xšnaōrāhē ahurēhē mazdā
Detail from above the entrance of Tehran’s fire temple, 1286/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad
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Reviews


Review Article


Special Issue

1. Firoze M. Kotwal: An Overview of the History and Development of the Parsi Priesthood in India up to the 19th Century
In a recent article I tried to demonstrate how to make sense of what Herodotus’ reports on the actions of the Achaemenid king of kings, Xerxes at the Hellespont and its structural relation to the story of the primordial king, Yima (Daryaee 2016: 4-9). The idea was that if we have a deep knowledge of the Iranian lore and tradition, one can decipher foreign sources for the Iranian world in a better way and one can distinguish between fact and fiction (Daryaee 2012: 28-43). The present essay continues the topic under the general theme of what I call the “Yima Paradigm,” and attempt to provide a possible answer as to why the Achaemenid ceremonial capital Persepolis, (Greek) περσέπολις / (Persian) Pārsa- / (Elamite) Ba-ir-ša (Mousavi 2012: 9), was to be called Taxt-e Jamšīd (Yima’s Throne). Naming places and buildings, and associating them with prophets, kings or heroes is an interesting tradition in the Iranian world, which can provide clues as to the historical continuity and ruptures in historical memory. Cyrus the Great’s tomb (Mousavi 2013: 31), which later came to be known as the tomb of Solomon’s mother (Ghab-e mā dar-e Soleymān), or Pasargadae’s tower (Zendan-e Solyeman), or the cluster of Achaemenid and Sasanian rock reliefs facing the city of Istakhr as Painting or Imprint of Ruştam (Naqsh-e Ruştam), or the Cube of Zoroaštîr (Ka’be-ye Zarduşt) for the rectangular structure opposite the Achaemenid tombs and Sasanian rock reliefs are examples of such naming convention.
None of these names we know are or should be associated with these structures, but people in their own time named them based on their world-view, at a time when real place-names were forgotten. Persepolis, as it is known, was the magnificent Achaemenid ceremonial capital which was built mainly during the time of Darius the Great and his son Xerxes, in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. We know, based on an inscription from the fourth century CE that the early Sasanians called the place Sad-Stūn, “One Hundred Columns” (Daryae 200: 107-114; Mousavi 2009: 82). This in itself is significant in that in the Elamite tablets we also come across this name (i-ia-an “columned hall”), which gives us a very interesting continuity in naming. But by the time we come across Classical Persian texts, the place is known as Jamšid’s Throne, or the “Shining Yima’s Throne,” i.e., Taxt-e Jamšid. How did Persepolis then become known as Taxt-e Jamšid? What was the reasoning for which this great palace came to be associated with Yima / Jamšid in late antiquity? Two scholars, I. Gershevich and A. Sh. Shahbazi have given important details and reasonings for the naming of Persepolis as Taxt-e Jamšid. While both make sound suggestions, and differ in their interpretation, I would like to provide yet another clue for the naming of Persepolis as Taxt-e Jamšid.

By the late Sasanian period Persepolis had been already called Taxt-e Jamšid. This inference is based on a references in the Šāhnāmeh of Ferdowsi which mentions Persepolis as Taxt-e Jamšid, when Zahhāk is on the march towards the palace (Shahbazi 1977: 202).

Furthermore, in the Persian epic, the location of Zahhāk’s nightmare at the palace is mentioned to be “Sad Sotūn” (One Hundred Columned) Hall (Shahbazi 1977: 202), which matches our early Sasanian reference to the place: 1

Shahbazi’s supposition is that since the Šāhnāmeh or the Book of Kings is ultimately based on the Sasanian Xwadāy-nāmag, the palace must have also been known as Taxt-e Jamšid. Of course there are some four centuries in-between the composition of the two texts and one must be cautious, but the idea is acceptable. Shahbazi suggests that the naming of Persepolis as Taxt-e Jamšid is because the “sculptures” recalled the story of Jamšid’s legendary throne, where the delegates came to pay homage, while the king is lifted into the sky (Shahbazi 1977: 204). This is based on the belief that already the story of Jamšid’s ascent into the heavens on his throne (taxt) was popular and hence the identification as such. I differ with Shahbazi on this point and would like to posit another suggestion. I. Gershevitch on the other hand suggests that long after the destruction of Persepolis, the building the terrace looked like a mound and was likened to Jam’s throne, i.e., Mount Jamagān. According to him, the Sāruka “palace” or “cave” was then believed to have been built below it (Gershevitch: 1974 67-68).

In the Middle Persian texts *War ī Jamkard* (Yima-made enclosure) achieves an interesting and eschatological association, where at the end of time the Sōšyāns will appear. Not only Persepolis’ religious function alters, but its location also shifts from the Eašt to the province of Persis. In the Zoroastrian encyclopedic book, the *Bundahišn* (XVII.220-221 / Pakzad XXXIII.36) it is stated that after the terrible winter which destroys the world:

\[
\text{\textit{pas abāz-ārāyišnih ī mardōm ud gōspand az war ī jam-kard bawēd ī ēn kār pad nihuhtagīh kard ēštēd}} \quad (\text{Pakzad 2005: 367})
\]

“Then the rearranging of people and cattle will take place from the Yima-made enclosure, that for this function has been built in concealment”

In a sense by associating the location of the savior with that of Persepolis, brings the Achaemenid palace into a sacred landscape. This association is clearly provided in the *Bundahišn* (Chapter XIV.199-200), where the location of “Yima-made enclosure,” in given in such a manner:

\[
\text{\textit{gūr ud war ī jam-kard mayān ī pārs pad sarwāg. ēdōn gōwēnd kū jam-kard azēr ī kōf ī jamagān}} \quad (\text{Pakzad 2005: 343-344})
\]

Gōr and Yima-made-enclosure is in the middle of Pārs by Sarwāg. It is said that the Yima-made (enclosure) is under the Jamāgān Mountain.

As Gershevitch had noted, already in the late Sasanian period it was believed that Jamšīd’s Wara was in Pars / Fars and that it was under Mt. Jamakān. In the early Islamic geographical works Mt. Jamakān was also placed in Pars and so it appears that the Kuh-e Rahmat was identified with Yima or Jamšīd’s wara and Persepolis next to it was seen as Jamšīd’s throne (1974: 68).

Thus, if Persepolis was associated with Yima and his throne, why may have this association been given to the monument? Shahbazi suggests the story of Yima’s ascension to the heavens and the reliefs as a possible answer. I have another suggestion, a sort of anthropological observation. I had the privilege of staying over at Persepolis from 4:00am to the opening of the site at 10:00am all by myself. It is these moments that one lives for and never forgets the rest of his or her life. I had much time to sit and to admire the monument, but also think about its purpose and function, especially the Apādānā, when I began to think why those in the past called this place Taxt-e Jamšhīd or “Yima’s” or “Jamshid’s Throne.” Let us look at the textual material for Jamšhīd or Yima in the Zoroastrian tradition. Our most important and detail tradition is found in the *Wīdēwdād* (Anti-Demonic-Law), specifically Fragard 2.

According to this tradition, Ahura Mazda tells Yima to prosper and enlarge the world and protect it. With a golden goad and a golden whip he ruled and enlarged the world again and again, three times (Skjærvø 2012 : Panaino 2013: 80), but the world had become filled with humans and animals. Then Ahura Mazda tells Yima who is renowned in *Airyanem Vaējō* (Expanse / Stretch of the Aryans / Iranians) (E. Benvenište 1933-1935: 265-274 : MacKenzie 1998), that a winter will come, a winter that is hard,
crushing upon the earth. The snow will fill the earth to the highest mountains. Ahura Mazda instructs Yima to build what the Widēwdād calls a Wara (Sanskrit Valā “fortress” Panaino 2012: 114, ft. 10) and (Widēwdād II.2.25.B):

\[u-ś \text{ pad āgenēn tōhamg abar bare az pahān ud ṭōrān mardōmān sagān wayān ud ātaxš-iz suxr sōzag}\]

Bring together there the seeds of animals, small and large and men, dogs, birds, and blazing red fires (Moazami 2015: 58-59)

Those familiar with the Noah’s ark tradition, but more importantly the Giglamesh tradition at once see the resemblance. But what is the relation between Widēwdād Fragard 2 with the Persepolis? One only has to walk before the Apādānā and put aside our knowledge of the Achaemenids and the association with them. That is if we erase in our minds of what we know about the štructure and forget the Achaemenids as part of the Sasanian political and cultural program, we can certainly have another view of what the reliefs are portraying. What one sees is readily the paring (Middle Persian dōgānag) of rams, other animals and people with plants beautiful object in the material world, being taken to a place (Fig. 1).

These scenes along with the story of Fragard II of the Widēwdād, where the collection of the best in the world placed into the Wara is related, match well. One should remember that at the time a huge stone monument, half buried, with scenes of things being loaded or placed would have been seen in line with the Yima-made enclosure story. I believe it was assumed that Persepolis was the throne of Yima in late antiquity, because it was thought that the reliefs of the Widēwdād tradition was carved on it and below was the place of Yima, hence the naming, Taxt-e Jamšid for the ceremonial palace of Persepolis.
Fig. 1 Freeze from Persepolis
Bibliography


