



BĀBAK (FATHER OF ARDAŠĪR I)

BĀBAK (Mid. Pers. Pāpak, Pābag), a ruler of Fārs at the beginning of the third century, father of [Ardašīr](#), the founder of the Sasanian dynasty. There are several traditions regarding the relationship of Bābak to Sāsān, who gave his name to the dynasty. One tradition, reported by Ṭabarī (I, p. 813) and other Islamic authors says that Bābak was the son of Sāsān, while another tradition found in the Middle Persian *Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr Pābagān*, Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, and elsewhere claims that Bābak's daughter was given in marriage to Sāsān, a shepherd who had royal blood, and from this union Ardašīr was born. Variations of this theme occur in the *Bundahišn* (chap. 35, A232) where the genealogy of Ardašīr is given (*Artaxšahr ī Pābagān kē-š mād duxt ī Sāsān ī Weh-āfrīd*, etc.) "Ardašīr son of Bābak whose mother (was) the daughter of Sāsān son of Weh-āfrīd, etc.," and in Agathias (2.27.5), where Bābak is described as a shoemaker who allowed an itinerant soldier called Sāsān to sleep with his wife, from which Ardašīr was born. Later Bābak and Sāsān quarreled over the parentage of Ardašīr and then both agreed that the boy should be called the son of Bābak, but of the lineage of Sāsān.

Another version calls Ardašīr the son of the daughter of Bābak, for which reason he was called Ardašīr Bābakān. (For various quotations in New Persian sources see Dehḵodā, s.v. Bābak.) According to the *Mojmal* (p. 33) Bābak claimed Ardašīr as his son, from fear of revealing his true lineage to the Parthians. The *Ġorar* of Ṭa'ālebī (p. 474), however, tells us that Sāsān was an



officer of Bābak and his son-in-law, but Sāsān died early so Ardašīr was raised by his grandfather Bābak who sent the boy to the court of Ardavān where he remained until Bābak died.

It is hardly possible to determine which version about Ardašīr's parentage is correct, but the suspicion that Ṭabarī simply assumes that Sāsān is the father of Bābak is great. In the great trilingual inscription of Šāpūr I at Naqš-e Rostam near Persepolis (ed. A. Maricq, *Syria* 35, 1958, pp. 318-19 [= *Classica et Orientalia*, Paris, 1965]), Sāsān is merely a lord (Parth. *hwtwy*) while Bābak is a king (*MLKA*), Greek *kúrios* and *basilēōs* respectively (Greek 1.46, Mid. Pers. 1.25, Parth. 1.20). At the same time, the dynasty was called Sasanian, and not Babakian, as we see from the Paikuli inscription where the family or "seed of the Sasanians" is mentioned (ed. P. O. Skjærvø in H. Humbach and P. O. Skjærvø, *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli* III/1, Wiesbaden, 1983, p. 65 par. 80, Parth. l. 36, and pp. 122f.). Consequently, early in Sasanian rule Sāsān was considered the ancestor of the dynasty.

In any case Bābak was a local ruler in Fārs, with his capital at Istakhr (Eštakr), who revolted against his Parthian overlord, probably in 205-06, as we may infer from a Mid. Pers. inscription on a pillar from Bīšāpūr (cf. R. Ghirshman, "Inscription du monument de Châpour I^{er}," *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* 10, 1937, pp. 123-29). As far as we know Bābak did not strike any coins, for those with his name on them, together with the name Ardašīr, were most probably issued by the latter (R. Göbl, *Sasanidische Numismatik*, Braunschweig, 1968, p. 42 and table I). Other than his name on coins and in later inscriptions, we have no contemporary sources on Bābak and are forced to rely on much later accounts, the most complete of which is the history of Ṭabarī (I, pp. 813ff.), presumably based for the most part on the lost *Xwadāy-nāmag*, or official history compiled under the Sasanians (see, e.g., M. Boyce in *HO* I, IV: *Iranistik* II: *Literatur*, Lief. 1, pp. 57ff.). According to Ṭabarī, Bābak was the ruler of Kīr (a district to the south of Istakhr on the edge of the salt lake, BaḳĀ-tagān). He continues that the wife of Sāsān, his father, called Rāmbehešt, was from the Bāzrangī (q.v.; Ar. al-Bāzranjī) family which ruled Fārs province, presumably as vassals of the Parthian rulers. Further, Sāsān became the director (*qayyem*) of the fire-temple in Istakhr which was called the fire-temple of Anāhīd. Bābak was born from Sāsān and Rāmbehešt. Bābak had long hair at his birth, a sign of future greatness. Later he followed his father Sāsān in rule and Ardašīr was his son. Ṭabarī continues that the king of Istakhr at the birth of Ardašīr was called Jūzehr (or Jozehr, Mid. Pers. *Gōčīhr*) of the family of Bāzrangī. When



Ardašīr was seven years old Bābak asked Jūzehr who resided at that time in the town of Bayžā, northwest of Istakhr, to give him to the care of his eunuch Tīrē who was in charge of the town of Dārābjerd. After subduing several local lords Ardašīr wrote to his father to revolt against Jūzehr, which he did and killed him. Then Bābak wrote to Ardavān (Artabanus), his Parthian overlord, requesting permission to grant the crown of Jūzehr to Bābak's son Šāpūr. The Parthian ruler refused but Bābak died and his son Šāpūr succeeded him (see also E. Herzfeld, *Paikuli I*, Berlin, 1924, pp. 35-36).

This account by Ṭabarī is the most detailed we have about Bābak but we can not check its veracity. No coins attributed to Gōčīhr or to Bābak have been identified and the graffiti of a Sasanian prince on the wall of the Harem building, now the museum, at Persepolis, may or may not represent Bābak (see E. Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, Chicago, 1953, p. 258), but the style of clothes and crown, in any case, is very early Sasanian.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. On the name see also E. Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien*, Paris, 1966, p. 17, where it is suggested that Pāpakān should be interpreted as "(son) of Pāp," a name attested in Pahlavi and Armenian.

More probably both Pāp and Pāpak formed the patronym Pāpakān.

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