



ESFANDĪĀR (CLAN)

ESFANDĪĀR, one of the seven great clans of Parthian and Sasanian times. Ṭabarī attributed the establishment of these clans to the Kayanian king Goštāsp (q.v.) and applied the epithet *al-fahlavī* (Parthian) to three of them: Kāren with its seat in Māh Nehāvand, Sūrēn in Seistan, and Esfandīār in Ray. The last traced its lineage to Esfandīār (q.v.) son of Goštāsp. Nöldeke suggested that, as Ṭabarī did not name Mehrān, one of the seven, with its seat in Ray, it could be identical with Esfandīār (pp. 139, 439 n. 3). Mehr-Narsē, the powerful grand vizier of Yazdegerd I, Bahrām V, and Yazdegerd II, well-known for having sponsored construction of a number of fire temples and palaces, belonged to the clan of Esfandīār. Among other outstanding members were Mehr-Narsē's sons Zarvānd(ād), chief religious teacher (*hērbadān hērbad*) under Bahrām V; Māhgošnaš, in charge of finances (also a *wāstaryōšān-sālār*, heading the estate of the farmers and toilers) under Bahrām V; and Kārdār, military commander (*arteštārān-sālār*) under the same king Beštām and Bendōy (q.v.), maternal uncles of Ƙosrow II Parvēz, who dethroned Hormazd IV and were in the end discarded by Ƙosrow II and Šāhīn, the super-satrap (*pādōspān*) of the western provinces and the general who conquered Egypt and Nubia and sent the keys of Alexandria to Ƙosrow II, belonged to this family. Some members of the clan, including Beštām and Bendōy, were also said to belong to the family of Sepāhbad, another great house of the Sasanian period; the confusion may have been caused as a result of intermarriages.



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Ṭabarī, I, p. 683, 868-69, 1002-24. Theophylactus Simocatta, 4.3.5.