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- 1 The authors, members of the DAFA (*Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan*), present in this paper the preliminary results of the excavations at Site 6 of Tepe Zargaran in the area of the ancient city of Balkh (northern Afghanistan, ancient Bactriana). More specifically, the paper offers a bio-archaeological analysis of the data obtained from the 2008 discovery of a sepulchral pit containing the skeletal remains of eight individuals separated, according to the authors, into two groups. This secondary collective burial was overlaid and sealed by a rampart of Kushan times. On the basis of the archaeological evidence gathered (including a carbon-14 dating test) the authors ascribe the pit to the Late Iron Age/Early Hellenistic period, possibly “around the [time of the] conquest” in the aftermath of the defeat of Darius III. The importance of the discovery is quite relevant considering the rarity of tombs in southern Central Asia for the whole Iron Age period (1500-329 BC). The analysis of the skeletal remains highlights

dismembering and cutting practices (in addition to excarnation), which are interpreted as possible mutilations of the corpses before their final deposition in the pit. The few data available on similar complex burial practices documented in other Bactrian sites (such as Tillya Tepe) are compared by the authors with the new data from Tepe Zargaran. A possible connection with the funerary praxis as described in the Avestan *Vidēvdād* is noted with caution in the conclusions.

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