

The Effect of the Arab Muslim Conquest  
on the Administrative Division of Sasanian Persis / Fars

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**Abstract**

Symbolically , Fars appears to have been the most important province of the sasanian empire between the third and seventh centuries A.D. The survival of the Zoroastrianism and its vigour in Fars after the Arab Muslim Conquest is attested by various accounts of Muslim historians and geographers . Further , the redaction of many of the middle Persian text in the early Islamic centuries in the province attests of the strength of Zoroastrianism . In this essay attempts to delineate the changes that took place in the administrative geography and the administration of the province of Fars in the late sasanian / early Islamic period .

Symbolically , Fars appears to have been the most important province of the Sasanian empire between the third and the seventh centuries A.D. This is made clear by its place within the list of the provinces in the early Sasanian inscriptions , where among the provinces of Ērān-šahr “domain of Iranians ”, it was always held above the rest of the provinces. In the inscription of Ka‘ba Zardošt, Šābūhr I names Fars as the first province of the empire . (Back: 1978, 258) Religiously , the province was the traditional stronghold of Zoroastrianism, where the priests kept the tradition alive . Pābag, the father of Ardaxšīr I, was the priest of the Anāhīd fire temple at Staxr , and it was there that the Sasanian imperial propaganda and aspirations took shape . Although the traditional homeland of Zoroaster’s scene of preaching was the east , where Kauui Wištāspa had accepted the religion , Fars became the stronghold of the religion and the priests from the Achaemenid period onward . The most influential Zoroastrian priest of the third century , Kerdīr , while enumerating the provinces of Ērān-šahr, mentioned (Middle Persian) p’lsy , Fars as the first province. (Gignoux: 1991, 61) Since both imperial and religious authorities were to mention Fars as the first province in the land of Iran and for the Mazda worshipping religion , we can conclude that Fars indeed held a special status at least as the origin of the dynasty.

The survival of Zoroastrianism and its vigour in Fars after the Arab Muslim conquest is attested by various accounts of Muslim historians and geographers. Further, the redaction of many of the Middle Persian texts in the early Islamic centuries in this province attests of the strength of Zoroastrianism . Istaxrī states regarding Fars :“There is no city or region without a fire-place(ātaš-gāh), and they (Persians) respect it” (Istakhri: 1969, 97) In the thirteenth century, Marco Polo visited Fars and tells us that:“he found a town called Kala Atašparastān (i.e., kādag (or

qal'a) ī ātaxš-parastān?house or fort of the fire worshippers), that is to say town of the Fire-worshippers... and I assure you that they are very numerous.”(Marco Polo: 1958, 58-60)

These anecdotes suggests that in the province of Fars, Zoroastrian Persian presence may have been stronger than other places in the Iranian plateau and that the Arab Muslim presence was not as strong as in other regions. This essay attempts to delineate the changes that took place in the administrative geography and the administration of the province of Fars in the late Sasanian/early Islamic period. To grasp and gauge this change one needs to pay attention to the late Sasanian administration before looking at the early Islamic period. From the epigraphic sources of the Sasanian period, it appears that the state was becoming more centralised and organised and there was an exponential growth in honorifics and titles from the sixth century onwards. The growth of titles and the specialisation of offices seems to be characteristic of late antiquity and Byzantium. This also occurred under Kawād and his son, Xusrō I, when a restructuring of the empire took place and the Muslim historians, Middle Persian texts, and the sigillographic evidence support this fact.

The very organisation of the provinces remains enigmatic, since many of the sources contradict each other. This is the product of two phenomena. The first has to do with the layers of reform, meaning that the older Sasanian system was complemented by the reforms of Kawād, and then of Xusrō I, and of Xusrō II, and finally the early Islamic reforms. It seems unlikely that the old institutions were completely replaced by new ones in such a short period, and thus there were several layers of authority and division piled upon each other. The second problem has to do with the very nature of the sources which give ample description of the Sasanian administration. Since most of the information comes from the Islamic period one should, however, be hesitant and cautious in using this information, since the description seems to be closer to the Abbasid administrative division of the eastern caliphate, than to the late Sasanian period. (Morony: 1982, 1)

For the Middle Persian sources, the most important text is the Šahrestānīha-ī Ērānšahr, “The provincial capitals of Ērānšahr”, redacted at the time of the caliphate of al-Mansūr (754-75 A.D.), but may be based on an authentic Sasanian source. (Gyselen: 1988, 206) Many of the administrative offices and officers are also mentioned in the Madīyān ī hazār dādestān “the Book of a Thousand Judgments” which was redacted in the reign of Xusrō II (590-628 A.D). More importantly, there are the administrative seals and coins which represent primary sources. They are invaluable in providing the basis for the reconstruction of the administrative system. The literary sources should be used whenever possible to corroborate or question the epigraphic evidence.

However, the seal corpus is incomplete, and only with the future discovery of more seals shall we have a better grasp of the situation in the sixth and seventh centuries. This essay attempts to give a preview of the administrative change mainly based on the coins and seals, and to view the effect of the Arab Muslim conquest on the province.

The administrative and military division of the empire has remained enigmatic, as mentioned before, and this has been caused by the contradictory nature of the sources. This is especially true of the question of the quadripartition of the late Sasanian empire, where arguments have not subsided. While it had been the norm to state that the Sasanian empire was divided into four regions at this time, more recently it has been asserted that the sigillographic evidence does not give any clue to this quadripartition. The explanation for this difference between the literary and the epigraphical evidence has been that this quadripartition was based on the Zoroastrian mythological understanding of the world which goes back to the Mesopotamian conception of the universe. (Gignoux: 1984, 555-72) The textual sources give ample evidence in regard to the quadripartition. This is not only stated in the Middle Persian sources, but also in Armenian sources, such as Moses Xorenats'i, who says that the province of Fars was in the quarter of the South

(Armenian) k'usti nemrog, (Middle Persian) kust ī nēmrōz, as part of this quadripartition. (Marquart: 1901, 16) Within this scheme of quadripartition, there are still contradictions. For example, Xorenats'i places Fars and Sīstān in the k'usti nemrog, while Tha'alībī places Sīstān in the quarter of the East kust ī Xwarāsān, and Fars in the kust ī nēmrōz.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for the differences may lie in the nature and times of the various reforms and divisions. There seems to be no hint of a quadripartition with regard to civilian and secular administration, and there is no evidence for it in the administrative seals. But militarily and religiously, there might have been a quadripartition, where a spāhbed was in charge of each kust "quarter".<sup>2</sup> From the religious point, the kust was under the control of a rad "spiritual master". (Kreyenbroek: 1987, 152) Before the reforms of Kawād and Xusrō I, an Ērān-spāhbed controlled the military of the whole empire, but later, his power was to be broken up among four spāhbeds. Some numismatic evidence also points to the quadripartition of the empire under Kawād I. The reverse side of Sasanian coins usually notes the date when the coin was struck and the place or mint signature. There are many Sasanian and Arab-Sasanian mint signatures which have not been attributed for certain. Recently, Gurent (Gurent: 1994, 36-7) has proposed to reading the Sasanian mint signature DYNAW which had been attributed to the city of Dēnāwar, as DYW-AO, along with three other signatures that have been found, DYW-AT, DYW-AS, and DYW-KR. In regard to DWY-AO, due to confusing nature of the Middle Persian alphabet, a letter could at times be read several ways.

The first three letters, DYW have been suggested to be the abbreviation for dēwān, thus Perso-Arabic dēwān, meaning "government office", with the next two letters acting as suffixes for the region. Gurent suggests AO for the south-west, AT standing for the quarter of north-west, perhaps standing for Ādūrbādagān; AS for the Capital, perhaps for Āsūrestān; and KR for the south-east, standing for Kermān.<sup>3</sup> By identifying AO with the south-west the scheme of the quadripartition becomes questionable, but the real question is what does AO stand for? Gurent does not give definitive answer to this anomaly, and indeed one can read the suffix as AN, thus DYWAN, but another suggestion may be more suitable. In Middle Persian, initial āleph can also be read as hēt and O is written with wāw, thus it can also be read as w. Here one can suggest the reading XW for Xwarāsān, thus DYWXW "Dēwān of Xwarāsān", the north-east. (Daryae: 2002, 10) These coins were minted during the reign of Kawād I, which exactly corresponds with the beginning of the administrative reforms. (Gurent: 1994, 37) To further support this supposition R. Gyselen's fine study of the newly found seals belonging to Sasanian generals (spāhbeds) has demonstrated that without adoubt the late Sasanian empire was quadripartitioned. (Gyselen: 2001)

According to these seals several personages attained these offices for each kust; Čīhr-Burzēn and then Dād-Burz-Mihr were the Ērān-spāhbeds of Xwarāsān (north-east); Wahrām Nāmxwāst, Pirag, and then Wēh-Šābūhr were the Ērān-spāhbeds of Nēmrōz (south-east); Wistahm was the Spāhbeds of Xwarwārān (north-east); and Gōrgōn, and then Sēdhōš were the Ērān-spāhbeds of Ādurbādagān (north-west). (Gyselen: 2001, 35-45) Thus the literary sources can be complemented by the coins and sigillographic material, which both point to the fact that there was indeed a quadripartition. The quadripartition was perhaps a reaction to the military setbacks experienced by Kawād I. The incursions from the east by the Hephthalites, as well as the Byzantine frontier wars in the west, and the Arab raids into the empire from the south, meant that it was crucial for the empire to be able to deal with problems on several fronts. This may have been the cause behind the division of the military power into the hands of four generals, who would thus be able deal with the invasions and wars. Here we have a division of four quarters, much like the divisions in Byzantium, where there was a praefectura praetorio per Orientem "prefecture of the east"; Praefectura praetorio per Illricum "prefecture of Greece and the Balkans"; Praefectura praetorio

Illyric, Italia et Africae “prefecture of Illyric Italy and Latin Africa”; and Praefectura praetorio Galliarum “prefecture of Roman Britain and the Iberian Peninsula”, (Ostoyorsky: 1996: 97-98 & Byzantium: 1990, 35) but not oriented to the cardinal points. Thus we have the old Sasanian divisions of the third and fourth centuries, followed by the quadripartition and later divisions by Xusrō I and Xusrō II in the sixth and seventh centuries. Fars, thus, may have belonged to the kust ī nēmrōz. Turning to Fars, now we can look at the divisions of the province itself.

For the administrative division within Fars, one is again faced with difficulties. Provinces in the third century inscriptions appear as štry (Middle Persian text) šahr, while the districts were also known as šahr and a capital city was known as šahrestān. The šahr was administered by the šahrdār, who was probably a local king in the third century. They were rulers of these provinces who were appointed by the King of Kings. (Lukonin: 1983, 701) The districts or šahrs were under the command of a šahrāb and a mogbed. The mogbed dealt with property rights and other legal affairs, which is attested by the function of the mogbed of Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, one of the districts of Fars.<sup>4</sup> There was also an āmārgar “accountant”, who dealt with the financial aspects of one or more districts. The number and divisions of the province of Fars in the late Sasanian period is problematic as well. We are faced with contradictory evidence for the names of these divisions and this may hint at the restructuring of the administrative divisions of Fars in the late Sasanian and also in the early Islamic period. The district, šahr, was known in the Islamic period as kura or xora. It has been suggested that the name was derived from the Greek chora which had been introduced in the Seleucid period. (Morony: 1984, 129) One can also suggest (although it is unlikely) that the Perso-Arabic kura/xora derives from the Middle Persian xwarrah. This is because many of the cities established by the Sasanians include the word xwarrah as a suffix. One can mention Ērān-xwarrah-Šabūhr and Ērān-xwarrah-Yazdgerd, and, more importantly for the districts of Fars, Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, and Kawād-xwarrah. Thus, because of the popularity of this suffix for various cities, it might have become the general designation for a district in the early Islamic period. According to the seal corpus, six šahrs are mentioned: (1) Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, (2) Bēšābūhr, (3) Staxr, (4) Dārābgerd, (5) Nēw-Darāb, and (6) weh-az-Amid-Kawād. Attempts at consolidating the Sasanian and Islamic sources have led to different, and at times forced, conclusions. How can we reconcile the Sasanian and Islamic sources? The Perso-Arabic sources of the early Islamic period usually enumerate five kuras (1) Ardašīr-xora, (2) Šāpur-xora, (3) Staxr, (4) Dārābgerd, and (5) Qobād-xora, also known as Arrajān. This has led to retrojection on the late Sasanian period that there were five kura/xora. In fact, some Perso-Arabic sources state that there were six kura. Ibn Xurrdābeh names Fasā as the sixth kura, although in another passage, he places Fasā in the kura of Dārābgerd. (Schwarz: 1969) He may have had access to an older source which confirms the late Sasanian situation. Ibn Rosta names seven kuras, including Fasā and Šērāz as the sixth and seventh. (Schwarz: 1969) Maqdisī enumerates six kuras, making Šērāz the sixth, but later states that Šērāz was not a kura before and that it was part of Staxr, and this was done by the author’s initiative<sup>5</sup>. Thus if we would disregard Šērāz, one is faced with six kuras. This confusion may have been the result of late Sasanian reforms which reduced the number of the districts from six to five kuras, and joined Fasā, the capital of Nēw-Darāb, with Dārābgerd. Ibn Balxī in describing the conquest of Fars, regards Fasā / Fasā as part of Dārābgerd (Dārābjird) (Ibn al-Balxi: 1921, 115). Thus there is a stronger possibility that in the late Sasanian period, Nēw-Darāb had been added to the district of Dārābgerd and its šahrestān, Fasā had become part of Dārābgerd. According to Gyselen, this may also have taken place in the early Islamic period, (Gyselen: 1989, 71) and the districts were reduced to five. In this regard, Ibn Xurrdābeh may be correct in assuming that there were six districts which reflect the post reform period. This is perhaps the result of the confusion

in the several administrative reforms of the late Sasanian empire which made the division unclear to later observers.

Nēw-Darāb is mentioned neither in the Sasanian literary sources, nor in the Perso-Arabic sources, nor by the numismatic evidence.<sup>6</sup> Weh-az-Amid-Kawād is a greater problem, since it is mentioned as one of the five *kuras* of *bilād fārs* in the Islamic sources. We can turn to the numismatic evidence for support for the existence of such a *šahr* in the late Sasanian period. There are five mints in Fars which are known with some certainty, and they include 1) BYŠ or Bēšābūhr, 2) DA or Dārābgerd, 3) ART or Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, 4) ST or Istaxr, and 5) WHYC or Weh-az-Amid-Kawād. (Gyselen, 1979, 210) These mints were active in the late Sasanian period and are in correspondence with the districts of Fars, according to the sigillographic sources. This, of course, reflects the situation after the reforms of sixth century, since Weh-az-Amid-Kawād was the creation of Kawād in the sixth century, and complemented the other four *šahrs*. Thus each *šahr* within Fars appears to have had a mint at its *šahrestān*. There were other subsidiary mints which are still problematic at best. The mint of the city of Weh-az-Amid-Kawād, Islamic Arrajān, WHYC, has been controversial and has been attributed to Weh-az-Amid-Kawād, reading it as WHYC.<sup>7</sup> Mochiri has read it as VSP for Visp-Šād-Xūsro (Xosrow), (Mochiri: 1982, 454) and Mordtmann and Sellowood have proposed NIHC for Nēw-šābūhr. (Sellwood: 1985, 49) Gyselen's identification as Weh-az-Amid-Kawād or Arrajān, as it was known in the Islamic period, (Gyselen: 1979, 210) is based on a Sasanian seal with three cities mentioned: Staxr, Bēšābūhr, and Weh-az-Amid Kawād, thus located in Fars (Gyselen: 1993, 62 & 112). Her reading is justified, since the peculiarities of the coins of Islamic Arrajān and the Sasanian coins of Weh-az-Amid-Kawād are in accordance with other Arab-Sasanian mints of Fars. This has to do with the appearance of pellets on the reverse of some of the Sasanian and Arab-Sasanian coins in Fars, which makes the identification certain that it is in fact the mint of WHYC.<sup>8</sup>

In the Middle Persian text, *Šahrestānīhā-ī Ērān šahr*, regarding the provincial capitals of Fars, the first four are in accordance with the numismatic and the sigillographic evidence (PT 22.41-45):

Šahrestān ī staxr ardawān ī \*pahlawīgān-šāh kard,  
 Šahrestān ī dārāb-kird dārāy ī dārāyān kard,  
 Šahrestān ī weh-šābuhr šābuhr ī ardaxšīrān kard,  
 Šahrestān ī gōr-ardaxšīr-xwarrah ardaxšīr ī pābagān kard

“The provincial capital of Staxr was built by Ardawān, the king of \*Parthians, the provincial capital of Dārābgerd was built by Dārā son of Dārā, the provincial capital of Bēšābūhr was built by Šābūhr, son of Ardaxšīr, the provincial capital of Gōr- Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, was built by Ardaxšīr, son of Pābag.” (Daryae: 2002, Text 15, tr.20)

Here we do not find a reference to Weh-az-Amid-Kawād. The Islamic sources, however, may support the later importance of Weh-az-Amid-Kawād. In the tenth century text, *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, regarding the cities of Fars, again one comes across Staxr, Bēšābūhr, Gōr, i.e., Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, and Dārābgerd as cities built in the time of the Sasanians, including Arrajān, written *Arragān*<sup>9</sup>. In the *Fārsnāme*, the province is divided into five districts (*kura*): Staxr, Dārābgerd, Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, Šābūhr-xwarrah, i.e., Bēšābūhr, and Kawād-xwarrah, i.e., Islamic Arrajān<sup>10</sup>. Istaxrī, in his work also mentions the five major districts, those of Staxr, Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, Dārābgerd, Šābūhr-xwarrah, i.e., Bēšābūhr, and Arrajān<sup>11</sup>. Malek doubts that Weh-az-Amid-Kawād (Arrajān) was such an important town in Sasanian times as to have had such a large output of coins. (Malek: 1993, 90) One should keep in mind that in the *futūh* literature, one comes across Weh-az-Amid-Kawād as an important place of conquest. The reason for the ambiguity may be that the district was formed later than the other districts of Fars. Al-Tabarī relates that the city was established at the order of Kawād (A.D. 499-531) after laying siege to Amida and carrying the inhabitants of that city to this location and making it the centre

of that district. (Schwarz: 1969, 150) This is also corroborated by Ibn Balxī and Ba'amī who, while naming Arrajān, stated that in the Sasanian period it was called Qobād xora which was established during the reign of Qobād b. Fērōz.<sup>12</sup> Thus it appears that this city, which was later to be the šahrestān of that šahr in Fars, was created during the military and administrative reforms of Kawād in the sixth century.

This may explain the problems with the mint and the district as compared with the other well known districts of Fars. This is also supported by the organisation of the Christian dioceses established in Fars in the fourth century, where Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, Bēšābūhr, Dārābgerd, Staxr, and Kāzerūn are mentioned, and where there is no mention of Weh-az-Amid-Kawād. Thus we can conclude that while Nēw-Darāb lost its importance and became integrated into the district of Dārābgerd, Weh-az-Amid-Kawād gained importance and, by the early Islamic period, became an important district. The omission of Weh-az-Amid-Kawād in the Middle Persian literary sources may also suggest that the territorial reforms were late and were accompanied by other divisions. Now we will turn to the administrative division of the districts. The šahr, or district, was further divided into rōstāgs, which perhaps consisted of several villages, and the smallest unit was the deh or village, which was headed by a dehgān.<sup>13</sup> This division is apparent from a late Middle Persian inscription, where a certain Xurdād, son of Hormuzd-Āfraīd who was a Christian, recalls his home in this order: (1) mān ī Ērān-šahr, (2) rōstā čālākān, (3) deh Xišt: "from the dwelling of Ērān-šahr, from the rōstā of Čālākān, from the deh of xišt." (De Bloise: 1990, 209-18) In Sīrat Anūšīrvān preserved in Ibn Miskawayh's Tajārib al-Umām, the same order is preserved, where Xusrō I enumerates the following administrative units in the following order: (1) balad "region", (2) kūra, (3) rustāq, and (4) qarya which is equivalent to deh. (Piacentini, 1994: 96) In the early Islamic period some of these terms seem to have been confused and used interchangeably. For example the rōstā, Arabic rustāq, was at times thought to be equivalent to a tāsōg, Arabic tassūj or a nāhiya.<sup>14</sup> There are, however, several accounts that corroborate the survival of the same terms in the above manner in the Sasanian period as well as the early Islamic period. Bal'amī, retrojecting to the beginning of the Sasanian dynasty, states that Ardaxšīr came from the šahr of Staxr, from the land of Fars. He mentions that Staxr had a rōstā, and there was a deh. Thus we have the exact division of the Sasanian epigraphic information, (I) šahr, (II) rōstā, (III) deh.<sup>15</sup> This may represent the correct division which stayed on in Fars in the early Islamic period.<sup>16</sup> This is corroborated by other sources, such as Tārīkh ī Qom which records that the city of Qom was made of seven dehs which were joined together.<sup>17</sup> Other divisions included the royal lands, the ostān which was headed by the ostāndār. This corresponds with Armenia, where the ostān was the royal land in the Marzpanate period (428-652 A.D); some territories were divided into ostān, and the ostān into gawars. The šahr and deh contained temples which were under the control of the Mogbed. (Lukonin: 1983, 727)

Another division was the tāsōg over which we know that a dādwar "judge" had authority by the seventh century,<sup>18</sup> and that the mogbed of the district (šahr) had power over the dādwar who had power over the tāsōg.<sup>19</sup> Tāsōg, has been suggested to be a fourth of rōstāg. Its meaning is relatively clear, from Middle Persian tasum "fourth". The question is whether this tāsōg was the fourth of what part of a territory/unit of division? Morony has suggested that the šahr or districts were divided into subdistricts around small towns or villages, and that this was called a , Arabic tassoj. (Morony: 1984, 129) One has to ask if there was a difference between these toponyms or not. According to the Madīyān ī Hazār Dadestān (MHD100, 5-7), while the šahr was under the administration of a mogbed, the tāsōg was under the command of a dādwar. the dādwar also had a superior, who had the title of šahr dādwaran dādwar "Supreme judge of the province".<sup>20</sup> This is also evident from the Syriac text The Life of the Patriarch Mār Abā (540-552 A.D) where a certain Mār Qardag held two titles, that of

āyēnbed “master of ceremonies”, and šahr dādwar “judge of the empire”. This has been suggested to be the combination or conflation of two titles, the šahr dādwar and dādwaran dādwar “judge of judges”. According to the Middle Persian texts, the dādwar dealt with a variety of cases, such as property rights, records and confessions, attended to complaints, broke seals and retained unclaimed property. (Shaki: 1994, 558) After the Muslim conquest, there is little evidence for changes in the organisation of authority, with the exception of the imperial government at Ctesiphon. In order to run the province effectively, Arab governors were appointed to head the šahr, and so the šahrāb may have been replaced by an amīr. Thus there seems to have been continuity of administrative divisions in Fars. With the collapse of the Sasanian government, naturally some of its offices became extinct as Arab Muslims took over. Other offices, especially the religious offices, such as the mogs, mogbeds and hērbēds with their chiefs became more powerful and became the caretakers of their people, i.e. the Zoroastrians. The Zoroastrian ecclesiastical hierarchy survived long after the Arab Muslim conquest in one form or another, along with the believers. This would not be far-fetched since even after the conquest, the (Middle Persian) mogbeds were left in charge of collecting taxes, administered charitable foundations and, because of the fall of the military and state, they may have gained even more power. Because of the chaotic situation after the conquest and the loss of state financial support, the higher ranks of the religious hierarchy was forced to do other work and overlap in their functions with lower ranked priests.

We can surmise that in the first Islamic centuries, the local elite were left in charge of the administration of the districts and the cities. When the Arab Muslims conquered the region, they were mainly settled in the amsār or garrisons, which either became new cities themselves, or were established next to the old ones. There was little contact and integration at the time of conquest and the immediate period that followed. This policy was not only supported by the Caliphate, but also by the Zoroastrian religious hierarchy who forbade contact and interaction with the Muslims. When conversions did take place, interaction became inevitable and so many laws were drawn up to regulate manners of interaction and conduct. These are mentioned in the Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts of the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. As for the administrative changes, there were certainly shifts in the late Sasanian period, when districts were reduced and others created. This is particularly clear in regards to Nēw-Dārāb and Weh-az-Amid-Kawād, where while Nēw-Darāb was to be integrated into the district of Dārābgerd, Weh-az-Amid-Kawād was established. Weh-az-Amid-Kawād became the westernmost district of the province of Fars and gained its own mint. The motives behind these shifts are not clear, but the influx of population seems to have had a part in this decision. The Sasanians were a force behind the processes of urbanization, made clear by the many cities they established. We know that the newly established Weh-az-Amid-Kawād was populated by the inhabitants of the city of Amida.<sup>21</sup> While some were returned to Amida, others may have stayed behind in their new houses and people from other cities may have further populated the area. The transfer of population from Syria and northern Iraq into the province of Fars from the third century A.D. contributed to the increase in the numbers of the Christians in the empire. While it has been suggested that there was a trend towards Christianisation in Sasanian Iran, we must not forget that this Christianisation was partly due to the fact that a large number of the newly settled people were Christians. Many of these people were skilled workers who contributed to the development of the cities. Certainly skilled laborers did contribute to the development of the empire, but this should not be overstated. We can agree on an influx of religious minorities in the provinces and settlement in new urban centres. This was complemented by shifts in the make-up of the districts, along with other reforms. Thus we seem to have a dynamic situation in the late antiquity in the province of Fars. The changes seem to have been accelerated by the Arab Muslim conquest, in terms of the development of new urban centers. Islam was an urban religion, and it was at the urban centres that religion first took hold in Iran. To this way,

the non-Muslim population survives in villages and remote places, while Islam took hold in the major cities or created them. Administratively, however, there seems to have been the little change, since the Arab Muslims left the divisions as they were. Officials and their function The seals relate several offices for a province and its districts. They are as follows: (I) šahrāb, (II) mog, (III) mogbed, (IV) driyōšān jādaggōw ud dādwar, (V) handarzbed, (VI) dādwar, and (VII) āmārgar.

(I) šahrāb: “provincial governor” The title of šahrāb is already found in Old Persian titlature (Old Persian) xšassapāvan, (Greek) satrapēs which meant “guardian or protector of the domain”.(Beneveniste: 1973, 315) The satraps were the ones who administered the great provinces of the kingdom. The šahrāb was the head of the domain or guardian of the kingdom. In the Achaemenid period, he was the head of province and the post possibly existed in the Median the Parthian period, the office is also attested in an inscription found at Šūš(Susa) and it seems that the title had already declined since the Achaemenid period. Henning was correct in stating that “the area he (the satrap) now governed was small, scarcely more than a town with its surroundings”.(Henning: 1953, 134) In the Islamic period Middle Persian.

šahrāb, Parthian hštrp, was known as šahrīg In the third century inscriptions, the decline of this office from the Achaemenid period is evident, where in the inscription of Šābūhr I at Ka‘ba Zardošt a list of šahrābs is given, for example that of Hamadān, Nirīz, and Weh-Andew-Šābūhr. The šahrāb is listed in the seventh position, after the framādār “court minister”, and before the dizbed “garrison commander”.(Frye: 1956, 331-335) In the Paikuli inscriptions, the šahrāb is mentioned in the eleventh rank after the kadag-xwadāy “lord of the house”<sup>22</sup> and before āmārgar “accountant”.(Humbach & Skjaervo: 1983) in the fourth century inscription of Šābūhr II (311 A.D) in the list of the retinue of the king of Sīstān, the šahrāb is placed after the mog “priest”, and before the dibīr “scribe”.(Beck: 1978, 438) This inscription shows the important position of the office within the province, where it is only subordinate to the MLK “king”, handarzbed “counsellor”, and mog, and above the dibīr “scribe”, āzād “free men”, frēstag “messenger”, and sardār “chiefs”.(Frye: 1966, 85) This may show the resurgence of the office and its importance in the Sāsānian period. The seals of the šahrāb portrays the person with jeweled cap (II) mog (mow): “priest” The mog functioned within the religious and state apparatus. The sheer number of seals with this title attests to the importance of this officer for the bureaucracy of the state, as well as the temple economy and the size of the religious body in Sasanian Iran. There are also seals for the mog of Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, Bēšābūhr, and Staxr. Wedo have evidence of a mog serving a province as early as the fourth century, where one accompanied the king of Sāstān.(Frye: 1966, 82)The mog was the lowest rank of “priesthood”, that functioned in various capacities in the districts, cities, villages, and temples. He seems to have been in charge of controlling economic transactions. On a large jar with a cursive inscription (late Sāsānian) a mog is imprisoned because of lying,(Nikitin: 1992, 105) and committing wināh “sin”, which was a legal term adopted from religious terminology,(Shaki: 1994, 544) perhaps in regard to the amount or worth of the commodity stored in the jar.

(III) mogbed(mowbed):“chief priest” The title is apparent in the third century, where Kerdīr is called an Ohrmazed mogbed “the mowbed of Ohrmazd”, under Hormizd I. He later achieved the added title of kerdīr ī boxt-ruwān-wahrām ī ohrmazed mogbed “Kerdīr, mowbed of the blessed Wahrām and Ohrmazd”.(Henning: 1956, 53) The assumption of many of the titles which appear later for Kerdīr at one time, show the beginning of these titles under his control. They include hamšahr mogbed ud dādwar “the mowbed and dādwar of all the empire”, and āivēnbed “master of ceremony”.(Gyselen: 1989, 186) By the fourth century, the office of mogbed had become important and was placed in the list of offices below hazārbēd “chilarch”, and above šahr-āmār-dibīr “secretary of finances”.(Humbach & Skjaervo: 1993, 42-43) This growth in power perhaps had to do with the



growing strength of the Mazdean priestly organisation and its hierarchy. It seems that the mog and mogbed were the ones who were involved in the administrative aspects of the empire and the province in large numbers. There are seals of the mogbed for subdistricts, fire temples and cities, which show the degree of their involvement and status.

It appears that by the late Sasanian period the mogbed dealt with documents and they were signed by him, which was only part of his duty. The mogbeds functioned in several main capacities. The mogbed, along with the šahrāb, administered a šahr or district. Since we do possess a seal for the mogbed of Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, (Gyselen: 1995, 123) we can assume that the other districts had a mogbed in charge as well. While the seal for the mogbedān mogbed is absent, from the mention of this title in many textual sources we may assume that ultimately such a person also had authority over the mogbeds. This title seems to have been attested as early as the fourth century in the Syriac sources, where there was a rēsā de maupātā “head of the mowbeds”. (Morony: 1987, 576)

Their growing authority and status is also attested by Byzantine sources. For example, in the sixth century Agathians states that “nowadays, however, the Magi are the object of exterem awe and veneration, all public business being conducted with their discretion and in accordance with their prognostications, and no litigant or party to a private disput fails to come under their jurisdiction. Indeed nothing receives the stamps of legality in the eyes of the Persians unless it is ratified by one of the Magi.”<sup>23</sup> They were not only active in administration, but seem to have gained even more power. The Syriac sources even report that mogbeds at some time were able to rule over a province, such as that of Adiabene, and others were in charge of the courts. This idea is also supported by Mšihā-Zkhā who reports that in the early Sasanian period the mogbeds and marzbāns were put in charge of provinces. (Shaked: 1990, 268) This may be a retrojection to the past, but it may also reflect the way the an-ērān “non-Iranian” provinces were controlled, since we here from the Armenian sources that the Sasanians put in charge of Armenia, along with the hazarapet, a chief mog, i.e., mogbed, who functioned as the judge of the land. (Garsoian: 1984, 4) Elish also reports that the Sasanians governed their empire by the religion of mog. (Elishe: 1982, 60) In the Middle Persian writings an interesting passage states that the mogbed was in charge of an awestām which can be translated as “province”, which was larger than a rōstāg and smaller than a kust. (Gignoux & Tafazzoli, 1993, 114-15)

(IV)driyōšān jādaggōw ud dādwar: “advocate and judge of the poor” One comes across this title, mainly by viewing the seal corpus, Madīgān Hazār Hazār ( 93.7), at the time of Kāwad official seals were introduced for the mowbed and the āmārgar, and the seal of the dādwar was made by the order of Xusrō I, and there was a mogbed for the entire province of Fars, and the title of the mogbed was changed to driyōšān jādaggōw ud dādwar “advocate and judge of the poor”. This office seems to be concered with social, legal and religious spheres. From seals we know that there were dādwar “judges”, functioning in the province, but for jādaggōw there is no evidence that it was a seprate office. It was during the time of Xusrō I that the dādwar was given a seal and functioned in districts and cities. (Shaki: 1994, 557) The textual evidence may shed some light on the problem because we do come across the title jādag-gōwān “adovocates”, which is explained as ayār “helper”, and panāhīh “protection”, (Menasce: 1963, 283) but its sence is not clear, and it may have had the function of intercessor on behalf of people or cause.<sup>24</sup> In the Zoroastrian world, they are thought to be placed with the peace-seekers in heaven.<sup>25</sup> De Menasce was one of the first to comment on the function of the office and to show that this office belonged to the mogbed of Fars. (Menasce: 1963, 282-87) Now we have as many as sixteen seals with this title. The sheer number of the seals with this title makes Shaked’s assumption that this office belonged only to the mogbeds of Fars implausible. (Gignoux: 1976, 105) For Fars, there is a seal for the driyōšān jādaggōw ud dādwar who administered the various subdistricts, such as Bēšābūhr, Staxr, and Ardaxšīr-xwarrah. (Gyselen: 1989, 31) Also driyōšān jādaggōw ud dādwar was in charge of three districts at the same time, those of Dārābgerd , Bēšābūhr ,

and Weh-az-Amid-Kawād .(Gyselen: 1989,59) Shaked has tried to down play the importance of the function to a more honorific. Yet he demonstrates the moral authority of this mogbed, which seems to be concerned with the welfare of the poor as attested in the Middle Persian texts: “The seventh is (jādag-gōwīh) advocacy. It is this: One who speaks a word on behalf of a widowed woman, a hungry child, fires, cattle, sheep and other hopeless creatures, specifically for the sake of his own soul.”(Shaked: 1975, 215) Clearly, this official must have had some functions relevant to the title as opposed to other mogbeds, such as administration of money received in charity for the poor and needy.<sup>26</sup> From the title it is clear that the religious authority(mogbed) had gained legal authority as well, which is paralleled with the title of St. Nersēs in Armenia: jatagov amenayn zrkeloc “intercessor for all the deprived” (Gorsoian: 1981, 24).

The driyōšān jādaggōw ud dādwar was perhaps the overseer of charitable foundations to help the poor and the needy.<sup>27</sup> This was a religious duty which the powerful should keep as their duty (Dēnkard VI.142): “The powerful means are not harmful to that man or to (other) people. In whatever comes about he is driyōšān jādag-gōw advocate for the poor and acts in such a manner that(his) wealth and riches are open to all men, and that they hold them as their own and are confident.”(Shaked: 1979, 57) On the local level the mog may have been in charge of the religious endowments, which were set up by people pad ruwān for the sake of the soul. This of course ties in with the Islamic institution of waqf or religious endowments which had the same function in the early Islamic era. (Macuch: 1987, 178-79) (V) handarzbed: “councillor”

The handarzbed served in various capacities as an adviser to persons of rank. In the Persepolis Middle Persian inscription, in the early fourth century, we encounter the title Sīstān handarzbed “chief councillor of Sīstān”, second only to the king of Sīstān, and above the mog and the šahrā of Zarang.(Frye: 1973,84-85) Thus, from early on he seems to have had an important function within the court apparatus, whose function may have been more concerned with advise, acting as an adviser and dealing with moral causes. For Fars, we only possess the seal of the handarzbed of Ardaxšīr-xwarah,(Gyselen, 1993: 33) but this makes this probable that there were other handarzbedān functioning for other districts. Alternatively, there could have been one handarzbed administering several districts at the same time. The dar handarzbed “court counsellor”, was an was an advisor to the king and was part of the court retinue, who according to the Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pāpagān (X.7) accompanied the mobedān mogbed “chief mogbed”, ērān spāhbed “chief of the army”, puštaspān sardār “chief of cavalry”, dibīrān mahist “grand scribe”, and was placed before the wāspuhragān “grandness/specials”. The mogān handarzbed gave advice in legal matters pertaining to marital questions, Madīyan-ī hazār dādestān (57.12;59.10;98.3), but the handarzbed in general did not have to be a mog. The mogān handarzbed had reached an important position by the end of the Sāsānian period, perhaps because of the growing power of the religious hierarchy. In one Middle Persian text, he is listed after the following offices Sūr Afrīn (157.9-14): šāhān šāh “king of kings”, pus ī wāspuhr ī šāhān “principal son among the princes”, wuzurg framādār “grand minister”, the spāhbeds “military commanders” of xwarāsān “north-east”, xwarwarān “north-west” and nēmrōz “south-east”, followed by the dādwar ī dādwarān “chief judge”. Below him are the mogān handarzbed, and the hazārbed “children”.<sup>28</sup> The mogān handarzbed was the counsellor to the mogbadān and as an explanation or Pahlavi version of the Yasna, mogān handarzbed is glossed as the teacher of the mogān. In the Perso-Islamic literature, the man of religion are placed in the first rank and divided into four divisions, the last being the mo’alimān, i.e, the hērbēdān “teacher-priests”.<sup>29</sup> We also have a seal for this office, as well as the mogān handarzbed of Sīstān. The handarzbed ī wāspuhragān “counsellor to the grandness/specials” had authority within the king’s demesne. (Chaumont: 1987, 22) There was also a handarzbed for the queen at the time of Šābūhr I bānūgān handarzbed, and a handarzbed ī aswāragān

“the counselor for the cavalry”.<sup>30</sup> In the Armenian History of Lazar P‘arpec ‘ i , it is reported that the movan anderjapet was sent to fortress in Nēw – šābūhr where Armenian Priests were held captive . He was to take them to a deserted spot to torture them , but more probably to try to change their mind in religious matters . More importantly , the text states that the movan anderjapet was under the authority of the movpetan – movpet , i.e., mogbedān mogbed .<sup>31</sup> A Middle Persian text states that the mogan handarzbed and the mowbedān mowbed were set over the rōstāg , the mowbedān who held sway over an awestām “district”, and radān “spiritual masters ”, over a kust “ quarter ” .<sup>32</sup> the mogān handarzbed according to the madīya – ī hazār dādestān was in charge establishing guardianship , and administrating foundations for the soul .(Perikhanian: 1968, 21) (VI) dādwar : “judge ”

The judge had to have legal schooling , and it is quite possible that he could have been a mogbed . This fact is attested by al-Mas‘ūdī, who stated that the chief judge , qadī al-qodat , perhaps from Middle Persian dādwrān dādwar , was the head of all mogbeds<sup>33</sup> . Thus the legal apparatus seems to have been under the control of the religious hierarchy. As stated earlier , the Madīyān ī hazār dādestān (100,11-15) states that the dādwar was under the authority of the mogbed . There is only one seal found with this title , thus we do not know how prevalent the office was from the sigillographic evidence .This perhaps means that by the sixth century A.D. mogbed had taken over the function of judges.

(VII)āmārgar : “accountant” From the sigillographic evidence it appears that the āmārgar “accountant”, and the dādwar “judge” controlled economic, administrative and legal processes. The whole province had an accountant, which is manifest from a seal found at Qasr ī Abū Nasr: (D209) pārs āmārgar “accountant of Fars”.(Frye: 1973, 63) In addition, there were accountants which held power over one or more šāhrs within Fars. One example is the āmārgar of Staxr and Dārābgerd,(Gyselen: 1989, 112) and the other the āmārgar of (B164) “Ardaxšīr,xwarrah, Bēšābūhr, and Nēw-Darāb”. An āmārgar’s jurisdiction could be changed, as is evident from other seals such as (Z3 Gyselen) “Staxr and Bēšābūhr and Weh-az-Amid-Kawād”. Beside the accountant for the provinces and the districts there were also a “court accountant” dar-āmārgar and accountant in charge of the finances of the empire, Ērān-āmārgar.(Gyselen: 1989, 35-36)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> - Abu Mansūr Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Tha‘ālibi, Ghurar Axbār mulūk al-Fars wa sālīhim, ed.H. Zotenberg (Paris,1990),p.393.

<sup>2</sup> - Gignoux basically disagrees with this division, “Le Spāhbed des Sassanides”, Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam XIII (1990), pp. 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> - KR certainly stands for Kermān where it appears on the mint GNCKR, which has been proposed to stand for gain kermān “treasury of Kermān”, see M.I. Mochiri, Garmikirmān, “A Sasanian and Early Islamic Mint in Kirmān Province”, NC CXLV (1985), pp.109-22.

<sup>4</sup> - Madīyān Ī Hazār Dādestān 100.4-5.

<sup>5</sup> - “In the dīwāns it (Šērāz) is considered as part of Staxr, but I call it a kūra”, see al-Muqaddasi, Ahsan al-taqāsī fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, ed. M.J.De Goeje, Pars Tertia (Leiden, 1906), translated by A.N. Monzavī, (Tehran,1361), vol.II,p.632.

<sup>6</sup> - The only way to reconcile the possibility of having Nēw-Darāb as a district is that it was created in the late Sasanian period and that it was reunited with Dārābgerd in the late Sasanian or early Islamic period If Nēw-Darāb was in the locality of the city of Fasā, which became known as part of a kura, it may support Gyselen’s argument. If the Sasanian mint of PA would stand for the city of Fasā, this idea might be justified; see also Marquart, Ērānšahr, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> -The location of this mint is unclear and there have been several suggestions. Mitchner has identified the mint as NIHC for Ctesiphon in the province of Asūrestān, “Mint Organization in the Sasanian

Empire”, *The Numismatic Circular*, LXXXVI, No.9 (September 1978), p. 473; see also S. Tyler-Smith “Sasanian Mint Abbreviations”, *NC*, CXLIII (1983), pp.224-45.

<sup>8</sup>- Micheal Bates at the American Numismatic Society showed me the peculiarities of the coins of Weh-az-Amid-Kawād and Arab-Sasanian Arrajān with other mints of Fars.

<sup>9</sup>- Anon., *Hudūd al-‘ālam min al-Mašriq ilā al-Maghrib*, ed. M. Sotoodeh (Tehran, 1983), pp. 130-36.-

<sup>10</sup>- Ibn al-Balxī, op. cit., p. 121.-

<sup>11</sup>- Istaxrī, *Masālik wa mamālik*, ed. I. Afshār, (Tehran, 1969), pp.97-102.

<sup>12</sup>- Ibn al-Balxī, op. cit. p. 84; *Tārīx-ī Bal‘amī*, ed. M. Bahār, Vol. II (Tehran, 1974), p.965.

<sup>13</sup>- Lukonin believes that the Rōstāg was a rural district and its villages were the deh, p. 727; Piacentini states that rustāq indicated a lesser administrative area with a rural character (though more rarely it might also have designated a village or a small rural area including one or more villages), V.F. Piacentini, “Madīna/Shahr, Qarya? Deh, Nāhiya/Rustāq The city as Political-Administrative Institution: the Continuity of a Sasanian Model”, *JSAI*, XVII (1994), p.92.

<sup>14</sup>- Dīnāwarī, *Axbār al-tiwāl*, p.228; Nashr Nay, Tehran, 1364. Morony, op.cit., 1984, p.129; others believe that a Tāssūg was divided into rasōtāq, rustāq was divided into Tāssūj, R.N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia. The Arabs in the Fall* (London, 1975), p.10.

<sup>15</sup>- *Tārīx-ī Bal‘amī*, pp.874-75.

<sup>16</sup>- Bal‘amī says that a letter from Ardawān, the last Parthian king to Ardaxšīr states that: you are a man from the rōstā of Staxr, your father Bābak was a man from Rōstā, it was not large enough for you to come a šahr, that according to him you would take over Staxr, p.880; Tabarī (I, 814) states that Ardaxšīr was from the quarya of Tīrūdeh, belonging to the rustāq of Khīr, in the kūra of Istaxr of the balad of Fars.

<sup>17</sup>- *Tārīx-ī Qom*, ed. S.J. Modarres (Tehran, 1982), p.23.

<sup>18</sup>- *Madīyān ī Hazār Dādestān* 100.5-7.

<sup>19</sup>- *Ibid.*, 100.5-7.

<sup>20</sup>- *Madīyān ī Hazār Dādestān* 110.148.

<sup>21</sup>- S.N.C. Lieu, “Captives, Refugees and Exiles: A Study of Cross-Frontier Civilian Movements and Contacts Between Rome and Persia From Valerian to Jovian”, *The Defense of the Roman and Byzantine East*, ed. P. Freeman and D. Kennedy, Part ii, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, Monograph No.8, BAR International Series 297(ii) (Oxford, 1986), p.499.

<sup>22</sup>- This kadag-xwadāy is not an ordinary “master of the house” and must have been of a noble house to be positioned before the šahrāb. I owe this suggestion to Hanns-Peter Schmidt.

<sup>23</sup>- Aghatians, *The Histories*, II.26.5.

<sup>24</sup>- *Pahlavi Rivayats* 196; *Sad-dar Nasr* XXII.3.

<sup>25</sup>- *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, XIX.15.

<sup>26</sup>- Shaked believes that the title was a complimentary one, designating the mowbeds of Fars in particular, *ibid.*, pp.215-16.

<sup>27</sup>- For dryōš see, W. Sundermann, “Commendatio pauperum”, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, IV (Berlin, 1976), pp.179-91; also M. Shaki, “An Appraisal of Encyclopaedia Iranica, vols II, and III”, *ArO*, LLX (1991), p.406; T. Daryaei, “Modafe’ drawīšān va dāvar dar zamān-e sāsānī”, *Tafazzolī Memorial Volume*, ed. A.A. Sadeghi (Tehran, 2001), pp.179-88.

<sup>28</sup>- *Pahlavi texts*, ed. J.M. Jamasp-Asana (Tehran, 1913), p.157; J.C. Tavadia, “Sūr Saxvan, A Dinner Speech in Middle Persian”, *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, XXLX, (1935), 42f., 63f.

<sup>29</sup>- *Tansar-nāme*, ed. M. Minovi (Tehran, 1932), p.57, 143.

<sup>30</sup>- Šābūhr I, *Ka‘ba-ye Zardošt*, line 33.

<sup>31</sup>-History of Lazar P'arpec'I (Atlanta Ga,1991),88.50 and 98.-

<sup>32</sup>- Zādspram,p.88.

<sup>33</sup>- Mas'ūdī , Murūj al-dhahab,p.240; it should be mentioned that due to the corrupt nature of the passage qādī al-quḏāt may stand for mogbedān mogbed.

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