A STUDY OF THE INVESTITURE OF NARSEH AT NAQŞ-I RUSTAM
—ANAHITAH OR QUEEN OF QUEENS?—

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Introductory Remarks

At Naqş-i Rustam to the north-west of Persepolis there are several Sasanian rock-cut reliefs including the Investiture of Ardashir I(224–240), the Victory of Shahpur I(241–270) and others. Among them, the so-called Investiture of Narseh (fig. 1) is quite unique in the sense that it represents a Sasanian lady. As far as the identification of this lady is concerned, most scholars have regarded her as the goddess Anahitah since F. Sarre(1) identified her with Anahitah.

However, in 1983 Shahpur Ali Shahbazi published an interesting article(2) in which he tried to prove that the lady concerned is not Anahitah but Narseh’s queen Shahpuhrduxtak II. While his arguments are very convincing at first glance, his conclusion is fundamentally beside the mark in the opinion of the present author. Therefore, in this paper the author attempts to clarify the reasons why Sh. A. Shahbazi’s new interpretation is not tenable.

The mistaken basis or other defects of Sh. A. Shahbazi’s arguments seem to consist in his ignorance of the Iranian comparative value of the left and right positions in artistic representation as well as in his misunderstanding of the beribboned ring which symbolizes the xvarnah. Therefore, the present author’s counter-argument is confined to these two points.

1. The basis of Sh. A. Shahbazi’s Argument

Before presenting a refutation of Sh. A. Shahbazi’s interpretation it would be well to describe the grounds of Sh. A. Shahbazi’s arguments.

His argument starts by concentrating on the left hand of this lady (fig. 1)


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which is entirely covered by her sleeve. The custom of covering the left hand with a sleeve on Sasanian rock-cut reliefs has already been noticed by W. Hinz and Sh. A. Shahbazi chooses to go along with W. Hinz's discovery. According to W. Hinz, the covering of the left hand with a sleeve was the custom among the Persians when they met the King of Kings. W. Hinz cites an Apulian vase (fig. 2) on which an Achaemenid vassal is represented with his left hand covered in front of Darius I. This courtly custom among the Persians is described by Xenophon as follows:

Les cavaliers étaient là, tous, à pied à terre, les mains passées à travers la redingote (c'est-à-dire à travers ses manches), comme ils font encore aujourd'hui quand le Roi voit (Cyropédie, tr. E. Delebecque, 1978, VIII (3)-10)

Moreover, Sh. A. Shahbazi cites the so-called Nereid Monuments in the British Museum on one of which (representing a banquet scene of Kerga) appears as Sh. A. Shahbazi observes, a servant with his left hand covered. Moreover, on an ivory plaque unearthed in Olbia in Southern Russia are sculpted three dignitaries with their left hands covered and a Parthian king with his right hand covered (fig. 3).

As regards Sasanian examples, Sh. A. Shahbazi enumerates the Investiture of Ardashir I (224-240) at Naqsh-i Rustam (fig. 4) and the Audience of Bahram II (276-293) at Sarab-i Qandil (fig. 5). On the former, the princes, including the later Shahpur I, cover their left hands with their sleeves and revere their father, Ardashir I, whilst on the latter the queen of Bahram II holding a tulip or lotus in her right hand stands on Bahram II's left side with her left hand covered completely with her sleeve.

Sh. A. Shahbazi furthermore discovers that on the reverse of Bahram II's drachm (fig. 6-a) is represented the queen of Bahram II (Shahpurduxtak I) standing on the right side of an altar with her left hand covered by her sleeve. He identifies the lady on the reverse of the coin as the queen, Shahpurduxtak I on the grounds that the crown-type (Senmurv) of the lady is the same as that of the queen who is clearly represented at the side of Bahram II on the obverse (fig. 6-b), and that the lady with her left hand covered must be lower in rank than the King of Kings (Bahram II); that is to say, she must be his queen. Although the lady on the reverse of Bahram II's coins (fig. 6-a) has been identified by others as the goddess Anahitah, Sh. A. Shahbazi's argument against this traditional identification is quite original and seemingly convincing. He
therefore applies the same rule to the lady on the Investiture of Narseh (fig. I).

Moreover, he also compares the crown-type (crenelated crown) of the lady of this rock-cut relief with that of a Sasanian royal lady’s bust(7) (fig. 7) sculpted on the cliff below the Victory of Shahpur I (241–270) at Darab whom Sh. A. Shahbazi identifies as a daughter of Shahpur I, perhaps Shahpurduxtak II.

Relying upon these two points, Sh. A. Shahbazi concludes that the lady on the Investiture (fig. 1) is not Anahitah but Shahpurduxtak II, Narseh’s queen. Thus in Sh. A. Shahbazi’s new interpretation, on the Investiture of Narseh no Zoroastrian divinity is represented investing the beribboned ring (xvarnah). Accordingly, in order to avoid or conceal that anomaly as regards the Sasanian rock-cut reliefs, Sh. A. Shahbazi invents a curious theory to the effect that King Narseh shared his kingship (the beribboned ring) with his wife, the queen.

The new interpretation proposed by Sh. A. Shahbazi might be summarized as above, while the present author cannot accept Sh. A. Shahbazi’s conclusion on the two grounds mentioned above. Therefore, in the following the author attempts to refute Sh. A. Shahbazi’s two statements.

First the author will discuss the likelihood of having the queen represented on right of the king in terms of Sasanian iconographical rules.

Secondly he will determine whether or not the beribboned ring held by Narseh and the lady can be interpreted as signifying the sharing of the kingship between the king and his queen.

### 2. The Right and Left Positions in Iranian Art

We should start with a look at the actual assignment of the right and left positions to images in Achaemenid art. When we look at the Victory scene (fig. 8) of Darius I (522–486 B.C.) at Bisutun, the winged Ahura Mazda within a ring is represented to the viewer’s right with Darius I to the left. This assignment of a god superior in rank to the King of Kings to a position on the viewer’s right and of the king to the viewer’s left might be regarded as one of the iconographical rules of Achaemenid art. In Achaemenid art, therefore, the viewer’s right side was regarded as superior to his left in the case of any one panel.

The same assignment of the right and left positions is observed in the Investiture scenes of the royal rock-cut tombs hewn at Naqsh-I Rustam and Persepolis which were produced by Darius I and his followers.

However, if we now look at various reliefs remaining in the palace of Perse-
polis, we can notice that the reverse method of assignment was applied for some individual scenes including the King's Combat with a Monster and the Audience of the King. Regarding the two famous audience scene reliefs excavated from the Treasure House, on one of them, Darius I is represented to the viewer's right and his retainers to the left. The assignment of the higher right position to Darius I, the prince and his servants in this relief in situ corresponds exactly to that of Darius I's Victory scene (fig. 8) at Bisutun.

On the other hand, the second relief of the pair (fig. 9), now housed at the Musée Iran Bastan in Teheran, is a clear example of precisely the opposite type of assignment. These two reliefs must have adorned opposite or parallel walls of the same building (the Treasure House or the fronts of the east and north staircases of Apadana), and must therefore have been made as mirror images. If these two reliefs were put on the fronts of the staircases of Apadane as some scholars have surmised, the production of the mirror image must have been related to the function of the staircase. That is to say, the position of Darius I and his entourage in these reliefs must have been decided by the direction of ascending or descending on the staircase, so that any one walking on the staircase on New Year's Day had to confront Darius I. In this sense, all Persepolis reliefs are intimately connected with the function of the buildings, and we should not therefore consider these architectural reliefs as proper evidence for the Achaemenid rules of assignment of the right and left positions in art. Instead, the correct assignment of the higher right position and lower left one is observed in independent rock-cut reliefs such as the Victory (fig. 8) and Investiture scenes of the Achaemenid royal tombs in which the positions of the god and the king can be decided without any reference to the building.

Lastly, mention should be made of a silver lid (fig. 10) of picis unearthed in East Turkey (Erjinjan). This represents the romance between the princess Odates and her lover Zariadores (Hystaspes' son), and the prince's position is assigned to the viewer's right while the princess's position is on the left, since men were always regarded as superior to women.

According to such evidence, we might conclude that as a rule in Achaemenid art, the viewer's right side was regarded as superior to his left and that this position was therefore assigned to the highest or higher person or god.

Next let us investigate the right and left positions in Parthian art. When we look at the obverse and reverse sides of Parthian drachms, we notice that on the obverse the king's bust (fig. 6-c) is represented with his head in profile
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looking to the viewer’s left while on the reverse\(^{11}\) the founder of the Dynasty, Arsaces appears with his head to the right (fig. 6-d). Arsaces extends his right hand holding a compound-bow (a symbol of kingship=\textit{xvarnah}) towards the king on the obverse, so that these royal images on both sides express together the idea of the investiture of the Parthian kingship. Needless to say, Arsaces was deified and thus regarded as superior to the living king who issued this coin. Therefore, we can assume that the deified Arsaces is represented on the viewer’s left, with one of his descendants also to the left if we juxtapose both sides of the coin. In this case we can say that the figure on the viewer’s left (Arsaces) is certainly higher in rank than the king.

This type of assignment of the right and left positions in Parthian art is exactly the opposite of that of the Achaemenids. The present author has no clear idea as to why the Parthian kings did not follow the earlier Achaemenid iconographical rule, but it is clear that the Parthian assignment of the positions or directions on coins is the exact opposite of that of the Seleucid coins where the king’s bust is represented with his head in profile looking to the viewer’s right on the obverse, and the god Appolon on the reverse looking to the left (the coins of Antiochus I, figs. 6-e, f). Therefore, as E. Herzfeld\(^{12}\) has already correctly surmised, the Parthians must have intentionally adopted these reverse directions or methods of assignment in order to demonstrate their complete independence from the Seleucid kings.

Thus, the new iconographical rule of the assignment of the higher left position and lower right position was established in the Parthian period at least as far as its coinage was concerned, although this new rule was not always adopted by the later Parthians or the vassals of the Parthian kings.

For example, on the reverse side of the coins issued by Phraates IV (38–2 B.C.), the enthroned king is represented on the viewer’s left receiving a palm leaf from Tyche, who is represented on the right (fig. 6-g). This assignment follows the typical Parthian method. Alternatively, on the reverse side (fig. 6-h) of the coins issued by Vologases I (148–192), the king’s and goddess’ positions are reversed. The same reversed assignment is observed on rock-cut reliefs such as the Audience scene (fig. 11) of Mithradates I (171–138 B.C.) at Bisutun. On this now lost relief, the king is represented to the viewer’s extreme right (in a higher position), with his vassals to the left (in a lower position), just as in the reliefs of Darius I mentioned above (figs. 8, 9).

However, on the investiture relief excavated from Susa,\(^{13}\) Artabanus
V(213–224) is represented to the viewer's left giving a ring (governership = xvarnah) to the satrap of Susiana, with Khwasak (satrap) represented to the right. On this relief, the higher position is assigned to the viewer's left just like on Phraates I's coins (fig. 6-g). The same kind of assignment is observed on the Victory scenes of Mithradates I at Hung-i Nauruzi (fig. 12) and of Gotarzes (38–51) at Sal-i-Pol Zuhab on which the images of the Parthian King of Kings occupy a position on the viewer's left side.

From these examples we might conclude that in Parthian art there was no definite iconographical rule for assignment of the right and left positions according to the distinct differences in the value of these positions.

Next let us investigate the assignment of the right and left positions in Sasanian art. First of all, when we look at the rock-cut relief of the Investiture of Ardashir I (224–240) (fig. 13) at Naqsh-i Rustam, the equestrian king is represented to the viewer's left and the investing god Ahura Mazda to his right. Therefore, it is clear that the Sasanians inherited the Achaemenid rule to some extent; this assignment of positions to the king and the god seems to have been formalized to a certain extent and continued by Shahpur I (the Victory scene at Naqsh-i Rustam, Darab and the Investiture at Naqsh-i Rajab), although there are some exceptional rock-cut reliefs executed according to the order of Shahpur I where the king is always represented to the viewer's left while the Roman emperors he has defeated or captured are to the right. In Sasanian royal iconography, the Roman emperors must have been regarded as inferior to the Sasanian King of Kings: therefore this kind of assignment of positions seems to be reversed. However, if we remember that the king's position was supposed to be assigned to the viewer's left with the god's position located to the right, this seemingly exceptional assignment can be regarded as following the rule exemplified by the Investiture of Ardashir I at Naqsh-i Rustam (fig. 13) in the sense that the king is represented to the viewer's left. This standard assignment method was followed by Ardashir II (379–383) on his Investiture scene, and by Shahpur III (383–388) on his standing image beside his father Shahpur II (309–379), both of which were made at Taq-i Bustan.

This kind of assignment of positions that reflects the idea of the viewer's left as superior to the right, seems to have been established as the Sasanian rule regarding the rock-cut reliefs, but there are some exceptions to this rule. For example, on the Investitures of Shahpur I at Naqsh-i Rajab and Bishapur, and of Bahram I (273–276) at Bishapur (fig. 14), the king is represented to the
viewer's right while the god Ahura Mazda is to the left. The present author has no definite idea of the reason why this anomalous assignment should have taken place.

However, as is clearly shown by the rock-cut relief of the royal couple of Bahram II and his queen (priestess?) at Barm-e Dilak, the iconographical rule to assign the viewer's left (lower) position to female image and the right (higher) one to male one seems to have been established at least in the late third century. Therefore, the viewer's extreme right position could hardly be assigned to any queen but possibly only to the goddess (Anahitah).

Next we should investigate the coin-types of the Sasanian kings. On the obverse, the king's bust is as a rule represented with his head looking to the viewer's right (fig. 15-a, the coin of Narseh). The direction of the king's head is exactly opposite of that of the Parthian king's. This means that the king faces the god supposedly existing to his right. This is proved by the obverse coin-type of Zamasp (497-499, fig. 15-b) where both king (on the viewer's left) and Ahura Mazda (on the right, smaller in size) are represented. Therefore, we can say that on Sasanian coinage, at least on the obverse, the same rule as that observed in rock-cut reliefs is strictly adopted.

The problem lies in the reverse of the coin-type of Bahram II (fig. 6-a). Here are represented a kingly person (to the viewer's left) and a lady (to the right). The former might be Bahram II himself since he wears a long sword such as was never carried by the Zoroastrian gods. However, identification of the lady is quite difficult to achieve. She wears a Senmurv crown and raises her right hand, holding a ring, while her left hand seems to be hidden in her long sleeve. As regards the identification of this lady, most scholars have regarded her as the goddess Anahitah, but a new interpretation regarding her as an incarnation of Xvarnah was recently proposed by K. Mosig-Walburg. As has been stated above, Sh. A. Shahbazi regards her as the queen of Bahram II (Shahpurduxtak II) on the basis that her left hand is hidden within her sleeve. However, since this point alone does not sufficiently prove his new interpretation, he also shows that the crown of this lady is the same as that of the queen (fig. 6-b) on the obverse of Bahram II's coin. On these two pieces of evidence he concludes that the lady on the reverse is the queen of Bahram II.

At this stage we should examine two points of his argument in detail. Regarding the first point which says that the lady must be the queen of Bahram II because her left hand (fig. 1) is hidden within her sleeve, it seems probable...
that this was one of the royal manners which the queen would observe in front of the Sasanian King of Kings. Therefore, any lady acting in this manner could possibly be regarded as a queen or princess. However, it is either too simplistic or too far a leap of logic to regard all the ladies with their left hands hidden in their sleeves as representing the queen, for it is highly probable that in the early Sasanian period the image of the goddess Anahitah was made after the model of queens or princesses of the Sasanian dynasty just like Ahura Mazda was modelled on the King of Kings (cf. figs. 4, 13, 14). Therefore, the lady on the reverse of the coin (fig. 6-a) was surely created in the image of the external appearance of the then ruling queen in terms including hair style, costume, crown and *etiquette*. This means that the lady with her left hand hidden in her sleeve is not necessarily a queen and that it is also not a mistake to identify her as Anahitah.

In addition, we must make it clear that all the ladies represented on the reverse of Bahram II’s coins have not their left hands hidden in their sleeves. If we look at plate 4 — nos. 67–71 of *Sasanian Numismatics* written by R. Göbl, we can examine the appearance of the lady concerned. However, it is not clear that the left hand of all the lady-images is represented as hidden within their sleeves. The ladies of coins nos. 67–69 of that book with no doubt have the left hands on their waists but it is hardly possible to conclude with positive proof that their left hands are hidden in their sleeves. As regards the other coins (nos. 70–71 of the same book), the ladies are raising their left hands to their heads and consequently their hands are not hidden in their sleeves (fig. 15-c).

According to such evidence it seems to be hardly tenable that all the ladies represented on the reverse of Bahram II’s coins are his queen because the left hand of some of them is hidden in their sleeves.

Regarding Sh. A. Shahbazi’s second point that, since the crown of the standing lady on the reverse (fig. 6-a) is the same one as that of the queen’s bust on the obverse (fig. 6-b), the lady must be identified as the queen on the obverse, we might say that the crown of the queen on the obverse was made in imitation of the Senmurv crown of the lady (goddess Anahitah in this case) on the reverse.

Incidentally as far as the identification of the two standing princely persons represented usually on the reverse (fig. 15-d) is concerned, no persuasive interpretation has yet been established, at least as regards the figure standing to the viewer’s right. The figure standing to the left of altar might be regarded as the king (Narseh) who issued this coin and whose bust is represented on the
obverse, because his crown is identifiable with that of the king's on the obverse (fig. 15-a, of Narseh). However, the figure to the right might be either a Zoroastrian priest (Magi), a Zoroastrian god or an incarnate ancestor (father) (fravashi) of the ruling king. In any case, if we refer to the reverse coin-type of Hormuzd's coin (fig. 15-c) of the Kushano-Sasanian Dynasty (3-4 centuries) where the radiate god Mithra is standing to the viewer's extreme right with the beribboned ring whilst the king is to the extreme left. The assignment of higher and lower positions of this coin is just the same as that of the Investiture of Ardashir I (fig. 13). If this same assignment could be applied to the reverse of the Sasanian coin-type, the lady represented to the viewer's extreme right (figs. 6-a, 15-c) cannot be the queen who is lower in rank than the King of Kings (Bahram II), but must be the goddess Anahitah. Moreover, it must be stressed that on the coins of Narseh no image is represented either of a queen or of Anahitah. This fact means that there was no sufficient reason for Narseh to make the image of his queen represented beside his own on his Investiture scene (fig. 1).

Next we should mention two "Sasanian" silver plates on which a Sasanian prince and his wife are represented (fig. 16). The scene on these plates must represent a royal marriage, symbolized by a ring without a ribbon, with the prince represented to the viewer's right while his wife is to the left in both scenes.

In view of the above examples, we might conclude that as a general rule in Sasanian art, the higher ranking figure was depicted to the viewer's right while the lower ranking figure was to the left, and that men were represented to the viewer's right while women were to the left. This general rule of assigning positions to persons is ascertained through a description of Sasanian Persian customs recorded in the T'ang Shu, vol. 221, in the chapter dealing with the Western Countries, to the effect that the Persians were accustomed to valuing the right side and to looking down upon the left. If we refer to the right and left in Sasanian art, the right mentioned in that Chinese chronicle means clearly the viewer's right and the left the viewer's left.

From such artistic and literary evidence, we can say that the lady on the so-called Investiture of Narseh (fig. 1) is unlikely to be the queen of Narseh, Shahpurduxtak II, as Sh. A. Shahbazi has propounded, and is much more probably the goddess Anahitah herself as identified by F. Sarre. If that lady were Shahpurduxtak II, she should have been depicted to the left of Narseh,
and not to his right.

3. The Beribboned Ring and the Sharing of Kingship

Next let us examine Sh. A. Shahbazi's second hypothesis that Narseh shared the kingship (the beribboned ring) with his queen, Shahpurduxtak II. As regards the significance of beribboned ring, a ring without a ribbon was represented as symbolizing the divine kingship in the investiture scenes of the Ancient Near East, and as one of the figural representations of xvarnah in Achaemenid and Parthian arts, as has already been proved by the present author in a recent paper.\(^{(25)}\)

However, in Sasanian art, a big ribbon was attached to the ring, and the divine kingship invested by Ahura Mazda became symbolized by this beribboned ring as is represented in the Investiture scene of Ardashir I (figs. 4, 13). On the other hand, a ring without a ribbon was also employed, for example, on matrimonial scenes (fig. 16) and the rock-cut relief of Sarab-i Qandil (fig. 5) and Barm-e Dilak. In these cases, the ring without a ribbon signifies the personal or private endowment of certain qualifications (the status of Queen of Queens, wife, heir-apparent) and not divine investiture.

Therefore, in the Sasanian period, there existed two kinds of rings and each of them had a different signification. The beribboned ring meant divine kingship, and the one represented in the Investiture of Narseh (fig. 1) must be the ring that is to be given to the King of Kings by Ahura Mazda or Anahitah. However, Sh. A. Shahbazi regards that beribboned ring as being shared by Narseh and his queen. If his argument were accepted as reflecting the truth, it would be difficult to know who the god was that invested Narseh and queen with the beribboned ring: Ahura Mazda, Anahitah or Mithra? Sh. A. Shahbazi does not mention the name of the investing god at all, because he is unable to identify the investing god or goddess on this relief (fig. 1) when regarding the lady (Anahitah) as the Queen of Queens of Narseh.

In the opinion of the author, it is a mistake in terms of other Sasanian investiture scenes to admit that no investing god is represented. From the investiture scenes of Ardashir I to that of Ardashir III (628–630)\(^{(26)}\) at Taq-i Bustan, the god Ahura Mazda is always represented as a princely figure, and it is hardly tenable to suppose that only in the Investiture relief of Narseh the anthropomorphic image of the investing god or goddess is missing. It seems to
be a strict rule that the anthropomorphic image of the investing god or goddess must be represented in the so-called investiture scenes of the Sasanian kings. If not, the idea of the divine investiture might not have been transmitted to the viewer. Therefore, Sh. A. Shahbazi's new interpretation seems to be mistaken.

Just such a misinterpretation is also seen in Sh. A. Shahbazi's observation of the beribboned ring held by Narseh and the lady. It is true that both of them hold the beribboned ring in their hands, and accordingly Sh. A. Shahbazi regards that ring as being shared by them both. However, if we look carefully at the condition of the represented hands (fig. 17), we notice that the lady grasps the ring with her right hand while Narseh only touches it with his right hand: he does not grasp it. This difference seems to reflect delicately the transfer rather than the sharing of the beribboned ring as is indeed the case with other Sasanian investiture scenes such as that of Ardashir I (fig. 13) on which Ardashir I slightly touches the beribboned ring with his right hand as it is in the hand of Ahura Mazda.

Moreover, the idea of the perfect transfer of the beribboned ring is clearly represented on the Investiture reliefs of Shahpur I at Naqsh-i Rajab and of Bahram I (fig. 14) at Bishapur. On these reliefs the king to the viewer's right slightly touches only the ribbon floating from the ring firmly grasped by Ahura Mazda who is to the left. Here it is easy to understand who is going to give the beribboned ring and who is going to receive it. Therefore, we can conclude that on other investiture reliefs the transfer of the beribboned ring is indicated by the difference in condition of the hands of the god and the king.

On the basis of our examination of the hands of Narseh and the lady, we can say that their hands do not suggest the idea of the sharing of the beribboned ring (kingship) and indeed indicate the divine transfer of the beribboned ring from the goddess (Anahitah) to Narseh. Therefore, the lady to the extreme left (figs. 1, 17) should be identified with the goddess Anahitah rather than with the Queen of Queens of Narseh.

Next let us refer to some of the Sasanian coins on which the idea of the shared kingship (corégence, Mittherrschaft, Doppelkönigtum) is allegededly indicated. On the obverse side of the coin issued by Ardashir I the bust of Ardashir I is represented to the viewer's left and that of his son Shahpur I to the right (fig. 15-f). According to the Pahlavi inscription on this coin, Shahpur I is qualified as "Shahpur, king of Iran of divine essence." However, if we look at their
heads we notice that Ardashir I wears a crown with corymbos (the symbol of kingship of the universe) just as the Sasanian King of Kings did, while Shahpur I has a simple kolah (hat). Therefore, on the images of this coin, the difference of status between the King of Kings of Iran and a king of Iran is distinctly visualized. However, the juxtaposition of the busts of both must have some special political signification. According to al-Ṭabari, Balʿami and Masʿūdī, Ardashir I seems either to have designated Shahpur I as his heir-apparent or regent, or to have placed the crown of King of Kings upon his head while he himself was still living. According to R. Ghirshman, these legends show that Ardashir I charged Shahpur I with state affairs during his own lifetime. If this kind of political situation can be called “sharing of kingship”, the two busts of the king and his son on that coin (fig. 15-f) might signify just that political situation.

Furthermore, busts of Bahram II, his queen Shahpurduxtak I and their son Bahram (III) are represented on the coins of Bahram II (fig. 6-b). We are unsure as to whether the “sharing of kingship” is indicated by the juxtaposition of the three royal busts on those coins, since Bahram II seems to have been exceptional in preferring to be represented together with his wife and favourite son, just as on the rock-cut reliefs at Sarab-i Qandil (fig. 5) and Sar-Mešhad. In any case, it seems quite probable that the idea of “shared kingship” was indicated by the juxtaposition of the persons concerned. Therefore, if Narseh shared the kingship with his queen Shahpurduxtak II, he might have ordered her bust to be represented beside his own on his coins, just as Bahram II and Ardashir I had already done. However, there is no image of Shahpurduxtak II on the coins issued by Narseh. On the obverse of his coins only the bust of Narseh is represented and on the reverse two princely persons (including his own standing image) are depicted. This fact means that Narseh did not share the kingship with his queen. Therefore, it would have been quite unnecessary for Narseh to visualize the non-historical fact that he shared the kingship with his queen on that Investiture scene (fig. 1) as has been propounded by Sh. A. Shahbazi.

From these observations, we might conclude that the lady on the Investiture scene of Narseh (fig. 1) is none other than the goddess Anahitah. Our identification might be further corroborated by the palmettes represented on the crown of Narseh (fig. 15-a), since the palmette was one of the symbols of the goddess Anahitah as is shown by the crown of this goddess represented at Taq-i
Bustan (fig. 18) which is decorated with palmettes, the symbol of fertility. Therefore, Narseh seems to have had a special attachment to the goddess Anahitah which might be the reason why he adopted the palmette for decorating his own crown. Furthermore, Narseh mentioned the name of Anahitah along with Ahura Mazda in his long Pahlavi inscription of Paikuli.(30)

Concluding Remarks

The above represents an attempt to prove that the lady on the scene of the Investiture of Narseh is not the Queen of Queens of Narseh but the fertility goddess Anahitah whom he seems to have pretended to venerate.

Lastly we might suggest the reason why Narseh adopted Anahitah in particular as the investing goddess instead of Ahura Mazda whom the other Sasanian kings always had represented on their investiture scenes (figs. 4, 13, 14, 15-b). According to Firdausi’s Sháhnáma,(31) Narseh deprived the legitimate king Bahram III (son of Bahram II) of his kingship. This means that he did not have the xvarnah (divine kingship) that Ahura Mazda had bestowed on all his predecessors (from Ardashir I to Bahram II). He was a usurper of kingship whom nobody claimed to have received the royal xvarnah by the grace of Ahura Mazda. If this assumption were true it would possibly have been too much in contradiction to the historical or religious fact for Narseh to have produced an investiture scene representing himself receiving the beribboned ring (the royal xvarnah) from Ahura Mazda. Therefore, Narseh adopted Anahitah instead of Ahura Mazda in order to demonstrate that he had received the royal xvarnah (legitimate kingship) from the very hands of Anahitah, although we remain unsure as to whether Narseh indeed revered this goddess(32) and paid frequent visits to her temples at Istakhr(33) or Naqsh-i Rajab.

Notes

(1) F. Sarre, Iranische Felsreliefs, Berlin, 1910, pp. 84-88.
(3) W. Hinz, Darius und Perzer, II, Baden-Baden, 1979, pp. 208-211.
(4) Sh. A. Shahbazi, op. cit., fig. 2. W. Hinz, ibidem, fig. 45.

(8) F. Kreifler, Persepolis’ Rekonstruktionen, Berlin, 1971, Beilage 16.

(9) W. Hinz, op. cit., pp. 44, 58, 76, Taf. 6, Bild. 18, 26. M. C. Root, The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art, Leiden, 1979, pp. 86-95, fig. 11.


(13) R. Ghirshman, op. cit., fig. 70.


(18) W. Hinz, op. cit., 1969, Taf. 72. Ahura Mazda (represented to the viewer’s left) grasps the beribboned ring whilst the king Shahpur I touches only the ribbon floating from the ring.


(22) V. G. Lukonin, Kul’tura Sasanidskogo Irana, Moscow, 1969, pp. 112, 146; Iran v III Beke, Moscow, 1979, pp. 34, 113.

(23) K. Mosig-Walburg, op. cit., p. 43.


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Addenda
After my manuscript was sent to the press, I came to know that the images with their left hand covered with sleeve are found on the rock-cut reliefs at Bishapur and Sar-i Mashad. cf. L. Trümpelmann, Das sasanidische Felsrelief von Sar Mathad, Berlin, 1975, Taf. 1, 4, 7.

fig. 1. Investiture of Narseh, Naqsh-i Rustam.

fig. 2. Audience of Darius I (detail), Apulian vase, W. Hinz, 1979, fig. 45.

fig. 3. Ivory plaque from Olbia, R. Ghirshman, 1962, fig. 351.
fig. 4. Investiture of Ardashir I, Naqsh-i Rajab, L. Vanden Berghe, 1984, fig. 9.

fig. 5. Audience of Bahram II, Sarab-i Qandil, L. Vanden Berghe, 1984, pl. 27.
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fig. 7. Lady's bust, Darab, L. Vanden Berghe, 1978, fig. 1.


fig. 9. Audience of Darius I, Persepolis, M. C. Root, 1979, pl. XVII.
fig. 10. Odates and Zariadores, O. M. Dalton, 1964, fig. 71.

fig. 11. Audience of Mithradates I, Bisutun, R. Ghirshman, 1962, fig. 70.

fig. 12. Victory of Mithradates I, Hung-i Naurūzī, L. Vanden Berghe, 1984, fig. 4.
fig. 13. Investiture of Ardashir I, Naqsh-i Rustam.

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fig. 16. Marriage scene (detail), P. O. Harper 1978, fig. 25.

fig. 17. Investiture of Narseh (detail of fig. 1).

fig. 18. Anahitah (detail), Taq-i Bustan.