



DEH-E NOW

DEH-E NOW, site of a group of four rock-cut tombs of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C.E., located about 25 km south of [Bīsotūn](#) in Kermānšāhān, three of them in the mountains between the villages of Deh-e Now (Kurd. Di Nū) and Eshāqvand (in Western sources often incorrectly rendered Sakavand; Kurd. Issaq-avand), the fourth near the village of Sorḡa-deh (Kurd. Sūrḡa-deh). They provide important evidence for the development of *astōdān* (ossuary) burial in Persia ([Plate XIX](#)). The group of three tombs has been hewn out of the sloping face of an isolated rock outcropping known locally as Farhād-taš (de Morgan, p. 300: Ferha-tach) “the stone of Farhād,” which is most easily accessible from Deh-e Now. The fourth, discovered by Oskar Mann (p. 328), is on the left bank of the Gāmāsāb river between Šamsābād and Sorḡa-deh, hewn into the cliff about 50 m above the river; it is known locally as Oṭāq-e Farhād (the chamber of Farhād).

The three tombs near Deh-e Now together extend across a surface a little more than 10 m wide, though at different heights above the ground. The facades are generally similar, each with a panel carved as a door bordered on three sides by a stepped frame ([Plate XIX.a-c](#)); the actual opening to the burial space is in the upper half of the panel. Above the entrance to the central tomb is a group of figural sculptures, important for the dating and understanding of this group of monuments. The tomb near Sorḡa-deh ([Plate XIX.d](#)) is of similar design, except that, like the remaining two tombs near Deh-e Now, it has no figural sculptures.

The dimensions of the chambers at Farhād-taš vary ([Figure 9](#)). Whereas the



tomb on the left is a niche, rather than an actual chamber (width, including frame, ca. 3 m; width of opening 2.10 m; depth 0.84 m), the central tomb consists of a larger cavity 1.63 m wide and 1.75 m deep. The tomb on the right, the highest above the ground, consists of a chamber 2.10 m² (Figure 10.b). It is likely that this tomb is the oldest of the three, its highly placed entrance and its relatively spacious chamber linking it to the earlier monumental tombs of Media (von Gall, 1966; Huff, 1971; von Gall, 1988). As for the small tomb near Sorḳa-deh, its chamber is unfinished (maximum width 2.33 m, maximum depth 1.50 m), so that no conclusions can be drawn (Figure 10.a).

There remains the question whether or not the three tombs near Deh-e Now can be connected with Zoroastrian burial practices. It is not possible to identify all of them as *astōdāns*. Although the right-hand tomb may well have served as a repository for one or several corpses in outstretched position, the central chamber seems too small for such a burial, though it would be more than spacious enough for ossuaries. Even the left-hand tomb would permit the laying out of a corpse diagonally, though from the evidence of other rock-cut tombs in Media a trough in the floor would be expected for this purpose (von Gall, 1966, figs. 7, 8; idem, 1988, pl. 29c). It is thus possible that at least the two smaller tombs were *astōdāns*.

Of the sculptures above the opening to the central tomb the largest is a figure standing in relief against a ground that still shows the marks of the pick with which the surface of the panel was roughly prepared. Ernst Herzfeld (p. 206) interpreted this figure as the Magian usurper Gaumāta (March-September 522 B.C.E.); indeed it is striking to find represented in the center of Media a personage in the long Persian dress, unarmed, and with lifted hands, undoubtedly in an act of prayer (see [CLOTHING ii](#)). Gaumāta is depicted in similar dress on the rock relief at Bīsotūn (ca. 521 B.C.E; Lushey, p. 74). The hairdo covering the ears is clear evidence, however, that the figure near Deh-e Now cannot have been carved earlier than the mature Persepolis friezes. Furthermore, some of the evidence cited by Herzfeld in support of his interpretation (pp. 205-06) is no longer considered valid. For example, Fort Sikayauvatiš, where Gaumāta was slain, is not to be identified with Sakavand, which he considered a simplified spelling of the original Kurdish Issaqavand, composed from the proper name Issaq (Eshāq). Sikayauvatiš must in fact be sought in the vicinity of Mount Bīsotūn (Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 118, 209, 220; Lushey, p. 67).

To the right of the large figure there is a smaller panel reaching only as high as



his waist but cut more deeply into the rock face than the large panel and breaking through the boundary of the latter on the right. On this panel three elements can be distinguished: to the left, immediately before the large figure and probably connected with it, a tall, unfinished object, evidently intended to be an incense burner, a royal and divine attribute (Gropp, p. 175; von Gall, 1972, p. 279); in the middle a low fire altar; and beside it a man wearing trousers and a tiara with a projection in front (von Gall, 1972, pp. 279-80) stoking the fire with a hook. The working of this panel, with a toothed chisel, represents a technical stage beyond that of the rough pick work on the surface of the large panel (Nylander, pp. 53 ff.). It therefore appears likely that there were two phases, the first in the Achaemenid period, when the larger figure was begun and left unfinished, the second probably in the early Hellenistic period, when the smaller panel and the actual chamber and its frame were carved. The smaller figure, apparently an *ātrəvaxš* (q.v.; Koch, pp. 159 ff.), was probably the later owner of the tomb, shown venerating the much larger figure. The latter's Elamite-Persian dress, in an area where the Median costume with trousers would be expected, suggests that a high Achaemenid state official is depicted. It would thus seem impossible to date this figure later than the breakdown of the Achaemenid empire (pace Huff, 1990, pp. 93-94; Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism*, pp. 98-99, favoring a Parthian date on the grounds of the figure's uncovered head and gesture). It is not impossible that, at least in the later re-interpretation, the larger figure was understood as Gaumāta, but it must be emphasized that in Achaemenid art, particularly seals, the two priests flanking the fire altar, normally the magus and the *ātrəvaxš*, are usually equal in height (von Gall, 1988, pp. 565-66).

Together with the evidence that two of the four tombs could have been *astōdāns*, this interpretation supports the view that the three tombs near Deh-e Now were those of Magians (von Gall, 1974, p. 143). According to Herodotus (1.140), the Magians were the first to practice open exposure of the dead. Undoubtedly the tombs near Deh-e Now and Sorḡa-deh represent an important stage in the development from the monumental Median rock-cut tombs with columned antechambers (von Gall, 1966; idem, 1974; idem, 1988; Huff, 1971) to the smaller rock-cut *astōdāns* found in Fārs (Gropp, pp. 205 ff.; von Gall, 1974, pp. 142 ff.; Huff, 1988).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

H. von Gall, "Zu den 'medischen' Felsgräbern in Nordwestiran und Iraqi Kurdistan," *Archäologischer Anz.* 1966, pp. 19-43.

Idem, "Persische und medische Stämme" *AMI*, N.F. 5, 1972, pp. 261-83.

Idem, "Neue Beobachtungen zu den sog. medischen Felsgräbern," in *Proceedings of the IInd Annual Symposium on Archaeological Research in Iran 1973*, Tehran, 1974, pp. 139-54.

Idem, "Das Felsgrab von Qizqapan. Ein Denkmal aus dem Umfeld der achämenidischen Königs-strasse," *Bagdader Mitteilungen* 19, 1988, pp. 557-82.

M. Golzārī, *Kermānašāhān-e bāstān*, Tehran, n.d. (ca. 1974).

G. Gropp, "Bericht über eine Reise in West- und Südiran," *AMI*, N.F. 3, 1970, pp. 173-230.

E. Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient Near East*, London and New York, 1941.

D. Huff, "Das Felsengrab von Fakhrikah," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 21, 1971, pp. 161-71.

Idem, "Zum Problem zoroastrischer Grabanlagen in Fars I. Gräber," *AMI*, N.F. 21, 1988, pp. 145-76.

Idem, "Das Grab von Doğubayazıt. Seine Stellung unter den urartäischen und iranischen Felsgräbern," in *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi 1986 I*, Ankara, 1990, pp. 87-95.

H. Koch, *Die religiösen Verhältnisse der Dariuszeit*, Göttinger Orientforschungen 4, Wiesbaden, 1977.

H. Lushey, "Studien zu dem Darius-Relief von Bisutun," *AMI*, N.F. 1, 1968, pp. 63-94.

O. Mann, "Archäologisches aus Persien," *Globus* 83, 1903, pp. 327-31.

J. de Morgan, *Mission scientifique en Perse IV/1*, Paris, 1896.



- C. Nylander, *Ionians in Pasargadae*, Uppsala, 1970.
- F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs*, Berlin, 1910.
- A. S. Shahbazi, *The Irano-Lycian Monuments*, Tehran, 1975.
- L. Vanden Berghe, *Archéologie de l'Iran ancien*, Leiden, 1959.