

Persian words for « drinking vessel » and « time »

Pers. (Pārsīg) *jām/ jāmag*¹ ‘pottery glass, glass; pot, cup; goblet, pottery vessel’². In the Avesta two forms are attested: *yāma-* m. ‘glazed pot; pottery glass’ (*yāmō.pacika-* adj.), and *yama-* m. ‘pottery vessel’. Sogd. *y’ mk /yāmək/*, Bactr. ζαμο ‘vessel’; Arabic lw جام (Syr. ܝܗܡܐ ‘earthen pot, vessel’).

If Parthian *j’ m /jām/* ‘time’ come from Pārsīg *jām* (and not from old Parthian *yām-a-*), then the word *jām* was also used to denote a water clock for measuring time. We find the Parthian word in Armenian ժամ /*žam/* ‘time, hour’.

It seems that the Sanskrit word for a watch of the day or night is cognate with the Persian word: *yāma-* m. ‘(night) watch of three hours’, *tri-yāma-* adj. ‘(the night) with three watches’; Prakrit *jāma-* m. ‘watch of three hours’. Varāhamihira, in his *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* II, 4, speaks of these qualifications for an astronomer:

तत्र ग्रह गणिते पौलिश रोमक वासिष्ठ सौर पैतामहेषु पंचस्वतेषु सिद्धान्तेषु युग
वर्षायनर्तुमास पक्षाहोरात्रयाम मुहूर्त नाडी प्राण् त्रुटि त्रुट्याद्यवादिकस्य कालस्य क्षेत्रस्य च
वेत्ता ॥४॥

‘An astronomer should be conversant with the five (theoretical) treatises (*siddhānta*) entitled Pauliśa, Romaka, Vāsiṣṭha, Saura and Paitāmaha. He must be well-versed in the various subdivisions of time such as the cyclic period (*yuga*, 4 320 000 solar years), year (*varṣa*), solstice (or, half-year, *ayana*), season (*ṛtu*, a period of two solar months), month (*māsa*), fortnight (*pakṣa*), solar day (*ahorātra*, day-and-night), watch (*yāma*), *muhūrta* (48 minutes), *nāḍī* (24 minutes), *prāṇa* (breath consisting of one inspiration and one expiration, 4 seconds), *truṭi* (9 seconds), and other divisions of time.’

There exists another Persian word for one-eighth of a solar day: *pās* ‘watch; guard’ < **pāça-*. It renders Syriac ܫܒܐܓܐ: *pās ī šabag*: ܫܒܐܓܐ ܫܒܐܓܐ ‘the morning watch’ (Ps 129.6). Pāzand *pās*³ is

¹ . ܝܗܡܐ: ܝܗܡܐ /*jām/*. Notice that Syr. ܝܗܡܐ means : 1) ‘vessel’ (¹*jām-ag*); 2) ‘garment; clothing’ (²*jām-ag*).

² . «جام دو معنی دارد: اول جامِ جم است یعنی آبگینه؛ دوم جامِ شراب است.» صحاح الفرس، ۲۱۸.

³ . Cf. also Sogd. *p’š /pās/* ‘watch, respect’.

rendered by Sanskrit *pra-haraka-* a period of about three hours (cf. ŚGV 13.17).

It seems that Parthian *p's* /*pās*/ 'measure of wine' and Armenian *p'as* 'pitcher, jug' come from the same Pārsīg word *pās*. In Persian پاس means 'a watch of the day or night, three hours; guard, watch'.

The Parthian proper form is *pāhr* (*phr* /*pahr*/) 'watch'. Av. *pāθra-* nt. 'protection, guard'; Sogd. *p'δr* /*pāθr*/, *p'rδ* /*pārθ*/ 'watch, care'; Armen. *pah* (older *parh*) 'guard, sentry; watch; hour, moment'; Pers. پهره / پهر 'guard; watch (or, fourth part) of the night'. Skt. *pātra-* nt. 'receptacle, drinking vessel' belongs to the same base. The word *pās*/ *pāhr* could be used for a drinking vessel, and as well for a measure for wine and time.

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