

Mīrzā Muḥammad Naṣīr Furṣat al-Dawla and the Archaeology of Iranian Archaeology

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Unlike other related studies which are focusing on either excavations or excavators, this essay explores some aspects of the early development of archaeology in Islamic Iran as a particular moment in intellectual history. In particular, the study is aimed at discussing the elusive turning point between traditional antiquarianism and modern archaeology which occurred some time during the mid-Qajar period (1860s and 1870s). Less emphasis is laid on the first foreign archaeological work in Iran as it is discussed in more detail elsewhere. Instead, the study will address how these foreign investigations affected the growing local awareness of the surrounding vestiges of Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Iran and how these led to local experiments in archaeological research. Mīrzā Muḥammad Naṣīr Furṣat al-Dawla, a protagonist in this process, will serve as a case study: his surveys, writings, drawings, and—sometimes contradictory—interpretations will serve to trace the first steps towards the modern Iranian appropriation of ancient heritage.

Introduction

Modernizing trends in Iran during the 19th century seem to have coincided with, and were in great part inspired by, renewed appreciation of the country's ancient past. Reformist scholars, theorists, craftsmen, and artists, discovered ancient Iran at the same time as they did European techniques and concepts. This article aims to throw light on the cultural background of these changes, in particular the beginnings of modern archaeological writing. The intellectual and cultural roots of archaeological scholarship in Iran have seldom been a focus of inquiry, in spite of the advances made in recent years in studying the cultural products of the later Islamic periods. Such work includes the reassessment of the art treatises of the 16th and 17th centuries, and particularly the so-called *dībāčas*, or prefaces. Instead of regarding them as ill-matched equivalents of Giorgio Vasari's *Vita*, scholars now interpret them as complex

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visual and literary achievements which introduce, contextualize, and manipulate the visual material contained in the albums in which they appear (Roxburgh 2005). More recently the growth and lasting impact of heritage management during the early Pahlavi period have also been subjected to analysis by Grigor (2009) and others.

On the other hand, the archaeological writing between the Safavid and Pahlavi eras, notably that of the Qajar period, is still awaiting such reconsideration. When it comes to the monuments of pre-Islamic Iran, we realize that while they have been always visible and accessible, their historical background (and with it, their Rieglian history-value) was gradually lost and replaced by fiction in the Islamic period. Moreover, apart from occasional attempts to preserve them through giving them new function, they were neglected and left to decay as useful reminders of vanity. The forthcoming pages aim to discuss the turning point in Iranian art historiography and heritage popularization, in particular the historiographical and visual impact of Mīrzā Muḥammad Naṣīr Furṣat al-Dawla (1854–1920), who was among the first to attempt reconciliation between European and Iranian notions about local monuments, while also calling on the importance of their protection. For a while, his *Āthār-i 'Ajām* (1894–1897) was regarded as a valuable source even by scholars of the modernist Pahlavi period, such as André Godard or Ernst Herzfeld. Nonetheless, the work of such European scholars quickly eclipsed that of local ones, such as the trail-blazer Mīrzā Muḥammad Naṣīr (Manoukian 2012, 12–22; Kasheff 1999, 100–102).¹

Rather than being a study on Islamic archaeology, the following pages aim to scrutinize the cultural milieu which fostered the growth of this discipline. By mapping the intellectual climate in a particular Muslim society on the eve of the first major excavations, it shall help us to identify the factors which engendered archaeological thinking within Muslim societies in general. Moreover, it shall offer insights into the different perspectives of foreign and native participants, while it shall also reveal the shifting dynamics of historiography and archaeology, as well as their constant interaction. Islamic archaeology emerged amid these interactions during the early 20th century.

However, for a discussion of the rise of Near Eastern archaeology, it is necessary to retrace its beginnings and move the focus from the Islamic period to pre-Islamic times. Modern archaeological investigations commenced in every Islamic land with an aim to reveal its ancient past by clearing away the sediment of the Islamic centuries which were generally perceived as a retrospective present. Recent studies (Canby 2000, 128–137, Shaw 2003) have shown how little was the concern of the first excavators working in the Ottoman Empire for Islamic layers even when such layers were uncovered and occasionally registered. Islamic sites started to attract more attention only after the turn of the 20th century when the debate about the origins of Islamic art erupted in Europe, although diggings continued to concentrate on the excavation of entire buildings instead of considering stratification. A fast-motion replay of Near Eastern chronology thus preceded the beginning of Islamic archaeology. Although

1. While Manoukian (2012, 22) is right in saying that “today Fursat is one of the major figures of Shiraz as a city of knowledge”, this applies to his status as one of the “great men” of Shiraz rather than his enduring presence in scholarly discourses. It is only in the time-honored tradition of local histories, such as Mostafavi 1978 (xi), that Furṣat’s central position remains unchallenged.

this applies to both native and European attempts at uncovering the past, the theoretical and ideological forces which galvanized these attempts were rather different. For Europeans, archaeology offered a shortcut to a presumed common heritage of all civilized nations. For Iranians, Ottomans, and Egyptians, the excavation of pre-Islamic patrimony meant secularization and the restoration of a broken national continuity. This study is primarily concerned with this latter perspective.

Cultural appropriations of monuments and places: The roots of Iranian archaeology

The origins of antiquarianism and archaeology in Iran have a deep history. In the epic of the early Islamic poet Firdawsī, the *Shāhnāma*, we may cite, for instance, the story of King Bahrām Gūr, in which the Sasanian king, with the help of a *moad* (Zoroastrian priest), discovers the buried treasure of Jamshīd, his legendary predecessor (Firdawsī 2005, vol. 6: 457–463). Although the story is fictitious, it does clearly reflect a mediaeval awareness of vestiges from earlier periods and keenness to make these vestiges meaningful. Of course we cannot be sure that the pairs of animals (peacocks, pheasants, lions, onagers and bulls) in Firdawsī's narrative did exist in reality, yet they may well refer to the monumental sculpture of the Achaemenids, or another pre-Islamic dynasty.

In Firdawsī's account, Bahrām Gūr was destined to find the hidden palace so as to rediscover the continuity of kingship. By accidentally unearthing the bygone greatness of previous dynasties, he legitimizes his sovereignty. Buried treasures invariably signified royalty, as demonstrated by a famous story of Hārūn al-Rashīd and his barber in the *Khamsa* of Niẓāmī, where the barber, influenced by a buried treasure below him, begins to speak to the caliph in a manner as if he were superior to the caliph (Niẓāmī 2001, 179–181). Bahrām Gūr's finding of a long-gone predecessor's treasury itself became a literary formula which was employed to express the finder's predestined right to rule; here one may refer to a passage of the 18th-century Ālam-ārā-yi *Nādirī* of Muḥammad Kāzīm Marwī, in which Nādir Shah not only discovers Tīmūr's buried treasure near Kalāt but he also finds the latter's foretelling of his ascendancy (Quinn 2000, 139). Similar examples can fill pages.

Written sources from the pre-modern period use descriptions of palatial remains as a device whereby the prestige of the monuments is associated with, and extended to, past and present members of the ruling elite. Conversely, these written sources have little to tell about the experience of lower social groups, including local residents who inhabited the surrounding areas, and they are equally silent about less eye-catching locations, such as rural settlements. While this must be recognized as a major shortcoming of written sources, the present study concentrates on writings and pictorial depictions which in Iran continued to carry an elitist imprint well into the 20th century, while the growing body of non-textual evidence pertaining to the mediaeval usage of pre-Islamic monuments is excluded from the discussion (for these, see, for example, Kervran 1974, 21–41; 1977, 75–161; Kleiss 1979, 281–287).

Famous sites, such as Persepolis, never needed to be rediscovered as they were familiar sights for locals and visited by a chain of royal and non-royal pilgrims who went there to ponder on transience and permanence. These sites were almost invari-

ably palatial or dynastic cult centres which comprised standing, thus visible, remains throughout the centuries that followed the Muslim conquest. Scientific surveys and excavations in Iran had begun at these sites because of their striking monumentality, long before the maturation of modern archaeological methods. While Bahrām Gūr might be an unlikely candidate for the title of the first Iranian archaeologist, the way he discovered Takht-i Jamshīd does have real-life parallels. In fact, the advent of modern archaeology in the 19th century and the introduction of modern technologies in the 20th seem to have left the time-honoured linkage between archaeology and royalty untouched. We read, for instance, that Zāhir Shah of Afghanistan (r. 1933–1973) officially “discovered” the site of Ay Khānum (the most significant site of ancient Bactria) as he happened to be on a hunting expedition in the area, as late as 1961 (Holt 1999, 16). He then summoned French archaeologists, including Paul Bernard of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA), to carry out research on his personal “discovery” and recover the lost heritage of Bactria (Holt 1999, 16). The continuity of Iranian traditions can be further demonstrated by drawing attention to the sometimes baffling similarity between discoverer and discovered, as in the case of the Bakhtiyari tribesmen and their famous find, the Parthian bronze statue from Shamī, which shows that the Zagros Mountains of Iran were rather resistant to fashion trends over two millennia between the Parthians and Riḏā Shah.



Figure 1. The Parthian bronze statue from Shamī in Mālamīr after its finding, 1937 (photograph: courtesy of the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran).

The Qajars and modern archaeology

Such discoveries by local dignitaries or even royalty served to counteract the lootings which had been customarily carried out by excavators, often foreigners, in the wider region of Iran (Mousavi 2006, cf. Shaw 2003; for a literary reflection of the conflicts between local archaeological heritage and its foreign explorer: Hidāyat 1963, 81–109). While it would be simplistic to attribute early archaeological work solely to European visitors (Young 1987, 287), the decisive impact of these experiments on local awareness of national heritage and archaeology cannot be denied. Systematic archaeology in Iran started under the Qajars and its first native patrons were members of the dynasty. It was also during the Qajar period that historical monuments became the focus of scholarly investigation and documentation. One of the earliest books in which historical monuments are defined is the *Tārīkh-i 'Umūmī-yi dawra-yi ibtidā'i* (General history of Antiquity) of Maḥmūd Khān Miftaḥ al-Mulk, published for the *Anjuman-i Ma'ārif* (Society of Education, founded in 1898 by Prime Minister Amīn al-Dawla; Anwar 1985, 86–88). According to it: “The term ‘ancient monument’ includes all what was created by the hands of ancient people and survived on the ground, such as palaces, buildings, mausolea, towers, stone pillars, cellars, weapons, coins, utensils, etc.”²

Showing a speedy transfer of European concepts to Iran, this passage echoes Alois Riegl’s contemporary notions about monuments, especially what Riegl called unintentional monuments (Riegl 1903; Arrhenius 2003, 51–55). By this time the famous European monuments and their prestige, as well as the growing European esteem for ancient Persian art, could hardly escape Iranian attention. Awareness of the high status of the built heritage in Europe was steadily growing through *safarnāmas* (travelogues), translations, and newspapers. This, of course, reinforced the need for research on the local heritage. Mīrzā Muḥammad Naṣīr commenced his survey roughly at the same time when European scholarship began to investigate Near Eastern art. It was still commonly held in Europe that “Oriental” art stopped developing after the Hellenistic period, although scholars such as Alois Riegl had already begun their campaign for an unbiased treatment of world art (Marchand 2009, 400). While there were more and more signs of a changing attitude in European scholarship, some authors, like Goldziher (1881 [1980], 323–358), warned that even if “Oriental” monuments might also have deserved preservation, their ultimate fate would be sealed by the inherent ahistoricism of the unmotivated Muslim societies which surrounded them. The reality of such remarks concerning the neglect of archaeology in Qajar Iran or at least the unavailability of preservation facilities there, even at the royal court, is underscored by the fate of the so-called Treasure of Astarābād, an apparently Bronze Age hoard, which was found accidentally at Tūrang Tappa near Gurgān in 1841, then transferred to Tehran, where it disappeared soon after having been described by Clement Augustus de Bode (Bode 1844, 248–255; for later speculations about its whereabouts: Rostovtzeff 1920, 26–27). Despite the tremendous

2. “Āthār-i ‘atiqa ibārat-and az kulli-yi āncha ki bi dast-i mardumān-i qadīm sākhta shuda wa dar rū-yi zamīn bāqī mānda-ast, az qabil-e qalā’, imārāt, maqābir, mināra-hā, sutūn-hā-yi sangī, sardāb-hā, aslaḥa, maskūkāt, asās al-bayt wa ghayra wa ghayra.” Quoted by Šifatgul 2000, 163.

technological and social changes of the 20th century, the conditions in Pahlavi and post-revolutionary Iran continue to prompt similar comments, as shown by Manoukian (2013, 95–109) who juxtaposes contrasting local attitudes in Shiraz towards monuments that are presumed to possess an added value, based on historical significance, and their merely old, hence obsolete, urban contexts which are left unprotected. Mixed feelings towards the Iranian past can be discerned in the work of some of Furṣat al-Dawla's more radical positivist contemporaries, including Muḥammad Ghaffārī Kamāl al-Mulk (ca. 1848–1940), the leading painter of late Qajar times, whose unfavourable view of traditional Iran contrasts markedly with Furṣat al-Dawla's veneration (Szántó 2011, 309–320).

The persistence of such attitudes notwithstanding, the general neglect of ancient monuments was about to end during the Qajar period. It was during this time that the search for the valuable and valid among the outmoded and useless commenced. Starting with the antiquarian interests of Fath 'Alī Shah (r. 1797–1834) and his court, and continuing with the first archaeological investigations financed by the Qajar governors of Fars, and later with the systematic survey of ancient monuments by Furṣat al-Dawla, the development of modern historical consciousness in Iran shows a remarkably straight course through the 19th century.

The making of cultural memory: Later Iranian perception of the Achaemenids

The dichotomy between history and cultural memory is increasingly becoming an independent area of investigation in various fields of Iranian Studies, as it is in general academic discourse. Such investigations include, for instance, the awareness of pre-Islamic Iran in the Muslim period, and Sasanian knowledge—or ignorance—of preceding periods. For the forthcoming discussion one shall briefly tackle with this latter, namely, the Sasanian perception of the Achaemenids, about which rather diverse views exist. One is the still popular but fading opinion which maintains that the Sasanian dynasty “reinvented” the Achaemenids (Frye 1963, 207; for an overview of the problem, see Gnoli 2006, 504–507). This view has been challenged by numerous authors, including Ehsan Yarshater (1971, 517–531), who asserts that the Sasanians did quite the opposite: purposefully or not, they “forgot” them. Still other authors, including Touraj Daryaee (2006, 387–393), hold that while the Sasanians did and could not forgot the Achaemenids, they instead relegated their predecessors to the background in favour of an invented history, founded on mythology, which came to be used as the “officially” sanctioned version of history.

Strong arguments seem to support this assumption. Chief among them is the completely different state of preservation of the pre-Sasanian and Sasanian heritage in Muslim historiography. When a renewed demand for neutral historiography, at least as far as pre-Islamic history is concerned, led Muslim writers turn to Sasanian sources, they could transmit and perpetuate the Sasanians' own history quite accurately, whereas they found the preceding eras only in the form of mythological narratives recast into a quasi-historical mould. Thus, it appears that pre-Sasanian history was truly lost and replaced by a fossilized form of Sasanian cultural memory by the time the Sasanians themselves faded into history.

Before the Qajars, pre-Islamic, or more precisely pre-Sasanian, Iran was virtually unknown for Persians, or at least it was not common knowledge. Generally speaking and disregarding a few notable exceptions (like Bīrūnī), we can surmise that for most of the Islamic period, factual knowledge of pre-Islamic Iranian history was replaced by a pseudo-historical narrative, with the Pīshdādian and Kayānid dynasties at its core. It easily lent itself to adaptation and reinvention, as attested by numerous Persianate courts, regardless of time and space: the Saljuqs of Anatolia drew on it with the same enthusiasm as did the Ghurids of Afghanistan and Northern India. While there were rulers called Manūčīhr in Anatolia and Bahrām in Afghanistan, no-one seems to have been concerned with Achaemenid and Arsacid history as depicted in non-Iranian sources until much later. Until when exactly?

Since comparatively little has been written about the re-emergence of factual history on the Iranian mental horizon and the consequent dissolution of the fictitious substitute, opinions differ about this phenomenon. The shift from the epic to the historic is quite often dated to as late as the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979) which, of course, contributed greatly to the public awareness of pre-Islamic Iran amid its progressive shift from an initial Sasanian preference towards the Achaemenids (for a case study, see Jenkins 2012). Others suggest that this historical awakening preceded the Pahlavis by a century and occurred during the early Qajar period, during which time the reigning dynasty indulged in several aspects of the pre-Islamic heritage, or at least what it regarded as such. Obviously, one can see different stages here, rather than an instant change.

An early phase of this movement witnessed the culmination of what the poet Malik al-Shu‘arā Bahār would later call the *bāzgasht-i adabī*, a return to the pure and expressive Persian diction of the early Persian classics, such as Firdawsī, Farrukhī and Manūčihri. In art the same movement is reflected by the rock reliefs of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shah, virtually the first ones since the Sasanians, as well as his monumental portraiture, in which he posed as a true heir of the Achaemenids, and his narrative imagery which showed him disguised as the ancient hero Rustam (Luft 2001, 31–49). This early Qajar revivalism was highly intuitive as it lacked an institutional background and even specific historical periods of preference. Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shah, ‘Abbās Mīrzā, and their courtiers aimed to suggest the oldness of Persian grandeur by broadly referring to earlier periods, be that the Achaemenid, the Sasanian, the Ghaznavid, or even the Safavid eras (Szántó 2012, 161–173). Despite its unfocused view, the early Qajar period might have been the first modern instance when the pre-Islamic was conflated with the national. Indeed, we see that illustrations of ancient Persian kings throughout the 19th century were depicted according to the conventions of the Faṭḥ ‘Alī era.

The freezing of the “Faṭḥ ‘Alī image” into an icon not only made it a perpetual monument of the ruling dynasty but it also commemorated the shah as the first Iranian ruler who self-consciously embodied Iranian history to make the country aware and proud of its own antiquity.

Throughout this enduring period of resurgence, historical consciousness was characterized by the coexistence of, and conflict between, traditionalist and modern nationalist views. Its ideological overburden remains a constant feature, yet



Figure 2. Ustād Sattār: The court of King Firidūn. From a lithographed edition of the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī, Tabriz, 1275 H/1858 CE (after Marzolph 2006, 10).

while during Fath ‘Alī Shah’s reign history was shaped almost single-handedly by the royal court, by the Pahlavi era a vast network of institutions had come into being, far exceeding the national level, to serve the same goal. Although the motivations changed relatively little, the movement that began as a literary-cultural one, by degrees had clearly developed into a scientific one.

But how and when did the turning point between traditional antiquarianism and modern archaeology take place, when it comes to the monuments of pre-Islamic Iran? It seems likely that Fars province proved to be yet again the cradle of nation-building, as during the ancient Persian empires, and it was precisely the relics of these empires which inspired the change. Of course, the monuments of Fars had attracted many visitors throughout the intermediate centuries and some of them had left their inscribed comments on the stones (Melikian-Chirvani 1971). But after the Buyid period all sense of historical continuity seems to have vanished, even if reference to the “heirloom to the Realm of Solomon” frequently recurred in the local princely titles of Fars. The first Iranians who regarded the ruins as historical monuments were local reformists during the mid-Qajar period. Influenced by a growing number of western visitors, their publications, and some thirst for treasure, the reform-minded governor and son of Crown-Prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā, Mu’tamid al-Dawla Farhād Mīrzā (1818–1888), ordered the digging out of the Hall of the Hundred Columns in Persepolis in 1876–1877, without finding the treasures he was looking for (Mousavi 2012, 155; Scarce 2006, 243; for a similar earlier attempt by Fath ‘Alī Shah, see Fasā’ī 1972, 141–142). Somewhat later, Sayyid Hāj Ḥasan Fasā’ī (1821–1918) mentioned briefly the

monuments of Persepolis in his *Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī* (written in 1887, first published in 1896; Fasā'ī 1972, 141–142) without any detail. Mu'tamid al-Dawla, on his part, was well-read in English and had a particular interest in geography. He may also have known Franz Stolze's book, *Persepolis* (1882). His curiosity led him to translate William Pinnock's *Comprehensive System of Modern Geography* (1835), under the title *Jām-i Jam* (1870). Ḥasan Fasā'ī also worked under his auspices and on his behalf. Yet, neither Farhād Mirzā nor Ḥasan Fasā'ī were particularly interested in the history of pre-Islamic Fars, though the antiquity of their homeland they took for granted and took in it much pride. Farhād Mirzā's position is best shown by his firm prohibition of Stolze and his colleague Friedrich Carl Andreas doing excavations on the site when he learned that they would ask for some of the finds in exchange (Mousavi 2012, 144).

Furṣat al-Dawla: Antiquity, visual culture and archaeology

It was in this milieu that Furṣat al-Dawla had begun his career. Having descended from a family of learned men, he received a traditional Muslim education, but he was also keen on mastering various branches of the visual arts and music, as well as modern scholarship, including life sciences (Kasheff 1999, 100–101). His pursuit of knowledge made him receptive to diverse influences: he made a study trip to India (Furṣat al-Dawla 1904b), and in Iran he learned from Indian Parsi emissaries with the same enthusiasm as he did from European engineers or linguists. The latter, in turn, counted on his traditional erudition and local expertise for their own interests, and this mutual reliance set a precedent for later cooperation between local and foreign scholars. One can still discern the tripolarity of foreign direct investment, modern scientific research, and traditional polymathism at work in Iranian field of archaeology of the late 20th century, with artist-scholars, such as Akbar Tajvidī (1973, 200–201) or Nūshīndukht Nafisī (2001, 45–48), acting as intermediaries between local and international audiences on the one hand, and scholarly and non-scholarly audiences on the other.

Furṣat al-Dawla's skills in draughtsmanship enabled him to visually depict the monuments besides describing them, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of his most popular work, the *Āthār-i 'Ajam*, turning it into a powerful Gesamtkunstwerk and a veritable eye-opener. Indeed, it has been argued that the pre-Islamic imagery which proliferated in late 19th-century Iran across a variety of art forms was directly inspired by the drawings in the *Āthār-i 'Ajam* (Scarce 2006, 243–244). However, a great deal of this revivalist imagery in fact predates Furṣat al-Dawla's book and this prompts us to situate Furṣat al-Dawla and his "scientific" visualization of ancient Iran in a wider context. In order to evaluate the growing role of images—both drawings and photographs—in the process that was intended to catalyse an objective transfer of knowledge about ancient Iran during the 19th century, one has to survey the illustrations of early Iranian printed books. While this may lead us away from archaeology in its closest sense, it provides an insight into the then current ideas about antiquity which provided the ground for the shaping of modern Iranian archaeology. Leafing through the 19th-century lithographed editions of the *Shāhnāma* (Marzolph 2001; 2006), a gradual appearance of pre-Islamic motifs and, somewhat later, accurate depictions of pre-Islamic monuments, can be noticed. Although, as we have seen

above, the standard image of the king or hero continued to be modelled after the normative royal imagery of Fath ‘Alī Shah, by degrees a departure can be observed in the treatment of certain figures: one by one they began to take up historicized features. The first person to appear refashioned is Zarathustra. As early as the 1846 Mumbai edition of the *Shāhnāma*, he is depicted as a radiant apparition from pre-Islamic Iran confronting dramatically the usual “Qajar” group of spectators (Marzolph 2006, 228).

Zarathustra is the only such figure in the whole volume, and its glowing burst into the scene makes it a visual highlight, outshining even the king: in fact, Zarathustra is the most forward-looking figure in the entire book, strangely but precisely because of his intentional ancientness. Enclosed into the epic archaism of the *Book of Kings*, Zarathustra appears to herald the arrival of a new vision of Iranian antiquity. Bombay, the main hub of Iranian book production of the time, was concurrently becoming the economic centre of the Parsi community and well-to-do Zoroastrians were obviously the driving force behind this revivalism. For Zoroastrian viewers at least, the image could well be read as the modern icon of their restored prestige. As in the era of Gushtāsp, Zarathustra appears prepared to enlighten the Persian nation once again. Having been among the most avid, but not uncritical, readers of the *Shāhnāma* in India, Zoroastrians naturally demanded special treatment for their prophet in the otherwise standard pictorial cycle. That said, Zarathustra seems not to be an accurate



Figure 3. Unknown draughtsman: Meeting of the Prophet Zarathustra and King Gushtāsp. From a lithographed edition of the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī, Mumbai, 1262 H/1846 CE (after Marzolph 2006, 228).

copy of any pre-Islamic representation of the prophet, but a composite recreation of several ancient images, including depictions of rock reliefs. Later on, other key figures of the Zoroastrian tradition, such as Jamshīd, Firīdūn, Gushtāsp, and Ardashīr, also assumed historicized physiognomies, “liberated,” and kept aloof from the uniform “Qajar” crowd where even royals remained mere multiplications of the Faḥ ‘Alī Shah image until the 20th century.

This Zoroastrian influence, based on historical accounts of the community such as the *Qiṣṣa-yi Sanjān* of 1600 and its derivatives (Cereti 1991, 91–94), clearly left its mark on Iran itself as well. The *Āthār-i ‘Ajām* was originally commissioned by the chief representative of the Indian Parsis in Tehran, Manekji Linji Hataria (1813–1890; Furṣat al-Dawla 1894–1897, 2–3; Grigor 2010, 57–58). Hataria requested a thorough investigation, including architectural measurements and geodesic survey, of Iran’s presumed Zoroastrian heritage. The original Parsi intentions are still evident in the book, although Hataria died before Mīrzā Mohammad Naṣīr could complete his work and the latter would resume writing on a governmental initiative. For instance, he attributes several historical monuments to Gushtāsp (Vishtaspa), the quasi-legendary king who first converted to Zoroastrianism. The buildings or sites he associates with Gushtāsp include Firūzābād and Sarvistān (Furṣat al-Dawla 1894–1897, 81–83): these sites are now considered to be Sasanian or even Islamic (Bier 1986), but European scholars of the late-nineteenth century, such as Jane Dieulafoy, still championed their Achaemenid origin (Dieulafoy 1887, 470). Furṣat al-Dawla followed Zoroastrian desideratum when he attempted to correct Firdawsī’s rather negative image of such heroes as Gushtāsp but, on the other hand, he was ready to incorporate European perceptions as well. He proposed a chronology long enough to accommodate every relevant figure. According to him, all the major sites of ancient Fars were originally built by the Pīshdādian kings; then these were totally destroyed by the deluge caused by Jamshīd’s vainglory. Restoration was the work of the Zoroastrian Kayānids (= Achaemenids) about 5000 years after Adam, until Iskandar Rūmī wreaked new destruction 9281 years after Adam (Furṣat al-Dawla 1894–1897, 111). This time restoration tasks were undertaken by Ardashīr and his dynasty.

From the corrupt and violent Gushtāsp of the *Shāhnāma*, Furṣat al-Dawla created a great builder who, moreover, reunited his people by giving them a new faith, and who became the progenitor of the Iranian state. Furṣat al-Dawla struggled to come to terms with all the different views, and in his treatises on ancient Iran he never failed to admit how little he knew about his subject (Furṣat al-Dawla 1904a, 2–5). He hints on his helplessness with regard to Cyrus (Furṣat al-Dawla 1894–1897, 232–234) and remembers how much amazement it caused when he came across the names Darius and Xerxes for the first time in Friedrich von Spiegel’s *Altpersische Keilinschriften* (1862, new edition 1881; Furṣat al-Dawla 1894–1897, 153). Elsewhere he also reports about the condemnation of his research by devout Muslims in Bushehr, to whom he retorted with the *ḥadīth*: “knowledge is better than ignorance” (Furṣat al-Dawla 1904a, 71). Marcel and Jane Dieulafoy’s ongoing work in Susa (*L’Acropole de Suse*, published in 1891–1893; Nasiri-Moghaddam 2004, 347–349) could not yet, perhaps fortunately, reach him and cause further confusion.

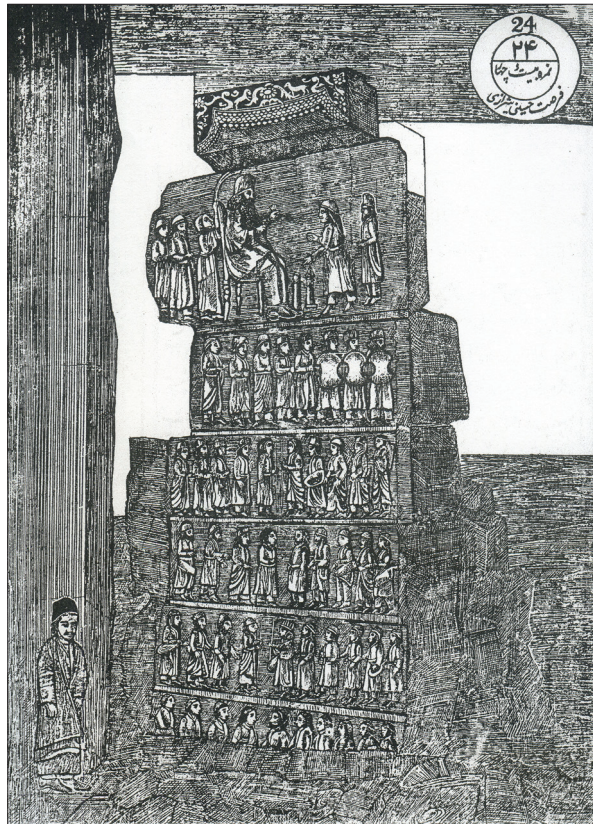


Figure 4. Mīrzā Muḥammad Naṣīr Furṣat al-Dawla: The ruins of a gate at Takht-i Jamshīd. *Āthār-i ‘Ajam*, Bombay, 1312–1315 H/1894–1897 CE (plate 23).

As we evaluate the archaeological work of the Qajar period we can recognize the role of *Āthār-i ‘Ajam* as a treatise which for the first time attempts to assess the built vestiges themselves and translate European perceptions of them to Iranian audiences. At the time of writing, *Āthār-i ‘Ajam* represented a novel approach to historical monuments in its aim to create a canonical series of representative works of art and describe and visually depict them in a comprehensive way. Its author limits the discussion to Southern Iran, and within it Fars, which is supplemented with certain other areas of “‘Ajam,” such as Kirmānshāh and even Ktesiphon, i.e., centres of Ancient Iran visited by Furṣat al-Dawla himself. He does not geographically or temporally define “‘Ajam,” which nevertheless he uses as a classicizing term for Persia, a notion reinforced by the usage of the ancient name “Ray” for Tehran, the actual capital of Iran. Nor does he reserve “āthār” for ruins or works of art: instead, he includes in his discussion diverse kinds of physical remains from the past, such as ancient scripts (cuneiform, Greek) and languages (Old Persian). Given that his fieldwork revealed a plethora of unknown vestiges and information, his understanding of monuments is more fluid and less restrictive than Miḥtaḥ al-Mulḥ’s abstract definition, quoted above. Taking a neutral position between Jamshīd and Darius, he also leaves open the question of their identity, allowing Iranian audiences to familiarize themselves with the re-emerging

historical personages. His command of Old Persian had developed over the years, prompting him to write repeatedly on the subject (Furṣat al-Dawla 1904a, 2–5).

Despite difficulties, the pre-Islamic imagery of Gushtāsp and Jamshīd had gained wide currency in Iran even before Furṣat al-Dawla embarked on his work, as shown by book illustrations and numerous other portable objects in other genres. The forced identification of Darius with Jamshīd was even more widespread than Gushtāsp’s visual linkage to pre-Islamic representations (for the latter, see Mostafawy—Siebenmorgen 2010, 74, fig. 78). Persepolis has been known in Iran alternatively as Takht-i Jamshīd and Takht-i Sulaymān for centuries: the geographer Istakhrī proposed a tentative equation of Jamshīd and Sulaymān in his *Masālik al-Mamālik* (1995, 109) as early as the 10th century. Nearly a millennium later, Furṣat al-Dawla made his own novel compromise by supposing that although what we can see in Persepolis was built by Gushtāsp, Darius, and Xerxes (whom the author identifies as Esfandiyār), all this was done in commemoration of Jamshīd, i. e., their pre-Diluvial ancestor and the original builder of the site, which (made ca. 5000 years before now) was totally destroyed (Furṣat al-Dawla 1322/1904, 152–155). While he left open the question whether the kings depicted on the Persepolitan reliefs are the Achaemenids or their predecessors



Figure 5. Ustād Muṣṭafā: The court of King Jamshīd. From a lithographed edition of the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī, Tehran, 1307 H/1889 CE (after Marzolph 2006, 10).



Figure 6. Ustād Muṣṭafā: The court of King Ardashīr. From a lithographed edition of the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī, Tehran, 1307 H/1889 CE (after Marzolph 2006, 275).

(identifying them prudently only as “sultans of ‘Ajam”), the late-Qajar public readily accepted them as depictions of Jamshīd, whether commissioned by Jamshīd himself or by one of his grateful successors.

Paradoxically, growing awareness of European scholarship in Achaemenid studies did not lead to Cyrus’s and Darius’s immediate rehabilitation as historical figures. Instead, reports about Darius initially only strengthened Jamshīd’s purported identity, while Cyrus would remain relatively unknown in Iran until much later. The earliest lithographed *Shāhnāma* which shows the visual equation of Jamshīd with the Darius reliefs is an 1889 Tehran edition, the illustrations of which are made by a certain Muṣṭafā seven years ahead of the *Āthār-i ‘Ajam*.

Like most Qajar-era lithographed *Shāhnāmas*, the opening illustration in this edition is the Jamshīd image (after the obligatory Sultan Maḥmūd), which already shows the previously mentioned tendency of selective historicism. Although most of the enthronement scenes still conform to what can be termed as the “Fath ‘Alī type,” certain royal figures depart from this canon. In addition to Jamshīd, two alleged restorers of statehood and religion, namely Firīdūn and Ardashīr, also deserved “ancient” portraits.

Firīdūn’s portrait was made after an unidentified Sasanian coin, while that of Ardashīr utilizes that king’s authentic issues. This latter is noteworthy as one of the earliest instances when a pre-Islamic visual source was successfully applied to imper-



Figure 7. Tray showing the mythical kings of Iran (King Jamshīd is second on the left from top). Brass, engraved, Isfahan (?), ca. 1900. Budapest, Museum of Applied Arts/Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, inv. no.: 54.38.1. (photograph: Ferenc Balázs © Museum of Applied Arts).

sonate the same character in a later Persian literary source (prefigured in Jalāl al-Dīn Mīrzā 1868). In derived artworks, such as a brass dish in Budapest (Kelényi–Szántó 2010, C. 4.2.21), we see a similar expression of selective historicism.

Of the ten kings around the perimeter of the dish, three are fantasy-images (though no longer in iconic Qajar form), while Tahmūrath, Jamshīd, and Fīrīdūn are inspired by pre-Islamic artworks: Jamshīd by the Persepolitan relief (or, rather, its lithographed depictions) and the two others by coin images as revealed by their profile rendering. Parallels occur in other art forms, such as *qalamkāri* textiles (Mostafawy –Siebenmorgen 2010, 71, fig. 74) and tilework, the latter having been probably the most visible media for public display of this new historicism and national consciousness (Šarīfzāda 2003, 160–162). Beginning with aristocratic residences in the mid-Qajar period, these tile series showing the heroes of ancient Iran (and occasionally also the great men of other countries, such as seen in the Zīāī‘ān House in Shiraz) continued to be produced well into the early Pahlavi era. The Qavām family’s Afīfābād palace in Shiraz showed Achaemenid and Sasanian features in its architecture and decoration as early as 1867. Although the Naranjīstān (1880s), another building belonging to the Qavāms, also displays Sasanian motifs, it is more traditional, hence less archaising, in



Figure 8. King Jamshīd. Polychrome tile from the Mukhtārzāda House. Fasā, Iran, 1346 H/1927 CE (photograph by the author).

architectural outlook (Scarce 2006, 244). The so-called Naqqarakhāna of Fasā (originally Mukhtārzāda House), a more recent monument, was built in 1346 H/1927 CE, or a year earlier (Afšār 1977, 174–177): this early Pahlavi structure mixes a Renaissance Alexander portrait with the Safavid-looking faces of Shahs Ṭahmāsp and ‘Abbās, as well as the ubiquitous Darius-Jamshīd relief-bust, in exactly the same manner as we can see in our earlier examples.

Although Furṣat al-Dawla’s *Āthār-i ‘Ajam* and its drawings earned more fame than any other manifestation of this antiquarian trend, on chronological grounds they cannot claim precedence. Moreover, the fact that numerous *Shāhnāma*-derived themes do not have equivalents in the *Āthār-i ‘Ajam* illustrations proves that the latter were but one aspect of a more complex and widespread late-Qajar revivalist movement. Yet, Furṣat al-Dawla was probably the first to challenge the traditional notions about ancient monuments by describing, depicting, and interpreting them in a concerted effort to uncover the layers of mythology and introduce these vestiges to the wider Iranian public as a worthy subject for scholarly inquiry. In other words, the shift from antiquarianism to archaeology may have taken place on the very pages of this remarkable book.

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