
William Trousdale, Mitchell Allen. *The Archaeology of Southwestern Afghanistan. Volume 1: Survey and Excavation*

Giulio Maresca



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/56595>

DOI: [10.4000/abstractairanica.56595](https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.56595)

ISSN: 1961-960X

Publisher:

Éditions de l'IFRI, CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens)

Electronic reference

Giulio Maresca, "William Trousdale, Mitchell Allen. *The Archaeology of Southwestern Afghanistan. Volume 1: Survey and Excavation*", *Abstracta Iranica* [Online], Volume 45 | 2023, document 1, Online since 30 December 2023, connection on 10 October 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/56595> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.56595>

This text was automatically generated on October 10, 2024.



The text only may be used under licence CC BY-SA 4.0. All other elements (illustrations, imported files) are "All rights reserved", unless otherwise stated.

William Trousdale, Mitchell Allen. *The Archaeology of Southwestern Afghanistan. Volume 1: Survey and Excavation*

Giulio Maresca

REFERENCES

William Trousdale, Mitchell Allen. *The Archaeology of Southwestern Afghanistan. Volume 1: Survey and Excavation*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022, 699+xxviii pages (including figures and index).

- 1 The Helmand Sistan Project (HSP) was active in southwestern Afghanistan between 1971 and 1979, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the Institute of Archaeology of Afghanistan. Directed by William B. Trousdale, Anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution, it represented the first long-term systematic archaeological survey and excavation project (also including geological and ethnographic research) in the region of Afghan Sistan, covering an area of approximately 40,000 square kilometres and investigating over 170 sites. After several decades, the project was resumed in 2016, when the Authors decided to finalise the publication of the project results.
- 2 The book at the issue represents the first volume of the HSP final publication and is devoted to the description – also by means of an outstanding number of figures (hundreds of photographs, plans, maps and tables) – of the sites surveyed or excavated in Afghan Sistan in the 1970s (the second volume, dealing with the archaeological materials and also including some specialistic essays on the geology, geography and ethnography of the area is already in preparation). Many of the discussed sites (roughly

- 100) were previously unknown, not included, for example, in the 2019 revised version of Warwick Ball's *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*.
- 3 After the Preface (pp. i-xxviii), the first part of the book is represented by four chapters dealing with the project background: Chapter 1 (p. 1-10) has an introductory character; Chapter 2 (pp. 13-18) outlines the history of Sistan from the Bronze Age to the end of the Timurid period; Chapter 3 (pp. 19-28) summarises the history of the archaeological research in the area (including the archaeological activities carried out in Iranian Sistan); Chapter 4 (p. 29-45) specifies both the survey/excavation methods and it also describes the processing procedures adopted for the excavated materials as well as the absolute and relative dating methods and criteria.
 - 4 In the second part of the book, from Chapter 5 to Chapter 7, the Authors deal with the 160 sites surveyed by the Helmand Sistan Project in different areas of southwestern Afghanistan, grouped according to a geographical criterion.
 - 5 Chapter 5 (p. 49-222), indeed, is devoted to the description of the 103 sites and/or isolated monuments surveyed in the Sar-o-Tar basin, providing evidence from a broad chronological timespan ranging from the Bronze Age to the post-Timurid period.
 - 6 Conversely, Chapter 6 (p. 223-326) illustrates and discusses the 50 sites surveyed in the Helmand Valley, featuring occupation phases from the Bronze Age to the post-Timurid period.
 - 7 Lastly, the remaining eight sites surveyed elsewhere in southwestern Afghanistan (with roughly the same chronology as the other ones) are the focus of Chapter 7 (p. 327-354).
 - 8 The third and last part of the book, represented by Chapters 8 and 9, is instead devoted to the twelve archaeological sites where the Helmand Sistan Project managed to carry out stratigraphic excavations in addition to survey activities.
 - 9 Chapter 8 (p. 357-509) deals with eleven minor sites excavated by the HSP in the years of its field activities in southwestern Afghanistan. These minor excavated sites include a Parthian cemetery (Cemetery 150); a Buddhist complex from the Hellenistic and Parthian periods (Khana Gauhar); a religious complex of Parthian age (Khawaja Ali Sehyaka); a huge multi-period mound (Lat Qala) with archaeological evidence from the Bronze Age to the post-Timurid period; a Timurid domed mausoleum (Mausoleum 214); an Early Iron Age platform with later Partho-Sasanian and Islamic occupation phases (Qala 169); two sites with domestic buildings from the Parthian, Sasanian, Ghaznavid and Timurid periods (House 139 and Houses 183) as well as Parthian and Partho-Sasanian fire temples (Qala 198 and Temple 215).
 - 10 Lastly, Chapter 9 (p. 511-651) is entirely devoted to the HSP excavations at the major site of Shahr-i Golgola, an outstanding (over one square kilometre) multi-period site (likely from the Parthian period to the 15th century CE) in the southern half of the Sar-o-Tar basin. Activities at Shahr-i Golgola resulted to be the main focus of the HSP and took place over a period of more than 35 weeks in total.
 - 11 Appendix 1 (pp. 653-659) enumerates all the sites surveyed or excavated in the frame of the Project. A synoptic table reports their names and synthetic additional information (e.g. geographical coordinates, dimensions, suggested chronology and a brief description). The location of the sites is shown in the eleven accompanying maps (p. 660-670), arranged in a chronological order.

- 12 Appendix 2 (p. 671) lists the twelve scientific contributions published by the Helmand-Sistan Project from 1972 up until today. In this respect, is important to recall the fundamental paper on a previously unknown Early Iron Age culture attested in the Sar-o-Tar Plain and dating to c. 1000 BCE (Mitchell Allen and William B. Trousdale, “Early Iron Age Culture of Sistan, Afghanistan”, *Afghanistan* 2(1), 2019, p. 29-69).
 - 13 Appendix 3 (pp. 672-685), by L. Morris, R. Mairs and M. Zellmann-Rohrer, is devoted to a fragmentary bilingual (Greek/Aramaic) inscription found at the site of Khwaja Ali Sehyaka/Sehyak along with other Aramaic epigraphic material.
 - 14 References are listed at pp. 687-694 and a useful index is placed at the end of the book (pp. 695-699).
 - 15 A richly illustrated summary of the scientific results obtained by the HSP (featuring a brief presentation of the project background, field activities, key sites and major finds) is also available for a non-specialist audience at the website sistanarchaeology.org, launched in 2023.
-

AUTHORS

GIULIO MARESCA

Università de Rome « Sapienza »