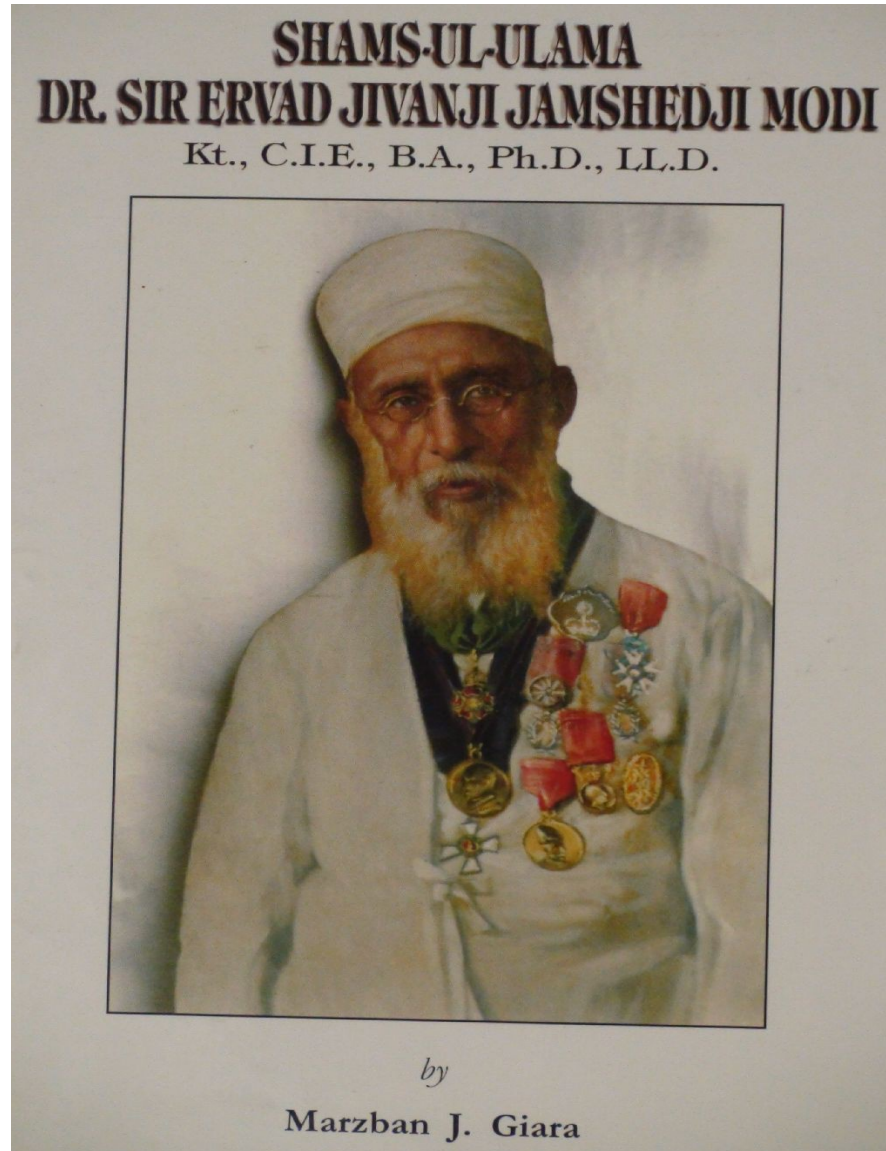


Zoroastrian Places of Worship (ZPOW)

Agenda: 9. Evolution of our ZPOWs in Iran and elsewhere



Dr. Sir Ervad Jivanji Jamshedji Modi's Travels Outside Mumbai, from 12 April 1925 to 5th November 1925, 208 days, to North Africa, Europe, USSR, Iran, Karachi and back.

Written in a Gujarati book in 101 Letters to the Jam-e-Jamshed Newspaper.
Tremendous insights into things he saw and witnessed of our religion, society and customs in Iran and elsewhere!
Compared them with Parsi practice.
Will concentrate on those items only from this 502 page tome!

The Surkhani, Baku Atash Kadeh, Asheron Peninsula, Azerbaijan



Is this a real Parsi Atash Kadeh?

The Surkhani, Baku Atash Kadeh, Asheron Peninsula, Azerbaijan



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Azerbaijan means “The Land of Fire” in Persian.

They call this place “Surkhani”. The origin of this word may have come from “SHO-E-LE-KHANEH” meaning the house (“KHANEH”) of the fire balls (“SHO-E-LE”).



The word Absheron consists of a few parts. *Ab* means *water*, *shour* means *salty* and *an* is the suffix that makes plural in Persian. So, Abshouran means "place of salty water".

Some researchers have pointed out ancient origin of “Baku” from Old Persian “Baga” (“God”).

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Natural fires on the shores of Caspian Sea in those distant times were considered as sacred and attracted many believers. A large settlement, which arose around one of the groups of natural lights, gradually grew into a city of Baku. M. J. Saint-Martin, French orientalist of early XIX century: “The city of Baku is regarded by Parsis as a holy place due to many sources of naphtha with natural burning fire and in many places worshipping an eternal fire”.

There must be an Aatash Kadeh here in ancient times

Just because I have proven that this building is not a Parsee Aatash Kadeh does not mean that in this city, in ancient times, there were no Aatash Kadehs.

There may be more than one Aatash Kadehs in this city.

In our ancient literary works, there are references of the worship of fire emitting directly from earth. One fire has been described which burns without any fuel. This is the same fire of the natural gas wells which burns night and day without any fuel.

Our Aatash “Apaam Naptaar” and the Naphtha of this place

We all pray at the end of each of the five Geh prayers the following prayer remembering various fires.

“Thwaam aatarem Ahura he Mazdaao puthrem ... yazamaide. ... Apaam Naptaarem Yazamaide. Nairim Sanghem yazamaide.”

Meaning: "We venerate you Aatash, the son of Ahura Mazda. We venerate Apaam Naptaar Aatash. We venerate Nairyosangha Aatash."

In this veneration of Aatash, in "Apaam Naptaar" words, the word "Naptaar" is the root of the current word Naphtha. This Naphtha flows like a liquid and so its Aatash is called "Aap" meaning liquid.

There must be an Aatash Kadeh here!

City of Bagavan, where fires were burning eternally in its fire temples is mentioned by Armenian historians as Atshi-Baguan where Atshi is a corruption of “Atesh” (“fire”), and Ateshi-Baguan is “Place of sacred fires” and identified Bagavan and Ateshi-Baguan as the ancient name of Baku.

Nezami Ganjevi, the famous 12th century Persian Poet, in his poem “Eskandar Nameh” wrote:

**“In that place was a fire built round with stone
Which the fire-worshipper used to call – “Khudi-soz”
For it, were a hundred priests (erbadan) of the fire-temple
with collar of gold.”**

There must be an Aatash Kadeh here!

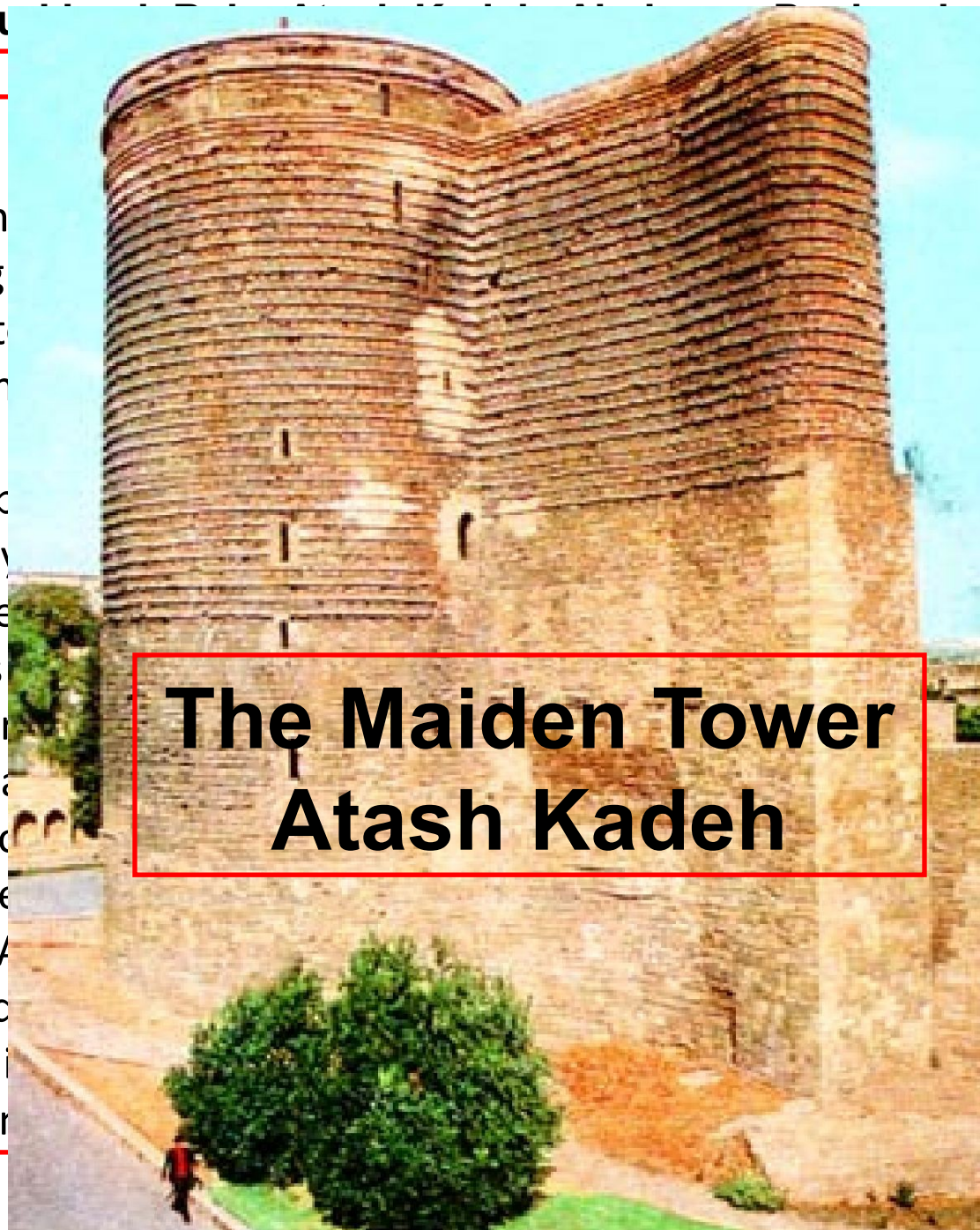
“Khudi-soz” (“Burning itself”) refers to the burning of natural oil or gas fires.

“For it, were a hundred priests (erbadan)” – for so many erbads to stand before the sacred fire must be in a very large temple.

Such large tiered fire temple with premises able to accommodate hundred erbads could be the Baku temple tower known as the Maiden’s Tower.

The line: “In that place was a fire built round with stone”, means that a fire was burning itself surrounded by stone i. e. round stone walls of the tower.

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The Maiden Tower Atash Kadeh

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There must be an Aatash Kadeh here!

According to my examination, this is an ancient Iranian building and it is an Aatash Kadeh. It is not a common Aatash Kadeh with its fire maintained by burning wood by its priests. But it is an Aatash Kadeh fed by the natural gases, Naphtha, (apaam Napaat). Haft or seven is a very holy number in Zoroastrian religion and hence there are seven stories or stages in it. At each story, in one corner, there is an escape hole for the natural gas Naphtha which when lit created a fire ball.



Some Dimensions of this Baku Atash Kadeh Tower

To build a mud-brick high hollow tower, it was necessary to take a considerable thickness of the walls for the strength and provide a massive overhang (buttress).

Towering fire temple of Sassanian times existed in Ardasher-Khwarrah in the province of Pars (now Firouzabad):

- built by Ardeshir I and was located at the center of the city and it was a 30 m high and spiral in design.



The Real Surkhani, Baku Atash Kadeh, A

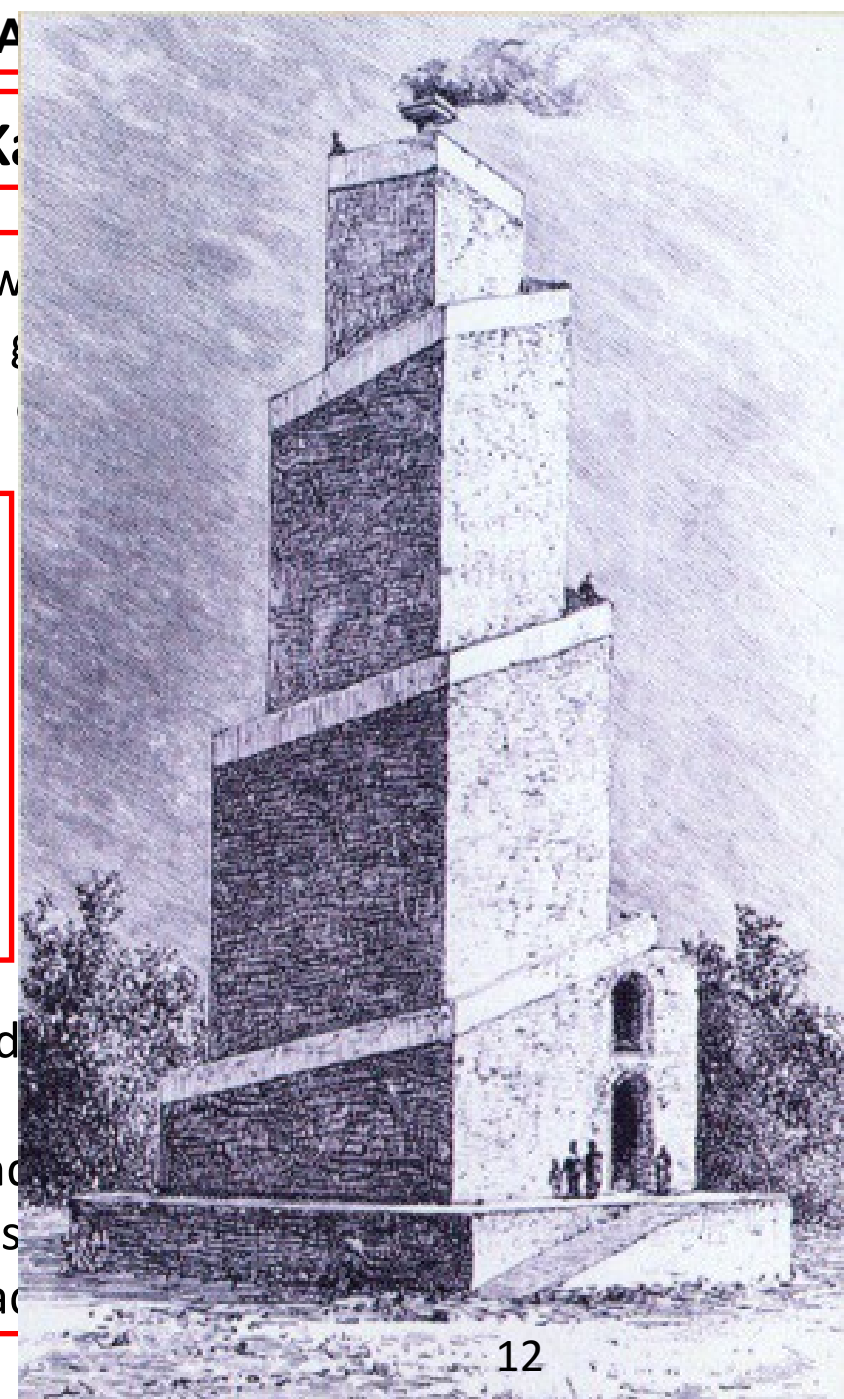
Some Dimensions of this Baku Atash K

A closer examination of construction of the tower structure, with large wall thickness (5 m at the footsteps from the first floor to the upper area

Towering fire temple of Sassanian times built by Ardasher Papakan in Ardasher-Khwarrah in the province of Pars (now Firouzabad).

Towering fire temple of Sassanian times existed of Pars (now Firouzabad).

This fire temple was built by shah Ardeshir I and and it was a 30 m high and spiral in design. This architecture of Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq



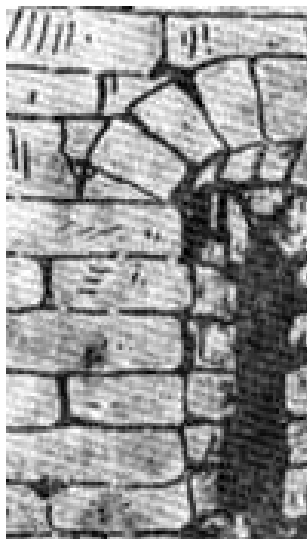
The Real

Azerbaijan

Some Dimer

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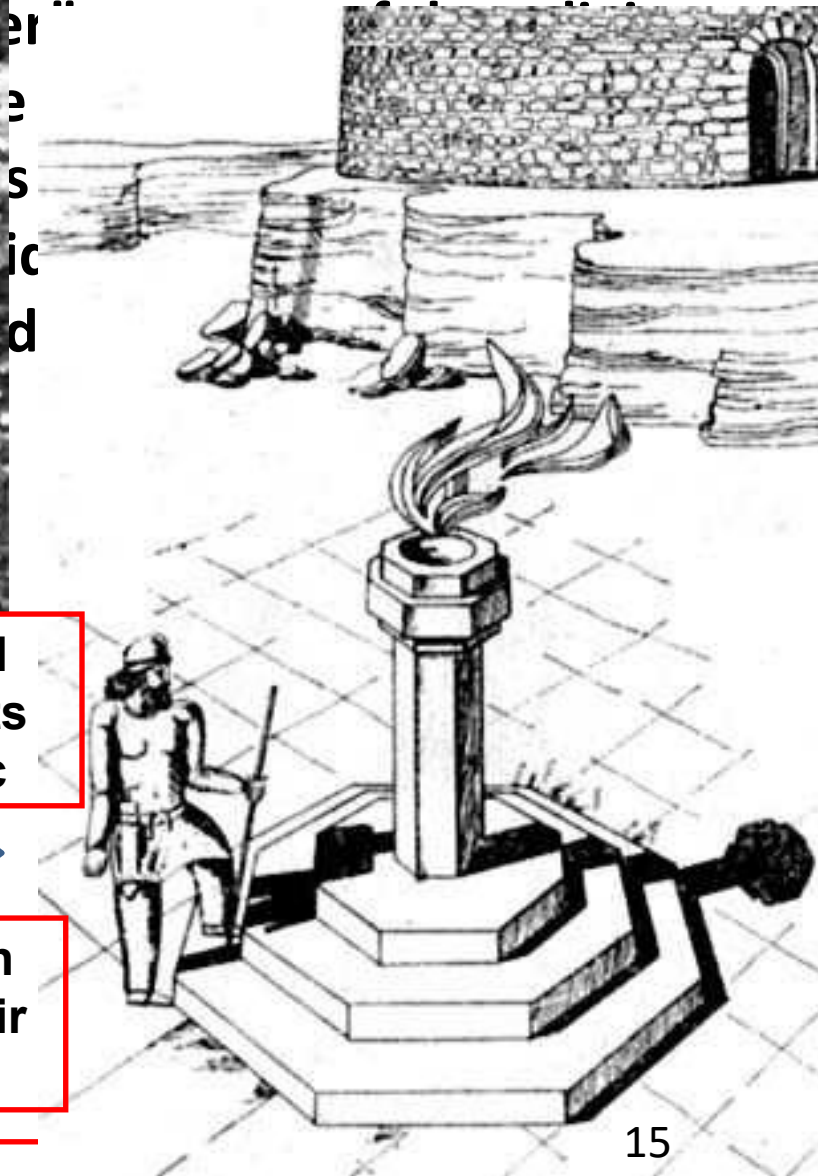
Well preserved Fire Altar near Baku Atash Kadeh Tower

The fact that the “Maiden’s tower” was part of the religious complex, confirmed by one more ritual structures near the tower.

In 1964, in front of the “Maiden’s tower”, a fifty meters to the west, archaeologists O. Ismizade and Jiddi at a depth of four meters from the existing ground surface found an almost well-preserved altar of fire, which, unfortunately, was soon destroyed.

The Real Surkhani, Baku Atash Kadeh, Absheron Peninsula, Azerbaijan

Well preserved Fire Altar near Baku Atash Kadeh Tower



Excavated
Altar and its
schematic



Altar Fire on
coin Ardeshir
Babekan

