Andrea Squitieri. “The Sasanian Cemetery of Gird-I Bazar in the Peshdar Plain (Iraqi Kurdistan)”

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- 1 In the site of Gird-i Bazar in the Sulaymaniyah province, a Sasanian cemetery was found installed over, and partly damaging, the older Iron Age structures. Although Zoroastrians notoriously exposed the bodies and then placed the bones into *astodans*, inhumations are not uncommon in such a multi-cultural empire. After mentioning the Sasanian cemeteries found in the same region and underlining the presence of a large Christian community in Adiabene, the author describes the 62 excavated graves, out of the 92 identified, with a total of 71 individuals (some pit graves are not individual). All the graves present a stone capping made of boulders taken from the Iron Age structures underneath. No pattern on the interment practices was discernible, neither on the orientation nor the position of the bodies. Grave goods were preserved in 25 out of 62 excavated graves, and consisted of manufactured items, e.g., beads, iron items, copper-alloy items, and unworked pebbles specifically placed on specific spots of the bodies. The placement of pebbles may be a local ritual practice and has no parallel in any other excavated Sasanian cemetery. Manufactured items were concentrated in three graves, hinting to the higher social status of some individuals. Most interesting, a seal depicting a 'Persian woman with a lotus flower' was found close by a juvenile of non-ascertained sex who shared the grave pit with a middle-aged woman.

- 2 There is no evidence of a Sasanian settlement close by which suggests that the cemetery was probably used by several rural communities or pastoral nomads. The description of grave goods and the impressive imagery content of this paper is exemplary, and appropriate for such an incredible discovery.
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