Published: December 15, 2003
Last Updated: April 17, 2018

HAMADĀN VII. MONUMENTS

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The city of Hamadān, besides its pre-Islamic remains, comprises some important monuments belonging to the Islamic period. Pre-Islamic remains of Hamadān are located at three different sites: Tappa-ye Hegmatāna, the Šir-e Sangi area, and the Achaemenid inscriptions of Darius the Great and Xerxes, engraved on the rocks in one of the foothills of the mountain, Alvand Kuh (q.v.) and known as Ganj-nāma (q.v.).

Tappa-ye Hegmatāna. Named after the reconstruction of the ancient name of Hamadān, the Tappa, a large mound in the northeast of the city, has been the object of archeological excavations since the 1980s. Although these excavations have not yet yielded any material that can be firmly related to the capital of the Medes, they have revealed impressive architectural remains in mud-brick, which may date from as early as the 5th century B.C.E. (Ṣarrāf, 1995; Boucharlat, 1997, pp. 39-40).

Tappa-ye Moṣallā. A natural hill (600 x 400 m) in the southeast of the city, the Tappa is higher and larger than Tappa-ye Hegmatāna, but aside from the remains of a presumably Islamic fort(*qalʿa*) in mud-brick, it does not seem to contain archeological remains (Schmidt, Plates 91-92; Moṣṭafawi, pp. 157-58; Jackson, pp. 163-65).

Ganj-nāma (q.v.; PLATE I).This monument is the popular designation of two trilingual inscriptions in three languages (OPers., Neo-Babylonian, and Neo-Elamite) by the Achaemenid Darius I and Xerxes in a pass through the Alvand Kuh (Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 111, 113, 147, 152). It is first mentioned by Ebn al-Faqih Hamadāni, who refers to the location as Tabanābar and adds that Alexander the Great had it read to him when he was passing through Hamadān. He also cites an alleged translation of the inscriptions in a fanciful language extolling truthfulness (Ebn al-Faqih, pp. 223-24). The natives of Hamadān believed that the inscription contained the secrets of a hidden treasure (hence the designation Ganj-nāma "treasure book"), which would be revealed to the person who could decipher it (Jackson, pp. 170-73; Aḏkāʾi, pp. 224-34).

Šir-e sangi (PLATE II). One of the ancient relics of Hamadān is Šir-e Sangi, which, in its present form, represents the battered image of a legless, couchant lion carved out of yellow sandstone. It was originally placed near a city gate called Bāb-al-Asad, on the top of a hill that commanded the Khorasan road. According to Masʿudi (*Moruj*, secs. 3592-94), it was carved at the order of Alexander the Great as a talisman to protect the city and its people when he returned from his campaign in Khorasan and India. According to Ebn al-Faqih (pp. 240-41), this lion was fashioned by the Greek sculptor Balinās, at the order of Qobād, to be a talisman against the floods and the severe cold that the city was often experiencing. There were also other talismans placed near it that were believed to protect citizens against snakes, scorpions, fever, insects, and getting stuck in snow. Masʿudi attributed the removal of the lion from the vicinity of the gate and its mutilation to Ziarid Mardāvij during his siege and conquest of the city in 319/931 (*Moruj*, sec. 3593). A. V. William Jackson was of the opinion that the it might date from the Median period, "when it may have anticipated the lion of the royal Persian emblem" (Jackson, p. 162). According to Ebn al-Faqih (p. 243), the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Moktafi be'llāh ordered the transfer of the lion to Baghdad, but his command was blocked by the people of Hamadān, who did not wish to lose the talisman of their city. Popular belief in the miraculous power of the lion has continued up to recent decades, as manifested in a variety of rituals that people performed to appeal to it (Aḏkāʾi, pp. 260-63; Qarāguzlu, pp. 100-101). The lion has been addressed in at least two classical Arabic poems mentioned by Ebn al-Faqih (pp. 240-43) and in an English verse by the American poet and novelist, Clinton Scollard (d. 1932), in whose words: this lion, ". . . a couchant lion lone/Mute memorial in stone/of three empires overthrown—Median, Persian, Parthian—/Round the walls of

Hamadan" (apud Jackson, p. 159).

Esther and Mordechai. The mausoleum of Esther and her uncle Mordechai is, historically but not archeologically, amongst the most ancient monuments of the city (see PLATE I in viii. below). The two tombs inside the structure are believed to house the remains of the biblical Esther and Mordechai from the time of Xerxes (biblical Ahasuerus, q.v.), the Achaemenid king of the 5th century B.C.E. (see ESTHER AND MORDECHAI; ESTHER, BOOK OF). The building, dating from the early 17th century according to Ernst Herzfeld (apud Gabbay, p. 23), bears the traditional features of *emāmzāda* (q.v.) architecture, and is revered by Muslims and Jews alike, for whom it is a place of pilgrimage. Unfortunately, no archeological research has been carried out to establish whether the graves are in fact those of Esther and Mordechai. Some scholars have questioned the authenticity of the attribution, and it has been suggested that the tomb may be that of the Jewish queen of the Sasanian Yazdegerd I (399-420), Šōšan-doḵt, who according to legend is credited with the establishment of large Jewish communities in Isfahan and Hamadān (Jackson, pp. 167-69; Matheson, pp. 110-11; *The Standard Jewish Encyclopaedia*, p. 830). The mausoleum housed a 300-year old Torah "written in vellum" that was kept in a room next to the grave chamber. The oldest datable material in the mausoleum was the ebony sarcophagus attributed to Esther, which had an inscription carved all over it in Hebrew characters, and which could be dated to the 13th–14th century; but the sarcophagus was destroyed in a fire caused by lit candles that pilgrims had placed on it; the new coffer is a replica of the old one (Jackson, pp. 167-70; Buckingham, pp. 166-67, containing the Eng. translation of the inscriptions on the two sarcophagi; Moṣṭafawi, p. 174; Gabbay, pp. 23-25; Aḏkā'i, pp. 297-301; Qarāguzlu, pp. 103-10). The shrine reportedly housed a number of valuable ancient relics, including (according to unsubstantiated reports) the crowns of Esther and Mordechai, which have been stolen (Ẓahir-al-Dawla, apud Qarāguzlu, pp. 109-11).

In 1971, as part of the festival celebrating 2500 years of Persian monarchy, the Iranian Jewish Society decided to have the dilapidated shrine renovated; it had been vandalised, robbed, and also used as a burial ground by some influential Jewish families. The plan was to have a new synagogue and a museum presenting "the history of Iranian Jews from Esther to the Pahlavis" attached to the shrine. The museum was never built due to the shortage of funds as well as the demand to have the building ready for the upcoming festival. Many artefacts that were unearthed during the construction were, unfortunately,

thrown away (Gabbay, p. 29).

Gonbad-e ʿAlawiān (PLATE III). Two hundred meters to the west of Tappa-ye Hegmatāna, stands the most significant architectural monument of Hamadān, the mausoleum called Gonbad-e ʿAlawiān. It is a square, relatively massive monument, almost entirely made of baked brick (for the plan, see Herzfeld). Its façade was once covered with opulent stucco decoration in high relief, depicting motifs of leaves, blossoms, vines and tendrils in interwoven patterns, in which Arthur Pope saw the ancient invocation for abundance and fertility. The building provides "the most complete example of stucco encrustation that survives in Persia" (Pope, p. 1301). The interior consists of a chamber (8 x 8 m), the walls of which are richly decorated with stuccoes. The monument was "the mausoleum of the ʿAlawiān family, who virtually ruled Hamadān for some two hundred years" (Matheson, p. 111). The tombs of two members of the family lie in the crypt reached by a staircase inside the tower. Moḥammad-Taqi Moṣṭafawi believed that the monument was originally the *ḵānaqāh* of the ʿAlawiān family, in which some of them were later buried. In absence of any inscription, the exact date of the building is uncertain. However, because of some extreme similarities with other Saljuq monuments, such as the Gonbad-e sorḵ (q.v.) in Marāḡa in Azarbaijan, which bears the date of 542/1147, it is reasonable to date it from the 12th century.

Borj-e qorbān "Tower of sacrifice." This edifice is a monumental tower with a twelve-sided conical cupola, located to the south of the city, not far from the Moṣallā hill. Inside the tower, there is a crypt, where fragments of a tombstone of Safavid times could still be seen in place about forty years ago. There are, however, reasons to believe that the building may date from the 13th-14th century period. The tower consists of the tomb chamber of Ḥāfeẓ Abu'l-ʿAlāʾ, a religious figure of the Saljuq period (Moṣṭafawi, pp. 188-91). According to Jackson, on certain occasions, people sacrificed a camel inside the tower, which was believed to have been originally a Zoroastrian fire temple (Jackson, p. 162; Qarā-guzlu, pp. 136-38).

Tombs of prominent figures. Hamadān is also famous for being the burial place of two highly eminent and celebrated figures, Abu ʿAli Sinā (d. 428/1037), better known as Ebn Sinā (see AVICENNA), and the mystic poet Bābā Ṭāher (d. 408/1017; q.v.). Avicenna was buried in a large but humble, rectangular building inside a courtyard that was frequented mostly by dervishes. The original tomb had been repaired in 1294/1877 by a Qajar princess by the name of Negār Ḵānom. This structure was unfortunately destroyed and replaced by

a modern one (PLATE IV) in 1951. “The tomb of the mystic poet, Shaikh Abu Saʿid Doḵduh, Ebn Sinā’s host while he lived in Hamadān, is also housed in the same mausoleum” (Matheson, p. 110; Jackson, p. 165-67; Moṣṭafawi, pp. 1-54), as is also that of the poet ʿĀref Qazvini (q.v.).

The modern tomb of the mystic poet Bābā Ṭāher (PLATE V) was previously in a ruined tower on a hilltop in the northwestern outskirts of the city. It was replaced by a modern one that imitates that of Ebn Sina. An inscription in Kufic script belonging to the 13th century was found in the tomb tower at the time of its replacement by the modern one (Moṣṭfawi, pp. 194-204).

Congregational mosque (PLATE VI). Hamadān’s congregational mosque (Masjed-e jāmeʿ) was built in 1253/1838, according to an inscribed brick placed in the main façade of its *ayvān*. The mosque is an impressive structure with a massive entrance pierced with an *ayvān*, and two minarets. In the outskirts of the city; outside, there is even a series of small shrines (*emāmzāda*, q.v.) which are not without architectural interest, but in the absence of an inscription their date cannot be established.

See also ECBATANA; ESTHER AND MORDECHI; GANJ-NĀMA

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