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MASʿUDI II. THE PRE-ISLAMIC HISTORY OF IRAN

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The Persians are a nation (*omma*) whose territory includes Azarbaijan to the borders of Armenia; Arrān and Baylaqān as far as Darband in the Caucasus; Ṭabarestān, Masqaṭ, Šābarān, and Jorjān; Khorasan, including Abaršahr (Nišāpur), Herat, and Marv; and Sejestān, Kerman, Fars, and Ahvāz. All of these territories once belonged to a single kingdom. That kingdom used a unified written language whose spoken forms later came to diverge. The languages used by the Persians include Pahlavi, Dari, and Azeri. Despite claims that their ancestor was Shem, or Joseph, or Lot, the Persians believe themselves to be the descendants of Iraj (or Irān), the son of Afridun. Some believe that Iraj was born to the seventh in a line of female virgins, but this claim is "irrational" and "contrary to observed phenomena." The northern Arabs identified either Iraj or Manušehr (Manučehr) with Isaac, the son of Abraham, and boasted of the association in their poetry. Conversely, notable Persians, including the grandfather of the first Sasanian king, used to visit the Kaʿba to honor its builder, Abraham, whom they regarded as their ancestor. In Masʿudi's time, some Persians had taken up the claim to descent from Isaac (Esḥāq) and used it to cudgel the Arabs, who are descended from Ismail, son of Abraham's concubine Hagar (Hājar). The ancient Mesopotamian peoples (Kaldāniyun, Suryāniyun, Nabaṭ) were assimilated to the Persians (*daḵalu fi jomlat al-Fors*) after the latter conquered them (*Moruj* I, secs. 563-75; *Tanbih*,

pp. 7, 38, 77-78, 108-9, 182).

The history of the Persians before Islam falls into three eras. The first is the era of the first or earliest kings (*moluk ... al-fors al-ulā*, or the Akyān; *Moruj* I, sec. 558). This era is subdivided into three dynastic periods. The second era is that of the factional kings (*moluk al-ṭawāʾef*). The third era is that of the Sasanians or second dynasty of Persian kings (*moluk al-fors al-ṯānia)*. The duration of the three eras together is 4471 years and five and a half months (*Tanbih*, p. 85; *Moruj* I, secs. 656-57, where other figures are given; see also *Moruj* I,sec.660, where another regnal subdivision is proposed).

Originally, the Persians dated events from the reign of their first king, Kaiumarṯ (Gayōmart). Later, they began to date events from the death of Dāryus (Dārius III) at the hands of Alexander. When Ardašir b. Bābak restored the empire, a new calendar was established, dating events from his accession. The last regnal calendar, and the one used in Masʿudi's time, began with the fall of Yazdegerd III, the last Sasanian king. Masʿudi attempts a correlation of the dates given for the major events in ancient history based on the fact that the Greek and Aramean calendars, like the Persian, refer to Alexander (*Tanbih*, pp. 197-99).

A. The era of the first kings. The first Persian king was Jayumart (Kayumarṯ) Kelšāh "Clay King" (Gelšāh, apparently a misreading of *garšāh* "king of the mountain"), who was the first man, or the eldest son of Adam, or a descendant of Noah. The Persian tradition has nothing to say about Noah's flood. Kayumarṯ's son Mašya and his daughter Mašiāna (*Tanbih*: Mišāh or M•h•lā and Mišāni) are the parents of humankind, or of the Persians. Kayumarṯ was appointed king when the people of his time realized that, just as the body cannot function without a directing intelligence, so the human community must also have a leader in order to thrive. A just ruler, he was the first to wear a crown, and also to command silence at meals, a practice intended to ensure that nourishment was properly distributed through the body. He was succeeded by Ušhanj (Hōšang) and then by Ṭahmuraṯ. During the latter's reign, there appeared Budāsf (see BODHISATTVA), an Indian, who claimed to be a messenger of God and an intermediary between God and his creation. He taught renunciation of the world in favor of the "higher worlds," from which the soul originates and to which it returns. Using tricks and sophistry, he persuaded people to return to the worship of idols. The next king, Jam (Jamšid), who claimed to be a god, introduced the veneration of fire (*awwal man ʿaẓẓama al-nār*), arguing that it resembles light, which is better than

darkness. He also divided light into classes (*jaʿala le'l-nur marāteb*). He established the New Year festival and invented various crafts and artisanal techniques. After his death, his followers split into different groups, "each venerating whatever objects they thought it best to venerate, hoping thereby to approach God" (*Moruj* I, secs. 530-36, II, secs. 1371-72, 1399-40; *Tanbih*, pp. 85-86, 93).

Jam's successor, Bivarasb, is the famous tyrant known as Dahhāk (Dahāka arabicized as al-Żaḥḥāk, lit. "the laughing one"). The Persians tell marvelous stories about him, saying that he was a sorceror with serpents growing from his shoulders. He was overthrown by an Isfahani shoemaker named Kābi (Kāva), who made a banner out of leather and rallied the people behind Jam's grandson, Afridun. The latter defeated Dahhāk and established the festival of Mehragān to commemorate the event. According to legend, the defeated sorceror still lives, held in chains on Mt. Donbāvand (Damāvand). As for Kābi's leather banner, it remained in the hands of the Persian kings, who decorated it with gemstones and used it as a standard during their most desperate battles (see DERAFŠ-e KĀVIĀN). After the defeat of the Sasanian general Rostam at the Qādesiya battle, it fell into the hands of the Arabs (*Moruj* I, secs. 537-38, III, secs. 1531, 1556; *Tanbih*,pp. 85-88).

The kings from Kayumarṯ to Afridun are called the Ḵodāhān, meaning "lords" (*arbāb*). Some accounts credit Afridun with introducing the veneration of fire, which he did when a certain group of fire worshippers explained to him that fire is an intermediary (*wāseṭa)* between God and creation. Fire, they said, belongs to the genus of luminary gods (*min jens al-āleha al-nuriya*). Light itself is divided into classes (*marāteb*). The power of light is evident from the fact that animals are drawn to it, moths fly into lamps, and fish leap out of the water toward lamps lit at night. Light is good (*ṣalāḥ*) and is opposed by darkness; fire is opposed by water, which is the source of all life. Persuaded by their words, Afridun took some of their fire and established fire-temples in Ṭus and Bukhara (*Moruj* I, sec. 659, II, secs. 1399-400; see further below, VI.C.).

Afridun divided the earth among his three sons, giving Rome and the West to Salam (Salm), the lands of the Turks to Ṭuj (Tur), and Iraq and Fars to Iraj. Iraj ennobled (*šarrafa*) certain families (*abyāt*), making them notables (*šahāreja)* in Iraq. Kesrā (Anušeravān or Abarviz?) later conferred further honors upon three of these families, whose descendants were known in Masʿudi's time. Below them in prestige (*al-ṭabaqa al-ṯānia)* were the *dehqān*s, the descendants of Vahkart, the great great grandson of Kayumarṯ. There were five classes of

*dehqān*s, each with its distinctive dress. Although Iraj was killed before he could succeed to the throne, he gave his name to Iran, the kingdom he was to have ruled. Afridun was later assassinated by his brothers, but they were in turn defeated by Manušehr or Manušahr (Manučehr), whose rule coincides with the age of Moses (*Moruj* I, secs. 537-39, 662; *Tanbih*, p. 88; cf. pp. 37-38 for different derivations of Iran).

With Manušehr begins "the second dynasty of the first Persian kings," called the Balān or "lofty ones." Manušehr is reportedly the ancestor of the Persians and the Kurds, though the Kurds themselves offer various accounts of their ancestry (*Tanbih*, pp. 88-89). He was succeeded by Sahm and then by Farāsiyāb (or Farāsiāt; see AFRĀSIĀB). The latter was overthrown by Zav(v), whose battles against the Turks are described in a famous book called *Sakisarān*. There are divergent accounts of the succession after Manušehr, including reports that one of his successors, Koršāsf (or Karšāsb), dug three major canals to irrigate Iraq (*Moruj* I, secs. 540-41, 554; *Tanbih*, pp. 89-90).

The third dynasty of the "first kings" is that of the Kāyān or Kayāniyun (Kayanids), "the mighty ones." It begins with Kay Qobāḏ (Kay Qobād) and his successor Kay Qāvus (Kay Kāvus). The latter ruled in Iraq, where he rebelled against God by building a tower to Heaven. He invaded the Yemen and married Soʿdā, the daughter of the Yemeni king Šammer Yarʿaš. He also moved the Persian capital from Iraq to Balkh. He was succeeded by Kay Ḵosrow, who built cities in India and China. Kay Ḵosrow was succeeded by Kay Lohrāsf or Lohrāsb, who was famous for his just rule, his building up of Balkh, and his battles against the Turks. Boḵt Naṣr (Nebuchadnezzar), who carried the Children of Israel into captivity, may have been a margrave (*marzobān*) of Lohrāsb. The Children of Israel eventually returned to their homeland thanks to the intervention of Dināzād, a captive who became the wife of Nebuchadnezzar (*Moruj* I, secs. 542-45, 555, 659, cf. I, sec. 551; *Tanbih*, p. 90).

The reign of the next king, Bostāsf, Yostāsaf, or Kay Beštāsb (Goštāsp), witnessed the coming of Zoroaster (Zarādašt or Zaradošt) "the prophet of the Magians." Zoroaster performed miracles and predicted the future. His revelation took the form of a book called Bastāh or Abastāh (Avesta; see further above, I.A.), whichcommon people refer to as *al-Zamzama*. In addition to the script used to write the revelation, he invented another script, called *k*š*n dabira* "the writing of everything" (*ketābat al-koll*), which can represent "all languages and the cries of animals and birds," using 160 characters. The Persians have an additional five scripts, some of which include Aramaic

(*nabaṭiya*). The Persian kings, who had theretofore been adherents of primitive monotheism (*al-ḥanifiya al-ulā*) or of the astral religion (*al-ṣābeʿa)* brought by Budasf, adopted the Bastāh as a guide to conduct. Thus it remained until the campaigns of Alexander, who burned some portions of it. After the period of the "factional kings" ([*moluk*] *al-ṭawāʾef*) the first Sasanian emperor, Ardašir, restored the Magian tradition on the basis of a chapter of the Bastāh called the Vendidād. "To this day, the Persians and the Magians read nothing else." Because they are unable to memorize all of it, they assign different portions to different scholars. Reportedly, a man in Sejestān active after 300/912-13 had memorized it all. The tradition of the Magian priesthood began with Jāmāsb, the first *mobad* (*Moruj* I, sec. 547-50, II, sec. 1373; *Tanbih*,pp. 90-94).

Under the next king, Bahman, the Children of Israel, who had been living in exile in Babylon, returned to Jerusalem under the auspices of Kuroš (Cyrus II The Great), who was either Bahman's viceroy in Iraq or his successor as king. When the Messiah was born, Kuroš sent three men with gifts, as described in the Gospels. Christians and Zoroastrians tell many stories about this event, including one about Mary and her reciprocal gift of saffron. One of Jesus's disciples later died in Ḵurāṣn and had a tomb-shrine there. The end of the Babylonian exile coincides with the appearance of Daniel, who used the motions of the heavenly bodies to predict the events of human history until the end of the world. Masʿudi identifies Bahman with Arṭaḵšast (Artaxerxes), a Persian king mentioned by Galen, who writes that Hippocrates refused to treat the king, because he was an enemy of the Greeks (*Moruj* I, secs. 551-52, II, sec. 1405; *Tanbih*, pp. 131-132, 200-1).

Bahman's successor (in one account at least) was his daughter Ḥomāya or Ḵomāni, who ruled justly and fought against the Greeks. She moved the capital from Balkh to Ctesiphon, where it remained. She was succeeded by her brother Dārā (12 years), who was in turn succeeded by his son, also named Dārā. This second Dārā, also called Darius (Dāriuš), was defeated and killed by Alexander of Macedon, who took over his kingdom and married his daughter. Thus ended the first era of Persian history. When Alexander died, his widow, Rōšank (Roxane), the daughter of Dārā, reproached the members of his funeral party for gloating over him (*Moruj* II, secs. 673, 676; *Tanbih,* pp. 94, 106).

B. The factional kings. On the advice of his vizier Aristotle, Alexander distributed power among his subordinates to prevent them from uniting

against him. Upon his death, they assumed control of their respective regions. These factional kings included Persians, Arabs, and Nabateans; collectively, they reigned for a total of 513 (or 517) years. Masʿudi reports that this figure is a "religious and political secret of the Persians" (*serr diāni wa moluki men asrār al-Fors*). Zoroaster, he says, had predicted that the Persian state would collapse in three hundred years; seven hundred years after that, the religion would disappear as well. The first part of the prediction came true when the empire fell to Alexander. But then, some 500 years later, the empire was restored, and Ardašir, the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, decided to buy time before the millenium by proclaiming that his own accession had taken place only 260 years after Alexander. As a result, the offical Persian chronology differs from those kept by other nations. Masʿudi claims to have learned the true figure from the Zoroastrian scholars he consulted in Fars and Kerman (*Tanbih*, pp. 97-99).

The most prominent line of "factional kings" was that of the Ašḡāniyun (Aškāniān, i.e., Parthians), who were reportedly descended from Kay Qāvus. They spent the winter in Iraq and the summer in Azarbaijan, where the remains of their buildings, along with "marvelous paintings of the celestial spheres, the stars, the earth, including lands and seas, built-up areas, plants, animals, and other wonders," may still be seen. They built a fire-temple called Āḏarḵoš, a name that Masʿudi translates as "good fire." Whenever a king succeeded to the throne, he would approach the temple on foot, make vows, and offer gifts (*Tanbih*, p. 95).

The first of the Ašḡāniyun was Ašk, who was succeeded by Sābur, during whose reign Jesus appeared in Jerusalem. Sābur was followed by Judarz and then by Niḏar (or Bizan, in *Tanbih*, p. 6), during whose reign Jerusalem fell to the Roman emperor Titus. The next kings were Judarz II, Narsi, Hormoz, Ardavān, Kesrā (Ḵosrow), Balās (or Balāš), and finally Ardavān II, who was killed in single combat by Ardašir son of Bābak, the founder of the Sasanian dynasty. There were other kings too, but the disorder of the period makes it impossible to establish a full and exact chronology. In this respect, Persian history resembles Roman history, in which only recent rulers can be dated with certainty (*Moruj* I, secs. 557-61; *Tanbih*, pp. 95-99, 137).

C. The Sasanians (*moluk al-sāsāniya)* or second series of Persian kings. They are also called the fourth dynasty, meaning that they came after the three dynasties into which the archaic period is divided.

The founder was Ardašir b. Bābak, who spent twelve years fighting the factional kings. He was a descendant of Manušehr. His great-grandmother was a Jewish captive (*Moruj* I, sec, 585). His royal title was Šāhān Šāh (king of kings). In his accession speech, he praised God and promised to treat all his subjects with justice (*ʿadl*). He established ranks or degrees for his courtiers (*tartib ṭabaqāt al-nodamāʾ*), as follows (*Moruj* I, secs. 576-78):

1. Cavalrymen (*asāwera)* and princes (*abnāʾ al-moluk*). They stood at a distance of ten cubits from the throne, on the king's right side.

2. Governors (*marāzeba)*, local kings (*moluk al-kowar*), and the *eṣbahbadiya*, "who had governance of the provinces during his reign" (*memman kānat laho mamlakat al-kowar fi ayyāmeh*). These stood at a distance of ten paces from the first group.

3. Jesters, buffoons, and clowns (*al-możḥekun wa ahl al-beṭāla wa ahl al-hazl*), excluding giants, dwarves, persons with deformities, or sons of low tradesmen such as weavers and cuppers. These stood at a distance of ten paces from the second group.

According to a different report, he established the positions of vizier and *mobaḏān mobaḏ* or chief judge (*qażi'l-qożāt*). He appointed four *eṣbahbadiya* or regional governors: one for Khorasan, one for the west, one for the south, and one for the north. Each was assisted by a *marzobān*. He also established ranks for singers and musicians. These ranks changed under Bahrām Jur (Gōr), who "kept the ranks of nobles, princes, custodians of fire temples, ascetics, renunciants, religious scholars, and the various philosophical professions (*anwāʿ al-mehan al-falsafiya)* as they were, but changed the grades assigned to singers." Under Anušervān, the old system was restored (*Moruj* I, secs. 581-82).

Another account explains that there were five ranks of officials who served as intermediaries between the king and the people. The highest was that of *mobaḏ*, "keeper of religion" (*ḥāfeẓ al-din*), from *mo* "religion" and *baḏ* "keeper." The chief *mobaḏ* was revered almost as a prophet. This rank included the *herbaḏ*s, who were subordinate to the *mobaḏ*s. The second rank was that of vizier or *bozorgfaramaḏār* "the greatest official" (*akbar maʾmur*). The third was that of *eṣbahband* "keeper of the army" (*ḥāfeẓ al-jayš*). The fourth was that of *dabirbaḏ* "keeper of the book" (*ḥāfeẓ al-ketāb*). The fifth was that of *hutoḵša* "keeper of all who labor with their hands," including

craftsmen, farmers, and merchants. Among the other officials were the *marzobān* "master of the frontier" (*ṣāḥeb al-ṯaḡr*), of whom there were four, one for each portion of the realm. Masʿudi adds that the *mobaḏ* in his own day, that is, in 345/956, was An*māḏ b. Aš*r*h*št. His predecessor was Esfandiār b. Aḏarbād, who was killed by the Caliph al-Rāżi in Baghdad (r. 322-29/934-40; *Tanbih*, pp. 104-6).

Ardašir established the royal custom of sitting behind a screen (*setāra)*, a custom later adopted by the first ʿAbbasid caliph, al-Saffāḥ (r. 749-54). Access was controlled by an official called *ḵorrambāš*, a title that means "Be joyous!" Audiences with the king began with a warning to all attendees to speak carefully in the presence of the king. When music was to be played, the *ḵorrambāš* would specify the piece and the style (*Moruj* I, sec. 580, IV, sec. 2334).

Ardašir used to say that kings should surround themselves with noble and learned men, because the company of the ignoble exerts a corrupting influence; that justice is the foundation of kingship; and that the king's companions must display a balance of virtues. Among his associates was Tansar, an ascetic disciple of Socrates and Plato who wrote "beautiful letters on royal and religious statecraft, in which he speaks of Ardašir and his career and attempts to justify on his behalf certain unprecedented innovations he introduced in the realms of government and religion" (*Tanbih*, pp. 99, 100; *Moruj* I, sec. 585; see also I.C.6. above). In a letter addressed to scribes, men of religion, cavalrymen, and farmers (see also I.C.4. above), Ardašir canceled a tax (*etāwa)* and counseled his subjects to avoid profiteering and holding grudges, to offer shelter to travelers, to marry relatives, and to shun the transient attractions of this world. In a letter to a governor (I.C.5. above), he warned him against being too lenient, commanding him instead to strike a balance between harshness and mercy.

Some fourteen or fifteen years into his reign, Ardašir abdicated in favor of his son Sābur, renounced the world, and devoted himself to worshipping at fire temples. His deeds are preserved in a work called the *Kārnāmaj* (*Kārnāmag i Ardašir*; see I.B.3. above). His testamentary disposition to his son contains a reminder that kingship and religion are mutually dependent (*Moruj* I, secs. 576-88, IV, sec. 2334; *Tanbih*, pp. 104-5).

Sābur I, whom the Arabs call "Sābur of the Armies" (*Sābur al-jonud*) reigned for 31 (or 33) years. He followed his father's policy of building cities and

naming them after himself (see BIŠĀPUR). He besieged Constantinople and forced the Byzantines to build a fire temple on the Sea of Marmara. He also laid siege to the famous citadel called Hażr, near Mosul, finally capturing it when Nażira, the daughter of Żayzan, the Arab king, fell in love with him and showed him how to enter the stronghold. Sābur married her as agreed, but was surprised to find her so delicate that a single myrtle leaf trapped in her mattress so irritated her that she could not sleep. When she reported that her father had fed her on cream, egg whites, snow, honey, and fine wine, Sābur ordered her drawn and quartered for betraying a parent who had pampered her so (*Moruj*, I, sec. 589, II, secs. 1406-11).

At the prompting of Māni, who professed dualism (*qawl be'l-eṯnayn*), belief in light (*al-qawl be'l-nur*), and renunciation of darkness (*al-barāʾa men al-ẓolma)*, Sābur temporarily abandoned Zoroastrianism. Masʿudi cites a letter of his on statecraft addressed to the Byzantine emperor, another to a governor on the treatment of subordinates, and a passage from his testamentary disposition to his son Hormoz. Masʿudi claims to have discussed Māni and the doctrines of his fellow dualists, such as Daiṣān and Marcion, in a now-lost work (*Moruj*, I, secs. 589-93; *Tanbih*, p. 101).

Hormoz I, who reigned for only one or two years, was called "the hero" (*baṭal*) and built the city of Rām Hormoz in Ahvāz (Khuzistan). He is credited with a letter describing the character traits necessary for generalship and good government. Under his successor, Bahrām (3 years), Māni b. Fātak (evidently the same Māni who appeared under Sābur, but here described as "the disciple of Qārdun") again summoned the king to adopt dualism (*al-ṯanawiya)*. Bahrām pretended to accept the new doctrine, but after Māni had recalled his missionaries, executed all its major representatives. The Persian term for "dualist" was *zandi*, a term that meant "someone who introduces into the law anything contrary to the revealed Avesta and turns [instead] to its interpretation, the Zand." When the Arabs came to Iran, they adopted the word (pronouncing it as *zendiq*) and applied it not only to dualists but also to believers in the eternity of the world (*Moruj*, I, secs. 593-94).

The next king, Bahrām II, was a dissipated monarch who took estates away from their owners and distributed them among his cronies. The new owners failed to pay taxes and care for the land, and many estates fell into ruin. The king mended his ways after the chief *mobaḏ* translated for his benefit a conversation between two owls to the effect that they would soon have a great many more deserted spaces to live in. The *mobaḏ* was thus able to impart the

lesson that “the law depends on the king, who depends on men, who depend on wealth; but there is no wealth without cultivation, and no cultivation without justice.” Bahrām II was succeeded by Bahrām III (4 years), Narsi (7 years), and Hormoz II (7 years), the last Sasanian king to have his residence in the city of Jundaysābur (Gondēšāpur). In Islamic times, Yaʿqub b. Layṯ Ṣaffār (see VI below) settled there in emulation of them (*Moruj* I, secs 595-600).

During the minority of the next king, Sābur II, known as Sābur Ḏu’l-aktāf, the Arab tribe of Eyād overran Iraq. When he turned sixteen, Sābur II marched against the Eyādis and defeated them. One of the king’s men, Laqiṭ, composed poems in Arabic warning the raiders of their impending doom. Sābur II pursued his campaign as far as Bahrain, where an ancient chief of the Banu Tamim persuaded him to show mercy to the Arabs, who, according to a prophecy known to the king, would one day reign over the Persians. Sābur II then turned north, and entered Byzantine territory in disguise to learn about their history and way of life. He was in Constantinople on a day when the emperor had joined the citizens on the occaion of a festival He was caught when a member of the emperor’s entourage recognized him from the image graven on a drinking cup. He was taken along on the emperor’s campaign against Junaysābur, but he managed to escape and turn the tables on the Byzantines. He settled his Greek captives in Ahvāz, where they established a silk industry still active in Masʿudi’s time. He also built the city of Nisābur (Nišāpur) and the palace, near al-Madāʾen, known as Iwān Kesrā (Ayvān-e Kesrā). In Islamic times, the caliph Hārun al-Rašid (r. 170-93/786-809) tried to demolish Iwān Kesrā. When his vizier Yaḥyā b. Ḵāled b. Barmak advised him against the plan, the caliph suspected him of harboring Zoroastrian sympathies (*al-majusiya wa’l-ḥonow ʿalayhā*; *Moruj* I, secs 601-11, II, sec. 745; *Tanbih*, pp. 204-6).

According to the *Tanbih* (p. 100), Sābur II was succeeded by Ardašir II (4 years), who was succeeded by Sabur III (5 years). According, however, to the narrative account (but not the king-list) in the *Moruj*, Sābur II was succeeded directly by Bahrām IV (10 or 11 years), Yazdajerd “the Reprehensible” (*aṯim*, 21 or 22 years), and Bahrām Jur (20 years). Bahrām Jur was raised among Arabs in Ḥira and composed poetry in Arabic. He gained fame by seizing the royal insignia after they had been placed between two lions. He was much admired for his justice and his concern for his subjects. He visited India in disguise, fought for a king named Šabramah, and married his daughter. He later defeated the king of the Turks, who had invaded Sogdia. He is credited with

innovations in archery, including the construction of a bow based on the principle of the four natures that make up the human body (*Tanbih*, p. 101; *Moruj* I, secs. 612-614, 660). His custom of rewarding musicians on the spot was adopted by the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Saffāḥ (*Moruj* IV, sec. 2334).

One or both of the next two kings, Yazdejerd II (18 or 19 years) and Hormoz III, are omitted in some king lists. The first reportedly built a defensive wall in the Caucasus; and, in a dialogue with a sage, he received advice on kingship and the prevention of civil strife. His heir was overthrown by Firuz (27 years), who was in turn defeated by the king of the Hephthalites (*hayāṭela)*. The succeeding kings were Balāš (4 years) and Qobāḏ (Kawād; 43 years). The latter changed the basis of taxation in the Sawād (for the borders of the Sawād, see ibid, 38-9) from *moqāsama* (taking a percentage or share of the crops) to *misāḥa* (taking a fixed sum per unit of land). The rate was two dirhams per *jarib*, but the crops failed before the date set for the assessment (*Moruj* I, secs. 615-16; *Tanbih*, pp. 39, 101-2).

The reign of Qobāḏ also witnessed the rise of Mazdak, a *mubaḏ* who offered an esoteric interpretation (*taʾwil*) of the Avesta that disagreed with its exoteric meaning (*bāṭen be-ḵelāf žāhereh*). He "introduced the common people to new laws and legal contrivances" (*mā aḥdaṯah fi'l-ʿāmma men al-nawāmis wa'l-ḥial*). He deposed Qobāḏ, replacing him with his brother, Jāmāsb (2 years; ibid, p. 101; Masʿudi, 1965-1974, I, pp. 304-305 = *Tanbih*, p. 101; *Moruj* I, secs. 615-18, 660; Jāmāsb is not mentioned in *Tanbih* and *Moruj* I, sec 660).

Legitimate rule was restored by Anušervān, assisted by Zarmehr, son of Suḵrā. Assending the royal throne, Anušervān, which means "new in kingship" (*jadid al-molk*), executed Mazdak and 80,000 of his followers and established Zoroastrianism as the common religion and forbade sectarian disputation (*jamaʿa ahl mamakateh ʿalā din al-majusiya wa-manaʿahom al-naẓar wa'l-ḵelāf wa'l-ḥejāj fi'l-melal*). In his first year, he levied taxes on the basis established by his predecessor, collecting 150,000,000 dirhams. He later revised the tax system, levying the following rates: 5/6 of a dirham per *jarib* of rice; seven dirhams on fresh dates (*roṭaba)*; eight dirhams per grapevine (or vineyard, *karm*); and one dirham for every *jarib* of wheat and barley, every four "Persian palm trees" (*naḵalāt fāresiya)*, every six *daqal* palm trees, and every six olive trees. In the Caucasus, he constructed a defense against seaborne attacks by building a wall on inflated skins and letting the skins sink to the bottom of the sea. In Transoxania, he defeated the Hephthalites. In the northwest, he fortified the Roman frontier and marched into Syria, capturing

Aleppo, Qennasrin, Ḥoms, Fāmia, and Antioch, and compelling the Romans to pay tribute. From Syria, he brought back marble and mosaic tiles, which he used to build a city near Ctesiphon called Rumiya. He was known as "the emperor of abundance" (*kesrā al-ḵayr*) and praised in Arabic poetry by ʿAdi b. Zayd. He received letters and precious gifts from the kings of China, India, and Tibet. The items sent him from India include chess, a colorfast black dye, and the book *Kalila and Demna*. He and his vizier Bozorgmehr are credited with numerous aphorisms and definitions of good statecraft (*Moruj* I, secs. 618-31, IV, sec 2848; *Tanbih*, pp. 39, 101-2).

Anušervān was also known for supporting the Jewish claimants Sayf b. Ḏi Yazan and his son Maʿdikareb against the Ethiopian-backed Christian kings of Yemen. He dispatched Wahrez, the *eṣbahbaḏ* of Daylam, at the head of an army composed of freed prisoners, to Yemen. After arriving on the South Arabian coast, Wahrez burned his ships to show his men that there would be no turning back. His army routed the forces of the Yemeni king Masruq b. Abraha. On Anušervān's orders, Wahrez crowned Maʿdikareb king of Yemen and left a contingent of Persian troops to settle there. These events are commemorated in several Arabic poems. When Maʿdikareb was assassinated by his Ethopian guards, Anušervān sent Wahrez back to Yemen, where he exterminated the Ethiopians and established a line of Persian viceroys: first himself, then Nušajān, Sobḥān, Ḵorrazāḏ, Ebn Sobḥān, Marvazān, Ḵorraḵosrow, and finally Bāḏān, son of Sāsān (*Moruj* II, secs. 1015-22, 1030-31; *Tanbih*, p. 260).

Anušervān's successor, Hormoz IV (12 years), "took the side of the common people against the elite" (*kāna motaḥāmelan ʿalā ḵawāṣṣ al-nās māʾelan elā ʿawāmmehem*), of whom he reportedly had 13,000 killed. The state collapsed and the Turks, the Khazar, the Romans, and the Arabs attacked the country. Against the Turks Hormoz IV sent Bahrām Jubin (Čōbin), who defeated them, thus arousing the jealousy of the king's vizier. Bahrām Jubin responded by sowing discord between the king and his son Abarviz (Parviz). Eventually, Hormoz II was deposed and blinded, and Abarviz became king, only to be defeated in battle by Bahrām Jubin. Fleeing on a famous horse belonging to the Arab Ḥassān b. Ḥanẓala, he took refuge with the Byzantine emperor Muriqios (Maurice), who supplied him with troops but forced him to cede Syria and Egypt. Again he met Bahrām Jubin in battle, this time defeating his rival, who fled to the Turks and was later assassinated (*Moruj* I, secs. 632-43, II, sec. 754).

Abarviz ruled for thirthy-eight years. Thirteen years into his reign, he imprisoned the sage Bozorjmehr, whom he suspected of being a *zendiq*, and later had him executed, along with another vizier, B*ḵbarāris, for rebuking him. Thereafter, he ruled as a despot. When his protector, the emperor Maurice, was overthrown by Phocas, he launched a war against the Byzantines, eventually capturing and sacking Jerusalem. He also made off with a fleetload of Byzantine treasure that had been blown ashore near Antioch, and called it "the windfall treasure" (*ḵazāʾen al-riḥ*). When his governor in the west, Šahrbarāz, turned against him, he lost territory to Heraclius, who crossed the Caspian and raided as far as Iraq. These events are those referred to in Qurʾān 30:2-5. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Abarviz collected 420 million *meṭqāl*s of gold in tax revenues for the Sawād and "the lands of the Persians," without collecting any tax from the lands north of Hit, which were in the hands of the Byzantines. Among his possessions were nine signet rings: one for letters (*rasāʾel*) and records (*sejjellāt*); one for memoranda (*taḏkerāt*); one for items sent by courier (*ajwebat al-barid*); one for letters of amnesty (*barāwāt*); one to seal his treasuries (*ḵazāʾen al-jawāher*, *bayt al-māl*); one to seal letters to kings (*kotob al-moluk*); one to mark foods, medicines, and perfumes; one to mark condemned prisoners and letters of execution; and one to be worn in the bathhouse and washroom. Each had its own stone and inscription. Two of the inscriptions are given in Persian: *ḵorrah va-ḵorram*, which Masʿudi translates as "splendor and good fortune" (*bahja wa saʿāda)*; and *Ḵorāsān khorrah*, which he leaves untranslated. Abarviz's stables contained 50,000 riding beasts, as well as 1000 elephants, which would kneel before him during processions (*Moruj* I, secs. 645-52; *Tanbih*, pp. 39-40, 143, 157).

In Hira, the Persians had established the descendants of Naṣr b. Laḵm as kings "in order to ward off the Bedouin Arabs." To communicate in Arabic, Abarviz employed the poet ʿAdi b. Zayd, who "wrote for [him] in Arabic, and interpreted for him during visits by Arab delegations." When ʿAdi was killed by Noʿmān, the Arab king of Ḥirah, his son Zayd succeeded him as Arabic scribe and interpreter. Zayd avenged himself on his father's killer by encouraging Abarviz to ask for the hand of Noʿmān's daughter in marriage. When the Arab king refused, Zayd translated the refusal as rudely as possible, provoking Abarviz to execute Noʿmān (*Moruj* II, secs. 1065-70; *Tanbih*, p. 186).

During the reign of Abarviz, omens of Moḥammad's prophecy began to appear to the Persians, who were defeated by the Arabs for the first time in the battle

of Ḏu Qār. Before his death, Noʿmān had left his property with Hāni' b. Qabiṣa of the tribe of Bakr b. Wāʾel, who refused to turn it over to a Persian force commanded by Hāmarz. The men of Bakr b. Wāʾel routed the Persians and killed their commander. Later, Abarviz himself was deposed, blinded, and executed by his son Qobaḏ, known as Širawayh (Šērōya). During Širawayh's six-year reign, a plague broke out in Iraq; according to some estimates, half the population succumbed to it. Širawayh was succeeded by his seven-year-old son, Ardašir III, who was deposed and killed by Šahrbarāz, the governor of the east. The usurper, whose adventures Masʿudi described in detail in his now-lost *Maqātel forsān al-ʿajam*, was in turn assassinated by Abarviz's daughter Āzarmidoḵt. Kesrā, a son of Qobaḏ, or of Abarviz, left the land of the Turks to claim the throne, but was killed. Burān, another of Abarviz's daughters, then ruled for a year and a half. Of her the Prophet Moḥammad said that no people ruled by a woman will thrive. Her successor, Firuz Ḵošnanda or Jošnasbanda, ruled for two months; and his successor, Āzarmidoḵt, for sixteen. Āzarmidoḵt ordered the killing of Ḵorrhormoz, the *eṣbahaḏ* of Khorasan, and was in turn assassinated by his son Rostam, who soon afterwards fought the Arabs at Qadesiyah. Her successor, the child Farroḵzād, ruled for one year. The next king, and the last of the Sasanian line, was Yazdajerd III, who ruled for twenty years, until his death in Marv in 31/631 (*Moruj* I, secs. 649, 653-55; *Tanbih*, pp. 102-3, 241-43).

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