



BOZORGĀN

BOZORGĀN (MPers. *wuzurg*, oblique plur. *wuzurgān*, usually written *LBA/RBA*, *LBA_n/RBA_n*), the third class-rank of the four or five divisions of the early Sasanian aristocracy, namely *šahryār* “landholders,” *wispuhr* “princes” or members of the royal house (Mid. Pers. usually written *BLBYTA*), *wuzurg* “grandees,” *āzād* “nobles” (lit. free men), and *kadag-xwadāy* “householders.” The first four groups occur in this order in the inscription of Šāpūr I (241-72 a.d.) at Ḥājīābād (ŠH, l. 6) and in the inscription of Narseh (293-302 a.d.) at Paikuli (NPi; Humbach and Skjærvø, pars. 74, 75, 78, 86), but the fifth one is attested only in some passages of NPi (pars. 16, 63, 83). The “grandees” are usually mentioned as the third order (ŠH; NPi, pars. 63, 74, 75, 78, 83, 86). *Wuzurgān*, preceded by *spāhbedān* “generals” and followed by *āzādagān* “nobles” and *wāspuhragān* “special courtiers,” are mentioned as attendants of Ardašīr (*Kār-nāmag*, ed. Antia, p. 48 par. 8). They are also mentioned together with *āzādān* “nobles” in the same work (p. 59 par. 5). As indicated by the Paikuli inscription the high offices of the state were occupied by the members of these four or five groups. According to the Arabic and Persian sources, *bozorgs* (Ar. *ʿoḏamāʿ*), *wispuhrs* (Ar. *ahl al-boyūtāt*), and *āzāds* (Ar. *aḥrār*, *banuʿl-aḥrār*) played an important part in the social and political organization of the Sasanians, although the special functions and activities of each individual group cannot be determined precisely. High-standing members of the aristocracy used to be present at the coronation feast of a new king to hear his discourse and to congratulate him (Ṭabarī, I, pp. 834, 835, 846, 871, 896; Ṭāʿalebī, *Gorar*, pp. 532, 536). Whenever there was a disagreement or dispute about the succession of a certain king, a council of high members of these



groups was summoned to settle the matter. It was in this way that Šāpūr II (309/10-379) was elected king after Hormozd II's death in 309/10 (Dīnavarī, p. 49; Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 51, n. 3). A similar council chose Ardašīr II as king after the death of his father Šērōya (628; Ṭabarī, I, p. 1061). After Yazdegerd I's death in 421 the grandees of Iran (probably Iranian nobility in general) first refused to favor any of his sons including Bahrām V and instead appointed a Sasanian prince named Ƙosrow as king (Ṭabarī, I, p. 858: *nās men al-'oḡamā' wa ahl al-boyūtāt*; Dīnavarī, p. 57: *'oḡama' al-Fārs*; cf. Ebn al-Balkī, p. 75: *laškar o ra'īyat*). According to Ṭabarī (I, p. 885), when Kawād (488-531) favored Mazdak, the grandees made common cause with the high priest (*mowbadān mowbad*) and imprisoned him and appointed his brother Jāmāsp as king (cf. Ebn al-Balkī, p. 85). The grandees (*'oḡamā' al-Fors*), dissatisfied with Ƙosrow II's way of government, dethroned him and elected his son Šērōya as king (Ya'qūbī, I, pp. 195-96). Another similar event was the dethronement of Hormozd IV (579-90) and the enthronement of his son Ƙosrow II (591-628; Ṭabarī, I, p. 995).

The term *bozorgān/'oḡamā'* (sometimes *a'yān, wojūh*) in the Persian and Arabic sources concerning the history of Iran, and *wuzurg(ān)* in Pahlavi works (e.g., *Draxt āsūrīg*, pars. 40, 43, in *Pahl. Texts*, pp. 112, 165 par. 17) usually denotes the whole body of the nobles in contrast to ordinary people (Pahl. *ram*, Ar. *'amma*).

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Given in the text. See also A. Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 110-11.

H. Humbach and P. O. Skjærvø, *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli III/2*, Wiesbaden, 1983, pp. 38ff.

Idem, "Case in Inscriptional Middle Persian, Inscriptional Parthian and the Pahlavi Psalter," *St. Ir.* 12/1, 1983, esp. pp. 60-61.

G. Widengren, *Der Feudalismus im alten Iran*, Cologne and Opladen, 1967, pp.



122, 126f.

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