



BAHRĀM III

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Bahrām III, Sakān Šāh (corrupt orthography: Šāhanšāh), the sixth Sasanian king, son of Bahrām II (less likely of Hormozd I, see Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 49 n. 1, p. 436a n. 3), ruled for four months. He was proclaimed king (despite his reluctance, it is claimed, see E. Herzfeld, *Paikuli I*, Berlin, 1924, p. 171, with reference) in Fārs, by a group of nobles led by Wahnām, son of Tatus, and supported by Ādurfarrōbay, king of Mēšān. But an assembly of many nobles, including the heads of great families as well as the high priest Kardēr, challenged the succession and swore allegiance to Bahrām's grand-uncle, Narseh, "Great King of Armenia," inviting him to come from Armenia to Ctesiphon and ascend the throne. In a swift campaign, Wahnām was captured and executed, but the fate of Bahrām is not recorded. Narseh then tampered with the investiture relief of Bahrām I at Bīšāpūr, substituted his own name for that of the former, and added the prostrate figure of a fallen enemy under the king's horse (symbolizing Wahnām or, less likely, Bahrām III). Bahrām himself does not seem to have left any monument. A number of coins showing a king with a fluted crown were formerly attributed to him but are now assigned to Narseh (see especially R. Göbl, "Narsē und nicht Bahrām," *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 78, 1959, pp. 5-13). Also, a fragmentary silver plate ornamented with a figure wearing the fluted crown and identified in an accompanying Mid. Pers. inscription as "Bahrām, King of Kings of Iran and Non-Iran" (see S. Eilenberg, "A Sasanian Silver Medallion of Bahrām III," *Ars Orientalis* 2, 1957, pp. 487f.) is considered suspect (Göbl, *op. cit.*, p. 5).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oriental sources are listed in Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 362 no. 10.

The account given here is based on the bilingual (Mid. Pers. and Parthian) inscription of Narseh at Paikuli, now restudied and published with restored text and commentary by H. Humbach and P. O. Skjærvø, *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli* III/1, Wiesbaden, 1983, pp. 28ff.; cf. R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran*, Munich, 1983, pp. 375-77.

For Narseh's addition of the fallen figure to the reclaimed relief of Bahrām I, see A. A. Sarfarāz, *Iran*, 13, 1975, p. 171 pls. iii, iv; and G. Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Relief at Bishapur*, pt. 2, *Iranische Denkmäler*, Lief. 10, Berlin, 1981, pp. 19-20.