



CROWN I. IN THE MEDIAN AND ACHAEMENID PERIODS

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i. In the Median and Achaemenid periods

In ancient Persia the crown occurred in a variety of forms. The Old Persian term for such a headdress is not preserved, though it has been suggested that various contemporary Greek terms—for example, *kídaris* or *kítaris*, *tiára*, and *kurbasía*—were derived from Persian or other eastern languages (Pauly-Wissowa, XI/1, cols. 378-79; Suppl. XIV, cols. 786-96). The ancient authors do not always distinguish clearly among these terms, and the most reliable evidence for the forms of Persian crowns is thus the depictions on Achaemenid monuments (see [clothing ii](#)).

In the 7th century b.c.e. the Elamite kings of each generation wore a characteristic form of cap, though there is no evidence that each king adopted an individual version (Calmeyer, 1976, pp. 56-61). In the Achaemenid period rulers were represented wearing two different kinds of crown. Most common was a rigid cylinder with crenellated decoration ([Figure 13](#)), which had a long tradition in Persia; crenellations appeared on the Elamite rock relief at Kūrāngūn in Fārs and were revived again for the crown of the Pahlavi dynasty (1303-58 Š./1924-79; see [v](#), below). Hubertus von Gall (1974) has argued that the Achaemenid kings adopted personal forms of crown, though Edith Porada has



not accepted his identifications of those attributed to Darius I (q.v.; 521-486 b.c.e.) and Xerxes I (486-65). The Achaemenid crenellated crowns did change in form with the passage of time (Figure 13), but they cannot strictly be considered “personal crowns,” for the crown prince is generally represented wearing the same type as his father; furthermore, at Persepolis the crenellated crown is also worn by other members of the court (Roaf, pp. 131-33). The interpretation of the “archer” on Achaemenid coins and seals, most frequently shown wearing a crenellated crown, remains controversial (see [daric](#)), but it seems clear that the image is a representation not of the ruler himself but of some kind of royal hero (Calmeyer, 1989). It is not known whether the king’s crown was of a special color or material, possibly gold. The crowns worn by lower-ranking persons were often less tall, but apparently all were ornamented (Tilia, pp. 53-66).

From the reports of the ancient Greeks it appears that the tiara was a soft headdress. They identified one variant with their eastern neighbors and labeled it the “Phrygian cap,” though it was actually worn by nearly all Iranian tribes, from the Cappadocians (OPers. Katpatuka) in the west to the Sakas (OPers. Sakā) in the northeast. This and other variants can be observed in the reliefs at Persepolis. All seem to have been made of soft material with long flaps over the ears and the neck, but the form of the top varies (Figure 14). The famous “upright (*orthē*) tiara” was worn by the king (*EIr.* V, p. 725 fig. 53). Members of the Median upper class wore high, crested tiaras.

The diadem, a band wrapped around the head, could be worn with either the crenellated crown or the tiara. The Neo-Assyrian kings (9th-7th centuries b.c.e.) had worn the diadem in combination with a tall hat resembling the fez and the crown princes the diadem alone; the Achaemenids may have borrowed this practice from them. When Darius I prayed to Apollo (Polyaenus, 7.12) he put aside his tiara and sandals and wore only the diadem; the privilege of wearing the diadem was also granted to the king’s closest advisers, and the members of the seven aristocratic families (see [courts and courtiers i](#)) were allowed to wear it knotted on the forehead. Of all the features of the Persian royal crown Alexander adopted only the diadem, perhaps under Babylonian influence (Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.22); it became the primary symbol of royalty for all rulers of the Hellenistic period, including the Arsacids (see ii, below). The crenellated crown, together with the old Persian robe, seems to have remained in use as part of the outfit of priests in Phoenicia.



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