Onomastics of Persepolis in Historical Documents and Texts: From the Beginnings to the Qajar Period

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Article Info	Abstract
	This article investigates the historical evolution of the names attributed to Persepolis, one of Iran's most prominent archaeological sites. The study addresses a central problem in historical and cultural scholarship: how the shifting nomenclature of ancient monuments reflects broader transformations in collective memory, ideology, and identity. The primary aim is to trace how various names—from *Pārsih* in Achaemenid inscriptions to the popular *Takht-i Jamshīd*—were shaped by different historical, religious, and cultural discourses over time. Using a multidisciplinary research method that integrates philological analysis, historical contextualization, and archaeological interpretation, the article draws on diverse sources, including royal inscriptions, classical and Islamic historiography, travelers' narratives, and mythological literature. Special emphasis is placed on the reinterpretation of Persepolis in Persian epic traditions and Islamic texts, where the site was often portrayed as the throne of the mythic king Jamshīd or a symbol of divine kingship. The research highlights a major turning point in the modern period, when advances in archaeology—particularly the decipherment of cuneiform inscriptions—corrected long-standing misconceptions and re-established the site's original name, *Pārsih*, as used by its Achaemenid builders. The findings underscore that the naming history of Persepolis is not merely a semantic curiosity, but a vital lens through which societies recall, reinterpret, and reconstruct their past. By situating this onomastic history within broader debates on heritage, memory, and historiography, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural processes that define and redefine historical identity.

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1. Introduction

On Jam's throne, whose crown reaches the summit of the sky,
Behold the resolve of the ant that, in its insignificance, dared to ascend.
- "Ḥāfiẓ" (1315-1390), (Ḥāfiẓ, 1999: 116).

The study of onomastics—particularly the historical evolution of place names—offers valuable insights into the linguistic, cultural, and political transformations that shape the identity of historical sites. Among Iran's archaeological landmarks, Persepolis stands out not only for its architectural and artistic significance but also as a symbolically rich site whose evolving names reflect broader shifts in memory and meaning.

From the Old Persian *Pārsih* (following the IJMES transliteration system for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, published by Cambridge University Press; see: IJMES Transliteration Chart) attested in Achaemenid inscriptions to the widely used *Takht-i Jamshīd* shaped by Islamic-era myths and literary traditions, the site has carried multiple identities. These names have functioned not merely as designations but as cultural constructs—intertwined with ideology, national narratives, and religious reinterpretation.

Despite significant scholarly focus on the architecture and iconography of Persepolis, the onomastic dimension remains understudied. A few references exist in broader archaeological literature, yet a systematic analysis of the names and their transformations across historical periods is lacking. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the site's evolving nomenclature from the Achaemenid period to the Qajar era, drawing on textual, archaeological, and epigraphic evidence.

Using a multidisciplinary approach that combines philological analysis, cultural history, and archaeological interpretation, the article highlights how naming practices have preserved, reinterpreted, or at times contested the legacy of Persepolis. In doing so, it illustrates the importance of onomastics not only as a linguistic discipline but also as a meaningful analytical tool in archaeological scholarship.

The article opens with a historical overview that contextualizes the broader cultural and political landscape of the region. It then turns to Persepolis itself, outlining its historical, architectural, and symbolic significance. Building upon this foundation, the study presents a comprehensive analysis of the various names attributed to the site over time, exploring the linguistic, mythological, and religious dimensions of its evolving identity. This is followed by an examination of scholarly efforts to identify and restore the site's original name. The article concludes by reflecting on the broader implications of onomastic change in the interpretation of historical memory and cultural heritage.

2. Historical Context

The roots of the Achaemenid Empire trace back to Cyrus the Great, who overthrew the preceding Median state and founded a new Persian dynasty. With his unprecedented imperial vision, Cyrus launched a series of successful campaigns that laid the foundation for an empire

which, under his successors—particularly Cambyses—eventually stretched from the Nile to the Indus.

Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, left a legacy admired by many nations, despite his extensive conquests and his policy of opening up to the world. His policies were marked by tolerance and moderation, even towards adversaries and conquered peoples. He never came across as a totalitarian king and was known for his cultural and religious tolerance with subordinate nations. As Richard Frye notes in *The Heritage of Persia*, Cyrus not only freed the Jews after his conquest of Babylon and became their hero but also refrained from alienating the Babylonian populace, portraying himself as a patron of their city. To honor Marduk, the supreme god of Babylon, he avoided invoking his own gods.

> Cyrus' policy of mildness towards the erstwhile subject peoples of Babyionia, at we see in the Old Testament, must have helped greatly in the consolidation of Persian rule in Syria and Palestine. The Book of Ezra is eloquent testimony to the actions of Cyrus in attempting to win support for Persian rule, and he was on the whole successful (Frye, 1962: 82).

3. Persepolis

Persepolis has witnessed a fascinating and, at times, tragic history. The story of this grand 2,500-year-old structure is one of highs and lows, fractures and splendor. Once hailed as "the richest city under the sun" (Diod. XVII.70), it eventually became a ruin inhabited by mice and snakes. Persepolis, which for nearly 200 years hosted the kings of 30 nations in the presence of the King of Kings,[1] astonishing all with its beauty, grandeur, and wealth, was ultimately reduced to ruins by Alexander's flames. The ruins of Persepolis not only became a source of pride for the monarchs of later dynasties, who sought to leave their own marks on it,[2] but also fell victim at times to the ignorance of vandals who inflicted wounds upon it for their amusement. Now, standing firm and steadfast atop its massive, man-made terrace after centuries of enduring the ravages of time, it holds the distinction of being the first Iranian historical site to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1979).

But what was the motivation and reason behind the construction of this magnificent and extraordinary structure, and by whose order and by whom was it built? Pasargadae was chosen by Cyrus, the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, as the first capital of this empire. However, in addition to Pasargadae, three other capitals are also mentioned: Ecbatana, Susa, and Persepolis (Imanpour et al., 2015). Archaeological evidence suggests a practical rationale behind the seasonal use of the Achaemenid capitals. For instance, Susa—an ancient settlement inhabited since the fourth millennium BCE—appears to have held a particularly prominent position and may have served as the king's main residence. However, due to the extreme summer heat in Susa, the royal court likely relocated to cooler regions such as Ecbatana or Persepolis during that season (see: Cook, 1983). From the perspective of military and geopolitical experts, other factors, such as the political and military significance of these locations, also played a role. From the perspective of

military and geopolitical experts, other factors, such as the political and military significance of these locations, also played a role. Major General Nosratollah Bakhturtash, a military strategist and historian who, in addition to his military education and ranks, held a PhD in Political Science from the University of Tehran and left behind valuable works on Achaemenid history, politics, and military strategy, considered this matter from a military viewpoint as evidence of the tactical insight of the Iranians, who were adept at understanding local conditions and aligning military activities accordingly. In his view,

> The same necessity that justified the creation, establishment, and development of outposts and garrisons also dictated the diversity, alteration, and multiplicity of administrative centers in Iran. Therefore, the fundamental and undeniable principle is this historical necessity—arising from the vastness of the country and political considerations combined with the suitability of each season in different regions—while the tradition of seasonal migration was a secondary matter (Bakhturtash, 1972).

With all this in mind, the selection of Persepolis cannot be solely attributed to climatic, military, or geopolitical factors. Before its construction, cities such as Ecbatana and Susa already served as major Achaemenid centers. Ecbatana, formerly the capital of the Medes, retained administrative significance within the Achaemenid system, while Susa—an ancient Elamite city—was a thriving political hub. Both were widely known throughout the empire and beyond. As Ali Mousavi notes, ancient Greek historians were more familiar with cities like Susa and Ecbatana, while Persepolis remained largely absent from their accounts—an absence that underscores its unique role and later emergence as a ceremonial capital closely associated with Darius I (Mousavi, 2012: 51). The Achaemenid Empire, in its grandeur, required a capital that was truly its own—not inherited from previous dynasties but created anew. Thus, Darius initiated the construction of Persepolis as a space that reflected the ideological and imperial vision of his reign. Darius the Great built the royal city and its magnificent palace complex not on the flat plains but on an artificial terrace spanning 125,000 square meters. This unparalleled terrace, one of the architectural masterpieces of antiquity, has withstood the passage of over 25 centuries, standing firm and majestic near Mount Raḥmat as a testament to history (Briant, 2002: 168).

In the Elamite version of inscription (DPf), carved on the southern wall of Persepolis—which, during Darius's reign and before the construction of the Gate of All Nations by Xerxes, served as the entrance to the complex—Darius introduces himself as the founder of this ensemble:

> 1. I, Darius, Great King, king of kings, king of lands, king upon this earth, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid.
>
> 2. And Darius king says: As for the fact that upon this place this fortress was built, formerly here a fortress had not been built. By the grace of Ahūrā-Mazdā, I built this fortress. and Ahūrā-Mazdā was of such a mind, together with all the gods, that this fortress (should) be built. And (so) I built it. And I built it secure and beautiful and adequate, just as I was intending to.

3. And Darius king says: Me may Ahūrā-Mazdā, together with all the gods, protect, as well as this fortress. And, furthermore, whatever has been erected in this place, may it not be kindly (to) what any hostile man (ever) counts on doing (Schmidt, 1953: 63).

One of the most widely accepted interpretations regarding the construction of the Persepolis complex is that it served to showcase the grandeur and legitimacy of the Achaemenid Empire—particularly as a ceremonial space for receiving annual delegations from subject nations, most likely during Nuvrūz (the New Year festival). A cursory examination of the extant bas-reliefs at Persepolis suggests that the primary function of the site was closely tied to royal ceremonies and the formal reception of foreign envoys. The repeated scenes of the king enthroned and rows of tribute-bearers presenting gifts, combined with the recurring motif of the lion-and-bull combat—often interpreted as a symbolic representation of the transition from winter to spring—support the notion that the complex had a significant ritualistic and seasonal dimension, possibly associated with the celebration of Nuvrūz. As Ali Mousavi notes, various scholars—including Herzfeld, Godard, Pope, Ghirshman, and Fennelly—have proposed differing views on this function of Persepolis, each emphasizing different ceremonial or symbolic aspects of the site (Mousavi, 2012: 52).

Heidemarie Koch, based on her examination of the decorations of the Tachara Palace (known as Darius's private palace), the Apadana, and the carvings at Darius's tomb, concluded that Darius did not establish anything other than the center of the Persian royal bureaucracy on the large terrace of Persepolis. She believes that his and his family's private residence, as well as the courtiers' quarters, must have been located separately from the terrace, in an area of open land beneath it (Koch, 2010: 156-157). However, this view may only apply to Darius's reign, since later archaeological findings regarding palaces such as Hadīsh (Xerxes's private palace) and the Harem Palace suggest a more personal use of the complex.

In contrast, Shapur Shahbazi believes that "the purpose of Darius the Great in building this palace in the land of Persia was not to create an administrative and political capital, because this location was far from the center of the empire. Instead, he wanted to create a center for Iranian ceremonies" (Shahbazi, 2010: 25-26). This opinion can be questioned based on the evidence, some of which Shahbazi himself has pointed out, such as the clay tablets discovered at Persepolis by Schmidt. Shahbazi views the treasury of Persepolis solely as a storehouse for the treasures of the Achaemenid Empire and does not attribute any administrative function to it. Meanwhile, Koch describes the treasury building as the center of administrative and financial affairs, the beating heart of Darius's court (Koch, 2010: 173). In practice, it is hard to imagine that a place where kings resided and where such grand structures were erected, always hosting the most important representatives of subject nations, would have ignored the management of the kingdom and political decisions.

Persepolis was not completed during the reign of Darius the Great, and additional structures were built by subsequent kings, particularly Xerxes. Evidence from architectural remains—

including: an unfinished tomb; parts of the rosette decoration left unfinished in several instances; the Unfinished Gate located to the north of the Hall of a Hundred Columns (this monumental structure, considered a counterpart to the Gate of All Nations, was never completed, as clearly shown by unworked stone surfaces and exposed unfinished elements); unfinished blocks; and unfinished stairs at the northeast corner of Palace H (Schmidt, 1953: 55, 82, 130, 244, 280)—indicates that major construction work was still ongoing when the site was destroyed by Alexander.

Ultimately, it was Alexander who determined the tragic fate of the richest city under the sun. Various accounts have been recorded regarding this event and its motives, ranging from it being an accident to a deliberate act of vengeance for Xerxes' capture of Athens and the burning of the Acropolis in 480 BCE.[3] Based on archaeological findings and the reports of various historians, André Godard responded to these differing views. Referring to Radet, an Alexander historian, he mentions Alexander's celebratory feasts after the conquest of Persepolis and a particular incident at one of these gatherings. Thaïs, a woman from Alexander's entourage during his campaigns, allegedly exclaimed in her drunken fervor that if Alexander set fire to the Persian kings' palace, he would earn a great favor from the Greeks, as they always yearned for revenge against the "barbaric" Persians who had destroyed their cities. Following her outcry, a wave of madness swept through the gathering. Thaïs urged Alexander to act, and he complied, leading the crowd with her. Together, they took torches and set fire to the cedar-roofed palace, causing a massive blaze. Godard rejects Radet's account, which is based on Quintus Curtius and Plutarch, arguing that it has now been proven that before Persepolis burned, its palaces were systematically looted, with their contents and furnishings relocated. This indicates that the burning of Persepolis was not accidental, and the theory that it resulted from a momentary lack of judgment is incorrect (Godard, 1947).

Persepolis was destroyed, its treasures plundered, and the city abandoned. However, the ruins themselves retained an extraordinary majesty that captivated every viewer. This compelled later generations to craft their own legends about it, leaving its secrets untold for centuries. It was only through scientific excavations and the deciphering of ancient scripts that these secrets began to be unveiled.

The history of Persepolis did not end with its destruction by Alexander; rather, it embarked on a turbulent journey afterward. The grandeur of the Achaemenid Empire tempted subsequent Iranian dynasties to associate themselves with its legacy, either by claiming lineage to the Achaemenid kings or through other means. Even the Parthians, often overlooked in history for various reasons, linked their dynasty to the Achaemenids and specifically to Artaxerxes II. Gareth C. Sampson, quoting Syncellus in his *Chronography*, writes that two brothers, Arsaces and Tiridates, rebelled against Antiochus because they traced their ancestry to Artaxerxes, the Persian king (Sampson, 2008).

Perhaps the greatest influence of and attachment to the Achaemenids was manifested during the Sāsānīyān dynasty. The Sāsānīyāns arose from the same region as the Achaemenids—Persia (present-day Fars Province in Iran)—and positioned themselves as their heirs and rightful successors

(Ghirshman, 1993: 345). Thus, they were influenced by the Achaemenids in various aspects, such as governance, tax collection, military organization, religious beliefs, and the adoption of certain artistic approaches. They also assumed the responsibility of honoring, preserving, and safeguarding Achaemenid historical and sacred sites, such as Persepolis and Naqsh-i Rustam (Malekzadeh, 1975). Historians have even attributed the neglect of Parthian history to the Sāsānīyāns' deliberate efforts to erase their memory and directly associate themselves with the Achaemenids.

After the rise of Islam, various periods witnessed a desire to revive the grandeur of the Achaemenid past. The connection to that golden era was sought through attempts to emulate Achaemenid civilization in all fields, including art, road construction, and state administration. Among the most captivating aspects of Achaemenid civilization was their art, particularly the art showcased at Persepolis. From antiquity to the present day, the motifs of Achaemenid bas-reliefs have been reproduced in various ways, primarily for aesthetic purposes and to decorate buildings. In some cases, modern artists have achieved a level of artistic quality close to that of the Achaemenid era, while in many instances, the reproductions have been mere imitations lacking the sophistication of the originals—like those seen in Qajar reliefs.

Finally, during the Pahlavi era—in a combination of modernism and a return to the grandeur of the past—the focus in art shifted toward modern artistic approaches rather than directly replicating Achaemenid art. The attention to Achaemenid heritage took a new form, emphasizing excavations, restorations, and the preservation of historical monuments. These invaluable efforts revived the memory of these remarkable artifacts, ensuring their identification, recognition, and protection against the ravages of time, human activity, and nature.

After the Islamic Revolution, following a revolutionary hiatus and an initial rejection of remnants of the "despotic regime"—to the point of considering their destruction—public interest gradually turned back to their historical heritage after much disillusionment. Interest in Iran's ancient history and culture revived, and gradually, both public perception and, in some cases, officials' views toward elements of Iran's ancient civilization, including Achaemenid heritage, underwent a transformation, leading to the emergence of new approaches to the ancient history of Iran.

4. The Onomastic Evolution of Persepolis
4-1. Etymology and Linguistic Transformations

The people of Iran, throughout different historical periods, have known Persepolis by various names, other than the name originally used by its founders, the Achaemenids: *Pārsih*. Even today, more than twenty-five centuries later, one of these names—*Takht-i Jamshīd*—has been widely accepted and is commonly used among Iranians, both the general public and academics. Among non-Iranians, thanks to renowned Greek historians, the name *Persepolis* has remained consistently in use from antiquity to the present day.

The most significant reason for the changes in the names of Persepolis throughout history can perhaps be attributed to the evolution of the Persian language. These linguistic changes, along

with shifts in script, led to considerable linguistic transformation, which disrupted the awareness of various Iranian peoples about their history over different periods. This disruption persisted until the deciphering of ancient languages and scripts, which ultimately resolved many historical ambiguities through the successful reading of ancient inscriptions.

The Persian language, a language of Iranian origin and one of the branches of the Indo-European languages, has undergone several stages of transformation from before 1500 BCE to the present day to become the Persian language Iranians speak today. (for the evolution of Iranian language and the path it has traversed from its inception to the present, see: Benveniste, 2016: 539). It is evident that as a result of linguistic changes over more than 3,500 years, ancient words have undergone significant structural and phonetic transformations. Many words, amidst the historical disruptions in Iran and the accompanying linguistic evolution—especially due to changes in script—have experienced profound alterations and, in some cases, have been erased from historical memory. Naturally, Persepolis and its name(s) could not remain untouched by these natural historical developments. Dandamayev explains this issue effectively:

> During the rule and dominance of the Sāsānīyān Empire, the names of Cyrus, Cambyses, Xerxes, and other kings of the true and historical Achaemenid dynasty were consigned to oblivion, and a legendary dynasty known as the Kayānīyān dynasty replaced the Achaemenids... The accounts of the Sāsānīyān period about Iran are by no means historical but are instead based solely on legends and epics. Medieval Iranian historians documented the credible and authentic history of Iran starting only from the reign of the Sāsānīyān dynasty. In the works of Persian poets and writers such as Niẓāmī and in modern Persian literature, references to the Achaemenids exist, but these rely on Greek sources transmitted through Syriac traditions.

> ... As such, before the deciphering of ancient Iranian cuneiform texts, it was impossible to assess or complete information about ancient Iran or examine the content of the Torah. From the first day Europeans encountered cuneiform scripts to the day they were deciphered, over two centuries passed... The deciphering of these inscriptions was one of the great achievements of the 19th century. It allowed us to gain insight into the civilizations and cultures of many nations worldwide (Dandamayev, 1994: 16).

Thus, it is based on this premise that we must examine and trace the evolution of names for places like Persepolis and Pasargadae, or names of figures such as Xerxes, Artaxerxes, or Cyrus. In onomastic studies, it must be acknowledged that the unfamiliarity with Old Persian cuneiform script and the obsolescence of other cuneiform scripts, such as Babylonian and Aramaic—which were used in the Achaemenid administration—led to various naming conventions being applied to the ruins of Persepolis in later periods. Providing an accurate chronology of the historical names used for Persepolis is challenging, and in some cases, one has no choice but to resort to conjecture. Consequently, studying the names of Persepolis based on their chronological precedence is not

straightforward. For this reason, in the present study, the investigation of the names used for Persepolis will be linked to the context and themes under which these names appear, rather than their chronological order. In this regard, the origins of these names will also be analyzed. The names associated with Persepolis are rooted in mythology, legend, superstition, religion, and even architectural elements and structural remnants of the Persepolis complex, such as its columns. By the end of this section, we may be able to propose a reasonable and coherent historical sequence for the names attributed to Persepolis, drawing from the results of our thematic research.

4-2. Mythological Associations: Jamshīd and Beyond

One aspect of the naming of Persepolis is rooted in myths and legends. The widely accepted name used today to refer to this historical complex—*Takht-i Jamshīd* (Throne of Jamshīd)—has its origins in Iranian mythology. While *Takht-i Jamshīd* may not have been the last name chosen for *Pārsih* (Persepolis), it is a name that has gained widespread acceptance among the Iranian public, irrespective of their familiarity with history. John Hinnells, who argues that Iranian myths have suffered damage during their transmission and that reconstructing a complete picture of them is challenging, introduces Jam or Jamshīd—or originally *Yima*[4]—as a figure belonging to Indo-Iranian beliefs. His most prominent characteristic in the *Vedas* is that he was the first immortal to choose mortality. He is highly revered for his thousand-year reign on Earth, marked by peace and prosperity, during which demons and their evil deeds—dishonesty, hunger, sickness, and death—held no sway. He was the first king to rule in peace, expand the world, and avoid warfare. Jamshīd serves as the archetype of an ideal king, envied by all rulers (Hinnells, 1989: 54-57 & 161).[5] Thus, the name of this mythical figure, who was also considered the creator of Nuvrūz, was aptly chosen for a structure that historically belonged to the Achaemenids, where Nuvrūz celebrations were held. During these ceremonies, Achaemenid kings received gifts from the leaders of subordinate nations and offered them gifts in return.

Firduvsī (940-1020), in the early pages of the *Shāhnāmih*, dedicates an entire chapter to Jamshīd and, in part, refers to the construction of his throne:

With the splendor of kingship, he fashioned a throne
Adorned it with many gems,

Whenever he wished, demons lifted it high
From earth to the heavens,

Like the radiant sun, suspended in air
Sat the sovereign king on it,

The world gathered round his throne
In awe of his fortune,

They showered Jamshīd with gems
Proclaiming that day a New Day,

On the first day of the new year
Body relieved from suffering, hearts free of hate,

The nobles rejoiced, adorned in cheer
Calling for wine, for goblet, for bard,

And so, from that day, this blessed festivity
Remains as a legacy, a kings' gift in history. (Firduvsī, 2020: 22).

But from when was the title *Takht-i Jamshīd* used, and when did the name Jamshīd and the title *Takht-i Jamshīd* begin to be used to refer to the complex we know today?

According to John Hinnels, in relation to the reconstruction of history based on mythology, later Iranian texts and early Muslim historians placed the myths of Gayūmart, Jamshīd, and others as the foundation of Iran's legendary history from the creation of the world until the Islamic conquest, with the foundation of this history being almost entirely based on the *Shāhnāmih* (Hinnells, 1989: 170). Ebba Koch, a historian, also holds this view specifically regarding Persepolis, believing that "in Islamic Iran, Persepolis was not associated with its historical founders, the Achaemenids, but with the mythical rulers of Iran as they were popularized by Firduvsī's great epic of kings, the *Shāhnāmih* (written around 1000 CE), in particular with Jamshīd" (Koch, 1993). However, Firduvsī relied on a written source to compose the *Shāhnāmih*: the prose *Shāhnāmih* of Abū Mansūr Muḥammad ibn-i Abd al-Razzāq, known as the *Abū Mansūrī Shāhnāmih*. This work was commissioned by Abū Mansūr and written by several authors, but only its introduction has survived to this day. The authors of the *Abū Mansūrī Shāhnāmih* themselves drew from ancient books, records, and some oral traditions (Safa, 1987: 613–615). We cannot say with certainty whether Firduvsī's reference to *Takht-i Jamshīd* was his own invention or if he borrowed it from the *Abū Mansūrī Shāhnāmih* or perhaps from other written or oral sources. More importantly, we do not know if his reference actually denotes the Persepolis [*Takht-i Jamshīd* (Throne of Jamshīd)] we are familiar with today. Or could it be that by the term "Throne," he specifically meant a royal throne in its literal sense rather than, by metonymy, the entire complex of Persepolis. Firduvsī's poetry allows for both interpretations: the throne that Jamshīd built, sat upon, and which demons elevated to the heavens, gathering the world around him; or the grand palaces constructed at Jamshīd's command by demons, where the great figures of various nations assembled to serve the king.

In the *Shāhnāmih*, before recounting the story of Jamshīd, Firduvsī narrates the tale of Gayūmart at the beginning of the Pīshdādīyān dynasty[6]. At one point, he says:

Gayūmart became the lord of the world
First he built a place on the mountain,

His throne and fortune arose from the mountain
With the group, he donned leopard skin. (Firduvsī, 11).

What prevents us from naming the place we now know as *Takht-i Jamshīd* (Throne of Jamshīd) "*Takht-i Gayūmart* (Throne of Gayūmart)" considering the precedence of Gayūmart's throne and kingship in the *Shāhnāmih*? The answer to this question is not simple, and it cannot be definitively and directly inferred from Firduvsī's poetry. The question of whether this site was known as *Takht-i Jamshīd* in popular oral culture before Firduvsī, or whether the association emerged after his poetry, remains unresolved. Interestingly, a century after Firduvsī, Ibn-i Balkhī (a historian of the 5–6th century AH / 11–12th century CE), in his *Fārsnāmih*, describes Gayūmart as the builder of what we know as *Takht-i Jamshīd* while discussing Iṣtakhr (ancient Sāsānīyān royal residence, lies five kilometers north of Persepolis) and Marvdasht:

> In the beginning, Gayūmart built something there, and every king who sat upon it added to it. Ṭahmūris in particular greatly expanded it. When Jamshīd ascended as the ruler of the world, he transformed it into a great city… He also constructed a palace there at the foot of a mountain that had no equal in the world... (Ibn-i Balkhī, 2006: 125–126).

By aligning the mythical and historical contents of the *Shāhnāmih*, one might equate Gayūmart with Cyrus. According to Hinnells, Gayūmart was the first king in the *Shāhnāmih* to rule the entire world, revered by all (Hinnells, 1989: 170). Although Cyrus founded the Achaemenid Empire, it was Darius who was its great organizer (Ibid: 15). Thus, through the integration of myth and history, Jamshīd could also be aligned with Darius, who initiated the construction of Persepolis and designated it as one of his capitals. This was where, at the beginning of spring and during the Nuvrūz celebrations, the kings of various nations would be received in that grand complex. However, it is crucial to reiterate John Hinnells's observation: "Iranian myths, for various reasons, have been damaged during their transmission, making the reconstruction of their complete image challenging," and thus the precise alignment of mythological elements with historical realities is nearly impossible (Ibid: 55). and that it is almost impossible to accurately match myth-related elements with historical facts.

Nonetheless, whether or not Firduvsī meant this very site by *Takht-i Jamshīd*, it is highly probable that later generations, based on the descriptions in the *Shāhnāmih* and their observations of the remains of Persepolis, identified it as the same *Takht-i Jamshīd* referenced by Firduvsī. This grand complex, with its towering columns, bas-reliefs of demons and mythical creatures (like the Lamassu), depictions of gift-bearers, the king seated on the throne receiving emissaries, and scenes of battles between the king and demons, all align with his descriptions.

4-3. Religious Influences

Religious beliefs have significantly influenced the naming of both historical and non-historical sites throughout Iranian history. Often shaped by historical misunderstandings or ignorance, these beliefs evolved into superstitions that became deeply ingrained in popular traditions and adopted symbolic functions. A prominent example is the association of Persepolis with the figure of Prophet Solomon, a trend that gained traction after the advent of Islam, particularly among ordinary people, and sometimes historians and geographers. The name *Takht-i Suliymān* (Throne of Solomon) used for Persepolis illustrates how ancient structures, which did not align with contemporary understandings, were attributed to mythical or religious figures. Solomon, renowned in popular culture for his supernatural abilities, was often identified as the figure behind these attributions. In addition to *Takht-i Suliymān*, the name of Solomon appeared in various forms, such as Solomon's Stadium or Solomon's Mosque, further cementing his association with the site.

In Iran, this practice was not limited to Persepolis but extended to other historical sites such as the *Takht-i Suliymān* (an alternative name for the Fire Temple of Āzargushasp in West Azerbaijan Province) and the *Zindān-i Suliymān* (Prison of Solomon) a nearby mountain.[7] Similarly, the city of *Masjid Suliymān* in Khuzestan Province was named after a structure believed to be a mosque built by Solomon, even though it was likely a fire temple from the Achaemenid period. Another example includes *Mashhad-i Mādar-i Suliymān* (Mother of Solomon's Mausoleum) referring to Pasargadae and the tomb of Cyrus the Great. Notably, in this case, an additional figure—the mother of Solomon—appears in popular belief, even though she remains nameless, being known simply as Mother of Solomon. Curiously, this raises the question of how a prophet of Jewish tradition became associated with a mosque. In this research, we encountered yet another mosque named after Solomon, this time in Kashan (see: Meshkati, 1967). Based on this trend, it can be estimated that there are dozens of other sites in Iran linked to Solomon.

Regarding the current discussion, al-Muqaddasī (945-991) refers to Persepolis as *Malʿab-i Suliymān* (Stadium of Solomon), comparing parts of it to the sports grounds of Levant (Al-Muqaddasī, 1983: 660-661), likely alluding to structures such as the Roman Colosseum or amphitheaters he might have seen in places like Palmyra. Similarly, Istakhrī (10ᵗʰ century CE) describes Istakhr as the oldest city in Persia and the seat of Persian kings. He explicitly mentions the Mosque of Solomon, son of David, and firmly attributes the site to the Prophet Solomon, dismissing as erroneous those who associate it with Jamshīd or equate Jamshīd with Solomon (Istakhrī, 1961: 110). Istakhrī could arguably be one of the first to refer to Persepolis as the Mosque of Solomon, a naming convention that became more established over time, as evidenced by its appearance in the later *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam* under the slightly different spelling of *Mazgit-i Suliymān* (*Ḥudūd al-'Ālam*, 1983: 131). Among all these references to Solomon, Zakarīya Qazvīnī offers an interesting and less commonly cited observation on the role of Persepolis as a fire temple. However, even he bases his account on its association with Solomon, presenting this view as the prevailing belief of his time:

> There is a grand fire temple of the Magi in Iṣṭakhr, said to have been the mosque of Solomon—peace be upon him. Masʿūdī states that this fire temple is located outside the city and features massive, extraordinary columns, atop which large, intricately carved stone statues stand. These statues, some claim, represent the prophets. The fire temple is near a mountain where the wind never ceases, night or day. It is said that Solomon—peace be upon him—confined the wind to this place (Qazvīnī, 1994: 203).

But who was Solomon, and what connection did he have with Iran, Jamshīd, or Persepolis? Historically, Solomon's lifetime is separated by at least 500 years from the Achaemenid era and the construction of Persepolis. If Persepolis were to be attributed to Solomon, the timeline of this site—and other places associated with him—would need to be pushed back by nearly half a millennium. Solomon, the son of David, was a king and prophet of the Israelites. While his exact birth date is unknown, it is generally placed around 1035 BCE (Farrar, 1890: 4). His character has been a subject of complexity and controversy in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, and he is mentioned numerous times in the Quran. "God granted Solomon great blessings and diverse gifts, including wisdom and knowledge, understanding the language of animals, control over the wind, an army composed of humans and jinn, and unparalleled sovereignty. Due to the vastness of his kingdom and extraordinary power, many tales about him have been narrated in commentaries and prophetic stories, some of which are clearly mythical in nature" (Pishvai, 2005).

Some Iranians have long equated Solomon with Jamshīd. This conflation becomes even more tangled in the *Fārsnāmih Nāṣirī*, where the confusion between the names of Jamshīd and Solomon over Iran's historical sites—especially Pasargadae—takes on a new dimension. Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Ḥusaynī Fasāī, the author of the *Fārsnāmih Nāṣirī*, claims that the current tomb in the Pasargadae complex is the Tomb of the Mother of Jamshīd:

> Since the tomb of the mother of Jamshīd is located in this region, and the ancient Persian belief considered Jamshīd to be a prophet, after the Arab conquest of Persia, this region was called *Mashhad-i Um al-Nabī* (Shrine of the Mother of the Prophet). And since the Persians equated Solomon and Jamshīd as one figure, they also called it the *Mashhad-i Mādar-i Suliymān* (Shrine of the Mother of Solomon), (Ḥusaynī Fasāī, 1999: 1558).

Thus, in part of the popular belief, Jamshīd was considered synonymous with Solomon. Here, mythology and religion intertwine, merging two mythical and religious figures into one, making it challenging even for historians to distinguish between the two. Interpretations varied based on personal beliefs and ideologies: those with stronger religious inclinations tended to attribute sites to Solomon (e.g., Iṣṭakhrī), while those drawn to mythological and literary traditions were more likely to associate them with figures like Jamshīd or Gayūmart (e.g., as seen in the works of poets like Firduvsī). In any case, from a religious perspective, the myth of Solomon and his supernatural traits—transmitted through Israelite traditions—has deeply influenced Iranian folklore, even permeating some pseudo-scientific narratives.

Along with its religious f *Ṣad Sutūn* unction, such naming conventions may also stem from the symbolic function of these structures. Laurie Adams, in her book *A History of Western Art*, suggests that stone Lamassus—creatures composed of human and animal features—symbolized royal power, and that these monumental divine jinns served as guardian figures at the palace entrances (Adams, 2011: 45). Even in the bas-reliefs of Persepolis, depictions of kings battling otherworldly creatures appear, possibly inspiring associations of the site with legendary kings and figures mentioned in literary and religious texts. These figures were celebrated for their superhuman traits and dominion over both humans and supernatural beings, such as jinn, as well as their battles with demons and dragons.

4-4. Architectural Influences

Another aspect of the naming of Persepolis is derived from the site itself and the ruins left behind. After the destruction of Persepolis by Alexander the Great, the columns were one of the elements that remained from the vast complex. These stone columns, primarily belonging to the Apadana Palace, became one of the reasons for the selection of some of the names associated with Persepolis. Names such as *Ṣad Sutūn* (Hundred Columns), *Chihil Sutūn* (Forty Columns), or even *Hizār Sutūn* (Thousand Columns). According to Shapur Shahbazi, "During the Sāsānīyān period, this site was called *Ṣad Sutūn*, although the name referred not only to the *Tālār-i Ṣad Sutūn* (Hundred-Column Palace) but to all the buildings on the terrace. In later periods, in the collective memory of the people of Fars, *Ṣad Sutūn* became the *Chihil Sutūn* and *Chihil Minār* (Forty Minarets)" (Shahbazi, 2010: 23). *Tālār-i Ṣad Sutūn* (Hundred-Column Palace) is the second-largest palace at Persepolis after Apadana, where a hundred columns are located, and the hundred soldiers depicted on the palace's main doorways reference the ten thousand soldiers of the Achaemenid Immortal Guard, with the king at its head. After the destruction of Persepolis, many of the columns of this palace were also damaged, and it is certain that the naming of Persepolis as *Ṣad Sutūn* (Hundred Columns) by the later people was not because of the hundred columns in this palace or even throughout the entire Persepolis complex.

Our knowledge of the use of the name *Ṣad Sutūn* to refer to Persepolis comes from two inscriptions attributed to Shāpūr II in the Tachara Palace at Persepolis. In part of the first inscription (ŠPs-I), it reads:

> In the month of Isfand, in the second year (of the reign) of the Mazdā-worshipping deity, Shāpūr, King of Kings of Īrān and Anīrān [non-Iran], who bears the lineage of the gods, at a time when Shāpūr Sakānshāh rules the regions of Sind, Sīstān, and Tūrān up to the shores of the sea, the son of the Mazdā-worshipping deity Hurmuz, King of Kings of Iran and *Anīrān*, who bears the lineage of the gods, offered prayer at the court of his majesty, and he made his way to this road between Istakhr and Sīstān, and for good deed he came here to *Ṣad Sutūn*... (Daryaee, 2001).

In the second inscription (SPs-II), it is stated:

> In the month of *Tīr* of the forty-eighth year, on the day of Ūrmazd (the first
> day of the month), we, Seleucus, son of the right Shāpūr, and Kavor, the judge,
> came to *Ṣad Sutūn*, and the text that had been previously written and ordered
> by Shāpūr Sakānshāh to be inscribed was instructed by us... (Sami, 1975).

Since many numbers have traditionally held symbolic value in folklore, particularly in Iranian culture, the choice of "hundred" or "forty" for Persepolis is not rooted in factual reality but rather in symbolic and social constructs. The number forty, for instance, is one of those numbers whose significance goes beyond mere quantitative representation. Historically, the number forty has symbolized perfection and completeness. In contrast to numbers considered inauspicious, forty is regarded with an aura of sanctity and blessing in most societies and cultures, holding a special significance. In many references involving the number forty, we can see that the number itself loses its quantitative nature and takes on meanings of perfection, completeness, and abundance. For example, we all know that the *Chihil Sutūn* (Forty Columns) Palace in Isfahan has only twenty columns, or that the Tomb of the *Chihil Tan* (Forty Saints) in Shiraz contains no more than sixteen graves (Hasanzadeh, 2007). Thus, the use of forty to refer to Persepolis can be justified on the same basis, and the selection of the number one hundred can also be explained similarly. Overall, in the existing structures of Persepolis, the symbolic value and sanctity of numbers are abundantly evident.[8]

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Davānī a scholar of the 9th century AH, in his treatise "Arż-i Sipāh-i Ūzūn Ḥasan (The Presentation of the Army Ūzūn Ḥasan)" notes that the people of his time—he was from Fārs—used the term *Chihil Sutūn* to refer to the complex associated with Jamshīd. He also mentions another name that was previously used for Persepolis:

> Description of the *Chihil Sutūn*
>
> In some historical records that have come to attention, it is written that this
> place was known as the *Hizār Sutūn* (Thousand Columns) during the time of
> the Persian kings, and during the time of Jamshīd, whom historians believe to
> be Solomon, the construction of this site took place, and it is also reported that
> after its completion, Jamshīd ordered all his subjects to gather at the foot of
> the mountain on the day of Nuvrūz (Davānī, 1956).

Here, we encounter another name for Persepolis: *Hizār Sutūn*. Although *Hizār Sutūn* was not a commonly used name for Persepolis, references to it can be found in older sources. For instance, in the *Mujmal al-Tawārīkh* (likely dating back to the 5th or 6th century AH), when describing the reign of Humāy-i Chihrāzad,[9] there is a mention of *Hizār Sutūn*:

> ... and Humāy set them to building. In Pārs, she constructed three structures:
> one in the direction of the *Hizār Sutūn*, which is Iṣṭakhr; the second… (*Mujmal*
> *al-Tawārīkh wa al-Qiṣaṣ*, 1999: 45).

Chihil Minār (Forty Minarets) is another name historically associated with the architecture of Persepolis and, specifically, with the remaining columns of the site. This name was widely known among people in the past and was also mentioned by foreign travelers. Giosafat Barbaro (1413–

1494), a Venetian diplomat, merchant, and traveler, is one of the earliest individuals to refer to *Chihil Minār* in his travelogue. He writes, "…there is a plain above it, surrounded by nearly forty columns, which they call *Chihil Minār* [in the text: *Cilminar*], meaning 'Forty Columns' in their language" (Barbaro, 1985: 97).

Another figure, Pietro Della Valle, an Italian traveler from the 11th century AH and 17th century CE who traveled to Iran during the Safavid period, also mentions in his work that the people of that time called Persepolis *Chihil Minār*:

> ...an enormous ancient structure known in Iran as *Chihil Minār*, located a bit further from Shiraz in the ancient city of Persepolis, which I believe to be the burial place of the ancient kings of Iran or a palace from the time of the Cyrus and Darius (Della Valle, 1991: 330).

Robert Stodart, an Englishman who was sent to the court of Shāh ʿAbbās Safavid with a delegation between 1627 and 1629 CE, left a travelogue in which he recounts his visit to Persepolis:

> On the twenty-third day, I went to *Chihil Minār*. It's a historical site with ancient relics. It was here that the great monarchs of the East, such as Cyrus and Cambyses, who laid the foundations of this renowned structure and many other buildings, resided. This Cambyses is the same figure whom Iranians refer to as Jamshīd.
>
> After visiting *Chihil Minār* and the tomb of Rustam, which is a farsang [league] away from *Chihil Minār*, we observed the carvings there, took horses and reached Zarqān, a poor village beside a hill, one English mile from "Rustam's House," which has now been converted into a mosque and restored (Stodart, 1960).[10]

Another person who mentioned *Chihil Minār* was the French merchant and traveler, Tavernier (11th century AH/17th century CE), who traveled to Iran during the Safavid era (Tavernier, 2020, 325). From examining the travelogues written during this period, we conclude that *Chihil Minār* was the term used to refer to Persepolis during the Safavid era.

4-5. Underused Names

In addition to these names, there might have been other names referring to Persepolis, some of which did not gain popularity and have faded from historical memory. Besides figures like Jamshīd and Solomon, one of the individuals to whom Persepolis was attributed was Humāy—which was also mentioned earlier. One of the earliest references to this attribution can be found in *Tārikh-i Ṭabarī* (History of Ṭabarī), in a historically complex and somewhat chaotic narrative that intertwines legendary figures with historical ones from the Achaemenid and Sāsānīyān periods, alongside references to Roman (but not ancient Greek) eras, as well as prophets from the Israelite tradition. Ṭabarī speaks of Gushtāsp, Ardishīr (Artaxerxes), Bahman, Rustam, Dastān, Dar (Darius), Sāsān, Isfandīyār, Humāy, and others, even drawing inspiration from the story of Moses. He recounts that after Bahman's death, Humāy placed Dara in a chest and cast him into the

Kur River so she could become the sole king. She was also the one who repeatedly sent armies to fight Rome and had the buildings of Iṣṭakhr (possibly Persepolis) constructed by Roman captives in the Roman style, and so forth (Tabari, 2011: 483-486). Apparently, this narrative became the dominant one for some time after Ṭabarī, with Humāy being regarded as the founder of Persepolis and Iṣṭakhr identified as Persepolis.[11] For example, this same narrative appears almost verbatim in *Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* by Dīnwarī (815-895), (Dīnwarī, 1985: 51-52) and *Tārikh-i Payāmbarān va Shāhān* (History of the Prophets and Kings) by Ḥamza ibn al-Ḥasan Iṣfahānī (893-961), (Ḥamza ibn al-Ḥasan Iṣfahānī, 1967: 38), both of whom lived not long after Ṭabarī's time. In later periods, the name Iṣṭakhr frequently appeared in significant historical and geographical works, such as Iṣṭakhrī's *Masālik al-Mamālik* (The Routes of the Kingdoms) and the well-known *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam*.

Another name with low frequency in historical texts, which some authors believed referred to Persepolis, was mentioned by Odoric of Pordenone, an Italian religious missionary from the 14th and 15th centuries CE. Some historians consider the city he described as *Comerum* to be Persepolis. After passing through Yazd, he reports:

> Then passing many days' journey on forward, I came to a certain city called *Comerum*, which was a huge and mighty city in old time, containing well-nigh fifty miles of walls, and in times past did great damage to the Romans. In it there are stately palaces altogether destitute of inhabitants, notwithstanding it abounds with great store of provisions (Komroff, 1928: 215-216).

Ali Mousavi, citing Shapur Shahbazi, considers this word to be a corruption of *Kumihr*, derived from *Kūh-i Mihr* (the Mountain of Mehr) or *Kūh-i Raḥmat* (the Mountain of Mercy), (Shahbazi, 1977, as in: Mousavi, 2012: 95), near which Persepolis was constructed. It is possible that Odoric, due to language barriers and communication difficulties, misunderstood and interpreted *Kūh-i Mihr* as *Kumir*, or as he says *Comerum*. There is also the possibility of confusion with other place names, leading him to mistakenly associate this name with Persepolis, especially since a location with this name exists in the same region, which Muḥammad Nāṣir ibn-i Jaʿfar Furṣat Shīrāzī (1271–1339 AH), a poet, writer, painter, and statesman of the Qajar era, mentioned this place in *Āsār-i Ajam* while discussing Shiykh Quṭb al-Dīn, stating, "His tomb is in *Kumehr*, meaning in *Kamīn*..." (Furṣat Shīrāzī, 1998: 405).[12] Interestingly, Furṣat Shīrāzī himself, on page 377, dedicates a section to introducing *Kamīn*, but, there, he makes no mention of either Persepolis or *Kumihr*. Based on this, we may conclude that Odoric's report of *Comerum* and his association of it with Persepolis is a confused account, and it is even unlikely that the local people used this term to refer to Persepolis.

5. Tracing the Original Name

Today, after centuries have passed, we know that the true and original name of Persepolis was *Pārsih*, "a title derived from the name of the Persian people, who called their own province by the same name, Pārs, which we today call Fārs. This name, *Pārsih*, is inscribed as the city's

name in Xerxes' inscription on the wall of the 'Gate of All Nations' and also appears on the Elamite tablets unearthed from the treasury and fortifications of Persepolis" (Shahbazi, 2010: 22). This discovery—the recognition of the name used by the builders of this complex, the Achaemenids—has only been made possible through the efforts of dozens of archaeologists, historians, and travelers who deciphered cuneiform and read the ancient inscriptions of Persepolis. Each contributed, through transcription and comparison of various cuneiform inscriptions, to the unraveling of the cuneiform alphabet, ultimately enabling historians and archaeologists to read these ancient texts with precision. This undertaking spanned three centuries—from the 17th to the 19th century—before reaching fruition. The initiative can be traced back to 1622, when Pietro della Valle brought a copy of the cuneiform inscriptions of Persepolis to Italy during his journey to Iran. Then, in 1674, Jean Chardin first used the term "cuneiform". Later, more seriously and separately, individuals like Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815), and eventually Friedrich Grotefend (1775-1853) and Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895) succeeded in completely and accurately reading the Achaemenid inscriptions at Persepolis and other sites, like Bīsutūn.[13] After centuries of using various names, the trilingual inscription of Xerxes on the wall of the Gate of All Nations at Persepolis clarified that *Pārsih* was the original name of Persepolis a name hidden from our knowledge for a span of twenty-three centuries.

The translation of Xerxes' inscription (XPa), written in cuneiform four times in three languages —Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian—on the walls of the Gate of All Nations at Persepolis reads as follows:

> **- Paragraph 1:** A great is who created this earth, who created that heaven, who created man, who created the joy of man, who made Xerxes king, one king among many, one governor among many.

> **- Paragraph 2:** I am Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the king of countries with all kinds of people, the king of this vast, far-reaching land, son of Darius the king, an Achaemenid.

> **- Paragraph 3:** Xerxes the king says: By the will of Ahūrā-Mazdā, I built this Gate of All Nations. Many other beautiful works in this *Pārsih* were done by me and my father. Everything that is beautiful to the eye, we did by the will of Ahūrā-Mazdā.

> **- Paragraph 4:** Xerxes the king says: May Ahūrā-Mazdā protect me and my kingdom, and what has been done by me and what has been done by my father—may Ahūrā-Mazdā preserve it! (Sharp[14], 1967: 109).

Despite this significant historical discovery and the understanding that *Pārsih* was the name chosen and used by the builders of this complex, ultimately, *Takht-i Jamshīd* (Throne of Jamshīd) became the established name, which remains widely accepted among Iranians today. Furṣat Shīrāzī's repeated and consistent use of the title *Takht-i Jamshīd* in *Āsār-i Ajam* indicates that this name became established and was in use during the Qajar period. Furṣat Shīrāzī, who was commissioned to map and document Iran's ancient sites at the end of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's reign, write:

Some historians have written that the city of Istakhr was initially built by Gayūmart; others state that it was founded by his son, whose name was Istakhr; following that, Hūshang added to its construction; and then Jamshīd completed it. It is recorded that Jamshīd's enthronement was 2,419 years after Adam's fall, and *Takht-i Jamshīd* is called "Persepolis" in English. From its remnants, ruins, buildings, and columns, it is evident that few constructions in the inhabited world were built with such solidity; minds are astonished upon seeing it. The Eternal God is witness to the fact that words fail to capture its description; one cannot truly understand what has been achieved and what structures were left behind until they have seen it. This humble one stayed there for seven days and nights. To the best of my ability, I drew a few sketches of those buildings and recorded some details about the site... (Furṣat Shīrāzī, 1998: 218).

He then goes on to describe the different parts of *Takht-i Jamshīd* in detail and consistently uses this name. Thus, this name has become widely used among both the general public and the scholarly community. Ordinary people commonly refer to this complex as *Takht-i Jamshīd*, and even the most renowned historians and archaeologists, despite their familiarity and knowledge of the original name of the site, *Pārsih*, use the popular term accepted by the public. For example, one of the most distinguished researchers on Persepolis, whose work has become a source for many international articles and historical books on this subject, is Professor Shapour Shahbazi. He has conducted some of the most important published studies on Persepolis, and while referring to its original name, he did not choose or use any name other than *Takht-i Jamshīd* in Persian; a choice that was both deliberate and wise. For the name *Takht-i Jamshīd* itself has become a part of Iran's cultural heritage, and changing it would mean tampering with the collective memory of Iranians; an act that would undoubtedly be met with resistance and possibly collective opposition.

In all the periods in which various names were used in Iran to refer to this site, simultaneously and among non-Iranian historians, a single name, Persepolis, was used to refer to that. This uniform use of the name Persepolis and the reason for the lack of significant variation or change in its name in non-Iranian societies are due to surviving texts, especially from ancient Greek historians. The name used by Greek historians from the outset to refer to Persepolis has continued with minor modifications to the present day. However, the research of Professor Shapour Shahbazi, based on various sources, provides an interesting etymology of this name's choice, which is worth quoting in detail:

The famous Western name for this place, *Persepolis*, has a peculiar origin. In Greek, *Persepolis*, or its poetic form *Perseptolis*, is an epithet for Athena, the goddess of wisdom, craftsmanship, and war, meaning 'destroyer of cities.' This epithet was used by Aeschylus, the 5th-century BCE Greek poet, in *The Persians*, to refer to 'the city of the Persians' as a pun and play on words. This deliberately incorrect translation, in its simpler form, *Persepolis*, became

popular in Western texts and was later adopted by modern people (Shahbazi, 2010: 22).

It is clear that the Greeks and Greek historians were familiar from the beginning with the use of *Pārsih* by Iranians to refer to Persepolis; Ktesias, in referring to Persepolis and Pasargadae, used *Pārsih* (Ktesias, 1888: 136). however, they seem to have preferred the use of Persepolis, and this name was accepted and established among them and almost the entire Western world, except in cases where foreign travelers and historians referenced the names used by locals and Iranians to refer to Persepolis, some of which we have previously mentioned.

6. Conclusion

This study has traced the evolution of Persepolis's names, revealing a complex interplay of historical, cultural, linguistic, and mythological factors that have shaped perceptions of this monumental site. This study explored how the name *Pārsih* (its authentic Achaemenid name) was obscured over millennia, replaced by a series of designations reflecting Iran's shifting cultural and historical landscapes. Specifically, our awareness of the name *Pārsih* has been established through the deciphering of cuneiform texts, marking a new understanding that was not previously available. These names offer a unique lens into the transformations of Iranian society, from the grandeur of the Achaemenid Empire to post-Islamic reinterpretations and modern nationalist revivalism.

Concerning the names of Persepolis, aside from *Pārsih* (which we know with certainty was used by the Achaemenids themselves) the exact timing of other names is unknown. Based on various historical sources and their references to the name used for Persepolis, we likely can say in which historical period each name was utilized. Thus, following the title *Pārsih*, which was used from the time of the construction of Persepolis, during the Seleucid rule and considering their direct connection to Alexander and Greek historians, it can be said that the widely known title *Persepolis*, coined by Greek historians, was in use. However, concerning the Parthian Empire, which rose to power after the Seleucids and ruled Iran for nearly five hundred years, we lack as much information as we have for the Achaemenid or Sāsānīyān eras. Some historians attribute this lack to the destruction of Parthian cultural artifacts and heritages by the Sāsānīyāns, who sought to present themselves as the direct heirs of the Achaemenids. As discussed earlier in this study, the Parthians traced their lineage back to the Achaemenids and specifically to Artaxerxes II. Syncellus, in *Chronography*, mentions that the two brothers, Arsaces and Tiridates, rebelled against the Seleucid rule during Antiochus' reign due to their claimed lineage from Artaxerxes, king of the Persians. Thus, given the historical closeness of the Parthians to the Achaemenids, it can be inferred that they, too, likely referred to Persepolis as *Pārsih*.

In the Sāsānīyān era, and based on an inscription by Shapur II in the Tachara palace at Persepolis, we know that Persepolis was called *Ṣad Sutūn* (Hundred Columns). However, after Islam, various names arose for different reasons. The primary influence stemmed from the mythological perspective on history, based on oral epic traditions and, above all, Firduvsī's *Shāhnāmih*. Thus,

the title we use today, widely recognized among all Iranians, took shape and eventually became established after centuries: *Takht-i Jamshīd* (Throne of Jamshīd). In the Islamic period, along with *Takht-i Jamshīd*, various other names were used, such as *Takht-i Suliymān* (Throne of Solomon), *Malʿab-i Suliymān* (Solomon's Stadium), *Masjid-i Suliymān* (Mosque of Solomon), *Chihil Sutūn* (Forty Columns), *Chihil Minār* (Forty Minarets), *Hizār Sutūn* (Thousand Columns), and several other less common names. Among non-Iranians, the title *Persepolis*, established by Greek historians, was recognized from the beginning, and in the post-Islamic era, travelers and writers often referred to the local names used for this site alongside Persepolis.

These onomastic transformations highlight how collective memory and cultural identity have shaped and been shaped by Persepolis's legacy. The use of *Takht-i Jamshīd*, widely recognized among Iranians today, underscores the enduring influence of Firduvsī's *Shāhnāmih* in intertwining myth and history. Simultaneously, the continued use of *Persepolis* in Western traditions underscores the global resonance of this site, albeit through external interpretations shaped by Greek historiography.

This study has examined the evolution of Persepolis's names to explore how language and culture have intersected in preserving, interpreting, or distorting historical narratives. Persepolis, as both an architectural marvel and a linguistic palimpsest, has reflected the layers of Iranian identity and history. Its names, from the Achaemenid *Pārsih* to later titles, have highlighted shifts in political power, cultural memory, and national identity. This analysis has underscored the importance of protecting cultural heritage from modern challenges, such as ideological distortion and geopolitical conflict. Future researches could investigate the sociopolitical implications of onomastic changes, revealing how the renaming of cultural sites has shaped collective memory and national identity. By understanding Persepolis's names, we have gained insight into the broader role of onomastics in preserving and interpreting heritage, emphasizing the ongoing relevance of names in shaping cultural continuity and transformation amid political change.

Endnotes

1. Darius, in the Bīsutūn inscription (DB), lists 23 subordinate countries: 1. Persia, 2. Khūzistān (Īlām), 3. Babylon, 4. Assyria, 5. Arabia, 6. Egypt, 7. Greeks living by the sea (Cilicia and Cyprus), 8. Sardis (Lydia), 9. Ionia (Greeks living on the coast of Asia Minor), 10. Media, 11. Armenia, 12. Cappadocia, 13. Parsava (Khurāsān), 14. Sīstān (Zarang), 15. Hirāt, 16. Khārazm, 17. Balkh (Bactria), 18. Sogdia 19. Gandhara, 20. Saka, 21. Satagavsh (part of present-day Afghanistan), 22. Harauvatish (Arachosia), and 23. Makran (Sotoudeh, 1971). In his later inscriptions, such as those at Persepolis, Susa, the Suez Canal in Egypt, and Naqsh-i Rustam, Darius mentions additional lands and tribes beyond the 23 regions conquered during the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses. These include Asagarta (around the region of Kurdistān), India, Skudra (parts of modern Macedonia), Libya, Ethiopia, Karkā (possibly Georgia), and other groups of Scythians and Ionians (Greeks). In some cases, the number of satrapies increases to 30, as indicated in Darius's inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam. Xerxes, in his inscription at Persepolis, adds two more groups: the Dahaeans (a Scythian group) and the Ākufchīyā (likely in Kerman and Makrān), bringing the total number to 31 satrapies (Jamali, 2013).

2. For instance, the Tachara Palace, which was Darius's private residence, is famously known as the "Hall of Mirrors" among the people. This is because the stones used in its construction are highly polished and smooth, and in several doorways, they have remarkably retained their clarity and gloss, reflecting faces like a mirror. Additionally, due to the well-preserved condition of the stones and the minimal damage caused by fire, from the Sāsānīyān period to the post-Islamic era, kings, princes, military commanders, and

calligraphers visiting Persepolis have engraved inscriptions and memoirs on its walls, columns, and doorways. Today, many of these inscriptions hold significant historical interest and value (Sami, 1975).

3. Different narratives have been recorded regarding these events, ranging from the capture and destruction of Athens to the burning of the Acropolis, with the latter theory finding broader acceptance among historians. Tom Holland provides a comprehensive account of this event in his book *Persian Fire: The First World Empire and the Battle for the West*, detailing the evacuation of Athens by the Greeks, its transformation into a ghost town, and the subsequent arrival of Xerxes' army (for further reading, refer to: Holland, 2005). In general, some historians attribute Xerxes's campaign to a desire for revenge over the defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Marathon (Barringer & Hurwit, 2005: 91). While others see it as a response to the burning of the city of Sardis, one of the Achaemenid satrapies, by the Greeks. The abstract of the historians' accounts in this context can be summarized in Abdulazim Rezaei's statement that "The Iranian army deviously went toward Athens, conquered the said city, burned down the temple of Athena, and in this way the revenge of the Greeks for the burning of Sardis was avenged" (Rezaei, 1985: 221).

4. Even here, the linguistic evolution of the name, which we now write and pronounce as Jamshīd, is noteworthy.

5. Hinnells' reference to Jamshīd's thousand-year reign is likely based on a source other than the *Shāhnāmih*, as the *Shāhnāmih* states: *Seven hundred years passed him by*; *He created all that was good and ill* (Firduvsī, 2020: 28).

6. A legendary lineage of primordial kings central to Zoroastrian belief and Persian mythology. Initially depicted as rulers of the entire world, their dominion was eventually confined to Īrānshahr in the legends.

7. Based on excavations by the German Archaeological Institute in Iran, beginning in 1960, the structure known as the Zindān-i Suliymān has been identified as a fortress from the 8–7th centuries BCE, later acquiring a religious function alongside the Āzargushasp Fire Temple, where sacrifices were performed atop its summit. (see: Kleiss, "Takht-i Suliymān and Zindān-i Suliymān"). Once again, these two sites were attributed to Solomon not based on historical reality but due to popular myths and superstitions.

8. For more detailed information regarding the symbolic value of numbers in Persepolis, see Appendix Two in the *Authoritative Guide to Persepolis*, titled "Scales and Numbers in Persepolis."

9. This refers to the female Iranian ruler, the seventh king of the Kayānīyān dynasty.

10. Here, we witness Stodart's historical error in attributing the construction of Persepolis to Cyrus and Cambyses, identifying Cambyses rather than Darius as equivalent to Jamshīd. Another issue is his perception of the Naqsh-i Rustam complex and the tombs of the Achaemenid kings as the tomb of the legendary Rustam from the *Shāhnāmih*, based on the beliefs of the people of that time.

11. As previously mentioned, Istakhr is a city from the Sāsānīyān era, located near Persepolis.

12. The editor explains in a footnote that *Kumihr* is said to have originally been *Kūh-i Mihr*, which, in any case, is the old name for *Kamīn*.

13. For a complete study of the process of cuneiform discovery, refer to the article by Dr. Lutz Glelhammer, German Ambassador to Iran: "The Discovery of Cuneiform."

14. The Reverend Ralph Norman Sharp was an Anglican missionary and later university assistant professor of Old Persians in Pahlavi university, Shiraz.

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نام‌شناسی تخت‌جمشید در اسناد و متون تاریخی: از آغاز تا دورهٔ قاجار

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چکیده	تاریخچه مقاله
این پژوهـش بـه بررسـی سـیر تاریخـی نام‌هایـی می‌پـردازد کـه در طـول زمـان بـه تخت‌جمشید، یکـی از برجسته‌تریـن محوطه‌هـای باسـتانی ایـران، اطلاق شـده اسـت. مسـئلۀ اصلی پژوهـش، ایـن پرسـش اسـت کـه، چگونـه تغییـرات در نام‌گـذاری یادمان‌هـای باسـتانی بازتابـی از دگرگونی‌هـای گسـترده‌تر در حافظـۀ جمعـی، ایدئولـوژی و هویت فرهنگـی هسـتند. هدف اصلـی مطالعـه، دنبـال کردن فرآیندهایـی اسـت که طی آن‌هـا نام‌هایـی چـون «پارسـه» در سـنگ‌نوشته‌های هخامنشـی تـا «تخت‌جمشـید» در دوره‌هـای متأخرتـر، در بسـتری از گفتمان‌هـای تاریخـی، دینـی و فرهنگـی شـکل گرفته‌انـد. ایـن پژوهـش بـا بهره‌گیـری از رویکـردی میان‌رشـته‌ای کـه تحلیل زبان‌شـناختی، تاریخـی و باستان‌شـناختی را بـا یک‌دیگر تلفیـق می‌کند، بـه بررسـی منابع متنوعـی ازجملـه کتیبه‌هـای سـلطنتی، متـون تاریخـی کلاسـیک و اسـلامی، سـفرنامه‌ها و ادبیات اسطوره‌ای می‌پـردازد و بـه نقطۀ عطفـی در دوران مدرن اشـاره می‌کند که پیشـرفت‌های علمـی در حـوزهٔ باستان‌شـناسی، به‌ویـژه رمزگشـایی خطـوط میخـی، موجب رفع برداشـت‌های نادرسـت تاریخـی شـد و نـام اصیـل «پارسـه» کـه در روزگار هخامنشـیان به‌کار می‌رفت، بـار دیگر به هویت این مجموعـه بازگردانده شـد. یافته‌هـای پژوهش نشـان می‌دهد کـه تاریخ نام‌گـذاری تخت‌جمشید صرفـاً موضوعـی واژگانـی نیسـت، بلکـه دریچـه‌ای مهـم بـرای درک چگونگی بـه یاد آوردن، بازتفسـیر و بازسـازی گذشـته اسـت. بـا قـرار دادن ایـن تاریـخ نام‌شـناختی در دل مباحث کلان‌تـری چـون: باستان‌شـناسی، میراث‌فرهنگی، حافظـۀ تاریخـی و تاریخ‌نـگاری، ایـن پژوهـش سـهمی در فهـم ژرف‌تـر فرآیندهـای فرهنگـی‌ای دارد کـه هویـت تاریخـی را شـکل می‌دهنـد و بازتعریـف می‌کننـد.	**صص: ۲۱۵-۱۸۹** **نوع مقاله:** پژوهشی **تاریخ دریافت:** ۱۴۰۳/۱۲/۰۲ **تاریخ بازنگری:** ۱۴۰۴/۰۱/۲۶ **تاریخ پذیرش:** ۱۴۰۴/۰۲/۰۸ **تاریخ انتشار:** ۱۴۰۴/۰۵/۰۱ **کلیدواژگان:** تخت‌جمشید، پارسه، امپراتوری هخامنشی، نام‌شناسی ایرانی، اساطیر ایرانی، میراث باستان‌شناسی، اسناد تاریخی.