A Study on the High Reliefs of the Medes Time in Kermanshah

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Abstract:
This article deals with the study of high reliefs in Kermanshah in the Median era. The purpose of this article is to perform a more accurate study of high reliefs in Kermanshah in the Median era and analyze them artistically in order to have a detailed comparison with other time periods. The method of this research is library-documentary, which means the needed information are firstly collected and then analyzed. The result of this research shows this issue that although the Medes have benefited by the cultural heritage of neighbors like the Elamites and Assyrians, but they have been able to process all those effects over time and create a new unique style.

Keywords: High Reliefs, the Medes, Kermanshah, Art.
Introduction:

On the Achaemenid inscriptions, the Medes country was named Median land that Greek historians called it Media [1]. On the Assyrian Cuneiform inscriptions for the first time Medes have been mentioned in the date of 836 BC, in the age of the kingdom of Shalmaneser III. It isn’t clearly obvious that when the Medes enter to Iran but they have most likely moved to Iran at ninth century BC. On the base of a viewpoint, the Medes have entered to Iran from the south of modern Russia and since they have found militarily the kingdom of Urartu as authoritative, they haven’t therefore dared to attack that territory and preferred to conquer the western part of Iran plateau [3].

Median Aryans were the only tribe speaking in the Iranian languages and establishing their own kingdom before Achaemenid. The Medes were deployed in the foothills of Zagros and merged with the indigenous peoples and they not only learned their livelihood rites but also the cultural traditions and religious beliefs [4]. Median country namely Median land included the central and western parts of Iran and it extended from Elam and Fars to the Zagros Mountains. Establishment and strengthening of the Medes government despite of its short-time survival was an important historical event, because for the first time, a nation was found that could risk the domination of the Sami peoples in Western Asia and establish the Aryans government.

It isn’t available a lot of information about the ancient times of the Medes history, with the exception of that an indigenous authoritative dynasty would rule in the country to date 550 BC. Herodotus the king of the Medes points out to four persons: Deioces (Dayukku), Phraortes (Pravartish), Cyaxares (Ksuwaksaros) and Astyages (Is-tu-me-gu) [5]. We get the information about the establishment of the Medes government from Herodotus’ “History” book that on this base, during the period of Phraortes heir of Deioces the founder of the Median imperial dynasty, the Medes inforced the Persians to obey themselves, and but on 612 BC, Cyaxares subverted Nineveh the capital of Assyrian. Median land covenant with Nebuchadnezzar II the authorized king of neo-Babylonian dynasty and Cyaxares took in marriage his daughter for him. The united Medes and Babylonians forces would soon hold the whole Assyria and northern Mesopotamia and became the largest government of Near East [6]. After the death of Cyaxares, his son Astyages the last king of the Medes held the administration of government in Media (550-585 BC).

The power that was going to annihilate the independent government of the Medes was born in the areas of east south and under the mastery of the Medes, in a region called Pars. It has been mentioned about the Persians and as well as the Medes on the Assyrian inscriptions for the first time in 9th century BC. Like the Medes, the Persians were divided into the different tribes that one of them was Pasargad tribe creating the pompous dynasty of Achaemenid. Of course, when Cyrus succeeded in concuerring the Median kings, the subject of extension of the country’s borders wasn’t possed because the Medes and Persians were same race [7].

On 550 BC, Cyrus the competent commandant and head of the Persian army declared a war against the Medes and after a series of other long-term and consecutive wars captured Ekbatan the capital of the Medes. But it should be noted that Cyrus after the defeat of Astyages the last king of the Medes, didn’t humiliate him, but he considered for him an honorable position and occasion in himself empire [8].

Median as peoples who were just shaping, benefited by the cultural heritage created by their neighbors namely the peoples having the older history of Mesopotamia, and thus, for example, the kings of Media and thereafter also the Persians were often illustrated militating
accompanied by a imaginary beast, a fierce animal and gaining a victory over it, like the instance of portraying the character of Gilgamesh, the Sumerian king and hero. And even during the period of Achaemenid government, both the Medes and Persians (Iranians) designed or carved Ahura Mazda, their own superior god in the format of a heavenly king, within a circle-form winged surface of the sun that this form is an exactly reminiscent of similar images of the Assyrians super god. The engraving works of the flat surfaces, and the petroglyphs on the walls of the palaces built by both the Medes and Persians are infinitely similar to the Assyrian and Babylonian high reliefs created in the subsequent centuries in the terms of their subject content, artistic style and implementation art. It is assumed that the Median architects and builders have often merely simulated and patterned the architectural buildings and constructional skills of the kingdom of Urartu. And yet, over time, the Medes and Persians have been creatively able to produce these derived and exotic elements and subjugate them to their own steady, comprehensive artistic style and innovative remembrance. It is necessary that we add as follows that these Medians are known as the planners of the Achaemenid art; it is the cultural and artistic heritage remained from them that has provided a potential ground for the Achaemenid art and strengthened it [9].

By the buildings remained from the Medes age, and in this case, the petroglyphs and other samples of visual art, one can have partially the imaginations about how that people look, dress and live. In general, they were the men and women having round faces, thick brows, short hairs, medium heights, and strong physiques. They had the sheep- and cheetah-skin capes and fastened the long covers on their feet. They wore the high, trumpeted, fine-tip and on the front or around-edged hats. Median clothes were the reminiscent of the clothing of peoples residing in the uncomfortable climatic conditions and cold areas. Their shirts’ sleeves were freely hung from their shoulders and they wouldn’t restrict the movement of people. It is interesting that many herdmen and farmers residing in Iran today wear the same clothes. Of its obvious examples is “Pharajy” seen especially among the Kurdish herdmen. The cloaks and trousers have also been the non-separable part of the Medes clothes. They and also Scythians, Sakas and Massagetaes of which the Medians have derived other many things in their livelihood affairs have hang the short copper swords (fine-tip double-edged Acinaces) on the waist area.

In Sarpol-e zahab region, there is a series of tombs of which the major part has been left from the Medes period. The date of their construction can be determined from the images engraved on the walls and showing a historical event, war spectacle and famous religious ritual. The largest tomb is Dokan-e Dawud which was mentioned. This tomb has been one of the Medes’ holy places. There is no way upwards from the Catacombs and one can’t find a path to it from above as well, but the youths of that land overcome easily the bars which seem insurmountable and so easy and comfortable enter the Catacomb. Only the underpart of two thick stone colourns of the tomb enterance’s margin has been left (Figure 6). Some experts consider this place as the tomb of Astyages the last Medes king [10]; some also believe that this building has been built later and during the Achaemenid Empire [11]. A man praying has been engraved on the lower part of tomb’s outer wall (Figure 7). He has worn a clothe with a long skirt and had a wand in his hands especial for Magi, which is known as Barsmunak or Barsum and formed of a bundle of the date palm’s leaves twisted and plait to each other, and fire-worshippers kept it in their hands while praying or worship ceremony. The face of this man is toward the east. From the position and movement of him hands and the manner of holding and keeping the bundle of leaves, it is guessed that he is praying.

In New Ishaq Vand Village, there is a petroglyph in a relatively small Catacomb in
where we see the character of another man (Figures 8 and 9). According to Ernest Herzfeld, this petroglyph also belongs to the Medes age. On the foot of the mountain of this villager rehin, three holes have been drilled that third one is wider in comparision with two other cases and there are two frames by 10 meters higher that ground level and but above the entrance. Above the entrance, in addition to these frames, the image of a man with Median clothing has been engraved. Like the hero of Dokan-e Dawud petroglyph, this man also biased his face to the East and kept his hands up, he is probably praying. He has a height two times shorter than the normal ones that is about 80 centi meters. In the front of him, there are two holy fire-temples called “Athravan”, in thanks to Uttar the god of fire. The image similar to this fire-temple is also seen on the petroglyph existing above Pir Mountain near Sardush Sulaimaniyah Village (Figure 10). Opposite the fire-temple, two men praying are seen whose clothes are also like the Medes traditional ones. If we look closely at the images carved on Dokan-e Dawud tomb, Ishaq Vand Village and on Taq Mountain, we will see that these have not only the specifies common with each other, but also with the engraving work on a flat surface with the small dimensions and attributed to the Medes and kept in the British Museum in London (Figure 11).

Two other holes of Ishaq Vand Village are high by 2 meters respect to ground level and located in the worse conditions, the works of carving available on their walls are of the premier art and they leave artistically a positive effect. But not all archaeologists, historians and artistic experts unisonously know these buildings belong to the Medes. This scientific viewpoint is very reasonable that they were created a little later and during the age of the Achaemenid government [12].
Conclusion: The Medes as the just organized peoples naturally have enjoyed the cultural heritage of neighbors namely the people with more history of Mesopotamia and the Near East, especially the inhabitants of Elam and Assyria. But over time, they have been creatively able to reprocess all these and form an artistic unique style, indeed a balanced and illustrative style of a reminiscence that it has affected the future development of Iranian art, for long time from
the Achaemenid era to Sassanian degeneration.
References

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[7] Henry Lucas, the History of Civilization
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[12] See, for example:

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