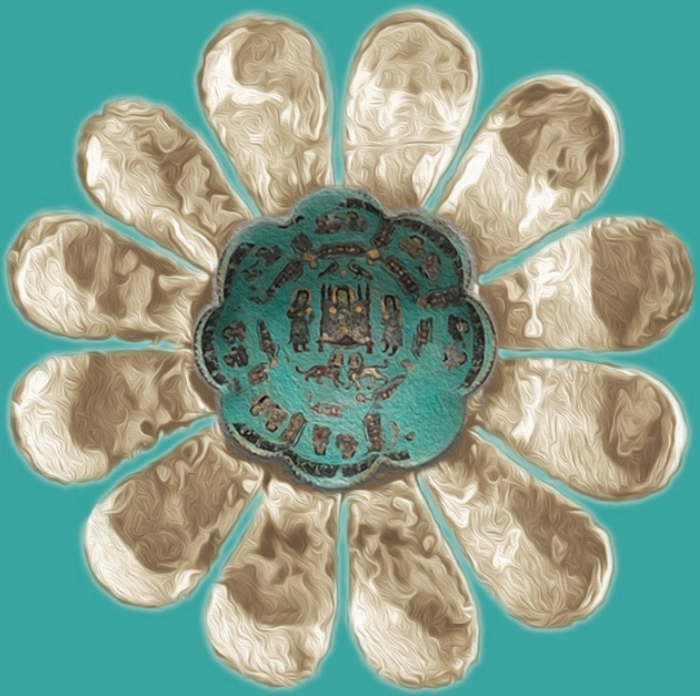
Kings, Whores and Children:

Passing Notes On Ancient Iran And The World That We Live In

By Touraj Daryaee



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Introduction

These short texts are a collection of notes and commentaries that I have made in the past few years about history and my experience and interaction with some intelligent, and some not so bright people on the social media. I firmly believe that we, historians and university professors, not only must share our intellectual reflections and discoveries with fellow experts through publications in academic journals, but we should also try to reach out to a non-specialist audience, which is interested to learn about what we do. I have written these short pieces to peak the interest of the reading public in what we do and provide relevance to the present through past events. Many essays in this volume were written in response to recent events, such as the war in Syria and the destruction of historical sites, or notes on

my travels through Iran. A few others are reviews of important topics and people who have left deep impressions on me and my work.

These are not deep writings with many footnotes and with a heavy dose of theoretical dressing. Rather, they are written from the heart about issues that preoccupy us today, but also belong to the ancient past. I live in the US, where the past is the past. US is a forward-looking nation with little regard for anything before the eighteenth century. Ancient history in the US mostly concerns Greece and Rome, although beside the Greek columns in the US Congress, there isn't much real or continuous connections. Yet if one was to talk about ancient history on this continent, it must be the history of the Olmecs and the Toltecs and the Mayans and the Incas and the Aztecs. Knowledge about the history of the native inhabitants of the American continent is as important as understanding the history that I present in this little book. Events from the Middle East's past are relevant to understand the present. In many ways, they have influenced the fate of people living in the US, Europe and the rest of the world. I hope that by reading these short essays meant to entertain and educate, the reader understands the experience of a historian who relates his own experience with texts, monuments, and people who work on the past.

I would like to thank several people for making this book possible. First and foremost is Mr. Hadi Khojinian, the editor of Mehri Publishing who agreed to publish the book. Secondly, I wish to thank Mrs. Virginie Rey who read the manuscript and made constructive remarks. I like to thank Ms. Fatemeh Takht Keshian for all the work she did on this book. I also would like to thanks Liora Tamir for the Judeo-Persian information, as well as Mahmoud Omidsalar for his help and encouragement. As I have turned fifty this year, I feel audacious enough to assemble some of these essays into an easy-to-access book, without any pretence. I would not have done this when I was younger, but now I feel at ease to have people judge me. I hope those interested in factoids, which make a larger contribution to the history of humanity, enjoy reading these essays.

Touraj Daryaee
Irvine, California

1

On the Earliest Reference to Stoning in Iran

In the twenty first century, stoning a person to death is considered as a vile idea for anyone with a human consciousness, regardless of religious belief and ethnic background. And yet it is still a current practice in many countries, including in Iran where we recall the recent case of Sakineh Mohammadi

Ashtiani, an Azeri woman sentenced to death by stoning in 2006 but (the sentence was not carried out). But when exactly did the first reference to stoning appear in Iran?

The earliest record of stoning as a capital punishment is found in the *Torah* (Duet. 22). It remained common practice within the Jewish community until the early medieval period, when it was abandoned. Stoning was used by pagan rulers of the Roman Empire in the first century CE as a death sentence for Christians, who themselves used it as a capital punishement (a famous example includes Constantine-Silvanus who was stoned by the Christians in 684 CE in Armenia). Likewise, the Sura of *An-Nur,* in the *Quran*, mentions stoning.

When it comes to Iran, we imagine stoning as a practice introduced after the Muslim conquest, in the mid-seventh century. The following piece of evidence may come as a revelation for those interested in Iranian Studies. As far as I can tell, the first evidence of stoning someone to death in the Iranian world dates back from the Sasanian period. There are plenty of Christian martyrologies from the time of the Sasanian King of Kings, Shapur II (309-379 CE) (see my article on Shapur in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* http://www.iranica.com/articles/shapur-ii). In the fourth century CE, Qardagh, a Christian who became a saint, wrote a book. In Syriac, he is known as Mar

Qardagh, *Mar* being the Syriac form of "Saint." My friend and colleague Joel T. Walker translated the history of Mar Qardagh. In this story, Mar Qardagh became a *marzbān* (Warden of Marches) in northern Mesopotamia by the order of King of Kings, Shapur II. Mar Qardagh also endowed a Zoroastrian fire-temple in his hometown. He gave a great feast and built a great home for himself (Walker, 2006, p. 23). Through a dream and the usual Christian tradition of miracles and dialogues with sages (here, Abdišo), Mar Qardagh became a Christian. He was then accused of converting Zoroastrian fire-temples into churches and, of course, of leaving Zoroastrianism for Christianity (Walker, 2006, p. 53). As a result, the behest of the Chief Priest (Mowbed) ordered that Mar Qardagh be stoned to death (Walker, 2006, p. 66-67):

> Then the cavalry, as they were armed and mounted, rushed [to the front], urging the crowds and saying, Everyone take a rock and stone the blessed one (i.e., Mar Qardagh).
> Then the magi (Zoroastrian priest) assembled with all the nobles and sat down and were reading the text of judgment against the blessed one sent by the king. The church is accustomed to call [this text] a qataresis, while the Persians call it a nibištag (Persian neveshteh).
> Then the blessed one, when he saw the crowds of pagans and Jews who were carrying rocks and running forward to stone him, gazed to heaven and

> sealed himself with the sign of the Cross. And he prayed in a loud voice and said, "Our lord Jesus Christ Son of God. Help me in this hour. Make me worthy that I may confidently join with the throngs of Your holy ones." Then his father, who was drunk with the error of Magianism (Zoroastrianism) and was afraid of death and sought favor with the king and the nobles took his robe and bound it around his face and threw the rock for the stoning of his son. And immediately the soul of the athlete of righteousness departed to eternal life.

In 358 CE, Mar Qardaqh was stoned to death. According to medieval Zoroastrianism, religious conversion carried the sentence of death (*margarzān*). This tradition also applied to Islam, where apostasy (*irtidād*) was punished by death. These examples show that stoning took place in Iran before and after Islam. My point here is not to blame any religion, but rather to make sure that everyone sees how the practices of the past, such as stoning still continues under various religious pretexts. One should never invoke thousand years old texts to justify harmingt other beings.

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2

Šābuhr I's New Gold Coin Depicting the Roman Emperor

In 243 CE, Gordian invaded Mesopotamia to take back what had been taken by Ardaxšīr and his son after Alexander Severus' death. Šābuhr reports (according to ŠKZ) how he was able to kill Gordian at Misikhe in 244 CE, close to the Euphrates river which he later called Pērōz-Šābuhr (Victorious is Šābuhr).[1] In reality, evidence suggests that Gordian died in Zaitha, in northern Mesopotamia, in 244 CE, at a time when warfare between the two armies was unlikely.[2] Some scholars argue that, after their defeat, Roman forces murdered Gordian in retreat at Zaitha.[3] According to Šābuhr I's Ka'be-ye Zardošt inscription, Gordian, whose army comprised "Goths and Germans" (ŠKZ Pa4/37 *gwt w grm'ny*), was defeated in a frontal battle. In compensation, Philip the Arab was forced to sign a treaty, ceding large portions of territory and 500,000 denarii. [4]

Šābuhr I commemorated his victory at Naqsh-ī

18 Rustam in a rock-relief, showing how he subjugated the two Roman emperors to his will. Šābuhr I left us with a long biography of his deeds at Ka'be-ye Zardošt, in Persis. This document is the first lengthy epic narrative written by the Sasannians. In this *res gestae*, Šābuhr I provides information on his religious beliefs, his lineage, his territory, and the fate of the Romans. He states that Gordian and his army were destroyed. Šābuhr I also tells us that Caesar lied, putting the matters in a Zoroastrian doctrinal context where the Romans represented the concept of Lie/ Disorder, against the Persian representatives of Truth/ Order. The second campaign began in 252 CE at Barbalissus against a Roman force of 60,000. This campain ended in a total defeat of the Romans, and if we are to believe the ŠKZ narrative, some 37 towns in Mesopotamia and Syria were taken.[5]

A recent discovery attests to this victory. A unique gold coin minted by our victorious Persian warrior was discovered several years ago. The legend printed on the obverse of this coin, around the bust of the king, typically reads:

> *mzdysn bgy shpwhry MLK'n MLK' 'yl'n W'nyr'n MNW ctry MN yzd'n*
> *mazdēsn bay šābuhr šāhān šāh ērān ud anērān kē čihr az yazdān*
> "Mazda-worshipping Lord, Šābuhr, King of Kings of Iranians, who is from the lineage of gods"

On the reverse, we see the king on his horse holding the hand of a man, a picture that can be found on rock reliefs in Persis. The legend, however, is unique: [6]

ZNH ZK AMTš plypws kycry W hrwm'y PWN b'cy W OBDk YKAYMWN / HWEd

Ēn ān kā-š frlipōs kēsar ud hrōmāy pad bāz ud bandag estād hēnd

"This is when Philip the Caesar and the Romans were stopped and became captive"

Notes:

[1] Roman sources are divided regarding the cause of death of Gordian. *Oracaula Sibyllina* XIII, 13-20 predicts Gordian's downfall as a betrayal; Aurelius Victor, *liber de Caesaribus* 27, 7-8: 7 states that he was a victim of intrigues of his Praetorian Perfect, Marcus Philippus; Festus, *Breviarium* 22 mentions that Gordian was returning, victorious from his war against the Persians when he was murdered by Philip. On all these sources see M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, A Documentary History*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 36-45. For details see Kettenhofen, *op. cit.,* p. 31-37.

[2] Potter, *op. cit.,* p. 236.

[3] Potter, *op. cit.,* p. 236.

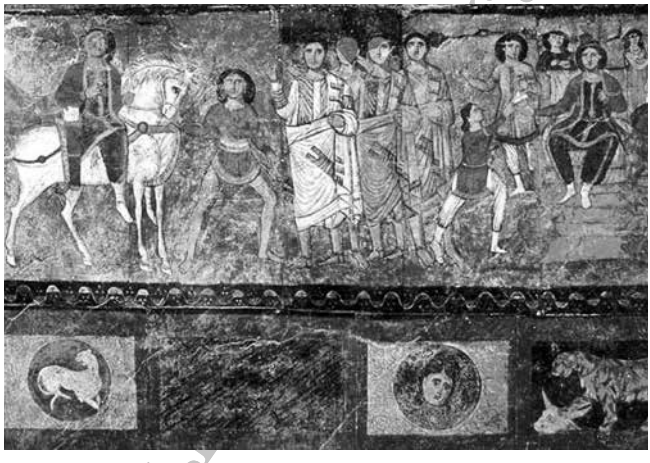
[4] ŠKZ 5/4/9.

[5]ŠKZ 12/9/11.

[6] M. Alram, M. Blet-Lemarquand, P. Skjaervo, Shapur, King of Kings of Iranians and Non-Iranians, Res Orientales XVII, 2007, 11-41.

3

Dura-Europos, Jews, Middle Persian Graffiti and the Sasanians



The remains of the once vibrant city of Dura-Europos stand on the banks of the Euphrates, in modern-day Syria. The city was established by the Seleucids in 303 BCE. During the reign of Mithradates II, the city fell into the hands of the Arsacids. Avidius Cassius captured the city and brought it into the Roman orbit,

where Dura acted as a defensive frontier city. In 256 CE, the Sasanians conquered the city. During the campaign of Shapur I (240-270 CE), its population was deported, along with that of other frontier towns.

The Persians left a series of graffiti at the synagogue, twelve to be exact (MacKenzie, "Dura Inscriptions" *EI*.) Some of these inscriptions and their location give us important clues regarding the relation between Jews and Sasanians and how Biblical stories, specifically those related to the Achaemenids, were received by Sasanian Persians. There are doubts whether the Sasanians knew about the Achaemenids. Yet it is not unreasonable to imagine that encounters between Jews and Sasanians would have resulted in the transmission of some Achaemenid stories.

The readings of the Middle Persian inscriptions could be improved. Yet their location at the synagogue is very important. For example, an interesting inscription (no. 44, plate xliv3 in B. Geiger, "The Middle Iranian Texts," in C. H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue, The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report 8/1*, New Haven, Conn., 1956, pp. 283-317) on the right leg of Haman mentions that Hormizd the scribe (*hormizd dibīr*) came to the synagogue. B. Giger, who worked on the graffito, had doubts regarding what *dibīrē ī zahmē ud ēn zandakē ī yahūdān* exactly meant. He translated this line as: "the scribe of the building and this *zandak* of the Jews." I would prefer and suggest

the reading *dibīrē ī dahm ud ēn zandakē ī jahūdān* meaning "the pious scribe and this district of the Jews." The action taken by the scribe is shown in the next line where Giger reads: *ō ēn patrastakē ī bay ī bayān ī yahūdān āmat hēnd*, "his edifice of the God of the Gods of the Jews came." I prefer and suggest the reading: *ō ēn parastakē ī bay ī bāyān ī jāhūdān āmad-hēnd*, "came to this place of worship of the God of Gods of the Jews." These are some of the corrections that could be made to these graffiti.

I would like to provide the reading of a graffito which has been attempted by several scholars (Giger no. 42, plate xliv, i):

māh frawardīn abar
sāl 15 ud rōz rašnū
ka yazdān-tahm-farranbay
dibīr ī dahmē ō
ēn xānag u-š ēn nigār
passndīd

In the month of Frawardīn, on
year 15 and the day of Rašn
when Yazdān-tahm-farrnbay,
the pious scribe, came to
this building, and he liked
this drawing

Bibliography:

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D.N. MacKenzie, "Dura Inscriptions ii. Inscriptions," ed. E. Yarshater, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1996, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dura-europos#INSCRIPTIONS.

4

How to Banquet in Late Ancient Iran

A Pahlavi Text on Banqueting*

The text examined here, *Sūr Saxwan*, is a banquet speech which may be of interest. The text is a blessing of a banquet, and of the hosts and guests,

by a eulogist. It should be noticed, however, that there is a religious / sacrificial aspect to the speech. The text is also of interest for it provides information on Sasanian court culture, including administrative structure and courtier hierarchy. The reader can imagine a traditional banquet ceremony at the court, such as held at the time of Xusrō I or Xusrō II. Eulogists were taught how to bless the deities, the king and the courtiers. The order of dignitaries mentioned provides a glimpse into the now lost Sasanian *Gāh-nāmag* (*Notitia Dignitatum*). It bears similarities to the Armenian text *Gāhnāmak* regarding the Naxarars and the Armenian court. This list may also be compared to the *Notitia Dignitatum* of the Roman world, albeit a much shorter version.[1]

The content of the *Sūr ī Saxwan*, however, is closest to another text from Late Antiquity, in the Mediterranean world: the κλητορολόγιον of Philotheos, completed in 899 CE.[2] The word κλητορολόγιον, linked to κλεσισ "invitation" and κλητοριον "banquet," is commonly translated as "dinner speech." The second chapter of the κλητορολόγιον is important in that it lists the highest dignitaries who join the emperor's table: The Patriarch of Constantinople, Caesar, and other dignitaries. One sees a similar list in the *Sur ī Saxwan*, but the progression of the list of deities, heavens and offices is Zoroastrian in nature. The

text begins with an order that is both spiritual and corporeal. First, Ohrmazd is mentioned, followed by the Amaharspandān (Holy Immortals) who are said to be in paradise, then Ohrmazd's name is repeated. Following this, the seven heavens are mentioned, from the lowest station to the highest where Ohrmazd resides. This is followed by a list of the seven *Kišwar*s (climes or continents), finishing with the central clime of *Xwanirah*. Then, the three sacred fires are praised, followed by Mihr, Srōš, Rašn, Wahrām, Wāy, Aštād and Frawahr.

After the mention of the deities, the corporeal order of things begins. Naturally, the *Šāhān Šāh* (King of Kings) is mentioned first, then are listed Princes of the blood, the Grand Minister, the Generals of the four quarters of the empire, Judge of the Empire, the Chief Councilor of the Mages, and the performer of the Drōn ceremony. One may be able to make several connections between the spiritual and corporeal worlds represented, since the realm of Ohrmazd and his cohorts is mirrored by the *Šāhān Šāh* and his court. Enumerating the order of the courtiers also gives us a general view of the *gāh*, the place of dignitaries relative to the King of Kings. The text itself may be divided into two sections: The first part (passages 1-17) the before-banquet speech, and the second part

(passages 18-22), the after-banquet speech, where the eulogist is full of food and wine, and gives thanks to the deities and the host.

The list and order of ranks and offices for the *Sūr Saxwan* is as follows:[3]

šāhān šāh King of Kings

pūs ī wāspuhr ī šāhān Princes of the Blood / Sons of the King

wuzurg framādār[4] Grand Minister

xwarāsān, xwarwarān, nēmrōz spāhbed[5] Generals of northeast, southwest, southeast

šahr dādwarān[6] Judge of the Empire

mowān handarzbed[7] Chief Councilor Mow

hazārbed[8] Chiliarch

drōn-yaz[9] Performer of the Drōn Ceremony

Transcription

pad nām ī yazdān

1) *āzādīh*[10] *ī az yazdān ud wehān andar har gāh (ud) zamān guftan ud hangārdan sazāgwār pad nāmčišt andar rōzgār-ē pad ēn ēwēnag*

2) *gōš andar darēd ašmā wehān ēdar mad estēd*

tā abar stāyēnīdārīh ī ēn sūr āfrīn az yazdān ud spāsdārīh ī ēn mēzdbān rāy saxwan gōwēm

3) *hamāg zōhr bawēd hamāg zōhr ohrmazd ī xwadāy kē pad mēnōgān ud gētīgān mahist kē hamāg ēn dām ud dahišn dād pad-iš pānag dāštār būd ēstēd*

4) *hamāg zōhr ēn 7 amaharspand ī pad garōdamān hēnd ohrmazd wahman ud ardwahišt ud šahrewar ud spandarmad ud hordād ud amurdād*

5) *hamāg zōhr ēn 7 wahišt kē pad *wīrāy*[11] *bālāy ēk pad mihrag-pāyag dō pad star-pāyag sē pad māh-pāyag čahār pad xwaršēd-pāyag panj pad harburz-pāyag šaš (pad asar-rōšnīh)*[12] *haftom pad rōšn garōdmān ī was rōšnīh ī hu-čihr brāzagtom ī purr-huīh*[13] *ī purr-nēkīh kē pēš-gāh ī ohrmazd ī xwadāy xwad pad mēnōgān xwadāyīh kē ēn *15*[14] *(ud) haft [kišwar]*[15] *<amahrspand>*[16] *arzah (ud) sawah ud fradadafš ud wīdadfš (ud) wōrūbarišt (ud) wōrūjarišt kē pad mayān xwanīrah ī bāmīg was hambār ī purr-mardōm ī purr-nēkīh*

6) *hamāg zōhr ādur-farrōbāy ud ādur-gušnasp ud ādur-burzēnmihr ud abārīg ādurān ātaxšān ī pad dād-gāh nišāst ēstēnd čand ahy-tar hamēšag-sōz ī hamēšag-yazišn ud hamēšag-zōhr bawēnd*

7) *hamāg zōhr mihr ī frāx-gōyōd ud srōš ī tagīg ud rašn ī rāstag*[17] *(ud) wahrām ī amāwand ud wāy*

30 *ī weh ud wēh-dēn ī māzdēsnān ud aštād ī freh[18]-dādār gēhān ud frawahr ī ahlawān*

8) *hamāg zōhr hamāg mēnōg ī meh ud weh kē pad sīh rōzag gāh paydāgēnīd ēstēd*

9) *hamāg zōhr šāhān šāh ī mardān pahlom*

10) *hamāg zōhr pus ī wāspuhr ī šāhān farroxtom ī dāmān pahlomtom andar gēhān abāyišnīgtom*

11) *hamāg zōhr wuzurg framādār kē pad wuzurgīh wuzurg ud pad pādixšāyīh pādixšāyīhā ud pad-iz dahišnān meh ud weh*

12) *hamāg zōhr xwarāsān spāhbed hamāg zōhr xwarwarān spāhbed hamāg zōhr nēmrōz spāhbed*

13) *hamāg zōhr šahr[19] <ī> dādwarān*

14) *hamāg zōhr mowān handarzbed ud hamāg zōhr hazārbed hamāg zōhr drōn-yaz[20]*

15) *hamāg zōhr meh ud weh kē yazdān pad ēn mēzd arzānīg kard dahād zūd pad xwadāyīh ērān-šahr ud abrang pad mayān bawād čiyōn pad xwadāyīh ī jam ī šēd ī hu-ramag rōzgār farrox wehān xwašīhā rāyēnēd yazdān ēk hazār padīrād ud āfrīn pad ham mērag ī mēzdbān kunad*

16) *pad nāmčištīg āfrīn ēn kunād kū abāg mardōmān ī xwad tan-drust ud dīr-zīwišn ud xwāstag pad abzōn ēdōn bawād čiyōn az abestāg paydāg*

17) *ka-mān nēk stāyēnd hāmōyēn gētīg xwaštar ud hamwār āfrīn pad ēn mān kunād kū was bawād pad ēn mān was asp ī ray ud xwarrah mard ī gušn šāyendīg ī hanjamanīg guftār abāg wihān ayād was zarr abāg asēm was jaw abāg gandum was hambār purr-nēkīh ud huram ud huniyāg bawēd nēk zamān ud nēk sāl ud nēk māh ud nēk rōz ud nēkīh az ēn mēzdbān rāy was nēktar*

18) *spās ī ohrmazd spās ī amahrspandān ud spās āsrōnān ud spās artēštārān ud spās wāstaryōšān ud spās hutūxšān ud spās ātaxšān ī pad gēhān spās xwangarān ud spās huniyāgarān ud spās darbānān ī pad dar spās ēn mēzbān kē ēn rōzgār handāxt ud sāxt kard ud rāyēnīd nēk-mān pihān ud stabr-mān[21] sūr <ī> (ud) pahlom-mān hamrasišnīh ud stāyīšnīg ud menišnīg gōwišnīg ud kunišnīg spāsdār ī azabar spāsdārīh any čiš nēst*

19) *bē man saxwan wēš abāyēd guftan pēš ī ašmā wehān kū sagr hēm az xwarišn ud purr hēm az may ud huram hēm az rāmišn bē ašmā wehān stāyišn ī yazdān ud āfrīn ī wehān bowandag guftan nē šāyēd āšmā wehān ēdar mad ēstēd har čē wehtar dānēd guft gōwēd*

20) *čē man har čē farroxīhātar čē man *harzag[22] *wasānd[23] may azabar xward ēstēd xwaš xufsēd ud yazdān pad xwamn wēnēd ud drust āxēzēd ud pad kār ud kirbag kardan tuxšāg bawēd čē*

32 *az bundahišn tā frazām kārīh ōy farroxīhtar kē yazdān ōy pad frārōnīh tuxšagīh arzānīg dārēd*

21) *āfrīn čiyōnom guft bē rasād zamīg pahnāy ud rōd drahnāy ud xwaršēd bālāy bē rasād ēdōn bawād ēdōntar bawād*

22) *frazaft pad drōd šādīh ud rāmišn har wehān frārōn kunišnān*

Translation

In the name of the Gods

1) It is befitting to say and consider gratitude for the Gods and the Good Ones at every moment and time, especially in such a day in such a manner.

2) Listen you good ones who are here, so that I speak to praise this banquet, of the Gods and gratitude towards this host.

3) May it be worthy of all offerings: Worthy of all the offering (is) the Lord Ohrmazd, who among the spiritual and material world is the greatest, who created all of the creatures and creations, (and) it is their guardian and preserver.

4) Worthy of all the offerings (are) these seven Holy Immortals who are in Paradise, Ohrmazd, Wahman, and Ardwahišt and Šahrewar and

Spandarmad and Hordād and Amurdād.

5) Worthy of all the offerings (are) these seven heavens which through arrangement are above (one another): one at cloud-station, two at star-station, three at moon-station, four at sun-station, five at Harborz-station, six at [Endless Light], seven at Rōšn Garōdmān, full of light, beautiful radiance, full of goodness, full of beneficence, which is before the Lord Ohrmazd himself, ruling over the spiritual realm which are these fifteen (and) the seven (climes) which are these seven: Arzah and Sawah and Fradadafš and Wīdadfš and Wōrūbarist and Wōrūjariš, which in the middle is the glorious Xwanīrah, is the store of many people (who are) full of goodness.

6) Worthy of all the offerings (are) Ādur-farrōbāy and Ādur-Gušnasp and Ādur-Burzēnmihr and other sacred fires and fires seated at their place of creation (i.e., designated place), may they always be burning, always worshipped, and always (receiving) offerings first.

7) Worthy of all the offerings (is) Mihr, possessor of the wide pastures, and Srōš the strong, and Rašn the truthful, and Wahrām the powerful, and Wāy the good and the Good Religion of the Mazda-worshipping religion, and Aštād the prominent

creator of the corporeal world, and Frawahr of the righteous ones.

8) Worthy of all offerings (are) the great and good spirits who at the time of Sīh Rōzag (each of their names) are revealed.

9) Worthy of all offerings (is) the King of Kings, foremost of men.

10) Worthy of all offerings (are) the principal sons of the king, most fortunate of the foremost creatures, most necessary in the corporeal world.

11) Worthy of all offerings (is) the Wuzurg Framādār, who in greatness is great and in sovereignty is the sovereign and among the created (i.e., men) is greater and better.

12) Worthy of all offerings (is) the Spāhbed of Xwarāsān, worthy of all offerings (is) the Spāhbed of Xwarwarān, worthy of all offerings (is) the Spāhbed of Nēmrōz.

13) Worthy of all offerings (is) the Chief Judge of the Empire (Šahr Dādwarān).

14) Worthy of all offerings (is) the Chief Councilor of the Mages (Mowān Handarzbed) and worthy of all offerings (is) the Leader of a Thousand (Hazārbed), worthy of all offerings (is) the performer of the Drōn ceremony.

15) Worthy of all offerings is the great and good (things) which the Gods have provided in this meal, may he quickly give sovereignty to Ērānšahr, and splendor amidst it, as it was during the sovereignty of Jamšēd of good herds, (may) the day of blessed good ones continue with pleasure, (may) the Gods accept it a thousand times, and also bless the man who is the host.

16) Especially may he bless this that for his own people, (provide) health, long life and increase in wealth, may it be in this way as is it manifest from the *Avesta*.

17) When they praise us, it is as if all of the material world will become more pleasant and continuously bless this house that it increase, in this house many swift horse and glory, manly man, able in a gathering to speak with reason (and) memory, and have much gold with silver, much barley with wheat, much storage of goodness and blissful and delightful, good time and good year and good month and good day and goodness for this host (and) for being better.

18) Thanks to Ohrmazd, thanks to Holly Immortals, and thanks priests (asrōnān) and thanks warriors (artēšdārān) and thanks husbandmen (wāstaryōšān) and thanks artisans (hutūxšān) and thanks the fires of the material world, thanks cooks

and thanks entertainers and thanks the guardians of the palace, thanks this host who planned and prepared and arranged this day, good is our food and grand is our banquet, and excellent is our gathering and praiseworthy, and there is no other thing greater than thoughtful speech and action.

19) But I must say more before you good ones, that I am satiated from food and full of wine and blissful from pleasure; but it is not possible to praise the Gods and bless the good ones completely, you good ones who have come here, whoever knows to say it better say it.

20) Because I am evermore joyous, because I (am) buzzed on the account of much wine I have drank, (I) will sleep pleasantly and I will dream of the Gods and will rise well and will be diligent in doing work and in deed, because from the beginning of creation to the end, his work is evermore joyous, whom the Gods value his diligence through righteousness. May it be so, it will be so.

21) May there come blessing in the manner that I have said, the width of earth and the length of river and the height of sun.

22) Finished with salutations, happiness and pleasure unto every righteous doer.

Notes:

* The complete version of this article can be found in T. Daryaee, "The Middle Persian Text Sur i Saxwan and the Late Sasanian Court," *Des Indo-Grecs aux Sassanides: Donnees pour l'historie et la geographie historique*, Res Orientales XVII, 2007, pp. 65-72.

[1] *Notitia dignitatum omnium tam civilium quam militarium in partibus Occidentis* (Latin version), for the East.

[2] "Philotheos, Kletorologion of," *Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 1662.

[3] For a discussion of the titles which appear here see R. Gyselen, *La Géographie administrative de l'empire Sassanide*, Les témoignages sigillographiques, Peeters, Leuven, 1989.

[4] From the fourth century CE onwards, the *wuzurg framādār* became certainly the most important dignitary at court, after the King of Kings and the princes. Holders of this title include Xusrō Yazdgerd (from the Syriac sources as *harmadārā rabbā*, see J.B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale ou Recueil de synods nestoriens*, Paris, 1902, p. 260; Mihr-Narseh in the fifth century CE, see W.B. Henning, "The Inscription of Firuzabad," *Asia Major*, vol. 4, 1954, pp. 99-100. For other figures who may have been a *wuzurg framādār* see M.L. Chaumont, "Framadār," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, Bibliotehca Persica Press, 2001, pp. 125-126. While *wuzurg framadār* appears in the early Sasanian inscription, *wuzurg framādār* (with the long *ā*) is matched by the orthography of the seals from sixth and seventh centuries CE which also appears in the text under study (I would like

to thank R. Gyselen for bringing this fact to my attention).

[5] The omission of the *spāhbed* of Abāxtar / Ādurbādagān in this text certainly suggests the religious / ritualistic nature of the text where *hamāg zōhr* can not be directed towards it. For example in the *Bundahišn* (XIV.27-28) because Mašānē poured milk as libation towards the north / abāxtar, the demons became stronger, see F. Pakzad, *Bundahišn: Zoroastrische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie*, Kritische Edition, Ancient Iranian Studies Series, Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, Tehran, 2005, pp. 187-188. I would suggest that is the reason for the omission of this *spāhbed* in this text as compared with others, see T. Daryaee, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr, A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, 2002, pp. 7-11. For some other suggestions see Gnoli, *op. cit.,* p. 269. For the latest and comprehensive evidence for the *spāhbed*s see R. Gyselen, *The Four Generals of the Sasanian Empire: Some Sigillographic Evidence*, Roma, 2001.

[6] This title echoes the early *hāmšahr dādwar* "Judge of the whole empire," in the third century CE which was held first by Kerdīr. We come across the title again for Mār Qardag who held the title of *šahr dādwar*, P. Bedjan, *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha, de trios autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et de deux laïques nestoriens*, Paris, 1895, p. 228. On Mār Qardag see now J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, California University Press, 2006. In the *Mādīyān ī Hazār Dādestān* we have the title of *šahr dādwarān dādwar*, which according to M. Shaki was introduced during the reign of Yazdgerd II (439-457 CE), "Dādwar, Dādwarīh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, Mazda Publishers, 1993, p. 558.

[7] It appears that the holder of the office had administrative and, more importantly, legal skills. In the Armenian sources, this title is *mogac'anderjapet* and *movan anderjapet* (Ełīšē, 8, p. 315; Łazar P'arpec'i, 2.55, 57, p. 326, 345, 349; and P'awstos Buzand, 4.47, all quoted by M.L. Chaumont, "Andarzbed," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 23.

[8] It appears that the office of *hazārbed* came into being in the Sasanian period, and that in the late third, early fourth centuries CE at the court of the King of Kings, Narseh a Affarban held this title and was one of the two officers (along with the *hargbed*) to remain with him when the Roman representatives came to the court, see R.M. Shayegan, "Hazārbed," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. XII, 2005, p. 94.

[9] As for any important dinner, a *drōn-yaz*, a person in charge of making ritual offerings to the deities, would have been present at the court. The office is rarely mentioned and the *Sūr ī Saxwan* is important for this title. On the Drōn ceremony see J.K. Choksy, "Drōn," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. VII, Mazda Publishers, 1996, pp. 554-555.

[10] Tavadia *'p'tyh*

[11] Tavadia *wylwk* "man" and has added the number 1000 after it; Mazdapour has *nylng* "spell." Orian follows Tavadia and inserts the 1000, as well. I would suggest *wyl'd* "arrange, prepare," in the sense of arranging the heavens.

[12] There is a lacuna here, but from Zoroastrian cosmology it is certain that we should have *'sl-lwšnyh*. See A. Panaino, "Uranographia Iranica I: The Three Heavens in the

Zoroastrian Tradition and the Mesopotamian Background," *Au Carrefour des religions, mélanges offert à Philippe Gignoux*, Res Orientales, vol. VII, Paris, 1995, pp. 205-221. Orian has left the lacuna.

[13] Tavadia emends to *pwl-GDE* and Orian has accepted his reading. The manuscript, however, clearly shows *pwl-hwyh* which Mazdapour suggests as well.

[14] DP provides the numeral 15 which makes sense here as Ohrmazd along with the Amaharspandān and the seven Wahišts would come to fifteen (Ohrmazd counted twice).

[15] Tavadia has also inserted *kyšwr* correctly as the list of the climes follows it. Mazdapour does not insert the word, nor does Orian.

[16] Mazdāpour and Orian do not omit.

[17] Mazdāpour *l'cystk.*

[18] Orian *pr'c*.

[19] Tavadia inserts *d'tbl* after *štr* which is not necessary; Mazdapour emends the word to *d't* and Orian reads it as *d'tbl*. The MK manuscript which is now in the process of being published clearly shows that the word is *štr*. I would like to thank Professor A. Hintze who will publish the manuscript for providing me with the pages of MK containing this text.

[20] Mazdapour makes the suggestion to read *dlwn'* as "bow."

[21] Tavadia makes the only logical suggestion as the text has *pšnwst plm'n'* to read as *pyh'n* and connect the last three letters with the next word as *W stpl*. This is followed by Mazdapour and Orian who read the first word as *pyh*.

[22] Tavadia suggests to read the word as *'lt W cywk*, "flour and consecrated milk," an interpretation accepted by Mazdapour and Orian. Tavadia himself was skeptical of the reading which, indeed, does not make much sense. Thanks to A. Hintze, I was able to read the word as *hlck*□□ in the sense of "loose", or, in this context, "drunk," in American colloquial, "buzzed."

[23] If the preceding reading is accepted, the next word can be emended as *wsn'd*.

5

The Caspian World:
Borj-e Lājīm and A Post-Sasanian Tomb Tower with Pahlavi and Arabic Inscriptions

In August 2008, Iraj Afshar, Manouchehr Sotudeh, Khodadad Rezakhani and myself traveled to the provinces of Mazandaran and Khurasan in search of medieval towers. The function of towers in Iran varies, depending on their location and the time of

their construction. Some were used as landmarks so that travelers would find their way, others are simply tombs of notables and local rulers. To see Borj-e Lājīm in the province of Mazandaran, we drove from Tehran into the lush mountain area towards the northeast until we arrived at the village of Lājīm.

Borj-e Lājīm is a tomb tower erected during the time of Ziyarid rule, in the eleventh century CE, more exactly in 389 Yazdgerdi / 413 Hijri. Of special interest was the bilingual (Pahlavi–Arabic) inscription located just below the dome of Lājīm. The Arabic inscription states that this is the tomb or resting place (*ghabr*) of Shahriyār ibn Abbas, while the Pahlavi inscription mentions

the dome (*gumbad*) Shahriyār. This difference in views between the Arabic and Pahlavi texts is of course interesting and noteworthy for the issue of function, terminology, Perso-Arabic translation in the Iranian and Islamic tradition.

André Godard was the first person to study the Pahlavi inscription at Borj-e Lājīm. His work was supported by very useful sketches (A. Godard, "Les tours de Ladjim et de Resget (Māzandarān)," *Athār-é Irān*, I, 1936, pp. 109-121). More recently, the excellent Persian philologist, Hassan Rezaei Baghbidi completed and corrected Godard's work (Baghbīdī, NIB, No. 7, 1383, pp. 9-21).

According to Ernst Herzfeld the Arabic inscription below the Pahlavi inscription reads:

بسمله (الرحمن الرحیم) هذا قبر القبه (القیم؟) الکیا الجلیل ابوالفوراس شهریار بن العباس بن شهریار مولی امیرالمومنین رحمع الله امر بیانه السنه الکریمه چهرازاد بنت سلیاخور فی سنته ثلث عشر و اربعا مانه عمل الحسین بن علی

(see E. Herzfeld, "Arabische Inschriften aus Iran und Syrien," *Archäoligische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, Band VIII, 1937, p. 79; the variation in the brackets are mine).

As for the Pahlavi inscription Baghbidi reads:

ēn gumbad šāh tuwānmand šahryār ī abbās ī

šahryār mowlīī amīr-ō-mōminīn framūd kardan duxt ī rād ī sīspuhr čihrzād mādar ī ōy sāl tirēst haštād noh ādur māh spandarmad rōz

"This dome was ordered by the powerful king, Shahryār, the son of Abbas, the son of Shahryār, servant of the Commander of the Faithful, the daughter of chief Sīspuhr Čihrzād (Shahrzād), his mother, in the year three hundred eighty-nine, in the month of Ādur, day of Spandarmad."

Noteworthy is that the Pahlavi inscription is above the Arabic one. Was this a conscious decision? Nowadays both inscriptions are in a dilapidated state, compelling researchers to turn to the sketches from the early twentieth century. Since there were scaffoldings around the tomb it appears that a restoration project is underway. I hope the restoration is based on the latest readings and done correctly.

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Godard, "Les tours de Ladjim et de Resget (Māzandarān)," *Athār-é Irān*, I, 1936, pp. 109-121.

E. Herzfeld, "Arabische Inschriften aus Iran und Syrien," *Archäoligische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, Band VIII, 1937.

6

Cyrus & Mithra: On the Religion of Teispids

Cyrus claims descent from the Teispids which seems to be from a different line than that of Darius and Achemens. What did Cyrus believe in? This is very hard to know.

Some evidence points to an Indo-Iranian tradition. This is an excerpt from an article I wrote on Cyrus' Religion in the book, *Cyrus the Great: A King of Ancient Iran*, Afshar Publishers, Beverly Hills, 2013. More importantly, a passage from Ctesias mentions a horse sacrifice. The order by Cambyses, Cyrus'son, to sacrifice a horse for his father is clearly part of the Indo-Iranian practice of *aśvamedha*. In the Cyropaedia, there are references to royal parades by Cyrus, where a white horse and fire are mentioned. The horse sacrifice is explained as follows (Cyropaedia VIII.3.12):

> After the oxen came horses, an offering to the Sun,

> then a white chariot with a golden yoke, hung with garlands and dedicated to Zeus, and after that the white chariot of the Sun, wreathed like the one before it, and then a third chariot, the horses of which were caparisoned with scarlet trappings, and behind walked men carrying fire upon a mighty hearth.

The story is part of a ritual procession, in which a chariot was dedicated to the Sun. The Sun, here, is clearly Mithra (Briant 2002, 96; Swennen 2004, 170). Mithra is one of the great gods (Old Persian *baga*) of the Indo-Iranians who, while not mentioned in the early Achaemenid inscriptions, makes his appearance during the rule of Artaxerxes II, at the end of the fifth century BCE. Several classical authors mention the large number of horses the Persians demanded of their subjects (Strabo XI.14.9 "20,000 horses for the feast of Mithra"), especially sacred white horses during Cyrus' conquest of Babylon (Herodotus I.189; Briant 2002, 96).

Mithra was considered one of the important gods (Avesta *yazata*) and his is the deity to whom one of the longest hymns are dedicated in the Mazdean *Avesta*. However, it should be remembered that Mithra was already an important deity before the development of Mazdaism in the Indian and the Iranian worlds. Primarily connected to contracts and oaths (Schmidt 1978, 351), Mithra was also associated with the sun and martial prouesses, the very attributs of Cyrus as

reported in classical sources. Similarly, the Avestan hymn dedicated to Mithra shares commonalities with the ritual parade of Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia* (Swennen 2004; 174-175)."

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7

Dancing in Sasanian Iran

In the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, there is a short entry on dancing in the "pre-Islamic" period (Sh. Shahbazi) which is very good, but, of course, no article is ever complete. Literary sources and material culture both demonstrate that dancing was part of life in the Sasanian period and that there was no prohibition against it. The literary evidence given in the *EI* are by Jahiz and the following passage from the *Shāhnāmeh* dealing with Bahrām Gur and his visit to a *dehqān* named Borzīn and his three daughters. Each daughter is described as being able to entertain in the following manner. I have chosen Omidsalar & Khaleghi-Motlagh edition (Vol. 6, 836-837):

برفتند هر سه به نزدیک شاه
نهاده به سر بر ز گوهر کلاه
یکی پای کوب و دگر چنگزن
سدیگر خوش آوارز بربط شکن

Naser-e Khosro also provides the same word for dancing in his poetry which suggests *pāy-kūb* as the earliest recorded Persian word for "dance" (Dehkhoda):

من رانده بهم چو پیشگو باشد
طنبوری و پایکوب و بربطزن

Then, in early Classic Persian one finds *pāy-kūb*, "foot pounding," or, in American parlance, "foot stomping," for dancing. Of course, we do have another word for dancing in Persian, namely γer

(*Farhang-e Nezām, Dehkhoda*), but I am not sure how old *γer-dādan* is. I believe that *γer* is a Khawrazmian word which penetrated the Persian language (see Henning's unfinished dictionary of Khawrazmian edited by MacKenzie), meaning "to spin."

But what is the Middle Persian word for dancing? MacKenzie, in his Pahlavi dictionary, does not mention any specific word, and neither does Nyberg, in his glossary. Indeed, the word does exist in Middle Persian. In the recent edition of the Middle Persian text, *Husraw ī Kawādān ud Rēdag-ē* (Khusro and a Page) – with copious notation by Samra Azarnouche – there is a list of court performers. Among them one finds a passage (13) where a young man recounts his musical and recitation skills. Here is the last skill he mentioned (Azarnouche 2013: 13):

> W **p'w'cyk** krtn' 'wst't GBRA HWEm
> ud **pā-wāzīg** kardan awestād mard hēm
> "And in dancing I am masterly accomplished"

Thus, one finds the Middle Persian for dancing *pā-wāzīg*, "foot-playing," or better, "foot-moving." So far, I have not come across the Persian form, *pā-bāzī*, but foot-playing and foot-pounding are close enough to give the sense that what was of importance in dancing was the moving of the feet.

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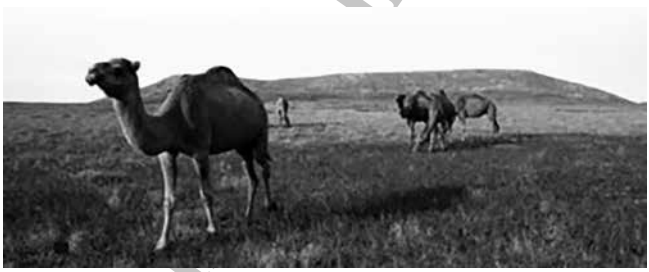
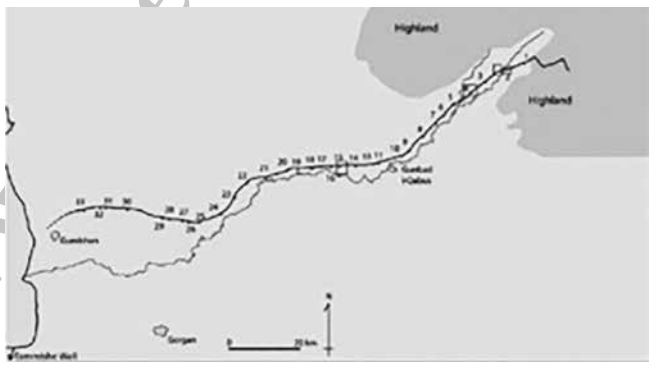
8

The Longest Wall in Antiquity Was Built by the Sasanians

Several walls built in antiquity have received much attention in history books and scholarly work. The first and foremost is the Great Wall of China, which was put together as a whole during the Ming Dynasty, between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries CE. Some parts of the

wall were built much earlier, but no continuous structure existed until the Ming period. Other famous walls in history include Hadrian's Wall and Antonine Wall, built in the second century CE by the Romans. Both worked to keep outsiders away from the empire. Yet the longest continuous wall ever built in antiquity was neither in China, nor Rome, but in Iran in Late Antiquity! This wall is called of *Sadd-e Iskandar* (Barrier of Alexander), otherwise known as *Gizil Yilan* (Red Snake).





A great number of studies on wall systems in Iran have dealt with the *Sadd-e Iskandar* (Frye 1977; Bivar & Fehèrvéri 1966), which runs across the Turkmen steppe from the Caspian Sea to the mountains. This wall has attracted much attention from groups of Iranian and Western archaeologists in the past decades. According to recent excavations, the wall was 195 kilometer-long, including 33 forts. This makes it the longest wall built in antiquity! (Nokandeh & Sauer 2006: 127). The wall was dated from the fifth century and early sixth century CE, undoubtedly functioning as a defense mechanism against the Hephthalites and other nomadic people who tried to enter *Iranshahr* (Empire or Realm of the Iranians) (163). As Nokandeh, Sauer et. al. have correctly stated, the wall "bears the hallmarks of a powerful demonstration of military superiority and an effective security measure against future threats." (167).

I was able to see the wall some years ago with the late Iraj Afshar and Khodadad Rezakhani. Standing by the wall, you can see the clear division between the Sasanian Empire and the steppe, where the nomads roamed and, later, settlers established themselves. Not only the management and upkeep of the wall must have taken much money and manpower, but its protection was expensive. The discovery of klin workshops in the vicinity of the wall revealed that workers made the building bricks on site. A a body of rivers supplied water, through hydraulic canals built by the Sasanians. To house soldiers, forts were created along the wall, and according to some estimates they kept some 37,000 (166) men at any given time! We

simply did not know that such forts were able to hold so many soldiers, although other Sasanian forts are known (I will discuss one of them in another note concerning my travels with Iraj Afshar).

But of course, like many other historical traditions from the Parthian and the Sasanian periods, theses wall(s) are unknown or ignored in the West. We urgently need to organize a workshop on comparative wall studies in the pre-modern period and / or the Sasanian period. This way we could further our understanding of the Sasanian walls: their significance, function and engineering. We should remember that this is only one of four walls constructed by the Sasanians in Late Antiquity which would merit our attention during such workshop.

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9

Nowruz / Persian New Year in History: The Persian New Year

NOWRUZ (literally "New Day" i.e., New Year) is by far the most joyous and important celebration among the Iranians and their Asian neighbors. According to Iranian belief, the Spring Equinox marks the changing of the year and the regeneration of life and a new birth of the world. This is forms the

basis of the *Nowruz* celebration, a three millennia-old tradition. During *Nowruz*, Iranians from various religious, ethnic and linguistic background come together to greet the New Year in their homes and hope for a better year to come. Streets bustle with activity. One can see thousands of goldfish in bowls for the traditional *Nowruz* table. Children anxiously await receiving gifts from their elders. Parents shop for new shoes and new clothes for their children to wear in line with the symbolic theme of renewal and renovation. Each March 21, all wait eagerly for the exact moment when the earth will pass the point of equinox, in the hope of becoming rejuvenated for a better year to come.

The story of *Nowruz* is wrapped in myths and legends which are beautifully told in the great Persian epic, the *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings*. The story goes that when one of the earliest and greatest of the mythical kings of Iran, Jamshid, rose to power, he reorganized the realm and brought culture to the people. His throne was adorned with jewels and carried to heavens by supernatural beings. According to the *Book of Kings,* Jamshid sat on the throne in the sky and was like a sun shining from above. The world's creatures gathered and scattered jewels on him. They called this day the New Day, or *Now Ruz*.[1] According to this Persian tale, people put their differences aside,

rested and made a great feast with much wine and music. Henceforth, no one knew nothing of sorrow, sadness or death. This is the legendary history of the *Nowruz* as it is remembered by children in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikestan and expatriates around the world. The *Book of Kings* is a thousand years old, but it is conceivable that the story was known even a thousand years before then. This is a very old legend that has lived on.

Pictorial evidence of Iranians celebrating the *Nowruz* with pomp can be found as early as 2500 years ago. Some suggest that during the heyday of the Achaemenid Persian Empire (550-330 BCE) the great ceremonial capital of Persepolis was used as a staging ground for the New Year celebrations. For example, the famous scene of a lion devouring a bull depicted at the Apadana palace of Persepolis is throught to symbolize the end of the winter and the beginning of the spring. On the side of the palace, another important reference to the New Year celebration depicts a procession of people from Africa, Europe and Asia, waiting in line to gift the king the best produce of their respective countries [2]. These emissaries etched in stone, carrying flowers and holding each other by the hand or the shoulders, portray the celebratory nature of the *Nowruz*. Such procession might be behind the tradition of gift-giving during *Nowruz*.

Greek sources mention that precious objects were gifted at Persepolis. Not only did the king receive gifts (Old Persian *bāji*), but he also provided gifts for his people. At the time of Cyrus the Great, the King of Kings made a proper sacrificial ceremony and a feast. He distributed presents among all and even joined in the dance and the merry-making.[3]

In the late Hellenistic period (330 BCE–224 CE), the celebration continued with much joy. References left from this period are scarce, but descriptions of festivities during the *Nowruz* can have been found in a later Persian tale from the Parthian times called *Vis and Ramin*. This romance recounts the story of the king of Marv (a city in modern-day Turkemenistan), Mowbed Manikān. This king gave much importance to the celebration of *Nowruz* and his life was described as a continuous New Year. During a *Nowruz* celebrations, he fell in love with a lady and so the tale begins.[4] The celebration took place in the garden, and again wine and music were the mainstay of the celebration.

Late Antiquity, the Sasanian kings (224-651 CE) celebrated the *Nowruz* with similar splendor. The tradition has it that the king "gave dinars (gold coins) and dirhams (silver coins) of the year's coinage put in a lemon, a quince or an apple."[5] On that day, people rested and were happy, and on the third day the king

held court and meted out justice to those who sought it.[6] If the *Nowruz* fell on the Sabbath, the king was said to reward the Jews 4,000 silver coins as present.[7] The court singers played songs about the New Year: a series of melodies which are called *Bahār* (meaning spring) in the Persian musical repertoire. The most famous composer and performer of the late antique Iran was Bārbad. He was a master composer who made very popular *Nowruz* songs that continued to be sung and remembered With the coming of Islam, *Nowruz* continued to be celebrated by the people and the Caliphs in Baghdad. During the Abbasid Caliphate, in the ninth century, it is reported that people celebrated the *Nowruz* by kindling bonfires on New Year's Eve and pouring water on each other. The people in Baghdad gave each other an apple to honor the day and colored eggs for the feast. Cooks worked through the night to make fresh food for the *Nowruz*, and people threw parties for relatives and friends. Fruits, such as green melons, plums, peaches and dates, were served. Muslims even drank wine in public when celebrating the New Year.[9] Tenth-century Muslim author Ibn Hawqal describes the *Nowruz* celebration as such:

During the *Nowruz* festival, people gather for seven days in the bazaar of Karina, a suburb of Isfahan, engaged in merriment; they enjoy various food and go around visiting decorated shops. The inhabitants and those coming from other places

to participate in this festival, spend a good deal of money, wear beautiful clothes, and take part in gatherings for plays and merrymaking. Skillful singers, both male and female, take their places side by side on the riverside along the palaces. The whole atmosphere is filled with joy and happiness. Many assemble on the rooftops and in the markets, engage in festivities, drinking, eating, and consuming sweets, not letting an idle moment to pass by.[10]

In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Safavid Shahs of Iran also celebrated the *Nowruz* with great fanfare. French traveler Jean Chardin beautifully described the activities of the Safavid court at the time. According to him, eggs, gilded and colored with special scenes, were given as presents. At the court, dancers, musicians and singers entertained the crowd, while the court astronomer looked at the sky to call the exact time for the beginning of the spring. Once the time of *Nowruz* was called, there was a huge commotion on the streets: firecrackers, muskets and canons were fired, bands played music, cries of joy filled the air and wild rue (Isfand) was thrown into the fire for a pleasant smell.[11]

A century ago, in Tehran and in many other places, the *Nowruz* was celebrated on the last Wednesday before the New Year. According to tradition, people lit up bonfires and jumped over

them saying: "My yellowness to you and your redness to me." In so doing, they asked the fire to conjure up their ailment and for their health to be returned.[12] When it was time for *Nowruz*, canons were fired and young people kissed the hands and the feet of their elders who, in return, presented them with gold or silver coins.[13] Everyone wore new clothes and visited each other's homes until the thirteenth day of the *Nowruz*.[14] These very same practices are still carried out today in Iran, where people eagerly await the coming of *Nowruz* as a time of joy, hope and renewal of life.

Haft Sin: The Ceremonial Table of *Nowruz*

The Iranian *Nowruz* has a ceremonial table called *Haft Sin*. Traditionally, *Haft Sin* includes seven things whose names start with the Persian letter "Sin." The seven items used the most are: 1) Sabzeh (lentils/ wheat sprouts); Sepand (wild rue); Sib (apple); Sekeh (coins); 5) Sir (garlic); 6) Serkeh (vinegar); and 7) Samanu (cooked wheat). These goods were supplemented by other items, such as a glass bowl with water and goldfish; sometimes a bowl of water; a mirror and candles, colored eggs; sweets; a winter citrus; a copy of the holy book, depending on the religious persuasion (nowadays, people tend to use the *Book of Kings* or the collection of

poems by famous Persian poet, Hafez of Shiraz.[15] Family members sat by the *Haft Sin* table before and during the beginning of the Spring Equinox. In the olden days, musicians played on the streets and cannons were fired to mark the beginning of *Nowruz*. Nowadays, people listen to the radio to hear the end of the year's prayer and the marking of the beginning of *Nowruz*. Everyone greets each other and exchanges gifts to start the New Year. The *Haft Sin* table is set several days before the New Year and kept for a few more days after it.

If the tradition of a celebratory table for New Year is relatively modern, references to a *Nowruz* spread can be found in the Sasanian period. In this time, people greeted *Nowruz* by growing seven different kinds of seeds on seven pillars. They placed on their *Nowruz* table trays containing seven branches of vegetables (wheat, barley, peas, rice) as well as a loaf of bread made from seven grains.[16] eleven century-Iranian scholar Abu Reyhān al-Biruni, gives a similar account, stating that "it has been the custom on this day to sow around a plate seven kinds of grain on seven columns, and from their growth they drew conclusions regarding the corn of that year, whether it would be good or bad."[17] During the Safavid period, *Nowruz*'s celebration included the spreading of fuit, greens, sweets, water in a bowl and colored eggs on a a

long tablecloth. At the exact time of the New Year, the king stared at the water for he believed that "water is the symbol of prosperity."[18]

Much speculation surrounds the symbolic meaning of the *Haft Sin*. According to the most convincing explanation, the seven items on the table epitomize the Zoroastrian idea of *Amesha Spanta*. Zoroastrianism was the religion of ancient Iran and according to this three-thousand-year-old tradition, the supreme deity, *Ahura Mazda* / *Ohrmazd* (Lord Wisdom) created the world and all that it is good in it with his seven helpers called the *Amesha Spantas* or *Amshāspandān*. The *Amesha Spantas* are linked to the seven creations which made the world. The list and connection of the *Amesha Spantas* with the world are 1) Ahura Mazda with humankind; 2) Vahman with cattle; 3) Ardavahisht with fire; 4) Shahrevar with metals; 5) Spendarmad with earth, 6) Khordad with water and 7) Amurdad with plants. Thus, the items on the table may symbolically portray the creator and the creation of the world, which regenerates annually during the *Nowruz*.

Nowruz was originally a Zoroastrian festival. *Nowruz* begins on the first day of Farvardin, the first month of the year (which falls on March 21, i.e. the Spring Equinox). Farvardin relates to Fravashis or the guardian souls of people who come back home at the time of *Nowruz*. The ancient Iranians honored

the soul (Fravashi) of their departed family members, hence a celebration called Farvardinegān. Homes were cleaned, new clothes were worn, and a ten-day feast took place. The feast was divided into two five-day periods: the last five days of Isfand and the first five days of Farvardin, which corresponds to the first five days of *Nowruz*. This was a sort of "all-souls" festival. Some of the theological aspects of these ceremonies may have been lost through the ages, but the tradition is still alive these days It is echoed in ceremonial practices such as housecleaning and the buying of new clothes and shoes.

Nowruz is a unique festival within the Iranian culture. It is celebrated by Iranians and Iraninan-speaking people, regardless of geography, religion or ethnicity. In Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and India, and around the world, religious and ethnic groups – Kurds, Afghans, Tajiks, Azaris, Kurds, Baluchis, Lurs, Uzbeks, Turkemens, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Bahais, Zoroastrians, etc. – come together to celebrate this joyous occasion. They unite, despite their differences, to greet the regeneration of the earth.

What is it that all these people with different backgrounds and religious beliefs celebrate? It is the coming of the Spring Equinox, the celebration of a new season and the continuation of the cycle of life and hope. As the great medieval Iranian scholar

Biruni reports, the Iranians called *Nowruz* the "day of hope." The earth turns green and brings hope for another great harvest for all humanity. *Nowruz* transcends all religious and ethnic divisions, and it has done so for many millennia. Wherever Iranians have migrated, they have made *Nowruz* a celebration to be remembered. From New York to Orange County, Iranians celebrate the *Nowruz* in the United States. *Nowruz* lives on and may it continue to do so for a long time to come. This Iranian festivity is a unique cultural event that allows us to take a glimpse of the best of Iranian heart and soul and its brilliant impact on humanity for the past several thousands of years.

Notes:

[1] A. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, translated D. Davis, Viking, New York, 2006, p. 7.

[2] Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire*, Indiana, 2002, p. 194.

[3] Xenephon, Cyropaedia VIII.7.1.

[4] F. Gorgani, *Vis o Ramin*, edited by M. Roshan, Tehran, 1377, p. 42.

[5] al-Jahiz, page 101, after M. Boyce, "Iranian Festivals," *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3(2), edited by E. Yarshater, Cambridge, 1983, p. 799.

[6] Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāmeh*, p. 42-43, after Boyce, p. 800.

[7] K. Inostrantsev, *Sasanidskie etiudy*, translated by K. Kazemzadeh, Tehran, 2005, p. 75.

[8] Inostrantsev, p. 79.

[9] *Kitab al-Hafawāt*, trasnalted by Tritton, after A.Sh. Shahbazi, "Nowruz ii. In the Islamic Period," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, edited by E. Yarshater, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nowruz-ii.

[10] Ibn Hawqal, p. 364, after Shahbazi.

[11] J. Chardin, *Voyage de chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient*, ed. L. Langlès, 10 vols., Paris, 1811, vol. II, p. 267, after Shahbazi.

[12] S. Nafisi, *Sa'id Nafisi's Version. Literary, Political , and Youth Memories*, edited by A. Eetesam, Tehran, 2002, p. 518.

[13] Nafisi, p. 522.

[14] Nafisi, pp. 523-524.

[15] A.Sh. Shahbazi, "Haft Sin," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, edited by E. Yarshater, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haft-sin.

[16] Shahbazi, ibid.,

[17] A. Biruni, *The Chronology of Nations*, translated by C.E. Sachau, London, 1879, p. 202.

[18] Shahbazi, "Nowruz ii."

10

The Psalms in Judeo-Persian

For Ammon Netzer and the many teas
we drank at Borders in Westwood

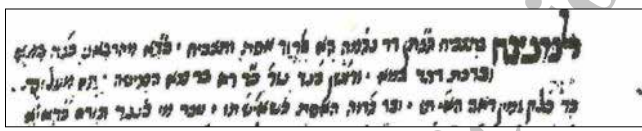
There are many new documents and texts found in Judeo-Persian from late antiquity to the modern times. Late Amnon Netzer has given a detailed of the surviving Judeo-Persian literature ("Judeo-Persian Literature," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (http://iranica.com/articles/judeo-persian-ix-judeo-persian-literature), but those working on these texts are few and, surprisingly, there is no one in Iran! The history of Judeo-Persian literature is fascinating and there are those who are interested in the pre-Mongol material (Shaked and Gindin among the most prominent) which amount to about 600 pages of documents, mainly found from the Cairo Geniza because there were Persian Jews in Fatimid Egypt in the medieval period (Shaked, "Early Juadeo-

Persian Texts," in *Persian Origins*, ed. L. Paul, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, p. 196). Then we have the post-Mongol texts which are mainly literary in nature, and include epic tales and of course translations of the Bible.

As an example, I would like to provide a translation for the first two lines of Psalm 67. The text with transliteration given by J. Asmussen ("Judaeo-Persica IV: Einige Bemerkungen zu Baba ben Nuriel's Psalmenübersetzung," *Acta Orientalia* 30, 1966, p. 18). This Judeo-Persian translation was done by the great Rabbi of Isfahan, Baba ben Nuriel in the 18th century on the behest of Nader Shah Afshar (Netzer, **"BĀBĀ'Ī BENNŪRĪ'EL"** *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://iranica.com/articles/babai-ben-nuriel). Nader Shah Afshar was one of the most interesting rulers of the Iranian world, not so much for his conquests, but rather his attitude towards other religious groups. He is believed to have said: "If God is one, religion must be one." This conception was undoubtedly influenced by Akbar's religious ideas (W.J. Fischel, "The Bible in Persian Translation: A Contribution to the History of Bible Translations in Persia and India," *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1952, p. 31). His translation of the Jewish and Christian sacred texts was completed between 1740 and 1741. The Psalms was translated by Baba Ben Nuri'el as such that first the translation of the Psalms

was done in Hebrew characters (hence our text) and then transliterated into the Persian script by a scribe (I am doing the same here!) (Fischel, p. 34).

I will provide the image of the manuscript, transliteration and then the Persian.



btṣbyḥ gftn dr nγmh h’ srwd ‘st wtṣbyḥ
xd’ mhrb’ny knd bm’ wbrkt dhd bm’
wrwšn knd nwr xd r’ br m’ hmyšh
t’ m’lwm br xlq zmyn r’h h’y tw
wbr grwh h’st gš’yš tw

به تسبیح گفتن در نغمه‌ها سرود است و تسبیح
خدا مهـــــربانی کنـــد بما و برکت دهـــد بما
و روشـــــــن کند نور خود را بر ما همیشـــه
تا معلـــــــــوم بر خلق زمیـــــــن راه‌های تو
و بـــر گـــــروه‌هاست گشـــــــــــایش تو

Here is the Hebrew with English translation for comparison:

לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת, מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר.
אֱלֹהִים, יְחָנֵּנוּ וִיבָרְכֵנוּ; יָאֵר פָּנָיו אִתָּנוּ סֶלָה
לָדַעַת בָּאָרֶץ דַּרְכֶּךָ, בְּכָל-גּוֹיִם, יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ

76 For the Leader; with string-music. A Psalm, a Song:

> God be gracious unto us, and bless us; may He cause His face to shine toward us; Selah That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations.

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A. Netzer, "Bābā'ī Ben Nūrī'el," Encyclopaedia Iranica, ed. E. Yarshater, 1988, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/babai-ben-nuriel.

A. Netzer, "Judeo-Persian Communities ix. Judeo-Persian Literature," ed. E. Yarshater, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-ix-judeo-persian-literature.

Shaked, "Early Juadeo-Persian Texts," in *Persian Origins*, ed. L. Paul, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003.

11

The *Gathas* of Zarathushtra: Gathica I

These notes on the *Gathas* are meant to provide information for the general public on the mysterious and legendary figure of Zarathushtra. Zarathusthra was a Prophet, a mystic, a priest and a poet whose poetic message is at times clear and at other times ambiguous. A simple glance at the five authoritative

translations of the *Gathas* published this past century suffices to understand that most expert philologists disagree on their reading and interpretations (Barthalomae, Duschene - Guillmen, Humbach, Insler, Kellens and Pirart).

This is partly due to the archaic language, imagery and historical knowledge of Zarathushtra. The language of the Gathas is known as Old Avestan. According to W.B. Henning, Old Avestan first appeared in the Eastern Iranian world (*Bactrai*/ *Balkh*?). For Gnoli, it was in Sistan. Due to the dearth of material found, our knowledge of old Avestan is incomplete. The closest language to Avestan is Vedic Sanskrit and most translators of the *Gathas* have taken a comparative approach to decipher it. To learn Gathic Avestan, knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedic Sanskrit is a must. Without it, one cannot make sense of these hymns. Avestan has been a dead language for the past 2500 or 3000 years. Until the nineteenth century, a period when European philologists began to apply the methodology of both linguistics and philology to translate these hymns, no one understood the *Gathas*.

Already in the Sasanian period, when the *Avesta* was put into writing, the Pahlavi translation of the *Gathas* showed that ninety per cent of it was not understood by Zoroastrian priests. The Sanskrit translation by medieval Parsi scholar Nayrosangh,

was so useless that the meaning of the *Gathas* remained forgotten to all. Only did the *Gathas* recover their importance with the advent of modern European science, first in India, within the Parsi community, and then in Iran (especially, following their translation in Parsi by Pourdavoud).

When and where Zarathushtra was born remains unclear. Bactria? Sistan? Eleventh century BCE? Sixth century BCE? Because the language of the Gathas is not connected to any other modern Iranian language (for example modern Yaghnubi spoken in the Zarafshan Valley in Tajikestan is a descendant of Sogdian), it is very difficult to place a time and homeland for Zarathusthra.

My reading of the text, in conjunction with the work made by the great philologists who deciphered these hymns, supports a location of the *Gathas* and Zarathushtra within the Iranian context. Hafez makes sense to me, although he composed his hymns some seven hundred years ago. Of course, I know Persian and there is a direct link to medieval Persian poetry. The *Gathas* do not supply this connection, but the view, vision and mentality that emanate from them is undoutedly Iranian. Whether we consider Zarathushtra as a reformer or a prophet, his beliefs and work are closer to the Iranian ethos than to the Indo-Iranian vision of the world.

We should remember that it was the Iranian

people who first adopted his ideas. In fact, approaching Hafez may be beneficial. This idea is supported by great Iranist W. Lentz in an article published in the 1960s. The study of words is the affair of philologists, making sense of them is something that everybody can attempt. But what do the hymns mean? Thanks to my friend George Lang, I was exposed to the concept of Ethnopoetics which simply means (according to Dennis Tedlock) an attempt by some scholars to hear and read poetry from the distant past, outside the Western tradition. This may be helpful in deciphering these difficult hymns.

I believe that, just like Zarathushtra himself said, it is for us to choose our path. I am taking heed of this message and will translate and comment from time to time on the Gathic stanzas, which reflects an Iranian vision about life, the divine, the universe and the world.

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12

The *Šāhnāmeh* and the History of the World as Epic

Mahmoud Omidsalar has told me several times that if many people have talked about the *Šāhnāmeh*, only a few have really read it from start to finish. My curiosity was piqued, and I decided to explore the epic. What follows is a summary of my notes. Amongst the many questionable statements and

false conjectures, one can hopefully find a few sensible comments.

The Source of the *Šāhnāmeh*: Orality vs. Textuality

The textuality and/or orality of the *Šāhnāmeh* has been the subject of heated debates among scholars for a long time. While some scholars, such as Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, have spent the past three decades attempting to provide a critical edition of the text, others such as O. Davidson and D. Davis have suggested that this endeavor was impossible since the *Šāhnāmeh* relies on several oral traditions collected during the time of Ferdowsī. Most scholars are in agreement with Th. Nöldeke that Ferdowsī did not retrieve his information from a Middle Persian source(s) (Khaleghi-Motlagh 1381; 309). Davidson (1994, p. 44) and Davis (1996; 48-57) have opted for an oral tradition, while Omidsalar has been the most vocal proponent of an earlier Persian text (Omidsalar 1381, p. 138: Omidsalar 2002, pp. 245-282). Similarities between the *Šāhnāmeh* and Arabic accounts on Iran's history, such as Tha'ālbi's *Ghuraru axbār ī mulūk al-furs wa siyarihim*, suggest that both traditions were taken from the same source (Nöldeke 1879, pp. 25-26: Khaleghi-Motlagh 1381, pp. 303-304: Omidsalar 1998, pp. 344). There is no evidence, however, that Ferdowsī was familiar with

Middle Persian or Arabic sources. Rather, scholars believe that he drew most of his knowledge from a Persian source (Safa 1374, p. 191: Omidsalar 1996, p. 238), mainly a *Šāhnāmeh* prose, the translation of the Middle Persian *Xwadāy-nāmg* (Nöldeke 1879, p. 26: Nöldeke 1896-1904, p. 164: Safa 1374, p. 203). Around the time of Ferdowsī, as many as twenty such manuscripts existed with only a Bahrām b. Mardānšāh (von Rosen 1895(1382), p. 31), and Hamza b. al-Hasan is said to have seen many copies of the history of the Persians (Arabic *tarīkh mulūk al-furs*) which was called *Xwadāy-nāmeh* (Mojmal al-Tawārīkh, p. 85), which suggests the importance and popularity of the text in the early Islamic period. Muslim authors such as Mas'ūdī (Tanbih 1365, p. 99); Hamza al-Isfahanī (Siyar al mulūk 16, 24, 64); and Ibn Nadim (al-Fihrist, p. 244) also attest to the existence of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* (Safa 1374, p. 83). To further bolster the idea of a textual antecedence to the Persian *Book of Kings* known as the *Moqddam-ye Šāhnāmeh-ye Abū Masūrī* (The Preface of the Šāhnāmeh of Abū Masūr), there was an edition of the royal history based on the *Xwadāy-nāmag* which was made on the order of Abū Mansur 'Abd al-Razzāq and was written by Abū Mansūr Ma'amarī (edition and Persian translation: Qazvīnī 1332; 34: Monchi-Zadeh 1975: English translation Minorsky 1964; 260-274).

I believe it is clear that the Sasanian *Xwadāy-nāmag* existed as early as the sixth century CE during the reign of Khusro I (Shahbazi 1990, p. 214: Daryaee 2003, p. 35). Byzantine historian Agathias, who journeyed to Sasanian Iran, mentions hearing from his friend Sergius the existence of a (II.27) βασιλειοι διφJέραι "Book of Kings" (Nöldeke 1896-1904, p. 136: Shahbazi 1990, p. 208). Evidences found in the *Moqddam-ye Šāhnāmeh-ye Abū Masūrī* (The Preface of the Šāhnāmeh of Abū Masūr) and the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (Shahbazi 1990, p. 214: Daryaee 2002, p. 4-5) suggest that the book was updated in the seventh century CE, during Khurso II. By the end of Yazdgerd III's rule, further additions were made, including lamentations on the loss of the Sasanian Empire (Nöldeke 1896-1904, 13f: Safa 1374, p. 83: Shahbazi 1990, pp. 214-215).

So far only Arabic, Persian and Greek sources have been used in support of a Sasanian *Book of Kings*. However, I would like to touch upon other sources to emphasize the textual heritage of the Persian *Book of Kings*.

The *Šāhnāmeh* was popular in neighboring regions and Armenian and Georgian sources mention its existence. Writing in the seventh century CE, Sebēos cites a *matean zhamanakean* rendering the "Tale of the *ariakan*," (i.e., Iranians), a "Royal History" (Thomson 1999; 13). In the eighth century

CE, *The Georgian Chronicle of the History of the Kings of K'art'li* alludes to the story of Farīdūn and Zahhāk from the books of the Persians, a likely reference to the *Xwadāy-nāmag* (Thomson 1996; n.55). These evidences imply that the Persian *Book of Kings* existed during the Sasanian period.

The Evaluation of the *Šāhnāmeh* as a Historical Source

The *Xwadāy-nāmag / Šāhnāmeh* served a variety of purposes in the Sasanian and post-Sasanian periods. It was used as a tool to legitimate the Sasanian social structure and, as such, the text's historical accuracy is limited. Because the text acted as a propaganda material for the church and the state, ideological considerations overrode attention to fact (Yarshater 1983; 393). The *Šāhnāmeh* was also used as a tool to educate the courtiers and the masses on how to behave in a hierarchical society. In order to make them both accessible to and entertaining for the masses, these didactic lessons were delivered in the form of epic narratives of kings and heroes. To give further credence to the text, the ethos of the Sasanian period was connected to Zoroaster, the primordial kings and the concept of absolute kingship. This last concept, which was current during Sasanian times, runs through the different historical periods

covered in the *Šāhnāmeh*. Rulers are portrayed as philosopher-kings who rendered long accession speeches praising God for the gift of kingship. These throne-addresses were meant to outline the king's character and intentions (Yarshater 1983; 408). According to the political philosophy of the *Šāhnāmeh*, only God was above the king, and the king acted as the intermediary between the Supreme Being and the people.

Stories of Persian heroes and kings were used to justify the inviolability of both the Sasanian kingship and *Ērān* itself. For example, the story of Rustam killing his beloved son Sohrāb, was a clear reminder of the price to pay for anyone who dared to go against the institution of kingship. Rustam, the great hero and fighter of *Ērān* pays for his bad behavior toward the king and the monarchy. No matter how irresponsible or shortsighted the king may be, loyalty to him and to the country must be absolute. One way of reading this story is to consider Ferdowsī's fatalism. Yet there is another moral to this story. This moral judgment which Ferdowsī projects onto the heroic age is very well in standing with Sasanian hierarchical values, where the ruler must always win against subordinates, even his own son (Davis 1992; 108). The paradigm of the hero (general) paying for his disrespectful behavior towards the king is echoed in the story of Bahrām

Čūbineh whose rebellion against the king Hormozd takes a long portion of the *Šāhnāme*. Hormozd's son, Khusrō Parvēz is only saved and defeats the insubordinate general, Bahrām Čūbineh through the intervention of an angel (Davis 1992; 86-92), which emphasizes the fact that God only supports the rightful king, *i.e.,* the family of Sāsān. These stories educated the populace about the importance of absolute obedience to the king and respect for *Ērān* (Yarshater 1983; 397). The absolutism of the king and court could then be used in the post-Sasanian period, in the Samanid and Qaznavid eras, when the kings and Amirs used the text to insure obedience from their subjects. The text became used again during the Islamic period as a guide on how and who should rule the land. In that respect, the *Šāhnāmeh* served as a repository of history and traditions to be emulated by the generations to come.

The *Šāhnāmeh* also emphasizes the close relationship existing between church and state. The *mobed*s, or priests, appear as the wise men of the court and the counselors of the King. Their function was to remind the King to remain close to Zoroastrian moral tenets when making decisions about the future of *Ērān* and its people (Yarshater 1983; 402-403). It was believed that those who did not abide to the teachings of the Zoroastrian religion and tried to introduce innovations within society

woud face hardship or even death.

The King, however, was only punished if he went against *yazdān* "God" or *dēn* "religion." The *Šāhnāmeh* contains several examples of kings who lost their thrones or their lives. The most famous of all is the story of Jamšīd, whose hubris caused him to lose *farr* "glory." He was dethroned by the *tāzī* "Arab" Zohhāk. Jamšīd's infraction not only caused his fall, but also the loss of *Ērān* to the Arabs. Yazdgird the Sinner, whose religious infractions weakened the Zoroastrian religion, received his divine punishment in the form of a kick from his horse. Kawād II (Shīrōy), who killed all his brothers and other potential heirs to the throne leading to the downfall of the Sasanian dynasty, received God's punishment when he was killed by plague (Yarshater 1983; 399).

The *Šāhnāme* also provided ideological support for social stratification. According to the text, social hierarchy had been established by the first king, Jamšīd, suggesting that Sasanian society had reverted to this idyllic state of primordial times. Drawing on Sasanian sources, such as the *Kitāb al-Tāj*, some Islamic texts attribute the establishment of a stratification system to Ardašīr ī Bābakān (Yarshater 1983; 397). This suggests a conflation of the first primordial king with the founder of the Sasanian dynasty. The message is that Ardašīr

and the Sasanians had restored Jāmšīd's perfect *Ērān* which had been disrupted by Alexander's conquest and the feudalism of the Parthians. The story of Bahrām Gūr on the abolishment by the king of class distinction in a disrespectful village is a good example of what could go wrong in a non-hierarchical society. Anarchy follows this move and the village is in ruins within a year (Davis 1992; 27). Mazdak's movement and the preaching of the doing away with class distinction is another important story of the *Šāhnāme*. Mazdak and his followers are killed because they went against the tents of the Zoroastrian religion and the established Sasanian social order (Davis 1992; 30-31).

Not only did the Sasanians develop a specific perspective on history, but they also provided a new geography by transferring the locations and peoples of eastern *Ērān* depicted in the *Avesta* to western *Ērān*. This was made possible mainly because the Avestan language was no longer understood by the time the *Avesta* was committed to writing (Kreyenbroek 1996; 221-237). Geography could be easily manipulated to serve Sasanian territorial ambitions. Following to this process of topographical redefinition, the Romans were associated with the descendants of Salm, whilst the Tūrānians were connected to the Turks, a group called the descendants of Tūj. Also, common place names associated with kings and heroes in the *Avesta*

were transferred onto the Iranian Plateau. Thus, Zoroaster's birthplace and the heart of *Ērān* was identified with Azerbaijan and the location of the captivity of Kay Kawūs' army became Māzandarān (Yarshater 1983; 402-403). Finally, *Ērānšahr*, which was only a part of the *Xwanirah* (Central Clime) in the *Avesta*, became identified with the entirety of that *kišwar* "clime," making *Ērān* an enormous empire (Daryaee 2002; 107-108).

The Schema of History According to the *Šāhnāmeh*

The birth of the epic as a Persian historical narrative begins with the rule of two mythical rulers: the Pēšdādiān and the Kayānīyān. This part of the *Šāhnāmeh* is closely structured and in line with the content of the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yašt XIX) of the *Avesta* (Pirart 1992; 9), a section that may have been composed as late as the Achaemenid period. The heroic section intertwines the deeds of the Saka hero, Rostam and the Kayānīān rulers, with the tale of Goštāsp's acceptance of Zoroaster's message and Rostam's defeat of Isfandiyār. Some of the stories in this section, such as Rustam's saga in Mazandaran, cannot be found in Arabic sources, especially in Tha'ālībī's *Gurar al-Akhbar mulūk al furs wa siyarahim*, which seems to draw from the same source as the *Šāhnāmeh*. This fact suggests that Ferdowsī

probably used other Iranian traditions to compose his text (Nöldeke 1896-1904; 168-169). In this part of the text, certain names recall Parthian rulers.

The historical section of the *Šāhnāmeh*, however, begins with Dārāb, supposedly Darius I, and ends with the killing of Yazdgerd III and the short rule of Māhuy. The last section provides the most accurate account of ancient Persian history. The historical section does not really cover the Achaemenids in any detail. The Parthians who temporally ruled between the two Persian empires had a strong minstrel tradition which transmitted stories of the Achaemenids along with those of the Kayānīān kings (Boyce 1954; 49: Boyce 1957; 12). Only minor attention is given to the Achaemenid period. It is disguised/confused with a series of rulers whose identity is vague at best. This confusion may be due either to the erasure of the Achaemenid period from the national consciousness (Yarshater 1971; 519) or to Sasanian manipulation of the ancient tradition, providing legitimacy for themselves through a connection with a mythical past (Daryaee 1995; 129-141: 2001-2002; 1-14). In the *Šāhnāmeh*, one comes across Bahman the son of Isfandīyār (Middle Persian) Wahman ī Spandīyādān: *andar ham hazārag ka xwadāyīh ō wahman ī spandyādān mad ud āwērān būd ērānagān xwēš pad xwēš absist hēnd ud az tohmag ī xwadāyīh kas nē mānd kē xwadāyīh*

kard hād ušān humāy ī wahman doxt pad xwadāyīh nišast [In the same millennium, Wahman, the son of Spandiyādān, came to power. His rule was followed by ruin. The Iranians killed one another and there was no one from the seed of the rulers left who could succeed him. They brought Humāy, the daughter of Wahman to rulership] (Bundahišn XXXIII.12). This Bahman is said to be a certain Ardaxšīr, the Kayānid (Middle Persian) *ardaxšīr ī kay* in *Zand ī Wahman Yasn III.25* (Cereti 1995; 152; Mohassel 1370; 4), who has been identified with the Achaemenid ruler, Artaxerxes II (Amir-Arjomand 1998; 245-248: Boyce 1991; 385).

Interestingly, Bahman's son is mentioned to be Sāsān, the patronym of the Sasanian dynasty, and his daughter is named Humāy, who was also known as Čihrzād (Middle Persian Čihrāzād / Persian Šahrzād). She assumes the throne after her father/husband (Bahman), attesting to the Zoroastrian next-of-kin marriage (*xwēdodah*). While the *Šāhnāmeh* and other Middle Persian sources, such as the *Bundahišn* (XXXIIII.12) and the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (45), mention her rule, it has been suggested that she was fictitiously inserted in the national tradition to accommodate the world era of the Persians (Shahbazi 1990; 222). According to the *Šāhnāmeh*, Humāy has a brother (Sāsān), who left for India. Yet Middle Persian sources states that she was chosen as

queen since all descendants of Bahman were killed (*Bundahišn* XXXIII.12): *az tohmag ī xwadāyīh kas nē mānd kē xwadāyīh kard hād ušān humāy ī wahman doxt pad xwadāyīh nišast* [there was no one from the seed of the rulers left who would rule, then they brought Humāy, the daughter of Wahman to rulership].

Whilst Perso-Islamic sources, such as the *Fārs-nāma* of Ibn Balkhī (Le Strange and Nicholson 1921; 52-53) make reference to Cyrus the Great, he is not remembered in the *Šāhnāmeh*. The figure of Dārāb, however, may allude to Darius I through the Parthian and Sasanian tradition. His reforms, such as the establishment of a postal system, are mentioned in the *Fārs-nāma* of Ibn Balxī (Le Strange and Nicholson 1921; 55). His son is named Dārā and is known as Dārā, son of Dārāb. In the Middle Persian sources, we also come across Dārā ī Dārāyān, presumably Darius III, who was defeated by Alexander the Great and burnt the sacred books of the Zoroastrians (*Avesta*) after sending a copy to *Hrōm* [Rome]. In the *Dēnkard* IV (321), Dārāy ī Dārāyān has the function of preserver of the *Avesta*: *dārā ī dārāyān hamāg abestāg ud zand čiyōn zarduxšt az ohrmazd padīrift nibištag* [Dārā the son of Dāra accepted and wrote the *Avesta* and its commentary in the manner in which Zoroaster had received it from Ohrmazd] (Shaki 1981; 114-125; Humbach 1991; 51). Thus, the two

Dārās represent the Achaemenid period, from Darius I to Darius III. It is also possible to see Dārā ī Dārāyān, in the Middle Persian and Classical Persian texts, as a conflation between the Achaemenid kings and the kings of Persis, specifically Dārāyān II whose major religious and non-religious reforms are remembered (Skjærvø 1997; 103). The mention of Ardaxšīr I as the founder of the Sasanian dynasty in the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* (VI.19), may be in connection with the post-Achaemenid period. Perso- If we except Ibn Balkhī's *Fārs-nāma* and Bīrūnī's *Athār al-Baqīya* (Bērūnī 1363; 140-141; 151-152), Arabic sources say little regarding the Achaemenid period and Darius.

Unlike Middle Persian sources, the *Šāhnāmeh* provides a positive image of Alexander the Great (Iskandar). This suggests that Ferdowsī used another source beside the *Xwadāy-nāmag* (Nöldeke 1896-1904; 165), maybe the pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander Romance (Yarshater 1983; 377). Here, Alexander is endowed with royal glory (Persian *farr* / Middle Persian *xwarrah*) and Dārā is impressed by him. Dārā gives Alexander his daughter Rošanak (Roxanna) in marriage. Alexander is instructed to protect the realm, and to take care of the sacred Zoroastrian texts, the *Avesta* and *Zand*. Middle Persian texts, mainly from the late Sasanian and early Islamic period, depict Alexander as a villain. In the

Bundahišn (XXXIII.13), for example, Alexander is responsible for the destruction of both Ērānšahr and the Zoroastrian tradition: *pas andar xwadāyīh ī dārā ī dārāyān alexsandar kēsar az hrōm dwārist ō ēranšahr āmēd dārā šāh ōzad ud hamāg dūdag ī xwadāyān mog-mardān paydāg ō ērān-šahr ābaxšīnēd ud was marag ātaxš afsārd ud dēn ī māzdēsnān ud zand stād ō hrōm āmēd ud abestāg suxt ud ērānšahr pad nawad xwadāy baxt*. [Then during the rulership of Dārā, the son of Dārā, Alexander the Caesar of Rome rushed to *Ērān*, (he) killed king Dārā and destroyed all the family of the rulers (and) Magi who were visible in *Ērānšahr*, and extinguished countless fires, and took the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion and the commentary (of the *Avesta*) and sent it to Rome and burnt the *Avesta* and divided Ērānšahr into ninety king(doms)]. Alexander is given similar treatment in other Middle Persian texts, where he is accused of destroying the sacred tradition (*Dēnkard* VIII 528.11-13) and taking the *Avesta* to Greece/Rome (*Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*.7-9 Vahman 1986; 191; *Dēnkard* III 316.18-21 Humbach 1991; 52: Shaki 1981; 115-117: Bailey 1986; 149).

While the Seleucids are absent in the *Šāhnāmeh*, the Parthians receive only a minor attention. The Sasanians made sure that the memory of this great dynasty was obliterated and that some of their stories were transferred into the epic/heroic age. Ferdowsī

himself states: "Since their (i.e., Parthians) branch and root were cut short, the learned narrator holds no record of their annals, I have heard nothing of them but their name, nor seen anything in the Book of the Kings" (Moscow edition 1968; VII.116: Levy 1990; 251). Only the name of the founder of the dynasty, Ašk (Arsace), and some rulers such as Šāpūr, Gudarz, Bižan, Narsī, Hormizd and Āraš, as well as Ardavān (the last Parthian king Artabanus IV) are mentioned. The Šāh-nāme remembers the Parthian rule as a time of disunity, chaos, when *Ērān* became weak (Yarshater 1983b; 473).

From this time onwards, efforts were made to turn the *Šāhnāmeh* into an important historical text, as much as an epic text can be. As the last version of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* was emended after the challenge to the Sasanian throne by Wahrām Čōbīn, the Parthians would have been further omitted from the royal chronicle and/or relegated to the heroic section (Yarshater 1983; 474). The section on the Parthians ends with the mention of Bābak (Middle Persian Pābag), the father of Ardaxšīr I (the founder of the Sasanian dynasty), ruling the city of Staxr/Istaxr (Moscow edition 1968; VII.116-154). In fact, one may state that the Parthian section is only concerned with the career and activity of Ardašīr.

As for the Sasanians, the *Šāhnāmeh* provides very important information which appears to

have been drawn from the Persian version of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* as well as from other sources. As we mentioned earlier, the *Šāhnāmeh* does not give a detailed historical account of all the Sasanian rulers. As an epic it is much more concerned with matters of warfare, feasting, didactics and heroic speeches. The life of some kings, however, tends to be covered in more detail: Ardašīr I, Šāpūr I, Šāpūr II, Yazdgird I, Bahrām V, Pērōz, Kawād, Khosrow I, Hormizd IV, Khosrow II, Šērōye, and Yazdgird III (Yarshater 1983; 379). As one moves toward the later Sasanian period, the *Šāhnāmeh* becomes very detailed, offering information that surpasses even the accounts of al-Tabarī and other Muslim historians (Rubin 1995; 234-235). The early part, however, still carries a mixture of romance and historical events, heroic deeds and throne speeches.

As for the founder of the dynasty, Ardašīr ī Bābakān/ Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān, the *Šāhnāmeh* demonstrates that its source has used a version of the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* (The Testament of Ardaxšīr, the son of Pābag). This is a romantic tradition, probably composed in the sixth century CE, which was filtered through the court of Khusro I, when the early version of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* was composed (Daryaee 2003; 35), and which found its way into Persian and Arabic texts. Ferdowsī's source, a Persian prose *Šāhnāmeh* commissioned

by Abū Masūr b. ‘Abd al-Razzaq, had already incorporated the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān*.

The methods used by Ardašīr to recruit his army, advisors, administrators, organize his empire, and rule are given much attention in the *Šāhnāmeh* (Moscow edition 1968; VII.155-194). Šāpūr I’s reign is given a very short treatment and only his war with the Romans is mentioned (Moscow edition 1968; VII.195-200). Paradoxically, Hormizd I, who ruled for only a short period of time (270-271 CE), is mentioned and one of his long speeched even quoted. It should be noted that the Perso-Arabic sources also have very little to add to the reign of Hormizd (Moscow edition 1968; VII.203.34).

The three Bahrāms (I, II, and III) who ruled from 271 to 292 are mentioned briefly. While Bahrām I’s speeches are mentioned, Bahrām II’s rule is given as twenty years (Moscow edition 1968; VII.24), the combined length of rulership for the three Bahrāms. Neither his attachment to the Zoroastrian priest Kerdīr, nor the imprisonment and death of the prophet Mānī are mentioned. The *Šāhnāmeh* states that after Bahrām III ruled for four months, he became ill (Moscow edition 1968; VII.213.7) and left the throne to his son Narsē. In reality, Narsē was the son of Bahrām I and had been bypassed by Bahrām II and Bahrām III. Thus, the *Šāhnāmeh*, or its source, is mistaken. The mention

of Narsē's disastrous wars with Diocletian is absent and only his speeches abound in this part of the text. The *Šāhnāmeh* gives less attention to Narsē, who ruled from 292-302 CE, than it does to Hormizd II, who ruled from 302 to 309 CE.

Šāpūr II receives a very detailed and long treatment in the *Šāhnāmeh*, which conflates his rule with that of Šāpūr I. The first section of the rule is mentioned regarding his defeat of the Arab tribes and the dismembering of their shoulders, where he is given the title of Dhū al-Aktāf "The lord of the Shoulders" (Moscow edition 1968; VII.226.116-120). In the *Bundahišn* he appears to have kept this title as *šānag āhanj*. This is followed by his secret travel to Rome where he is imprisoned in the skin of an ass, while Iran is destroyed and its people forced to embrace Christianity. He returns to recapture the country, kill the Roman invaders, and re-establish Zoroastrianism, which has some resonance in the persecution of the Christians which took place under his rule in Persia as evidenced in the Syriac *Acts of the Martyrs* (Labourt 1904; 20-25). The defeat and imprisonment of the Caesar of Rum / Rome recalls not only the imprisonment of the Roman Emperor Valerian who was captured by Šāpūr I, not Šāpūr II, but Julian the Apostate's defeat in the fourth century CE. This confusion is further attested by mention of the appearance of Mānī as a prophet and his eventual

execution after the chief priest (probably Kerdīr is indicated here) accuses him of being a painter rather than a prophet. Mānī finally hangs from the gateway of the city (Moscow edition 1968; VII.252.600).

Ardašīr *ī nīkūkār* (II), about whom the historical sources are also meager, is mentioned only briefly (Moscow edition 1968; VII.257-258). Of interest is the mention of the oath which Ardašīr, as the younger brother of Šāpūr, takes to act as the viceroy for his nephew, which is not mentioned in any other historical texts. Following Ardašīr is Bahrām IV, whose wise speeches are mentioned (Moscow edition 1968; VII.262.263). Yazdgerd I, who is called *bezeh-kār* [sinner] only receives a short treatment which is in line with other Perso-Arabic historical evidence. He received his title of "sinner" because he attempted to destroy the power of the grandees and the Zoroastrian priests who had become too powerful by the time he ascended the throne. In the Roman and Christian sources, however, he has been portrayed as a beneficent ruler. The epithet on his coins, describes him as *rāmšahr* [one who brings peace to his realm] (Daryaee 2002; 89-95).

While many verses of the *Šāhnāmeh* (Moscow edition 1968; VII.304-454) bear the title "On the Rule of Yazdgerd the Sinner," the section is really about the childhood adventures of Yazdgird I's son, Bahrām ī Gōr (Moscow edition 1968; VII.264-303). Bahrām's

dragon slaying is mentioned after he comes to the throne is mentioned to exemplify his worthiness, and is an Indo-European motif which also appears for Ardašīr I (Watkins 2001). Other stories include Bahrām being raised in Yemen under the tutelage of Monzar; the famous involvement with the lyre-player Āzāda and their hunting episode, which not only adorns Sasanian silver bowls but also Islamic pieces (Harper 1978; 48-50), lion combat; several love affairs and the love of the hunt. Xāghān ī Čīn's attack upon Bahrām's realm finds corroboration in the historical sources as the time of Turkic invasions. Yazdgerd II (Moscow edition 1968; VIII.6-7) and Homrizd III (Moscow edition 1968; VIII.7-8) only receive brief mention.

A great deal of historical information interspersed with ceremonial speeches are found in this section of the epic. This is perhaps due to the fact that the *Xwadāy-nāmg* was revised in the sixth century CE under Khosro I. Hence, the *Šāhnāmeh* becomes an important historical source from this period onward. Pērōz (Moscow edition 1968; VIII.9-17), whose rule coincides with the low point of the Sasanian dynasty, is mentioned to have experienced a drought and his defeat at the hand of the Turks (i.e., the Hephthalites) under the leadership of Xošnawāz. From the *Šāhnāmeh* (Moscow edition, Vol. VIII.25), one can even find some details about the personages involved

at the court, details are useful in editing and translating Middle Persian texts. An example is the name of the *mōwbad-e mōwbadān*, Ardašīr who had been taken captive during the reign of Pērōz (Khaleghi-Motlagh 1987; 382 : Daryaee 2003; 145-147). This is followed by the reign of Balāš (Moscow edition 1968; VIII.17-28) which is much more detailed than what Tabarī and other Perso-Arabic historians supply.

The story of Mazdak in the reign of Qobād is interesting and provides many details, especially the account of the execution of this religious reformer / revolutionary which is given in a way not found in other sources (Bausani 2000; 97-100). Khusro I's rule (Moscow edition 1968; VIII.53-314) is of especial importance because of the detailed information about the royal land reform, especially a letter attributed to him on this subject, which contains important and accurate information regarding the reason he initiated these reforms (Rubin 1995; 234). The reforms and initiatives taken by the king include an influx in the revenue, but also a restoration of the agricultural basis of the Sasanian Empire, which was an important source of revenue (Rubin 1995; 257). There are, of course, independent Middle Persian texts on other stories that appear in the *Šāhnāmeh*, such as the invention of the games of chess and backgammon and the wise saying of the king's wazīr, Bozorgmihr (Daryaee 2002; 281-312).

There is a good deal of detail about Hormizd (Moscow edition 1968; VIII.315-430), his speeches, deeds, and wars. This information agrees with Tha'ālibī's report, especially about Bahrām Čōbīn. Bahrām's career is romanticized and expanded upon more than in any other extant historical source. Khosro II (Moscow edition 1968; IX.10-253) is allotted a major portion of the *Šāhnāmeh* which has much interesting detail and which grafts of historical and romantic accounts current at that time. The marriage of Khosro II to the Roman Princess Maryam, is mentioned along with the romance of Khosro and Shirin. The opulence of the court, the building of the Tāqdīs throne, and the minstrel Bārbad are all topics treated under the rule of Khusro II, along with tales of war and intrigue. There is, however, some conflation of the history of Khusro I and Khusro II, as in the case of Šāpūr I and Šāpūr II. For instance, Greek philosophers' entry into Persia (Gutas 1998; 25-26) which took place under Khusro I, is assigned to Khusro Parvīz's reign.

Šērōye's reign (Moscow edition 1968; IX.254-292) begins with animosity towards Shirin that leads to her suicide. The story is in close agreement with that of Tha'ālibī. Tabarī who provides a long political history of the ruler must have used an alternative source. Ardašīr II's reign is followed by Farāyīn Gorāz who is mistakenly said to have been

killed by a Šahrān Goraz (Šahrwarāz). His reign is followed by Bōrān-doxt, Azarmī-doxt, and Farroxzād (Moscow edition 1968; IX.293-310) which matches Tha'ālibī's account. This fact suggests that whatever the source of Ferdowsī and Tha'ālibī, it was deficient in historical information for the period from Khusro II to Yazdgird III. Ṭabarī provides a much more detailed account of this period.

Yazdgerd III's reign (Moscow edition 1968; IX.311-369) is certainly a later insertion, which was not in the *Xwadāy-nāmag*, as there is the foretelling of the end of the Sasanian rule over Persia. The historical circumstances are given some minor treatment over the long speeches and letters by Persian and Arab forces and their leaders. Only the battle of Qaddesiya and other wars are given some treatment and Yazdgerd III's consultation with his advisors and fleeing to China, which appears to have a kernel of historical truth, is then mentioned. The last King of Kings flees to a miller's hut after being defeated by Māhūy. He is found out and the local chieftain pays the old man to kill the king. Māhūy ascends the throne (Moscow edition 1968; IX.368-376) of Iran and gives a long speech that is not found in any other historical source. Yazdgerd III's death at the hand of Māhūy does not go unanswered, and a certain Bīžan (Moscow edition 1968; IX.376-380) at the same location where the King of Kings had fallen kills the pretender to the

throne in a gruesome manner. Tha'ālibī is consistent in his report with the *Šāhnāmeh* until the war of the Sasanian general Rustam with Sa'd b. Vaghās. In Tha'ālibī, the general has a dream where an angel takes the weapons of the Persians to heaven where the Prophet Muhammad hands them to 'Omar. The battle of Jalūlā and Nīhāvand are mentioned first, and then Yazdgerd III's battle with Māhūy, after which the King of Kings is captured, suffocated and thrown in the Marv River. Bīžan's name in Tha'ālibī is given as Nīzak which may be a corruption of the former name (Tha'ālibī 1368; 477).

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13

Childhood in Ancient Iran

How were children thought of and how were they treated in antiquity? How different were their lives from that of children today? How were they raised and taught to behave? The history of childhood in antique Iran has not received much attention because evidence is scarce. Still, I will cite a

few interesting details that can give us an idea of childhood in Iran during the late antique period.

It is important to note that it was only in the 1960s, through the work of Philippe Ariès, that important strides were made in the field of childhood in antiquity in Europe (Ariès 1962). Ariès argues that prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth century, parental love for and societal views on children were different from modern conceptions because half of the children died. Needless to say that, since its publication, this has book received much reviews and criticism.

How about children in the ancient World? What kind of emotional bonds did parents have for their children in antiquity? Since the 1960s, there has been much work done and specifically on various aspects of childhood in antiquity, but nothing on ancient Iran.

It should be noted that work on the Greco-Roman world is based on a rich textual tradition. In example, we could cite the edited volume *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy* (Cohen & Rutter 2007). The authors of this volume explore a variety of issues such as childhood, religious education, the welfare of infants and the rites of passage to adulthood. Some chapters address the question of gender and identity construction.

More recently, the copious *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World* (Grubbs, Parkin and Bell 2013) explores the world of children and their education within various religious traditions in Greece, Rome and Egypt.

For ancient Iran, however, we have far less evidence. Still, there are avenues to explore the lives of children and childhood, specifically for the late antique period. The sources at our disposal are mainly religious laws pertaining to children, Andarz literature and scraps of writing on childhood. Archaeology with a specific research purpose at hand could help in this regard (Kamp 2001), but the absence of children in the archaeological context has been noticed and discussed in an important study (Baxter 2000: 160-161). I am not going to give the references to the legal texts available, but rather mention an amusing Pazand (Pahlavi texts written with Avestan alphabet) text from late antique Iran which sheds light on the habits and mores of children. This short text is a good start for research on children, at least for an MA thesis!

Reading through the text, one is struck by the similarities between education principles then and education principles in today's Iran. In fact, many of the dictums outlined in the Pazand text mirror exactly what is prescribed today. The best

work published on this text is Heinrich Junker's *Ein mittelpersisches Schulgespräch* (1912). Unfortunateley, Junker's precious analysis was never translated into Persian or any other European languages. I may have simply missed this, but it is not the first text that comes to mind!

Education in Zoroastrian Iran appears to have had specific merits. One chapter of the *Sad-dar Nasr* states: "It is known to all that sending a child to school for learning, whatever work and good deeds the child does, it is like the father and mother has done by their own hands (i.e., done themselves)" (Junker 1912: 12). In fact, going through this text, or any source on education and children in late ancient Iran, one notices that children are rewarded for their good behavior. It is rare that we get such a glimpse into the lives of children in the Iranian and Zoroastrian worlds.

For the sake of information, I would like to provide some free translations from Junker's edition and translation. The section for *kōdakān* (children) begins from passage 25 (Junker 1912: 20), where the first 24 passages are about the *rēdagān* (youth), hence there is a distinction and separation in terms of their duties:

25: when going to school, on the way go straight (and) do not hit dogs, and chicken, and cattle.

27: when going home stand ready for command

before your father and mother (love this)
29: do not sit until they command you to do so (love this too).
30: when you are told to eat, wash your nose and hands
33: when finished eating food, clean your teeth.
36-37: sleep well and rise rightly
38: the next day, before the sunrise, get up and wash (with *dastšōy*) your hands and face three times, and rinse them very well seven times with water.
41-43: when you become 20 years-old, go before the sages, and teachers, and priests. They will ask questions about your knowledge. And if you do not know the answer, people will look at you, you (should) look at the ground (failing your SAT exams?)

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14

Of Witches, Whores and Sorcerers: Women of Ancient Iran

My interest in the study of women in ancient Iran is driven by several forces. Firstly, because the Iranian community, in Iran and outside it, share a dream-like misconception about women's rights and rites from the past. This is mainly driven by ultra-nationalist or political agendas,

where not only ignorance, but also a distaste for Islam has created the opportunity for this ancient magical world of female rulers, priestesses and scantly clad women to run on the Iranian Plateau. Secondly, I was drawn into the topic through my PhD advisor's own research about women in the Indo-Iranian world (Schmidt 1987), amassing a substantial amount of information on this issue since the 1990s. Lastly, research on women within the field of Iranian Studies mainly revolves around Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and Manichaean women. More recently, efforts have been made to transform this monolithic view on women in late ancient Iran (Emrani 2011), so that we can have a clearer understanding of the topic.

Until the twentieth century, only a handful of articles had dealt with women in the ancient Iranian world. These texts and articles explain why a large portion of the modern day population was informed by the important Persepolis Fortification Tablets which showed that there were women managers (for women workers), payment for maternity leave, and payment for bringing children into the world (although those who bore sons received a higher reward). Romantic views about Zoroastrianism (one should ask which Zoroastrianism or what period) contributed largely to feed the myths of the evanescent woman we find

on the internet (Brosius 1998).

As an attempt to get a better understanding of the role of women in ancient Iranian society, how they were perceived and the limits to their functions, I propose to discuss three recent books on the laws, visions and images that governed Zoroastrian women. If, like the ultra-nationalists you too like to transpose the imagery of the Pahlavi period onto the "pre-Islamic" Iranian world, imagining Persian female admirals, warriors and priestesses, you may want to stop reading me here, as what follows suggest a very different reality.

Jamsheed K. Choksy, a leading figure in the study of Zoroastrianism, and a fellow Zoroastrian, has provided us with his religion's images of the feminine in its long history. *Evil, Good, and Gender: Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History* (2002), is a wonderful read for those engaged in the study of gender through the prism of Religious Studies. The book focuses on Zoroastrian texts, from the *Avesta* to the later medieval Middle Persian and Persian Zoroastrian writings. It demonstrates the views of priests on gender and its power to bring deceit and discord. Jamsheed's work is more religiously oriented than philological; hence it is a good start to understand the complexity of women's lives in pre-modern Iranian world. In his book, Choksy

quotes a passage from the *Bundahishn* (Book of Primal Creation), my favorite passage of the entire Zoroastrian Middle Persian corpus about women and discord. In this passage, Ahura Mazda (MP Ohrmazd) turns to the woman and states (14a: 1):

> "I created you, whose adversary is the class of whores. You were created with an orifice close to your buttocks, and sexual intercourse seems to you like the taste of sweetest food is to the mouth. You are my helper for man is born from you. Yet, you cause me, Ohrmazd, grief. If I had found another vessel from which to produce man, I would never have created you. I searched the water, earth, plants, beneficial animals, on the highest mountains, and in the deepest rivers, but did not find a vessel from which the righteous man could be (created) except woman" (Choksy 2002: 28).

Obviously, this relationship with the "whore" (Avestan *Jahika* / MP *Jahi* or *Jeh*, where I assume the modern Persian slang *Ji-Ji* comes from), brings lust and debauchery, which is in the power of woman, rendered to her by Ohrmazd. Here, men do not seem to cherish the idea of intercourse as much as women do. Hence, it is women who, through lusting men, bring discord to the world of good creation.

In fact, the "whore" is most important in Zoroastrian cosmology, in that it helps revive the

Evil Spirit (Av. Angra Mainiyu / MP Ahreman) and tells it to "Arise, our father." (Bundahishn 41-2) (Choksy 2002: 39). Hence our beloved Jahika / Jeh / Ji became the patroness of evil women. We might even say that Jahika is the patron saint of all the whores! This is the "negative" power of the feminine, or at least part of it. Who follows this lady may end up in Hell, subjected to all sorts of horrific tortures as described in the *Ardā Wirāz/f Nāmeh* (Kargar 2009).

This brings us to the next book, by which the title of this section was inspired. S.K. Mendoza Forrest's *Witches, Whores and Sorcerers: The Concept of Evil in Early Iran* (2011), is another excellent read from the field of Religious Studies about the evil power of Iranian women. The book underlines the rich vocabulary used to describe the various classes of witches, whores and sorcerers that abounded in the Zoroastrian world. *Jahika* has a large entourage! Along with *Jādūg* (sorcerer) and *Parīg* / *Pairika* (witch / fairy), she has the power to derange the orderly lives of men (Mendoza Forrest 2012: 65). To protect "good men" from this cohort of evil females, Zoroastrianism created numerous rituals and incantations, amonst the most important is the *Haoma* ceremony. Men were most reliant on spells to survive in the Zoroastrian world.

Mendoza Forrest also discusses the idea

that women have a special connection with evil. According to Zoroastrian tradition, it was during their menstruation cycle that women were the most contaminated by the evil. The Zoroastrian texts state that Ahreman gave women menstruation, that is the "unnatural bleeding," through a kiss (Mendoza Forrest 2012: 72). Intercourse with a non-whore (meaning only your wife), can also be damaging when she is in this impure state. As her power to seduce you is the greatest in this period of contamination, she should be kept at a distance to avoid the perpetration of sins difficult to atone.

The desire for sexual intercourse with a whore is conceived as having a magical function, where the Jahika binds the mind of the opposite sex (Mendoza Forrest 2012: 73). One of these evil beings is a witch or fairy named *Khavanaeti Pairika* who appears during men's sleep and performs intercourse with them in their dreams (I remember her visits when I was 15!). "Wet dreams" are the product of an assault from the evil feminine world. They are considered as a sin because semen is wasted (Daryaee 2002). My favorite Iranian hero to have commited this sin is Kershaspa/Garshasb. According to the *Vendidad*/*Wedivdad*, when Ms. *Khavanaeti Pairika* visited him, so-to-speak, he spilled his water and was barred from entering heaven!

The last book, yet the most recently published, I want to discuss is G. König's *Geschlechtsmoral und Gleichgeschlechtlichkeit im Zoroastrismus* (2012), which brings together every line and passage regarding Zoroastrian sexual moral and immoral material. To tell the truth I am going slowly through this over-500-page book, but I am already amazed by the monumental philological work undergone and the book's attention to details. In this book, women are given ample attention. No text, it seems, has been left unturned by König. Every piece of law pertaining to women in the entire Zoroastrian corpus is identified (transliterated, transcribed, translated) and given a proper commentary in the Germanic scholastic tradition. König discusses marriage in detail, as well as the idea of lust (see above, Chap. 1.4-5). Lust (MP *warran*) could be good, if we follow the *Avesta* (*Yasna* 53.7), where Ohrmazd pronounces: "The most faithful one will yoke (his) penis at the bottom of the (female) thighs" (König 2010: 24, Humbach's translation). König discusses how women have to follow the direction of their husbands and engage in intercourse following their desires. Women who do not abide are "worthy of death" (MP *marg-arzan*) (König 2010: 97).

Chapter 2 revolves around another interesting subject in Iranian Studies: passive and active anal

intercourse. All the terms used for such practices such as *kun-marzīh* (anal intercourse) and its relationship to *gādan* (neutral term) and *guhdān* (anus), and its remedy, i.e., *khwēdodah* (next-of-kin-marriage) is spelled out. Of course, the first to perform a *kun-marzīh* was Ahreman who performed the most interesting "self-sodomy," hence making it clear that we are in the realm of evil. The book mentions all the mythological traditions associated with *kun-marzīh* and other lustful acts. For example, it seems that the mother Mr. Dahag / Zahhak was the first to engage in prostitution ("*Wadag ī Dahag mād kē-š fradom rōspīgīh kard*" König 2010: 360).

The piece of wisdom that I would like to impart here is that it would be beneficial to read these books to close the gap between fantasy and reality regarding the lives of women in ancient Iran, with textual evidence at hand. All in all, it seems that it was not so glorious and not so terrible, or it had elements of both. Work on Iranian women in antiquity has just begun!

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15

Iranshahr as a Concept and an Ideology

There have been many ideologies at play in Afro-Eurasia for the past centuries and some continue to manifest themselves in the most unsavory manner. The Islamic State (IS), for example, aims to re-establish a caliphate which stretches from Iraq and Syria (Iraq and Sham), to North Africa (Maghreb,

Land of Habasha, and lands of Alkinana), the eastern portion of Europe (Orobpa), all the way to Western China (Greater Khurasan). We shouldn't forget that India is also included in this Islamic State. Due to wars and political events in the past decades, IS's political gravitas has brought together people from all of these aforementioned regions and beyond. How long its leader, Mr. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi can continue this violent ideology which is based on forced conversion, beheadings and his brand of Islamicization, mostly funded by people in the Hijaz, is not clear. However, we now have to grapple with a new form of Islamism. Attempts to give an Islamic response to European and, later, American colonialism in the Muslim world have been made since the nineteenth century by various leading figures, such as Muhamad Abduh and Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani.

Since we are celebrating today the memory of one of the greatest Afghanis in history, the Lion of Panjshir Ahmad Shah Massoud, perhaps the most important leader of the Iranian cultural sphere (I shall explain this below), I thought it would be appropriate to discuss another important ideology that has been simmering for some time. In our forthcoming book, *The World of Late Antique Iran: An Introduction*, Afshar Publishers, Khodadad Rezakhani and I attempt to outline the ideology of *Iranshahr*

(*Iranshahri*). This term should not automatically be associated with the political boundaries of modern Iran. It is a term that originally included a much larger landmass, but more importantly, its cultural spread went beyond its political boundaries. Let me provide you with an example. *Nowruz* (in Persian, New Day), an important Iranian celebration of the changing of seasons is one of the core cultural values of *Iranshahr*. It is today celebrated in such countries as Turkey, the Republic of Azerbijan, Uzbekistan, beside Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikestan, even in parts of Iraq and Syria. This is what I mean by the cultural and ideological importance of *Iranshahr* beyond its political boundaries. I have in the past attempted to delineate the political (Daryaee 2002), cultural and ethnic association with the idea of *Iranshahr* (Daryaee 2005 & 2009), as well as its historical outline (Daryaee 2006 & 2008).

Here is a part of Rezakhani's text and my forthcoming book: (*The Idea of Iranshahr in Eurasian History*)

> In the third century CE, the second Sasanian monarch, Shapur I in his trilingual inscription designated his empire as *Iranshahr*, which can be translated as the "Realm" or "Empire" of the Iranians (Huyse 1999, 22). The empire of Shapur is mentioned to include the following provinces and regions: Pars, Parthia, Khuzistan, Mishan, Assyria, Adiabene, Arabia,

Azarbijan, Armenia, Georgia, Segan, Albania, Balasagan, and in the east, Media, Gurgan, Marv, Heart, Khurasan, Kerman, Sistan, Turan, Makran, Paradene, India, the land of the Kushans up to Peshawar and up to Kashgar, including parts of Sogdiana to the Tashkent mountains and Oman on the other side of the Persian Gulf (Huyse 1999, 22-23). Hence, we can assume that there was an idea of a realm connected to Sasanian rule with its specific designation.

From the beginning to the latter part of Sasanian history, however, the meaning and function of the term fluctuated. Third century Zoroastrian high priest Kerdir delineates the boundaries of *Iranshahr* as being formed by what we know today as Iran, Iraq, parts of the Caucasus, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Gignoux 189-190). However, by the second half of the Sasanian Empire, most probably following the reforms of king Kavad and his son, Khusro I, non-Zoroastrians were also seen as belonging to this realm. The most instructive example is an inscription from a Christian Iranian tomb which reads: "From the dwelling of *Iranshahr*, from the district of Chalagan, from the village of Khisht" (de Blois 1990, 218). By the late Sasanian period, not only were the non-Zoroastrians legally considered to be part of the Iranian world (Middle Persian *zan ī šahr / mard ī šahr* "woman/man of the Empire"), but *Iranshahr* had gained an imperial level that went beyond its own political boundaries. This is best captured by the late Middle Persian geographical text *Provincial Capitals of Iranshahr* (*Šahrestānīhā*

ī Ērāšahr) (Daryaee 2002) and the Sasanian law book *Madīgān ī Hazār Dādestān* (The Book of a Thousand Judgements) (Perikhanian 1997).

One of the reasons why such a gigantic world was able to survive was that the cultural norms and values of the Sasanian Persians went beyond their political boundaries. Thus, anyone conforming to the cultural values of Iranianness (Middle Persian *ērīh*) was considered as part of *Iranshahr*. Thus, what is set out in the Middle Persian texts as an Iranian acquiring *paidea* or culture (Middle Persian *frahang* / Classical Persian *farhang*), at least for certain classes of people included learning about the past in the guise of the Sasanian history of *Iranshahr* which was called the *Khoday-nameh* (*Xwadāy-nāmag*) (Shahbazi, 1990 208-225); to learn certain dispositions such as being measured (Middle Persian *paymān*) (Amouzegar 2004, 32-42), learning to write in various forms and gaining knowledge in house of learning (Middle Persian *frahangestān*), to engage in sports such as the hunting, jousting and, the Iranian sport par excellence, polo. While for mental readiness, chess and backgammon was subscribed (Azarnouche 2013). Certainly, the Persian language appears to have been an important vehicle for such lessons. Othwerise, it is difficult to explain why Persian became the lingua franca of the Iranian

Plateau, parts of Iraq, the Caucasus and Greater Khurasan (Central Asia).

The impact of the idea of *Iranshahr* was felt long after the fall of the Sasanians. With the weakening of the Abbasids, local kingdoms in the area associated with *Iranshahr* and began to claim legitimacy through connection with past Empires, especially the Sasanian Empire and those associated with it. The Tahrid dynasty in Khurasan claimed to be connected to the great Persian hero Rustam; the Saffarid dynasty in Sistan claimed legitimacy through a line of rule stretching from Jamshid to the King of Kings, Khusro II; the Buyids, who took over the Abbasid Caliphate in the tenth century, claimed to be related to the Sasanian king, Bahram Gur; the Samanids in Bukhara and Balkh in the ninth century promoted the Persian language and claimed to be from the lineage of a Sasanian general; The Ziyarids from the Caspian region claimed to be related to one of the primordial Iranian hero-kings, Kay Khusro, while the Bavandids from the same region claimed to be related to another Sasanian general from the time of the Sasanian king Khusro II; the Ghaznavids, who were partly Turkic in origin and ruled from Ghazna and Bust, claimed to have married into the family of Yazdgerd III, the last Sasanian King of Kings; the Afrighids in Khwarzam claimed to be related to the Iranian hero, Siyavash (Bosworth 1979). Despite the coming of Islam, the

Sasanian tradition of *Iranshahr* had lived on.

Even the Qarakhanids, a Turkic dynasty in Western China, promoted Turkic language and culture throughout the thirteen century. They claimed Iranian anti-hero Afrasiyab as their progenitor (Hua 2008, 341). No matter how different they were from the Iranian world (Turan), dynasties and empires of the region could not escape from the power of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* and, later, the *Šāhnāmeh* (Book of Kings), which had set out to define the history of the past of *Iranshahr*. When the Qarakhanids embraced the idea of a mythical Turan, everyone who lived in this region, from Western China to Mesopotamia, accepted and adapted their tradition to this history.

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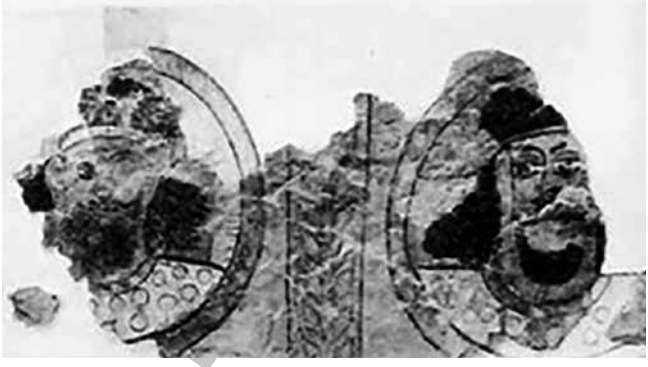
16

Sasanian Frescos



The important book by the late Masoud Azarnoush entitled, *The Sasanian Manor House at Hajiabad, Iran*, seems to have largely gone unnoticed. This is mainly due to the fact that the book was published in Italy and did not get a very good circulation. Azarnoush discovered the manor house at Hajiabad

in the late 1970s and continued the excavations, reaching spectacular results. The excavation of the manor house, in eastern Fars, revealed the existence of contacts with the Kushans. The busts of the nobility which decked the columns of the manor house display an artistic symbiosis between the eastern and western Iranian traditions from the fourth and fifth centuries CE. The manor house has been dated to the time of Shapur II, in the fourth century CE.

Of specific interest are the frescos, of which I am including a specimen. As far as I know, only two other sites display Sasanian frescos: Kuh-e Khwaja, in Sistan, and the city of Ardashir-Khurrah, in Fars. Many of the frescos and the photographs taken at Kuh-e Khwaja were destroyed in Germany during World War II. Only a few survived in the Herzfeld archives at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC (Kawami 1987). Recent excavations at Ardashir-Khurreh unearthed a new group of frescos, but those at Hajiabad are the best preserved.

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17

Ancient Iran Viewed From Above

Irans Erbe in Flugbildern von Georg Gerster is a fabulous book for those interested in Iranian archaeology, urban history and pictographic journeys covering ancient and medieval sites. The book is based on pictures taken by Georg Gerster between 1976 and 1978 supplemented by important articles

on the various aspects of Iran's archaeological and architectural history.

The editors are noteworthy archaeologists, David Stronach of the University of California, Berkeley, and Ali Mousavi, Curator of Ancient Near East at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The book features an introduction by the editors followed by six chapters: T.J. Wilkinson deals with Iran's nature and the plateau's landmass; A. Mousavi and W.M. Sumner survey the early remains of Iranian civilization (5000-2000 BCE); D. Stronach writes on the major remains of the great imperial master builders, the Elamites, the Medes, the Achaemenids and the Parthian (Baumeister der Zeitalter); A. Mousavi covers the monumental architecture of the Islamic period until the 20th century; M. Harverson and E. Beazley explore native Persian architecture (Einheimische Architektur). The book concludes with a postscript by G. Gerster, the photographer. Dietrich Huff's chapter, "Prince, Fortresses and Fire-temples. The Sasanian Empire 224-651 CE" [Fürsten, Festungen und Feuertempel. Das Sassanidische Imperium (224-651 n. chr.)], is a major contribution to the field of Sasanian Studies. In his work, Huff makes a fresh reevaluation of the most important monuments in late antique Iran, adding great bibliographical references.

Another important contribution of the book is the aerial pictures taken by Gerster, some of which depict archaeological sites and monuments that have since been destroyed during the Iran-Iraq War. For example, one can point to the Eivan-e Karkheh photo which provides us with a great overhead view, as well as the rarely seen Qasr-e Shiri site from the air. Also included in the book are three exquisite photos and a diagram of the Sasanian fire-temple at Takht-e Suleyman, which was sacked by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in the seventh century CE.

I very much hope to see the English version of the book so that it could be used by those living in the English-speaking world.

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18

Great Commander and Court Counsellor of the Sasanian Empire

Mehr-Narseh was born in the fourth century CE in the village of Abrovān, in the rural district (rostāq) of Dašt-e Bārin, in the administrative division of Ardašīr-Khorreh of southwestern Fars. He appears to have had noble ancestry, similar to that of Ardašir I, the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, going back

to the Kayanian king Vīštāspa, with the notable difference that the Arsacid king (Kay Ašak) is also mentioned as part of his lineage. Mehr-Narseh is lauded for his sagacity and is credited as a trusted appointee and regent during the reign of Bahrām V (Gōr). He is perhaps one of the earliest trusted officials who took over the function of viceroy when the king was campaigning on the fringes of the Sasanian Empire. His appointment by Yazdgerd I coincides with a period of unrest during which persecutions against Christians broke out after the desecration of a Zoroastrian temple (Daryaee 2012).

The recent booklet by Middle Persian epigraphist Rike Gyselen (2008) previews some of the dignitaries and their seals, specifically the *wuzurg-framadār*, *dar-andarzbed*, *mardbed*, *mehārān-sālār*, *Kirmān-šāh,* and others. She makes the important observation that the reason why the list of dignitaries given in the Šābuhr inscription at the Ka'be-ye Zardošt seems convulated is due to the fact that the sequence of names is not based on ranks but on personal closeness to the King of Kings.

Gyselen's study also focuses on the fifth century *wuzurg-framadār*, Mehr-Narseh and other high dignitaries. She concludes that the seals of the dignitaries can be grouped into three typologies. She also discusses the insignias on the hats of the

dignitaries, along with their jewelry and costume.

This is another excellent work by Gyselen who has made very important contributions to the understanding of Sasanian administrative history.

The legend on Mihr-Narseh's seal reads:

mtrnrs[hy] <ZY> LBA plmt'l
"Mehr-Narseh, Great Commander"

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19

Travels with Afshar, Frye and Kadkani

I would like to share memories of a trip I made to Western Iran in 2004 with some extraordinary individuals. Bahram Afshar and I had come from the US to attend Richard Nelson Frye's ceremony. Frye expressed a desire to leave Tehran. Iraj Afshar who knew Iran like the back of his hand, planned

a memorable journey, one of the most memorable treks I have gone on in my life. On June 30th, the three of us joined by poet and scholar of Persian literature, Dr. Shafi'i-Kadkani, left Tehran. We wanted to see the remains of a Mazdean fire-temple, but we could not find it. We moved toward Delijan, where there was a large fire-temple complex and also a single pillar of another fire-temple nearby.

The next day we moved toward Golpayegan. We stayed at an old carvansarai and visited Mr. Maliki's home. A Pahlavi inscription had been found near his place, in Ribat Gowkad. Other tribal marks made the location very interesting.

During the trip, Frye kept asking my opinion and gave his about various matters regarding Iranian history, language and culture. Afshar joined in and answered what we did not know. Dr. Shafi'i recited his poems at times and told me about his youth in Khurasan.

The next day we traveled toward Khomein, Ali-Gudarz, Azna, Drud to Khorram-abad. At Seymareh, we visited the city of Seymareh (Darreh-Shahr) which fire-temple had been nicely redone, and the old city from late Sasanian – early Islamic period along with a Sasanian wall system (at Tangeh Makhu). We also passed by a Pol-e Dokhtar, probably from the Sasanian period which had been rebuilt in the Islamic

period. There were three bridges: Malavi, Pol-e Dokhtar and Pol-e Gavmishan and then we were at Seymareh.

The remains of the city were impressive along with the stucco work found in the mosque which dated to the late Sasanian – Early Islamic period. You can see the old city of Darreh-Shahr from Google earth. Some of the photos were sent to me by Mr. Tatari, a great photographer from the Syemareh.

We then moved towards Elam and were hosted by a Kurdish family. From there, we moved towards the Iraqi border. About half an hour from the border, we arrive at an interesting site, which looked like a satrap's tomb from the Achaemenid period. Frye had not seen it and was very excited by it.

Then, we moved to Dokkan-e Davud with its monument and then to a recently rebuilt ancient structure.

The next day, we arrived in Kerend. Mr. Ghameshloo and his family made us feel at home and made it a great night. From good food, to reciting poetry, to the history of Kurdish people, we got to taste the life of this great people. The house was on the mountain, overlooking the city.

At night, we slept outside under the moonlight and, in the middle of the night, I could hear the wolves crying out above our heads.

We then returned to Tehran through Kermanshah.

152 We saw much more, but that is for another time to discuss.

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20

Cambyses' army NOT found

I have been following the news about the recent finds in Egypt and the so called "lost Persian army". It has become exceedingly clear that the Castiglioni brothers have hyped up their discovery. Let me give you some reasons why their story is unbelievable:

1. Herodotus reports that the Persian king Cambyses, sent 50,000 soldiers to the Oasis of Siwa to destroy the Oracle of Ammun. We should already be doubtful of the story, as no one in their right mind would send 50,000 soldiers to destroy a place in the middle of the desert.
2. The Achaemenid Persian Empire held Egypt from more than a century. The discovery of two spearheads, a piece of a horse bite and an earring are poor evidence in support of a 50,000-men army. They could belong to any Persian army patrol in the area.
3. The other issue at hand concerns the "archaeologists" themselves. The Castiglioni brothers are known for being more treasure finders, *à la* "Indiana Jones," than professional archaeologists. The Director of the Egyptian Antiquities, Dr. Hawass said that the two brothers were not supposed to be in Egypt conducting excavations of any sort and that he had reported them to the authorities.

Let's not jump to conclusions until the story settles down and some real academic study comes out.

Sorry to dissapoint everyone!

21

A New Approach to the Study of Median History Persian

For Robert Rollinger, for
opening my eyes to the Medes

For a long time, only those who knew Russian or Persian had access to a good account of Median history through Diakonoff's master work, *History of Media* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1956). In 1985, however, Diakonoff himself stated that the field

needed further critical analysis (1985, p. 882). He provided a bibliography which reveals that most of our knowledge about the Medes in the twentieth century came from Greek sources and Assyrian royal annals, no doubt projecting an imperial past onto the Median world.

All of this changed, when, in 2003, G.B. Lanfranchi, M. Roaf, and R. Rollinger published *Continuity of Empire (?): Assyria, Media, Persia*. The book argues that Median society was not organized as an empire but as clusters of settlements. Most articles in the volume (except D. Stronach) pursue this theory in a very convincing manner, offering a thorough reading of Herodotus. One should also read the excellent review of the book published in 2005 by M. Waters.

Whilst G.B. Lanfranchi, M. Roaf, and R. Rollinger's volume offers excellent textual and literary data, a gap in the literature remained regarding Median archaeology. This is no longer the case! Two books on archaeological Median sites have since been published. David Stronach and Michael Roaf's work on Nush-i Jan Tape is a detailed study of "Median" settlement (2007). Their thorough analysis opens new understandings of Median architecture (Assyrians did draw the Median city of Harhar, and the Median fortress of Tikrakka), including religious sites (Chapter 2:

The Central Temple). This precious information can be matched with Herodotus' account and other sources on the religion of the Medes.

But it was really after reading the wonderful volume of Hilary Gopnik and Mitchell Rothaman on Godin Tape that on Godin Tape that I got a more complete sense of the Medes. Both authors have done a wonderful job in bringing to conclusion forty years of research and excavations conducted by the late T. Cuyler Young. If anything, one should read the final chapter, "The Median Citadel of Godin Period II," to get a better picture of the changing nature of the Median world: from *šarru* "king," to *bēl ālani* "city lords," to the later King of Kings of Media in the Greek sources. Only then can one truly grasp the dynamics of the Median world with its cluster of city-states wedged between the Assyrians and the Urartians, until their eventual victory over the Assyrians and their mastery of the Near East. Not only does Hilary Gopnik makes the work of Cuyler Young very clear, she also provides a great sketch of the history and importance of the sites under scrutiny, suggesting a new analytical outline for Median history. It is all-together a wonderful work that makes Median matters clearer.

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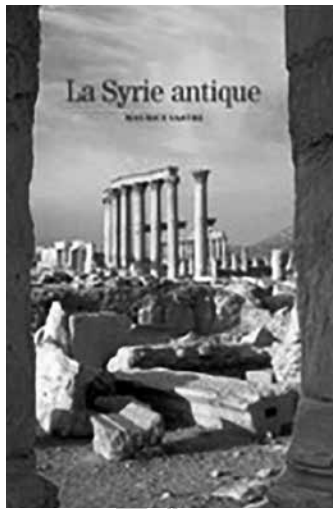
22

Khaled al-Asad, Palmyra: A Note of Remebrance

Five years ago, I spend several months in Paris, giving lectures on Sasanian history at the EHESS-*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*. During my stay, I read a lot of books about antiquity. One of my daily activities was to go to the bookstore and buy Gallimard's pocket sized books on history



of everything and everywhere. My favourite opus in the series is *La Syrie antique* (Galimard, 2002) by Maurice Satre, a professor of ancient history at the University of Tours. As soon as I held the book in my hands, my fingers went straight to the place that scholars like to visit first, the bibliography. The first reference was:

> Asad (Khaled) et Yo (Jean-Baptiste), *Inscriptions de Palmyre*. *Promenades épigraphiques dans la ville antique de Palmyre*, Beyrouth, IFAPO, 2001.

Khaled al-Asad was a Syrian archaeologist and

a world specialist of Palmyra's antique history. Two days ago (August 18, 2015), he was beheaded by ISIS in Plamyra, a city where he was born, where he lived, whose monuments he studied and loved. Palmyra was part of the great cultural centers of the late antique world. Palmyra was an oasis town, an important merchant city on the border of the Iranian and the Roman worlds, in Mesopotamia. Syrians should be proud of its existence today, and Iranians too, for it was part of the great Arsacid world (if we are to follow Dr. Leonardo Gregoratti).

Khaled al-Asad had been warned by Syrian officials of the impending danger coming, but his love for Palmyra did not allow him to forsake it. You see, if you spend enough time with a monument, or better yet, an ancient town, you become so attached to it that it is impossible to leave it when you know that bipeds with a certain ideology of destruction are approaching. Khaled probably knew that he would die, but to die would have been better for him than to see the destruction of Palmyra while he was alive. Khaled died because he refused to give ISIS the location where many of the precious archaeological pieces of Palmyra had been taken for protection.

He died to save Palmyra's heritage. We should not forget. He died so that we would see Palmyra live. I consider him an honored colleague and

 remember and thank him for his courage. Let us hope his city is spared.

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23

Finding the Image of King of Kings Pirouz, Who is From the Race of Gods

Some fifteen years ago, the official seal of the Sasanian King of Kings Pirouz (459-484 CE) came to light, but the picture of the seal was never published. If I am correct, the dealer who had the seal was not willing to have the image published (Judith Lerner knows more about this matter) but

authorized the publication of the inscription around the image, which was read by P. Oktor Skjærvø. According to his reading, an improvement upon to that of Ph. Gignoux's, the legend reads:

"The nycny of the Mazdean Lord … who keeps the land at peace … Kay Pērōz, King of Kings - the fortunate, munificent, and beneficent one, in / by whom the new fortunate of the gods has increased - Ērān and *Non-Ērān, whose seed is from the gods, son of the Mazdean Lord Kay Yazdgerd, King of Kings – the generous and beneficent one, grandson of the Lord Warharān, King of Kings - the beneficent one" (Skjærvø 2003; 282-283).

My only contribution to this reading was the enigmatic nycny, which I read as *nēšān*, in Classical Persian "signet," a meaning that makes sense in this context (Daryaee 2005; 196).

While reviewing Pierfrancesco Callieri's wonderful new work on Sasanian architecture and reliefs published in 2014, I came across the image of king Pirouz. It seems that we now have a sketch of the seal, or an image of the King of Kings. It was here that one encounters the seal's sketch which provides rich details of our famous Pirouz. Yet this coinage does not do justice to the opulence and details of imperial art from the period.

The winged crown of Pirouz, representing

the deity Wahram (god of offensive victory), is beautifully portrayed. One can recall Procopius' narration of the final battle of Pirouz in the East, where the king, before he dies, throws his famous pearl earring to the ground so that it is not found by the enemy. While we may never find Pirouz's pearl earring, we can admire it through the seal of the great King of Kings.

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The Arabs Who Worshipped Ahura Mazda: Zoroastrianism in Pre-Islamic Arabia

As archaeological activity is growing in the Gulf, so is our knowledge about the various religious traditions of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. People living in Arabia, Bahrain and Yemen knew of Iranian religious traditions. In example, during the Byzantine-Sasanian war, non-Muslim Meccans

told Muhammad that the Persians would defeat the Muslims as they had already defeated the "People of the Book," i.e. the Christians from Byzantium (Arab. *ahl al-kitāb min ar-Rūm*). Tabarī, the Muslim historian from Amol, also states that Muhammad was not very fond of the fact that the Zoroastrians (Arab. *al-majūs*, lit.'*magi*') had won their battle against the "People of the Book" (Arab. *ahl al-kitāb*). In response, an Islamic revelation, which came to be known as the Sūraar-Rūm (Qur'ān, Sūra XXX), predicted the defeat of Sasanian King of Kings, Khosrow II (590-628 CE) and the victory of the Emperor Heraclius (610-641 CE) (Tabarī, 1999, 324). Thus, the Qur'ān is an important source for gauging early Muslim views on Iranian-Byzantine politics (Bowersock 2012, 62-63).

Zoroastrianism was an important religion on the Arabian Peninsula. There were Zoroastrians in the pre-Islamic period in Arabia, possibly among the tribes of Tamim in Yemen, and we do know that Zoroastrians were also living in Bahrain and Oman (Friedmann 2003, 69). There appears to have been a fire-temple in Bahrain that was later taken over by the Muslims in Hira (Morony 1986, 1110-1111). Not only did Arabs living in the Gulf have extensive contacts with Zoroastrianism, but certain tribes were interested in Zoroastrianism. Evidence

shows that Arab tribes in the Hejaz had gravitated around Mazdakite Zoroastrianism during the time of Kobād I (488-496 and 498-531 CE), in the early 6th century (Kister1968, 143-144). With the Muslim conquest, Arab Zoroastrians converted to Islam and the fire-temples were either forsaken or destroyed. Just recently graves identified as "Sasanian," from the fifth century or so, were found at Sharjah in the UAE (Kutterer et. al., 2015, 43-54). Thus, if graves of Persians are found on the Arabian Peninsula, Zoroastrian structures can also be found there. Further archaeological activity is necessary to develop knowledge regarding the nature of Arabian Zoroastrianism, especially the architectural quality of the temples built in the Arabian Peninsula.

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25

Qajar Image of Ancient Iran

For Ali Ansari

It is common belief that Iranians only became interested in their past after the Pahlavi Dynasty came to power, in the 20th century. This is completely wrong!

Claims on an ancient Iranian heritage started under Qajars rule (1785-1925), in the nineteenth

century (Ansari 2012, 19), when European scholars reintroduced Achaemenid history to Iran. In a period of self-discovery and nationalism, this reinstatement completely changed the vision that the Qajars had of themselves and of their nation's past. Intellectuals campaigned to identify Iran's glories and monuments, to place the dynasty within its historical and cultural context.

Traditional figures, such as Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh (1812-1878) and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (1826-1870), became the masters of ancient Iran's glorification and anti-Islamic propaganda. At the time when Akhundzadeh and Kermani were writing, the idea of an Indo-European/ Aryan racial identity was *en vogue* in Europe. Their ultra-nationalism and anti-Islamic attitudes clearly borrowed from European intellectual writing (Ansari, 13-14; Zia-Ebrahimi 2011, 454). They advocated the return to ancient Iranian ideas and traditions, while embracing European values and civilization (Amanat 2012, 329). Naturally, many of their ideas resonated with Persian intellectuals and still make an impact on the population today (Zia-Ebrahimi, 446).

Akhundzadeh and Kermani's work, however, was not the only response by Iranians rediscovering their ancient past.

The approach of Qajar statesmen such as

E'temad al-Saltaneh and Forsat al-Dowleh Shirazi was much sober and denoted a genuine scholarly interest in ancient Persia. E'temad al-Saltaneh was educated in Europe. Whilst in Paris, he studied French and gained access to sources on Persia's ancient history and geography. He used European ideology to manufacture a Persianate outlook on his nation's past. Forsat studied cuneiforms with Henry Dunlop, the representative of the Dutch commercial enterprise in Shiraz, as well as ancient languages, including Greek (Kashef 1999, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/forsat-al-dawla). E'temad al-Saltaneh and Forsat al-Dowleh Shirazi studied and acknowledgement the greatness of Darius and the palace of Persepolis, but still combined the legendary Kayanid history, the staple of Persian taste since Late Antiquity.

The Achaemenid Empire was made only known to the Qajars and only in a limited manner (Amanat 1997, 432), but it still was important for the court and the king who could think differently about their nation's past, but also how they would be situated within the narrative of Iran's history. One should remember that from the very first Qajar king, Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar, the twenty-four-pound jeweled crown was called the "Kayani crown," (Amant, 100), referring to the ancient Iranian kingly tradition.

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26

Non-Violence and Peaceful Co-Existence in the Zoroastrian Scriptures

For Ramin Jahanbegloo
who understands the real
meaning of non-violence

I would like to start with a personal note relating to the topic at hand. During my time as a graduate student of Vedic Sanskrit and Gathic Avestan at UCLA, scholars in the field were divided regarding the translation of the most ancient religious poetry

of the Iranians, i.e. the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra. Of course, in an academic setting, one had to mull over most of the scholarly publications, discuss grammatical issues and review the various opinions. However, as my mentor distinguished Professor Hanns-Peter Schmidt like to say, at some point, a scholar must decide for her/himself.

Since 1995, I have tried to translate the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra on my own. The more I study the hymns, the more I am impressed with the concepts and ideas developed by this man who lived somewhere in the eastern Iranian world, three thousand years ago.

The *Gathas*, as I shall explain below, are different from most other hymns/texts written in antiquity. What can the *Gathas* bring forth that is different from other religious traditions? How is it relevant to us leaving in the twenty-first century?

To answer this question, I would like to start with *Yasna* 29 (*Xšmāvaia.gəš.urvā Hāiti*) as an example. This *Yasna* is "the most mystifying text of the *Gathas*" (Schwartz, 2003, 195). Its singularity comes from the message it contains, as well as the main protagonist it portrays, *gəuš urvān* (Gathic Avestan), a term that signifies "the soul of the cow." In 1968, George Cameron disputed this meaning, suggesting that *gəuš urvān* was to be understood as a metaphor for humanity, in a similar fashion to the

"flock" in Christianity (Cameron 1968, 261-281). In 1975, Hanns-Peter Schmidt, in his inaugural lectures at the University of Leiden, reconnected with the literal meaning of the term. He argued that *gəuš urvān* represented (Gathic Avestan *Daēna*) the "Good Vision." To explain this idea, I would like to borrow Martin Schwartz's translation of *gəuš urvān* as the "conscience" of humanity (Schwartz, 2003, 221).

The name given to this *Yasna* 29 is "Cow's Lamentation," which, if we take as a metaphor, means the lamentation of human conscience. Here, *gəuš urvān* complains (29.1): "For whom did you (Lord) shape me? Who made me?"

Kahmāi mā ϑβarōzdūm kə mā tašat

The reason *gəuš urvān* is questioning the Lord in relation to the violence (*aešma*) and its cognates, the fury and the aggression, happening in the world. One can say that the conscience of humanity is complaining about all the violence and cruelty that is current in the world. Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) proclaims that Zarathushtra was chosen to lead humanity amidst this turbulent world. The crux of the matter is this. What should one do when the world in engaged in a nasty and violent state? This is an issue that concerns any period in history. What

should one do in this hectic and violent world? In Zarathushtra's time, some religious traditions revolved around violence to animals, killing and stealing.

The answer by the Wise Lord and through Zarathushtra is rather in line with the great religions of the east, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. I believe Zarathushtra's message should be placed within this Indo-Iranian tradition to be fully understood. But what does Buddhism and Zoroastrianism have at their core that Zarathushtra is voicing? In Hinduism, and, by extension, in Buddhism and Jainism there is an inner concept which is most sacred, known as *Ahimsa* in Sanskrit. *Ahimsa* means non-violence to living beings, that is utmost respect for living things. This means a peaceful existence where there is a lack of violence (Schmidt 1968, 625-655).

The same concept also exists in Zoroastrianism. In the *Gathas*, Zarathushtra mentions the word for "peace" *rāma* and "traquilty" *hušoit* more than all mental state and states of being. That, I believe has been less of a topic of discussion. Let us see what Zarathushtra says in this regard:

47.3:
ahiiā mainiiəuš tuuəm ahī tā spəntō
yə ahmāi gam rāniio.skərəitīm həm.tašat
at hōi vāstrāi rāmā.dā ārmaitīm

"You (Lord) are the Holy Father of this Spirit,
Who has, Lord, created for us the cow, the source of good fortune,
And also right-mindedness (*Armaiti*), establishing peace (*rāmā*) for her pasture"

Again, here in *Yasna* 47.3, we come across the cow and pasture which are metaphors for the conscience and the world (probably), which means to be in a state of peace through the work of the Lord and right-mindedness.

48.11:
kadā mazdā aša māt ārmaitiš
jimat xšāϑra hušəitiš vāstrauuaitī
kōi drəguuō-dəbīš xrūrāiš rāmam dāntē

"when, O Lord, will right-mindedness come with truth (*aša*),
Arrive with power, provided with good dwelling and pasture (*vastra*),
Who are those that will give peace (*rāmā*) from the bloodthirsty wicked"

In *Yasna* 29.10 we find the clearest manifestation of peace on this earth:

yūzəm aēibiiō ahurā aogō dātā ašā xšaϑrəmcā
auuat vohū manaŋhā yā hušəitīš rāmamcā dāt

"Lord, grant to these people (humans) strength and

the rule of truth and of good thinking, by means of which one shall create peace and tranquility."

This good vision or conscience is not solely a mental state, but a physical on as well. As Stanley Insler observes, to rule according to (*aša*) "truth/ order" and "good thinking" / "good mind" (*vohu manah*) in peace and tranquility is the opposite of what is going on, that is cruelty, fury and violence" (Insler, 1975, 31). This is what Zarathushtra is opposed to and what the Soul of the Cow laments for.

In the face of violence, Zarathushtra preaches peace, in the face of chaos, Zarathushtra preaches tranquility. If we were to bring these ideas to the modern period, I don't see much difference with what Gandhi or, for that matter, Martin Luther King preached (just a couple of months ago, Ramin Jahanbegloo voiced a similar sentiment in his lectures at UC Irvine).

Some may say that this is very nice and that all religions have similar ideas (more or less). But one can counter that these tenets have actually been put into practice in the history of Zoroastrians. At least for the past 1,000 years, Zoroastrian communities have been some of the most peaceful and benevolent communities in the world. Be it in Yazd and Kerman, or Mumbai and Gujrat or Westminster, they have kept this tradition of non-violence and tranquility. Since I

am not a Zoroastrian, I can make such a statement as a scholar and historian of the tradition, not based on any emotional affinity, but rather on logic. But for those who follow Zoroastrianism, from time to time, it is good to be told about their own tradition from the outside, to highlight some of the important ideas which at times may get lost in the details and rituals of life.

I would like to end this short essay by exploring another approach. How about if we don't follow the general scholarly view and don't consider the "soul of the cow" as a metaphor? What if we take things literally? As I mentioned in the beginning of the talk, Zarathushtra said that each person should make up their own mind. What would then the lamentation of the cow mean for us?

We know that, in the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian society, the cow was held to be very precious. After all, a good example is the ancient Germanic society, where Wergild "the worth of a human being" was based on the cost of a cow. That shows how important the bovine was in antiquity. Cattle raiding in a pastoral society, such as that existing during Zarathustra's time an its Indic counter part, was a real threat to */Aša/* order. After all, the world of the ancient Iranians at the time was described as *pasuš vīrəng*, "men and cattle" (Lincoln 1993, 152).

"Perspective" is of utmost importance here. If

one is a vegetarian and/or someone who believes in non-violence to living beings (animals), if for that person cattle represents the entirety of animal life, then, violence is voiced by the cow, or, rather the conscious of the cow, the most peaceful of the animals. Another important factor to consider is that people ate very little meat in antiquity. They did it during a communal meal, when a portion of meat was given to the god(s).

Thus, one can interpret *Yasna* 29 as one of the earliest manifestos on non-violence to animal life, where Zarathushtra is protesting the excessive killing of cows and the irrational slaughter of bovine. This makes perfect sense! In Zoroastrianism, along with other Indo-European societies, the bovine is sacred. In Old Iranian *gow-spenta* means "holy cow/bovine."

Whatever interpretation we choose to follow, we see a strong respect for animal life and the world, which should be a model for Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians alike today. Lots of things can be learnt from the moral texts of antiquity. One should read them today.

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27

The Ancient Iranian and Indo-European Wolfman and War Band

During antiquity, young bands of warriors (German, *Männerbund*) were abundant: The Proto-Indo-European **kor-yo-s*; the Irish cuire "troop;" the Gothic *harjis* "army," the Lithuanian *kãria* "army," and the Old Persian *kāra* "army."

In the case of Iran, the earliest sign of warlord

bands dates to the end of the Bronze Age. They are mentioned in the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra, as well as other parts of the *Avesta*, specifically the *Yašts*. Proto-Indo-European *H2ner- supplies such ideas as "hero" and compares the Avestan adjective *nairo-mana, "heroic manly minded," and Luvian annari-* "strength." Of course, in the *Gathas*, these warrior bands were demonized by Zarathushtra as those "who ravages the pastures and raises a club against the truthful man (*hvō mā nā ... yascā vāstrā vīvāpat / yascā vadarə vōiždat ašāunē*). *Nar-* in Iranian also conveys the sense of man, hero, and warrior (Bailey 1953, 103-116). Now it is to the credit of S. Wikander that we first understood the young band of warriors in India and Iran (Wikander 1938. For a recent review of the Indo-Iranian material see Hasenfratz 1982, 150-155).

These men, who in India and Iran were known as *Marya*/*Mairyō*, "villain," were associated with wolves (Persian *mērak*) < Proto-Indo-European **mor-yo-s* "pertaining to death." Zarathushtra turned these young bands of warriors into a daevic characters, and they are portrayed as such in the *Avesta*. They were attached to such militaristic deities as Mithra, but especially *Vərəθraγna* (Wikander 1938, 34) (compare Latin *Nerio-* who is a consort of the Roman military god, Mars and the both Iranian deities appearing in *Mihr Yašt* 10.70-10.71 as a militaristic raging force).

From all evidence, it appears that these young bands of warriors went into battle with full rage. The idea of fury (Avestan *aēšəma*/*aēšma*) is well attested in the *Avesta*. While Zarathuštra condemned *aēšma* and those who were possessed of it, its depiction provides us with a perspective into the world of non-Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian Iranian warrior bands and society. This rage (*aēšma*) is usually portrayed a "wolfish rage," as the wolf was also demonized in the Zoroastrian tradition. This "wolfish rage" has parallels in the Indo-European language, where one can posit a Proto-Indo-European *wlkwo- for the word "wolf" (Lincoln, 1992, 131).

In Darius' Naqš-e Rustam inscription, a group of Scythian tribes is mentioned as "*saka haumavarka*" (*haoma* + *varka*), which may mean "those who become wolves thorough the drinking of haoma." (Wikander, 1938, 64). This wolfish rage appears to be the nature of certain groups of people, who are mentioned as *vəhrkō bizangrō*, "two-footed wolves," in *Yasna* 9.18. These Scythians, like some other Iranian young warrior bands, were attached to the cult of Haoma. They believed that by taking Haoma they became as fierce and cunning as the wolf. Rage (*aēšma*) is personified as the demon of Wrath in the Zoroastrian tradition, but it keeps its ancient weapon associated with the *Mannerbünd*, carrying the epithet of *xrvi.dru-* (Middle Persian *xurdruš*),

"of the bloody club," or "of the bloody mace." It should be noted that *aēšma* not only means "wrath," and is associated with this Zoroastrian demon, but it also means "madness," or going crazy as the Berserkers in Nordic civilization. In Indo-European societies, these young warriors had the reputation to be unstoppable when facing their opponents. The best-known wolf-men are the Germanic úlfhednar, "those of the wolf's head," who dressed and acted as wolves, and the *Cúchulainn* in Ireland, which took on the ferocity of a wolf or hound (McCone 1987, 121-122, 137, 146-147).

The word to designate the military organization of the early Indo-Europeans was **teuta*- "People," corresponding with Oscan *touto*, Old Irish *tuath*, Latvian *tauta*, Old High German *diota*, Hittite *tuzzi*-, and compare Persian *tōdeh* (Mallory 1991, 127). They were led by the king, **rēg*- (draw out in a straight line); Sanskrit *raj*; Latin *rex*, Old Irish *ri*. As many scholars have stated, this term does not exist in Iranian. Then, the question begs as to whom may have lead the Iranian tribes (Avestan *zantu*-)? The Avestan word *Kauui*- has been brought forward as a probability, even if it most likely represents a religious figure who also assumed political power, while the "secular king" **rēg*- was forgotten. Otherwise, we may see this office as developing in the post **rēg*- period.

In the *Avesta*, the *Kauuis* are pictured as having dominion over the seven parts of earth, as well as men, cattle and beasts. In Vedic, ūrj, "strength," appears in 73 forms. There is an unnoticed word which gives us the forgotten **rēg*- in Iranian and that may be compared to Avestan *vərə zuuant*, "strong," which, in turn, may relate to Vedic *ūrj* (Wackernagel 1896, 25). While Humbach (1991, 172) takes *varəzī* as loc. Sg. of *varəz*-, "freshness," (*Yasna* 45.9), Insler (1975, 260) understands *varəzi* as a loc. of a root noun *varəz*- "effectiveness," which matches well with Vedic *ūrj*. H. Scharfe (1985, 543-548) had already drawn our attention to the fact Sanskrit *rajan*- is a feminine noun indicating "strength," and "power." According to him, the highest level of leadership would have been that of the leader of the clan in the Indo-European period, Proto-Indo-European **weik-potis*, "master of the clan," (Avestan) *vispaitis*, Lithuanian *viespats*.

We have more interesting information regarding the weapons carried by the early Iranians and the Indo-Europeans. The Indo-Europeans were familiar with metallurgy. Metal was melted and used to make weapons, PIE**ayes*; Latin *aes*, Gothic *aiz*, Old Norse *eir*; English *ore*, Vedic áyas-, and (Avestan) *ayah*- (Mallory 1989, 121). In the *Avesta*, we have such terms as *xvaēnā ayaŋhā*, "glowing metal," and *ayaŋhā xšustā*, "molten metal" (Lincoln 1992, 156).

There are also a series of correspondences for weapons in Indo-European languages which helps us to gain knowledge of the armaments of the early Iranians. For example, the Proto-Indo-European word **nsi*-; Sanskrit *asis* and Latin *ensis*, "Sword," was either a short dagger or a sword (a thrusting weapon). The last important evidence comes from the word for chariot, Vedic *rátha*-, Avestan *raθa*-, Old Persian (*u-ratha*-), "good chariots" (Humbach 1977, 49) and proper names from that of the Mitanni king *Tuš-ratta*; (For Indo-European terms in the Near East, especially in the kingdom of Mitanni, see Mayrhofer 1959, 78-80), where Latin *rota*, Old Irish *roth*, Old High German *rad*, Lithuanian *rātas*, mean "wheel." This "semantic specialization" developing only in the Indo-Iranian world, suggests that chariots were being used by the warrior nobility (Lincoln 1992, 157).

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28

Tolerance and Empire: The Case of Achaemenid Persia

For Bruce Lincoln who can read
the deep structures of ancient
Iranian civilization

The accomplishments of the Achaemenid Empire have outlasted the life of the Empire itself. Throughout history, any confrontation between the so-called "West" and the rest of the world has been likened to the Greco-Persian Wars, incidentally by means of which most Western readers know about or of the

Achaemenids. As mentioned before, the Achaemenid administrative system was an inspiration for most subsequent powers, including the Roman Empire. A tradition that is remarkably continued by the will of the modern USA, which refers to Rome as its self-appointed political ancestor.

But the Achaemenid Empire was a world-empire, and, most importantly a world-system, for other reasons. Its administrative system, after all, served a purpose, and that purpose was to facilitate the everyday business of its inhabitants. In the face of history's long parade of kings and commanders and their wars and conquests, we tend to forget that, although history is populated by strong men and occasionally strong women, real historical territories were populated by everyday men and women whose names we do not know. These people sowed seeds, made horse-shoes, built houses, took their cattle to the pasture, crafted kitchen ware, and occasionally even traded goods between villages, towns, provinces, and sometimes countries. They paid taxes that ensured their safety, gave them the right to move freely between places, to reside in their chosen domains, to receive state support in their enterprises, in the most basic sense, which means that it gave them the right to earn their living.

For this class of people, the Achaemenid system represented and provided several things.

In its remarkable uniformity, the empire offered consistency and security which allowed for level production. Whoever was paying taxes was entitled to plan for profit-making, eventually causing a form of specialization which naturally resulted in higher production and an improvement of living standards. In being tolerant and flexibile, the empire allowed for localization, leaving the Aegean or Phoenician merchant to roam the seas and look for profits where they were, the nomadic pastoralist to raise its cattle and the farmer to utilize all resources at hands. This emphasis on local economic autonomy was reflected in the monetary system. In regions with more monetary exchanges, state-issued currencies (the Darik and the Siglos, based on Babylonian and Lydian precedents) were supplemented by local coins (the so-called "satrapal issues"). At the same time, the stability of the empire was ensured through a strong centralized administration which controlled taxation, as well as the distribution of resources. This organization survived the fall of the empire and became engrained in the region.

The same lasting effect can be observed in Achaemenid cultural policies. Most remarkable was the Old Persian word *vispazanānām*, "Multi-Cultural," which was used to describe the empire in an inscription related to Darius, at Naqš-e Rostam (Schmitt 2000, 25, 29). The Achaemenid

administration was famous for adopting and cultivating the Aramaic language and script as a standard means of communication for the empire. Old Persian, the mother tongue of the Great Kings themselves, was consistently used for inscribing tablets in Behistun and Susa and in the heartland of the empire in Persis. In Mesopotamia, well into the Arsacid era, Akkadian endured as a business language, while Phoenician and Egyptian remained the common administrative languages in their respective territories. Herodotus, the Ionian Greek writing-father of history, was a subject of the Achaemenid Empire, while the language of the Persepolis Tablets, payment receipts to the laborers who built the Achaemenid palace-complex, was Elamite.

The idea of local diversity within uniformity extended to cultural matters, as well as religion. The Mazda-worshipping Great King never forced his Babylonian subjects to pray Ahuramazdā. Following the tradition of Cyrus, who declared Marduk to be the god who prompted him to conquer Babylon, Darius and his successors respected the existence of local gods. They even gave state support to the rebuilding and repair of places of worship, such as the Temple in Jerusalem or the sanctuaries in Egypt. Religion, as an important determinant of people's identity, was included in the administrative policies

of the Achaemenids.

Something must be said in regard to Achaemenid world-view. In Old Persian, the term *fraša*, "excellent" or "perfect," was used by Darius to describe his palace complex at Susa (DSfa, DSf 56; DSo 4; DSs1 corporeal and DNb2 cosmic sense). This word carries an important religious and spiritual connotation within the Iranian world that helps to illuminate the Achaemenid conception of their function in the world. This term first appears in the *Gāthās* of Zarathustra and was used to define the time after the apocalypse and the end of the world, when all evil withers away and the world becomes perfect as it was once was. For Darius, his palace and the Persian *pari-daiza-* (Greek παράδεισος, perhaps Artaxerxes II's **p-r-i-d-i-d-a-m* / **pari-daidām*) or walled gardens was the corporeal representation of this perfection on earth. In a similar way, the king attempted to provide a heaven on earth through the establishment of an empire (the Achaemenid Empire) that would protect and nourish his people (Lecoq 1990, 209-213; Lincoln 2007, 64-65/74-75).

From a political point of view, the Achaemenid Empire embodied the idea of justice and order. The Old Persian term used for this concept is *arta*, a word that carries a cosmic notion of order amidst chaos. The king's law was established to do justice to Ahuramazdā's benevolent creation, where there

would be "good horses, good men" and no "(enemy) army, nor crop failure nor Falsehood." (Schmitt 2000, 58). The King of Kings was also one who administered justice and his (Old Persian) *dātā-* "law" was held supreme. In fact, the Persian monarchy supported an all-encompassing law, which did not interfere with the local traditions (Briant 1999, 1135). The King maintained the democratic institutions of the Greek inhabited cities on the Ionian coast, as well as the traditions of other Satrapies. This is what is meant by a sense of justice and order such as established in the Achaemenid Empire.

The success of the Achaemenid emperors, from Cyrus to Artaxerxes I - and despite all their mistakes, even that of their successors – owed much to a well-oiled administrative system, which distinguished the empire as a truly innovative imperial system. The territory of the Achaemenids, as mentioned in Darius' Behistun inscription, followed a centralized administrative and economic system within a pluri-religious and cultural empire, and they thrived under it. It was the success of this system that made it a lasting force in its territories and guaranteed its continuation in further political and cultural spheres of the region.

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29

Inscription for the Gods: The Behistun Inscription and Other Old Persian Texts

For Martin Schwartz, who once
upon a time let me take Old Persian

Despite the large size of the Achaemenid Empire and its durability (from the sixth to the fourth century BCE), very few documents in Old Persian have been found. The most obvious reason for this scarcity is due to the empire's conception of governance. The Persians ruled over three hydraulic civilizations,

Egypt, Mesopotamia and India in a relatively tolerant manner. They allowed the people of the empire to worship their own deities, to continue their own traditions, to use their own language, to produce their own coinage and to conduct their lives with little interference from Persian overlords. From India to Eastern Europe to Northeast Africa, there was little need for the Old Persian language.

The lack of sources in Old Perisan can also be explained by prevalence of Aramaic within the Empire and its adoption as official language for imperial correspondence. In 2001, some 48 new Aramaic documents belonging to the chancery of the Achaemenids in Bactria/Balkh were found in Afghanistan. These documents shed new light new light on Persian administration (Naveh & Shaked 2012). We also have Aramaic ritual texts from the ceremonial capital, Persepolis, and from Elephantine from Egypt (Bowmen 1970). Thus, from Central Asia, to Iran, to Africa, Aramaic was used widely.

Elamite was also used in the heart of the Persian Empire for administrative activity. Elam and its culture loomed large over the early Persian world and its civilization. The Oriental Institute in Chicago, alone, contains some 30,000 tablets and fragments of fortification tablets (Stolper https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/persepolis-

fortification-archive). Due to Iran's US trial for bombing Israel and supporting the Hamas, the US government considered auctioning the tablets to pay for the plaintifs (Daryaee 2009 / http://www.huffingtonpost.com/touraj-daryaee/auctioning-ancient-irania_b_378962.html). To keep records of the tablets before their sale, the Oriental Institute photographed and catalogued them all in a record-breaking time. It was through this process that archaeologists and epigraphists found the first administrative tablet in Old Persian (Stolper & Tavernier 2007 https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/persepolis-fortification-archive). One may suspect that if there is one, more will come, and our knowledge of Old Persian will increase.

Except for a few inscritptions found on objects and on seals, the largest concentration of Old Persian language comes from the Achaemenid royal inscriptions. These inscriptions are not only important for the study of Achaemenid religion, politics and world views, but also for understanding the history of the Persian language and literary tradition.

Let us look at Old Persian in more detail. The Old Persian language uses a simplified cuneiform script. It is a syllabic script (36 signs), but it also has few logograms (5) or ideograms. Most important for us is the content of Old Persian texts, which offers a

glimpse into the Old Persian/Old Iranian literature. Darius the Great, in the early sixth century BCE, tells us that the content of the Behistun inscription was read to him aloud (DB V 88-91), so he must have dictated it. While poetic at time, the content of these inscriptions is mainly royal. The basic premise of these inscriptions is that doing Right and upholding the Truth (*Arta*) is held dear, while the king follows the laws of Zoroastrianism and its super-deity, Ahuramazda. Ruling through Truth, it is believed, will consequently bring a good cycle, a good season and a good harvest. Because the Achaemenids were upholders of Right/Truth/Order (*Arta*), the Persian Empire was call *uvasp umarti* "good people and good horses." The king was a protector of the entire empire against *hainaya*, *dušiyara*, *drauga* "enemy, bad year (famine), and Lie."

What were the boundaries of the region where good people and good horses dwelled? Darius gives the imperial boundaries in a diagonal way, where Persis/Fars falls at the center of the axis. The limits go from Sogdiana to Ethiopia, and from Sind to Sardis. Darius also discusses helping the weak, treating them with justice, and protecting them from the strong. He emphasizes truthfulness, mild manner, and fortitude in ruling and tells others to follow his example as a good fighter, horseman, bowman, and spearman.

Darius' Res Gestae

The Behistun inscription of Darius is the longest cuneiform inscription known today. According to late ancient historian Arnoldo Mamogliano, this document can be considered as the first accurate biography or self-portrait of the ancient world (Momigliano 1990: Chapter I). The inscription is trilingual, in Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. The monument is on a mountain in Kermanshah region on the caravan route between Media and Mesopotamia in Northwastern Iran. The name Behistun goes back to Old Persian *Bagastāna*- "place of the god(s)." Diodorus renders the name as Βαγίστανον which shows the place was holy for the Persians since immemorial times. The monument is cut into rock, some 20 meters above the ground. The relief itself is huge. The cuneiform inscription takes a lot of space (18 meters wide and 7 meters high). The inscription was first copied and studied in 1847 by Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, an advisor stationed in the region. Rawlinson's brother was an important scholar and translator of Herodotus' history, a reference title today. It is ironic that the only two historical documents available about the political history of sixth-century-Achaemenid Iran can be found in the Behistun inscription and Herodotus' Histories.

Content of the Inscription

The inscription may be divided into several sections: 1) the King's ancestral lineage; 2) the events leading to Darius's accession to the throne; 3) the nine revolts in the empire, those who were pretenders and the 19 battles fought; 4) Falsehood as the reason of rebellion and warning against Falsehood; 5) the King's deeds and his love of Truth; 6) blessings and curses (very Mesopotamian!); 7) Ahura Mazda's assistance; 8) the six helpers of Darius; 9) and the introduction of the writing system in Aryan (*ariyā*).

The Behistun inscription is important because its content is aristocratic and theological. It depicts Darius as having physical and moral superiority over others. The binary opposition between the followers of Truth/Order and Lie/Chaos, which goes back to the Zoroastrian tradition. The inscription also suggests that Persian society was centered around the King and that loyalty was of paramount importance. The inscription may also be considered as an epic rendition of historical events, as it contains verses. It appears that the Elamite version was written first, followed by the Babylonian and then the Old Persian translation. Darius discusses his lineage, the lands that he ruled, how he came to power, the 9 revolts that took place, which he or his agents suppressed, his reordering of the empire,

and finally his religious zeal. More than seventy times, Darius mentions that he accomplished what he did with the aid of Ahuramazda. He instructs the people to disseminate his story. In setting himself alongside Ahuramazda and the Truth/Order, he placed his enemies on the side of Angra Mainu (Evil Spirit) and the Lie/Chaos. These ideas, along with the name of Darius' father (Wištaspā), suggest the Achaemenids' deep devotion to the Zoroastrian tradition. Darius, in some of the earliest poetic lines of the Old Persian language, revered Ahuramazda for creating good men and good horses, the earth and the sky. Of course, the critics would ask if Mazda-worship is the same as Zoroastrianism.

The Imagery of Paradise on Earth

The word Paradise derives from Old Persian **Paradiza*-, which really meant a walled off garden where the Persian King of Kings lived. Thus, an imagery of Paradise on earth was very much a vision of these kings (Lincoln 2012, 5-6). Another imagery of beauty, paradise and perfection exists. The Old Persian inscriptions regarding Darius' son, Xerxes, focuses on his building projects in Persepolis. Xerxes tells the story of how he was selected from among the many sons of Darius, and how he carried the building activities of his father.

208 He, as well as his father, calls the building that they have completed with the Old Persian term *Fraša-*. There are various views as to the exact meaning of the word, from "perfect" to "wondrous" to "brilliant." While, in Old Persian, *Fraša-* is used for a physical building, in the *Avesta*, the sacred text of the Zoroastrians, the term, Avestan *Frəša-* "perfect,", is an adjective use to describe the world after the Judgment, when it returns to the beginning of creation. If we take the word to mean, we can appreciate the ideological and religious beliefs, as well as the aesthetics, governing the Persians during this period. The palace was a symbol of the beauty and perfection of the world, at its beginning and its end. Achaemenid Persians saw themselves as intermediaries between these two opposite poles of history. The Persepolis palace was a representation of the "perfect" state of creation (Lincoln 2014).

In the time of Xerxes, in the fifth century BCE, another topic of religious interest appeared in the Old Persian inscriptions. The most famous of all is the Daivadana Inscriptions. This inscription details Xerxes'endeavor to eliminate the worship of false gods (*daiva ayadiya*). Xerxes states he removed sanctuaries used to worship "false gods." This claim goes against early Achaemenid policy, which respected any form of worship. Can we conclude that Achaemenid Persian policy was changing? We

cannot be certain of this. In this instance, religion might be used as a cover for political tensions, because the people mentioned were Iranians.

By the time of Artaxerxes II, in the fourth century BCE, other deities had appeared: Anahita and Mithra. They were invoked as a protection for the King against evil. Thus, here we have the mention of other ancient Iranian deities, Mithra and Anahita, which along with Ahuramazda made up the triad deities worshipped in the ancient Iranian empires.

In conclusion, by looking at Old Persian inscriptions one can gain an insight into the psyche and world-view of Achaemenid Persians. Because they have been seen through Greek textual evidence, the Achaemenids have often been misunderstood. Old Persian texts counter this negative view. They depict a society focused on order, a prerequisite for human prosperity and happiness.

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30

The Moment When the Gods Became One! The Pahlavi Papyri from Qom from the Early Islamic Period

For Iraj Mochiri in Rue Mouffetard and his coins

Some documents have made a significant and profound impact on the way we view the development of religions in the pre-modern world. The Pahlavi documents recently found in the central Iranian Plateau are such documents. Before their

discovery, scholarly work on life in the Iranian plateau during the seventh and eight centuries was based on accounts from contemporaneous Muslim victors (Tabari, Bal'ami, Hamza al-Isfahni and Beladuri) or records gathered in later periods. To possess documentation on a moment of Iranian history, called by late history Abd al-Hossein Zarrinkub the "Two Centuries of Silence," (7th-8th CE), is truly amazing. Dieter Weber, who has been working on the Berkeley Pahlavi archive from the region of Qom, has just published an article (Weber 2014) regarding this important period in the history of the Iranian Plateau, thus rectifying some of our misconceptions about the early Islamic centuries in Iran.

This discovery allows us to better understand the formulaic introduction used in some Pahlavi texts from late antique and early medieval Zoroastrian times. As it is the case for many Middle Persian texts, the opening line (later inserted by copyists) reads:

pad nām ī yazdān

If we read the benediction correctly, it should be translated as: "In the name of the Gods." This reading brings the focus of the benediction not only on Ohrmazd, the Zoroastrian super-deity, but on all

the Gods. Some have argued against such reading and suggest instead that the word *yazdān* should be understood as referring to Ohrmazd as a singular deity. We can now say, without any hesitation, that *yazdān* refers to the Gods (plural) and not God (singular). In his reading of the coinage of ʻAbd al-ʼAzīz b. ʻAbdallāh (691-692 CE), the governor of Sistan, Malek Iradj Mochiri (1981) had already put forward the idea of a singular form for God. The reverse of the coinage in Middle Persian reads:

> *yazd-ew bē oy, any yazad nest, mahmat paygāmbar ī yazad*
>
> "There is one God, without any other, (and) Muhammad is the prophet of God"

Here, it is clear that *yazad* or *yazd* is in the singular and that the benediction is the Middle Persian translation of:

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

Thus, the early Iranian Muslims were using Middle Persian, as well as Arabic. The Umayyads were attempting to make clear their religious tradition using Iranian tradition. The Pahlavi documents from Qom, number in the hundreds and

give us very important and interesting information. These documents (Berk. 188 and 197) begin with a similar benediction (Berk 187):

> *pad nām ī yazd ī kardakkar*
>
> "In the name of god who (is) powerful" (translation by Weber 2014: 181).

Here, of course, we are privy to another Islamic benediction which points us to a moment in the history of Iran when Islam had become the main religion, and even Middle Perisan was still in use. It was a time when *yazdān*, the Gods, had become one, i.e., *yazad*. The parchment makes reference to mosques (Middle Persian) *mazgitān*, which, according to Weber, refers to the old mosque near Qom (Masjid Atigh), in Mamaghān (Weber 2014: 181). Thus, we can now safely say that, while in the Zoroastrian tradition *yazdān* was used as the usual benediction among the Muslim Iranians, in Middle Persian, *yazad* was used for their God.

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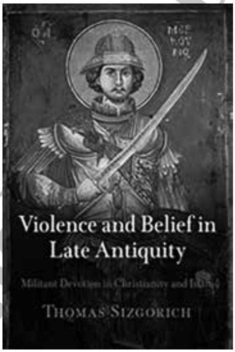
Violence and the End of Late Antiquity

In rememberance of my friend, colleague and neighbor Tom Sizgorich, who did not sleep at night



My colleague Thomas Sizgorich passed away this past Thursday (January 27th, 2011), due to a stroke. Despite his young age, 40 years-old, he was a most interesting scholar in the field of late antiquity, making sense of the history of the Mediterranean and the Near Eastern world through questions I had

never thought about. Tom and I were planning to make UC Irvine a major center for the study of late antiquity in the US. He would teach late Roman history, Islamic history, Arabic and Syriac. I would teach Sasanian history, Medieval Iran, Middle Persian and Persian. This dream ended abruptly when I received a call on Thursday, saying that had to rush to hospital to say my goodbyes. Tom is gone but his excellent work remains. During the course of his brief academic career, he published a book and several very important articles, which I would like to touch upon in this short note.

His book entitled: *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), covers the idea of militant piety as it applied to both Christian and Muslim communities and how communal identities were formed through such narratives. He uses John of Chrysostom as an example of Christians creating communal boundaries against others. Chrysostom's dictums made sure that Christians watch over each other, as Ahmad Ibn Hanbal did for the Muslims. Sizgorich studies how identities were produced or constructed in late antiquity among these two religious communities and how religious and spiritual violence played out among them. He starts his analysis with ascetic Christians who emerged

as representatives of violence and defenders of communal boundaries. He then looks as the early Islamic world and the concept of *Jihād* and Islamic ascetic militancy.

In the post Constantine period, some Christian figures created communal boundaries for the community which then put them at odds with other religious groups. These Christians used a variety of traditions or narratives not solely based on the Bible, but also on local and pagan Roman traditions. Emperor Theodosius attempted to curb the violence by these Christian ascetics in his empire. The violence was against non-Christians and went against imperial views of even the emperor Theodosius, but they were espoused by zealot monks in Syria and the Levant. Sizgorich concludes that the violence and fear was imposed not because of intolerance, but rather in defense against the erosion of communal boundaries.

Sizgorich then turns to narrative regarding militant piety in the early Islamic tradition. He concludes that these narratives brought with them a deadly surplus, namely violence. The Khawārij (militant pious Muslims) are an example of militant piety that stands out in the early Islamic history. Sizgorich believes that the actions of the Khawārij fit into the larger antique pattern of martyrdom. Violence was against both

non-Muslims and Muslims who did not behave according to the early Islamic narratives, in which these pious figures believed. He suggests both Christian and Muslim narratives were feeding from one another's tradition. Consequently, fear and violence were called upon by militant ascetics to curb interactions between communities and keep them "pure".

Tom's study made me think about the use of violence in late antique Iran, specifically in the Mazdean tradition. Religious interactions, conversions to Christianity and Islam brought anxiety within the community. The other problem facing Mazdaism in both Sasanian and post-Sasanian periods was heresy. In Middle Persian, heresy has a plethora terminology (*ahlomōγīh, dušwurrōyišnīh, judristagīh, zandīgīh* and *agdēnīh*), Mazdak being the chief *zandīg* who, in the Pahlavi texts, is often remembered as the "chief heretic" (*ahlomōγān ahlomōγ*).

All of this brings to mind the perceived danger of the erosion of communal boundaries for Mazdaism which suffered from internal and external assaults. During the Sasanian period, the state attempted to maintain communal boundaries and resorted to violence when one communal group infringed on the rights of the other. Later, Pahlavi Rivayats also emphasized the protection

of communal boundaries through violence, using the dictum that if anyone leaves, Mazdaism is worthy of death (*marg-arzan*).

خدا بیامرزدش

Some of Sizgorich articles include:

‘“Do Prophets Come with a Sword?’ Conquest, Empire and Historical Narrative in the Early Islamic World,” *American Historical Review* 112.4 (2007): 993-1015.

‘“Not Easily Were Stones Joined by the Strongest Bonds Pulled Asunder’: Religious Violence and Imperial Order in the Later Roman World,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15.1 (2007): 75-101.

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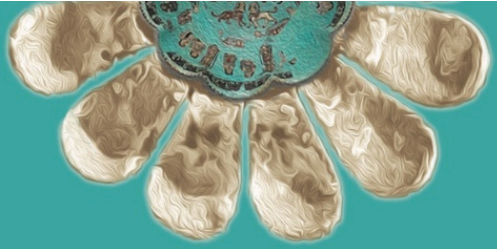

With very few exceptions, scholars who specialize in ancient history rarely address modern concerns. Professor Touraj Daryaee, the Maseeh Chair in Persian Studies & Culture and the Director of the Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture at the University of California at Irvine has done so. In this interesting collection of essays, he has ventured out to make a number of technical historical issues both accessible to the general reader and relevant to our turbulent time. This engaging volume is a highly recommended addition to our knowledge of the past and how it reflects our present concerns.

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