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THRICE BURNED: SHAHR-I SOKHTE IN THE SISTAN-BASIN

I. BURNT CITIES

Humanity is said to have experienced four catastrophes during the period which we designate today as the Bronze Age. At least if we follow Plato's reference in his account of "a mighty flood, the third since the cataclysm of the time of Deucalion" (*Critias*, 112a). The Aztecs of Central America too, in their *Anales de Cuauhtitlan,* as well as in the *Balam de Chumayel*, know of "four world-ages," respectively of four "suns" before the present - i.e: the fifth, which following today's European jargon would have to be designated as the Iron Age (Leòn Portilla 1986, 35-37; 49-51). This fifth sun would be identical to the one which, after the catastrophe of Deucalion, was still warming the Greece of Plato.

Ever since his Ugarit (Ra's Schamra near Minet le-Beida in Lebanon) excavations in 1929, Claude F. Schaeffer hits upon layers of destruction, which cannot have their origin in human actions. First, he thinks of earthquakes as the possible cause. Yet at a linear distance of 900km, at Troy, his colleague Carl Blegen discovers layers of destruction matching in time. Disappearing together with Old-Ugarit II, Troy II ends "in an enormous conflagration, which does not spare even one building. What really happened to bring about the burning up of the whole settlement, remains an unsolved mystery." (Blegen 1963, 69 f.; s.a. De Grazia 1984, ff.)

The longest distance found by Schaeffer between two simultaneously destroyed cities - Troy and Tepe Hissar - amounts to 2,300 kilometer. "Truly, there is not the slightest doubt to our mind that the burning of Troy II coincides with the catastrophe which brought an end to the Early Bronze settlements of Alaça Hüyük (layer III), Alissar (layer IA), Tarsus (layer III, 12 to 13 meters below the surface) and Tepe Hissar (layer IIB). In Syria, this catastrophe burned down

Old-Ugarit II, the city of Byblos and the contemporary cities in Palestine." (Schaeffer 1948, p. 225).

As to the origin of such a mighty cataclysm, Schaeffer decides in favor or sismic activities, "yet of a much stronger destructive power than that of modern earthquakes" (Schaeffer 1948, 1ff.): "Our investigations have established that the successive upheavals, which inaugurated and closed the epochs of the 3. and 2. millennia [B.C.] were not brought about by the hand of man. In the contrary: in comparison with the extension of these all-encompassing crises and with their far-reaching consequences, the mighty deeds of military conquerors and the assaults of political rulers seem almost puny" (Schaeffer 1948, 565).

II. Schahr-e Sokhte as another urban victim of mysterious megafires.

Yet another 500 km farther to the East of Tepe Hissar - which, with settlement layers conventionally dated to -4500/3900 to -1900 (Schmidt 1937), is situated 80 km to the South of the Caspian Sea near Damghan - there lies, considerably farther to the South, in Beluchistan, the ruined site of Shahr-i Sokhte. Between Troy and Shahr-i Sokhte the linear distance is 2800 km. The Briton Orwell discovers the city in 1915. In 1967, the Italian archaeologist Maurizio Tosi *(Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente)* begins the excavations in cooperation with the *Iranian Center for Archaeological Studies.* Following the revolutionary interruptions in 1978, work is pursued under the direction of Mansur Seyed Sajjadi. In a circle of more than 40 kilometers around the 150 ha city (including its cemeteries) one reckons with the existence of up to 1500 settlements, of which by 2007 810 have already been identified in a radius of 12 km (Soudabeh 2006).

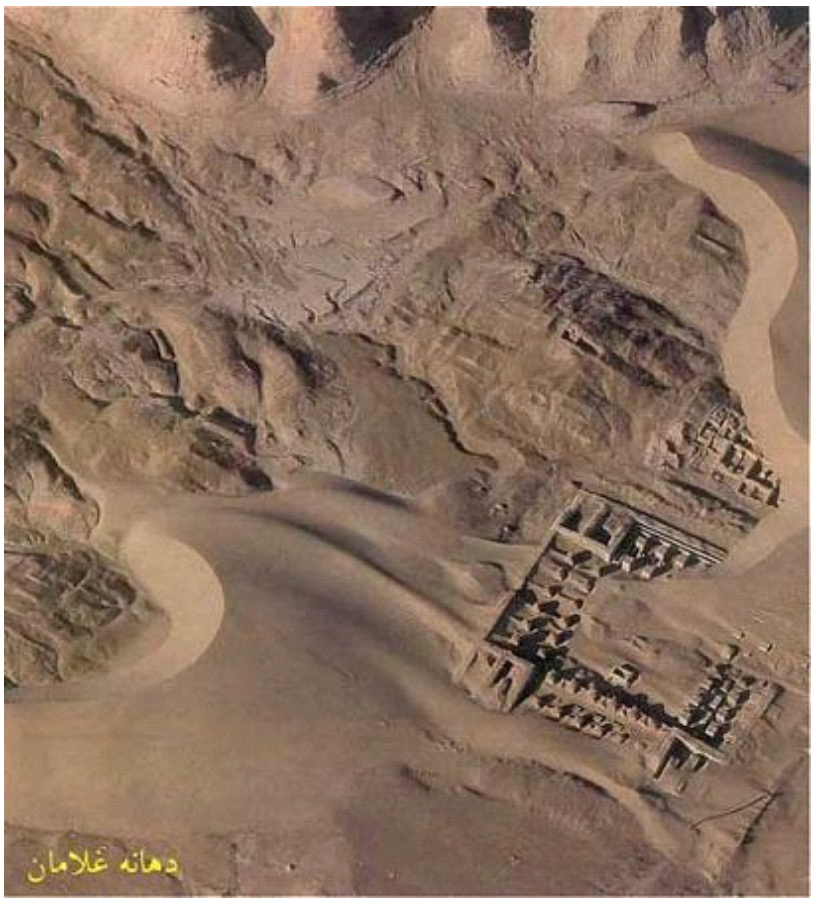
Geological situation of the Sistan-Basin, with Shahr-i Sokhte

Cemeteries, covering a surface of over 20 ha contain some 40,000 graves, of which by 2009 a mere 134, containing 157 Skeletons had been investigated. They bear witness to the considerable dimensions of the city. The dead were furnished with cups containing food , as well as with heads of garlic, which were possiby meant to keep “evil spirits” at a distance

Nowadays, this once so fertile territory appears partially as a desert hostile to life, afflicted with “summers of sheer unsufferable heat” (Ardalan 2009). Now and again, the excavators must interrupt their investigations because of extreme temperatures or of all-engulfing sand storms (CHN 2004). At the present

rhythm of excavation, a further 150 years will be needed for all the tombs to yield their secrets.

The city was never protected with walls. The third and last fire left it “utterly destroyed” (Ardalan 2009), which brought it the english name "Burnt City.” The origin of the flames which annihilated it is considered to be an enigma (Mortazawi 2007): "We are still curious - [says excavator Sajjadi] - and want to find out what happened to the people during the last fire, and where they escaped to after the drying up of the Hirmand-Deltas" (Ardalan 2009).



Desert excavations at Shahr-i Sokhte

STRATIGRAPHY OF SHAHR-I SOKHTE (CHN 2004 FF.)

	Conventional Dating	Dating from evidence
After unexplained gap of 1500 years until building of nearby Achaemenid city of Dahan-i-Gulaman	-6. century	-6. century
Period IV Use of ruins reduced to max. 20 ha parallel to UR-III-"Sumer"	from -2100	-7. century Medes
Third, last and most thorough FIRE		
Period III Cultural climax parallel to the period of Akkad on squrface over 100 ha. Imported ceramics from Mundigak (Afghanistan) and the Quetta-Valley (Pakistan)	until -2100	Fall of Assyrian empire of Ninus. -8./-7. century
Linen, preserved under a salt-crust, contemporaneous with Troy II; Ugarit II	from -2500/-2400	
Second FIRE		
Period II parapellel with early dynastic period II/III on 45ha. Making of beads of semi-precious stone. Spinning and weaving of wool. Artificial eye.	until -2500/-2400 from -2800	-9. century
First FIRE		
Period I parallel with early dynastic time I. Late neolithic. Early urban on maximum 20ha. Proto-elamic cuneiform tablet and seal.	until -2800 from -3200	-9. century

Woman's skeleton (height 182cm, taller than the other female skeletons) with artificial eye - probably from Period II of Shar-i Sokhte (funeral find)

In the dominant paradigm, one catastrophic cycle foremost represented by Harvey Weiss (Dalfes et al. 1997) comes to an end around -2200 and therefore could fit fairly well the mysterious ending of Shahr-i Sokhte, but it is not considered in the literature. Weiss - as the main representative of a Velikovskianism without Velikovsky - notoriously sees the catastrophic demise of cultures of "Egypt, the Aegean, Anatolia and the Levant, over Mesopotamia and Turkmenistan all the way to the Hindus Valley" as a synchronous event (Weiss 2002). Where Schaeffer substantiates cataclismic destructions over a distance of 2300km, Weiss brings forth a series of climatic downturns the seering breath of which easily wreaked havoc over twice the distance. Nevertheless, he encounters problems with his dating of -2200 for the fall of the Old Akkadian empire, because layers of the Hyksos - such as the one of Middle Bronze A in Jericho (Garstand 1948) - end near -1550 in catastrophe as well: "There occured far-reaching destructions of the cities in Southern Canaan simultaneously with, or shortly after, the expulsion of the Hyksos out of Egypt at the end of the Middle Bronze Age A." (Israel 2010).

Only the identification of both empires with the first semitic world empire, which the Greeks remember as the empire of the Assyrians of Ninus, as well as the evidence-based dating of the latter to the -7. century, can conquer this problem (Heinsohn 1991).

III. Where does life in the Sistan-Basin disappear to for 1500 years?

Not only the catastrophes befalling Shahr-i Sokhte must confront us with enigmas, if cosmic interferences continue to be ruled out. The date of -2200/-2100 for the annihilation of the city is also astonishing because rather closely succeeding Achaemenidic finds by the Italian Shahr-i Sokhte team in Dahan-i-Gulaman (Scerrato 1966; 1979) clock in with a date of 1500 years later and nobody has a clue as to what may have happened during these 1500 years in the Sistan Basin.

Dahan-i-Ghulaman - built in a square of 1500m by 500 m on sterile ground - reveals an impressive urban ensemble with large public buildings and an extensive residential area. Twenty-eight monuments have been excavated, among them the so-called Tomb of Zoroaster. It was certainly the most important provincial capital in Eastern Iran and the only one that has been recovered at all (Gnoli o.J.). Possibly, it served as the center of the satrapy of Drangiana (Schmitt o.J.). After the Achaemenids too, the Sistan-Basin goes on flourishing: “The archaeologists have been able to identify sites of the Seleucides (-312 bis -64), of the Parthians (-248 bis +224) and of the Sassanids (224 bis 651)” (Soudabeh 2007 a).

Before the Drangianian were subdued by the Medes and then the Persians, they appear on the list of the peoples subjected to King Ninus (Diodorus Siculus, 2.2.3, from Ctesias *in* Jacoby, Fragmente IIIC, 422, fr. 1, par. 2.3).
This first world ruler according to the Greek tradition must therefore be deciphered as *alter ego* for the first Akkadian world ruler, Naram Sin (Heinsohn 2006).

This latter was not preserved in the -8. century Ancient Greek chronology, but in the biblical-fundamentalistic -23. century of the genealogy of Abraham. And this chronological inflation is responsible for 1500 dark years of the chronology of Antiquity, which bestow in turn onto the 15,000 sqkm Sistan-Basin, as well as to the ancient Drangiana a Dark Age of their own: “What happened during the centuries following the collapse towards the end of the Third Millenium has brought forth many erudite speculations. The archaeologists can show no finds substantiating a successive settlement in Shahr-i Sokhte or in any other place in

the Sistan-Basin before the time of the Achaemenids." What happened during this time and why is evidence for this gap so rare?" (Motazawi 2007)?

Modern archaeology hopes to be able one day to makes substantive finds for this 1500 year-period as well. Yet, according to the tradition of ancient Greek historians, the Medes take over the Drangiana after the fall of the Ninus-Assyrian empire. In these Medic times of the -7. century must therefore belong the partial use (or the looting) of the end-period IV of Shahr-i Sokhte, which now inserts itself through biblical-fundamentalistic and UR III -"Sumer" cross-dating, at around -2100. Where it becomes identical with the cuneiform "Kalam," therefore with the land of the Chaldeans who - again according to the Greek tradition - brought down, together with the Medes, the realm of Ninus=Naram in the late -7. century.

III. The Iranian Ibex

Right at the beginning of the early-urban period of the -4. millenium (-10./-9. century according to evidence) the Ibex *(Capra aegagrus)* imposes itself in Iranian iconographie. It is conventionally substantiated as a food animal as early as the -8./-7. millenium at the foot of the Zagros mountains (Hole et al. 1969). Iconographically it can be found on seals, as well as on ceramics in early Tepe Hissar as well as in Susa and in many other places since the Chalcolithic (Potts 2004).

A cup from Tepe Hissar fashioned on a potter's wheel, Ibex with a rosette in his horns (conventionally dated to -4./-3. millenium)

Goblet from Susa with stylized Ibex (conventionally dated -4. Millenium).

In Shahr-I Sokhte too, a wonderful cup was found which catches for the first time the Ibex in movement(Biscione/Bulgarelli 1983).

Cup (diam. 8cm, height 10cm) with five representations of an Ibex from Period I of Shahr-I Sokhte.

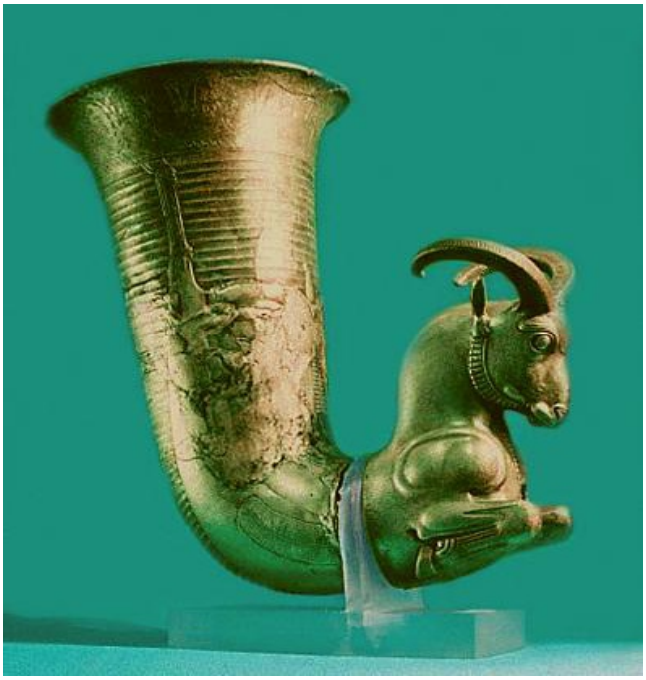
Development of the five Ibex representations of the cup of Shahr-I Sokhte

Abrollung der fünf Ibexdarstellungen des Schahr-e Suchte-Pokals.

The five Ibex-representations - conventionally dated to -3200 for Period I of Shahr-I Sokhte - are considered today to be the fist comic-strip in history (Wapedia 2010).

Pair of Achaemenid staff-heads in the shape of Ibexes. -6./-4. century. Bronze (17.7x9.5cm). Lucy Baud Buckingham Collection.

Because the Achaemenid period takes on so seemlessly the iconography of the Ibex, it appears difficult to explain why this - ever more refined - artistic element could have remained totally absent from the Sistan-Basin for 1500 years. Freeing its chronology from pius but unscientific Bibel-faith reveals this gap to be a mere phantom of modern Ancient Orientalistic.



Achaemenidic Ibex-Rhyton (-500);
http://www.worldisround.com/articles/73022/photo1973.html

This author also attributes the Assyrian Ibex representations to the Persian period, which in the Middle- to Late Assyrian findings of the Assyrian territories provide the - desperately sought for - material basis for the core satrapy of the Achaemenidic world (Heinsohn 1996).

Man with Ibex and Poppy from the Sargon “II”-palace in Dur Sharrukin/Khorsabad (concentional dating -715; dating according to evidence: -5./-4. century; Louvre.

IV. Conclusion

Shahr-i Sokhte offers a new and impressive proof for extra-terrestrially induced catastrophes in historic times. Of the four cataclysms between the five Suns of the Azteks or the five Epochs of Plato the city experienced at least three and never recovered from the last.

Yet this early Iranian metropolis did not flourish between -3200 und -2100 as the Biblical-fundamentalistic chronology would have it, but between the -9. and -7. century, when the chronology of the ancient Greek historians gets in full swing. Which takes care of the mysterious absence of findings in the Sistan-Basin between -2100 und the -6. century, beginning from which this territory - albeit in an ecologically consistently precarious state - regains uninterrupted settlement - by the Achaemenids, Seleucids, Parthians and Sassanids.

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