

QUADERNI DI VICINO ORIENTE

SAPIENZA UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

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QUADERNI  
DI VICINO ORIENTE  
XIII - 2018

ISTAKHR (IRAN), 2011-2016  
HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ESSAYS

edited by  
Maria Vittoria Fontana

ROMA 2018

# QUADERNI DI VICINO ORIENTE

SAPIENZA UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

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*Direttore Scientifico:* Lorenzo Nigro

*Redazione:* Daria Montanari, Chiara Fiaccavento

ISSN 1127-6037

e-ISSN 2532-5175

ISBN 978-88-98154-09-8

Sapienza Università di Roma - The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International  
Cooperation - The Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

The English language has been revised by Rebecca Milner

Cover illustration: Istakhr 2012 (photo courtesy of the Joint Iranian-Italian Archaeological  
Mission at Istakhr, Iran)

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## TWO NEW PAHLAVI INSCRIPTIONS FROM FARS PROVINCE, IRAN

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*This paper presents two newly discovered Middle Persian inscriptions. One was found on Qal' a-yi Ištakhr, an isolated mountain in the Marvdasht plain known to have hosted a military garrison at least from mediaeval times; the other is a tomb stone from the distant cemetery of Kāmfirūz, in a mountainous area of Fars province. The Qal' a-yi Ištakhr inscription seems to bear the date 204 of Yazdagard, testifying a period of the castle's history earlier than 'Aḏud al-Dawla's construction works, whereas the Kāmfirūz inscription is remarkable because it contains eight lines in Pahlavi script and the last line in Arabic script. Both attest to the use of Middle Persian well into Islamic times as shown by the fact that the majority of dated Middle Persian funerary inscriptions belong to the early Islamic period.*

Keywords: Fars, Ištakhr, *Qal' a-yi Ištakhr*, Middle Persian, funerary inscriptions

This short paper discusses two newly discovered Pahlavi inscriptions found by one of the authors of this article over the course of investigations in Fars Province between 2002 and 2008. We were first made aware of these inscriptions by local people of the Marvdasht region, and although they may not have understood the importance of the discoveries, we would like to dedicate this article to them for all their help and kindness.<sup>1</sup>

The longer funerary inscription, unfortunately very worn, was discovered during a survey on Day month of 1384 (December 2004/January 2005) carried out on top of the mountainous rise known as *Qal' a-yi Ištakhr* which, according to Ibn al-Balkhī, once hosted one of the most ancient castles of Iran. It was newly documented in 2013 during our joint survey, together with some other graffiti.

In the north-eastern corner of the western side of the Marvdasht plain there are three isolated, steep mounts with an average height of 2100 m, forming a line stretching for more than 30 km from northwest to southeast (fig. 1). Local people call these three mountains *Si-Gunbadān* ("three domes"), a name already attested in the *Fārsnāma* on account of their distinctive shape. *Qal' a-yi Ištakhr* itself is almost 2300 m above sea level, rising about 500 m above the surrounding plain.

Ištakhrī and Muqaddasī, who wrote in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, both mention a fortress of Ištakhr, though the former uses the term *hiṣn*, while the latter speaks of a large *qal' a*, and both describe a stronghold provided with a water reservoir, a description that may well fit

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<sup>1</sup> The inscription on *Qal' a-yi Ištakhr* was first spotted by two students of archaeology of the Azād University of Marvdasht, Asya Sotuda and Samya Allahyari, who reported their discovery to Dr Ahmad Ali Asadi. The shorter inscription was found not far from the first one during the 2013 survey. The Kāmfirūz inscription, now privately owned, was shown to Dr Asadi, who was also allowed to take photos. He then asked Prof. Carlo G. Cereti to study them from a philological and epigraphic point of view. The authors jointly visited *Qal' a-yi Ištakhr* in November 2013. The archaeological description has been written by the first author, while the philological and historical work is due to the second.

our citadel.<sup>2</sup> The three fortresses were well known to Ibn al-Balkhī, who in his 12<sup>th</sup> century *Fārsnāma* wrote that the castles dated back to the times of the mythical Pīshdādiān kings and were already manned in the time of Jamshīd, who had his treasury (*khazāna*) in *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, storages (*farrāsh-khāna*) on mount Shikasta and his arsenal (*zarrād-khana*) on mount Shakanvān\Ashkanvān, now also known as Shahrak.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence of human settlement is visible on the top of each of these mounts, in the form of pot sherds, traces of walls, and carved-rock graves belonging to different periods. These remains reveal the importance of the *Si-Gunbadān* over the course of history. The unique shapes of these limestone buttes, to some extent resembling those found in central Italy in towns such as Orvieto or Orte (which are, however, of volcanic origin), make them difficult to climb, while the ample flat land on their tops makes them suitable for living. These characteristics, ideal for a castle or fortified area, made them of special interest to the peoples and rulers of the region. All the evidence points to the fact that *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* castle was of greater importance than the other two table mountains, known as *Qal'a-yi Shikasta* and *Qal'a-yi Shakanvān (Shahrak)*. The latter plateau mountain is further away and larger than the other two, rising from the Marvdasht plain not far from the lake created by the Dūrūdzan dam, whereas *Qal'a-yi Shikasta* and *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* are near to one another and face Kūh-i Ḥusayn on the opposite side of Naqsh-i Rūstam.

The ancient mountain track leading up to *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, once probably large enough to allow the passage of mules, hinnies and donkeys, and maybe even horses, is now quite disrupted and goes through a narrow, perilous passage on the northeast side of the mountain. Such a difficult road was protected by fortification walls and must have granted a high degree of security to the garrison stationed in the castle. Moreover, the presence of a water source on the flat land on top of the butte made small-scale cultivation possible. Therefore, the mount and castle of Istakhr were in an ideal position to oversee the strategic old summer road linking Istakhr, and in later periods Shiraz, to Isfahan, as well as the rich grasslands of the Marvdasht plain itself.<sup>4</sup>

The narrow path leading to the top of the mountain still shows traces of manmade improvements especially in some parts of the track nearer to the top of the mountain, where the path itself was carved into the rock and some rock carved steps of varying dimensions, meant to facilitate the climb to the top, can easily be observed. Furthermore, while climbing to the summit, the remains of walls and fortifications can also be observed (figs. 2-3).<sup>5</sup>

Various types of archaeological evidence are apparent upon reaching the plateau on top of the mountain. The great majority of the architectural remains are found in the central valley of the plateau oriented north-east to south-west. The remains include a monumental complex of three related basins built of stone, brick, and *sāruj* located near the south-

<sup>2</sup> See further Fontana 2017, 147 and notes 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Fārsnāma* (Persian text 1921), 32, see also 126 and 152 (cf. in this volume Appendix I, ed. by Casari - Buontempo). Cf. Asadi 2012, 396 and Fontana 2017, 147 and n. 9. In her article Fontana traces a detailed history of both medieval Islamic sources dealing with the *Si Gunbadān* and early European travellers who visited the site. For a presentation of the Middle Persian tradition concerning Istakhr and its territory see Terribili in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Whitcomb 1979, 111.

<sup>5</sup> See further Asadi 2012, 388-389.

western edge of the mount - in fact the most famous of the buildings of *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* (figs. 4-5). According to the *Fārsnāma*, 'Aḏud al-Dawla built a dam at the lower end of the plateau on top of *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, thus preventing water from freely flowing down onto the plain. He further ordered the construction of a large tank, with a roof supported by thirty columns and a stair counting seventeen steps that led down to its bottom.<sup>6</sup> The same information is repeated by Mustawfī in his *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* composed in 1340.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the monumental structures we see today can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE and that they were built at the command of 'Aḏud al-Dawla, the monarch who also ordered the construction of the famous Band-i 'Amīr on the Kur River.<sup>8</sup> However, this does not rule out that a more ancient stronghold may have existed, possibly as early as pre-Islamic times.

The water basins have been visited by many travellers, including the French voyagers Flandin and Coste, at that time attachés at the French Embassy, who drew a precise map of the structures (fig. 5).<sup>9</sup> Due to today's deteriorated condition it is not possible to accurately measure the two smaller pools. However, according to Flandin's precious records, the first pool measured 36.5 × 4 m, with an average depth of 4.5 m, while the second measured 40 × 4 × 4.5 m.<sup>10</sup> The third and largest water reservoir today measures 48 × 24 metres, with a varying depth of between 8 and 9 metres.<sup>11</sup> Remains of the small canal leading to the first pool, duly recorded by Flandin and Coste, may still be seen.

The central valley of the small plateau on top of *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* and the area near the main gate have the largest number of remains. Vestiges of different architectural structures can be seen on the citadel, in the central valley, in the north-eastern area and in other spots that had a good view of the passage between the mountain itself and the ridge of Naqsh-i Rostam. These structures consist of small rooms and spaces apparently used by guards and other individuals who may have lived there as workers and farmers. The rooms are either square (2 × 2 m) or rectangular (2 × 3 m). Relics of what was apparently a larger building, now mostly destroyed, lying to the southeast of the pool complex, probably belong to the quarters of the castle's commander (figs. 6-7). Rectangular rock-cut graves were found in some areas on the south-east side of the citadel (fig. 8), the largest of these tombs measures ca. 2 × 0.70 m, while the smallest is less than a metre long. Lacking the possibility to clean the tombs of debris, it was not possible to measure the depth. Holes and pits of different sizes are sparsely found in the rocky area (fig. 9). Graffiti with inscriptions in the Arabic alphabet are to be seen on a few rock faces around the pool. A surface survey has revealed a high number of pottery sherds, both glazed and unglazed, the main bulk of which can be dated to the early Islamic centuries. Similarly, a number of sherds of glass vessels probably

<sup>6</sup> *Fārsnāma* (Persian text 1921), 156; cf. Asadi 2012, 392.

<sup>7</sup> Mustawfī (English translation by Le Strange 1919), 131-132, cf. Fontana 2017, 148 and n. 12.

<sup>8</sup> On this topic cf. also Duva in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Flandin - Coste 1843 (Pl), pl. 62. On early European travellers who visited *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* see further Fontana 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Flandin - Coste 1843 (T), 71-72, cf. Fontana 2017, 155-156 and n. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Asadi 2012, 390-391. Flandin - Coste 1843 (T) say it measured 43 × 16 metres, with an average depth of 8.5 metres.

dating to the early Islamic period have been found in the inhabited area. The presence of moulded and glazed sherds typical of Islamic Istakhr<sup>12</sup> is an important indicator of the castle's continued use throughout the Sasanian to early Islamic periods.

The Pahlavi inscription found in *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* in December 2004 is located on the horizontal rocky surface in the eastern corner of the highland, not far from the main entrance gate and the buildings connected to it. The inscription, on eight lines, measures ca. 60 × 40 cm. The surrounding area is characterised by a number of outcrops of rock, some of which bear very rough graffiti (figs. 10-12), some accompanied by short inscriptions or isolated letters (fig. 13). The remains of bones and ash layers resulting from unauthorised excavations by local people were found about 20 metres to the north of the inscription.

Ahmad Ali Asadi - Carlo G. Cereti

#### 1. THE INSCRIPTIONS

The epigraphs found at *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* and Kāmfrūz are not isolated, since the area of Marvdasht is relatively rich in late Middle Persian inscriptions, often written vertically<sup>13</sup> and more may be found through a systematic survey of the area. The one in *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* differs from most other inscriptions, being written on a flat, horizontal surface and being longer than most other funerary inscriptions known to date. The epitaph from Kāmfrūz is one of the rare Middle Persian inscriptions to be accompanied by a line in Arabic. Remarkably, it seems to belong to a grave stone and to have been found inside an Islamic cemetery.

More generally the Marvdasht plain and surrounding mountains boast of a complex funerary landscape, which developed around the monumental remains from Achaemenian and Sasanian times. In fact the hills around Naqsh-i Rostam, Naqsh-i Rostam, Takht-i Jamshīd and Istakhr are rich in burials dating from different periods that have recently been surveyed by M. Farjami-rad for her PhD dissertation.<sup>14</sup> This funerary landscape originally evolved around the impressive cruciform tombs of the Achaemenian kings, much as this happened in Islamic times around the tombs of Shia Imams or other respected figures of the community, showing that the area was charged with a religious significance throughout history, beginning as early as Elamite times as evidenced by the partly surviving bas-relief in Naqsh-i Rostam.

Given the context, the study of our inscriptions should take into consideration the other epigraphic texts dating to different historical periods. Aside from the monumental monuments that were built to witness the glory of Achaemenian and Sasanian monarchs, a number of less significant, but nonetheless interesting late Middle Persian inscriptions have

<sup>12</sup> See, in this volume, Fusaro - Mancini, *Excavations at Istakhr in 2012: Ceramics and Stratigraphy*, and Asadi, *Mould-Made Relief Pottery*.

<sup>13</sup> Late Middle Persian inscriptions were often written vertically and the same is true for Sogdian ones in Central Asia, see Henning 1958, 46-48.

<sup>14</sup> Farjami-rad 2015, see also Cereti - Gondet 2015, 387-397.



been found in the hills surrounding the Marvdasht plain.<sup>15</sup> Funerary inscriptions are still to be seen on the Shāh Ismā‘īl cliff, a rock cemetery found on Kūh-i Ḥusayn, between *Qal‘a-yi Ištakhr* and Naqsh-i Rustam.<sup>16</sup> Here a total of twenty four niches<sup>17</sup> were carved into the rock, six of which were accompanied by a vertical inscription. None of these inscriptions are dated, although considering the easy accessibility of the site, they may be assigned to a period before Islamic dominion had consolidated itself in the area.

Another group of funerary inscriptions is found near the historical town of Istakhr: four inscriptions can be seen in an area that must have been one of the ancient exposure grounds of the city itself, where the limestone bench forms natural flat slabs fit for exposure according to Zoroastrian practice. Three of them are carved into the rock and may be associated with three small cists carved into the rock slab itself, while a fourth is found on an isolated stone block, which may possibly have been the base of a free-standing ossuary. They are collectively known as the Takht-i Tāvūs inscriptions. Two of them are dated, one to day Bahrām (*Wahrām*), month Khurdād (*Hordād*), year 33 of Yazdagard (664 CE), the other to day Spandarmad (*Spandarmad*), month Bahman (*Wahman*), year 43 of Yazdagard (675 CE).<sup>18</sup>

Another group of inscriptions, none of which are dated, was discovered by Sébastien Gondet and has recently been published by the author of this text.<sup>19</sup>

A number of other late Middle Persian inscriptions were found nearby. The one known as the Bagh-i Lardi inscription is engraved on a column and is now kept at the Museum of Persepolis. The text is still to be definitively interpreted, though it seems to commemorate various individuals.<sup>20</sup> Two other inscriptions, both attesting ownership, were found at Maqṣūdābād, on the piedmont of Kūh-i Raḥmat. One of the inscriptions attests that a *Gēs-wādān* owned an estate, the other that the same individual owned a well.<sup>21</sup> Another short and barely legible cursive inscription was found on Kūh-i Ḥusayn and published by S. Nadjmabadi in 1979.

<sup>15</sup> On Middle Persian monumental inscriptions see Huysse 2009, 90-102. For a thorough survey of cursive inscriptions see Tafazzoli 1997, 97-107.

<sup>16</sup> Gropp - Nadjmabadi 1970, 205-207; cf. also in this volume Rugiadi - Colliva, § 1.

<sup>17</sup> For the use of the word “niche” in this context see Cereti - Gondet 2015, 377-379.

<sup>18</sup> This reading was first suggested by Gropp (1969) and later accepted by Tafazzoli (1997); Frye (1970) on the contrary reads 23 with a question mark. Both Gropp’s tracing of the inscription (Gropp 1969, 259) and the photo of the calque found in Frye (1970, pl. IV) suggest reading 33. According to the majority of scholars, these dates were calculated from Yazdagard’s accession year (631 CE) rather than from the emperor’s death (651 CE), already Henning 1958, 47; on the inscription see Gropp 1969, 258-262; de Menasce 1956; Gropp - Nadjmabadi 1970, 207; Frye 1970, 152-155; Tafazzoli 1997, 102-103.

<sup>19</sup> Cereti - Gondet 2015, 379-389.

<sup>20</sup> According to W.B. Henning (1958, 48), it may be a little more recent than the other inscriptions. See further Sprengling 1953, 70-71; de Menasce 1956, 428-31; Frye 1970, 156.

<sup>21</sup> See de Menasce 1956, 423-427.

Notably, these inscriptions are written in a cursive form of the Middle Persian alphabet that is quite near to the “libresque” script found in Zoroastrian books, and relatively easier to read than the extreme cursive found on parchments and papyri as well as on the Quilon plates (*Tabula Quilonensis*). Remarkably, most dated inscriptions go back to the early years of Islamic dominion in Fars, which may suggest a similar date for other funerary and non-funerary cursive inscriptions in the area. As we shall soon see, the main inscription on *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* dates to a much later period, the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE and the Kāmfrūz inscription must date from Islamic times, since the last line is written in Arabic.

#### 1.1. *The inscription of Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* (fig. 14)

The inscription itself is now extremely abraded, some lines being so badly worn that no continuous text can be read anymore, while other are slightly better preserved, though seldom allowing a certain reading. It was probably only lightly engraved on the stone from the beginning, though the inscription's present condition is certainly due to its being inscribed on a horizontal surface unprotected from snow and rainfall and fully exposed to the wear and tear of time and man.

It is quite clearly a funerary inscription, engraved near the place where a person's body was exposed to birds and wild beasts, following the ancient Zoroastrian custom. Apparently, the inscription is dated to year 204 of Yazdagard or to a few years later (see below), which may correspond either to 836 CE, if calculated from his accession to the throne, or to 855 CE, if counted from the year of his passing away.<sup>22</sup> Both dates fall under the early Abbasid caliphate and roughly correspond to the rise of the first semi-independent Iranian dynasties in the northern and eastern parts of the Iranian plateau. Written much earlier than Buyid rule, it attests an otherwise unknown period of the citadel's history. The fact that it is relatively near to the main inhabited area, may suggest that at the time the castle was not heavily manned or at least that its occupants did not object to Zoroastrian funerary practices.

The inscription, measuring ca. 40 × 60 cm, is written on eight long lines following a pattern not much different from that of the other funerary inscriptions, though the text itself is longer. Unfortunately, the central lines, which may have told us something about the life of the deceased, are no longer readable. The legible digits of the date are 200 and 4, but the latter is followed by a small lacuna, which may be due to a natural imperfection in the rock, or, on the contrary, it may have accommodated the Pahlavi graph for any digit between 1 and 4. In this second hypothesis, the inscription may be dated anywhere between 204 and 208 a.Y.

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<sup>22</sup> See further n. 18.

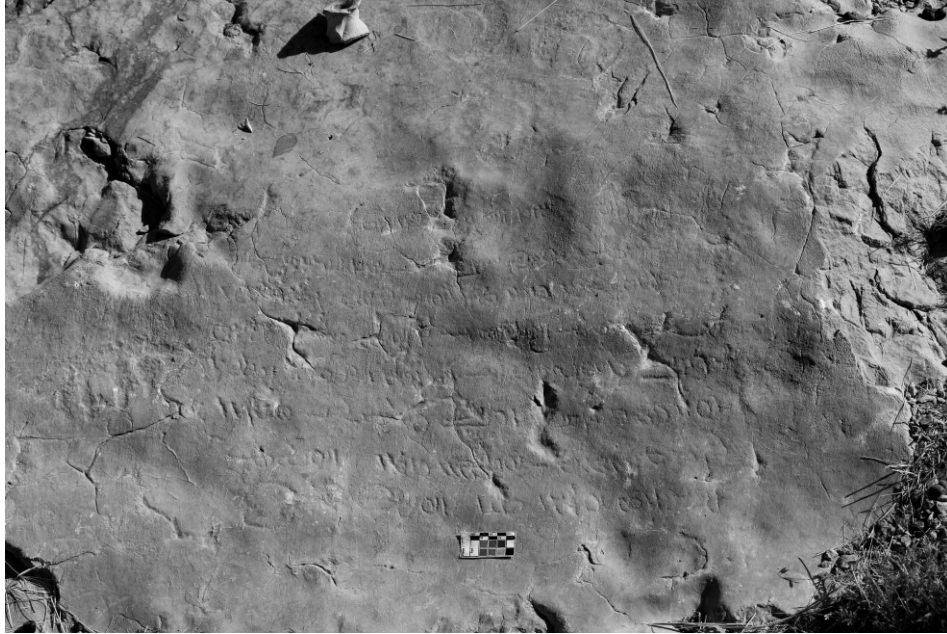


Fig. 14 (© C.G. Cereti 2013).

1. ZN[E dh](m)[k Y p]lhwt[n' Y]<sup>23</sup> (wn)[dt](gw)[šnsp]' (NP)[ŠE]
2. [BY]RA [whw](mn<sup>24</sup> ŠNT) 200 4 [1-2 l.] Y (yzdkrt')
3. (YW)[M 6-8 l.] (t' W MN?)[1-2 l.](W PWN)[6-8 l.]
4. (b)[4-5 l.]dln<sup>25</sup> W [5-6 l.]š (P)[WN 3-4 l.] d'n [5-6 l.]
5. (W) KBD (št)[4-5 l.] (Y)[2-3 l.](d'n) [3-4 l.] wtl't'
6. PWN [2-3 l.]n<sup>26</sup> [1-2 l.]W KBD [3-4 l.](gl)<sup>27</sup> Y yzd'n''
7. (LBA?) m[4-6 l.](š Y) pyl'mwn krt' W (p'hlwm)
8. [bh](r? why)št plhw'tn' NPŠE

1. \*ēn \*daxmag <ī> \*Farroxtan <ī> \*Windadgušnasp \*xwēš
2. \*māh \*Wahman <ī> \*sāl 204 ī Yazdegard
3. \*rōz [...]d ud \*az [...] ud pad [...]
4. g[...]darm W[...]š \*pad [...]dān[...]
5. ud was št [...] ī [...]dān [...]widard

<sup>23</sup> This reading is hypothetical, based on the name appearing in the last line of this same inscription.

<sup>24</sup> Or [']š[whšt'], though barely fitting the space.

<sup>25</sup> Or possibly [dlyh, jglyh, jglm, etc.

<sup>26</sup> The reading PWN (l)[m]šn is tempting, but not entirely supported by the surviving ductus.

<sup>27</sup> Before these letters the sequence l'h can be guessed, though the *lāmeq* may well be no more than an imperfection in the rock surface.

6. *pad[...]<sup>ān</sup>[...] ud was [...]gar ī yazdān*
7. *\*wuzurg m[...]š ī pērāmōn kard ud pahlom*
8. *\*bahr wahišt Farroxtan xwēš*

This is the dakhma of \*Farroxtan son of \*Windād-Gušnasp, in the month \*Wahman of the year \*204 of Yazdegard, day [...] and on [...] on [...] many [...] passed away. On [...] and enough [...] of God/the gods a great [...] he did around. May Paradise be Farroxtan's best lot.

Lines 1-2 The first two lines, though largely reconstructed, are in line with the incipit of other funerary inscriptions in the Marvdasht area. The inscription in Aqlīd (Eq̄līd) reads: ll. 1-5 [ZNE] dhmk' [s]wk' Y [p']pk'n Y [p']p'k' BRE NPŠE I'd; ll. 11-17 W LZNE BYRA 'p'n QDM ŠNT 6 yzdkrt' MLKAn MLKA W ywm hwl PWN pht OZLWNt W YWM m'h tn' Y 'ym 'šwk' OL dhmk' HNHTk'; in the inscription Takht-i Tāvūs (TT) 1 we have ll. 1-6 ZNE dhmk' wlwn BYRA hwrđt Y ŠNT 20 10 3 yzdkrt' W YWM whl'n pwskwk' Y hwlšyt' BRE lwb'n Y NPŠE I'd prmw't krtn'; TT 2 we read ll. 1-6 ZNE dhmk' BYRA whwmn' Y ŠNT 40 3 W YWM spmdrmt plhw'd'n (Y) m's w'r'n š w'r'n t BRE lwb'n Y NPŠE I'd prmw't krtn'. Though employing a different term to describe the funerary object to which the inscription itself refers to, dates are rendered in a very similar way also in the Kāzarūn inscriptions: K2 presents two different dates referring to two different funerals ll 1-8 ZNE 'šp(w)l 'nwšlwb'n nywkd't Y mt( r )ynš't BRTH I'd krt' BYRA spndrmt Y ŠNT 93 Y yzdkrt W YWM dyn' <PWN> bht O<Z>L<WNt>; ll. 10-20 'nwšl(w)b'n bwlcyt' Y ym'ngwšnsp BRTE BYN hm 'šp(w)l YKOYMWN't APš whšt bhl YHWWN't BYRA hwrđ't Y ŠNT 94 Y yzdkrt' W YWM ddw' PWN 'twr PWN bht OZLWNt. K3 ll. 1-6 [ZNE 'šp(w)l ... Y .... ] Y [whšt] bhl [YHWWN't] BYRA [...] Y ŠN[T...] 8 [plmw't] krtn. K11 [ZNE dhmk' .... Y ...] BYRA p[rwrty'n]<sup>28</sup> Y ŠNT 80 3 3 Y yzdkrt ; K14 ll a2-3 BYRA 'p'n Y ŠNT 6 W YWM 'ngl'n.

The exact meaning of the term MP. *daxmag* is under discussion. Here the reading is hypothetical and it apparently indicates the place where the corpse was exposed, notwithstanding W.B. Henning's opinion that it may indicate the rock-cut niches, which should therefore more correctly be called *daxmag* and not *astōdān* ('stwd'n), though the latter term is attested in an inscription from Kāzarūn.<sup>29</sup> Though *daxmag* is found in the majority of funerary texts of this kind, the word *ašwar* ('špwl), not 'spnl or 'sp'nwl, is found in a number of inscriptions, mainly those from Kāzarūn.<sup>30</sup>

Though the word order may change, as a rule inscriptions mention the name of the departed and the month, year and day of death and/or exposure. As far as I know the name *Farroxtan* is not attested in Middle Persian; though both members of the compound are known in Middle Persian onomastics, *Farrox* is widely attested<sup>31</sup> while *tan* is found only in

<sup>28</sup> Or possibly š[trywr].

<sup>29</sup> K1, see Hassuri 1984, 93. On *daxmag* and *astōdān* see further de Blois 1993, with earlier bibliography.

<sup>30</sup> On *ašwar* see Tafazzoli 1991, 199-200.

<sup>31</sup> Gignoux 1986 and 2003, *passim*.

the compound *Tan-Wahman*.<sup>32</sup> The name Windād-Gušnasp, should this be the correct reading, is well attested in IMP.<sup>33</sup>

Line 7 *pērāmōn kard*: many inscriptions contain the expression *framūd kardan* “(he) ordered to make” and it would be tempting to consequently emend the text. However, this is one of the few areas of the inscription where the script is reasonably clear.

Lines 7-8 *ud pahlom bahr wahišt farroxtan xwēš*; the presence of *bahr* is no more than an educated guess based on the fact that it seems to be necessary for the correct formulation of the closing phrase. In this form perhaps the closest parallels are found in the Kāzarūn inscriptions, which however often omit the word *pahlom*, e. g. K4 ZNE 'špwl whšt bhl bwlcyn NPŠE; K9 [ZN]E 'šp(w)l [...]plhwmlt[...] m' (?) plwb'n APŠ whšt Y ... [p'hlwml] bhl YHWWN't, though similar wordings are found in inscriptions in the Marvdasht area as well, e. g. TT 1 ll. 8-9 W whšt Y phlwml bhl YHHWN't (...) and DB 9 ll.3-4 whšt' p'hlwml bhl YHWWN't.

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### 1.2. *Kāmfrūz Pahlavi inscription* (fig. 15)

A second Pahlavi inscription was found some 50 km north of *Qal'a Ištakhr*, in a flat area on top of one of the eastern Kāmfrūz Mountains, a range lying between the Marvdasht plain to the southeast and the Kāmfrūz district to the north-west. The inscription is in a remote Islamic cemetery stretching over one hectare from north to south. Different types of Islamic Persian and Arabic calligraphy are written on some of the gravestones, while other graves are recognisable only by a simple row of stones bordering the grave itself. It seems that the site was used only in Islamic periods and few of the graves show late Islamic carving traditions. Although the remains of temporary structures, particularly those used for animals, are found some 100 metres west of the cemetery, there are no traces of permanent architectural remains nearby, indicating that the site was only used temporarily or as a nomadic settlement. Unfortunately, the stone upon which the inscription was carved was removed from the site by local people, and we do not know exactly where it was found in the cemetery. Only later, when we heard about the inscription and visited the site, would a few locals provide the approximate location of the inscription.

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#### 1.2a. Inscription

The gravestone with the inscription is an irregular stone measuring 50 × 60 cm and has a maximum thickness of 20 cm. In order to carry the stone, some areas below the inscription were broken away by those who took it from the site. There are no traces of carving on the stone to prepare it for the inscription engraving. The inscription is on nine lines, eight in Middle Persian and one in Arabic. Remarkably, the term used to indicate the object of the inscription is NP. *gūr*, corresponding to Ar. *qabr*, a word that indicates a burial and not a place for exposure or an ossuary, as MP. *daxmag* or *astōdan* do. This may suggest that the departed was not a Zoroastrian, but rather a Christian, since Christians are

<sup>32</sup> Gignoux 2003, 62 referring to Weber 1992, 195.

<sup>33</sup> Gignoux 1986, 182 and 2003, 67.

known to have used the Pahlavi script in their inscriptions.<sup>34</sup> However, the other inscriptions that bear Middle Persian and Arabic texts written side by side, those of *Qal'a-yi Bahman*,<sup>35</sup> Lājīm and Mīl-i Rādakān<sup>36</sup> are all situated in an Islamic context and this is most likely the case here too.



1. PWN ŠM Y yzdtñ
2. ZNE gwl Y
3. hlpws Y mltwy
4. APš yzdtñ' b'
5. 'mwlc't W ZNE
6. c'h Y PWN LOYŠE
7. Y ZNE kwp' hlpws HPLWNt
8. W 'p't'n krt
9. hdh' qbr hrfs bn mrdwyh r̥mh'l'h

Fig. 15 (© A.A. Asadi 2008).

1. *pad nām ī yazdān*
2. *ēn gōr ī*
3. *Harpos ī Mardōy*

<sup>34</sup> Such is the case of the Middle Persian crosses of South India and of the *Tabula Quilonensis*. On the crosses see Cereti - Olivieri - Vazhutanapalli 2002 and Cereti 2003; on the *Tabula Quilonensis* see Cereti 2009.

<sup>35</sup> A few Kufic inscriptions were discovered in *Qal'a-yi Bahman*, one of these also carries five lines in Middle Persian (see Hassuri 1984 and the brief description in Tafazzoli 1997, 99).

<sup>36</sup> On these two monumental inscriptions from the Caspian region, see Cereti 2015 and Cereti, in press.

4. *u-š yazdān ba*
5. *āmurzād ud ēn*
6. *cāh ī pad sar*
7. *ī ēn kōf Harpos kand*
8. *ud ābādān kard*
9. *hadhā qabr harfas bin \*mardōy raḥima-hu-llāh*

In the name of God. This is the tomb of Harpos son of Mardōy, may God have mercy on him. And Harpos dug this well that is on top of this hill and made it (i.e. the hill) prosperous. This is the tomb of Harfas bin Mardōy, may God have mercy on him.<sup>37</sup>

l. 1 *pad nām ī yazdān*: this expression is regularly found at the beginning of Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts in medieval and modern manuscripts. Understood in the singular, it would also fit a Christian or Islamic context.

l. 3 *Harpos*: the name of the departed is clearly written both in MP. and in Ar., the only minor variation being in the second vowel, marked by a *wāw* in the Pahlavi text. The patronymic could be either *Mardōy*, which better fits the Pahlavi spelling, or *Mard-weh*, closer to the Arabic spelling; both are attested in IMP.<sup>38</sup>

ll. 4-5 *u-š yazdān ba āmurzād*: on the vocalisation in *-a* of the preverb NP *bi* see Lazard.<sup>39</sup> Verbal construction and the use of the enclitic pronoun are remarkable, showing that the language was already well on its way to becoming New Persian. Moreover, the construction *ēn cāh ī pad sar ī ēn kōf Harpos kand ud ābādān kard*, found in the successive lines, should not necessarily be understood as ergative.

ll. 5-8 *ēn cāh ī pad sar ī ēn kōf Harpos kand ud ābādān kard*: compare the first two lines of the inscription found in *Qal'a-yi Bahman*:<sup>40</sup> 1. **ZNE kl't h'cym Y mhmt Y lyh...** 2. **'p't'n krt ŠNT 200 40 5.**

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## 2. CONCLUSIONS

The two inscriptions presented in this article were discovered in recent years in the area of Marvdasht, where another group of inscriptions, those of Darra-yi Barra, have recently been revealed by Sébastien Gondet and studied by one of the authors of this paper.<sup>41</sup> This demonstrates the need to continue field survey in this and in other less known areas of Iran, and to locate, document and publish late Middle Persian inscriptions and early Islamic ones. A systematic survey will probably allow the scientific community to obtain access to new data able to shed light on the early centuries of Islamic dominion in Iran, years that were crucial for the survival and transformation of Iranian identity. One of our inscriptions, that of *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, was discovered in what was later to become a Buyid stronghold

<sup>37</sup> The authors wish to thank Prof. Roberta Giunta, who kindly agreed to read and translate the line in Arabic.

<sup>38</sup> See Gignoux 1986, 119 and 2003, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Lazard 1963, 190.

<sup>40</sup> For the text of this inscription see Hassuri 1984, 94-97.

<sup>41</sup> Cereti - Gondet 2015.

and must have been a powerful castle run by the rulers of the region of Istakhr even earlier than ‘Aḏud al-Dawla’s time. Notwithstanding the current condition of the inscription, which makes it difficult to read, we were able to place it in the early years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century a.Y., thus shedding a ray of light on an otherwise undocumented period of the castle’s history. The inscription found in Kāmfirūz bears eight lines in Middle Persian and one line in Arabic side by side, joining the small number of bilingual Arabic-Middle Persian inscriptions found in Iran. Both are witness to a process of integration and transition of which we do not yet fully grasp the development, dynamics or implications, but which allowed Iranian identity to survive in all its specificity until the present day.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

|      |                              |
|------|------------------------------|
| Ar.  | Arabic                       |
| a.Y. | anno Yazdagardi              |
| IMP. | Inscriptional Middle Persian |
| MP.  | Middle Persian               |
| NP.  | New Persian                  |

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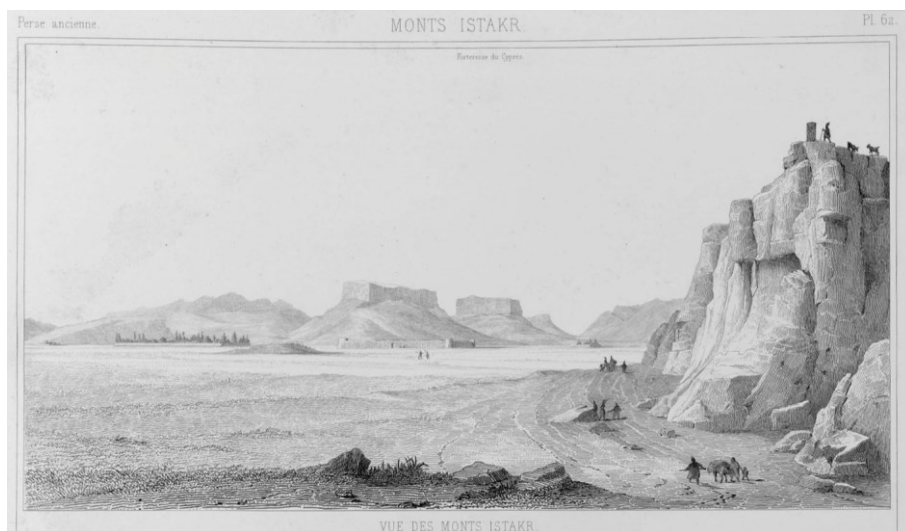


Fig. 1 - Drawing showing the *Si-Gunbadān* (Flandin - Coste 1843 [PI], pl. 62, upper).



Fig. 2 - Steps cut into the rock in the path leading to the summit of *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* (© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Fig. 3 - The road leading to the summit of *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* (© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Fig. 4 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, the great pool built under 'Aḏud al-Dawla (© C.G. Cereti 2013).

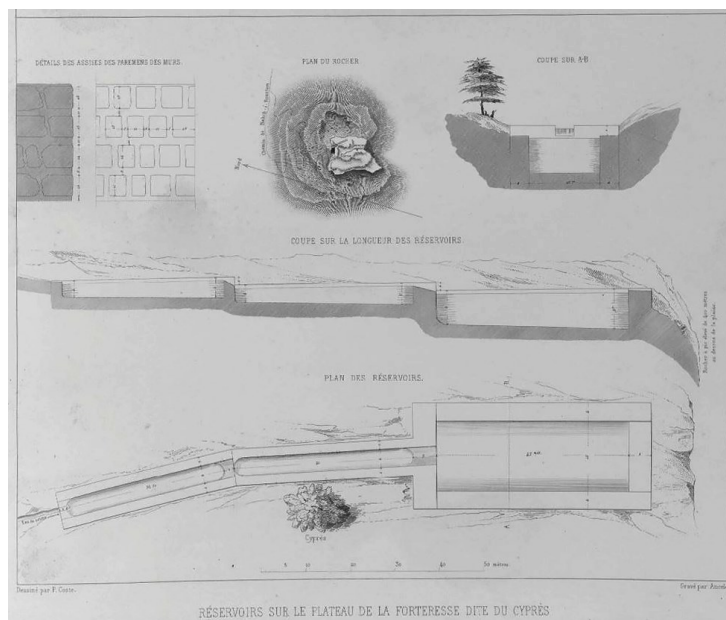


Fig. 5 - Drawing of the three pools at *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr* (Flandin - Coste 1843 [PI], pl. 62, lower).



Fig. 6 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, remains of buildings in the area near to the main gate  
(© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Fig. 7 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, remains of buildings in the central valley  
(© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Fig. 8 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, pit (© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Fig. 9 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, rectangular rock-cut graves (© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Figs. 10-11 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, graffiti in the area near the inscription in fig. 14  
(© C.G. Cereti 2013).

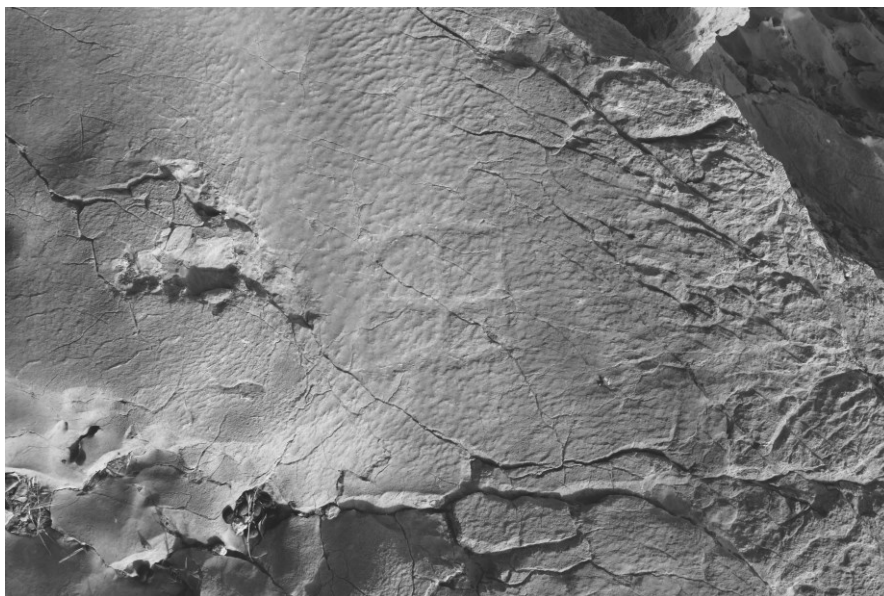


Fig. 12 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, graffiti in the area near the inscription in fig. 14  
(© C.G. Cereti 2013).



Fig. 13 - *Qal'a-yi Ištakhr*, one line inscription accompanying the graffiti in figs. 10-11  
(© C.G. Cereti 2013).