

Beyond Shape: a New Perspective on the Classification of Arrowheads from the Historical Pre-Islamic Period in Iran*

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Le punte di freccia rappresentano uno dei rinvenimenti più frequentemente attestati nei contesti archeologici pre-islamici. Tuttavia, a dispetto della loro abbondanza e riconoscibilità non è ancora disponibile una comprensiva e aggiornata categorizzazione basata sulle moderne tecniche analitiche. Il presente contributo riporta uno studio condotto su un totale di centosessantasette punte di freccia provenienti dai tre siti chiave di Persepoli, Tol-e Ajori e Susa: la descrizione sistematica di forme e tecnologie si accompagna a un'analisi esplorativa dei dati al fine di offrire un approccio inedito al riconoscimento della variabilità morfologica. La ricerca ha saputo definire una chiara tipologia di questa classe di manufatti e indirizzare alcune questioni sottostimate nei precedenti studi sul tema concernenti gli aspetti morfologici e storici delle punte di freccia.

Introduction

Arrowheads are one of the frequently found metal artefact types in proto-historic and historic archaeological records. Change over time and across geography in material, structural elements, and shape of arrowheads can be studied to identify the most likely prototype form, to compare the various types recorded by archaeologists, and to categorise them so to arrange a taxonomic classification and to correctly associate their occurrence to specific temporal and spatial coordinates. These artefacts can offer reliable results for the archaeological research, due to their high recognisability and persistence. Over the past fifty years, scholars have examined aspects of arrowheads found in Western Asia during the 2nd and 1st millennium BCE. To quote the most relevant examples for the present work, Serge Cleuziou (1977) first proposed a comprehensive typology of arrowheads attributed to a period ranging from the 9th to 3rd century BCE and uncovered in a wide region spanning from Central Asia to the Middle East. Inna Nikolaevna Medvedskaya (1982) presented a category of copper alloy tanged arrowheads of Western Asia in the 2nd millennium BCE and copper alloy socketed arrowheads of Iran in the 1st Millennium BCE. Two more recent examples on Neo-Assyrian arrowheads are the work of John Curtis (2013) and the study led by Matthew Jamie Szudy (2015). Finally,

* This article is based on Naghme Mahzounzadeh's M.A. dissertation, under the supervision of Prof. Pierfrancesco Callieri, Prof. Eugenio Bortolini and Prof. Luca Colliva, submitted to Bologna University in 2020. The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the directors of the Iranian-Italian Joint Archaeological Mission in Fars, Prof. P. Callieri and Prof. A. Askari Chaverdi and the authorities of Louvre, Persepolis and Susa museums, especially M. Pic, J. Cuny, H. Fadai, M. Rafi'i, B. Heidarzadeh, M. Omidfar and H. Sorkhe. Special thanks are due to M. Kaboli, the director of the Iranian archaeological mission at Susa, for his generous help and the willingness to share the yet unpublished data.

In conclusion, the authors are grateful to the memory of Serge Cleuziou for his inspiring work and teachings.