



DĒNAG

DĒNAG (< Mid. Pers. *dēn*, q.v.), name of several Sasanian queens; it was not feminine by derivation but was clearly reserved for feminine prosopography (Schmitt, p. 269). In the Middle Persian inscription ŠKZ (l. 25; Back, p. 339) the name designated the mother of King Bābak (Mid. Pers. Pābag) and grandmother of the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardašīr I (q.v.; 224-40 C.E.).

Dēnag was also the name of one of Bābak's daughters (ŠKZ, l. 29; Back, p. 350), born about 140 (Lukonin, 1969, p. 32); she was both Ardašīr's sister and his wife, in conformity with the Zoroastrian law of consanguineous marriage so favored by the Sasanians. She was granted the title "queen of queens" (*bānbišnān bānbišn*; see [BĀNBIŠN](#)) and is believed to be represented on the far right of the investiture relief of Ardašīr at Naqš-e Rājab (Hinz, p. 126). This queen must also have been the mother of Šāpūr I (240-70) and would have lost her title "queen of queens" after the death of her husband (Henning, p. 44). The inscription on an oft-published amethyst seal in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (Borisov and Lukonin, no. 979) could refer to her (Henning, p. 44 n. 3), rather than to the wife of Yazdegerd II (438-57), as has often been claimed (Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 84; Christensen, *Iran. Sass.*, p. 289). It reads *dynky ZY MLKT'n MLKT' mħysty PWN tny š'pstn* "Dēnag queen of queens, the principal (or oldest?) in the harem" (lit., "the body of eunuchs"; for a different reading, see de Blois, p. 36). Following W. B. Henning ("Mitteliranisch," p. 45), most scholars (with the exception of Lukonin, 1960) have accepted attribution of this seal to the queen's personal eunuch (cf. Shaked, p. 223; Khurshudyan, p.



98), but, as the representation on it is that of a woman (cf. Gignoux and Gyselen, 1989, p. 882) and as Dēnag is nowhere attested as a masculine name, this attribution seems unacceptable.

A third woman with the name Dēnag was queen of Mesene (ŠKZ, l. 30; Back, p. 355), probably the wife of Šāpūr, king of Mesene and a son of Šāpūr I. She was granted the title Dastgerd-Šābuhr (Gignoux, no. 309; see [DASTGERD](#)), doubtless by her husband, rather than by the Sasanian king of kings. She may have ruled Mesene after her husband's death in about 260 (Lukonin, 1969, p. 42). She is believed to have had many children, of whom seven are known (Lukonin, 1969, p. 197 table), if in fact they were all born to her.

According to the 10th-century author Ṭabarī (II, p. 872; cf. Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 84), the wife of Yazdagerd II was also called Dēnag; she reigned at Ctesiphon (q.v.) during the war between her two sons, Ohrmazd III (457-59) and Pērōz (459-84; cf. Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 289).

The name is also attested in Coptic Manichean in the form Dinak, the name of a probably female catechumen (Polotsky, p. 59).

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