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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MEDITERRANEAN AND ORIENTAL STUDIES -  
ISMEO

# FROM PALACE TO TOWN

**Report on the multidisciplinary project carried out by the  
Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission on the  
Persepolis Terrace (Fars, Iran),  
2008-2013**

## **1. Topography, Diagnostic and Conservation**

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Roma 2017

# FROM PALACE TO TOWN - 1

*This volume has been prepared with the contribution of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Directorate General for Cultural and Economic Promotion and Innovation, Office VI-Archaeology, and of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, Project PRIN 2007ZKPPSM.*

Cover image: Polished section Micrography of a sample from the “Unfinished Palace” in Persepolis, showing the stone with micro-fissures filled with secondary calcite and the thin superficial layer. 33x (see Fig. 50).

ISBN: 9788898392636

DOI: 10.12977/from\_palace\_to\_town

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2017 BraDypUS

via Oderisi da Gubbio, 254 00146 Roma

CF/P.IVA: 14142141002

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## Prefaces

The research activities carried out by the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission in Fars on the Persepolis Terrace in the frame of the project "From Palace to Town: An integrated multidisciplinary approach to Persepolis terrace and town" include aspects of great relevance for the preservation of the World Heritage Site of Persepolis. A whole section of the project has indeed been dedicated to diagnostic studies, which represent the first step for an appropriate methodological approach to conservation as well as a basic tool for our commitment to the preservation of the masterworks of Achaemenid architecture concentrating on its Terrace. The completion of the diagnostic studies, supported by sophisticated analyses, has made it possible to reach a safer ground in the evaluation of the causes of stone decay. This fact, in its turn, has suggested us to experiment a new approach in the intervention on conservation of stone, through the realization of a short didactic hands-on workshop of great methodological value. The results of this practical activity, carried out in 2011 and illustrated in the volume, are subject to an accurate and constant monitoring, in view of the possibility to extend the same methodology to a larger scale. Thus, the abundant information obtained through several scientific methodologies and made accessible through a digital publication represents a precious tool for further steps which ICHHTO will carry on.

*Mohammad Hassan Talebian*  
Deputy, ICHHTO

The results of the research activities of the Joint Iranian-Italian Archaeological Mission in Fars in the area of the Persepolis Terrace represent the most recent advances in our knowledge of a site of fundamental importance for the history of humanity. The Research Centre for Cultural Heritage and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the aegis of which the activities are being carried out on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2008 and renewed in 2013, is glad that the Persepolis Terrace has also been included in the joint archaeological project.

The volume presents the results of the diagnostic activities which have been directed toward the survey on the state of conservation of stone materials and artefacts and toward sampling and application of chemical-physical, biological and mineralogical analyses. The value of these activities is enhanced by the fact that they are the outcome of international collaboration, bearing out my agreement to such collaboration framed within the Iranian strategy of development of archaeological research. I am thankful for the scholars who have been able to produce such a valuable contribution in this perspective, Iranian or Italian. My thanks also go to the Persepolis archaeological authorities, now represented by the director of the Persepolis World Heritage Site, Dr M. Rezaei Monfared, for the spirit of support and collaboration shown to the joint team during the occasions of study and sampling.

*Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti*  
Director, RICHT

## Introduction

*Alireza Askari Chaverdi and Pierfrancesco Callieri*

In Autumn 2008 the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission, directed by the editors of the volume, selected the site of Persepolis West for its program of excavations. This project aimed at discovering traces of the everyday town of Persepolis and obtaining ceramic material from reliable stratigraphic contexts necessary to outline a ceramic sequence of historic age for Fars, which was still missing. Even though the scope of the new project was to be mainly archaeological, it was felt the need to urgently update the approach to conservation then applied by the local restorers managed by Hassan Rahsaz, still based on methods and techniques in use in Italy during the 1960' and 1970'. This "Italian" approach was the result of 15 years of uninterrupted presence in Persepolis of the Italian team of restorers and conservators headed by Giuseppe and Ann Britt Tilia, up to 1979. Therefore, the five-year project that was submitted in 2007 to the Iranian authorities, approved in 2008, included both archaeology and conservation works, and was named "From Palace to Town: An integrated multidisciplinary approach to Persepolis terrace and town".

This title suggests that the focus of the work that was to be started on Persepolis, differently from the previous research programs, would have shifted from the "Palaces" of the imperial Terrace, which had exclusively attracted the attention of archaeologists in the past, to the inhabited settlement known from the written sources, the "Town", at the same time without forgetting the urgent needs of conservation on the Terrace and the multidisciplinary approach of an up-to-date study of the past.

In this way, the project had two main objectives, respectively in the fields of archaeology and conservation. The archaeological section of the project has concerned stratigraphic investigations in the promising areas evidenced by the previous geophysical surveys over Persepolis West, one of the supposed areas in which to study everyday life in a settled environment (the "Town") (Askari Chaverdi and Callieri 2012) as well as in the area of Bagh-e Firuzi (Askari Chaverdi, Callieri and Gondet 2013). They have also resulted in original archaeometric researches on ceramics and other finds (Amadori et al. 2012). The collection of information regarding diagnostic on stone as a basis for subsequent pilot conservation tests on the main problems met on the Persepolis Terrace (the "Palace") have represented the strategy of the conservation section of the project, which until now has preproduced several separated articles (Guidi et al. 2012; Askari Chaverdi, Callieri, Laurenzi Tabasso and Lazzarini 2016).

The series of final reports on the 2008-2013 project "From Palace to Town" is made of four volumes. Volume 1 is dedicated to the diagnostic studies necessary for subsequent interventions in conservations on the monuments of the Terrace; Volume 2 is dedicated to field work concerning the inhabited settlement at Persepolis West; Volume 3 is dedicated to field work in the area of Bagh-e Firuzi; Volume 4 is finally dedicated to the archaeometrical investigations on finds.

While Volume 2 is being published as a volume printed by the BAR publishing house in the BAR International Series (Askari Chaverdi and Callieri 2017), Volume 1 and Volume 4, due to the high number of colour illustrations necessary for publications in those disciplines, are published in digital format by the BraDyPUS publishing house.

Volume 3 will be only published after the end of the excavations of the gate at Tol-e Ajori, which are the object of of new MoU for the years 2014-2018 (Askari Chaverdi, Callieri and Matin 2014).

We wish to thank in this regard all the scholars who collaborated in the project: their names are listed in the report of each one of the activities. Without them, as without the skilled workers of the villages around Persepolis, these activities would not have been possible. The two directors of the Joint Missions tried their best to offer to each of these scholars the most suitable conditions for work and to integrate the results of these multidisciplinary activities in a holistic view, basically finalised to the preservation of Persepolis World Heritage Sites in its archaeological context.

We have to thank the Institutions which between 2008 and 2013 made this project possible through scientific and financial support: in Italy the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, University and Scientific Research, the University of Bologna and its Department of Cultural Heritage, the Fondazione Flaminia-Ravenna, the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient; in Iran the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, at the start of the project guided respectively by Dr Taha Hashemi and Prof. Hassan Fazeli Nashli and now by Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti and Dr Hamideh Choubak, as well as the Parsa-Pasargadae Research Foundation, guided at the time of the work by Dr Mohammad Hassan Talebian, the Shiraz University and the Embassy of Italy: to all of them our most sincere gratitude.