



# Bulletin

Vol. 26, No. 17

April 28, 1971

## CANADIAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS RETURN TO IRAN

This summer, for the fourth season since 1965, archaeologists from Canada's Royal Ontario Museum will excavate Godin Tepe, a site in western Iran, which was occupied continuously from about 6000 B.C. to 600 B.C. A new ROM "dig" will also begin at nearby Seh Gabi.

Godin Tepe, which has seven major periods of occupation, is situated in the central Zagros Mountains, beside the Silk Road, an ancient trade-route winding from Mesopotamia to China. Since the ROM crew began excavating in 1965, they have unearthed a monumental structure dating from about 700 B.C., which they believe was a prince's palace in the land of the Medes.

The Median kingdom was a confederation of small local kingdoms that was gradually formed under the leadership of a powerful royal line. Judging from the strategic location of the palace on the main road to Babylon and the immense size of the complex, it is likely that the ruler was an important figure in the Median confederation.

The main feature of the palace is a monumental columned hall about 95 feet long and 81 feet wide,

which is said to be an early example of the type of great audience hall found at Pasargadae and Persepolis. There are also 12 store-rooms, a fortified outer wall with four defensive towers, a pantry and a kitchen with hearths and an oven, bearing witness to the banquets served in the great meeting-hall.

Historical accounts reveal that the Medes were rather troublesome to the mighty Assyrian Empire, which stretched from Iran on the east to Egypt on the west. In 614 B.C., the Medes formed the spearhead of the attack that led to the final fall of Assyria. Eventually, they established the capital of the Median empire at Hamadan, which thrives today a short distance from Godin Tepe.

### FIRST COMPLETE DIG

Although there are numerous Biblical and literary references to the Medes and Media, little is known about their culture from first-hand archaeological evidence in Iran. The ROM expedition, headed by T. Cuyler Young Jr., Curator of the Museum's West Asian Department, is the first to excavate a Median site systematically and to compile a complete archaeological history of the area.

The selection of Godin Tepe proved fortunate, not only because of the impressive structure built by the Medes but also because of the remains of five earlier settlements.

Period I covers the current use of the mound as a cemetery and the presence of a small shrine. Period II is the Median occupation about 700 B.C. The people whose remains are classified as Period III lived in the area from about 2200 B.C. to 1200 B.C., but they cannot be identified with any historically-known people or nation.

In one of the Period III levels in the excavations, the Museum's crew unearthed a large building that had been violently destroyed, possibly by an earthquake. Deep layers of debris, including roofing reeds and plaster, covered the floors. On some of the walls there were fragile remains of reed mats that had once

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