

Preface

Enrico Ascalone and Seyyed Mansur Seyyed Sajjadi

The Iranian-Italian collaboration initiated with the 2016 agreement has, to date, allowed for a deeper understanding of the main historical dynamics of Shahr-i Sokhta, adding new knowledge to the extensive and fruitful excavation campaigns carried out by the Iranian mission between 1997 and 2015. The collaboration has resulted in the publication of three volumes in the series *Excavations and Researches at Shahr-i Sokhta* that are the fruit of the studies carried out to date.

This third volume presents the excavation and research activities carried out in Shahr-i Sokhta in 2018 and 2019, with contributions from researchers in the fields that make up the MAIPS core (archaeology, palaeoenvironmental studies, bioarchaeology and topography).

This volume is divided into three sections, the first on the excavation and reconnaissance activities, the second on the study of the material collected during the excavations and the third presenting the bioarchaeological studies.

In the first section, the contributions by S.M.S. Sajjadi, H. Sarhaddi Dadian, M. Keikha, J. Marashi, H. Moradi and M. Saadatian open up new horizons on the understanding of the settlement and its hinterland. Specifically, the survey carried out to the east and south-east of Shahr-i Sokhta enables significant considerations on the growth of the complex societies of Sistan. Similarly, the excavation reports

on the 2018-2019 excavations in Area 33, necropolis and Areas 20 and 33, S.M.S. Sajjadi and H. Moradi respectively, provide new data that have allowed us to draw a new stratigraphic grid for the entire settlement.

The second section presents the materials from the excavations, in particular the ceramic corpus from Area 33 (P. Vecchio) and the catalogue of its artefacts (R. Rivoltella), the analysis of the so-called 'Emir Ware' found throughout the settlement (S.M.S. Sajjadi) and separate studies of the marble and alabaster vessels from Area 33 (S. Festuccia) and the rest of the site (S.M.S. Sajjadi and S. Amini). This part of the volume includes the presentation of the stone, wooden and reed objects from the Iranian excavations (S.M.S. Sajjadi) and a study on the animal iconographies on pottery vessels (S.M.S. Sajjadi). This section also provides reflections and analysis on the enormous amount of material excavated by the Iranian mission from the settlement's necropolis (over 1000 graves) (R. Krvavac) and on the Iron Age ceramics from Sistan and eastern Iran more generally (V. Cardini).

The third section of the volume contains bioarchaeological studies by G. Fiorentino, M. Madella and I. Minervini, whose research aims at a re-reading of the various stratigraphic units on the basis of the sampling and analysis of botanical macro-remains (charcoals and seeds/fruits) and micro-remains (phytoliths); by P.F. Fabbri and G. Vincenti, who present the study of 69 skeletons from the necropolis of Shahr-i Sokhta; and by C. Minniti and A. Potenza who, on the basis of 800 animal remains, examine the evolution of husbandry strategies over time.

The dissemination of the research carried out aims at publishing a fourth volume of the series on Shahr-i Sokhta and its neighbouring regions, trying to place Sistan within a broader historical framework that recognises contacts, trade and relations of various kinds with the Iranian plateau, Central Asia, Mesopotamia and the Greater Indus Valley.