

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF IRAN

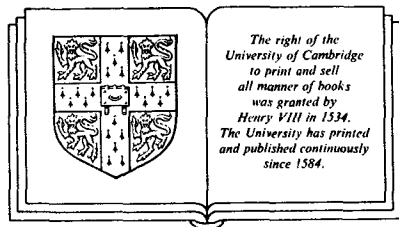
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THE SELEUCID, PARTHIAN
AND SASANIAN PERIODS

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CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF IRAN UNDER THE SASANIANS

THE RISE OF THE SASANIANS

The rise of the Sasanian dynasty can be understood as the successful struggle of a minor ruler of Persis (today Fārs province) not only against his Parthian overlord, but also against a multitude of neighbouring rulers. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the pre-Sasanian history of Persis is almost a total blank save for what is known from coins struck by local dynasts. At least one local kingdom had existed in the heart of Persis since the breakup of Seleucid power in Iran, if not earlier, from shortly after the death of Alexander the Great.¹ The ruins of Persepolis and Pasargadae alone would have been a standing reminder of the past glory of the area, even if knowledge of a great empire for the most part had been forgotten.² The names (such as Darius and Artaxerxes) on the coins of the local rulers who held sway here before the rise of the Sasanians testify to a certain continuity of Achaemenian traditions, if not to an actual descent in a side line from the royal Achaemenian family itself. The history of the immediate predecessors of Ardashīr is thus virtually unknown and the few items of information about them are conflicting.

Most scholars have assumed, following the Arabic history by Ṭabarī, that Sāsān was the grandfather and Pāpak the father of Ardashīr, founder of the Sasanian dynasty. The trilingual inscription (Greek, Parthian and Middle Persian) of Shāpūr I, on the Ka'ba-yi Zardusht at Naqsh-i Rostam, however, does not say that Sāsān was the father of Pāpak.³ In an ascending order of importance, Sāsān is merely designated as a lord, while Pāpak is a king. Ardashīr, his son, is called

¹ See pp. 299ff.

² E. Yarshater argues for the total loss of the memory of the Achaemenians as such in the course of the Parthian period; see "Were the Sasanians heirs to the Achaemenids?" in *La Persia nel Medioevo* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, 1971), pp. 517-31.

³ There is still no complete and adequate edition and translation of the three texts (the Middle Persian original, and the Parthian and Greek versions). A. Maricq, "Res gestae divi Saporis", *Syria*, xxxv (1958), 295-360, edited and translated the Greek text with excellent notes on the other versions and on the inscription as a whole.

king of kings of Iran, while Shāpūr, son of Ardashīr, is called king of kings of Iran and non-Iran. There is another version of the lineage of Ardashīr found in a story in the Middle Persian book, the *Kār-nāmag* or “Book of Deeds of Ardashīr son of Pāpak”. The same version is also given by Firdausī in his epic the *Shāh-nāma* and appears to be the basis of a scurrilous Greek adaptation of the tale recorded by Agathias, a sixth-century Byzantine author. This story tells how Sāsān was married to the daughter of a local prince Pāpak after the latter learned that Sāsān had royal Achaemenian blood in him. From this union Ardashīr was born. Then Sāsān vanishes from the story and Pāpak is considered the father of Ardashīr. This corresponds to the inscription and other later Arabic and New Persian sources. The problem is, who was Sāsān?

One should note that Shāpūr’s inscription does not give us the answer and for lack of another course, one may choose between the version of the epic, and the statement of Ṭabarī that Sāsān was the father of Pāpak. Ṭabarī’s account, however, is suspect, since he reports a lengthy genealogy of Ardashīr tracing it back to mythical, heroic kings of ancient Iran. It is more likely that Sāsān was a remote ancestor of Ardashīr whose name was given to the dynasty as Achaemenes was for the Achaemenids. Most plausible, however, is the epic version which may have the following interpretation: Sāsān was the natural father of Ardashīr, but he died shortly after the birth of his son whereupon, according to current Zoroastrian practice, Pāpak adopted Ardashīr as his own son; or the adoption may have occurred after a certain Shāpūr, Pāpak’s son, was killed.

In any case, King Pāpak probably united much of Fārs under his sway during the hectic time of the Parthian sovereign Vologeses IV¹ (192–207) when Septimius Severus invaded Mesopotamia and wrought havoc there. About the year 205 (or possibly 208 according to another reckoning), if we may accept this date from an inscription of Shāpūr on a pillar from his capital at Bīshāpūr, which gives the date 58 with no indication of any era, something happened which started a Sasanian chronology.² Because we have no sources, one can only guess at the event in Fārs which led to this dating. Perhaps Pāpak overthrew a ruler of Stakhr at that time, or he may have decided to proclaim his

¹ Vologeses V according to a different way of reckoning; see pp. 94, 297.

² See R. Ghirshman, “Inscription du monument de Chapour 1^{er} à Chāpour”, *RAA* x (1936), 123–9.

independence of the Parthians at that date. Since the same inscription also mentions two other ways of dating, the fortieth year of the fire of Ardashīr and the twenty-fourth year of the fire of Shāpūr, the conjecture that the year 58 had something to do with Pāpak, rather than with Ardashīr's rise to the governorship of a city, or the like, is eminently plausible.¹ This political interpretation is also more likely than any other, such as a religious act connected with the shrine dedicated to Anahita at Stakhr, with which the early Sasanians seem to have been closely connected.² The custom of establishing a fire temple, at least kindling a new fire at the accession of a new ruler, may have existed in Parthian times. The fire of the Sasanian monarch was extinguished at the end of his reign, a symbolic as well as religious act. In any event, a Sasanian system of dating from the year of Pāpak did not spread; rather the old method of dating by the regnal years of a king, or the Seleucid calendar, beginning with the year 312 B.C., became usual.

The events preceding Ardashīr's victory over Ardavān, the last of the Parthians, in c. 224, may be reconstructed from brief notices in later Islamic sources. There is a possibility that the Parthian king Vologeses IV defeated Pāpak, after the latter's revolt, and forced him to return to Parthian allegiance, at least for a time.³ It is unlikely that Pāpak extended his rule much beyond central Fārs, and most conquests even there may have been the work of Ardashīr. The date of Pāpak's death is unknown, but before that he was succeeded by his eldest son Shāpūr, who probably was killed accidentally after a very short rule. Ardashīr, whose relationship to Pāpak we have already mentioned, became king, probably about 216, and began to expand his realm into Kirmān in the east and Elymais to the west.

The overthrow of the Parthians seems to have been the result of a coalition headed by Ardashīr, since the Syriac *Chronicle of Arbela* says that the rulers of Adiabene and Kirkuk joined Ardashīr in a crusade against the Parthians which was successful.⁴ The date of the battle of Hormizdagān, in which Ardavān was killed, cannot be determined satisfactorily because of the uncertainty of the entire chronology of the early Sasanians.

There are now at least two schemes of chronology for the early

¹ See p. 783 for further detail.

² See Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (London, 1962), p. 206, for references.

³ E. Sachau, "Die Chronik von Arbela", *APAW*, 1915, p. 56. [On the *Chronicle of Arbela* cf. pp. 92 and 925-6, 1276 in this vol.]

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

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Sasanians, both of which are plausible. It is impossible to discuss here the vast literature relating to such questions as the difference between accession to the throne and coronation, the Babylonian practice of counting the accession year from new year's day, the death of Mānī, and the like. Fortunately, the two positions have been well summarized by their two major proponents, S. H. Taqizadeh and W. B. Henning.¹ In short, they are the following.

Event	Taqizadeh	Henning
Ardashīr's first regnal year began	26 Sept. 226	27 Sept. 223
Accession to the throne	6 April 227	28 April 224
Shāpūr's first year began	22 Sept. 241	23 Sept. 239
Shāpūr's crowning	9 April 243	12 April 240
His death	April 273	May 270
Death of Mānī	26 Feb. 277	2 March 274
Death of Bahrām I	July 277	Sept. 274

A difference of three years exists throughout. The discovery of a Greek codex on the life of Mānī seems to resolve this discrepancy, but problems still remain. The relevant passage in the codex reads as follows:

When I became twenty-four years old, in the year in which the Persian king Dari-Ardashir conquered the city of Hatra, and in which King Shapur, his son, put on the greatest diadem [was crowned] in the month of Pharmuthi, on the day of the moon, my most blessed Lord took compassion on me, summoned me to his grace [etc.]²

The Egyptian month and year can be calculated to show that the crowning of Shāpūr as co-ruler with his father must have taken place on 12 April 240 (first of the Babylonian month Nisan 551). The co-regency of Shāpūr and Ardashīr seems to have lasted until early in 242. Thus we have a problem that Shāpūr may have had two "crownings", one as co-regent in 240 and another as sole ruler in 243, although it is more likely that there was only one crowning in 240.

After Ardashīr overthrew Ardavān, his task of conquest was not ended. The great Parthian feudal families, if one may use the word "feudal" in its widest connotation, either submitted to Ardashīr

¹ W. B. Henning and S. H. Taqizadeh, "The dates of Mani's life", *Asia Major* VI (1957), 106-21.

² Cf. A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Ein griechischer Mani-Codex", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* V (Bonn, 1970), p. 120.

willingly or unwillingly, or they were in turn defeated. The family of the Karen, with their centre probably at Nihāvand, is said to have been almost exterminated save one member who fled to Armenia and founded the Kamsarakan noble family, according to an Armenian source.¹ Khosrov, the Arsacid king of Armenia, certainly led an opposition to Ardashīr, and Armenian tradition has it that his relative the Kushān king Vehsadjan (Vasudeva?) supported him, whereas the Suren and other noble Iranian families submitted to Ardashīr. Members of the Karen family, however, appear high on the list of notables at the court of Ardashīr, as recorded in the great inscription of Shāpūr I,² which contradicts the notice in the Armenian source above. Therefore, we may assume that gradually most of the great lords, including the Karen, joined Ardashīr.

In some areas, Ardashīr installed sub-kings from his own family as rulers. Thus one son, also called Ardashīr, was made king of Kirmān.³ Other sons were probably installed elsewhere, and Persian governors or other officials were sent to the principalities which had submitted. Governors and kings, who were members of the Sasanian family, were shifted from one area to another according to policy or need. Although there is no evidence that Ardashīr had any detailed and clear knowledge of the Achaemenians, the fact that he and his son Shāpūr carved rock-reliefs near their Achaemenian counterparts at Naqsh-i Rostam indicates a policy of cultural as well as political aggrandizement in imitation of the past. Several Roman historians assert that Ardashīr consciously planned to re-establish the Achaemenian empire, and there is no reason to doubt the intention of the founder of the dynasty to create a vast empire.⁴

Ctesiphon, on the plains of Mesopotamia, was the main, administrative capital of the Sasanian empire, while in the summer the court moved to the cooler highlands of the Iranian plateau. Ctesiphon was in reality a group of towns, and they were called collectively Māhōzē in Syriac or al-Madā'in in Arabic, both meaning "the cities". One of the towns was called Veh Ardashīr, probably built by the first Sasanian ruler. Another was called Veh Antiok Khusrau (or Rūmagān), built by Khusrau I and settled with war prisoners from Antioch, just as

¹ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), II, 73, p. 219.

² Sprengling, *Third Century Iran*, 9, 11, 76 (Shahpuhr KZ, Parthian lines 23-4, MP line 29, Greek line 57).

³ *Ibid.* and Nöldeke, *Ṭabari*, 10.

⁴ Dio Cassius 80. 3, Herodian 6. 2, 1-2, and foll.

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Shāpūr I had built Gundēshāpūr (see below). The district in which Ctesiphon was located was called Khusrau Shād Kavād, at least during part of the sixth century. Khusrau II held court much of the time at Dastagird to the east of Ctesiphon. The region of Ctesiphon was a natural site for a capital since the Tigris and Euphrates approached each other there, and canals connected the two. Trade routes from the four points of the compass converged here and wealth from trade accumulated in the area of ancient Babylon and modern Baghdad. Furthermore, much of the agricultural wealth of the Sasanian empire was concentrated in Mesopotamia.

Ctesiphon was exposed to attack and conquest by enemies coming down the rivers from the north-west, so from time to time certain Sasanian kings sought to establish their courts at cities more removed from danger of capture. Shāpūr I built Bīshāpūr in Fārs province and probably died there. Gundēshāpūr or Susa may have seen the court established in them for a time, but neither city could compete with Ctesiphon for economic as well as strategic reasons. Likewise Hamadān, an ancient city, was probably the summer capital sometimes, and Stakhr at others. Again both cities were too cold in winter to serve as capitals, as were most towns on the plateau.

Most of the Sasanian kings were crowned in Ctesiphon, although other ceremonies also may have occurred in Stakhr, the home town of the dynasty in Fārs province, or in Shīz, the site of the fire temple of Ādhur Gushnasp in western Jibāl. In Stakhr the site as well as the rôle in history of the temple of Anahita, called the fire of Anahit-Ardashīr and Anahit the Lady (*'n'hyt 'rthštr W 'nhyt ZY MLKT'*) in the MP inscription of Kartīr at KZ, Naqsh-i Rostam (line 8), is uncertain. Perhaps it was a royal shrine of the Sasanians, which played no important rôle in history after the formation of the empire.

The extent of Ardashīr's conquests cannot be determined with precision. Most of the Parthian domains, including vassal states, as we have noted, submitted to the Sasanians. According to Ṭabarī, in the east the kings of the Kushāns and of Tūrān submitted to Ardashīr, while in the west the island and opposite coast of Bahrain were conquered.¹ It is unlikely that Gīlān and the Caspian Sea coast submitted to Ardashīr since the name "Gīlān King" appears first in the reign of Shāpūr, who installed his son, the later king of kings Bahrām I, as

¹ Nöldeke, *Ṭabarī*, pp. 17-18. Tūrān has been identified with the Qusdār of Islamic sources, south of present Kalāt in Pakistan Baluchistan.

ruler there. The Marv oasis was sufficiently important for Ardashīr to install a king with his own name. It is unknown whether the latter was a son or brother of the king of kings, but he should have been a member of the royal family.¹ We can only speculate that Marv was the outpost of the empire in the north-east since neither Sogdiana nor Khwārazm are mentioned in any source as ruled by Ardashīr.

THE EARLY RULERS: THE CONFLICT WITH ROME

The main adversary of the Persians, however, was the Roman empire, and the ambitions of the first Sasanian ruler were soon countered by Rome. Ardashīr besieged Nisibis (at present Nusaybin in Turkey on the Iraq frontier) in 230, and his forces raided Syria and elsewhere in the Roman east. The Romans tried to make peace with the Sasanian ruler but failed. Alexander Severus, after more fruitless negotiations with Ardashīr, set out against him in 232. One column of his army marched into Armenia to aid the Armenians, while two other columns operated to the south. We do not know the course of events, but the northern column seems to have been successful, whereas the others failed, mostly on account of physical hardships. In any case, Ardashīr was repulsed and Alexander Severus celebrated a triumph in Rome.²

The murder of Alexander Severus in 235 and the subsequent troubles in the Roman empire may have induced Ardashīr to attack again. The dates are uncertain, but towards the end of his reign, probably in 238, he took both Carrhae and Nisibis. We may surmise that not long thereafter Ardashīr allowed his son Shāpūr to rule jointly with him, as coins with busts of both men suggest. Since the dates of the end of Ardashīr's reign and the accession and coronation of Shāpūr are disputed, we have almost five years in which certain events may be placed. One of the most important was the capture of Hatra, the trading and caravan city in the desert between the Tigris and Euphrates. Hatra had withstood sieges of Trajan, Septimius Severus and Ardashīr. The attack of the last had changed the animosity of Hatra against the Romans into an alliance. Hatra may have been integrated into a defence system of Roman *limes* initiated in northern Mesopotamia by Caracalla and continued by Alexander Severus.³ At all events, Ardashīr cap-

¹ Shapur KZ, MP line 55.

² *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, 55-6.

³ Cf. A. Maricq, "Les dernières années de Hatra", *Syria* xxxiv (1957), 291.

tured the city, and this may have been one event which provoked a Roman counter-thrust.

Because of internal difficulties including the rapid change of emperors, the Romans could not move against the Persians for several years, and it was not until 243 that Gordian advanced against Shāpūr. In the meantime, Shāpūr had been busy, according to the *Chronicle of Arbela*, in subduing the Khwārazmians and the people of Gilān on the Caspian Sea coast.¹ Whatever the chronology of events in the first years of Shāpūr, in his first clash with Rome the Persians were on the defensive. Carrhae and Nisibis were retaken by the Romans and the Persians were defeated at a battle near Resaina. Some time after the battle the praetorian prefect Timesitheus, who was the power behind the young emperor Gordian, died, presumably of illness, and was replaced by Philip, who was an Arab. In 244 the two armies met in battle at Massice, or Anbār, not far from Ctesiphon, and Shāpūr won. After the battle, he gave a new name to the town, Pērōz-Shāpūr or "victorious is Shāpūr". The emperor Gordian either died in the battle or was murdered by his own men, and Philip became emperor.

Philip paid a ransom of 500,000 gold *dinars* to Shāpūr, according to Shāpūr's great inscription. He also probably agreed not to aid the Armenians against Shāpūr, for the Arsacid king of Armenia was still a bitter enemy of the Sasanians. Unfortunately, information about events in Armenia is lacking and we must rely on probable inferences. The Arsacid king of Armenia, according to the Armenian sources of Agathangelos and Moses of Khorene, was called Khosrov and he was assassinated at the instigation of the Sasanian king. No dates are given, but it probably happened under Shāpūr rather than Ardashīr, presumably about A.D. 252. The son of the Armenian king Tiridates fled to Roman territory and this is probably the reason for Shāpūr's decision to reopen hostilities against Rome.

In his inscription Shāpūr says (Parthian line 4, Greek line 10), "Caesar again lied and did wrong to Armenia, and we attacked the Roman empire". The date of this campaign is disputed, for both 253 and 256 have partisans. A solution to the problem may be that two campaigns have been combined into one, a preliminary raiding in 253 and a more successful expedition in 256. In the latter year a Roman army of sixty thousand was destroyed at Barbalissus and Syria was laid waste. Dura Europus and the city of Antioch were among the many

¹ Sachau, "Die Chronik", p. 64.

towns captured and the Christian bishop of Antioch, Demetrianus, was one of the captives settled at a new town in Khūzistān called Veh Antiok Shāpūr (“Better than Antioch [has] Shāpūr [built this]”), which became corrupted later into Gundēshāpūr.

It seems that Shāpūr was besieging Carrhae and Edessa when the new emperor Valerian marched against him. The date of the battle near Edessa, when Valerian was captured by Shāpūr, is also disputed – either the end of 258, or 259, or some even suggest 260. The triumph of Shāpūr was commemorated by rock-carvings showing him on horseback and his Roman opponent kneeling before him at Naqsh-i Rostam and at Bīshāpūr. Shāpūr’s forces again ravaged Syria and also invaded Cappadocia. In the great inscription of Shāpūr I the various cities taken are listed, but they were not held for more than a short period. It was less the Romans and more Odenath, the ruler of Palmyra, who attacked detachments of the Persians causing them to retreat to their homeland. The history of the next few years is clouded, for the extent of Palmyrene successes against Shāpūr is unknown. We may assume that Shāpūr was content to rest on his laurels and to supervise the building of dams in Khūzistān and the embellishment of his capital of Bīshāpūr by his prisoners from the Roman empire.

Probably a short time after the victory over Valerian, Shāpūr made some changes in his empire. In Armenia after the murder of King Khosrov and the flight of Tiridates, a certain Artavazd seems to have ruled until about 262 when Shāpūr appointed his own son Hormizd-Ardashīr as great king of Armenia. Another son, also called Shāpūr, was king of Mesene, and he had probably succeeded his uncle Mihrshāh, lord of Mesene, known from Manichaean texts.¹ A third son Varahrān, or later Bahrām, was king in Gīlān, and a fourth son Narseh was the king of the Sakas, ruling over large territories in eastern Iran, including Sind. Several brothers of Shāpūr seem to have continued in the posts assigned to them by Ardashīr; one Ardashīr was king of Adiabene, and another, with the same name, was king of Kirmān. Amazasp, king of Georgia, was an Iranian, possibly related to the Sasanian family. Many other princes and lords appear in the *notitia dignitatum*, at the end of the great inscription of Shāpūr I. If we examine the extent of the empire as vaunted by Shāpūr in his inscription, it becomes clear that much of Transcaucasia was ruled by local kings subject to him, for only in

¹ Middle Persian fragment from Turfan, M 475; cf. F. W. K. Müller, “Handschriften in Estrangelo-Schrift aus Turfan”, *APAW* 1904, p. 83.

Georgia and Armenia are names of Iranians given. In the east the empire extended over the "land of the Kushāns up to Pashkibur (Peshawar?), and to Kāshghar, Sogdiana and Tashkent" (Parthian line 2, Greek line 4). In other words, the empire included the domain of the Kushāns, at least as far as the lowlands of the north-west frontier of Pakistan. It also extended to Sogdiana and Central Asia, but did not include them. For it is likely that what Shāpūr meant in his inscription was that the Kushān kingdom had submitted to him, and the boundaries of that kingdom extended to Peshawar, Sogdiana, Kāshghar (or possibly Kish) and Tashkent. No Sasanian prince is designated as Kushānshāh by Shāpūr, so we may infer that the ruler who had submitted retained his title, but under Sasanian suzerainty.

At the time of the capture of Valerian, Shāpūr must have been advanced in age, which may explain his apparent lack of reaction to the expansion of Palmyra. The king of kings must have been busy with internal matters, for we know he took an interest in Mānī and in matters of culture and thought. He built a new city in Fārs province, Bīshāpūr, where presumably artisans from the Roman empire worked, as evidenced by mosaics found there. The religious developments during Shāpūr's reign are discussed elsewhere.¹

The date of the death of Shāpūr and the accession of his son Hormizd I is subject to the same controversy as the dates of accession of Ardashīr and Shāpūr. Whether the date is 270 or 273, Hormizd, or Hormizd-Ardashīr as he is known from inscriptions, ruled only a little more than a year before he died. Nothing is known of his short reign except a notice in the Arabic history of al-Tha'ālibī that he waged war against the Sogdians, not improbable in view of his reputation for valour in war.²

With the accession of Varahrān I, or, to use the later form of the name, Bahrām, we may sense a change in the dynasty. Bahrām was not the son of Hormizd, as some later Arabic and Persian writers supposed; rather he was another son of Shāpūr, and he was called the king of Gīlān, in the great inscription of Shāpūr I. In this inscription, Bahrām was not honoured by a fire in his name, as were both Hormizd and Narseh. This may indicate that Bahrām's mother was a lesser queen or possibly even a concubine. Narseh, king of the Sakas and of the east, most probably objected to the accession of Bahrām II, son of Bahrām I,

¹ See chapters 22, 23, 27. Ed.

² *Histoire des rois des Perses*, ed. and trans. H. Zotenberg (Paris, 1900), p. 499.

but he certainly blamed the father, since in one instance he substituted his own name for that of Bahrām I on a rock-inscription of Bīshāpūr.¹ We may believe that the problem of succession to the throne had not been settled in a manner agreeable to all princes, and Narseh may have thought he should have succeeded his brothers, but we have no evidence that he revolted. When Bahrām I arranged for his son Bahrām II to succeed him, Narseh was surely unhappy but bided his time. Bahrām I ruled only three years and during his reign, Aurelian brought an end to Palmyra and re-established Roman rule in the east. Under Bahrām I the priest Kartīr, or Kerdir, continued his career of consolidating the state church, and incidentally of self-aggrandizement. He was probably the main influence in the imprisonment and death of Mānī which took place under Bahrām I.

The religious history of the reigns of Hormizd and the two Bahrāms is dominated by the figure of Kartīr, who may have been the real power behind the throne of Bahrām II. One might speculate that the priest used his influence in securing the succession to the throne for Bahrām II, rather than for Narseh. The latter seems to have followed a liberal policy towards religious minorities in the empire, much like his father, Shāpūr, whereas the Bahrāms were more amenable to the wishes of the conservative Zoroastrian priesthood. Apart from his religious impact, Kartīr's influence on political affairs should not be underestimated.

Bahrām II at the outset of his reign had to face a Roman invasion under the emperor Carus in 283. The Romans captured Ctesiphon and would have extended their conquests if the emperor had not died in December of the same year. Peace was made, and this permitted the Romans to regain the province of Mesopotamia, which seems to have been under Persian domination since Shāpūr's conquests. The reason for the acceptance by Bahrām II of such onerous terms was possibly a revolt of Hormizd, brother of Bahrām, in the eastern provinces.² The rebel was reportedly supported by the Sakas, Kushāns, and people of Gīlān. We do not know what position Hormizd held; perhaps he was a king in Khurāsān, or even in Sakastān, and he may have proclaimed himself great king of the Kushāns. Bahrām was able to put down the revolt, and we might surmise that he installed his son, also

¹ E. Herzfeld, *Paikuli 1* (Berlin, 1924), p. 173. In January 1975 the rock-carving of a male figure was found under the horse of the king. It probably represents Bahrām III whom Narseh conquered, and it was added to the relief after the victory of Narseh.

² Zonaras xii. 30, and *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Carus. 8.

called Bahrām, as the king of the Sakas in place of the rebel. Bahrām II had several rock-reliefs cut at Bīshāpūr and at Naqsh-i Rostam, possibly in honour of his victory over his rebel brother, or other conquests. He also had reliefs carved at Gūyum and Barm-i Dilak, north and south of present Shīrāz.

About 288 the new Roman emperor Diocletian placed Tiridates, an Arsacid prince who had fled to Roman domains, on the throne of at least part of Armenia, and Bahrām by his inaction acquiesced. Probably Sasanian control had become weakened over some sections of Armenia, though Narseh, son of Shāpūr I may have been appointed by Bahrām to rule over the country. When Bahrām II died in 293, his son Bahrām III ruled for only a few months until he was deposed by his uncle Narseh.¹ We have a bilingual inscription, or probably two bilingual inscriptions, of Narseh at Paikuli in modern Iraq near the Persian frontier. Unfortunately, many of the stones of the monument are missing, but some sense may be made of what remains in spite of great lacunae.

Narseh was in Armenia at the time of the death of Bahrām II, either as its king, or possibly as head of a Sasanian army intent on defeating and deposing a competitor, Tiridates. In his inscription, however, Narseh calls himself "king of kings". Although the title in the inscription – "king of the Armenians" – may refer to Narseh before he took the throne, it more plausibly should refer to Tiridates afterwards in the inscription. In any case, according to the inscription, a noble called Vahunam took the diadem and either for a time usurped the throne or more likely prepared the way for Bahrām III, the king of the Sakas. Some of the nobility were killed and others objected to the high-handed policies of the new régime. Many nobles joined in a conspiracy to overthrow Bahrām and sought the candidacy to the throne of Narseh. He came from Armenia, probably having made peace with, and possibly even with the support of, Tiridates. Narseh was counselled by his new supporters to come to the border of Babylonia (Asūristān), where the site of Paikuli was located. A caravan of notables came to him to pledge allegiance. Kartīr the famous mobad, having seen the writing on the wall, may have been among the number who came. The fate of Vahunam and Bahram III is not known, for

¹ Coins of Bahrām II, but with the legend "Hormizd King of Kings", may reflect the independence of Hormizd, brother of Bahrām II, in the east, or less likely they may date from the very end of Bahrām II's rule, indicating a short reign of Hormizd after the death of Bahrām II.

the first or upper inscription of Paikuli has too many lacunae at the end to reconstruct it, and they vanish from history.

The second or lower inscription at Paikuli is mainly a list of rulers and lords who supported Narseh or were subject to the Sasanian monarch after his accession. Among them we find the king of the Kushāns; the king of the Khwārazmians is also mentioned, indicating Sasanian suzerainty in that part of Central Asia. A certain 'Amr, king of the Lakhmids (Parthian *lḥmyšn*), and another 'Amr, king of the Apgarids (Parthian *'pgrn'n*), testify to the submission of Arab tribes to Sasanian overlordship. The latter name is enigmatic, for the last king of Edessa, or Osroene, supposedly died in Rome. Are we to suppose a continuation of a tribe called the Apgarids, somehow related to the kings of Edessa, which lay within the borders of the Roman empire? Are we to interpret the list of rulers as those who supported Narseh or those who came or sent representatives to the coronation of Narseh, rather than direct tributaries of the Sasanian state? Other potentates in the list include the king of Paradene and the king of Makrān, both in present Balūchistān.

When we analyse this list we are struck by the multitude of lords and kings mostly from the borders of the Sasanian state. First, not one of the rulers can be identified as a Sasanian prince; second, none of the important areas such as Kirmān, Marv, Gīlān or Meshan, where kings once ruled, according to the great inscription of Shāpūr I, is mentioned; and third, none of the great feudal families, such as the Karen or Suren, is noted. We may tentatively conclude that Narseh was supported by a host of minor rulers, while his opponent Bahrām III held the allegiance of the central part of the empire. We may further suspect a consequent weakening of the position of the great nobility after the accession of Narseh. Unfortunately, our sources are silent about internal affairs during the reign of Narseh, and all is conjecture.

Narseh, once on the throne, determined to regain territory lost to the Romans by Bahrām II, which mainly meant Armenia and Mesopotamia. Again events in Armenia remain unclear, but Tiridates was driven from his throne by Narseh in 296. About the beginning of 297 a Roman army under Galerius, the Caesar of Diocletian in the latter's reform of the Roman empire, was defeated and Narseh recovered Mesopotamia. In the following year, however, Narseh lost his harem in a rout of the Sasanian army by the same Galerius in Armenia. Diocletian made peace at the request of Narseh whereby the Romans not only regained

suzerainty over northern Mesopotamia and Armenia but obtained additional land joined to their domains in this area. Furthermore, trade between the two empires was to be channelled through Nisibis as the sole place of exchange, at the request of the Romans. After this defeat the Persians and the Romans remained at peace for forty years.

As mentioned, internal affairs during the reigns of Narseh and his son Hormizd II are unknown, but from brief notices we may infer a change from the time of the Bahrāms. The religious policy of persecution of the Manichaeans, for one thing, changed to toleration under Narseh.¹ This change may have been induced by Narseh's desire to secure the support of Manichaeans in the Roman empire, for in 297 in Alexandria Diocletian issued an edict against the propaganda of the Manichaeans. We do not know about other religious minorities, but since there are no indications of Christian martyrdoms or anti-Jewish acts from this period, we may assume that the policy of toleration which held sway under Shāpūr I was resumed under Narseh. Towards the end of Narseh's reign the king of Armenia was converted to Christianity, which changed the destiny of that country, soon to become a religious ally of the Roman empire after Constantine was himself converted in 312. That Narseh was not such an ardent supporter of orthodox Zoroastrianism is indicated by a notice in al-Tha'ālibī that he did not visit the fire temples.² Other information about the reign of Narseh is lacking.

Hormizd II ruled for seven years (302-9), a hard and strong man who none the less was just and well liked according to various Arabic sources. Otherwise nothing is known of his reign. A short excursus on the urban and agricultural policy of the early Sasanian rulers may help to elucidate internal affairs. The town-building activities of the early Sasanians are well known. An ancient practice of moving populations from one part of the empire to another was followed by Shāpūr I when he settled Roman prisoners in the new towns of Gundēshāpūr and Bīshāpūr. Other new foundations or at least renamings of older settlements are amply attested. Less well known, but more significant, is the enormous expansion of cultivated land in Khūzistān, the Diyālā river basin and elsewhere.³ The area of cultivated land apparently was

¹ Cf. C. Schmidt and H. J. Polotsky, "Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten", *SPAW* 1933, p. 28.

² *Histoire des rois des Perses*, p. 510.

³ Cf. R. Adams, "Agriculture and urban life in early southwestern Iran", *Science* cxxxvi (1962), 109-22, and his *Land behind Baghdad* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 69-83.

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larger in Sasanian times than at any period before or since. Archaeological evidence would indicate an enormous effort on the part of the Sasanian government to extend and maintain a costly irrigation system, in many areas of the empire. This extension of agriculture is more impressive than the founding of cities, for the latter were usually small, though with strong surrounding walls, to judge from the few archaeological surveys which have been made. With the increase of agricultural land, a meritorious act in the Zoroastrian religion, the Sasanian kings also laid the basis for an increase in population. The increase of population over the earlier periods is difficult to assess but the archaeological evidence for expansion is a good indication. The new Sasanian towns were laid out in a regular order, and most Sasanian settlements over both earlier and later areas of cultivated land were centres of larger agricultural districts. The pattern of towns in the later eastern Islamic caliphate took its form in the Sasanian period.

THE REIGN OF SHĀPŪR II:

THE CULMINATION OF SASANIAN POWER

Likewise, it would seem that many later institutions were organized, if not founded, in the early Sasanian period. It is true that many scholars have discounted the later Sasanian practice of attributing all changes in the state or society, especially in the time of Khusrau I, to mere revivals of conditions obtaining under the founder Ardashīr. None the less, under the early Sasanians much of the groundwork for the future was established. For example, the authority over political and economic affairs of the heads of various religious minorities, famous as the *millet* system of the much later Ottoman empire, seems to have been organized by the early Sasanians, as well as the tax system applied to minorities.¹ Both the organization of the state church and the fixing of the political and tax structure of the Sasanian state were the results of great endeavours under the early Sasanian rulers.

The events following the death of Hormizd II are obscure, but one of the sons of Hormizd, probably called Ādhurnarseh, came to the throne. The nobility, however, took matters into their own hands, deposed the king and seized some of his brothers, although one, Hormizd, escaped and fled to the Romans. The crown was then given to an infant Shāpūr II. The fact that another son of Hormizd II, also

¹ Cf. many articles of the late Yu. A. Solodukho, e.g. in *VDI* xx (1947. 2), 40-51.

THE REIGN OF SHĀPŪR II

called Shāpūr, the king of the Sakas, is attested in two inscriptions from Persepolis, as well as the mention of an Ardashīr, king of Adiabene and brother of Shāpūr, in the Syriac acts of Christian martyrs, suggests that there may have been two factions in the family of Hormizd II, and the nobles supported the one which brought to power Shāpūr II.¹ Shāpūr II was to rule from 309 to 379, the longest time-period of any Sasanian king, and under his reign Iran developed greatly and expanded.

Although the nobility from time to time during the Sasanian empire showed its power, on the whole the importance of the ruler and the centralization of authority continued. The ultimate dependence of the bureaucracy, of the legal system, and indeed of all institutions of the state on the person of the ruler is revealed in the acts of the Christian martyrs, as well as in later Arabic and Persian texts. The reign of Shāpūr II can be considered the culmination of the process of centralization under the early Sasanian kings. At first, as a child, he was under the sway of the nobility, but soon Shāpūr was able to bring power into his own hands with the acquiescence of the same nobility. For the supreme rights of the ruler were recognized as having precedence over all. It is interesting to compare the same tendencies in the late Roman empire, for in Byzantium the bureaucracy and centralization, as well as autocracy, could be compared easily with the Sasanian empire. We do not know whether the administrative reforms of Diocletian and Constantine had any echoes in Iran, but most likely their spirit did have some repercussions even though they cannot be pin-pointed.

The mechanism of succession to the throne, and the part played by the nobility and priesthood, may be examined briefly. Down to the end of the dynasty a member of the family of Sāsān was the ruler, and the allegiance of the nobles and priests could rarely be won by a rebel who was not a Sasanian prince. The case of Bahrām Chōbīn (see below) was unique, and he ultimately failed to secure the support of the nobility against Khusrau II. Although a strong ruler in reality would designate his own successor, and secure the support of the priesthood and nobility for the succession before his own death, none the less, the support of these two classes was always necessary for accession, for the crown prince had to satisfy them by his qualities of mind and

¹ For the Persepolis inscriptions see Frye, "The Persepolis Middle Persian inscriptions from the time of Shapur II", *AO xxx* (1966), 83-93, and for the Syriac martyr acts see G. Wiessner, *Zur Märtyrerüberlieferung aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II* (Göttingen, 1967) p. 206.

body that he was fit to rule. Almost invariably a prior demonstration of ability to rule a province was a prerequisite for mounting the throne of the king of kings. Bahrām Gor had not governed a province, but by his personal qualities he was able to convince the aristocracy that he was that son of Yazdgard I fit to rule. The belief that the *farr* or “mystical majesty” of kingship had descended on a prince would cause nobles to rally to one member of the royal family rather than another. The signs and symbols of the *farr* were many and varied, and politics undoubtedly also played an important rôle in securing support for the succession.

The priesthood had to be assured that a prospective ruler would follow the Mazdayasnian faith, as the Zoroastrian religion was called. This meant not only adherence to the ritual and the ethics of the state religion, but also to the norms of society in the class structure. In the many books of advice (*andarz*), and on rules of conduct, from Islamic times in Arabic and Persian, one finds the remark that in the Sasanian era religion and state were twin sisters, and the duty of the ruler was to support the religion. The future rulers of the Sasanian empire were, of course, instructed in the worship of Ahura Mazda, and taught the requirements of religion, as well as the arts of riding, archery and the like. In the years of the earlier Sasanian state the ruler appointed priests and bestowed titles on them, but later, perhaps already by the time of Shāpūr II, the chief priest, the *mobadān-mobad*, created on the analogy of the title king of kings, took over such ecclesiastical tasks as religious appointments. The *mobadān mobad* also performed the act of coronation, placing a crown on the head of the new ruler. Firdausī describes this frequently in the *Shāh-nāma*.

The time and day of coronation were determined by astrologers, astronomers and soothsayers, all of whom were important personages at any court of antiquity. The day of coronation might be postponed a long time in waiting for an auspicious day. In any case, it did not coincide with the day of accession to the throne; this has caused great uncertainty in the dating of the reigns of some Sasanian rulers. The celebrations at the time of coronation included much feasting and entertainment, and the ruler presented money or precious objects to the nobles and to the army.

Each Sasanian monarch had a distinctive crown, or even more than one (fig. 1).¹ The crown and the mace (Persian *gurz*) were two of the symbols of royalty. There is not space here to go into the details of

¹ [See ch. 9, pp. 324ff. for details, and pls 25-30 (3).]

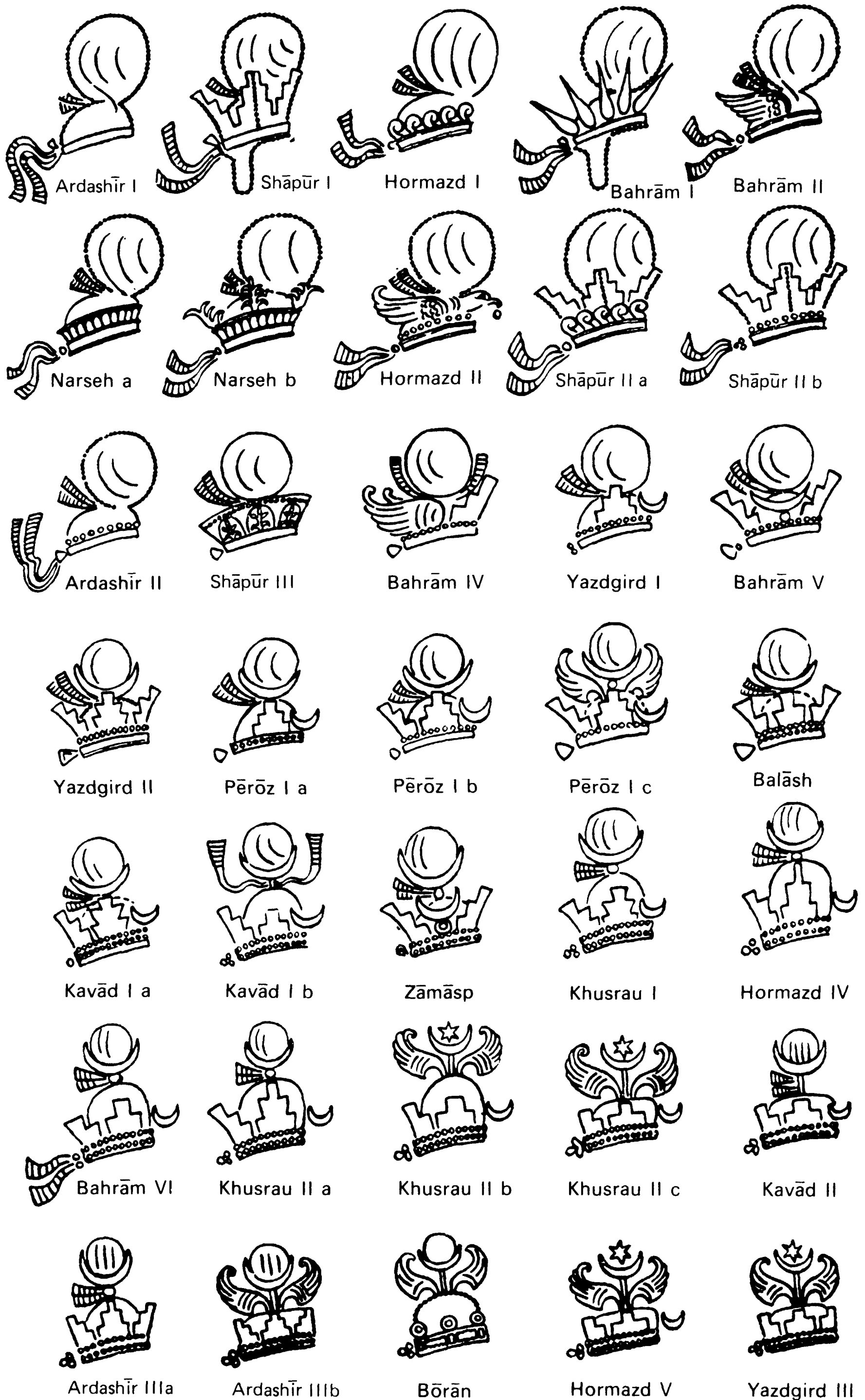


Fig. 1. The crowns of the Sasanian kings as found on coins and reliefs.

the coronation ceremony. Suffice it to say that traditions of kingship in the Sasanian state were both varied and ancient.

The ruler was regarded as chosen by God with a divine right to rule, but this did not make him an unapproachable divine figure. Many stories are told by Firdausī about the sense of justice of the Sasanian kings. Access to the throne by the poorest subject was an old tradition in Iran, and on festival days such as Norūz and Mihragān, the king listened to complaints in open audience. The ruler was regarded as the protector and impartial judge of all of his subjects, and the ancient traditions of law in Iran can be compared with the rôle of law in the Roman empire. The ruler with all his power had to submit to the laws as everyone else. Since the privileges of the nobility and clergy were established and accepted by all, the ruler had both to respect them and to defend them. Thus the very structure of society in Sasanian times imposed limits on the monarch's power and duties to his subjects.

The power of the rulers was great in the third century, but in the fourth, until Shāpūr II reached manhood, the nobility and priesthood held sway. Khusrau I, in the aftermath of the Mazdakite troubles (see below), reorganized the nobility. In the 7th century the prestige and powers of the ruler had sunk so low that the monarchs were mere puppets in the hands of the nobility. Undoubtedly this contributed much to the decline and fall of the dynasty, but this is a later story, and we must return to Shāpūr II.

Among the events of Shāpūr's reign were his early expeditions against the Arabs of the desert, where he is supposed to have filled their wells with sand to bring them to submit.¹ Shāpūr penetrated far into Arabia; how far is unknown. An indication of local recalcitrance to imperial rule was the revolt of the city of Susa later in his reign. Shāpūr not only suppressed the revolt but he caused elephants to trample the remains of the city.² Then he rebuilt the city with the aid of Roman prisoners, as Shāpūr I did at Gundēshāpūr, and he renamed the city of Susa Īrān Khwarrah Shāpūr ("Iran's glory [built by] Shāpūr"). This title was confused with a similar title given to the town of Karkha de Ledan (the Aramaic name of the city) north of Susa, until Karkha was later renamed Īrān āsān kar(t) Kavād.³ Other cities were founded or refounded by Shāpūr II, among them Nishāpūr in

¹ Nöldeke, *Ṭabarī*, p. 56.

² Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ wa'l-anbiyā'* (Berlin, 1922), p. 37; *Sozomenus* 2. 14.

³ This reading, found on seal impressions, is more likely than *kir* for the passive *kīrīd*. The meaning would be "Kavad made Iran peaceful" (not "easy").

Khurāsān. So Shāpūr II was a worthy successor of his namesake in his building as well as his martial activities.

It was inevitable that the new Sasanian ruler would seek to regain territory lost to the Romans by his predecessors. Armenia was also involved, but, as usual, we have no accurate details of events. In any case, it was Shāpūr who broke the long peace between the two empires, and the main field of battle was Mesopotamia. It seems that the nephew of Constantine, a certain Hannibalianus, had had some success in Armenia when Constantine died in 337.

The system of fortresses and *limes* erected primarily by Diocletian in the Roman province of Mesopotamia and in the Syrian desert proved to be a strong bulwark against the Persians. The Roman defences were rendered even stronger by the roads, wells and caravan-sarais erected behind the forts, castles and walls, enabling soldiers, especially horsemen, to move with speed to an area of invasion. This is not the place to discuss the military reforms of Diocletian and Constantine, except to say that for the defence of the frontiers they provided various trained troops, which Shāpūr on his expeditions met to his discomfiture. Several sieges of the Roman fortress city of Nisibis ended in failure for Shāpūr. A number of minor battles were won or lost but no decision was reached, and Shāpūr had to end operations on his western front to meet an invasion of new nomads in the east. These were the Chionites, who, to judge from their name, represented the first appearance of Hunnic peoples in the Middle East. They were probably Altaic-speaking (proto-Turkic-speaking?) nomads mixed with Iranians, remnants of the Sarmatians and others, who adopted the local Kushān-Bactrian language after they settled in the northern part of the Kushān domain in the east. Shāpūr was successful in containing the Chionites, who even concluded an alliance and gave him aid in his wars against the Romans.

After successes in the east Shāpūr turned again to the Romans, his principal enemies. Fortunately we have an eyewitness account of some of the martial activities between the two empires in the history of Ammianus Marcellinus. In the face of Shāpūr's advance a scorched-earth policy was followed by the Romans, but Shāpūr was able to defeat them and lay siege to the Roman fortress of Amida, present-day Diyārbakr, which he took in 359 after much difficulty. Other towns were captured and their populations taken to Khūzistān and elsewhere in the Sasanian empire. The Romans took up this challenge when the emperor Julian led an impressive force against Shāpūr in 363. A large

detachment was sent to join the Armenians east of Carrhae, so both would march parallel to Julian who, with the main body of troops, descended the Euphrates river to Ctesiphon. In a combat Julian the Apostate was mortally wounded, and after his death the new emperor, Jovian, found his army in a disadvantageous position. Peace was made by which Shāpūr obtained most of the former Roman possessions east of the Tigris as well as the cities of Nisibis, Singara and others. Armenia was also abandoned by the Romans and was soon conquered by Shāpūr who treacherously seized and blinded the king of Armenia. Pap, the son and successor of the blind king, incurred the enmity of the Romans and a few years after the death of his father, Pap was killed by them. Afterwards, Shāpūr sought to come to an agreement over Armenia with the emperor Valens, but this was not possible until the invasion of the Goths in the Balkans near Constantinople distracted the Romans. Then the Sasanians took the lion's share of Armenia, while the Romans had to be content with a small area mainly around Mount Ararat. Armenia, however, continued to remain a bone of contention between the two empires.

Under Shāpūr II a number of innovations appeared in the Sasanian empire. Unfortunately in the sources the two Shāpūrs are frequently confused, and activities of Shāpūr II are frequently attributed to Shāpūr I, more than vice versa. The earlier Sasanian rulers may have begun to erect fortifications against the Romans in Mesopotamia, and against nomadic enemies north of the Caucasus, but Shāpūr II extended the system of defence, probably in imitation of Diocletian's activities in building the limes of the Syrian and Mesopotamian frontiers of the Roman empire. Islamic writers attribute to Shāpūr II the line of forts, walls and probably moats or ditches situated in Iraq on the edge of the desert and called *khandaq Sābūr*. Just as the Romans settled *limitanei* on their frontiers, so Shāpūr settled Arabs in Iraq as a permanent defence force against other Arabs of the desert, especially those allied with Rome. We have no information about Shāpūr's efforts to repel invaders from the Caucasus region, but we may assume that the famous wall of Darband, if not begun by Shāpūr, at least was the result of his efforts at fortification in the north. The system of Roman limes must have impressed the Sasanians for it stopped Shāpūr's strenuous efforts to repeat what his great-grandfather Shāpūr I had done. And this was in spite of the fact that the army of Shāpūr II probably was better organized and more disciplined than under previous monarchs.

THE REIGN OF SHĀPŪR II

In addition to the limes and system of forts built by the Sasanians, mainly to halt raids by the desert Arabs, either brigands or allies of the Romans, there were a number of buffer states at the beginning of Sasanian rule. These became absorbed into the central state in the course of time, such that by the 7th century even the buffer state of the Arab Lakhmids of Ḥīra was gone. The end of the buffer states may have weakened the Sasanian state at the time of the Arab conquests, for the imperial forces had to bear the brunt of the first attacks. In the 3rd century such client states as Adiabene, Arabistān (in the north-east Syrian desert), and of course the Lakhmids, played an important rôle in Sasanian–Roman relations, perhaps comparable to Palmyra on the Roman side.

Just as in the Roman empire, the client states were taken over by the central government, and in their place the fortified cities of the frontier and the limes were organized into a defence system. In the long series of wars between the Sasanians on one side, and the Romans followed by the Byzantines on the other, the frontier remained more or less constant in upper Mesopotamia. It is true that sometimes Nisibis, Singara, Dārā and other cities of upper Mesopotamia changed hands, but the stability of the frontier over centuries is remarkable. Although the possession of frontier cities gave one empire a trade advantage over the other, one has the impression that the blood spilled in the warfare between the two states brought as little real gain to one side or the other as the few metres of land gained at terrible cost in the trench warfare of the First World War.

Shāpūr II was noted for his religious persecution, mostly of the Christians but also of Jews and Manichaeans. Christianity had expanded into Iraq already under the Arsacids, but the large numbers of prisoners brought from Antioch and elsewhere by Shāpūr I, and settled by him in areas such as Khūzistān, had increased the numbers and activities of Christians in the Sasanian empire. Bishoprics existed not only at Ctesiphon but at Gundeshāpūr, Bīshāpūr and elsewhere. While the Christians in northern Mesopotamia and especially in Adiabene, which had had a Jewish ruling family in Parthian times, were early converted by missionaries from western centres of Christianity, those of Khūzistān and Fārs provinces were mostly descended from war prisoners settled by royal decree. Shāpūr II needed money for his army to attack the Romans, so among his taxes those on Christians were doubled to provide extra revenues. The Christians naturally objected and the

persecutions began. They lasted from 339 until the death of Shāpūr II in 379, and the fact that the Romans, chief enemies of Shāpūr, were Christians did not help the Christians in the Sasanian empire. The three centres of Christianity in the Sasanian empire, Ctesiphon, Adiabene and Khūzistān, suffered the most and fortunately we have the Syriac acts of martyrs from these areas, which *inter alia* give interesting information about Sasanian titles and offices.

Under Shāpūr II the process of the establishment of church–state relationships seems to have reached its culmination. The Zoroastrian church was now fully identified with the monarchy and yet the church had its separate place in society with a hierarchy of its own. Just as in the case of the Ṣafavid state so much later, the initial supreme position of the ruler as head of both church and state in the Sasanian empire had become modified by a strong and well-organized clergy on the one hand, and a class-conscious nobility on the other. The “great mobad” is mentioned many times in the acts of the martyrs from Shāpūr’s time, and other religious offices are also mentioned, indicating that by this time the religious organization which lasted until the end of the empire had been formed. It was during the reign of Shāpūr II that the mobad Ādhurbad son of Mahrspand is supposed to have submitted to the ordeal of having molten metal poured on his chest and to have emerged without harm; thus he vindicated the efficacy of following the good religion of Zoroastrianism in opposition to other religions.¹ It would seem that orthodoxy was given a great boost by Ādhurbad, for we have some of his writings in Pahlavī still preserved and the Zoroastrian tradition considers him most highly. Heresies, among them time-speculation or Zurvānism, were combatted by the orthodox clergy with the approval of Shāpūr.²

Arabic sources as well as Agathias (iv. 26) say that Ardashīr II, successor to Shāpūr II, was his brother, but this seems most unlikely, for he would have been very elderly. Some scholars have speculated that Shāpūr II is confused for Shāpūr III in the sources, which is also improbable. Another Shāpūr, a son of Hormizd II like Shāpūr II, as mentioned above, is attested by his Middle Persian inscription at Persepolis. This was Shāpūr the king of the Sakas, of Sind, Sistān and Tūrān, up to the edge of the sea.³ It is possible that Ardashīr II

¹ See R. C. Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi* (London, 1956), p. 98.

² Cf. M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians; Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London, 1979), pp. 118–19, who considers both Shāpūr II and his high priest Adurbād ī Mahrspand defenders of Zurvanism.

³ See Frye, “The Persepolis Middle Persian inscriptions”, p. 84.

was the son, or less likely the brother, of this Shāpūr rather than of Shāpūr II. The practice of calling various children by the same name, or with slight variants, exists in other parts of the world, but here it can be very confusing to the historian. If Ardashīr II was not the son of Shāpūr II, as was his successor Shāpūr III, then we may postulate several factions among the nobility and clergy in the empire at this time, since one would expect a father-to-son succession if all were tranquil. Moreover any speculation that the relief attributed to Ardashīr II in Ṭāq-i Bustān represents a northern Iranian predominance (either political or religious) as opposed to Fārs, where the earlier kings have their rock-carvings, is vain. Also any supposition that this implies a religious division between north and south is unwarranted. Whatever the relationship of Ardashīr II with Shāpūr II, his reign was short, and he was deposed after less than four years' rule by the nobility because of his tyranny towards them, according to Islamic sources.

Ardashīr II was succeeded by Shāpūr III, a son of Shāpūr II, as we know from a Middle Persian inscription of the former at Ṭāq-i Bustān. Shāpūr III ruled from 383 to 388 and was praised in the Islamic sources as being mild and well disposed towards the nobility. None the less he was either murdered or his tent fell on him killing him.

During the reign of Shāpūr III Armenia again became a bone of contention between the Roman and Sasanian empires. Since the time of the successes of Shāpūr II Armenia, Georgia and Albania had remained "vassal states" of the Sasanian empire. The defence of the passes over the Caucasus against nomad invaders was imperative for the Sasanians, which is one reason why they were so sensitive about their northern frontiers. From time to time they shared expenses of the defence of Darband and the north with the Romans, who also did not desire invasions of their Anatolian provinces. We have mentioned that a small part of Armenia remained outside Sasanian influence, and the emperor Theodosius evidently sought to increase the domain of the Roman protégé in Armenia by sending an army to his eastern frontier in the year 383 or 384. Hostilities, however, did not occur. Rather embassies passed between the two great empires, and an agreement was reached to readjust the boundaries of the two Armenias. Artashes, the ruler of the Roman part, was killed in a conflict, and the Romans appointed a new ruler with a new title *comes Armeniae*, which confirmed the virtual annexation of this part of Armenia to the Roman

empire.¹ The largest part of Armenia remained under an Armenian king of the Arsacid dynasty, but as a vassal of the Sasanians until 428 when Bahrām V, at the request of some Armenian nobles, dethroned Artaxias son of Vramshapuh, and installed a Persian *marzbān*.

There is an interesting notice in the Armenian history of Faustos of Byzantium relating to this time regarding Persian wars with the Kushāns to the east.² He says that the king of Persia (Shāpūr III or Bahrām IV) fought against the great king of the Kushāns, an Arsacid who resided in Balkh, but the latter won. This would indicate that the successors of Shāpūr II had to fight in eastern Iran against a ruler who called himself the great king of the Kushāns, and was moreover related to the Arsacid dynasty of Armenia. That the word Kushān is being used in a general sense is revealed by other Armenian authors who later identify the Kushāns as Huns or Hephthalites.³ The relationship between the Arsacid kings of Armenia and the Kushān rulers is mentioned by other Armenian authors but not in non-Armenian sources. Intermarriage between the royal houses, however, is not to be excluded.

The Sasanian empire not only had hostile relations with the Romans to the west and the Kushāns and others in the east, but the Caucasus in the north and the province of Gurgān to the east of the Caspian Sea were also sources of disturbance. The Romans and Persians could agree on the need to contain the nomadic tribes north of the Caucasus but sometimes the defences of Darband were unable to hold the onslaught. About the year 395 bands of Huns came into Armenia and spread as far as Syria and Cappadocia plundering and killing. Both Syriac and Greek sources tell of this invasion which was not opposed since the Roman military forces were concentrated in the western part of the empire at the death of Theodosius that same year. For several years the Huns were active in the Middle East but we hear nothing of attacks on the Sasanian empire. The Huns invaded the Roman empire because of its weakness, and possibly with the connivance of the Sasanians, but more likely they defeated the Persians and devastated the north-western part of the Sasanian empire during their invasion. Information on external relations is lacking for the reign of

¹ For a study of this period with indication of sources, see P. Asdourian, *Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Armenien und Rom* (Venice, 1911), p. 167.

² *Patmut' iun Hayoc* (Venice, 1933), p. 242, trans. in V. Langlois, *Collection des historiens de l' Arménie* I (Paris, 1880), 298.

³ [See ch. 5, pp. 211 ff. for a discussion of these peoples.]

YAZDGIRD I TO KHUSRAU I

Bahrām IV, probably the son of Shāpūr III. Bahrām held the title “King of Kirmān” before he ascended the throne, and although Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī reports that he was vulgar and neglectful, he is generally praised in Arabic sources. He was murdered, however, with an arrow and his son Yazdgard became the ruler in 399.

FROM YAZDGARD I TO KHUSRAU I; TROUBLE ON THE FRONTIERS; AGGRAVATION OF THE ARMENIAN PROBLEM

Yazdgard, according to the Persian tradition, reported by later writers such as al-Jāḥiẓ, was a sinner who “changed the traditions of the Sasanian dynasty, agitated the earth, oppressed the people and was tyrannical and corrupt”.¹ This bad reputation has been attributed to the king’s reputed persecution of the Zoroastrian priests and his pro-Christian sentiment. The latter probably has been exaggerated, for many of the acts of Christian martyrs from the reign of Yazdgard do not support the view that he was unduly friendly to the Christians. Perhaps his reported friendship for Marutha the bishop of Maiferqaṭ, who was sent by the Byzantine emperor Arcadius on several embassies to Iran, changed the policy of the Sasanian ruler. Yazdgard seems to have been ready to launch an attack on the Byzantine empire, but the embassies served the good purpose of maintaining peace, which was sealed by an agreement in the year 409. There are a number of sources about the life of Marutha, and several say he won the good graces of the Persian king by his ability as a doctor.² In any case, one may conclude that the lot of the Christians in the Sasanian empire improved as a result of Marutha’s influence.

It was during the reign of Yazdgard that the Christians of the Sasanian empire held a council in the city of Seleucia in the year 410. The council was convened under the patronage of Yazdgard, to use modern terms, and was composed of bishops and other ecclesiastics of the empire. They officially accepted the provisions of the Council of Nicaea. The Council of Nicaea in 325 was the first ecumenical council after the Roman emperor Constantine had accepted Christianity. At this council the heresy of Arianism was condemned. Arius, an ecclesiastic of Alexandria, had refused to recognize the divinity of Christ and his equality with God the Father. The Nicene Creed which

¹ Ahmed Zeki Pasha, *Djahiz, le livre de la couronne* (Cairo, 1914), p. 163.

² See R. Marcus, “The Armenian life of Marutha of Maipherkat”, *Harvard Theological Review* xxv (1932), 47-73, for the sources.

became a statement of Christian belief declared that the Son is of "One Substance" with the Father. In the Sasanian empire, the Christians had not formally subscribed to the decisions of the Council of Nicaea, and there had been no unanimity of opinion on the rules of the church and its organization in Iran. The Council of Seleucia changed this, for it stopped dissensions and quarrels, and created an organized hierarchy and rules for Christians in the Sasanian empire. A certain Isaac, bishop of Seleucia, became head of the church in the Sasanian empire, although he did not live long afterwards; other steps were also taken to organize the church. Towards the end of the reign of Yazdgard some Christians went too far in destroying fire temples and attacking Zoroastrian priests, whereupon they were put to death.¹ None the less in comparison with previous rulers, Yazdgard was tolerant towards minority religions. Yazdgard is said to have married a certain Soshandukht, daughter of the *resh galutha* or patriarch of the Jews in the Sasanian empire, and this improved their position in the land.

An innovation in the relations between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires occurred during the reign of Yazdgard, which was the request of Arcadius that the Persian ruler act as a guardian for his young son Theodosius II. This testament has been considered merely an unimportant though polite gesture, but perhaps at the time it meant more in the eyes of the two monarchs and their subjects. Yazdgard took his charge seriously and at the death of Arcadius sent a eunuch called Antiochus to Byzantium to advise and care for the young emperor, which he did. The sons of Yazdgard, however, did not fare so well after his death. During his lifetime one son, Shāpūr, was sent as king of Armenia to replace the Arsacid king of Armenia, Vramshapuh, who died in 414. Another son, Bahrām, was sent to al-Mundhir, the king of the Lakhmid Arabs at Hira, to be brought up, while the existence of another son, Narseh, is implied in the sources. At the death of Yazdgard his son Shāpūr came from Armenia and ascended the throne. He ruled for a very short time, was killed, and a Sasanian prince from a side line, called Khusrau, was made ruler by the nobles. Bahrām, however, did not accept Khusrau and moved against Ctesiphon with an army primarily of Arabs. Khusrau apparently abdicated and Bahrām V became ruler in 420.

Bahrām is surnamed Gōr "the wild ass" in Islamic sources, reputedly because of his skill in hunting the onagers, and many stories are told

¹ O. Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer* (Munich, 1915), pp. 139-41.

about him. In the early years of his reign Bahrām is said to have devoted so much time to hunting, drinking and women that the affairs of state suffered. He loved polo and music and, according to Firdausī, he brought bands of *lūlīs*, the ancestors of the gypsies, from India to Iran to entertain the people. It is possible that the soubriquet “wild ass” is a folk etymology for an older east-Iranian word for king or leader, since Bahrām was victorious in his campaigns in the east and left a legacy at least in the coinage of Bukhārā.¹ The *dirhams* (drachms) of Bahrām served as the prototype of the later coinage of the oasis of Bukhārā, and the portrait of Bahrām, albeit in debased form, continued to appear on the local coins well into the ‘Abbāsīd period. This fact is enough to indicate the importance of Bahrām’s wars in eastern Iran and Central Asia although the details, as so frequently, escape us. In any case, the wars in the east occurred towards the end of Bahrām’s reign, for at the beginning he had difficulties in the west.

Shortly after his accession in 421 the persecution of Christians in the Sasanian empire was resumed, probably at the instigation of Zoroastrian priests. Many Christians fled to the Byzantine empire and Bahrām sought their extradition, but Theodosius II refused. War broke out and the Byzantines were successful in a series of skirmishes. Bahrām sought peace, and hostilities between the two empires ceased in 422. Christians were free to worship in the domains of Bahrām, and the Byzantines agreed to contribute money towards the defence of the pass at Darband in the Caucasus. Since no city had fallen to the army of either opponent there was no change of territory. Shortly after the end of the war the Christians of the Sasanian empire in a synod proclaimed the autonomy and separation of the Persian church from the “western” fathers of the church, which thus took place before the Nestorian heresy.

Bahrām also tried to settle the continuing discontent in Armenia by appointing an Arsacid, Artashes son of Vramshapuh, king of Armenia. After six or seven years the Armenian nobles tired of their ruler and requested Bahrām to remove Artashes. This Bahrām did, replacing him with a Persian governor in 428. The Armenian nobles called *nakharars* on the whole were satisfied with the change since it gave them more power in their own domains, but the Armenian clergy, led by the patriarch or catholicos Sahak, opposed the appointment of a Persian governor or marzbān. Sahak was arrested by the Persians and

¹ Cf. O. Hansen, “Tocharisch-iranische Beziehungen”, *ZDMG* xciv (1940), 161–2.

kept in custody for a few years, then released to resume his ecclesiastical duties. The situation in Armenia was by no means resolved, however, and later revolts brought great distress to the country.

Bahrām was succeeded by his son Yazdgard II in 439, who at once opened war against the Byzantines. Theodosius II, however, did not want trouble in the east, so he sent the commander of his eastern armies, Anatolius, to the camp of Yazdgard and peace was made preserving the status quo, with an additional proviso that neither side should erect any new forts in the frontier areas. Peace having been made in the west, Yazdgard then had to turn to his north-eastern frontier where certain tribes, defeated by Bahrām, had again challenged Sasanian supremacy. The identity of these people is unknown, for the Armenian sources which tell about them simply call them, anachronistically, Kushāns, or Huns who were called Kushāns.¹ The use of the term "Kushān" for subsequent kingdoms in the east was analogous to the Greek usage of "Scythian" for all nomads in south Russia and Central Asia, or the later Byzantine designation of all eastern nomads as "Huns". It is probable, however, that Yazdgard fought against the Hephthalites, for one Armenian author suggests this when he says the Sasanian king in the twelfth year of his reign invaded the land of Italakān where the king of the Kushāns lived.² The Hephthalites are mentioned in Chinese sources as originally having lived in Central Asia. In the fifth century they moved into Bactria and apparently joined some local mountaineers to rule the land. They adopted the local written language, Bactrian (or sometimes called Kushān-Bactrian), written in modified Greek letters. Yazdgard is reported by the Armenian sources to have established his residence for a number of years at Nishāpūr in Khurāsān so as to be better able to prosecute the war against his eastern enemies. Sasanian forces seem to have been victorious in the east, for Yazdgard turned his attention to Armenia where grave disorders had broken out.

Fortunately we have detailed accounts in Armenian sources of the attempt of Yazdgard to convert Armenia to the Zoroastrian faith. According to them, the prime mover behind this attempt was Mihr-Narseh, the famous prime minister of Yazdgard I, Bahrām Gor and Yazdgard II; he wrote a letter to the Armenians calling upon them to

¹ Elišē, *Vasn Vardanay ew Hayoc Paterazmin*, ed. E. Ter-Minasean (Erevan, 1957), p. 11, and Lazar of P'arp, *Patmut'ian Hayoc*, ed. Ter-Mkrtzean (Tiflis, 1904), p. 86.

² Elišē, *Vasn Vardanay*, p. 18.

convert. Mihr-Narseh not only failed but roused many people against his policy, and in 450 an assembly of Armenian priests and princes called by the patriarch Joseph launched a revolt. Some of the Armenian nobles had accepted Zoroastrianism and sided with the Persians, so the result was more a civil war than merely a Persian–Armenian struggle. Requests for aid from the Byzantines were in vain. In a memorable battle in 451 the Christian Armenians led by a noble, Vardan, of the house of Mamikonian, were annihilated and after the battle many Armenian priests and nobles were led into captivity in Iran. Several ecclesiastics were martyred in captivity and the land of Armenia was ruled by Persian marzbāns. The battle of Avarair became a landmark in the history of Armenia, remembered with emotion by Armenians to this day.

Christians other than Armenians in the empire also suffered from persecutions and impositions, although there was no overall attack on them as in the time of Shāpūr II. Several of the Syriac acts of martyrs incidentally mention the persecution of Jews by Yazdgard. The last years of the king were devoted to more struggles with nomads to the east of the Caspian Sea and with the Hephthalites. Yazdgard died in 457 without having pacified the eastern frontier and leaving two sons to contest the throne.

Although the sources disagree as to who was the elder brother, it was probably Hormizd, who, in any event, became the ruler. Pērōz, his brother, secured the aid of the Hephthalites, however, and marched against the king. In battle Pērōz was victorious and became ruler. During the war between the two brothers the Transcaucasian area of Albania proclaimed its independence from Iran, so one of the first acts of Pērōz was to reconquer the rebel territory. He also freed some Armenian nobles who had been imprisoned by his father, and it seemed that the harsh measures of previous reigns might now come to an end.

A long famine caused by a severe drought caused new problems for the Sasanian state, and renewed enmity with the Hephthalites proved disastrous for Pērōz. The Byzantine empire was occupied with the Huns in Europe, while the Persians had to meet corresponding migrations of peoples from Central Asia. Pērōz was defeated and captured by the Hephthalites about the year 469. There is confusion in the sources between the names “Hephthalite” and “Kidarite” Huns. Whether they are identical is difficult to decide, but since both designations appear in the time of Pērōz one could assume they were

contemporary rather than one or the other being anachronistic. The word "Chionite" is also used as a synonym for "Hun" in Syriac chronicles, further confusing our view of the situation in the east. The Sasanian monarch had to agree to an onerous peace. His son Kavād was left as a hostage until the Persians paid a large sum of money.¹ Sasanian Iran in effect had to pay tribute to the Hephthalites for a number of years.

Pērōz turned from his defeat in the east to Armenia where a revolt had broken out led by Vahan Mamikonian, a nephew of Vardan. In neighbouring Georgia, too, conflict between Christians and the partisans of the Persians at first brought victory to the Christian nobles. Later the proclaimed king of the Christian Armenians, Sahak Bagratuni, was killed in a battle with the Persians after the Georgian king Vakhtang had betrayed his Armenian allies by making peace with the enemy. Vahan, however, was able to rally the Armenians after most of the Sasanian forces were withdrawn from the country in 482 to aid Pērōz in a campaign to the east of the Caspian Sea. Two years later a Sasanian army was annihilated by the Hephthalites and Pērōz was killed.

The bureaucratic organization of the Sasanian empire was fully developed by the 5th century; we have mentioned the important rôle in government of the prime minister Mihr-Narseh, the prototype of the later Islamic grand vizier. The three great offices of the state may have corresponded, at least in theory, to the three classes of priests, warriors and scribes. The mobadān mobad was the head of the Zoroastrian church; the *haxārbad* or chiliarch was the title given to Mihr-Narseh by Armenian sources, which office was also known as that of the *vuzurg framadār* (the great commander); thirdly the *andarzbad* seems to have been the chief of the bureaucracy or the chief councillor of the court.² From the vast number of seals preserved as well as notices in varied sources, we may assume that there was a hierarchy of andarzbads, in districts and provinces. The andarzbad was probably a judicial as well as an administrative officer, a testament to the continuing importance of law in Iran. The administration of the Sasanian empire is discussed in another chapter, but suffice it to say that the proliferation of titles in Sasanian Iran indicates the complexity of the bureaucracy.

The development of Christianity in the Sasanian empire also belongs

¹ According to Joshua the Stylite, *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, trans. W. Wright (Cambridge, 1882), p. 9, the Byzantine emperor contributed to the ransom of Pērōz.

² Cf. Elišē, *Vasn Vardanay*, p. 62.

to another chapter, but it was at the end of Pērōz's reign that Nestorianism became the dominant form of Christianity in the empire. This in effect created a "Persian" church, as opposed to the "Byzantine" church, and it was proclaimed in a synod held at the capital city in the spring of 484. The significance of this was a greater possibility for the spread of Christianity in Iran, not as the faith of the Byzantine enemy but as a "national" religion. The anti-monastic policy of the Nestorians for a time caused disorders in the Persian church which, however, little concerned the Sasanian state.

Internal disorders in Zoroastrianism, however, were of concern to the state, but it may be doubted whether there were any serious challenges to the harmony between the religion and the state before the Mazdakite movement which will be mentioned below. The supposed adherence to Zurvānism by Mihr-Narseh and Yazdgard II may have provoked opposition from some priests who were more strictly dualist, but we cannot perceive any influence on the political history of Sasanian Iran. The fact that there was a later Mazdakite crisis, however, points to an earlier background of unrest and uncertainty, not only in the Zoroastrian religion but also in the social fabric of the empire.

The brother of Pērōz, called Balāsh or Valgāsh, was elected king by the nobles, who always showed their influence in the face of weak rulers, or of such a disaster as befell Pērōz. Peace was made with the Hephthalites and a heavy tribute was paid by the Persians. Peace was also made with the Armenian rebels led by Vahan. It was agreed that existing fire temples in Armenia should be destroyed and no more erected and the Armenians were free to practise Christianity without fear of forcible conversion to Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, Armenia was to be administered directly by the Sasanian king and not through a deputy. The Armenians supported Balāsh against a pretender to the throne, either the brother or a son of Pērōz called Zarer. With this aid the rebel was defeated and later captured and killed, so the Armenian nobles stood high in the esteem of Balāsh. At the end of the reign of Pērōz, or at the beginning of the reign of Balāsh, Nestorianism was established as the *sole allowed* sect of Christians in the Sasanian empire. Balāsh, in spite of his good intentions, seems to have fallen victim to a conspiracy of nobles who in 488 deposed him in favour of Kavād, son of Pērōz.

Kavād had lived with the Hephthalites as a prisoner or hostage, and it is highly probable that they actively assisted him to obtain the throne.

Early in his reign the prime minister Zarmihr, or Sokhra as he is also called, who probably was instrumental in deposing Balāsh, was murdered at the instigation of Kavād. This event caused resentment among some of the great nobles and Kavād's position was consequently weakened. According to a Syriac chronicler, certain Arab tribes, the Armenians and others caused trouble for Kavād during his first reign.¹ But the greatest problem for the empire was the sect of the Mazdakites, about whom much has been written.

In his doctrines, Mazdak seems to have followed a form of Manichaeism though he adhered to Zoroastrian rituals. We know very little about the life of Mazdak, but he may have been a Zoroastrian priest, possibly with Manichaean sympathies. As an avowed Manichaean or arch-heretic he hardly could have obtained the influence he did. His admonitions against violence and harm to others were coupled with a call to a sharing of possessions, a primitive communism. We do not know how far Mazdak went, for his detractors even accused him of advocating the sharing of wives, which is unlikely. Just how or why the king adhered to, or favoured, Mazdakism is unknown, but most scholars have speculated that he was seeking to counter the power of the aristocracy. There seems little doubt that a desire to ameliorate the condition of the common people also played a rôle in the sympathies of Kavād for Mazdakite ideas. In any case the disorders consequent on Kavād's penchant for Mazdakism evoked a conspiracy of the nobility. We have mentioned rebellions among the Armenians and Arabs, and the refusal of the Byzantine emperor to send money for the defence of Darband; these things exacerbated the situation. Kavād was deposed and put in prison, and his brother Zāmāsp became ruler in 496.

Many stories are told about Kavād's escape from prison and flight to the court of the Hephthalite king, from where, after a few years, he returned to Iran with a Hephthalite army and Zāmāsp surrendered the throne to Kavād without a fight. This probably took place at the end of 498 or the beginning of 499, and it is probable that Zāmāsp was not killed as was usual in such cases. Kavād eliminated the chief nobles who had actively conspired against him, but in general he consolidated his position by clemency. The refusal of the Byzantine emperor to send money to Kavād, again ostensibly as a contribution to the defence of Darband, led to hostilities. Kavād needed money to pay his Hephthalite allies, and he opened hostilities in August 502

¹ *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, pp. 14-15.

in the north-west part of his empire. Theodosiopolis, present Erzerum, was captured by the Persians, and then Kavād moved to the south and laid siege to Amida. After a spirited defence it fell in January 503. The Byzantines reacted by sending several armies to the east and the war moved back and forth with no major victory for either side. In 503 Kavād had to break off operations to meet an invasion of his territory in Transcaucasia. In 504 the Byzantines had the advantage although they could not retake Amida. In 506 peace was made whereby Kavād received some money from Byzantium as a compensation for the Byzantine fortification of the town of Dārā contrary to a long-established agreement between the two empires, but Kavād gave up Amida and other conquests. The treaty was to last seven years but in fact was extended.

Internal affairs occupied Kavād till the end of his reign although the accession of a new emperor in Byzantium, Justin, at first caused a strain in relations between the two states. The Mazdakites continued to flourish but their excesses were held in check by the orthodox priesthood and the nobility, which in reality may have strengthened the hand of Kavād against all opposition. The question of succession worried Kavād for he wished to name his successor himself and not leave the matter to election by the nobility. He had three sons, the youngest of whom, Khusrau, he favoured as his successor. In order to ensure his succession to the throne, Kavād proposed to Justin that he adopt Khusrau as his son and accept the responsibility to support Khusrau as ruler of Iran. But the Byzantine emperor did not want to accept the adoption as Kavād had proposed it, and as a result relations between the two empires cooled.

The end of Kavād's reign internally saw the execution of Mazdak and many of his followers, while externally war with Byzantium was renewed. The crown prince Khusrau reportedly was the instigator of the massacre of the Mazdakites, and several stories are told about this. After the death of Mazdak the heretics, for so they were considered by orthodox Zoroastrian priests, were persecuted and the movement went underground. Their name, however, appears time and again in the sources as the common designation for social revolutionaries. The impact of the Mazdakites must have been great, for their name was not forgotten and they left a legacy for the future, even into Islamic times.

At this time a tribal kingdom was founded in Arabia by the tribe of

Kinda, and its leader Ḥārith b. ‘Amr was able to defeat Mundhir III, king of the Lakhmids, and seize his capital Ḥīra. The Kindī occupation of Ḥīra probably lasted only a few years, perhaps 525–8, but the Kindī Arabs had taken over parts of Iraq as early as 506.¹ Events in Georgia also occupied the Persians during the second reign of Kavād. Gurgenes, the king of Georgia, had to fight against his nobility, which sought to limit, if not abolish altogether, the power of their king. The Persians were happy to take advantage of this discord and supported the nobles with an army in 523. The king fled to neighbouring Lazica on the shores of the Black Sea, north-west of Georgia, and the Persians occupied the cities of Georgia. A marzbān ruled the country and Sasanian garrisons were established in the chief city, Mtskheta (near modern Tiflis), and other cities. Persian success in Transcaucasia was matched by the defeat of a Byzantine army in Mesopotamia, in which Belisarius the famous general held a command. In 527 Justin turned over the reins of government to his nephew Justinian, but the war continued in Lazica and on the Mesopotamian frontier, though in a desultory fashion. Belisarius was placed in command of a Byzantine army in the east and instructed to erect forts on the frontier. He was defeated by a Persian force but Justinian instead of removing him from command made Belisarius general of the east. He met the Persians again outside the walls of Dārā and defeated them. In the Caucasus region too the Sasanians suffered several reverses.

Kavād then heavily supported his Arab ally Mundhir of the Lakhmids in a great raid into Syria, flanking the Roman fortifications and Belisarius, with the intention of capturing and plundering Antioch. Belisarius, however, was not surprised and moved to meet the new threat. In a battle at Callinicum in 531 Belisarius was defeated and retreated but the Sasanian forces had lost so heavily that they too withdrew. Kavād only prepared another army under new commanders and sent it into Roman Mesopotamia, with more hope of success, since Belisarius had been recalled by Justinian and sent against the Vandals in North Africa. Nothing was accomplished, however, for the death of the aged Kavād brought an end to hostilities. The new ruler Khusrau was to become the most illustrious of the Sasanian rulers, comparable to Shāh ‘Abbās in Ṣafavid times.

¹ G. Olinder, *The Kings of Kinda* (Lund, 1927), pp. 58–65.

IRAN UNDER THE SASANIANS

KHUSRAU I AND HIS REFORMS; REVITALIZATION OF THE EMPIRE

The reign of Khusrau I, or Khusrau Anūshīrvān (“of immortal soul”), began with a revolt of his brothers and some discontented nobles, but the new ruler was able to suppress it and unite the nobility and religious leaders behind him. He had to repair the damage to society wrought by the Mazdakite movement, so he made peace with the Byzantines in 532, on condition of the Persians evacuating several fortresses in Lazica and the Byzantines paying Khusrau to maintain the Caucasian defences. Reforms of taxation and internal administration occupied the new ruler for a number of years.

The Mazdakite disorders had disrupted not only the collection of taxes but also the titles to land. The need for reform, however, was of long standing and the social upheaval brought on by the Mazdakites only enhanced an already archaic system. Kavād had initiated the reform by surveying and measuring the land, but this had not been finished at the time of his death. The cadastre was finished by Khusrau, but more than land was measured; date palms and olive trees were counted and assessed for tax purposes. Finally individuals were counted for the head tax. The old system of assessing taxes on the produce of the land was not only archaic but unjust, for assessment was made on the harvest, but before it was gathered. This meant that farmers had to wait until tax collectors arrived to assess the harvest, which was sometimes spoiled because of the delay. In Kavād’s time the assessment seems to have been made after the harvest had been collected, which was an improvement. The new system of Khusrau did away with the yearly assessment and instead established a fixed tax, the average of several years’ harvest. This represented a tremendous advance, since plans could be made henceforth on the basis of the known taxes. The head tax did not apply to the upper classes – clergy, knights and scribes – but rather to men of the common people between twenty and fifty years old. After the reform taxes were collected in money rather than in kind, and payments were made three times a year.

The importance of the new tax system cannot be underestimated since it served as the model for the later caliphate. The resemblance of the tax reform of Khusrau to the Roman *indictio* with the *iugatio* and *capitatio*, as established by the tax reforms of Diocletian, has been noted by several scholars.¹ The result of Khusrau’s tax reforms was

¹ E.g. F. Altheim, *Finanzgeschichte der Spätantike* (Frankfurt, 1957), pp. 7–55.

that the ruler had a fixed amount entering his coffers every year. The lowlands of Iraq, as had been the case under the Achaemenids, paid the lion's share of the land tax in the Sasanian empire, evidence of the continuing importance of the Tigris–Euphrates area.

Just as significant as the tax reforms were the army reforms of Khusrau. Previously the nobility, from the great to the small, had been obliged to equip themselves and their followers and serve without pay in the army. Khusrau gave the poor nobles, better called knights, equipment and a salary for service in the army. Thus the ruler secured direct support of the military class, and the great nobles who had maintained private armies saw their power drastically reduced. In essence a new social order was created, a new nobility of the robe beside the landed nobility. This was the period of the flowering of the *dehkān* class, the knight who owned a village. The *dehkāns* became the backbone of Iranian society, as the Arabs discovered after their conquests. Khusrau also settled families on the frontiers with the duty to come to arms and protect the frontier in time of danger. Whether this policy provided the model on which the later Byzantine theme system was based is uncertain, but this is not impossible.

Further, the king divided the empire into four parts and put a *spāhbad*, or general, over each part. The generals of the east, Khurāsān, and of the west, Iraq, were especially important since they respectively had to defend the frontiers against the nomads of the east and the Romans in the west. The Arabs later discovered that the interior of Iran was relatively empty of troops, for the soldiers were concentrated on the frontiers. Once the frontier armies were defeated the way to the interior was opened. No doubt other reforms in the military organization of the empire were undertaken by Khusrau, on which we have no information. The end result, however, was a more efficient army, which shortly was to be put to use against the Byzantines.

Fortunately, we have in Procopius a detailed source for the wars of Khusrau against the Byzantines, as was Ammianus Marcellinus for the wars of Shāpūr II. The causes of the resumption of hostilities between the two empires after an interval of peace were manifold. Certainly the instigation of ambassadors of the Ostrogoths in Italy, threatened by Justinian, and of others, played an important rôle in the decision of Khusrau to open hostilities. He may have feared future aggression from the Byzantines after they had re-established the Roman empire in the west. As usual the Armenians and the Lakhmid Arabs

had grievances against Byzantine subjects, so a *casus belli* was easily at hand. At first Justinian sought to dissuade Khusrau from war but in this he failed.

Khusrau invaded Byzantine territory in 540 primarily in search of plunder. He headed for Syria, flanking at the south the Byzantine defences in upper Mesopotamia. In a short time the Persian army stood before the walls of Antioch. The siege of the city lasted only a few days, for, because of an earthquake a few years before, it was ill prepared to withstand an enemy. The city was plundered and burned, which at once led Justinian to seek peace. With his main forces in the west, the Byzantine emperor had to buy peace from the Persian adversary. A truce was declared at Antioch, but Khusrau returned to his land slowly, waiting for the agreement of Justinian to pay him five thousand pounds of gold as a war indemnity and five hundred pounds annually, ostensibly as a contribution to the defence of the Caucasian frontier. As Khusrau retreated, however, he extorted large sums of money from Byzantine cities such as Edessa and Dārā as a condition of leaving them in peace. At the latter place, he laid siege to the city until the inhabitants paid him a large sum to leave them further unmolested. As a result of these actions, Justinian denounced the truce and prepared to send Belisarius, his victorious general in the west, against the Persians.

Khusrau, on returning to Iraq, built a new city near his capital, a model of Antioch, which he called Veh Antiok Khusrau, ("Better than Antioch [has] Khusrau [built this]"), wherein he settled captives brought from Antioch. This town, forming part of the complex of the capital, was called Rūmagān "town of the Greeks" by the local inhabitants, and al-Rūmiyya in Arabic. Khusrau the following year opened hostilities in Lazica on the Black Sea coast of Transcaucasia. The Persians captured Petra, a Byzantine fortress on the coast, and established a protectorate over the country, which formerly had been nominally under Byzantine rule. In the south Belisarius had a few local successes but he did not have sufficient troops or equipment to take Nisibis or other large, fortified cities. The following year pestilence hindered the activities of both sides. Then Belisarius was recalled by Justinian and sent to Italy. A Roman army suffered defeat in Armenia in 543. Heartened by the prospects of victory, Khusrau in 544 laid siege to Edessa, hoping to incorporate all of the Byzantine trans-Euphrates domain into his own empire. The defence of Edessa is

described in detail by Procopius, and the end was the retreat of Khusrau to his homeland after a remarkable defence of their city by the people of Edessa. A five years' truce was arranged between Justinian and Khusrau with the latter receiving two thousand pounds of gold.

The truce was broken in its fourth year by the Byzantine alliance with Lazica to expel the Persians. A Byzantine-Lazic force besieged Petra, but the city was relieved by a Sasanian army. Later two Persian armies were routed and finally after a memorable siege the strong fortress of Petra was retaken by the Byzantines in 551, and again a five-year truce was concluded between the two empires. Lazica was not included in the truce and hostilities continued there. Finally, the Persians had the worst of the conflict and negotiations were opened with Byzantium in 556 for a permanent settlement. After much discussion and passage of time, finally in 561 a fifty years' peace treaty was signed in which the Sasanians evacuated Lazica and in return received an annual payment of gold. A description of the sealing of the documents, as well as the terms of the treaty, is given by Menander Protektor, a Byzantine historian (in fragment 11 M), and it provides an insight into the diplomatic protocol of the time.

Khusrau needed peace on his western frontiers so he could deal with the Hephthalites in the east. About 557 he allied with the Turks, who had appeared in Transoxiana, under a ruler called Silziboulos in Greek sources, and together they destroyed the Hephthalites and partitioned their territory. It would seem that Khusrau obtained their lands south of the Oxus river, while the Turks ruled over lands to the north. Just how far the Sasanians extended their domains to the east is unknown; it is possible that they penetrated north of the river and then withdrew later when hostilities between Turks and Persians had broken out about 569-70. Whether Khusrau pushed his frontiers into India is also unknown but not likely. It would appear that Kabul and areas to the east were not under Sasanian rule, although short periods of control cannot be excluded. There does not seem to have been a central power holding the Hephthalite princes together in the east.

Another venture of Khusrau at the end of his reign brought Persian arms for the first time to southern Arabia. It is impossible here to discuss the background of the history of southern Arabia and its relations with Ethiopia. The Byzantines, and before them the Roman empire, had an obvious economic interest in Ethiopia and southern

Arabia, controlling as they did the lower Red Sea and trade with India. The spread of Christianity in both lands had established bonds with the eastern Roman empire, so when the two great rulers Justinian and Khusrau measured their strength it was almost inevitable that Arabia would be drawn into the conflict. The Ethiopians, who had adopted Monophysite Christianity as the state religion, in c. 522 sent an army across the Red Sea to help their co-religionists who were being persecuted by the Himyarites, the dominant power in southern Arabia at that time. A long struggle ensued in which the Ethiopians and the Christians of southern Arabia naturally were supported by Byzantium, at least morally, but without men or supplies. A certain Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās, reportedly a follower of Judaism, made himself the leader of the non-Christian Arab majority in southern Arabia and drove out the Ethiopians. Yūsuf realized he would need aid against the Ethiopians and their Arab Christian allies, so he turned to Sasanian Iran and the vassal state of the Lakhmids of Ḥīra. Byzantine diplomacy, however, prevented any aid from going to Yūsuf from Iran. Byzantium, on the other hand, then sent ships and supplies to aid the Ethiopians. In 525 the Negus (the title of the ruler of Ethiopia) himself led troops into southern Arabia in a second invasion. The Ethiopians were victorious and Yūsuf was killed in battle. A new Arab king of the Himyarites was installed under Ethiopian overlordship.

In 531 Justinian sent an emissary to southern Arabia to the king of the Himyarites and to the Ethiopians. Procopius (I. 20) tells us that the envoy proposed to the Ethiopians that they take over the trade directly with India, especially of silk, which was so important in the Byzantine empire. The Ethiopians could force the Persians out of this profitable trade. To the Arabs Justinian's envoy proposed that they ally with some nomadic tribes of central Arabia to invade the Sasanian domains. Both hopes of the Byzantines were unfulfilled, but the expedition against Iran was not then necessary, since Justinian and the new Sasanian ruler Khusrau had concluded peace. This was also the period of the fall of the Kinda confederacy in northern Arabia and the growth of Lakhmid power.

Some time between 532 and 535 an Ethiopian general Abraha seized power from the Himyarite king and established an independent state in southern Arabia which he gradually enlarged. Abraha declared his independence from Ethiopia, defeated all opponents and received embassies from Byzantium. Abraha, a Christian, was thus pro-Byzantine

while some of his enemies appealed to Khusrau for aid against him. Nothing resulted from the different power alliances in Arabia and in 569 or 570 Abraha died. This was "the year of the elephant", the year of the birth of the prophet Muḥammad.

In 572 Ma'dikarib, one of the sons of Abraha, fled from his half-brother, who had become the ruler in southern Arabia, to Khusrau and finally Khusrau moved to support the anti-Byzantine party. The allegiance or sentiments of some of the Monophysite Christians in Arabia changed from a pro-Byzantine position to opposition, since Justin II, who succeeded his uncle in 565, after five or six years of following the policy of reconciliation of his predecessor in vain, turned to a fierce persecution of the Monophysites in the empire. Khusrau sent an army with a small fleet under a commander called Vahriz, together with Saif, son of Abū Murra, to the area near present Aden. The Persians and their allies were victorious, Ṣan'ā', the capital of southern Arabia, was occupied, and Saif became the new king. This happened between the years 575 and 577. Southern Arabia thus became and remained a dependency of the Sasanian empire. But the influence of the Ḥimyarite kingdom of southern Arabia on the rest of the peninsula already had declined, preparing the way for the rise of Islam. The Sasanians, however, were interested in controlling the trade of Byzantium to India and the Far East, which they were now able to do thanks to their position in southern Arabia. About 598 a new and larger expedition was sent under command of another Vahriz, since the ruler of the Ḥimyarite kingdom wished to renounce Persian authority. The Persians were successful in battle; the king was killed and southern Arabia became a Sasanian province headed by Vahriz.¹

To return to Khusrau, the accession of Justin II boded ill for continuing peace between the two empires, for the latter resolved to end Justinian's payments to certain Arab chiefs, who had agreed to refrain from pillaging Byzantine territory in return for subsidies. Justin also sought to obtain possession of Svanetia in the Caucasus, claiming it was part of Lazica, due to Byzantium by the fifty years' peace treaty, although this matter had not been settled in the treaty. In negotiations in Constantinople the emperor showed such intractability in dealing with the Arabs that the Arab chiefs decided to commence raids on Byzantine territory. War between the two empires did not materialize at this time in spite of the embassy from the western Turks in western

¹ [See for further detail and a somewhat different version, ch. 16, pp. 604 ff.]

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Turkestan, who came to the Byzantine capital in 568 seeking an alliance between the Turks and Byzantines against their common enemies the Persians and the Avars in the Balkans. Nothing came of this embassy.

Armenia had remained quiet for a long period, but a Persian governor of the family of Suren, who had been appointed by Khusrau about 564, tried to spread Zoroastrianism in Armenia. He built a fire temple at Dvin, an important town near present Erevan, and he put to death a member of the influential Mamikonian family. The result was an Armenian uprising, and Suren and his guard were massacred in 571. The Armenian rebellion fitted in well with the plans of Justin II. He withheld the yearly payment to Persia for the defence of the Caucasus and he welcomed the Armenian rebels as subjects of the empire. An army was sent into Sasanian territory and the city of Nisibis was besieged in 572. The Byzantines were not able to take the city, but retreated in disorder because of the jealousy of the commanders. The Persians, on the other hand, followed the fleeing Byzantine army and invested the city of Dārā in which they had taken refuge. The Persians, after a siege of about five months, received the surrender of the city. Afterwards Persian forces ravaged Syria, and Justin sued for peace.

Justin II had been suffering from a mental illness and became incapable of ruling, so Tiberius, a high Byzantine officer, was named co-ruler in 574. A truce for one year was made with Khusrau, whereby Byzantium paid a large sum of money, but Armenia was excluded from the truce. No real conclusion of peace was reached, however, and in 575 Khusrau invaded Armenia. At first success crowned the Persian arms, and it seemed as though the eastern part of the Byzantine empire would be incorporated into the domains of the enemy. The fortunes of war changed, however, and a strong Byzantine army defeated Khusrau and then occupied Sasanian territory, plundering many localities. Consequently the local population, primarily Armenian, suffered from the Byzantines more than they had from the Persians. The Sasanians, losing heart, were now willing to negotiate a peace in 576. A great victory over the Byzantine army in Armenia, however, interrupted negotiations. In essence, the Persians refused to return Dārā to Byzantium and insisted that certain Armenian refugees be turned over to them, to neither of which points the Byzantine envoys would agree.

In the warfare of 578, a new Byzantine commander, Maurikios or

Maurice, was able to capture several Persian forts and many captives. On the other hand the Armenians had ended their rebellion and a general amnesty from Khusrau brought the land back under Sasanian control. Before peace could be negotiated between the two empires Khusrau died in 579, after a long reign of forty-eight years.

The empire which Khusrau ruled was in its glory, but already showing signs of decay in a spirit of pessimism and decadence prevalent among many of its citizens. The rigid class structure, disturbed by the Mazdakites, had been re-established under Khusrau with strong religious sanctions. Although the power of the great families had been curbed, the boundaries between classes resembled the caste system of India. The lower classes were not flourishing. Khusrau, however, became the prototype of the wise, just ruler for later times, so much so that his personal name for many Arabic authors became the common title for the pre-Islamic Sasanian kings. Thus *Kisrā*, an Arabic deformation of his name, followed the path of Kaiser and Tsar in the European lands, as descendants of Caesar. Even today in Persia the ignorant peasant will ascribe any very old ruin to *Kisrā Anūshīrvān*. He built caravanserais, bridges, roads and towns, such that under his reign the empire was linked together as never before. To Khusrau is attributed a long wall and series of forts in the plain of Gurgān, built as a defence against the Turks. He is also supposed to have rebuilt the wall and defences of Darband. It would seem that the walls and fortifications in Gurgān, Māzandarān (from the sea to the mountains near Sārī), Darband and Iraq, fitted well with Khusrau's division of the military command in the empire among four army commanders of the four frontiers.

The basis of the wealth of the empire was land and agricultural produce, and the vast majority of the population were peasants, whose numbers if anything increased under Khusrau. We have noted that archaeological surveys in Khūzistān, and of the Diyālā river basin north-east of present Baghdad, have revealed a great expansion of irrigation and of the amount of land under cultivation during the Sasanian period,¹ indicating the strong interest of the government in agricultural matters. One large irrigation enterprise in Iraq was the great Nahrawān canal system which supplied water to a large expanse of fields in Iraq. It seems clear, after investigations in Iraq, that there was also an unprecedented investment of state funds in extending the area of cultivation. Khusrau I developed complex plans for the digging

¹ See Adams, *Land behind Baghdad*.

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of tunnels and canals all over the empire, such that never before or since has there been so much land brought under cultivation in this part of the world; the agriculture was extensive rather than intensive. The Zoroastrian religion, of course, regarded the promotion of the cultivation of the soil as a meritorious act, if not a strict duty of the ruler.

Khusrau was a tolerant monarch in regard to religions, for we hear of no systematic persecutions during his reign, although some of his underlings at times showed a too-zealous attitude in regard to minority faiths. In contrast, Justinian was particularly severe on heretics and pagans. In 529 he closed the academy at Athens, which had been a centre of ancient Greek philosophy and culture, and some philosophers took refuge at the court of Khusrau. Although he welcomed them and treated them well, they became homesick, and Khusrau secured a pardon and permission from Justinian for them to return to Athens in one of the peace treaties between the two empires. The Persian monarch maintained at his court Greek physicians and various thinkers, and a medical school following Greek theories, or a primitive university, was established at Gundeshāpūr which lasted into Islamic times. Translations were made into Middle Persian not only from Greek, but also from Sanskrit. One of the most famous native scholars at his court was the physician Burzoe, to whom are attributed many translations into Pahlavī from Sanskrit, including the collection of fables known in Islamic times as *Kalīla wa Dimna* from the Arabic of Ibn Muqaffa', from the originals in the Sanskrit book, the *Panchatantra*. It is quite possible, as suggested by Christensen, that the name Burzoe is simply a short form of Buzurjmihr, a sage who lived in the time of Khusrau.¹

Khusrau is surnamed "the just" in later Islamic works, and there are a great number of stories extant in Arabic and Persian sources attesting to his popularity, or at least to the great impact he made in Persia. Especially abundant are the collections of *andarz* or "advice", better described as "mirrors for princes", which have survived, relating to Khusrau.² In fact there are so many practices and sayings attributed to Khusrau that it is highly probable our monarch has become the receptacle of all novelty and change in Sasanian history, making a determination of which stories are real and which fanciful extremely difficult.

Many Pahlavī books supposedly were written in the time of Khusrau

¹ A. Christensen, "La Légende du sage Buzurjmihr", *AO* VIII (1930), 108.

² E.g. the examples in M. Grignaschi, "Quelques spécimens de la littérature sassanide" *JA* 1966, 16ff.

I, although it must be remembered that just as in the case of the two Shāpūrs, so the two Khusraus are frequently confused. Some scholars have claimed that the Avestan alphabet was created under the reign of Khusrau I, but more likely it was earlier, possibly in the time of Shāpūr II. We have seen how Khusrau I destroyed the Mazdakites. He also enforced a dualist Zoroastrian orthodoxy on his people, even forbidding religious controversies according to Mas'ūdī.¹ It is safe to assume that the Zoroastrian orthodoxy which we know from the Pahlavī books of the ninth century and later became fixed during the reign of Khusrau.

One might continue to enumerate the achievements of the reign of Khusrau, such as the silver plates and engraved gems in various museum collections, all testimony to the wealth of his reign. The famous building Ṭāq-i Kisrā in Ctesiphon, part of which still stands, impresses everyone with the immense size of the central arch or *aivān*. The structure may date from the beginning of the Sasanian empire and it may have been extended or embellished under Khusrau I. Such matters are the subject for special investigation and can be mentioned here only as evidence of the pomp and glory of the reign of Khusrau "of immortal soul".

The son of Khusrau succeeded him without trouble. Hormizd IV was the son of a Turkish princess who had been given in marriage to cement good relations between the two states. Some Islamic sources follow one tradition and praise Hormizd as being more just than his father, especially with the common folk. Others condemn him as tyrannical and cruel. The Christians of the Sasanian empire considered him friendly and praised his reign. At news of the accession of Hormizd, Tiberius attempted to bring the conflict between the two empires to a close more or less on terms of the *status quo ante bellum*. Hormizd, however, refused to surrender Dārā, even in exchange for several forts in Armenia conquered by the Byzantines. The Persians also wanted a large annual subsidy, but no agreement was reached and the war continued. Maurice proved a capable general and ravaged the northwestern provinces of the Sasanian empire at the end of 579, but in 580 his plans to march to the enemy's capital Ctesiphon failed. In 581 a large Persian army was defeated by Maurice near the city of Constantina in Mesopotamia. The sickness and subsequent death of Tiberius in

¹ *Les Prairies d'Or (Murūj al-Dhahab)*, tr. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, rev and corr. C. Pellat, vol. 1 (Paris, 1962), p. 231.

582 caused Maurice to leave the east for Constantinople, and his successor in the field was wholly incompetent. He was defeated in two battles with the Sasanians, and Maurice, the new Byzantine emperor, replaced him with his brother-in-law Philippicus. It would be too tedious to follow the attacks and counter-attacks of the Persian and Byzantine armies in the Mesopotamian theatre of war until 589. Suffice it to say that both sides suffered from the constant warfare with no decisive advantage to either. The war remained as a festering wound for both empires.

It was unlucky for Hormizd that other foes of his took advantage of the exhausting wars with Byzantium. Some Arab tribes raided lower Iraq, but the greatest danger came from the east. The Turks, either at the instigation of the Byzantines, or desirous of plunder, invaded the north-eastern provinces of the Sasanian empire. The sources regarding the battles of the Persians against the Turks and their Hephthalite subjects are confused, primarily because of the legends and tales which developed about the leader of the Sasanian army, Bahrām Chōbīn. There exist in later Arabic and Persian versions many stories about Bahrām, some of them identical to the stories concerning Bahrām Gōr, a confusion common in Sasanian history when two kings or heroes have the same name. It seems that Bahrām Chōbīn, a member of the Mihrān family from Ray and related to the Arsacids, was the commander of the troops of the east, and he decisively defeated the invaders. According to Islamic sources, Bahrām conquered Balkh and crossed the Oxus, where he defeated the enemy army and killed the enemy king in 588 or 589. It is doubtful if the king was the ruler of the western Turks; more likely he was a chief of the Hephthalites, vassals of the Turks, or perhaps only a representative of the great ruler of the Turks. In any case, after his victories in the east Bahrām was sent to the Caucasus to repel an invasion of nomads, quite possibly the Khazars. Here too he seems to have been successful although details are lacking.

Bahrām then was made commander of the Persian forces against the Byzantines and he opened hostilities in Georgia. Again Bahrām was victorious, but subsequently a Byzantine army defeated him on the banks of the Araxes river. This was a signal for Hormizd, who had become jealous of his popular general, to remove Bahrām from office. Bahrām reacted by staging a rebellion, the details of which are given by the Byzantine historian Theophylactus Simocatta. Persian troops in

Iraq sent against the rebels made common cause with Bahrām's army in Armenia, and the combined forces marched on the capital Ctesiphon. Hormizd tried in vain to organize effective resistance against the rebels. The Sasanian aristocracy, however, did not support the son of Khusrau. The religious leaders, too, were not pleased by his tolerance of the Christians and other religious minorities, so the monarch found himself surrounded by enemies. Hormizd had imprisoned many nobles, and now a palace revolt freed them, while the rebels in Ctesiphon seized Hormizd and imprisoned him. The leaders of the overthrow in Ctesiphon were two brothers-in-law of the ruler called Bindoe and Bistām. Hormizd was blinded and his son Khusrau Abarvēz or Parvēz, "the victorious", was raised to the throne. This was in February 590, and some time later Hormizd was put to death.

At first the new king tried to conciliate Bahrām Chōbīn, who was near the capital with his army when the events mentioned above occurred. An exchange of messages produced no settlement, so Khusrau prepared to fight Bahrām. The king marched forth to battle near Hūlwān, but the two armies did not engage in a major battle. Khusrau saw that he could not hope to defeat Bahrām, so he fled to Ctesiphon and then towards the Byzantine frontier. Bindoe, who accompanied his nephew on his flight, was able to throw off the pursuers sent by Bahrām, but subsequently he was taken prisoner while his king escaped to the west. Khusrau was received by the Byzantine governor of Circesium in March 590 and the Persian monarch sent a letter and then a mission to Maurice requesting his aid against Bahrām. At the same time Bahrām sent emissaries to Constantinople to counter the proposals of Khusrau. According to Byzantine writers, Bahrām offered to give the Byzantines Nisibis and all the Mesopotamian territory to the Tigris, whereas Khusrau offered Dārā, Martyropolis (Maiferqat) and part of Armenia, and promised that he would never again ask for a yearly subsidy. Furthermore, he stressed his royal right to the throne emphasizing the principle of legitimacy. After some debate at Constantinople, the Byzantine emperor agreed to aid Khusrau, so he released Persian prisoners the Byzantines held, sending them to serve under Khusrau, while a Byzantine army was prepared to assist Khusrau to regain his throne.

Bahrām Chōbīn had difficulty in asserting his claims in the empire, since he did not belong to the family of Sāsān, but rather, it seems, was descended from the Arsacid royal house, long extinct. Bahrām realized

that he would have to stop the attempt of Khusrau to regain his throne on the frontier, so he sent a general called Zadespras to hold the key city of Nisibis. But the city of Nisibis had already gone over to Khusrau and the army sent by Bahrām was defeated and the commander killed. The chronology of events is somewhat uncertain, but it seems that Khusrau had to wait six or seven months for the Byzantines to decide what they would do. During this time he sent his uncle Bistām into Armenia to organize resistance to Bahrām. Bindoe, the other uncle, escaped from Bahrām's prison and made his way north to join the growing opposition. In the spring of 591 Khusrau began his march to regain his throne, supported by a Byzantine army under a general called Narses.

The city of Dārā, in Persian hands since 573, was surrendered to the Byzantines, one of the payments of Khusrau for Byzantine support. Another Byzantine army marched from Armenia, and the plan was to catch Bahrām between the southern and northern armies. Bahrām's forces were defeated in Mesopotamia, and by a flanking movement one of Khusrau's lieutenants seized Ctesiphon. Bahrām was a brilliant general, however, and even with inferior numbers he was able to inflict large casualties on his enemies. None the less he was obliged to retreat to Āzarbāijān and in a decisive battle Khusrau, with his Byzantine and Armenian allies, was able to defeat Bahrām completely. Bahrām fled to the Turks, where he remained for a year until he was assassinated, probably at the instigation of Khusrau.

The life of Bahrām Chōbīn was told in a Pahlavī romance which passed into Persian and Arabic versions. Firdausī gives the essentials of the story of the rise and fall of Bahrām in his *Shāh-nāma*, and the hero is revealed as the heroic prototype of a Persian chevalier or knight. His exploits, greatly embroidered of course, remained in the memories of Persians for centuries. Although he was in the end unsuccessful, his human qualities gave him a greater place in the hearts of his countrymen than the king of kings, as witnessed by the stories.

Khusrau II rewarded those who had supported him and executed his opponents. One of the former, who received many honours and a governorship, was the Armenian Smbat, head of the house of Bagratuni. With regard to his uncles who had supported him, Khusrau was in a dilemma, since they had overthrown his father. He finally seized Bindoe and drowned him, whereas Bistām escaped and raised the standard of revolt in the Alburz mountains. On the plateau Bistām

was able to maintain himself for almost a decade, for the battles with troops sent against him by Khusrau were indecisive. Bistām was able to prolong his resistance in great part because of the support given him by former partisans of Bahrām Chōbīn. So in effect Bistām was a successor of Bahrām. He established his capital at Ray and minted coins, thus showing his claim to rule instead of Khusrau. Finally Bistām was murdered by one of his eastern allies, a Hephthalite or Turkish chief. By 601 Iran was once more united under Khusrau, but it had been weakened greatly by the internal strife.

The territory promised by Khusrau to Maurice was ceded to Byzantium by a treaty in the autumn of 591, and peace reigned between the two empires. The Ghassānid Arabs, clients of the Byzantines in Syria, however, raided Persian territory which caused Maurice to send as his envoy George, the praetorian prefect or commander of the eastern forces of Byzantium, to Khusrau to assure him that the Arabs had acted on their own. Peace was reaffirmed and declarations of continued friendship were so strong that some Armenian writers believed that Khusrau had been converted to Christianity. He had a Christian wife called Shīrīn, and legend also assigned to him as another wife Maria the daughter of Maurice, which was most unlikely. Here again the legend of Khusrau and Shīrīn in Persian poetry had many ramifications. Although the king was himself not a Christian, he did show considerable sympathy to Christians, and he even gave money or presents to Christian shrines. In the writings of Christian authors Khusrau II has received a good name.

Until the overthrow of the emperor Maurice by Phocas in Constantinople, we hear little about Byzantine–Persian relations in this reign, or about the internal affairs of the Sasanian empire. We may presume that Khusrau was occupied with the revolt of his uncle and in consolidating his position. He obviously had to reward the Byzantine soldiers who had helped him to the throne, and some Persians felt he was too friendly to their traditional enemies. Likewise the supporters of Bahrām Chōbīn were not all executed or even removed from office, and many Persians opposed to Khusrau still held positions of authority. Among those who incurred the enmity of the king of kings was Nu‘mān III, the Nestorian king of the Lakhmid Arabs with their capital at Hīra. Some sources say that the Arab king had not helped Khusrau when the latter had fled to Byzantine territory and requested Nu‘mān to come with him, but this is unlikely. There were many

reasons, however, for the enmity of the two monarchs, and it seems in the early years of Khusrau's reign hostilities broke out between the Arabs and Persians. Nu'mān was captured by a ruse about 602 and later he died in prison. Khusrau resolved to end the dynasty of the Lakhmids, so in their place a chief of the Ṭayy tribe was made head of the Arabs under Persian control, but with a Persian governor at his side. The new situation disturbed the status quo and bedouin Arab tribes felt free to raid the settled areas of Iraq. A large tribe, the Bakr, allied with other Arabs, met the Persians and their Arab allies in the famous battle of Dhū Qār. The Persians were decisively defeated, which showed the Arabs their strength when united. It also revealed the weakness of the Sasanian defence system on the edge of the desert once the Lakhmids were gone. The old system had not only held the Arabs at bay, but the Lakhmids had also maintained a far-flung hegemony over warring tribes which could have caused much trouble for the Sasanians. The way for the expansion of Islam was indicated by this battle which took place about 604, although the exact year is unknown.

Events in Byzantium overshadowed even the internal affairs of the Sasanian empire. In 602 the Byzantine army in the Balkans revolted and, led by an officer Phocas, marched on the capital. Maurice, finding no support among the populace, fled. He was captured and executed together with his five sons. There are many reasons for the fall of Maurice, but one of importance which concerns us was his persecution of the Monophysites and others in the Byzantine empire who had not conformed to the Council of Chalcedon. Revolts broke out in various parts of the empire at the accession of Phocas. A rumour spread that Theodosius, the eldest son of Maurice, had escaped the massacre and fled to Persia. In the spring of 603 when a Byzantine envoy arrived at the Sasanian court announcing the accession of Phocas, he was thrown into prison. Khusrau had an excellent pretext to declare war on Byzantium to avenge the murder of his old benefactor Maurice.

The city of Edessa refused to recognize the new emperor, so Phocas sent an army to besiege the rebels. In 604 Khusrau marched against the forces of Phocas. The Persians defeated the Byzantine army besieging Edessa, which then opened its gates to Khusrau. It seems that in Edessa Khusrau found a pretender to the throne of Byzantium who was proclaimed as Theodosius son of Maurice, the true emperor, by Khusrau. After a siege of about nine months the town of Dārā fell

to Persian hands and another Byzantine army was defeated. Khusrau then resolved to take advantage of the disorder in the Byzantine empire and expand the Sasanian domains.

One army moved into that small part of Armenia still under Byzantine rule and met with complete success. A marzbān was sent by Khusrau to Dvin, the chief town of Byzantine Armenia, and the Sasanian army continued its campaigns into Cappadocia. To the south Sasanian arms were equally successful, for in 606 the border towns of Amida and Resaina were taken and the Euphrates crossed. Cities of Syria were captured. In Constantinople several plots to overthrow Phocas were discovered and the instigators were executed. The internal quarrels and fighting of political factions, especially the "blues" and the "greens", in the large cities of the Byzantine empire, deepened the chaotic conditions, making it easier for the Persians in their conquests. Meanwhile a new group of rebels against Phocas seized North Africa and after a short struggle established their control over Egypt in 609. In 610 the rebels reached the capital and Phocas was deposed and executed. Heraclius, the chief of the rebels who had come from North Africa, was crowned emperor, but soon he would have to face a great Persian threat even to the capital.

In 610 Persian forces had again crossed the Euphrates and captured Circesium and other cities. Heraclius sent an embassy to Khusrau to make peace but Khusrau had resolved to continue his conquests. The Sasanian army from Armenia had occupied Caesarea Mazaca, the chief city of Cappadocia, but in 611 a new Byzantine army sent by Heraclius drove their enemies out of the city. Heraclius took command of the Byzantine armies himself but the Sasanians proved too strong. In 613 Heraclius sent an old Byzantine general, Philippicus, into Armenia while he moved to the south. In this area, however, Sasanian arms were triumphant near Antioch. Shortly afterwards they captured Damascus, and to the north they defeated the Byzantines near the Cilician Gates, capturing Tarsus. Philippicus was forced to retreat from Armenia, so on all sides the Persians were victorious.

The following year a Sasanian general Shahrbarāz took Jerusalem after a short siege. The true cross was taken to Ctesiphon as part of the booty. In 615 the northern Persian army under the command of a general called Shāhīn marched through Anatolia to Chalcedon, opposite the capital. Attempts to make peace failed and the Persians continued their conquests of various towns in Anatolia. Meanwhile bands of

REVITALIZATION OF THE EMPIRE

Slavs and the Avars devastated the Balkan provinces and Greece. It seemed as though Heraclius was faced with an impossible task to regain the lost Byzantine possessions. In 617 the Avar king reached Constantinople, so the capital was caught between the Avars on the European coast and the Persians on the Asiatic coast.

In the spring of 619 Persian troops entered Egypt and besieged Alexandria, which soon fell. The patriarch and the governor of Egypt fled to Cyprus and the entire country was occupied. Thus the main source of grain for the capital was cut off. Heraclius resolved to leave Constantinople for North Africa where supplies and men might provide a better base for the reconquest of the empire, but the people of the capital persuaded him to remain. The situation remained critical.

Khusrau had in effect re-established the Achaemenian empire, but he had not annihilated his enemy. Heraclius instituted a number of radical reforms, including dividing the empire into large military zones, the theme system, each under a military chief. This meant that native military units would become the chief support of the state rather than mercenaries, although many Slavs, for example, were settled in Anatolia to work as farmer-soldiers. The church contributed gold and silver, and Heraclius opened a crusade or holy war against the enemy. The Byzantines controlled the seas, not only because of their vastly superior naval power, but because of the excellent training of their crews, the use of Greek fire and general technical superiority. This enabled Heraclius in April 622 to sail into the Black Sea with an army and to launch an expedition into Armenia, thus outflanking the Persians. The Persians followed Heraclius but in a battle they were decisively defeated. Consequently Asia Minor was cleared of Sasanian troops.

The Avars were constrained to peace by the payment of tribute on the part of Heraclius. Attempts to make peace with Khusrau failed, and in a bold stroke Heraclius again invaded Armenia in the spring of 623. Shahrbarāz and Shāhīn were both sent by Khusrau against Heraclius, but the latter was able to penetrate Āzarbāijān where he captured and plundered the Sasanian sanctuary and fire temple at Ganzak. Then he retired northward to winter quarters. The following year Heraclius defeated several Persian detachments but no decisive victory was secured. The Byzantine emperor, however, did re-establish his authority in Anatolia. Khusrau was persuaded that only a bold stroke against Constantinople would end the war, so he entered into

negotiations with the Avars to make a joint attack on the capital. Both Shahrbarāz and Shāhīn were to co-operate with the Khan of the Avars and his allies of Slavs, Bulgars and others. Able use of Byzantine sea power rendered the co-operation of the Persians and Avars ineffectual, and, in short, both enemies of Byzantium were defeated.

Meanwhile Heraclius had not returned to the capital, but instead he built up his army in the Caucasus region and made an alliance with the Khazars. In the autumn of 627 the allies advanced southward against the Persians, spreading destruction in Āzarbāijān. Not meeting any strong opposition, Heraclius resolved to cross the mountains to the plains of Mesopotamia. The Khazars withdrew but Heraclius pushed on until he camped near the ancient ruins of Nineveh, where in December he defeated a Persian army which had followed him. Khusrau at once ordered the recall of the Persian army, commanded by Shahrbarāz, from Chalcedon. But Heraclius moved on Dastagird, where Khusrau had a palace, and was waiting for him. Khusrau, however, lost heart and fled to Ctesiphon, while Heraclius occupied and plundered Dastagird where he found enormous treasures. Then Heraclius withdrew and retraced his steps, going into winter quarters.

DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

Meanwhile Khusrau was looking for scapegoats for his defeat, and among others he decided to execute Shahrbarāz. Before he could carry out this plan a revolt broke out, and Khusrau was imprisoned and murdered at the end of February 628. Shīroe, son of Khusrau, ascended the throne as Kavād II. He had joined the rebels and agreed to the execution of his father. The new ruler at once sought peace with Heraclius and agreed to recall Sasanian troops from Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and western Mesopotamia, and to observe the pre-war boundaries. All prisoners were to be returned, and the true cross and other relics restored. Both sides rejoiced in the termination of hostilities which had bled both empires for so many years.

Shahrbarāz, however, was dissatisfied, and since he was the commander of a large army he was dangerous. But after a reign of less than a year Kavād II died, probably of the plague, and was succeeded by his son Ardashīr III, still an infant. Shahrbarāz decided to seize the throne himself, so in June 629, presumably with the support of Heraclius, he marched on Ctesiphon, defeated the forces of Ardashīr and

killed him and his chief followers. Shahrbarāz ascended the throne, but his rule lasted less than two months before he too was murdered. Another pretender in the eastern part of the empire, a nephew of Khusrau, was also murdered before he could come to Ctesiphon as Khusrau III. Since no sons of Khusrau II were left alive, the nobles raised his daughter Bōrān to the throne, the first woman to occupy this position, but she died after a rule of little more than a year. A succession of rulers followed one another, each ruling only a few months, and we know little more than their names, Āzarmēdukht, sister of Bōrān, Pērōz II, Hormizd V and Khusrau IV. Finally the nobles raised Yazdgard III, son of a certain Shahryār and grandson of Khusrau II, almost the last living member of the house of Sāsān, to the throne in 632. Yazdgard had been living almost in hiding in Stakhr and it was there, in a fire temple called after the name of the first king of the dynasty, that the last king of kings was crowned.

Before outlining the life of Yazdgard, a few words are necessary about the long reign of Khusrau II, the last great monarch of the dynasty. Regardless of the conflicting accounts of his character, the splendour of his reign is recognized by the Arabic and Persian sources. He is supposed to have amassed a great fortune, including a magnificent throne, and his court became legendary for its luxury. The rock-carving of Khusrau II at Ṭāq-i Bustān near Kirmānshāh is an unusual example of a sumptuous hunting party depicted in great detail. Khusrau was a great builder and his palaces in Dastagird, east of Ctesiphon, and in Qaṣr-i Shirīn, supposedly named after his queen, were famous in Islamic sources. Likewise the king's love of poetry and music is attested by the musicians at his court such as the famous Bārbad. That the court of Khusrau had some of the same refined degeneracy of the courts of the old Roman emperors is attested by the Pahlavī text of "King Khusrau and his page", where knowledge of rare foods and perfumes, skill in games and musical instruments, and the like, are mentioned as part of the education of a page.¹

We have mentioned the tolerance of Khusrau in the early part of his reign towards the Christians, and during his reign the Christian religion spread widely throughout the Sasanian empire. The disputes between Nestorians and Monophysites broke into open conflict several times during his reign. Whereas Nestorianism had been dominant, the king favoured the Monophysites, partly because of his friendship with

¹ J. Unvala, *King Husrav and His Boy* (Paris, 1923), pp. 1-29.

Gabriel, a doctor at court, and also because Khusrau's queen Shirin became a Monophysite. At the end of his reign, however, Khusrau sanctioned the persecution of Christians.

Although the Zoroastrian church seems to have been in a state of decadence and decay, Khusrau II built fire temples and probably encouraged the work of further codification of the Avesta. The fixed ritual of Zoroastrianism, however, seems to have discouraged philosophic thought, for there is no evidence of Zoroastrian intellectual activities at the end of the empire. The plundering of the great sanctuary of the Gushnasp fire temple at Shiz by Heraclius must have dismayed and shaken the Zoroastrian clergy. All in all, the reign of Khusrau was noted for its devotion to luxury more than its devotion to thought.

The pretensions of usurpers to the throne have been mentioned, and most of them were generals. We know that at the time of the Arab conquests the marzbāns in Khurāsān were practically independent of the court at Ctesiphon, and one may ascribe this weakness of the state to the results of the reform of Khusrau I, when he divided the empire into four parts, each guarded by a spāhbad. The names of the various local rulers, especially in the east and in the Caspian provinces, at the time of the Arab conquests, indicate the degree to which the Sasanian empire had become a feudal state of landed nobility. This nobility was basically unwilling to rally to the support of the central authority and unwilling to unite in the face of an enemy.

Under Yazdgard III, his chief minister and commander of the central army was called Rustam. The latter tried to rally the Sasanian forces in the face of a united Arab threat, but in 636 the Persians were defeated and Rustam was killed at the battle of Qādisiyya, near Hira. The following year Ctesiphon was occupied by the victorious army of Islam. Yazdgard fled to the plateau, hoping to rally the Persians to oppose the new menace. The treasures of Ctesiphon were sent to the caliph 'Umar who reputedly displayed the crown of Khusrau in the Ka'ba of Mecca. The Arabs invaded the plateau and in 642 won the battle of Nihāvand, which put an end to the imperial Sasanian army. Yazdgard, fleeing, sought aid on all sides. He had requested Chinese aid in 638 but no one came to help the dying cause. Finally he came to Marv, but the marzbān of Marv, Māhoe, wished to be rid of an unwelcome guest and resolved to seize Yazdgard. The latter fled and hid in a mill where he was murdered. This happened in 651 and marks the end of the Sasanian empire.¹

¹ For the details of the Arab conquest of Iran see *CHI* IV, ch. 1.

EPILOGUE

The fall of the Sasanian empire has been discussed by historians many times,¹ and the exhaustion of the two empires, the Byzantine and the Persian, after years of strife, frequently has received prime attention as the main reason for the victory of the Arabs. An overall survey of the long relations between the two great empires would strengthen this view.

The Sasanians inherited from the Parthians a legacy of over two centuries of conflict with the western power. With a Sasanian belief in the destiny of Iran to rule over the territories once held by the Achaemenians, it was inevitable that wars between the two great powers would continue. The Sasanians might have to fight on their eastern and northern frontiers, just as the Romans had to hold the *limes* against the Germans and as the Byzantines sought to regain territories in Italy, Spain and elsewhere lost to Germanic kingdoms. But the main opponent, and the only worthy opponent, of each empire was the other. Only between rulers of equal standing could proper treaties be made and affairs satisfactorily regulated. This does not mean that Persians and Romans never broke agreements or engaged in deceit towards the other party, but the Persians and the Romans regarded each other as different from the rest of the world, which was somehow barbarian. For the Persians, the Roman Caesars were the only fitting and equal counterparts of the rulers of Iran. Likewise "the king of kings" was regarded with considerable awe by the Romans. This attitude continued to the time of the Arab conquests.

The Sasanian claim to rule territories extending to the Mediterranean and Aegean seas was an overall impetus to conflict, although usually the Armenian question, conflicts of interest in Georgia and Transcaucasia, or Arab incursions in Mesopotamia would provide a *casus belli*. The Romans, and then the Byzantines, who were regarded as Romans by the Persians, were more on the defensive, more seeking to maintain the status quo than their opponents, although they too were not above offensive acts to extend their frontiers. By the middle of the 6th century, however, the system of defences on both sides of the Mesopotamian frontier had produced what amounted to a stalemate. Both Byzantine and Sasanian diplomacy sought to extend the area of conflict, as well as alliances, far beyond the frontiers of both states. I believe that relations of both sides with the Turks in Central Asia

¹ See in particular S. H. Taqizadeh, *Az Parviz tā Changiz*, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1349/1970), pp. iff.

and with the Ethiopians and the people of southern Arabia were part of the enlargement of spheres of activity of both empires on a world stage, in one sense a forerunner of the extent of the Arab conquests. Just as in the time of the Achaemenians, at the end of the Sasanian empire ideas of the *oecumene* or world-state were in the air.

Some have argued that the spread of Christianity across Iran into Central Asia and to China was part of this sentiment for ecumenism and even for a universal empire, but Christians were sharply divided at the beginning of the 7th century. The Nestorian Christians of the Sasanian empire, who had broken with other Christians at the synod of Beth Lapat (Gundēshāpūr) in 483 and at later councils, were quarrelling with the Monophysites, just as the Monophysites in the Byzantine empire were quarrelling with the Orthodox leaders in Constantinople. Christianity had made many conversions in the Sasanian empire at the expense of Zoroastrianism, but it was far from becoming the religion of the majority as some scholars have surmised. It is true that Zoroastrianism had become stultified with too much concern for rites and rituals, and the lack of an ecumenical drive such as Christianity maintained, but it was the state church of the Sasanian empire. Unfortunately, its fate was closely bound up with the state, which accounts for its decline or stagnation after the Arab conquests.

The Sasanians did overextend themselves in the brief fulfilment of their ambitions to reconstitute the Achaemenian empire in the last years of Khusrau II, but just as the extended diplomatic activities weakened them, so did their military feats. The Persian forces were too few effectively to hold and rule Egypt, Palestine and Anatolia. Their victory proved hollow, and the subsequent events brought the prestige of the court to the lowest level in the history of the Sasanian empire. The ruler, and his court, provided the sole centre of allegiance and support for the nobility and the people. That allegiance and support were almost gone before the battle of Qādisiyya.

The story of the Arab conquest of Iran to the death of Yazdgard is clear in our now ample sources. Each province and even city had to fend for itself. Unity, a common allegiance and a common cause did not exist, and the inspired Muslim armies conquered the provinces one after the other. It was not a quick and easy conquest, for there was much fighting before the Arabs could claim the land as theirs. Once the imperial Sasanian army was crushed on the plains of Mesopotamia, however, there were no regular, trained troops to oppose the conquerors

EPILOGUE

until they reached the frontiers of the Sasanian empire in the east, with the military centre of Marv, and in the north at Darband and the frontier of the Caucasus. By that time (Arabs were not settled in Marv until after 665, and they hardly reached Darband before 655) there was no incentive for the frontier troops to fight the conquerors of their homeland. The terms of peace made by the Arab armies with various cities and districts, frequently making smaller demands than the previous taxes paid to the central government of the Sasanians, induced many Persians to submit. It is clear that few subjects of the Sasanian state were concerned about the fate of the court or of the central government; local interests predominated, and the Arabs did not even have to pursue a policy of *divide et impera*, for the divisions already existed. As long as the Arabs left alone local affairs, the change in masters above them had little interest for the local people. They had no incentive to fight for a court which took little notice of them. New masters who exacted fewer taxes than the old were to be welcomed rather than fought. Such was the psychology of many Persians. When the Arabs reached the Sasanian frontier in Central Asia, they found the people no more united among themselves than the Persians, but the Sogdians and Khwārazmians had had long experience in fighting the Sasanians or Turks, and playing off one against the other. They were more proud of their local independence than the people of the Sasanian empire. It was only natural that the descendants of Yazdgard, and those who hoped for a restoration of the Sasanian empire, would turn to the east for possible assistance. Even China itself loomed as a possible haven and support for Sasanian pretenders.

The Sasanians throughout their history had not maintained regular relations with China, for trade had been carried on by middlemen, principally the Sogdians, from their most important centre at Samarkand. Furthermore, during the entire Sasanian period China was neither unified nor did it advance any claims to that territory held in Central Asia under the powerful Later Han dynasty (A.D. 25–220). Warring dynasties kept the Chinese preoccupied with internal affairs until the establishment of a unified government under the Sui dynasty (589–618). But it was only under the T'ang dynasty (618–906) that China once again felt strong enough to extend its influence into Central Asia. The expansion of T'ang China, and the great interest in the west by the Chinese, corresponded with the decline and fall of the Sasanian empire. There had been, of course, some contacts between

Iran and China before the T'ang dynasty. Manichaeism and Christian missionaries had brought their doctrines to the Far East, and some traders and soldiers of fortune had made their way from Iran to the distant "Middle Kingdom". But most contacts were through Sogdians and Turks, for Turkic dynasties ruled over parts of China during the period of the "Warring States".

As mentioned above, according to Chinese sources Yazdgerd III sent an embassy to China in 638 seeking aid in vain against the Arabs.¹ One of the sons of Yazdgerd, called Pērōz, took the title of "king of kings" and sought to enlist the support of the Sogdians and Hephthalite princes in Tukhāristān (now called Badakhshān in Afghanistan) against the Arabs. Chinese sources say that Pērōz sent an embassy to the T'ang court for help, but the Chinese emperor considered the distance too great to offer any effective aid, and the envoy returned to Pērōz without troops or money.² The sources report that Pērōz was supported, however, by the troops of Tukhāristān. Pērōz again turned to China for aid about the year 662, but all he received was recognition as a ruler and a promise to investigate the possibility of aid, which did not materialize. Shortly afterwards Pērōz was defeated by the Arabs and finally came himself to the Chinese court where in 677 he requested permission to build a temple in the Chinese capital of Ch'ang-an, presumably a Zoroastrian temple.³ The date of his death is uncertain, but he left a son who tried to recoup his fortunes in Tukhāristān and Sogdiana against the Arabs but failed. The Chinese court continued to recognize the existence of a ruler of Persia until the middle of the 8th century, but it was only a fiction.⁴ None the less, the continuing fiction indicates that hopes for a restoration of Sasanian power, at least in Central Asia or eastern Iran, had not faded among the refugee nobility. Many Sasanian nobles must have fled to Central Asia and even to China from Iran, and they surely contributed to the spread of the Persian language in such cities as Bukhārā and Samarkand in place of Sogdian. A Middle Persian-Chinese bilingual inscription on a gravestone has been found near the town of Sian in Shensi province of western China. It records the death of a princess of the Suren family from the year 872 or 874, evidence of the late persistence of Sasanian families in exile.⁵

¹ E. Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-Kiue (Turcs) occidentaux*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1946), pp. 171, 257. [On Persian appeals to China cf. p. 547.]

² *Ibid.* p. 172.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 173.

⁵ W. Sundermann und T. Thilo, "Zur mittelpersisch-chinesischen Grabinschrift aus Xi'an (Volksrepublik China)", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* XI (Berlin, 1966) 437-50.

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Other members of the Sasanian royal family at different times sought to raise the flag of revolt against the Arab masters of Iran, but all failed. These revolts are part of Islamic history, but again they testify to a certain persistence of allegiance among the Persian nobility to the Sasanian dynasty, when its restoration was beyond hope. The traditions of Sasanian Iran were to continue into Islamic Iran, however, where many institutions and cultural legacies were to assert themselves in the new synthesis of an ecumenical culture of Islam under the 'Abbāsids. It is ironic that the Persian aristocracy was not prepared to rally to and to defend Yazdgard in his time of need but later maintained and fostered Sasanian culture and traditions even against the Arabs and Islam. In a sense, Sasanian Iran experienced a rebirth under the 'Abbāsids, for it was the Sasanians who provided the patterns and background for the splendour of the imperial court of Baghdad.

Appendix I. Chronological Table of the Sasanian dynasty

Persian Name	dates	Greek form	Middle Persian form	Arabic form
Ardashīr	224-40	Ἀρταξάρης Ἀρταξέρξης	'rthštr	Ardashīr
Shāpūr	240-70	Σαπώρης, Σαβουρ	šhpwhly	Sābūr
Hurmazd I (Hurmazd-Ardashīr)	270-1	ᾠρμίσδης	'whrmzd	Hurmuz
Bahrām I	271-4	Γουαράθρανος, Ουαράνης, Βάραμος, etc	wlhl'n	Bahrām
Bahrām II	274-93			
Bahrām III	293			
Narseh	293-302	Ναρσαῖος, Νάρσης	nrshy	Narsī
Hurmazd II	302-9	ᾠρμίσδης	'whrmzd	Hurmuz
Shāpūr II	309-79	Σαπώρης	šhpwhr	Sābūr
Ardashīr II	379-83	Ἀρταξάρης	'rthštr	Ardashīr
Shāpūr III	383-8	Σαπώρης	šhpwhr	Sābūr
Bahrām IV	388-99	Γουάραθραν	wlhl'n	Bahrām
Yazdgird I	399-420	Ἰσδιγέρδης	yzdkrt	Yazdijird
Bahrām V	420-38	Ουααραράνης	wlhl'n	Bahrām Jūr
Yazdgird II	438-57	Ἰσδιγέρδης	yzdkrt	Yazdijird
Hurmazd III	457-9 (?)	ᾠρμίσδης	'whrmzd	Hurmuz
Pērōz	459-84	Πηρόζης	pyrwč	Fīrūz
Balāsh	484-8	Βλάσης, Βάλας	wlḥš, wrd'hšy	Balāsh
Kavād I (first reign)	488-96	Καβάδης, Κωάδης	kw't	Qubād
Zāmāsp	496-8	Ζαμάσφης	z'm'sp	Zāmāsf
Kavād I (second reign)	498-531	Καβάδης	kw't	Qubād
Khusrau I	531-79	Χοσρόης	ḥwslwb	Kisrā (<i>ksry</i>) Anūshirwān
Hurmazd IV	579-90	ᾠρμίσδης	'whrmzd	Hurmuz
Khusrau II (first reign)	590	Χοσρόης	ḥwslwb	Kisrā Abarwīz
Bahrām VI Chobīn	590-1	Βαράμης	wlhl'n	B. Shūbin, Jūbīn
Khusrau II (second reign)	591-628	Χοσρόης	ḥwslwb	Kisrā Abarwīz
Kavad II (Shirūya)	628	Καβάδης	kw't	Qubād
Ardashīr III	628-9	Ἀρταξάρης	'rthštr	Ardashīr
Shahrvarāz	629	Σαρβαραζ, Σάρβαρος	ḥštrwr'č	Shahr barāz
Bōrāndukht	630-1	not attested	bwl'ndwḥt	Būrān Dukht
Yazdgird III	632-51	Ἰσδιγέρδης	yzdkrt	Yazdijird

APPENDIX 2

The following transcriptions are intended to assist the reader in identifying different forms of the words in various sources; from them one can deduce the MPers., Greek or Arabic forms of other words and names occurring in the chapter. No attempt has been made to transliterate Armenian names or well-known place names.

PLACE AND PERSONAL NAMES

- Ādurbād son of Mahraspand or Mihraspand, MPers. *'twrp't y mhrspnd'n*.
 Ādur Gushnasp, MPers. *'twr gwnsp*, Aramaic *'drgwnsp*.
 Amazasp, MPers. *'mčspy*, Greek *'Αμαζασπ*.
 Ardashīr, MPers. *'rthštr*, Greek *Αρταζαρ* (or *'Αρταξέρξης*); Arabic *ardashīr*.
 Ardavān, Parthian: *'rtbnw*, Greek *'Αρτάβανος*.
 Bahrām, MPers. *wlhl'n*, Greek *Γουαράθρανος, Ουαράνης, Βάραμος*, etc., Arabic *bahrām*.
 Balāsh, MPers. *wlk'š*, Greek *Βλάσης, Βαλάς*, Arabic *balāsh*.
 Khusrau, MPers. *hwslwd(y)*, Greek *Χοσρόης*, Arabic *kisrā*.
 Gundēshāpūr, MPers. *wyh* (or *wḥ*) *'ntywk šhpwhl*, Greek *Γουε-αντιοχ-σαβωρ*, Arabic *jundaisābūr*, Syriac *byt l'pt*.
 Hurmazd, MPers. *hwrmzd* (or *'whrmzd*); Greek *'Ωρμίσδης*.
 Karkha, MPers. *'yr'n 's'n kr(t) kw't*, Aramaic *krk' d ldn*.
 Kartīr, MPers. *kltyl* (Kerdīr), Greek *Καρτειρ* (and other spellings).
 Kavād, MPers. *kw't(y)*, Greek *Καβάδης, Κβάδης*, Arabic *qubād*.
 Narseh, MPers. *nrsby*, Greek *Ναρσαίος, Ναρσής*.
 Pērōz, MPers. *pylwč*, *prywz*, Greek *Πηρως, Περόζης*, Arabic *fīrūz*.
 Shahrbarāz, MPers. **hštrwr'č*, Greek *Σαρβαραζ*, Arabic *shahrbarāz*.
 Shāpūr, MPers. *šhpwhr*, Greek *Σαπώρης* (or *Σαβουρ*), Arabic *sābūr*.
 Susa (Ērān-farrāh-Šāpuhr), MPers. *'yr'n GDH šhpwhry*, Aramaic *šūš*, Arabic *al-sūs*.
 Vahrīz, MPers. *whryč*, Greek *Ουαριζης*, Arabic *bahrīz*.
 Vēh Antiok Khusrau, MPers. *wyh 'ntywk hwslwd*, Arabic *al-rūmiyya, rūmiyān*, NPers. *rūmagān*.
 Vologases, Parthian *wlgšy*, Greek *'Ολαγάσης* or *Βολογέσης*.
 Yazdgird, MPers. *ydžkrt*, Greek *'Ισδιγέρδης*, Arabic *yazdajird*.
 Zāmāsp, MPers. *z'm'sp*, Greek *Ζαμάσφης*, Arabic *zāmāsf*.

SPECIAL TERMS

- andarzbad*, MPers. *hndrčpt*, “chief advisor”.
dar-andarzbad, MPers. *BB' hndrčpt*, “court councillor”.
dehkān, MPers. *dhyk'n*, “yeoman” (now “farmer”).
diram MPers. *ZWZN*, “coin of weight approx. four grams”.

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- baḡārbad*, MPers. *ḡč'łpt*, "army leader of a thousand".
marzbān, MPers. *młčp'n*, "margrave".
mībragān, MPers. *mtrwg'n*, "festival of the autumnal equinox".
mōbadān-mōbad, MPers. *mgwpt'n mgwpt*, "chief priest".
nōrūz, MPers. *nwklwč*, "New Year's Day".
spāhbad, MPers. *sp'ḡpt*, "army leader".

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The abbreviations used in the bibliographies and footnotes are listed below.

- AA* *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (Beiblatt zum Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts) (Berlin)
- AAWG* *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Göttingen)
- AAntASH* *Acta antiqua academiae scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest)
- AArchASH* *Acta archaeologica academiae scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest)
- AB* *Analecta Bollandiana* (Brussels)
- Acta Iranica* *Acta Iranica* (encyclopédie permanente des études iraniennes) (Tehran-Liège-Leiden)
- Aevum* *Aevum* (Rassegna di Scienze Storiche Linguistiche e Filologiche) (Milan)
- AGWG* *Abhandlungen der (königlichen) Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Berlin)
- AI* *Ars Islamica = Ars Orientalis* (Ann Arbor, Mich.)
- AION* *Annali: Istituto Orientale di Napoli* (s.l. sezione linguistica; n.s. new series) (Naples)
- AJSLL* *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* (Chicago)
- AKM* *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (Leipzig)
- AMI* *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* (old series 9 vols 1929-38; new series 1968-) (Berlin)
- Anatolia* *Anatolia* (revue annuelle d'archéologie) (Ankara)
- ANS* American Numismatic Society
- ANSMN* *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* (New York)
- ANSNM* American Numismatic Society Numismatic Notes and Monographs (New York)
- ANSNS* American Numismatic Society Numismatic Studies (New York)
- Antiquity* *Antiquity* (a periodical review of archaeology edited by Glyn Daniel) (Cambridge)
- AO* *Acta Orientalia* (ediderunt Societates Orientales Batava Danica Norvegica Svedica) (Copenhagen)
- AOAW* *Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
- AOH* *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest)
- APAW* *Abhandlungen der Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Berlin)
- Apollo* *Apollo* (The magazine of the arts) (London)
- ArOr* *Archiv Orientalní* (Quarterly Journal of African, Asian and Latin American Studies) (Prague)
- Artibus Asiae* *Artibus Asiae* (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University) (Dresden, Ascona)

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- Asia Major* *Asia Major* (a journal devoted to the study of the languages, arts and civilizations of the Far East and Central Asia) old series, 11 vols (Leipzig, 1923-35); (a British journal of Far Eastern studies) new series, 19 vols (London, 1949-75)
- ASIR* *Archaeological Survey of India*. Reports made during the years 1862- by Alexander Cunningham, 23 vols. Simla-Calcutta, 1871-87.
- BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (Baltimore, Maryland)
- BCH* *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* (Athens-Paris)
- BCMA* *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, Ohio)
- BEFEO* *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* (Hanoi-Paris)
- Berytus* *Berytus* (archaeological studies published by the Museum of Archaeology and the American University of Beirut) (Copenhagen)
- BMQ* *British Museum Quarterly* (London)
- BSO(A)S* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies* (University of London)
- Byzantion* *Byzantion* (Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines) (Brussels)
- CAH* *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 12 vols; 1st edition 1924-39 (Cambridge) (Revised edition 1970-)
- Caucasica* *Caucasica* (Zeitschrift für die Erforschung der Sprachen und Kulturen des Kaukasus und Armeniens) 10 fascs (Leipzig, 1924-34)
- CII* *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Oxford)
- CIIr* *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* (London)
- CR.AI* *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* (Paris)
- CSCO* *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Paris, Louvain)
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna)
- DOAW* *Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
- East and West* *East and West* (Quarterly published by the Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orient) (Rome)
- EI* *Epigraphia Indica* (Calcutta)
- Eos* *Eos* (Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum) (Bratislava-Warsaw)
- EPRO* *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain* (Leiden)
- Eranos* *Eranos* (Acta Philologica Suecana) (Uppsala)
- ERE* *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, 13 vols (Edinburgh, 1908-21)
- GCS* *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig, Berlin)
- Georgica* *Georgica* (a journal of Georgian and Caucasian studies) nos. 1-5 (London, 1935-7)
- GJ* *The Geographical Journal* (London)

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- Hellenica* *Hellenica* (recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques) (Paris)
- Historia* *Historia* (Journal of Ancient History) (Wiesbaden)
- HJAS* *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.)
- HO* *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. B. Spuler (Leiden-Cologne)
- HOS* *Harvard Oriental Series* (Cambridge, Mass.)
- IA* *Iranica Antiqua* (Leiden)
- IJ* *Indo-Iranian Journal* (The Hague)
- IndAnt* *The Indian Antiquary*, 62 vols (Bombay, 1872-1933)
- Iran* *Iran* (journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies) (London-Tehran)
- Iraq* *Iraq* (journal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq) (London)
- JA* *Journal Asiatique* (Paris)
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (New York)
- JASB* *Journal (and proceedings) of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta)
- JASBB* *Journal of the Asiatic Society Bombay Branch* (Bombay)
- JCOI* *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute*, 29 vols (Bombay, 1922-35)
- JCS* *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* (New Haven, Conn.)
- JESHO* *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (Leiden)
- JHS* *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (London)
- JMBRAS* *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore)
- JNES* *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (Chicago)
- JNSI* *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* (Bombay)
- JRAS* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London)
- JRS* *The Journal of Roman Studies* (London)
- Kairos* *Kairos* (Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie) (Salzburg)
- Klio* *Klio* (Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte) (Berlin)
- Kuml* *Kuml* (Aarbog for Jysk Arkaeologisk Selskab) (Aarhus)
- KSIIMK* *Kratkie soobshcheniya o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniyakh Instituta istorii materialnoi kultury AN SSR* (Moscow)
- KZ* *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung, begründet von Adalbert Kuhn* (Göttingen)
- LCL* Loeb Classical Library
- MDAFA* Mémoires de la délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (Paris)
- Mesopotamia* *Mesopotamia* (Rivista di Archeologia, Faculta di Lettere e filosofia) (University of Turin)
- MMAB* *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (old series 1905-42; new series 1942-) (New York)

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- MMP *Monuments et Mémoires* (publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres) (Fondation Eugène Piot, Paris)
- Le Muséon* *Le Muséon* (Revue d'Études Orientales) (Louvain-Paris)
- Museum* *Museum* (art magazine edited by the Tokyo National Museum) (Tokyo)
- NC *Numismatic Chronicle* (London)
- NGWG *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Göttingen)
- Numismatica* *Numismatica* (Rome)
- OLZ *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* (Berlin-Leipzig)
- Oriens* *Oriens* (journal of the International Society for Oriental Research) (Leiden)
- Orientalia* *Orientalia* (a quarterly published by the Faculty of Ancient Oriental Studies, Pontifical Biblical Institute) new series (Rome)
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- PBA *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London)
- Philologus* *Philologus* (Zeitschrift für das klassische Altertum) (Stolberg, etc., now Berlin)
- PO *Patrologia Orientalis* (ed. R. Gaffin and F. Nau) (Paris)
- R.A.A. *Revue des arts asiatiques* (Paris)
- RAC *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* (ed. T. Klauser) (Stuttgart, 1950-)
- REA *Revue des études arméniennes, nouvelle série* (Paris)
- Religion* *Religion* (A Journal of Religion and Religions) (Newcastle upon Tyne)
- RGG *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., 6 vols (Tübingen, 1927-32); 3rd ed., 7 vols (Tübingen, 1957-65)
- RHR *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (Paris)
- RIN *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini* (Milan)
- RN *Revue Numismatique* (Paris)
- RSO *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (Rome)
- Saeculum* *Saeculum* (Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte) (Freiburg-Munich)
- SBE Sacred Books of the East (Oxford)
- SCBO Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford)
- Semitica* *Semitica* (Cahiers publiés par l'Institut d'Études Sémitiques de l'Université de Paris) (Paris)
- SHAW *Sitzungsberichte der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Heidelberg)
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- SPAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Berlin)
- SIr* *Studia Iranica* (Leiden)
- Sumer* *Sumer* (journal of archaeology and history in Iraq) (Baghdad)
- SWAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener (Österreichischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil. Hist. Klasse) (Vienna)
- Syria* *Syria* (Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie) (Paris)
- TITAKE* *Trudi Iuzhno-Turkmenistanskoi Archeologicheskoi Kimpleknoi Ekspeditsii*, 6 vols (Moscow, 1949-58)
- TM* *Travaux et mémoires* (Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance) (Paris)
- T'oung Pao* *T'oung Pao* (Archives concernant l'histoire, les langues, la géographie, l'ethnographie et les arts de l'Asie orientale) (Leiden)
- TPS* *Transactions of the Philological Society* (London)
- VDI* *Vestnik drevnei istorii* (Moscow)
- WVDOG* *Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* (Leipzig)
- WZKM* *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (Vienna)
- YCS* *Yale Classical Studies* (New Haven, Conn.)
- ZA* *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* (Berlin)
- ZDMG* *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden)
- ZN* *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* (Berlin)

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CHAPTER 4

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of sources on Sassanian Iran, for which consult *Christensen, *L'Iran*, pp. 50–83.¹ Rather, it is first an overall guide to bibliographies on specific subjects, and second a chronological survey of the most important sources for the political history of Sassanian Iran.

All Sassanian inscriptions will be contained in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* published in London and now in progress. A preliminary glossary has been prepared by P. Gignoux, *Glossaire des inscriptions pehlevies et parthes*, London, 1972 (*CIIr* Supplementary Series 1). The two basic works on the great inscription of Shāpūr are M. Sprengling, *Third Century Iran. Sapor and Kartir* (Chicago, 1953) and *Maricq, "Res Gestae". For other inscriptions the main publication is E. Herzfeld, *Paikuli* (Berlin, 1924).

Sassanian numismatics are conveniently summarized by R. Göbl, *Sassanian Numismatics* (Brunswick, 1971) where an extensive bibliography on the subject may be found.

Seals and clay sealings may be found in the relevant volumes of the *CIIr*. Bibliographical references to the inscriptions on them, and on all Iranian inscriptions from the Sassanian period, may be found in *Henning, "Mitteliranisch".

Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature is surveyed by J. Tavadia, *Die mittelpersische Sprache und Literatur der Zarathustrier* (Leipzig, 1956) p. 141. In this book the bibliographies of editions, and studies on each of them, will aid the reader.

Arabic and Persian sources on the Sassanians are discussed by Christensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–74, and a full bibliography is in B. Spuler, *Iran in frühislamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1952) pp. 535–64.

Nothing has replaced the remarks of Christensen *op. cit.* on Greek and Latin sources (pp. 73–7), Armenian sources (pp. 77–9) and Syriac sources (pp. 80–3).

The overall history of the succession of Sassanian rulers is covered by Ṭabarī (see especially *Nöldeke, *Tabari*) and by *Firdausī. Although other works, such as the Arabic text of al-Tha'ālibī, edited and translated into French by H. Zotenberg, *Histoire des rois des Perses* (Paris, 1900), contain information not found in Ṭabarī or Firdausī, those two are the most important general histories upon which many others are based. Firdausī, of course, contains many fanciful stories, but cannot be ignored if used with caution.

For the beginning of the Sassanian dynasty, we have a plethora of material. The most important Classical source is Agathias, edited in a recent publication by R. Keydell (Berlin, 1967). All sources are surveyed in G. Walser and T. Pékary, *Die Krise des römischen Reiches* (Berlin, 1962). A summary of events, with selected translations from various sources is given in J. Gagé, *La montée des Sassanides* (Paris, 1964).

After the death of Shāpūr I, there follows a dearth of information until

¹ See also pp. 359ff. and 1269ff. in the present volume.

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the time of Shāpūr II. For his reign we have the long account of his wars with the Romans by Ammianus Marcellinus, edited and trans. into English by J. C. Rolfe (LCL, London, 1935).

In the 4th century, for the first time, we have the Syriac acts of the Persian martyrs which, in addition to religious matters, contain items of information significant for political history. G. Wiesner has studied these accounts in his *Zur Märtyrerüberlieferung aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II*, *AAWG* LXVII (1967). The Syriac chronicles, while occasionally having items of interest to Iran, are generally disappointing as sources for the political history of Iran under the Sassanians.

In the reign of Yazdagird I and throughout the 5th century the Armenian sources begin to throw light on Sassanian history, and they give us information in addition to the standard texts of Ṭabarī and Firdausi. For the early part of the century the chronicles of Lazar of P'arp and of Elišē, although concerned with the history of Armenia, are also of value for Iranian history. Translated into French under the auspices of V. Langlois, *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie* II (Paris, 1869), pp. 183-368, both translations need to be controlled by the newer and best editions of each: Lazar, *Patmut'ün Hayoc*, ed. Ter-Mkrtzean (Tiflis, 1904), and Elišē, *Vasn Vardanac ew Hayoc Paterazmin*, ed. E. Ter-Minasean (Erevan, 1957). Priscus, ed. L. Dindorff, *Historici Graeci Minores* I (Leipzig, 1870), pp. 275-352, or ed. C. Müller, *Fragments Historicorum Graecorum* IV (Paris, 1868) pp. 29-110, has interesting information about the reign of Pērōz.

For the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th, especially the reigns of Kavād and the beginning of Khusrau I we have detailed account of the wars between Persians and Byzantines in Procopius; *History of the Wars*, ed. and tr. H. B. Dewing (LCL, London, 1961). Agathias, mentioned above, is also an important source for the reign of Khusrau I.

The Mazdakite movement has evoked two books, one by A. Christensen, *Le règne du roi Kawād I et le communisme Mazdakite* (Copenhagen, 1925) and O. Klima, *Mazdak* (Prague, 1957). The Syriac chronicle of Joshua the Stylite, ed. and tr. W. Wright (Cambridge, 1882) is especially useful for Kavād's reign, although many Byzantine authors writing in Greek are just as important for the events of the 6th and 7th centuries.¹ The *Corpus Scriptorum Historicorum Byzantinorum*, published in the first half of the 19th century at Bonn, contains the texts of relevant authors.

For the last century of Sassanian rule we have a number of valuable chronicles such as the so-called Syriac "Anonymous of Guidi", first edited by I. Guidi in the *CSCO* series 3, vol. IV, and translated by T. Nöldeke in *SWAW* CXXVIII (1893), no. ix. For a detailed bibliography of this period see P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam* I (Paris, 1951), pp. 332ff.

For the 7th century the massive number of Arabic sources completely changes our view of the history of Iran, bringing it from the shadows into the full light of detailed chronicles. The *Futūḥ al-buldān* of al-Balādhurī, ed. M. J. De Goeje (Leiden, 1866) and translated into English by P. K. Hitti,

¹ See also bibliography to Ch. 27 (b).

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The Origins of the Islamic State, part 1 (New York, 1916), part 2 by F. Murgotten (New York, 1924) is perhaps the most valuable source on the Arab conquests. For the Islamic sources see Spüler, *op. cit.*

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