



ARGBED

ARGBED, (Inscr. Mid. Persian *hlgwpt*, Inscr. Parthian *'rkpty* and *hrkpty*, i.e., (*h*)*argbed*, older (*h*)*arkpat*) a high-ranking title in the Parthian and Sasanian periods. The etymology of the word is uncertain. Two possible meanings have been suggested, fortress commander (cf. New Persian *arg*) and chief tax collector or taxation manager; the former seems much more likely (cf. Bartholomae, *Zur Kenntnis der Mitteliranischen Mundarten* I, Heidelberg 1916, p. 16; D. Harnack, in *Geschichte Mittelasiens*, p. 540.)

In a Greek parchment from Dura Europos which can be dated about A.D. 121, the title *arcapates* is given to the eunuch Phraates, a member of the staff of the Parthian governor Manesos (No. 20, line 4, in *The Excavations at Dura Europos, Final Report* V, Yale University Press 1959, p. 115; cf. R. N. Frye, "Some Early Iranian Titles," *Oriens* 15, 1962, pp. 352-53). In Fārs towards the end of the 2nd century A.D., the eunuch Tīrī was the *argbed* (Arabic *arḡabed*) of the fortress of Dārābgerd under the authority of the king of Eṣṭakr; his successor in the post was Ardašīr, son of Pāpak, the future founder of the Sasanian dynasty (Ṭabarī, I, p. 810; tr. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 5). Furthermore the presence of a high official holding the same title (under the forms *alqaftā*, *arqaftā*, *arqabtā*) at the Parthian royal court is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of Targumim, The Targum Babli and Yerushalmi* I, New York, 1950, p. 236. J. Neussner, *A History of The Jews* I = *Postbiblica* IX, 1965, pp. 108, 114).

The office seems to have acquired more importance after the rise of the Sasanians. In the Paikuli inscription made for Narseh in 293 (Mid. Pers., lines



6, 8, 10, 15, 19, 30; Parth., lines 5, 7, 9, 13, 34; see Humbach and Skjærvø, III, 1, p. 95), the *argbed* Šāpūr is placed high in the state hierarchy. Menander Protector (Bonn ed., p. 136) names one of the dignitaries who received the Roman envoys to Narseh's court in 297 or 298 as the *archapetes* Barsaborsos. The king's representatives at the church council held at Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 were the *vazorg-framadār* and Mehr-Šāpūr of the family of the *argbed* (*Synodicon Orientale ou recueil de Synodes nestoriens*, ed. and tr. J. B. Chabot, Paris, 1902, pp. 21, 26). According to Ṭabarī (I, p. 869; tr. Nöldeke, p. 111), the office of the *argbed* was even more important than that of the *artēštārān-sālār* (commander-in-chief of the army). The list of the seven great Persian families in Theophylactus Simocatta's *History* (3.18.3) is headed by the name Artabides, which certain scholars (e.g. Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 107) have supposed to be a mistake for Argabides, i.e. the family of the *argbed*; but this hypothesis is dubious, because the reading in de Boor's edition (p. 148) is Arsaces, i.e. the Arsacid family. The same title was held by a high-ranking Palmyrene official named Septimius Worod in the years 264-267 (*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* II, 3, 1926, nos. 3940, 3941, 3943, 4105; *argabṭa* [Greek *argapetes*]). The use of this term at Palmyra probably went back to the Parthian period.

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