

# Sasanian Bullae Project at the Iran National Museum

Tehran, Iran, July-August 2004



Dr. Judith Lerner and Dr. Touraj Daryaei at work,  
*The Inscriptions Hall, Iran National Museum*

With grants from the American Institute of Iranian Studies, scholars of Sasanian history and art, Dr. Judith Lerner and Dr. Touraj Daryaei, along with Dr. Dariush Akbarzadeh, manager of the Inscription Treasury of the Iran National Museum, undertook a project to catalogue four collections of Sasanian bullae. These bullae, which had come to the possession of the Iranian National Museum via various routes, were previously only marginally studied and catalogued.



The project team at work: Dr. Judith Lerner, Dr. Touraj Daryaei,  
Dr. Dariush Akbarzadeh



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Dr. Judith Lerner, independent scholar and an expert on Sasanian art, directed the project by devising a cataloguing system. She also recorded the iconographic and stylistic features of the bullae and categorized them based on these characteristics.

Dr. Touraj Daryaee, Associate Professor of Ancient History at California State University, Fullerton, was the coordinator of the project. Dr. Daryaee read and recorded the various Pahlavi inscriptions on the bullae; in this task, Dr. Daryaee was assisted by Dr. Akbarzadeh. In this process, the team found new information regarding the uses of the bullae and their association with local authorities.



Examples of the bullae studied during this project

The project spanned a period of four weeks in July-August of 2004. The bullae were also photographed in order to prepare them for eventual publication; in this the team was ably assisted by Khodadad Rezakhani.



Khodadad Rezakhani, photographing the bullae  
*Iran National Museum*

Most of the bullae have not been published. The majority come from the site of Tepe Kabudan (Gorgan) and others from Susa. Still others came from private collections; there was also a group which the team called “Mehr-Abad” because it was confiscated from smugglers at the airport.

Two talks, by Dr. Lerner and Dr. Daryaei, were given at the Museum during this project. The talk by Dr. Daryaei, in Persian, concentrated on the memory of the Achaemenids in the Late Antique period; Dr. Lerner gave a fascinating talk on Bactrian sealings and explained the particular features of the Bactrian documents, currently under study by her and Dr. N. Sims-Williams of SOAS, London.



Dr. Daryaei and Dr. Lerner, during their talk  
*Iran National Museum*