



PASARGADAE

PASARGADAE, the spacious capital and last resting place of Cyrus the Great (559-530 BCE). Located in northern Fārs in the fertile and well-watered Dasht-i Murghab (Dašt-e morġāb), the site stands 1,900 m above sea level at 30°15' N and 53°14' E. In a straight line, Pasargadae lies 40 km to the northeast of Persepolis; and, while the modern road takes 80 km to cover the distance between the two sites, the route taken by the pre-modern highway, following the relatively direct course of the River Pulvar through the spectacular Tang-i Bulaghi (Tang-e Bolāġi), was only 50 km in length.

The Name. In 1967, shortly before the completion of his monograph on the Achaemenid Elamite “fortification tablets” found at Persepolis, [R. T. Hallock](#) came to realize (D. Stronach, personal communication) that the toponym Batrakata(s), which appears in this and other variant spellings on seven of the tablets, could well represent the Elamite form of the name of Cyrus’ capital. As Hallock (1969, p. 676) went on to indicate, this attractive possibility (first suggested by the relative closeness of the Elamite name to the well-known Greek form of the name, Pasargadai) finds a degree of corroboration in the contents of the tablets in question (dated to the years 497-491) in that they refer, *inter alia*, to a “royal treasury” and to “royal stores” at this location (see [BATRAKATAŠ](#)), the name is first mentioned by Herodotus (i.125), who relates that this was the name of the most renowned of the Persian tribes. But since Herodotus fails to mention Pasargadae as a place-name, the possibility that this claim was based on erroneous information cannot be completely discounted. For many years the only additional support for the name as a



tribal designation came from the claims of two much later classical writers (see, e.g., Ptolemy, vi.8.12), to the effect that there was a tribe of this name in Carmania, and to Hans Triedler's not unreasonable conclusion (1962, col. 778) that the tribe in question could have migrated to this new location. Subsequently, Ilya Gershevitch, in response to the fact that the Greek name happens to occur in a plural form (such as could conceivably refer to a tribal entity as well as to the site), and in response to the newly available Elamite etymologies contained in the fortification tablets, has suggested that the original Iranian tribal name could have held the meaning "those who wield solid clubs" (Gershevitch, 1969, p. 168).

In the main, however, scholarly debate has concentrated on the likely spelling and meaning of the Iranian place-name that stand behind the classical place-name. In this context, most commentators have taken the view that there could have been a metathesis in the form of the name and they have presumed that, in its original form, it would have begun with the spelling "Parsa." (For hypothetical reconstructions based on this premise, see Stronach, 1978, pp. 280-81 and Boucharlat, 2004, p. 352). It is most unlikely, however, that the readily recognizable form "Parsa" would have undergone a transformation into something else (Martin Schwartz, private communication); and, beyond this, the character of the newly discovered Elamite name, combined with the weight of classical testimony (rehearsed in detail in Triedler, 1962) would seem to rule out the likelihood of the proposed metathesis. If evidence to the contrary is sought, one has to refer either to the first century writings of [Quintus Curtius](#) (where the spelling "Parsagada" is attested) or to an explanation given, presumably by a Persian informant, to the historian of the late fourth century BCE, Anaximenes of Lampsakos, to the effect that the name of Cyrus' capital meant "encampment of the Persians" (Anaximenes, Frag. 19J). Moreover, as A. D. H. Bivar (1978, p. 162) has pointed out, the reading "...psrgd[h]" in an Aramaic summary of a very fragmentary, longer Greek text on a Seleucid milestone that was discovered on the Tall-i Takht in the early 1960s (Stronach, 1978, pl. 136) supports the view that the site was known to the Greeks of the fourth century BCE by a name with the spelling "'Pasargadai' rather than... 'Parsagada'—the variant spelling offered by Quintus Curtius. In addition, the long-popular belief that the name of Cyrus' capital once began with the spelling "Parsa" finds little support on historical grounds. As the inscriptions of Darius I (522-486 BCE) make plain, it was this latter monarch who chose to underline the explicitly Persian character of his patrimony: a circumstance that led him to rename the ancient



highland of southwestern Iran (formerly [Anshan](#)) as “Parsa” and, above all else, to bestow the same name on his new home-capital, Persepolis.

Early Travelers. Lying squarely on the traditional route from Shiraz to the north of Persia, the ruins of Pasargadae were long known to travelers to the Middle East. As early as 1474 the Venetian Giosafat Barbaro writes of “the tomb of the Mother of Solomon,” the local designation for the structure that would later be identified as the tomb of Cyrus, and a century later Albrecht von Mandelslo included an illustration of the tomb in his account of his visit to Fārs ([FIGURE 1](#)). The Dutch traveler Jan Struys, who visited the site in 1672, gives further details about the role of the tomb as an object of female devotion (Struys, p. 331), a theme that recurs in the accounts of nearly all visitors to the site until the early twentieth century. James Morier, the British emissary to the Persian court, included a detailed description of several of the standing features at Pasargadae in the vivid account of his travels published in 1812 (Morier, p. 144). Struck by the resemblance between the tomb of the Mother of Solomon and classical descriptions of the tomb of Cyrus, Morier was also the first writer to give serious consideration to the possibility that the site should be identified as the ancient city of Pasargadae. He ventured the suggestion only to reject it, however, on the grounds that the site was too far north to match Persian geography as described by Pliny and other classical writers. A few years later, however, Morier’s suggestion was revived by Robert Ker Porter, the first visitor to attempt to take account of the testimony of Pasargadae’s still visible inscriptions. An accomplished artist, Porter sent a drawing of one of the site’s trilingual cuneiform inscriptions to the pioneer decipherer of Old Persian, [Georg Friedrich Grotefend](#). When Grotefend was able to identify the presence of the name of Cyrus (cf. Barnett, p. 22), Porter concluded that “in comparing... the account given by Arrian of the Tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae” with the still mysterious monument on the Murghab Plain, the resemblance between the two was “too exact not to bear an instant conviction” that they were “portraits of one and the same place” (Porter, p. 502).

In spite of Porter’s “instant conviction,” debate over the identity of the site continued through most of the nineteenth century. In particular, the detailed information provided by the finely executed drawings of Texier in 1840 (Texier, pls. 81-5), and by those published by [Flandin and Coste](#) shortly afterwards (Flandin and Coste, 4, pls. 194-203), did little to resolve the issue which centered primarily on the translation and interpretation of descriptions



in classical accounts. [Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy](#), who visited the site in 1881, and subsequently published elegant reconstructions of key architectural details (Dieulafoy, pls. 16-18), entertained the possibility that the ruins in question might represent those of Pasargadae, but insisted that the tradition of the site as a place of feminine devotion must have its roots in the identity of the tomb as that of a woman. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that consensus about the identity of the site as Pasargadae began to form in the scholarly community. [George Nathaniel Curzon](#)'s thorough review of the evidence, published in 1892, served to crystallize this opinion, and, with the publication of [Ernst Herzfeld](#)'s doctoral dissertation in 1908, the identity of the site as Pasargadae was established beyond all reasonable doubt.

Excavations. The first excavations at Pasargadae were undertaken by Herzfeld, who carried out unspecified minor excavations in November 1923 (Herzfeld, 1926, p. 241). In his subsequent four-week season in April/May 1928, Herzfeld produced a detailed site plan and, amidst other conspicuous contributions, revealed most of the stone fabric of such monumental structures as Gate R, Palace S, and Palace P (Herzfeld, 1929, pp. 4-16; Herzfeld, 1941, p. 210 ff).

In 1933 Aurel Stein (1936, pp. 217-21) completed a map of the southern part of the plain and conducted sondages at two outlying prehistoric mounds, Do Tulan A and Tall-i Seh-Āsiāb on the banks of the perennial stream of the Pulvar, where occupations of fourth and early third millennium date were encountered. The main monuments came under renewed scrutiny two years later when E. F. Schmidt conducted his valuable aerial survey (Schmidt, pls. 14 and 15).

Investigations resumed in 1949, at which time 'Ali Sami (Sāmi) embarked upon a six-year program of excavation and conservation. Apart from adding to the known plans of the Achaemenid palaces, Sami drew specific attention to the significance of Pasargadae in both the Chalcolithic period and Islamic times. The excavations of the British Institute of Persian Studies (see [GREAT BRITAIN. xiv. The British Institute of Persian Studies](#)) directed by David Stronach from 1961 to 1963 (Stronach, 1978), followed Sami's initiative in exploring each period of settlement, beginning with the Chalcolithic occupation at Tall-i Nokhodi (Goff, 1964). In this instance, however, particular attention was paid to the chronology of the main monuments, to the characteristics of early Achaemenid stone architecture, to the prominent role of the garden in Achaemenid architectural design, and to the choice jewellery and other objects that came to light during three seasons of concentrated excavation.



Since then the latest field researches, begun in 1999 and continued in 2001, have been largely dependent on geomagnetic surveys. These have revealed that extensive areas of the site were landscaped on the same governing axis as the royal garden and the adjoining palaces (Boucharlat 2002, fig. 2). Finally, the prospects for further vital research and conservation throughout the site were greatly strengthened by the decision, taken in July 2004, to place Pasargadae on the World Heritage List.

The Tomb of Cyrus. The tomb of Cyrus has long been a focal point for visitors to Pasargadae. It is the only monument from the site directly described in classical accounts and often the only building that is mentioned in the works of early European travelers. The dramatic quality of the imposing building in its isolated position on the Murghab plain has appealed to the aesthetic imagination of visitors to the site for untold years: Claudius James Rich found it to be “of the correctest taste, a perfect Grecian sepulchral monument,” (Rich, p. 219), [A. V. Williams Jackson](#) comments on “the nobility of its lines (and) the symmetry of its proportions,” (Jackson, p. 288), and Curzon writes of its “walls which gleam like a white patch on a somber landscape” (Curzon, p. 90).

The tomb ([FIGURE 2](#)) consists of two distinct elements: a high plinth composed of six receding tiers and a tomb chamber with a steep-pitched gable roof (Stronach 1978, pp. 24-41). The entire monument, which originally reached almost eleven meters in height, is constructed in massive ashlar masonry with few decorative moldings, creating an overall effect of simplicity of line combined with volumetric solidity. The rectangular plinth is composed of two visually distinct portions; the lower three steps each measure about one meter in height, while the upper three steps are just over half that height. The four stone courses of the tomb chamber itself, as well as the three courses of the gable, echo this pattern, in that each successive course diminishes in height. The strong upward vertical thrust of the structure, established by the stepped plinth rising to the steeply pointed roof, is reinforced by this repeated sequence of graduated stone courses.

Decorative architectural details on the surviving fabric of the tomb are confined to the doorway, the cornice and the northwest pediment. The doorframe is composed of double fasciae that splay out at the corners of the lintel. The splayed lintel as well as the bi-curved cyma reversa molding (concave at the bottom and convex on top) above it, can be traced specifically to the Lydo-Ionian architectural tradition (Boardman, p. 59). The only decorative element on the tomb that may not have been used to define a



structural component is a large raised disc or rosette that was carved into a protruding boss in the centre of the pediment directly above the doorway. Although rosettes are a common decorative motif in the ancient world, and although rosettes of a clearly western type are attested elsewhere at Pasargadae, there is no exact parallel for this disc, and it has been suggested that it may constitute a decorative echo of the end of a ridge beam that once typified wooden structures of this gabled form (Stronach, 1978, p. 43).

If the details of the architectural decoration and construction techniques of the tomb of Cyrus are clearly Western in origin, the overall design of the sepulcher, and, even more significantly perhaps, the dramatic visual effect that is created by the juxtaposition of its elements, are unique to this monument. Suggestions for the possible inspiration for the tomb have been many and varied, but there is no single convincing source for its design. The gable-roofed tomb chamber itself was almost certainly derived from western Anatolian examples (Boardman, pp. 53-57; Stronach, 1978, pp. 40-42; Nylander, 1970, pp. 95-99), with which it shares both structural and metrological components, but these chambers were buried under tumuli and cannot therefore have served as the inspiration for the final visual effect of the monument. The six-stepped plinth has no good Western parallels from a funerary context with the possible exception of the so-called “pyramid tomb” from Sardis, a monument that is itself of uncertain date. It has been suggested that the inspiration for the plinth may be found in the Mesopotamian ziggurat (Nylander, 1970, p. 101), and, although the two forms share more in concept than in execution, it is possible that the notion of a hallowed, tiered structure derives from this source. But whatever the source of the individual features of the monument may have been, the overall design continues to convey a compelling sense of integrity and sanctity.

The Palace Area (FIGURE 3). The ceremonial center of Pasargadae lay almost a kilometer north of the tomb of Cyrus in a broad flat tract of land that came to be characterized, exceptionally, by a whole series of contiguous gardens (Boucharlat, 2002). Contrary to the tenets of early scholarship that sought the derivation of the layout of the palace area in the haphazard arrangement of a “first settlement of nomads” (Herzfeld, 1935, p. 28), it is now clear that the gardens served to link such uniformly orientated structures as Gate R, Palace P, and Palace S into a single, unified plan. Each building in this focal area at Pasargadae is essentially a variation on a theme that would become the basis of an enduring tradition for the lifetime of the Achaemenid Empire. The basic



unit of design was the columned hall; a representational architectural form that had become widely disseminated throughout western Persia during the first few hundred years of the first millennium BCE. If this central idea was indigenous, its expression at Pasargadae was entirely innovative, even if it also depended on knowledge derived from Cyrus' conquests in the west. While previous Persian columned halls were built with mud-brick walls and wooden columns, Cyrus' architects here, as elsewhere at Pasargadae, made use of the technically superb stone-working techniques that had recently evolved in Lydia and Ionia, regions now controlled by Cyrus. The major technical elements of Lydo-Ionian stone-working, including anathyrosis joints (Nylander, 1970, pp. 59-61) and dove-tailed iron and lead clamps, both only appeared at Pasargadae after their introduction in the Greek world (Nylander, 1970, pp. 63-66). These innovations facilitated the production of the finely jointed and finished stone platforms, staircases, doorways, wall socles, floors, and stone columns, each of which was to become a hallmark of Achaemenid architecture from about 540 BCE onwards.

If the influence of the western stonemason's craft is very much in evidence at Pasargadae, the impact of the Greek aesthetic vision on the design of the palaces is less clear. Certain decorative motifs, including horizontally fluted tori and bichromatic stonework, were borrowed from the West (Boardman, pp. 65-66), but the architectural sculpture is almost entirely of Mesopotamian origin and many decorative features, most notably the quintessentially Persian addorsed animal capitals, seem to have been invented by the Pasargadae designers themselves (Stronach, 2001, p. 99). Certain more subtle stylistic features of the Greek aesthetic can be detected in selected features of the palace architecture at Pasargadae, including some of the fluted tori from Palace P that appear to bulge under the weight of the columns (Stronach, 1978, fig. 43c) in a way that is reminiscent of the Greek tendency to treat stone forms as organic (Nylander, 1970, p. 107), as well as the naturalistic rendering of human feet in Palace S (Boardman, p. 102). But while the inspiration for the broad porticoes of Pasargadae has been sought in Greek dipteral temples, palaces, or stoas (Nylander, 1970, p. 115-16), various antecedents in Iran may also provide parallels in terms of both form and function (Dyson, fig. 1; Goff, 1970, pl. 1a; Stronach and Roaf, fig. 1; Young and Levine, fig. 37), even if no single source adequately accounts for the revolutionary nature of the Pasargadae palace plans. Achaemenid art is often referred to, sometimes disparagingly, as eclectic in that it incorporates a variety of other artistic traditions (Nylander, 1979, p. 350), but the palace area at Pasargadae offers a



clear testament to the rich inventiveness of the Persian designers themselves.

Gate R. Located at the eastern edge of the palace precinct, Gate R (Herzfeld's Palace R or Palace with the Relief) is the earliest known example of a freestanding propylaeum. It may well have served as the inspiration for the famous Gate of Xerxes at Persepolis. The gate consists of a rectangular columned hall (26.40 x 22.60 m in size) pierced by two opposed monumental doorways on its long axis and by two side doorways on its cross axis (Stronach, 1978, pp. 44–55). Although all that survives of the building are the stone foundations and some wall socles, the upper parts of the walls must have been formed of mud-brick, possibly niched in the manner of the Gate of Xerxes. The roof of the hall was supported by two rows of four columns, of which only the stone plinths are still partly preserved. The large size of the latter (about 2 x 2 meters) suggests that the original stone columns must have towered over 16 meters high, which would have made the gate the tallest structure at Pasargadae.

The two main doorways leading into and out of Gate R were originally flanked by monumental winged bulls that were closely copied from the *lamassu* that had once provided divine protection to the gates and doorways of Neo-Assyrian palaces. Although they are no longer represented by anything but small stone fragments, the many pieces of sculptured hair and the part of a crown found by Herzfeld in this area, and recorded in his unpublished notes, indicate that the bulls of the inner door were human-headed. The most distinctive feature of the gate is a carved, winged figure, three meters high, which still miraculously survives on one jamb of the small northeastern doorway. Like the great winged bulls, the winged figure is clearly inspired by Assyrian sculpture, yet here we are not dealing with a replica but rather with an evocation of an established tradition towards a different end. If Assyrian apotropaic winged genii were meant to refer the viewer to the protective power of established religion, the Pasargadae figure, lacking the specific ritual attributes of its Assyrian models, instead seems to have been intended to conjure the power of the new empire itself. The combination of the figure's Syro-Phoenician-style Egyptianizing *hmhm* crown, Elamite robe with an Ionian rosette border, and Neo-Babylonian stylistic elements, all expressed within the Assyrian tradition of winged genii, appears to represent a deliberate attempt to co-opt the visual traditions of recently conquered regions in order to create a single, powerful, protective image (Stronach, 1997, p. 43).

The overall concept of Gate R is without precedent. Although monumental



gateways had long been associated with ceremonial display in the Near East, the idea of divorcing the gateway from an associated wall appears here for the first time (Stronach, 2001, p. 96). This splendid isolation strengthens the symbolic power of the gate, which is now purely monumental in effect. It is indeed possible that Cyrus may have intended to endow the structure with even greater meaning. By de-emphasizing its defensive role in favor of its ceremonial function Cyrus may have been displaying both the strength of an empire that had little need of static defenses, and the benevolence of a ruler who sought to welcome rather than exclude the peoples of his dominions.

Palace S and Palace P (FIGURE 3). Known for many years only as the location of the one surviving intact column at Pasargadae, Palace S (Herzfeld's "Palast mit der Saule") was no doubt built to serve as the principal public venue for Cyrus and his court. Like the rest of the structures in the palace area, the core of Palace S consists of a central rectangular columned hall, here laid out with two rows of four columns, with doorways leading from the center of each wall to a flanking portico (Stronach, 1978, pp. 57–77). The northeast portico, which faces a newly discovered inner garden (Boucharlat, 2002), extends well beyond the width of the hall itself while the other three run only the length of the hall walls, with the resulting corner spaces being occupied by two small rooms (FIGURE 4). Each of these porticoes is *in antis*, that is to say that each is terminated on either side by a stone pier (or anta) marking the end of a wall, another clear borrowing from Ionia. The zoomorphic capitals found in the debris of the palace, exquisitely carved in black stone, took a variety of forms including lions, bulls, and a unique rendering of a horse, suggesting that the sculptors at Pasargadae were still experimenting with a form that was to become one of the leitmotifs of Achaemenid architecture. The columns of the porticoes were less than half the height of those in the central hall (FIGURE 4), so that on passing through the porticoes and entering the hall visitors would have been struck by the light that streamed from the clerestory windows into the soaring space above them.

Palace P, Herzfeld's "Palast mit der Pfeiler," so labeled for its one surviving anta, has a similar plan to Palace S with a central columned hall pierced by doorways in all four walls, even if only the northwest and southeast sides were fronted by porticoes (Stronach, 1978, pp. 78-105). The columns in the hall of Palace P, each supported by exceptionally finely-made, horizontally-fluted tori on black and white plinths, are smaller but more numerous than those of Palace S. The relatively low roof of this hall and the large number of columns,



arranged in five rows of six, no doubt combined to create a more intimate environment than that found in the great hall of Palace S. Fragments of curved, painted plaster found by Herzfeld in the debris of the palace and recorded in his unpublished notes also suggest that, in contrast to other columns from important locations, the upper portions of the columns of Palace P were made of plaster-covered wood rather than of stone. This and other anomalies in the design and construction of the palace indicate that, although Palace P was begun during the reign of Cyrus, its construction was halted, probably at the time of Cyrus' sudden death, and that the structure was only completed, with certain evident economies, by Darius. The meticulously-paved "throne portico" or "garden portico," with a commanding view down the center path of a fourfold garden, was assuredly intended as a king's retreat and included a centrally-placed throne-base from which the king could hold court while taking in the verdant expanse of his garden, although it now seems unlikely that Cyrus himself was ever able to enjoy this carefully-planned haven (Stronach, 1994).

The designers of Pasargadae chose to concentrate all architectural sculpture on the main palace doorways where it would not be obstructed by the lines of columns in the halls. Thus, the opposed doorways on the long axis of Palace S were adorned with supernatural protective beings derived from Assyrian prototypes (Stronach, 1997, pp. 44-45). John Boardman believes that the long, slim human feet of certain of the poorly preserved figures on the left-hand jamb of the southwest doorway are "immediately reminiscent of late Archaic Greek relief" (Boardman, p. 104) and might well betray the presence of Greek sculptors at Pasargadae.

The doorway reliefs from Palace P are both stylistically and thematically different from those at the rest of the site. Here we see a king dressed in a long pleated robe adorned with gold inlays, followed by an attendant. Inscriptions on the pleats of the robe identify the depicted monarch as Cyrus but the style of the pleats can be associated with the reign of Darius, and all current evidence suggests that Darius sought to reify his connection with the heritage of Cyrus by completing several elements of Cyrus' unfinished program of construction, creating these gold-enriched reliefs and inscribing Cyrus' name, here and elsewhere, in a number of key locations (Stronach, 1997, p. 355; see also "Inscriptions and Chronology," below).

Evidence for part of the design of the adjacent royal garden was fortunately preserved in the form of a series of stone water channels and basins that



defined the greater part of two adjoining rectangles in front of the main façade of Palace P. The central location of the throne base in the “garden portico” of Palace P suggests, moreover, that an opening ran down the center of the planted area, providing the king with an unobstructed vista through the chief garden of his estate (Stronach, 1997, p. 50). This arrangement effectively divided the garden into four quarters, possibly as an evocation of Cyrus’ Mesopotamian-derived title “King of the Four Quarters.” If this reconstruction is correct, the gardens at Pasargadae would appear to document the first known occurrence of the *čahārbāg* or fourfold garden, a specific articulation of space that went on to become a characteristic mark of later garden design, not only in Iran but even far beyond the bounds of the Near East (Stronach, 1994). Isolated toothed chisel marks on the stones of certain of the water channels could also point to assiduous efforts to maintain the garden long after the general introduction of this tool in the late 6th century BCE. Indeed, the fact that the royal garden remained in use throughout the Achaemenid period is best demonstrated by the discovery of a cache of exquisite jewellery and other objects of precious metal (FIGURE 5) that were hidden in a water jar beside one of the garden’s two pavilions during the last days of the empire (Stronach, 1978, pp. 168-77 and pls. 146-59).

The plan of the Pasargadae palaces marks one of the true revolutions in ancient Near Eastern architectural history in as much as a single-focal axis, such as had dominated monumental architectural traditions in the Near East for millennia, gives way to a truly open, symmetric four-sided structure with no principal axis and no fixed focal point. In the case of Palaces S and P this new physical reality may document a new attitude towards kingship, or at least towards certain aspects of ceremonial display involved in “holding court.” The long porticoes *in antis*, for instance, were almost certainly designed to accommodate outdoor receptions, and it could be argued that the open four-sided plan of the structures was devised specifically to be appreciated in the setting of unusually spacious grounds. At Persepolis and Susa, however, Cyrus’ successors retained in part the multi-axis plan invented at Pasargadae even though the setting of these structures was no longer a paradisiacal garden, a circumstance that suggests a deeper relationship between the open plan of the reception halls and the development of Achaemenid court ceremonial.

The Tall-i Takht. The great stone platform, known today as the Takht-i Madar-i Suleiman (Takht-e mādar-e Soleymān; The Throne of the Mother of Solomon),



that juts out from the western side of the Tall-i Takht (Throne Hill) provides some of the best evidence for the abrupt cessation of construction work at Pasargadae before the original plans for the site could be completed. The terrace was almost certainly intended to serve as a platform for further palatial construction; and this never-finished project may have provided at least part of the inspiration for the later, elevated palatial compound at Persepolis. At the time of Cyrus' untimely death, however, neither of the Takht's two monumental staircases had been completed and relatively few stones in the façade of the great platform had been given the kind of finished, drafted margins and pecked centers that were no doubt meant, in keeping with contemporary Lydo-Ionian traditions, to distinguish the whole façade (Stronach, 1978, p. 13 and pl. 5). At a later date, probably during the first half of the reign of Darius, a large strong-walled mud-brick structure was erected on the terrace and the adjoining hilltop (FIGURE 6). This dominant location continued in use throughout the remainder of the Achaemenid period and beyond (Stronach, 1978, pp. 146-59); and it is more than tempting to associate it with the "storehouse" at Pasargadae that was surrendered to Alexander, in an intact state (Arr. 3.18.10), early in 330 BCE. Furthermore, on the basis of two separate coin hoards that were found in a destruction level of later date, it is likely to have remained under Greek control down to the moment of a local uprising that followed the death of Seleucus I in 280 BCE (cf. Jenkins, p. 186; Houghton, 1980; and, most recently Bernard, 1995, p. 76, n. 43). Still later, while a short-lived reoccupation conceivably falls within the first century of Fratadara rule (c. 280-180 BCE), a more restricted occupation on the crown of the Tall-i Takht offers an intriguing glimpse of an early, apparently fortified Islamic settlement that is likely to have flourished in the 7th and 8th centuries CE.

The Zendan. Not far to the north of the palace area a fourteen-meter-high tower, known locally as the Zendān-e Soleymān (Solomon's Prison) still boasts a more or less intact entrance façade (Stronach, 1978, pp. 117-37). The tower was built almost exclusively of finely cut blocks of white limestone with the striking exception of three rows of blind windows in dark limestone. The location of the windows is clearly not related to the interior plan of the building, which included only a single room raised above almost eight meters of solid masonry. The only entrance to this single immured chamber was via a monumental external stone staircase that crossed a deep front pavement and the building's three-stepped plinth in order to reach a large elevated doorway. Closely-spaced, shallow recesses, such as were presumably intended to create

alternating patterns of light and shade on the Zendān's once gleaming white wall faces, also appear to document an unusual innovation; for, while bichromatic effects of light and dark stone are not uncommon at Pasargadae, such shallow recesses are otherwise found only on the exterior of the *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt* at *Naqš-e Rostam*, a monument that constitutes an almost exact replica of the Zendān. In recent years geomagnetic surveys of the area immediately beside the Zendān have revealed a sizable structure lying directly behind and on the same axis as the extant tower, suggesting that, at some point within the Achaemenid period, the tower was only one feature in a larger complex (Boucharlat, 2003).

The close correspondences between the Zendān and Ka'ba, and the total absence of other Achaemenid buildings of a like character, can only be explained in terms of their related function, which has been a subject of prolonged debate. It has been variously argued, for example, that the twin structures were used as fire temples, tombs, treasuries, or investiture towers (for which last possibility, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1983 and Stronach, forthcoming). Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg has also tried to reconcile these disparate hypotheses by suggesting that, as the location for critical initiation ceremonies at the beginning of each new reign, the towers may have served all of these various functions, at least in a ritual sense.

The Stone Plinths. The most northerly part of the site of Pasargadae is marked by the presence of two stone plinths that stand some nine meters apart. Set on substantial foundation stones and reaching over two meters in height, the plinths were constructed in white limestone and each rose from low-level black limestone borders that provided a characteristic bichrome effect. It has been convincingly argued that the function of the southernmost plinth, which was fronted by a monolithic flight of eight stone steps, was to serve as a platform from which the king could worship in the vicinity of a similarly elevated fire altar, as depicted on Darius' funerary monument at Naqš-e Rostam. Since substantial fragments of early Achaemenid stepped stone altars have also been found at other parts of the site (Stronach, 1978, p. 141), the close resemblance between these plinths and altars and the depiction of religious ritual at Naqsh-e Rostam can perhaps be taken as one of the few hard and fast archaeological indications for religious continuity between the reigns of Cyrus and Darius.

Inscriptions and Chronology. The cuneiform inscriptions found on the monuments of Pasargadae, such as are normally referred to by the sigla CMA,



CMb, and CMc, have given rise to intense debate. But while they have been used over the years as evidence for both the sequence of construction at the site and the nature of Cyrus' kingship, it is now apparent that they were erected more than a decade after Cyrus' death.

A wide array of separate clues have combined in recent years to indicate that the invention of the Old Persian cuneiform script took place early in the reign of Darius, most probably in 519 BCE (Schmitt, 1990, pp. 56-60; Schmitt, 1991, p. 73; Huyse, p. 58). This finding is owed not only to Darius' statement in sec. 70 of the Elamite version of the [Bisotun](#) inscription in which he relates that the text was also written "in Aryan" (i.e. in Old Persian) "which formerly was not," but also to careful studies of the detectable chronological order in which the various trilingual texts and labels at Bisotun came to be introduced. Furthermore, certain radical reassessments of the circumstances that inspired the introduction of the trilingual Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian "Cyrus Murghab" inscriptions at Pasargadae can be said to have played an additional role in identifying Darius, not Cyrus, as the author of the much-discussed CMA and CMc texts (Stronach, 1990).

The earliest studies of the Pasargadae inscriptions did not anticipate that these inscriptions could date from any reign save that of Cyrus himself. Thus, from the time that he first visited Pasargadae in 1905, Herzfeld viewed the few still visible CMA texts reading "I, Cyrus, the King, an Achaemenid" (such as had once occupied numerous key locations in Gate R, Palace S, and Palace P) as manifest examples of Cyrus' laconic "foundation inscription." Moreover, the stark title "King," a title that Weissbach (1894) resolutely refused to associate with any inscription authored by Cyrus the Great, was not thought to pose a difficulty. Instead, Herzfeld viewed this designation as a decisive chronological indication: one which placed the building program at Pasargadae between the years 559 and 550 BCE, in an interval during which, as Herzfeld chose to maintain, it would have been appropriate for Cyrus to have continued to use his modest "satrapal title" (Herzfeld, 1908).

In Herzfeld's estimation this scenario (in which Cyrus built extensively in the first decade of his reign, but hardly at all thereafter) was unambiguously affirmed by the discovery, in 1928, of the fragmentary doorway reliefs of Palace P, each of which showed a king followed by an attendant at a smaller scale (Herzfeld, 1929, pl. 3). The fact that the stacked folds of the dress of the king could be seen to carry the Elamite and Akkadian versions of a once presumably trilingual CMc text reading "Cyrus, the Great King, an



Achaemenid” (Kent, p. 116) was enough to persuade Herzfeld that these now fragmentary representations of Cyrus had been carved and inscribed in or soon after 550. That is to say that the introduction of the new, relatively prestigious title, “Great King,” which did not yet approach the global character of Cyrus’ titles in his Babylonian cylinder of c. 539, could be viewed as a direct response to Cyrus’ overthrow of Astyages of Media.

Notwithstanding subsequent protests that Herzfeld’s date for the reliefs appeared to be too early (see e.g. Frankfort, p. 9), it was left to Carl Nylander to point out in his important study, *Ionians in Pasargadae* (1970), that the whole complex apparatus of sophisticated ashlar construction at Pasargadae depended on innovations in Ionian stone architecture that could only have become available to Cyrus after his conquest of western Anatolia in or near 547 BCE. In addition, he noted that the method that was used to depict the stacked folds of the Persian robe depended on certain formal refinements in the rendering of drapery in Greece that only came into existence “about 540 and later” (Nylander, 1970, p. 137). Thereafter, Stronach (1971) and Farkas argued that the Palace P reliefs could logically post-date only the pioneer representations of Persian dress in the Bisotun relief of c. 520 and Stronach, in a general survey of immediately subsequent glazed brick and stone Achaemenid reliefs (1978, pp. 96-97), suggested that the reliefs from Palace P were most probably completed by Darius in about 510.

Apart from these considerations, R. Borger and W. Hinz’s discovery that the name of Darius could be detected in the fragmentary CMb inscription (a trilingual inscription that once stood above each of the Palace P doorway reliefs) was another decisive factor. Especially in the context of the new findings of the 1970s it underscored the fact that the first person CMA inscription was now the one complete “Cyrus Murghab” text where the agency of Darius, not Cyrus, remained to be demonstrated.

In this context it was not long before it was pointed out (Stronach, 1985, p. 845, n. 7) that Cyrus would have violated standard Achaemenid building practice if he had indeed erected the CMA inscription on any part of the stone fabric of Palace P while that structure remained largely unfinished. Furthermore, the tenor of the CMA text can be seen to bear little if any resemblance to those titularies of Cyrus that are known from Mesopotamia. In this regard, the far from effusive title “King” is at once suspect; Cyrus himself would also have been most unlikely to have omitted his patronymic in the context of his most prestigious buildings (or neglected to give his father some such title as “Great



King, King of Anshan”); and last but not least, both the CMa and CMc texts include an identification of Cyrus as “an Achaemenid,” an affiliation that finds no mention in the text of Cyrus’ long foundation inscription from Babylon. In sum, it is now apparent that Darius went out of his way (not least at his near-predecessor’s unfinished capital, where he could take full advantage of many un-inscribed, smooth stone surfaces) to reinforce the novel concept (first advanced at Bisotun) of a ruling “Achaemenid line” to which both he and Cyrus belonged.

In conclusion, a correct interpretation of the date of the inscriptions from Pasargadae is vital. Among other things, it accords with Strabo’s unequivocal statement that “Cyrus held Pasargadae in honor because he there conquered Astyages the Mede in his last battle, transferred to himself the empire of Asia, founded a city, and constructed a palace as a memorial to his victory” (xv.3.8). It also accords with a view, already reached on secure archaeological grounds, that most major construction at the site took place between 546 and 530 BCE (as well as a further perception that Cyrus’ monumental buildings do much to reflect the pattern of his far-flung conquests). In addition, a correct reading of the approximate date at which the CMa, CMb and CMc texts were erected reveals the existence of a hitherto unrecognized second moment of royal building activity at Pasargadae (no doubt located within the first two decades of the reign of Darius), when Palace P was given its final form, when Gate R and Palace S were each also inscribed, and when, in all probability, Cyrus’ impressive stone platform on the western side of the Tall-i Takht was turned into the most arresting feature of a new and enduring royal treasury.

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