

FRANTZ GRENET

## RECORDS FROM A DISAPPEARING TEMPLE

*A Note on the “King and Queen” in the Painted Gallery at Kuh-i Khwaja*

---

### ABSTRACT

This article reexamines a wall painting discovered in 1925 and 1929 by Ernst Herzfeld in the Painted Gallery of the great Parthian-Sasanian temple complex at Kuh-i Khwaja in Iran (Sistan-Baluchestan province). The painting subsequently disappeared and today it can be studied only from Herzfeld's photographs (hardly usable), sketch, and watercolors, kept at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. It shows a royal or aristocratic couple standing in a schematic architectural setting. No interpretation has so far been attempted. It is proposed that the couple is standing at the entrance of a fire chamber (such as the real one that exists at the back of the temple) and that the man holds a written scroll (already identified as such by Herzfeld according to a scribbled note), which probably contains a deed of endowment. The costumes are Sasanian but not royal Sasanian, while the type of the woman's crown is documented in Kidarite-Hephthalite Bactria. A date is proposed in the fourth or fifth century. The man could belong to the vassal dynasty of the Saganshahs or be a later Sasanian governor.

---

The Kuh-i Khwaja, “Mountain of the Lord,” is an archaeological site on a basaltic plateau rising over the waters of Lake Hamun in Iran (Sistan-Baluchestan province), close to the Afghan border.<sup>1</sup> The walled settlement measures ca. 2.7 hectares, of which the northern half is occupied by a temple complex, the only one so far in pre-Islamic Iran where wall paintings have been discovered (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

The site was first investigated in 1915 by the British archaeologist Sir Mark Aurel Stein, who drew the first plan and recorded some paintings. In 1925 and 1929, the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld conducted a more systematic study. The only stratigraphic excavations were carried out in 1961 by a team from the University of Turin. Limited in scope, the initiative produced little reliable data for the overall chronology, which was overinterpreted and consequently gained no credit in the literature.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent visitors occasionally reported masonry falls that brought to light other paintings, and samples of wood were taken for radiocarbon analysis. Although there is evidence that the site was sacred for Zoroastrians as early as in the Avesta (*Yasht* 19, presumably from the Achaemenid period),<sup>4</sup> the safely or relatively safely

### QUICK CITATION

Grenet, Frantz. “Records from a Disappearing Temple: A Note on the ‘King and Queen’ in the Painted Gallery at Kuh-i Khwaja.” *Ars Orientalis* 54 (2024): 3–14



**FIGURE 1.** Excavation of Kuh-e Khwaja (Iran): Ruins of Ghaga-Shahr, “palace-temple” complex, view of main courtyard’s north wall. Ernst Herzfeld / National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Ernst Herzfeld Papers, FSA A.6 04.GN.2080

datable architectural remains date from between the late Parthian period (second and early third centuries CE) and the late Sasanian period (early seventh century), possibly with an occupation until the early Islamic period. There is no evidence for systematic destruction after the conquest. Earlier structures may come to light in the future.

This study focuses on one of the paintings, which particularly caught Herzfeld’s attention. Even if he did not provide an explanation, Herzfeld referred to it as the “king and queen,” a composition that was painted toward the middle of the back (northern) wall of the “Painted Gallery” encased in the basement of the raised terrace leading to the fire chamber (figs. 2–4).<sup>5</sup>

Photographic negatives, supplemented by Herzfeld’s sketches and watercolors (completed afterward and somehow different from each other),<sup>6</sup> show the couple standing in three-quarters view and the man’s body slightly overlapping the woman’s. The figures are set between two high rectangular frames ornamented with scrolls, circles, and a crisscross pattern. Herzfeld considered these frames as “a canopy, of which the posts only remain,” but in fact only the external band of the right frame is extended by an outward curve. A third character is standing to the left, recorded only in an uncolored sketch that is difficult to interpret.

The couple is dressed in tight, long red tunics and is richly adorned with neckbands, armbands, and stripes distributed along the sleeves and hems. The male figure also has a





**FIGURE 2.** "King and Queen," drawing from Herzfeld's sketchbook. Ernst Herzfeld / National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Ernst Herzfeld Papers, FSA A.06 05.0354a



**FIGURE 3.** Watercolor sketch (1 of 2) of fragmentary paintings on the wall. Ernst Herzfeld / National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Ernst Herzfeld Papers, FSA A.06 05.0354



FIGURE 4. Detail of watercolor sketch (2 of 2). Ernst Herzfeld / National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Ernst Herzfeld Papers, FSA.A.06 02.06.15.039

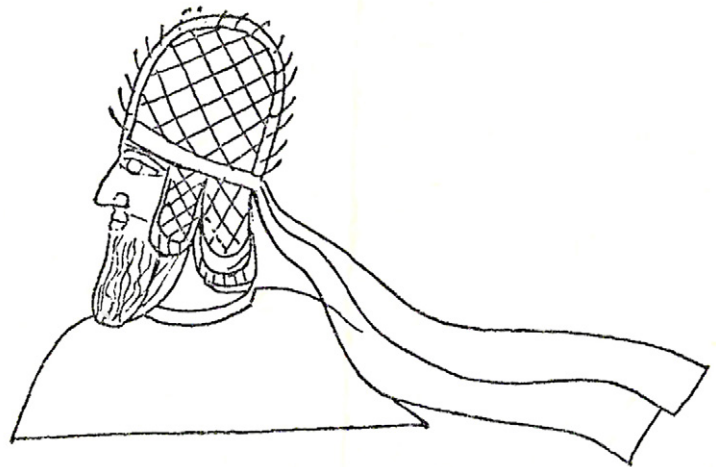


FIGURE 5. Graffito in Persepolis, detail of the northern wall of the "Harem." From Peter Calmeyer, "Zur Genese altiranischer Motive, V. Synarchie," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, n.s. 9 (1976): pl. 3

yellow cloak draped on his shoulders. His garments, which fold over from right to left, are not characteristic of Sasanian royal costumes, but traces of the typically Sasanian pearled "harness" are visible below the left shoulder. Below his red belt on the left, the figure wears a dagger with one round lobe on each side below the hilt (the lower part is missing).<sup>7</sup> His headgear, under which no headband is visible, is a plain calotte (the typical Sasanian headgear) covered with a crisscross pattern, such as that shown on a Persepolis graffito from the transitional Parthian-Sasanian period (fig. 5).<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, calottes with the same general shape but different patterns are shown on coins of Ardashir II (r. 379–383 CE) and before him, occasionally, Shapur II (309–379). Figures wearing such tight-fitting calottes are also depicted, together with higher round tiaras, on some nonroyal Sasanian seals. A crisscross pattern on



another type of headgear appears on a fourth- or fifth-century Sasanian plate showing a local ruler, perhaps in Sistan, holding a foal.<sup>9</sup> The woman's headgear is far more complicated, with a rosette set in a lozenge over the forehead, and on top a row of five triangular fleurons each enriched by multiple small round ornaments within and around it. Some Kushano-Sasanian crowns from the mid- and late fourth century are composed of similar elements (fig. 6).<sup>10</sup> A more similar crown, with round ornaments similarly attached to the sides of the triangles, is worn by a worshiper in the temple at Dil'berdzhin near Balkh (northern Afghanistan), dated to the fifth or sixth century (fig. 7).<sup>11</sup> Comparable crowns are also found on some Bactrian seals with male portraits attributed to the same period.<sup>12</sup> Among women's crowns, a more remote analogy is on the Sogdian seal of "Azat, consort of Indamich," with five fleurons each topped by a short spike carrying a round element (fig. 8).<sup>13</sup> On the painting under discussion, a nimbus painted in yellow seems visible around the head of the woman and perhaps also of the man.

Regarding the position of the figures' arms, Herzfeld wrote that "the attitude of his [the king's] left arm and the right arm of the queen is not quite clear." Trudy Kawami took the raised arm as the man's left arm; but comparing Herzfeld's various versions, it appears that his left arm, covered with a red sleeve like the right one, is hanging at the side of the body (on one of the watercolors, fig. 3, the hand, painted in pink, is recognizable), like the woman's left arm.



**FIGURE 6.** Kushano-Sasanian crowns. From Robert Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kušānreiches* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), pl. VI, king or kings "Wahram," crowns 1 (2nd type), 2, 5



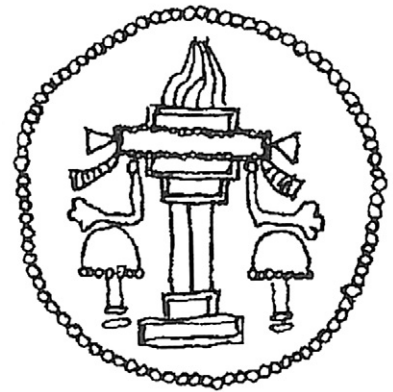
**FIGURE 7.** A worshiper, Dil'berdzhin, annex to the temple, room 16, watercolor copy. From Irina T. Kruglikova, "Nastennye rospisi v pomeschenii 16 severo-vostochnogo kul'tovogo kompleksa Dil'berdzhina," in *Drevniaia Baktriia: Materialy Sovetsko-Afganskoi arkheologicheskoi ekspeditsii, vyp. 2*, ed. Kruglikova (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), fig. 18; original in Kabul Museum or destroyed



**FIGURE 8.** Imprint of the Sogdian seal of Lady Azat, British Museum (119999) [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3b/British\\_Museum\\_stamp-seal\\_%28Registration\\_number\\_1870%2C1210.3%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3b/British_Museum_stamp-seal_%28Registration_number_1870%2C1210.3%29.jpg)



**FIGURE 9.** Worshippers, Mes Aynak, Ghol Hamid monastery. Photograph: INA/DAFA, courtesy of Nicolas Engel



**FIGURE 10.** Fire altar on coins of Wahram IV, type Ia 1/1a. From Nikolaus Schindel, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum*, 3/2: *Shapur II–Kawad I*. 2. *Regierung* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), p. 116

The raised arm is in fact the woman's right arm, with the yellow sleeve of the undergarment coming out of her red dress. A recently discovered Buddhist painting at Mes Aynak, a major Buddhist settlement near Kabul, attributed to the fourth or fifth century, shows exactly the same biconvex configuration (fig. 9).<sup>14</sup> In one version of Herzfeld's watercolors, not illustrated here, this arm, which Herzfeld supposed to be the man's, is holding a flower. The misinterpretation probably arose from a cluster of gemstones on the side of the woman's neckband. It seems rather that she is holding nothing but is executing the Iranian gesture of respect with a bent forefinger.

Below the man's broad red belt, perhaps made from leather with a rosette clasp, he has tied a second one. White in color, it is thinner with light fluttering ties. Based on the three ties, it is tempting to interpret this nonfunctional belt as the *kustīg*, the soft belt of the Zoroastrian initiate, folded three times. As the *kustīg*, however, is in principle worn directly on the skin with only the ends emerging from the tunic, this interpretation poses a problem.



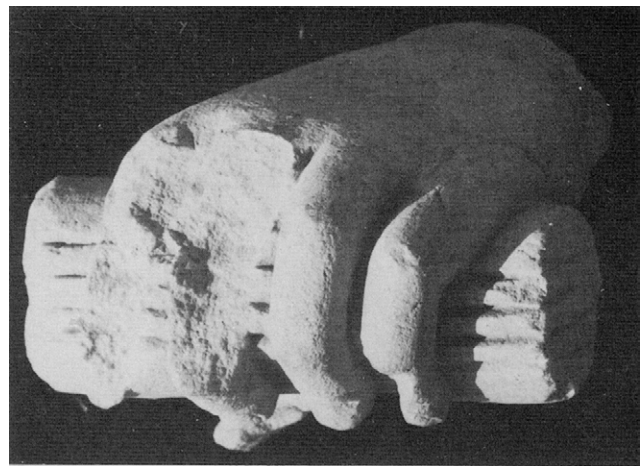
The couple appear to be standing in a setting. Behind them, the high “frames” could represent two doors of an antechamber. To the right, the arch of which only the departure subsists most probably indicates a niche or a dome containing the object of the adoration. What is visible inside suggests a large fire altar rather than a statue. The reverse of some Sasanian coins, especially under Shapur II (309–379), Ardashir II (r. 379–383) and Wahram IV (r. 388–399), shows a design that, on a miniature scale, seems compatible with the design Herzfeld failed to understand: a floating ribbon above (white on the watercolors), and a contorted yellow shape he perhaps misinterpreted from the schematized lion leg attached to the upper table of the altar and bent horizontally to reach a “mushroom-shaped” post (cf. fig. 10).<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, what is depicted here could be a combination of the upper ribbons shown on coins of Ardashir I and the middle ribbons shown on coins from Shapur I onward and on the Bandiyan (Khurasan) stuccos (see below).

Neither Herzfeld nor Kawami commented on the long white object held horizontally in the man’s right hand (fig. 11). On the negatives, it appears slightly thicker than as is shown on the watercolors, but similarly ending at a straight angle. This detail excludes a scepter. Considering the proximity of the fire altar, the object could be a bundle of *barsoms* (ritual twigs), but this is unlikely, as on almost all images from the Achaemenid to the Sasanian periods, the *barsoms* are longer, held vertically or bent slightly forward.<sup>16</sup> Another ritual object to be considered is the *esm*, a log or stick of scented wood, which would be cleaned of its bark and presented as an offering to the sacred fire. The white coloring and straight ends of the motif, however, are more indicative of a scroll.<sup>17</sup> Almut Hintze tentatively reads Herzfeld’s scribbled annotation on the object as: *volu. Skriptum* (i.e., *volumen Skriptum*, “scroll. Written document”) (fig. 11).<sup>18</sup> Independently, Anca Dan proposes the same interpretation with slight differences.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore probable that Herzfeld identified the object as a written scroll.

There is an analogy, even if not strictly morphological but probably functional, with some royal stone statues at the Kushan dynastic temple of Surkh Kotal, north of Kabul, Afghanistan, which was founded by Kanishka (r. 127–ca. 150). At least one fragmentary left hand, detached from a statue, holds an object, entirely preserved, which the French archaeologist



**FIGURE 11.** Detail of fig. 4. The object in the man’s right hand, with Herzfeld’s annotation *volu. Skriptum* (?). Ernst Herzfeld / National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Ernst Herzfeld Papers, FSA.A.06 02.06.15.039



63. 195. — S 2.



63. 196. — S 2.

**FIGURE 12.** Surkh Kotal, sculpture fragments S 2. From Daniel Schlumberger, Marc Le Berre, and Gérard Fussman, *Surkh Kotal en Bactriane*, vol. 1, *Les temples: Architecture, sculpture, inscriptions* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1983), pp. 195–96, pl. 63; original in Kabul Museum

Daniel Schlumberger described as “a book consisting in two convex tablets enclosing a bundle of sheets” (fig. 12).<sup>20</sup> The object, however, cannot be a codex, which was introduced to Central Asia only later by the Christians and Manichaeans. In northern India and Khotan, wooden tablets enclosing *pothis*, texts written on palm leaves, were also known, but this material seems specific to the Indian sphere, while Bactria used parchment.<sup>21</sup> The leaves between the planks could be a Bactrian parchment charter folded three times (one of the documented formats of Bactrian documents)<sup>22</sup> with the thickness of the four lines exaggerated for the sake of visibility. So, most probably at Surkh Kotal the king is holding a charter of endowment or donation as a folded parchment; at Kuh-i Khwaja it appears to be a scroll but the context is the same. Such an interpretation also corresponds to what the high magus Kerdīr stated in his inscriptions concerning his establishment of fire temples: “many charters



(relating to) fires and mages were sealed.”<sup>23</sup> The Pahlavi word translated as *charter* is *pādix-šīr*; in similar contexts, Kerdir uses also *gitt* (document) and *mādayān* (record). We may not know the appearance of these documents, but probably they were shown at the time of the temples’ consecration. The end of the Bactrian inscription, which records the foundation of the Rabatak temple by Kanishka, states that “according to the king’s command many rites (?) were endowed, many attendants were endowed.”<sup>24</sup> The word for *command* is *fromana* and relates to the Persian *farmān*; it designates both the order and its written record. On the Kuh-i Khwaja painting, a scroll with a Zoroastrian prayer is unlikely: prayers were known by heart as they are today, and scholars generally agree that the Avestan texts were not committed to writing before the sixth century.

The identity of the couple is unclear. With the unresolved chronology of the site of Kuh-e Khwaja, partially due to lack of proper stratigraphic investigations, the iconographic parallels discussed here seem to indicate that this painting was executed in the mid-Sasanian period, fourth or fifth century, but may not represent Sasanian imperial art *stricto sensu*. If the characters are royal, they probably belong to the line of the vassal Saganshahs’ “Kings of the Sakas,” that is, Sagestan-Sistan. They are last documented by an inscription at Persepolis from 327 that mentions Shapur Saganshah, a member of the Sasanian family.<sup>25</sup> If from a later period, the pair may represent a governor and his wife. As noted, the figure’s appearance seems to draw inspiration from Kushano-Sasanian or Kidarite fashions and regalia. Although these realms never included Sistan, they bordered it to the south of Herat and included Kapisa, which was not distant from the upper Hilmand basin.

This image of an act of endowment to a sacred fire is located at a most appropriate spot, near the middle of the long back (north) wall of the Painted Gallery, on the axis of the domed chamber that sheltered a stone fire altar. As in the vase of the private fifth-century shrine at Bandiyan, the real fire was burnt in the cella, where only priests were admitted, while also at Bandiyan a room set on its axis contained its image in its most exalted form, with wide middle ribbons flanked by lay patrons.<sup>26</sup> At the time of Herzfeld’s visits, the scene was the only preserved painting on this wall. There is one other clearly Zoroastrian image at Kuh-e Khwaja, which is painted near the northern entrance; it represents a priest or servant of the cult wearing the mouth cover (*padām*).<sup>27</sup>

Generally speaking, there is very little evidence of deities in human form at Kuh-e Khwaja. On the south wall and ceiling of the Painted Gallery, other paintings included rows of worshippers, festive scenes, and a mythological episode (a combat between two Indian elephant riders). In a corridor along the south gate of the complex, a composition recorded by M. Aurel Stein showed an enthroned royal character with an ox-headed mace receiving the submission of a three-headed foe. Only here, a precise identification is possible: the composition depicts Faridun’s victory over Zahhaq.<sup>28</sup> To return to the Painted Gallery, the pair formed by a male trident bearer and a female mace bearer could be divine, the god in this case being Vayu (Oēšō with a trident on Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian coins) and the goddess Nana (sometimes depicted with a mace), but the light dress and the woman’s informal pose complicate this identification.<sup>29</sup> Apart from this pair, in a group of three men, the right one, with a two-winged helmet, has been compared to Hermes and could be tentatively identified as Farn, depicted in the guise of Hermes on Kushan coins. As he carries a shield and appears on equal footing with an obviously non-divine figure, he could be just a young warrior.<sup>30</sup> All in all, the only clearly divine representation in the gallery is that of a moon god with a halo and a wide crescent over his head.<sup>31</sup> An astral personification does not necessarily hint at image worship.

Despite current challenges to conducting fieldwork at Kuh-e Khwaja, progress can still be made with detailed examination and comparative analysis of Herzfeld's archives. Complete digitalization of his sketchbooks, with hypertext links to translations of his notes and associated documents, could further facilitate research. More generally, a three-dimensional model of the architecture of the temple with the precise location and reproduction of all recorded wall paintings is a desideratum. And, even more importantly, the Iranian authorities should take measures to contain the accelerated destruction of this exceptional site, which most probably contains still other undiscovered images.

---

Since 2013 **Frantz Grenet** has been professor at the Collège de France, Paris (chair "History and Cultures of Pre-Islamic Central Asia"). Previously he held the chair "Religions of Ancient Iran" at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. Since 1989 he has been director of the French-Uzbek Archaeological Mission, which conducts excavations mainly at Samarkand. For his list of publications, see <https://www.archeo.ens.fr/IMG/pdf/f.grenet.publications.pdf>

---

## Notes

- 1 On October 20, 2022, along with some of the participants in the conference "The Sasanians in Context: Art, History, and Archaeology" organized at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, I was able to consult Ernst Herzfeld's sketchbooks from his two expeditions at Kuh-e Khwaja (1925 and 1929), as well as some of his photographic negatives. These observations are the result of the visit. Special thanks are due to Antonietta Catanzariti and Massumeh Farhad for their kindness and patience, and to my co-lecturer, Anca Dan (National Center for Scientific Research [CNRS], École Normale Supérieure-PSL, Paris) for her valuable insights.
- 2 For overall presentations of the site and the history of its study, see Trudy S. Kawami, "Kuh-e Khwaja, Iran, and Its Wall Paintings: The Records of Ernst Herzfeld," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 22 (1987): 13–52; Soroosh Ghanimati, "New Perspectives on the Chronology and Functional Horizons of Kuh-e Khwaja in Sistan," *Iran* 38 (2000): 137–50; and *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2015), s.v., "Kuh-e K̲w̲āja," (with up-to-date information on the degradation of the site).
- 3 Giorgio Gullini, *Architettura iranica dagli Achemenidi ai Sasanidi: Il "Palazzo" di Kuh-i Khwaja (Seistan)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964). The most fully argued archaeological criticism is by Klaus Schippmann in his *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 57–70.
- 4 Eschatological legends associated to the site, from the Avesta to fifteenth-century Pahlavi texts, are studied in Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 3, *Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 149–51, 451–53.
- 5 Ernst Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 294, pl. civ (top); Kawami, "Kuh-e Khwaja," 42–44, figs. 19, 20. These are the only published images. As this painting was never mentioned by visitors after Herzfeld, it has most probably disappeared, the mud underlay having collapsed or the paint layer having peeled off.
- 6 Caution is needed for some details, as Herzfeld completed his watercolors later, on the basis of notes on his sketches. The black-and-white negatives do not always help. Herzfeld's published slide was quite coarsely touched up with gaudy colors and cannot be considered reliable.
- 7 As remarked by Michael Shenkar (private communication) it looks like the four-lobbed dagger attached to the thigh, which is considered typical of the Parthian period. In fact, this type of dagger (and probably also the way it is attached) is still depicted on some Sasanian silver plates in the late fourth century. Prudence O. Harper and Pieter Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, vol. 1, *Royal Imagery* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), pls. 24 (Shapur III), 29 (king unidentified).
- 8 Peter Calmeyer, "Zur Genese altiranischer Motive, V. Synarchie," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, n.s. 9 (1976): 63–95, pl. 3, especially the bust to the left of the right-hand scene.
- 9 *The 1st Anniversary Exhibition* (Shigaraki: Miho Museum, 1998), 22–23.
- 10 Robert Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kusānreiches* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 1–2.



- reichisches Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), pl. VI.
- 11 Irina T. Kruglikova, "Nastennye rospisi v pomeschenii 16 severo-vostochnogo kul'tovogo kompleksa Dil'berdzhina," in *Drevniaia Baktriia: Materialy Sovetsko-Afganskoi arkhelogicheskoi ekspeditsii*, vyp. 2, ed. Kruglikova (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 120–45, esp. 128–32, figs. 17, 18.
  - 12 Judith A. Lerner and Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Seals, Sealings and Tokens from Bactria to Gandhara (4th to 8th century CE)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), esp. 73: AA 2.2; 78: AA 5.1.
  - 13 Nicholas Sims-Williams, *The "Ancient Letters" and Other Early Sogdian Documents and Inscriptions* (London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 2023), 95–96, pl. XLV a,b, which supersedes earlier readings. Despite some analogies with the crowns of the "Eastern Aphrodites" produced massively in Egypt and Syria (see, e.g., the Louvre statuette BR 418: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010258169>), there are probably no direct connections, considering that most such crowns in Central Asia are masculine.
  - 14 Anna Filigenzi, "Remarks on the Wall Paintings from Mes Aynak," in *Recent Archaeological Works in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2013), 44. Cf. also the *ichkuylak*, the undergarment of the traditional Uzbek female costume, which is colored differently from the overgarment and sometimes comes out.
  - 15 Nikolaus Schindel, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum*, 3/2: *Shapur II–Kawad I./2. Regierung* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 116, reverse types 1a, 2, 2a. For photos of specimens with deformed lion paws more similar to what is visible at Kuh-e Khwaja, see Robert Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics* (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1971), pl. 7, no. 107 (Shapur II), no. 124 (Ardashir II).
  - 16 There are very few exceptions, none of which seems relevant here. On the Mulla Kurgan ossuary near Samarkand, there are two short bundles of *barsoms*, each with a neat division line and held straight. Judith A. Lerner, "Believers, Proselytizers, & Translators: Religion among the Sogdians," <https://sogdians.si.edu/believers-proselytizers-translators/>, fig. 3. On the Sino-Sogdian sarcophagus of Wirkak (Xi'an), two priests hold horizontally two very long bundles of *barsoms*, again with a division line. Julie Bellemare and Judith A. Lerner, "The Sogdians Abroad: Life and Death in China," <https://sogdians.si.edu/the-sogdians-abroad/>, fig. 6. On the Yumalak Tepe ossuary near Shahr-i Sabz, the long instrument lowered onto the offering table is more probably tongs. Lerner, "Believers," figs. 4, 5.
  - 17 The so-called white sandalwood sometimes used in India for *esm* is in fact yellow, and the *esm* can be presented by a layman only to a low-grade fire in the absence of a priest. Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: J. B. Karani's Sons, 1937), 218–19.
  - 18 Almut Hintze, SOAS, London, personal communication to the author.
  - 19 Anca Dan, personal communication to the author.
  - 20 Daniel Schlumberger, Marc Le Berre, and Gérard Fussman, *Surkh Kotal en Bactriane*, vol. 1, *Les temples: Architecture, sculpture, inscriptions* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1983), 120, fragment S 2; 195–96, pl. 63. Another hand (S 3) could also hold a document, but Schlumberger took it rather as an unfinished hand.
  - 21 See, e.g., in Khotan the *Book of Zambasta*. Ronald E. Emmerick, *Saka Documents Text*, vol. 3, *The St. Petersburg Collections* (London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 1995), 34, pls. 188, 189. In India parchment is avoided because it is forbidden to write on the skin of a dead animal.
  - 22 Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 2, *Letters and Buddhist Texts* (London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 2012), 11–12 (format 3).
  - 23 "Kerdir's Inscription," trans. David N. MacKenzie, in Georgina Herrmann, *The Sasanian Reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam: Naqsh-e Rostam 6, The Triumph of Shapur I*, *Iranische Denkmäler 13/II/1* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1989), 54, §2.
  - 24 Nicholas Sims-Williams, "The Bactrian Inscription of Rabatak: A New Reading," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 18 (2004 [2008]): 57, §21.
  - 25 Inscriptions ŠPs-1 and ŠPs-2: Michael Back, *Die Sassanidischen Staatsinschriften* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 492–97.
  - 26 I owe this excellent comparison to Samra Azarnouche. See Mehdi Rahbar, "Découverte d'un monument d'époque sassanide à Bandian, Dargaz (Nord Khorassan)," *Studia Iranica* 27 (1998): 213–50, pls. IX, X, figs. 7, 8; Samra Azarnouche, "A Zoroastrian Cult Scene on Sasanian Stucco Reliefs at Bandiyan (Dargaz, Khorāsān-e Razavi)," in *Sasanian Studies: Late Antique Iranian World / Sasanidische Studien: Spätantike iranische Welt*, ed. Shervin Farridnejad and Touraj Daryaee (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2022), 1:1–28, esp. 7n31. Here the *barsoms* held by the worshipers are long, thin, and vertically oriented.

- 27 Kawami, "Kuh-e Khwaja," 45–48 (figs. 23, 26, 27).
- 28 The only visual record that subsists is the photo in M. Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), 2: 913–21, pl. 54, fig. 468 (where Stein proposed a less plausible identification with Rustam). A forthcoming article in *East & West* will be devoted to this painting: Frantz Grenet, "A Preliminary Note on a Painting from Kuh-e K'āja in the New Delhi National Museum."
- 29 Kawami, "Kuh-e Khwaja," 30–34, figs. 10–13; the male figure is hypothetically identified with Vayu while the question is left open for the female figure. For Vayu with the trident, see Michael Shenkar, *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images: The Iconography of Deities in the Pre-Islamic Iranian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 154–58, figs. 146, 147, pls. 27, 28; for Nana with a mace, 125, fig. 112.
- 30 So Kawami, "Kuh-e Khwaja," 34–36, figs. 14, 15.
- 31 Kawami, 36–37, fig. 16.