



HERZFELD, ERNST IV. HERZFELD AND THE PAIKULI INSCRIPTION

The monument at Paikuli (Pāikūlī), locally called *bot-kāna* “idol house” (Rawlinson apud Thomas, p. 57), lies on the Iraqi side of the border with Iran on a north-south line drawn from Solaimāniya in Iraq to Qaṣr-e Šīrīn in Persia on the ancient road from Ctesiphon to Azarbaijan (see maps, e.g., in Herzfeld, 1914, fig. 1; Humbach and Skjærvø, pt. 1, fig. 116). In the 19th century, when it was visited by several travelers, it consisted of the ruins of a large, square tower that had originally been covered on all sides by stone blocks, some of which contained inscriptions, but, at the time, lay scattered all around the monument.

In 1844, Major H. C. Rawlinson had visited the ruins at Paikuli and made drawings of 32 inscribed blocks (now in the Royal Geographical Society, London), which he entrusted to E. Thomas (see Thomas, 1868, p. 38), who published them with an extensive commentary; the Middle Persian (which he called “Pehlvi”) was set in a Middle Persian type font, the Parthian (which he called “Chaldæo-Pehlvi”) in Hebrew type. Other Iranian scholars, among them Martin Haug, also studied the inscriptions; but the sketches themselves were only published by H. Humbach in 1974.

Herzfeld visited the site for the first time in the summer of 1911, when he



made a few paper squeezes and photographs that he sent to F. C. Andreas in Göttingen. He then applied for money and obtained a grant of 1,000 Mark from the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft to record the monument and the inscription (Herzfeld, 1914, p. 10), which he did in the summer of 1913. He photographed and/or made paper squeezes of 97 blocks (MPers. 54, Parth. 43), which, with Rawlinson's sketches, brought the number of known blocks to 100 (MPers. 55, Parth. 45). Aside from the photographs in the Andreas Nachlass (see ANDREAS), the present whereabouts of this material is not known.

Herzfeld reconstructed the monument as a tall, square box with a slightly wider base and the inscriptions placed some way up on opposite sides (Herzfeld, 1914, p. 23, Abb. 1; for a revised reconstruction see Humbach and Skjærvø, pt. 2). As for the inscription, in 1914 Herzfeld did nothing more than record the inscribed blocks and publish photographs of one Middle Persian (Herzfeld's E5) and one Parthian block (Herzfeld's f6). The complete publication appeared in 1924, comprising a text volume and a case containing loose leaves with photos, etc., both in portfolio format, published in English in recognition of support by the Parsi community (p. XIII). Here, Herzfeld determined the position of almost all the blocks correctly; read and translated the inscriptions, for the most part correctly; laid the basis for the grammatical understanding of the languages; and determined the historical context of the monument and inscription (see s.v. NARSEH).

Chapters I-II contain Herzfeld's accounts of the reconstruction of the monument and the inscription: after having deciphered all the partial inscriptions on each individual block, by comparing the Middle Persian and Parthian texts, and by measuring the blocks, he assigned to all the blocks their relative positions. He noticed that eleven blocks from the second MPers. row (B) formed a continuous text, which overlapped with a similar sequence of Parthian blocks. Since the Parthian blocks belonged to the first Parthian row (a), this discovery at the same time helped determine the order of the Parthian row (a), and so also of the MPers. first row (A), and so on.

In this publication, Herzfeld included almost everything known about Arsacid (Parthian) and Sasanian epigraphy (chap. IV, end: coins; chap. V: seals; chap. VI: editions and translations of all the known inscriptions), which he used in chap. III for a study of the history of the early Sasanian empire. He identified the event commemorated by the Paikuli inscription (p. 35) as the war between Narseh (293-302) and Warahrān III, son and successor of Warahrān II (276-293), citing Arabic and Armenian historians writing of the same event.



We may note that Andreas, who had early access to Herzfeld's material, interpreted the reference to the Caesar toward the end of the inscription as referring to a victory over the emperor Galerius, and concluded that the inscription had been composed before Galerius defeated Narseh in 297 (see Lentz in Humbach and Skjærvø, pt. 3.2, p. 143).

Chapter IV is the important "Essay on Pahlavi," which deals with two important issues: the so-called ideograms (q.v.; also called heterograms, arameograms) and the age of the Parthian and Persian written languages. (Herzfeld's analysis is discussed in detail in Skjærvø, 1995 and forthcoming.) Chapter VII is an exhaustive glossary of the known epigraphic material, with historical and philological notes.

While the book was being published, Herzfeld made another trip to Paikuli and recorded an additional 30 (MPers. 20, Parth. 10) blocks, one of which was known from Rawlinson's drawings, bringing the total number of known blocks to 129 (MPers. 74, Parth. 55) out of an estimated total of 235 blocks. Paper squeezes and photographs of this material are now in the Freer Gallery archives, Washington, D.C. From the additional discoveries, Herzfeld realized that his arrangement of the blocks was almost completely correct (see letter to H. F. Junker, 19 April 1926, cited by Sundermann, 1983, p. 88). (More inscribed blocks exist; the block E1, for instance, was recently offered on the antiques market.)

The additional material was first used in various articles by R. N. Frye, who published the new blocks of the end of the inscription containing the list of dignitaries and rulers (1956, 1957, 1959), and Ph. Gignoux included the additional blocks in his glossary of Middle Persian and Parthian, which appeared in 1972. In 1971, however, V. Popp traveled to the site at the suggestion of H. Humbach at the University of Mainz, Germany, and made pictures of the blocks he could find, including several unpublished ones. They published the new material in 1973, and Humbach decided to prepare a new edition, which was published between 1980 and 1983 in collaboration with P. O. Skjærvø. It is worth noting that Herzfeld's arrangement of the blocks proved to be almost correct. Most of the blocks rearranged were blocks that were hard to read, and the only really significant change was the repositioning of the second last block of the MPers. version.

Herzfeld's contributions to Middle Persian and Parthian philology were largely ignored by Iranian scholars (see Skjærvø, forthcoming). Henning's study of the



Manichean Middle Persian verb (1933) contains no references to the inscriptions, and he cites no forms from *Paikuli*. Ghilain in his study of the Parthian verb (1939) cites Herzfeld's conclusions regarding the spelling of verbal forms and ideograms but otherwise hardly refers to it and, judging from the index, cites no forms from it. In his 1952 article, Henning discusses several instances where Herzfeld had misread and misinterpreted the text, but he nowhere intimates that the work might be important to Iranian studies. In his "Mitteliranisch" (1958) he calls Herzfeld's "Essay on Paikuli" indispensable (p. 100), but he ignores it in his own description of the verbal ideograms (see Skjærvø, 1995 and forthcoming). It was, of course, unavoidable that many of Herzfeld's linguistic analyses in 1924 would prove wrong, as the languages were barely known at the time, especially Parthian; the Manichean texts had yet to be studied in depth, and he had not yet seen the fundamental study on Middle Persian and Parthian by Tedesco ("Dialektologie," 1921). His method was sound, however, and many of his conclusions remain valid; he also updated points of his discussion in later publications (1934, 1938).

See also [EPIGRAPHY i.](#), [GERMANY ii.-iii.](#), [NARSEH](#).

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