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NARSEH

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Sasanian king (293-302 CE).

HISTORY

Narseh ruled the Sasanian Empire as its seventh king from 293 to 302 CE. In contrast to his royal predecessors, Narseh did not ascend the throne as a crown prince, but was crowned king only at the advanced age of approximately 60-65 (*Histoire nestorienne* I, p. 254) after the short (4 months) reign of his grandnephew, Bahrām III (Weber, 2010a; idem, 2012).

Name. The name Narseh can be derived from the Old Iranian theophoric name **naryasa(n)ha-*, meaning "men's praise" (Huyse, 1999, II, p. 110, n. 182; Back, p. 237, no. 228a; Sundermann, 1979, p. 101, n. 3/11.1; idem, 1986, II, p. 304; Gignoux, 1986, p. 134, n. 678). The Šāpur (ŠKZ) and the Narseh inscription (NPi) give Narseh's name as follows: MPers. *nrshy* and Parth. *nryshw* (Huyse, 1999, I, p. 80; II, p. 110, n. 182; Skjærvø, in NPi 3.1, p. 114). The Greek version of the Šāpur inscription has Narsaiēs or Narsaios. However, the other Greek sources have Narsēs; in other languages, the name is handed down as: Lat. Narseus; Syr. NRSY; Ar. Narsi; Armen. Nerseh; Copt. Narsaph (Pedersen, 1997, pp. 197-99), but also Narseos (2Ke 445, 2-7/309 (G); s. Gardner, 2015, p. 179).

Narseh's genealogy and his position among the members of the royal family. The primary sources for King Narseh's genealogy and regency are the

trilingual inscription of his father Šāpur I on the Kaʿba-ye Zardošt at Naqš-e Rostam (Huyse, 1999, I-II: MPers., Parth., Gk.), the bilingual inscription on the Paikuli monument erected by himself (Humbach and Skjærvø, 1978-83, parts. 1-3: MPers., Parth. [hereafter NPi]; Cereti and Terribili, pp. 74-87), and his brother Bahrām I's inscription at Bišāpur (Back, pp. 490-91; NVŠ: MPers.), which Narseh claimed for himself with the help of a *damnatio memoriae* of his brother. These three epigraphic sources and the Arabic *Histoire nestorienne* (I, p. 254) of the 11th century testify to Narseh as Šāpur I's son and Ardašir I Bābakān's grandson. The secondary and tertiary sources lack hints of his genealogy or present grossly flawed information on his degree of kinship (Weber, 2012, p. 157, n. 13).

Conversely, the genealogy in Šāpur's inscription (Huyse, 1999, I, secs. 33-38; Weber, 2009, p. 568) provides us with reliable information on the royal Sasanian family. It is notable that Šāpur I's descendants are presented twice, first, with regard to protocol (ranks 1-4): Ādur-Anāhid, queen of queens; Hormozd-Ardašīr, great king of the Armenians; King Šāpur of Mēšān; and King Narseh of Sakastān. These four are privileged descendants honored by the endowment of a fire. Then there is the list that depends on the age of these enumerated persons (ranks 10-15; Huyse, 1999, I, secs. 33-34, 36-37; Sprengling, 1940, p. 392; Henning, 1954, p. 44, n. 6; Chaumont, 1968, p. 81, n. 3). It starts with Ādur-Anāhid, who is followed by two hitherto unknown figures: Queen Dēnag, who was probably Šāpur's daughter, and King Bahrām of Gilān. Next come Šāpur, Hormozd-Ardašir, and Narseh. One may assume that Šāpur I integrated Dēnag and Bahrām into the group of his descendants with good reasons (Huyse, 1999, II, p. 117). They probably also belonged to it. This is why Bahrām of Gilān can probably be identified as the person who later became King Bahrām I (r. 273-76). In his own inscription (Back, p. 490: NVŠ) and in two inscriptions of the priest Kartīr (Gignoux, 1991, pp. 57, 67: KKZ 4 = KNRm 9, KKZ 6), Bahrām appears as Šāpur I's son, and Kartīr presents him as Hormozd I's brother. Bahrām, who is suprisingly absent in the first list of Šāpur's inscription, has replaced Hormozd-Ardašir as first-rank descendant.

Based on this list, one may conclude (e.g., Huyse, 1999, I, secs. 36-37; contrary to Gyselen, 2005 [2009], p. 29) that Bahrām should be regarded as Šāpur I's eldest, and Narseh as his youngest, son (Weber, 2009, p. 568: list of protocol). Considerable differences turn up if the positions of Bahrām and Narseh are compared. Bahrām Gilān Šāh was significantly put back by his father. He is

not listed in the group of Šāpur I's privileged descendants; furthermore, he had to content himself with a low, eleventh protocol rank and to renounce the address "Our Son." Apart from that, he had to do without the privilege of a personal fire (endowment of a fire temple) benefitting his sister and brothers. Richard N. Frye (1983, pp. 127-28; idem, 1984, p. 303) argued that the humble origin of Bahrām's mother might be one of the reasons why Bahrām was ignored. Bahrām I probably saw himself as a significantly underprivileged son of Šāpur I.

Narseh, viceroy of the Sasanian Empire. Before his coronation as king of kings (*šāhānšāh*), Narseh governed two viceroyalties: in the beginning, he was viceroy of Hind(estān), Sakastān, and Turān to the Edge of the Sea (Kettenhofen, 1995, pp. 11-12; Huyse, 1999, I, sec. 34: MPers. 23, 24; Parth. 19; Gk. 42), and later, viceroy in Armenia (Humbach and Prods O. Skjærvø, III/1, secs. 3, 19). We do not know the exact time-span of both viceroyalties (Huyse, 1999, I, pp. 10-14). Šāpur I's entrusting of this vast territory to Narseh testifies to his belief in his son's ability to rule. As viceroy, Narseh probably played "a key role in Sasanian Eastern policy" (Alram, 2012, p. 279; Weber, 2012, pp. 160-68). In the 3rd century CE, Armenia, Narseh's second viceroyalty, was the politically and strategically most important province of the empire. The first two Sasanian kings' policy of western expansion was closely connected with the Armenian question and repeatedly caused military encounters between Rome and the Sasanian Empire. The small number of Western sources and the unreliability of Armenian sources (Kettenhofen, 1995, pp. 48-73) make it difficult to write a history of Armenia in the 3rd century CE (Weber, 2012, pp. 173-82).

After Ardašir I's defeat of the Parthian king Ardawān (Artabanus) IV in 224, Armenia's political role had substantially changed. Armenia was ruled by a pro-Roman branch of the Arsacid dynasty, whose existence might have been a threat to Ardašir I's further plans. His fruitless attack on Armenia (227 or 228; Cassius Dio, LXXX 3.3-4; Zonaras, XII 15 = p. 572.18-19) was based on his claim to overcome the last branch of the Arsacid royal house and to become its successor. Šāpur's inscription tells us that the conflict with Rome intensified shortly after Šāpur I's accession to the throne (r. 239/40-270/72; q.v.): The trigger for this was several Sasanian invasions of Roman territories. The Sasanian capture of Hatra in 240/41, a fortress that had been considered to be impregnable, was the impetus for a new Roman-Sasanian war (242-44; Huttner, I, pp. 179-88). For Rome, it ended as a painful defeat at the battle of

Meshik near Ctesiphon, where Emperor Gordianus III (r. 238-44) died. In the peace treaty of 244, his successor Philippus Arabs (r. 244-49) committed himself to pay large war reparations to the Sasanians. In addition, the Romans waived claims of "an influencing control in Armenia governed at that time by the Arsacids" (Zonaras, XII 19, p. 583.3-7; Kettenhofen, 1982, p. 35, n. 72: "antique non-intervention clause").

Šāpur considered Rome's behavior towards Armenia the *casus belli* for the second Roman-Persian war (from 252 onwards; Huyse, 1999, I, sec. 9). It is not clear from the sources whether Šāpur I only wanted to find a pretext for integrating Armenia into the Sasanian Empire or not. Presumably, the point criticized by Šāpur was connected with Rome's repeated breach of the non-intervention clause of the treaty (*foedus*) of 244. According to Zonaras (XII 21 = pp. 589.24-590.3; Weber, 2012, p. 181 n. 105), the only reliable source, the conquest of Armenia, for which there are no reports in the sources, took place during the reign of Emperor Trebonianus Gallus (r. 251-53). Most probably, Šāpur I made his third son, Hormozd-Ardašir, viceroy of Armenia with the title of Wuzurg Šāh Arminān (Great King of the Armenians) shortly after the conquest of Armenia. This title is mentioned three times in Šāpur's inscription (Huyse, 1999, I, sec. 33: Mid. Per., Parth., Gr.; Kettenhofen, 1995, pp. 43-45). According to Agathangelos (p. 35, secs. 18), only the crown prince was entitled to bear the title "king of the Armenians."

When Šāpur I passed away (270/72), Hormozd-Ardašir ascended the Sasanian throne as Hormozd I. There is no detailed information on Narseh's appointment as Hormozd-Ardašir's successor in Armenia. Also not clear are the circumstances of the coronation of Bahrām I, whom his father had not had in mind for succession (Huyse, 1999, I, secs. 33-34; see the chapter "Narseh's Genealogy"). It may be assumed that only Bahrām I, after Hormozd's early death (273), made Narseh king of Armenia in return for the latter's giving up of his right to the throne. Narseh's *damnatio memoriae* of his brother, testified to by Bahrām I's inscription and investiture relief, may count as a late reaction to his brother's action.

Quarrel for the throne and Narseh's rise to kingship of Iran and Non-Iran. Approximately only twenty years after his start as viceroy of Armenia, Narseh entered history again when Bahrām II died (293) and the coronation of his son as Bahrām III led to a serious crisis of the empire. This coronation, which, against established rules of succession (Agathias, IV 24.6-8; Gyselen, 2012, pp. 241-52, 274-75), secretly and without the nobles' acclamation (NPi 3.1, secs.

4-5), had been carried out by Wahnām, the son of Tatrus, was strongly opposed by the aristocracy. Furthermore, it led to the latter's division and threatened to escalate into civil war. As a result, the leading members of the nobility and the most influential dignitaries united to offer the crown to Narseh (Frye, 1983, pp. 129-30).

Narseh's Middle Persian-Parthian bilingual inscription (NPi, 1-3; Skjærvø, 2006, pp. 119-23) on the tower of Paikuli in ʿIrāqi Kordistān (Kettenhofen, 1993, map; idem, 1995, p. 5, Fig. 1) is the only source for the four-month reign of Bahrām III and the military encounters between him and Narseh (Weber, 2010a). Bahrām's authority had strongly suffered because he had obviously made himself dependent on Wahnām, called an "assistant of Ahriman" (NPi 3.1, sec. 4). The noble opposition against Bahrāms III's coronation might have suited Narseh. His followers might have had four reasons to consider him the right king: because of his experience in governance as viceroy, his reputation as sponsor of the Mazdean religion and as a guarantor for the peace and well-being of the empire (NPi 3.1, sec. 69), but also because of his origin from the primordial branch of the royal Sasanian family (NPi 3.1, secs. 13, 80-81).

A unique feature of the Paikuli inscription is the naming of his supporters, in three lists (NPi 3.1, secs. 16, 32, 92-93; Weber, 2012, pp. 192-93, 205-6). At first, his followers asked Narseh to come to Ērānšahr to take over the throne of his forefathers (NPi, 3.1, sec. 18). Narseh's meeting with his supporters took place in the pass of Paikuli at Hāyān ī Nīkātrā (i.e., Syriac Nīqātōr-Āwānā, modern Benkodra; Herzfeld, 1914, p. 6; Henning, 1952, pp. 519-22; Cereti and Terribili, pp. 78, 84). Here, Narseh was unequivocally accepted and presumably also proclaimed king for the first time. To avoid escalation, Narseh had offered a truce to both Bahrām III and Wahnām. In the event of their approval, they would be ordered to renounce fighting. There are no reports on military encounters or decisive battles.

The resolution of this conflict might have been due to a change of mood among Bahrāms III's soldiers that made many of them defect to the enemy. As a result, Bahrām III submitted to his great-uncle Narseh and renounced the throne (NPi 3.1, sec. 51). However, it remains unknown whether Bahrām III died a violent death or not. Most probably, Narseh was content with his grandnephew's resignation (Börm, 2007, pp. 104, 108, n. 7), whereas Wahnām was probably sentenced to death after his capture (Skjærvø, 2006, pp. 119-23). Wahnām may be the prostrate figure under Bahrām I's horse on his investiture relief at Bīšāpūr (V) that was later claimed by Narseh for himself

by substituting his own name for that of Bahrām (Sarfarāz, 1975, p. 171; Herrmann, 1981, pp. 11-14, 17-20, Fig. 2, Pl. 15a-c; Weber, 2012, pp. 199-201).

Afterwards, Narseh called a meeting of the nobles to face royal election (NPi 3.1, secs. 63, 68-69); by his recourse to this ritual, which had been known since Ardašir I's time, Narseh tried to get accepted by the nobility and the rulers of the entirety of Iran, not as a usurper, but as a legitimate ruler (Weber and Wiesehöfer, 2010, pp. 89-132, 89 n. 1). This is why the Paikuli inscription can be considered both as a statement of Narseh's deeds and as a legitimating document. After an unequivocal vote of his supporters, Narseh agreed "to enter the throne of Our Father and Our Forefathers with the help of the Gods, in their name and that of Our Forefathers" (NPi 3.1, sec. 90). The fact that Narseh could also count on wide approval beyond the nobles' meeting is supported by the third list with the names of 37 followers (NPi 3.1, sec. 92-93; Weber, 2012, pp. 205-6). Whether they all had vassal status or not is strongly debated.

Narseh as šāhānšāh of the Sasanian Empire (293-302). King Narseh's nine years of reign can be divided into three stages: (1) the years from his coronation (293) up to the beginning of the Roman-Persian war (296/97); (2) the war with the Imperium Romanum; (3) the years up to his death (298-302).

At the beginning of Narseh's rule, the eastern parts of Mesopotamia (since the treaty [*foedus*] of 244) and Armenia (since 252) were part of the Sasanian Empire. The view that the Armenian king Trdat/Tiridates had been restored in the western areas of Armenia and that the province had been divided has to be dismissed. It is quite certain that Armenia remained a Sasanian vassal state in the third century for more than 40 years, from its conquest up to the Roman-Persian treaty of 298 (Kettenhofen, 1995, pp. 67-69, 144-64; idem, 2005, p. 139; idem, 2008, pp. 484-90). The hypothesis that Narseh might have pursued an expansionist policy in the footsteps of his father (Šāpur I) soon after his coronation (Lactantius 9.5; Ensslin, 1942, p. 35; Chaumont, 1969, p. 114; Winter, 1988, pp. 152-54; Bleckmann, 1992, pp. 137-38; Kuhhoff, p. 169; Winter and Dignas, 2001, p. 48; idem, 2007, p. 28; see also Kettenhofen, 1984, pp. 177-90; idem, 2002, pp. 49-75; Wiesehöfer, 1993, p. 373, n. 54; idem, 2007, pp. 164-66) does not correspond with the statement of the Paikuli inscription: "And Caesar and the Romans were in gratitude (?) and peace and friendship with us" (NPi 3.1, sec. 91; Weber, 2012, pp. 210-12). In contrast to this statement, a war broke out with the Roman Empire three years later. From a

Roman perspective, the aggressive policy of the first two Sasanian kings had been a heavy burden on the bilateral relations. However, the decisive factors for the Roman attack may have been the former territorial losses and the unfavorable shift in the power relation in the Mesopotamian-Armenian areas in the 240s and 250s. From Narseh's point of view, the re-strengthening of the Roman Empire had given the impression of a forthcoming war, portended by Diocletian's administrative and military reforms, the extension of the border fortresses in the east, like that of the Euphrates line, the construction of a fortified frontier road, the *Strata Diocletiana*, and the strengthening of the Syrian steppe border against the *Saraceni* (*Panegyrici Latini* III [11] 5.4, 7.1; Wiesehöfer, 2008, p. 545; Mosig-Walburg, 2009, pp. 98-99; Weber, 2012, pp. 215-16). Additionally, Galerius's presence in his headquarters at Nicomedia must have been a menacing danger for the security of the Persian possessions in Mesopotamia and Armenia. It might be assumed that, in the late summer of 296, Narseh stationed his troops in the northeast of Mesopotamia on Persian terrain in anticipation of a Roman attack.

Before suppressing an uprising in Egypt, Diocletian asked Galerius to cross the borders of Syria in the direction to Mesopotamia to counteract the offensive of the enemy (Aurelius Victor, 39.33). Narseh might have been prompted by Galerius's specific route of march to attack the Roman part of Mesopotamia so that his own imperial territory would not be exposed to the war (Mosig-Walburg, 2009, p. 113). If so, that motive would seem to indicate that it was Narseh who started the war. However, Narseh is not the only one to be held responsible. Ammianus Marcellinus is the only author who transfers the first acts of war to Armenia: in his opinion, Narseh was the first to attack, in the area of Armenia that was subject to Roman law (XXIII 5.11; for Narseh's itinerary, see Mosig-Walburg, 2009, pp. 120-22). The tradition of Ammianus is not compatible with the other sources; according to his version, Narseh would have attacked an area that had already been part of the Sasanian Empire from 252 onwards (see above). In the Narseh inscription and in other dependable sources, there are neither hints of a division of Armenia nor of the theory that Narseh had been made viceroy only in a part of Armenia (Kettenhofen, 1995, pp. 56-73, esp. p. 68-69 and n. 428-29; but see also Henning, 1952, p. 517, n. 4; Chaumont, 1975, pp. 151-55; Toumanoff, 1969, pp. 256-65; idem, 1987, pp. 543-46, Table 13). Furthermore, the Paikuli inscription introduces Narseh as king of Armenia, which means that he still bore this title in 293 (NPi 3.1, sec. 3).

In the spring of 297, there was a first military clash in an area between Callinicum and Carrhae (Kettenhofen, 1984, map), which resulted in a heavy defeat of Galerius (Eutropius, IX 24; Orosius, VII 25.9; Theophanes, 9.4). Diocletian was upset about the defeat (Amm. Marc., XIV 11.10; Eutropius, IX 24; Festus, XXV 1; Jordanes, *Romana* 38.301; Orosius, VII 25.9; Theophanes, 9.5-7), but allowed Galerius to levy new troops. Conversely, Narseh withdrew to Sasanian territory on the southwest border of Armenia. His convincing victory might have kept him from continuing the fighting, from planning new campaigns and occupying Roman territories (Wiesehöfer, 1993, p. 373, n. 54; idem, 2007, pp. 164-65). However, Narseh's wrong assessment of the Roman war strategy would have disastrous consequences. At the end of 297 or 298, Galerius, with his newly recruited army, moved from Syria to the Roman province of Cappadocia, to the garrison town of Satala (P'awstos Buzand, III 21 [text], pp. 98-99; tr., IV, pp. 22, 155) not far from Narseh's camp at Osḫa in the Basean canton, a district east of Erzerum in Armenia Major (Aurelius Victor, 39.34; Eutropius, IX 25; Lactantius, 9.6). In a surprise attack, Galerius came upon Narseh's camp, inflicted a major defeat on him, led Narseh's harem and many nobles into captivity, and carried off large parts of the Persian imperial treasury. Narseh was able to escape.

Narseh sent Affarbān, whom he trusted, to Galerius to convey to him his desire for peace and submission, and solely asked that his children and wives be returned to him (Petros Patrikios, Frags. 13-14). Petros Patrikios is the only preserved author who tells us about the negotiations and the final peace treaty. Nevertheless, the reports that we have do not give us the authentic contract (Kettenhofen, 1995, p. 70 n. 435), but only the five important clauses in condensed form (Petros Patrikios, Frag. 14; Winter and Dignas, 2001, pp. 145-47; idem, 2007, pp. 122-24; Kettenhofen, 1984, map; Winter, pp. 152-215; Mosig-Walburg, 2009, pp. 122-55; Weber, 2012, pp. 231-48). The treaty of Nisibis in 298 was a major success for Rome, not least because of the recovery of the areas lost under Emperor Philippus Arabs. For the Sasanians, however, it was nothing more than a dictated peace treaty (Klein, p. 185; Wirth, pp. 336-37; Barceló, p. 74; Blockley, 1992, p. 7; but see: Winter, 210-13; Winter and Dignas, 2001, p. 154-55; idem, 2007, p. 130), and Narseh must have seen it as inflicting a grave loss of prestige, in the eyes of his own subjects and of foreigners alike. After the peace had been concluded, Narseh's wives and children returned home from captivity. Galerius had the details of his victorious campaign depicted on his triumphal arch at Thessaloniki for future generations (Weber, 2012, pp. 248-49 and n. 324). Only Narseh's grandson,

Šāpur II, was able to recover sizeable parts of the territories lost to Diocletian, in his treaty of 363 with Jovian.

Of Narseh's family, four members are known and attested in inscriptions: two wives, Šāpurdoḵtag, Sagān Bāmbešn (Sakān Queen) and Narsehdoḵt, Sagān Bānug (Sakān Lady; ŠKZ genealogy: ranks 12-13); Narseh's crown prince, Hormozd [II] (ŠṬBn I-II: Back, pp. 490-91); and Narseh's daughter, Hormozd(d)oḵtag (ŠKZ genealogy: rank 29; Weber, 2012, pp. 270-73).

Narseh's titles. His titles are reliably recorded by primary sources, four inscriptions (ŠKZ, NVŠ, NPi, ŠṬBn-I) and his coins (for details, see Weber, 2012, pp. 261-70):

Ia. As viceroy (262) of Hind(estān), etc.: *ēr mazdēsn Narseh, šāh Hind, Sagestān ud Turestān tā drayā damb*, "the Iranian, Mazdā-worshipping Narseh, king of Hind(estān), Sagestān and Tūrān up to the seacoast" (ŠKZ: Huyse, 1999, I, sec. 34).

Ib. As viceroy of Armenia: *šāh Armenān* ('King of Armenia'; NPi 3.1, p. 28, sec. 3). This title is debated by scholars. Starting point of the debate is the fact that Hormozd-Ardašir had been enthroned as 'Great King of Armenia' by his father. By contrast, Narseh is just called *Šāh Armenān* in the Paikuli inscription thirty years later in 293 (Kettenhofen, 1995, pp. 42-45; see also Mosig-Walburg, 2009, pp. 84, 85-86, 91, and p. 87, n. 372).

II. As king of kings (*šāhānšāh*), he took over the titles of his predecessors: ptkly ZNH mzdysn bgy nlsḥy MLKʾn MLKʾ ʾyrʾn W ʾnyrʾn MNW ctry MN yzdʾn, "This (is) the image of the Mazda-worshipping god Narseh, king of kings of Ērān and Anērān, whose seed (is) from the gods" in the inscription of his brother, Bahrām I (MacKenzie, pp. 14-17).

III. An epithet: nr]shy ZY ʾpcwt-GDE = *Narseh* (?) *ī Abzūdxwarrah* "Narseh, whose *xwarrah* blossoms" (NPi 3.1, p. 53, sec. 56, and p. 80; Gignoux, 1972, p. 16b; idem, 1986, p. 27, no. 18). This epithet was probably already given to him by his supporters at their first meeting on the pass of Paikuli. The Aramaicum *GDE* in the meaning of *xwarrah* (splendor, glory), linked with the verb *abzūdan* (to increase), was meant to point out to the fact that the *xwarrah* had left Bahrām III and was going over to Narseh. Narseh's coins show three different versions of the titulature quoted above on the obverse. The different shortenings of the titulature might be due to the engravers' difficulties in

placing the whole text on the obverse. The omission of the additional *ud Anērān* in the legend has therefore no relevance whatsoever as far as historical events are concerned (Alram, 2012, pp. 287-89).

IV. As Narseos the Caesar. Noteworthy and unprecedented is Narseh's title *kaisar* (Coptic *p-kaisar*; see Weber, 2012, p. 262, n. 376) in a text of the Dublin *Kephalaia* (see CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY; Giversen, 2Ke 445, 2-7= 2Ke 309 [G]); in Gardner's translation (p. 179): "Narseos the Caesar, the son of Shapur the king ... this persecution of the apostle. He (bound him in) fetters and chain." The text raises a great many questions, which, however, will probably only be answered after the final publication of the Dublin *Kephalaia*. It has not yet appeared in the hitherto known texts that king Narseh himself had been involved in persecution of the religious founder Mani. The apostle's seizure must have probably taken place when Narseh had still been viceroy of Sagestan. Note Gardner's new reading of the Middle Persian fragment M3, in which he interprets the nameless king not as Bahrām I, but as Narseh, viceroy of Sagestān (Henning, 1942, pp. 949-50; Gardner, pp. 177-79).

Narseh's religious policy. The two Bahrāms had turned their backs on the tolerant religious policy of their predecessors and had persecuted the followers of non-Mazdean faiths, including Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Mandaeans, Jainas, Manicheans, and Christians (Kartīr's inscription: KKZ, see Back, pp. 411-18). The effects of this change in religious policy were still palpable in Narseh's first years. In contrast, Narseh adhered to the tradition of his father, who had provided Mani with protective letters and had not interfered with his mission activity (*Manichaean Homilies*, p. 48.1-22; Wurst, p. 107.20-22). The quarrels between Bahrām I and Māni had led, in the end, to the latter's seizure and his death in prison in 276 (Wurst, p. 109.30-44; *Manichaean Homilies*, p. 48.19-23). The persecution of the Manicheans and Christians had continued also under Bahrām II (martyrs, among others: Māni's successor, Sisinnios, ca. 291/92; Qandidā [Qandirā, in Taqizāda], wife of Bahrām II; see *Manichaean Homilies*, pp. 82.5-83.20; Brock, pp. 167-81; *Taʾrīḵ al-nasṭuri*, in Taqizāda, pp. 383-84; on Qandidā, see also DEPORTATIONS ii. In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods). Most probably, the persecution of the Manicheans did not stop at the end of Bahrām II's reign (Seston, 1939, p. 229). The report on an alleged end of the persecution in the *Manichaean Homilies* cannot be harmonized with the tradition of the texts from the Chester Beatty Library that testify to persecutions of the Manicheans at the beginning of Narseh's rule (Giversen, II, sheets 99-100; Pedersen, pp. 193-201, sheets 99-100).

This is why the Manichean communities turned for help to ʿAmr b. ʿAdi, the Lakhmid king of Ḥira (Schaeder, pp. 337-62; Taqizāda, pp. 17-18). He is identified with one of Narseh's supporters mentioned in the Paikuli inscription (NPi 3.1, sec. 92; Chaumont, 1975, pp. 94-96; Blois, pp. 196-98). King ʿAmr sent letters to Narseh and his *hargbed*, Šāpur (Hyparxos Sapōrēs) asking him to stop the persecution of the Manicheans. Innaios, who succeeded Sisinnios in leading the Manichean community (*Manichaean Homilies*, pp. 83.21-85.9), must have played a decisive role as bearer of the letters of request to Narseh and as a partner in the negotiations. Up to the year of King Narseh's death in 302, the Manicheans experienced religious freedom and were able to unfold an active mission movement.

According to the *Histoire nestorienne* (I, p. 255), Narseh's attitude towards Christianity was likewise marked by tolerance. Many unequivocal statements on Narseh's attitude towards the gods of Zoroastrianism can be found in the Paikuli inscription. It must have been Narseh's intent to demonstrate the close connection between the legitimization of his rule and the rule of his Sasanian forefathers and the favor of the Zoroastrian gods both to his followers and to future generations (Stausberg, I, p. 225). Whereas Šāpur I speaks of "the gods" quite generally (Huyse, 1999, 1, secs. 32, 51), Narseh preferred to stress the prominent position of Ahura Mazdā in relation to the other gods (NPi 3.1, secs. 19, 90). Also quite striking is the mention of the goddess Anāhitā. Ṯaʿālebi's note (p. 510) that Narseh "did not visit the fire temples" does not fit with many examples of the king's religious zeal. It should therefore be regarded rather as an anecdote than as a historical fact (Chaumont, 1988, p. 121). Another argument against the credibility of the quotation is the religious imagery of his coins, furthermore, the title *ēr mazdēsn*. For Narseh's followers, two determining criteria justified the legality of his claim to power. In their view, the gods had honored the family of Sāsān in a special way by bestowing on them the divine royal glory, *xwarrah* (GDE), and the rule over Ērānšahr (NPi 3.1, secs. 80, 88-90). This is why the Paikuli inscription glorifies Narseh's grandfather Ardašir and holds the latter's son Šāpur in high esteem (NPi 3.1, secs. 65, 68, 70, 80, 82). His possession of the *xwarrah* reassured Narseh that he had been chosen king by the gods and would be protected by them.

IMAGES

There are five busts of Narseh on the monument of Paikuli (Herzfeld, 1938, p. 112, Fig. 8; Alram, 2012, Pl. 75, Figs. 8a-b; p. 280; Cereti and Terribili, p. 85). Current knowledge suggests that these busts (with palmette crown and long

hair) are to be dated to the first phase of his rule. His only rock relief is at Naqš-e Rostam (Figure 1a, Figure 1b; Herrmann, 1977, pp. 9-11, Pl. 8, Fig. 2; Weber, 2010b, pp. 305-19; Mosig-Walburg, 2011, pp. 446-73; Alram and Gyselen, Pl. 76, Fig. 9a-b). There Narseh presents himself amidst his family; the image wears a lamellar crown, and the hair is bunched to either side (Alram, 2008, p. 28; idem, 2012, pp. 280-81).

The common images of Narseh are those of the coins (Alram, 2012, pp. 277-352, 488-522). Narseh's minting activity "can be divided into three succeeding phases" (Alram and Gyselen, p. 351). According to recent typological and stylistic studies, Narseh is wearing the palmette crown in phases 1 and 2, but in combination with two different hairstyles; in phase 3, he wears the lamellar crown without palmettes, and his hair is held together in bunches of locks at the nape. Narseh's lamellar crown, which formerly had been identified as his first crown type (Göbl, 1959, pp. 7, 12; idem, 1971, p. 45), has now to be seen as the king's second one, which he is also wearing on his rock relief (de Shazo, pp. 2-3; Alram, 2008, p. 28; Alram and Gyselen, pp. 280-81). This means that Narseh was the first Sasanian king who changed his crown (Alram and Gyselen, p. 281, n. 27; see Figure 2). The reason cannot be determined with certainty on the basis of the existing sources. However, one may wonder if Narseh's change of crown can be associated with specific historical events, namely, with his severe defeat and ignominious peace treaty of 298 (Alram and Gyselen, pp. 280-81, 345).

In the end, the correction of the crown typology has also consequences for the dating and interpretation of Narseh's rock relief. Formerly, some scholars (e.g., Justi, pp. 518-19; Sarre and Herzfeld, 1910, pp. 84-88, Pl. IX) saw it as representing the king's investiture by the goddess Anāhitā, but it has now to be interpreted differently. Although there is an ongoing debate on whether the female figure represents the queen or the goddess Anāhitā (Shahbazi, pp. 256-57; Tanabe, p. 113; Herrmann, 2000, p. 42; Šenkar, 2013, pp. 612-32; idem, 2014, pp. 66-80), here one fact speaks in favor of Narseh's wife Šāpurdoḵtag, who is mentioned in the genealogy of Šāpur's inscription (ŠKZ genealogy: rank 12; but see Mosig-Walburg, 2011, p. 466, n. 104). Whereas Sasanian coins only seldom reflect political events (Alram and Gyselen, pp. 280-81), this does not automatically also apply to sculptural art. However, one wonders which event Narseh might have wanted to perpetuate on this relief. The imagery of the royal couple that holds the ring of power decorated with diadem ribbons and accompanied by the crown prince and the grandson was probably meant to

demonstrate royal power. The relief might have served as an image of sovereignty representing Narseh with the divinely given *xwarrah*, remembering his epitheton: *Narseh ī Abzūdxwarrah*.

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Abbreviations.

[KKZ] Kerdir's inscription at Kaʿba-ye Zardošt.

[KNRm] Kerdir's inscription at Naqš-e Rostam.

[NPi] Narseh's inscription at Paikuli (see Humbach and Skjærvø).

[NVŠ] Narseh in Veh-Šāpur (see Back, pp. 490-91.

[ŠKZ] Šāpur's Inscription at Kaʿba-ye Zardošt.

ŠṬBn-I] Šāpur II in Ṭāq i Bustān (see Back, pp. 490-91).

[ŠṬBn-II] Šāpur III in Ṭāq i Bustān (ibid.).

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See also SASANIAN ROCK RELIEFS.