

Denominations and Titles of Rulers in Iran in Pre-Islam Era

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ABSTRACT

Rulers of ancient Iran applied abundance of denominations and titles to disseminate their beliefs and views. A number of such denominations and titles were selected in compliance with their predecessors and others were picked as the result of other factors in the course of time. Through denominations and titles, rulers principally tried to exhibit their sovereignty, supremacy, and sanctity among people. A glimpse at the history and civilization of past peoples paves the way for the investigation of denominations and titles of rulers in old days and factors leading to their formation.

KEYWORDS: title – denomination – ruler – history – sovereignty –people

INTRODUCTION

Generally, the human history is conferred of ascending trend and promoting nature. Therefore, socializations and communications mainly brought about the development of nations. Past civilizations were an impact on communities and occasionally modifications were exerted into the social values and conceptions and occasionally the earlier patterns were obeyed. The application of denominations and titles in Iran is traced back to a long time ago. Monarchs and heads of tribes were mostly characterized through their denominations and titles. Interestingly, Iranians applied their denominations and titles far more than their real names, and desire for denominations and love of titles has preponderated in the culture of this territory. The quality and the diversity of the denominations and titles can be observed through meditation in the oldest historical publications, ancient stone inscriptions and also coins. The predominant role of religion along with politics was among the most influential factors biasing the choice of denominations and titles by the rulers throughout the history. For the reason that always religion cast sanctity corona on monarchs. Therefore, they viewed religion as an approach for accomplishing their mundane ambitions on the grounds that religion was firmly planted in social communities.

In old times, religion was intermingled with superstitious notions and fallacies and slowly sensible rapport was established between religion and human beings. Monarchs mostly resorted on religion shield to maintain and preserve their hegemony and sovereignty. They also managed to open up novel political prospects through war and attack. Both spiritual and material elements actually contributed to the selection of denominations and titles. If we appraise the conditions and beliefs of the past times such sketch emerges that Kings oriented to the religious beliefs of the society and relied on their political proficiency while choosing the denominations and titles. Therefore, they managed to obtain authority, predominance, and sanctity which in turn warranted their perseverance in history.

The present study will focus on the investigation of denominations and titles that rulers utilized in ancient times until the pre-Islam era. Denominations refer to the statements or adjectives which were devoted to one or several kings under specific conditions. Titles pertain to lexical items which convey the dignity and political status, and were constantly applied by a number of rulers.

Elam

Not unlike other ancient civilizations, Elam's civilization had a polytheism religion. In one of the most ancient records which belongs to 2223 B.C. names of all the Elam gods have been written. These gods were worshiped till the fall of Elam. (1) Mesopotamians believed that Elam was the land of witches and demons. One of the characteristic of their religion was snake worshipping. Such religion even influenced the Imperturbable Assyrians. (2) Inshooshink was the most important god of Elam whose name derived from the Sumerian Nin-shooshink, meaning "the lord of Susa", was a memorial of the domination of the Sumerian in Elam in the distant past. (3) All the Elamite people believed in the existence of life after death and the restoration of spirits to Inshooshink territory. (4) Inshooshink among other gods had the most significant influence on the spirits of Elamite people. In Ashorbanipal's words, an Assyrian king, Inshooshink was a mysterious god who blew in unknown places where no

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one could make sense of his divine existence. (5) Such beliefs regarding the power and influence of Inshoshink might have been reason that most of the Elam kings had selected his name.

Denominations and Titles-

With such beliefs, and religious replete with images and spirits, rulers of Elam used the titles like, Sukel, Sukelmah, king of Anshan and Susa.

Those kings of Susa who were called Sukel accepted the sovereignty of the Sultan in Babylon.(6) and after Shilhaha (shimty shilhak) was appointed as the monarch of a large part of the Elam and established the idea of kings for local areas, used the Sukelmah title."Sukelmah "or"raised messenger "was the most elevated title since it was a proof of the rapport between kings with the gods. That's why such kings could be regarded as "Prophet"or even "angels". (7) In other words, "Sukelmah"was equivalent to "king of kings" or as the most prevailing rulers of the kingdom. Such titles were attained after astonishing triumphs. Also the conceptual sense of "Sukelmah"sanctifies the kings.

Furthermore, "king of Anshan and Susa"were very glorious titles which were in use of Elamite kings since the second millennium (BC.), and symbolized the kingdom of Susa and Anshan mounts. The existence of constructions (temple, palace), suggests the authority of the kings of Anshan and Susa in southern parts of Zagros during the second millennium (8). These constructions also suggest the attention of these kings to religion and worshiping.

Although some rulers creating "golden age" of Elam (9) did not suffice to the title of "king of Anshan and Susa"and along with maintaining their old title, selected other denominations such as "Propagator of empire"and "servant of the gods" for themselves. After the seizure of Babylon, Shotrok Nakhonteh brought loads of trophies like board law of Hammurabi, the goddess of Uruk and Mardok God of Babylon to the Ainsoshink territory, Susa. (10) Subsequent to these victories Shotrok Nakhonteh called himself in an inscription "Propagator of Empire, adored servant of gods." (11) In Shilhak Ainsoshink's time (1165-1150 B.C.), Elam developed and as the result of his triumphs and the integrity among his troops, the first kingdom was brought under the sovereignty of Elamites and in fact Elamites accomplished rehabilitation of national force. (12) Subsequent to all these events Hoteh Lodosh Ainsoshink who substituted Shilhak Ainsoshink in 1150(B.C.) attempted to call himself "Propagator of empire". Comments have been made that, a talented king called Homban Nomba was the first who disputed the denomination of "Propagator of empire". Discoveries in Liyan Island in Persian Gulf confirm the accuracy of this claim. (13)

A meticulous investigation of denominations axiomatically reveals the proclivity of Elamite rulers to religion and politics. The glorious denomination of "Propagator of empire"subsequent to their victory and establishment of a unified sovereignty divulges the king's arrogance and ambitiousness. By the same token, the denomination of "servant of the gods"proves the Elamites' civilization of polytheism and the rulers' caring for the beliefs of the community. During a few thousand years of ethnic concentration, this community survived against the attacks of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon and Assyria. It declined several times and rehabilitated but eventually was exterminated by the Ashor Banipal.

Achaemenid

Achaemenid imperial is regarded as the continuation of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Elamite kingdom. The old inscriptions remained from those times, testify that Achaemenid kings dominated Elamite and Anshan territories and regarded themselves as the authoritative and powerful landlord of the land of Persia.

Persia enjoyed a special position in ancient religious texts and in Bandahishn, it is described as an ideal location for people settlement. (14) Historical records also suggest that the most outstanding civilizations of Iran, particularly the Achaemenid and Sassanid civilizations were developed in Persia. It had also an old history prior to Achaemenid. From the very troglodytism era to the threshold of history, Persia was regarded as the cradle of ancient civilizations. Recent discoveries in Tal Melyan ascertained that a large part of the Persian territory was under subjection of Elamite civilization and was referred to as Anshan. (15) On gold tablets (discovered in Hamadan) chish pish, Aryarmaneh and Arshameh have regarded themselves as the landlord and the king of Persia. (16) Therefore, this is the beginning sparks of the proclivity of the Achaemenid kings to prove their sovereignty in Persia on the inscriptions.

Titles of Achaemenid kings

Titles of Achaemenid kings are greatly diverse in the Achaemenid inscriptions: "Great King, the King of Kings, King in Persia, the king of territories, the king of many countries, the king in this territory, Achaemenian King, King of people of all kinds, the king in the distant territories... ". Inscriptions testify that the title of "the king of kings"(=Shahanshah) was officially used in Iran from the very beginning of Achaemenids. (17) The given title is a purely Iranian terminology and belongs to all Iranians. This title is traced back Khshayasyanam of the ancient Persia. (18) It is said that this title in fact belongs to Medes but no inscription has been discovered from the Medes

remaining. (19) According to a quotation, the second Sardanapallus applied the title “king of kings” in the first half of the eighth century (BC.) during the splendor of Urartu. (20)

But during the Achaemenid reign the title of “king of kings” meant the country's most authoritative imperial position and was used to refer to the highest rank man in empire. The person with such rank was conferred of administrative, military and juristic power. Such power embraced any issue except for religious authorities. Actually, the title of “the king of kings” had wider scope than the title of “the king”. Some researchers believe that Achaemenid kings’ graphs unveils that “the king of kings” was the representative of Ahuramazda on earth. Therefore, they sincerely exalted the king and envisaged him as a God who is the protector of everything. (21)

The title of “The king of people of all kinds” which have been pictured in the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings is the offspring of integration of ancient oriental civilizations i.e. Elamite, Persian, and Assyrian Babylonian civilizations. Such advantage promoted the Achaemenid kings in Persia. It also underlines Achaemenid kings’ political talent which helped them elevate themselves in history through consensus.

Kings also appropriated the title of the other kings after they defeated their territories. As an example, Cyrus called himself as “king of Babylon” and “king of Anshan” after he conquered Babylon and Medes. He has also referred to himself as “... a mighty king, king of Babylon, and king of Sumer and Akkad ...” in his eminent cylinder. (22) It is notable to mention that after Babylonian strong-personality man, Hammurabi’s dream about unified Mesopotamia came true (23) appropriated the title of “King of Sumer and Akkad”. Similarly kings of Ur used the same title after they dominated the southern Mesopotamia. (24) Therefore, the application of “King of Anshan, King of Sumer and Akkad” probably confirms the significance and influence of the Elamite legacy in Achaemenid civilization, particularly during Cyrus. It further allusively implies the succession of Elamite kings domination in the Mesopotamian territories and civilizations.

Although in time of Cyrus Medes and Persians remained in their current occupations and western kingdoms conceived Persian Empire as Medes Empire, (25) the Empire of Cyrus and his successors were much thankful to Elamite than to Medes. (26) It is notable to say that the inscribers of tablets of Persepolis were those Elamites who were accountants and historians of their Elamite kings for long and later came to serve for Persian conquerors. (27) Elamite belief influenced Achaemenid kingdom and traces of imitation from Elamites are witnessed in the political and social life of Cyrus and other Achaemenid kings. The Elamite thinking might have also played a role in the selection of titles mentioned in tablets of Persepolis.

Denominations of Achaemenid kings

The first Ardeshir’s denomination “long hand” initially meant physically powerful in a figurative sense. But later was used in its actual sense and was probably orienting to his pioneering against his opponents. Ardeshir II, whose reign was replete with conspiracy and uprising from the first day, received the denomination of “Manmon” (cognizant) from the Greeks apparently because of his extraordinary intelligence. Ardeshir was successful in his connection with the western world (28) and his overflowing attention to the Greek gods and Anahita temples brought about his eminence in a way that his memories came alive for over centuries. (29) Darius was also sarcastically called “businessman”. He might have earned such denomination due to his excessive monitoring or reproaching character in relation to the affairs of his peasants and mayors. (30).

But Cyrus’s distinct function and personality gracefully elevated him in history in a way that Iranians addressed him as “Father” and the defeated Greeks referred to him as “the lord” and “legislator” and the Jews regarded him as “the Anointed of God”. (31)

Achaemenid inscriptions testify that religion was involved significantly in Achaemenid Empire especially by Darius because he regarded his monarchy an award from Ahura Mazda after using such magnificent titles like the King of Kings, King in Persia, the king of territories, the king of many countries, the king in this territory, Achaemenian King, King of people of all kinds, the king in the distant territories” (32) By the same token, Ashoorbanipal after prayer addressed himself as the servant of Shamesh (the God of Sun) and regarded his Empire as the will and command of Shamesh. (33) In fact the presence of Ahura Mazda as Achaemenid kings’ selected God and as substitution of Assyria, and Mardok put an end to Elamite and Mesopotamian religions and ascertains Achaemenid kings’ piety.

Kushans

The title of “king” continued to be used by the Kushans (located in the current Tajikistan) and the Red Kotal inscription testifies the application of this title by Kenishkeh who reigned on land as wide as the lands of Central Asia, eastern of Iran and even parts of India. (34) The inscription declares that: “This Temple is construction of Kenishkeh the winner who is called emperor king or kenishkeh king.” (35)

Furthermore because of cultural exchanges with Rome, the evolution in western language by using the Greek alphabet, promotion of connections of Kushans with the Roman Empire and his other moves elevated Kenishkeh’s position which brought him the denomination of Darius. (36) Throughout the history, using the name of a typical

emperor for another ruler was regarded as granting a title to him and this was generally performed by his contemporary people or historians. Kenishkeh was one of the fanatical adherents of the Buddhist religion. (37) Coins testify that Kenishkeh has applied the denomination of Ahura Mazda for about 200 years. (38) The selection of such denomination ascertains the existence of Achaemenid religion among the Kushans and Kenishkeh's political talent in absorbing followers for Iranian religion. Kenishkeh paid attention to this strategy after his conquests in his relationships with western world and extension of his territories.

Seleucids

After the collapse of the Achaemenids, aliens prevailed over the territory and unification and integration of Iranians was lost. Seleucids were not originally Iranian and didn't confide Iranian agents who had occupied most sections of the kingdom. However, when they were substituted the Achaemenids, they imitated many of their governmental strategies. Therefore, through Seleucid's era satrap still stayed as a government status and the Seleucid satrap used the title of Aparokh. After Alexander entered Babylon and was welcomed by bouquets of flowers, he maintained the position of Persian satrap of the city. (39) Since Alexander's main objective was to link the Greeks and Persians, he appointed the Iranian and Greek satraps for his territory. (40) And the lower-class Iranians served in the army as military mercenaries or in the backup regiments of Seleucids. (41)

Denominations of Seleucid kings

The Seleucid era have to be regarded as the age of variety and frequency of denominations. Kings usually applied repetitive denominations. Coins testify that Seleucid kings usually used denominations like Souter (manumitter), Aurgotes (philanthropist), Nikator (champion), Apifater (the realization of God), Theos (God), etc. (42) It is said that after the manumission of Malite from the yoke of a ruthless king, named Tymarkhos, its residents gave Antiochus a second denomination Theos (God) which Seleucids had first brought it to Asia. (43) Antiochus IV adventurously ventured to save the decomposition of the imperial and received the denomination of Apifater (the realization of God). (44) The reason that the Seleucid kings picked divine denominations is because of grace of worship of kings in the end of Hellenistic Age. In Hellenistic Age the Gods had lost their territories and (45) the kings replaced them to maintain their hegemony under the pretext of this Divine position. Historical documents reveal that along with such thinking system the Seleucid kings' wives reported to receive such Divine honor under the command of the king. (46)

It seems that all the Seleucid kings were killed in battlefields (47) and some pieces of evidence show that they picked glorious denominations after they won war or offered great services. It is also assumed that the people of the cities or the manumitted areas awarded these denominations as an appreciation. Although, Alexander denominated himself as "the Great", the Iranian ancient texts has addressed the Alexander as "Gojastak"(accursed) which is equivalent to the denomination of the Devil (48). The head of the Seleucids dynasty was Seleucus who was denominated as (Conqueror) and he was Antiochus' son, one of the commanders of Alexander's father Philip. (49) The most of Seleucid rulers used Souter (manumitter), as an example, Antiochus was honored by such denomination after he defeated the Syria's uprisings. (50) Also, the third Seleucus whose first name was Alexander picked the denomination of Souter for himself after he called himself Seleucus when he seized the kingship. Moreover, the second Seleucus was denominated as Kalinikos (the shining champion) (51) but he failed to deserve such a name because of his numerous failures.

Seleucid kings' titles

After the residents of Babylon were transported to kingship city of Solokieh, the first Antiochus commanded that Ezgil, the temple of Marduk, should be reconstructed. From that time on, Babylon preserved as a religious city. He was so delighted with his attempts in Babylon that in addition to his previous titles, he used two other titles "King of Babylon" and "rehabilitator of Ezgil". (52) It is not quite clear why the Seleucid king did so or what purposes he was pursuing, but his titles imply that he was competing with the Achaemenid kings, especially Cyrus (53) and was trying to achieve popularity among people. It is essential to mention that before Antiochus III (223-187 BC.) Seleucid monarchs didn't have a fixed title and mainly used the aforementioned titles. (54) But Antiochus III was a king with violent rages and keen political instincts. (55) He was the sixth Seleucid king and the younger son of Seleucus II Kalinokos who was throned when he was very young. He rehabilitated the overthrown Seleucid kingdom through successful battles. Thereby, in imitation of Persians kings and in competition with Alexander, he picked the Greek title of "Basileus Megas"(the magnificent / great king). And the Persians for their kings chose to follow. After Kalinokos, Seleucid kings and Roman emperors used the title as well. (56) By and large, we conclude that the Seleucid rulers according to their culture and civilization their usurped status and also due to their competition with the Persians resorted on the title selection.

Parthians

Parthians government was Greek in nature and Greek immigrants whom Alexander commanded to reside in Iranian lands were influential in dissemination of the Greek language and Literature. Therefore, it's not surprising to see that Parthian kings used denominations of the Seleucid kings.

Denominations of Parthian kings

Coins testify that Parthian kings used Greek denominations such as Theos (God), Filadelfos (devotee of Brother), Filopater (father lover), Yekhanos (righteous), Apifans (famed), Aurgotes (philanthropist) etc. (57) With the first Farhad and his denomination Filadelfos (devotee of Brother), the brothers began to have influence in the reign. And the third Farhad denominated as Theos (God) was killed by his sons Mehrdad and Orod. Therefore, they picked the denomination of Filopater (father lover)! The fifth Mehrdad didn't manage to have a remarkable performance. He could only bribe to seize some territories that helped him to refer to himself as The Aurgotes (philanthropist). (58) According to Ebn Khaldun defeated peoples always try to imitate the rituals, traditions and religion of the dominant nation because humans **believe that conquering nations are superior in terms of civilization, perfection and accomplishment.** (59) Such thinking might have been the reason that Parthian kings were fascinated by the Greek culture and literature. Even after the Parthian, Sassanid also used Greek in their inscriptions along with Middle Persian and Parthian languages.

Moreover, propagation of Hellenism and religious tolerance made the Parthian kings disregard the Mazdyasnan religion and in Parthian coins and inscriptions, in contrast to Achaemenid, no sign of Ahura Mazda can be seen. It is said that religion was restricted to the worship of the moon, sun, and past images. Temples were even blocked and ruined and the influence of the clergymen totally diminished. (60)

"Greek lover" was the denomination Parthian kings used on their coins. (61)

After the riot against Farhad in Solokieh, on the three Drachma coins, Tirdad called himself as for the friend of Romans and Greece. (62) The denomination of "Greek lover" or "Fil Helen" reveals the submissiveness of Parthian kings in face of the dominant powers. But some researchers believe that the application of such denominations by the Parthian kings ascertains their political talents in that time. Because of threats, the Parthian kings couldn't ignore all internal perils of ubiquitous Greeks and Hellenistic culture. They could genuinely understand the associations between Greeks and Seleucids i.e. their principal enemies. (63) At times they used such strategies for isolated inhabitants of Greek to fascinate them and to show them their philanthropic goal.

Parthian kings' titles

"Great king, Ashk" was the fixed title of Parthian kings on their coins which was formed after the name of the establisher of the Parthian dynasty. (64) Archaeological discoveries ascertain the historical reality of the first Ashk. (65) Ashk is supposed to be derived from the word Aresha in Avestan (bear) which was considered the totem or arshan (man / Paladin), which looks to be more correct. (66) More importantly, the kingship beliefs which were established by the AshkI maintained until the last king, Ashk the twenty-ninth (Ardavan the fifth).

The "king of kings" – was the outcome of the domination of the Macedonians and connection with Greek civilization which led to triviality of the Achaemenid tradition. Most people thought that from the perspective of historical processes Iran has arrived at its end. The first Mehrdad (the sixth Ashk) was the most powerful ruler and was the symbol of fanaticism toward Iran. He can be regarded as the main founder of Partian imperial because he revived the lost grandeur of Achaemenid.

The stone engraving of Hong Norouzi shows the victory of the first Mehrdad against (about 140 A.D.) the Elamite's local king, Kabnaskires. In a short inscription the king of Parthian has been addressed as "Mehrdad the King of Kings". (67) He was the first Parthian king who used the title of "King of Kings" in imitation of Achaemenid. He distanced himself from mimicking Greeks and after whom other kings also used the same title. The princes in their eighteen-branched statuses in the Parthian government used the title of "king" (68). Therefore, the insistence on the application of the title of "king of kings" in addition to competing with the Achaemenid rulers helped kings to show their predominance in face of low-level kings of other folks.

Satrap was also a remarkable title during the Parthian period. The status of satrap had degraded markedly compared to their position in Achaemenid era. However, they were regarded as fundamental foundations of Parthians' government. (69) Stone inscriptions of Bisooton which is one of the memorials of the second Mehrdad, contain title "head satrap of satraps" as the "King of Kings". (70)

The "king of kings" in Armenia- The conquest of Alexander of the Macedonian influenced abundantly in the orient over the Armenians who were under command of Iranians for two centuries. The Armenian princes used the title of "King" in Greek alphabet on their coins. (71) Such evidence shows the influence of Alexander's dominance and the entrance of Greek culture and civilization to Armenia. Prior to the invasion of Alexander, Armenia was an eastern country and was influenced by Iran dramatically. However, after the second Mehrdad passed away, Tigran, who owed his crown to the Parthians had detained the opportunity and as coins testify (72) usurped some of the

Parthian territories and claimed the title of “King of Kings”. Evidently, the second Tigran offered a severe rudeness to the downfallen king. (73)

After Parthians conquered the Seleucids after the first century BC, they showed they proclivity for the Achaemenid traditions. In the time of the first Belash the initial hints of Iranian of revitalization of the neo-Iranian were divulged. In the backside of his coins a temple along with a victimizer clergyman was envisaged.

These coins were first minted with the Parthian alphabet. (74) Furthermore, Velash commanded to various territories to assemble all the oral or written parts of the Avesta which had survived the attacks of Alexander. (75) This reveals that the Parthians regarded themselves as the heirs of the magnificence of ancient Persia and tended to disseminate these ideas among the masses and finally in the official Inscription of fifth Ardavan in Susa the title of “king of kings” was registered, “Ardavan, the king of kings, the son of Velash king of kings” (76)

Ardeshir also chose the title after his crowning ceremony. Although the Seleucids were attempting to wipe out cultural resources of people through Hellenizing the Iranian culture and civilization, it has to be admitted that the Parthian kings during their two last century tried to neutralize the cultural invasion of Alexander.

Sasanian

The first Sasanian king, Ardeshir was proud of defeating the Parthian and establishing an Iranian dynasty which followed Achaemenid imperial. Therefore he always regarded such qualities as a benefit over Parthian. When he was crowned he promised to ruin the signs of Hellenism, to take revenge of Darius from Alexander’s heirs, and attain all those territories which were usurped by Achaemenid kings. (77) Ardeshir who served in the temple of Anahita at Istakhr just as Sasan and Babak did played a significant role in promoting Mazdayasnan religion.

Denominations of Sassanid kings

The wealth of denominations and titles of Sasanian rulers have fascinated everybody.

The denominations of “Zulaaktaf” which was given for the second Shapur, had two meanings. The first meaning is an eulogic denomination which means “a wide-shouldered man” implied the person who burdens the responsibilities of government on his shoulder”. And the second meaning is that he had killed Arabs and had torn away the shoulder bones of their kings (78). Persians called him “Hibeh Kia” (79) and Arabs due to abundance and power of Shapur’s regiment in war called him “saboraljonod”. (80) It is said that the first Yazdgerd was a very savage man who treated people fiercely and outrageously. Therefore, Iranian sources called him “delinquent” (in Arabic Alathim) (81). However, the Greek historian Agathias has called Yazdgerd (Christian lover) due to his philanthropist deeds toward minority groups, and a peaceful leader who never entered into war against Romans. (82) The fifth Bahram’s malignant and violent mood brought him the denomination of “zebra”. But later such denomination was said to be traced back to the time when Bahram had shot dead a zebra and a lion in a preserve. (83)

Despite the battles and conflicts, the first Khosrow was interested in philosophy and in the end of his life he gave his relatives advices about the mortality of body and the worth of philanthropy charity. (84) He commanded to scribe on his grave: “all the charities that I sent before are my savings now.” (85) Therefore, he was distinguished from other kings and received the name of Khosrow which meant splendiddness, magnificence, and greatness. Also, he is said to achieve the denomination of Anoushirvan (immortal spirit) because of his assiduousness in adherence of official religion (86) and “Kasra” was his other denomination which Arabs awarded for all Iranian rulers after him (87), in the same way that all Roman rulers were referred to as Caesar (Kaiser). (88) Moreover, Khosrow Anoushirvan earned eminence due to his justice in a way that abundance of stories have been passed about his justice and equality. (89) But the most prominent felicity was that the Prophet awards Anoushirvan such description: (I was born in a justice-loving king’s era). (90) The second Khosrow was given the denomination of “winner” after conquering Rome in long attacks in 602 A.D. subsequent to murdering of his friend Maurice. (91) Ebne Athir believes that he was the first-ranked king in terms of triumph, wealth, and fortune. Therefore, he was called Parviz which in Arabic means victorious. (92) Some other denominations are “kay” which is derived from “kavi “. This denomination was envisaged in Kavad and Pirouz coins. The discovered coins in Transoxiana testify that “kay” has moved beyond the borders of the Sassanid Empire. (93)

Sassanid kings titles

“King of Kings” was still as glorious title for the Sassanid kings. Ardashir unified the religion and politics to revive the era which existed before Alexander. For the first time, Ardashir in inscription of Nagshe-Rostam juxtaposed the denomination of “gods, worshipers of Mazda” with the title “King of Kings” which was mimicked by other Sassanid kings in their inscriptions and coins. (94) The first Shapur used the new title of “King of Kings of Iran and Anyran” in inscriptions. After The first Shapur, Narsy, the second Shapur, the third Shapur, Hormazd, and, Bahram applied this Title, too. (95) Shapur chose this title due to his proclivity for policy of nationalism and

imperialism of the Sassanids and his ambitious avarice toward his neighbors, especially Romans. Actually Shapur extended the view and domination of his father to Anyran and this trend proceeded for some time after him.

Titles of princes - Sassanid princes principally delivered their titles from their fathers. One of the main features of the titles in Sasanian empire was adding the name of the place in front of the main titles. For instance, Shapur the son of first Shapur was called as “king of Myshan” in Zarthusht inscription and Hormazd Ardashir another son of him, was referred to as “Great Armenian king”. (96) In addition, a carved signet in the British Museum engraves the picture Bahram and the following title: “Bahram, Kermanshah, son of the King of Kings Shapur”. (97)

It is believed that when the Sasanian kings defeated one of the populated tribes in their vicinity, they didn't kill the conquered people but they made them as taxpayer and let them to live in usurped territories and farm in those lands. They only killed the former leaders of the tribes and sometimes appropriated their kingship titles to their sons, to commemorate and glorify their pride in their victory. Thus, when father of the third Bahram usurped the Sagestani tribe, his father called him, “Saganshah” which in Greeks means “king of the Sagestani”. (98)

The title of Kushanshah”, “the great Kushan king”

The most high-ranked people of the Sassanid Empire who were commanders in the different parts of territories were called kings. Moreover, low-ranked kings who had sought asylum in Iran, the great king gave the title of king provided that his regiment would be in service of the great king and stay as taxpayer. (99) Examples of such kings which have been illustrated in the Narsy Paykoly inscription are the king of Saka, the Armenian king, king of Kushan, king of Turan, the king of Makran, etc. (100) Importantly, Kushan was a prominent territory during the Sassanid Empire and its governor had as valuable rank as the great king did.

Thus, before successors receive the Imperial throne, they were appointed as the governor of Kushan.(101) That's why the first Shapur appointed his son the first Hormazd as the governor of Khorasan and submitted him the magnificent title of “the great Kushan king”. (102)

The early Sasanian kings used the title of “Kushan king”and “the great Kushan king”on their coins and Hormazd commanded to mint the first coin with the title of “the great Kushan king and king of kings of Kushan “. Herzfeld believes that the title of “king of Kushan”during the early ages of the Sassanid Empire can be regarded as equivalent to “the Prince of Wales”. (103) Throughout the Sassanid Empire Persian religion was established in the country, clerics earned authority and all the religious rituals were regularly carried out as the temples promoted. The denomination of “God, Lover of Mazda”along with the title of “king of kings”suggest a close coordination of religion and kingship and also shows the authority and piety of the kings. This might have been the reason for magnificence and splendor of Sassanid Empire as the last kingdom in pre-Islamic era.

“King of Kings”beyond the borders of Iran

Non-Iranian leaders have always been fascinated with the purely Iranian title of “King of Kings”throughout history. Non-Iranian leaders even sometime usurped the title. Pompey the Roman ruler is an example of such kings who conquered east. Later, in competition with Tigrans of Armenia, mimicked Parthian Empire and used the title of “king of kings”. (104)

Moreover, most of the kings were called Abgar or Manu in Odessa . After the eighth Abgar helped Roman Emperor (Septimus Severus) in his invasion of Mesopotamia (198 AD), Septimus Severus appreciated him with the title of king of kings”. (105) At the time of the first Shapur Odanatus governor of Tadmir (Palmyra) in cooperation with Romans succeeded to attack Iran which made him famous. It is said that Palmyrians began to address him with the title of “king of kings”after his death (since 267 A.D.) (106) For the first time, he was referred to as “King of Kings”in the inscriptions of his wife Zenobia (271 A.D). (107)

Evidently, during Odanatus's life, Roman Emperor (Galinus) appreciated his services for Rome with that title. In order to humiliate Shapur and encourage Odanatus, Galinus awarded him this title and after Odanatus's death , his wife Zenobia perpetuated the title in the inscriptions. Roman emperor, Herclius put aside the old title of Roman king “Augustus”and chose “King of Kings”for himself. Researchers believe that the reason of choosing “king of kings”is traced back to his Armenian ancestry (108) because he is said to be born in an Armenian family in Kappadokia. (109) Generally, the application of “King of Kings “by aliens illustrates the significance of Persian culture and civilization as a powerful territory in ancient world which influenced all other surrounding territories.

Conclusion

The selection of titles and denominations was greatly significant in terms of the status they illustrated. The objective of most of kings was sovereignty along with religion. In this way, they could legitimize their ascendancy and receive an elevated position among communities. Those titles and denominations conveying religious content illustrated the kings' intent in absorbing the mass through religion. Because they were well aware that religion was

the most definite and absolute approach toward a constant sovereignty. Further, religion was the most appropriate instrument to achieve their worldly wishes and ambitions.

From the very beginning, the Sumerians used Patsy (priest king) to address their kings. This title illustrates that kingship and religion had been linked. Later, in the Sassanid Empire it changed as “King of Kings” and the denomination of “gods, worshipers of Mazda”.

The word “king”(=Shah) which conveys magnificence and splendor is equivalent to a master, the high, and magnificent in the following word groups: masterpiece(=Shahkar), the highway(Shahrah), magnificent verse(=Shahbate), etc. throughout the history, the label of “king” was accompanied by the name of the eminent people and functioned as a title in form of a suffix or prefix.

Most of the denominations were composed of adjectives which kings chose them under the influence of political occasions, military triumphs, or any other attempts and principally in competition with other kings. In fact most of such denominations which were picked by kings were used for the purpose of publicizing. Of course some of these denominations were given to the kings according to their special talents and qualities.

Through a meticulous inspection in the life history of kings and leaders, we can discern that they eventually demised. They wasted the wealth and resources of the world in invasions. After their death, a writer used several worthless papers and a piece of pencil to scribe their gloomy life and perpetuated their names. (110)

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