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INVESTITURE

INVESTITURE of kings, the ceremonies and symbolic actions used to assert the assumption of rulership and to elicit affirmation of it. Covered here is investiture under the pre-Islamic dynasties.

i. *Achaemenid period*.

ii. *Parthian period*.

iii. *Sasanian period*.

i. ACHAEMENID PERIOD

Investiture of the early Persian kings. Although scarce, Near Eastern evidence suggests that the early Persian kings, Cyrus II the Great and Cambyses II (qq.v.), celebrated an official investiture in Babylon, in which the gods sanctioned the king's accession to the throne. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle [NCh.], Cyrus addressed the Babylonians as their new king and nominated his officials (NCh. 7, col. III:19-20; Pritchard, 1969) during his installation as king of Babylon on 29 October 539. The Cyrus Cylinder adds that Cyrus entered the city with the divine support of Marduk and was publicly acclaimed by the people: "All the people of Babylon, the whole land of Sumer and Akkad, princes and governors knelt before him, kissed his feet, rejoiced at his kingship" (Cyrus Cylinder 1.18; Pritchard, 1969). Cyrus also adapted the Persian royal title of "king of Anshan," which itself was derived from the

Elamite royal title, to "king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters [of the world]" (Cyrus Cylinder 11.20-21). When Cyrus's son Cambyses was installed as regent of Babylon in a similar ceremony, he sought the acceptance of the god Nabu (NCh. 7, col. III:24-28; Kuhrt, 1988, p. 122).

Cyrus's investiture as king of Babylon probably followed Babylonian practices, but it is also reminiscent of the procedures for Assyrian royal investiture, during which the kingship was bestowed on the king by the supreme god. The new king received the blessing of the other gods in the presence of officials and courtiers, who congratulated him (Kuhrt, 1995, p. 604). It may therefore be inferred that the early Persian kings modeled their investiture on Mesopotamian precedents. Due to the Persians' political and cultural affinity with Elam and Media, it could also be surmised (though no more) that they incorporated elements of investiture of the Elamite and Median kings (Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1983, p. 150).

Prior to the royal investiture, which officially marked the commencement of the king's reign, the heir designate had to proclaim an official mourning period and to oversee the funerary rites for the deceased king. According to Near Eastern documents, the mourning period for the king, as well as for members of the royal family, lasted for 40 days and was observed by the people across the empire, a custom which seems to have been followed by the Persians (NCh. 7, col. III:23). On the order of the king-to-be, the body of the deceased king was returned to Persia for burial. Thus, according to Ctesias, Cambyses II entrusted Bagapates to return Cyrus's body to Persis in 530 B.C.E.; and in 522 B.C.E. Izabates returned Cambyses' body (Ctesias; Jacoby, *Fragmente* 688 F13), presum-ably on the order of Bardiya/Gaumata. Cambyses' final resting place is unknown, although he himself may have intended to be buried in a tomb near Persepolis which was to be modeled on Cyrus's tomb (Kleiss, 1996, pp. 135-37).

The investiture of the Achaemenid kings from Darius I. The investiture of the Achaemenid kings was preceded by the proclamation of the designated heir to the throne, who, at this point, took an official throne name and was allowed to wear the *kitaris* (see CROWN i.). (See the audience reliefs of the Apadana at Persepolis [Schmidt, 1953]; inscription XPf par. 4; Herodotus, 7.2.2-3, 9.108.1; Diodorus, 12.64.1; Ctesias, in Jacoby, *Fragmente* 688 F15, F16; Plutarch, *Artoxerxes* 30; Aelian, *Varia histo-ria* 9.42.) We can only assume that the king's announcement of his heir to the throne was made during an official court

ceremony (but cf. Herodotus, 7.2.1). In the case of a succession struggle including the death of the heir designate, the successor wore the *kitaris* and took his throne name at his accession to the throne (Ctesias, *Fragmente* 688 F15). In continuation of the practices of the early Persian kings, it was the first duty of the heir designate to proclaim the mourning period for the deceased king (Polyaenus, 7.7.17; see also Herodotus, 2.1). Other practices included the extinction of the royal fires, which burnt during the entire reign of a king (Diodorus, 17.114.4-5) and the return of the king's body to Persis to be laid to rest in the king's tomb at Naqš-e Rostam/Persepolis (Ctesias, *Fragmente* 688 F15).

The royal investiture was celebrated at the end of the mourning period. The royal fires were re-lit, probably in the royal and satrapal centers across the empire. During the ceremony the king received the divine sanction from the principal god of the Achaemenids, Ahuramazda, who bestowed the kingship upon him: "Ahuramazda who is the greatest of the gods, has created me, has made me king, has given me this kingdom, which is great, which has good horses and good men. . . . Thus it was the desire of Ahuramazda to choose me as his man on this entire earth, he made me king on this earth" (DSf par. 2). The king sacrificed to Ahuramazda and the other gods and held a banquet in celebration (Diodorus, 17.83.7). At his investiture the king will have received the official insignia of kingship, including the royal robe, a special pair of shoes, his crown, the royal staff, and his royal seal (Polyaenus, 7.7.17; Wiesehöfer, 2001, p. 32). Members of the royal court, the Persian nobility, the satraps, and possibly delegations of the lands of the empire witnessed the divine approval of the new king and publicly acknowledged his reign. The king may have used his investiture to confirm or dismiss individuals in high office (Diodorus, 11.71.1), to confirm or invalidate treaties (Herodotus, 7.151-52), and to bestow gifts on the Persian nobility and loyal subjects.

The investiture seems to have been celebrated in Pasargadae (q.v.) rather than in the Achaemenid royal center, Persepolis. Undoubtedly, the investiture of Darius I took place there, and Plutarch (*Artaxerxes* 3.1-2), probably following either Deinon or Ctesias, seems to confirm that Pasargadae remained the ceremonial place of investiture of the Achaemenid kings: "A little while after the death of Darius (II) the new king made an expedition to Pasargadae, that he might receive the royal initiation at the hands of the Persian priests. Here there is a temple of a warlike goddess whom one might conjecture to be Athena. Into this sanctuary the candidate for initiation must pass, and after

laying aside his own proper robe, must put on that which Cyrus the Elder used to wear before he became king; then he must eat a cake of figs, chew some terebinth, and drink a cup of sour milk."

Plutarch may be describing here a part of the investiture ceremonies, during which the Achaemenids paid their respects to the founder of the empire, emphasized the legitimacy of their succession (Stronach, 1997, p. 49), and expressed the historical continuity of their kingship. The reference to Cyrus's clothes (worn before he adopted the Median royal robe[?]; cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 2.4.1, 8.1.40-41, 8.8.15; Herodotus, 1.135; Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1983, p. 148) and the foodstuffs, resembling the staple diet of nomadic pastoralists (see Sancisi-Weerdenberg, 1995, pp. 287-89), may have been symbolic reminders of the Persians' past. More problematic is the reference to an Iranian goddess of war. She has been identified with Anahita, whose cult apparently was introduced by Artaxerxes II (see inscriptions A2Sa, A2Sd, A2Ha; Berossus, in Jacoby, *Fragmente* 680 F11; Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1983, p. 149 and n. 24; Frye, 1984, p. 133; Boyce, Chaumont, Bier, 1985, pp. 1004, 1006; Briant, 1991, p. 7). Accordingly, the ceremony in Pasargadae must have been introduced by Artaxerxes II. Yet this interpretation rests on a number of assumptions. Firstly, the identification of Anahita as a 'warlike goddess' of investiture rests on slim evidence of a much later source (*Yašt* 5.34 ff.), which probably conflated attributes of another goddess, Aši, with those of Anahita (Boyce, 1985, p. 1003). Even so, neither goddess is associated with investiture in the Avesta. As far as can be established, Anahita was primarily a goddess of water and fertility in the Achaemenid period (Brosius, 1998). No evidence supports the assumption that the Achaemenids worshipped Anahita as a goddess of war, who, in this capacity, took over from their principal god Ahuramazda as the divinity bestowing the kingship. Against the assertion that Artaxerxes II introduced the cults of Anahita and Mithra, it also must be emphasized that his predecessors already referred to "the other gods" besides Ahuramazda and that the existence of a Persian goddess and a divinity named Mithra (Gk. Mitra) were already known to Herodotus (1.131-32), even if he confused their names. There is no reason to doubt that throughout Achaemenid rule Ahuramazda was the supreme god of the Achaemenids who bestowed the kingship (inscriptions A2Hc, A3Pa).

Secondly, the idea that the Achaemenids built temples for their gods is contrary to Persian religious practice, according to which rites were performed in open spaces and before fire altars; no archeological evidence

exists to corroborate Plutarch's claim of a temple in Pasargadae (cf. Boucharlat, 2001a; Boucharlat, 1984, p. 133). Rather, the two stone structures of the sacred precinct confirm that the Persians erected fire altars alongside stepped platforms (Fig. 1; Stronach, 1978, p. 141). From these the king performed the religious rites, as is illustrated in the tomb reliefs of Naqš-e Rostam.

Figure 1. The sacred precinct at Pasargadae.

If Plutarch referred to the single chamber tower, the Zendān-e Solaymān, as a temple, this, too, is erroneous (Boucharlat, 1984, p. 125). Sancisi-Weerdenburg's suggestion that the chamber housed paraphernalia for the investiture is a very plausible one, but ultimately the function of this building remains unclear (Fig. 2; cf. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1983, pp. 145-46 and n. 5). Thus Plutarch's idea of the royal investiture being celebrated in a temple of a goddess of investiture has to be dismissed. He fails to recognize Ahuramazda's preeminent position in the Achaemenid pantheon, and his identification of a Persian temple at best must be dismissed as an erroneous Greek interpretation of Persian architecture. Above all, the assumption that the Achaemenid kings wanted to be associated with war and belligerence is in stark contrast to the royal ideology of a 'Persian Peace'. As far as the evidence allows us to argue, from the reign of Darius I onwards the Achaemenid kings celebrated their royal investiture in Pasargadae to commemorate the founder of the empire and to demonstrate the historical continuity of the dynasty as well as the legitimate succession of the king. As the supreme deity, Ahuramazda bestowed the kingship of the Achaemenid king, who accordingly honored the god during his investiture.

Figure 2. The Zendān-e Solaymān at Pasargadae.

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ii. THE PARTHIAN PERIOD

In the Parthian period there is evidence for kings being invested by deities and local kings being invested by the king of kings. The investiture is marked by the presentation of an object such as a diadem, a palm frond, a ring and possibly a belt. The evidence for royal investiture comes from coins, rock reliefs, stelae, and textual sources including the Avesta and classical authors.

On coins, the earliest evidence for an investiture scene involving a ruler and a deity dates to the second half of the first century B.C.E. Pacorus I (ca. 39 B.C.E.) has a winged goddess behind his head, who holds a diadem which is tied around a spiked/radiate crown (Wroth, 1903, pl.18, no.12; Sellwood, 1980, 49.1). Drachms of his brother and successor Phraates IV (ca. 38-2 B.C.E.) depict for the first time a bird with a diadem or ring in its beak behind the king’s head on the obverse (Sellwood, 1980, 52.14, 53.6, 54.7). The reverse of his tetradrachms show him in the presence of different deities, who offer him symbols of kingship. Most often, a standing goddess, holding a *cornucopia* and resembling a Hellenistic Tyche presents a diadem (Sellwood, 1980, 50.1) or a palm frond (Sellwood, 1980, 51.5). Sometimes she kneels in front of the seated king and clasps his hand (the *dexiosis* gesture; Sellwood, 1980, 53.1). An Athena-type deity wearing a helmet also offers the king a diadem (Sellwood, 1980, 52.3), as does a tiny winged Nike who sits on the palm of the king’s right hand (Sellwood, 1980, 54.6). The divine investiture of Phraataces (ca. 2 B.C.E.-4 C.E.), the son of Phraates IV, is symbolized on both drachms and tetradrachms by the appearance of a winged goddess on either side of his head (Sellwood, 1980, 57.3, 57.13). Each deity holds in her right hand a diadem. His consort and mother, the Roman slave Musa, who is sometimes shown on the reverse of his coins, only receives divine investiture from one deity. On these tetradrachms a

winged figure holds a diadem above the queen's forehead (Sellwood, 1980, 58.6).

By this time a striking resemblance had developed between the royal bust on the obverse and the seated male figure being invested by a deity on the reverse, showing that they are clearly the same person. This is particularly noticeable on coins of the late first to second centuries C.E. (Sellwood, 1980, 72.1, 79.17).

A tetradrachm of Artabanus II (ca. C.E. 10-38) shows that the enthroned king on the reverse is being invested twice: once by a standing female figure who offers him a palm frond and then by a kneeling man who holds a diadem (Sellwood, 1980, 62.1). Artabanus III (ca. C.E. 80-90) receives an untied band, a diadem or belt, as a symbol of kingship from a goddess (Sellwood, 1980, 74.2), and the mounted Pacorus II (C.E. 78-105) again receives his investiture from two figures: a goddess with a diadem and a male figure dressed in the Parthian fashion with an untied belt (?) (Sellwood, 1980, 75.2); both objects were symbols of kingship (Curtis, 2001, pp. 309-10). Towards the end of the Parthian period the royal bird or falcon makes its reappearance as a symbol of royal investiture on bronze coins of Vologases IV (ca. C.E. 147-91; Sellwood, 1980, 84.161).

Despite the Hellenistic-inspired iconography, the deities and divine symbols on Parthian coins have to be understood within an Iranian context. It seems as if we have here representations of Iranian divinites such as Aši, the goddess of Reward and Fortune, and Anāhita, the goddess of Fertility and All Waters. Probably the bird is the Avestan *vārəγna*, the royal eagle and bestower of the God-Given Glory, the *xvarənah* (see FARR[AH]), who is closely associated with Vərəθraγna, the god of Victory (Shahbazi, 1984, pp. 314, 316; 1989: 516). The winged goddess hovering above the king's head holding a diadem or ring as a symbol of kingship, resembling the Hellenistic Nike, could also be a symbol of *xvarənah* (Shahbazi, 1980 p. 131).

On Bactrian coins, the Kushan kings, who were contemporaries of the Parthians, depict a variety of Iranian deities on their coins. These include Orlagno, the god of Victory, a Kushan equivalent to Vərəθraγna. He is shown in royal dress resembling the king and wearing a hat which ends in a bird's head. Another gold coin of Kanishka I shows the king holding a scepter, which has a bird placed at the top. The name Orlagno (Av. Vərəθraγna) is written in Greek letters on the reverse of this coin (Göbl, 1984, pl. 8, 29). Another Iranian

deity identified by name on Kushan coins is Pharro (OPers. and Med. *farnah*/Av. *xvarənah)*. He is shown holding a diadem in his hand (Rosenfield, 1968, p. 97; Tanabe, 1984, p. 35).

The royal eagle, as a symbol of divine investiture, also appears on coins of Persis during the first and second centuries C.E. (Hill, 1922, pls. XXX-XXXI). Sometimes it is placed in the center of the king's crown on the obverse, and other times it appears in a worshipping scene to the right of a temple on the reverse. Occasionally, it is shown on its own on the reverse (Hill, 1922, pl. XXXVIa). The significance of the bird as a symbol of Vərəθraγna and divine kingship continues into the Sasanian period, where feathers and the bird itself appear as divine symbols on the royal crowns of a number of Sasanian kings on coins, rock reliefs, silver plates, and seals (Göbl, 1971, pls. 3, 4, 10, 13; Herrmann, 1977, pp. 100, 106, 112). Eagles are also shown on the scultpure of Hatra in northern Mesopotamia. Here they appear on both the diadems and tiaras of Hatrene kings, as well as on their own (Safar and Mustafa, 1974, pls. 6-8, 12, 14, 136-38).

Representations of investiture scenes on rock reliefs and stelae fall into two main categories:

(1) The investiture of a local king, sometimes in the presence of the king of kings. A local ruler receives or holds a ring of power. Such scenes are known from Sar-e Pol-e Zohāb near Kermanshah, perhaps of the time of Gotarzes II in the first century C.E., or even later (Trümpelmann, 1977, p. 16, pls. 9a, 10). A banquet scene at Tang-e Sarvak in Elymais shows the local ruler, Orodes, reclining on a platform throne supported by mythical birds. He holds a ring in his right hand and is surrounded by figures who carry divine attributes such as a cornucopia, a helmet, and a radiate crown (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann, 1985, pl. 28). A similar banquet scene appears on the rock relief of Kuh-e Tina (Bard-e Bot), also in Elymais. Here a reclining male figure holds a ring in his right hand, and behind him stands a female (?) figure with a stylized cornucopia (?) (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann, 1985, fig. 5). The best example, which can be dated on the basis of the Aramaic inscription to 215 C.E., comes from Susa and shows the investiture of Khwasak, the satrap of Susa, by Artabanus IV (Ghirshman, 1962, p. 56, pl. 70). The king of kings wears his ridged tiara known to us from his coins, and he is seated on a throne supported by winged griffins. He offers a ring to the standing local satrap.

(2) Court scenes or jousting scenes, where a Nike-type deity or a bird appears

behind a human figure, usually the king, and indicates divine protection and royal investiture. A floating, winged Nike-type figure, for example, appears on the rock relief of Mithradates II (ca.123-88 B.C.E.) at Bisotun, and a bird with a diadem in its beak is shown on the eroded jousting relief of Gotarzes II of perhaps 49-50 C.E., also at Bisotun (Herrmann 1977: 53; Vanden Berghe, 1984, fig. 3; Curtis, 2000, p. 25, fig. 7) and on the Hong-e Azhdar rock relief near Izeh/Malamir (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann, 1985, pl. 2). This latter relief is sometimes dated to the reign of Mithradates I and is thought to commemorate his victory over the Elymaian revolt in 140 B.C.E. (Schmitt, 1998, p. 168), but it is more likely that it dates to the end of the first century B.C.E. or even later. It is possible that the scene shows the investiture of a local Elymaian king, perhaps in the first or even second centuries C.E., while the inscription, belongs to an earlier relief of the time of Mithradates II, which has not survived (Curtis, 2000, p. 25).

Among classical sources, Strabo (2.9.3) reports that Parthian kingship was hereditary, but the official appointment of the Parthian king was the task of a council, which consisted of relatives of the king, noblemen, “wise men,” and “magi” or priests. Plutarch (*Crassus* 21.7) writes that the honor of placing the crown on the king’s head belonged to the family of Surena. This is confirmed by Armenian sources, where the Surens, one of the seven important families, had the privilege of crowning the king (Kettenhofen, 1998, p. 329). Evidence for the investiture of local kings by the Parthian king of kings appears in Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.68), who describes how, once the power of Artabanus was restored, Izates, the king of Adiabene, was given permission to wear his tiara upright and to sleep on a golden bed (Rjak, 1998, p. 320). This tiara is likely to have been similar to that worn by the Parthian king of kings, as a coin of Abgarus, a much later king of Adiabene (q.v.) in the second century, shows (Curtis, 2000, pl. 81, n, o).

See also CROWN ii.

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iii. SASANIAN PERIOD

Divine Investiture of the king. That investiture was one of the most significant moments in the life of the Sasanian monarch, as both spiritual and physical legitimation of his rule, is indicated by the fact that those kings who commissioned only a single rock relief, such as Bahrām I (273-76) at Bišāpur, and Narseh (292-303) at Naqš-e Rostam, chose the theme of divine investiture above all others (Herrmann, 1998, p. 46, n. 6). Šāpur I (ca. 240-72) even recorded his investiture twice, once at Naqš-e Rajab and once at Bišāpur.

Such investiture scenes and accompanying inscriptions provide almost the only contemporary internal information we have concerning that particular Sasanian institution. Sasanian monarchs referred to themselves as having divine qualities: in the inscription at Naqš-e Rajab, Šāpur I refers to himself, his father Ardašir, and his grandfather Pāpak as MPers. *bay* “god,” whose

origin is “from the gods” (MPers. *yazdān*xwarrah (divine fortune or glory, see FARR[AH]), and the king himself. *Bay* is usually translated as “Majesty,” and much Sasanian art is concerned with conveying a sense of the majesty of the royal person.

The deity. The Sasanians believed that the *xwarrah*, symbolized by the diadem of kingship, was divinely conferred, thus consecrating each monarch’s rule. The significance of the diadem as the repository of divine blessing is evidenced on the Sasanian inscription at Paikuli, which tells of the punishment of one driven by Ahriman and the *divs* to place the diadem on the head of a false ruler (Skjærvø, tr., pp. 21 f., 29).

The first formal throne address of the newly crowned king began with praise and thanks to Ohrmazd for bestowing kingship (Yarshater, 1983, p. 407). In the rock reliefs and coins, several anthropomorphic divinities are shown handing the diadem to the king, who, as the central positional figure, is distinguished from his subordinates by specific insignia of power, such as the distinctive crown, the style of hair and beard, jewelry, ornaments, and apparel (Loukonine and Ivanov, 1996, p. 26).

On the investiture relief of Ardašir I (ca. 224-40) at Naqš-e Rostam, Ohrmazd, on the right, offers the diadem to the monarch, who is of the same height (Plate I). In this scene, symbolic of both material and spiritual victory, both god and king are depicted on horseback, trampling the heads of their respective opponents. Ohrmazd is identified in the accompanying inscription, as well as by the *barsom* (q.v., a priestly symbol) he holds, and by his mural crown, once worn by Achaemenid rulers and subsequently depicted as the headdress of divinities on the coins of Estaḵr (Shepherd, 1983, p. 1055).

Anāhid and Mithra also appear as investing deities on Sasanian coins and reliefs. They, too, are identifiable by their crowns: Mithra’s is rayed, as on the coinage of Hormizd I (272-73) (Loukonine and Ivanov, 1996, p. 26) and the investiture scene of Ardašir II (379-83) at Ṭāq-e Bostān (Plate IIAbān Yašt (see Choksy, 1989, pp. 131 f.; Herrmann, 1977b, p. 11). Until Šāpur III (383-88), Anāhid is portrayed as investing several Sasanian kings, many of whom imitate her crown (Duchesne-Guillemin, 1962, p. 298; for an alternative identification, see Shahbazi, 1983, pp. 261-63).

Two centuries later, in the investiture scene on the large grotto at Ṭāq-e Bostān, the king, whom most scholars accept as Ḵosrow II (591-628) (cf. Peck,

1969, pp. 102 ff.) is handed two diadems, one from Ohrmazd, on the right, and the other from Anāhid, on the left. This grandiose stone billboard was perhaps intended to re-establish both loyalty to the dynastic goddess and the invincibility of the king. Elsewhere on the same series of reliefs, the diadem representing the *xwarrah* is figuratively shown as a halo around the king's head (cf. Harper, 1978, p. 41).

Ritual. Sources concerning the ceremony and regalia associated with the divine investiture are meager, but it is clear that the Sasanians followed earlier ritual in several aspects. Although Ardašir and Šāpur I apparently crowned themselves—Šāpur is referred to as "placing the great diadem on himself " (Sundermann, 1990, p. 295)—there are also indications that the Parthian practice of being crowned by a member of the Suren family continued for some time (Christensen, *Iran. Sass.*1, 1936, p. 107), and that this role was later assumed by the *mobadān mobad* (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 96).

Following a custom purported to have been established by Jamšid, the mythical king who represented the ideal of Iranian kingship, it was customary for the coronation ceremony to be held on the first Nowruz following the accession of the monarch, although sometimes Mehrgān was preferred (Shahbazi, 1993, p. 278; Christensen, *Iran. Sass.*1, 1936, p. 180).

There appears to have been no fixed place for Sasanian coronation; but, since Anāhid was closely linked with investiture, it is assumed that the Sasanian dynastic temple at Istaḵr was the site of several coronations, such as that of Yazdegird III (Duchesne-Guillemin, 1962, p. 292; for further discussion of the place of coronation, see Chaumont, 1964). It has been suggested, however, that Narseh was proclaimed king of kings at Paikuli (Henning, 1952, pp. 508 f.), and that Ḵosrow I (531-79) was crowned at Šiz or Ganzak (Wikander, 1946, pp. 151-52).

There is also conjecture that there may initially have been two ceremonies; a ritual appointment at the fire temple and an enthronement at the palace (Wieshoefer, 1996, p. 171). Indeed, the reverse of the coins of many Sasanian rulers depicts a divine conferral adjacent to a fire altar, which has been interpreted as the "personal fire" of the king, lit by the monarch at the time of accession to the throne. (cf. the Bišāpur inscription; Sundermann, 1990, p. 296). This was probably on a portable fire altar, similar to those illustrated in the coins (Frye, 1993, p. 238). After the investiture, certain monarchs made a

pilgrimage on foot from Ctesiphon to the Adur Gušnasp fire at Šiz and sent gold and treasure for its upkeep, endowing both land and slaves (Christensen *Iran. Sass.*1, 1936, p. 162 ff.).

The *Letter of Tōsar* provides a vivid description of a Sasanian coronation in the presence of a "thronging multitude." Although apparently a late Sasanian recension of an earlier work, it does seem to include authentic early Sasanian elements (Boyce, 1968, pp. 15, 20), including the involvement of some kind of council in the election of the new monarch, continuing Parthian custom (Wieshöfer, 1996, pp. 170, 288).

The role of the mobad in organizing the investiture seems to reflect later Sasanian practice: "The mobad, together with the herbads and nobles, the illustrious and the pillars of the realm, will go to the assembly of the princes . . . They will take up that prince [whom "the angels" have approved] and seat him on the throne and place the crown on his head" asking him if he accepts the kingship from God" (Boyce, 1968, p. 62).

Crown and diadem. It was the crown, more than any other of the royal regalia, that distinguished the monarch from predecessors and from the other nobles; for it was the crown, encircled by the diadem with ribbon ties, that symbolized the divine blessing of his rule. Each Sasanian monarch had one or more distinctive crowns, which are usually easily identified on the coinage and rock reliefs. Sasanian coins, mostly silver drachms, depict the king and his crown surrounded by the diadem, often in the form of a ring of pearls, representing the *xwarrah*. Apparently, "the right to wear a headband of pearls" was a royal privilege (Langlois, 1869, p. 66).

Many monarchs favored a winged crown, perhaps because in the Avesta and in a later Pahlavi text the *xwarrah* manifests itself as a falcon (cf. *Yt.* 19.35, and the fifth-century *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr*). By the time of Ḵosrow II, the ceremonial winged, diademed crown had developed into such an elaborate and cumbersome headgear that it was too heavy for the king to wear and was suspended from the ceiling of the throne hall at Ctesiphon (Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, pp. 221-22; see also Ettinghausen, 1972, pp. 28 f.).

The beribboned diadem is first found on coinage of the Parthians, and this iconography continued under the Sasanians (Choksy, 1989, p. 128). On two separate investiture reliefs at Naqš-e Rajab, Ohrmazd hands the beribboned diadem to Ardašir I and Šāpur I. Likewise, on his coins Bahrām II receives

beribboned diadems from Anāhid (Choksy, 1989, pp. 126 ff.). It was not just the ring of investiture, but also the ribbons on the crown or, on the reverse of the coins, tied to the fire altar, which are symbolic of the *xwarrah* (Göbl, 1952, p. 61: ribbons representing ruling power are also found in the reliefs as necklace fastenings; tied around the waist; and on the front of the trousers tied to the shoes; see Peck, 1992, p. 747).

Clothing and accouterments. According to Ṭabari, the high priest was in charge of the regalia and royal appurtenances of the later Sasanian monarchs (Noldeke, *Geschichte*, p. 96). The regalia provided at the investiture is depicted on the rock reliefs, silver bowls, and coins which enact the scene. Later, Ḥamza Eṣfahāni, refering to an official Sasanian "coronation book" containing the portraits of Sasanian kings, provides information about the crown, robe, and trousers of each monarch, identifiable by their particular colors (Yarshater, 1983, p. 362). Red was apparently the dominant color of the boots, trousers, and tunics of the Sasanian kings (Manson-Bier, 1983, p. 123).

The earliest Sasanian depictions of monarchs in the various investiture scenes show them wearing variations on traditional Iranian dress, but more elaborately cut and ornamented: a knee-length, belted tunic over loose leggings or trousers tucked into calf-high boots. This apparel, worn by both kings and deities, is first identified on the mid-third-century reliefs of Šāpur I at Dārābgerd and became the standardized representation for the next century (Peck, 1992, pp. 746 f.; see, for instance, the description of Narseh at Naqš-e Rostam, in Sarre and Herzfeld, 1910, p. 85).

Reliefs depicting investiture illustrate the various ornamentations and accouterments associated with royalty. For instance, at Naqš-e Rostam and Firuzābād, Ardašir I wears a beard bound by ring, with a tuft of hair below (Sarre, *Iranische Felsreliefs*, p. 68). This style, found on portraits of Šāpur I (at Dārāb and Bišāpur and, as crown prince, at Salmas) and Bahrām II (at Naqš-e Bahrām; see also Harper, 1981, pl. 2), seems to have been a privilege of the king alone (Hinz, 1969, pp. 146, 127).

Another symbol of royal authority found in early investiture representations is the top cloak, fastened with two circular clasps tied with short ribbons (Ohrmazd on the Ardašir I relief at Naqš-e Rostam; Narseh at the same location; Šāpur at Dārāb). This cloak was initially worn with a broad collar of flat disks or jewels, perhaps a chain of office (Herrmann, 1969, p. 85). In some reliefs, the collar was replaced with a necklace of pearls tied with fluttering

ribbons, which became a prominent royal motif until the end of the dynasty and beyond (see Overlaet et al., 1996, p. 204).

By the fourth century, the single necklace appears to have been insufficient to express the king's majesty, and a chest harness was worn as well (Herrmann, 1977a, p. 136), usually as a halter strapped around the upper torso, as exemplified in the depiction of Ardašir II at Ṭāq-e Bostān (Harper, 1987, p. 588). This chest harness is one of the most important insignia of royalty on the silver plates depicting royal hunters, and is found also on seals, coins, and stucco reliefs (Harper, 1978, pp. 33, 41). The diagonal straps across the chest were often jeweled or beaded, attached by a central boss to a horizontal strap around the chest and tied at the back with two long ribbons ending in jewels or bells (Harper, 1981, pls. 10, 15, 16, 17). Two centuries later, on the investiture relief of Ḵosrow II at Ṭāq-e Bostān, the harness appears on the image of the king in its most elaborate form, decorated "with bands of beads and square gems" (Peck, 1992, p. 749). On this relief can be seen for the first time another symbol of royal or divine status—the necklace with three parallel pendants on the front, worn by both Ohrmazd and the king (Overlaet et al., 1996, pp. 204, 207). This motif appears on the coinage of Ardašir III (ca. 628-30) and his successors, and later in depictions of some of the Omayyad governors of Iran (Jeroussalimskaya, 1993, p. 129).

As the Sasanian dynasty progressed, the clothing of investiture became more and more ornate, probably influenced by eastern fashion. Theophylactus, a Byzantine eyewitness at the investiture of Hormizd IV (579-90), describes his awe upon seeing the king seated on his throne ostentatiously clad in ornately bejeweled attire, including handwoven, gold-decorated trousers and a tiara of gold and jewels, framed with a row of pearls. (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*1, 1936, pp. 398 ff.).

This preoccupation with extravagance in terms of attention to textile patterning and costume detail is evidenced on the later reliefs at Ṭāq-e Bostān. In his investiture scene, Ḵosrow II is shown wearing a fantastic amount of jewelry—both on his person and sewn onto his clothing—and the flower, bird, and animal motifs decorating his apparel are clearly visible (Peck, 1992, p. 751): Ṭa-bari later described Ḵosrow II enthroned behind a curtain, dressed in a tunic of rich material, embroidered in gold thread, and jewel-encrusted leggings (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 367). As well as his sumptuous costume, the king wears long earrings, a large, decorated necklace, jeweled chest harness, belt, sword belt and scabbard (Herrmann, 1977a, p. 136; cf.

Harper, 1981, pl. 33).

The king's attire here contrasts with that of Ohrmazd, who wears the traditional tunic and cloak, and it is clear that, although such ornate apparel was a significant element of the king's public persona, in itself it held no power of authority. Rather, the notion of the king's charismatic majesty was conveyed by the appurtenances symbolizing the *xwarrah*: the crown, with its elaborate ornamentation; the ring of investiture; the fluttering ribbons; the necklace of pearls; and the decorative motifs on the clothing of the king and his courtiers, such as the winged falcons and horses, rams, boars, and the *senmurv* (for analysis of these motifs, see Rowland, 1970, pp. 97 f., 191, 201; Ghirshman, 1962, pp. 228 f.; Jerrousalimskaja, 1993, p. 117; Harper, 1987, p. 590).

Investiture by the king. Although there is no record of the king himself being specifically invested with a coronation robe on accession to the throne, there are several references to robes of honor being bestowed on worthy members of the Sasanian court and on visiting dignitaries. Often, the monarch would commence his rule by bestowing gifts of gold, silver, jewels, robes and fabrics, horses, and armor to the nobles and to his army (Yarshater, 1983, p. 407).

That appurtenances of rank were significant throughout Sasanian times is made clear in the *Letter of Tōsar*, where the king issues a decree establishing "a visible and general distinction between men of noble birth and common people" and among the nobles themselves, with regard to clothes (including trousers and headgear), other regalia, and "trappings of pomp" (Boyce, 1968, pp. 44, 48).

The *Letter of Tōsar* also refers to the king as "the one who sets a crown upon the head of vassals" (Boyce, 1968, p. 34). According to Procopius, a golden diadem embellished with pearls was one of the greatest signs of honor (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*1, 1936, p. 404). Reporting the king's punishment of a Mihran by depriving him of a golden hairband, Procopius remarks that "in that country [Persia] no one is allowed to wear a ring or a belt, a clasp or any other object of gold without royal bestowal" (ibid.). In his inscriptions Kerdir refers to Hormizd I (272-73) investing him with "the tiara [*kolāh*] and the belt [*kamar*]" when he bestowed upon him a higher position [*gāh*] and rank ("*mobad* of Ohrmazd") (Wieshoefer, 1996, p. 289).

The practice of presenting a *kolāh* (tiara, or hat denoting noble rank) to a

visiting noble was well established by Sasanian times. Antoninus, a Roman deserter, was graced by Šāpur II "with the distinction of the turban" (Latin *apex*, hat or tiara of eastern kings and satraps), an honor shared by "those who sit at the royal table, allowing men of merit among the Persians to speak words of advice and to vote in the assemblies" (Ammianus Marcellinus, 18.5.6; tr. Rolfe, I, p. 431).

The custom of royalty distinguishing a subject by bestowing a robe of honor is very old, and it continued in Iran under the caliphate and throughout the eastern Islamic countries. Ebn Ḵaldun reports that images of the king or symbolic designs representing royal dignity were often woven into the material of robes of honor (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*1, 1936, pp. 403 f.). Such stylized patterns symbolizing the *xwarrah* or the embroidered image of the king incorporated the notion that divine grace had been bestowed upon the wearer.

Šāpur II presented his Armenian general, Manuel, with a royal robe, an ermine fur, and other decorations of royalty, such as a chest harness and chest and helmet ornaments (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*1, 1936, p. 404). Juanšer, a prince from Albania wounded fighting for Yazdegird III against the Arabs, was richly rewarded by the king after his recovery. As well as receiving a palace and the insignia and honors due to a general, the king invested him "with a belt of gold studded with pearls, a sword of wrought gold, bracelets for his arms, and . . . a coveted crown upon his head . . . also leggings sewn with pearls and as many pearls again [on a collar] round his neck." (Dowsett, 1961, p. 111).

An enduring influence. The Sasanian kings were regarded as conduits of power, dignity, and faith, which rulers and nobility alike sought to emulate in later years. Sasanian royal iconography continued for many decades after the end of the dynasty, influencing courtly fashion in Islamic Iran as well as in Byzantium and Central Asia, where some of the nobility took refuge after the Arab invasion (for further references, see Rose, 2001, pp. 47 f.).

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