



ARDAŠĪR I I. HISTORY

i. History

Ardašīr, Middle Persian spelling 'rthštr (= Parthian 'rthštr), pronounced Artāšīr, later Ardašīr, is derived from Old Iranian *Ṛtaxšira, a two-stem hypocoristic name (**ṛta-xš-ira*) to a full name *Ṛtaxšθra (R. Schmitt, "Artaxerxes, Ardašīr und Verwandte," in *Incontri Linguistici* 5, 1979, pp. 61-72 and below under Artaxerxes).

Family and early career. Sources on Ardašīr's birth and early years vary on many points. According to one account given by Ṭabarī (I, p. 814) he stemmed from a noble family of Persis and was born at Ṭīrūda, a village in the district of Kīr and subdistrict of Eṣṭaḳr. His grandfather Sāsān (q.v.), whose name was to be given to the dynasty, is described as custodian of the temple of the Fire of Anāhitā (*Bayt nār Nāhīd*) at Eṣṭaḳr and his grandmother, Rāmbehešt, as a descendant of the princely family named Bāzrangī. His father was Pāpak (Bābag, q.v.), a son of Sāsān, and his successor to the "governorship of the people." A second version may be adduced from the inscription of Šāpūr I on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt (ŠKZ), which names Sāsān as a lord (*hwt'y*) but not as Pāpak's father (Mid. Persian, line 25). A third version appears in the Middle Persian romance generally known as the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr* (Book of the deeds of Ardašīr, tr. Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Artachšīr i Pāpakān* [= *Bezenbergers Beiträge* 4, 1878, pp. 22ff.]), repeated in Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, VII, pp. 116ff.) and echoed by Agathias (2.27). According to this, the local ruler Pāpak gave his daughter in marriage to Sāsān after learning of Sāsān's descent from Dārā, i.e. the Achaemenid king Darius III, and Ardašīr



was the child of their union. Thereafter, however, Sāsān disappears from the romance and Pāpak is treated as Ardašīr's father. The discrepancy of the sources is variously explained. Some accept Ṭabarī's version, dismissing the third as a legend, or suggest a possible adoption, consistent with Zoroastrian practice, of Sāsān's son Ardašīr by Pāpak. Others surmise that, as in the case of Achaemenes, Sāsān may have been an ancestor and patronym of the Sasanian dynasty (see Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 1ff.; Herzfeld, *Paikuli I*, pp. 35f., 240ff.; R. N. Frye, *Camb. Hist. Iran III*, 1983, pp. 116ff.; M. L. Chaumont, *RHR* 153, 1958, pp. 154ff., and *JA* 247, 1959, pp. 175ff.).

Equal obscurity surrounds Ardašīr's early career. According to Ṭabarī (in Nöldeke, *ibid.*, pp. 4f.; see also Baḷ'amī, *Tārīk*, pp. 877ff., and the anonymous *Nehāyat al-erab*, cited and tr. in G. Widengren, "The Establishment of the Sasanian Dynasty in the Light of New Evidence," in *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Rome, 1971, pp. 767ff.), Pāpak obtained permission from Gōzihr, the king of Eṣṭaḡr to place his son in the care of Tīrī, the commandant of the castle of Dārābgerd; when Tīrī died, Ardašīr took over his post, but then defiantly began to extend his own sway, and in the process killed several local princes, and even urged his father to overthrow Gōzihr. Pāpak did so and upon the refusal of the Parthian Great King to make Šāpūr the new king of Eṣṭaḡr, declared open rebellion. The leading role of Ardašīr in the rebellion against the central authority could be a later interpretation; it is quite likely, on the other hand, that Pāpak gained partial control of Fārs because he is known from Ardašīr's coins (see below). The rebellion began with the overthrow of the king of Eṣṭaḡr, after which the realm was consolidated and its independence from the Parthian monarch was proclaimed. It may be inferred that one of these events took place in 205-206 A.D., because that year is implied as the start of an era (the Sasanian era?) in a Middle Persian-Parthian inscription at Bīšāpūr which is dated to "the year 58, forty years of the [royal] fire of Ardašīr, twenty-four years of the fire of Šāpūr" (see R. Ghirshman and A. Christensen in *RAA* 10, 1936, pp. 123ff.; O. Hansen, *ZDMG* 92, 1936, pp. 441ff.; W. B. Henning, *BSOAS* 9, 1939, pp. 825f.). The chronological implication of this text is much discussed (see esp. W. B. Henning and S. H. Taqizadeh, *Asia Major* 6, 1957, pp. 106-21, and most recently R. Altheim-Stiehl, *AMI*, N.F. 11, 1978, pp. 113ff., and more fully in *Boreas* 5, 1982, pp. 153ff.). The supposition that the date indicated Pāpak's rebellion seems all the more probable because subsequent Sasanian time-reckoning was not based on the epochal year 205-206, but either on the start of each king's reign or on the Seleucid era, and Ardašīr himself initiated his own era (Ḥamza, p. 23) with his overthrow of the



Parthians in 224. The reign of the Parthian monarch Vologeses IV (192-207) was disturbed by the invasion of Mesopotamia by the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, and the attention of the paramount Iranian power was naturally directed to the west providing a good opportunity for the local rulers in the southwestern and central regions to initiate revolts. Pāpak was supported by his sons, the eldest of whom, Šāpūr, became king in his father's life time (his coins are known), but after they both were dead, Ardašīr assumed power and gave the movement a new impetus (see for details and sources S. H. Taqizadeh, in *BSOAS* 9, pp. 125ff.; V. G. Lukonin, *Kul'tura Sasanidskogo Irana*, Moscow, 1969, chap. 2; Widengren, op. cit., pp. 711ff.).

By 224, Ardašīr had extended his sway over Persis and beyond into Elymais (Kūzestān) and Kermān, forcing to submission many local kings and vassals of the Parthians (Ṭabarī, I, p. 815; Baḷ'amī, pp. 881ff.). The extent of his original realm cannot be determined precisely. During this first phase he was already flouting Parthian authority through administrative actions such as the foundation of new towns and probably the issue of coins (see details in Lukonin, op. cit.). The story of an exchange of letters between Ardašīr and the reigning Arsacid, Artabanus (Ardavān) V (told by Ṭabarī, I, pp. 817f.) and some other Oriental sources, e.g., Baḷ'amī, pp. 880f.) may be regarded as a literary or historiographical dramatization of the fact that Ardašīr was claiming the throne of all Iran. His prospect of success would have been less good if his pretensions had not concurred with a widespread mood of discontent with the Parthian régime and willingness to look favorably on the rebellion. His policy declarations and propaganda (cf. the letters to local kings cited in Ḥamza, p. 45), as well as his military victories, probably induced many individuals to stake their lot on the movement's success (see also Ferdowsī, VII, pp. 130f.).

Overthrow of the Parthian empire (224), and subsequent expansion of Ardašīr's realm. The decisive battle between the Parthians and the Sasanians was fought in the plain of Hormazjān in Media on 28 April 224 (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 411). The year is confirmed by the evidence of the inscription of Šāpūr at Bīšāpūr (cf. Altheim-Stiehl in a forthcoming work on the *Chronicle of Arbela*, ed. by P. Kawerau). A detailed account of the battle was probably composed for the official history of the Sasanians, and if so, is likely to have been Ṭabarī's ultimate source. An illustration of this account was carved by Ardašīr in a bas-relief at Fīrūzābād (see Ṭabarī, I, p. 818, Baḷ'amī, pp. 882ff.; Ṭa'ālebī, pp. 478ff.; Dīnavarī, p. 44; Ferdowsī, VII, pp. 134f.; *Chronicle of Arbela*, in A. Mingana, ed., *Sources syriaques* I, Leipzig, 1908, p. 29.8ff.; *Acta Martyrum*



et Sanctorum Syriaca, ed. P. Bedjan, II, Paris, 1891, p. 128. On the bas-relief, see below).

While still on the battlefield, Ardašīr assumed the title Šāhānšāh (king of kings), and this marked his accession, and indeed, in the light of the most plausible interpretation of the bilingual inscription at Bīšāpūr, the “official” opening year of the Sasanian régime began in 223-224 A.D., i.e. the Sasanian calendar year starting with 27 September 223 and ending with 25 September 224 (R. Altheim-Stiehl, *AMI*, N.F. 11, 1978, pp. 113ff., and *Boreas* 5, 1982, pp. 152ff.). In other sources an official coronation of Ardašīr at Ctesiphon in 226 is mentioned in the context of an expedition to annex former Parthian territories in northwestern Iran and Upper Mesopotamia (see Taqizadeh and Henning, *op. cit.*, and Lukonin, *op. cit.*, for references and discussion).

In the campaign in the northwest of the Parthian empire, Ardašīr failed in an attempt to capture Hatra about 226-227 (Dio Cassius 80.3.2), just as two Roman emperors—Trajan (Dio Cassius 68.17ff.) and Septimius Severus (Dio Cassius 76.9ff.; Herodian 3.9)—had failed before him. He was also repulsed (in 227-228?) by the Arsacids of the collateral line reigning in Armenia, who were to give the Sasanians trouble for a long time (Dio Cassius 80.3.2-3). On the other hand Ardašīr was apparently able, in the following years, to take over the east of the Parthian empire and obtain the submission of numerous Parthian vassals, local magnates, and noble families (Lukonin, *op. cit.*, chap. 2). The precise extent of the Sasanian empire can not be ascertained. It appears that the rulers of the Kūšān and of Turan in the east paid homage to Ardašīr and that the oasis of Marv (and presumably also K̲v̲ārazm) fell into his hand (Ṭabarī, I, p. 819; Yaʿqūbī, I, p. 179; Dīnavarī, p. 44; *Nehāya*, in Widengren, *op. cit.*, p. 770. On the campaign see E. Herzfeld, *Paikuli* I, Berlin, 1924, pp. 37ff.; Widengren, *op. cit.*, pp. 752ff.). In the southwest, the Sasanians succeeded in conquering the north Arabian coast (Baḥrayn) (Ṭabarī, I, p. 820; Dīnavarī, pp. 44f.; *Nehāya*, in Widengren, *op. cit.*, p. 771; cf. R. N. Frye, “Bahrain under the Sasanians,” in *Dilmun*, ed. D. T. Potts, Berlin, 1983, pp. 167ff.). In the northwest, the old Roman-Parthian frontier probably at first marked the limit of Sasanian influence (Wiesehöfer, *Klio* 64, 1982, pp. 440ff. with literature). There can be no doubt that Ardašīr’s view of foreign relations was shaped by his ambition to resume “Achaemenid” policy and repeat its successes. As J. Wolski (in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase, II/9, pt. 1, Berlin, 1976, pp. 195ff.) has rightly observed, the Sasanians were not the first to pursue a consciously Iranian policy and propagate a related



political ideology (see below); the Arsacids had done the same before them. In both war and propaganda, however, Ardašīr and his heirs achieved better results.

Ardašīr appears to have discerned that an irredentist and offensive policy would have no chance of success without prior stabilization of conditions within the empire. The Parthian central government's dependence on local magnates and tribal leaders, and the autonomy acquired by the aristocratic and tribal interests, had for two centuries curbed foreign policy and repeatedly enabled dangerous adversaries, above all the Romans, to exploit internal troubles (Ḥamza, p. 45; Ṭabarī, I, p. 814; Ebn Qotayba, *Ketāb al-ma'āref*, ed. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1850, p. 321; Ebn Meskawayh, *Tajāreb al-omam* I, ed. Caetani, Leiden and London, 1909, p. 77. Cf. *The Letter of Tansar*, tr. Boyce, Rome, 1968, p. 29). Only through elimination of most of the local kings and establishment of a new centralized and bureaucratically organized system (Ṭa'ālebī, *Gorar*, p. 480) would it be possible to change the existing military balance and territorial configuration. Both the army and the administration would have to be reformed to ensure success (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 97ff., 107ff., 130ff., 207ff.). Although the Sasanians had only a superficial and imprecise knowledge of their "ancestors" (see E. Yarshater, "Were the Sasanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?" in *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Rome, 1971, pp. 517ff.) there is plenty of evidence in the Middle Persian and Perso-Arabic literature to show that the aggressive confrontation with Rome was meant to restore a once glorious position in the west, aims that were also taken seriously by the Romans. Thus, Ṭabarī (I, p. 814) reports a declaration by Ardašīr that he had risen "to avenge the blood of his cousin Dārā b. Dārā whom Alexander had fought and two of Alexander's hirelings had murdered" (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 3. Cf. *The Letter of Tansar*, tr. Boyce, p. 29). This claim to the imperial lineage and territory of the Achaemenids is also evidenced by Roman historians who report that the Sasanian ruler demanded retrocession of all the former Achaemenid domains in the west (Herodian 6.2.2; Dio Cassius 80.3.4; Zonaras 12.15). The Sasanian claims were probably not so precisely formulated and historically based as Herodian, in particular, suggests; but these reports show that the objective of Sasanian foreign policy was well understood by their Roman adversaries, although they failed to see the change of regime in Iran as revolutionary (Christensen, op. cit., p. 97), for the Parthians had also aired similar pretensions at times when their military position was strong (Tacitus, *Annals* 6.31). It is noteworthy that the Sasanian evocation of the traditional view of Alexander as the great wrecker of Iran was



matched by a contemporary Roman emphasis on the idea of *imitatio Alexandri*. The emperor Caracalla described himself as a second Alexander (Dio Cassius 78.7.1ff.; Herodian 4.8.1f.), and Alexander Severus cherished the same notion (Dio Cassius 79.17.3; Herodian 5.7.3; *Historia Augusta, Alexander Severus* 51.4).

The available information about the fighting in the west comes almost exclusively from Latin and Greek sources (mainly Herodian 6.2ff.). Sasanian troops invaded the Roman-ruled part of Upper Mesopotamia in 230 A.D. and laid siege to Nisibis, one of the territory's two main fortresses (the other being Carrhae), but were unable to capture it. Raids by Sasanian cavalry squadrons penetrated into Syria and Cappadocia (Herodian 6.2.1; Zonaras 12.15; Syncellus 1.674 ed. Dinorf). When negotiations, which the Romans had proposed, broke down, Alexander Severus reluctantly decided to march in person against Ardašīr. After conscripting troops and reinforcing them with experienced veteran units (*vexillationes*) from garrisons in the Danube region, he proceeded overland to Syria. From his headquarters at Antioch he appears to have made another unsuccessful attempt in the winter of 231-232 to settle the conflict by diplomatic means (Herodian 6.4.4; Zonaras 12.15). A mutiny in the army had to be crushed before any advances to the war fronts could be undertaken.

The war ended unrewardingly for the Romans, whose early victories were outweighed by later defeats (Herodian 6.5f.); but the result of this first trial of strength was not exactly advantageous to Ardašīr either, because the Sasanian army suffered severe losses and was for the most part so exhausted that the troops had to be discharged (Herodian 6.4.4ff., 7.1). The lack of any mention of this war in the Perso-Arabic literature suggests that the whole venture in fact ended ingloriously for Ardašīr. Conversely, in some of the Roman writings, the war's outcome in maintenance of the status quo is made to look like a great success for the emperor. Alexander Severus staged a triumph for himself after his return to Rome (Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 24.2; Eutropius 8.23; Festus 22; Hieronymus, *Chron.* 215; Orosius 7.18; Jordanis, *Rom.* 36; *Historia Augusta, Alex. Sev.* 55.1, 56.1ff. all discussed in A. Rösger, "Die Darstellung des Perserfeldzugs des Severus Alexander in der *Historia Augusta*," *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1975/76*, Bonn, 1978, pp. 167ff.)

No formal peace treaty was signed, but in the following years Rome's eastern frontier was not disturbed by any new Sasanian attacks. Perhaps more important for the Romans was the defection to them of Hatra and the



incorporation of its fortress in the Roman frontier defense system (A. Maricq, “Les dernières années de Hatra,” *Syria* 34, 1957, pp. 228ff.; H. J. W. Drijvers, “Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa,” in Temporini and Haase, eds., op. cit., II/8, pp. 799ff. esp. p. 825). The people of Hatra knew that their relative autonomy in the later Parthian period had been made possible by the weakness of the Arsacid central government and was now in peril from the declared political designs of the Sasanians. The foreign policy of Iran’s new rulers was set on westward expansion and perhaps also intended to distract from the coercion within the country, whereas the Parthian and likewise the Roman policy in recent years had been to leave things as they were. Certainly Hatra’s concerns would have to be subordinated to the Sasanian objective, and probably its special political or economic interests would be disregarded altogether (literature in Maricq, op. cit.; Wiesehöfer, art. cit.).

Disorder in the Roman empire after the murder of Alexander Severus in 235 evidently encouraged Ardašīr to launch new attacks on Rome’s eastern frontier: The most important were a raid on Dura in April 239 (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* [= SEG], VII, 743 b), a thrust into Upper Mesopotamia about 237-238 when Carrhae and Nisibis were captured (Syncellus I, 681 [Dindorf]; Zonaris 12.18) and an expedition against Hatra. It appears that Hatra resisted a very long siege and did not fall until sometime between April and September 240 (Mosig-Walburg, *Boreas* 3, 1980, pp. 117ff. Cf. also Chaumont, “A propos de la chute de Hatra et du couronnement de Shapur Ier,” *Acta Antiqua Scient. Acad. Hungarica* 27, 1979 [1981], pp. 207ff.). The city appears to have been chosen as a base for operations against the Roman Mesopotamia (Dio Cassius 80.3.2). The capture of Hatra was presumably the cause of the Persian war of Gordianus III (cf. *Historia Augusta*, *Gordianus* 23.5 with the date given in the Cologne Mānī Codex [= CMC], 18, 2-5. Important maps (BV 11 and BV 12 of the *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orient*, by E. Kettenhofen).

Because of the difficult state of the sources, Ardašīr’s last years and the date of his death are subjects of scholarly controversies. His son Šāpūr was probably crowned as co-monarch on 12 April 240 (A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, “Der Kölner Mani-Kodex,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 5, 1970, p. 129; 19, 1975, p. 21 (CMC 18, 5-8). Probably assignable to this time is the rock relief in northwestern Iran at Pīr Čāvūš near Salmās, which appears to be a representation of the co-monarchy (see below). The question whether Šāpūr was designated (and crowned) as sole monarch during Ardašīr’s lifetime



depends on the interpretation of a particular coin type (Mosig-Walburg, in *Boreas* 3, 1980, pp. 117ff.). It can now be accepted, on the evidence of the Cologne Mānī Codex (164, 1ff.) that Ardašīr lived until the early part, perhaps February, of the year 242 (Henrichs-Koenen, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 48, 1982, pp. 4ff., 44).

Administration. The Sasanian empire in Ardašīr's reign resembled the later Parthian state in many ways, though differences were already apparent. In the ŠKZ inscription (Middle Persian, line 28), Ardašīr's name as the Great King is mentioned together with the names of four "kings" who governed the provinces of Aprēnak, Marv, Kermān, and Sagestān with some measure of semi-independence from the central authority. There were also "kingdoms" (Makurān, Tūrestān, Kūšānšahr) whose rulers had had to accept vassal status (Lukonin, op. cit., chap. 2 and in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/2, 1983, pp. 681ff.; M. L. Chaumont, in *Acta Iranica* 4, 1975, pp. 89ff.). Next came provinces comparable with the Achaemenid satrapies. In addition to royal lands, there were large areas under the administration of local chiefs and noble families, and thus not immediately subject to royal control. Taxes could of course only be obtained from these areas through indirect channels (F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *Ein asiatischer Staat*, Wiesbaden, 1954, pp. 3ff.). Even at this early time, Sasanian policies had to be shaped with due regard to the relationships between the monarch, the royal family, and the landowning magnates (including members of the old Parthian aristocracy). Although a process of centralization was set on foot, and the number of local kings was greatly reduced, during Ardašīr's reign, his empire was still run on much the same lines as the later Parthian empire (see Lukonin, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/2, 1983, pp. 681ff.).

The order of precedence of the dignitaries and offices at Ardašīr's court is given in the ŠKZ inscription (Middle Persian, lines 28ff.) as follows. First are four kings holding governorships with right of succession inheritable by the youngest son, namely Sadāraf (Satārōp ?) king of Aprēnak (Nīšāpūr); Ardašīr king of Marv; Ardašīr king of Kermān; Ardašīr king of the Sacae (of Sagestān). Next are three queens, namely Dēnak grandmother of Ardašīr; Rōdak mother of Ardašīr; Dēnak wife of Ardašīr. Then come Ardašīr the *bidaxš* (viceroy); Pāpak the *hazāruft* (prime minister? or guard commander ?); and five members of the great noble families, namely Dēhēn of the family of Warāz, Sāsān of the family of Sūrēn, Sāsān the lord of Andīgān, and Pērōz and Gōk of the family of Kārin, together with Apursām ([Abarsām](#)) "Ardašīr-Farr" whose function is not clear, but was perhaps that of the chief counselor to the



monarch. After these come fifteen more named dignitaries including the *spāhbed* (head of the army) and the *dibīruft* (head of the chancery) (Lukonin, *ibid.*, pp. 681ff.).

Other officials which already existed in this early stage were: the *aywēnbed* (master of ceremonies), the *framādār* with his secretaries, and the religious functionaries *hērbads*, *mōbads* and *mōgs* (Lukonin, *ibid.*, pp. 73f.; Christensen, *Iran Sass.* pp. 97ff.; Ph. Gignoux, “Die religiöse Administration in sasanidischer Zeit: Ein Überblick,” in H. Koch and D. N. MacKenzie, eds., *Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte der Achamenidenzeit und ihr Fortleben*, Berlin, 1983, pp. 254ff.; cf. also Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar*, pp. 1ff.). Higher offices of *wuzurg framādār*, *mōbadān mōbad* and *hērbadān hērbad* were not Ardašīr’s foundations (against Christensen, *ibid.*, pp. 118ff., see Gignoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 255ff.; cf. Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, London, 2nd ed., 1984, p. 122).

Urban foundations. Iranian monarchs could only establish, reestablish, or rename cities and towns on sites lying within the royal lands (*dastkart*). Ṭabarī (I, p. 820) credits Ardašīr with the following urban foundations: (1) Ardašīr-Ḳorra(= Gūr, Fīrūzābād); (2) Rām-Ardašīr; (3) Rēv-Ardašīr (= Rīšahr); (4) Hormozd-Ardašīr (= Sūq al-Ahwāz) in Ḳūzestān; (5) Vēh-Ardašīr opposite Ctesiphon; (6) Astarābād-Ardašīr (= Kark-e Meyšān) in Lower Mesopotamia; (7) Ps’ (and variants) Ardašīr on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf; (8) Nūd-Ardašīr near Mosul. Further foundations are mentioned by Ḥamza (pp. 46f.), Dīnavarī (p. 47), and other authors. The materials are discussed in D. Metzler, *Ziele und Formen königlicher Innenpolitik im vorislamischen Iran*, Munster, 1977, pp. 184ff., but the dating back to Ardašīr I’s reign must be considered dubious. Several more towns are known with names compounded with Ardašīr, but some were definitely founded by Šāpūr I and named in honor of his father, while some may have been founded by, or named after, other bearers of the name Ardašīr (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 20 n. 4). Each of these towns was made the center of a rural district under a *šahrab* (ŠKZ, p. 34 of the Middle Persian text); and the tax revenues from the town and district went straight to the monarch (Lukonin, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/2, pp. 723ff.). It was for this reason that increase of number of royal urban foundations and attached districts was a goal of Sasanian internal and fiscal policy from Ardašīr I onward. Even so, the dichotomy between lands under direct royal control and lands in the possession of the nobility and only indirectly subject to the central government continued to be a basic feature of the agrarian economy until the tax reforms of Kavād I and Ḳosrow I Anōšīravān (for

possible models of this reform mentioned by Ṭabarī, I, p. 897, see N. V. Pigulevskaya, “K voprosu o podatnoī reforme Khosrova Anushirvana,” *VDI*, 1937, pp. 143ff. accepted and supported by Altheim and Stiehl, op. cit., pp. 129ff.; cf. also Lukonin, op. cit., pp. 745f.; N. Garsoïan, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/2, 1983, pp. 587f.).

Coinage. As a broad generalization, it may be said that the coins minted for Ardašīr I are of three distinct types (R. Göbl, *Sasanidische Numismatik*, Braunschweig, 1968; idem, in *Comb. Hist. Iran* III/2, 1983, pp. 322ff.; V. G. Lukonin, in *Acta Iranica* 8, 1968, pp. 106ff.; Mosig-Walburg, *Die frühen sasanidischen Könige als Vertreter und Förderer der zarathustrischen Religion*, Frankfurt, 1982, pp. 25ff.). Type I shows Ardašīr in full face or profile on the obverse, and his father Pāpak facing to the left in Parthian style on the reverse. The legends are *’rthštrMLK’* “Ardašīr the king” and *bgy p’pky MLK’* “the Lord, Pāpak the king.” Type II, the commonest, shows Ardašīr facing to the right and variously capped or crowned on the obverse, and a fire altar on the reverse. The legends read: *mzdysn bgy’rthštrMLK’nMLK’yr’nMNW čtry MNyzd’n* “the Mazda-worshiping Lord, Ardašīr, king of kings of Iran, whose origin is from the gods.” They show the Zoroastrian beliefs of Ardašīr. Type III shows Ardašīr and Šāpūr facing each other on the obverse, and again a fire altar on the reverse. The legends on this third type are *šhpwhry MLK’ry’n MNW čtry MNyzd’n* “Sapur, king of Iran, who is descended from the gods,” and *NWR’ZY ’rthštr* “the fire of Ardašīr.”

The emblem on the reverse of Type II, showing a fire altar of a design found in Persis, and the legend *NWR’ZY ’rthštr* (fire of Ardašīr) refer to the royal fire which was kindled at the start of each king’s reign (A. Christensen, *RAA* 10, 1936, p. 127). As regards the fire altar, the part supported by a pillar has been seen as resembling the throne platform of the Achaemenids (I. Pfeiler, “Der Thron der Achaimeniden als Herrschaftssymbol auf sasanidischen Münzen,” *Schweizer Münzblätter* 23, 1973, pp. 107ff.; cf. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, in *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Rome, 1971, p. 377). The ribbons may perhaps be interpreted as ends of an unfastened and outspread diadem, the traditional Iranian symbol of sovereignty. Thus the reverse of these coins reflects Ardašīr’s concern to present himself not only as the rightful successor to the Achaemenids, but also as a pious Zoroastrian. In the matter of headdresses and crowns, Ardašīr at first adhered to Parthian conventions and took over a type of crown dating from Mithridates II (Göbl, *Sasanidische Numismatik*, Type II). In later years, however, his principal crown was of a type (Göbl’s Type III)



which permitted arranging part of the hair into a globe over the cranium and a shock projecting from the nape of the neck; the headpiece (often with cheek-guards) and the globe are covered with thin silk gauze from which ribbons dangle to the rear. Also found are variants in which Ardašīr wears a crenellated crown or a tall, round cap with an eagle held in place by a tape. While Göbl thinks that all these types symbolize Ohrmazd's or Anāhīd's investiture of Ardašīr with the kingship ("Investitur im sasanidischen Iran und ihre numismatische Bezeugung," *WZKM* 56, 1960, pp. 36ff.), Mosig-Walburg maintains (op. cit., p. 31) that only the first of these designs denotes a special relationship of Ardašīr to Ohrmazd and that the second is a "victory crown" (otherwise Lukonin, *Iran v III veke*, Moscow, 1979, p. 117). The coin-type III, which shows Ardašīr with his son Šāpūr, can be associated with the introduction of Šāpūr as the successor (Chaumont, "Corégence et avènement de Shāpuhr Ier," in Ph. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli, eds., *Mémorial J. de Menasce*, Louvain, 1974, p. 135). In the matter of coin denominations and weights, the Sasanians at first strictly followed the existing traditions, though Ardašīr introduced a new half-drachma. Moreover some gold pieces minted for him have been found. Apparently only three mints were at work in his reign, the former mints in semi-autonomous parts of the empire having been closed down (Göbl, *Sasanidische Numismatik*, pp. 25ff. and in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, pp. 328ff).

Religious policy. In Ardašīr's reign, Zoroastrianism was already the religion which the Sasanian king supported and personally professed. It has been suggested that under Ardašīr, the supporters of *ātaš-kadags* "fire temples" were favored but those honoring temples with cult statues (*uzdēs-kadag*) were persecuted (Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar*, p. 47, and "Iconoclasm among Zoroastrians," in J. Neusner, ed., *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for M. Smith at Sixty IV*, Leiden, 1975, pp. 93ff.), but this view is strongly disputed (G. Gnoli, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland*, Naples, 1980, pp. 221ff.). Although no member of the priesthood figures in the list of the dignitaries at his court, it seems likely that the first steps to organize a Zoroastrian state church were taken in his reign and that traditions from Achaemenid, Hellenistic, and Parthian times were applied and developed in this connection. On his coins and in his inscription at Naqš-e Rostam (ANRm-a), Ardašīr describes himself as "Mazda-worshipping" and "descended from the gods." His religious belief is also proclaimed pictorially through the fire-temple emblem on the reverse of his coins. (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 116ff., 141ff.). The investiture reliefs depicting Ardašīr's divine appointment at Fīrūzābād,



Naqš-e Rājab, and Naqš-e Rostam give further evidence of the first Sasanian monarch's close attachment to Ohrmazd. In Middle Persian lore, the incidence of Ohrmazd's choice on Ardašīr is concretized in the mental image of the *Xwarrah*, "(God-given) fortune," which may be compared with the Greek Tyche and the Roman Fortuna (cf. A. Sh. Shahbazi, "Farnah Symbolised," *AMI* 13, 1980, pp. 119ff.; Calmeyer, in *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 94, 1979, pp. 347ff.). Ardašīr, having been invested with the *Xwarrah*, is the rightful ruler; and investiture with the *Xwarrah* is always prerequisite for legitimate rulership. Ardašīr is also credited with the erection and endowment of fire-temples and with a helpful interest in Zoroastrian literature (Ṭabarī, I, p. 817; *Dēnkard*, p. 412.11-17). A special fire-temple, the "fire of Ardašīr," which he founded at the start of his reign, is named in the inscription of Šāpūr at Bīšāpūr. Mas'ūdī (*Morūj* II p. 162) gives a traditional version of Ardašīr's words concerning the church-state relationship: "Know that the religion and the monarchy are two brothers neither of which can exist without the other. The religion sustains the monarchy, and the monarchy protects the religion. That which lacks sustenance and support must perish, and that which has no protector will pass away" (see Mosig-Walburg, loc. cit.).

Ardašīr's policy toward other religions made his reign, on the whole, a hard time for the non-Zoroastrian communities. The Jews and others had enjoyed considerably more tolerance and autonomy under the Parthians. Ardašīr, and later also Šāpūr in the early years of his reign, sought to incorporate and control the Jewish population more effectively and to deprive them of their communal jurisdiction in religious and legal matters (which were hardly separable). The underlying motive was probably to propagate Zoroastrianism and enlarge the Zoroastrian community by procuring conversion of non-Zoroastrians. The Syriac-speaking Christian communities enjoyed more tolerant or at any rate milder treatment, and their numbers grew substantially up to the middle of the 3rd century. Mani did not publicly come forth until after Ardašīr's death, perhaps in the correct expectation that Šāpūr would be more receptive than his father (see J. Neusner, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/2, 1983, pp. 909ff.; J. P. Asmussen, *ibid.*, pp. 924ff.; Chaumont, *RHR* 165, 1964, pp. 165ff.; Henrichs-Koenen, *op. cit.*, pp. 1ff., esp. p. 5).

Royal ideology and propaganda. Ardašīr's efforts to present himself as a god-related and devout Mazda-worshiper, and as the possessor of the divinely given *Xwarrah*, his claim to legitimacy as a worthy scion of the Iranian (mythical) kings, his successful propaganda against the rightfulness of the



Parthians and their proper place in the sequence of Iranian history, prove the importance of the Achaemenid legacy to the minds of the early Sasanians though they presumably did not know much about actual Achaemenid conditions and figures. This interest was enhanced by the location of the temple of Anāhīd at Eṣṭakr, the choice of major Achaemenid sites such as Naqš-e Rostam for the carving of reliefs and inscriptions and the erection of fire-temples, the inclusion of members of the Achaemenid dynasty in the legendary Sasanian genealogies (conserved in the Arabo-Persian literature, the mentions of Ardašīr's ambition to "avenge his ancestors" in the Arabo-Persian literature and of his claims to former Achaemenid territories in the histories of Herodian and Dio Cassius. The question whether such plans and claims were really formulated by Ardašīr as literary sources claim (on the Testament ('*ahd*') of Ardašīr see M. Grignaschi, *JA* 254, 1966, pp. 1ff.) or ascribed to him, as the empire's founder, in later times can not be answered with certainty for lack of evidence though the latter seems more probable. The same applies to the endeavor of the Sasanians to remove the Parthian link from the chain of Achaemenid-Sasanian legend and to depict the Parthian kings as alien "chiefs of tribes" in a time of Iranian weakness (Gnoli, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland*, pp. 166ff.; M. Grignaschi, in *La Persia nel Medioevo*, pp. 143ff.; A. Sh. Shahbazi, *BSOAS* 40, 1977, pp. 25ff.). To all appearances, Ardašīr actually owed a great deal to the Parthian legacy (Yarshater, op. cit.). On surer ground, scholars are now examining Achaemenid relics in Sasanian administration, art, religion, coinage (resumed minting of gold), and epigraphic texts and formulas.

Bibliography : Given in the text.