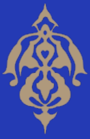

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FĀRS II. HISTORY IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD

FĀRS

ii. History in the Pre-Islamic Period

From the "Neolithic Revolution" to the end of Elam. The history of early pre-Islamic Fārs is most closely interwoven with that of its eastern and western neighbors. Agrarian settlements had been established (by immigrants?) in the Muški phase in the Kor basin, a widely and well researched area, before 5,500 B.C.E. The settlements utilized the river and the water springs along the periphery of the valley for irrigation purposes, beginning at the latest by the 5th millennium. The first ascertainable contacts between Susiana and Fārs took place in the Bākūn phase around 4000 B.C.E. at the height of population growth (e.g., compare the Ibex figure on the ceramics of Susa I and the Tall-e Bākūn).

Soon after Susa II was integrated into the cultural domain of early Sumer around 3,700 B.C.E., many of the village settlements of the Bāneš period in Fārs were abandoned. The negative consequences of intensive agriculture, such as raised water table, salinization, reduction of productivity, may have prompted its inhabitants to shift to nomadic pastoralism for their subsistence. Fārs seems to have been affected only marginally by the Sumerian expansion in the second half of the 4th millennium during the late Uruk and the Susa II periods,

when colonists migrated as far as western central Iran for exchange purposes (Sumner, 1986a). Only after the late Uruk culture in Susiana and along with it the close relation with Mesopotamia had come to a halt, both regions, Susiana and Fārs, drew closely together again in the so-called proto-Elamite Period (see ELAM). An urban center developed at the Tall-e Malīān of today in the plain of Bayżā, about 450 km southeast of Susa, which may already have been called Anshan (q.v.; see Hansman), and which dominated its immediate environment and distinguished itself economically through the emergence of a significant tradition of crafts, utilizing indigenous and imported materials. At the beginning of the 3rd millennium the city had already reached a size which covered about 50 ha with evidence of an impressive defensive wall which circumscribed an area of about 200 ha (Carter and Stolper, pp. 123-36; Sumner 1986a; Nicholas). The alliance between Anshan/Anzan and Susa constituted the foundation for the later Elamite empire and proto-Elamite culture expanded far to the north and east. Proto-Elamite textual documents, seals, and ceramics have been found in Tepe Sīalk near Kāšān as well as in Tepe Yaḥyā in Kermān and even in Šahr-e Sūḵta in Sīstān. It may have been the duality of the proto-Elamite culture and the proto-Elamite empire with its dual basis in the low-lying areas of Susiana (present-day Ḵūzestān) and the high-lying Iranian plateau, which led to the disintegration of the empire. The rise of the early dynastic Sumerian city states in the west, however, may have contributed to this development. While Susa became part of their cultural sphere of influence, Anshan and the other settlements in Fārs were abandoned again and their inhabitants returned to their earlier life-style of pastoral nomadism around 2600-2200 B.C.E. In the old Akkadian period, Susiana fell under the dominance of Sargon of Akkad and his successors. One of them, Man-ištušu, praised himself for having defeated Anshan. The same claim is made by Gudea of Lagaš a short time after that (Carter and Stolper; Sumner 1986a).

The Sumerians were expelled from Susa at the time of the indigenous Elamite dynasty of the Šimaški. Anshan recovered again and developed into an important metropolis, covering an inhabited area of about 150 ha with about 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants at the time of the so-called Kaftari period (Sumner, 1989). The precise political status of Anshan in the Elamite empire remains ambiguous, but the sources reflect its conspicuous role in the military, diplomatic, and economic relations of Elam and the states of Mesopotamia. Some time before 1900 B.C.E. the lords of Šimaški seem to have carried the title “King of Anshan and Susa.” Under their successors, who were distinguished by the title *sukkalmah* (grand regent), the connections between

the Susanian lowlands and the plateau of Fārs continued to be cultivated. Rulers founded places of worship, whose bas-reliefs indicate the veneration of a God-couple, Napiriša and his wife, near Kūrāngūn in Mamassanī on the overland routes between Susa and Anshan and near Naqš-e Rostam on the road leading from Anshan to the Iranian plateau (Carter and Stolper).

Little is known about central Fārs in the time between 1600 and 1300 B.C.E. The number of inhabitants of Anshan seems to have decreased to one third and the number of settlements clearly declined. Anshan benefited from Elam's renewed rise to power since the 14th century B.C.E., especially under the rule of Utaš-Napiriša. With the crushing defeat of the Elamites by Nebuchadnezzar I at the end of the 12th century, Anshan, like Susa, was destroyed and only reappeared in the history of the neo-Elamite kingdom of "Anzan and Susa" in contemporary written traditions by the end of the 8th century B.C.E.

From the end of Elam to the end of the Achaemenid empire. How Fārs (OP. Pārsa; Gk. Persis) was able to develop into the center of an empire, whose leading classes were part of a people who spoke an Iranian language and seem to have been ethnically different from the Elamites, is disputed. For a long time it was believed that the Persians appeared toward the end of the 2nd millennium in northwestern Iran and gradually migrated from the areas south of lake Urmia via the present-day Kermānšāh region to Fārs, where they founded a dynasty under Achaemenes (q.v.; OP. Haxāmaniš), shortly before 700 B.C.E., which soon disintegrated into the divided kingdoms of Anshan and Pārsa (for literature, see Stronach). The discovery of Anshan in Fārs, however, gave rise to a different interpretation (de Miroschedji, 1985; Carter; Sumner, 1994), which argues that in the 11th and 10th centuries, that is the period of Elamite weakness, Iranian pastoralists migrated in small groups to Fārs, where they intermingled with the Elamite population. At Assurbanipal's invasion of Susa in 646 B.C.E., Elam at the latest lost control of Fārs, which, probably in the attempt to defend itself against the Assyrian threat, formed itself into the independent kingdom of Anshan under a Persian dynasty (see the Babylonian cylinder of Cyrus and the seal of Cyrus [Cyrus I?]; Hallock, p. 127; and incorporated adjacent smaller dominions like Gisat into its territory [?]). There are no arguments in favor of a concurrent rule of two lines of the Achaemenids. To the contrary, it seems that the Teispids (decendants of Čišpiš/Teispes), the line of Cyrus, and the Achaemenids, the line of Darius, ought to be seen as distinctly separate from each other. The transformation to a sedentary culture of agriculture and husbandry, which has been

corroborated by archeological investigations, was linked to these political develop ments. The temporary dependency of the Persians on the Medians, which has been propounded by Greek tradition (Herodotus, 1.127), is not corroborated in the available indigenous sources.

Cyrus II the Great (q.v.) was able to withstand an attack by the Median king Astyages (q.v.), himself taking the offensive in 550 B.C.E. Following his victory, the royal city Ecbatana (q.v.) fell into the hands of Cyrus who transferred the treasures kept there to Anshan (Grayson, 7, II 1-4). About ten years after the death of Cyrus in 530 B.C.E., when the son of the kingdom's founder, Cambyses II (q.v.) died and Darius I the Great (q.v.), who succeeded to the throne, was daunted by numerous insurrections and separatist movements, the empire was threatened with impending collapse. The way in which Darius managed to master these insurrections, to rally the nobility of Fārs in his support, and to ensure the survival of his dynasty, the Achaemenids, and the throne has genuinely impressed his contemporaries, not least because of his own ideological efforts (monument and inscription of Bīsotūn with copies and translations).

Under the Achaemenids Fārs was the political as well as "ideological" center of the empire. Royal inscriptions assign to its Persian inhabitants the first rank among the empire's peoples. Being a Persian, son of a Persian, and "King in Pārsa," distinguished the great king, while ancestral roots in the region of Pārsa or the relation to the Persian tribes lent prestige to the nobility and to the simple subjects. The principles of this noble Persian descent and the special confidential relationship to the king may complement each other to the benefit of both sides, but occasionally they may also be in competition with each other. Herodotus' history of the end of Intaphernes (Vindafarnah), Darius' ally, and his family (Herodotus, 3.118 f.) and Ctesias' (q.v.) report about the fall of the house of Hydarnes (Vidarna; Jacoby, *Fragmente*, 688, F. 15) show that the ruler was able to decide this kind of conflict to his own favours. Soon after Darius' accession to the throne, all Persian aristocrats, as well as the families of his allies, depended on his favor and patronage. Their privileges, such as the right to intermarry with the royal family, were often undermined, since, instead of marrying the daughters or sons of the conspirators' descendants, the Achaemenids sometimes politically decided to marry members of the Achaemenid clan, or to give those persons the highest rank among the wives of the king (e.g., Darius II marrying his own half-sister Parysiatis; see Jacoby, *Fragments*, 688, F. 25). At the same time loyal nobles

were rewarded with a plethora of prebends, honors, titles, and presents, which made it advisable to seek and associate with the king and bridle one's own ambitions. If the king agreed, even someone who had only one parent of Persian descent could be counted as Persian (Herodotus, 6.41).

Although Fārs was under the rule of the "king of lands/peoples" and its inhabitants paid taxes (witnessed by the Elamite clay tablets), the province did not count among the subdued, tribute-paying regions of the empire. Pasargadae (Elamite Batrakataš), the place of the royal investiture, and Persepolis (OP. Pārsa; cf. XPa 14) the metropolis (Diodorus, 17.14) of the empire lay in this province. The great kings were buried in tombs at Pasargadae (Cyrus II), Naqš-e Rostam (Darius I, Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I., Darius II **?**),and Persepolis (Artaxerxes II and III). Here they provided a iconographical (Root, passim) and inscriptural expression to the specific idea of their rulership by divine favor (*vašnā Auramazdāha*), for the benefit of the subjects (e.g., DB IV 61-67). The welfare of Pārsa, "a good country, with good horses and good men" (DPd 6ff.) was of special importance for the king. If Pārsa, "which was bestowed upon him by Ahura Mazdā" was well and its inhabitants were safe, that was "happiness unbroken" (*šiyātiš axšatā*; DPe 23). It is no longer surprising that many Greeks of Alexander the Great's entourage, who praised the profuse settlements, the population density, and the productivity of the land, thought the campaign of revenge was completed with the capture of Persis. Archeological surveys in the plain of Persepolis (Sumner, 1986b) and the Elamite clay tablets from Persepolis (PFT, PTT; see Koch) confirm this impression of the participants of the campaign of Alexander (Curtius Rufus, 5.4.5-9, 24; cf. Strrabo, 15.3.1; Arrianus, Indica 39.2-4) as well as the king's efforts for the welfare of the country. They also confirm (cf. Sumner, 1986b, p. 30) that in Achaemenid times, Fārs was marked by the coexistence of sedentary small peasants and nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists (see Herodotus, 1.125; Briant, 1996, pp. 28 ff.). Among the region's most important places, which are known through the administrative texts of Persepolis, are Shiraz (Elamite *Tirazziš*/Qaṣr-e Abū Naṣr?), (Elamite) Matezziš (OP. Uvādaičaya/Akkadian Ḫumadēšu/settlement of Persepolis?), and Fasā/Tall-e Żoḥāk (Elamite Bašiyan?; see Wiesehöfer, 1994, pp. 65-66)

By the end of 331 B.C.E., Alexander was able to capture the tenaciously defended "Persian Gates" and in January was able to seize Persepolis. In May of 330, shortly after the Macedonian paid homage to Cyrus at Pasagardae, the palaces and buildings of Xerxes were set on fire. The Greek idea of the

complete destruction of Persepolis through Alexander is of a literary or rather "ideological" nature. The place as the symbol of Persian dominance had to be destroyed in conclusion to the campaign of revenge (Wiesehöfer, 1994).

From Alexander to the end of Parthian rule. Under the rule of Alexander and his successors Persis/Fārs lost its special status as the empire's center. Although it still harbored a specific ideological, economic, and strategic potential, it became, like the remaining provinces, just a part of the empire. Seleucid rule met with indigenous resistance in Persis only initially, if at all. The potentates, who ruled Persis under the hegemony of the Seleucids and who called themselves Frataraka (q.v.) and are known to us mostly through their coins, emphasized their close connection to the Achaemenids through the adoption of certain ceremonials and symbols, but evidently did not perceive themselves as Achaemenids or great kings. Their loyalty toward the Seleucids, which found expression also in their iconography, was only relinquished when the deterioration of the Macedonian rule in Persia became clearly visible (Wiesehöfer, 1996b). When the stronger Parthians appeared in Mesopotamia, the Frataraka temporarily supported the Seleucids again. Later the Parthians, however, saw no problem in keeping natives in the position of partially autonomous kings. This system was supported by the fact that these Persian dynasties never insisted on any claims beyond their own region. It is thus not surprising that even the later Sasanians counted the era of these kings to the time of the petty kings, but beyond that were unable to adopt real historical memories of the Achaemenids. Even though the Frataraka behaved like devout Zoroastrians (see Wiesehöfer, 1994, p. 75; idem, 1996, pp. 109-110), they were hardly representatives of a religious-nationalist party or even regal priests (Magians). In Seleucid times their function seems to have been primarily political, administrative, and military in nature. As keepers and guardians of traditions, educators of the princes, and administrators of the cults the Magians probably were charged with tasks similar to those they held under the Achaemenids (see, e.g., Herodotus, 1.132; Jacoby, *Fragmente*, 688, F. 13). Later religious traditions show that the negative memories of the Greeks (or Alexander only) were harbored by the Zoroastrian priesthood, but this legacy has not gained political weight in Hellenistic times. The long period of the unchallenged Seleucid rule in Persis/Fārs (see FRATARAKĀ) proves not only that this province was not a "stronghold of resistance against Hellenism" but shows that the foreign rulers were familiar with the particular traditions of this region. It is almost impossible to determine precisely to what extent Fārs of the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E. was Hellenized. Results of

archeological research seem to indicate a rather inconsequential presence of Greek-Macedonian influences, but in the face of the lack of literary evidence the example of Antiocheia-in-Persis (see Wiesehöfer, 1994, s.v.) should caution against any rash conclusions. As the Molon revolt in 222 B.C.E. proves, the Median and Persian units formed the backbone of the army in this region under Seleucid rule as well. The function of Persis as link between southeastern Persia and Susiana/Ḵūzestān as well as starting point for campaigns in the Persian Gulf precludes any possible disinterest of the Seleucids in the region (Wiesehöfer 1994; 1996b).

The fact that only little archeological evidence of Parthian presence in Persis exists, that Parthian practice has been imitated on the impressions of coins issued by their vassal rulers (Alram, 1987), and that conflicts between Persians and Parthians until the 3rd century C.E. are not mentioned by any of the existing traditions (with one exception which, in historiographical terms, is not unproblematic; *Chronicle of Arbela*, pp. 22 f.), can be explained as the result of a sagacious and successful Parthian policy, which was respectful of indigenous traditions. The substitution during that time of the mythical Kayanid traditions of eastern Iran for the historical, indigenous southwestern Iranian traditions of kingship also speaks for this assumption (Wiesehöfer, forthcoming).

Under the Sasanians. The Middle Persian-Parthian inscription of Šāpūr I at Bīšāpūr (q.v.) sets the beginning of the Sasanian era at 205/6 C.E. This indicates that the beginning of Sasanian political aspirations stood in close relation with the Parthian-Roman confrontations in Severian times on the one hand, and the dispute over the throne between the brothers Vologases (Balāš) VI and Artabanus (Ardavān) IV on the other hand. One ought to be, however, cautious in perceiving these Sasanian ambitions as a symptom of political disintegration in the late Parthian empire. The concurrent successes of Artabanus against Rome (Dio Cassius, 78.26.3 ff.) and the long phase of consolidation of the early Sasanian empire rather indicate that the Parthians (and the Sasanians themselves?) initially perceived the events in Fārs as regionally confined confrontations over the vassal kingship of Persis, and that the fatal outcome of the battle of Hormozjān only in retrospect appears as inevitable.

The early Sasanians considered themselves as successors to rulers who, like themselves, came from Fārs and ruled over a large empire. They built impressive palaces and laid out important residences. They thought of their

homeland as a place of historic, religious, and political significance and honored the "holy places" and remains of their "ancestors" which were situated there (Wiesehöfer, 1996

a, pp. 165 ff.). At the same time, unlike the Achaemenids, they emphasized the common Iranian rather than the Persian foundations of their rule (Gnoli, 1989) and for a long time followed the Parthian model, which was only later replaced by Sasanian traditions. This was the case even though Fārs was mentioned at the top of the list of the empire's provinces enumerated by Šāpūr I in his inscription at Kaʿba-ye Zardošt (ŠKZ). The new elements of early Sasanian politics lay in the renewal of the hostile position against Rome, in the stronger emphasis on the "Iranian" character of kingship and religion, as well as in the clearer reference to Zoroastrian gods (Wiesehöfer, 1996a, pp. 165 ff.). In the context of domestic politics, the loyal Parthian clans guaranteed continuity and stability, but were now complemented by those of Fārs, and kingship was reserved for the house of Sāsān from this province. The special significance of Fārs for the history of Zoroastrianism, which was already emphasized by the high priest Kirdēr in his inscription at Sar Mašhad (KSM 31), is confirmed by modern archeological as well as linguistic and historical literary research: Fārs was to a very large extent Zoroastrian (Huff; Boucharlat), as burial practices and the fact that the Avesta was canonized on the basis of the tradition of Fārs (Hoffmann and Narten; Hintze) indicate.

Fārs, before the reforms of Ḵosrow I Anošīravān, seems to have been divided into numerous districts for administrative purposes. These small precincts were replaced by larger entities in later times, of which Ardašīr Xwarrah (Ardašīr Ḵorra), Weh Šābūhr (Bīšāpūr), Dārāb, Estaḵr, Nēw Dārāb, and Weh-az-Amid Kawād (Arrajān, qq.v.) are known by name (Gyselen). Fārs was also among those provinces of the empire in which Šāpūr I settled people deported from the Roman empire (ŠKZ, Parthian 15 ff., Greek 34-36; Chronicle of Seʿert, pp. 220-23). Christianity was deeply rooted in Fārs in this way (Chaumont, 1988, pp. 54 ff.; Schwaigert, 1989, pp. 18 ff.) and ultimately led to the establishment of dioceses, whose representatives appear in the records of the synods of the Nestorian bishops. In late Sasanian times Rēw-Ardašīr (Rēšahr) was the seat of the metropolitan of Fārs as well as the starting point for Christian maritime contact, reaching all the way to India (Müller). Fārs fell into the hands of Muslim Arabs in 643 after ardent resistance .

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