



## History

Ute Franke

Hardly anything is known about the Herat region during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, a time related with the movements of nomadic steppe cultures in the region (cat. nos. H1–H3). The lack of archaeological evidence is also reflected in the museum by just a few objects from this period.<sup>1</sup> The same, however, also applies for the subsequent centuries, when information on Herat is available from historical sources. One of the oldest texts to mention the region is the Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrians, which is partly dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE.<sup>2</sup> In the Vendidad, the creation of 16 lands by Ahura Mazda is described. The name of the sixth land is *Haroyu* (Herat?). A similar name is mentioned in Achaemenid cuneiform inscriptions from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

The Achaemenid kings, whose empire at times extended from Libya to India, commemorated their history and victories in rock inscriptions at Bisutun, Persepolis and elsewhere (Map 3). In the long list of vassals, who on the reliefs of Persepolis proceed to the throne to pay tribute to the king, the line '*iyam Harajiva*' = 'this is the Areian' denotes a man with a short tunic, loose pants, high boots and a dagger.<sup>3</sup> Mention is made of revolts and battles in the Margiana, Bactria and Arachosia, and, later, of fights against the Scythians, a

confederation of horse-riding nomadic tribes, whose movements from the eastern Eurasian steppes towards the Black Sea posed a constant threat to the political stability in Iran and Central Asia for many centuries.

The Achaemenid empire was divided into up to 29 satrapies. 'Haraiva', most likely conquered under King Cyrus II (559–530 BCE), was the land south of Margiana and Bactria, east of Parthia, north of Zranka/Drangiana (Sistan), northwest of Arachosia (Kandahar), and west of Ariana. The Greek historian Herodotus reports that Areians were part of an army led against Greece by King Xerxes I (r. 486–465 BCE) around 480 BCE.<sup>5</sup> Areia is also mentioned along with Parthia, Choresmia, and Sogdia in his taxation list.<sup>6</sup> Its capital Artacoana (Herat?) was one of the three major Achaemenid cities in the East, along with Bactra and Kandahar (in Arachosia).

Spectacular cultural testimonies of these centuries come from the Oxus Treasure, which combines courtly Achaemenid art with the animal style of the steppe nomads<sup>7</sup>, and from sites unearthed by the Soviet Mission in the Balkh region.<sup>8</sup> Archaeological remains from elsewhere are scarce, they come from Old Kandahar, Nad-e Ali, and Dahan-e Gulayman (Iran-Sistan).<sup>9</sup> An Achaemenid cylinder seal was, along with Sasanian gems, allegedly found in the hills near Herat.<sup>10</sup> In the city itself pre-Achaemenid levels and Achaemenid pottery were found at Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin and Kohandez more recently.<sup>11</sup>

The last Achaemenid king, Darius III (r. 336–330), was defeated in the battle of Gaugamela (331 BCE) by the Macedonian Alexander the Great. While Alexander moved to Babylon, Susa and Persepolis, the fleeing Darius was captured by the satrap of Bactria (Bessos), and later killed. When Bessos, supported by the three major satraps of the region, including Satibarzanes from Areia, declared himself king (Artaxerxes V, r. 330–329 BCE), Alexander took up his pursuit. His march along the Royal Achaemenid Road led him first to Areia, then to Arachosia and ultimately to Bactria and Sogdia (Map 4). To counter the revolts, a number of garrisons was established along the major route and, soon after, the Iranian governors of these satrapies replaced by Macedonians.

1 The collection, however, has lost some of its holdings, cp. e.g. MacDowall/Ibrahim 1979.

2 Vogelsang 2004, 205–206.

3 Calmeyer 2009, Gropp's type III (Gropp 2009). Gerd Gropp analyzed the inscriptions from various sites and the reliefs at Persepolis in detail, particularly the sequence of placement of the delegations and their satraps in the reliefs of the Apadana, the Central Building and the Hundred-Column-Hall at Persepolis. He also discusses the political implications of changes in placements and the ranks of the respective leaders between 495 and 480 BCE, and provides the names of satraps under Darius I (7M, a Mede) and Xerxes I (5P, a Persian, after Herodotus 7.61–99). Zranka possibly retained a local king (Gropp 2009, 319–320 Fig. 6).

4 Old Persian; 'Areia' in Greek texts, e.g. Arrian (An. 4.6.6) and Herodotus (3.93.3), to be differentiated from 'Ariane'; see Vogelsang 2004. – Schmitt 1986.

5 Herodotus 7.61, after Vogelsang (2004) and Altheim (1947).

6 His information is according to Altheim (1947, 142ss) based on the compilation and map of Hekataios of Milet (c. 560–480 BCE).

7 Curtis 2012. – Simpson 2012.

8 See Map 1 and Franke, Prehistory, this volume. A large site, Cheshm-e Shafar, was recently discovered near Balkh by the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA).

9 Dales 1977. – Gnoli 1966. – Helms 1997. – McNicoll et al. 1996.

10 Torrens 1842.

11 Franke/Urban, forthcoming. See also the thematic maps in Ball/Gardin 1982, Pls. 59–69.



Map 3 Achaemenid Empire, selected sites (U. Franke/Th. Urban 2015)

'Alexandria in Areia' was one of the cities founded by Alexander after the conquest of the Areian capital Artacoana in 330 BCE. Artacoana allegedly measured 532 m in perimeter and contained the royal fortress.<sup>12</sup> According to the sources quoted by Altheim (1947, 1966s), beside Artacoana other cities existed in Areia.<sup>13</sup>

Following Alexander's death at Babylon in 323 BCE, his empire was divided among his commanders (*Diadochi*). Seleucus I (r. 312–281), who became king of Persia, Syria and Bactria, further fostered the colonisation of Central Asia by Ionian Greeks in order to consolidate his eastern frontiers. As a result, Hellenistic culture was firmly implemented, most magnificently exemplified in Afghanistan by Ai Khanoum. The rise of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and the Mauryans in the east led to a blend of Greek with local languages and cultures, with strong Buddhist and Hindu influences.

At about the same time, the Parthians established their power in northeastern Iran, thereby separating the eastern Greek from their homeland. However, around 190 BCE, when the Xiongnu pushed the Yuezhi, both horse-riding Central Asian nomads, out of the Tarim Basin, large-scale movements

12 Arrian, An. 3.25.2–6, and others, see Vogelsang (2004), Schmitt (1986), Altheim (1947, 1966s), and Bengtson (1960, 338; 350). Droysen (1898, 276) mentions that 13,000 armed men were murdered or enslaved. According to Vogelsang (2004), however, the first references to Alexandria in Areia date after Alexander's death in 323 BCE.

13 Artacoana is sometimes located at Herat, sometimes further to the west. One of the other cities is named Susia (Altheim 1947, 167; Arrian, An. 3.25.1; 3.26.4; 3.29.1; 5.25.1. – Diodorus 17.78.1. – Plinius, Nat. Hist. 6.93).

began which brought long-lasting instability in the frontier regions. The Yuezhi moved to Transoxania and Bactria, toppling the Graeco-Bactrian (c. 110 BCE) and Indo-Greek (c. 50 BCE) kingdoms. Ahead of them fled the Scythians (also: Saka), one branch to India, another towards the Iranian plateau and Sistan. Their expansion collided with the interests of the Parthians, who had extended their power to Babylonia, Merv, Herat and Sistan – Areia became a buffer region. However, the presence of these politically and culturally important entities is mostly attested by coins only.<sup>14</sup> The formation of the Kushan empire by one branch of the Yuezhi (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) and the consolidation of power between Parthia, the Scythians and the Kushan resulted in a golden era, particularly under King Kanishka. From their capitals at Taxila, Peshawar and Begram (Kapisa), the Kushan traded with Rome and China, adapted local languages and cultures, and created a cultural blend of Hellenistic and Buddhist elements, documented

14 See Alram, this volume.



Map 4 Hellenistic era, selected sites and routes of Alexander the Great (U. Franke/Th. Urban 2015)

by the treasures from Begram, Hadda, and Surkh Kotal.<sup>15</sup>

Soon after 200 CE, major changes took place, the ancient world was thrown into turmoil again. Ardashir I (r. 226–241 CE), first king of the Sasanian dynasty, and his son Shapur I (r. 241–270 CE) gradually took control of the lands from the Euphrates to the Indus from their homelands in Fars, opposing Rome and Byzantium, eliminating the Parthians, and reducing the Kushan to petty, subordinate kingdoms (Map 5). Their rule over Central Asia is not only proclaimed in royal inscriptions and rock reliefs in the heartland, e.g. at Naqsh-e Rostam, but is also visibly represented in a rock relief near Pol-e Khomri and a wall painting from a grave in Gholbiyan.<sup>16</sup>

Just like Balkh and Merv, Herat (*'Harēv'*, 'Hariy') was one of twelve capital cities listed by Shapur I and in the Pahlavi catalogue of provincial capitals. It also had a mint where gold coins were struck.<sup>17</sup> From the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards, this

15 Cambon/Jarrige 2007.

16 Lee/Grenet 1998; see also Simpson 2012, 78; 81.

17 Markward 1931, 11; 46. – Szuppe 2004, 206.

region was an important stronghold against invading Chionites (Kidarites), and later, Hephthalites ('White Huns') from the Merv region. Their raids on Sasanian armies and caravans, and attacks on Herat and Balkh forced the Sasanians to protect their eastern frontier and the vital trade along the Silk Road. Although the Hephthalites were gradually dislocated through alliances between the Sasanians, Turk-speaking tribal confederations and local rulers, Herat and Badghis were reportedly still settled by a large number of Hephthalite and Turkic tribes at the time of the Arab conquest, which they fiercely resisted until 651 CE<sup>18</sup>, when the last Sasanian King Yazdegerd III was assassinated at Merv.

The late Sasanian period is attested in the museum by some seals.<sup>19</sup> A small high-tin vase with faceted neck dates to either the late Sasanian or early Islamic period (6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>20</sup>

In general, despite the historic references which attest a political importance of the Herat region and its location at major communication routes, archaeological evidence for all these periods, and Greek or Buddhist influence in particular, is limited (cat. nos. H4–H8).<sup>21</sup>

18 Szuppe 2004.

19 Lerner, Seals, this volume. See in general for this period Hermann/Cribb 2007; Errington/Sarkosh-Curtis 2007; in Iran: Stöllner et al. 2004.

20 Almost identical objects are assigned a 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century date (Harper 1978, 93–94 cat. no. 33C; Stöllner et al. 2004, cat. no. 539). Our vase was subsequently included in the Islamic metal wares, based on comparative evidence from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century, see Müller-Wiener, Metalwork, this volume, Fig. 1, cat. no. M1.

21 See Alram, Coins, this volume. Ball/Gardin (1982, Figs. 60–69) list between two and four sites in the province for the different periods, mostly based on sherd collections.

## Catalogue

### Cat. No. H1

HNM 010.02.93

Footed basin, Afghanistan

2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (?)

Earthenware (fine orange); handmade

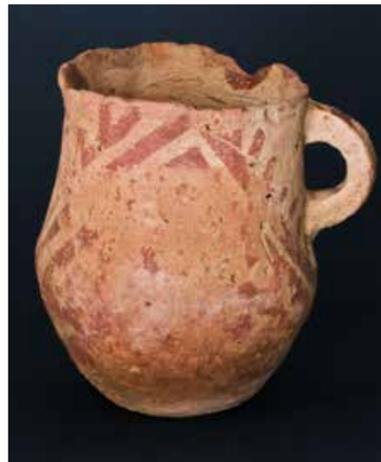
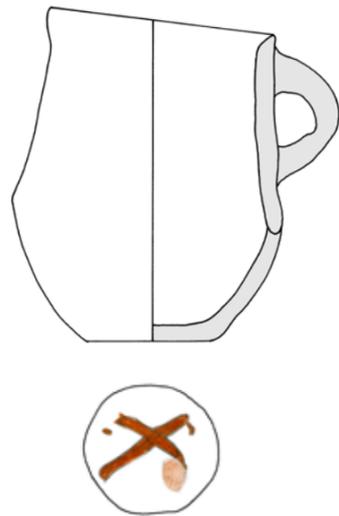
Treatment: slip (buff)

Size (cm): h. 38; d. (top) 34



A flat plate or tray has been mounted on four hollow legs with enlarged feet. Slightly irregular shape.

Footed basins or platters are known from e.g. Altyn Tepe (Namazga V; Hiebert 1994, 64 Pl. XII: squatter type) and the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC), but also from the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium.



### Cat. No. H2

HNM 89.142

Beaker with handle, Afghanistan

Iron Age/Yaz III (?)

Earthenware (red-orange); handmade

Treatment i/s: wash (buff); o/s: slip (buff)

Decoration i/s: painted (dark red/ 10R 4/8);

o/s: painted (dark red/ 10R 4/8)

Size (cm): h. 10; w. 9; d. (rim) 7; d. (base) 4.5  
Beaker with high, slightly restricted neck, round rim, flat base; vertical handle with square section; irregular shape. Buff slip, covered by a thick sinter layer. Traces of red painted patterns are visible, showing opposed hanging and standing triangles, separated by a line with interior fill patterns.

### Cat. No. H3

HNM 010.02.87

Beaker, Afghanistan

Iron Age/Yaz III (?)

Earthenware (orange); handmade

Treatment i/s & o/s: slip (reddish-buff)

Decoration o/s: painted (dark red/ 10R 4/8)

Size (cm): h. 12; d. (rim) 6.5; d. (base) 5.5



Beaker with slightly curved section, round rim; flat foot ring; irregular shape. Buff slip, covered by a thick sinter layer. Traces of red painted patterns are visible, showing two friezes of opposed hanging and standing triangles; interior fill patterns of circles.

### Cat. No. H4

HNM 03.23.86

Rhyton, dromedary loaded with four vessels Afghanistan (?), late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (?)

Earthenware (fine, sandy orange); wheel- and handmade

Treatment i/s & o/s: slip (pale red)

Size (cm): h. 25; l. 25



Cat. No. H4

Cat. No. H5

