

The Hand in Art: Hands on Persepolis Stone Reliefs

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FIGURE 1: Delegates present gifts.



FIGURE 3: Spearmen soldiers.

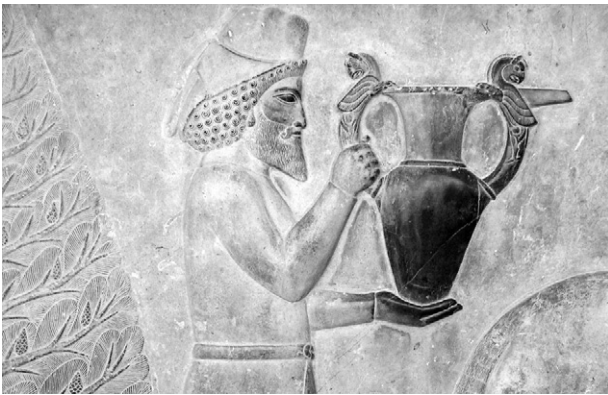


FIGURE 2: A delegate presents a gift.

The site of Persepolis is located 70 km northeast of Shiraz in Iran. Persepolis is a Greek name that means “the city of Persians.” It was one of the capitals (the ceremonial capital) of the Achaemenid dynasty (ca. 550–330 BC). The Persepolis palace is a reminder of a glorious period in the history of Persia. The splendor of Persepolis ended



FIGURE 4: The officer on the left raises a glass. The left hand of the officer on the right has been carved in place of his right hand.

when it was captured by Alexander the Great in 330 BC and subsequently destroyed by fire. The ruins of Persepolis attest to its magnificence in its time. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has recognized the Persepolis as one of the world’s heritage sites.¹

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Persepolis is a large and magnificent collection of stone reliefs that have been used to decorate the palaces and staircases. They were created by the craftsmen that used hammer, chisel, and other rudimentary tools 2,500 years ago. Many archeological delegations and researchers have visited and explored the Persepolis site and discovered many valuable objects and materials.

In a majority of Persepolis stone reliefs, the hand is a prominent feature. The hands have been used

extensively to signify salute, express respect and friendship, present gifts (Figs. 1 and 2), bring foods, raise glasses, hold flowers and hold arms as a symbol of power (Fig. 3). It is interesting to note that, on a few of the stone reliefs, the right and left hands were transposed when engraving (Fig. 4).

REFERENCE

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