The Politics of the Past: The Representation of the Ancient Empires by Iran's Modern States

Maryam Dezhamkhooy
Leila Papoli-Yazdi

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Foreword

> 'I am undoubtedly in a heritage environment, but the past is not easily separated from my ongoing experience' (Shanks 2012: 14).

Learning about the Middle East, one of the most common images of the region are the ones depicting violence. Both local and global media outlets are replete with the images of injured bodies, heads cut-off by ISIS and mourning women; all with a very familiar label attached to them: from the Middle East. It seems that the modern propaganda is deeply ignoring the other side of the people's lives, which involve the everyday life, and cultural plurality.

The history of the region is saturated by the male tyrants killing the enemies. According to these pictures, the ancient kings' images are being reproduced as a symbol of modern power structures. Though frankly, the ancient kings' image has two coincided sides, a powerful man who protects the nation and simultaneously, a vulnerable figure who should be protected from his enemies.

Such a long compositional grammar of history with an emphasis on king and dominant power could not be equilibrated even after pioneer antiquarians and archaeologists began to experience it objectively. Focusing on palaces, battlefields and administrative centers by such antiquarian archaeology only reinforced the political nationalistic discourse needed by new born states in the Middle East after the First World War. As a result, the recent recurring violence in the region is always metaphorically dealing with ancient emperors and kings; Saddam Hussein compared himself with *Assyrian* emperors during Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) while the presidents and kings of modern Iran are trying to present themselves as the grandchildren of *Cyrus II*, *Darius I* (*Achaemenid* kings) or powerful holy Muslim Caliphs. History in Middle East is the weapon for politicians who call themselves the fathers of all the nation, in purpose of referring to a bountiful past, glorious duties of kings and absolute innocence against real enemies of the territory.

Two ancient empires, *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian*, whose territories extended from current Pakistan to Syria, have mostly been the objects of the modern propaganda. For the contemporary governments in the region, the extended territories of these empires, as well as their offensive tendencies have made an allegorical field for propaganda, justifying dictatorship and power centralization.

Obviously, the reality of life in historical and modern Middle East is much more different from its representation in the mainstream media and conventional history. Considering the real lives of ordinary people, like all over the world the region's history in fact has been created by ordinary men and women, children, slaves, workers, homosexuals, disabled people, minorities and all the people whom the politicians; hence, kings and power structures are only a part of. Though, the bitter reality is that propaganda and media have gradually reduced such diverse voices merely to the monologue of kings. Criticizing this process (and point of view) is the key component of this book.

The first and main premise that this book rests upon is that the fabricated history is a reduced one and reality is that the diverse groups of human beings and pluralities have been neglected in such a political narrative. The second premise is that the archaeology, both as an academic discipline and also as a political action has accompanied the politicians en route to promoting a monologist narrative of history with nationalism as its dominant theme. Critical approach can unmask what has been intentionally disguised in the most prevalent formal narrative. Driven by this aim, authors, both female indigenous Iranian archaeologists, endeavor to examine the constitution of archaeological past of the region by modern states. Contextualising their own professional experience, the authors attempt to outline some principles, including ethics, that can help transecnd official history, in fact, the commonly overlooked ones. This book is more about the deconstruction of accepted narratives and aims to present a reinterpretation of history of domination through using cultural material and outside the nationalism framework.

The book includes five chapters, which are all on the critique of dominant narrative of political history. Chapters one and four go through the details of modern states' attitudes toward past material remains, whereas chapters two and three try to put forward alternative interpretations of empire remains. However, each chapter can also be read separately just as if they are independent articles. Indeed, the notions of chapters two and three are accompanied by an artistic rhetoric and alternate narratives. In these chapters, the reader is invited to join the authors to go beyond the media-narrated version of the history of ancient empires of the Near East, *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* Empires, and speculate and visualize the histories which 'could' have occurred.

Chapter five puts forward the challenges and dillemas of practicing archaeology in the Middle East. Briefly, it contests the conventional ways of doing archaeology advocating

the more contextualised types of archaeologies. To consider the localities, minorities and also ignored episodes of past and its materialities can charecterize more engaged archaeologies.

Chapter 1

Governments, Archaeologists, and the Lasting Remains of Ancient Empires in the Middle East

Introduction: identity crisis in the modern Middle East

The highly unanticipated independence referendum of Kurdistan Region on 25th September 2017 shocked the global political sphere. The news was quickly spread online and stunned the geopolitical neighbors of Iraq. To the people of the Middle East, it was obvious for years that some *Kurd* parties had struggled and had been claiming to gain an independent ethnical and national identity. But is the archeological side of such claims of any importance to those eager to follow the changes in the region? Were the archaeologists working in the region aware of the cconsequences of their investigations? Did they think about the possible misunderstanding or misuse of the results of their investigations? Have they possibly imposed contemporary identities on the archaeological sites and findings consciously or unconsciously?

To reply to such questions, it is necessary to know that during the last decade, the Kurdistan Regional Government has invited foreign archaeologists and invested a considerable budget in conserving the monuments and sites. Iranian, Greek, German and other foreign teams have divided Kurdistan Region into archaeological research sections. Just a simple search on Google would display plenty of results, a huge proportion of which simply include promotional and vague content and titles such as '150 new archaeological sites found in Iraqi Kurdistan' (The Archaeology News Network 2016) or 'Iraqi Kurdistan site reveals evolution towards the first cities' (The University of Alabama 2016).

Scrutinizing the point, the authors briefly discuss a research published in 2015. The project was supported by Harvard University (Kopanias *et al.* 2015) and is accessible as an Open Access content. The report mentions 52 different archaeological, conservation, survey and excavation and museum projects. According to the report,

this huge project whose completion took about five years, is a methodological and chronological mixture of different approaches, time periods and sites; from mosques to *Assyrian* graves. Only a glimpse of the contents of the project shows that almost all the provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan*,* namely *Deyhuk,* Sulaymaniyah and Erbil have been surveyed. Indeed, each of these provinces have a Department of *Antiquities* which are all under the supervision of the Central Department of Antiquities of Kurdistan.

The introductory section of the report written by *Mala Awat,* the general director of Department of Antiquities of Kurdistan, indicates that 'Kurdistan has become one of the most important areas of archaeological research in the world. In recognition of this, and as one way of taking this further, consideration is being given to creating an independent institute of archaeology able to provide information and data and archaeological expertise to both local and foreign investigators in support of their activities, whose value we fully appreciate, so that future research in Kurdistan will be able to set the record straight and help answer the many questions which continue to exercise the minds of archaeologists' (Awat 2015: iii). Although it has been claimed that promoting a scientific basis for future has been the main target of these archaeological projects in the region, it could be inferred that they follow an explicitly political agenda: 'here is a genuine gap in literature in Kurdish dealing with archaeological research, a circumstance principally due to the fact that until very recently the Kurdish nation did not have its own country. Generating the necessary expertise and experience in the field is now a central priority. In this context, the collaboration of Kurdish and foreign historians and archaeologists has a genuine role to play in promoting scientific research projects systematically designed to investigate the relationship between the Kurdish nation and the people and civilizations of the *Zagros* Mountains and *Mesopotamia*'(Awat 2015: iii).

Despite claiming that the project was conducted in order to answer some academic questions, the entire report implied that no coherent theoretical nor even chronological concern have been adhered to by the archaeologists. In what followed, a vast and diverse collection of the materials including post *Elimate* cities, *Assyrian* graves and Islamic mosques have been redefined under the umbrella of Kurd identity. Seemingly, the main aim is to cover all the geographical context of Kurdistan and also the regions such as *Mosul* and *Kirkuk,* whose political ownership is still a matter of struggle between Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi Government.

Maybe one of the most famous archaeological interventions aimed at building new identities in the entire Middle East is the one attempted by Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell, whose attempts were successful in shaping the Iraqi nation (Adams 2010). However, even that attempt was not very pioneering. Previously, and during the closing decades of 19th century, the Russian and European colonial activities made *Qajarid* Iran to relinquish parts of its territory. Some decades later, *Ottoman* Empire was dissolved into fourteen countries as a consequence of an agreement known as Sykes-

Picot. Therefore, the decades between the two World Wars observed a new political order installed in the Middle East with every nation suffering from identity crisis.

Concentrating on the newly derived identities of the Middle East, in this chapter we consider the role of archaeology in constitution of identities in the region. Critically, among the major issues of the Middle East are identity problems (Maalouf 2001). Obviously, to build new countries, a national identity is supposed to be identified and indeed, this new identity is responsible for integrating the diverse identities. For thousands years, the diverse ethnic and religious groups had lived together in the region. But it was during the last two centuries that new identities were slowly built on the ruins of the past, while the mythological past was gradually changed into an archaeological one. To constitute new identities in the Middle East (and also in regions like the Balkans), the current identities of the region is being imposed particularly on historical or even prehistorical sites. The modern governments present their own propagated interpretation of archaeological facts to fill the identity gaps. Even, people believe that these were their direct ancestors who lived in the same place as they live, so the archaeologists are seen as the experts who are excavating the current people's grand grand parents' graves!

According to what mentioned, the chapter will investigate the ethical and professional challenges of archaeology in the Middle East. Do archaeologists consider their ethical responsibilities before accepting a project? To what extent are they aware of the social and political implications of archaeological practice?

Historical background: the rise of nationalism in the Middle East

To reply to above questions, we have to delve deeper into the recent history of the Middle East. Will Durant (1935) has dedicated the first volume of his great eleven-volume book, The Story of Civilization, to the Near East, the volume is named Our Oriental Heritage. The book discusses the 'glory' of the past civilizations of the Near East, namely *Sumer*, Egypt, *Babylonia*, *Assyria*, Judea and Persia. During 19th and 20th centuries, this ideal image of the Near East as the land of the first civilizations, the glorious ones, has been (re)produced several times by orientalists and archaeologist as modern stewards of history.

Prior to the introduction of archaeology to the region, traditional history was the only form of interpreting the past. As a case in point, post-Islamic Iranian historians (such as *Al-Tabari*, *Ibn al-Muqaffa'*) presented historical and mythological information in accordance with *Pahlavi Sasanian* texts (Jaafarian 1997) which were mostly translated to Arabic during the first centuries after the emergence of Islam. Indeed, very few attempts to reach a unified identity can be observed throughout the traditional history. Moreover, the ethnical, folkloric and mythological histories also defined the past and the living world.

Co-occurrence of the pioneering archaeological activities and the rise of modern governments made the traditional history fade gradually, whereas the new interpretation of history was being highly encouraged. The new identities, particularly the concept of modern citizen, justified the existence of the modern borders. In the past, the concept of border was different for the people of the Middle East; borders were usually the territorial ancient ones and since it was a permeable and flexible phenomenon, it was possible to pass through the borders. The new borders, even after a century, are still the theme for endless political challenges in the region given every nation attempts to present its historical superiority. It has to be clarified, though, how the governments and archaeologists claimed strong ties between splendorous remote past and contemporary Middle East, a region far from peace and involved in sporadic bloodsheds. It should be endorsed that some conservative classic researchers reject any direct relationship between the current people of the Middle East and that glorious past (Hanna 2016: 120). They do not recognize current population of the region as the descendants of *Cyrus*, *Sargon* or *Assurbanipal*. On the contrary, these are the modern governments of the region which are trying to construct a bridge between the past and the present.

The aim of this book is to explain how the material remains of the remote past make a path for the governments to identify themselves as the deserving successors of ancient kings. 2500th anniversary of *Cyrus* reign celebrated by *Mohammad Reza Shah* of Iran as well as the commemoration of *Assurbanipal* by Saddam Hussein who was desperate to depict himself as the heir to *Babylonian* and *Assyrian* kings' thrones on the billboards, are arguably some endeavours of political figures to resort to using the remote past as a means of nationalism project.

Some scholars consider the first appearance of Iranian nationalism to be in *Qajar* era. Obviously, nationalism which was propagated as the main characteristic of *Pahlavi* monarchy was initially utilized in *Fath-Ali Shah* era (Bausani 1992: 259). The rise of nationalism in Iran coincided with the occupation of northern territories by Russian Army in 19th century (Ajoodani 2016). Although Arabian Nationalism emerged later than its Persian version, it seems that in 20th century and following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, there were some conflicts between these two nationalistic movements. 'In 1930s Pan-Arabism gained greater definition' (Al-Rodhan *et al.* 2011: 74). 'A prominent Pan-Arabism party was the *Baa'th* party, which was founded in 1940s. It espoused Arab unity, socialism and anti-colonialism' (Al-Rodhan *et* al. 2011: 74).

In Iraq, nationalism had already gained relevance before Saddam's reign started. 'In 1933, *Faisal* pronounced his concern regarding the formation of a national identity' (Othman 2017: 72). 'In 1970s, the Iraqi *Baa'th* party had increasingly believed in itself as the only representative of the demands and ambitions of the Arab nation' (Othman 2017: 72). *Baa'th* party, in fact had an objectified program to reintroduce the new country of Iraq based on ancient past. 'Saddam confirmed and supported Iraqi

patriotism claiming the determining role the country had played in the history of the Arab world' (Othman 2017: 71). He 'mentioned pre-Islamic Iraq (Farrokh 2015) and glorified the period as the cradle of the human civilization, praising figures such as *Nebuchadnezzar II* and *Hammurabi*. He spent a significant amount of financial resources for archaeological projects' (Othman 2017: 72).

Such a program was being followed seriously in Egypt by *Gamal Abdul Nasser* who tried to reunite Arabs and made the dichotomy between Arabs and Persians, enflaming anti-Iranism (Flynn 2017). Nasserism 'had a strong appeal in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s' (Neuberger 2006: 521). The Turkish nationalism was also supported by Turk elites of the time in 1920s, though *Kamal Atatürk* rejected Pan-Turkism (Özdogan 2002: 116) and almost competed with the mentioned waves of nationalism in the Middle East (see Hobsbawm 1990).

Iran's first modern state and archaeology: the establishment of laws and the administrative atructure

Although the first contracts of pioneering antiquarians were signed in the last two decades of 19th centuries during *Naser al-Din Shah*'s reign, no administrative was especially adopted to regulate the remained material culture and monuments of the past before *Reza Shah*'s era. Contracts were under the supervision of the king himself and the process of conducting archaeological activities was under the Ministry of Culture and Art.

The lack of a specialized administrative part made a chaos in the excavations, the foreign antiquarians exported the materials from Iran to the Europe and there was no actual law to avoid such actions (Karimloo 2001). The Department of Antiquities which was founded in 1918 under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Art was responsible for evaluating foreign contracts and buying or selling the Antiques. This supervision process evolved into a more modernized and structured one during *Pahlavi* dynasty.

The first *Pahlavi* king, *Reza Shah* (r.1925–1941), faced two influential waves of thought: the traditional religious perspective (Banuazizi and Weiner 1988) and that of the educated nationalists. *Reza Shah* had to satisfy both groups in order to empower his newly-established dynasty. He handed the right for constituting the civil law to the clergymen. The new civil code followed the French model but it also included certain parts of the *Fiqh* (Islamic juridical and civil laws) (Samadi 1997). Also a new commercial code was introduced in 1925 (Riesebrodt 1998). The new Antiquities Law benefited the nationalists and intellectulls, also the establishment of the modern police, municipality and a courthouse was meant to satisfy them.

Reza Shah declared the abolition of the *Qajar* contracts (Keddie 1999). The French missioners' position was undermined and they were gradually replaced by German and American archaeologists. Taking the first aerial photos, Schmidt documented the archaeological sites of Iran. In 1930s, Ernst Herzfeld (Yeroushalmi 2009) started the excavations at Persepolis, known in Iran as *Takht-e Jamshid*. The power structure invested in history, but this time by means of archaeology, aiming to producing idealized history and identity.

Antiquities Law (passed in 1931) (Mohammad Moradi 2003) was a step towards making the Iranian archaeology more governmental. In order to control the sites and the foreign excavations, it mainly focused on the role of the government rather than the experts and the public consciousness. There were some preliminary drafts of a similar law in *Qajar* era, but it seems that it was only seriously discussed in the *Pahlavi* era (Papoli-Yazdi and Garazhian 2012). This law can be seen as one of the first attempts to objectify the subjective mythical past. As Özdogan has discussed the issue in regards to the Ottoman Empire, the traditional perception of the past in many non-western societies 'was less dependent on factual evidence, the facts did not necessarily have to be as concrete as they are in the Western way of thinking' (Özdogan 2002: 113). The law legitimized the conservation and preservation of the ancient objects. Noticeably, the Antiquities Law was in contrast with the Islamic Law, *Fiqh*, which emphasized that the findings from a field belong to the owner of that field. The law insists on the supervision of the Iranian experts on the foreign excavations. It was in parts a translation of the respective Austrian law, and for the first time the Iranian government became responsible for the conservation and preservation of all the antique objects, which were dated up to the end of the *Zand* Dynasty (1751–1794) (Nasiri-Moghaddam 2013). The administrative structure of archaeology in the pre-revolution (pre-1979) Iran was based on a center called Department of Antiquities (Mohammad Moradi 2003: 14) which was later replaced by Center of Archaeological Research.

The government also decided to establish museums and public libraries. For such a project, the French missioners were handed the prerogative. André Godard traveled to Iran in 1929 to build the National Museum of Iran. The French were able to retain their position in the National Museum of Iran until 1960, when André Godard lost his place (Isenstadt and Rizvi 2008). Godard's oversight over the Museum (1928–1960) had resulted in the domination of a history of art and aesthetic perspective throughout the first *Pahlavi* period which was inspired by French school. As reading mute material culture depends entirely on individuals who are in charge and authorities as part of the pyramid of power, the selective view of the French school of museology in the National Museum of Iran resulted in the exclusion of objects deemed 'not beautiful' from exhibitions. Up to the present, the so-called beautiful objects of the great *Persian* Empires are more likely to be exhibited than contemporaneous pottery sherds.

By the rise of governmental institutes such as National Museum and later, the Institute of Archaeology of University of Tehran, the old and traditional history was replaced by new archaeological interpretations which were strongly based on material culture. Archaeological interpretation of past, accompanied by the concept of archaeological site were introduced to Iran in 19th and 20th centuries courtesy of European explorers and archaeologists. The traditional perception of the past can be considered an amalgamation of local histories, folktales, myth and a rich body of traditional historiography which was represented by researchers like *Forsat-al-Dawlah Shirazi* in *Qajar* era.

Archaeological reading opposed somehow indigenous understandings of the past and history. As a science, archaeology has proved itself to be valid, unbiased and evidence-based whereas the local histories were propagated blended with superstition (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009). Also, archaeology bestowed the acquisition of ancient monuments and ruins, redefined as archaeological sites, upon the archaeologists as the eligible government stewards. Hence, the people working on the farms where ancient monuments and sites were usually located lost the ownership on parts of their lands. Even if they had the right to cultivate the farms, they had to report to the government or ask for permission for any kind of intervention. From another viewpoint, the relation between people and the sites reduced. For example, the site called *Takt-e Soleymān*, the throne of Solomon, located in Western *Azerbaijan* province was attributed to Solomon the prophet by the villagers (later known as a religious *Sasanian* center), Persepolis (known as The Throne of *Jamšid,* a mythical king) and graveyards conventionally attributed to *Gabrs* (local word for Zoroastrians) gradually lost their mythical and cult values for the indigenous people.

The growing body of nationalism based on the archaeological findings has lift the emphasis from the diverse local mythological culture and emptied it from its initial tenets. Based on the elucidation of its process, we interpret archaeology as an imported commodity whose agents, both the foreign and the Iranian archaeologists, have practiced nationalism in its most pragmatic sense. The most propagated archaeological materials of the Iranian history have been from the *Sasanian* and the *Achaemenid* eras. The materials from archaeological contexts morphed into the tools of conformity and suppression.

There are no statistical investigations presenting the amount of money invested in archaeological activities during *Pahlavi* era, but it can actually be elucidated that archaeological studies were allocated a considerable proportion of governmental budget. Herzfeld, asked by *Reza Shah*, listed 25 significant sites to register in Iranian National Heritage list (Grigor 2004). Indeed, *Cyrus* and *Darius*, the *Achaemenid* kings, were introduced by Post Islamic historians but attributing the monuments to them was actually a *Pahlavi* phenomenon (see Ghani 2000). The ruins of *Pasargadae* and *Persepolis* were defined as *Cyrus* and *Darius* masterpieces, and *Mohammad Reza Shah*

claimed enthusiastically that Iran is approaching the great civilization (Pahlavi 1976). Both prehistory and historical archaeology paid little attention to indigenous people. The foreign archaeologists who joined Iranians mostly had very limited relationships with Iranian people as well (Negahban 2005).

Deciding to study a site was more of a political decision than an academic attempt to answer scientific questions. The members of Society for National Heritage (*Pirnia, Forūgī, Teymourtash*, etc.), who all were political elites close to *Pahlavi* court, were nationalists whose activities played a key role in Iranian archaeology. A vivid example is Tomb of *Ferdowsi*. The old, traditional tomb was first suggested to be rebuilt by anti-goverment intellectuals. *Aref Qazvini* (1978: 81) wrote about *Ferdowsi* and his impact on Iranian culture while he was regretting the bad condition of the great poet's tomb. In September 1934, Society for National Heritage celebrated the first millennium of *Šāh-nāma*. There, *Ferdowsi* was described as a national icon (Yahaghi 1993). The decision to hold this ceremony was definitely politically-situated. Was it also done to refutethe latest activities of opponents like *Aref*?

Obviously, the governments neither considered the public opinion nor were nor were willing to claim the responsibilities for their policies about the past. One result of such process was a gap between people and the government which finally resulted in a revolution.

Archaeologists and the professional ethics

Despite the popular image of archaeology in public, the discipline is neither about fantasy and excitement, nor treasure hunting. According to McGuire (2008), archaeology is a political action. As a modern phenomenon, the discipline itself was a result of Renaissance (Thomas 2000), hence, doing archaeology is usually very much influenced by contemporary context.

For the Middle Eastern governments, the discipline has functioned as a tool for them to present themselves as a distinctive existence. (see Bourdieu 2013). Contrary to historical data, documents and texts, archaeological materials possess the potential to be exhibited and it encourages the governments to present them as icons; material culture could simply act as showcase objectifying the desired identities. The governments gift these items to their political partners or rivals, borrow them in order to hold local exhibitions and fund the production of historical films. For example, Ahmadinejad's government (2005–2013) borrowed the *Cyrus* Cylinder from British Museum and exhibited it in National Museum of Iran. '*Reza Shah* promoted the ethnic difference of the Iranians from the Arabs and in fact, changed the traditional name of the country from Persia1, to Iran in his international correspondence (Aryan

[1] *Persia* was used by Europeans to refer to the Qajarid Iran but actually among Iranian and other Near Easterners, the world Persia addresses Fars province . For the people living in Iran and local monarchies,

land), to emphasize on their links with the Indo-Europeans, the linguistic group to which the Persian language belongs to' (Chary 2006: 1034).

The instability and chaos perpetually surrounding the Middle East has caused the borders to be changed several times. Fictitious borders have been imposed on people and communities who have continuously enjoyed commercial and cultural partnerships (like the Syrians and Lebanese, the Iraqis and Iranians) for centuries. Sometimes even a single ethnic group has been divided and was forced to accept different nationalities, the best example of which are *Baluch* people who currently hold citizenships of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Modern borders passing through the region are acting like Berlin Wall, not only they are almost impossible to cross, but also they have inflamed ethnic and religious conflicts and struggles.

It should be mentioned that, dividing the people with common roots has intensified a plethora of cultural problems, destroying their lifestyles and traditions. There are some ethnical groups, such as *Baluch* people, whose ancestors' graves are located in the adjacent country. For people believing in spiritual life and the other world, praying for the dead relatives weekly and asking God for putting the souls of their ancestors in peace is a necessity. However, borders act as a rigid political barrier separating them. In such an unstable and critical context, archaeology could easily be misused by governments.

Despite this dark history which has occasionally influenced the life of people worldwide (e.g. the role of Aryan Myth in the Second World War), archaeologists, with some exceptions, usually ignore the political and social implications of their research. Politicians use symbolic interpretations of past to justify suppression, conflicts and wars. In this context, 'an archaeologist is not viewed as a professional studying the ruins, rather as a labourer for the factory of producing the past' (Papoli-Yazdi and Masoudi 2017: 443). 'We should avoid becoming the cultural branch of war machines' (Hamilakis 2009: 57).

McGuire strongly warns archaeologists to be aware of such possible misuses: 'Scholars need to recognize that politics may be a dirty word but that archaeology is a dirty business' (McGuire 2007: 10). He and the other critical archaeologists (see. Arnold 1990) believe that archaeology has the potential to be exploited as a tool for suppression, physical omission and structural violence. Not only in the context of totalitarianism, but also in societies like Greece, Macedonia, China and all around the Middle East (Galaty and Watkinson 2004). 'Archaeologists must remember that giving up the control over the past to politicians will transform the history into a dangerous weapon. Did Ernst Herzfeld, the excavator of Persepolis, know that the site would be used to construct the Iranian Aryan Myth?' (Papoli-Yazdi and Massoudi 2017).

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the country was called 'armed country of Iran'. Reza Shah issued the name Iran as the official name of the country (see Ghani 2000).

But how can the dedicated archaeologists protect this discipline from misuse? The first step is to accept that the archaeological knowledge is politically-situated and archaeological interpretations and materials could be applied to suppress the people. Needless to say that it is impossible to ask all the archaeologists to act as a political activist. The second step is learning to sometimes say NO to authorities who can generate great changes in some cases. Hamilakis, criticizing the military-archaeology complex as part of USA's military, warns against 'the dangers of a de-politicized, professionalized archaeology' (Hamilakis 2009: 56). According to Anne Pyburn (2003: 170), 'it is nice to be in good standing with the national governments where we work, it is not nice to let the local [and national] authorities use the project vehicle to transport political prisoners'. In Iran, a notable example was the disagreement between the government and independent archaeologists during 2500th anniversary of *Cyrus* reign when some Iranian archaeologists declined to cooperate with *Pahlavi* regime and were subsequently arrested (Dezhamkhooy *et al.* 2015). On the other hand, some others were cooperating with the dictator government. Donald Wilber is one of the most well-known figures in the discipline who served as a CIA offical aiding the *Pahlavis*' dictatorship during Iran 1953 Anglo-American coup against *Mosaddegh* national government (Khosravi Nik 2015: 19).

Not only the ethnical groups and local communities, but also the archaeological sites themselves are among the very first victims of political abuse. There are several reports in Iran indicating that archaeological sites are being harmed by both illegal excavators, and extremists. Khazal's Palace in *Khorramshahr* built by an Arab local governor late in *Qajar* era was demolished by a military organization due to its symbolic significance to the identity of local Arab community. Also, both Persepolis and *Pasargadae*, the sites which were subject to heavy propagation by the *Pahlavis*, transformed into a negative heritage after the 1979 revolution (see Chapter four). In Soviet Union, archaeologists had to develop their findings with an emphasis on 'the imposition of Marxist orthodoxy, beginning in 1928,' (Trigger 2006: 574) unilineal evolution.

From a Foucauldian viewpoint, power and knowledge tie deeply together in modern times (Foucault 2012), the mechanisms of power establish effective tools for production and accumulation of knowledge. 'All social actions are situated within specific regimes of power' (Hamilakis 2009: 44). The archaeologists who are aware of the impact of power on their subjectivity and research, in a Foucauldian terminology, are going to resist. Such a resistance would dedicate archaeological investigations to the study of nationalism, mass graves, massacres, homelessness (Harrison and Schofield 2010), etc.

Archaeology is a discipline which can operate against or in favor of dictatorship and prejudices. It can deconstruct and challenge patriarchal violent orders and give voice to the voiceless. It can reinterpret power mechanisms of ancient empires and political structures, as well as criticizing the orthodox readings of materials. Parts of the

material culture which have traditionally been the subject of interest in conventional archaeology have indeed been ideological tools serving suppression and violence. Archaeology can challenge the 'pure beauty' exhibited in museums' showcases.

Why the archaeology of *Persian* empires needs to be deconstructed?

Since opening the doors to archaeology in the last two centuries, the modern archaeological narratives of past have been playing its indirect role in the lives of Middle Easterners. The initial archaeological steps toward shaping the new viewpoints of people were in contrast with the traditional history. Highly supported by nationalist governments, archaeology encouraged people to define themselves according to the past. Conventional interpretations of the *Achaemenids*, *Sasanians*, *Assyrians* and *Babylonians* have provided excuses for mono-vocality and suppression. According to the governments, these monarchs are not merely some names but they are their glorious ancestors, a mirror in which the nations can imagine themselves to be more glorious, victor and distinguished.

There is no end to the narratives and anecdotes related to past empires. They are reborn, re-interpreted and re-consumed permanently and their remains transform into some form of capital in the hands of political structures. Policy makers in the region ambitiously aspire to politicize the past. The material remains of ancient empires do not automatically turn into cultural heritage, despite what's commonly claimed by the governments, The ancient empires are usually propagated as successful models of governance, which is seemingly a means of suppurting and promoting modern states' policies. The ancient remains have even attracted the attention of fundamentalists, terrorists and extremists and has been subject to ideological interpretation, vandalism or trafficking. 'ISIS occupied Palmyra and used coliseum of Palmyra for their performances of violence as a site of execution' (Papoli-Yazdi and Massoudi 2017: 448).

One application of history within the power discourse is the use of historic affairs as a background for current events (Collingwood 1951). Archaeological evidence may be extremely susceptible to manipulation for nationalistic purposes (Kohl 1998: 240). By redefining themselves, both *Pahlavi* and Islamic regimes have invented and presented the historical and archaeological terminology that implied their regimes to be a continuation of the 2500 years of history (Scot Aghai 2011). They highlighted the invention of the first Human Rights Declaration by *Cyrus* (Davaran 2010) and the idea of *Persian* empires being the longest-ruling empires in all of the history.

'Ruins have become the context for propaganda and display of power for the powerful' (Papoli-Yazdi and Massoudi 2017). Archaeology recovered *Sasanian* and *Achaemenid* rock reliefs to reproduce kings as the only ones who could possibly have written and narrated the history. Reliefs and inscriptions have been used to represent the

identity of a warrior/victorious king. No room was left for archaeological sites that primarily consisted of the remains of ordinary people. Very little systematic research has been conducted on political oppositions, women, children, mythical history and ethnic/religious minorities since archaeology was introduced to Iran. Archaeologists interested in these subjects have been gradually sidelined. Is it possible to discuss the histories of ordinary people and social minorities? Can historical archaeology talk about an ordinary woman in *Achaemenid* times, a child in the *Parthian* Empire or the life of a slave in *Sasanian* Iran? What are the alternatives to escape from the dominance of kings over history? To avoid history functioning as a hegemonic discourse, historiography should be fragmented and multi-vocal based on the wide variety of sources it discovers. Such a process results in a better and more comprehensive understanding of history.

The government-oriented archaeology of Iran has resulted in the partial elimination of the cultural diversity and devolve Iranians into uniform and docile bodies. Since a century ago, national history derived from archaeological material is being applied with purpose of suppressing the diversity. The school books being written in *Tehran* representing official political history for the African origin people of the south, Turks and Turkmens of north and Baluch and *Khorasanis* of the east. Very recently, the people of *Zahedan*, one of the main centres of *Sistani, Baluch* and *Sikh* communities in south eastern Iran, attempted to show their dissatisfaction with the material exhibited in the Regional Museum of South-eastern, focused mostly on the prehistory and history of northern *Sistan*. Fortunately, the local authorities have decided not only to change the internal design and the contents of showcases, but also revise the basic concepts of museum.

However, the archaeologists who stand against nationalism can hardly receive a position in academia or start their own projects. The same can be said about the historians who have dedicated their research to critical readings of the contemporary past (see. Dezhamkhooy *et al.* 2015). Such policies also put pressure on publications; an example is the book *Da* written by *Zahra Hosseini,* a Persian from *Khuzestan* on Iran-Iraq war which had tens of thousands of copies published by state publications. On the other hand, *Ghazi Rabihavi,* an Arab from *Khuzestan* could not publish most of his monographs in Iran and was finally forced to immigrate. For both current and *Pahlavi* political structures, there is only one legitimate narrative of every event deserving to be published; all other narratives are condemned to remain unheard. For this aim, the Ministry of Culture in *Pahlavi* era and later, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Islamic Development Organization are responsible for censoring the narratives, books, films, theaters and music tracks.

Indeed, the history of great empires suffers from a univocal masculine narrative. The tipping point is that very few attempts have been made to make a feminist or gender-involved narrative of *Persian* empires. The history of *Persian* empires is a patriarchally

biased collection of masculine values, war stories and propaganda (see. Burton 1992). Deciding on the topic of the manuscript, the authors, both female Iranian archaeologists who had experienced the bitter taste of suppression of narratives in a patriarchal context, decided to walk toward a 'feminist narratology' (Lanser 1986). How would female archaeologists tell the story of the kings? Is there any remaining window to open and enjoy the light of a new narration? How can we deconstruct such a solid history produced by dominant patriarchy and reproduced by well-off, urbanized, educated, powerful, white men? Is there a method to recreate the history based on neglected stories and voices of archaeologists who desire not to be impelled by prevalent narratives? Those who mainly concentrate on the women, slaves, defeated soldiers, children, workers, religious and ethnic minorities and refugees?

Deconstruction is an appropriate method to break down the history of domination. It can help not only intellectuals, but also the broader public to gain more awareness about historical metanarratives. There can be many other alternative interpretations of history in which every community and marginal group can play its own role. Deconstruction does not change structures from the outside, but rather acts from the inside. Deconstruction borrows strategic and economic resources from the very structure itself (Derrida 1998). According to Derrida, deconstruction is neither negative nor destructive (Critchely 2000). It can be considered as a double reading of a text from its very inside. Derrida emphasizes that it helps reading the reapeating conventional dualities (Critchely 2000). Hence, deconstruction puts an alteration inside the text and helps to see the text from another point of view, but it is not concerned with reversing the dualities as the logic of text. Accordingly, we try to deconstruct the patriarchal nationalistic archaeological practice but it doesn't imply that the authors necessarily pursue a feminine narrative. But 'deconstruction is hyper-politicizing in following paths and codes which are clearly not traditional, it permits us to think the political (Derrida 1996: 87). Thus, it gives us the chance of approaching the point zero where there is no governmental history constructed (see chapter five) and opening up the possibility of introducing new narratives regarding histories of the others who have been silenced in conventional histories. Rhetorically, point zero emphasizes on the beginning of dialogue with history, denying the dominant ideology. This book attempts to do this: to approach the point zero.

Chapter 2

Take Your Feet off Me! *Achaemenids* Depicted in Reliefs and Inscriptions

Historical introduction

To have a rational and shrewd understanding of historical processes and events in *Achaemenid* era, it is essential to briefly outline the geographical context of the Iranian Plateau. This region is comprised of different environments (Burke 2009) including plains, deserts and lowlands surrounded by mountains (Heshmati 2013). The two main mountain ranges of the *Zagros* in the south and west, and the *Alborz* in the north delimit it. The lower ranges of *Azerbaijan* (northwestern Iran) and the deserts of *Khorasan* (eastern Iran) separate the central plateau from its adjacent regions. In striking contrast to more marginal regions such as Mesopotamia which lacks natural deposits, the Iranian Plateau possesses abundant mineral resources. On the other hand, Mesopotamia is rich in plants and animals.

Archaeological excavations conducted during the past 120 years attest that in the latter half of the fourth millennium BC (bronze age), the Iranian Plateau experienced large-scale urbanizations in at least three of its major geographical sub-regions, namely, *Khuzestan* in the southwestern lowlands with the city of *Susa*, *Anshan* (present *Tall-e Malyan*) in the central highlands, and *Sistan* in southeastern Iran with *Shahr-e Sokhta* as its center.

Archaeologically, we can trace some roots of the *Achaemenids* back to the *Elam* civilization, chiefly in Khuzestan and Fars, and the *Elamites*, who influenced the sociopolitical structures of the empires that suceeded them. Archaeological studies of settlement pattern hierarchies indicate that the various *Elamite* polities labeled 'Old', 'Middle' and 'Neo-*Elamite*' (2600–539 BC) were state organizations. Ancient texts elucidate their monarchical system of ruling (Carter 1971; Steinkeller 1982).

The socio-political organization included major cities with a variety of temples and villages, and from the Old *Elamite* period onward, existence of clay tablets, seals and bullae insinuate a complex administrative system (Amiet 1966). In *Middle Elamite* times, a scholarly curriculum included both *Babylonian* as the administrative language and *Sumerian* as a scholarly language in an otherwise *Elamite* linguistic environment, demonstrating the complexity of the cultural atmosphere in the second millennium BC (Malayeri 2012). Studies of seals show that various types of economic organizations flourished in *Elam*, including those of private trade (Attinger 1999). These documents, produced by non-governmental merchants and private organizations, hint at a lack of palatial monopolies.

Just before the rise of the *Achaemenids* in the middle of the first millennium BC, the Iranian Plateau consisted of small polities, potentially of different ethnic groups that had been formerly ruled by the *Elamite* kingdom (Kuhrt 1984, 2001; Waters 2004). Material of diversity are representing the vast exchange of material objects and styles during the first half of the first millennium BC (Talai 2009). Studying these commodities sheds light on both the local characteristics and regional levels of craft specialization as well as the extended networks of exchanges managed by local power structures. Prototypical instances of small chiefdoms from the pre-*Achaemenid* era are small but well-protected fortresses of the Iron Age, today located in the modern province of *Hamadan*, such as *Tepe Nush-i Jan*, *Godin Tepe II* and *Baba Jan.*

The *Achaemenids* (550–239 BC) inherited such an ethnically diverse territory that *Persians* were one of the groups with a relatively shallow genealogical and political heritage in this multicultural political landscape. Historians such as Herodotus refer to the *Achaemenids* as consisting of 10 different tribes. Early *Achaemenid* texts such as *the Cyrus* Cylinder specify *Anshan* in *Fars* as the traditional territory of the *Achaemenid* lineage. Possibly, the *Achaemenids* tried to absorb the cultures of these diverse 'others' into a cultural entity of their own. It is assumed that the *Achaemenid* court's ability to manage such diversity was a prerequisite for the establishment of a much larger empire. In the emerging political context, various cultural elements were appropriated from different regions and provinces of the empire and were integrated into a cultural whole. The most famous example of such attempts is well known: the site of Persepolis gives the impression of a museum that borrows some elements of art and architecture from many different regions. These cultural elements were then stitched together in a pastiche-like way.

In this chapter, we focus on the first half of the *Achaemenid* Empire, from the coronation of *Cyrus II* (also known as *Cyrus* the Great; r. 559–530 BC) until *Xerxes I* (485–465 BC). In this time span, the *Achaemenid* Empire was established and went on to experience a number of military victories, a coup, the invasion on the Greek mainland, a defeat in the war against the Greeks, and a number of great construction projects. This was also the period when the empire was expanded to the largest territory in its history,

extending from India to Egypt. It is noteworthy that there only exist very few excavated documents and sites from the *Achaemenid* period that represent everyday life. However, with the publication of the 'Persepolis Fortification Archive', information about court life and implications regarding the quotidian lives of those outside the royal realm is becoming increasingly available (Hallock 1960). Therefore, most of the discussions in this chapter focus on the evidences from palaces, administrative archives and battlefields. We start, though, from a conventional standpoint, and will attempt to establish a new reading of the material remains of glorious *Persians.*

The rise of the *Achaemenid* Empire

The period of *Achaemenid* Empire's establishment around 550 BC is also referred to Iron Age III (Briant 2002; Briant and Boucharlat 2005; Katouzian 2010; Lincoln 2007). According to textual sources, the founder of the *Achaemenid* Empire, *Cyrus II*, was initially the king of *Anshan*, a city today known as *Tall-e Malyan* that is located in south-central Iran. *Anshan* was attested to in *Sumerian* and *Akkadian* texts of the late third millennium BC for the first time (Harper *et al.* 1992; Potts 2005). Traditionally, *Elamite* rulers of the second and first millennia BC adopted the title 'King of *Anshan* and *Susa*.' Later, *Anshan* became the territory of the early *Achaemenids* who were referred to in *Neo-Babylonian* inscriptions as the Kings of *Anshan* (Hansman 1972; Sumner 1974). *Cyrus II* politically exploited the *Elamite* history in order to build authenticity for himself. For the first time and in the ninth year of *Nabonidus*'s reign (547 BC), *Cyrus II* is referred to as the 'King of *Parsu*' (Herzfeld 1935; Potts 2011). The traditions that link *Cyrus* to the *Median* royal house (His mother, *Mandane*, was the daughter of the *Median* king *Astyages* according to Herodotus) may reflect *Cyrus*' own propaganda in his attempts to portray himself as the legitimate *Median* king (Waters 2004), but this could also be due to Herodotus not being highly reliable. Much has been made of these links. Europeans initially took the Greek sources as historical truth and praised Herodotus as the 'first historian'. Another element that pushed this presumed connection between *Cyrus* and the *Median* kingdom into the foreground was European racism and the belief that speakers of Indo-Iranian languages would have been culturally closer to each other than the early *Persians* and *Elamite* speaking groups. Soon after *Cyrus*' death in a battle at the *Syr Darya* in Central Asia, his son *Cambyses* tried to expand the *Achaemenid* territory further. There are no royal inscriptions of *Cyrus*' sons in *Mesopotamia*, *Elam* or *Persia*, so it is uncertain if the title 'King of *Anshan*' was still in use after *Cyrus*' death. If so, its use should be attributed to purely customary reasons. This title is not even used in the *Elamite* version of the *Behistun* Inscription. After *Darius* officially took over the rulership, he used additional and new titles in most inscriptions (Waters 2004).

Extant sources do not document the course of *Cyrus*' progression from the King of *Anshan* to the conqueror of *Media.* Classical authors' confusion bears an authoritative account, and Near Eastern sources reveal little about *Cyrus*' reign prior to the conquest of Media. There is nothing concrete in historical records suggesting that *Cyrus* had

any power beyond the territory that was roughly the equivalent of modern *Fars* before this conquest (Waters 2004). His role as a king, however, seems to have had some genealogical depth, going at least back to his father *Cambyses I* and his grandfather *Cyrus I* both of whom were previously the rulers of *Anshan*. A tribute list from the court of the *Assyrian* king *Assurbanipal* mentions a King *Kurash* who has traditionally been interpreted to be *Cyrus I*. accordi Given the already existing political sturctures, it is understandable that *Cyrus II* and his descendent, *Cambyses II* did not feel the need to immediately change the political structure of an enlarging kingdom. As rulers of the *Elamite* polity of *Anshan*, they kept the already existing economic and social structures intact and utilized these previously developed *Elamite* institutional establishments to their own benefit (Buffelan 1982). The manner in which the Medes and the *Elamites* are depicted in later *Achaemenid* documents and reliefs clearly demonstrates the high status of both of these groups in comparison with other provinces (Cool Root 2002; Shepherd 1961). This is an indicator of a deep cultural rootedness of the *Persians* in the *Elamite* realm (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989). The official language of the *Achaemenid* texts was *Elamite*, and it seems that the scribes were also from *Elamite* territories (Basello 2011). *Achaemenids* also took over the bureaucratic system of the *Elamites*, only to develop and utilize it in a larger scale (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989). Understandably, due to such conditions, many *Elamites* were employed in the administrative and economic apparatus in southwestern Iran during the *Achaemenid* era. According to Mayrhofer (1989), ten percent of the 1900 names in Persepolis texts were *Elamite* and only some isolated names were *Babylonian* (Kent 1944; Lecoq 1997).

Just like *Assyrian* Empire did in the past, the *Achaemenid* Empire kept growing, albeit at a much steadier rate. Interestingly, there words referring to the land were written in Old *Babylonian* letters. For instance, in a letter from governor *Puzur-Numusda* to King *Ibbi-Sin* from the land of *Hamazi* to the Sea of *Magan* (Persian Gulf), and in a letter from *Aradmu to Sulgi* regarding some instructions on taxation (Michalowski 2011). The concept of a king of the country, with country being a notion to signify a geographic entity of larger scale than that of a localized territory, was already being used by *Sargon* (3rd millennium BC) according to a tablet found in the *Ekur* Temple in *Nippur* (Van De Mieroop 2005). *Assyrian* kings called themselves the 'King of the Four Corners', and *Cyrus*, similar to the kings preceding him, claimed that he was the king of the universe (Finkel 2013). The concept of the king of the universe was part of a strong ideological message that insinuated there couldn't possibly exist any 'exterior' to the *Achaemenid* power (Gnoli 1989; Moret and Davy 1970). It is noteworthy that the term 'Iran' was never used to address these lands. As mentioned, one of the special characteristics of the still young empire was its tendency to expand. Acquiring power over former 'universal' empires such as *Assyria* and *Babylonia* made this desire even stronger. Line 20 of the *Cyrus* Cylinder emphasizes this integration of older, and by implication, weaker empires:

> 'I am *Cyrus*, king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of *Babylon*, king of *Sumer* and *Akkad*, king of the four quarters of the world' (Law 2010: 230).

Cyrus II' and *Cambyses* II's polity comprised of vast territories (Figure 1) that were conquered in a minimal span of time. However, they do not seem to have spent much energy on consolidating their newly attached regions into a politically, and in particular, a culturally coherent entity. The 'empire' does not seem to have been more than a loose confederation with a strong military ruler at the helm. In his inscriptions, *Cyrus* does not delimit the territory he ruled under concrete lists of regions, but describes it by using vague concepts such as society, land, or territory (line 36, Cylinder: 'I made peace in *Babylon*'), whereas his previous moniker the King of *Anshan* and *Susa* specifically addresses the importance of a core territory and its vulnerability by showing its composition of different parts. Ideologically, the switch from the titular recognition of a multiplicity of lands and people to a royal title that includes a claim to universal power reveals a major shift in the self-perception of *Cyrus*. Such grandiose titles were not used frequently by the earlier *Elamite* monarchs (Law 2010). Potts (1999) believes that they might have merely been formal titles without a real indication at an interest in potentially endless expansions of political power.

Under *Cyrus II* and *Cambyses II*, the conquered territories were expanded so rapidly that the traditional political structure of *Elamite* origin proved insufficient. Major rebellions after *Cambyses*' death led *Darius* I, a usurper who was genealogically unrelated to the dynasty of *Cyrus II*, to reorganize the empire in a much stricter fashion (Briant 2002). The most important model for this organization was the *Assyrian* structure of provinces (*pihatu* or *pahatu*) installed by *Tiglat Pileser III* in the middle of the 7th century BC. While *Tiglat Pileser III* and his successors had imposed their geographic mosaic of provinces over much of *Mesopotamia* and the *Levant*, the mountainous regions to the east were spared. Over there, tax was collected more sparodically. *Darius I* took this form of government over and applied it to the highly diverse societies of the *Zagros* and far beyond to the East.

It is only from *Darius I's* time onward that we see the emergence of a rigid political organization, including a provincial system. According to *Achaemenid* inscriptions, the empire was comprised of ethnically diverse regions called *deyhu* (Katouzian 2010; Wiesehöfer 2001), each organized under a central power structure which was itself divided into twenty satrapies or provinces (Dandamayev 1999). In spite of numerous studies, the relation between satrapies and *deyhu* is still ambiguous. According to *Darius*' inscriptions, particularly the monumental *Behistun* inscirption that includes a relief depicting the humiliation of his main enemies, the word *deyhu* seems to roughly refer to a territory/country, while satrapy has precise administrative implications. In the *Behistun* inscription, *Darius* names 23 territories/countries as conquered lands. In lines six, seven and eight he lists the names of all the territories that he conquered, all

Figure 1. Map of the Persian *Achaemenid* Empire. Copyright Ian Mladjov.

of which were deemed to have been granted to him by *Ahuramazda*. It is apparent that these *deyhus* were not necessarily administrative entities (Figure 2).

Dandamayev (1996) believes that the number of satrapies is not known exactly but Herodotus mentions there existed 20 of them. He discusses how the division of the empire into satrapies was once precise and flexible enough to adjust to the changes in governmental policies. The 'Persian authorities were only concerned with creating a stable administration and establishing an efficient system for collecting royal taxes' (Dandamayev 1999). However, ancient sources already mention military functions for satrapies (Klinkott 2005: 35-37). Revenues from taxation in particular funded the court, the military as well as for vast building projects. Among these buildings, there also were some non-royal residences. Tablets found in Persepolis, concerned as the administrative archive of Persepolis, emphasize on the financial support for *Elamite* ceremonies and reconstruction of temples, indicating again at the continuation of older cultural traditions in the satrapies (Potts 1999). Indeed, Greek sources do not mention any interference of satraps in local religious affairs whatsoever (Klinkott 2005). Territories which enjoyed autonomy in internal affairs could also be included in the more extensive satrapies. For instance, under *Darius I*, Mesopotamia and all the regions to the west of the Euphrates as far as the border with Egypt, were apportioned between two satrapies called '*Babylonia*' and 'Beyond the River'. The rulers of all these provinces and of autonomous cities were responsible to the satraps of *Babylonia* and Beyond the River (*Transeuphratia* or '*Abar Nahara*' in Aramaean) (Dandamayev 1999).

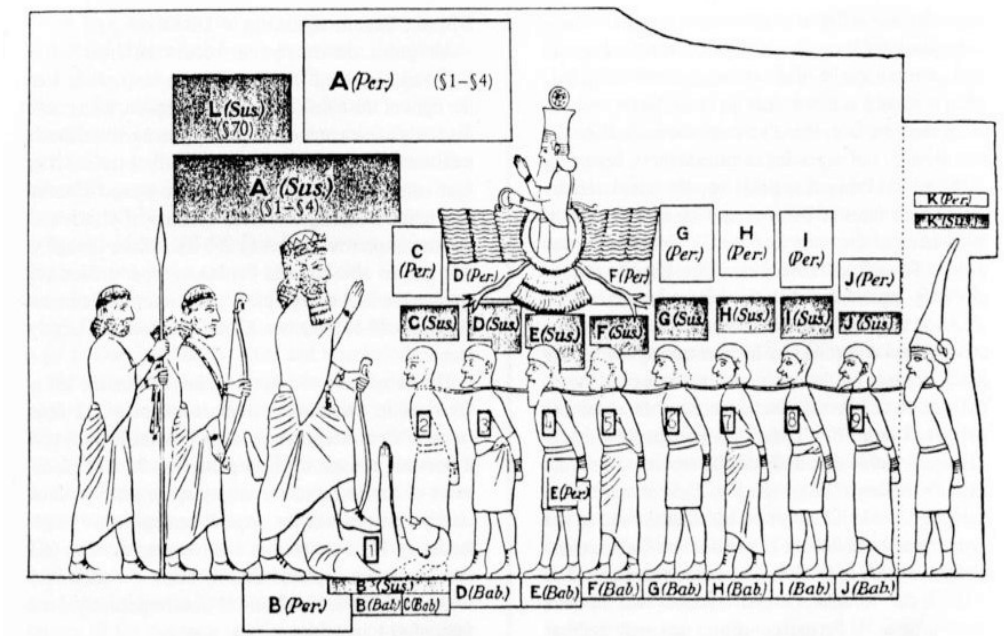

Figure 2. *Behistun* inscription and rock relief (Rawlinson 1846).

Similar to the other satrapies, these included semi-independent *Phoenician* city states and the provinces of *Judah* and *Samaria*.

Achaemenid elites formed an ethno-political pyramid, on top of which were the *Persians*, the *Medes* and the *Elamites* (Cool Root 2002; Torrey 1946). As observed on the relief of Tomb of *Darius*, the inhabitants of other satrapies formed the body of the pyramid. They could not have assumed official authority or political positions of higher ranks. Despite this rigid imperial ideology (Anderson 2002; Tucker and Dennis 2014), state employees were not treated like slaves (Tuplin 1996). According to tablets found in *Persepolis*, individuals working in construction projects received regular salaries while sick people and pregnant female workers had the legal right to leave their jobs (Nashat 2008).

'I': the symbol of the up and coming power structure

Public monuments, temples and religious institutions already existed in the ancient Near East before the formation of early kingdoms and palaces. As far as the Iranian Plateau is concerned, there are well-documented ancient religious buildings in *Elamite* territory (Mourreau 1977; Shenkar 2007), attesting to a close and long-standing relationship between political power and religious structures.

The *Elamite* kings used to declare themselves to be servants of gods and goddesses (Negahban 1991; Rice 2013), showing subservience to religious entities and institutions. In religious contexts, most reliefs were representations of deities rather than the kings (Bahrani 2004). A great example for the relationship between deities and monarchs is found in a historical document, which indeed is the oldest *Elamite* one about the dieties, and includes the *Elamite* version of an alliance between the *Akkadian* king *Naram-Sin* of the 3rd millennium BC and the ruler of *Susa*, *Khita*, drawn up as a loyalty oath imposed by a lord:

> 'Kings swear their oaths upon the *gods*. (As) a king is devoted to (the sun-*god*) *Nahiti*, (as) a king is obedient to [the god] *Inshushinak*, (as) a king is faithful (?) to *Siashum*, *Napir* and *Narunde* [all *Elamite* gods, L.P.], I will allow no falsehood against *Akkade* in *Elam*. My general shall protect this treaty against disloyalty' (Foster 2015: 172).

In contrast to the extant reliefs of the *Achaemenid* period on which no female bodies are depicted, there are several examples of women in the form of sculptures (e.g. the body of the queen *Napirasu*, now in the Louvre Museum), reliefs (e.g. at *Eshkaft-e Salman*), and other materials (e.g. a silver cup in the National Museum of Iran), most of which are interpreted to be female deities. Gods and goddesses were depicted sitting on chairs with the coiled serpents motifs (Jalilvand Sadafi 2012), and they appear on elaborate seals in small-scale motifs, which were also reproduced in large-scale statues in the temples (Bär 2003). These rulers, who perceived themselves to be servants of

gods and goddesses, ordered huge temple constructions and preservation projects. The Čogā Zanbīl Ziggurat and the vast religious complex surrounding it, which were built by King *Untash-Napirisha* during the Middle *Elamite* period in the 13th century BC, are the best example of such projects. Its site includes a complex of places of worship and temples for both *Elamite* and *Mesopotamian* gods (Harper *et al.* 1992; Potts 1999). Kings also presented valuable materials such as ivory, silver, gold and lapis lazuli to the Temple of the god *Inshushinak* in *Susa* (Potts 1999). The distance between *Elamite* kings and their gods and goddesses is great. In imagery, the king usually appears in front of the god, but not too close. Sometimes a dividing element, such as a footstool or a small table, separates the god from the king. Such a distance is also observed in the titles used for the kings:

> '*Atahoshu*, The Shepherd of The People of *Susa* and *Atahoshu,* the Favorite Servant of *Inshushinak*' (Potts 1999: 275).

Materially speaking, there is always an extra 'gap' between a deity and the *Elamite* king. This order of the world would change during the *Achaemenid* period. After the invasion of *Babylonia* in October of 539 BC, and as a foreigner to *Mesopotamia*, the new *Achaemenid* king *Cyrus* needed the support of the local *Babylonian* clergy, and therefore, their gods in order to be accepted by the masses and the religious institutions. This was facilitated by the fact that *Nabonidus*, the last king of the ruling *Neo-Babylonian* dynasty, had estranged the priests of the main god *Marduk* in Babylon. It seems that as a Persian pioneer, *Cyrus* also tried to stabilize his unknown tribe's political position by depicting himself as the protector of Babylonia and their gods rather than a conqueror. Thus, his relationship was in the first place a hegemonic and not an imperialist one. He treated those Mesopotamian old historical civilizations respectfully and with caution. In the best known of his inscriptions, *Cyrus* legitimizes his power through references to the two main *Babylonian* gods, *Marduk* and *Nabu*. He speaks on behalf of *Marduk* and in the end, he promises to dedicate his efforts to the god's satisfaction.

> 'He [the god *Marduk*] inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand *Cyrus*, king of the city of *Anshan*, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.... I am *Cyrus,* king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of *Babylon*, king of *Sumer* and *Akkad*, king of the four quarters of the world, son of *Cambyses*, the great king, king of the city of *Anshan,* grandson of *Cyrus*, the great king, king of the [ci]ty of *Anshan*, descendant of *Teispes,* the great king, king of the city of *Anshan*, the perpetual seed of kingship, whose reign *Bel (Marduk*) and *Nabu* love, and with whose kingship, to their joy, they concern themselves. When I went as harbinger of peace in[t]o Babylon, I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. *Marduk,* the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe' (Finkel 2013: line 23).

The text is remarkable for its switch from a third person auctorial perspective in which an external narrator seems to look onto what *Marduk* is doing to the first person 'I' of *Cyrus*. The cosmic view at the beginning relates the story from an omniscient point of view, giving the impression that historical events were carefully watched over and controlled by the main god *Marduk*. This unrelenting unfolding of events is then suddenly changed to the voice of an active and powerful king who fulfills the unstoppable course of events.

While *Assyrian* kings have utilized similar rhetoric, the ruler's use of 'I' on the Iranian Plateau gained prominence as a formal pattern of referring to the ruler's self during the reign of *Cyrus II*. *Cyrus*, in fact, granted himself the position of a superhuman in his cylinder. In lines 29 and 30 he says:

> 'From every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit [remote] districts (and) the kings of the land of *Amurru* who live in tents, all of them, brought their weighty tribute into *Shuanna* [Babylon], and kissed my feet. From [*Shuanna*] I sent them back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa' (Finkel 2013: 6).

This behavior that *Cyrus II* apparently imitated seems to have been a tradition in ancient times. The *Assyrian* king, *Assurbanipal* wrote: 'During my march (to Egypt), 22 kings from the seashore, the islands, and the mainland [including] *Manasseh*, king of *Judah*...servants who belong to me, brought heavy gifts to me and kissed my feet' (Stavrakopoulou 2004: 104). On the Black Obelisk of *Shalmaneser III* from the late 9th century BC, King *Jehu* of *Judah* is depicted kissing the *Assyrian* king's feet (Gertoux 2015: 69).

It is in fact a turning point at which the king transforms from a position of an abiding servant of gods, such as those present as statues in Babylon's or *Elamite* temples, to a man who enjoys and benefits from the support of gods like a close friend, a man who is the agent of his own power and not just the human mediunm of powers of a god. *Cyrus* began alluding to himself as more than a mere servant of a god. He completely changed his narrative's vantage point from that of the god to that of his own, presenting events metaphorically through insight and power of a conqueror rather than the benevolent means of the will of the gods. The first person singular on the *Cyrus* Cylinder is a narrative whose textual form alone conveys a strong sense of royal agency and power. The text insinuates a royal figure who elevates himself above the fray enough to take an equidistance between the gods on the one hand and other people, courtiers included, on the other (Kuhrt 1984).

This transformation from a subservient servant to gods to an inflated, domineering 'I' helped the *Achaemenid* kings to introduce themselves as the 'director of god's will' (Abadi 2005). Therefore, with the support of the god, the king authorized himself

to assure that *Marduk* would accompany him in his conquests (Provencal 2015). Additionally, the deity would support the king in invading foreign countries, torturing and killing (see also Lincoln 2007).

In line 27 of his cylinder, *Cyrus* declares: 'And he [the god *Enlil*] pronounced a sweet blessing over me, *Cyrus*, the king who fears him, and over *Cambyses*, the son [my] issue, [and over] all my troops' (Law 2010: 231). Here, he designates himself as the one mediator between the supernatural world of the gods and that of the normal people, foremost among them his son, who one day is going to take over this mediating role, and secondly the repressive state apparatus which was crucial both for the expansion of his power and the control of already the conquered regions. A king is so far above the fray of normal people that he has special communicative abilities that locate him in a world between the earth and the cosmos of the gods.

In modern Iran, *Cyrus*' Cylinder is understood to be the first manifestation of a culture that respects other nations and their respective gods (Katouzian 2010; Mohammadnezhad 2009). *Cyrus* describes the problems produced by *Nabonidus*, the endmost king of the Neo-*Babylonian* Dynasty. The cylinder describes the main god, *Marduk*'s disapproval of King *Nabonidus* in vivid terms. We need to read this as an account of the deep mistrust and estrangement of the powerful clergymen of *Babylon* from the king, who perhaps under the influence of his mother, *Adad Happe*, strongly favored the Moon God, *Nanna*, who resided in the cities of *Ur* in southeast of *Babylon*, and *Harran* far in the north. *Cyrus*' Cylinder describes the conflict between *Nabonidus* and *Marduk*'s priests as follows: '[*Nabonidus*] brought the daily offerings to a halt; he inter[fered with the rites and] instituted [. . .] within the sanctuaries. In his mind, reverential fear of *Marduk*, king of the gods, came to an end. He did yet more evil to his city every day; . . . his [people . . .], he brought ruin on them all by a yoke without relief. *Enlil*-of-the-gods became extremely angry at their complaints, and [. . .] their territory. The gods who lived within them left their shrines, angry that he had made (them) enter into *Shuanna* (Babylon). Ex[alted] *Marduk*, *Enlil*-of-the-Go]ds, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins, and the population of the land of *Sumer* and *Akkad* who had become like corpses, and took pity on them. He inspected and checked all the countries' (Finkel 2013: 5).

The intervention by the local religious institutions in the process of *Babylon*'s conquest is apparent on the cylinder. The priests' hostility towards *Nabonidus* and their collusion with *Cyrus* certainly became one of the main reasons for *Nabonidus*' defeat (Lincoln 2007). *Nabonidus* had attempted to assemble a large number of *Babylonian* deities in the city of Babylon. He did so by transferring their statues and the priests. Apparently, this move in the realm of religious politics was met with hostility by the priests, and *Cyrus* used this discontent to his own ideological advantage. The most important phrase to explain his own policy comes from the *Cyrus* Cylinder:

> '*Enlil*-of-the-gods became extremely angry at their [priests'] complaints, and [. . .] their territory. The gods who lived within them left their shrines, angry that he [*Nabonidus*] had made (them) enter into *Shuanna*' (Finkel 2013: 5).

Cyrus II became narrator of the main *Babylonian* god's desires and claimed to have been approved by him. Following the Mesopotamian pattern, *Cyrus* depicts his own willingness for political action through harnessing this god's power. By doing so, *Cyrus* deliberately undermines the possibility of being deemed a foreign 'other' because of his invasion of *Babylonia* and tries to introduce himself as a messenger of the gods in order to be accepted as a native *Babylonian*, which seems to be his ultimate goal. This is less the attitude of a conqueror than that of a self-seeking hegemon, a role that *Cyrus* did not adopt regarding the other areas he subjugated. However, due to its cultural history, Babylonia was deemed worthy of a special relationship to the newly established empire. Concurrently, *Cyrus* takes on the role of a messenger between the realm of the gods and normal human beings, rather than a mere man with military and political power. Nevertheless, in this pre-*Darius* era, the 'I' of the king is still obscure and the limits of its agency are still ambiguous.

By the time of *Cambyses*' death in 522 BC, an impressive amount of territory had been assembled in a span of thirty years (Briant 2002: 102). According to *Darius*' narrative, majority of *Cambyses*' last years were spent in Egypt and Ethiopia seeking to expand the imperial territories further, rather than consolidating what had been already incorporated into his young polity. The internal coherence of the empire was shattered near the end of *Cambyses*' reign by a rebellion in the Persian homeland.

The main document for the ensuing turmoil is *Darius I*'s monumental *Behistun* relief and inscription, high above the road that once extended from the Iranian highlands pass to the Mesopotamian lowlands. The rock inscription is trilingual in *Elamite*, *Babylonian* and Old Persian, and the relief included *Darius*, guards, the symbol of the God *Ahuramazda* and *Darius*' enemies. The *Behistun* inscription contains the official imperial version of the events surrounding the rebellion at the time of *Cambyses*' death. He and his brother *Bardiya* were supposedly involved in a battle over the throne where *Bardiya* was killed (Runion 2007). 'He was however, according to *Darius*, not *Cambyses*' brother, but a magus, belonging to the class of Iranian priests' (Vogelsang 1998: 196). Hence, many historians think that *Bardiya* had been killed by *Cambyses* in an attempt prevent a possible revolt, and the eventual rebellion was in fact led by a priest called *Gaumāta* (for full discussion see Vogelsang 1998). *Darius* claimed that *Gaumāta* tried to seize the throne just after *Cambyses*' death, so he felt the responsibility to secure the throne in order to keep it in the royal genealogical line (Poloos 2008). Berquist (2008) suggests that *Gaumāta*, who was supposedly a *Median*, tried to assert the dominance of an ethnic group, the *Medians*, within the empire. Dandamaev (1989) rejects these theories that are consistent with both *Darius*' and Herodotus' accounts. He notes that there were seven families who were granted special privileges by *Cyrus* and suggests

that these families were unsatisfied with the new conditions after the death of *Cyrus* and were happy to see *Bardiya* gain the control over his brother *Cambyses*. There appears to have been some support for the coup of *Bardiya* among the ruling class of the *Persians* (Trotter 2002), so it is speculated that it was the real *Bardiya* and not the impersonation of his, the *Gaumāta*, who ruled for a very brief time. This scenario is supported by the very short-lived apparent peace and stability that followed *Bardiya*'s coup (Vogelsang 1998) and the widespread rebellion that followed, even within Persia itself, at the accession of *Darius*, who, according to this reconstruction, would have usurped power from the legitimate successor of *Cyrus II* directly.

Darius was crowned after the brutal suppression of protesters who rebelled after the death of *Cambyses*. *Darius*' *Behistun* inscription renders the dramatic events of the suppression of the coup, describing the blood-soaked battles between his own supporters and the ethnic groups that fought against him, including both core regions such as *Media*, *Pars*, *Elam*, and peripheral areas including *Hyrcania*, *Bactria*, *Margiana*, *Archosia* and *Sogdiana.* The detention, cruel bodily mutilation and final death of these 'liar kings' are described in great detail. Interestingly, and in distinction to earlier *Neo-Assyrian* customs, the pictorial representation of the events takes on a much milder nature, showing the insurgents, *Gaumāta* included, alive but bound and strung together in front of *Darius*. Expectedly, *Darius* depicts himself as one of the Persian elite and thus connected to both deity and nobility, and therefore fit for royalty.

Several scholars have interpreted this process as a coup by *Darius* (Brosius 2006; Vallat 2013; Young 1988). This interpretation implies that *Darius* had planned his violent coup well in advance, at least from the time of *Cambyses*' death on (Briant 2002). On the *Behistun* inscription, *Gaumāta,* the priest who was deemed as a rebel, lies humiliated and naked under the feet of *Darius*. He is depicted begging for his life and seems to have received the most severe punishment among the ten rebels (Herrenschmidt 1982). It took *Darius* at least one year to subdue the rebels, from 522 to some time in 521 BC. Most of them are thought to have been elites in their respective territories (Frye 1998: 149).

After *Darius* secured the throne, he started an ingenious narration which was so successful that it survived in oral tradition for at least a century, after which Herodotus recorded it (Brosius 2006; Munson 2009). *Darius* created a new imperial narration that promoted him as the sole king. By repeating and emphasizing on a true statement – that he was the king – he managed to distract attention from the cruelties committed in the course of his accession to the throne. Mutilating, blinding and then hanging his *Median* adversary *Fravartish* in *Hamadan* is a case in point. *Darius* employs this tactic on his *Behistun* inscription, which Richard Frye describes as his very first known form of propaganda (Frye 1984: 101). It is worth noting that the three versions of the *Behistun* inscription in Old Persian, *Babylonian* and *Elamite* are not identical. For example, following his account of actions according to which he secured his rule,

Darius states in the Old Persian version that he wrote the inscription in the same year he became the king. However, the *Elamite* version states that it was written a year later. More importantly, though, are his claims that the priest *Gaumāta* falsely presented himself as *Cambyses*' brother *Bardiya* in order to usurp the throne. Interestingly, we are told in the same text that the Persian *Vahiyazdata* also claimed to be *Bardiya* for a similar reason. Parallel to this, two *Babylonians*, both pretending to be descendants of *Nabonidus*, and both taking the throne name *Nebuchadnezzar*, also vainly tried to usurp rule over *Babylonia* in a similar manner. It is quite apparent that the *Behistun* inscription is set up in a way that sheds extreme doubt on anyone who might pretend to have the genealogical rights to the *Achaemenid* throne or even a claim to rule over only a part of this empire.

Another element of the *Behistun* inscription is also of great appeal. In line 70 of the Old Persian version, *Darius* states: 'By the grace of *Ahuramazda*, this is the inscription which I have made. He repeats this claim four times (lines 56, 57, 59, 62- lines 71-73), in two cases specifically insisting on its truth (Hallock 1960; Kent 1939). Quite clearly, *Darius* established a relation to the supernatural realm that was entirely different from *Cyrus*' opportunistic bowing to local religious conditions: He imposed 'his' God *Ahuramazda* on the whole empire. An inscription from *Susa* illustrates this very well: 'I am *Darius*, the great king, king of kings, king of countries, son of *Hystaspes*, the *Achaemenid*. King *Darius* proclaims: *Ahuramazda* is mine; I am *Ahuramazda*'s; I worshipped *Ahuramazda*; may *Ahuramazda* brings me aid' (Kuhrt 2007: 487). It is remarkable that the phrase *Ahuramazda* is mine precedes the reverse. Purely from the textual arrangement, it appears as if the king is more powerful than the God. According to royal inscriptions, *Darius I* thus changed the fundamental relation between himself and the main god of the empire, by defining himself as an independent individual who is supported by the God (Abadi 2005). He is no longer just an executive arm or messenger of a deity. Even though he claims 'by God's will, I was successful', we must assume that he himself cunningly thought the reverse (Mousavi 2008).

This deep relationship between the God and the king is connected to the emergence of *Ahuramazda* as the new main god during *Darius I*'s reign. As the *Behistun* text makes clear, this change happens directly after the brutal suppression of revolting territories. The new deity seems to be actually introduced as a special God of the royal family in order to provide a source of religious differentiation from conquered territories. *Ahuramazda* appears from then onward in the highest place of the official hirearchy of the gods as the supreme God of the royal pantheon (Dandamayev 1996). Koch (1995) argues that there was an official religion, distinguished by regular monthly offerings called '*Lan*' or sacrifice. This sacrifice was likely carried out daily and took place in an open garden (*paradeisos*) at Persepolis; it is unclear whether this was an exclusive sacrifice for *Ahuramazda* or perhaps also for other major gods (see also Potts 2011: 812–813). However, Koch (1995) belives that according to Persepolis tablets, Lan ceremony was the only one with regular monthly payment. Some tablets indicate that the costs

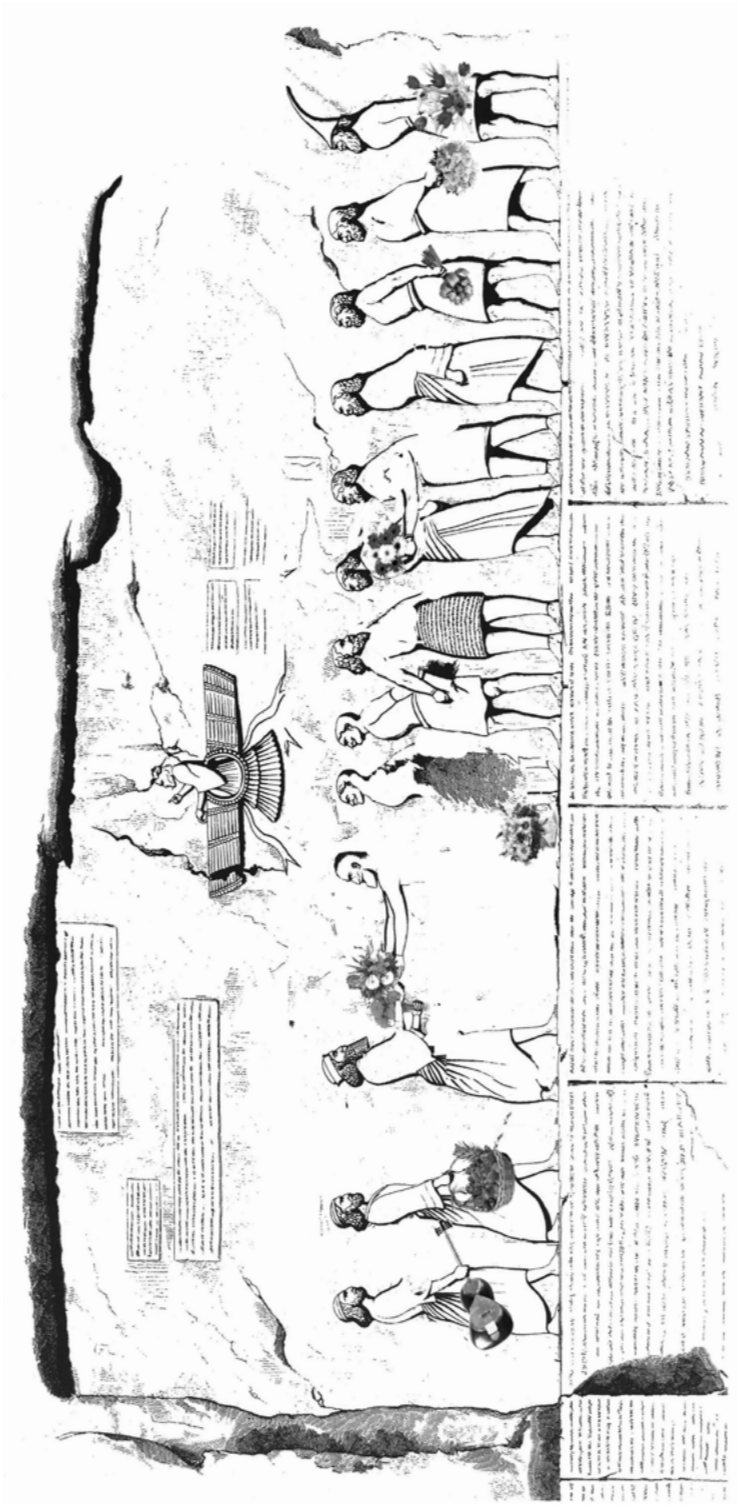

Figure 3. Dialouge (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

were covered by the king's ration. Hence, Koch concludes that Lan was a ceremony specified to *Ahuramazda*.

The emergence of *Ahuramazda* as the primary deity of the empire constitutes an enhanced version of the royal 'I'. *Ahuramazda* may have originated from one of the local pre-*Achaemenid* gods of the plateau (Abadi 2005; Brosius 2006), but his progress to the position of the god of gods seems to have occurred during the *Achaemenid* empire. The first recovered evidence of him was in an inscription by *Ariyaramna*, an ancestor of *Darius* who lived around 640-590 BC (Lecoq 1997). The *Behistun* inscription does not offer a thorough record of the god's evolution, but his name certainly predates *Darius*' texts (see Lecoq 1997).

Nonetheless, it was *Darius* who redefined his identity by describing his special relationship to *Ahuramazda* for the first time (Frye 1993) just after his coup (Myers 1991). Like Frye, Porada (1965) believes that *Darius* used the concept of 'god-man' and first symbolized the body of the king in the same way as the body of the god: they appear together on seal motifs. Likewise, the body of the king can be interpreted as a 'body politic,' (Deleuze 1990; Saldanha and Adams 2013), as a figure that stands for the empire or a very abstract form of a physical body that is equated with the state as a unified entity, similar to the famous frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan.

Moreover, the special relation between a god and king changes subtly. *Elamite* gods and goddesses appear as a man or woman, in front of whom stands a king in a distance that certainly implies respect, whereas *Ahuramazda*'s symbol, called '*Faravahar*', appears above the king as a supporter, his side view looking at king and the king speaks as his delegate, not as his servant. This kind of imagery is unprecedented to the Iranian highlands. However, the winged sun disk as the image of *Ahuramazda* (Inspired by Egyptian theological symbols and observed in 2nd millennium Anatolia, the Levant and later in *Assyria*) is clearly derived by *Achaemenid* artists from their *Assyrian* precedents. There, it stands for the main deity *Assur* and is also set above the head of the king, from the time of *Assurnasirpal II* on (9th century BC).

Overall, it is clear that *Darius* portrays himself as a powerful superhuman, a great king reigning over the entire universe. Although there is no evidence that the *Achaemenid* king was ever regarded as a deity, there are ample documentations suggesting that he held the very special position of a mediator with the gods, and particularly with the most important one, *Ahuramazda*, which distinguished him from mere mortals, and hinted that his spirit was an object of worship even after his death (Herzfeld 1968; Moorey 1978).

Darius specifically uses *Ahuramazda* and his support to redefine the concept of 'I' as a 'semi-god'. At the end of every sentence of his inscription in the *Behistun*, he justifies the use of torture and violence by referring to the will of the God. He wittingly assigns

his actions to a creature that is beyond the material world, an entity that is physically absent and with whom it is realistically impossible to have a dialogue (Figure 3). He seems to have regular dialogues with the God and translates them into human language. In contrast to *Cyrus, Darius* does not describe processes. Instead, he explains events by focusing on the 'I' as the main director of them and the 'God' as the 'I''s support. The *Behistun* inscription is not a narrative or an explanation. It is merely a text that justifies and legitimizes violence, and subsequently attempts to reshape the administrative and political structures (Zettler 1979).

Darius' son *Xerxes* also followed *Ahuramazda*. In his *Daiva* inscription, he describes the suppression of a rebellion under the gaze of the God (Lecoq 1984). In the narratives of the kings following *Xerxes*, such as *Artaxerxes* I, *Artaxerxes* II and *Darius* II, the main role of *Ahuramazda* is to personify power, to legitimize suppression and to foster the erection of royal monuments. The *Achaemenid* God plays a continual role in political ideology. He is implicitly with the obedient and against any rebels.

The shift in the religious structures is indicated in the enthusiasm of the *Achaemenids* in building palaces rather than temples (Koch 1995). *Pasargadae*, the new capital created by *Cyrus II*, shows the initially tentative nature of finding new architectural forms and palatial arrangements. His capital consisted mainly of a huge garden, whose water was regulated by dams and a canal (Benech *et al.* 2012; De Schacht *et al.* 2012), a massive gate, and several pavilions. Only under *Darius I* do we see the fundamental shift to vast palace constructions, particularly the new foundation of the massive palace platform at Persepolis, as well as the palace in *Susa*. Religious rituals may mainly have been carried out in an unroofed area, as also indicated by the reliefs on royal tombs at *Naqsh-e Rostam* (see below).

This emphasis on construction of political buildings rather than temples as houses for the gods fits the position of *Ahuramazda* as the new supreme God. The exception to the lack of temples could be the so-called *Kaʿba-ye Zardošt* in *Naqsh-e Rostam*, a stone tower with a square ground plan, protruding corners and blocked windows. It has an exterior access in the form of a stair since it was set on a high platform. The mystery of the building's function has not been solved yet, despite many attempts to explain its use via formal parallels. The single inside chamber has been explored already by early travelers but did not contain any finds that would have helped revealing its function. An earlier, almost identical but less well-preserved structure was found at *Pasargadae* (Mostafavi 1978). The *Kaʿba-ye Zardošt* was either built by *Darius* when he moved the capital to nearby Persepolis, or by *Artaxerxes II* (*Darius* II's son), or *Artaxerxes III* (*Artaxerxes* II's son; see Frye 1974). At any rate, the unfamiliar form of this tower, the lack of other clearly identifiable temples in the *Achaemenid* heartland and the highly visible palace architecture leave no doubt that the relations with the world of the gods had changed radically with the emergence of *Achaemenid* Dynasty.

Ideologically, *Ahuramazda* was used as a religio-political concept to justify 'political actions including authority, detention and torture, and other means of the ultimate domination over the human body (Haber 2009). This God, represented by a symbol consisting of a torso of a man in a winged disk (Brosius 2006), appears at the top of scenes, in a manner that suggests he is protecting the king while the king usually has raised his right hand toward the God. The God in fact has his position only one level above the king in the power hierarchy. *Faravahar* appears above the king's head while the king proclaims: '*Ahuramazda* brought me help because I was not wicked, was not a liar, nor was I a tyrant, I have done according to righteousness' (Garthwaite 2008; Kidner *et al*. 2007: 55).

Indeed, the faces of the God and the king are illustrated similarly so that they appear to have closely related identities, and they both seem to be copies of the same person. It's only the crown that distinguishes the two personae clearly. In such motifs, ambiguity is observed in the mixture of the faces. In this manner, respect for the God seamlessly glides into respect for the king. *Faravahar* in his *Achaemenid* persona reflects the supernatural aspects of his power: his divine power hovers over the realm of humans, but he also shows features of a Persian man. In fact, the bodies of king and the God are reproduced in each other, in a fashion that is very similar to the quote above of the text from *Susa*. Were it not for their specific positions in reliefs such as the one above the *Behistun* inscription, the faces of these two characters could not be distinguished from each other. Indistinguishability of the face, the most individualized part of the human body, signals indistinguishability of authority.

In adopting the symbolic body of *Faravahar* and the king from *Assyrian* art (Lincoln 2007), the impossibility of distinguishing the God's and the king's bodies shows that *Achaemenid* propaganda aims to equalize royal and superhuman bodies. If we accept the identification of the winged being in a gate at *Pasargadae* as *Cyrus II* (Kuhrt 2007), the king would be represented as a winged man, a form that is obviously distinct from that of a normal human being (Stronach 1978). From a more materialistic perspective, the face of the king has been transformed into a standardized form devoid of personalized features, repreaenting him as an abstract idea of masculinity, youth, health and power. The eternal youth of the king is unattainable for anyone else (Williams 2008). The king's body is always completely covered by a long costume representing the dichotomy between clothed and naked; the king is always in full gear while prisoners and rebels are bound, and often but not always partially or completely naked, following long-standing Mesopotamian customs (Ataç 2010). However, the rebels on the *Behistun* relief wear clothes, particularly headgears based on their region of origin, but have their hands bound on the back and are tied together with a long string wound around the neck of each 'liar-king'. The bodies of the rebels are carved on a smaller scale than the king's figure: *Darius* is 1.82 m tall, while the rebels measure at 1.17 m (Wiesehöfer 2001).

In a general sense, the *Achaemenid* method of artistic design was to take elements of earlier kingdoms and instill new meanings into them. An example of this method can be observed on *Achaemenid* gold coins called *daric*. They were taken from the *Lydian* culture, and feature a Persian archer added to the original motif where the archer was in fact Phoenician (Nimchuk 2002). This appropriation can also be seen in the above-mentioned tower-like temples of *Pasargadae* and *Naqsh-e Rostam* which are adoption of an *Urartian* building type, the so-called *Susi* Temple that is similarly small in surface area, square in plan and of great height. *Assyrian* prototypes *for Faravahar/Ahuramazda* were already mentioned, and the stools and other furniture on reliefs of Persepolis and *Naqsh-e Rostam* clearly also display strong signs of borrowing from *Assyrian*, and perhaps also Urartian prototypes.

Ahuramazda probably did not become the only accepted deity of the whole empire (Farazmand 2003; Dandamayev 1999), as the satrapies were not obliged to worship him (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989; Dandameyev 1996). Even in *Fars/Pars*, the administrative center of the empire, various religious cults and worshipping mountains and rivers were unhalted (Koch 1995). Hence, the system tolerated religious diversity. 'This fact can easily be understood if we have in mind that in ancient polytheistic societies there existed no dogmatic relegions' (Dandamayev 1999: 279). There is no evidence of mass killings because of religious goals or of forcing people to convert to another religion. Though at the same time, it promoted political homogenization of the entire territory (Abdi 1999). *Ahuramazda* acts more as a symbol for the rise of a new royal class and emergence of new authorities. It possesses more political implications than religious functions, if we consider the following Persepolis inscription: *'Darius* the King says: May *Ahuramazda* bears me aid, with the gods of the royal house; and may *Ahuramazda* protect this country from a (hostile) army, from famine, from the lie! Upon this country may there not come an army, nor famine, nor the lie; this I pray as a boon from *Ahuramazda* together with the gods of the royal house. This boon may *Ahuramazda* together with the gods of the royal house give to me!' (Briant 2002:213).

No wonder that the worship of *Ahuramazda* was not necessary in *Achaemenid* satrapies, because political obedience towards the king of kings was in itself equivalent to accepting *Ahuramazda*. Satrapies showed their respect towards *Ahuramazda* by paying taxes, acting in accordance with dependency and loyalty to the empire and the king as the delegate of *Ahuramazda.* One of the highly political messages of such inscriptions is their display of power: fighting 'lies' means the ability to punish protesters. The world of *Darius* is a starkly dichotomous one. The rebel is by definition a liar, the submissive a truthful person, the king's right is equated with righteousness and disobedience with wrongfulness.

Essentially, this black-and-white nature of this world can even convey advices for successors, as formulated in the *Behistun* inscription's [IV, 64] admonition:

> 'King *Darius* says: You who may be king hereafter, whosoever shall be a liar or a rebel, or shall not be friendly, punish him!' (Schmitt 1991 [IV, 64]).

This is a message almost to be expected from a ruler who established his power through a coup. In *Behistun*, *Darius* has his feet placed on the body of a partially naked man. The king, with a bow in his hand, is depicted as the only person with the right to speak. 'King *Darius* says: This is what I have done. By the grace of *Ahuramazda* I have always acted. After I became king, I fought nineteen battles in a single year and by the grace of *Ahuramazda,* I overthrew nine kings and I made them captive' (Behistun, IV, 52).

Xerxes' policy, largely following his father's and *Cyrus* II's footsteps, was to invade and conquer new territories. Much has been made of the attack on mainland Greece, even though that was most likely not at the center of *Achaemenid* political agenda. Traditional historiography of the *Achaemenid* kings has neglected the increasing frequency of rebellions (Perdu 2010), and the curses found in Egypt (Parker 1941; Strauss 2005) that attest to the existence of small-scale protests. They indicate that not all bodies were docile in the supposedly ideal world of the *Achaemenid* kings.

Reliefs, palaces, and inscriptions: the first indicators of a new empire

Most of the standing ruins attributed to the *Achaemenid* period consist of structures that are identified to be palaces. This obviously does not mean that there exist no sites where ordinary people lived, but it seems that archaeologists used to be and even currently are more interested in excavating privileged sites such as *Susa* and Persepolis and not the smaller sites where traces of everyday lives of citizens in *Achaemenid* Empire could be recovered. Only recently and over the course of salvage excavations of hydrological projects, archaeologists have begun to discover such small hamlets (e.g. Askari Chaverdi and Callieri 2009). The high value of *Achaemenid* artistic objects contributes to the problem of a one-sided, elite-inclined perception of *Achaemenid* 'culture', and is exacerbated by antiquities traders' attempts to discover beautiful magnificent items of past Persian emperors. There is an ample history behind this problem. It roots back to the purchase of the Oxus Treasure(found by the Oxus river about 1877–1880), a large collection of elaborate gold objects from a place where is today located in southern Tajikistan. Now in the British Museum, these gold objects, among them golden votive plaques, vessels, statuettes and coins, have been responsible for the desire for more prestige goods of this type.

Another tendency leading in the same direction was the *Pahlavi* kings' use taking advantage of the *Achaemenids* as an antidote to pan-Arabism (see chapter one). In order to utilize the materials as nationalistic tools, they deliberately cherry picked only the most glorious sites from this period for investigation and research (Towfighi 2009). As a result, our data on the *Achaemenids*, at least within the contemporary boundaries of Iran, revolve around the royal life, and we still only have limited information about

the everyday life of the people, particularly when it comes to domestic architecture and practices (Ansari 2012).

Achaemenid palaces were usually built as huge complexes with administrative quarters and private spaces (Wiesehöfer 2001). The most important of these palaces include Persepolis and *Pasargadae* in *Fars*, *Susa* in *Khuzestan* and Borazjan Palace near *Bushehr*, where major standing structures have been discovered next to several official buildings (Genito 1986). The fine art, sculptures and reliefs, as well as two-dimensional figures depicted on tiles and glazed bricks, display a common style and are the most common decorative objects of these monuments. Major sets of reliefs and glazed bricks that functioned as ornamental elements led art historians to discuss the unique phenomenon known as '*Achaemenid* art' as a reflection of the political structure of this empire.

The second decorative element of palaces are texts, often used as an exclusive tool of power structures. These monumental texts need to be distinguished from a second group of texts that were written on clay tablets and are in regards with the administrative issues. We find an exactly similar division between monumental inscriptions of political content, on hard stone with a clear attention to their aesthetic quality and visibility. Small-scale writings on clay tablets were common for daily bureaucratic purposes in the earlier Eastern Anatolian Kingdom of *Urartu* and, to a lesser extent, in ancient *Assyria* and *Elam*. Many of the *Achaemenid* monumental inscriptions are rendered in the three imperial languages Old Persian, *Babylonian*, and *Elamite*. They also appear in Egyptian hieroglyphs on royal statues in the famous statue of *Darius* in *Susa.* They describe the construction/restoration process of palaces, the structure of the empire and in some cases, the king's orders (Lecoq 1984). The latter group of administrative texts mentioned above mostly includes financial and other economic documents written on clay tablets. Third, most other inscriptions carved on stone walls or, in fewer cases, on the foundations of major official buildings (Mousavi 2012). Several inscriptions are set into vertical cliffs in the landscape, such as the *Behistun* monument near modern *Kermanshah*, the *Ganj-Nāma* inscriptions near *Hamadan*, and the monumental trilingual inscription from *Xerxes*' time on a rock at the eastern shore of *Lake Van.* Inscriptions on the Tomb of *Darius* in *Naqsh-e Rostam* can also be included among these textual displays. The latter ones are not always placed in a way that passers-by could have read them. We therefore have to wonder who the intended audience were. It could be because the *Achaemenid* kings' discourse with a god or a group of deities through these texts; moreover, *Behistun* has been already considered a holy mountain and the place of deites (Frye 1998: 145). however, it could also be that writing itself was seen as a quasi-transcendental ability, a comprehensive effect that was much more important than the specifications of any particular text inscribed on cliffs.

Monumental writings within palace complexes have been used as a means of monopolizing the power for the *Achaemenids*. In vast architectural complexes such as Persepolis, the succession of construction processes can be read in a series of inscriptions incised by courtesy of the main founder of buildings, *Darius I*, and his descendants *Xerxes I, Artaxerxes* I and II (Frye 1984). The inscriptions are usually about worshiping the gods and/or the processes of (re-)construction or preservation. One such building inscription, discovered in 1932, reads:

> 'When my father *Darius* went away from the throne, by the grace of *Ahuramazda,* I became the king on my father's throne. When I became king, I did much that was excellent. What had been built by my father, I protected, and I added other buildings. What I built, and what my father built, all that by the grace of *Ahuramazda* we built' (Thompson 2007: 52).

The oldest known large-scale architectural projects of the *Achaemenids* were the above-mentioned garden-like structures at *Pasargadae*, which include *Cyrus* II's tomb (Brosius 2006; Stronach 1978). Despite intensive research, and the recent identification of major construction in the northern and eastern parts of this sprawling complex, no sites were discovered that could be regarded as dwellings for normal inhabitants. *Pasargadae* may have been a palace city similar to *Assyrian Khorsabad, Abbasid Samarra* or *Mughal* period *Fatehpur Sikri* in India. This may also explain the ease with which *Darius I* chose to quit *Pasargadae* as a habitation site after his coup and moved elsewhere in order to completely distance himself from *Cyrus*' direct ancestors. The city of *Cyrus* was thus almost abandoned and *Darius I* founded Persepolis in the *Marvdasht* plain (Babelon 1886). When *Darius* I ordered the construction of Persepolis and *Matezzish*, a place not precisely localized yet but likely close to Persepolis or possibly even a part of it (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989; Kuhrt 2007: 719), it suddenly became a booming region, host to hundreds of foreign workers accompanied by their families, whose payments are documented in the tablets from Persepolis. By the time of the Persepolis Fortification texts, spanning the period from the 13th to the 28th year of *Darius I*'s reign (509-494 BC), 'the peaceful quiet of the *Firuzi* gardens were shattered by the noise of masons' hammers and the roar of kilns to fire the ornamental glazed bricks' (Sumner 1986: 28).

Some classical historians such as *Herodotus* (2010) and *Xenophon* (1997) deemed the *Achaemenids*' interest in building palaces to be for the pleasure of the kings, especially in the cases of *Xerxes I* and *Artaxerxes I* (Nadon 2001; Prevas 2009; Wiesehöfer 2001). Nevertheless, 30,000 written documents including receipts, budget documents and others are concrete evidence that show the serious efforts of building the monumental structures for much more than mere pleasure (see Koch 2001 [1992]). They must have been important ways to constitute and ideologize the whole political landscape, unmistakably by signifying power and its location.

Material	Region	Craftspeople
Brick	?	Babylonians
Cedar	Lebanon	Lydians, Egyptians
transport (cedar)	Assyrians, Carians, Yaun	?
yak timber	Carmania, Gandara	Lydians, Egyptians
Gold	Lydia, Bactria	Medes, Egyptians, work at Susa
lapislazuli, carnelian	Sogdia	people at Susa
Silver	Egypt	?
Ebony	Egypt	?
wall ornaments	Yaun	Medes, Egyptians
Ivory	Nubia, India, Arachosia	?
stone columns	Abirdu in Elam	Lydians, from Yaun
baked brick	?	Babylonians

Table 1. The Susa Palace of *Darius I*, Building materials, regions of origin and crafts people's origins.

In the case of Susa, the palace was constructed after the *Apadana* mound was leveled (Dyson 1968). The monumental palace at *Susa*, built for the purpose of staying there during winters, was constructed between 521 and 515 BC on *Elamite* ruins that had been flattened. Contrary to Persepolis, the building materials primarily consisted of bricks, although stone was used for the columns. *Darius*' palace at *Susa* was comprised of a harem, a general hall, gates and three central courtyards. Its plan is an architectural hybrid, consisting of a Mesopotamian standard palace plan similar to that of the slightly earlier *Babylon* of *Nebuchadnezzar* time, plus the representative square columned hall or *Apadana,* a typical Iranian structure. The *Apadana* is a columned hall similar to the central columned hall in Persepolis, with a central set of 6 x 6 columns located at a 20m distance from each other (Pirnia 2005).

The interior walls of the three courtyards were covered by colorful glazed bricks displaying the motifs of guard soldiers, winged lions and lotus flowers (Perrot 2013). The guards were thought to be members of the so-called 10,000 special royal guards, known as 'Immortals', as their number was apparently always maintained at 10,000 (Ward 2014: 31). The historian Pierre Briant (2002) contests such an idea which is closely derived from Greek historians reports. Despite their rich and colorful uniforms, he maintains that these soldiers were neither a parade army nor guard units, but rather elite fighters that engaged in most of the battlefields.

In the *Apadana*, a now-famous text was found that elaborates the construction process. The text begins with praise and worship of *Ahuramazda* and the list of *Darius'* ancestors. Then it enumerates in detail the geographic sources of construction and decoration materials, combining this information with the ethnical (regional) origins of the workers.

> 'This palace which I built in *Susa*, from afar its ornamentation was brought. Downward the earth was dug, until I reached rock in the earth. When the excavation had been made, then rubble was packed down, some 40 cubits in depth, another part 20 cubits in depth. On that rubble the palace was constructed. And that the earth was dug downward, and that the rubble was packed down, and that the sun-dried brick was molded, the *Babylonian* people performed these tasks. The cedar timber, this was brought from a mountain named *Lebanon*. The *Assyrian* people brought it to *Babylon*; from *Babylon* the *Carians* and the *Yaun*(?) brought it to Susa. The *yak*(?)-timber was brought from *Gandara* and from *Carmania*. The gold was brought from *Lydia* and from *Bactria*, which here was wrought. The precious stone lapis lazuli and carnelian which was wrought here, this was brought from *Sogdia*. The turquoise, this was brought from *Chorasmia,* which was wrought here. The silver and the ebony were brought from *Egypt*. The ornamentation with which the wall was adorned, that from *Yaun* (?) was brought. The ivory which was wrought here was brought from *Nubia* and from *India* and from *Arachosia.* The stone columns which were here wrought, a village named *Abirdu*, in *Elam*- from there were brought. The stone-cutters who wrought the stone, those were *Yaun* (?) and *Lydians*. The goldsmiths who wrought the gold, those were Medes and Egyptians. The men who wrought the wood, those were *Lydians* and Egyptians. The men who wrought the baked brick, those were *Babylonians*. The men who adorned the wall, those were Medes and Egyptians. *Darius* the King says: At Susa, a very excellent work was ordered, a very excellent work was brought to completion. May *Ahuramazda* protect me, my father *Hystaspes,* and my country' (Curtis and Tallis 2005: 56).

It is noteworthy to notice that the text suggests the use of raw materials extracted and brought to Susa from other regions. It attests to their power over these lands, as well as people who come from different regions but did not necessarily work on the materials which were brought from their homeland. One ideological message here is that the source of political power was neither just power over land, nor simply control over people, but both. The text further reveals the complexity of the tasks, likely not because of a genuine interest in the crafts themselves. Rather, emphasis on the ability to organize cross-craft interactions is what seems to have been a major ideological mechanism for the demonstration of political power (see Brysbaert 2011). The text also conveys a hidden message, which is most likely unintentional: skills required to work with specific materials aren't exclusively taught or learned in the specific area where these materials

are present, but such specific expertise can be acquired later, and presumably outside of one's own region. Thanks to the independence of skill from regional resources and local cultural specifications, any kind of object can be made anywhere in his empire by courtesy of the king (see table one). Interestingly, this also can imply the creation of styles at the whim of the ruler, an effect that one could indeed read into *Achaemenid* art's lack of local anchoring: it produced an international style that draws together many different kinds of stylistic features. In the Late Bronze Age in Near East, hybridity in luxury objects had already been identified as a mark of concealing any specific origin of highly valuable items and their styles (Feldman 2006).

Concurrent to the construction work at *Susa*, *Darius* started a project in his ancestral homeland in Persepolis (Ghirshman 1964: 147). It is well possible that the artists who had produced glazed bricks in their Susian workshops were moved to the highlands for labor at Persepolis. Hundreds of fragments of glazed bricks found at Persepolis could point in that direction. On the other hand, recent findings at *Tol-e Ajori* near Persepolis, where glazed bricks with a wall decoration consisting of hybrid animals, the *Mušḫuššu* identical with those of *Babylon's Ishtar Gate* were found (Askari Chaverdi *et al*. 2013). This hints at a large contingent of *Babylonians* working in and near Persepolis; the exact dating of this second Ishtar gate is still disputed. It is clear, however, that the stone sculptors of Persepolis were not the same as those working in Susa, since their styles and techniques are entirely different (see Razmjou 2010, 2003).

The representational pattern at Persepolis is completed in its material form at Persepolis' *Tripylon,* on the eastern entrance of the Central Palace where the God's icon hovers atop King *Darius* I sitting on the throne with his crown prince, *Xerxes I* standing behind him. Both are located on a wooden litter that is carried by people from the satrapies who have both hands above their heads to carry this massive litter. This hierarchy can be traced materially at other levels as well. Both at *Susa* and Persepolis, the king, nobles, ushers, soldiers, archers and grooms wear bracelets and earrings, but necklaces or torques are worn only by the king, nobles and ushers (Roaf 1974). This is a world in which the only voice heard is the voice of a person narrating all the events from the omnicient perspective: the king. He is the one who defines his own people and labels them, as a case in point in the inscription at Tomb of *Darius* at *Naqsh-e Rostam* (Schmitt 2000):

> 'King *Darius* says: By the favor of *Ahuramazda*, these are the countries which I seized outside of *Persia*; I ruled over them; they bore tribute to me; they did what was said to them by me; they held my law firmly; *Media*, *Elam*, *Parthia*, *Aria*, *Bactria*, *Sogdia*, *Chorasmia*, *Drangiana*, *Arachosia*, *Sattagydia*, *Gandara*, *India*, the haoma-drinking *Scythians*, the *Scythians* with pointed caps' (Alcock 2001: 105).

This ideal world of the *Achaemenids* was embodied in the architectural complexes and reliefs which depict the king being carried on the shoulders of his subordinates

who were collectivized and objectivized solely as administrated entities. He is present in many positions and places in the palatial structures, particularly those in Persepolis. Even where his body is absent, queues of delegates are depicted awaiting him. The authors are in agreement with Deleuze (1990) that these scenes represent decontextualized bodies, representing subordination and submission.

In Persepolis, and following the tradition of older *Assyrian* standards, any indicators that can differentiate the individuals from one another are omitted. As seen in the reliefs of the *Apadana*, the *Tripylon* and the Hall of Hundred Columns, all men have the same face with a seemingly faint smile which is only perceptible because of the distortion of the beards running up to the ears. The king governs the idea of being the same and of being the other (Lévinas 1987). The subjectivity of individuals in reliefs was erased, and men are all pictured similar to each other, whereas women aren't even remotely visible. The only originality they possess are indications of hairdo and cloths that suggest their ethnicity. They either present gifts from their satrapies, or as mentioned above, carry the king on a litter. All reliefs consist of carved figures that represent the royal conquests and the established provinces of the empire. Thus, these depictions of people become mere building blocks for the purpose of constructing the king's ideal world, silencing torture and violence that were mobilized amid the suppression of revolts and the expansion of the empire. Interestingly, many reliefs show figures smaller than real-life size. They are carved so that the king and courtiers would look down on them, creating an impression of superiority and control for the ruling elite. Indeed, walking up or down stairs, one feels accompanied by such servants who seem to bring all kinds of gifts to a king, producing an uncanny mirror effect that captures even the modern visitor who could picture her/himself as another potential servant of a past king, walking up the stairs.

In his portraits in Persepolis, the king is depicted in the most ideal form of a man, with a muscled, life-sized or larger body, while everybody else are smaller. He is handsome and calm with a lotus in his hand in some scenes, while in others he is displayed killing mythological animals. In his reliefs, the king's domination over people is represented in a world entirely devoid of physical violence. It is only monsters and mythical creatures, and not human beings, that are depicted being killed in the reliefs. An action that seems to be necessary for its protective value.

As mentioned above, the polarized world of the *Achaemenids* was divided into two powers; one is always defeated and the other is the victor, one is the wrongful and the other is the truth. In this world, the process of domination was not represented by scenes of physical violence, but by depictions of control over bodies. Specifically, in the palaces of Persepolis, the figures that represent the calm, almost serene presence of diverse nations that are led in queues by Persian officers who are all duplicates of an original figure, the king.

All the imagery in the palaces can be read as an attempt to reduce the lives of diverse people to a single aspect: obeying the king and submitting their standardized, but region-specific bodies and materials to him. The world of the palace is the practical place of the king's legitimation of his domination over other nations, and it creates the ideological foundations of that domination at the same time. Therefore, the king himself is the living law (Kent 1945). Two references by *Darius* himself in the Babylonian version of the *Behistun* inscription are remarkable in this interpretation. In the introduction to the *Behistun* Inscription, in line 23, he says: 'by the will of *Ahuramazda* these lands walked according to my law, as it was to them by me commanded, so they did'. Speaking about the conquered people in his tomb inscription at *Naqsh-e Rostam* DNa, in paragraph three, line 21, he declares, 'they held my law firmly (Livius.org)'. These two references suggest the existence of a definite code of law (Olmstead 1935), although they might also be interpreted as the king being 'just' but they were not put into practice unlike the Code of *Hammurabi* (Yoffee 1988). This fits the line 63 of the *Behistun* Inscription which reads:

> 'King *Darius* says: On this account *Ahuramazda* brought me help, and all the other gods, all that there are, because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a despot, neither I nor any of my family. I have ruled according to righteousness. Neither to the weak nor to the powerful did I do wrong. Whosoever helped my house, him I favored; he who was hostile, him I destroyed' (Perdue and Carter 2015: 112).

In the reliefs, the scenes revolve around the king, who seems to be in an eternal monologue as he does not face anyone else. The 'I' that holds the power presents itself as a man with no need for temples or other transcendental supports. The winged sun disk was even occasionally interpreted as the metaphysical representation of the king's body (see Herzfeld 1941). A lot of academic literature presume the symbol to be *Ahuramazda*. According to Zoroastrian teachings, *Ahuramazda* is an abstract concept (Zarrinpoush 2005: 22). Moradi Qias-Abadi (2012) introduces the motif as *Mard-Khoday*, Man-God.Such interpretations implicitly point to the masculine nature, presumably the king, or the God. The king assigns the God a physical body all over his palaces, so that the God would need no temple and can hover above the spaces that the king has built for himself (see Merleau-Ponty 2007). The king wants the people subservient to him, to be stripped of their individuality. He believes himself to be enough for humanity, therefore, it is his physical body that has to be copied in his empire, except that it is adorned with various ethnically recognizable 'skins' of cloth and hair.

For such a supposedly eternal world that the *Achaemenids* had invented, the idea of a geographic 'border' was complicated and required to be flexible. For example, the construction of Persepolis with no pre-designed plan, and keeping it theoretically always unfinished (it seems to have expanded in all directions) allowed it to expand until the terrace was completely filled with buildings. *Darius*, under whom the construction on the terrace had been started, must have had enough foresight to

imagine that his successors would only slowly add structure after structure on the huge terrace that delimits the site. Indeed, each king tried to leave a trace of himself in Persepolis by constructing or restoring a part of the city. The purpose of these constructions was not the actual buildings that were erected, but the continuation of the process of building an ideal world, just as they built an empire.

Understanding Persepolis as well as its buildings and their decoration helps us figure out how *Achaemenids* viewed the symbolic structure of their political world as each king reflected his ideal world on inscriptions, palaces and reliefs. If we consider the famous reliefs on the *Apadana*'s eastern side as the depiction of a real ceremony in which the representatives of conquered nations were forced to submit to the king, the reliefs should be read as the very practice of obeying the king. The freezing of this action in stone is an ideal way for the king and his courtiers to promote their worldview: all human beings come with a very faint smile, and certainly, without any pain on their faces, and all are standing in rows waiting to be admitted to the king's presence. This rendering de-historicizes the act of submission by eternalizing it. However, in times of actual visits from the periphery, the reliefs do not simply mirror the real practices of the subaltern: they serve as prototypes for the right way of behaving. At Persepolis, the imagery is constituted by an act of submission, and is at the same time the commemoration of submission and an instruction of how to behave in the act of showing reverence and obedience to the king.

If this is the main message of the reliefs of *Apadana*'s eastern side, its ideological mechanism is quite fine-tuned and works even today. The message of submission is delivered in multifarious ways and with so such elaborotion that the most important content mentioned is lost to most viewers. Each group from an *Achaemenid* satrapy is shown coming with its own gifts for the king, consisting of living beings, i.e. all kinds of region-specific animals from two-humped camels to the okapi, from long-horned sheep to horses; and of products of varying materials and shapes, ranging from textiles to highly decorated vases and arm rings similar to those recovered from the above-mentioned *Oxus treasure*.

Here is the list of the three rows of depictions and the gifts they bring:

Uppermost row:

1. Nine representatives from Media bring bracelets and vases;
2. Six *Elamite* representatives donate arches, stilettos and lions;
3. Four people from *Arachosia* bring camels and lion skins;
4. Four representatives from *Hilmand* bring vases and camels;
5. Six people from Egypt with cloths and cows;
6. Four *Parthians* bringing bowls, camels and goblets;
7. Five people from *Sagartia* with horses and cloths as gifts;

Middle row:

1. Three Armenians with vases and horses;
2. Six representatives from Babylonia bring cloths and zebus;
3. Seven people from Cilicia with vases and sheep;
4. *Scythians* with horses, bracelets and cloths;
5. People from *Gandhara,* and
6. People from *Sogdia.*

Lowermost row:

1. Six representatives from Assyria bringing goblets, bowls, golden bracelets and chariots;
2. Five people from *Cappadocia* with strong horses and cloths;
3. Eight people from Lydia bring golden vases and cloths;
4. Four representatives from *Bactria* with golden vases and camels;
5. Five Indians with mules and spears.

Representatives on the stairway:

1. Four representatives from Thrace bring spears, shields and horses;
2. Three Arab with cloths, camels and dirks;
3. Four people from *Drangiana* (eastern Iran) with shields, spears and cows;
4. People from Libya with chariots, spears and horned goats;
5. Three representatives from Ethiopia with ivories and an okapi.

The viewer's gaze is so concerned with figuring out all the detail and trying to identify who might be from where, that the underlying message of submission under a strong ruler, the threat of sanctions or suppression when tribute is not delivered remains subtle and unreflected. This is a very clever way of drawing people into accepting their own domination through visual redundancy that masquerades as a world of singular acts.

Interestingly, on the famous eastern stairs to the *Apadana* where the representatives of all satrapies are shown approaching the center of the relief, the royal image found in the treasury had been replaced with eight Persian and *Median* soldiers of the royal guard facing each other in groups of four with an empty space in the middle. What does this mean? Did the showing of a person in front of the king at some point become forbidden? It is as if the king has to be always beyond reach, avoiding face to face contact with his underlings. Elsewhere, the pictorial hierarchy with the king/deity at the top and as the main and highly repetitive theme is distinctive in another effect: the king is rarely in direct contact with his subordinates. He sits on a throne or is placed on a litter, and may be followed by other *Persians* or *Median* who are allowed

to hold a parasol over him. Only in a few instances, however, do we see a courtier approaching him face-to-face. And when this happens, this person is in a position of deep deference, bowing down and holding the right hand in front of his mouth while a thurible separates him from the king.

Subjectivity of materials versus objectivity of human beings

Majority of the recovered *Achaemenid* material culture can be attributed to the realm of royalty. The motifs in this period are standardized and repeat themselves at smaller than the monumental palatial scales on seals and coins (Moorey 1985). Texts contain instructions from the king concerning his laws, all formulated from the perspective of a single individual (Kent 1933). The whole architecture of the *Achaemenids* is an icon of the process of the existence and values of the empire. However, this is only because of the extensive use of relief decoration in those sprawling political complexes. The motifs include a consistent pattern: The king is always depicted mastering the scenes, hunting, punishing, receiving visitors, giving orders or delivering speeches. Representatives of ethnic groups are mostly depicted as silhouettes with very limited gestures, presenting gifts, paying their respects, and in few instances, like *Behistun*, being punished. In most scenes, this world of subaltern men is portrayed motionless, but in an almost smiling manner without individuality. It is not the goal to portray bodies as they are (Puar 2007). They are only depicted in the most idealized form of a male; a healthy and young duplicate of the king. Like many other ancient kingdoms such as that of the *Assyrians*, this pattern of copying an ideal body was also meant to be applied to the future, as a text by *Darius* I about 'you who may be king thereafter' makes clear (cited above). All these docile bodies exist under the rulership of the king and his God; their only possible action is presenting offerings to the king just as they were used to give offerings to the gods in their local temples. Based on documents such as *Darius*' letter *to Gadates* (Hansen 1986) and the tablets found in the rampart and treasury of Persepolis (Koch 2001 [1992]), the communication among the centralized government and the satrapies consisted mostly of religious, administrative and economic exchanges. Persepolis is like a new political temple for a new god whose body is so fused with the body of the king that the king is able to speak as a transcendent entity.

But to what extent did this ideal world actually exist in praxis? Evidence shows that although the *Achaemenids* seem to have preferred to illustrate themselves as calm men without any sense of anger, hate or even excitement (Davis 2013; Henkelman 2011), such a self-presentation was not necessarily a factual one. In the Greek sources we hear of tortures to death and details of brutal inquisition processes at the *Achaemenid* court (Lincoln 2007: 85–90).

The king always describes himself as the king of many peoples and ethnicities. Using the words *mardom* or *'Shahanshah bandak'* (respectively meaning people and the king's

people) in the most general sense, they showed pride in dominance over a vast diversity of peoples, and at the same time denying them of their individuality. Even in financial documents, workers are not named, but are categorized according to the job groups to which they belong, such as female tailors (Farazmand 2003; Wiesehöfer 2001).

In this deceptively idealized world, names of individuals were only recorded when they rebelled. When it comes to punishments, we suddenly come across names (Olmstead 1938). This hints that a good citizen is a nameless, silent one. In the *Behistun*inscription, the king is delivering a drastic punishment, so that other people will remember this scene forever (Foti 2013). Remembering the danger of punishment through the stable referent of the *Behistun* relief is meant to be a combination of a visual experience and a bodily expectation: it is the body that expects to remember what the eyes have perceived already. Yet, this potentially remembering body does not merely remain a body. It is a subject that is disciplined by the fear of physical ill-treatment and humiliation.

The frequency of mentioning *Ahuramazda* in the three *Behistun* inscriptions varies; in the Old Persian text, he appears a full 69 times (Benedict and Von Voigtlander 1956). Justifying his actions by claiming that the gods back him, indicates that *Darius* at that point in his reign felt the need of a supernatural support. Ascencion process of a revolutionary character like *Darius* to the throne is evident in his assertion that of eight of ancestors were previously monarchs, which in turn legitimized his claims to the throne. *Herodotus* gives a vivid account of the revolution before the rise of *Darius.* He does not, however, inform his readers whether *Darius* had the lineal right of succession. Rather, Herodotus strongly asserts that a debate preceded the reign of *Darius*. He states that, after the deposition of the Pseudo-*Bardiya* (the *Gaumāta* of the *Behistun* inscription) and the suppression of him, the seven conspirators, *Otanes*, *Aspathines*, *Gobryas*, *Intaphrenes*, *Megabyzus*, *Hydarnes* and *Darius*, met to discuss and decide the government of the state (Brannan 1963).

In such a world, the big eyes of *Darius*, as displayed in the *Behistun* relief, are carved as symbols of perpetual observation that monitor his entire territory looking to spot rebellion even inside the hearts, which should tremble at his god-confirmed sovereignty. It can be said that, according to historical texts and research, *Darius*' elaborate spying system called 'King's Eyes and Ears' (Krieger 2009) probably existed throughout the territory of the empire. The king always exhibits his domination as an imperialist power that is stable, hierarchical and irreversible (Lemke 2012).

Physical violence objectified in the inscriptions of *Darius* and *Xerxes* represents the attempts of the *Achaemenids* at defining dichotomies such as rebellious/docile and Persian/foreigner, with both sides of the dichotomy defined in order to legitimize subjugation:

> '*Darius* the king says: These are the peoples/territories who obey me; by the favor of *Ahuramazda*, I was their king' (Kuhrt 2007: cccii).

To what extent was this world realized in daily life? To what extent did political violence affect the everyday life of ordinary people of Persepolis, the province of *Parsa* and the other satrapies? If at all, this question can only be answered through further excavations in the sites containing houses belonging ordinary people and the remains of ordinary lives.

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Eventually, the *Achaemenid* Empire was taken down by Alexander circa 330 BC, after whose death, the whole territory was divided among his commanders, one of whom was *Seleukos Nicator.* He established *Seleucid* dynasty that existed from 312 BC to 63 BC and was finally succeeded by an empire that was founded by another dynasty speaking an Indo-European language, the *Parthians*.

Interpreted both by Iranian and the Western historians as exotic rulers, the *Seleucids* have never been icons of modern nationalism, nor were their successors *Parthians*. The *Sasanians*, in contrast, claimed that they were the direct descendants of the *Achaemenids*. In *Pahlavi* text, *Karnamak* (Hasheminezhad 1991: 31) the author claims that *Ardašīr* was from the race of *Dara (Darius I)*. This dynasty tried to delete any traces of the *Parthians* and *Seleucids* to enhance the incontrovertiblity of their political ancestry; to this effect, they also chose to add their own imagery close to the tombs of the *Achaemenid* kings at *Naqsh-e Rostam* (Grainger 2014). As already mentioned, the *Sasanians* were not the sole dynasty to claim descent from the *Achaemenids*. The *Pahlavi* kings of the 20th century resuscitated this fictive kinship, leading to a concomitant research focused on *Achaemenid* palaces and elite culture (Papoli-Yazdi and Garazhian 2012).

Chapter 3

Get off Your Horse! *Sasanian* Propaganda in Artistic Remains

> Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one (Marx [Capital, new edition] 1992: 915).

Historical background: A brief introduction to the *Parthians*

> *Ardašīr*, accompanied by a bondwoman from the *Parthian/Arsacid* royal family, was riding rapidly. Two horsemen, *Ardavan* the fifth and his advisor, were chasing them. *Ardavan* is asking a passer-by: Did you see a man riding with a royal family lady?
>
> Passer-by: I did my majesty! They were riding as fast as the wind and a buck was following them. *Ardavan*, surprisingly, A buck?! What does it mean?
>
> *Ardavan*'s wise advisor: My majesty, we must go faster, before the buck catches them!
>
> The passer-by informed the king that the buck was sitting on the back of *Ardašīr*'s horse!
>
> The advisor is whispering to him: gods bless the king of kings! It's too late...
> (*Karnamak-e Ardašīr-e Pāpakan* 1917: 7–8)

Claiming his background as an original Iranian, the above text is part of the legendary story of the rise of *Ardašīr*, the first *Sasanian* king (Karnamak-e Ardašīr-e Pāpakan 1917: 7-8; Baqeri 1999). *Ardašīr* is considered to be the founder of the dynasty. Presenting him as a mythical, powerful and divine creature is part of *Sasanian* political tradition. Such narratives also have deep roots in other Near Eastern traditions. The buck with

the billowing ribbons is the symbol of the *Kianian*s (Duchesne-Guillemin 1966), one of the first dynasties in Persian mythical history, and the divine *Farrah*, or magical force (Abd Allāhīl 1990). Mythical dynasties of Iran include *Kianian* and *Pishdadian*, which are described in the epic text written by *Ferdowsi* (940-1020 CE). They have deeply rooted in pre-Islamic literature (see Davidson 1998; Kheirandish 2004). It bestows upon its beholder the power from the God, *Ahuramazda*, and it became one of the common motifs in *Sasanian* art (Katouzian 2011, 2010: 377). In this way, the rising power of *Sasanians* that put an end to the *Parthian* empire (Koushan 2012) was represented as a beautiful, divine legend (Grossmark 2006).

The production of such legends was a pragmatic approach oriented towards benefiting the new rulers. It was presumably in the *Sasanian* period that various legends and a mythical history were gathered in a book, called *Khoday Namak* (literally God's scripture including official royal history) (Katouzian 2010). This history was represented in the form of mythical symbols, which are narrated as historical facts, so that the legend substituted for actual events or at least became a widely accepted interpretation of those events. For example, the coup d'état of the religious class who were in the temples, probably in Fars as a religious centre, and once appeared in the political was portrayed as the divine investiture of the *Kianian Farrah* bestowed upon *Ardašīr* (Haji Moradkhani 2010; Katouzian 2010; Pirnazar 2003). *Ardašīr* was depicted as the representative of god, and a harsh religious ideology justified the new political order. Everything started with a myth.

According to historical narratives, *Ardašīr* was from a religious *(Mobed)* family, the son of a priest called *Pāpak* who claimed descent from the legendary hero *Sasan*, a priest in the temple of the goddess *Anahita* in *Istakhr*, located only a few kilometers from *Naqsh-e Rostam* (Elohi Nazari 2002: 30; Eshraghi 1973; Frye 2001). It is thought that *Ardašīr* was also educated religiously (Foltz 2013: 49). His family's status as caretakers of an important shrine of the goddess *Anahita* enabled him to raise an army against the *Parthians* (Foltz 2013; Nabarz 2005). Narratives that mostly date to the late *Sasanian* period present him as a brave warrior who stood against *Ardavan,* the last king of the *Parthian* dynasty (Chrissanthos 2008). If these narratives and later *Sasanian* policies are investigated more closely, however, traces of an internal *coup* can be detected.

Although he had previously studied religion, *Ardašīr* was not himself a *Mobed* (Zoroastrian priest). Rather, he seems to have been the leader of religious groups that were opposed to the *Parthian* rule. In the *Sasanian* class system, clergymen held the highest rank. Most of the religious texts, particularly the *Avesta*, emphasize that the legitimacy of the Zoroastrians and the *Mobeds* are products of *Sasanian* times (Littleton 1973; Zakeri 1995).

Before pursuing these issues further, it is useful to step back briefly and give some consideration to the *Parthians* (247 BC–AD 224), the dynasty that the *Sasanians* replaced.

The *Parthians* came from the area of what is today northeastern Iran and southern Turkmenistan (Colledge 1967). At least from the reign of King *Mithridates* I (r. 165-138 BC) onwards, *Parthian* territory was comprised of an empire extending from central Asia to Armenia and from India to the eastern borders of the Roman Empire (Wolski 1957). The *Parthians* inherited from the *Seleucids* an expansive political structure and high demographic, ethnic, and religious variability (Wiesehöfer 2001). While Iranian cultural influences from the *Achaemenids* and from Central Asia formed the core, *Seleucid* and Hellenistic elements also played a key role in creating a rich, multicultural empire (Brosius 2006: 117). In order to manage this vast and diverse empire, the *Parthians* used a flexible political structure and granted internal independence to localities and minorities, especially to the Greeks (Andrade 2009; Sarkhosh Curtis and Stewart 2007). The *Parthians* appointed local rulers, usually old indigenous significant families, to various parts of their empire and granted them some authority in matters such as minting copper coins and carving rock reliefs or statues (Khademi Nadooshan *et al*. 2005). These local rights were almost completely revoked in the *Sasanian* period. Production of material objects was not a monopoly in the hands of the *Parthian* government; instead they were produced and consumed without much government interference. The creation of a rich body of rock relief art in south western Iran under local rulers, the *Elymais,* can be considered as a convincing example. The diversity of material culture found in burials and in public spaces (Colledge 1967; Herrmann 1977) is evidence of their open policies. *Parthian* sites have received very limited attention, compared to *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* sites, in archaeological investigations in modern Iran; but actually there are sites excavated out of political Iran such as *Palmyra* and *Nisa* in Turkmenistan. Therefore, the information we have is based mostly on historical sources.

The *Parthians* appear to have permitted some degree of freedom of religion in different parts of their realm (Boyce 1979; Kellens and Boyce 1989). They worshiped a variety of different gods and goddesses. Each group, city, or local region could perform their own religious ceremonies. *Marduk*, the main god of *Babylon*, was worshipped alongside *Ishtar* and *Nanna,* while *Shamash* was respected alongside other gods. However, there are some archaeological data that can be interpreted as evidence for religious diversity in the *Parthian* period, for example, the highly variable burial practices including jar burials, ossuaries, simple interments, and more (Davies 2013; Shaked 2005). Parthian kings permitted Jews to perform their own ceremonies. *Parthian* tolerance resulted in mutual help between Jews and *Parthians*, with *Parthians* receiving fugitive Jewish Roman citizens (Brosius 2006: 168). While there is some evidence that refers to the *Parthians* as Zoroastrians, such as names and fire temple inscriptions (Wolski 1957), there was no official religion. This stands in contrast to the adherence to a religion used to guarantee the unity of the upper classes and power in the newly established *Sasanian* Empire (Hybel 2013: 25; Tafazzoli and Amouzegar 2007).

The *Sasanian* Empire: a socio-political review based on material culture

The *Sasanians* conquered *Pars*/*Fars* in AD 205. *Pāpak* ejected *Guchehr*, the local governor of *Istakhr* and installed his eldest son *Šāpūr* as the crown prince. But *Ardašīr* rebelled against his brother in AD 220 (Wolski 2004). *Ardašīr* revolted against the *Parthian* king *Ardavan IV* (Figure 4) in AD 224 (Wolski 1957), and in doing so the *Sasanians* put an end to almost 500 years of *Arsacid* (*Parthian*) reign in Iran (Schippmann 1990). As his first step, *Ardašīr* brought Fars under his control, thereby starting his conquests from the same region as the *Achaemenid* king *Cyrus* had done. With the support of some of the neighboring provinces including *Kerman* and *Khuzestan*, he gradually conquered different parts of Iran in the course of several wars and sieges (Ghodrat-Dizaji 2010; Katouzian 2010; Schippmann 1990). *Ardašīr* encouraged local governors to mount their own military campaigns against *Parthian* rule (Wiesehöfer 2001: 173). However, some parts of Iran, including the western provinces of Hatra and Alhazar, resisted and were not conquered until the reign of *Ardašīr*'s son, *Šāpūr I* (Figure 5). 'Under Šāpūr I, *Sasanian* royal ideology underwent a rapid series of developments that reformed the bounds and claims of Iranian kingship, providing an ideological and visual bulwark to the military expansion started by his father' (Canepa 2014: 78).

The *Sasanian* Empire arose from the remains of its predecessors and pursued an aggressive expansionist policy (Pagden 2008: 143). Warfare became a regular activity, and the Roman Empire was presented as a permanent enemy of Iran (Wilcox 1986; Hekster and Zair 2008; Eyvindr 2012; Nicolle 1996; Canepa 2009). 'The Roman and *Sasanian* empires coexisted in subdued hostility for the majority of their mutual history (224–AD 642). Open warfare punctuated by battlefield negotiations was the hallmark of the initial seven decades of their coexistence. During this period, the two courts often cast each other as barbarous other or impudent upstarts' (Greatrex and Lieu 2007: 141).

Although the *Parthians* fought against the Roman Empire, especially along their mutual borders (Yarshater 1983: 826), the *Parthians* did not have as strongly expansionist tendencies as the *Sasanians*. Despite their proclaimed hostility, the *Roman* and *Parthian* empires also enjoyed periods of peace and friendship, as in the time of *Augustus* and *Nero* and the corresponding *Parthian* kings *Vologases* and *Phraates IV* (Herrmann 1977). Most *Parthian* wars seemed to be primarily defensive in nature (Victorino 2012) while the *Sasanians* engaged in more than 30 wars, mostly aggressive; and the *Sasanian* king of kings always appeared in written sources and visual representations as a warrior with his sword. King of kings carries his sword even in family or private scenes and in banquet scenes. However, 'an act of aggression by one side had been answered by the other. The awareness of their common interests had been occluded, their commitment to peaceful co-existence diminished' (Johnston 2006: 163).

Figure 4. *Ardašīr I* victory on *Ardavan V*, Tang-e Tangab, Fars province (Flandin 1977).

At its greatest extent, the territory of the *Sasanian* Empire reached from Afghanistan in the east to Syria in the west, while some parts of its western borders extended as far as Anatolia and Armenia (Herrmann 1977). The *Sasanians* showed a great interest in territorial expansion. The Roman attempted to take over Mesopotamia provoked the *Sasanians* to retaliate, and the Roman Emperor Valerian was captured by the *Sasanians* in AD 260 (Dadbeh 1968; Penrose 2008). After *Diocletian*'s reforms around the end of the 3rd century AD strengthened the Roman Empire, the *Sasanians*' military dominance ended (Markel 2013: 149). Much later, under the *Sasanian* king *Kosrow II*, also known as *Kosrow Parviz* (r. 590–AD 628), the struggle began again (Farrokh 2007: 234). At first the *Sasanians* were victorious. Jerusalem surrendered in 614, and the Holy Cross was carried off to Persia (Von der Osten 1931). The final transformative conflicts between *Heraclius I* (r. 610–AD 641) and *Kosrow II* were followed by the Arab invasions in 633–642. By 651, the last *Sasanian* king, *Yazdegerd III*, had been assassinated, and the Persian Empire was completely destroyed (Canepa 2010a).

The *Sasanian* tendency toward territorial expansion led to repeated wars during their 450-year dynasty. *Sasanian* militarism and a nationalist ideal (see the following) did not tolerate diversity (Kia 1998; Matyszak 2014: 113). Royal family members replaced most former local rulers. In some cases, *Sasanian* kings ordered individuals to be shifted from upper to lower classes (Masʿudi 2008). The *Sasanian* polity focused on religious and political hegemony, exercising violence and erasing others with bloody means (Hosseini and Esmaili 2013).

The *Sasanians* introduced a new socio-political structure that differed markedly from the ruling structure of the *Parthians* (Debevoise 1968: 269). *Ardašīr* named his territory Iran, the first time this designation was used (Modaressi and Ghodrat-Dizaji 2011). The *Sasanians* promoted a kind of nationalism and a return to the splendorous *Achaemenid*

Figure 5. *Sasanian* Persia. Copyright Ian Mladjov.

Persia of their purported ancestors (Smith 2013; Stepaniants 2002), when the empire extended as far as Africa and the peripheries provided the heart of the empire, Fars, with human resources such as craftsmen. The *Sasanian* interest in *Achaemenid* policies can be observed in the places in which they preferentially carved their reliefs. Significant *Sasanian* sites are very often in the same locations as *Achaemenid* ones, and the rock reliefs and inscriptions are carved alongside *Achaemenid* palaces and other sites (Canepa 2014).

During the reign of *Šāpūr I*, who called himself the king of kings of Iran and *Aniran*, the term *Aniran* began to be used to denote non-Iranian territories. Although in some later periods, such as during the reign of *Kosrow I*, the *Aniran* discourse subsided (Canepa 2010a, 2010b), it ultimately lasted until the end of the *Sasanian* period, as seen, for example, in the *Bundahišn*, a cosmography based on Zoroastrianism (Bahar 2011).

In the *Sasanian* Empire, the interlinked notions of territory, boundary, kingdom, and kingship were substantially developed. The territory of Iran required a definition. The concept of boundaries was thereby mobilized and redefined (Mojtahedzadeh 2001, 2005a). Borders became the lines separating enemies and friends, more extreme than before. Prior to the *Sasanians*, the border concept was vaguer. 'Under *Šāpūr* I, *Sasanian* kingship and its symbolism of power became self-consciously imperial' (Canepa 2009: 54). At least from *Šāpūr I* era, some areas were described as borders such as the region of the Caspian Sea. In *Sasanian* times borders changed to exact lines, especially in the case of the western boundary between Iranian and Roman territories. At the time, Rome also had its clear set of borders, enemies and friends. The notion of border reached its peak in the concepts of Iran and *Aniran*, which defined the territory of the *Sasanian* Empire, the borders of Iran and non-Iranian lands politically (Mojtahedzadeh 2005b; Sauer *et al.* 2013; Canepa 2010a). A new concept of citizenship was produced: good citizens should be Zoroastrians. People were limited and defined by boundaries, whether these were territorial or identitarian, and violation of these boundaries was punishable (Allahyari 2003; Vameghi 1997).

In order to defend these boundaries, the empire needed people to function as soldiers. Indeed, the factor that propelled the empire towards a tyrannical closed system may have been these boundaries, which were concrete lines separating good Zoroastrians and friends from enemies. At the same time, obedience within the boundaries worked to remove internal danger and allowed the king to keep his focus on external enemies (Ibn-Miskawayh 2003). For example, *Šāpūr II* tried to suppress Christianity, which was more on political ground rather than religious ground (Modi 1905: 85).

Internally, the central government took over the monopoly of minting coins and some luxuries made out of valuable materials such as silver and gold. From the 4th century AD onwards, royal workshops were in charge of acquisition, processing and production of artistic pieces depicting the kings (Bryce 2008). A decrease in material

diversity is an indicator of this monopoly, with luxury products standardized in terms of patterns, motifs, and dimensions. Designs and motifs had pre-defined and repetitive patterns. Generally, the king and his actions were the main motif; in most cases he is presented as absolute goodness and is accompanied by the god or religious symbols, such as a fire temple, the main place of worship for Zoroastrians. Sometimes he fights an enemy, thereby representing the contrast between good and evil (Gupta and Kulashreshtha 1994) and light and darkness. *Sasanian* silver plates represent scenes of hunting, killing animals, and warfare (Harper 2000). While there are very few plates on which females are depicted, dancing, playing music, drinking wine, or just sitting (Lukonin and Ivanov 2012; Nicolle 1996).

Sasanian material culture generally acted as a tool of propaganda for the government (Sreberny and Mohammadi 1994). Scenes of warfare and hunting are depicted on tens, even hundreds of objects, ranging from the aforementioned silver plates (Lockard 2007) to cups, mosaics (Giroire and Roger 2007), seals, stucco works, rock reliefs and more. Violent narratives, such as depictions of the king of kings in a battle or while taking captives, stomping on enemies, or hunting, appear on durable materials such as gold, silver and stone reliefs (Parsa 1985; Shaw 2001; Sidnell 2006).

Ordinary people are rarely shown, and these vessels were items of luxury that were not widely distributed (Boyce 1979). Restricted in a different way were rock reliefs and inscriptions that were carved in protected areas, some of which, such as *Taq-e Bostan* near modern *Kermanshah* or *Hajiabad* Cave were hunting and shooting sites. The audience for these highly ideological materials were members of the upper classes such as noblemen. This material - in this case inscriptions, mosaics and their motifs - constitutes a one-way process without any interactions. It is a reflection of the ego. This ego can be King *Šāpūr*'s or *Kartir*'s, the *Mobedan-e Mobed* (priest of priests). It represents an oppressive and univocal system that defines the other as a horrible atheist and an infernal creature that must be suppressed.

> 'I wrote this inscription so that in the future anyone who sees imperial records or documents or other (17) inscriptions will know that I am that *Kartir* who under *Šāpūr*, King of Kings, was entitled '*Kartir*, the priestly school master,' and under *Hormozd*, King of Kings and *Bahrām*, (18) King of Kings, I was entitled '*Kartir*, *Ahuramazda*'s magi-master,' and under *Bahrām*, King of Kings, son of *Bahrām*, I was entitled '*Kartir*, *Bahrām*'s Soul-savior, *Ahuramazda*'s magi-master.' And whoever may see or read this inscription, may that one be to the Yazatas and noble lords and himself devout and sincere, that one (just) so, as I (19) have been, in order to attain good fame and fortune for this bone-endowed body, and salvation for the soul' (Ka'ba-ye Zardosht: Akbarzade and Tavousi 2006 : 45).

The defeated regions became part of Iran politically and their inhabitants, especially craftsmen, were moved to Iran (Akbarzade and Tavousi 2006). In the third to sixth

centuries, *Persians* deported skilled craftsmen and even entire populations of Roman cities to be forcibly resettled (Canepa 2010a). Most of them worked for royal workshops. Any cases of resistance were harshly suppressed. Narratives of victories, including mass killings, were recorded as honorable deeds in rock reliefs and inscriptions, placed alongside the figures of their glorious ancestors, the *Achaemenids* (Herrmann 2000). '*Šāpūr* I's prodigious military successes and innovations in royal ideology made a deep impact on Persian identity and visual culture' (Canepa 2014: 78). '*Šāpūr* I developed visual and spatial techniques to imagine control over Iran and non-Iran. His rock reliefs reflected and buttressed this shift in *Sasanian* desire to portray themselves as kings of kings of peoples beyond the traditional borders of Iran, both in their subject matter and location' (Canepa 2014: 78). In a reign of more than four hundred years, the *Sasanians* created a centralized power structure with a complex administrative system accompanied by a new stratified social order and new borders. Centralized bureaucratic policies according to the Weberian concept of patrimonial bureaucracy can be applied to the case of the *Sasanians* during the period from *Šāpūr II* (r. 309–AD 379) until the end of *Kosrow I*'s (531–AD 579) reigns (Uricoechea 1980: 2; Zarrinkoub and Pashzanous 2011).

Policies directed toward limiting the power of higher status groups are found in *Sasanian* Persia. Social classes became rigidly stratified under the *Sasanians.* The clergies constituted the first class, which included priests, judges, temple guardians, teachers, and ascetics. From the time of *Kosrow I*, the high officials of the state were formed into a new elite class, the bureaucrats, whose status acted to check the power of the old noble families to monopolize offices for themselves (Middleton 2015: 827). Relying on this new class and on the army, which its high officals organized warrior class, the later *Sasanian* monarchs were able to reorganize the state and endow it with a strength that was unknown under the *Parthians*.

According to Zoroastrian cosmology, which the *Sasanians* adapted to serve as an imperial tool, Iran stood at the center of a divinely created world (Canepa 2010a). The holy Zoroastrian text, *Avesta,* was collected and (re)structured by the religious class (*Mobedan*) (Mirzaei 2012). Until the advent of the *Sasanians*, and even under their regime, Iran was a country in which written documents were conspicuously rare, so as far as the religious tradition is concerned, it faithfully carries on the old Indo-Iranian tradition which established the preeminence of a precise and careful oral textual transmission and made learning by heart of the sacred texts an essential element of an adequate cult (Kellens 2012). According to the testimony of *Pahlavi* texts such as *Ardā Wīrāz -Namag* (*Ardavirafnameh*) and the inscriptions of *Kartir*, the *Avesta*, or at least some parts of it, was recompiled in the *Sasanian* period (Dezhamkhooy 2012a, 2012b). In fact, The *Avesta* is a compilation of ancient texts, which we owe to the collaboration of the *Mazdean* priesthood and the *Sasanian* political power, but of which, unfortunately, only a fraction has been transmitted to us by the Parsi communities of India and Iran, which still remain true to the old religion (Kellens 2012). 'The Avestan texts were

written down only in *Sasanian* times, under king *Kosrow* (531–AD 579) according to the tradition, but possibly later' (Daryaee 2008).

The *Sasanian* social order was closely related to the rulers' political agenda (Clark 1998; Karimian 2010: 2). In order to create an unquestionable basis for their ideal social order, the *Sasanians* turned to religion, and indeed the traces of *Sasanian* social order can be observed in the religious texts. *Avesta* lays out a stratified pattern for society. Members were divided into four main groups: clergymen (*magis/athravan/mobedan*), warriors (*rathshr*), farmers (*vasteriofeshount*) and burocrates (*divan salaran*) (Christensen 1991; Razi 2000). *Mobeds* were at the top of this hierarchical order and were themselves divided into two groups, the *magupatan* chief priests and the *herbadan* (*herbeds*) (Karimian 2010: 105). 'Judging, religious teaching and supervision over the performance of religious duties were the responsibility of *magupats* (*magis*)' (Karimian 2010: 454).

The Letter of *Tansar* points out that this stratified order was unalterable (Sattarian and Salehi 2009), and membership in a certain social class could only be inherited (Canepa 2009; Minavi 1974; Simonsohn 2011), although in a few cases, such as priests or the military class, changes of class could be ordered by the royal family. Officially the four distinct classes involved only men. The audience for the *Avesta* was normally men, with bravery, warrior hood, and even aesthetic categories usually discussed in male terms (Dezhamkhooy 2012a:61–63). If we examine royal material culture, the very limited presence of women in political and public spaces is notable (Dezhamkhooy 2012a: 56–57). Social divisions were based on masculine characteristics with no room for women, signaling clearly the patriarchal social order of the *Sasanians* (Dezhamkhooy 2012b).

The *Sasanian* political structure was a mostly religiously-based pyramid. A sacred ruler blessed by the gods mediated between heaven (see below) and earth and stood at the center of the empire. This is manifest ideologically in the use of the title king of kings. The religious centrality of the king can also be traced in the material world. Under the *Sasanians*, material culture was utilized in many cases to represent a relation of domination and obedience (Babic 2005: 26). The city of *Ardašīr-Ḵorra* (Glory of *Ardašīr*), today known as *Gur* near *Fīrūzābād* in Fars, was built by *Ardašīr I* and reflected his developing ideas about kingship. The circular city represents the urban plan of a sovereign who intended the city not only to function as the center of the empire, but also to symbolize the centrality of the king of kings (Khodadadian 1999).

The *Sasanian* tendency toward centralization has been mostly examined in relation to religious institutions and the state's declaration of official religion (Wiesehöfer 2001). In order to define and reinforce religious institutions, the *Sasanians* came up with a new version of Zoroastrianism that influenced many aspects of social life. These pressures led some groups of people, such as the Mazdakites and Manicheans, to rebel against the system. According to *Al-Tabari* (1999), *Mazdak* and *Mani* were both from

the priestly class. They formed opposition groups based on changing class relations: *Mazdak*, for example, joined with the farmers. *Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk* (2010) believes that such an act could have weakened the empire because it ignored class relations and the power of the kings, while *Ibn Al-Athir* (1996) emphasized *Mazdak*'s agenda with reference to sexual freedom. The two authors describe *Mazdak* as someone who challenged religious notions, sexual laws (Dezhamkhooy and Papoli-Yazdi 2017), class relations and beliefs in gods and kings.

Some of the religious texts can be considered religious-governmental, as they present policies and approaches towards the elimination of religious minorities. To produce a considerable quantity of written documents on different spheres of life by the clergy was a new strategy. Religious and jurisprudence texts, including *Ardā Wīrāz-Namag*, *Bundahišn*, *Shayest Nashayest* and *Denkard*, denounce other religions or reformers such as *Mazdak* and subjects such as same-sex practices, while defining/emphasising on *Sasanian* class stratification (Dezhamkhooy 2012a). *Denkard* divides all people into two main groups: *Behdin* (Zoroastrians) and *Bad-din* (literary believers of other religions) (Moradi-Qiasabadi 2007). It presents Mazdakis as licentious wolves (Fazilat 2002), calling them *Ashmuq*, a term that means liar and evil. *Denkard* also contains a discussion against Manicheans und the Jewish minority (Fazilat 2002). Another group of written sources includes post-Islamic texts such as the *Al-Tabari* history (Allahyari 2003) that concentrates on the *Sasanians* and are sometimes based on precise translations of *Pahlavi* sources; considering *Pahlavi* texts *Al-Tabari* describes the suppression of the Mazdakite movement.

Mechanisms of political and social suppression in the *Sasanian* Empire

The aforementioned social stratification and the division of people into four different classes bore a variety of implicit meanings that acted as a kind of demarcation that defined these groups, their rights and duties (Eisenstadt 1969; Lornejad and Doostzadeh 2012). The distinction between the fourth class, that of the farmers, and the other three was of utmost importance. Despite making up the majority of the *Sasanian* population and actually acting as the productive engine of the empire, the class of farmers was considered to be the lowest of all (Dinvari 2007; Moftakhari *et al*. 2008: 104). A series of civil laws, in particular family laws, was enforced to guarantee the survival of *Sasanian* social order.

Laws that prescribed norms were mostly written by clergymen, and they defined the relations between the members of the family unit legally (Karimian 2010). Most of the laws were arranged according to the *Sasanian* interpretation of the *Avesta*. Therefore, most practices and behaviors in different aspects of social life, especially of family life, were supposed to be in harmony with Zoroastrian instructions (Shahzadi 2007). Yet, it is clear that at least a minority of the *Sasanian* population was not Zoroastrian. The situation of the minorities has not been researched in detail (see Valavi and

Boroumand 2009), but the fact that social and political pressures were imposed on these minorities is reported in *Sasanian* texts. For example, *Kartir* mentions in his inscriptions that he ordered that people who did not believe in Zoroastrianism (*Ashmuq* (infidels)) be killed. These pressures were exerted not only on religious and ethnic minorities, but also on people who had different readings of Zoroastrianism or different ways of living (Elling 2013: 183). The situation was even worse in the case of the *Aniranis* (non-Iranians/strangers), who, like slaves, suffered from the absence of civil rights (Wiesehöfer 2001: 220; Moftakhari *et al.* 2008: 105). 'This cosmology, inflected as it was with the dynamics of a supernatural battle between good and evil, informed the imperial ideology of the *Sasanians* as they interacted with a vast array of lands and peoples that offered themselves as tempting prizes or threatened, like a demonic force of chaos, to disrupt or supplant their own law' (Canepa 2010a: 125). The *Sasanian* political structure projected a notion of the 'other', described as both a political and religious opponent including different identities, social and religious groups and as someone who denied the prescribed sexual/gendered roles and rules as laid out in *Ardā Wīrāz–Namag* and *Denkard* (Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2009; Gignoux 2002).

Monitoring everyday life and controlling the body and sexual behaviors was an integral part of life in historical Iran (Brosius 1998). To control the mind through the body, sexual violence appears as a punishment for sins (Foucault 2012). Such control has usually been assigned to religious powers rather than to political structures (Johnston 2004). But in this case due to the fact that the *Sasanian* king of kings was considered to be a half-god (Goiṭain 1968: 165; Brague 2007) an immortal man amongst the gods and a replesendent god among men (Dov Goitein 2010: 166) who had direct contact with the Zoroastrian *Ahuramazda* and the goddess *Anahita*, religion cannot be distinguished from politics.

The ideal man/the ideal woman

Sasanian propaganda extended to the private lives of people. Society was divided into two gender groups, men and women, with general behavioral guidelines to follow in order to be ideal men and women, as described in the legal text *Matikan-i Hezar Dadestan* (Shahzadi 2007; Soltani 2004). Acceptance of the patriarchal system was the responsibility of all citizens; rejecting it would cause them to be deprived of their rights and be called *khodsaray* (hard-mouthed) (Robinson 2012; Sangari 1995; Shahzadi 2007). The ideal man also had to accept patriarchy and protect his family as *Salar* (chief) (Sundermann 2008) as well as obey the king. These points are clearly stated in the religious texts, *Matikan*, *Avesta* and *Ardā Wīrāz–Namag.*

Social organization was based on control: men controlled women and children, and the king was the greatest controller of all. *Ardā Wīrāz–Namag* states that the people who accept the leadership of the king and obey him go to heaven, whereas those who do not obey the king, deserve hell (Gignoux 1984). Control over public and private

life in the *Sasanian* period can be seen in texts, from which it can be argued that this control existed at all times and places, at least in theory, at both small and large scales, and included all people (Canepa 2010a; Williams 1908).

Investigating *Sasanian* legal texts, inscriptions of *Kartir* and *Šāpūr I* and visual arts such as rock reliefs shows that *Sasanian* society was lineage-based and patriarchal (Christensen 1907). In the *Sasanian* text *Matikan* and the narrative of *Omid-i Aša Vahišta*, the family is referred to by the term *dudag* (Mazdapour 1990). The family was a part of a bigger patriarchal unit, the empire, ruled by a powerful father, the king (Dezhamkhooy 2012b: 2; Wiesehöfer 2001). It was necessary for all family members, especially women and prepubescent children (*brona*), to obey the father or the grandfather, who were the heads of the family (*salar*) (Canepa 2010a; Mazdpour 1990). The families that formed a lineage respected the paternal ancestors (Christensen 1944; Yarshater 2001). Patriarchy influenced all social and political dimensions of *Sasanian* life and acted as an organizing principle. Reflections of this patriarchal system can be traced in inheritance, succession, guardianship, naming, document registration, and even gravestone inscriptions (Gorg Yaraqi 1999). Of 51 *Sasanian* inscriptions, including royal ones and those on grave stones investigated by Dezhamkhooy (2012c), 50.9% introduce people by making reference to their father's name and paternal family. To mention women is very rare. Of 23 royal inscriptions, only one (4.34%) (*Šāpūr*'s *I* inscriptions on the *Kaʿba-ye Zardošt* tower in Fars) include women's name. If an inscription discusses a woman, she is merely introduced via her relationship to her father or her husband. The case can be extended to women's grave stones. Women are assigned to their paternal family by referring to them by names such as *Šāpūr Dokht,* the daughter of *Šāpūr* (Dezhamkhooy 2012b: 59; 2012c). Pointing to the paternal lineage is very common (especially in legal documents) in the case of both men and women, although men are introduced by their career or social status (the best examples are the *Kaʿba-ye Zardošt* or *Hajiabad* inscriptions). As the children's mother and housewife, *kadak banou* (Shakki 1992), the married lady should obey her husband. According to *Matikan*, after the death of the husband, his oldest son or the closest male member of his family took the custody of his widow (Kaka Afshar 2007).

In addition to the importance of the family as a social unit in *Sasanian* society, individuals' sexual orientations and relations were tightly tied to the family (Dezhamkhooy 2012a: 127). The *Sasanian Pahlavi* literature, including all kinds of juridical, religious and Zoroastrian jurisprudence, shows a deep concern for sexuality, family, and marriage (Kuhrt 2007). The juridical Zoroastrian texts aimed to regulate and institutionalize sexuality (Ghaderi and Sadeghi 2005); limited and regulated sexual behavior could guarantee the survival of family units and lineages as the basis of a patriarchal society (Daryaee 2013).

To mention the text indicating the importance of men vs worthless women, *Bundahišn* regards the issue by expressing that if *Ahuramazda* could create men in another shape,

he would not create women who bother men (Bahar 2011). Also, the authors of the book believe that men would be created of men's powerful body and not from the female one but actually believe that female babies are the fruits of their mother.

Of all the sins indicated in the religious texts *Ardā Wīrāz–Namag*, 38% are related to sexual practices, 70% of which are attributed to women (Dezhamkhooy 2012a). Women seem to have been punished more severely for their sins, and at the same time it was recommended that women show less desire for sexual activity. Sins included disobedience, betrayal and refusing the responsibilities of motherhood. The anticipated punishments were mostly physical, including forms of rape or imposed nudity (Gignoux 2002). In *Denkard* sins were categorized in detail: Hostility to the good and making the bad happy, blasphemy, infidelity (being *Ashmuq*), homosexuality, disobeying the commands of the kings (Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2009).

Ardā Wīrāz–Namag displays the destiny of the sinners clearly:

> I also saw the soul of a man who, because of hunger and thirst, ever cried thus: I shall die. And he ever tore out his hair and beard, and devoured blood, and cast foam about with his mouth. And I asked thus: What sin was committed by this body, whose soul suffers such a punishment? *Soroush* the pious, and Adar the angel, said thus: This is the soul of that wicked man who, in the world, devoured talkatively, and consumed unlawfully, the water and vegetables of *Hordad* and *Amurdad*, and muttered no grace and through sinfulness, he celebrated no *Yasht* such was his contempt of the water of *Hordad,* and the vegetation of *Amurdad.* Now this soul must suffer so severe a punishment (Ardā Wīrāz–Namag 2011: 75).

Homosexuality (Figure 6) was severely punished (Dynes and Donaldson 1992; Gignoux 2002). Presumably the ruling class feared that if they accepted alternative sexualities, such as homosexuality or open sexual relationships, there could have been considerable consequences in the long run, including illegitimate children and even destruction of the patriarchal system. Controlled sexual life with a reproduction of the *Sasanian* heterosexual structure would guarantee the continuation of inheritance rules and marital laws.

Sex was considered to be a power that could be dangerous, destructive and negative. From the viewpoint of Zoroastrian institutions, virtually all erotic behavior was thought to be bad unless a specific reason to exempt it was established, a reason such as biological reproduction (Rubin 1984). *Shayest Nashayest* declares: try to give birth to many children. It guarantees good deeds, *Karfah*, for you; the good deeds done by your sons will be accepted also as parents' (Mazdapour 1991: 129). Controlling sexual practice was a way of organizing individuals. Such control was not necessarily physically enforced. It could be applied by defining masculinity, femininity, puberty, and social expectations and roles. *Sasanian* society was classified into two different

sexual groups. Different sexual statuses were defined for each of them: the first included the sexually active, namely young to mature men and women, and second the sexually inactive, including immature and elderly people. The body was not only the subject of external control through the exercise of pressure or violence, but through socialization and institutionalization of social norms it was also controlled from the inside. Through institutional means such as religious training, which favored biological reproduction and commitment to marriage and the family and warned people of the hellish agonies that resulted from disobedience, these strict norms came to be labeled as natural. Institutionalized rituals excluded the practices of individuals and functioned as mechanisms of domination (Last 1995). They did not merely rest on the formal political system but spread well beyond into social and cultural arrangements of everyday life (Babic 2005).

But People did not necessarily practice the prescribed norms. Indeed, it seems that ordinary people actively resisted. The *Mazdak* movement is a good example (Fazayi 2009). It was a civil movement (*c.* 500–AD 528) that emerged in the middle of the *Sasanian* period. Those who subscribed to it demanded gender equality and sexual freedom (Balʿamī 1959; Ibn Al-Athir 1996, 1997; Jafari Tabar 2005; Porter Berkey 2003:30). Minorities and dissidents were named *Ashmuq*, and the destruction of their temples, regarded as evil houses, was endorsed (Akbarzade 2006). In the *Denkard*,

Figure 6. Kiss (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

Mazdak and his followers are accused of being salacious as well as heretics (Aghayi 2001; Daryaee 1999). However, the Mazdakite movement should not be reduced to demands related to sexuality; rather, it was a more general reaction to the existing social stratification and suppression of the fourth class, the peasantry, using religious justifications. The Mazdakite movement was not without results. 'The changes that occurred in the reign of *Kosrow I Anōširavān* (531–AD 578) may not have been unrelated to the Mazdakite revolt and events and social reforms of *Mazdak*'s era' (Hozhabri 2013: 16). Among these changes was the creation of a middle class called *dehqan*, which can be regarded as an important, long-term outcome (Moftakhari *et al*. 2008: 110).

Sasanian propaganda was reproduced numerous times. The *Sasanian* point of view on the opposition leader, *Mazdak*, was repeated by post-Islamic historians (Al-Tabari 1999; Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk 2010). The revolt of peasants led by *Mazdak* was directed against the rule of a thousand families. Equal division of land, money, and women was not only demanded but actually practiced by the Mazdakites (Müller 1963). *Mazdak* and his ideas of public domination in order to share property and to allow free sexual practices have been a controversial matter among historians (Balʻamī 1959; Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk 2010). He made people equal, according to *Ibn Al-Athir* (1997: 480), he would take the wife of the one and hand her over to another, and likewise possessions, slaves, slave-girls and things such as landed property and real estate. These statements clearly imply that private property and marriage were left intact, only inequalities being removed (Crone 1991: 24). There are also texts such as that of *Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk* (2010) that indicate that women had significant possibilities during the *Mazdak* movement. *Al-Tabari* (1972) and *Ibn Al-Athir* believe that most Mazdakites were women, while *Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk* presents *Khorram*, *Mazdak*'s wife, as one of the most effective agents of the movement, the one who survived after the suppression and ran away to the city of Rey where she continued to rebel. *Sasanian* propaganda presented *Mazdak* as a person whose ideas were focused only on sexual practices (*Denkard*: Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2009) and who was only interested in changing the norms of the family structure.

In the 11th century *Al-Tabari* (1972) wrote that *Kawād I* (r. 488–AD 496 and 499–AD 531), the *Sasanian* king and *Kosrow Anōširavān* 's father, was an attractive and worthy man who was deceived by *Mazdak. Mazdak's* ideas gained *Kawād*'s support, as they had the potential to reduce the power of the priests and noblemen. The Mazdakite movement did not end with the execution of *Mazdak* but spread all over the empire (Al-Thaa'labi Neyshabouri 1900; Ibn Al-Athir 1996; Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk 2010). For traditional post-Islamic historians, the Mazdakite movement and the troubles it caused for the central state of Iran were the source of collapse and a symbol of the decline of the empire (Daryaee 2008, 2009). These viewpoints seem to derive from their sources, assumed to have been the '*Khoday Namak*,' the royal history of the *Sasanians*, first noted by *Ibn al-Muqaffa'* in the second century after Islam (Crone 1991).

In the *Sasanian* Empire there were serious attempts to prevent the institutionalization of oppositional groups, especially those with a religious basis. Hence, it is not surprising that the main targets of suppression were religious minorities, particularly Christians and Manichans, who were institutionally organized and religiously stratified as well as having a written tradition. Competitively the highly structured Manicheism and Christianity compeled clergymen to improve a hierarchial order and develop Zoroastrianinsm as an organized structure (Mirzaei 2012: 147). Another target was the Mazdakite movement, which claimed to have produced a new reading of the *Avesta*.

Mazdak believed his readings of religious texts to be more accurate than the standard ones (Aghayi 2001). His movement showed the potential of an opposition to arise from different interpretations of a text that was used by the *Sasanian* power holders as a tool to achieve conformity. In *Pahlavi* texts we repeatedly find the names of *Avesta* interpreters, including *Abarag*, *Nivgoshansab* and *Rooshan* (Kellens and Boyce 1989; Mansoori 2008). Whenever they confirmed the actions of the king they were encouraged, whereas in contrast clergymen such as *Mazdak* were denounced and labeled *Ashmuq*. The word *zandiq* — infidel — was used for the first time to describe opposition, specifically the Manicheans, to *Šāpūr I* (Maghdassi 2011; Monzavi 2005; Taban 1987).

Sasanian propaganda in artistic remains

Propaganda is an expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups, deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups addressing predetermined ends (Barsamian and Chomsky 2001; Cantril 1938: 217; Chomsky 2011; Taylor 1942). The function of propaganda is 'to gain acceptance of a particular opinion, doctrine, or course of action under circumstances designed to curb the individual's freedom of action' (Soper 1929: 224). It is also defined as a government's persuasive act of communication that is directed at an outer audience (Martin 1971). Propaganda applies indirect statements, insinuation and suggestion. However, direct statements that can be easily refuted are avoided (Van de Water 1938). Propaganda may aim to evoke either active or passive participation among people: active when it is able 'to motivate the individual to act, and passive when the individual does not directly act but psychologically supports that action' (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006: 16).

Large-scale propaganda in its modern sense, involving the use of wide-ranging media such as television, radio and newspapers, was first employed during World War I (Cantril 1938: 217; McElligott 2004; Wilson 1943), but propaganda itself has a much longer history in which older kinds of media were used (Brown 1937). It is an ancient art, and some of its techniques can be observed in the orations of the Greek statesman *Demosthenes* against the Macedonians.

Propaganda always attempts to introduce itself as the only acceptable/legitimate voice of a society. Underwritten by political capital, propaganda has the facility to reproduce itself in artistic, every day and historical forms; at the same time it is also a producer of history by means of texts, reliefs, and inscriptions. Propaganda may be a reductionist term for a political tool, but we use it here to refer to a systematic agenda applied by the *Sasanian* royal class to ensure social conformity.

We turn now to the fundamental question of how the *Sasanian* kings and the political structure attempted to push their people to conform. How did they encourage the masses to take part in wars or believe in a special kind of religion? We will examine the methods that were used by the kings and their close associates to ensure the persistence of their empire.

Archaeological remains such as the well-known rock reliefs in various mountainous areas (Canepa 2013a, 2013b) have been previously analyzed as historical media that might have been used for propagandistic purposes (Lewit-Tavil 1992). Most visual art remaining from the historical periods of ancient Iran relates to governmental issues and was commissioned by kings. We address the question of whether the notion of propaganda can be considered to apply to ancient empires' material culture in general and to *Sasanian* reliefs in particular.

Sasanian propaganda can be divided into two categories based on the target group: internal and foreign propaganda (Nichols 2010; Rose 2002; Widengren 1955). Foreign enemies, who were in most cases the Romans (Figures 7 and 8) and the *Hepthalites* (Masʿudi 2008), were always defeated, while internal propaganda targeted various minority groups and critics that were dominated by *Sasanian* imperial rule. The purpose of internal propaganda was to control *Sasanian* citizens:

> And Jews, Sramans (Buddhists), (10) *Brahmins, Nasoreans* (Orthodox Christians), (Gnostic) Christians*, Maktak*(?) (Baptisers), and *Zandiqs* (Manicheans) in the empire were smitten, and destruction of idols and scattering of the stores of the divs and god-seats and nests were abandoned. And in kingdom after kingdom and place after place many divine services in magnificence and many Warharan (*Bahrām*) fires were established, and many magi became happy and prosperous, and many fires and *magis* were imperially installed. And in documents and imperial rescripts and records, under *Bahrām*, King of Kings, son of *Varahran*, (11) which were made, in was recorded, *Kartir, Bahrām's* Soul-Savior, *Ahuramazda's Magi*-master (*Šāpūr I Ka'ba-ye Zardost* inscription; Rajabi 1972: 61–66).

In a time when media were limited to religious books, and coins a centralized government can easily hold a monopoly on and control the channels of information. Propaganda can be imposed as the only voice of history. The main aim of propaganda is to present evidence from its own point of view and to impose it as reality. The

Figure 7. *Šāpūr I*'s victory on Valerianus and Philip the Arab and Gordianus, *Naqsh-e Rostam* (photo by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

Figure 8. Alternative 1, Kings riding bikes (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

monologues heard in the *Sasanian* period are the voices of kings, gods, and clergymen. But there is also another side to the matter: violent punishments, suppression of opposition groups and religious minorities, and scissors: the symbol of the great clergyman *Kartir* which could be interpreted ironically as the sign of censorship. Opposition groups were described as disruptive enemies of the god, while reliefs depict torture and omit minorities.

Archaeologically, propaganda can be identified in a vast spectrum of materials, including plates, ornaments, coins, mosaics and even small things like gems representing warfare, killing and hunting scenes, showing the king always in his standard body. The king always conquers; he is accompanied and appreciated by *Ahuramazda* and other gods or the goddess (Figure 9), while the enemy is squashed under his feet or his horse's hooves. With the end of the fourth century onwards, vessels take over the previous role of rock reliefs (Canepa 2014: 74). Their motifs are still the same: the king is never old or defeated. All of this material presumably belonged to the wealthier class of society. So, it can be argued that the artistic appearances of bodies on material objects aimed to portray the worldview of the royal and wealthy classes. It seems that silver and golden plates and gems made of valuable stones were not used in public, it is vague if they were used as the tools of propaganda for public or not. For the middle and the lower classes, religious texts and civil laws could have functioned as a way to make bodies conform.

There is also an idea of counter-propaganda. The so-called enemies began to defend themselves against the stream of propaganda. The *Sasanian* Empire always had to struggle with Roman counter-propaganda (see Howard- Johnson 2006); Roman propaganda continue to maintain a strong grip on the dissemination of the facts at the cost of historical reality and the preservation of the image of Rome as the sole (and invincible) world power (Brosius 2006: 144).

In the end, the *Sasanian* political structure became a victim of its own black-and-white worldview. The interpretations of post-Islamic historians, *Al-Tabari* (1999), *Bal'amī* (1959), and *Ibn Al-Athir* (1996), suggest that *Sasanian* policies were deaf to voices other than their own. Within the borders the political structure had to strictly suppress social movements, label them as evil, and prevent more minorities from joining the opposition. As a reaction to several rebellions, the *Sasanian* kings tried to solve the problem by making some reforms, particularly under *Kosrow I* (Moftakhari *et al.* 2008).

But it was too late: the Muslims conquered the *Sasanian* territory, and a new faith defeated the old propaganda.

Figure 9. The gift (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

The King's images: propaganda as an imposing historical fact

How do we identify a *Sasanian* king? How, for example, do we distinguish *Šāpūr I* from *Kosrow I*? What are the differences between their images? Nowadays the image of a *Sasanian* king can be simultaneously derived from reliefs, inscriptions, and, to a great extent, from coins (Monfared 2003; Qolizadeh 2004; Sarfaraz and Avarzamani 2008). As most of those materials contain representations of the king as an ideal person/body, it is difficult if not impossible to address them as neutral portraits of the king as he was. Propaganda had the potential to change the image of the king. The king who executed

power was himself under the control of propaganda, a power strong enough to change the real body of a king or a human being to an idealized image.

In *Sasanian* rock reliefs the king was always carved as a young, tall, strong and healthy man, a man in his most masculine form, with a wavy beard, big eyes, and muscular (Canepa 2013b). In some of the reliefs, such as the one at *Naqsh-e Rajab*, where *Šāpūr I* on his horse is accompanied by noblemen, and the scene of *Ardašīr*'s investiture at *Fīrūzābād*, the king is of an equal size to *Ahuramazda* as is the case, for example, in the relief of *Ardašīr I* in *Naqsh-e Rostam*; in fact the only clear difference is the king's crown which is completely different from *Ahuramazda*'s (Porada 1965; Shahbazi 1978). The same can be said about *Sasanian* kings, as the main difference between the kings is the form of their crowns. This similarity can be understood as representing the same essence of the kings: all have the same powerful origin. The *Sasanian* king was considered to be a representative of the god, a king who took the ring of investiture from the hands of the god himself. This gave him a secure position to rule over and manage other classes.

The kings' actions usually represent their power. They are carved and painted stereotypically in scenes of hunting, war, victory and ceremonies (Geiger 1908). The kings kill their enemies or walk on their dead bodies. His beauty and masculinity contrast with his enemies, who are depicted as shorter and less beautiful than him (Brosius 2006; Herrmann 1977; Wiesehöfer 2001). In one scene the king (*Bahrām II* in *Sarmashhad*) defends his family – which may be understood as a symbol of the country – against wild lions. His body postures are predictable, he is always, looking around or killing an enemy or an animal. The king's face is always serious, while the enemies' bodies differ from scene to scene. They are crying, kneeling, or lying down while the king is always portrayed as calm and victorious. Enemies are depicted more humanly and acting more moderately– for example in *Bahrām II*' relief in *Naqsh-e Rostam* the defeated enemy in falling down the horse while his sword is flying. The king invariably carries a sword or a spear, even in scenes of private life. His sword hangs from his belt, a symbol of his masculinity. In the few existing portraits of the *Sasanian* kings (such as *Šāpūr I* sculpture in *Šāpūr Cave*, Fars and silver head of king in Metropolitan Museum), the eyes are depicted wide open. In order to impose power, it is not only the enemy's body that changes, but also the body of friends - the royal family, noblemen and soldiers - turns into an idealized, symbolic form.

The king was inaccessible, out of reach and removed from direct perception (Bayat 1976; Pirnia 2005). The traditional historians *Masʿudi* (2008) and *Maghdassi* (2011) claim that the king only spoke with ordinary people during royal ceremonies while sitting behind a curtain; there was a man whose job was to re-narrate the king's speeches for the audience. In that way, people had to substitute for the image of an ordinary man that of an imposing and propagandistic one. The rock reliefs were the only way of finding out what a king looked like. The king, whether old or young, always had

the same image (Bayani 2002). Under such conditions, propaganda had the power to impose itself as the main means of perception.

Now many centuries later, the king is dead and no direct view of his body is possible. It should be considered that there is also no discovered royal burial. His real body has been forgotten and replaced by an unreal, propagandistic image of what that body was (Pirnia 2005). The real body was embodied again and again, but in the form of an idealized image. Under such conditions, propaganda immortalizes a part of history, the body of kings. The *Sasanian* kings were themselves victims of this urge to conformity, a subject and an object of this process; they had two bodies, a real one and an idealized, symbolic one (Kantorowicz 1997).

Sasanian propaganda was so powerful that even now, a millennium and a half later, historians often unintentionally reproduce it. They are usually represented in the way they wanted to be presented, as conqueror and the only legitimate narrator of history. Many other voices are almost completely ignored. Most of the early post-Islamic historians were strongly influenced by the *Sasanians*' lifestyle and kings, particularly *Šāpūr I*, *Kosrow I* and *Kosrow II*. *Ibn Al-Athir*, however, approached *Sasanian* narratives critically. He offered his own version of history, especially of *Mazdak*, based mostly on the personal relation between *Mazdak*, *Kawād I* and *Kawād*'s son, *Kosrow I Anōširavān*. In this story *al-Athir* is in favor of *Mazdak*, describing the weak personality of the king and justifying the rising opposition. The destruction of the empire shows that even powerful propaganda cannot change minds forever and may eventually be subdued by a new ideology.

The concept of enemy

The *Achaemenids* referred to their territory as the *Achaemenid* or the Persian Empire, whereas the *Sasanians* created the political concept of *Iranshahr (*Wiesehöfer 2001: 207). However, some scholars believe the term had religious implications (Daryaee 2009). The idea of Iran as a united and monolithic territory is based on the *Sasanians*' urge to unify their territory. The concept of *Irani* (Iranian) was also created, implying someone who was a (male) Zoroastrian.

To remain in control, the *Sasanians* attempted to homogenize the populations that lived in the territory they called Iran. The enemy was created as a theoretical concept. In this monologue, Iran only exists in contrast to *Aniran*. Every non-Iranian and/or non-Zoroastrian person could be potentially an enemy. Iranians were advised to have little contact with them, including business deal, according to the writings of *Denkard* and *Matikan* (Kaka Afshar 2007). However, the best way to deal with them was to eliminate them:

> To avoid the enemies to become more powerful, do not sell swords and metal to them, avoid exchanging slaves with them, do not get married with them; they are deviant! Their temples are places of evils (Denkard, Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2009: 142).

In this way, the binary world of the *Sasanians* was formed, a world with *Sasanians* at its center and the others to the side. This binary of enemy vs Iranian must have been a permanent phenomenon, as *Sasanian* political structure was based on a duality of evil and good, the opponents as evil and those who conformed as the good ones. In the *Sasanian* period the role of the foreign political enemy was played by the Roman Empire (Goldsworthy 2010 and also *Hepthalians*. According to inscriptions and texts, an *Anirani* (non-Iranian) remained always an *Anirani.* The conquered areas would never become parts of Iran socially, as they have been referred to as non-Iranian territories; they were only under Iran's political control as the property of the king of kings. In inscriptions of *Kartir*, defeated provinces, for example, Syria and *Antakya* (Antioch), were called *Aniran*. Minorities living within the *Sasanian* Empire were under pressure to change their religion to Zoroastrianism (Iyer 2009). Christians in particular were suspected of being undercover agents of the Romans, their situation got worse under *Šāpūr II*, and the destruction of their churches was legally allowed (Christensen 1944).

The notion of enemy could be used to justify structural violence. The enemy was absolute negativity and referred to as *Anirani*, *div*/dev (demon) or *Ashmuq* (infidel), one who destroys and lies. In inscriptions such as those at *Naqsh-e Rostam*, the enemy, Philip the Arab, the Roman Emperor, is presented as a liar. Every Iranian who was a believer in Zoroastrianism was supported by the king of kings, by *Ahuramazda* and the other Zoroastrian gods and goddesses. The king of kings' sword only targeted enemies whose removal was necessary for the survival of Iran and Iranians.

> 'We burnt Roman cities, and forced its *Anirani* people to migrate to Iran... we defeated everywhere with our heroism... we captured Caesar Valerian with our hands... we attacked too many lands with the support of the gods, taking their control...' (*Naqsh-e Rostam* inscription: Akbarzade and Tavousi 2006: 44). (Figure 10)

> 'We destroyed demon nests [temples of religious minorities] and idols. Jews, Buddihs, berahmans, Christians, *Zandiqs* were smitten. Their evil nests were replaced by the houses of gods' (Akbarzade 2006: 105). The accompanying visual narrative of this cruel monologue is *Kartir*'s determined profile, with his forefinger bent as a symbol of respect for ordinary people. According to *Kartir*, in the western provinces the temples of Satan (probably a reference to the temples of minorities) were destroyed, and this satisfied the mobeds'.

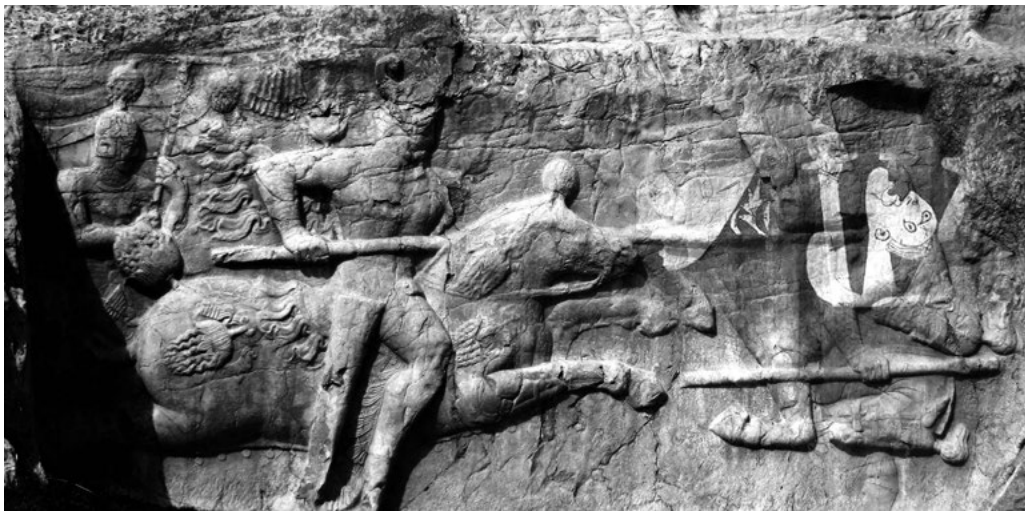

Figure 10. The burning houses (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

This report shows the contrast between *Parthian* religious tolerance and the removal or serious diminishment of religious diversity with the rise of the *mobeds* to power. Whereas *Šāpūr I* mentions only foreign enemies, *Kartir* did not name any external enemies (Akbarzade and Tavousi 2006; Davaran 2010). It can be hypothesized that the two negative *Pahlavi* words had distinct and specific meanings: *Ashmuq* referred to religious enemies who lived inside the *Sasanian* territory and *Anirani* to foreign enemies (Masʿudi 2008; Minavi 1974). The enemy is presented as a person who is opposed to the whole structure, and according to *Kartir*, also as a person who is differently minded and/or not a Zoroastrian. *Kartir*'s list of enemies includes Christians, Buddhists, *Berahmans*, Jews, and *Zandiqs,* referring probably to Manicheans (Purdavud 1963), while Šāpūr names the Romans as the most important *Aniranis. Kartir* emphasized killing and suppression of enemies inside the Iranian territories (Tafazzoli 1997). He specifically stated that he changed the minorities' religion to Zoroastrianism, those who lived in a region where 'the horses and the men of the king standing there' (*Kartir*'s *Naqsh-e Rostam* inscription, Akbarzade 2006: 105), mentions the final parts of territory where there was no one except the soldiers and their horses, presumably referring to border areas or conquered regions.

Did ordinary *Sasanians* have an understanding of themselves as Iranians, as members of this constructed unified body? The *Sasanian* rulers' strategy to keep their subjects united was to impose fear of enemies and the illusion of conspiracy. It is very difficult to answer the question of whether the majority of people had an image of themselves as Iranians, because the Iranians are rarely represented in visual remains and documents by the rulling class. Methodologically speaking, the material evidence of ordinary people comes mostly from surveyed rather than excavated sites, hence

with little context for their occurrence. Publications of artifacts, such as pottery, are limited to classifications with little connection made to people's actual lives. Overall, the material culture of everyday life has been largely neglected. The splendorous *Sasanian* palaces still attract archaeologists. In this way, the *Sasanians*' policy to obscure others from view is still functioning more than 1500 years later. Most *Sasanian* sites investigated in Iran are representative sites of state power – palaces, reliefs, inscriptions, and fire temples. The outcome of such a focus is the categorization of the crowns of the *Sasanian* kings in order to identify them. *Sasanian* Iran has been reduced to the kings and their actions.

Summary

Otherness and the creation of identity by inventing a concept of the other, followed by a need to eliminate it (Hallam and Street 2013), are subjects that attract much attention in modern philosophy and political sociology. In Hegel's words: 'It is 'negation' and, more specifically, the self-relating negation that constitutes otherness' (Westphal 1996: 333). Hegel claims that something preserves its own identity 'in its otherness' (Houlgate 2005: 333; see also Keenan 2004; O'Donovan 1999). These are historical processes: many societies have experienced living in a binary world, or they are reduced or simplified to that condition when they are rewritten in history. Being the other was not unknown in the ancient world (Taylor 1942). The other creates some parts of the identity and existence of 'I' with its 'negative agency' (Fischer and Ravizza 1999; Fischer 2006). On the other hand, in this process 'I' determines what the other is. In such an interaction, the concepts of 'self' and 'other' are born with a space that separates them from one another. The other never turns into ego (Barnes 2002).

The other repeatedly appears in politics. The more positive the image of the self is, the more negative and destructive the image of the other becomes. Ego recognizes its being via the illusion of the other (Shoham 2006). In dictatorial power structures, the construction of the other appears in all social domains: politics, religion, sexuality, art, myths and power.

The *Sasanian* Empire was an ancient tyranny (Pettazzoni 1954) that was interested in creating otherness. Over time the *Sasanians* moved toward heightening otherness and in some periods violently enforcing it (Shaw 2001). The other, who can be an ordinary *Sasanian* person or a member of a religious or ethnic minority, is not usually portrayed. He/she appears only if categorized as an enemy. In an exceptional case, a group of Arabs were portrayed in their local costumes while making an official visit to *Bahrām* II, who is on his horse. The other only finds its meaning in such a confrontation/submission.

Some historians of religion such as Raffaele Pettazzoni (1954: 213) who have examined the religious homogenization of *Sasanians* have described them as totalitarians, even

the first ones. In a book called Essays on the History of Religions, Petazzoni indicates that 'Zoroastrianism [...] ended by becoming the totalitarian State religion in Persia under the *Sasanians*, as Christianity did in the Roman Empire' (1954: 213). Others, like Salmi and his colleagues (1998), tried to justify this argument. Associating some features of modern dictatorship with the *Sasanian* period is difficult and to some extent inaccurate, but some pre-modern tendencies in that direction can be observed: an expansion-oriented military system, ideological discourses and tendency towards conformity in public and in some private domains such as sex and religion. Such conditions resulted in a tradition of using oppression, removal and physical violence as tools of suppression. Like many dictatorial structures, the *Sasanian* Empire was dependent on the individual agency of the king, but it also had a clear ideological structure. Dictatorship and totalitarianism are not sudden unanticipated phenomena; they are formed in a long-term process and their ideological instruments changed in different historical periods. Overall, *Sasanian* material culture indicates ideological violence against others. There is a considerable amount of evidence that the *Sasanians* were inflexible against their critics, reformers or enemies. They accorded very limited rights to minorities to express their ideas, resulting in a univocal society. The number of written records from *Sasanian* critics, such as *Mani* and *Mazdak*, are quite limited. To accept and propagate just one interpretation, here *Sasanian* Zoroastrianism, as the only acceptable reading of the living world resulted in the killing and deporting of many people under the *Sasanian* reign.

For Hannah Arendt, a traditional tyrant 'would never identify himself with his subordinates, let alone every one of their acts; he might use them as scapegoats and gladly have them criticized in order to save himself from the wrath of the people, but he would always maintain an absolute distance' (Arendt 1973: 72). For her, tyranny 'leaves more or less intact certain non-political communal bonds between subjects, such as family ties and common cultural interests' (Stanley 1987: 26).

In a society like Iran that has a long experience with tyranny - ignoring the voice of 'others'- explaining the process in which the concept of the self was shaped is complicated. Tyranny makes all aspects of life political; it makes controlling and intervening in all private and public aspects of life possible (Rush 1992). Dictatorial systems always tend to destroy individuality (Canetti 1984) because they expect pure submission (Rush 1992). But there are also individuals who resist becoming the tools of the system. The whole process is made up of imposition and resistance. Therefore, against the government's permanent attempt to control bodies and minds, there are always individuals who oppose (Papoli-Yazdi *et al*. 2013).

Chapter 4

Nationalism and the Reproduction of the Ancient Kings/Empires by Iran's Modern States

Introduction

Benedetto Croce's famous quote, 'All history is contemporary history' (Cannandine 1992: 21), refers to the role of subjective viewpoints that result from contemporary contexts and, more importantly, the political situations in which researchers live. Essentially, in the complicated context of modernism, historians are affected by the various experimental schools of thought of their time (Jaffe 2005), so they are producing a more modern history using the ancient material.

In its 120 years of history in Iran from the French contract with *Qajar* Dynasty (1789–1925), archaeology has acted more as a means of propaganda than a critical academic discipline that informs about the past regarding the academic methods and theories. It has been a flexible object whose shape changes according to the needs of the government. It was a source of income, and an inspiration for royal art, for the *Qajars*, a nationalistic tool for the *Pahlavis*, and both nationalistic and anti-nationalistic implement for the politicians of the Islamic Republic. This tool could be used by an overtly monarchic system headed by the king of kings or by a supreme leader commanding as the *ayatollah* of *ayatollahs*, both of whom seek to establish a single dominant rule over a highly diverse population.

Investigating Iran's material culture is a political rather than an academic matter, as governments are able to use archaeology and cultural materials to serve their own interests (Goode 2009). They can highlight certain parts of history and ignore others by channelling funds to the study and presentation of particular time periods. *Sasanian* and *Achaemenid* periods in particular have been the most ideologically laden archaeological periods in Iran and were politically manipulated in combination with contemporary history for use as tools of exclusion and repression (Abrahamian 1993).

During the last hundred years of governmental control over the media in Iran, where the scope of controversial discourse in the media is even more restricted than it is in the West, history has been used to promote partial viewpoints.

Before the rise of modern government, every ethnic and religious group in Iran had its own local mythological history, which was objectified and presented on a national scale by archaeologists starting in the 19th century. The school materials were standardized in the entire country and people began to speak only Persian though most of people had also another language before the rise of nationalism. A growing nationalism based on archaeological finds obscured and appropriated Iran's multifarious local mythological cultures. In elucidating this process, we interpret archaeology as an imported commodity that has been pragmatically utilized in the service of nationalism by both Iranians and foreigners. In this chapter, we present the gradual transformation of archaeology into such a political tool, using examples from the history of archaeology in Iran. We illustrate how the mythological past articulated by plural local histories in Iran has been reduced to an official, patriarchal national history through the use of a politicized archaeology and how one of the unique aspects of Iran's heritage — its plural traditional/mythological past — has thereby been undermined.

In this chapter we will investigate the reproduction of ancient victorious kings while discussing how this reproduction is problematic. While the idea of (cultural) heritage is the product of modernization in Iran, it has been violated and exploited several times. The political challenges and tensions in pre-modern and modern Iran have turned the cultural heritage of ancient remains to political battlefield. The conflicts over the ownership of past has provoked challenges and paradoxical readings of archaeological materials and of course confusing agendas towards archaeological sites. Hence, it is not surprising that the archaeological remains are the actual victims of these political tensions. It has also left several negative impacts on society; the denial of cultural plurality can be cited as the worst and most challenging.

Historical background: *Shah*, curiosity about history and archaeology as an imported commodity

Naser al-Din Shah (1831–1896) was the first king of Iran to travel to Europe. Intrigued by the new lifestyle he observed there, he brought back to Iran numerous new elements of modernization, from ballet and European attire to photography (Marashi 2011; Sohrabi 2012). Like the camera and European theatre, archaeology was a modern imported commodity introduced to Iran by *Naser al-Din Shah* after his travels in the 1880s (Papoli-Yazdi and Garazhian 2012; Tahmaseb Pour 2008).

In the second half of the *Qajarid* rule, the kings were faced with budget deficits. King *Naser al-Din*'s attempt to communicate with the West was one of the ways in which

he sought to solve his economic problems (Abrahamian 2008, 2013; Stone 2014). In 1880, the *Qajar* king, known as the Shadow of God (Gleave 2004), signed contracts with French antiquarians for excavations to recover Iran's antiquities (Ma'soomi 2004; Mousavi 1990). These contracts granted French archaeologists a concession to pursue archaeological excavations anywhere in the country, similar to a mining concession. The contract stipulated that excavated materials could be exported to France and the Louvre. An exception was made for gold and silver objects, which were to be handed over to the Iranian government, although those could also be brought to France for further study if needed (Fazeli 2005; Karimloo 2001). Individuals could also purchase sites and excavate them (Karimi 2013).

But the *Qajarid* kings were not interested in the remains of remote past only as financial source, they were also interested in ancient history and highly inspired by artistic styles of ancient remains. More than a type of extreme nationalism, *Qajar* enthusiasm to the past may originate from a curiosity about the past. This period coincides with the arrival of several European travellers to Iran and the gradual formation of Antiquarianism. At the same time an interest in the 'antique' and a desire to search for lost civilizations and uncover relics of the past gradually increased. Such desire stimulated *Naier al-Din Shah* who individually attempted to excavate *Khorheh*, a *Parthian* site located in central Iran (Papoli-Yazdi and Garazhian 2017).

There are some travelogues and diaries indicating that *Qajarid* courtiers and kings have visited archaeological sites, particularly Persepolis. *Ferdowsi*'s (2009) famous book *Šāh-nāma* - the book of kings written between 977–1010 is the source of information about remote past and ancient kings, however, consists of national myths. The trace of this book and also the new rising archaeological-based identity is definitely observable in a book called Ecstasy written by one of *Naser al-Din Shah* courts' people, *E'temad al-Saltaneh* (1978). This type of national myth is very common among most of the Persian-speaking people, and the stories have been translated and narrated in local languages as well. Enchanted by the ancient history, some *Qajarid* kings have produced rock reliefs strongly influenced by the *Sasanians*'.

Perhaps the *Qajarid* reliefs can be introduced as the latest representations inspired by the *Sasanian* motifs (though in a completely different tradition). Studying the prominent images of *Qajar* era inspired by the *Sasanian* reliefs is considerably important because it was two *Qajarid* kings, *Fath-Ali Shah* (1772–1834) and *Naser al-Din Shah*, who tried to recreate these motifs (Fallah and Sabri 2013). Several reliefs in cities including Tehran, Shiraz, Kazerun, Amol and Kermanshah have been identified from *Qajarid* kings. Tehran and its countryside (particularly Rey) was more appealing as the site of reliefs, mainly because the city was chosen as the capital of the dynasty, while the selection of the other locations was under influence of *Sasanian* site selection. Also, throughout a very modern concept, new locations have been selected as well. '*Qajar* kings were mostly inspired by *Sasanians*, they borrowed the ancient artistic motifs

and subjects (Morteza'i *et al.* 2014: 28). 'As the traces of modelling and simulation of *Sasanian* art in *Qajar* artworks is evident' (Diba 1998).

Since the *Qajar* art pieces were generally considered in two chronological categories, analysing developments of sculptures and their evolutions can also be done on the same basis; the first period begins with *Fath-Ali Shah* (r. 1797–1834) and lasts until *Mohammad Shah*'s reign (r. 1834–AD 1848) while the second period coincides with the *Naser al-Din Shah*'s reign until the collapse of the *Qajar* dynasty. In the first period, sculpture art is a continuation of Iranian art developments in precedent epoches; the reliefs and engravings which were especially commissioned during *Zand* era (1750-1794) in Shiraz [their capital] can be cited as a starting point (Hosseini Rad 2012: 26). What emerged during *Fath-Ali Shah*'s reign indicates the king's interest in rock relief as Iran's pre-Islamic artistic heritage (Hosseini Rad 2012: 26).

Up to now eight *Qajarid* reliefs have been identified; the oldest one was engraved by courtesy of *Fath-Ali Shah* in 1817 near Savashi River in Jelizjand village in the vicinity Firuzkooh (Hajialilou 2005: 36). There are also some unfinished reliefs reported from *Qajar* era. Before sitting on the throne, *Fath-Ali Shah* was the governor of Fars Province for three years. So, he visited the ruins of Persepolis, *Naqsh-e Rostam* and *Bīšāpūr* during his excursions (Sheibani 2013: 102). Among *Qajar* kings, *Fath-Ali Shah* carried the greatest impact in the revival of the art of engraving of ancient Iran (Vahdati 2006: 42). The reappearance of rock reliefs in Iran during the reign of the second *Qajarid* king is not only the icon of political change but more so, indicates a cultural shift in the understanding of reliefs (Taghavi 2007). Remaining reliefs from *Fath-Ali Shah* and his sons signifies the clear influence of ancient Iran art on *Qajarid* art (Godard 1965).

Fath-Ali Shah and *Naser al- Din Shah* reliefs

One of the most interesting embossed motifs created by courtesy of *Fath-Ali Shah* is located in *Cheshmeh Ali*, Rey, near Tehran. The composition of the motif, more or less is under the influence of *Šāpūr* II's relief in *Tang-e Chogan*. Two columns on both sides divide the scene into three parts. The king is depicted in the midst of the scene on his throne and looking towards the audience. His beard is bushy while his waist is narrow and jewelry (bracelets and armbands) are visible on his neck and arms. Depicted in two rows, courtiers are on both sides of his majesty, putting their hands on their daggers. On the rightmost, there are two individuals; one is supposedly the gamekeeper or hawk keeper holding a hawk on his hand, whereas the other is a young man without beard who has held a parasol over king's head. Two other men in very small dimensions have been engraved in very small dimensions in front of the throne. Seemingly, *Fath-Ali Shah* had also ordered some other reliefs to be engraved in *Vashi*.

Fath-Ali Shah also engraved some other reliefs in Rey region, one in Sorsoreh area, in 1830. The relief shows the hunting king on horseback while pointing a long spear

to a lion (Hajialilou 2005: 39). This embossed image is the largest image created in *Qajarid* period being 12 meters high in 18 meters wide. The relief contains an historical inscription that seems to be few couplets of a poetry by *Mirza Gholam Reza Esfahani*. Travelers, who have visited this image, believed that the remains of a *Sasanian* bas-relief with a similar theme existed before on which the sculpted reliefs of *Fath-Ali Shah* was engraved (Gall 1990: 49). On this subject, the report of Eugene Flandin is worth considering:

> 'The travellers who have visited this site before us have seen a *Sasanian* relief which seems to be destroyed by *Fath-Ali Shah* due to engraving his own relief at its place. Very surprised! Why has not this King, who was so interested in ancient industry, respected this relief? Why has not he engraved his image somewhere else?' (Flandin 1977: 114).

A piece of the latest prominent relief engraved during *Fath-Ali Shah*'s period is located in a cement factory in Rey and is very much endangered and with each day passing, it gets closer to destruction (tarikhirani.ir 2013). There are two reports on destruction of this relief. Luft has elucidated the condition of the relief as follows: 'Unfortunately, parts of the relief has been applied as the raw material for cement production in the early seventies (Luft 2001: 23). *Kosrow* Pourbakhshandeh, one of the researchers of Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, also confirms Luft's report: During *Pahlavi* era, the relief was destroyed in order to provide raw materials for cement factory (Afrond and Pourbakhshandeh 2001: 57). TarikhIrani website (2013) claims that 50% of the relief was destroyed by factory owners just after the 1979-revolution. Firstly, they ruined half of the image. The remaining parts of the relief consisting of inscriptions in *Nastaliq* script and a broken part including a hunted lion's tail were found in the abandoned building of the factory.

Mohammad Ali Mirza Dolatshah, son of *Fath-Ali Shah*, the governor of Kermanshah, was appointed as the head of the western margraves. In one of the carvings of *Taq-e Bostan*, a famous *Sasanian* archaeological site, *Mohammad Ali Mirza* has been pictured in a very similar manner to his crowned father, *Fath-Ali Shah*, sitting on a throne while his sons are also present. On the sides of the relief, there is a deed of endowment donating three sixths of his own farms in order to feed poor people and hold *Ta'zia* (Iranian traditional religious theatre).

In a journey to Kermanshah, *Naser al-Din Shah* visited *Taq-e Bostan*, he describes the reliefs as follows: On the left wall of the big arch, under the order of *Mohammad Ali Mirza*, the governor of Kermanshah, his own portray has replaced an ancient engraving. He has put a crown on his head and worn jewelry. In another part of his handwritings, the king regards this image with scorn: Above this image, *Aqa Qani*, the eunuch of deceased *Mohammad Ali Mirza* who was from Talish in northern Iran, has laboured to engrave his prince sitting; the governor's son *Heshmat al-Dawlah* and his

younger son have also been portrayed. The relief includes *Agha Qani* himself in an abominable posture in front of the prince's image; the quality is so bad and ragged, makes really the visitors sick! It has damaged the arch and its carvings, the motifs have been painted due to the bad quality of the engraving. They have destroyed *Taq-e Bostan* with these ugly motifs (Naser al-Din Shah 2011). The other *Qajarid* rock relief includes the body of grandson of *Fath-Ali Shah*, *Taimur Mirza*. *Taimur* was the governor of Kazerun at the time he ordered his face to be engraved in 1245 AH (1829–AD 30). The relief was carved in *Pol-e Abgineh* region, Kazerun, Fars province. *Taimur* has been imaged sitting on a throne while a pet lion and four individuals of his courtiers are around him (Fallah and Sabri 2013).

The last relief of *Qajar* period has been ordered by *Naser al-Din Shah*. The relief was engraved in Larijan region, 60 kilometres far from Amol, Northern Iran and on a historical road called Haraz dated 1879. In this motif, *Naser al-Din Shah* is riding a horse and located in the centre of the image while ten civilians and military retinues and officers in formal dresses sorround him. Only one person who appeared to be older than the others in bushy beard and long loose garment holding a stick is standing on the right side of the King. *E'temad al-Saltaneh* (2000: 52) in his diaries writes: In the Strait, the holy Shah's effigy has been carved on rock, riding a horse in formal dress. *Hasan Ali Khan*, Minister of Benefits, is also standing and reporting the reportage of road.

The 8 meter in 4 meter relief has been surrounded by several frames, containing some inscriptions and poems in eulogy of the king, describing the difficulty of passing the Larijanroad and king's order to mend it (Fallah and Sabri 2013). In the middle of the scene under the hooves of king's horse, a phrase has been engraved which addresses the artist who has worked on the scene: 'the labour of *Ali Akbar*, the humblest, 1295 AH [1878]'. Also above the people's head, their titles have been engraved with fine font and cursive writing, *Nastaliq* script (Sotoudeh 1987: 7–8). During World War II, Soviet troops shot the relief and destroyed the king's face.

Considering the *Qajarid* reliefs, indeed, portraying the king's body during *Qajar* period was not a novel rising idea. A huge number of human motifs were created during post-Islamic era on pottery shreds, miniatures and wall paintings. Miniatures initially go back to Ghaznavid dynasty (977–1186) representing the face of the king, *Sultan Mahmoud* (971–1030). Also, there are wall painting from Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) in Chehelsotun Palace, representing the bodies of *Shah ʿAbbās I* (1571–1629) and *Abbas II*, *Esmāʿil* and king *Tahmaseb I*, also *Nader Shah Afshar* (1688–1747). Though the leading innovation is to use bas-relief and engraving graphic means to represent kings' body. Being inspired by *Sasanian* king motifs and postures can be cited as another prominent difference.

Qajar reliefs as negative heritage

This colourful relief [of *Mohammad Ali Mirza* in *Taq-e Bostan*] was created in the big vault. Although the value of this *Qajarid* relief by no means matches the *Sasanian* ones, it reflects the history and art of a group of Iran's rulers in the past and must be preserved according to the law of antiques (see Avarzamani 1999).

By rise of *Reza Khan* to power, all tangible and intangible heritages attributed to *Qajar* dynasty quickly deemed as 'negative heritage'. In his travelogues based on his trips to Khuzestan in 1924, *Reza Khan*, then prime minister, insults the *Qajars* and accuses them of incompetence (Pahlavi 2004). Accompanied by the wave of intellectual critics of the *Qajars* that had strengthened in the second half of *Qajarid* era, *Pahlavi* dictatorship got empowered and introduced the *Qajars* as the main parameter of Iran's backwardness. Misusing the pessimistic views of intellectual class, *Reza khan* promised to modernize the country, while destroy many material remaining from the *Qajars*.

Antiquities law passed in 1930 asserted that an artwork or building dating back to less than a century ago is not considered as antiques or heritage (i.e., only artworks created up to 1832 were included). Thus, the law did not include many cultural monuments of the *Qajar* era and a range of these artworks simply vanished by not appealing to this law. Plenty of *Qajarid* buildings were destroyed in order to build modern monuments, constructing new streets or widening the old ones. In a gradual process, *Qajar* dynasty and its cultural heritage and traditions turned to negative heritage within two decades, the process continued also strictly in the era of *Reza*'s son, *Mohammad Reza Shah*, and with less intensity after 1979-revolution. Numerous reports of damaging or neglecting *Qajar* monuments or ignoring them are published daily in Iran.

Pahlavi nationalism desired to introduce the new monarchy as the saviour of Iran from the darkness, and represented itself as the supporter of progression and development. For this purpose, the newly emerging politicians attempted to present *Qajar* era as a dark hole. Hence, they endeavoured to ignore the fact that first steps towards reformation were taken under *Fath-Ali Shah* when his crown prince *Abbas Mirza* dispatched a group of students to Europe to learn modern science. Very apparently, the attempts to establish a national state had started during second half of *Qajar* period based on the ideas deriving from archaeological excavations and archaism (Dezhamkhooy *et al*. 2015).

In the meantime, *Reza Shah* (he was known as *Reza Khan* before the coronation and *Reza Shah* after it), desired to revive the Iranian values and ancient glory. Though, it is now obvious that the revival of ancient Iranian history goes back to *Qajar* period and *Reza Khan*'s slogans were only a propaganda aiming to show himself as the pioneer of this process. As a turning point, this tendency led to some cultural changes, particularly under *Naser al-Din Shah* which resulted in archaeological excavations conducted by

westerners and the growth of archaism (Hajialilou 2005: 57). Some of the remaining texts from the *Qajar* era represent the deep desire of writers toward Iran's pre-Islamic history and culture. Nameh Kosrowan can be cited as a remarkable example, written about Iranian history, it contains assumptive paintings of the ancient Iranian kings (Hajialilou 2005: 44). Some scholars even believe the first appearance of Iranian nationalism to be in *Qajar* era. Obviously, nationalism which was propagated as the main characteristic of *Pahlavi* monarchy was firstly emphasized on in *Fath-Ali Shah* era (Bausani 1992: 259).

More so than the reliefs, there are other artworks remaining from *Qajarid* era which represent the *Qajars*' deep consideration of ancient Iran history and culture. One of the monuments of this era is *Masoudiyeh* up-country mansion in *Taq-e Bostan* (Hajialilou 2005: 42). That was a *Qajarid* mansion beside *Taq-e Bostan* no trace of which is left today. On the right side of the big arch, an inscription in 10 lines has been left by *Imam Qoli Mirza Emad al-Dawlah* declaring the year of the construction, 1280 AH (1902). The Building was constructed gradually from 1854 to 1867 and was destroyed in 1963 following the second meeting of the Supreme Council of Archaeology in order to unblock the spring and search for *Sasanian* temple (Luschey 1968). Also the *Qajarid* reliefs and inscription of *Taq-e Bostan*, neither in *Pahlavi* era nor after the revolution, were never seriously conserved, preserved or even investigated. Because of this ignorance, the colours used for painting the reliefs are fading. Noteworthy, these colours are not industrial but natural ones and should be studied and preserved (Kermanshah ICHTO 2016).

It is remarkable that the governmental propaganda of the *Pahlavis* against *Qajar* cultural heritage strongly influenced the research strategies. In many cases, even the foreign research endorsed the *Qajar* heritage as worthless remains of the past and the icons of Iranian art decline. For example, Gianroberto Scarcia (1997: 35) in his The History of Persian Art indicates that 'the quality of *Qajar*'s art is in a lower level in comparison with the art of previous era but represent an independent nature'. Therefore, Iranian archaeology was not only governmental during *Pahlavi* era, but the government, as the only reference of providing budget, could control the researching process (Papoli-Yazdi and Garazhian 2012). Academic disciplines, namely, archaeology and history were both means to produce material evidence for *Pahlavi*'s Pan-Iranism (see Chapter one). So, the studies concentrated on the eras which were interested in and could reflect nationalism as the main policy.

Qajarid re-reading of ancient Iran material culture was never recognized by *Pahlavi* government and the new dynasty attempted to clear the *Qajar* reading. Second *Pahlavi* monarch, *Mohammad Reza Shah*, called himself '*Aryamehr*' and made a speech near *Cyrus* II tomb, during 2500-year celebration of Persian empire to present himself as the Achamenid's successor. Referring to a very ancient past gave this opportunity to *Pahlavis* to ignore the recent past of the *Qajars* given *Qajars* were originally Turks and

Pahlavis introduced themselves as Aryans. So, *Pahlavi* royal family always distanced themselves from Turk dynasties and insisted on being the rightful monarchs and the saviours who saved Iran from invasion. The *Pahlavis* tried to maintain the monopoly of re-reading the history (Tavakoli Targhi 1993). They abused the history of Persian empires in purpose of suppressing the diversity of Iranians and force them into 'Aryans'. Such artificial conformity provided a context for *Pahlavi* to pull over the curtains of long-standing patterns and rule. But the cost was too much: the demolition of fundamental ancient diversity of Iranians.

Iranian nationalism and the archaeology of the *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* periods

After the decline of the *Qajar* dynasty, there was an ideological change in the government's approach to the archaeological past (Amir Arjomand 1984). During the first *Pahlavi* period of *Reza Shah*'s rule, contracts were signed by archaeological institutes instead of individuals (Negahban 2005). Otherwise, approaches imported at the beginning of the twentieth century, mostly by German and French archaeologists, became permanent laws that have rarely been criticized.

Iranian modern government became interested in the representation of the *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* empires after the discovery of their archaeological evidence by western archaeologists and orientalists. This silent material culture was first excavated by the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld. Actually, 'these projects provided a platform for western scholars like French architect Andre Godard, German-American archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld, and American art dealer Arthur Pope to negotiate their conflicting personal and colonial ambitions' (Grigor 2004: 19). Moreover, this was a means to present particular historical patterns that the new political system and its rulers wanted. This process took place as the petroleum industry was transforming Iran's agriculture-based traditional economy (Alizadeh *et al.* 2000; Fashahi 1983), and the political system was turning into a highly centralized one (Karshenas 1990).

Thus, with the *Pahlavi* dynasty in power in the 1920s, archaeology was transformed into cultural heritage practice and a governmental organization that has preserved its political identity up to the present. Ernst Herzfeld played a particular role to introduce the concept of Iranian heritage. On 13 August 1925 he 'delivered a lecture at the Ministry of Culture about the importance of the nation's heritage' (Grigor 2004: 27). He declared,

> 'Historic buildings and heritage are plenty and everywhere in Iran, and I cannot mention all of them. Since the Aryan tribes, or more precisely because of them, this country is called '*Iranshahr*', that is about nine centuries BC, and the true ancient heritage of Iran dates from that period (SHN 1971).This nation has reached the zenith of its culture at least on four occasions: first, the

> *Achaemenian* period when Iran was the centre of the known world and lived in security for two hundred and fifty years; second, the *Sasanian* period, which, in fact, is considered the period of Iran's progress' (SHN 1971).

Hence, the Government established itself as the owners of cultural heritage, and it gave itself the right to destroy past material remains whenever they are seen as obstacles to progress. Sites in dam areas, along roads and beneath houses in cities could be presented as obstacles that are to be excavated as fast as possible and destroyed. As an example, the prehistoric site of *Tepe Hissar* was cut by a railway in the *Reza Shah* period, at the very time of the establishment and rise of nationalistic archaeology (Sherwani *et al*. 1975).

The initial reaction of intellectuals to excavations and rediscovery of historical material culture was a feeling of great pride in the victories of pre-Islamic historical kings (Amir Arjomand 1984; Ansari 2003). Politician and diplomat, *Hassan Taqizadeh* defined the earliest Iranian empire as the first government based on freedom and justice, while *Reza Shah*'s Prime Minister, *Mohammad Ali Forūḡī*, spoke of *Cyrus* as the first person to establish a monarchy in Iran (Afshar 1990). Iranian intellectuals of the early 20th century tried to establish an analogy between modern Europe and pre-Islamic Iran. For example, Iranian journals, such as *Kaveh*, *Iranshahr*, and *Ayandeh*, depicted *Sasanian* women as free and having lived just like modern European women (Sadeghi 2008). These interpretations were attempts to reconcile these two ways that nationalistic propaganda claimed would lead to development: westernization and the reproduction of ancient values.

The reason for the selection of the *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* empires as a basis for the discourse of modern nationalism is more likely to have been the close similarities between the repressive methods, expansionist policies and political structures of these empires and the modern political systems of Iran. Both dynasties used propaganda to enforce conformity. The *Achaemenids* created the first empire in the territory that was later named Iran, while the *Sasanians* were the first dynasty to use the name Iran. Historical archaeology of these periods has also focused on great men, especially on the 'King of Kings'. As such, archaeological data have been used as a powerful instrument to produce a linear political history and has reinforced the masculinization of history. In this version of history, the king of kings is the only agent who can act effectively. All lived experiences of the various groups and communities who lived under the political authority of these dynasties are compressed.

The *Pahlavi* government under *Mohammad Reza Shah* supported more extremely restoration and conservation fieldwork along with archaeological projects in ancient archaeological sites in Iran. Its nationalistic discourse enabled the survival and aggrandizement of Aryan history on the one hand and resulted in the silencing and erasure of whole historical periods on the other. *Arsacid/Parthian*, *Saljuq*, *Elamite* and

Ghaznavid periods are among the examples of such nationalistic erasure. The *Arsacids*, who tolerated cultural plurality, were neglected, while the *Sasanian* dynasty as a strict system with harsh treatment of oppositions and religious minorities was considered ideal, and *Sasanian* sites enjoyed archaeological projects of immense scales (Niknami 2000).

In his book Toward the Great Civilization, *Mohammad Reza Shah* criticized the Aryan Theory introduced by European scientists and recognized it as connected to discrimination. However, in other books published by the government, he presented Iran's national government as an effective and conformist government. He believed that the *Achaemenid* Empire could be presented as the best example of an Aryan reign. He referred to scientists and philosophers, such as de Gobineau (1915), Voltaire, and Hegel, who discussed the Persian Empire and argued that the proper form of government was first founded in Iran. *Mohammad Reza Shah* believed that Iranians could lay the foundations for a great civilization with the support of their historical and cultural background when time and conditions would be suitable.

During the 1960s and 1970s, pre-Islamic sites, especially *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* sites in *Fars* province were gradually transformed into the main icons of national propaganda, into contexts in which the *Pahlavis* referred to as the privileged past. Under *Pahlavi* rule, the *Achaemenid* era was the preferred time of reference for Iranians. *Pahlavi* nationalism reached its peak in the festival to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of *Cyrus*'s reign and the founding of the Persian Empire on October 1971 (Grigor 2004). Along with the massive increase in Iran's military budget (Dabashi 1993), the celebrations seemed to justify the *Pahlavis*' tendency to promote Iran as the greatest power of the past and present in the Middle East. *Pasargadae* and *Persepolis* were the two main archaeological sites selected to host the anniversary celebration. *Farah Diba*, *Mohammad-Reza Shah*'s queen and an architect, was the main designer of the ceremonies (Adlam and Macglashan 1989).

> 'In the presence of the international audience and the political elite of the time, on 'this illustrious occasion in the history of Iran', the Shah stood in front of *Cyrus* the Great's empty tomb at *Pasargadae* and bow[ed his] head low before [*Cyrus'*] resting place and honor[ed his] unforgettable memory' (Aryanpur 1973: 50). 'The Shah reassured 'the eternal hero of Iranian history' and 'the great liberator of history' that he could 'sleep comfortably' for we are 'vigilant to protect your glorious heritage' ' (Grigor 2004: 28–29).

During an official ceremony accompanied by a military parade and the attendance of representatives of 54 foreign governments, *Mohammad Reza* declared himself the legitimate king of Iran in *Pasargadae*. The festival acted as an official declaration of Iran's new national identity, displayed on an international scale. To promote this identity, the government selected certain parts of the histories of different ethnicities

and communities. The chosen parts were those rendering the image of the victorious warrior king. Taking *Aryamehr* and *Shahbanou*, respectively, as official titles for *Mohammad Reza* and his queen makes the point quite clear. These two words were completely unknown for Modern Persian speaking people and were developed before the coronation of *Shah*. *Mohammad Reza* connected the *Pahlavi* dynasty explicitly to pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties in order to legitimize his reign.

Many archaeologists refused to cooperate with the organizers of the festival because they found it to be destructive of ancient sites (Dezhamkhooy *et al*. 2015). As a result, some archaeologists were arrested and detained until the end of the celebration. This repression may be one of the reasons for the political neutrality of archaeologists in the following decades. After the 2500th anniversary celebration, the Department of Archaeology at University of Tehran established a policy aimed at avoiding political struggles. It was a time when archaeologists had to decide whether they were for or against the ruling system. Iran's archaeology was intentionally steered towards research on prehistory, while historical and Islamic archaeology declined (Niknami 2000).

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi also changed the official calendar from *Hijri* (Islamic calendar which begins with the migration of *Mohammad* the Prophet from Mecca to Medina) to a 2500-year-old one, beginning with the *Achaemenid* dynasty's rise to power in 550 BC. The change was confirmed by the Senate in 1975. The *Hijri* calendar was used to date Islamic ceremonies for centuries. *Ayatollah Khomeini* reacted harshly and ordered his followers not to use the new calendar, declaring that 'using the monarch's calendar is unlawful' [*Haram*](Foran 1993: 50). As a result of social and religious pressures, the *Shah* vetoed the Senate's order to use the new calendar six months before the 1979 revolution (published documents, Iranian national documents organization 2006 [Calendar documents]).

The 'calendric ideology' issued by *Mohammad Reza Shah* represents the government interests to use time as a political means to control history. The new calendar was also a tool for the purpose of highlighting the older history of monarchy in comparison with other Middle Eastern governments. With the new calendar the *Pahlavis* were emphasizing the older origin of monarchy and associating modern Iran with the ancient territory of the Persian empires. Beyond the propaganda aimed at foreign governments, the new calendar attempted to create a hegemonic time (Agamben 2009), a subaltern time (*Hijri*) penetrated deeply into daily life, every day and on any paper one writes, on passports, personal letters, and the like.

The modern interpretation of the 'glory' of the *Achaemenid* kings was part of an effort by the kings of the *Pahlavi* dynasty for self-promotion against rising pan-Arabism, which *Mohammad Reza Shah* described as Iranians' main challenge in the Middle East (Doran 1999; Ferris 2013; Rahigh-Aghsan and Jakobsen 2010; Stewart 2012: 115–

117). The notion of the Arab nation was highlighted by Nasser (Jankowski 2002). In contrast to Arabs, who were identified as Muslim together with the entire population of the western Middle East, the *Pahlavis* tried to equate all Iranians with Aryans and *Mohammad Reza* perpetuated the idea of Aryan prominence (Shakibi 2007). The two discourses shared an interest in producing a hegemonic society; just as the Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens were the victims of censorship in an Aryan society, the Kurdish and Baluch minorities (the Persian languages spoken minorities) were the victims in the Arab world. Iran needed to invoke the victorious kings of its glorious past more and more at that time, as well as later when *Saddam Hussein* made territorial claims and challenged Iran's ownership of islands in the Persian Gulf in the 1970s (Ashton and Gibson 2012).

Islamic Revolution and *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* material culture as negative heritage

Today, all Iranians have to study a nationalistic, formal 'Aryan' history at schools. Here, as elsewhere, nationalistic approaches tend to investigate limited parts of a country's history. The construct of Aryan history includes three 'great' empires: *Achaemenid*, *Parthian* (*Arsacid*) and *Sasanian*. Iranian cultures and civilizations are reduced to the history of these three empires. The *Achaemenid* and *Sasanian* empires in particular have remained the main nationalistic topics promoted by the political system in terms of archaeology and history both before and after the Iranian revolution. It is notable that in Iran, all of the themes on which nationalistic archaeology has focused are related to pre-Islamic history.

Iran's plural histories, including various legends, myths, and local narratives that were passed down from generation to generation, were reduced to an official history of the Aryans and the *Persians*. The Arab, Turkish, *Baluch*, Fars people, *Tat*, Turkmen, Kurdish and *Kurmanji* children were taught that which conformed with the official history, which is the history of one of the Iranian ethnicities at best.

The *Pahlavi* dynasty came to a dramatic end at the hands of revolution, and a fundamental hegemonic structure was taken down. The calendar was changed back to *Hijri Shamsi* (solar date). For a short period of about a decade, nationalism, which had been on the rise since the beginning of the 20th century, lost its prominence. During the *Pahlavi* reign (1925–1979), cultural heritage and its material elements were considered in a negative light by certain sections of the religious class because the government promoted an Aryan-based nationalism. Fighting this nationalist propaganda was declared as one of the specific goals of the revolution of 1979 (Amir Arjomand 1984). Governments have the power to change the meaning of mute archaeological findings into negative or positive heritage by funding projects and museums, and the ability of a government to present a part of the history as 'dark heritage' increases its ability for

propaganda. The new generation of politicians after the revolution tried to show the dark side of a political concept: monarchy.

For both the left wing and the Islamic fundamentalists, the ruins of *Persepolis*, *Bīšāpūr* and *Pasargadae* were the symbols of the regime of the Shah (Axworthy 2013). For them, the 2500 years of post-*Achaemenid* history was negative and the main goal of their revolt was the elimination of the corrupt concept of monarchy. Government–sponsored archaeology is in fact full of charged terms such as idolatrous, oppression, in/justice, and human rights. Between 1978 and 1989, all archaeological materials associated with Aryans were transformed into 'negative heritage' (Meskell 2002; Rizzuto 2008), and revolution and war were promoted as the heritage of Iran. Foreign archaeologists were forced to leave (Coolidge 2011), and the projects of their native colleagues were stopped until the early 1990s. The National Museum of Iran transformed into an organization that functioned as a treasury, while the Department of Archaeology at University of Tehran was academically silent. Some professors were fired, and a new generation was not trained. The department merely preserved its position by accepting 25 students into the program per year for more than a decade.

The religious extremists put forth the idea of heritage demolition (Sarshar 2014). There are multiple accounts of them bringing bulldozers near the ruins of *Persepolis*, but the local resistance seems to have changed their minds about destroying it (personal communication with local governors and villagers in Fars, August 2000). This shows the severity of the threats against archaeological materials. For the revolutionists, these materials were tangible representatives of the ideas against which they fought. One can argue that the long-term propaganda about the negativity of the regime of the *Shah* and its background has left its impression on people's minds, as very recently, some unknown agents tried to damage the *Sasanian* relief of *Tang-e Chogan* located in *Fars* province but they could only demolish the mace of *Bahrām II* which was restored afterwards (Parsineh.com 2011).

Archaeologists were deemed to be the tools of the *Pahlavi* dynasty, and their western orientation was denounced. Continuous governmental pressure on archaeologists and archaeological institutions played a key role in weakening the Department of Archaeology, especially when it was taking students during the 1970s.

During 1960s, *Ezzatallah Negahban* (2005) working as the chairman of Department of Archaeology (1967–1978) made efforts to modernize the courses. To conduct such a project, new professors were employed in the department. These individuals were educated in United States and Europe (*Gholam Ali Shamloo*, *Sadegh Malek*, *Yousef Majidzadeh*, *Simin Daneshvar*) and he was himself educated in the University of Chicago. It seems that he tried to save archaeology from nationalistic approach (Negahban 2005) and according to such agenda, he developed prehistory in University of Tehran. To develop prehistory, *Negahban* and his colleagues planned to train undergraduate

students in field. The selected sites were all prehistoric, *Tepe Zagheh*, *Tepe Qabristan* and later *Sagzabad* all located in *Qazvin* plain northern Iran.

Indeed, *Negahban* and his team were not successful to change all of the courses. They were obliged to keep some traditional lessons of archaeology while the elder professors were unsatisfied. However, prehistory and methodology were added to courses. The art history and historical courses remained unchanged. Actually, these changes did not eliminate the nationalist approach in the department but changed it. But actually besides *Negahban* efforts, historical archaeology and the archaeology practicing in the Center of Archaeological Research remained more nationalistic. There is evidence which show that some of *Negahban*'s students were planning a demonstration against the 2500th anniversary and were arrested accusing to be against the nation (Dezhamkhooy *et al*. 2015).

Although prehistoric archaeology had not participated in the nationalist process of the *Pahlavis*, it was condemned and disapproved on those grounds after the revolution by the new regime. One of the first victims of such misunderstanding was *Negahban* himself. In 1980, *Negahban* was attacked at the entrance of the Faculty of Literature and Human Science University of Tehran (Negahban 2005). He was seriously injured with a knife. *Negahban* decided then to leave Iran; he lived in Pennsylvania until his death in 2009. Violence against *Negahban* continued in nonphysical forms. Other archaeologists also suffered from various forms of violence. Respected and experienced professors were replaced by revolutionaries, causing a downfall in the quality of higher education.

The heritage of the *Pahlavi* dynasty for archaeologists was a 'governmentalized discipline' that persisted in the post-1979 period. The administrative structure of archaeology in pre-revolutionary Iran was based on the Centre of Archaeological Research under the Ministry of Culture and Art. Its structure was, however, changed completely right after the revolution and underwent further major modifications during the two periods of neo-conservative governments from 2005 to 2013, which had a radical populist structure.

The Antiquities Law, that had been ratified in 1931 (ICHTO 1997) was reconfirmed by the religious intellectuals in 1983 during the prime ministry of *Mir-Hossein Mousavi*. This action protected archaeological objects and heritage from religious radicals who intended to destroy them and from international looters who abused the crisis following the revolution and the outbreak of war with Iraq in order to trade archaeological objects. Changes were implemented in a 20-year process between 1984 and 2004 by an institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Science. Archaeologists were also under pressure from the Cultural Heritage Organization, the administrative institution responsible for fieldwork projects, established a decade after the revolution. As a result, some had to emigrate and others either lost or quit their jobs. Iranian archaeologists were forced to declare explicitly their political position. If they cooperate they are

Figure 11. God and king enjoying their evening tea (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

involved in an endless monologue of symbolic violence (see Bourdieu 1977); in the case of resistance they would be the victims of repressive violence, whether physical or in other forms. Despite all the post-revolutionary changes, the government did not lose its monopoly on archaeology. It remains the organization that funds archaeological projects, and so it is the government that decides whether a project goes or not - it was through the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization after the 1979 revolution instead of the Center of Archaeological Research.

Two decades after the revolution, at the time of the presidency of *Mohammad Khatami* (1997–2005), the atmosphere in the society was moderate, and there was a platform for an impartial attitude towards archaeological remains. But during the last eight years of the domination of the religious populists from 2005 to 2013, the situation changed completely. The government focused on Iranian-Islamic culture, claiming that even pre-Islamic Iranians used to pray to one God. In the 2000s the earlier radicalism of people turning against the *Shah* metamorphosed into a new nationalism. In an effort to reduce the number of western archaeologists, Iranian archaeology attempted to show its own abilities which peaked under the neo-conservative government (Elling 2012, 2013). The *Sivand* dam flooded dozens of archaeological sites at a time when the Islamic Republic was promoting the glorious past of the Iranians (Taghavi 2007), and archaeologists such as *Ehsan Yaghmaei*, the Iranian excavator of *Tepe Hissar*, who opposed such destruction were fired or seriously punished. On the other hand, archaeological heritage sites such as *Persepolis* and *Pasargadae*, which were considered

anti-Islamic in the first years after the revolution, gradually became nationalist icons once again. President *Ahmadinejad* travelled to *Persepolis*, declaring it a result of the brilliance of Iranians. Borrowing the *Cyrus* Cylinder for display in a three-month exhibition, at which selected symbols of the revival of nationalism were unveiled at the National Museum of Iran, is an example of recreating nationalism. In an astonishing gesture, then-president *Ahmadinejad* placed a *Chafiyeh* shawl (a symbol of right wing fundamentalists close to the Islamic leader) around the neck of *Cyrus* symbol in the ceremony held to celebrate *Cyrus* in Tehran, to promote the idea that he was one of the first kings in the world to pray to only one God. In 2011, the government decided to recreate the 2500-year celebrations, but religious fundamentalists resisted the idea, and finally it did not happen (Figure 11).

Summing up

Both the *Pahlavi* rulers and the governments of the Islamic Republic defined their political structures using historical/archaeological terminology: the continuation of 2500 years of kingship versus the revolution against 2500 years of kingship (Behrouzi 1971; Mehrab Mohseni 1998; Scot Aghaie 2011). Such a political interpretation is instrumental in justifying present and future policies. They highlighted revolutions, the so-called human rights declaration by *Cyrus* and the idea of Iran as the longest-ruling empire in all of history (Axworthy 2013; Davaran 2010; Shelton 2013; Kuhrt 2007). They have selected parts of history and focused on the centralized dictatorships and tyrrants of the past, rather than on more pluralistic political systems. They have also promoted the dynasties purportedly associated with 'Aryans', the groups that spoke an Indo-Iranian language out of which later Iranian languages developed, and ignored groups such as the *Elamites* or those who were definitely not Aryan, such as the *Seleucids* (Elling 2013). Such censorship and invented terminologies led to interpretations shaped by the current needs of a present political system.

On the other hand, although both regimes associated themselves directly with specific historical periods, they have been even eager to focus on prehistory (Asgharzadeh 2007). According to the annual reports of the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO), more than 70 % of the excavations conducted since 2000 took place at prehistoric sites (Fazeli Nashli 2007). An analysis of the reports written by archaeologists gives a very similar number for the 1970-1990s (Ma'soomi 2004). Apparently, the neutral stand of prehistory has made it more appealing to these regimes. On the other hand, focusing on prehistory was a way of avoiding governmental pressure on archaeologists, who were continuously urged to confirm the official interpretations of historical monuments. But even prehistoric archaeology could not remain safe forever. It has been more than twenty years since discussions about Iran having an older origin than *Mesopotamia* were rised (see Madjidzadeh 2003a, 2003b; Matthews and Fazeli Nashli 2004). Obviously, the (partial) imposition of contemporary political boundaries on prehistory can only result in

illogical conclusions. Such discussions of precedence are mostly derived from the weak theoretical body of Iranian archaeology. According to mentioned above, more than 120 years after the birth of archaeology in Iran, only few systematic researches have been conducted on women, minorities, ethnicities, children, blacks, slaves or homosexuals (Figure 12). The main body of Iranian archaeological research is still about Persian men or nameless prehistoric populations.

Figure 12. We are all in one frame (designed by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

Chapter 5

Kings Riding Bikes: Towards the Deconstruction of Official Nationalist Archaeology

The main theme of this book was to investigate the politics of the past, for the most part, nationalistic archaeology in contemporary Iran (and the Middle East). During the chapters, the authors tried not only to criticize the impact of nationalistic archaeology on archaeological sites but also to discuss how nationalistic archaeology constitutes its interpretations in a trans-modern context and how it influences public domain and contemporary society.

But what kind of principles can be suggested to practice engaged archaeologies? In this chapter, according to our contextual understanding of Iran, we briefly discuss an engaged archaeology which takes into account the contemporary society as the context of the production of knowledge generally and archaeological interpretation particularly. Hence, we suggest an archaeology which commits itself not only to archaeological remains but also to communities, social groups and indigenous people. We also apply the term modernist official archaeology argued briefly by Hamilakis (2009, 2016) trying to appreciate the significance of other discourses about past materialites. The political history has overcame, reduced and downplayed other forms of knowledge, lived experiences and lifestyles. By doing this we hope to open an entry in the possibility of plural understandings of the past and de-colonizing archaeology as a governmental instrument.

Our concrete argument goes on critical understanding of dominant discourse, which is called according to Hamilakis, modernist official archaeology which matches the Middle East archaeology properly. With respect to the theme we discuss respectively in favour of the necessity of a socio-politically conscious archaeology and paying more attention to public. It will attempt to issue kind of manifest on engaged ways of doing archaeology in the Middle East and Iran. Actually the main audience of the argument

are the archaeologists who are from the Middle East or the archaeologists who follow their research interests in the Middle East.

The necessity of a politically-situated archaeology(ies)

The term politically-situated is broadly used here to claim that archaeologists' activities and the practice of archaeology are far from being neutral and are usually misused by power structures in the Middle East. The chapter follows the goal of re-placing archaeology in contemporary context, as Hamilakis (2009: 44) states 'archaeology is all about context'. However, there are archaeological researches discussing in favour of more consideration to the context of the practice of archaeology there is still too much to do and for many archaeologists the politics of the past are still background noises. Mark Leone and his colleagues invite archaeologist to acquire more about critical theory 'by evidence that archaeology in some environments is used to serve political ends and by the growing controversy over the ownership and control of remains and interpretations of the past'(Leone *et al.* 1987: 283). They believe seeing the interrelationship between archaeology and politics will allow archaeologists to achieve less contingent knowledge (Leone *et al.* 1987).

We cannot consider the past as an objective and unified phenomenon. Every phenomenon has actually its own history. Some versions of archaeology including nationalistic one construct a de-historicized and de-contextualized version of the past. They isolate material culture and interpret it according to contemporary political agenda. In the case of Iran, the governments' interest in nationalism, due to conformity, resulted in the strengthening of the nationalistic notions in the archeology and turning the mythical past to a materialistic one which carries highly patriarchal tendencies. Producing a new history based on archaeological facts, the modern interpretations (see Wolfreys 1998) pose new conflicts: the histories of diverse Iranian ethnicities were reduced to an Aryan history highly based on Persian civilization and the Persians as the noble ethnic group. Consequently, the other groups who find themselves inferior claim distinguished (ethnic) identities. Such circumstances turn ethnicity to a highly ideologically charged phenomenon which can raise severe conflicts. 'Some archaeological tales are not innocuous, but dangerous in that they fan the passions of ethnic pride and fuel the conflicts that today pit people against each other' (Kohl 1995: 6). Nowadays, Iran is full of 'Pans' (Such as Pan-Turksism, Pan-Arabism and Pan-Iranism) disputing about the so-called 'facts', which were created by the ancient kings and recreated by the archaeologists. As a developing country with a multi-cultural context, Iran's nationalistic archeology resulted in serious internal conflicts and even international ones. Such archeology has dangerous potentials to inflame wars and conflicts in a strategic region like the Middle East. Hamilakis warns several times against 'the dangers of de-politicized professional archaeology' (2009: 56), as apolitical archaeology can be misused simply by the power structures and dictatorial systems. 'In the absence of politically explicit interpretative parameters

drawn and redrawn by archaeologists, the significance of archaeological narrative will continue to be either ignored by contemporary political debates or harnessed in support of political programs that commit direct or indirect social violence' (Giblin 2015: 34).

In Iranian departments of archaeology, students are offered a course on the history of archaeology but the course usually argues the chronological history of digging/doing archaeology accumulated with names and dates. The suggested texts by the professors are actually very traditional books such as the Persian translation of Louis Vandenberge's L'Archéologie de l'Iran ancient (1959). Alternatively, the students could learn about the history of archaeology as knowledge, its early days in the region; likewise articulating an argument about transformations of power structures' trajectories in the region like colonialism, imperialism and the rise of modern states and their interaction with archaeology or anthropology would be part of the syllabus particularly in undergraduate studies. Hence, the students lose the opportunity to involve in an argument investigating challenges, dilemmas and even the responsibilities of archaeology as a modern discipline. 'The educational system of archaeology in Iran has basic problems but the main problem is a higher system encouraging the whole field to remain apolitical and unreflective' (Dezhamkhooy *et al.* 2015: 65). Since archaeology has always been in Iran a governmental matter it could be said that possibly many archaeologists deem the intervention of the states as sponsors quite normal. 'The absence of an organized nongovernmental syndicate has made archaeologists vulnerable to expulsion and soft violence' (Dezhamkhooy *et al.* 2015: 57). In the edited volume nationalism, politic and the practice of archaeology, Philip Kohl and his colleagues (1995) discuss on nationalism and its relation with archaeological practice in detail. According to Kohl and Fawcett (1995: 4), 'nationalism and its relation to archaeology is complex'. Clarifying that 'it is also a phenomenon of recent origin' (Trigger 1995: 276), Trigger even attributes some positive characteristics to nationalism.

According to Kohl and Fawcett (1995: 14) 'nearly every practicing archaeologist is aware of inherent relationship between nationalism and archaeology'. This idea might be rational for example about Western Europe or North America, of course still with numerous exceptions including people from academia, but in the contexts like the Middle East many archaeologists or historians still practice some versions of nationalism without awareness about its implications. Contextually speaking, nationalistic archaeology in Iran has strong ties with the history of suppression (see below), however, many archaeologists still assume archaeology as pure and neutral and define themselves as apolitical persons concerning only their data (Dezhamkhooy *et al.* 2015: 51). Being politically engaged in particular under dictatorship could be always challenging (see below) and bring at least joblessness to the agents; but archaeologists are not encouraged to appear rebel or on the street. The thesis advances here do advocate neither rebel nor passivity but 'a critical engagement that safeguards the autonomy of scholar' (Hamilakis 2009: 39) and the discipline. Leone and his colleagues

discuss (Leone *et al.* 1987) nicely the need for critical theory which help to arise consciousness among archaeologists. Archaeology shows its commitment through the subjects that it recognizes deserving to be studied. As discussed in chapters two and three Iran historical archaeology has scarcely investigated slavery, women, children, opposition or theoretical concepts such as gender, colonialism, etc.

No need to say that knowledge is far from being impartial. In the Middle East, which has always been in its recent history a provided ground for religious and ethnic tensions, an apolitical and non-reflective archaeology could play a very dangerous role. It could introduce conflict over the ownership of cultural heritage and the past and an increasing desire between different social and ethnic groups to attribute the ancient kings and noble groups, and their material remains to themselves. While many people in Fars province are proud of *Cyrus* II and recognize themselves as his descendants the *Kurdish* community in western Iran are eager to accept the Medes and ancient indigenous populations of western Iran as their ancestors.

'It is useful to distinguish nationalism from other forms of social and cultural group consciousness' (Kohl 1995: 11). According to Ernest Gellner (1983), nationalism is not only a cultural phenomenon but a problem. Towards such an argument, the dark side of nationalism in the Middle East is that public can imagine hardly that the past could have other implications for communities (see Ansari 2012). Many people, even educated ones, have no idea about how they can engage in reading and constituting the archaeological past. According to questionnaires filled in Tehran and some other cities in Iran, *Kermanshah*, *Mashhad* and *Tabriz*, the authors found out that the base of historical information in Iran deemed to be school books and TV shows (Garazhian *et al.* 2015); 'as attending school is an obligation and school has (almost) a monopoly on the transfer of true knowledge' (Meier 2013: 168). It is the duty of archaeologists, historians and other related scholars, to open the discussions about the alternatives and constructing a fruitful atmosphere for dialogue.

Nationalism has already penetrated in parts of quotidian of ordinary people. In Iran the nationalistic tendencies target 'non-Aryan' populations specifically the Arabs. It can particularly intensify ethnic tensions in the declining Middle East. When we glorify ancient *Sasanian* kings as the conquering power against the Arabs indicating that the Arabs deserved receiving punishments do we think about the Arab-Iranian community? Archaeologist should accept to take contemporary society into account and re-contextualize archaeology. We should comprehend that our propositions about the past are constructed in the present. Archaeologists do not work in a vacuum and our interpretations influence the modern society. Conventonally, we separate things from people claiming that we are only responsible for things but our results leave a high effect on the life of people. We should overcome the dichotomy of people/ things (Gonzalez-Ruibal 2006). Hence, considering people and modern society, in its broadest meaning including non-modern and non-industrial communities, and accepting the

implications of the production of archaeological knowledge on peoples' lives are part of the agenda against apolitical archaeology.

Public archaeology(ies) as a necessity

Besides the urge for rich debates on archaeological theory and the history of archaeological thought (Trigger 2006), it is significant to revise our definition from the nature of archaeological practice, and include people in our practice and interpretations; as 'separating people and things' (Hamilakis 2009: 52) could introduce unfavourable consequences into society and archaeology. 'An engaged archaeology is partly meant to balance the complex power relations between researchers/ archaeologists and the communities' (Schmidt and Pikirayi 2016).

One of the most challenging issues in Iranian archaeology is the absence of public and community based archaeologies, thought, there are some sporadic activities including the authors' activities. Noteworthy, according to Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ISNA.ir 2016), no archaeological NGO has been submitted untill November 2017. The report stands in a sharp contrast to 495 active NGOs in tourism and handicrafts. The inability of archaeology to conduct more engaged activities particularly school events and organizing different continuous events for public and local communities has turned archaeology to a one-way street, namely it is the only consumer/audience, though it benefits from the government on its side, of its produced knowledge. The archaeologists scarcely bring the public into the fore, treating them as background noises. As an official authority, archaeology, generally denies the ways local people communicate with the past. Meier (2013: 146) questions the credibility of academic narratives stating 'in post-modernity academic history has become multiple, it has lost its innocent claim to tell the one and the only true history' (Meier 2013: 146).

Some scholars discuss interdisciplinary approaches to get more close contact with public. Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos (2009) advocate archaeological ethnography as an approach which can help researchers grasp a deep insight into communities. Archaeological ethnography can 'promote alternative narratives and practices of engagement with the material past' (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009: 80).

In recent decades many researchers and scholars within the field have placed emphasis on context, (Hamilakis 2009; Hodder 1987) indicating that the material traces of past can not be separated from the contemporary societies, communities and social groups who interact with archaeological remains. Actually many scholars have already argued for communities as part of archaeological sites (Ricci and Yilmaz 2016: 42) and the contemporary societies as the main context of practicing archaeology. Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos (2009) putting the term alternative archaeologies versus modernist

official archaeology and clearly emphasize on the importance of the engagement of communities and groups and the study of their understanding of the past.

In conventional archaeology particularly in 19th and first half of 20th centuries the past was defined by studying material remains, ancient civilizations and communities, while according to recent epistemological shifts in discipline every discourse on the past is constituted in modern time; hence, archaeological past is a modern constitution. No need to say that the absence of such approaches leaves a big gap between archaeology and the public. Archaeologists recognise the authorities as the only reference point to hand in their produced knowledge. It simply means that the dialogue with the society happens seldom and the state decides about the results. In current situation, the states enjoy the monopoly on past and its material remains.

In the Middle East it is of vital importance to transcend the monotone archaeology which is usually under the strong influence of states, departing towards plural understandings of the past. Almost from the beginning of archaeology, various communities, indigenous people and groups have been usually the victims of subjugation or simply ignorance. Iranian government, with respect to political challenges which it confronts in national and international scales, needs to create more room for the participation of society and shows an acceptable level of tolerance for cultural multiplicity. Undoubtedly, archaeology as a human science can play a considerable role. We as archaeologists would organise different events and activities for and among communities instead of sitting in our ivory tower and keep talking about the splendour of ancient Iran, assigning everything to the kings and plainly neglecting ordinary people. Such events could be great opportunities for reflexion, and investigating the expectations of public from archaeology.

In her pioneer study engendering archaeology Ruth Tringham discusses current interpretations about ancient agents as faceless blobs (1991). She has dedicated her argument fully to gender but it would be useful if we draw Tringham's word to the practice of archaeology in Iran. The dominant discourse not only assumes ancient people faceless but also modern population as passive blobs which should accept archaeologists' scientific explanations about the past. Except we begin to deconstruct the dominant paradigm of archaeology, we can not talk about a plural past and present. An engaged archaeology not only supports communities to be involved in archaeological site management (Ricci and Yilmaz 2016: 42) but also takes them into account in decision and policy making processes. Such an approach introduces reflectivity into the archaeology in unexpected ways. Being asked to re-design the Regional Museum of Southeastern Iran, the authors decided first to survey the whole province in search of cultural diversity. Conventionally the region is famous as the traditional residence of *Sistani* and *Baluch* people but the results of the survey were simply shocking. We discovered minorities like Sikhs who live in silent, we encountered people stuck between Iran and Pakistan borders with painful stories of

poverty, marginality and oppression. How the Regional Museum of Southeastern Iran could at least recognize them as part of the province population without conducting kind of indigenous or community-based archaeology? How can we reflect unsatisfied marginalized groups who are still interested in active engagement in constituting archaeological past?

The results granted us insight to suggest a recent and contemporary past section as a significant part of the museum dedicated fully to critical engagement with modern dilemmas in the region. It would be a theoretical pitfall to treat material/archaeological past as an abstract. Archaeologists do not deal with the material traces of dead people, but rather with leaving people and ''living'' things (Hamilakis 2009: 51). 'Archaeology no longer makes the distinction between past and present' (Hamilakis 2009).

The monarchs of the *Pahlavi* dynasty and the Islamic Republic have failed to define the archaeological history(ies) with an indigenous language. So, the historical kings of the *Achaemenid* era are being either loved or hated but not analyzed. It is the political system that defines the relation between the people and archaeological past: it can be respected or neglected, destroyed or conserved. The Iranians, who still believe in the mythical or the religious history, may not rely on the history that is made by the political systems.

Controversial policy making has also left a bad effect on preservation and conservation usually resulted in the separation of archaeological sites and local communities. The sites are usually fully fenced and interrupt/forbidden local people access. If they want to enter or visit they have to pay like other visitors. Every kind of relationships with the site must be allowed by state authorities. On the other hand, the indigenous do not benefit from, with the exception of very limited jobs or the opportunity of working as seasonal workers for archaeological teams, the profits of locating by the archaeological sites. The surrounding communities remain mostly in poverty and misery. As an example, the excavation project of *Shahr-e Sokhta*, from 1978 onward, has actually no relation with the local people. It is not an exception while most of Iranian excavation teams act like the foreigners who worked in the country and prefered to live isolated. Moreover, the authorities usually are not interested in indigenous beliefs or popular narratives about the sites. In the Middle East there has been actually very little effort to systemically investigate local people beliefs about archaeological sites; while recognizing some archaeological sites as holy places by local people has played a key role in preservation. 'Non-academic perspectives on the past are no longer considered as false or fringe but as valuable constructions in their own right for their own groups and purposes' (Meier 2013: 146). The same is true by starting a new archaeological project; what local people expect from a museum or an archaeological exhibition in their vicinity usually leaves uninvestigated.

A very good counterexample is *Çatalhöyük* project. Since 1993, Ian Hodder conducts archaeological investigations in pre-historic site *Çatalhöyük* in Turkey. The project ambitiously follows the active involvement of local community particularly women providing them a good basis to work for archaeological team; sometimes 'as intern instilled pride in local women to see that one of their own was involved and highly respected in the research taking place at *Çatalhöyük*' (Atalay 2012: 227). The project also gets the opportunity of selling their hand-made products. 'These aspects are critical for the future, long-term sustainability of *Çatalhöyük* community-based archaeology project, and more importantly for the capacity building that will benefit local communities in ways unrelated to archaeology and heritage management' (Atalay 2012: 227). The *Çatalhöyük* community-based project also produces written community report for residents from all five villages that surround the site (Atalay 2012: 227). Also the anthropologist Ayfer Bartu has studied different groups interested in the site including tourists, local people and archaeologists themselves (Edgeworth 2006: 7). 'Community engagement enables archaeologists to recognize the voices of communities and other stakeholders, ensuring that these become active participants in the course of archaeological process' (Abungu 2016: 47).

We do not advocate public and community-based archaeologies as completely innocent and bias-free but their credibility comes from their ability to create more places for dialogue and engagement to comprehend the archaeological past in contemporary context. Soon they start defending a monotone archaeology based on full-autonomy or advocating unevaluated indigenous beliefs they will fail in their attempts towards plurality. 'Uncritical acceptance of alternative views may result in pure jingoism' (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Fergusen 2006: 149). By approaching communities in this way, we could gain new insights to the function and role of archaeology as the medium of pluralism and as an academic effort toward plural identities.

Archaeology, sustainable development and future in developing countries

The archaeology is more about present and future. Generally, archaeology institutions, heritage institutions and museums, and even the most conservative archaeology departments, though from a completely different point of view, can hardly deny the role that archaeology plays in the present and future of societies.

The Middle East still suffers from colonialism, imperialism, and dictatorship in its modern history, thus, to speculate about the future and cultural policy-making is very difficult. Every decision in favour of a group or community could simply be considered against the other stake-holders. It is of course not the result of high and rich multiplicity but the interference of unexperienced hands in policy-making and different destructive factors which victimize cultural policies on the side of political short term goals.

A serious instance of the case is the unpleasant interruption of projects because of political changes. Started in 2003 and just a few days after the devastating earthquake in Bam, Bam contemporary archaeology project was one of the most innovative projects in a disastrous context. The project shifted from an ethnoarchaeology oriented to contemporary past which owes this shift to reflexivity and good intercommunication with local community. The team, mostly comprised of young female researchers, was active from 2003 to 2008 when the project was interrupted due to the presidential election which caused some changes in regional authority level. Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization appear particularly vulnerable to any kind of change in the state. Sometimes the government tries to place its special agents in the organization, the policy of the neo-conservative government from 2005 to 2013 is the best example, and it makes the situation even more complex and intricate.

To undertake archaeology in a conflict, post-conflict or an unstable context is much more complex than a normal context. The Middle East, far from peace and stability, puts forward the question, as a permanent concern, that what kind of archaeological practice can introduce active and peaceful engagement to the present and future of the region.

Iran, as claimed by politicians a country in the way of development with immense potentials, can be discussed as a post-conflict context. Experienced a big revolution and an eight-year war with Iraq, the country has undergone serious tensions. The presence of different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, here we would like to avoid the term minority deliberately, demands long-run cultural policy-making which introduces first of all tolerance and respect for plurality and difference. However to undertake engaged community-based archaeology and improving the general level of knowledge about past, the practice of archaeology, cultural variety and heritage among communities, needs time plan and long-running projects. To define multi-disciplinary projects attracting international budgets or the cooperation of academies and research foundations which are fairly independent from government may introduce a big change in the quality and durability of projects. Sometimes the state has unethical expectations from team in exchange for providing financial support. Sometimes the best way is to avoid the government particularly its financial contribution.

Obviously sustainable development cannot be achieved only by investing in construction, health care or employment. According to what mentioned above, to work on concepts like the plurality of archaeological past, implicitly enhances social tolerance, peaceful approaches and even democracy in a post-conflict context; unfortunately, dogmatism, intolerance or granting privileges to a special group are ,far from being exceptional, the normal procedure of states in the Middle East. During chapters we discussed briefly how the misuse of archaeological remains has turned past to a dangerous weapon in the hands of dictatorial regimes which are interested in ethnocentrism and racial contestations. In a nutshell the first step is the revision of archaeological practice and the role of archaeology by archaeologists themselves.

A multi-fold approach towards a sustainable and dynamic archaeology invocates more archaeological theory, more reflectivity and more political awareness between archaeologists.

In the Middle East 'history has annoying habit of repeating itself' (Hamilakis 2009: 42), embodied as the repletion of violence as an endless circle. The process of engaged and collaborative dialogue with communities could be a rational solution against the exploitation of archaeology in power game. 'Our engagement with the present involves the varied politics of the past. Archaeologists in many parts of the world have been confronted by issues of reburial, repatriation, land claims, indigenous rights and competing perspectives' (Hodder 2002: 189). Historians have also recognized that each age writes its own history, and that the writing of history is part of a political process (Hodder 2002: 189). As Critchley et al. (1996) pointed, deconstruction does not mean turning from a concept to another one or reversing the power relations to reach a negative balance. Deconstruction is to transcend the dichotomies (Derrida 1991, 1981).

A practical approach towards a nongovernmental archaeology: A personal narrative

The agency of archaeologists, who critized the government, has been under pressure during the last decades (Dezhamkhooy *et al.* 2015). From 2005 to 2013 coincided with the rise of neo-conservatives in Iran, we as the engaged avant guard archaeologists lost our projects. Bam ethnocarchaological project which in fact covered the ethnoarchaeology of disaster and later the study of contemporary past of the city was interrupted and the two project directors were banned to do field archaeology. After the post-election conflicts in 2009 they were forced to leave their academic jobs and live in a remote city accusing of involving in oppositional activities against the government while one other member was forced to teach in a much more remote city far from her hometown.

Gradually, we found that there is a resistance against our articles to be published in Iranian journals. Besides, some years before we were interrupted during a national-scale conference and it was very difficult to organize free lectures and seminars. In a country that you have to take permission of a governmental administrative part, Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, to have the right to do field archaeology, all these were catastrophes. We had to leave archaeology or do something independent from the government. During a couple of years in fact we reached the very famous agenda of Charles Orser (1996) 'dig locally and think globally'. It was hard but we tried to publish internationally and in English. For the people like us with limited knowledge of English beginning to think in another language was actually very difficult. But, we gradually learned to do that. One of the obstacles is that, the Middle Eastern criteria for writing an article is very much different from the Western one. To do so, we had to learn how to draw the attention of our western colleagues.

We were the first Iranian archaeologists speaking for the necessity of avant guardism, postprocessualism, reflexivity and anti-nationalistic issues. Indeed, it was hard to ask the people, who were used to dominant conservative paradigm, to pay attention to our works and arguments in the first steps. But it finally occurred.

We were successful to publish the results of Bam project and some articles on nationalism and its dangerous impact in a multi-cultural context. Being far from the teaching context, we had enough time to examine new challenges in theory in the field gender, post colonialism and deconstruction. Our working group, 'GAP END', also attempted to hold indoor seminars, exactly at the house of members; the results of these seminars were lately the fundamentals of further researches. The students who were interested in theory, or the archaeology of contemporary past were allowed to attend the seminars. During these years, we have also learnt how to do field archaeology out of government's support which does not recognize the archaeology of recent past as archaeology.

We are ourselves ignored ones, the jobless archaeologists, without any tribune and possibility of access to financial sources but within years of work, we have learnt that in the context that there is no actual way, you have to build the road yourself. What we suggest is fundamentally based on our own experiences of being ignored. For a more balanced and reflective archaeology, in the Middle East, we propose to stand far from the governments and to find new ways within the society, communities and social groups. To begin from point zero! (Figures 13, 14 and 15).

Figure 13. Towards point zero (designed and photo by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

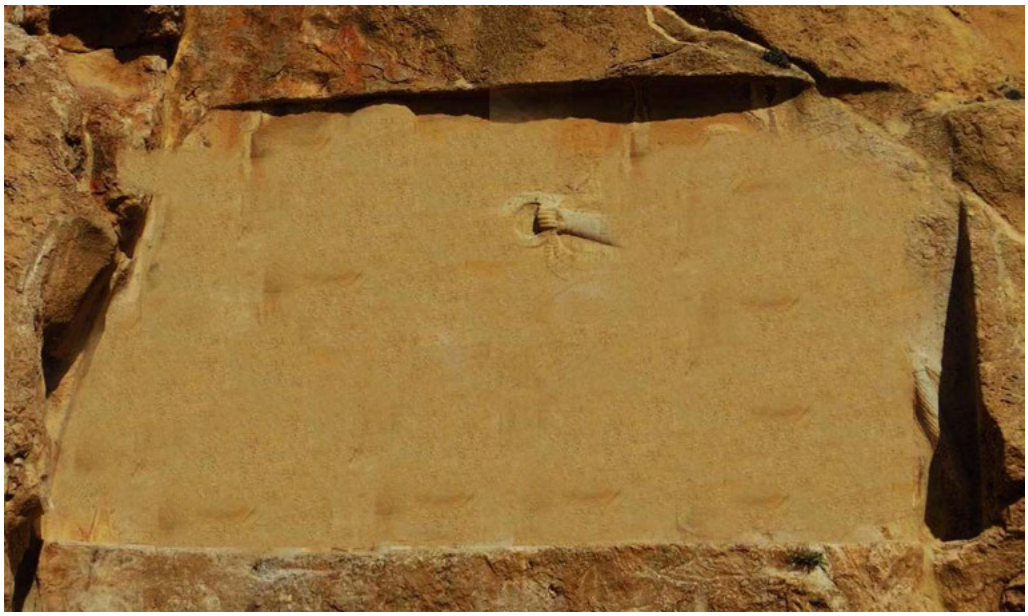

Figure 14. Towards point zero (designed and photo by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

Figure 15. Towards point zero (designed and photo by A. Roustaeeyanfard).

Summing up

While in chapters one and four we attempted to discuss politics of the past representation in this chapter we have attempted to look at the ignored pieces in the Middle Eastern archaeology(ies). The absence or low occurance of public archaeology, sustainable (cultural) development perspectives and the denial of subjective and politically-situated archaeologies, have led archaeology to conservative approaches and even isolation. The arguments are also related to ethics, subjectivity of archaeologists and heritage presentation. The later has controversially appeared in the contemporary socio-political context of the Middle East. Archaeologists should be aware of the dangers of involving in ethnocentric claims. To render an ethnic group in archaeological interpretations as distinguished (like the Medes and Persians as ancient noble ethnic group in southwestern Iran) could inflame tensions between modern communities.

In the contemporary Middle East ethnic identity has been ideologically-charged and the danger of ethnocentrism, contrary to what Isiah Berlin (1972) describes as an ancient type of national feeling among populations of the region, threats the whole region. Generally, the growing processes of ethno-religious tensions, conflicts and civil wars in the Middle East not only undermine localities, communities and populations but also threat past materialities and destabilize the context of archaeological practice. Engaged archaeology (Pyburn 2011) can be an alternative archaeology in such a context. Within this orbit, archaeology should reorient its strategies and objects of study. 'This should lead to a redesign of the field methods that are closer to ethnography and sociology' (Politis 2015: 88); also the discipline should appreciate interdisciplinary researches or what has been called the archaeology of the present and more interaction with humanities. Much more future investigations remain to be done to explore the relationship between the ownership of material remains of past, the rise of ethnic claims, and the political interests and demands of social groups.

Finally, given Iran's recent history and the intricate relationship between the construction of the modern Iranian state, and the misuse of the past material remains, the question of Iranian archaeology continues to remain significant not only as a problem of ethics and engagment, but also as a constant reminder of the defects and shortcomings of archaeological practice, theory, and self reflectivity within Iran's academic framework.

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Glossary

Geographical names

Alborz	Alborz Mountain range stretches from northern to northern part of Tehran. Its highest point is Mount Damavand.
Amurru	was an Amorite kingdom located at the territory that includes modern western and north-western Syria and northern of modern Lebanon.
Arachosia	an ancient satrapy of Persian Empire, located in the southern part of the Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, Greco-Bactrian, and Indo-Scythian empires.
Armenia	present Armenia and an ancient satrapy of ancient Persia.
Borazjan	a little town located near Bushehr, southern Iran.
Bushehr	an important port and the capital of Bushehr Province located in southern Iran and on the northern border of Persian Gulf.
Kerman	the name of a province located in south eastern Iran, its capital is named also Kerman. The province has been one of Iranian satrapies at the time of Persian empires.
Khorasan	the name of an eastern Iranian province which was extended from Afghanistan to Central Asia in Medieval Iran. Recently it has been politically divided into three independent provinces.
Khuzestan	the name of a province located in south western Iran, next to Iran-Iraq border, with high ethnic diversity (Arabs, Fars, Lurs). The province is known for its oil and agricultural resources.
Mecca/Maka/ Meka	Muslim's religious center located in Saudi Arabia.
Marvdasht	both name of a little town and a plain located in 45 km north west of Shiraz, the capital of modern Fars province. Archaeologically, Marvdasht has been one of the main centers of Achaemenids where Persepolis is located.
Persia	geographically, politically and archaeologically, the term, Persia, refers to different meanings: an alternative for Achaemenid Empire, the name of Achaemenid's capital and satrapy located near Marvadasht, and an ethnic group attributed to Aryans. The term was also generally used by Europeans to refer to the country of Iran until the beginning of Pahlavi dynasty (1920s).

Shuanna	the name of a territory cited in Cyrus Cylinder.
Susa	also known as Sus/Susiana. The name of a city located in modern Khuzestan province. The ancient city of Susa is famous because of being addressed in Bible. The city was first excavated during 19th century by French antiquarians and was one of the first sites excavated in Iran.
Zagros	Zagros Mountain range located in Western Iran and Eastern Iraq, stretches from west to south Iran. The valleys of these mountain ranges are known as the first centers of Elimate kingdom.

Historical places/archaeological sites

Antioch/ Antakya	the name of a Greek city located in the Eastern side of Al-Aasi/Orontes River.
Anshan	known as Tall-e Malyan. An ancient city in Fars province with considerable ties to Ilam civilization.
Ardašīr-Ḵorra	the city of 'Royal Glory of Ardašīr', also known as Gur, was built by Ardašīr the First near present Fīrūzābād in Fars.
Aria	mentioned in Achaemenid inscriptions addressing a geographical part located in eastern part of the territory; near present Herat, Afghanistan/Afqanistan.
Assyria	geographically situated in northern Mesopotamia, also the name of an empire declined by the Babylonians in 612 BC.
Babylon	an ancient Akkadian-speaking civilization located in southern Mesopotamia, founded in 1894 BC.
Bactria	a province in north eastern Iran. It has been a part of Iranian empires such as Achaemenid and Sasanian.
Behistun/Bistoun/ Bisotun	the name of an archaeological site in Kermanshah western Iran, famous for the longest known inscription of ancient Empires, Behistun inscription, ordered to be written by Darius I.
Cappadocia	referring to a region located in central Turkey. It has been an Achaemenid territory, also cited in Šāpūr I's Naqsh-e Rostam inscription.
Čogā Zanbīl	local name for Dur Untash. The only known Elamite ziggurat located in Khuzestan province, south western Iran.
Chorasmia	an Achaemenid satrapy mentioned in different inscriptions located in Achaemenid eastern territories.
Drangiana	also known as Zarang, an Achaemenid satrapy mentioned in different inscriptions. It might present modern Sistan south eastern Iran.
Elam/Ilam	the name of an ancient civilization dated from 4th to first half of first millennium BC. The evidence of this civilization has been mostly uncovered in Khuzestan and some parts of Fars, south western Iran.
Gandara	a historical place, mentioned in Achaemenid inscriptions. Probably located in Achaemenid eastern territories.
Godin Tepe	a famous pre-historic site located near Kangavar City, western Iran.

Hajiabad	a Sasanian archaeological site including the remains of a manor house located in Fars province, Iran.
Hatra	also known as Alhazar, an Arsacid city located in modern Iraq. The main profession of its settlers was exchanging and trading between Arsacid and Roman empires.
Istakhr	a famous Sasanian city mostly recognized as a religious center located in north western Fars.
Ka'ba-ye Zardost/ Ka'beZart(d)osht/ KaabeZart(d)sht	an Achaemenid building located in Naqsh-e Rostam, Fars province.
Kilikia/Cilicia	the south coastal region of Asia Minor, south of the central Anatolian plateau. It existed as a political entity from Hittite times to the Byzantine Empire. It has been cited in Šāpūr I's Naqsh-e Rostam inscription.
Lydia	an Iron Age kingdom of western Asia Minor located in western Turkey. According to historical records its king was defeated by Cyrus II.
Matezzish	a historical place cited in Persepolis tablets.
Media	according to Herodotus, Media was a pre–Achaemenid kingdom (8–6 centuries BC) founded by Diako. According to Darius' inscriptions, it was one of the Achaemenid satrapies located in western Iran.
Parthia	the name of a region/satrapy in north eastern Iran cited in Achaemenid inscriptions. The Parthians are traditionally assigned to this region.
Parsu/Parsua	probably located in south western Iran and a primary center for the Achaemenids.
Pasargadae/ Pasargadas/ Parse	the first Achaemenid capital in north western Pars province.
Sattagydia	a geographical term referring to a satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire, probably located in east of the Kirthar Mountains, Indus River.
Shahr-e Sokhta	the name of a key Bronze Age archaeological site/ancient city near Zabol, southeastern Iran.
Sogdiana	an Achaemenid satrapy (8th satrapy in Darius I's Behistoun inscription) and ancient civilization lasting to Islamic conquest including different cities located in modern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
Sumer	the name of an ancient civilization (from 5th millennium BC) and a historical region in southern Mesopotamia.
Susiana	(see Susa)
Taq-e Bostan/ Tagh-I Bostan	a Sasanian site located in Kermanshah western Iran famous for its several reliefs.
The Carians	the ancient inhabitants of Caria in southwestern Anatolia.
The Scythians	mentioned in Achaemenid inscriptions, also known as Scythe, Saka, were a large group of Iranian nomads who were mentioned by the literate people surrounding them as inhabiting large areas in the central Eurasian steppes.
The Scythians of pointed caps	according to Darius' inscription in Behistun a group of Scythians with special long sharp-ended hat who were defeated by him.

Names

Abarag	the name of one of Avesta interpreters.
Ahuramazda/ Urmazd/Mazda	the name of God in Zoroastrianism.
Al-Tabari	Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, one of the prominent historians of 11th century in Iran.
Anahita	Zoroastrian goddess of water.
Ardavan V	the last Arscaid king defeated by Ardašīr the First (r.213–AD 224/6).
Ardaviraf/Ardaviraz	the name of a magupat (clergy man) and the author/narrator of Ardaviraf. The text narrates a story very similar to Dante's divine comedy; it is the story of Ardaviraf's journey to divine and his visit of heaven and hell, punishments and remunerations.
Ardašīr I	the founder of Sasanian dynasty (r. 224–241 AD).
Artaxerxes I	the fifth King of Persia from 465 to 424 BC. He was the third son of Xerxes I.
Atahoshu	the name of an I[E]lamit king and the cousin of Shilhaha from Sokalmakh dynasty (1900–1500 BC).
Augustus	the founder of the Roman Empire and its first emperor, ruling from 27 BC until his death in AD 14.
Bal'amī/Balami	Abu Ali Mohammad Ba'lami was a Muslim Iranian historians lived in 10th century.
Bahrām/Warahrān/ Varasraqna	the name of three Sasanian kings and a Zoroastrian god which has a yasht (religious adoration) in Avesta as Bahrām Yasht.
Bardiya	Cyrus' son assassinated by his brother Cambyses (?).
Bell	The name of a Mesopotamian god.
Caesar Valerian	The Roman emperor (200–AD 260) defeated and captured by Šāpūr I.
Cambyses II	the second Achaemenid king and Cyrus II's son (r. 530–522 BC).
Cyrus II	the founder of the Achaemenid Empire (r. 550–539 BC).
Darius I	Achaemenid king rose to power in 522 BC.
Darius II	king of the Persian Empire from 423 to 405 BC.
Enlil	A Mesopotamian god.
Forūḡī, M.A/ Foroughi, M.A.	(1877–1942) was a teacher, diplomat, nationalist, writer, politician and the prime minister of Iran.
Gaumāta/Guatama/ Guatamay	the name of a magupat (clergy man) leading a rebellion against Cambyses II and introducing himself as Bardiya.
Gobryas	according to historians particularly Herodotus, Gobryas supported Darius I to achieve monarchy.
Gordianus	Roman Cesar defeated by Šāpūr I (159–AD 238).
Heraclius I	Roman emperor (610–AD 41) contemporary with Sasanian king Kosrow II.
Herodotus	Greek historian (484–425 BC).
Hormozd/Hormizd/	

urmozd	holy God of Zoroastrian religion and also the name of some Sasanian kings such as HormozdI/II.
Ibn Al-Athir	Ali 'Izz al-Din Ibn Al-Athir, a Muslim historian (1160–AD 1233).
Inshushinak	an I[E]lamite god.
Intaphrenes	according to historians particularly Herodotus, he is one of the seventh Darius I's advocates supporting him to achieve monarchy.
Kartir/Kardir/Kertir	The name of the Sasanian king Bahrām II's mobedan-e mobed (head of clergymen).
Khaje Neẓām-al-Molk	(1018–1092) Abu Ali Hasanibn Ali Tusi, a Persian scholar and the prime minister of the Saljuq Empire especially king Sultan Malekšāh.
Kosrow I/Anōširavān/ Anushiravan	Sasanian king (531–AD 579) known as Anōširavān the Just.
Kosrow II, Parviz	the son and successor of Kosrow the First, known as Parviz (r. 590–628 AD).
Marduk	the main god of Babylon people.
Mazdak	the leader of a public opposition against the Sasanians during 5th century AD. Qobād, the Sasanian king, supported him, but he was finally executed by Kosrow I.
Megabyzus	according to historians particularly Herodotus, he is one of the seventh Darius I's advocates supporting him to achieve monarchy.
Mohammad Reza Shah (Pahlavi)	(1919–1980) the second and last king of Pahlavi dynasty.
Nabu	a Mesopotamian god.
Nabonidus	The king of Babel, died in 539 BC.
Naser al-Din Shah	(1831–1896) Qajarid king. Iran's borders reached their modern conditions during his reign. Also, he is known as the first king of Iran who traveled to Europe.
Nivgoshansab	an Avesta interpreter.
Otanes	according to historians particularly Herodotus, Otanes is one of Darius I's advocates supporting him to achieve monarchy and defeating Geomata/Gumata.
Pāpak/Bābak	The name of Ardašīr the First's father.
Pirnia, H	(1872–1935) historian, and the co-founder of the Society for the National Heritage of Iran.
Reza Shah (Reza Mirpanj/Pahlavi)	(1878–1944) the first king of Pahlavi dynasty.
Rooshan	an Avesta interpreter.
Šāpūr I/Shapour/ ShapurI	Second Sasanian king and the son and successor of Ardašīr the First (r. 240/42–270/AD 72).
Tansar/Tensar	The name of Ardašīr the First's mobedan-e mobed (the head of clergymen).
Untash-Napirisha	Middle Elamian king (14th century BC) from Igihalkid family and the founder of Dur-Untash (Čogā Zanbīl).
Xenophon	an ancient Greek historian (430–354 BC).
Xerxes	Darius I's son and successor (r. 485–465 BC).

Dynasties

Achaemenid	the first Persian Empire (550–239 BC).
Akkad	the name of a Mesopotamian empire in the half of third millennium BC founded by Sargon.
Assyrian Empire	an empire first rose to power in North Mesopotamia by Shamsh-Adad I (1813–1781 BC).
Elamite kingdom	the term points to the kingdom lasted from 4th millennium to first millennium BC situated in south western Iran (Khuzestan and some parts of Fars and probably Kermanshah). Chronologically, it is divided to four main phases: proto-Elamite, ancient Elam, Middle Elam, and New Elam.
Kianian	the name of the second Iranian mythical dynasty mentioned in Shahname.
New Assyria	a chronological term pointing to the last phase of Assyrian empire (8th century BC).
Pahlavi[d] dynasty	(1925–1979) a monarchy founded by Reza Mirpanj after his coup against Qajar dynasty. His successor, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi faced public rebellions in 1979 and lost his monarchy.
Parthians/Arsacids	the second pre-Islamic Iranian empire (242 BC–224/AD 226)
Pishdadian	the name of the first Iranian mythical dynasty mentioned in Shahname.
Qajar[id]/ Ghajar dynasty	the last traditional monarchy of Persia (Iran) (1785–1925).
Roman Empire	the term signals to different Roman historical empires which came after Republican period.
Sasanian dynasty	the last pre-Islamic Persian empire founded by Ardašīr the First (224–638 BC).
Saljuq/Saljukid	a post-Islamic empire founded by nomad Turk tribes who captured Central Asia, Iran and Asia Minor in 11th century AD.

Historical texts

Ardavirafname/ Arda-Wiraz-Namag/ Ardawiraznameh	a Sasanian Pahlavi religious text describing the journey of a clergyman to divine. See Ardaviraf.
Avesta	the Holy book of the Zoroastrians.
Bundahišn/ Bundahishn	a Sasanian Pahlavi text collecting in third century AH (AD 9th) by Farnbaq discussing different issues.
Denkard/Dinkard/ Dinkart	a Sasanian Pahlavi text in nine nask (parts), including juridical and civil laws.
Karnamak-e Ardašīr-e Pāpakan/ Karnameye Ardašīr	

Bābakan	the name of a Sasanian Pahlavi book focusing on the rise of Ardašīr the First and the myths around him.
Khoday Namak	a Sasanian Pahlavi text introducing Sasanian kings. The Pahlavi version has been disappeared. Its Arabic translation is known as Seir-ol Moluk.
Matikan-I Hezar Dadestan	a Sasanian Pahlavi juridical text collected by Farrokh Mard Bahraman.
Omid-I Aša Vahišta	a Sasanian Pahlavi text.
Shayest Nashayest	the name of a Sasanian Pahlavi religious/ juridical book.
Tarikh-e al-Tabari	a significant history written by the Iranian Muslim historian Al-Tabari in Arabic.

Special historical terms

Aniran	the term was used to refer to Non-Iranian territories during Sasanian era.
Ashmuq/Ashmough	religious enemies (usually refers to non-Zoroastrians)/infidel.
Dehqan/Dehghan	a particular class of farmers invented by Kosrow II mostly known as yeomen.
Faravahar	the symbol of Ahuramazda, first introduced in Achemenid era. Artistically, it derived from Assyrian motifs. Now, it is mostly used as an ornamentation to present Aryanism.
Yazatas	Yazdan, god of Mazdisnan religion.
Zandiqs/Zandigh	according to Sasanian written documents the followers of Mani.

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