



## FRATARAKA

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**FRATARAKA** “leader, governor, forerunner” (*fratarā-*; Av. *fratarā-* “fore-, former”; BSogd. *prtr*; cf. OInd. *pratarām*, Gk. *proteros*; Brandenstein and Mayrhofer, p. 119), ancient Persian title.

*In the Achaemenid period.* *Frataraka* was the title of the administrative head of a district or province in Egypt (q.v. i), immediately under the satrap at Memphis. Three *fratarakā* are known by name from Egyptian Aramaic papyri: *rmndyn-* \*Ramnadainā (Porten and Yardeni, I, p. 41; Cowley, no. 20 l. 4), in 420 B.C.E. in the district *tštrs*, to which Elephantine (q.v.) belonged; *wydrng-* \*Vidranga (?; Porten and Yardeni, II, pp. 63, 69; Cowley, nos. 27 l. 4, 30 l. 5, 31 l. 5), from 410 B.C.E. onward in the same district; and *gršpt-* \*Garšapati-, in the district of Memphis in the fifth year of Darius II (419 B.C.E.; Segal, 27:5). The *frataraka* of the southern province of Egypt was superior to the commander of the garrison (*rab ḥaylā*) of Syene in both military and administrative matters (Porten and Yardeni, II, pp. 69, 73; Cowley, nos. 30 l. 5ff., 31 l. 5ff.); whether he or the *rab ḥaylā* or both were called *sgn* (*segan*) in judicial contexts remains a matter of debate.

*In the Seleucid and Parthian periods.* The dynasts of Fārs in the 2nd century B.C.E. used the title in the formula *X, prtrk' ZY 'LHY'* (*X, frataraka* of the gods) in the Aramaic legends on their coins (read variously as *fratakara*, *fratadāra*, *fratakāra*). The divine or semi-divine beings they served cannot be identified with certainty, as *'LHY'* may be read in Middle Persian as both *yazdān* (deities, i.e., Ahura Mazdā and perhaps other Persian gods) and *bayān* (godlike [kings], i.e., Achaemenids or Seleucids).



The *fratarakā bgdt* (Baydād), *rthštry* (Ardaxšīr I), *whwbrz* (Vahbarz, mentioned as Oborzos in Polyenus 7.40), and *wtprdt* (Vādfradād I) were long considered to have been independent, anti-Seleucid rulers of Persis in the 3rd century B.C.E. It is much more probable, however, that they began as Seleucid representatives in Fārs (cf. Strabo, 15.2.34) just before the end of the 3rd or in the first decades of the 2nd century B.C.E. and that Vahbarz or Vādfradād gained independence around mid-century, when Seleucid power crumbled in southwestern Persia and the Persian Gulf region. On their coins the *fratarakā* iconographically stressed their close ties to the Achaemenid kings but did not claim power outside the borders of Persis: They were not depicted wearing the upright tiara and did not call themselves “great kings.” That the Arsacid Mithridates I (ca. 171-38 B.C.E.) left Persian dynasts in office with the right to mint coins (later with the title *MLK* “king”) is further evidence of their modest claims and of a sub-Seleucid phase of *frataraka* rule. It is more probable that the Arsacids restored conditions existing before Vahbarz than that they granted an entirely new partial autonomy, especially as they were under heavy pressure from the Seleucids, Sakas, and Mesenians between 140 and 126 B.C.E.

As only general political symbols predominate on *frataraka* coins and as dynasts are depicted wearing the “royal” tiara on the first series of Baydād’s coins but subsequently the “loose” tiara of satraps (not magi, as previously thought), the *fratarakā* should no longer be considered priestly dynasts or exponents of religious (and political) resistance to Hellenism. Their seat was presumably at Persepolis, where they sponsored intense building activity both on and near the Achaemenid terrace (cf. the reliefs of a *frataraka* and perhaps his spouse in a building northwest of the terrace).

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