pugachenkova 1967, pl. 67. For its architectural use in Mauryan India see Wheeler, *Flames*, p. 130.

overall plan shows the strong influence of the north and east, especially of Buddhist Central Asia.¹⁰⁵

Within the first phase of Ghaga-shahr, changes and additions were made. Alterations to the South Gate included an elaborate stucco panel, recently dated to the late Sasanian period,¹⁰⁶ that was covered in the second phase. The windows of the North Tower and North Gate and other windows near Tower A on the east side of the complex are offset rather than inset, a late Sasanian characteristic.¹⁰⁷ These later elements do not undercut the evidence that the first phase of construction at Ghaga-shahr occurred in the early Sasanian period. They only show the normal repairs and alterations one would expect in a large and much-used complex.

In the second building phase at Ghaga-shahr, the South Gate was extensively replastered and the size of the court was diminished by the addition of the large *eivans* on the east and west and by the row of deep buttresses forming vaulted rooms against the north wall of the court. Vaulted space became more important both in appearance and in actual area. In the main chamber of the South Gate, whose upper walls were articulated by a continuous series of deep, rounded niches framed by thick colonnettes, the base of the vault became a continuously undulating surface alternately protruding and receding. The flat wall of the earlier phase had been covered with plaster moldings and the architectural emphasis shifted from the flat horizontal panel at the base of the vault to the plasticity of the vault itself.

Single round niches with simple two-step moldings are known in the early Sasanian palace at Firuzabad,¹⁰⁸ and rows of shallow niches with flanking colonnettes are found in the late Sasanian Taq-e Khusro at Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁹ In both buildings, however, the niches are flat or very shallow and the slender columns do not project strongly from the wall. The contrast between the plump colonnettes and deeply hollowed niches at Kuh-e Khwaja and the flat mortar-and-rubble surfaces of most Sasanian buildings in Iran suggests a post-Sasanian architectural aesthetic. Closely spaced niches or windows alternating with pairs of short, thick colonnettes occur in early Islamic structures such as the eighth-century Qasr-al-Kharanah in Jordan and Ukhaidir in Iraq.¹¹⁰

The *eivans* that project into the court also point to a date for the second phase after the Sasanian period. *Eivans* covered with pitched-brick vaults appear

at Nippur and Assur during the Parthian period in Mesopotamia.¹¹¹ They were used in both public and domestic architecture in the Sasanian period and spread to the Iranian plateau, where they became a common architectural feature.¹¹² Neither Parthian nor Sasanian *eivans* extend into the courts they face as do the *eivans* at Ghaga-shahr. The T-shaped configuration of the Kuh-e Khwaja *eivans*, with domed back room, is also unusual; the closest parallels are at Khirbat Minyah (early eighth century) and especially at Ukhaidir, a complex with strong Iranian connections.¹¹³ These comparisons reinforce the probability that the Kuh-e Khwaja *eivans* were added to the court after the Sasanian period.

Only the foundation vaults remain for the buttresses added to the north wall of the court, with the exception of a small segment in the northwest corner. There, some plain vertical molding and a short section of the stringcourse remain. The stringcourse with its single row of thick circles is without parallel in Sasanian architecture, though the form plays a prominent role in the decorative vocabulary of Samanid (ninth–tenth century) and Ghaznavid (tenth–twelfth century) architecture of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Samanid Tomb of Ismail at Bukhara¹¹⁴ and the remarkable minaret at Jam, Afghanistan,¹¹⁵ are two important structures having a

105. Indo-Buddhist influence was suggested as early as 1938 by Reuther, *SPA* I, p. 512.

106. Kröger, p. 257.

107. Gullini, p. 416, fig. 277, also noted the late Sasanian characteristics of the North Tower.

108. Dietrich Huff, "Zur Rekonstruktion des Turmes von Firuzabad," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 19/20 (1969/70) pp. 336–338, pl. 64:2; and Reuther, *SPA* IV, pl. 147B.

109. Pope, *Persian Architecture*, p. 57, pls. 43, 44.

110. G. Lankester Harding, *The Antiquities of Jordan* (New York, 1967) pp. 160–161, pl. 22B; and Bell, *Ukhaidir*, pl. 8, fig. 3; pl. 16, fig. 1; pl. 31, fig. 1.

111. Edward Keall, "Some Thoughts on the Early Eyvan," in Dickran K. Konymjian, ed., *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles* (Beirut, 1974) pp. 123–130. See also Kawami, "Parthian Brick Vaults in Mesopotamia," pp. 61–67.

112. Keall, "Eyvan," pp. 126, 129, fig. 3.

113. Bell, *Ukhaidir*, pp. 84–86, pl. 2; and Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1973) pp. 147–148, figs. 58, 63.

114. Pope, *Persian Architecture*, p. 83, fig. 77.

115. G. A. Pugachenkova, *Iskusstvo Afganistana* [Art of Afghanistan] (Moscow, 1963) p. 111.

stringcourse or banding of circular brick ornament exactly comparable to that at Kuh-e Khwaja.

Considered together, the colonnettes and niches of the South Gate, the *ivans* of the court, and the plaster ornament of the north wall suggest that the second phase of Ghaga-shahr was constructed in Islamic times. Indeed, a comparison of this later state of Kuh-e Khwaja with Islamic structures such as those at Bost (eleventh-century Samanid)¹¹⁶ and Lashkari Bazar (eleventh-century Ghaznavid) and the fortress of Shahr-i Gholghola (A.D. 1222)¹¹⁷ yields many points of similarity in the treatment of wall surface, arrangement of internal spaces, and details of vaulting. Sistan prospered under the Ghaznavids,¹¹⁸ and a major rebuilding at Ghaga-shahr during that period appears likely. Thus, we have come full circle in our dating of the second phase, for Herzfeld initially proposed an early Islamic date to Stein.¹¹⁹

THE PAINTINGS

The walls of Ghaga-shahr were once extensively decorated with paintings,¹²⁰ but by 1929 most of the ornamentation had vanished. The extant paintings were concentrated in two main areas, the South Gate and the Painted Gallery under the terrace on the north side of the courtyard. A few small fragments could also be seen in little rooms on the northern and eastern walls.

Figured wall paintings are documented in Iran from at least the fourth century B.C.,¹²¹ but few wall paintings of the Parthian and Sasanian periods have survived. Those that remain from Parthian Assur¹²² and Sasanian Ctesiphon,¹²³ Susa,¹²⁴ Damghan,¹²⁵ and Hajiabad¹²⁶ are badly fragmented, with the total compositions now lost. The study of painting in the ancient Near East has therefore focused on later periods and the more distant regions of Central Asia.¹²⁷ The paintings of Kuh-e Khwaja are a precious addition to a very small corpus.

The South Gate

Sir Aurel Stein, the earliest explorer of Kuh-e Khwaja, uncovered near the western facade of the South Gate paintings in two distinct styles. The first painting—of a tall robed figure, almost life-size, and adjacent fragmentary figures—was found on a wall

sealed by later construction.¹²⁸ Only faint colors and the general contours were visible. Nonetheless, the garments, jewelry, and poses strongly evoked Central Asian Buddhist parallels for Stein, and led him to speculate on the possibility of a Buddhist foundation at Kuh-e Khwaja.¹²⁹ As we have seen, the architectural antecedents of the early phase support Stein's observations, and additional documentation of Buddhism in Iran has since appeared.¹³⁰

Herzfeld may have seen this Buddhist painting during his 1925 visit to the site.¹³¹ In the absence of a clear photograph (Stein was well aware of the inadequacy of his illustration¹³²), it is difficult to compare the image with other works.

The second painting occupied a later, adjacent wall.¹³³ Damaged at top and bottom and ultimately walled up, this painting showed two registers of standing figures in belted tunics, trousers, and high boots. The static frontal pose of the figures, with feet turned out to each side, was mitigated somewhat by the slight angle of their heads to the viewer's right. In the lower register, a partly obliterated seated figure faced the standing ones. In spite of the pitted

116. B. Brentjes, "Vorislamisch-mittelasiatische Traditionen in der Architektur des Islam," *Das Altertum* 23 (1977) pp. 101–103.

117. Jeanine Auboyer, *The Art of Afghanistan* (Prague, 1968) p. 57, pls. 101, 103–107.

118. Curzon, *Persia*, pp. 228–229. On the literary importance of Sistan in this period see Bosworth, *Sistan*, pp. 122–123.

119. Bodleian, fol. 147.

120. Herzfeld 1935, p. 67.

121. Athenaeus, XIII, 35, 575. See also L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*, American Philosophical Association, Philological Monograph XX (New York, 1960) p. 39.

122. Andrae and Lenzen, *Assur*, pp. 111–114, pls. 61, 62.

123. Kröger, pp. 88–89, pl. 29.

124. Ghirshman 1962, p. 183, fig. 224.

125. Erich F. Schmidt, *Excavations at Tepe Hissar, Damghan* (Philadelphia, 1937) pp. 337–338, figs. 174, 175.

126. Azarnoush, "Excavations at Hajiabad," pp. 173–174.

127. Mario Bussagli, *Central Asian Painting* (New York, 1979); and Azarpay.

128. Faccenna, pp. 92–93, fig. 3.

129. Stein, II, pp. 917–918, fig. 467.

130. Richard Bulliet, "Naw Bahar and the Survival of Iranian Buddhism," *Iran* 14 (1976) pp. 140–145; and Warwick Bell, "Some Rock-Cut Monuments in Southern Iran," *Iran* 24 (1986) pp. 95–116.

131. Sk. XIII, p. 10.

132. Stein, II, pp. 917–918. I have thus far been unable to locate the original photograph or its negative.

133. *Ibid.*, pp. 913–918, fig. 468.

surface, many colors retained their intensity, and numerous details of dress, fabric, and ornament were clearly visible. The style of the painting was characterized by the use of flat areas of strong color articulated by sharp lines of contrasting tones. Modeling, shading, and other attempts to render three-dimensional surfaces were not used. The light-colored halos of the figures in the lower register nearly covered the dark ground, creating the appearance of an arcade.

Among the distinctive images that caught Stein's eye were a three-headed figure suggesting Central Asian Buddhist connections and an ox-headed mace held by the seated figure. This unusual weapon recalled the famous mace of Rustam, the legendary hero of eastern Iran whose deeds were celebrated in the Iranian national epic, the *Shahnameh*.

Rows of standing figures occur frequently in both Parthian and Sasanian art, as well as in Kushan art of Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹³⁴ One figure in the South Gate painting had diadem ribbons that flew straight up on either side of the head, a detail that appears most frequently in late Sasanian art.¹³⁵ The style of the painting is closer to that of a row of donor figures from Qizil, produced in the early seventh century,¹³⁶ than to naturalistic representations of an earlier date. This painting, like the patterned stucco panel mentioned above, points to a redecoration of the South Gate in the late Sasanian period. Whether the Buddhist paintings remained visible over a long period of time is impossible to say.

The main chamber of the South Gate was also painted. In 1974, a painting fragment was uncovered on the western corner of the south entrance to this room.¹³⁷ This painting, like those noted by Stein outside the South Gate, had been covered by later remodeling that included the plaster colonnettes. This new example shows two overlapping male heads in profile to the left, and below them, to the right, four male heads compressed into the same amount of space. The heads are placed against a dark ground in a setting of light-colored walls, battlements, and towers. The painting, described as a fresco,¹³⁸ showed extensive use of light pigments to model the features of the face, as well as dark outlines to distinguish figure from figure and figure from ground. The clean-shaven images, the repeated use of profile faces, and the sophisticated internal modeling produced a classical—that is, Hellenic—appearance in contrast to

the flat and patterned paintings discovered by Stein. The first century has been proposed as a date for this painting, on the basis of its location (Gullini's level IV) and classical style,¹³⁹ but the architecture upon which the painting was executed points to a later, at least third-century, date. Classical architectural elements were used well into the fourth century in the Near East, and it is likely that classical images and techniques continued in painting as well. A classicizing head from third-century Toprak Kala, already linked to Kuh-e Khwaja,¹⁴⁰ and the head of a Bowman from Koi-Krylgan-Kala¹⁴¹ may be compared with the new South Gate fragment. Even closer are the Kushan (second–fourth century) Buddhist paintings of Fayaz Tepe near Termez, also featuring naturalistically rendered male heads in profile.¹⁴² Thus, this newest fragment also points to artistic activity at Kuh-e Khwaja in the Sasanian period.

Herzfeld, too, noted paintings on the south wall of the domed chamber in 1925,¹⁴³ though he did not mention them in his publications. Since he made no further reference to the paintings in 1929, when a part of the South Gate served as his camp kitchen, the painted mud plaster may have already fallen from the vaults.

In summary, the paintings of the South Gate in its first phase displayed three different styles in both painting and composition: Buddhist, modeled (Hellenic), and flat, patterned (Sasanian). All these paintings were eventually covered by later walls, though it is not possible to know if all were obscured at the same time. The variations in style as well as imagery suggest that the painted decoration of the South Gate at Kuh-e Khwaja was not the result of a single program; just as the architecture of the South Gate was altered during the first phase, so, too, were the paintings.

134. W. Zwalf, *Buddhism, Art and Faith* (London, 1985) no. 9, pp. 13, 29; Colledge, pls. 17–19, 24b, 31b, 47a, 48c; and Ghirshman 1962, pp. 158, 171, 176–184.

135. Ghirshman 1962, pp. 192, 205, 206, 240–241; and Reuther, *SPA I*, pp. 526, 528.

136. Bussagli, *Central Asian Painting*, pp. 80, 83.

137. Faccenna, pp. 84–86.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 85, n. 3.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

140. Azarpay, p. 84, pl. 2.

141. S. P. Tolstov and B. I. Vainberg, *Koi-Krylgan-Kala* (Moscow, 1967) p. 215.

142. Stawiski, p. 141, pl. 102. See below and note 244.

143. Sk. XIII, p. 10.

The Painted Gallery

The best-preserved paintings of Ghaga-shahr, noted by both Stein and Herzfeld, covered the vaulted underground gallery on the north side of the Central Court. Herzfeld photographed and drew these paintings, but never fully published his findings; his photographs and sketches in the Herzfeld Archive allow us to reconstruct this now lost cycle.

The decoration of the Painted Gallery was divided into two major zones—the vaulted ceiling and the walls—by a simple two-step cornice marking the springing point of the vault.¹⁴⁴ The barrel vault, where it still existed, bore a pattern of painted coffers arranged in three rows ascending from the cornice to the apex of the vault. This uppermost point was further defined by small rosettelike forms at the juncture of the coffers.¹⁴⁵ The painted squares evoked, by painterly means, the three-dimensional qualities of an actual coffered ceiling. The broad red-brown frames of the squares had a lighter inner band whose edge, where it was well preserved, was delineated by a thin light or dark line. At the corner of each square, fine contrasting lines showed the oblique junction of the horizontal and vertical elements of each frame, recalling the classical trompe-l'oeil painting technique of the Mediterranean world. From the various photographs in the Herzfeld Archive, it appears that alternating squares were filled with floral rosettes of varying designs and styles. Some rosettes had a solid circular form much like a dense sunflower or lotus;¹⁴⁶ others had long, curling leaves that unfurled into the corners of the square.¹⁴⁷ Some of these long leaves or petals folded back on themselves.¹⁴⁸

The remaining squares held single figures or simple groups that also varied in painting and compositional style. Some figures, such as the seated one with a cushion (Figures 4, 5)¹⁴⁹ or the acrobats (Figures 6, 7),¹⁵⁰ relied on dark outlines for clarity. Other images, such as Eros riding a horse¹⁵¹ or a feline,¹⁵² achieved their impact with solid areas of strong color and some modeling. Still other coffers contained partial figures¹⁵³ or images too fragmentary for analysis.¹⁵⁴ All the images, however, had more subtle details and greater elegance of execution than was apparent in the retouched photographs published by Herzfeld.

The placement of at least one coffer can be determined from the Herzfeld photographs,¹⁵⁵ which show the little Eros on a feline in the second row above the cornice, on what appears to be the back or north wall of the Painted Gallery. The first row of coffers directly above the cornice was already totally destroyed, and the oblique angle of the camera to the surface of the vault obscured the other squares.

Similar decorative schemes, applied to either flat or curved ceilings, are known throughout the classical world, occurring not only in Italy¹⁵⁶ and Egypt¹⁵⁷ but also in south Russia¹⁵⁸ in the first century A.D. Actual carved stone coffering appears in the Near East at the same time, in Anatolia¹⁵⁹ and Syria.¹⁶⁰ Rosettes with folded leaves and petals are common on Hellenistic and Parthian metalwork from the first century B.C. through the first century A.D.¹⁶¹ The absolute

144. Neg. no. 4036; color slide 5100.

145. Sk. XV, p. 9; neg. nos. 4039, 4048.

146. Sk. XV, pp. 8, 10, 32; neg. nos. 4031, 4042–4044, 4047, 4050.

147. Sk. XV, pp. 7, 8; neg. nos. 4027, 4032; D-356.

148. Sk. XV, p. 6.

149. Sk. XV, p. 7; neg. no. 4028; color slide 5098.

150. Sk. XV, p. 6; neg. no. 4031.

151. Sk. XV, p. 12; neg. no. 4043; color slide 5195.

152. Neg. no. 4029.

153. Neg. no. 4026.

154. Neg. nos. 4038, 4050.

155. Neg. no. 4036; color slide 5100.

156. A. Boethius and J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture* (London, 1970) pp. 118–119; and H. Mielsch, *Römische Stuckreliefs* (Heidelberg, 1975) pp. 122, 133, pls. 18, 19, 32.

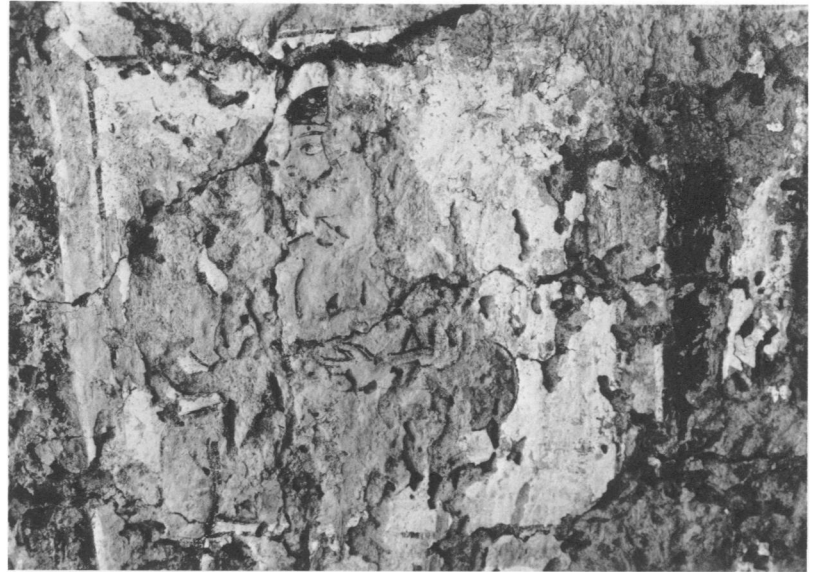
157. B. Brown, *Ptolemaic Painting and Mosaics in the Alexandrian Style* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957) p. 54; and Irving Lavin, "The Ceiling Frescoes in Trier and Illusionism in Constantinian Painting," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 (1967) fig. 20.

158. Mikhail Rostovtzeff, "Ancient Decorative Wall Paintings," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 39 (1919) p. 152, pl. ix.

159. G. M. A. Hanfmann, *From Croesus to Constantine* (Ann Arbor, 1975) pp. 37–38.

160. M. A. R. Colledge, *The Art of Palmyra* (Boulder, 1976) pp. 83–84, fig. 47, pl. 113; and Lavin, "Ceiling Frescoes," pp. 108–109, fig. 20. Similar painted ceiling schemes remained popular not only in post-Classical Europe, but also in the Near East well after the Parthian period. For an 8th-century Islamic example in Jordan see F. Zayadine, "The Umayyad Frescoes of Quseir 'Amra," *Archaeology* 31:3 (1978) p. 27; and J. M. Blazquez, "La pintura helenística de Qusayr 'Amra II," *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 56 (1983) pp. 169–196. I am indebted to Prudence O. Harper for this last reference.

161. L. Byvanck-Quarles van Ufford, "Les Bols mégariens," *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 28 (1953) pp. 1–21; H. Kuthmann, "Beiträge zur hellenistisch-römischen Toreutik, I," *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums* 5 (1958) pp. 94–127, pls.



4, 5. Seated figure from the ceiling of the Painted Gallery; Herzfeld's sketch and photograph, 1929 (photos: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 7 and neg. no. 4028)

regularity of the Kuh-e Khwaja designs suggests a date in the first century A.D. or later.

The figured squares also depend on Hellenistic sources. Erotes riding horses or felines relate to the late Hellenistic house decorations on Delos and to Ptolemaic sculptures in Egypt,¹⁶² but are unknown in Iran until they appear at Kuh-e Khwaja.¹⁶³ The charging equestrian, however, is a common theme in Near Eastern art.¹⁶⁴ Although the Kuh-e Khwaja example is painted in a classical style, the dark trousers of the rider are Iranian rather than Greek garb. The local adaptation of classical imagery was already well under way.

One ceiling panel shows a male figure seated, resting his left elbow on a cushion; one leg is tucked beneath him, the other hangs down, crossing the frame of the panel (Figures 4, 5). Versions of this pose appear in Iranian art as early as the second century B.C., but only in representations of Herakles.¹⁶⁵ Unlike the Herakles images though, the Kuh-e Khwaja figure is beardless and exhibits none of the attributes of the Greek hero—the lion-skin, club, bow, or cup.

Rulers and aristocrats of the late Parthian and the Sasanian periods also assumed the recumbent pose of Herakles.¹⁶⁶ The painting at Kuh-e Khwaja may illustrate one stage in the secularization of the image in Iran.

The most unusual panel, however, depicts a pair of acrobats, one doing a handstand; only the feet and

6–13; H. Jucker, *Das Bildnis im Blatterkelch* (Olten, 1961); L. Byvanck-Quarles van Ufford, "Les Bols hellénistiques en verre doré," *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 45 (1970) pp. 129–141; and Andrew Oliver, Jr., *Silver for the Gods* (Toledo, 1977) pp. 71, 75.

162. J. P. Lauer, *Saqqara: The Royal Cemetery of Memphis* (New York, 1976) pp. 23–24, pls. 3, 8, 9; and P. Bruneau, *Délos: XXIX. Les Mosaïques* (Paris, 1972) pp. 290–292, pl. c.

163. Erotes playing with felines do occur in the late Parthian period in western Iran at Qal'eh-e Yazdigird. See J. E. Vollmer, E. J. Keall, and E. Nagai-Berthrong, *Silk Roads, China Ships* (Toronto, 1983) p. 42.

164. For a discussion of this image see Kawami, pp. 37–40.

165. For instance, the Bisotun Herakles dated 148 B.C. (see Herrmann, p. 31) and a stone plaque from Masjid-e Sulaiman. For a discussion of these images see Kawami, pp. 111–117.

166. Herrmann, p. 83; Tolstov and Vainberg, *Koi-Krilgan-Kala*, p. 204, figs. 76, 77; Ghirshman 1962, pp. 218, 242, figs. 259, 296, 297; Harper 1978, pp. 74–76, 148; and Pugachenkova 1967, pl. 67.

legs, with bent knees, of the other had survived (Figures 6, 7). Both figures slightly overlapped the panel frame. This representation is without parallel in Iran, though much earlier images of acrobats are found in Egypt¹⁶⁷ and Mesopotamia.¹⁶⁸ More relevant to the Kuh-e Khwaja pair, however, are the scenes of acrobats doing handstands painted on vases from southern Italy in the fifth through the third century B.C.¹⁶⁹ The only known Parthian acrobat doing a handstand is carved on a bone rhyton excavated at Olbia on the north coast of the Black Sea.¹⁷⁰ Neither the posture nor the style of the Olbia acrobat is close to the painted example from Kuh-e Khwaja. Chinese records of the Han dynasty refer to acrobats from Rome and Parthia,¹⁷¹ so perhaps the Kuh-e Khwaja painting illustrates a pair of these far-traveling entertainers.

The springing point of the Painted Gallery vault was marked by a simple molding and an elaborate painted frieze (Figures 8, 17).¹⁷² Both the molding and the frieze ran the length of the window wall, that is, the outside or south wall of the Painted Gallery.

The first element at the top of the frieze was a row of red and white dentils, painted in an illusionistic manner and framed by a red band at top and bottom. Below this was a pale two-step molding followed by

167. M. A. Murray, *Egyptian Sculpture* (London, 1930) pl. XXI:2; and C. Vandersleyen, *Das alte Ägypten*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte XV (Berlin, 1975) pp. 314, 345, pls. 282b, 333b.

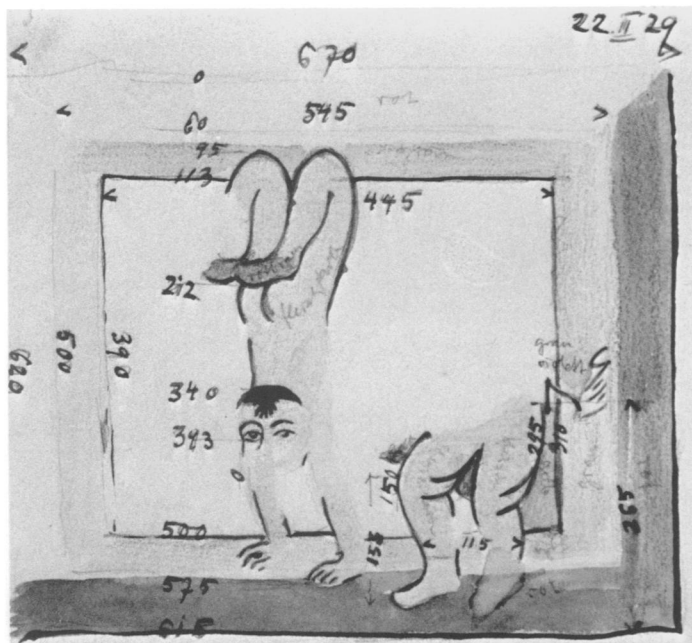
168. B. Buchanan, "A Snake Goddess and Her Companions," *Iraq* 33 (1971) pp. 1-18.

169. G. Prudhommeau, *La Danse grecque antique* (Paris, 1965) figs. 469, 471, 474-476; G. M. A. Richter, *Ancient Furniture, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman* (Oxford, 1926) fig. 366; and A. D. Trendall, *Phylax Vases*, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, suppl. 19, 2nd ed. (London, 1967) no. 80, pl. 6b.

170. Ghirshman 1962, p. 268, fig. 348; and Lukonin, pl. 4. For the date of this piece see E. Belin de Ballu, *Olbia* (Leiden, 1972) p. 181. The geographical gap between the Greek examples and the Parthian ones may be filled in part by a scene of gymnastics painted at Gordion ca. 500 B.C. and reported by R. Young, "Gordion: Preliminary Report, 1958," *American Journal of Archaeology* 59 (1955) pl. 5, fig. 19.

171. J. I. Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1969) pp. 133-135.

172. Sk. XV, p. 10; neg. nos. 4035, 4036, 4049.



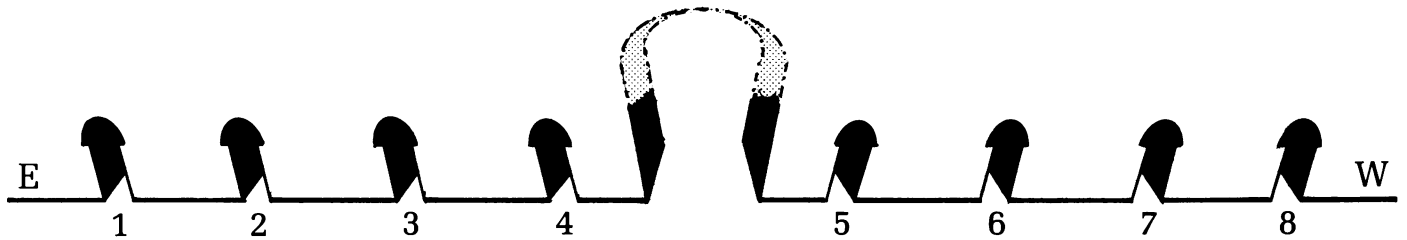
6, 7. Pair of acrobats from the ceiling of the Painted Gallery; Herzfeld's sketch and photograph, 1929 (photos: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 6 and neg. no. 4031)





8. Detail of the painted cornice from the back (north) wall of the Painted Gallery; Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 4035)

9. Schematic elevation of the window (south) wall of the Painted Gallery (D. Kawami after Herzfeld, *Sk.* XV, pp. 29, 30)



a broad yellowish frieze featuring white (formerly green?) laurel leaves wrapped with a dark red ribbon. This festoon was in turn bordered at the bottom by a wide, dark red band with a floral pattern in red and green based on the Greek Lesbian cyma.

Ornate painted cornices, including some with Lesbian cymas, are known from the Hellenistic houses of Olynthos and Delos,¹⁷³ though fewer examples have survived in the Near East. A Lesbian cyma painted on a mud-brick wall at Ai Khanum in northern Afghanistan shows the spread of such illusionistic devices well to the east of Kuh-e Khwaja,¹⁷⁴ and a stiffened version from Dalverzhin Tepe documents the continued representation of laurel festoons in Central Asia.¹⁷⁵

The function of the elaborate painted cornice was to set off a series of figures, somewhat over life-size, arranged in groups of two or three between the eight windows that pierced the wall at regular intervals (Figures 9, 17). Herzfeld's sketches¹⁷⁶ recorded the arrangement of the images and this description will follow his order, proceeding westward from the eastern end of the gallery.

The first preserved painting showed a pair of beardless figures painted in pale tones against a dark

purplish background.¹⁷⁷ The figure on the left, a youth with short curly brown hair shown in three-quarter frontal view,¹⁷⁸ supported an upright trident with his left hand (Figures 10, 11). The right arm was probably held at his side, but the painting was very damaged here and the exact disposition of the lower arm and hand is lost. The trident bearer wore a long yellow tunic decorated with a red band with yellow and green roundels about the neck.¹⁷⁹ A similar decorative strip, perhaps indicating embroidery,

173. P. Bruneau, "Les Peintures et mosaïques de Délos," *Monument Piot* 14 (1908) figs. 39, 42, 43, pls. VI, VI A, and esp. VII; Marcel Bulard, *Délos: IX. Description des revêtements peints à sujets religieux* (Paris, 1926) fig. 49; D. M. Robinson, *Olynthos II* (Baltimore, 1932) pp. 19–21, pl. III, fig. 86; and idem, "Olynthos," *Annals of the British School at Athens* 22 (1918–19) pl. XII:3.

174. Paul Bernard, "Chapiteaux corinthiens hellénistiques d'Asie Centrale découverts," *Syria* 45 (1968) pp. 140–141, figs. 15, 16.

175. G. A. Pugachenkova, *Iskusstvo Baktrii Epokhi Kushan* [Bactrian Art of the Kushan Period] (Moscow, 1979) pp. 176–177, figs. 210, 212.

176. *Sk.* XV, pp. 29–30.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

178. *Ibid.*, p. 35; neg. no. 6338.

179. Neg. no. 4024; color slide 5107.

ran down the front. A mantle was wrapped around the waist and fell over the left shoulder in a triangular fold. The mantle was edged with a red strip bearing a symmetrical leaf pattern in yellow between green borders. Black outlines once sharpened the basic shape of the figure and the folds of the garment, but most of the pigment had flaked off by the time Herzfeld photographed the paintings.

The light brown hair of the youth was rendered with loose, curling brushstrokes, the whole being set off by a few black lines. Vigorous modeling, later obliterated in the retouched photographs, emphasized the solidity of the face around the eyes, on the bridge of the nose, and on the left cheek.¹⁸⁰ The eyes were gouged out, though adjacent areas were not damaged. At first glance, the figure appears bareheaded, but a long, dark, vertical strip between the left eye and the ear suggests that some sort of ornament or device was on the head. The naturalism of the figure gives few clues to its date. Even the classical three-quarter view had spread into Central Asia by the third century A.D.¹⁸¹

Standing to the right of the trident bearer was a female figure resting a long rod with a rounded head, called a mace by Herzfeld,¹⁸² against her left shoulder (Figure 12).¹⁸³ She wore a yellow sleeveless gown gathered above her right breast by a roundel or brooch, whose greenish center simulated a mounted stone. A horizontal dark band at the base of the throat implied the edge of an undergarment, though the pattern of interlocking half circles, painterly shorthand for a guilloche or braid, and the skin-pink area beneath the line raise the possibility that it represented a gold chain instead. The actual neckline of the gown, pulled straight by the brooch, had a pearled or beaded border indicated by a row of greenish dots set within thick yellow circles.

With her raised right hand, the mace bearer pulled the white mantle already covering her left shoulder over her right. The dull bluish border of the mantle was visible only where it draped over the left shoulder. The right arm, its thin round bracelets, and the shoulder were still well preserved, retaining in their original modeling not only the darker shadings on the edges of the forms but also the fine, supple zigzags of very light paint that created highlights on the arm and the shoulder (Figure 13).¹⁸⁴ Likewise, the folds in the gown gathered above the breast were far more plastic and naturalistic in exe-

cution than could have been deduced from the retouched photographs.

In contrast to the naturalistic style in which both figures were painted, the soft, broad fingers of the woman's right hand are not well articulated or carefully modeled. Rather than evoking Greek or Roman style, the rubbery, jointless fingers are typical of Sasanian hands.¹⁸⁵ The combination of a characteristically Sasanian manner of rendering fingers with lifelike classical modeling indicates the stylistic complexity of painting in the Sasanian period.

The two figures must have been impressive when viewed within the confines of the narrow chamber, for they were over life-size and completely filled the space allotted to them. The left elbow of the mace-bearing woman virtually leaned against the upper arch of the window,¹⁸⁶ and the trident of the beardless youth protruded slightly into the painted cornice at the top of the wall.¹⁸⁷ This overlapping, like that of some of the coffer figures, showed a disregard for the classical relationship of picture to frame, and indicated that the painters of Kuh-e Khwaja were already at some remove from their classical source.

The identity of these two figures is not easy to determine, despite their attributes and gestures. Herzfeld called them deities,¹⁸⁸ and in general the available comparisons support him. The trident was the identifying attribute of the Greek sea god Poseidon, who appeared on the coins of Antimachos of Bactria (ca. 190 B.C.)¹⁸⁹ and on the carved ivory rhyta from Nisa, the Arsacid dynastic capital.¹⁹⁰ The trident was also carried by the Sogdian god Veshparker¹⁹¹ and by

180. Neg. no. 4019.

181. Benjamin Rowland, *The Art of Central Asia* (New York, 1974) p. 44; and Bussagli, *Central Asian Painting*, pp. 18, 22, 23.

182. Sk. XV, pp. 29–30.

183. Color slide 5112.

184. Neg. no. 4023.

185. I am grateful to Mas'oud Azarnoush for calling this to my attention. For a discussion of the representation of female hands in Sasanian art see Lionel Bier, "A Sculptured Building Block from Istakhr," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 16 (1983) pp. 308–309, pl. 27.

186. Color slide 5112.

187. Neg. no. 2097.

188. Herzfeld 1941, p. 296.

189. Stawiski, pl. 28.

190. M. E. Masson and G. A. Pugachenkova, *The Parthian Rhytons of Nisa* (Florence, 1982) pp. 40, 80, 102–103, nos. 2, 65, pls. 22:1, 71:1.

191. Azarpay, p. 29, fig. 5.

the Indian god Shiva on Kushan coins, seals, and even sculpture.¹⁹² But the trident was not exclusively a divine attribute; in their numismatic portraits, Kushan rulers such as Vima Kadphises and Vasudeva, who ruled in the second and third centuries, held tridents with their left hands,¹⁹³ as did the Kushano-Sasanian rulers of eastern Iran in the fourth century.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the beardless trident bearer of Ghagashahr cannot be assumed to be divine merely on the basis of his weapon.

The identity of the woman accompanying him is also hard to establish. The macelike object she holds

has no classical parallel, and there are no antecedents in earlier Iranian art, where armed female figures are extremely rare. Athena appears occasionally in Arsacid art, her weapon always a spear,¹⁹⁵ and the

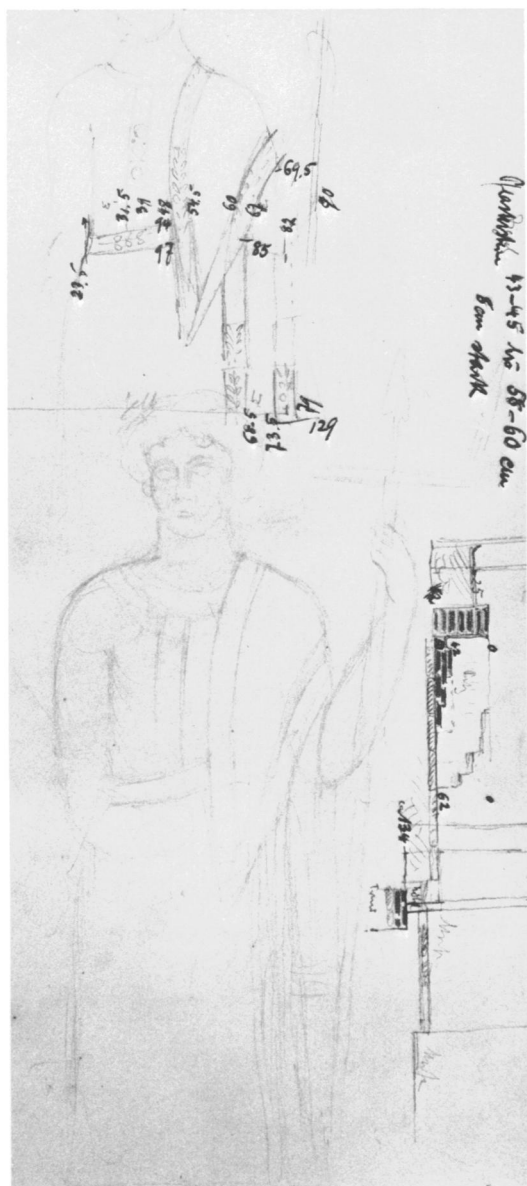
192. Herzfeld 1941, p. 296; and Rosenfield, pp. 22–24, 93–94, pl. II:19–27; pl. XVI:6,7; fig. 126.

193. Stawiski, p. 62; Lukonin, pl. 50; and Rosenfield, pl. XI:218,222–229.

194. Harper 1981, pp. 43–44, fig 13.

195. For numismatic examples see David Sellwood, *An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia* (London, 1971) Type 52/25, p.

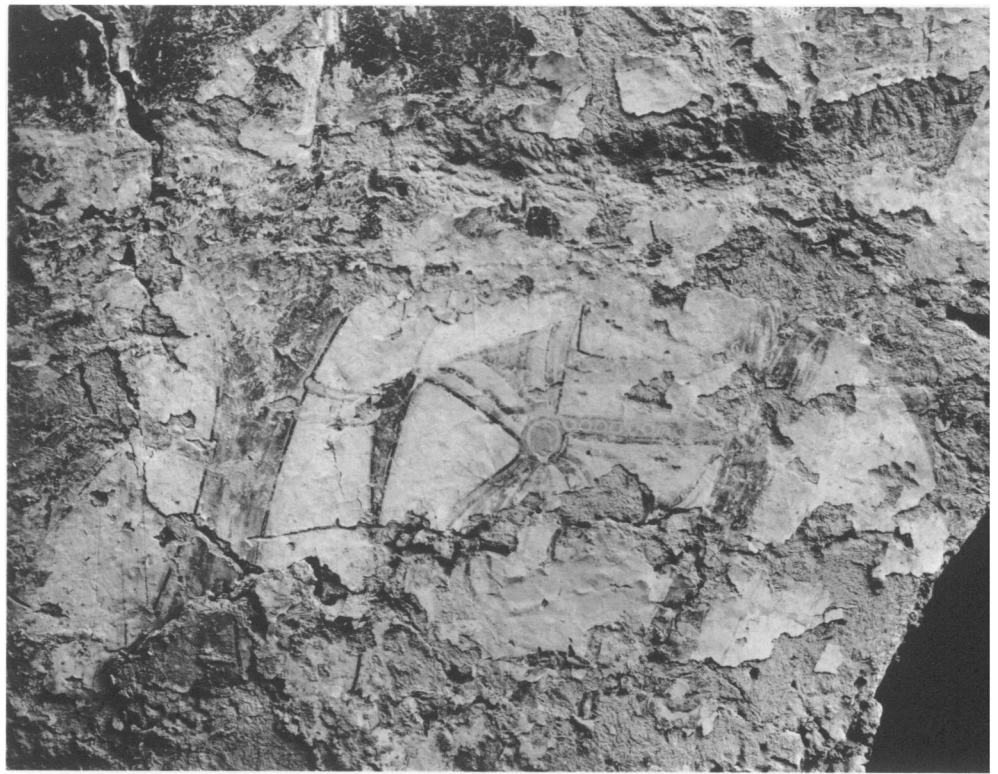
10. Trident bearer in the Painted Gallery; Herzfeld's sketches, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 35)



11. Head of the trident bearer; Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 4019)



12. Herzfeld's photograph, 1929, showing (from left to right) the trident bearer's left arm and part of the trident, the upper body of the female mace bearer, and part of the arch of the second window in the Painted Gallery (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 4022)



13. Detail of the female mace bearer's right arm, hand, and shoulder; Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 4023)



few images of Artemis show only a bow.¹⁹⁶ Farther east, Kushan kings, on their coins, hold maces with elongated oval heads,¹⁹⁷ and at Khalchayan a male figure, identified by the excavator as a ruler, also holds a mace.¹⁹⁸ In all of these representations, the mace, which does not match the Ghaga-shahr example with its narrow shaft and broad, apparently elliptical head, is carried in the right hand; in contrast, the painted figure at Kuh-e Khwaja holds her mace on the left side. A Kushan(?) plaque from Afrasiab, which shows an enthroned female with a mace resting against her left shoulder,¹⁹⁹ suggests that the manner in which the mace is carried may depend on the bearer's gender; unfortunately, however, the plaque gives us no indication as to whether the person depicted is mortal or divine. Her jewelry is of no help, either, in the search for an identification, for the bracelet and roundel can be duplicated from Palmyra to India from the first through at least the sixth century A.D.

The distinctive gesture of the female figure, drawing a mantle or veil over her right shoulder, is equally ambiguous. This gesture, related to that of the bride removing her veil in the presence of her husband, is known in Greek art from at least the early fifth century B.C.,²⁰⁰ but does not appear in Iranian art. It does appear in a Buddhist relief from Takht-i Bahi, a site that also has architectural parallels with Kuh-e Khwaja.²⁰¹ By Roman times, the gesture did not always indicate marriage or sexual intimacy.²⁰² Nonetheless, the pairing of the male and female figures between the windows at Kuh-e Khwaja, and the use of the hand nearest the male figure to adjust or open the mantle, indicate that the figures are meant to be seen as a pair. Furthermore, the uncertainty over the possible divinity of the pair is significant. Kushan rulers regularly took on divine attributes and epithets, including "God-King" (*begoshao*),²⁰³ and it is possible that this couple in the Painted Gallery were not strictly gods but rulers, or perhaps heroized or divinized ancestors.

The wall between the second and third windows was filled with three standing figures, all apparently male (Figures 14, 15).²⁰⁴ More damaged than the first section, this part of the wall also suffered from a broad crack that cut through the central figure. The collapse of the vault at this point further exposed the gallery to the weather. In this section, the dark ground was framed at each side by a light-colored

vertical strip. The strip on the right was marked by several tall thin lines that Herzfeld, in his reconstruction drawing,²⁰⁵ interpreted as corners of towers. The three figures—visible only from the waist up, like all the figures in the Painted Gallery—stood in three-quarter view, turning to the viewer's left. They were grouped very closely, so that one shoulder of each outside figure overlapped a significant part of the man between them; all three were alike in having broad, sloping shoulders, a thick neck, and a small head. The two on the left had dark hair and rounded beards. They wore tunics and mantles over their left shoulders in the manner of the mace carrier. The white mantle of the man on the far left had a broad black or purple border that contrasted with his blue tunic and its dark yellow central panel. The yellow mantle of the central figure, who was clad in a dark green tunic, had a dark border.

The third figure, the most damaged of the group, was also the most unusual. Unlike the other two, he was beardless and wore on his head a round, light-colored cap or helmet with a thin rim and a winglike feature rising at each side. The wing on the left still retained the round attachment by which it was fixed

158, Type 52/11, p. 155, Type 63/18, p. 195, Types 78/10, 78/18, p. 247; and W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins of Parthia* (London, 1903) pls. xix:9, xxi. For the rock relief at Tang-e Sarvak see Herrmann, p. 83; and Kawami, pp. 88–110, for the dating. See also Olivier Guillaume, "Nouvelles Tessères de Suse," *Syria* 59 (1982) pp. 251–252, fig. 6, no. 2669.2. I am grateful to Edith Porada for calling this to my attention. For new Bactrian examples see Viktor Sarianidi, *The Golden Hoard of Bactria* (New York, 1985) pp. 124, 168–196, 230–231, 246, nos. 2.1, 2.2, 3.78.

196. Sellwood, *Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia*, Types 30/25, 30/26, p. 81, Type 34/6, p. 94, Type 63/16, p. 194; and Wroth, *Parthia*, pl. xxvii:9.

197. Rosenfield, pp. 179–181, pls. III:47–60, v:95–99.

198. G. A. Pugachenkova, *Skulptura Khalchayana* (Moscow, 1971) p. 51.

199. *Ibid.*, pl. 49.

200. Martin Robertson, *A Short History of Greek Art* (Cambridge, 1981) pp. 59, 61, 84, 104, 173, figs. 85, 124, 144, 236; and John Boardman, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* (New York, 1970) p. 299, no. 733.

201. Colledge, pl. 24b.

202. John Ward-Perkins and Amanda Claridge, *Pompeii A.D. 79: Treasures from the National Archaeological Museum, Naples, with Contributions from the Pompeii Antiquarium and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston, 1978) II, pp. 166–167, fig. 133.

203. Rosenfield, pp. 202–206.

204. Neg. no. 4045.

205. Sk. XV, p. 31.

14, 15. Three male figures between the second and third windows of the Painted Gallery
(photos: Herzfeld Archive)



14. Herzfeld's watercolor sketch, date unknown (color slide 8225, neg. no. 6336)



15. Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (neg. no. 4045)

to the headgear. Herzfeld's retouched photographs and sketch (Figure 14) of this group show an additional wing on top of the head, but the actual plaster was damaged and no clear indication of such a wing can be seen in the original photograph (Figure 15). All that remained was a small ferrule like that of the wing on the left. The dark ground retained no remnant of a central wing, and whatever the missing element was, it must have been small and perhaps vertical.²⁰⁶ This third figure wore a white tunic bearing a red band with a yellow floral pattern down the front and two geometrically patterned bands on the upper right sleeve.²⁰⁷ His left side was partly covered by a large reddish-brown and yellow shield, whose concentric rings retained a suggestion of modeling.

Unlike the mace and trident bearers, these figures have little in the way of distinctive weapons, attributes, or gestures. The winged headgear of the right-hand man recalls the Greek messenger-god Hermes, but the shield is not consonant with this identification.²⁰⁸ Alternatively, he may be a mortal, for elaborate crowns with wings shown in profile are worn by Sasanian kings in the late third and early fourth century.²⁰⁹ By the fifth and sixth centuries the wings appear frontally, rising as a symmetrical pair from the top of the head.²¹⁰ Wings do not appear on Parthian, Kushan, or Kushano-Sasanian crowns, suggesting that the source for this distinctive headgear is western Iran rather than India or Central Asia.²¹¹ The large shield, typical of Greek or Roman rather than Iranian military equipment, underlines the western influence. Other details of dress, unfortunately, are of little help in identifying the other two figures or in ascertaining whether they represented mortal or divine characters.

The painting that would have occupied the space between the third and fourth windows in the Painted Gallery was already destroyed when Herzfeld visited Kuh-e Khwaja. Similarly, the space in the western half of the gallery, between windows five and six, was devoid of paintings. Between the sixth and seventh windows, however, Herzfeld recorded "two heads, the left with a red helmet, yellow dotted; the right [figure] in a red robe with yellow."²¹² No sketches or photographs of these figures are known, though one very dark photograph may be tentatively assigned to this place.²¹³ The photograph shows traces of black and white lines as well as areas of skin tone, but nothing more definite. The notation in Herzfeld's note-

book for the space between the seventh and eighth windows is illegible.

The painting between the eighth window and the western end of the gallery was very damaged; all one can see is a pale form against the dark ground.²¹⁴ Herzfeld drew this as a beardless male framed by a yellow nimbus and bearing a red and yellow crescent on his head (Figure 16).²¹⁵ For obvious reasons, Herzfeld identified him as a moon god. Few of the details of Herzfeld's sketches, such as the arrangement of the robe or the red and yellow vine-scroll pattern on the neckline, can be verified from the photographs. Only the general outline of the face, which turned slightly to the left, the dark hair or head covering, the faint suggestion of the halo, and the edge of the painted cornice above can be seen. The line defining the lower jaw was the sole surviving detail.

Crescent-crowned moon gods appear in the art of ancient Mesopotamia as early as the twentieth century B.C. and as late as the third century A.D.²¹⁶ Only one example, a Sasanian stamp seal, is known from

206. The plumelike ornament rising from the helmet of Athena on one of the rhyta from Nisa may be the type of element indicated. See Pugachenkova 1958, p. 165, nos. 9, 22. Another example occurs on the helmet of a defeated horseman identified as a Georgian in the relief of Hormuzd II (302–309) at Naqsh-i Rostam. See Georgina Herrmann, *Naqsh-i Rostam 5 and 8: Sasanian Reliefs Attributed to Hormuzd II and Narseh*, *Iranische Denkmäler* (Berlin, 1977) pp. 7–9, pl. 7.

207. Sk. XV, p. 32.

208. A female figure with winged headgear on an ivory rhyton from Nisa was identified as Hera by the excavators. See Masson and Pugachenkova, *Parthian Rhytons*, p. 69, no. 30, pl. 32. It is unlikely that Athena is the deity represented, as her standard headgear is quite different.

209. Lukonin, pls. 113, 114, 118, 151, 207; and Harper 1981, pp. 25, 30, 37, pl. 2.

210. Lukonin, pls. 123, 143; and Hubertus von Gall, "Globus oder Diskus auf der Krone Hosrows II," in *Orientalia J. Duschesne-Guillemain Emerito Oblata* (Leiden, 1984) p. 182, fig. 1, pls. xxiv–xxvi.

211. Winged headgear for mortal rulers did penetrate former Kushan areas by the 5th century, to judge from the remains at Kuev-Kurgan in Uzbekistan. See Vadim M. Masson, "The Forgotten Kushan Empire: New Discoveries at Zar-tepe," *Archaeology* 37:1 (1984) p. 37.

212. Sk. XV, p. 30.

213. Neg. no. 4046.

214. Neg. no. 4025; color slide 4025.

215. Sk. XV, p. 30.

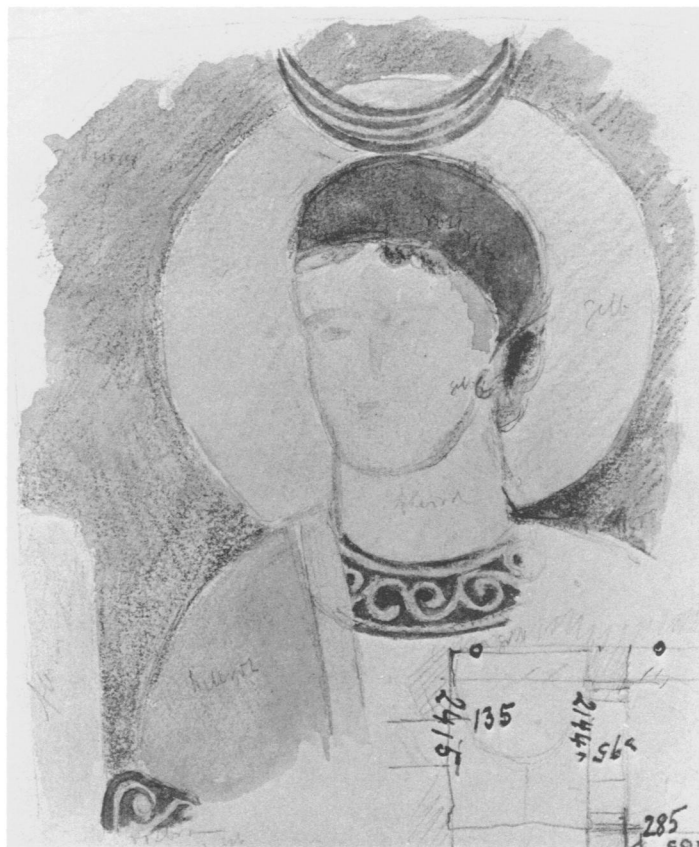
216. Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London, 1969) pp. 72, 73, pl. 194; and Colledge, pl. 11c.

Iran, however.²¹⁷ Male lunar deities are known farther east, the most important being the Indian Shiva²¹⁸ and the Kushan Mao (Mah).²¹⁹ A few, rare representations use the Greek-based name Salene to identify the figure.²²⁰ Many of the Kushan representations also have a crescent rising from their shoulders, an attribute that appears as late as the sixth century in the Buddhist frescoes of Fondukistan in Afghanistan.²²¹ The fact that the Kuh-e Khwaja figure is male underscores that it is indigenous. The Greco-Roman lunar deity Artemis or Selene is female.

Stein, the first to explore the Painted Gallery, removed a section of painting from the window wall, noting that the plaster was harder and finer than that of the South Gate paintings.²²² This fragment, now in the National Museum of India, New Delhi, depicts a scene of two life-size beardless males shown in profile. Clad only in light-colored drapery about the waist, both figures hold long lances. The man on the left bends forward, grasping his leveled lance with both hands as if to drive it into the figure on the right, who leans back as if anticipating the thrust, his weapon remaining upright, supported by his left hand. The legs are missing, but from the fragmentary remains both men seem to be seated on or astride dark, slightly curving forms.

Above the scene runs a section of painted cornice with its dentils, beribboned laurels, and dark red bands, indicating that the fragment was clearly part of the series of paintings revealed and described by Herzfeld. Unfortunately, Stein did not record the exact location of the section he took, but it appears to have been somewhere near the center of the gallery, in the area of the head of the stairs. The space between the windows nearest this opening was “empty” when Herzfeld visited Kuh-e Khwaja, and it is probable that Stein’s fragment came from either the eastern or western side of the opening. Indeed, Herzfeld labeled the space directly to the east of the stair opening “destroyed” (“Zerstört”),²²³ and it is tempting to place the Stein piece between windows three and four (Figure 17).

While Stein’s example matches the Herzfeld paintings in scale, style, and upper borders, it differs from them in two major ways: first, the figures are active—particularly the male on the left, who lunges forward; second, the ground is white, unlike the dark purplish ground of the Herzfeld paintings. These



16. Herzfeld’s sketch of the crescent-crowned figure between the eighth window and the western end of the Painted Gallery, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 30)

two characteristics raise the possibility that the window wall of the Painted Gallery bore one (or perhaps two) significant scenes of action set off by a white ground, and that these were witnessed by the row of standing figures painted between the other windows.

The classically beardless heads in profile and the bare torsos of the men in the Stein fragment suggest that the event depicted occurred prior to the time of

217. Harper 1978, p. 149.

218. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York, 1963) pp. 310, 315.

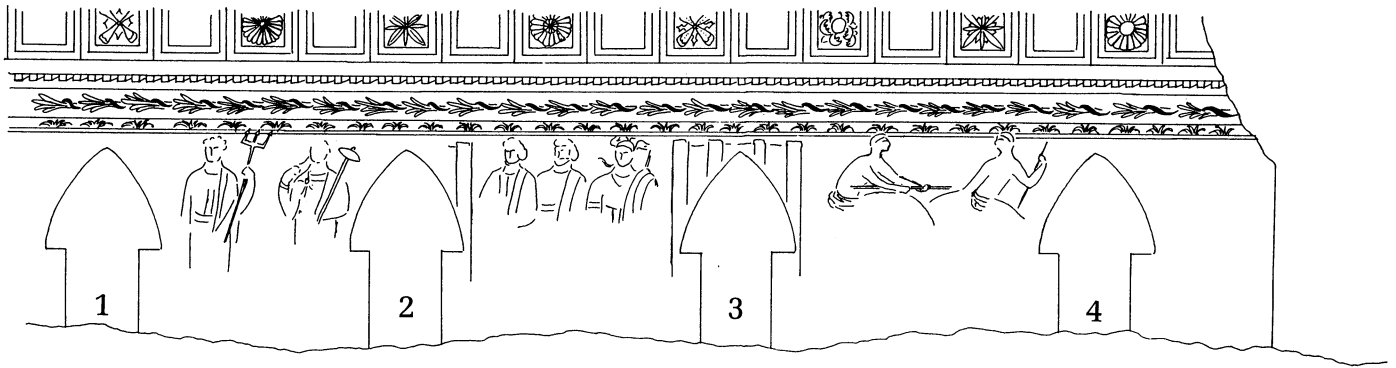
219. Rosenfield, pp. 72, 80–81, pls. III:59, VI:103–112.

220. *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 98.

221. J. Hackin, “Travaux en Afghanistan,” *Revue des arts asiatiques* 12 (1938) p. 9, pl. VII:23.

222. Stein, II, pp. 919–920.

223. Sk. XV, p. 30.



17. Reconstruction of the eastern half of the window (south) wall of the Painted Gallery (drawing: author)

Herzfeld's paintings. It is probable that a combat scene was intended, though the type of combat is not clear. If both figures rode horses, the distinctive equine heads and necks should appear between the figures; and the dark sloping form behind the right figure does not resemble a horse's back or hindquarters. Camels, with their easily identifiable silhouettes, are even less likely mounts here. Elephants, however, fit the two dark shapes between the combatants, the sloping form on the right having the characteristic slant of an elephant's back.

Elephants appear on the coins and metalwork of Central Asia, especially in Bactria, whose early Greek rulers were displayed with elephant-scalp helmets.²²⁴ Seleucid coins bear images of elephants and elephant combat,²²⁵ and the Sasanian rulers Shapur I (241–272/3) and Khusro II (591–628), who had elephants in their armies,²²⁶ included them in their triumphal sculpture and hunting reliefs.²²⁷ At least one small-scale Sasanian sculpture of an elephant is also known.²²⁸ Thus, a surprisingly long tradition of elephant representation in Iran and Central Asia can be documented.

The laurel festoon that runs along the painted cornice supports an interpretation of the Stein painting as triumph through combat or contest. The front of a painted altar from the domestic quarter of Hellenistic Delos features two boxers or wrestlers struggling beneath a laurel festoon, while the sides of the altar show spectators or witnesses with palm branches.²²⁹ However, both the location of the Stein piece and its interpretation remain hypothetical, of course, in the absence of more specific documentation.

The walls and vaults of the window recesses were also decorated, and at least two windows still retained some of their painted ornament. The second window from the east end of the gallery was described by Herzfeld as having “coffers and pictures.”²³⁰ A few pages later, his notebook contains a sketch of the elevation of “the painted window, eastern part of the gallery.”²³¹ Herzfeld's use of the definite article (*das*) implies that this was the elevation for the only painted window on the east side. This window is probably the same one as was observed by the Italian restorers in the mid-1970s. Certainly their description of a rosette set in a geometric panel is congruent with Herzfeld's brief notation.²³²

224. For example, MMA acc. nos. 26.7.1430, 55.11.11, 55.11.12. See also Colledge, pp. 107, 115, pls. 39j,k,l, 46a; Lukonin, p. 215, pls. 38, 40; Masson and Pugachenkova, *Parthian Rhytons*, pp. 131–132; and Herrmann, p. 46.

225. Herrmann, p. 26; G. Hafner, *The Art of Crete, Mycenae and Greece* (New York, 1969) p. 213; and George F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia* (London, 1922) pp. cxlv–cxlvi, 191, pl. xxii:18.

226. Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV.1.14.

227. Herrmann, p. 134; Ghirshman 1962, pp. 184, 194, 196, 199; Ghirshman 1971, pp. 70, 89, pls. 15, 19–21, fig. 10; and Georgina Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, *Iranische Denkmäler* (Berlin, 1980–83) I, pp. 14–15, 43, pls. 9, 14, 15; II, pp. 31–32, fig. 3, pl. 29. For a summary of Sasanian Iran's relations with India see Jens Kröger, “Sasanian Iran and India: Questions of Interaction,” in Herbert Härtel, ed., *South Asian Archaeology 1979* (Berlin, 1981) pp. 441–448.

228. Harper 1978, pp. 172–173.

229. Bulard, *Délos: IX. Description des revêtements peints*, pls. III:2, v:1d, 1e, 2, VIII, XVI.

230. “Im Fenster Kassetten u. Bilder erhalten,” Sk. XV, pp. 29–30.

231. “Das bemalte Fenster, Ostteil d. Gallerie,” Sk. XV, p. 43, left.

232. Faccenna, p. 87, n. 5.

Two pages after he mentioned the painted window, Herzfeld made an annotated sketch of a row of five standing figures on the wall of a window recess in the eastern half of the Painted Gallery (Figure 18).²³³ Since he referred specifically to no other window in the intervening pages, we may assume that Herzfeld meant the second window as the location of the five figures.

All five figures were shown frontally, with their heads in profile to the viewer's right. Each figure had the right hand raised to chest level, while the left arm was held to the side and bent across the waist. All the figures had short dark hair and wore sleeved tunics of undetermined length. Four of the five, slightly overlapping, were roughly the same height and bearded. At the head of this static procession on the right was a figure half the size of the others. Substantial damage to the painting made it impossible to determine whether this was another bearded male or a beardless child.

This smaller figure carried an indistinct vertical item in the raised right hand. The man behind, clad in white, held in his right hand an almost white tulip-like flower with two green leaves and in his left a red-

dish ball-like object that could be interpreted as the hilt of a sword.²³⁴ His face had been vandalized, but sufficient detail remained for one to appreciate the subtle dark line of the profile with its aquiline nose, and to note the naturalistic modeling of the cheek and nostrils in contrast to the superficially painted ear.²³⁵ The hair was short and fluffy, with small curls falling over the forehead. The beard, which is difficult to discern in Herzfeld's photographs, seems to have been fairly small and perhaps tapered.

Behind the flower bearer stood another white-clad figure, carrying in his extended right hand an oval ring.²³⁶ This ring was decorated with spirals or linked circles on a dark background. The man's face was badly damaged, though his pointed nose and sharp chin with its very short beard could still be seen.²³⁷ A line running obliquely downward from the base of the nose defined the contour of the cheek, and an adjacent horizontal line suggested the mouth. Above the head were two small flowers, one with four petals

233. Sk, XV, p. 45; "Festerwand, Westseit in ostl. Hälfte d. Gallerie."

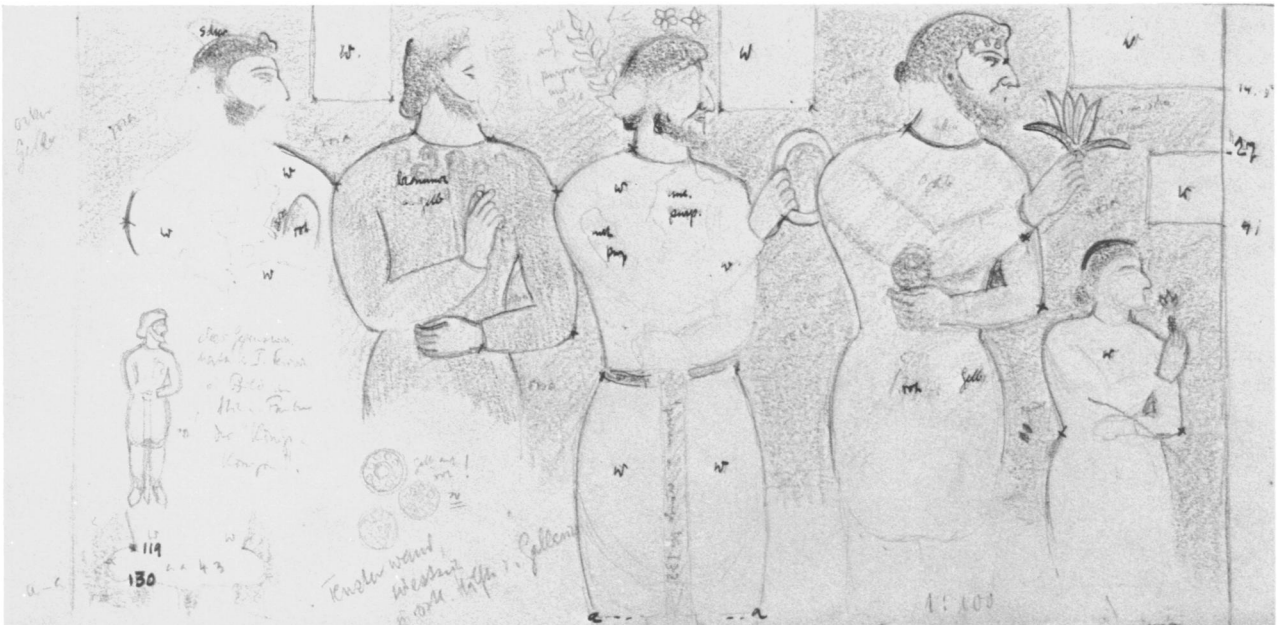
234. Neg. no. 4016.

235. Neg. no. 4041; color slide 5117.

236. Herzfeld described all the figures as carrying flowers (Herzfeld 1941, p. 297), but this is not the case.

237. Color slide 5110.

18. Herzfeld's sketch, 1929, of the five figures in the second window recess of the Painted Gallery (photo: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 45)



and one with five, and behind it rose a pale yellow leafy branch, rather like a stylized laurel.²³⁸ The man may have worn some sort of headband or coronet to which these elements were attached. This figure was also distinguished from the others by his thin belt and his inverted sword, held by the hilt in the left hand.

Behind the ring bearer stood a man in a dark red robe, which was decorated on the upper part with yellow circles; other ornament appeared faintly along the robe's neckline.²³⁹ Herzfeld had drawn the yellow circles separately as roundels with smaller circles inside them, but these details and several others are not visible in the photographs. The face and the top of the man's head were obliterated, but in the photograph a dark outline clearly indicated the hair, which fell with a gentle curve down the neck, and continued from the neck along the top of the shoulder. A second line marked the top of the beard but there was no indication of its extent or shape. Herzfeld's sketch shows part of an eye and more of the beard, elements that cannot be confirmed in the photographs.

The figure at the extreme left was the most damaged of the five, and only traces of his shoulder, torso, and upper head remained.²⁴⁰ His white robe, where it still existed, contrasted with the reddish ground and with the dark red of his neighbor's garment. The sure, supple lines of the nose, eyebrow, and forehead recall the features of the flower bearer, as does the modeling at the bridge of the nose. It seems from these details that one hand was responsible for all five figures.

These figures have been considered Parthian, but it is readily apparent that their faces in profile, their posture, and their dress are typically Sasanian. Parallels are not found in the figural arts of the Parthian period (ca. 250 B.C.–A.D. 224), with its emphasis on frontality.²⁴¹

Rows of male attendants, shown frontally with heads in profile, appear in royal reliefs throughout the Sasanian period. They may stand with arms folded, or with the right hand raised before them. Frequently they hold the long Sasanian sword before their bodies.²⁴² The arrangement of the Ghaga-shahr figures, with the shoulder of one figure slightly overlapping the man behind, the broad and simple forms of the neck and upper torso, and the placement of the left arm across the front of the body find paral-

els most frequently in the reliefs of the third century, particularly those of Ardashir I (224–241) and Shapur I at Firuzabad and Naqsh-e Rujab.²⁴³

Similar rows of male figures also appear in the wall paintings of Fayaz Tepe, a Buddhist shrine near Kara Tepe in northern Bactria, active between the second and fourth centuries.²⁴⁴ The donors of Fayaz Tepe have small heads shown in profile with short hair, and the same thick necks and broad shoulders as the Kuh-e Khwaja figures. Thus, the composition of the Kuh-e Khwaja painting, and the proportions of its figures, may indicate Bactrian rather than Sasanian influence.

The royal Sasanian reliefs do not offer many parallels to the short hair and short tapered beards of the painted figures. A few attendants of Shapur I at Naqsh-e Rujab and of Bahram II (276–293) at Naqsh-e Rostam affect the same hair style.²⁴⁵ Comparable heads on Sasanian royal silver are also uncommon, and all date to the late third and early fourth century.²⁴⁶ Engraved seal stones provide some representations of individuals with short hair and short tapered beards, though these two characteristics are not always found together.²⁴⁷

238. Traces of leafy branches can be seen near the heads of the Sasanian knights on relief III at Bishapur, left side, register 3, figures 4 and 5. The relief is dated to the reign of Shapur I. See Herrmann, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs*, I, pp. 15–16, pls. 17, 21, 22.

239. Neg. nos. 4015, 4018.

240. Neg. no. 4037; color slide 5108.

241. For a survey of the art of this period see Kawami.

242. For examples of these swords see Harper 1978, pp. 83–84.

243. Louis Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres de l'Iran ancien* (Brussels, 1983) pp. 62–66, 126–127, pls. 17, 20.

244. Stawiski, pp. 137, 141, pl. 102; and Tokyo National Museum, *Cultural Contacts Between East and West in Antiquity and the Middle Ages from the USSR* (Tokyo, 1985) no. 66 (color photo).

245. Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs*, pp. 128, 134, pls. 20, 26; and Lukonin, pl. 124.

246. Harper 1981, pp. 25–31, 36–37, pls. 3, 6. Attendants on the late Sasanian plate from Strelka (*ibid.*, pp. 100, 110–111, pl. 19) have very short hair and short pointed beards, though their smooth, domed headgear creates quite a different appearance overall.

247. Lukonin, pls. 100, 102, and esp. 103; Ghirshman 1962, p. 241, fig. 294F; Christopher J. Brunner, *Sasanian Stamp Seals in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1982) pp. 54, 57; and A. D. H. Bivar, *Catalogue of Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals: II. The Sasanian Dynasties* (London, 1969) pls. 1–3.

The objects held by at least two of the figures—the tuliplike flower and the ring—appear not only in the royal reliefs but also in the less monumental and often nonroyal arts of the Sasanian period. Both male and female figures hold a single flower in the reliefs of Bahram II;²⁴⁸ the flower also appears on silver plates and bowls, primarily from the late third and early fourth century, and on seals.²⁴⁹ The form of the flower varies from a round lotuslike bud to a small foliate sprig. The tuliplike flower from the Painted Gallery, with its petals and pair of slender framing leaves, is found by itself on engraved seal stones, perhaps as a symbol of growth and prosperity.²⁵⁰

Pairs of figures holding or passing a ring appear in scenes of investiture and marriage.²⁵¹ More unusual are scenes in which a single figure holds a ring as an attribute. This occurs in two royal reliefs from the reign of Bahram II, in which the ring bearer is identified as the crown prince, later Bahram III. The single figure with a ring also occurs on a few seal stones and on a third-century bone plaque from Olbia.²⁵²

When compared with other Sasanian art, the Painted Gallery figures appear to reflect the style of royal art in the late third and early fourth century. There is nothing specifically royal about the Painted Gallery composition or iconography, however, and indeed the hair and beard styles of the figures indicate associations outside Sasanian court circles.

Four white rectangles more or less adjacent to the heads of the figures stood out clearly from the dark ground. Though these rectangles were blank when Herzfeld photographed them, they may have held, or been designed to hold, painted inscriptions identifying the five people depicted. Similarly placed identifying inscriptions are carved on rock reliefs in Iran,²⁵³ and painted inscriptions have also survived.²⁵⁴

Herzfeld's notes place the five-figure painting in the second window from the east end of the Painted Gallery, but Herzfeld did not indicate on which side of the window he found it. The exact placement of the painting is significant, for it determines the orientation of the figures. Did they face outward to the Central Court or inward to the Painted Gallery? Did they turn their backs on the figures in the gallery, or did they raise their hands in salute to them? Herzfeld's photographs show a light source both in front

of and behind the figures. One source would have been the collapsed roof of the Painted Gallery; the other would have been the courtyard itself, after the buttresses of the second stage had been removed, opening the original windows. Herzfeld's published description implies that the figures faced inward,²⁵⁵ and his sketch may be interpreted in the same way by assuming that the vertical line before the figures is the inner edge of the window. This edge would have been clear and easy to record, whereas the faint line behind the figures would have been the less visible outer corner of the window that was damaged and/or obscured by the construction of the buttresses of the second phase. One photograph²⁵⁶ shows the edge

248. Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs*, pp. 80–81, 135–136, pl. 27; and Leo Trümpelmann, *Das Sasanidische Felsrelief von Dārāb*, *Iranische Denkmäler* (Berlin, 1975) pp. 1, 2, 4, 20, pl. 5, where it is dated to the reign of Shapur I (241–272/3).

249. For the flower on silver plates and bowls see Harper 1981, pp. 24–25, 27, 37, 108–109, pls. 1, 2, 7 (all 3rd and early 4th century); and Harper 1978, p. 74 (late Sasanian at the earliest). For the flower on seals see Harper 1978, pp. 143, 145; Prudence O. Harper in Frye, ed., *Qasr-i Abu Nasr*, pp. 69–70, no. D.48; Brunner, *Sasanian Stamp Seals*, pp. 60–61; and Bivar, *Sassanian Dynasties*, p. 25, pls. 7, 8.

250. Christopher J. Brunner in M. Noveck, *The Mark of Ancient Man* (New York, 1975) p. 89, no. 89. For the identification of the flower as a pomegranate blossom see Harper in Frye, ed., *Qasr-i Abu Nasr*, p. 80. See also Brunner, *Sasanian Stamp Seals*, pp. 116–118; and Bivar, *Sassanian Dynasties*, p. 106–108, pl. 25.

251. The ring as a symbol of delegated authority has its origins in the late 3rd millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia. The motif seems to have spread to Iran only in the Parthian period (see Kawami, pp. 50, 165) and appears in the royal reliefs of the early Sasanian period. See Lukonin, p. 110, pls. 126, 127; and Herrmann, pp. 90–91. For the ring in scenes of marriage see Harper 1978, pp. 74–75, 148.

252. Lukonin, pl. 103; Brunner, *Sasanian Stamp Seals*, pp. 60, 64, 65; and Ghirshman 1962, pp. 270, 271. For the date of the Olbia plaque see E. Belin de Ballu, *Olbia* (Leiden, 1972) p. 181.

253. For instance, the Parthian reliefs at Shimbar and Tang-e Sarvak, and the Sasanian reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rajab. See A. D. H. Bivar and S. Shaked, "The Inscriptions at Shimbar," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27 (1964) pp. 269–290; W. B. Henning, "The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tang-i Sarvak," *Asia Major* n.s. 2 (1951) pp. 151–178; and Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III* (Chicago, 1970) p. 131, pls. 83, 85, 98. See also Richard N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (Cleveland/New York, 1963) p. 185, pl. 42.

254. Christopher J. Brunner, "The Iranian Epigraphic Remains from Dura-Europos," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92 (1972) pp. 492–497.

255. He called them "spectators" (Herzfeld 1941, p. 297).

256. Neg. no. 4016.

of the window against a very bright, virtually overexposed background. This bright light, which does not fall into the window, is from the late winter sun. Its southern slant, observable in all Herzfeld's 1929 photos, fell on the exposed northern wall of the Painted Gallery, providing only indirect, reflected light on the paintings Herzfeld photographed. Thus, the five standing figures were painted on the western wall of the window and faced inward, becoming a part, if only by their orientation, of the pictorial scheme of the Painted Gallery.

We may assume that all the windows of the Painted Gallery once bore painted coffering, for Herzfeld observed traces of painted coffers in the vault of the eighth and last window in the western end of the gallery, adjacent to the painting of the moon god.²⁵⁷

The back or north wall of the Painted Gallery was windowless and bore along its upper edge remnants of the same painted cornice noted on the window wall.²⁵⁸ However, only one section of the wall painting itself survived, directly opposite the trident bearer in the eastern half of the gallery. The plaster here was far more damaged than that of the window wall and fewer details survived. The collapse of the vault had exposed the surface not only to the rare rains but also to the fierce sunlight and to abrasion by wind-borne sand.

The only extant painting on the back wall showed three standing figures, one overlapping pair and a single figure barely visible on the left (Figure 19).²⁵⁹ The slender figures of the pair undulated in a sort of contrapposto, the slight curve implying a three-quarter stance with the figures looking to the viewer's right. The heads, hands, and indeed all details of the pair were obliterated, leaving only general shapes and areas of color. The darker of the two figures was clad in a long tunic that seems to have had a deeply cut V-shaped neckline edged by an even darker band. The figure's right hand may have been held across the chest, for a dark band appeared to mark the end of the sleeve. This figure is identifiable as male by the sword hanging from a thin belt worn low over the hips. The light, fluttering ties of the belt are one of the few details of dress that can be verified from the photograph.

The second figure, presumed to have been female, also wore a long V-necked tunic with a dark border at the neckline and the sleeve. Her left arm hung at the side while her right arm was concealed behind

the male figure. Herzfeld called this group "King and Queen."²⁶⁰ His detailed watercolor renderings and reconstructions of the scene (Figure 20)²⁶¹ illustrate royal headgear, hair styles, jewelry, and textile patterns, but none of these specifics can be confirmed in the photographs.

The "royal" couple were set within a frame of light and dark vertical bands. To the viewer's right, the end of a broad, light-colored ribbon fluttered across some of the vertical bands. The vague shape of a standing figure to the viewer's left was not included in all Herzfeld's sketches. Herzfeld's photographs show little of this figure except for the vertical strips of contrasting color on the lower portion of the garment.

Damaged as it was, the painting on the north wall showed clear differences in style from the paintings of the window wall. The human forms were willowy and far more slender than the broad-shouldered figures on the window wall. The degree of overlapping was much greater, too, and the background far more ornate than the simple dark ground of the window-wall paintings. Without additional photographic evidence it is impossible to say whether the paintings of the north wall showed the same concern for modeling of form and the same use of shaded edges and bright highlights seen in the better-preserved portions of the window-wall paintings.

These differences raise the possibility that the two walls of the Painted Gallery were not painted at the same time. This would not be surprising in a structure with as long and complicated a history as Ghagashahr, but without clearer documentation the chronology remains a matter of speculation. One can say, however, that before the addition of the buttresses in the second phase and before the reinforcement walls were erected within the gallery, the long corridor, its ceiling, and its windows were decorated with a complex scheme that featured figures in several types of dress framed by painted architectural details.

Given the Sasanian and Kushan parallels for the figures in the Painted Gallery, these paintings would

257. "In diesem Fenster Rest d. Gewolbe-Kassetten"; Sk. XV, p. 30.

258. Stein, II, p. 921.

259. Neg. nos. 4010, 4017, 4020.

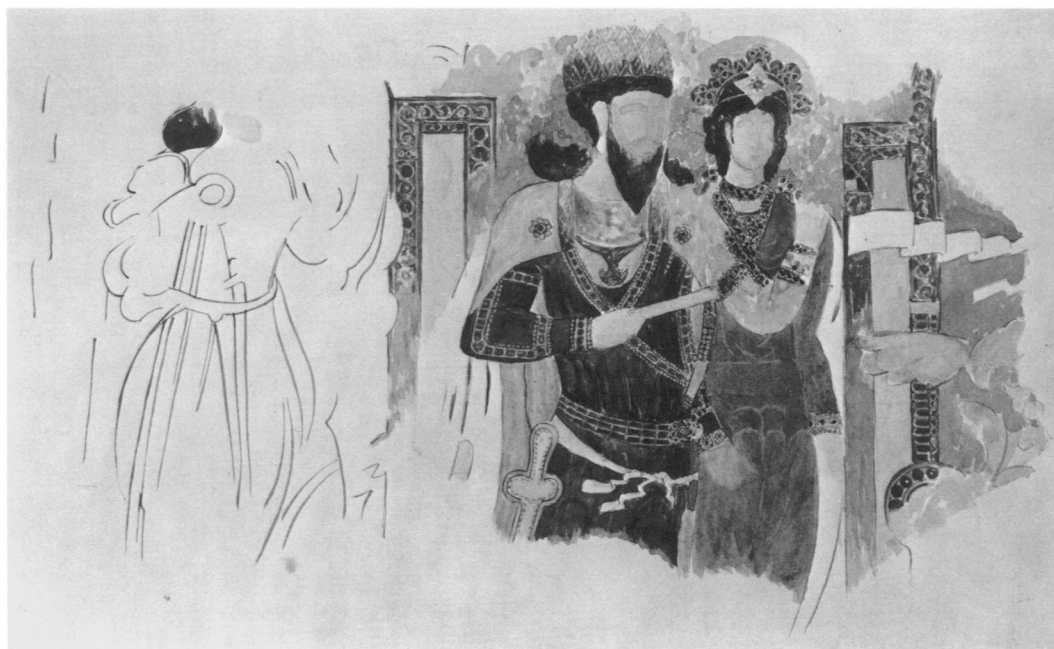
260. Herzfeld 1941, p. 295, pl. CIV top.

261. Sk. XV, pp. 37, 38; D-354, neg. no. 4021.

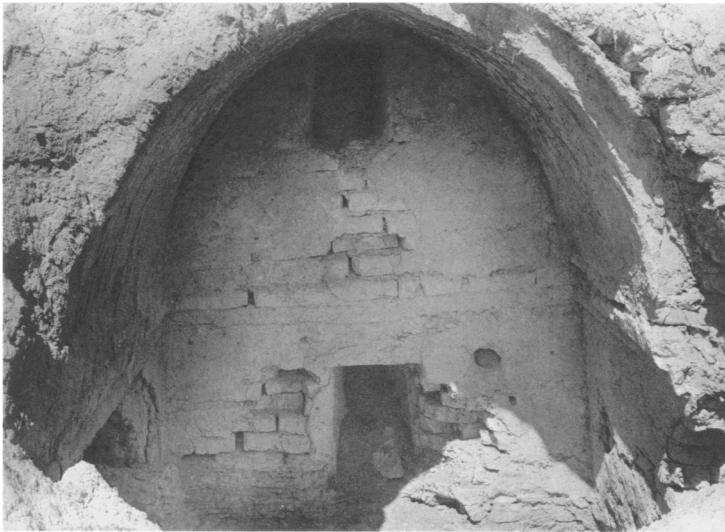
19, 20. The so-called King and Queen figures on the back (north) wall of the Painted Gallery (photos: Herzfeld Archive)



19. Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (neg. no. 4017)



20. Herzfeld's watercolor sketch, date unknown (D-354)



21. View of the upper chamber of the North Tower, the site of the two paintings now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (see Figures 24–27); Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 2097)

seem to date to the late third or early fourth century. Their iconography reflects a rich melding of classical, Iranian, and Indian influences. The classical and Indian influences, however, arrived by complicated routes that are very difficult to trace to their origins. It is not even evident what the purpose of the Painted Gallery was. In these ways the gallery points to the uncertainties of the political history of Sistan. Sasanians and Kushans were at various times allies and enemies, and it is not always easy to separate the ruling elite of both groups. In view of the late third-century rebellion of Kushanshah Hormizd I, brother of Sasanian King Bahram II, it is tempting to see the figures of the Painted Gallery as reflecting Kushan influence and the stucco sculpture as evidence of royal Sasanian activity.²⁶²

The North Gate

The north terrace with its Temple and subsidiary buildings was contained within a thick defensive wall. The only entrance, Herzfeld's North Gate, was a two-story vaulted structure with a dogleg plan.²⁶³ Fitted into the angle of the North Gate on its west side was a small tower;²⁶⁴ its upper room, which was the high-

est point of Ghaga-shahr and would have caught any breeze, retained traces of wall paintings (Figure 21). Two fragments of these paintings, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, are the only surviving examples of all the paintings Herzfeld recorded.²⁶⁵

Additional paintings may have been visible in or near the North Gate, for Stein refers to faded paintings in a small vaulted "cella vii" in the north corner of the defensive walls.²⁶⁶ In Stein's plan, however, "room vii" is not in the north corner but in the North Gate, presumably on the upper story. Stein's "chamber vi," which in his plan adjoined the North Gate, corresponds to Herzfeld's "upper tower room near the North Gate," the original location of the Metropolitan Museum's paintings.

The east side of the north terrace also had a tower room that jutted out and above the other remains.²⁶⁷ On his first trip to Kuh-e Khwaja in 1925, Herzfeld recorded wall paintings in or near this tower.²⁶⁸ In 1929 he made no mention of them, however; apparently they had deteriorated in the intervening years.

The Metropolitan Museum fragments have been associated with the ceiling coffers of the Painted Gallery,²⁶⁹ but Herzfeld clearly recorded that one of them came from a niche in the north wall of a small room in the tower on the west side of the North Gate (Figures 22, 23).²⁷⁰

The fragments consist of two heads. The larger of the two shows a beardless male in profile to the left (Figures 24, 25).²⁷¹ His black hair is short and curly, with the remains of a fillet or band of twisted white cloth near the top of the head. The nose is aquiline, the lips are full, and the jaw is rounded and heavy. The skin is a rich red brown, the color that tradition-

262. A. D. H. Bivar, "Sasanians and Turks in Central Asia," in G. Hambly, ed., *Central Asia*, Delacorte World History XVI (New York, 1969) pp. 51–52.

263. Sk. XV, p. 16 (partial elevation); neg. nos. 2099 (inside), 2062, 2101 (outside).

264. Sk. XV, pp. 13–14; neg. nos. 2097, 2098. See also Gulini, p. 416, fig. 277.

265. MMA acc. nos. 45.99.1, 45.99.2. Sk. XV, p. 9, records their original location (see Figure 23): "½ n. Gr. weißer Grund aus d. oberes Turm-Kammer neben N Tor in Fensterlaibung links 22.II."

266. Stein, II, pp. 912–913, pl. 53.

267. Neg. no. 3986.

268. Sk. XV, p. 7 (right).

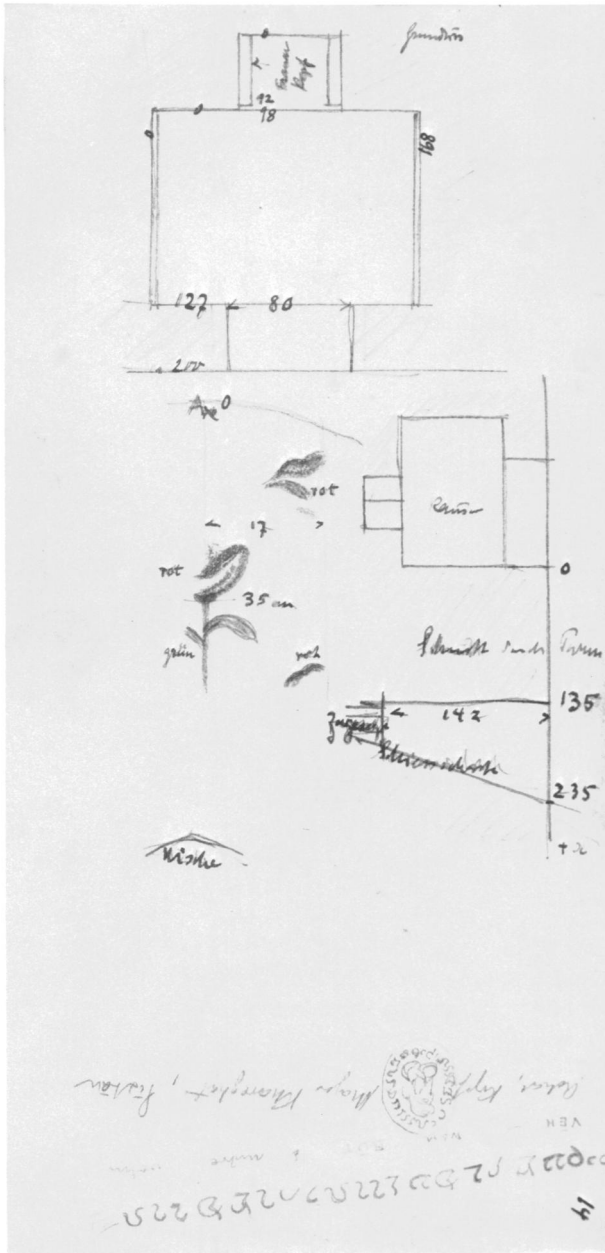
269. Faccenna, p. 89, n. 7.

270. Sk. XV, pp. 9, 13, 14, 20.

271. MMA acc. no. 45.99.2; neg. no. 4033.

ally denotes a male. The black lines defining the back of the neck and the edge of the garment at the base of the neck have largely disappeared, though Herzfeld's photograph shows these lines quite clearly. The figure's white eye, with its black outline, was inten-

22. Herzfeld's sketches, 1929, of the plan and elevation of the North Tower chamber and of remains of painted flowers (photo: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 14)



tionally mutilated by a carefully placed gouge in the center. Nonetheless, enough pigment remains to show that the configuration of pupil and iris touched only the upper lid, giving the face an uplifted gaze.

On the left side of the fragment, opposite the eye and the shoulder, are two bright pink oval forms partially outlined in black. The upper oval has a broad black band diagonally across it. The pink of these shapes is different in tone from the ruddy skin, so it is unlikely that they were the man's raised hands. In their much-reduced state they can only remind us that the figure was part of a larger and more complex scene.

The band of twisted white cloth on the head is the only distinctive attribute that survives. Similar headgear, based on the thick, ribbon-bound wreath of classical antiquity, appears in Iran in the Parthian period, crowning the heads of a few apparently immortal figures.²⁷² A Greco-Indian Nike from Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan²⁷³ wears related headgear that recalls the narrow turbans of early Buddhist figures from Afghanistan.²⁷⁴ Although these parallels place the head in an eastern Iranian and Central Asian context, they offer little help in identifying the person represented.

The second fragment shows a beardless head in profile to the right (Figures 26, 27).²⁷⁵ Herzfeld identified it as female, and later as a flute player,²⁷⁶ though we shall see that the first description is uncertain and the second incorrect. The fragment shows the same flat, linear style and limited color range as the other head, but it is smaller and painted by a different hand. The curve of the jaw is stiff and mechanical, produced in three separate strokes rather than in one smooth, continuous line as in the first head. Each of the three strokes is also thicker than the line of the first head, with abrupt and arbitrary changes in width. The short dark hair is smooth, unlike that of the first head, and its sleek shape is accentuated by the long lock falling in front of the ear. The eye has been scraped so that the pupil is totally

272. Ghirshman, *Bard-e Nechandeh et Masjid-i Solaiman*, pls. xxxii:1-4, cxxv:4-6.

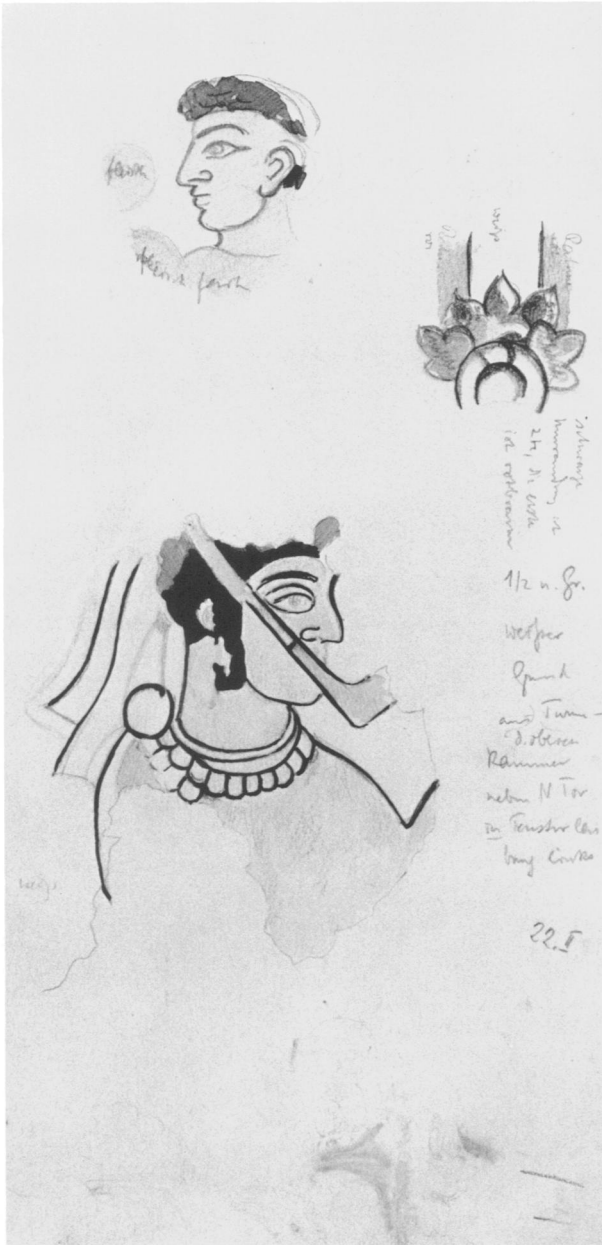
273. Sarianidi, *Golden Hoard*, p. 157, no. 6.3, pl. 99.

274. Colledge, pl. 25c.

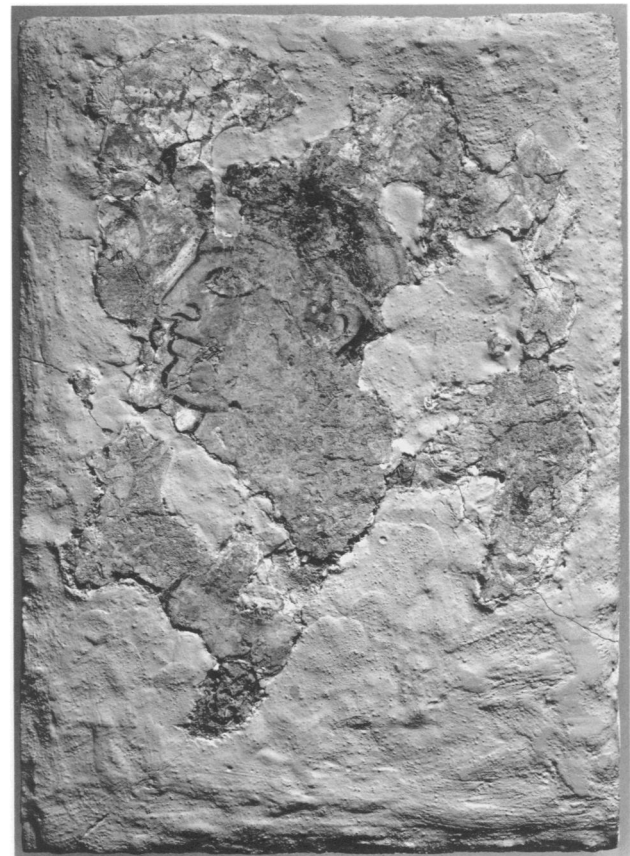
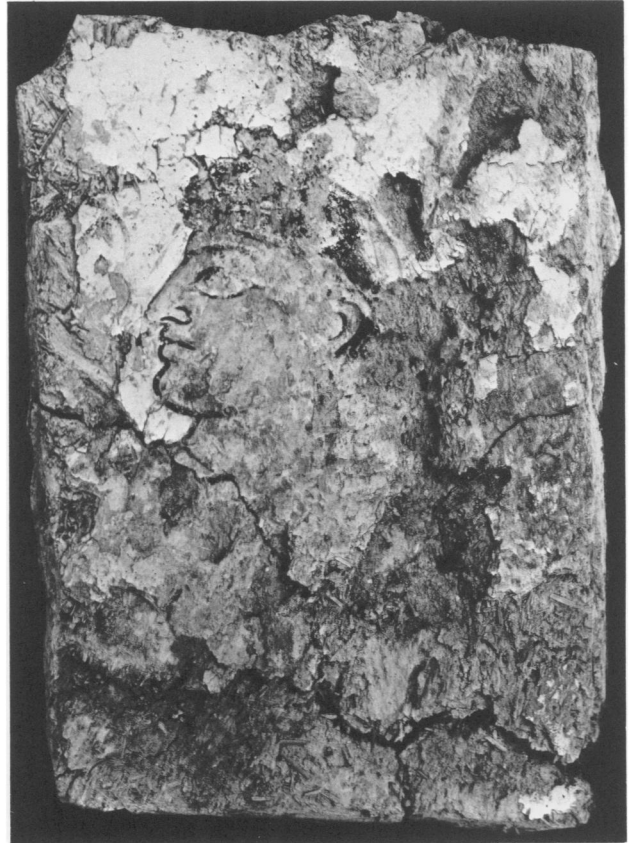
275. MMA acc. no. 45.99.1; neg. no. 4030.

276. For identification as female, Sk. XV, p. 14; for identification as a flute player, Herzfeld 1941, caption to pl. ciii (top left).

24, 25. Head of a man in profile to the left, from the North Tower chamber



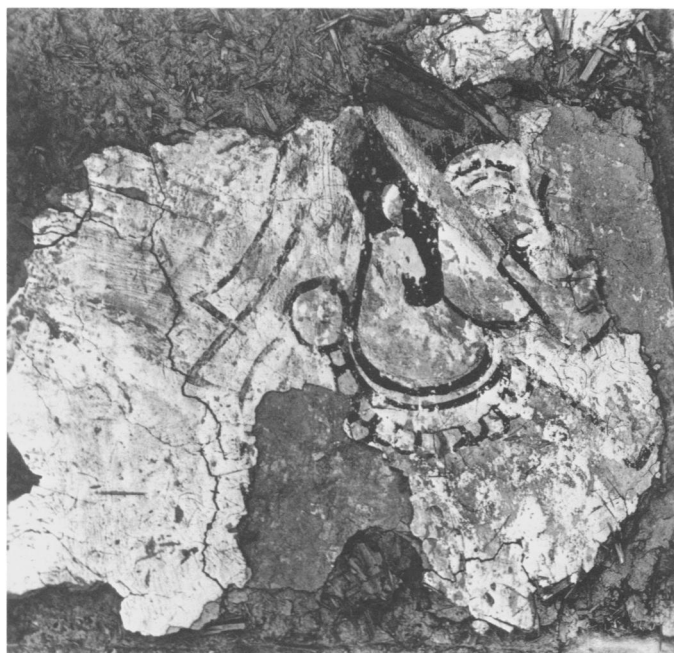
23. Herzfeld's sketches, 1929, of two paintings found in the North Tower chamber and of part of the decoration of the ceiling in the Painted Gallery (photo: Herzfeld Archive, Sk. XV, p. 9)



26, 27. Head of a person wearing a *padam*, from the North Tower chamber

LEFT:

24. Reproduced from Herzfeld's color slide, 1929; the blurring of some sections is due to the shifting of the color layers in the original film (photo: Herzfeld Archive, color slide 17, neg. no. 4033)

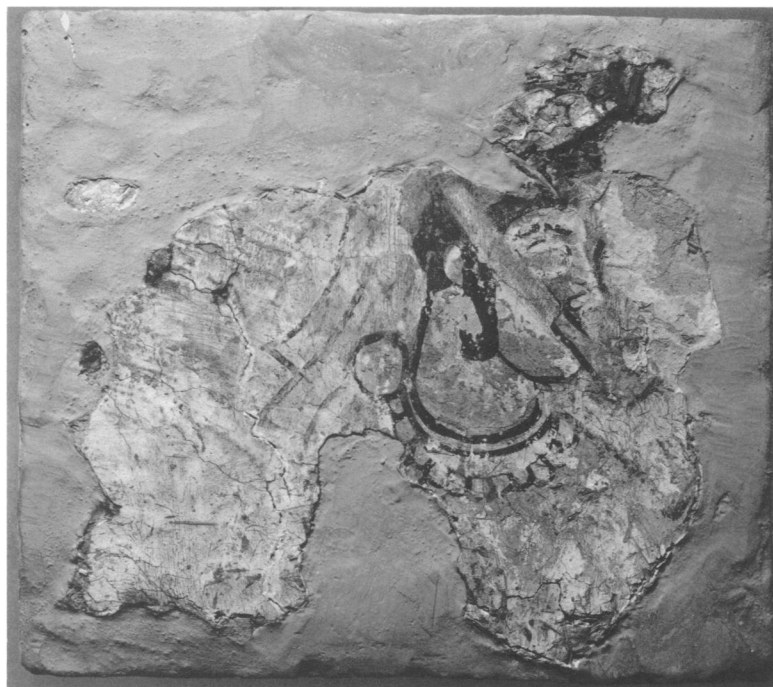


26. Herzfeld's photograph, 1929 (photo: Herzfeld Archive, neg. no. 4030)

27. The fragment in its present state. Overall, $8\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ in. (21×24.4 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 45.99.1

LEFT:

25. The fragment in its present state. Overall, $13\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. (34×24 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 45.99.2



erased; nonetheless, the upper and lower lids and the eyebrow can still be discerned. A long, thin band cuts diagonally across the head and cheek, terminating in a broad rectangular shape in front of the mouth. This element, which Herzfeld interpreted as a flutist's mouth-binding, is in fact a *padam*, a ceremonial mouth-covering mentioned in Iranian texts,²⁷⁷ and illustrated in Sasanian and post-Sasanian works.²⁷⁸ Four white ribbons fall at the back of the figure's neck, and these may be the ties of the *padam*, which would have been fastened on top of the head.

The figure wears a white necklace composed of two bands and secured at the back by a large roundel. The lower, broader band of this collarlike ornament has a row of semicircular tabs pendent from it. The figure's right shoulder is missing, though Herzfeld supplies it in his sketch;²⁷⁹ a portion of the left arm, bent upward at the elbow, suggests that the missing hand was held before the face.

Both fragments have a smooth ground of fine reddish-brown clay laid over a base or scratch coat of coarse clay mixed with chopped straw. This differs from the prepared plaster in the South Gate.²⁸⁰ The heads were first sketched with brown iron oxide pigment,²⁸¹ then the skin areas were painted with various iron oxide and gypsum mixtures. Finally, the black hair and details of eyes, ears, and costume were added with a carbon-based paint.²⁸² The image was finished with a thin black outline, and a whitewash of gypsum was applied to the ground. This method of painting and the sequence in which each element was laid down can be seen when the surface of either piece is examined under magnification. The gypsum ground consistently overlaps the black outline, which in turn is painted over the skin tone. The gypsum is never found beneath the brown underdrawing; this, in a Renaissance fresco, would be called a *sinopia*.²⁸³ The black lines were added late in the painting process, when the surface was fairly dry. The carbon-based pigment did not bond well with the other layers and has flaked off in many places. Under magnification, however, sufficient traces of it can be seen to follow the nearly lost lines.

The palette of the Metropolitan Museum heads seems limited in view of the use of yellow, green, purple, and blue in the South Gate paintings²⁸⁴ and in the Painted Gallery. It is possible, however, that the clothing of the North Gate figures was more colorful. Consideration of the varied and vivid pig-

ments used in the Achaemenid period (late sixth through fourth century B.C.),²⁸⁵ of the roughly contemporary Kushan paintings from Bactria,²⁸⁶ and of the seventh- to eighth-century wall paintings at Pianjikent²⁸⁷ only underlines these chromatic restrictions. They may have had more to do with the relative unimportance of the room than with the general availability of additional pigments.

The pigments, dissolved in water with perhaps some organic binders, were applied with a thin brush

277. Carter, "Royal Festal Themes" (cited in note 104), pp. 180, 191. For the use of the *padam* in Indian Zoroastrianism see Jivanji J. Modi, *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsis*, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1922) pp. 152–153. For Iranian practice see Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism: I. The Early Period*, Handbuch der Orientalistik (Leiden, 1975) pp. 189, 309, 322–323; and idem, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 1977) p. 231. The *padam* may be the *paragnathiades* of the "fire priests" seen by Strabo (*Geography*, XV.3.15) and is perhaps illustrated in an Achaemenid stone relief from Anatolia (Ghirshman, *Ancient Iran*, p. 347, fig. 440). For an apparently nonreligious depiction of a related mouth-covering from Susa see Ghirshman, *Ancient Iran*, p. 144, fig. 194. I would like to acknowledge my debt to James Russell, Columbia University, for his help with questions of Zoroastrian belief and practice through the ages.

278. Carter, "Royal Festal Themes," pls. v, vi, xi; Harper 1978, pp. 74–76; and Tokyo National Museum, *Cultural Contacts*, no. 86.

279. Sk. XV, p. 9.

280. Faccenna, p. 85, n. 3.

281. Kurt Wehlte, *The Materials and Techniques of Painting* (New York, 1975) pp. 98–99. Interestingly, among the strongest red earth (iron oxide) pigments mentioned by Wehlte was "Persian Gulf oxide."

282. *Ibid.*, pp. 167–168. See also Appendix.

283. Millard Meiss, *The Great Age of Fresco* (New York, 1970) p. 16. For a late medieval account of how to execute a *sinopia* see Cennino Cennini's *Il libro dell'arte* in E. G. Holt, *A Documentary History of Art I* (New York, 1957) p. 142. The use of *sinopia* antedates the Renaissance by millennia, however. For an Assyrian example see A. Parrot, *The Arts of Assyria* (New York, 1961) p. xv.

284. Faccenna, pp. 85–86.

285. Judith Lerner, "A Painted Relief from Persepolis," *Archaeology* 26 (1973) pp. 116–122 and corrigenda, p. 305; A. B. Tilia, "Color in Persepolis," *IsMEO Reports and Memoirs* 18 (1976) pp. 31–32, 68–69, pls. A, B; Stronach, *Pasargadae*, pp. 85–86; J. Perrot, A. LeBrun, and A. Labrousse, "Recherches archéologiques à Suse et en Susiane en 1969 et en 1970," *Syria* 48 (1971) p. 40; and Audran Labrousse and Rémy Bouchard, "La Fouille du palais du Chaour à Suse en 1970 et 1971," *Cahiers de la délégation archéologique française en Iran* 2 (1972) p. 83. For even earlier wall paintings see Yoko Tomabechi, "Wall Paintings from Till Barsip," *Archiv für Orientforschungen* 29/30 (1983–84) pp. 63–74 and esp. n. 33.

286. Azarpay, p. 35, n. 70.

287. *Ibid.*, pp. 161–165.

whose softness and flexibility can be seen in the better-preserved lines. The brush was made of hair rather than vegetable fiber, to judge from the bristles stuck in the plaster of the second fragment. This is rare physical evidence of painters' tools in the ancient Near East.

The second head, with its unusual headgear, is of particular interest, because it was altered at the very time it was being painted, and again shortly afterward. In examining this painting we come a little closer to the anonymous artisans responsible for these works. The head and neck were originally painted a strong, bright pink, the classical color for a female. This pink, which has a high iron content, was then concealed by an opaque white coat of gypsum on which the black outlines of the features were painted. The white skin was then painted the same ruddy tone as that of the larger head, presumably signifying a change in gender. The hair was not altered; the thin black pigment on the back of the head was painted directly on the brown clay ground before the color of the flesh was changed. The long black lock, however, was added later, on top of the final reddish skin color. The ornamental collar and the white ribbons seem to have been painted last. The black lines of the necklace overlap the ruddy flesh tint, and the "shadows" of three of the four ribbons show that they were painted, without a *sinopia*, after the background had been washed with gypsum and allowed to dry. The carbon pigment did not bond with the surface and the lines flaked off.

Fugitive pigment, however, was not the cause of the lack of detail in the eye and on the *padam* band. These two areas were carefully abraded, so that most of the paint was removed. This action was not accidental, for the scraped area is neatly confined to the eye and the band, stopping abruptly near the nostril. The reason for the abrasion is difficult to understand. Perhaps there was something unsatisfactory about the rendering of these elements and they were rubbed off to prepare for a repainting that never occurred; or it is possible that the alteration took place during the second, Islamic phase of the site and is an erasure of elements associated with the Zoroastrian religion.

With its heavy, hesitant brushwork, the deliberate change in the color of its skin, its scraped areas, and an inexplicable black line curving outward from the nose as if to delineate a frontal eye, the second head

stands in contrast to the first, with its fluid line and ease of execution. One is tempted to see the second head as the work of an apprentice or inattentive journeyman assigned to a back room under the eye of a more experienced artist. This same painter used the disintegrating brush that left its hairs embedded in the painting.

In this second fragment the form of the *padam*—a thin band tied across the mouth and fastened at the top of the head—is distinct from the loose, billowing version known on Sogdian reliefs and paintings of late Sasanian or post-Sasanian date.²⁸⁸ Instead, it closely resembles the *padams* worn by royal attendants in banquet scenes on a few post-Sasanian silver plates²⁸⁹ and on a painted vase excavated at Merv.²⁹⁰ These Central Asian parallels, which are all in secular rather than religious contexts, suggest that the second head was that of a servant or attendant at a banquet. The *padam* cannot, then, be taken as an indication of religious activity.

Another distinctive element of the second head is the lock of hair falling before the ear. It occurs in early Sasanian images²⁹¹ and in Central Asia, where it remained popular well past the Sasanian period.²⁹² It was always a female hair style.

The third distinctive attribute, the necklace or collar, evokes the typical Sasanian necklace of large beads, although it has no actual parallel in Sasanian art.

Herzfeld specified that the second head came from the western wall of the niche in the tower room; he did not note the exact location of the first head, but we may assume that it came from the same niche. The wall into which the niche was set was also decorated. It was painted with trilobed red flowers on thin green stems with occasional leaves, against a

288. Tokyo National Museum, *Cultural Contacts*, no. 86; and Azarpay, p. 200, pl. 21.

289. Carter, "Royal Festal Themes," p. 180, pl. v, fig. 3, pl. vi, fig. 4.

290. *Ibid.*, p. 191, pl. xi, fig. 10b; and Tokyo National Museum, *Cultural Contacts*, no. 81 (col. pl.). An interesting sidelight to this is the fact that the vase was excavated from a Buddhist stupa, where it had been reused as a receptacle for religious texts.

291. Harper 1981, pp. 32–35, pls. 5, 36, 38; and Harper 1978, pp. 48–49, no. 12; pp. 74–75, no. 25; p. 109, no. 4.

292. Carter, "Royal Festal Themes," pp. 191–192; Harper 1978, pp. 77–78, no. 26; Azarpay, pp. 64, 128, pls. 6, 12, 18; and Bussagli, *Central Asian Painting*, p. 25.

white ground (see Figure 22).²⁹³ The flattened, ornamental shapes of the flowers and the manner in which they were scattered over the ground find close parallels in the floral “fillers” on a post-Sasanian silver plate and on the painted vase from Merv,²⁹⁴ both pieces that show secular scenes of feasting and include *padam*-wearing attendants. Thus, the Metropolitan Museum fragments may be all that remains of a banqueting mural, a fitting decoration for a room well situated to be a cool and pleasant retreat.

The simplicity of the Metropolitan Museum fragments contrasts with the illusionistic structure of the Painted Gallery ceiling and the dense composition of the paintings in the South Gate. This suggests, at most, a late Sasanian date for the New York pieces.

The wall paintings of Kuh-e Khwaja, like the architecture of the site, do not form one contempora-

neous whole, but reflect changes, additions, and perhaps repairs made over a span of time. The earliest painting, a Bodhisattva on the wall embedded in the South Gate, illustrates the site's earliest function as a Buddhist shrine. The other paintings of the South Gate and those of the Painted Gallery show a mixture of Kushan and Sasanian imagery with divine and/or mortal figures painted in a variety of styles. This diversity reflects the varying tides of political power and patronage in the third and fourth centuries. The final paintings, the fragments from the North Gate, seem to be related to late Sasanian and post-Sasanian works depicting courtly pastimes; as now understood, they carry no religious meaning. Considered together, the murals of Kuh-e Khwaja provide an unexpectedly complex picture of artistic activity in Sistan and form the largest corpus of painting in ancient Iran.

293. Sk. XV, pp. 13, 14.

294. Carter, “Royal Festal Themes,” pl. v, fig. 3, pl. xi, fig. 10.

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Appendix

A TECHNICAL NOTE

Analysis and optical examination of pigment and ground samples from the two wall-painting fragments excavated at Kuh-e Khwaja and now in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. nos. 45.99.1, 45.99.2) indicate that the white ground is gypsum (calcium sulfate dihydrate), the black pigment is carbon, and the reds and flesh tones are iron compounds combined with gypsum. These are the only colors present, except for scattered green particles on acc. no. 45.99.2, which may be the result of the spattering of pigment that was applied elsewhere on the wall.

Samples of the white ground from both fragments dissolved without effervescence in dilute hydrochloric acid. When the solution dried, the characteristic "wheat sheaves" of gypsum were observed under the microscope. Analysis of the white-ground samples by scanning electron microscopy/energy dispersive X-ray spectrometry (SEM/EDS) showed the principal elements present to be calcium and sulfur, components of gypsum.

When samples from the red areas and from the flesh tones were dissolved in concentrated hydrochloric acid followed by potassium ferrocyanide solution, they gave a blue precipitate, indicating the presence of iron (III) compounds in the pigment. Samples of reds and of flesh tones dissolved without effervescence in dilute hydrochloric acid and, when dry,

formed "wheat-sheaf" needles characteristic of gypsum. Further microchemical tests revealed no trace of lake pigments.

Examination of the reds and flesh tones by SEM/EDS showed calcium, sulfur, and iron as the principal elemental components, confirming the presence of gypsum and iron compounds. More specific mineralogical information might be provided by X-ray diffraction. No mercury was found by SEM/EDS, eliminating the possibility of vermilion (cinnabar).

Optical examination indicated that the black pigment was some form of carbon black. The atomic number of carbon is too low for elemental identification by the Museum's SEM/EDS. Samples of black pigment were, however, analyzed by SEM/EDS for the presence of phosphorus, and none was found, thus eliminating the possibility of bone or ivory black, both of which are composed primarily of calcium phosphate.

The scattered green particles present on part of the surface of acc. no. 45.99.2 were analyzed by SEM/EDS and found to be primarily copper, with zinc as a secondary component. In addition to the elements already mentioned, SEM/EDS revealed variable amounts of sodium, magnesium, silicon, aluminum, potassium, and chlorine, all commonly found in soil such as that of eastern Iran.

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