

One Person, Several Names: Median or Old Persian?

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Abstract: The Persepolis Fortification archive provides new insights into the study of Old Iranian, particularly regarding the debate over the “Median language”. The archive contains numerous Iranian names in Elamite transcription, allowing for the identification of phonetic differences between Old Persian and Median names. The high frequency of certain names enables detailed prosopographic analyses, revealing that individuals with varying spellings of their names may in fact be the same person. This is illustrated by the case of Ziššawiš, a vice director and deputy satrap in Persepolis. The variations in the spelling of his name suggest dialectal differences within the Persian heartland. While the accuracy of spelling was likely high, all variations were allowed, indicating that Median should be viewed as a dialect rather than a separate language.

Keywords: Achaemenid Period, Persepolis Tablets, Onomasticon, Achaemenid Elamite, Old Persian, Median, Ziššawiš

Introduction

After the decipherment of Old Persian, scholars were confronted with variant forms of the same word such as *asa* vs. *aspa* for “horse”. Such variations were linked to statement from Herodotus (*Histories* I.110.1) in the context of the legend on the rise of Cyrus:

“... because her Median name was Spako, and the Median word for a female dog is Spaka”.

This testimony, often seen as hard evidence, was taken to imply that the *sp* cluster was preserved in a language that could confidently be identified as Median.

There are also some other overgeneralizations, as considering all *-sp-* Median, and all *-s-* Old Persian just based on what Herodotus has mentioned. Therefore, *aspa-* and *vispa-* were regarded as Median and even all their compounds including *vispa-zana*, and then it was thought that *zana-* and all personal names containing *zana-* were Median.

The Persepolis Fortification archive plays an increasingly important role in linguistic research on Old Iranian, if only because it contains hundreds of Iranian names in Elamite transcription. One debate which is renewed by this material is that on the “Median language”, which for a long time was reconstructed on the basis of Greek sources and royal inscriptions.

In the Fortification archive, one may come across some names differing just in certain phonemes making one Old Persian and one Median based on their renderings. The high frequency with which certain names occur makes it possible to do prosopographic analyses on a very detailed level, as if one were looking at the personal files of the individuals involved.

If it is proved that those names (or spelling forms) - one reflecting Persian and one Median according to traditions - are the same individual then that would be easier to look at this difference from a different angle which is rather dialectal variation than the case of two different languages. In this paper a thorough analysis is conducted to show that one of the high-ranking officials of the economic system of Achaemenid kingdom has his name spelled in almost fifteen ways although being the same individual. This should be accompanied by the fact that it is extremely weird to conceive such a prominent official to have had his name misspelled or spelled in different languages unless dialectal variation was at stake.

Ziššawiš

As it is traditionally said about Old Iranian languages, some phonemes from Proto-Iranian and even further back are believed to be rendered some Old Persian and some Median (de Vaan and Lubotsky 2009, 173).

These reflexes are not unique to Median and it is obvious that Avestan shares the same ones and even in West Iranian isoglosses reflexes homogeneous to those in the Median language are regularly found in Parthian, Zazaki, Gorani, etc.

It is usually assumed that before the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE, Indo-Iranians had not only separated from other Indo-Europeans but also formed a community of separate dialects (Kuz'mina 2007, xi), and small groups of Indo-Iranian migrants emerged in southwestern Iran sometime in the late second millennium BCE. There, they intermingled with Elamite people (Waters 1999, 99). Surely both had effects on each other's languages which to some extent are conspicuous to us. The Elamite Fortification and Treasury tablets have been shown to be replete with Iranian loanwords. Fortunately there is a rich source of these phonological changes in Elamite administrative tablets from Persepolis; and since the

Achaemenid era abounded in peoples of different races and languages, investigating the proper names has a lot to prove.

TABLE 1. From PIE to OP¹

	PIE	PIr.	PIr.	Av.	Med.	OP
phoneme	*k ^{u2}	č ^u	*t ^s w	*sp	*sp	s
phoneme	*tr/ *tl	*tr	*θr	*θr	*θr	ç
phoneme	*ǵ/ *ǵ ^h	*j ^h	*d ^h	*z	*z	d
phoneme	*k	č	*t ^s	*s	*s	θ
phoneme	*ǵ ^h u ³	*j ^h u	*d ^h u	zb	zb	z
phoneme	*km	*km	*xm	xm	xm	(h)m
phoneme	?	?	*ti	θy	*θi	ši
phoneme	*kt	*čt	*čt	št	*št	st

More than 300 Median names have been identified by Richard Hallock and Tavernier in Achaemenid Elamite texts (see Hallock 1969; Tavernier 2007). In addition, there are 13 Median names (out of 107 Iranian names) identified in Neo-Elamite texts.

In total, among Elamite Royal Inscriptions, PF and PF-NN (here, NN), 49 personal names are known which some are labeled Persian and some Median by Tavernier (2007); they differ fundamentally in phonemes which distinguish Median from Persian (i.e., *Savanta- and *Θavanta-).

Analyzing the archive, considering these Iranian names written in Elamite, has prepared scholars with a detailed understanding of Elamite renderings of the Iranian names (see Tavernier 2011, 213-234).

Ziššawiš, vice director of the “Persepolis economy” and deputy satrap of Pārsa is an individual with some importance. Contrary to what one might expect, however, the spelling of his name shows a range of variations. At the same time, prosopographic analysis makes it clear that the same individual is at stake.

¹ Reconstructions are according to Leiden school.

² *k^u

³ *ǵ^hu

Studying the whole archive, PF, NN, PT and Fort., one will come to his name with different spellings which some represent Persian and some Median according to the general view.

The example of Ziššawiš is illuminating and will serve to introduce the wider research to dialectal variation within the Persian heartland and since he is one of the most attested individuals for Achaemenid transactions, and widely known in the Kingdom, a detailed analysis of his name forms will be presented.

In the Fortification archive he is present in over 200 transactions. In PF, Ziššawiš is mentioned in 86 memoranda, while in NN his name is mentioned in 130 memoranda.

TABLE 2. The occurrences of Ziššawiš's name in the PF

0073	0672	1302	1389	1424	1460	1512	1813	1822	1948
0074	0673	1304	1392	1429	1468	1515	1814	1823	1949
0075	0674	1337	1411	1430	1476	1518	1815	1824	1986
0317	0675	1345	1412	1431	1482	1519	1816	1825	1987
0474	0676	1354	1413	1435	1486	1542	1817	1826	2069
0573	0677	1355	1414	1439	1493	1565	1818	1827	
0574	0678	1366	1415	1454	1497	1578	1819	1828	
0670	1285	1373	1416	1458	1500	1811	1820	1917	
0671	1294	1376	1417	1459	1504	1812	1821	1947	

TABLE 3. The occurrences of Ziššawiš's name in the NN

0002	0259	0544	0872	1242	1519	1751	2004	2394	2575
0018	0299	0561	0939	1269	1528	1797	2047	2404	2636
0049	0305	0617	0947	1270	1570	1804	2071	2416	2646
0065	0333	0652	0948	1280	1590	1811	2078	2425	2647
0087	0344	0698	0957	1305	1628	1839	2210	2444	2656
0088	0349	0705	0959	1307	1630	1844	2214	2468	2657
0123	0381	0726	0967	1368	1633	1848	2241	2486	3007
0140	0386	0740	1034	1369	1636	1870	2259	2493	3010
0144	0447	0745	1036	1375	1638	1878	2279	2535	3017
0167	0485	0779	1093	1402	1694	1880	2324	2535	3050
0179	0488	0851	1190	1460	1700	1889	2332	2561	3061
0191	0495	0862	1204	1463	1732	1949	2339	2566	3112
0205	0543	0862	1235	1470	1746	1950	2356	2568	

It also occurs in: PFa 29, PF-Teh.11, Fort. 0875-102, Fort. 1810-101, Fort. 1390-102, Fort. 1229-107, Fort. 2338-103, Fort. 2337-104, Fort. 2326-103, Fort. 1819-101, Fort. 2066-103, Fort. 2117-101, Fort. 2126-103, Fort. 0849-103, Fort. 0901-101, Fort. 1058-107, Fort. 1207-101, Fort. 1628-101, Fort. 1653-101, Fort. 1799-102, Fort. 0819-101 and PT 28, PT 29, PT 31, PT 33 which for the last four it is impossible to reach certainty as being the same with previous ones.

I do believe that all these spellings pertain to one person and that is Ziššawiš, the deputy director of Persepolis. For this the different roles and spellings should be investigated carefully to see the differences and similarities.

Ziššawiš appears in the texts as having various positions, *halmi*-issuer⁴, addressor⁵, recipient⁶ and presiding over religious ceremonies. In 125 memoranda he acts as the *halmi*-issuer. In 57 letter orders he appears as well; and 42 times as recipient of commodities, but in some journals at the same time, he has other responsibilities as well. In PF 1947, NN 1190, NN 1369, Fort. 1229-107, as *damanna*.⁷ In NN 0561, as *Lan* performer.

All the spelling forms except number four, happens for him as being the *halmi*-issuer and one should not forget the significance of this official in the system; therefore it is hard to imagine such an important official to have had his name spelled wrongly.

Ziššawiš is the second and a weighty person of the system after Parnaka who is the director. He receives high payments, issues *halmi*, sometimes has long colophons, and issues letter-orders. We are aware of his presence in the system over a period of 13 years in a row.⁸

Ziššawiš, as the deputy director of the system, used two different seals in the Fortification archive, PFS 0083 and its replacement PFS 0011 (Garrison 2017, 333). Based on this fact his identity will be investigated here.

Ziššawiš, an issuer of letter-orders, as mentioned above, is cited 57 times, and one should bear in mind that addressors of letter-orders are high rank officials of the agency or members of royal family (Garrison 2017, 337); as to the seals pertained to the letter-orders memoranda bearing the name Ziššawiš, one finds almost all of the seals (except 6 ones)⁹ to be PFS 0083 and 0011 with the latter being a replacement of the first one. At stake here, is

⁴ Issuing travel authorization.

⁵ Issuing letter orders.

⁶ Receiving commodities.

⁷ It is hard to apprehend the exact meanings of the terms *šaramana* and *damanna*. Hallock (1969, 27-28) takes the meaning of “PN *damanna*” as “PN assigning” and “PN *šaramana*” as “PN apportioning”. According to other scholars, *damanna* and *šaramana*-officials were kind of managers responsible for workforce, commodities, ration commodities and animals in a particular area and determined the quantity of rations (Aperghis 1999, 155; Henkelman 2008, 130; Garrison 2017, 38). In addition, Garrison (2017, 38) cautiously proposes the English equivalent “supervisor”.

⁸ From month 2, year 15 → month 12, year 28.

⁹ Fort. 1229-107; NN 2647; NN 2646; NN 1870; NN 0259; NN 0087.

the information of the six ones without seals which clearly illustrate that the same individual is presented in them as well. PF 1813 and NN 1870 will serve as good instances to prove they are the same.

TABLE 4. Various spelling forms of Ziššawiš as recorded in all the memoranda and journals in questions

No.	Spelling Form	Position
1	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-ma	<i>halmi</i> -issuer and recipient
2	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-ú-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer, addressor and recipient
3	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-u-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer, addressor and recipient
4	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-u	messengers went to him
5	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-hu-maš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
6	^{HAL} zī-šá-ma	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
7	^{HAL} zī-šá-u	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
8	^{HAL} zī-šá-ma-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
9	^{HAL} zī-is-ra-ma-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
10	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-u-ú-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer, addressor and recipient
11	^{HAL} zī-šá-u-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
12	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-u-iš-šá	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
13	^{HAL} zī-iš-šá-hu-iš	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
14	^{HAL} zī-iš-u-ma	<i>halmi</i> -issuer
15	^{HAL} šu-iš-šá-ma	<i>halmi</i> -issuer

TABLE 5. A synopsis of NN 1870

Ziššawiš (^{DIS} zī-iš-šá-ú-iš)		patikamaš	šaramana	commodity	addressor	addressee	location	scribe	date
tablet number	seals								
NN 1870	O	Kamezza	Baraddumawiš	flour	Ziššawiš	Pirratamka	Uzikraš	Hintamukka	22

TABLE 6. A synopsis of NN 1813

Ziššawiš (^{DIS} zī-iš-šá-ú-iš)		patikamaš	šaramana	commodity	addressor	addressee	location	scribe	date
tablet number	seals								
PF 1813	PFS 0011	Kamezza	Baraddumawiš	flour	Ziššawiš	Pirratamka	Uzikraš	Hintamukka	22

Therefore, it is ratiocinative to believe that the same individual (considering the fact that this individual has several spellings) has ordered all the letters at stake. Moreover, there is no considerable difference (considering Median/OP) among spelling forms in letter-orders memoranda.

The other position which is not as crucial as *halmi*-issuer or letter order issuer- in this paper- is Ziššawiš as recipient.¹⁰ We are aware of most of those transactions as being recorded in a series of H texts by Hallock (1969, 23-24) about which he mentions to belong to high rank recipients. In these texts the massive amount of commodities are at stake and the name of the scribe is usually mentioned in the colophons. “Ziššawiš received fixed amounts of commodities on a daily basis” (Hallock 1969, 338). It is clear then that here we are dealing with the deputy director, too. About the rest (in B texts) I do believe that Garrison (2017, 338) is quite right that the same Ziššawiš is presented.

One thing should be considered here and that is the spelling forms of his name as *halmi*-issuing person. The spelling ^{HAL}zī-iš-šá-ú-iš is the most common form being seen everywhere but there are other forms as mentioned above. Among all the forms, one (^{HAL}Zī-is-ra-ma-iš) is taken to represent Median *Čiθrava- (Tavernier 2007, 158) and one form is (^{HAL}šú-iš-šá-ma) which although taken to represent OP, the scribe must have heard it in a completely irregular form and then just recorded once (PF 1515:8-9).

By taking a look at the two memoranda bearing the two various forms, we reach these synoptic tables below:

TABLE 7. A synopsis of NN 1482

Ziššawiš (Zisramaš)						
tablet number	seals	commodity	recipient	<i>halmi</i>	location	date
PF 1482:7	PFS 0056	1.4 bar flour	Kaudama/ 3 men/ 10 workers	from Zisramaš	[Persepolis →]	10/22 nd
	PFS 1281					

TABLE 8. A synopsis of NN 1504

Ziššawiš (Zišama)						
tablet number	seals	commodity	recipient	<i>halmi</i>	location	date
PF 1504:6	PFS 0056	0.45 bar flour	Parninaza/ 4 gentlemen	from Zišama	[Persepolis →]	12/22 nd

PF 1482 is about the commodity flour which Kaudama, three gentlemen and ten workers receive. Kaudama carries a *halmi* from Zisramaš. They started off their journey from Persepolis in the month Ānāmaka of the year 22.

¹⁰ Since all the forms mirror Persian renderings.

PF 1504 is about flour which Parninaza and four gentlemen receive. Parninaza carries a *halmi* from Zišama. They set off from Persepolis in the month Viyaxna of the same year as PF 1482. Two different seals are collocated with these tablets and PFS 0056 which is the same for both is a left-edge¹¹ one and pertains to the *kurman*-official who is unknown here but must be the same. There is no doubt that these two name forms in PF 1482:7 and PF 1504:6 point to the same person, Ziššawiš, “deputy director of the Persepolis administration”.

The form of Ziššawiš in PF 1482:7 is ^{HAL}Zí-is-ra-ma-iš, taken to reflect Median *Čiθrava- (Tavernier 2007, 158) and in PF 1504:6 is ^{HAL}Zí-šá-ma(-iš), taken to mirror Persian *Čiçava- (Tavernier 2007, 158).

In addition there are other spellings considered to be Median *Čiθravahuš and Čiθravauš. The forms are ^{HAL}Zí-ut-ra-u-ú-iš (Fort. 1301-101:2-3, 4-5) and ^{HAL}Zí-ut-ra-u-iš (Fort. 1206 - Fort. 1206-102:48’).

There are two other spellings in NN 2290:26¹² and NN 0728:38¹³ which cannot be judged by certainty to be the same individual as the previous ones.

The other memoranda bearing the above mentioned spellings illustrated one person having different name spellings.

Conclusion

The differences in spelling Ziššawiš only occur as being the *halmi*-issuer; among issuer of letter orders, and recipient no spelling representing Median is recorded. As was mentioned above, there are fifteen different spelling forms introducing Ziššawiš.

Considering the facts about the seals, paramount importance of *halmi*-issuers, and letter-order issuers and the amount of commodities he received, there is no doubt about his identity. Moreover, the different spelling forms presenting the soi-distant Median happened in a memorandum exhibiting him as a *halmi*-issuer. The low frequency of the Median one does not show anything for the time being since the whole archive has not yet been investigated and furthermore no wrong spelling of an important person can be imagined. He was a high rank official, in fact the deputy director of the system and the second person after Parnaka; consequently, recording such a well-known person’s name in a correct way must have been crucial. One cannot imagine his name to have been scribed in two languages unless dialectal variation is at stake here. This variation illustrated that these two spelling forms did not cause any problem for the ones who saw and worked with them and was rather understandable.

It is obvious that Ziššawiš as addressor had his own scribe and the accuracy must have been almost unerring and as to this individual’s name it certainly was due to little

¹¹ All left-edge seals are linked to *kurman*-officials.

¹² Zi-ut-ra-ma

¹³ Zi-ut-ra-maš

difference in spelling form; nevertheless, Ziššawiš significant role in the heartland as a *halmi*-issuer is not something to be ignored, but surely illustrates that all variations were allowed and even such a minority as *šu-iš-šá-ma* was accepted. The research should be continued as to dialectal variation system within the heartland but for now the time has arrived to look at Median not as a language but a dialect quite common in the heartland.

Abbreviations

Av.: Avestan

Fort.: Unpublished Persepolis Fortification tablets in Muzeh-ye Melli-e Iran, edited by G.G. Cameron, and collated by R.T. Hallock, C.E. Jones, and M.W. Stolper

Med.: Median

NN = PF-NN: unpublished Persepolis Fortification tablet edited by R.T. Hallock

OP: Old Persian

PFS: Persepolis Fortification Seals

PF: Persepolis Fortification tablets published in Hallock 1969

PIE: Proto-Indo-European

PIIr.: Proto-Indo-Iranian

PIr.: Proto-Iranian

PT: Persepolis Treasury tablets published in Cameron 1948

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