



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.35465

ALEXANDER THE GREAT: IN THE REALM OF EVERGETÁES

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Received: 30/05/2015

Accepted: 03/12/2015

ABSTRACT

Sistan, in the eastern half of Iran, is one of the most important archaeological regions from where archaeological sites belonging to the Bronze Age onwards have recovered in abundance. During the Achaemenids, this region was known as Dranka/Zranka that remarkably covered a vast area and population. Greeks called this vast territory as Drangiana. According to Greek historians, Drangiana consisted of two main parts: the northern part was Prophtasia and the southern was known as Agriaspé/ Ariaspé. It is said that Alexander the Great spent the winter in Ariaspé while on his way to conquer India. Greeks called the people of Ariaspé as Evergeté (donor). They not only helped Syrus the Great in his war against Massagetai at a time when he was suffered food shortages in the Iranian desert but, they also welcomed of Alexander the Macedonian in the winter when he was going to conquer India. So, I tried to determine the actual location of Evergeté realm in old Drangiana (Sistan) using historical approach which is based on Greek documents as well as archaeological surveys. During a systematic archeological survey carried out by a large team of archaeologists in the south half of Drangiana (now; Sistan) we identified about 110 Achaemenid era sites also providing further evidences for the significance in connection with the post achaemenids. So, the Evergeté domain can be distinguished in the delta of Rud-e Biaban that is currently deserted and uninhabited. If it is excavated in some of the sites, will get a lot of information of late Achaemenids and Greeks in this region.

KEYWORDS: Sistan, Archaeological Studies, Achaemenid Period, Evergeté, Alexander the Great

1. INTRODUCTION

In Para 6 of the Bistoon inscription, Darius had mentioned the name of 23 countries that were respected by the law of his domain. One of these countries was Zranka/Dranka (Sistan) that has also mentioned repeatedly in the inscription of Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rostam and Shusa (Sharpe, 2004: 33). In the Bistoon rock inscription, the correct names of this country and its people have come as Z-r-k (Zranka). According to the inscription, in Elamite, the name has been written as Sir-ra-an-qa, in Babylonian as Za-ra-an-ga, in Egyptian as Srng or Srnk, in Greek as Zarangiane, Zarangaioi, Zaranngai (Arian and Ezidoor) and Sara,ngai (Herodotus) and in the Latin as Zarangae (Pliny) (Schmitt, 1995: 534-537).

Greeks remembered Sistan (map1) with different names such as Drangiana or Zarangia, Sarangai, Drangai and Drankai (Daffina, 1967: V). The names are a changed form of "Dranka" in Persian and "Zrankae" in Median.



Figure 1 Map of Iran. Sistan (hatched) is located in the East

The geographical limit of Zrankae based on the Achaemenid royal inscriptions and with respect to its peripheral regions is distinguished completely. In the north of Zrankae, there was Haraiva (Herat) or Arya, in its east there was Haraுவதிš (Kandahar) or Arakhosia (Daffina, 1967: V). This historian believes that the center of this region during Darius was Arghandab Valley and Satrap quarters were the present day Kandahar (Ibid). According to Strabo, Drangiana which was surrounded by Aria in the north, by Karmania in the west, by Gedrosia (Balochistan/Makya) in the south and, by Arakhosia. Ariana (Greater Khurasan) in the east was sometimes referred to all the above

countries spreading in eastern Iran. These people spoke the same language however, dialectal differences existed there. Among these tribes, the residents of Zrankae possessed the Persian culture and spoke the prevalent Persian (Achaemenid) language (Bryant, 1999: 1057).

Zaranngai had various powerful tribes, each with sovereignty over large swathe of areas of Sistan. Ptolemy has mentioned three major tribes in the region: Darandae which lived in the north, close to the border with Aryan (Herat). Probably, their place of residence was in the north of the sea in Farah region. Batrian was another tribe who lived in the east of Zaranngai and adjacent to Arakhosia (Kandahar). Tatakene (alike) lived in between the above two above tribes. Tomashek corrected Darandae as Drangae and Tatakene as Paraitakene (Schmitt, 1995: 534-537). One of the biggest tribes in the Zaranngai was Agriaspæ/ Ariaspæ that settled in the southern part, in the vicinity of Makia (Gedrosia / Balochistan).

2. AGRIASPÆ/ARIASPÆ

Most Greek historians tell about Agriaspæ/ Ariaspæ and their impacts on the tribal warfare of Cyrus and his army. "When Cyrus during an expedition against Scythians in the desert encountered with a famine, these people helped him 30,000 carts of food and in return, Cyrus gave them privileges and exempted them from taxation" (Herodotus, 1806: 8). Greeks called these tribes as Evergetæ (donors). Arian, Pliny and Ptolemy remembered them as Agriaspæ, Argetæ and Ariaspæ respectively (Ibid). Rawlinson believes that Agriaspæ was the ancestor of the Arian tribe that had the possession of a tributary of Hirmand River in the city of Agriaspæ. That canal flowed up to three furlong on the Kerman route. He further writes: "it would not be a bold comment if it is said that Gurshasp who established Sistan as his first capital, was linked to Agriaspæ tribe and thus the city was remembered with this name" (Rawlinson, 2000, 305).

Phrada that Greeks remembered as Prophtasia, was located in the north of Zrankae (north and north-east of Hamun Lake and current Farah region). Ammianus Marcellinus has mentioned Phrada and Ariaspæ as two rich and luxurious cities in this region (Schmitt, 1995: 534-537). Alexander, at the time of his arrival to Sistan, stayed about nine days in Prophtasia and a city with similar name, which was a center of the region.

Pliny, has once remembered Prophtasia as the capital of Agriaspæ and at other places he follows other historians and placed it in Drangae. Ptolemy recalls Agriaspæ as the second city of Drangiana. Arian who remembers Agriaspæ as Evergetæ places it along Hirmand and in between Zrangae and Drangae. But Strabo places it in between Drangae (Drangiana) and Arakhosia. Probably, Ariaspæ was derived from "Aryasva" meaning a skilled horse rider (Wilson, 1998: 155).

Ctesias, a physician of Ardeshir II, for the first time mentioned the name of a city called Zarin along the Hamun Lake. After him, Diodorus Siculus also talked about this city. According to Ctesias, a conspiracy was hatched by Teritouchmes in the city during Darius II. Mitradates, son of Oudiastes, in opposition to the court and his father, attempted to establish an independent rule in the city of Zarin. The prevailing chaos in the court and distance of Sistan from the Achaemenid capital, gave rebels a chance, although for a short span of time, to create an independent and sovereign state on its borders (Azarnewsheh, 1991: 189).

Between 545 BC and 540 BC, Cyrus conquered provinces like Zranka, Aria, Arakhosia, inner regions of India and Baluchistan. Probably, he followed Fars-Kerman-Sistan route to conquer these areas. Most Greek historians have pointed that Cyrus encountered with a great famine during his expedition to the East to the extent that his soldiers ate each other. At that point, a tribe called Agriaspæ settled along Hirmand River sent 3,000 food carts to help him and Cyrus, in turn, called them as donors and exempted them from taxes and gave them great gifts (Pirnia, Vol 2, 1983: 1683).

Probably, Cyrus had encountered problems during his expedition to eastern and southeastern regions and these people rushed for help seeing the proximity of the army in Sistan. In fact, it has evidences too. While returning from India, Alexander decided to pass through Gedrosia (Baluchistan). Despite being told about hardship and shortages of water and food in the route, Alexander rejected the advice. He was even told by local people that so far only Semiramis, the legendary queen of Assyrian with 20 people and Cyrus with 7 people could go through the terrible land (Briant and Eisen, 2006: 758). However, Alexander who considered himself superior on earth and wanted to prove its superiority over his predecessors stepped on the soil of Gedrosia. But, the dry and harsh nature of Gedrosia took over him

without any war and fight and hence, he lost one-third of his army and countless spoils (Mehrafarin and Mousavi Haji, 2010: 135). It seems, Cyrus may have faced a similar situation in the East.

Why people of Ariaspæ voluntarily and without any coercion sent a large amount of their annual food crossing hot and dry desert of Baluchistan to Cyrus? Is this love and affection of Ariaspæ towards Cyrus and his army cannot be a sign of deep heartily bonds probably based on their ethnic, religious and linguistic commonalities?

In the historical geography of Iran, Aria was called a vast territory (Herat, Khorasan, Sistan and Kandahar) covering eastern region. Since Achaemenid called themselves as Aryans, there is possibility that they resided in this area. It is also said that Ariaspæ's way of life among others in eastern parts, was more akin to the Persian custom and tradition. Characteristics and traits such as truthfulness, tolerance, contentment, courage, commitment and law and order and justice, put Ariaspæ fully in line with the Achaemenid society and tribes thereof. As if the two nations are from one root and their cultural origin is the same.

Interest and inclination of Cyrus toward East (Zranka) led to the appointment of his youngest and most favored son, Bardia as the Satrap of this region- a tradition that later became public under which, a crown prince ruled in Sistan prior to his accession to the throne. The loyalty of the people of Zranka continued by the end of the Achaemenid rule. As such, their presence in the battle of Darius III against Alexander has also been reported (Daffina, 1967: V). These people also helped Xerxes in his battle against Greeks in 480 BC. In that battle, Zarangai troops were guided by Pherendate, son of Megabazus. According to Herodotus, they wore colorful clothes and put on knee-long boots (Fairservis, 1961: 31).

According to historians accompanying Alexander, the last Satrap of Zranka was "Brezantes". At that time, Upper Hirmand and Arakhosia formed a big Satrap, consisting inner areas of Sind. Brezantes along with Besus, a Satrap of inner region of Central Asia and Sati Berzan, killed the Arian Satrap, Darius III while he was escaping from Alexander. With Alexander's victory over Arian, Brezantes came to Sistan but fled to India upon hearing Alexander's pursuit. Later, Indians handed him to Alexander who put him to death for his involvement into the killing of Darius III (Hamilton, 1974: 94).

It is said that the main element that provoked Sati Berzan against Alexander was Brezantes, the governor of Zranka (Fairservis, 1961: 32). After maintaining peace in Aria, Alexander appointed Arsaces or Arshameh, an Iranian as its governor and moved towards the south, to Drangiana (Zranka) (Arrian, 1814: 179). It seems Alexander's decision to withdraw from Balkh and rush to Zranka, was the apparent danger he had felt from Brezantes. Alexander did not want to give Brezantes an opportunity to form a strong army. In other words, since Brezantes was ruling over a vast territory and warrior tribes, he could have prevented Alexander's entry into the Indian subcontinent.

3. PROPHTASIA PLOT

Alexander turned his army towards Aria with the sole aim of capturing and punishing Brezantes. Greeks called Dranka at that time as "Drangiana" and that consisted of two parts: the northern part was Prophtasia and the southern was known as Agriaspæ/ Ariaspæ. It is said that Alexander with his army arrived in Phrada which was the administrative center of Prophtasia (Rawlinson: 2000, 306).

One of the great generals accompanying Alexander during his entry to Prophtasia, was Phelotas, son of Parmenion. Phelotas was a brave, courageous and luxurious man. Despite being trusted and closer to Alexander, he used to criticize his achievements and considered him not more than a kid. Phelotas considered himself and his father as main factors behind all the fame and glory of Macedonians. Repeated rude, and despised discussions, caused some of Alexander's relatives to be pessimistic against him (Williams, 1836: 174). Finally, with the discovery of a plot against Alexander in Prophtasia, Greeks became cynical to Phelotas who was executed on charges of organizing the plot.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS IN SISTAN AND ACHAEMENID SITES IN DRANGIANA

Until now, Dahan-e-Gholaman was believed to be the only Achaemenid era site that was identified in the eastern half of Iran. But archeological studies that were conducted in southern Sistan in 2010, about 110 sites of the Achaemenid period were identified (map2). If studies could cover parts of Sistan in Afghanistan, the number of these sites would have gone up. According to Klaus Fisher, no country has archi-

tectural remains to the magnitude that of Sistan (Fischer, 1971).

Dahane Gholaman was discovered in 1960 by Umberto Serratto, an Italian archaeologist. Excavation work there started in 1962 and continued until 1965. Serratto found that the aforementioned place has much similarity with archeological remains of the early Achaemenid kings. As such, he tried to link their establishment between 6 BC and 4 BC (Serratto, 1962: 186-197). What is certain is that Sistan is considered as one of the most important provinces of the Achaemenid Empire. It's strategic, economic, and most likely, religious, and ethnic importance led this area to become center of attraction.

The extent, wealth and influence of the Achaemenid Empire led it to increase its area of influence by constructing cities especially as they were familiar with aspects of urban planning and had constant presence of architects from various nationalities.

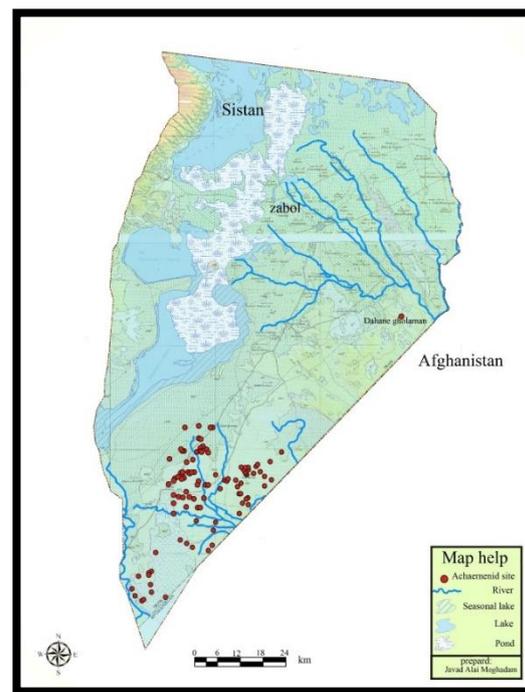


Figure 2 Sistan, Achaemenid sites

Pottery fragments are one of the cultural remains of Dahane Gholaman that are abundantly seen in different archeological layers. Studies and classification of those potteries are of much importance because their typology could be effective in its chronology. The exact and scientific introduction of this site could be a basis for making comparison and identification of different heterogeneous and homogeneous types in other sites.

Potteries of Dahane Gholaman have the spectrum of buff and red colors (fig.3). But other colors such as gray (concrete color) are also seen among them. Without exception, all these potteries are wheel-made with clay made of minerals and in some cases plants. They have simple external decorations, however, a limited number of them having engraving or applied decorations. A collection of potteries at this site, unlike most other thick types, enjoys a paramount softness and elegance. The external and internal surfaces of these ceramics are scathed. A majority of potteries at Dahane Gholaman have a desirable baking. In sum, potteries at this site consist of simple, potteries with engraving, projection, unglazed scathing potteries, potteries decorated with colors.

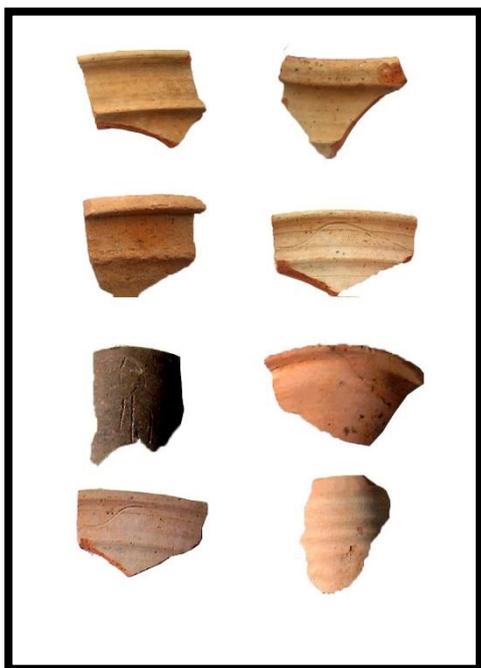


Figure 3 Pottery samples from Dahane Gholaman

Prior to the systematic archeological study of Sistan, only two sites from the Achaemenid era were identified in the region: Dahane Gholaman in Iran and Sorkh Dagh in Afghanistan. Advanced integrated facilities at Dahane Gholaman indicate that this was not the only city in Sistan during Achaemenid. By this way, detection and identification of other sites were not unlikely.

In a systematic study of Phase 1 of Sistan that was conducted in the northern part (developed and residential) in 2008, no site was discovered except Dahane Gholaman that had excavated before. In the second phase of studies (Mehrafarin, 2012: 2) that was conducted in the

southern half of the region (deserted Sistan), Achaemenid sites with different dimensions were revealed. The extent of some of these sites could surprise the archeological team and other archeologists. About 110 Achaemenid era sites were identified in the southern part of Sistan (fig.2). The chronological scale of these sites, classifications, typology as well as types of superficial level potteries of each of these sites (fig.4) were indexed with samples from Dahane Gholaman, Sorkh Dagh, Pasargadae, Persepolis and other Achaemenid sites. The identification of such a large number of Achaemenid era sites that included cities, towns and villages in Sistan were not recorded in any other part of the country, even around Persepolis and Pasargadae. It must be mentioned that a principal part of ancient Sistan that is currently located in Afghanistan has so far not been targeted by archeologists.



Figure 4 Pottery samples from some Achaemenid sites

The region where Achaemenid era sites were discovered is completely deserted. During Bronze Age, the region contained a number of towns and villages particularly because of Rud-e Biaban (Desert River) and its tributaries that flowed between the late fourth millennium BC and the early second millennium BC. After Bronze Age and until the middle of the first millennium BC, no archaeological remains were found in this area. It seems that the flow of Rud-e Biaban and lakes were disconnected hence, residents were forced to leave the area.

Abundance of Achaemenid era sites in the aforementioned region shows that Rud-e Biaban and its tributaries flowed again during the Achaemenid period or shortly prior to that and consequently a variety of human groups (farmers, stockbreeders, artisans, fishermen ...) settled in the area and attempted to build towns. The concentration of Achaemenid era sites is seen in Gerdi, Jonoob-e Qale Rostam and Shileh domains (figs.5-6), where there are still a number of sand hills and there is high probability that Achaemenid sites may be hidden under each of these tepes (Mounds).



Figure 5 Site nom.229 in Jonoob Qale Rostam Domain

A large number of Achaemenid sites in this region are settled over Bronze Age sites and therefore, until excavation or trenching, their exact limits cannot be determined. In ancient Sistan, it should also be noted that the extent of each of sites that has been archeologically studied, the range of the area did not constitute its actual life. For environmental (wind and water precipitations) and human reasons, a large amount of remains have been either buried or destroyed. Thus, it is possible that a large number of sites currently with a little extent might turn into bigger after excavations and cities with common facilities like Dahan-e-Gholaman could be revealed.

Since this region flourished beyond Achaemenid (Seleucid and Parthian) time, many cities and population of later periods settled over Achaemenid. Such a trend is also visible from the Islamic period. Since, Sistan is a flat land, its inhabitants, in order to avoid natural calamities like flood, moved and built their cities and villages on elevated places that often belonged to previous periods. Due to this reason, many ancient sites in Sistan have varied settlement periods and for their segregation, as often said, we need excavations and explorations.



Figure 6 Site nom.231 in Jonoob Qale Rostam Domain

According to settlement hierarchy, there are 4 Achaemenid era sites in the discovered area with an extent of over 50,000 square meters, 26 sites between 10,000 and 50,000 square meters and 79 sites in this domain have an extent less than 10,000 square meters. Site 242 of Gerdi domain with an extent of 224,000 square meters is of course the largest Achaemenid era site that also has settlements from the Bronze Age and beyond. The largest site of this domain that purely possesses the Achaemenid-era settlements is site 413 that has an extent of 18,396 square meters and its height reaches up to 2 meters (Mehrafarin and Mousavi Haji, 2010).

It seems that 4 sites at the southern domain of Ghale Rustam (Sites 229-232), all of which possess the Achaemenid era settlements and located in the vicinity of each other, formed a single human settlement. The extent of these four sites together is 33,418 square meters. In the Shileh domain too, there are 5 sites (36-40) that belong to the Achaemenid period and have been in contact with each other that actually formed one settlement with an area of 98,850 square meters (ibid).

5. EVERGETÁÉ DOMAIN

After a nine-day stay in Prophtasia and the execution of one of his great commanders, Alexander with tense and fragile mood, stepped up along Hirmand River to the south so that after the acquisition of food and feed in Ariaspæ, he could reach Arghandab and Arakhosia. Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian, has identified Ariaspæ settlements along Hirmand and acknowledged that Alexander met with a person named Tiridetes (Tirdad) who had control over Ariaspæ tribes (Sistani, Vol. 1, 1985: 128). Recent archeological studies, to some extent, have determined the location given by Diodorus and other Greek historians about Ari-

aspæ. The studies could identify a large number of archeological sites/enclosures ranging from the south of Rud-e Biaban (road to the Afghan border checkpoint Taleb Khan) to Shileh River (fig.7). By this way, the Everget domain can be distinguished in Gerdi region (current Tasuki), Trakun and Rud-e Biaban in Iran and Shah Mardan, Dasht-e Zerreh to Rud-bar in Afghanistan. The area was fully populated during the Bronze Age and cities and villages were scattered over there. However, from the beginning of the second millennium BC to the Achaemenid era, the area lost its charm hence; inhabitants were forced to leave. Rivers in the above region took their course again during the Achaemenid and life re-shaped since rivers deposited fertile soil thus led to booming agriculture, especially grain production.

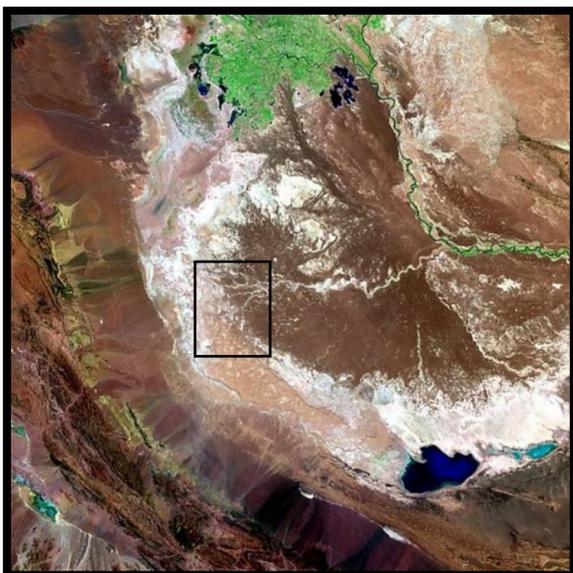


Figure 7 Sistan. Rud-e Biaban (Desert River) and its delta are seen in the map (Seyyed Sajjadi, 2007). The square is the realm of Evergetæs

Ariaspæ cheerfully welcomed Alexander and his army and accepted his extended sovereignty. Probably, this was also the outcome their dissatisfaction with Brezantes. According to the writing of Arian, Alexander, in return, behaved them well due to two reasons: First, because of services provided by their forefathers to Cyrus. Second, their political and social conditions were different from other tribes and preferred justice similar to Greeks. They were the people with admirable traits and adorned truthfulness, tolerance, contentment and courage and commitment to law and order and contract. Therefore, Alexander exempted them from the Satrapy laws and tributes (Azarnewsheh, 1991: 194).

The region to name these people to Evergetæ (donor) by Alexander was that their ancestors helped Cyrus with 30,000 carts of cereal when he was suffering from acute shortage during a battle (Hammond, 1998: 135). After Cyrus, it was the turn of Alexander when these people helped him and his great army. Pirnia quoting Kenneth Korth writes: "the people initially known as Agriaspæ but when Cyrus's army was helped with food and seeing their generosity, they then onward were called Evergetæ. Alexander stayed there for 60 days to deal with the affairs of the province and gave a lot of money to the people for the help they provided to Cyrus" (Pirnia, vol.2, 1983: 1384).

60-day stopover of Alexander in Agriaspæ during the winter indicates that the people were rich and wealthy. Wherever Alexander entered, local people fed his huge army and livestock. Currently, the domain of Evergetæ with such development and generous population has turned into a wasteland where nothing is visible except the howling wind and dust particles.

In return for their services, Evergetæ asked Alexander to expand their territories. Alexander agreed to their demands and, in addition, he appointed Amenidas, a secretary to Darius III, as his Satrap and offered sacrifices to satisfy Apollo, one of the Greek gods and considering the loyalty of Agriaspæ, he left no Greek commander or military force there (Mitford, 1838: 88).

6. CONCLUSION

After the assassination of Darius III, the last Achaemenid king, with the hands of Satraps in eastern Iran, Alexander the Great with the intention to punish the rulers of this region as well as to conquer their territories, took his army to the east. One of the areas that was very important for him, and in fact, considered to be the gateway to India, was the land of Drangiana (Sistan). Sistan at that time consisted of two main parts: the northern part was Prophtasia and the southern part known as Agriaspæ/Ariaspæ. The center of Prophtasia was the town of Phrada where the Alexander's murder plot was revealed and Phelotas, son of Parmenion, who was considered one of Alexander's prominent generals, was executed for allegedly hatching the conspiracy. Currently, a large part of Prophtasia is located in Afghanistan's Farah province.

After a nine-day stay in Prophtasia, Alexander following the shores of Hirmand, moved towards southern Sistan that Greeks called as

Agriaspâ/ Ariaspâ. Local inhabitants happily received him and provided food for his army and cattle. Alexander named these people as Evergetâ (donors) as they, apart from helping him, had helped Cyrus during a battle with Scythians. After spending his winter at Evergetâ, Alexander moved toward eastern Iranian region so that he could conquer India.

Prior to systematic archeological studies of Sistan that carried out in 2010, the domain of Evergetâ was unknown. In the course of field studies in southern Sistan, about 110 Achaemenid era enclosures were identified that indicate

the presence of a prosperous and fertile land of Evergetâ. It should be noted that this region, which is currently uninhabited and barren, numerous archeological sites have also been identified from Bronze Age such as Shahr-e-Sokhta. However, the number of Achaemenid era sites is much higher. Meanwhile, a principal part of Evergetâ that is currently located in Afghanistan has not been studied systematically. Moreover, since most of the area is covered by sand hills, the possibility that more sites would have buried beneath, is much higher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological section of this project forms of the "Systematic archaeological surveys of Sistan (phase 1 & 2) which has been carried out in Sistan of Iran during 2010, financed by the center of Iranian Cultural Heritage.

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