



SŪR SAXWAN

SŪR SAXWAN (Banquet Speech), a Middle Persian text about a court banquet held in the [Sasanian](#) Empire (Cereti, p. 181; Macuch, 2009, p. 168). The mention of three generals (*spāhbeds*), the three quadrants introduced with the military reforms of King [Kawād](#) and his son [Kosrow I](#), suggests that the text was written between the sixth and the seventh centuries CE (Tafazzoli, 1998, p. 293; Gyselen, 2001; Daryaee, 2007). Further evidence of its dating can be seen in the presence of an official in charge of the *drōn* ceremony, a moment of feasting in a Zoroastrian court. *Sūr saxwan* is a unique text in the Middle Persian corpus as it provides insights into the courtly manners adopted during a royal meal and the rituals and eulogies accompanying them. First, the eulogist provides blessings to the deities, the king, and the courtiers, who are named according to their rank and seating, perhaps in a fashion similar to the lost Sasanian *Gāh-nāmag* (Macuch, p. 183).

The text opens with blessings given to beings in both the spiritual and the corporeal world: [Ohrmazd](#) and the Holy Immortals ([Amahrspandān](#)). Then, the seven heavens are mentioned from the lowest station to the highest one, where Ohrmazd resides. This is followed by a list of the Seven [Climes](#) (*kišwar*), the praise of the three sacred fires ([Ādur Farnbāg](#), [Ādūr Gušnasp](#) and [Ādur Burzēn-mihr](#)), and the praise of the *yazatas* (Mihr, Srōš, Rašn, Wahrām, Way, Aštād). The court is then introduced as follows: the king of kings (*šāhān šāh*), the princes of the blood (*pūs ī wāspuhr ī šāhān*), the grand minister (*wuzurg framādār*) and the generals of the quadrants (*spāhbed xwarāsān*, *xwarwarān*, *nēmroz*) – except the general representing the north, a direction associated



with the abode of [Ahriman](#) and the demons in Zoroastrianism (see [BĀKTAR](#)) – the judge of the empire (*šahr dādwarān*; see [Dādwar](#), [Dādwwarīh](#)), chief councilor magi (*mowān handarzbed*), the chiliarch ([hazārbed](#)), and, finally, the performer of the *drōn* ceremony (*drōn-yaz*). The eulogist continues to give praises and blessings to all while mentioning the king to provide prosperity for the realm of the Iranians (see [Ērānšahr](#)), as it was done by [Jamšid](#) in the primordial times. The three classes of people (*Artēštārān*, *Wāstaryōšān*, and *Hutuxšān*; see [CLASS SYSTEM iii.](#)) is also mentioned.

Sūr saxwan was first translated into English by [Jehangir C. Tavadia](#) (1935), followed by Saʿid ʿOriān in Persian (1992) and Katāyun Mazdāpur (2004-5). The latest translation was done by Touraj Daryaee (2007). *Sūr saxwan* is based on the MK codex edited by J. M. Jamasp-Asana (1913). The MK codex containing 160 folios has two colophons, the first dated to 324 Yazdegerdi (956 CE), and the second one dated to 691 Yazdegerdi (1342 CE), by a Persian Zoroastrian priest named Mihrābān Kay-Ḳusrow, who had traveled from Iran to India to assist the Parsi priests in their religious traditions. In the codex, *Sūr saxwan* appears in fols. 152a, 1.8-fol. 154b, 1.15, while in the Jamasp-Asana edited manuscript it appears in fols. 155-59 (Tafazzoli, 1997, p. 328).

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