



## CROWN PRINCE

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**CROWN PRINCE**, the officially recognized heir apparent to the throne. The position of crown prince was attested in the Median and early Achaemenid periods (Herodotus, 1.74: Astyages, 1.208: Cambyses II), when kingship was becoming institutionalized, under the influence of Mesopotamian, Urartian, and Elamite traditions. The Avestan term *vīsō puθra* (*AirWb.*, cols. 1455-56) “son of the clan” was adopted to denote “prince royal,” translated by Aramaic BR BYT’ (Bailey, p. 953; Schaeder, pp. 740-43); ultimately, through a *vṛddhi* adjective and duplication of *puθra* > *pus*, the term *pus ī vāspuhr* “crown prince” evolved (*Sūr saxvan*, par. 10; Tavadia, pp. 42-43, 63-64; for linguistic details, see Schaeder, pp. 744-49; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 100 n. 1; Benveniste, pp. 23-26; Eilers; Henning; Gershevitch, p. 209; Hinz, 1975, pp. 265, 268). By the early Achaemenid period Persian law required a king embarking on a military campaign to appoint his heir (Herodotus, 7.2). In later traditions the main virtues of a sovereign included “selection of an heir preferred by the people, rather than by his personal desire” ([Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, tr. Nawbakht, p. 216).

Normally the appointment was conditioned upon descent, physical excellence, and leadership qualities. Only when the mother of a prince was a princess or a lady of noble birth did he have a legitimate claim to succeed to the throne (Herodotus, 7.2-4; Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.120E; Procopius 1.11.5, 1.21.22). When there were several legitimate princes either the law of primogeniture was applied, or the son of the noblest queen was preferred. The former principle was observed, for example, when Artaxerxes, the older brother, was preferred



to his brother **Cyrus the Younger** (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.1.1-4) and the Sasanian Hormozd III to Pērōz (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 114 n. 2, 115). Kāvūs, the oldest son of Kavād (Qobād) I (488-96, 493-531), thus naturally expected to succeed his father (see below); in addition, the Persian magnates elected Šērōē and rejected the nomination by Kōsrow II Parvēz (590-628) of a younger son, Mardānšāh (Baḷ'amī, ed. Bahār, p. 1154). On the other hand, Xerxes I (486-65 b.c.e.) was the fourth son of Darius the Great (521-486 b.c.e.) but the first son of his mother, **Atossa**, daughter of **Cyrus the Great** (Herodotus 7.2-4). In the Sasanian period Kōsrow Anōšīravān, whose mother was a sister of Spahbaḍ Bōē (Aspebedes; Procopius 1.11.5), succeeded his father (see Hinz, 1969, p. 124, for the hypothesis of a similar case for Hormozd-Ardašīr, son of Šāpūr I [240-70]). Nomination was not restricted to the son of a sovereign; occasionally an able brother, even an uncle, was designated as successor to the ruler.

Physical perfection and beauty were proverbial traits of a popular prince (e.g., Persian songs on the beauty of Cyrus son of Cambyses; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1). Xerxes surpassed all his men in “beauty and stature” (Herodotus, 7.187). The Sasanian “Qobād was very handsome, and whoever beheld him recognized him as a prince” (Baḷ'amī, ed. Bahār, p. 964). As a result, one way of depriving a prince of the succession was to disfigure him (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 260). Because Yazdagerd III (632-51) lost the Sasanian empire, he was subsequently denigrated, called the son of a lowly black maid, and said to have had a deformed hip (Baḷ'amī, ed. Bahār, pp. 1147-50; cf. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 359 n. 3).

Finally, the crown prince was expected to be an accomplished leader, responsible, generous, just, respectful of the law, and well-mannered, as well as faithful to his pledges and trained in the arts of war, banqueting, and statecraft (Plutarch, *Artoxerxes* 2; Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.21-22, apud Clemen, p. 22; Nicolaus Damascenus, apud Clemen, p. 30; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1-12; idem, *Anabasis* 1.9; *Nehāyat al-arab*, p. 227; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 416-17). Persian princes were educated by four “royal tutors” from their fourteenth year; one of these tutors was a magus, who “taught them Zoroaster’s doctrine, as well as the duties of rulers” (Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.21-22, apud Clemen, p. 22). “No one can ascend the Persian throne unless he has first studied the teaching and doctrine of the Magi” (Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.4.90, apud Clemen, p. 30 ; cf. Philo of Alexandria, *De Specialibus Legibus* 3.18, apud Clemen, p. 37). Like other princes (cf. Lukonin, pp. 702-03), the heir to the throne was often tutored



by a great magnate (e.g., Pērōz by Rahām, Bahrām V by Monder, Ardašīr III by Meh-Ādargošasp; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 290, 274; Widengren, pp. 69-82; cf. Garsoīan, p. 521). The classic instance is the bringing up of Sīavoš by Rostam, who took him to Zābolestān and “instructed the youth in riding, archery, the use of lasso, stirrups, reins, and other gear; to hold his court, his feasts, and drinking-bouts; to follow game with falcon, hawk, and cheetah; to judge in causes, and to rule the kingdom, make speeches, combat, and lead forth a host” (*Šāh-nāma* [Moscow], III, pp. 10-11; tr., II, p. 196).

The crown prince ranked second only to the reigning monarch. Beside the king he alone was allowed to wear a ruler’s headgear (Plutarch, *Artoxerxes* 26) and other regalia (Schmidt, III, p. 163). His birthday was celebrated throughout the empire (Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.21C), and occasionally he was even accorded royal titles and regarded as “joint ruler” (e.g., Cambyses II [529-22 b.c.e.], Xerxes, and Šāpūr I [240-70 c.e.]; Calmeyer; Shahbazi, p. 11). Normally he was appointed to govern a major province, in order to gain experience in statecraft (*Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, p. 34; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 102-03). His jurisdiction was, however, restricted by tradition and law. He was required to show total obedience to his sovereign father and never to revoke his orders, attempt to rival him in diplomacy and politics, or pronounce judgment on legality or legal principles ([Pseudo] Jāḥeẓ, tr. Nawbakht, pp. 160-64, where *ebn al-malek* refers not to any prince but to the heir to the throne; cf. *Nehāyat al-arab*, p. 227). Departure from Iranian norms could cost him the crown; for example, Vonones’ Roman education made him unacceptable to the Parthian magnates (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.2-4), and Hormoz, son of the Sasanian Hormoz II (302-09 c.e.), was considered ineligible by the Sasanian nobility because of his excessive philhellenism (Zosimus, 2.27). The Persian magnates countered Bahrain V’s claim to the succession with the argument that “he has never administered a province, from which one might infer how he would conduct affairs. Besides, his education is not Persian but Arabic; he even looks like an Arab, because he has been brought up among the people” (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 91).

In practice, the king designated his heir with the approval of kinsmen, magnates, and priests, who constituted a supreme council of state (for the Parthian period, see Strabo, *Geography* 11.9.3; for Sasanian instances, see *Nāma-ye Tansar*, pp. 38-39; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 20, 259, 262-64; for a detailed discussion, see Widengren, pp. 102-43). When Kavād consulted his trusted adviser Mehbōd about the appointment of his youngest son, Kōsrow,



as crown prince, Mehbōd asked him to write his wish in his testament and be “confident that the Persians would never dare to disregard it.” Kavāḍ did so (Procopius, 1.21.17-19; cf. *Nehāyat al-arab*, p. 227; for details of written testaments see *Nāma-ye Tansar*, pp. 38-39; cf. pp. 61-62 for Ardašīr’s testament; Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 146-47; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 64-65, 263, 353, 361-62); when, after his death, Kāvūs claimed the succession, “certain by reason of the law [of primogeniture],” Mehbōd argued that “no one ought to assume the royal power by his own initiative, but by vote of the Persian notables.” Kāvūs agreed to abide by their decision, but when they convened Mehbōd read Kavāḍ’s testament, “and all, calling to mind the virtue of Cabades [Kavāḍ] straightway declared Chosroes [Kosrow] King of the Persians” (Procopius, 1.20.20-22). The power of such a supreme council was so great that, beside rejecting an emperor’s nominee as his successor, it could sometimes even depose and kill the ruler himself (Widengren, pp. 108-15).

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