

## Artaxerxes' 'paradise'

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Much has been written about the Persian concept and construction of 'paradise'.<sup>1</sup> In this short article I shall not discuss the ideology of 'paradise'. Rather, I want to investigate, linguistically, the actual term used by Artaxerxes II. There have been, over the years, various interpretations of the phonetic value of the Old Persian signs which comprise the word. These interpretations have led to etymologies which alter the perspective of how a 'paradise' was conceived. I shall examine these interpretations, then offer a novel approach which delves into dialect issues concerning the relationship of the language of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions to Middle Persian.

It has long been recognized that the language of the Achaemenid inscriptions represents an archaic stage of Old Persian, perhaps similar to the English of the King James Bible, deliberately itself archaic or old-fashioned that sets a tone of ancient, hallowed authority. Telltale signs that Old Persian was in transition to early forms of Middle Persian first appear decisively in the inscriptions of Xerxes. Thus, in the "*Daivadāna*" inscription we find correct *niyaštāya*' beside *nīštāya*'. By the time of Artaxerxes II (404-359) the wording of the inscriptions generally imitates the language of the Darius and Xerxes inscriptions; and when an innovation is required the language deteriorates in respect to the older models. This can be seen readily

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1- For a summary of the literature see Bruce Lincoln *'Happiness for Mankind': Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project*, Leuven: Peeters, 2012, p. 9, fn15.

in the inscription which is the focus of this article. The first part of A<sup>2</sup>Sd from Susa begins with the short proclamation: “I am Artaxerxes, the great king, king of the earth, son of Darius (II 423-404), an Achaemenid” and then continues as follows:

*ḡāti artaxšāça XŠ wašnā AMhā imām hadiš taya jīwadi prdyd'm adam akunawām AM 'nht uta m'ḡr mām pātu hacā wispā gaštā uta-mai kartam*

“Artaxerxes the king declares: by the will of Ahuramazdā this palace, which even as I live<sup>2</sup>, (as) a *prdyd'*, I built. May Ahuramazdā, (as well as) Anāhitā and Miḡra, protect me from all evil, and what was built by me.”

Although *hadīš* ‘palace’ is recognized as a neuter noun, *ima' hadīš* in Xerxes, Persepolis c, here we have a switch to the feminine *imām hadīš*. Further, the relative pronoun *taya'* is a fossilized case form of the neuter singular and functions like the izafe of Middle Persian without regard for case or gender.

Another peculiarity is the spelling of the goddess' name. The name only appears first in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II always alongside of Miḡra. At A<sup>2</sup>Sa and A<sup>2</sup>Ha we find the old formula “by the will of Ahuramazdā” to which have been appended *'nht uta m'ḡr*, a grammatical context where one would have expected the genitive case. Instead, these are fossilized forms showing that the creator of the inscription was at a loss to provide proper case endings.

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In a contribution of the *Daštūr Kotwal Festschrift*<sup>3</sup> I discussed the goddess' name in some detail. The Greek reflex of the name, Ἀναῖτις shows that it was taken from an Iranian \**Anāhitiš* nom. sg. of a feminine stem in *-ti-*. Although in Avestan the nom. sg. always ends in short *a* rather than the expected long *ā*, this may be dismissed as merely the regular shortening of etymological final *ā* of the Vulgate text, were it not for the fact that in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II one finds the spelling *'nht* without the final alef which in Old Persian orthography indicates a long final *ā*. This is in keeping with the general defective state of Artaxerxes' language. I assume that there was one Iranian goddess \**Anāhiti* whose early Middle Persian form was \**Anāhit*, a popular name which was hyperOld Iranianized as *Anāhitā*, rather than posit with Mary Boyce a Western Iranian \**Anāhiti* whom the Greeks came to know, as well as an Eastern Iranian \**Anāhitā* whom we find in the Avesta and the inscriptions of the Zoroastrian greatking. To be explicit, I believe that the Avestan *Anāhitā* was introduced into the canon at a time subsequent to the original name having passed into a Middle Persian form. I must make one further observation. The Pahlavi Zoroastrian tradition, which is not wholly dependent upon the Avesta, knows the names *'nhyt* / *Anāhīd* / ‘Venus’ and *Ardwīsūr*; but always keeps the two separate. All of this shows, I think, that the Avestan goddess of Yašt 5 is a late combination of two (at the least) originally distinct goddesses *Anāhiti* and *Ardwī Sūrā*. Whether the latter were originally epithets of a \**Harahwatī* I do not know; but at least \**Anāhiti* had nothing to do with IndoAryan *Sarasvatī*,

2- The word *jīwd'y* has been interpreted as *jīwa-di* ‘living verily’; that is *jīwa* + the emphatic particle (*Av -zi*, OInd. *-hī*), corresponding to *Av. jwō zī* “so lang er lebt” (Vend 5.36f). However, what exactly Artaxerxes meant is a matter of some conjecture.

3- J. K. Choksy & J. Dubeansky, edit. *Gifts ti a Magus, Indo-Iranian Studies Honoring Firoze Kotwal* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 105-111.

as first argued by H. Lommel and later embraced by M. Boyce.<sup>4</sup>

Returning to the “paradise” word in the Artaxerxes inscription, owing to the ambiguity regarding the vocalization of the Old Persian syllabary there have been differing interpretations offered by scholars. R. Kent<sup>5</sup> and most recently C. Herrenschildt<sup>6</sup> understood *paradayadām*. Accordingly, the word has been parsed as *para* ‘beyond’ + *day(a)dām* ‘wall’, that is ‘what is beyond the wall’. Mayrhofer/Brandenstein<sup>7</sup> and W. Hinz<sup>8</sup> assumed a defective spelling for *paridaidām* or with Hinz *paridaidām*. Both interpretations agree on some realization of *daidā-* ‘wall’, but differ on whether the preposition is *para* ‘beyond’ or *pari* ‘around’.<sup>9</sup>

An outlier is the idea proposed by P. Lecoq<sup>10</sup> that the reading *p<sup>a</sup>r<sup>a</sup>d<sup>a</sup>y<sup>a</sup>d<sup>a</sup>m* is a mistake for \**pari-adām* ‘j’ai consacré’ to *pari/dā-* (Av. *pairi/dā-* ‘weißen, widmen’). Apart from the problem of emendation, this is an ingenious solution to the ‘paradise’ issue and the syntactic function of the izafe. However, it fails, simply because there is a simpler explanation of the ‘paradise’ word, without emendation.

I believe that the proper point of departure is Av. *pairi.daēza-* m. This word occurs in a cognate accusative construction at Vend. 3.18

... *aēte yōi mazdayasna aiŋ hā zəmō pairi.daēzqn pairi.daēzayqn*

“They who are Mazdeans should build on this ground walls around” (*lit.* should wall around wall-arounds)

Leaving aside the preposition of our word, it is clear that the correct rendering of *°d<sup>a</sup>y<sup>a</sup>d<sup>a</sup>m* is *°daidām* where Old Persian regularly gives Old Iranian *z* as *d* (δ). That the word shows an acc. sg. fem. ending, instead of masc., is in line with the confused attribution *imām hadiš* for older *ima<sup>t</sup> hadiš*,<sup>11</sup> *imām būmām* and *imām būmim*.

Now, consider what becomes of Old Iranian *pari* as prior member of a compound. If we review MPers words that derive from *pari*<sup>o</sup> the *i* usually drops out. For example, Phl *parwāz* (Av *pairiwāza-*) ‘flight’, Phl *parwand* (OIr \**pariβanda-*) ‘enclosure’, Phl *parwār* (Av *pairiwāra-*; but note that Pahlawīg (ŠKZ) has *prybr* where the Pārsīg has *plw<sup>l</sup>*) ‘circumvallation; surroundings’, Phl *parzēn*, MMPers *prcyn*, JPers *przyn*, NPers *parcīn* (OIr \**pari-cayana-*; cf. OInd *cáyana-*, *paricaya-*, and thus not *parzīn* with MacK) ‘fence’, Phl *parwāl*,

4- *Asiatica, Festschrift für Friedrich Weller*, (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1954), pp. 405-413.; M. Boyce *A History of Zoroastrianism Vol. I*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 71f.; and *Vol. II* (1982) pp. 201-204 for a more extensive discussion of Anāhiti/Anāhitā under Artaxerxes II. While *sūrā-* is certainly an epithet, *arədwī-* need not be, any more than Ved. *prth(i)vī-* ‘broad; Earth’.

5- *Old Persian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edit., New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953, p. 195.

6- Eric Morvillez (ed.), *Paradisos. Genèse et métamorphose de la notion de paradis dans l’Antiquité* (Actes du colloque tenu à Avignon, Palais des Papes, printemps 2009), coll. « Orient & Méditerranée/Archéologie » 17, Paris: De Boccard, 2014, 348 p.,

7- *Handbuch des Altpersischen*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964), p. 137.

8- *Neue Wege im Altpersischen*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973), p. 147.

9- Noncommittal is Bruce Lincoln *op. cit.*, p. 9.

10- François Vallat, edit. *Contributions à l’histoire de l’Iran: mélanges offerts à Jean Perrot*, Paris: Recherches sur les civilisations, 1990, pp. 209-212.

11- A similar shift of declension took place with the acc. sg. of *būmi-* ‘earth’ between the language of Darius (522-486), for example, DNā 1-2 *imām būmim*, and that of Artaxerxes III (359-338) A<sup>3</sup>Pa 2 *imām būmām*, where the acc. has been falsely created out of what must have been an uninflected \**būm*, Phl. *bwm* / *būm* / (see *op. cit.* W. Brandenstein / M. Mayrhofer, p. 14).

MPrth *prwrz*; (OPers \**pari-warḍa-*) ‘nourishment, refreshment’. Note that NPers *pālēz* ‘garden’ < \**pardēz*, with common development of OPers *ard* > *āl* in MPers. It might appear that GrLW *παράδεισος* can be invoked in support of OPers *parad*<sup>o</sup>. However, if one looks under *πάρρα* in Liddell & Scott<sup>12</sup> one notes that pp. 1305-1331 are devoted to words beginning with *παρρα*, while less than half a column have *παρρδ*<sup>o</sup> most of which have to do with leopards. The obvious conclusion, I believe, is that Greeks understood, by analogy, that the Persian word was just another case of *παρρα*<sup>o</sup>.

Although, strangely, a \**pardēz* is not attested in Middle Persian,<sup>13</sup> *prδʹys* occurs in the BSogd *Vasantara Jātaka* (13b)<sup>14</sup> in the context of an enclosure for elephants:

*šn pr cʹβ cʹβ zyrynynʹy prδʹys dštʹy*

«autour de chaque un de ceux-ci était construite une enceinte d’or» (Benv.)

As Benveniste noted in his *Grammaire Sogdienne*,<sup>15</sup> *pardēs* is an ancient borrowing from the North-East. This spelling is reflected in Hebrew and Aramaic *pardēs*; and the final *s*, as already anticipated, is in Gr *παράδεισος*. As a LW in Armenian \**paridaiza-* > *partēz*. As was the case in Middle Persian, Sogdian words with *pr* as prior member show a loss of *i*: e.g., *prcʹβt* ‘enclosure’, *prwʹrt* ‘scroll, chapter’ a LW < Skt *parivarta-* (both SCE). The same phenomenon is repeated in Khotanese: e.g. *parbīra* ‘round, circumference’ < \**pari-barya* (cf. Parth *prybr* cited above). The problem of chronology: In Greek, the word *παράδεισος* first appears in the *Anabasis* of Xenophon. This author lived from c. 430 – 354, and wrote the *Anabasis* describing the events involving the struggles between Artaxerxes II and Cyrus the Younger, the latter dying in 401. *παράδεισος* occurs again later in his *Cyropaedia* an idealized biography of Cyrus the Elder.

The word *pardēs* occurs three times in the Hebrew Bible, all in later Writings. The only occurrence which can be dated with approximate certainty is Nehemiah 2.8. Written in the first person, Nehemiah places his account in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of king Artaxerxes (לִּאֲרֶתְחַשְׁתָּא הַמֶּלֶךְ). Although there are many problems with the received text of Ezra-Nehemiah, at face value this would seem to refer to Artaxerxes I (465-424) whose 20<sup>th</sup> year would have been 445; however, if to Artaxerxes II, then his 20<sup>th</sup> year would have been 384. In his account Nehemiah begs the king to write a letter to a certain Asaph, “keeper of the king’s *pardēs*” (שֹׁמֵר הַפְּרָדִים אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ) requesting he supply the timbers necessary for construction of roofing for the Temple gate houses, the city walls and a house for himself. In this context *pardēs* would have to include woods with trees that could furnish many timbers.

A second occurrence is Kohelet 2.8. and reflects the conception of an orchard planted with trees. Enumerating the vanities of human existence, Kohelet says “I laid out gardens and groves (גִּנּוֹת וּפְרָדִים) in which I planted every kind of fruit tree.”<sup>16</sup> The third occurrence is in Šīr haŠīrīm. Theories abound concerning the dating of Song of Songs, but at least the verse in question must be situated in the late 5<sup>th</sup> early 4<sup>th</sup> century. Here (4.13) the beloved’s privates are likened to “an orchard of pomegranates” (פְּרָדִים רְמוֹנִים).

12- *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940).

13- Parthian (Nisa) *prdyz* / *pardēz* / is perhaps a name for a type of wine (Ph. Gignoux *Glossaire des Inscriptions Pahlevies et Parthes* (London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 1972), p. 61.

14- E. Benveniste *Vasantara Jātaka* (Paris: Paul Guethner, 1946), p. 13.

15- *Essai de Grammaire Sogdienne II*, Paris: Paul Guethner, 1929, p. 169.

16- Note that the LXX translates Hebr גן as *παράδεισος*.

These chronologies of both Greek and Hebrew borrowings show that the Old Persian ‘paradise’ became current in these languages in the latter half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, not coincidentally, around the time of the Artaxerxes II inscription.

To summarize where all this is leading, I am proposing that Old Persian *prdyd>m* is neither defective writing of *\*paradaydām* nor *\*paridaidām*, rather is to be read as *pardaiδām*. What this shows is that in Artaxerxes’ day an original *\*paridaiδa-* m. had already passed into early Middle Persian, then to be introduced back into the inscription as a feminine noun. The change of gender is due to the fact that case endings had all but disappeared in contemporary Middle Persian, a development we have noted in the change of original *būmim* to *būmām*, where MPers *būm* was reintroduced by scribes who no longer knew the original stem in *-i*.<sup>17</sup>

A problem of phonology remains with the interpretation of Old Persian *d* where cognate languages show Old Iranian *z*. Do words like New Persian *pālēz* and Armenian *partēz* derive from, perhaps a Median (or Parthian?) *\*<sup>o</sup>daiza-* ? or from some realization of OPers *δ*? Both Hebrew, Aramaic, SogdB and Greek have *s*. In any case, we are dealing with a word that derives from an Old Iranian *\*paridaiza-*. So the perspective is decidedly not of someone on the outside, beyond (*para*) the wall, looking in.

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17- Another example of change of gender is A<sup>3</sup>Pa 22 *imam ustašanām*, A<sup>3</sup>Sc 5f [*usta*]canām. I am inclined to view the spelling with *š* as a mistake, perhaps owing to the similarity of the signs for *c* and *š*. Thus, originally *us-tacana-* n. ‘stairway’ *lit.* ‘a walking up’, but, in any case, a neuter noun in *-ana-*.