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HAJIABAD I. INSCRIPTIONS

The Hajiabad inscriptions were discovered by Robert Ker Porter at Ḥājiābād in 1818 in a grotto a few kilometers north of Persepolis, at a place called Šayḵ ʿAli or Tang-e Šāh Sarvān, opposite the village of Ḥājiābād that gave these texts their name (Figure 1). Following several attempts at deciphering them, it was not until a century later that Ernst Herzfeld (1924) provided a transcription of them in his edition of the *Paikuli* inscription, and not until 1945 that Henrik Samuel Nyberg for the first time provided a complete edition of both the Parthian and Middle Persian versions. These appeared in the Festschrift for Arthur Christensen, but were written in Swedish and hence not widely accessible. The author, however, provided a facsimile text in his *Manual of Pahlavi* (1964), and Walter Bruno Henning added some minor corrections to the Parthian version, which he called the "*fons et origo* Parthian studies." And finally, David N. MacKenzie published (1978), together with a silver plate reproducing part of the Ḥājiābād inscriptions, a transliteration, transcription, and translation of the two versions, which, together with Nyberg's study, made up the *editio princeps* of the text.

This text describes a feat of archery by King Šāpūr I, mentioning his full titles to start with. In the presence of kings and princes, of the grandees and the nobles, the king of kings had shot an arrow beyond a cairn which was not visible and yet constituted the target, which he reached nevertheless. The king thereupon ordered a second cairn to be set up in a certain direction, and challenged anyone strong enough to shoot an arrow to reach that cairn. This exploit, which appeared difficult to understand properly from a short text of

only fourteen lines in Parthian and fifteen in Middle Persian, must have made a powerful impression on the court and beyond it; for the king had both versions of the inscription engraved at another site about a hundred km northwest of the first, at Tang-e Borāq in an identical archeological context, on the rock of a grotto. Discovered in 1956, this inscription was first mentioned by ʿAli Sāmi (1957 and 1963), then published by Gerd Gropp in 1969, in a volume in which Walter Hinz also presented various discoveries. Although badly deteriorated in its Middle Persian version, the inscription was well understood after Gropp by MacKenzie, who showed that the Parthian version differed very little from the original. At Tang-e Borāq shooting conditions were better, for the king could position himself to face both cairns, which explains why it was necessary to move the target at Hājiābād to make it visible.

The British Museum silver plate no. 136772, which supposedly comes from Persia and contains the complete Parthian and about half of the Middle Persian version, has been published by MacKenzie, who found two important mistakes in the Parthian version: *BRʾ* instead of *byš*, and *ʾYK* instead of *ʾNW*; but he did not consider that these mistakes might indicate the work of a forger. He nevertheless mentioned that Richard Frye (1977) had identified a very similar plate, which he considered to be a fake. MacKenzie believes that it may have been a model (draft) which was to serve as a prototype for the engraver, but the use of silver obviously argues against this. He adds that the attempt was so bad that they had to resort to another scribe. A process of this kind need not be imagined, for Shaul Shaked has confirmed Frye's viewpoint by showing that the two dubious words can indeed be found in Herzfeld's edition, which was used by the forger, while the Nyberg edition in Swedish could not have been accessible to him. Besides, Shaked has found other copies of the Ḥājiābād inscription, pointing out that the fake is obvious because these can only make sense *in situ*. Among these fakes Shaked mentions a stone slab at the California Museum of Ancient Art, which manifestly stems from Herzfeld; a similar one seen in 1988 in a London gallery; a bronze plate from a private European collection, which is a very meticulous copy of Herzfeld's edition; a bronze bowl which supposedly comes from the Deccan, with an inscription on the outer border probably derived from the Parthian version; and an earthenware bowl which is similar to the magic bowls of the Babylonian collection of Yale. This bowl was studied by Prods Oktor Skjærvø, who, having compared all the reproductions, concluded that the Yale inscription could not have been copied from any of them, but must have been an ancient copy, perhaps from the 4th-5th century. On comparing this

inscription with the California Museum slab, however, he conceded that it was a modern copy. Thus the Ḥājiābād inscriptions, which were forgotten for centuries, have served to enrich forgers in this modern age and to teach scholars to recognize the great numbers of fakes, of which they are not always aware.

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