



THE LEGENDARY HISTORY OF IRAN

Author(s): S. Nabi Hadi

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frontier as defined in the Agreement of Nov. 1893 was divided into sections and was carried out by joint Commissioners during the years 1894-96. By the year 1895, the frontier lying between Newa Kotal on the skirts of the Mohmand country and the Bashgal valley in the Hindukush had been demarcated. The Government of India appointed a Commission for demarcating Mohmand-Bajur-Asmar Boundary and ultimately succeeded due to the sincere cooperation of the Afghan Amir-Abdur Rahman.

The boundary of the Kurram valley was demarcated by Donald and Sharindil Khan and was completed on 21st. Nov. 1894. But a small portion of the line in the Khyber area remained undemarcated until the conclusion of the third Afghan war of 1919. The starting point of this boundary was the Sikaram peak from where it descended to Peiwar Kotal and reached Kimatai Kotal. Passing through to the culturable lands, it terminated on the western end of the Tewza. It proceeded to Lora, Patans and Kharlachis. After crossing the Kurram river, it reached the Manz Darwazgai Pass. Upwards, it ascended to the Walli Hill and reached the watersheds of Kurram Khost & Hassan Khels. It ended at the Laram Peak after passing through Ucha Laram and Bezo Sar.

The work of delimitation of Waziristan was divided into three sections. Mr. L. W. King, was to work northwards from Domandi to Khwaja Khidr and Mr. Anderson, was to commence work at Char Khel (Char Kiaghar) and working southwards to Khwaja Khidr and returning back to Char Khel, was to continue demarcation. The delimitation between Domandi and Khwaja Khidr was completed by Mr. King till Febr. 1895. Mr. Anderson, after facing great obstacles, succeeded in completing the demarcation between Char Kiaghar and Laram by the end of 5th April, 1895.

THE LEGENDARY HISTORY OF IRAN

By

S. NABI HADI

Mankind has been incessantly staggering with the interesting phenomenon of forgetting and discovering the realities of the past ; but it seldom happens that realities of great importance are forgotten in order that fiction of fantastic nature may occupy their place in national 'memory. The people of Iran in this respect present a surprising example of having completely ignored, for a number of centuries, the record of their actual past and in place of that their creative genius conceived a lengthy fiction of imperial dynasties which never existed and of mighty kings and grand heroes who were never born. The purpose of this paper is to make an inquiry as to what may be the

period when these legends, remarkable and interesting as they are, began to be formed and whether critical method may possibly help to fix up a span of time when the whole set of legends assumed their final shape in the national imagination.

Taking into consideration the actual history of the country, Iran emerges on the scene with the Achaemenians (B.C. 600 to B.C. 300) striving to build up a world empire and governing from their seat at Persepolis (near modern Shiraz) the vast region of earth confined by three great rivers, i.e. the Indus, the Nile and the Danube. Plutarch was informed that water was constantly brought from those rivers to be kept in the royal treasury so that the "king of kings" may not lose care of the boundaries of his empire¹. The rock-inscriptions left by the Achaemenian kings and the histories of contemporary Greeks, mainly Herodotus, Xenophon², and Ctesias³, are creditable sources regarding the Achaemenian period. Earlier than that the Archeological researches carry us far back to the kingdoms of Media, Babylonia, and Elam respectively ; but these scenes are not quite clear, nor do they provide any clue to the understanding of Persian national legends⁴. Archaeology, on the contrary, brings us to the surer judgment that no attempt would be fruitful to identify the legends with truth. From the days of early Muslim writers, like Masudi and Yaqubi, upto that of more recent scholars as Sir William Jones, all efforts to identify the legendary figures with historical persons have been rejected as absurd. All serious historians have repeatedly cautioned against the mistake of pressing the identification between fact and fiction at length. The actual history of Achaemenian dynasty was glorious enough to have struck all coming ages with admiration and wonder. Darius left his name among the great men of all times, not due to the battle of Marathon, but as a wise and successful ruler of the greatest empire in the ancient world. The march of Xerxes against Greece, in spite of its failure and defeat, has been unanimously treated as a remarkable example of the mobilization of human resources. Alexander passed a few moments of solemn contemplation when he stood before the tomb of Cyrus and read this epitaph: "O man, whosoever thou art and whensoever thou comest, for come I know thou wilt ; envy not this little earth that covers my body. I am Cyrus, the founder of Persian Empire⁵." These great men, their dazzling personalities, and their wonderful achievements disappeared in complete oblivion for a number of centuries. They virtually ceased to exist in the memory of their own people and have been revived only at the turn of the last century.

As regards the legendary history, every episode of which is so dear to the heart of all Persians and so fresh in their common imagination, it begins from the dynasty known as Pishdadiyan. The

founder of the dynasty, that is, Gayumarth was the first king and rather the first man to inhabit this earth. The fourth king of his line was Jamshid who ruled for seven hundred years, obviously a sufficient period to conceive and create some of the necessary institutions of civilization. Kaykaus was another important king of these early days who prolonged his reign for one hundred and fifty years. The national hero of the Persians, namely Rustam appeared during the reign of Kaykaus. The dynasty which succeeded the earlier one was that of the Kayaniyan or Kayani and the widely celebrated kings of that dynasty were mainly Gushtasp and Lahrasp, both of whom ruled for an equal period of one hundred- twenty years each. It is during the reign of one of those kings that Zoroaster, the prophet of ancient Iran came out with his mission and preached his religion to the people. The other two dynasties which followed were Ashkaniyan and Sasaniyan ; these two are semi-historical ; their record is also very much mixed up with fact and fiction, but they do not in fact come within the orbit of purely legendary history.

We have no precise knowledge about the period of Zoroaster and his book Avesta, which is claimed by the followers of his religion as a revealed scripture. While some authorities assign the time as between B.C. 1400 to B.C. 1000, there are others who further push the date far back and insist on assuming it as something between B. C. 4000-B.C. 3500. The names of some of the legendary kings and the stories of their achievements occur in Avesta⁶. That goes to show, provided the antiquity of the sacred book is taken for granted, that the process of legend formation had actually started before the Achaemenians rose to lead the people of their race as rulers of the vast empire. Some of the legends bear a clear impress of having their common Indo-Iranian origin ; for example, Jamshid appeared in Hindu mythology as "Yama " who is the first great mortal to pass over into the After-world. Such evidences are helpful to prove that the Persian mind was actively busy during the Pre-Achaemenian period to conceive its own cosmic concept quite distinct from the Hindus as well as from the Greeks. Their heroes are essentially human figures and, from the first to the last, play a human role having been carefully precluded from assuming the attributes which the other mythological systems assign to their gods. The object of such an endeavour possibly was to assert the distinct character of Persian genius from the beginning of civilization.

The Achaemenian rock-inscriptions and the contemporary Greek records bear no trace of direct or indirect allusion to the existence of any of the legends, although their deep influence in shaping the

emotional and intellectual attitude of those earlier people can be fairly imagined. After the destruction of Achaemenian power by the Greeks, the Persian race was faced with an unpleasant and hitherto unexperienced situation of servitude. The long period of misfortune and adversity that ensued, changed the course of their social life. In order to obliterate the marks of ignominious defeat and the disrepute of losing their supremacy, it had become a necessity to forget the reality and to develop a fictitious memory. There are periods of deep sleep in the life of certain nations. Meanwhile the process of dreaming uninterruptedly continues and the national spirit wanders in Utopia. The Persians succeeded to restore their lost power and glory, but more than five centuries had elapsed in wrestling against the outrageous destiny until the Sasanian dynasty (A.D. 226-652) emerged on the scene to rebuild a vast empire⁸. The political record of the five centuries which intervene between the Achaemenians and the Sasanians is treated as barren. The history of intellectual activity also remains to be unknown. With the coming of Sasanian dynasty to power, the outstanding achievement in the intellectual field was the recomposition of the sacred book Avesta and the wide-scale propagation of Zoroastrian religious ideas. According to Parsitradition, Avesta was kept in the royal Achaemenian library at Persepolis written in gold on twelve-thousand cow-hides. Alexander burned the Achaemenian palace and in the great conflagration the sacred book also went into flames; only a few fragments of it had survived. During the Sasanian period all the learned labour of the realm was employed to recompose Avesta and work was systematically pursued to elucidate the religious code of Zoroaster. The political expansion of Sasanian empire and the subsequent material prosperity initiated the whole race to liberate their energies in the intellectual and cultural fields. They began, in their vigorous imagination, to idealize the past giving free reign to their fancy which presented a pleasing picture of facts as they should have happened. In "*Khudai-Namak*" (the book of kings), composed during the Sasanian period, every event is colourful and pleasing to satisfy the national taste. The bulk of legends which swell the pages of *Khudi-Namak* seem to have been conceived during the early days of Sasanian glory. It was the stage when the whole Persian race, lifting itself with a sense of success, experienced the intense emotions of joy and came to live in exceptionally high spirits. The starting point of their mental exercise may be earlier than the beginning of Sasanian age, but the galaxy of remarkable heroes, among whom Rustam occupies the prominent place, had been created as a result of great victories achieved by those who were expanding the boundaries of Sasanian empire. The joy of conquest inspired the national mind to think in terms of

epic and romance ; and an imaginary past became the compelling desire to add dignity and weight to their national life. Such cravings and emotions received satisfaction through elaborate legends of proud adventure.

These brief assumptions lead to conclude that most of the legends, save the tales of Guyumarth and Jamshid, were born in the mind of those who lived at the dawn of Sasanian era. The unknown author or authors of *Khudai-Namak* arranged them into a systematic scheme⁹. In the ninth century the new Persian language was born and a century later Firdowsi came to get hold of these legends and gave them monumental treatment in his poetical masterpiece, the *Shahnama*.

N O T E S

1. Plutarch : *Life of Alexander* (Langhore Translation) p. 190.
2. Xenophon : *Persian Expedition*. Tr. Rex Warner.
3. Ctesias : His "Persica," now lost, was written during his stay at the Court of Artaxerxes where he served as physician.
4. Grishman : *Iran*.
5. Plutarch op. cit.
6. Yasht 19.
7. *Rg. Veda* 1. 165. 4 & *Ath Veda* 18. 3. 13
8. *Tarikh-i-Balami*. Ed. Tebran. In fact the Persian rendering of Tabari's Arabic History is the earliest authority on Sasanian period.
9. Gibbon : *Decline and Fall*. Vol. 2 p. 605 (Mod. Lib. Ed.) Chosroes I or Nushirwan: "At Gondi sapor the annals of monarchy were composed... the darkness of the first ages was embellished by the giants, the dragons, and the fabulous heroes of oriental romance."

SLAVES AND SERFS IN MEDIEVAL CAMBODIA (CIRCA 400—1300 A.D.)

By

RADHAKRISHNA CHOUDHARY

In my Paper on "*Some aspects of Feudalism in Cambodia*" (Submitted to the Twentysixth Congress of the International Congress of Orientalists, held at Delhi, in January 1964, and published subsequently in the *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Volume XLVII, Rahul Sankrtyana Volume), I have traced the development of Feudalism in Cambodia and have also discussed in brief the position of the slaves and serfs in the society. Some Soviet and Czech scholars have also turned their attention to this aspect of the Cambodian history and Mr. L. Sedov of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, U.S.S.R., Moscow, has recently published two important Papers dealing with the socio-economic history of Cambodia in the Angkor period.

Feudalism was a form of socio-economic system throughout the world at a given period of social development in history. The nature of feudalism differed from country to country and from continent to conti-