

## Birthplace of Zarathushtra

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For the birthplace of the prophet Zarathushtra a study of the Avesta Scriptures shows that most of the scenes described are to be located in eastern Iran; In the Shah-Nameh, also, it is in the east that Zoroaster's mission is carried on. Tradition also has it that the prophet peacefully passed away his life in Balkh. These points all become significant when examined correctly. Before proceeding to draw conclusions, we must examine in detail what is said in the Avesta and other Zoroastrian works with regard to the first appearance of the prophet. This is important.

### Media, or Atropatene — Scene of the Prophet's Appearance.

Turning to the Zoroastrian books, we find statements which plainly lead us to infer that the prophet really first appeared in the west of Iran, either in Atropatene or in Media proper.

The Bundahish places the home of Zarathushtra in **Iran Vej** (Air- yana Vaejah), by the river Darja, and adds the fact that his father's house stood on a mountain by that river. For instance:

Bd. xx. 32: Daraja ud pad Airan Vej, ...

'The Daraja river is in Airan Vej, on a hill (bar) by which was the house of Porushasp, the father of Zaratusht.'

Further Bd. xxiv. 15: says ' The Daraja river is the chief of exalted rivers, for the dwelling of Zaratusht was upon its banks; and Zoroaster was born there. 'There can be little doubt that these unequivocal statements of the Bundahish rest upon good old tradition. The statements carry out in detail the lines found in the Avesta itself. In Vd. xix. 4, 11, we also learn that the temptation of Zarathushtra by Ahriman on the one hand, and the prophet's communicating with Ormazd on the other, took place on a mountain by the river Darja, where was the house of his father Pourushaspa.

In Vendidad . xix. 4 : *darejya paiti zbarahi nmanahe Pourusaspahe* 'by the Darja, upon a mountain, at the home (loc. gen.) of Pourushaspa.'

Vd. xix. 1 1 : peresat Zarathustro Ahurem Mazdam . . .

... *darejya paiti-zbarahi Ahurai Mazdai vanhava vohumaidhe aognhaano, Ashai Vahistai, Xshathrai Vairyaaii, Spentayai Aarmatehe* ...

'Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda . . . upon the hill by the Darja, praying to Ahura Mazda, who is endowed with Asha Vahishta, Khshathra Vairya, and Spenta Armaiti.'

The reference to the 'hill,' Av. zbarah (Skt. hvdras, Phi. bar Bd. xx. 32), is quite in accord with the tradition that Zarathushtra retired to a mountain for meditation: cf. Vd. xxii. 19: *gairim avi spentd-frasnao, varesem avi spento-frasnao* 'toward the mountain of the holy communion, toward the forest of the holy communion.'

Similarly elsewhere (see below) reference is made to Zarathushtra's communion upon a mountain. Such prophetic meditations are thoroughly Zoroastrian.

This river Darja we may perhaps localize; it may be identical with the river Darya, which flows from Mount Seblan in Adarbljan-Azarbijan (Atropatene) into the Araxes. See Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta transl.*, S.B.E. iv., *Introd.* p. xlix. For the Aras (Araxes) see de Harlez, *Avesta traduit*, p. viii, map, If this identification be correct, the ancient Darja was in Media Atropatene.

Another explicit, although late and non-Iranian, tradition connecting Zarathushtra with the region of Atropatene is found in Kazwini. In this Arabic writer, Zoroaster is associated with Shiz, the capital of Atropatene. See Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta transl.*, S.B.E. iv., *Introd.* p. xlix, where Rawlinson's identification of Shiz with Takht-i Suleiman is noted.

**The passage from Kazwini (quoted from Rawlinson) reads: "In Shiz is the fire-temple of Azerekhsh, the most celebrated of the Pyraea of the Magi; in the days of the fire-worship, the kings always came on foot, upon pilgrimage. The temple of Azerekhsh is ascribed to Zarthusht the founder of the Magian religion, who went, it is said, from Shiz to the mountain of Sebllan, and, after remaining there some time in retirement, returned with the Zend-Avesta, which, although written in the old Persian language, could not be understood without a commentary. After this he declared himself to be a prophet."**

The account here given, we observe, tallies accurately with the statements and suggestions made immediately above. In the Avesta, as above quoted, it was on a hill by the river Darja that Zarathushtra communicated with Ahura Mazda. The hill (zbarah) or mountain (gairi) thus referred to by the Avesta would answer to Kazwini's Mount Sebilan; the proposed identification of the Avestan Darja with the modern river Darya would be confirmed, as this latter river flows from Mt. Sebllan into the Aras.

For the region of Atropatene speaks also the authority of Yaqut (see Spiegel, *Eranische Alterthumskunde*, i. 684),

At this point, we must furthermore take up the tradition, which directly connects the opening of Zarathushtra's prophetic career with Airyana Vaejah or Iran Vej. This land is often regarded as mythical; it may originally have been so, but there is good reason for believing that the fact of the later localization of this region in the west of Iran points to the common belief that Zoroaster originally came from that direction. The Bundahish xxix. 12 connects Iran Vej directly with Atropatene: Alran Vej pad kost-i Ataro-badafcan. The river Darja, near which stood the house of Zoroaster's father, is especially stated in Bd. xx. 32 to have been in Iran Vej. In the Avesta, moreover, Zoroaster is familiarly called "the praised -one in Airyana Vaejah": Ys. ix. 14, stuto airyene vaejahe. The prophet is there also represented as offering sacrifice in Airyana Vaejah by the river Daitya: Yt. v. 1 04; ix. 25; xvii. 45, airyene vaejahi vanhuyao daityayao. In the later Persian Zartusht-Namah — see Wilson, *Parsi Religion*, p. 491 — it is the waters of the Daiti that Zoroaster crosses in a miraculous manner after he has had the vision of the conflict with the demons and of the final conversion of Medyo-mah. After passing Daiti, he receives the visions of God (See- Ys. xliii. 3-15), and thence he proceeds to King Vishtaspa.

The Daitya was perhaps a border stream; it is to be remembered that it was on the other side of it (cf. pasne, Yt. xvii. 49) that Vishtaspa prayed. The Bundahish likewise alludes to Zarathushtra's first offering worship in Iran Vej, and receiving Medyo-mah as his first disciple: see Bd. xxxii. 3: Zaratust, amatas din...

'Zoroaster, when he brought the religion, first celebrated worship in Airan Vej, and Medyok-mah received the religion from him.' cf. Bundahish, p. 79, and West, *Pahlavi Texts transl.*, S.B.E. v. 141. This Medyok-mah is the Maidhyo-mah of the Avesta, Yt. xiii. 95; Ys. li. 19, the cousin of Zarathushtra; and he seems to have been a man of influence. That he was the prophet's first disciple -first to hear the manthra - is distinctly recognized also by the Avesta, Yt. xiii 95 : yo paoiryō Zarathustrai mathremca gusta sasndosca.

All these traditional citations are unanimous in placing Zarathushtra in Adarbijan or Media Atropatene. There is yet another passage drawn from the Avesta that connects his name with Ragha (Rai) in the same region, or more particularly in Media, properly so called. This allusion is in the Pahlavi version of Vd. i. 16.:

'As the twelfth, I created Ragha of the three races.' The Pahlavi commentary adds 'triple-raced Rak, of Ataro-patakan (Atropa-tene); some say it is Rai; . . . some say Zaratust belonged there.' This connection of the name of Zoroaster with Ragha is also given elsewhere in the Avesta. In Ys. xix. 1 8, mention is made of the five lords, "the lord of the house, the village, the province, and the country, and the Zarathushtra as the fifth." This reference, in addition to the Pahlavi, at least shows plainly that Ragha must have been the chief seat of the religious activities. In like manner, Yaqut, cited by Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta transl.*, S.JB.JS., iv. p. xlvi, describes a celebrated fortress in the province of Rai, which was the stronghold of the Zoroastrianism. If Ragha was indeed the "Zoroastrian Ragha," and enjoyed such religious prominence, it must have been because of Zarathushtra's connection with it.