

***Yādgār: A Technical Official (Dīwānī) Term in Šāhnāma***

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**Introduction**

In Firdausī's *Šāhnāma* (1010 AD), in the story of the reign of Hurmazd-i Nūšīnrawān, after Parmūda, the son of Sāva-Šāh, comes under the protection the Šāh and Bahrām Čōbīn, Bahrām commands the secretaries to count and record the treasures of the fortress where Parmūda was kept captive in. Here the poet says:

The secretaries set forth with fearful hearts/From dawn –until three watches of the night had passed

Much *yādgār* (?) was blacked/But was not written [all of the treasure] eventually

As it appears, this word has been recorded in the narrative of *Farāmarz-nāma* in the region of Kūhmāreh Sorxī of Fars province in the form of *yāzgār/yadhgār*, meaning “leather scroll”. Accordingly, one of the researchers by presenting attestation from Arabic texts and showing the term *ayādkārāt al-furs* in the texts of *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-mamālik*, and *Kitāb al-Aqālīm* (both by Iṣṭaxrī, 10<sup>th</sup> AD) also concluded that *ayādkārāt al-furs* “were scrolls (*tūmār*) on which the images of the kings of ancient Iran, the *marzpāns*, the Zoroastrian clerics (*hērbeds* and *mowbeds*), and their stories were recorded”. In the following of the mentioned article due to the presence of this term in Arabic texts, the same meaning of “leather scroll”, which is used in the region of

Kūhmāreh Sorxī, has been accepted for the word *yādgār* in the verse in question.

### Research Background

So far, researchers have expressed various opinions about this word (see Aydenloo, 2007 → “Važe-ī farāmūš šode az *Šāhnāmeḥ* dar farhang-hā”; Khatibi, 2007 → “*Yāzgār* ya *yādgār*”; Sadeghi, 2007 → “Darbare-ye *yāzgār*”; Naghzguy-Kohan, 2009 → “*Yāzgār* va *Yādgār* va enšeqāq-e avvalīyye”). What is mentioned in the *Notes on the Šāhnāmeḥ* (Khaleghi Motlagh, 2012) about this word, is a summary of these discussions. The author of the *notes* finally concluded that *yādgār* used in the above verse refers to “paper, writing and *sawād*”.

### Discussion

In my view, first of all, it is not necessary to elaborate the meaning of *ayādkārāt al-furs* in Arabic texts; It is obvious that in Middle Persian *ayādgār*, which later became *yādhgār* and *yādgār*, means “note”, “treatise”, “treatise of biography”; Secondly, the meaning of “leather scroll”, which is based on the narrative of Farāmarz-nāma in Kūhmāreh Sorxī of Fars, refers to the appearance of these treatises, not the lexical and terminological meaning of the word *yādgār*.

But the word *yādgār* in *Šāhnāma*, as it appears, is a technical official (*dīwānī*) term and the poet has probably quoted this word from Abū-Manšūrī’s *Šāhnāma*; because *yādgār* has been used only once in this sense in the *Šāhnāma*, whereas Firdausī could easily have used the word “paper” instead, without affecting the meter of the poem. Therefore, to find attestation for this term, the first step is to examine the historical

texts and the books of *Āyīn-i dabīrī*. After much searching, the author found this word only in *Zayn al-axbār* (1051 AD) Gardēzī.

Gardēzī mentions *yādgār/yadhgār* after the “royal mandate” (*manšūr*) and “register” (*sijill*) and then speaks about the “bags of couriers (*barīdān*)” and the “safe-conducts” (*amān-nāma-hā*), which indicates that *yādgār* was a ministerial (*dīwānī*) term. Since Gardēzī most likely quoted this news from Mas‘ūdī’s (d. 957 AD) *Murūj al-dhahab* (*The Meadows of Gold*), it will be helpful to find out the Arabic equivalent of this term in this book.

Mas‘ūdī in the *Meadows of Gold* under the “mention of the Sassanid kings ...” has spoken of the treatises (*rasā’il*) and registers (*sijillāt*) and then *tadhkirāt*, and Gardēzī has placed *yādgār-hā* as equivalent to the word *tadhkirāt*. Therefore, most likely, the term *tadhkira*, which was translated from Arabic to Persian in the Islamic era, was equivalent to the word *ayādgār* in Middle Persian. Now, if the meaning of *tadhkira* is understood, the meaning of the word *yādgār* in the above phrases and Firdausī’s *Šāhnāma* will also become clear.

The word *tadhkira* in Persian, in addition to its general meanings, has been a *dīwānī* term and has three different meanings that we often see in Persian historical-literary texts such as *Tārīx-i Bayhaqī* (11<sup>th</sup> century) and *Tarjama-yi tārīx-i Yamīnī* (13<sup>th</sup> century):

- 1- List (*siyāha*) of presents and goods;
- 2- Script and note (in the specific sense of official letter or message);
- 3- A written request or complaint addressed to the king and the nobles to receive a reply.

In the verse in question in this article, the word *yādgār* refers exactly to the first meaning, that is, “list (*siyāha*) of goods”, and most likely,

Firdausī quoted this word from Abū-Manṣūrī's *Šāhnama*. This is a testament to his commitment to the source used. Now the question that arises here is whether in pre-Islamic sources the word *ayādgār* had other meanings besides “note”, “treatise”, “treatise of biography” or not? The author thinks that the answer to this question is ‘yes’. The reason is its use, in a sense other than the common meanings, in the text of the *History of Sebeos*.

Thomson, the English translator of the *History of Sebeos*, uses the word “letter” for *yektar* and states in the footnote that the word has no attestation for use prior to Sebeos. It should be noted that Sebeos used *yetkar* here for a specific meaning, otherwise, he could have used commonly used words such as “paper” or “letter” to refer to this letter as he has used in few lines lower. In another attestation in the same book, this word is used to mean “account”, which is somewhat close to the meaning of the word *yādgār* in the verse discussed in the *Šāhnāma*.

### Conclusion

According to what has been said, the word *yādgār* in the verse in question in *Šāhnāma* was a technical official (*dīwānī*) term meaning “goods report” or “goods list” (*siyāha*), and it is not a general term. What reinforces this conjecture is the association of this word with other *dīwānī* terms in *Zayn al-axbār*. In addition, the use of the word *yetkar* in the *History of Sebeos*, which is a loan word from Middle Persian, confirms the use of this word with the specific meaning of the letter or note. The author thinks that *ayādgār* also had various meanings in the Middle Persian, which, although not available to us, traces of them are

left in Armenian. The word *tadhkira* in the *dīwānī* terms of the Islamic era is also the Arabic equivalent of the word *yādgār* before Islam.

**Keywords:** *Šāhnāma*, *Yādgār/Yadhgār*, Ministerial (*Dīwānī*) Terms

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