

RAYY RESEARCH, 1935, PART II

THE continuation of Dr. Schmidt's report on the 1935 season of the Joint Expedition to Iran covers two important phases of his scientific investigation. The site of Rayy (ancient Rhages) just a few miles from Teheran, present capital of Iran, was apparently recognized as a strategic point from the very earliest times. The discoveries of the Joint Expedition are laying a sure foundation for more exact knowledge of the chronology of the various Persian epochs from the fourth millennium before Christ to the fifteenth century after.

THE archaeological deposit of Rayy is for the larger part spread far into the plain and seems to be composed principally of remains of the Islamic city. There are only two compact mound formations on the site of Rayy containing strata of Pre-Islamic times (before the seventh century A. D.), the Cheshmeh Ali Mound and the Citadel Hill. The delicate chronology of the pre-historic strata was to be determined at Cheshmeh Ali by an extensive top-to-bottom test, while on the Citadel Hill—which must have been the nucleus of defense for most of the successive settlements—we hoped to define early historic occupations.

THE EXCAVATION ON THE CITADEL HILL

On May 16, 1935, we broke ground in an area of four hundred square meters selected on the flat eastern platform of the hill. Almost fifteen meters below, the base of the fortress mound merges with the second girdle of defense, including the so-called Governmental Quarters, while the outer defense walls of the city extend in the form of eccentric circles from other points of the fortress far into the plain. Our patience was well tried for the first several days, for they were spent wholly in penetrating a sterile sediment which was thicker than had been assumed. But finally, at a depth of more than a meter below the surface, remains of broken-down walls appeared, charcoal layers and masses of sherds. The top level of the Citadel occupation had been struck. In the test area the uppermost stratum of the Citadel was defined by debris rather than by foundations of buildings. Deep charcoal layers suggested the remains of a conflagration; *tandirs* or baking ovens of earthenware, gave us the levels of floors, though their enclosing walls had disappeared. Potsherds came to light in great numbers

and, though the level was architecturally ill-defined, the sherds indicated that it belonged to the recent phase of the Islamic Era (Islam III).

The bulk of the ceramics seem to belong to the fifteenth century, for a Timurid coin of Shah Rokh (fourth son of the great Timur) struck in 1432-33, came to light in the refuse of the top stratum encountered. Compared with the delightfully colored and modelled ceramics of the Seljug period (1055-1300) these supposed Timurid wares comprise rather degenerate products of the made by potters longer masters of patterns, mainly and black and in blue-green and orate the coarse

After removing struck the first group of building rows of rooms closed by walls baked bricks, or out of the earth over. Here we domestic furni-baking ovens of storage pots for liquids, and some sels of more deli-most important

was a small coin bank of plain pottery standing on the plastered floor of one of these rooms. It contained the dating specimens of the second level, namely silver coins of the great Seljug monarch, Toghrul Beg, who ruled about the middle of the eleventh century; there were in addition somewhat earlier coins of Mahmud of Ghazni who ruled from 971 until 1030.

The fact that an occupational level of the middle of the eleventh century underlies remains of the fifteenth century apparently indicates that during the time of the greatest splendor of Rayy, namely the whole



ate and clumsy kilns, obviously who were no their art. Crude in blue-green purple-brown, gray-white, dec-ware of this time. the top level we well-defined remains. Neat appeared, en-of baked or un-walls merely dug and plastered found remains of ture, such as earthenware, grain or for fragmentary ves-cate forms. The find, however,

Seljuq period, the area of the Citadel we tested was not occupied at all. The ceramics found in the second level and in several sub-levels, slightly older than the latter, gave us clues as to the appearance of the elusive transitional wares, linking Early and Middle Islamic Pottery.

At points where the excavation penetrated somewhat below the common bottom level characterless sherds of plain ware appeared suggesting ceramics of the early historic eras. Further there was noted a decided increase in prehistoric gray ware no doubt pertaining to the Early Iron Age (roughly 1000 B. C.), and below these a few painted sherds of Hissar IB type suggest the presence of a stratum of this period (third millennium), far below the present level of the excavation. In any event, it will be extremely instructive to continue this test to the very bottom of the Citadel Mound.

THE EXCAVATION ON THE CHESHMEH ALI MOUND

For technical reasons the excavation had to shuttle between the Citadel and Cheshmeh Ali—a striking mound, the name of which translated is the "Eye of Ali," so called from a charming spring on one side. As soon as an architectural level is encountered the main crew of diggers has to be halted while the excavated structures are being cleaned, surveyed and described. Therefore, when the first well-defined level was uncovered on the Citadel, the main crew was shifted to Cheshmeh Ali Tepe and was set to work making a thorough test of this mound, so that no time should be wasted.

At Cheshmeh Ali we became impatient of the deposits of the Islamic Era which only disturbed and retarded the excavation. These are of trivial importance compared with the underlying strata. This Islamic layer averaged two meters in depth and contained great numbers of burials and small mausoleums of the Early Islamic phase, but very few objects came to light which might be useful in determining culture of this period. A few graves supplied information as to manner of the disposal of the dead, but the skeletal material was so badly preserved that virtually none was worth saving. Of some interest were the small tombstones of marble or alabaster with religious inscriptions carved in Kufic characters.

The hill of Cheshmeh Ali covers the most important prehistoric center of the plain of Rayy. It is clear, therefore, that the principal aim of our work at this point is the illumination of the earliest cultures of the

site. There are, however, handicaps. Our soundings of 1934 showed an extreme scarcity of burials, and burials, as a rule, give the fullest information about the culture of prehistoric times. We shall, therefore, have to be content probably to determine the ceramic development of earliest Rayy by means of the abundant fragments and occasional vessels found in the remains of the dwellings of the prehistoric people: the chief scientific problems fortunately can thus be solved despite the scarcity of objects, and the culture relations of the earliest settlers of Rayy with the neighboring areas can be determined, in addition to defining the characteristic local features of the site.

E. S.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK IN DURANGO DURING MARCH, 1936

DR. MASON has been engaged in research in northern Mexico since early December on an extension of Dr. Edgar B. Howard's project for the study of Early Man in America, a project supported by a grant from the American Philosophical Society. While Dr. Mason has covered exhaustively the area around Durango and has found nothing to correlate with Dr. Howard's finds in the United States, nevertheless, this negative evidence is of distinct value to the problem, and his evidences are of undoubted importance.

The following extract from a letter recently received from Dr. Mason should not only of itself be of interest to readers of the *Bulletin*, but indicates the thoroughness of his investigation of the problem before him.

THE greater part of the month to date was spent in the high mountains west and northwest of Durango City. Although it was an interesting experience, the archaeological results were disappointing. The country is high, the habitations and passes being probably about eight thousand feet, the mountain tops much higher. Everything is pretty heavily forested, mainly with great pine trees and live oaks, very little cactus. It was very dry, the wagon trails being several inches deep in fine dust, but it was always cold at night; when camping out we needed all the bedding and clothes we had as well as a blazing camp-fire. It was generally warm in the sun during the day, but if cloudy and damp it was chilly and uncomfortable.