

SIGNIFICANCE OF EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES “NAQSH-E ROSTAM” AND “CUBE OF ZOROASTER” IN THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF BACTRIA

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the information about Bactria in the epigraphic sources of Naqsh-e Rostam and Cube of Zoroaster. It is based on the inscriptions of the Cube of Zoroaster that the Surkhan oasis, northern Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan are called Kushanshahr, and the end date of the Kushan kingdom is based on the 40-50s of the 3rd century AD.

KEYWORDS

Bactria, Naqsh-e Rostam, Achaemenid Iran, Zoroastrian Kaaba, Sassanid Iran, Kushan Kingdom, Kushanshahr.

INTRODUCTION

The historical and cultural region of Bactria, which made an important contribution to the development of world civilization, is the place where the foundations of the first statehood in Central Asia were created and the traditions of urban planning were formed. Historical sources contain a lot of information about the historical geography, population, regions, cities and wealth of Ancient Bactria. For this reason, written

sources on the historical geography of Ancient Bactria, inscriptions on stone inscriptions are constantly in the focus of the world scientific community.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

In this article, we analyzed the works, monographs, dissertations, articles of scientists and researchers such as E. Hersfeld, A. D. H. Bivar, R. Gobl, V. G. Lukonin,



R. Girshman, A. B. Nikitin. The author of the article [1,2,3,4] and J. Annaev's research materials [5,6,7] were also used in the research.

This article uses methods of objectivity, periodical and territorial-geographical, comparative analysis, statistical, scientific consistency. It analyzes the information about Ancient Bactria in the epigraphic inscriptions of Achaemenid Iran and Sassanid Iran.

RESULTS

Naqsh-e Rostam (Persian: نقش رستم) and "Cube of Zoroaster" (Persian: خعبه زرتشت) are structures located

12 km northwest of the city of Iqtahr (Takhti Jamshid) in the province of Ancient Persia. It is located in the village of Zangiabad in the Marvdasht district of Fars province, 50 km from the city of Shiraz in Iran [8]. It is known that Naqsh-e Rostam was named after the commander-in-chief of the troops of Yazdigard III (632-651), the ruler of Sassanid Iran, general Rustam Farrokhzad (who died in the battle of Qadisiya with the arabian general Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas in 636 AD). Naqsh-e Rostam Inscriptions Darius I (522-486 BC), Xerxes I (486-465 BC), Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC) and Darius II (424 BC) -404 years) carved on the southern slope of Hajiabad mountain and consists of inscriptions carved at the entrance[9] (Fig. 1).



- | | |
|--|---|
| K Cube of Zoroaster | 1 Investiture of Ardashir I |
| A Tomb of Darius II | 2 Audience relief of Bahram II |
| B Tomb of Artaxerxes I | 3 Equestrian relief of Bahram II |
| C Tomb of Darius the Great | 4 Equestrian relief of Hormizd II |
| D Tomb of Xerxes I | 5 Relief of Shapur II |
| * Darius III's unfinished tomb between C and D | 6 Triumph of Shapur I relief |
| | 7 Equestrian relief of Bahram II in Combat |
| | 8 Investiture of Narseh |



Figure 1. Map of archaeological monuments in Naqsh-e Rostam [10].

The mausoleum of Darius I is rectangular in shape, created according to the Zoroastrian tradition, and is one of the oldest monuments of Zoroastrianism. While the Behistun inscriptions indicate the western provinces of the Achaemenid state, the Naqsh-e Rostam inscriptions list the countries starting with the eastern provinces after Media and Elam. In the Naqsh-e Rostam inscription written under the portrait of Darius I, Bactria is listed in the fifth place in the list of 23 satraps subordinate to the Achaemenid dynasty [9].

The words of Darius: "I am Darius, the great king, the emperor, the king of many tribes and countries, the

king of vast lands, the son of Vishtasp, Achaemenid, the Persian, the son of the Persian, an Aryan from the clan of the Aryans. Besides the province of Persia, the following countries have been subjugated by me, paying tribute to me, obeying my word, developing according to my law: Media, Elam, Parthia, Arya, Bactria, Sugdiyana, Khorezm, Drangiana, Arachosia, Sattagidia, Gandara [Gadâra], India [Hiduš], Saka Haumavarka, Saka Tigrahauda, Assyria, Babylon, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, Greeks (Yaunâ), Sakas beyond the sea (Sakâ), Thrace, Greeks wearing petasos [Yaunâ], Libyans, Nubians, Maka and the Carians". [11] (Fig. 2).

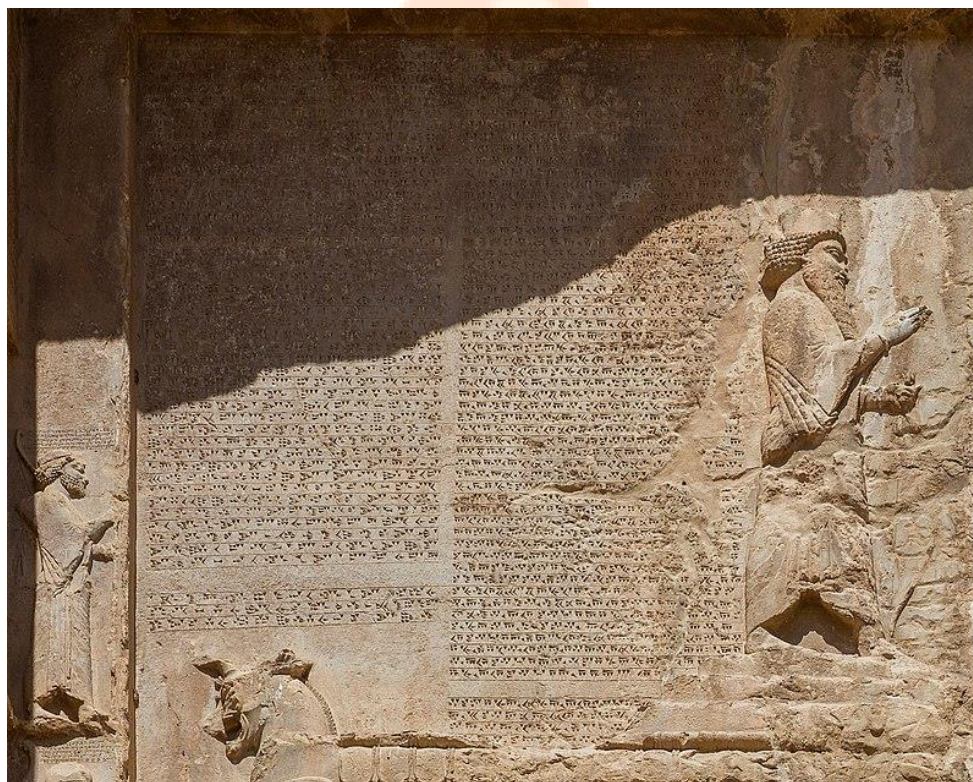


Figure 2. Inscription on upper left corner of the mausoleum of Darius I in Naqsh-e Rostam. [12]



The relief on the lower left side of the mausoleum depicts the victory of the Sassanid king Shapur I over the Roman emperor Valerian in 260 AD. And it depicts Valerian kneeling and bowing to Shapur I, who is riding a horse. In the inscription under the relief, the march of the Persians to the Caucasus in 262 AD is represented.

Zoroaster's Kaaba is located opposite these mausoleums (Fig. 3). Its roof is covered with floor-sized flat stone slabs, and its walls are left with open spaces instead of windows. The names of the countries that

were part of the Sassanid state and the list of gifts brought to this place were written in Pahlavi, Parthian and Greek inscriptions on the walls of the tower, which was built like the houses of the people of Iran, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in 262 AD.

For example, the Zoroastrian Kaaba says: "I am the noble Shah of Iran, I am the owner of the following cities: from Kushanshahr to Pashkiburg, then to Kesh, Sogd and Shosh. All these are the lords and rulers of many kingdoms who pay taxes and obey me. [13]

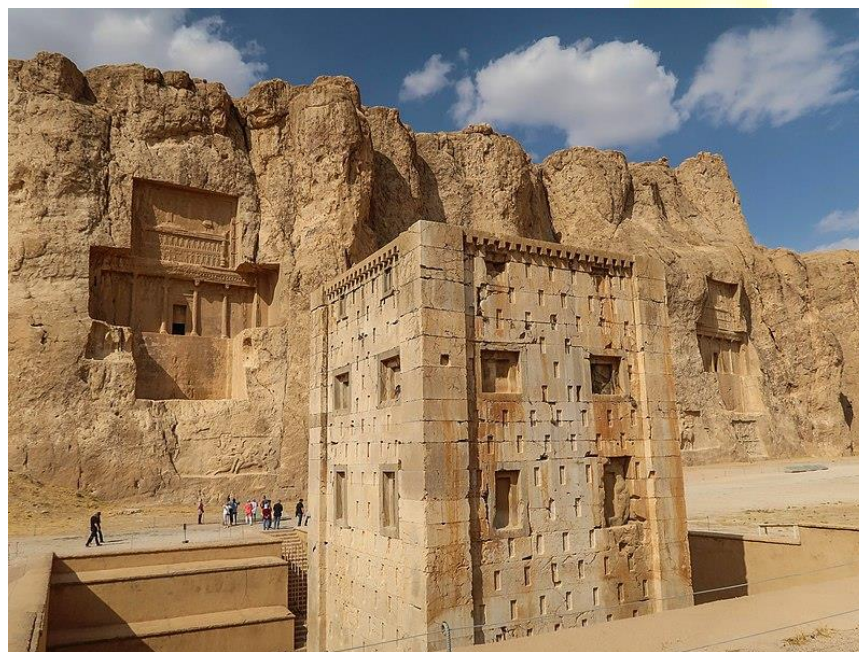


Figure 3: Cube of Zoroaster. [14]

The Cube of Zoroaster probably got its name in the 14th century when ruins throughout Persia were associated with figures from the Qur'an or the Shahnameh. The name does not indicate that it was a Zoroastrian shrine, and there is no record of any pilgrimage to the site. The Cube of Zoroaster is described in the writings of Western travelers who visited Naqsh-e Rostam in the 17th century.

DISCUSSION

It is known that the Surkhan oasis, the north of Afghanistan and the south of Tajikistan were called Bactria, Kushanshahr, Tokharistan. The Middle Persian epigraphic inscriptions of Shapur I in the Cube of Zoroaster mention Kushanshahr as a subordinate country. In general, the areas called Bactria in ancient sources were called "the land of the Kushans" or



Kushanshahr from the Kushan period to the Hephthalite period.

Researchers have determined the occupation of Kushan kingdom by Sassanid Iran and the start of minting of Kushan-Sasanian coins with different periods. For example, E. Hersfeld [15], A.D.H. Bivar [16] dated it to the III century AD, R. Gobl dated it to the beginning of the IV century [17], V. G. Lukonin dated it to the second half of the IV century [18], R. Girshman dated it to the fourth quarter of the IV century [19], V. M. Masson dates it to the end of the III century. Based on the materials obtained as a result of recent archaeological research, it was determined that Kushanshahr was conquered by Shopur I (241-272) in the second half of the III century [20]. It is known that Sassanid kings distributed conquered provinces to their princes, and they were considered governors of their provinces and minted coins in their name.

Kushanshahr was also ruled by Sasanian princes, and they minted coins with Middle Persian "ozorko Koshono shohonohoho" or "ozorko Koshono shoho" - "Kushon the king of the great kings" or "the status of the great king of Kushon" [21]. Kushanshahr was ruled by an official in the position of "shahrab" from the city of Balkh [22]. Kushanshahr was under the rule of Sassanid Iran until the Khionids and Ephtalids entered Central Asia. From the beginning of the Middle Ages, the Kushanshahr region began to be called Takharistan.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the fall of the Kushan Empire did not occur at the end of the IV century, but in the 40-50s of the III century, and the Bactrian region was called Kushanshahr in written sources from that time.

In conclusion, Northern Bactria is considered one of the developed historical cultural regions of the Kushan

kingdom, and therefore the study of its historical geography is of great importance.

The Naqsh Rostam and Zoroastrian Kaaba inscriptions are important sources in the study of the historical geography, ethnography and culture of the countries and peoples conquered by the Achaemenids and Sasanians.

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