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*xšnaoθrahe ahurahe mazdā*

Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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## Methodological and Historiographical Notes on the ‘Paradise’ as an Iranian Royal Institution.

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The purpose of this short essay is to draw attention to important continuities and ruptures in what has often been portrayed as one of the most enduring institutions of ancient Iranian kingship, that is, the ‘paradise.’ A large and extremely learned literature has grown up, especially around the Achaemenid paradise, which we need not review again here exhaustively.<sup>1</sup> Here, I would like to draw attention to moments where assumptions inherited from one discipline, be it philology, history or archaeology, have been brought to bear on another, and in so doing, have shaped our understanding of ancient phenomena in ways that do not cohere with the extant evidence.

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<sup>1</sup>- C. Tuplin’s thorough study, which collects and evaluates classical literary evidence in relation to the Persian material provides the most comprehensive synthesis of the literary evidence up to its date of publication. Christopher Tuplin, “The Parks and Gardens of the Achaemenid Empire,” in *Achaemenid Studies*, ed. C. Tuplin, 80-131, *Historia Einzelschriften* 99 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1996). For a recent historiographical and archaeological review, see Rémy Boucharlat. 2016. “À propos de parayadām et paradis perse: perplexité de l’archéologue et perspectives,” in *Des contrées aveſtiques à Mahabad, via Bisotun. Etudes offertes en hommage à Pierre Lecoq*, edited by C. Redard, 61-80 (Neuchâtel: Recherches et Publications, 2016). For the ideological role of the paradise within the Achaemenid Empire, see Bruce Linclon, *Happiness for Mankind: Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project*. *Acta Iranica* 53. Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2012), 3-19.

## I. Paradise Palaces

The word *paradaidā-* appears in the Old Persian version of Artaxerxes II's four-line, trilingual inscription from Susa (A<sup>2</sup>Sd), which was engraved on at least eight square column bases from the porticos of two structures in his palace near the Šāhur River. The inscription contains many irregular spellings, which have sometimes been interpreted as orthographic errors. Such errors could have resulted from the work of a less skilled engraver, however, many of the departures from expected spelling (like using a long ā for a short 'a' to indicate the masculine accusative singular) likely reflect changes in the Old Persian language as it moved towards Middle Persian.<sup>2</sup> Extrapolated from exceptional descriptions of paradises, the conviction that 'paradises' were one and the same as a hunting park or garden even led to faulty interpretations and emendations of Artaxerxes II's *paradaidā-* inscriptions. For example, privileging the view given by some (though not all) classical authors like Xenophon, P. Lecoq understood the Achaemenid paradise to be exclusively a hunting park and thus could not accept that the word *paradaidā-* actually referred to the very garden palace whose column bases preserved the inscription itself. Before suggesting an alternative, he emended the reading and interpretation of the aforementioned inscription, stating "[...]il ne paraît pas possible de transformer un édifice en parc à gibier."<sup>3</sup>

Scholarship has made great strides in understanding the nature of the Achaemenid institution. Quite different than a hunting park, the Achaemenid 'paradise' (OPers. *paradaidā-* [*\*paradaida-*], Elamite *partetaš*; cf. Av. *pairi.daēza-*) was a specially delimited space that encouraged and, in some instances, showcased agricultural, animal and human productivity. In special cases palaces, formal gardens and even hunting enclosures were associated with paradises, but, it must be stressed, such features were neither constant nor necessary constituents of paradises any more than paradises were exclusively found with them. Paradises could be free-standing installations, located adjacent to other paradises or associated with another feature, such as a treasury, fortress or palace. Although they are more prominent in the literary sources and modern scholarship, paradises that contained, or were associated with, palaces and ornamental gardens should be thought of as prestigious exceptions rather than the rule in the Achaemenid period. When considering the full sweep of the evidence, it is more accurate to characterize paradises as powerful- even necessary- symbolic adjuncts to royal palaces, country manor houses or hunting estates rather than vice-versa.<sup>4</sup> Even paradises that were a part of royal or aristocratic residences showcased practical, productive features. This was certainly the case at our best-

2- Rüdiger Schmitt, *Wörterbuch der altpersischen Königsinschriften* (Weisbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2014), 225; idem, *Beiträge zu altpersischen Inschriften* (Weisbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1999), 59-118, esp. 80-85. Antonio Panaino, "No Room for the 'Paradise'? About Old Persian <pa-ra-da-ya-da-a-ma >," in *Persepolis and its settlements: territorial system and ideology in the Achaemenid State*, eds. G.P. Basello and A.V. Rossi, 139-54 (Naples: Università degli studi di Napoli «L'Orientale», 2012). Chlodwig Werba, "mavāred-rā na-bāyad ziyād kard be joz-e ehtiyāj. (Indo-)Iranische Rekonstrukte als textkritisches Korrektiv in der Altiranistik," in *Iranistik in Europa – gestern, heute, morgen*, eds. H. Eichner et al., 261 – 306 SBWien 739 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), 282n103.

3- Pierre Lecoq, "Paradis en vieux-perse?" in *Contribution à l'histoire de l'Iran, Mélanges offerts à Jean Perrot*, ed. F. Vallat, 209-11 (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations (ERC), 1990).

4- Tuplin, "Parks and Gardens," 95-96 and 111-14.

known Achaemenid palace associated with a paradise: Pasargadae.<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, W. Henkelman's frequent translation of *partetaš* in the Persepolis archival tablets as 'plantation' is the most accurate general translation available, which can be modified according to what other features were associated with it, be it palace, garden, storehouse or stockyard.<sup>6</sup> Artaxerxes II's paradise palace is exceptional in the same way that Pasargadae is.

The inscribed column bases recovered from the Šāhur Palace provide a nuanced view of how such institutions- either workaday or palatial- participated in Achaemenid royal ideology and the special role that the palatial 'paradises' played.<sup>7</sup> The Šāhur Palace's inscribed bases were found in the vicinity of the southern portico of Building II.<sup>8</sup> Others were thought to have come from the western portico of Building I. Thus all originated from the highly visible, focal points of both structures. Both the Elamite and Babylonian versions 'translate' *hadiš* with the Old Persian word *tacara*, a different Old Persian word for 'palace'.<sup>9</sup> In the Old Persian version of the inscription Artaxerxes II uses a different Persian term for palace, *hadiš*, and includes an added descriptor stated that he created, "this palace, which is a living paradise" (*ima hadiš taya jivadi paradaidām*).<sup>10</sup> The Elamite and Babylonian versions of the inscription simply state, "I built this palace."<sup>11</sup> In addition, the Elamite and Babylonian versions either ignore the phrase *jivadi paradaidā-* or consider *tazara/tašara* as a simplified translation for the entire phrase, *ima hadiš taya jivadi paradaidām*. Here, it is possible we are dealing with a proper name or institution, which did not need to be- or could not be- translated because of its heavy Mazdaean connotations.<sup>12</sup> In all other occurrences of the word in the royal inscriptions, the royal author programmatically deploys it in opposition to *mṛta-* 'dead,' suggesting a specific usage growing from Achaemenid royal ideology.<sup>13</sup> The walls of the paradise separate the living from the dead.

## II. What did the Arsacids and Sasanians call their 'Paradises?'

The other problem is that of continuity. The Macedonians initially used the palaces of the Achaemenids and these provided them both a template and departure point. In narratives of Alexander's

5- Rémy Boucharlat, "Gardens and Parks at Pasargadae: Two Paradises?" in *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich/Herodotus and the Persian Empire*, eds. R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg and R. Bichler, 457-74 (Weisbaden: CLeO 3, 2011). Overview of the site: David Stronach and Hilary Gopnik, "Pasargadae," *Encyclopaedia Iranica online* (2009): www.iranica.com

6- Wouter Henkelman, *The Other Gods Who Are: Studies in Elamite-Iranian Acculturation Based on the Persepolis Fortification Texts*. Achaemenid History 14 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2008), 394.

7- R. Boucharlat and A. Labrousse, "Le palais d'Artaxerxès II sur la rive droite du Chaour à Suse," *DAFI* 10 (1979): 21-136, 53. Rémy Boucharlat, "Other Works of Darius and His Successors," in *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia*, ed. J. Perrot, trans. G. Collon, 359-408 (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 394-95.

8- Boucharlat, "Other Works," 391-92.

9- F.H. Weissbach, "Achämenidisches," *ZDMG* 91 (1937): 643-51, p. 651. Werba, "(Indo-)Iranische Rekonstrukte," 282n103.

10- Schmitt, *Inschrift*, 195.

11- Schmitt, *Beiträge*, 82. Werba, "(Indo-)Iranische Rekonstrukte," 282n103.

12- Clarisse Herrenschildt, "Le rire de Zarathushtra l'iranien," in *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne*, ed. M.-L. Desclos, 497-511 (Grenoble: J. Millon, 2000), 506-8. Schmitt, *Beiträge*, 82.

13- Schmitt *Wörterbuch*, 197.

conquest and the wars of the Diadochoi, *paradeisoi* appear as a normal part of the economic and cultural landscape of the former Persian Empire. These are visible both as freestanding plantations and, occasionally, as a component of a palace or the extended royal holdings in the environs of a royal residence city. Toponyms and scattered mentions indicate that some of the old practical, work-a-day paradises not connected to a palace still functioned too. In Hellenistic Western Asia, what are referred to as *paradeisoi* are associated primarily with royal residences, and the term as deployed in later literature is most closely associated with royal palaces or estates. While imperially sponsored agricultural production, estates and storage depots were important in the Seleukid Empire, the ideological apparatus of the Achaemenid imperial project that once animating them and provided a larger conceptual unity no longer was intact. In fact, it survives as a technical term in Egypt much longer than it did in Iran. Ptolemaic tax registers indicate that a number of Achaemenid agricultural paradises survived in Egypt even if they were no longer associated with a memory of the Persian legacy.

The Parthian and Sasanian kings established numerous country estates where the kings kept royal hunting preserves, developed grand plantations and kept treasuries. The Middle Iranian words by which these institutions are most often referred in indigenous ancient sources is *das̄t̄gird* ('property,' 'estate'), though scholarship often refers to them as 'paradises,' using the same name as the Achaemenid material or Greek descriptions.<sup>14</sup> The complete continuity between the two institutions that this nomenclature implies is by no means securely continuously documented, least of all linguistically. As far as I can tell (and I would welcome learning of more evidence if I have overlooked something), the word appears to have dropped out of use as both a technical and general term for a royal garden or estate by the Sasanian period. To my knowledge no Middle Iranian version of the word, such as *\*pardīz*, *\*pardiz*, *\*pālīz*, or *pardēz*, appears in any Sasanian inscription yet discovered or late Pahlavi text to refer to a royal estate or garden.<sup>15</sup> The Zoroastrian and Manichaean literature that refers to gardens use a different term, even when speaking of a heavenly garden: *bōyestān* or *boštān*. Needless to say, in the Middle Iranian linguistic realm, this term was not applied to a Zoroastrian or Manichaean otherworldly Paradise. It never appears in the place of Avestan-derived terminology: *garodmān* or *wahišt*. Linguistically speaking at least, Classical Armenian *partēz* reflects Parthian *pardēz*. Armenian retained several archaic words rooted in Old Persian, for which different terms arose in Sasanian Middle Persian. It is tantalizing to think that this instead reflects the impact of a wider usage of the Parthian word for this institution, but, more significantly, this term is never used when referring to the hunting enclosures as maintained by the Orontid, Artaxiad or Arsacid kings.<sup>16</sup> When it is used, which is only seldom, however, it translates 'garden' (Gr. *kēpos*) but not a heavenly 'paradise' in a Judeo-Christian sense, for which term the Iranian loanword, *draxt* was employed.<sup>17</sup>

14- E.g. Jan Bremmer, "Paradise: From Persia, via Greece, into the *Septuagint*." In *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, edited by G.P. Luttikhuisen, 1–20 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

15- Anders Hultgård, "Das Paradies: vom Park des Perserkönigs zum Ort der Seligen." In *La cité de Dieu/Die Stadt Gottes*, edited by M. Hengel, S. Mittmann, and A.M. Schweme, 1–44 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 21.

16- Hultgård, "Das Paradies," 22. Heinrich Hubschman, *Armenische Grammatik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1897), no. 537, p. 229; Hrach K. Martirosyan, *Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Inherited Lexicon* (Leiden: Brill: 2010), 698.

17- Hultgård, "Das Paradies," 21.

Tantalizingly, an ostrakon from the archives in Nisa provides precious evidence of the continuity of the word “paradise,” *pardēz*, in Parthian. Using one of the common bureaucratic formulae found in the archive, it records the contents of an amphora brought to Nisa from an estate: “In this amphora, from an *uzbari* (vineyard), which is in Sēgabič, Pardēz by name, (is) wine: 17 mari...”<sup>18</sup> The majority of the archive records payments from royal estates. The technical terms for royal estates that paid their incomes in kind were *uzbari* (*ʿwzbry*, cf. OPers. \**udbariya-*, Av. \**uz-barya-*) and *patbāžik* (*ptbzyk* < OPers. \**patibāži-*) estates.<sup>19</sup> In the majority of the cases in the Nisa documents, they are vineyards that paid the king’s share in wine, though in Mesopotamia such crown lands along the royal canals grew grain.<sup>20</sup> However in this ostrakon it is the proper name of an estate, not a common bureaucratic designator as in the Persepolis archives. The significance of this is not entirely clear, but given that the Nisa archive does not systematically designate all or a certain class of the estates as a *pardēz*, as did the Achaemenid material, it suggests that the word was no longer was a common term for a royal estate in the Parthian period. Thus in the Nisa archive, *Pardēz* is the proper name of an *uzbari-* estate, placing it firmly in the continuum of agricultural estates versus hunting or palatial traditions. The early Armenian usage seems to reflect this too. The word survives in New Persian *pālēz* as the word for a domestic vegetable garden. Without further indigenous primary source evidence, it seems to me, at this point, that any Roman authors who used the term in describing a *daštgir* likely did so independent of common Sasanian usage and applied it as a learned antiquarian term. That they were tempted to do so, however, is not surprising given that the Sasanian estates held much of the same ideological charge and fulfilled many of the same logistical purposes as the Achaemenid estates. The processes by which Iranian aristocratic culture preserved and cultivated these royal practices is a problem for another work.<sup>21</sup>

18- BHWTʾZNH MN KRMʾ [2] ʿw(zbry) ZYB sygbyš (3) prdyz QRY Hm X(I) III (I)II Dieter Weber, “III.2. Parthische Texte,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches. Textsammlung mit Übersetzungen und Kommentaren*, 3 vols., eds. U. Hackl, B. Jacobs and D. Weber, 2: 492-588 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), no. 741, p. 541.

19- Weber, “Parthische Texte,” 496-7.

20- Muhammad A. Dandamayev, *Iranians in Babylonia*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies 6 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1992), 32-33.

21- To be dealt with more fully in Matthew P. Canepa, *The Iranian Expanse: Transforming Royal Identity through Architecture, Landscape, and the Built Environment, 550 BCE–642 CE* (Berkeley: University of California Press [forthcoming])

