

I. EINLEITUNG / INTRODUCTION

I.1. Numismatic and History – An Outline

a. Ardashir I (after 205/206 as king of Fars, as King of Kings 224–240)

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The origin of the Sasanian dynasty, which came to power in Iran under the leadership of Ardashir around 224 AD and ruled as King of Kings for 400 years in Iran until its conquest by the Arabs in the middle of the 7th century, remains obscure. It is certain that the Sasanians came from Persis (Fars), which was also the homeland of the Achaemenids. The eponymous ancestor of the dynasty was Sasan, but his relationship to Ardashir remains unclear. On the inscriptions and legends of his coins, Ardashir describes himself simply as “son of the ‘god’ Pabag, the king” (Type I[1]/I[1]).¹ The inscriptions of Ardashir’s son Shapur I also name “King Pabag” as the father of Ardashir and grandfather of Shapur.² Sasan, on the other hand, is known to us only from Shapur’s account of events on the walls of the Ka‘ba-i Zardusht (ŠKZ), where, however, he mentions Sasan as an ancestor of Ardashir but not as his grandfather, and this comes only in a later passage, in which he names the religious endowments founded by himself. Here Sasan is referred to only as “lord” and not as king.³

If one accepts the Arab historiographer Tabari (839–923)⁴, Sasan was indeed the father of Pabag, and Ardashir was thus his grandson.⁵ According to Tabari, Sasan was the ruler of a province in Fars and held the office of head of the Anahita Temple of Stakhr. Pabag succeeded his father in his offices, and Tabari names him as the king of Kihir, a district that was part of the province of Stakhr. Both Sasan and Pabag were vassals of the king of Stakhr, who ruled over all of Fars but was himself a vassal of the Arsacid great king.

According to Tabari, Ardashir’s political career began as “castle lord” (*argbed*) of Darabgird, a provincial capital in the south-east of Fars. Around 211/212⁶ he rose up against the Arsacid great king and began to subjugate the petty kings of the principalities surrounding Darabgird. At the same time, he called on his father, Pabag, to eliminate Gocihr, the king of Stakhr. Pabag killed Gocihr and asked the Arsacid great king Artabanus IV to crown his oldest son, Shapur, as the new king of Stakhr. Pabag died immediately thereafter, and Shapur succeeded Gocihr as

¹ Thus also the inscription on Ardashir’s investiture relief in Naqsh-i Rostam (Back 1978, p. 281).

² Cf. Shapur’s inscription in Naqsh-i Rajab (Back 1978, p. 282 f.) as well as ŠKZ, §1 (Huyse 1999, vol. 1, p. 22) with commentary and additional literature in Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 14 f.

³ ŠKZ, §36 (Huyse 1999, vol. 1, p. 49) with commentary and additional literature in Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 115.

⁴ At this point it should be stressed that the credibility of Tabari’s account, as a late and repeatedly broken tradition, is always to be validated with contemporary source material.

⁵ A different version is found in the Middle Persian novel *Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* (*Ardashir’s Book of Deeds*) as well as in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, according to which Sasan was the father of Ardashir and son-in-law of Pabag. On the origin of Ardashir cf. the list of sources in Felix 1985, p. 27 ff. as well as the surveys in Wiesehöfer 1986/1, p. 371, Schippmann 1990, p. 10 ff., Frye 1983, p. 116 ff. as well as Frye 1984, p. 291.

⁶ This date is taken from Tabari (Nöldeke 1879, p. 1). For details of the controversial chronology cf. *II.A.2. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*, where all relevant sources and literature are named.

king of Stakhr. This proposition is also supported to some extent by the coinage, particularly since we know of no coins of Pabag, but some of Shapur depict an image of the (already dead?) Pabag on the reverse.⁷

Ardashir, who sought the crown of Fars for himself, refused to recognise Shapur, and the two brothers armed themselves for war. But before it could begin – if legend is to be believed – Shapur was killed by a collapsing building, and Ardashir succeeded his brother without a fight.⁸ It remains controversial just when Ardashir's coronation as king of Stakhr took place – and thus when minting began in Fars (Phase 1). A reliable *terminus post quem* is provided in any case by the unnamed “Sasanian Era” mentioned in an inscription for Shapur I in Bishapur (ŠVŠ) and which according to Altheim-Stiehl 1978 began in the years 205/206 (**pl. 48, fig. 14**).⁹ The absolute *terminus ante quem* is the Battle of Hormizdagan against the Arsacid great king Artabanus IV, which is supposed to have taken place in 223/224.¹⁰ This is the very date that Altheim-Stiehl 1978 takes as Year 1 of the reign of Ardashir (lighting of the Ardashir Fire) and which she inserts into the equation resulting from the Bishapur inscription – the year in which Ardashir proclaimed himself King of Kings of Iran, thus opening a new chapter of Iranian history.¹¹

Ardashir's first minting phase (**Phase 1**, Type I[1]/1[1]; nos. **1–4, A1**; see *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 2: Typensynchronogramm*) thus begins with his coronation as king of Fars in Stakhr and ends with his victory over Artabanus IV at the Battle of Hormizdagan. A single type of coin was minted in series (drachm, half-drachm, 1/6-drachm), which presented Ardashir as the new king of Persis. The types and denominations are clearly rooted in Persian royal coinage, and there is a seamless transition from the previous coinage group of Ardashir's brother Shapur (**pl. 40, E35, E36**). In contrast to Shapur, Ardashir's first coin portrait is frontal and conveys an extremely dynamic image of the king. Ardashir wears the same high royal cap-like crown as his brother, which is actually of Arsacid origin, but which had long been part of the regalia of the king of Fars (*II.A.1.1.a. Typologie*). As king of Persis, Ardashir used only the simple title *šāh* (“king”). In addition, like Shapur, he held the honorary title *bay* (“god”, “majesty”), which was set before the name of the king (*bay Ardašīr šāh*). On the reverse – also following the example of Shapur – Pabag can be seen. In the legend Ardashir is here expressly described as “son of the ‘god’ Pabag, the king” (*pus bay Pābag šāh*). The principal denomination remains the drachm, which corresponds in weight (between 3.49 and 3.77 g) and reduced fineness (61%) more or less to the Arsacid model (*II.A.5.1. Nominalien*).¹² At present, the dimension and duration of the issue cannot be deduced from the material itself. But from a numismatic point of view, Ardashir's reign as king of Fars probably did not last very long (*II.A.2.1. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*). The mint may be assumed to be Stakhr (Group/Mint A), which served for centuries as the main mint of the kings of Fars (*II.A.6.1.a. Münzstätten und Funde*).

Ardashir's time as king of Fars, for which Tabari represents our most detailed source, was primarily occupied with securing his reign in Fars itself. There he also founded a city, Ardashir-

⁷ Alram 1986, nos. 653–656; here **pl. 40, E35-E36**.

⁸ Tabari (Nöldeke 1879, p. 8).

⁹ This inscription is dated in the year 58 of an unnamed era; it is equated with the year 40 of the Ardashir Fire and year 24 of the Shapur Fire. The calculation made by Altheim-Stiehl 1978 assumes that the Ardashir Fire was lit in 223/224 and the Shapur Fire in 239/240. That would mean that the monument for Shapur I in Bishapur was erected in 262/263, and the beginning of the unnamed era would fall in the year 205/206.

¹⁰ Tabari (Nöldeke 1879, p. 14).

¹¹ This date is confirmed by the *Chronicle of Arbela*, which records that the reign of the Parthians ended in the year 535 sel. (223/224); see *Chronicle of Arbela* (Sachau 1915, p. 61 and Kawerau 1985). Additional confirmation is provided by the *Acts of Syrian Martyrs* (Assemanus, I, 15), which says that widespread persecution of the Christians began in the 31st year of the reign of Shapur II (=340/341), which is equated with the 117th year of the empire; see also Felix 1985, p. 25 f. and Winter/Dignas 2001, p. 243 f.

¹² For metal analyses cf. the essay by Linke/Schreiner in this volume (*I.3.a. Metallurgie*).

khwarrah (“Ardashir’s Glory”; Gor/Firuzabad), with a magnificent temple and palace complex. This was followed by the conquest of the neighbouring eastern province of Kirman as well as invasions of southern Khuzistan.¹³ After that Ardashir felt strong enough to move against Media, centre of power of the Arsacid king, where a decisive battle took place between the forces of Ardashir and Artabanus IV in 223/224 in the area between Isfahan and Nihawand. Artabanus fell in battle, and Ardashir succeeded him as King of Kings. In a giant rock relief not far from Ardashir-khwarrah this glorious victory was later recorded pictorially (**pl. 42, fig. 2**).¹⁴

If one accepts Tabari, Ardashir proclaimed himself King of Kings immediately after the battle while still in the field.¹⁵ The course of the events that then followed is unclear. According to Tabari, Ardashir’s further advance from Media described a large curve through Adurbadagan / Atropatene, Nodshiragan / Adiabene to Asuristan / Assyria (Iraq)¹⁶, where he conquered the capital of the Parthian Empire, Ctesiphon, in 226/227. Then he returned to Fars in order to prepare his great eastern campaign. This took him through Sakastan and Abarshahr at least as far as Marw, which was to hold a strategically key position in the north-east of the Sasanian empire. The account in the anonymous *Nihayat al-Irab fi-ahbar al-Furs wa’l-‘Arab* is different, however. It places this eastern campaign immediately after Ardashir’s victory over Artabanus and the conquest of Media. According to the *Nihayat*, Ardashir remained for a year in Marw and then returned to Ray, and from there – here there is agreement with Tabari – he marched through Adurbadagan and the lands of the Tigris to Ctesiphon.¹⁷

At this point it is necessary to return once again to the dates of Ardashir’s seizure of power as known from ancient records. The literary sources provide two different dates for the beginning of Ardashir’s reign, which are perhaps related to two different events. One is the time already stated of 223/224 (SVŠ, Tabari, *Chronicle of Arbela, Acts of Syrian Martyrs*), which is presumably related to his decisive victory over Artabanus at the Battle of Hormizdagan. On the other hand, Agathias (4, 24, 1 Keydell) and Elias of Nisibis (42, 16 f.; 91, 18 ff. Brooks) give 538 sel. (1 October 226 – 30 September 227) as the year the empire was founded. This date was connected by Nöldeke 1879 with the conquest of the imperial capital of Ctesiphon¹⁸, while Taqizadeh believed it was related to the official act of coronation – following the final suppression of Parthian resistance and consolidation of Sasanian rule.¹⁹ If one accepts the chronology as detailed here, the proclamation of Ardashir as King of Kings occurred, as related by Tabari²⁰, after his victory over Artabanus in 223/224. The proclamation in the field would then have been followed by a more formal coronation ceremony in Ctesiphon in 226/227. While the chroniclers say nothing about this, such a ceremony can also not be ruled out.

¹³ For the reconstruction of events see especially Widengren 1971, where all the relevant passages are compiled in English translation. An outstanding overview is also provided by the map of Kettenhofen (TAVO, B V 11).

¹⁴ See von Gall 1990 with its outstanding pictorial documentation. For the chronological sequence of the rock reliefs of Ardashir I cf. the study by Meyer 1990.

¹⁵ Tabari (Nöldeke 1879, p. 15). According to the *Nihayat*, Ardashir adopted the title only after the conquest of Ctesiphon; cf. the related passage in Widengren 1971, p. 771.

¹⁶ The conquest of Armenia did not take place as reported by both Tabari and the *Nihayat*; it occurred under Shapur I in 252 AD; see Widengren 1971, p. 750 f. and Kettenhofen 1982, p. 38 ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Widengren 1971, p. 745 ff., who also accepts the version in the *Nihayat* and thus dates the eastern campaign before the conquest of Ctesiphon. Harmatta 1965, p. 186 ff. thinks otherwise, dating the eastern campaign – in accordance with Tabari – as starting in 233, following the conflict with Severus Alexander; cf. also the reference in Kettenhofen 1995, p. 165 f.

¹⁸ Nöldeke 1879, p. 409 ff., especially p. 411.; cf. also Altheim-Stiehl 1978, p. 115, Felix 1985, p. 26 and Richter-Bernburg 1993, p. 72 ff.

¹⁹ Taqizadeh 1943/46, p. 20 f. as well as Taqizadeh in Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 108 f.

²⁰ Tabari (Nöldeke 1879, p. 15).

Thus about three years would have passed between Ardashir's victory over Artabanus in 223/224 and the coronation in Ctesiphon in 226/227. Ardashir either spent them in protracted fighting, especially in Adiabene, Mesopotamia and Babylonia, before he succeeded in breaking Arsacid resistance and capturing Ctesiphon, or, setting out in the autumn of 224 from Media to the east, he may have resided in Marw until the end of 225. In this case, the campaign against the western lands could not have begun until 226.

It is likely that in 226/227 a first but unsuccessful attack on Hatra took place (Dio Cassius 80, 3, 2–3), and in 227/228 an equally unsuccessful attempt involving heavy Sasanian losses was made to eliminate the collateral branch of the Arsacids ruling in Armenia.²¹

Problematic is an issue of Arsacid tetradrachms that apparently bear the date ΘΛΦ (539 sel.)²² and thus were minted in the year 227/228 (**pl. 39, E14**; *II.A.6.3. Münzstätten und Funde*). The likely mint is Seleucia-Ctesiphon, where Arsacid tetradrachms were produced over the centuries. The last Parthian coins of this kind known with certainty to have been minted there are from Vologases VI and dated 221/222 (533 sel.). According to our current knowledge of the sources, however, I consider it highly unlikely that Vologases or any other Arsacid king would have been in a position to mint coins in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 227/228. This date could also be seen as an error made by the engraver, who instead of ΘΚΦ (529 sel. = 217/218)²³ inadvertently engraved ΘΛΦ (or something similar) on the die. If the coins were in fact minted in 227/228, this Arsacid intermezzo was only of short duration, and one may assume in any case that by 229 at the latest Ardashir was in complete control of the entire Arsacid Empire, with the exception of Armenia.

From a numismatic point of view this second phase of Ardashir's rule, his first as King of Kings, can be divided into three periods (**Phases 2a-c**, Types I[1]/2[1], IIa[2]/2[2] and IIa-i[3]/3a[2]; *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 2: Typensynchronogramm*). It brought with it a radical reordering of Iranian coinage, from both a typological and a denominational point of view (*II.A.1.1.b. and 1.2.b. Typologie; II.A.5.2.–4. Nominalien*).

It begins with a small bronze issue (Phase 2a, Type I[1]/2[1]; nos. **5-7**), which still uses on the obverse the old frontal portrait of Ardashir from Phase 1, but on the reverse already shows the new fire altar – combined with the old reverse legend – which is likely related to the lighting of the royal fire for Ardashir (*II.A.2.2. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*). This type represents, as it were, the preliminary stage of Phase 2b (Type IIa[2]/2[2]; no. **A2**), in which Ardashir already appears in his new attire as “king of the Iranians”. The fire altar on the reverse also includes the explanatory circumscription “Fire of Ardashir” (*II.A.1.1.b. and 1.2.b. Typologie*). The supports of the altar table copy – as Pfeiler 1973/1 correctly recognised – the feet of the Achaemenid royal throne. It is remarkable that Sasanian gold coinage began with this type, which so far is known only from a single dinar coin (*II.A.5.3. Nominalien*). It is tempting to assume that this was a festive issue on the occasion of the lighting of the royal fire for Ardashir. As explained in Chapter *II.A.1.1.b. Typologie*, on this first gold coin Ardashir bears only the title of “king of the Iranians”, and the fire altar on the reverse is not yet decorated with the diadem of the great king. This changes in Phase 2c (Types IIa-i[3]/3a[2]; nos. **8–122**): The titulature is now changed

²¹ Harmatta 1965, p. 186 ff., Widengren 1971, p. 756 ff. and Wiesehöfer 1982, p. 445 f.

²² Sellwood 1980, Type 88.17; thus far only two examples are known, which possibly bear this date; the name of the king, however, cannot be read with absolute certainty on either of the two. Full account in Simonetta 1954 and also 1956; Simonetta's historical interpretation must, however, be rejected. In converting the dates of years on the Arsacid tetradrachms, I have followed in principle the Macedonian calendar; for treatment of the problems see Hauser 2000.

²³ Sellwood 1980, Type 88.12.

to “king of kings of the Iranians” and the fire altar is enwreathed in a diadem band. The rise of Ardashir from *bay Ardašīr šāh* to *mazdēsān bay Ardašīr šāh Ērān* and *šāhān šāh Ērān* was thus complete, and a new chapter of Iranian history could begin.

The new type of coin chosen by Ardashir underscores the special role that Mazdaism was to play in the Sasanian state from this time on. This does not mean, however, that Ardashir elevated Mazdaism to a kind of “state religion”. It was more likely his main desire to assert the king’s absolute claim to power relative to the Zoroastrian priests and to see his political course legitimised by religion.²⁴ Also new is the addition *Ērān*, expressing the idea propagated by Ardashir of the “realm of the Aryans/ Iranians” (*Ērān-šahr*), which certainly provides a clear ideological demarcation from the Arsacids.²⁵ The political-religious concept developed by Ardashir of an “Aryan” and “Mazdaist” nation was based on the “invention of a tradition” whose roots lay deep in the past. It was a reference, on the one hand, to the mythical Kayanid dynasty and the obscure Achaemenid past²⁶ and, on the other hand, to the religious tradition of Zoroastrianism. The monarchy and religion were to be the corner-stones of the Sasanian state from that time on.²⁷

In view of the quantitative distribution of the individual types and denominations (*II.A.3. Häufigkeit der Typen und Nominalien, Tab. 4: Stückzahlen 1*), it becomes clear that the main focus of Ardashir’s minting in Phase 2 clearly lies in Period 2c, in which the conversion of the currency was carried out. Based on typological details on the obverse, the bulk of Type II(3)/3a(2) coins may be divided into two groups (B and C) that are an apparent reflection of two different mints (*II.A.1.1.b. Typologie* and *II.A.6.3. Münzstätten und Funde*). In both groups/mints, coins were issued in series. In addition to the key denomination, the silver drachm, there were also small quantities of its subdivisions, the half-drachm and 1/6-drachm. There are also tetradrachms of billon (Group/Mint C) as well as a range of smaller AE-denominations that were also mainly produced at Group/Mint C (*II.A.5.4. Nominalien* and *II.A.6.3. Münzstätten und Funde*). A subdivision of the dinar is known from Group/Mint B. It represents a continuation of the gold coinage that began with Type IIa(2)/2(2) at this mint.

I have interpreted the beginning of minting at Group/Mint B, which in any case is older than Group/Mint C, as an immediate result of Ardashir’s victory over Artabanus IV at the Battle of Hormizdagan. This presents two possibilities for the location of this mint: either minting was carried out at the old mint of Stakhr (Group/Mint A), or Ardashir used a new mint in the newly conquered areas that were in the immediate sovereign territory of the Arsacid king (*II.A.6.3. Münzstätten und Funde*). Here only Ecbatana/Hamadan is possible, which until the last had been the main mint for the drachm production of the Parthian Empire (**pl. 39, E15-E17**). Following his victory over Artabanus, Ardashir had taken possession of Media as a centre-piece of the Arsacid Empire, thus also gaining free access to the imperial mint in Ecbatana. Given the prevailing state of affairs, I believe it is highly likely that Ardashir now concentrated his coin production in Ecbatana/Hamadan. Shifting the mint from Fars to the Median capital would in any case have been the most sensible solution, both politically and economically. In contrast to the somewhat isolated Stakhr, Hamadan was at the centre of political events. The further advance to Mesopotamia or to the east began in Media.²⁸ Here Ardashir also had all the economic and

²⁴ See, for example, Gnoli 1989, p. 164 ff., Shaked 1994, p. 1 f., Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 2 ff. as well as Winter/Dignas 2001, p. 231 f. with additional literature.

²⁵ Of fundamental importance on the Iran idea, Gnoli 1989, especially p. 136 ff.

²⁶ On the status of the Achaemenid tradition in Sasanian Iran cf. the varying standpoints of Yarshater 1971, Shahbazi 2001, Wiesehöfer 2002, Huyse 2002 and Kettenhofen 2002 with additional literature.

²⁷ Cf. Wiesehöfer 1993, p. 220 ff.

²⁸ The sequence of the military campaigns – as already mentioned – is controversial.

technological resources for creating a new imperial coinage, which not least served to finance further military expeditions. It is possible that this could have taken place with the help of instructors or die-cutters from Stakhr.

The coinage organised in Group/Mint C (Type IIe-i[3c,d]/3a[2b]; no. **23** ff.) consists for the most part of drachms, tetradrachms (billon) as well as small bronze coins ($\text{Æ}/2$ - $\text{Æ}/4$), with much larger quantities of tetradrachms and small bronze coins than drachms (*II.A.3. Häufigkeit der Typen und Nominalien; Tab. 4: Stückzahlen I*). Differentiation from Group/Mint B (“Hamadan”) is made – as already mentioned – by using typological details, such as the ribbed diadem bands on the obverse, the missing pectoral star on Ardashir’s robe as well as the varied spelling of the obverse legends (*II.A.1.1.b. Typologie* as well as *II.A.2.2. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*). The crucial point in establishing the location of this group is represented by the tetradrachms, which are clearly a Parthian legacy and which the Arsacids as a rule only minted in Seleucia-Ctesiphon.²⁹ The final Arsacid tetradrachms minted there are from Vologases VI and are dated 221/222 (533 sel. Ä.). As already explained, the capture of Ctesiphon occurred presumably in 226/227 – the year of the founding of the empire as stated by Agathias and Elias of Nisibis. In that year Ardashir likely also took over the mint, producing mostly tetradrachms and small bronze coins in the Parthian tradition. That Ardashir’s tetradrachms were really minted in Seleucia-Ctesiphon is corroborated by a hoard of 205 tetradrachms, which was found in 1965 in the course of the Italian excavations in Ctesiphon.³⁰

In Phase 2 the extensive conversion of Iranian coinage from the Arsacid to the Sasanian system was carried out (*II.A.5.2.–4. Nominalien*). Probably the most spectacular of Ardashir’s decisions was to begin minting his own gold dinars. The Roman and Kushan gold coinage of his western and eastern neighbours may well have served as a model, but Ardashir went his own way with regard to the standard of coinage. The weight of the new Sasanian dinar (8.47 g) lies significantly higher than that of the Roman aureus and the Kushan dinar and is comparable only to the old Attic standard, of which the gold stater – introduced to Iran by Alexander and the Seleucids – weighed around 8.6 g. There were also subdivisions of the dinar (Type IIc/3a; no. **A6**), which in relation to the heavy Attic standard should be classified as 1/6-dinars.

The principal denomination remains the silver drachm, of which half- and 1/6-drachms continue to be issued. As was customary in Fars, the drachm blanks throughout the empire are now made of thin silver flanges – a characteristic of Sasanian coinage. The mean weight of the drachms lies between 3.70 (Group/Mint B) and 3.80 g (Group/Mint C) and thus appears to have been slightly higher than the preceding Phase 1 and the Arsacid drachms. A clear improvement may be seen in the silver content, which in one drachm analysed from Group/Mint B (Type IIa/3a; no. **11**) is 91.8%, while the three drachms investigated from Group/Mint C (Type IIe/3a; nos. **23, 27, 30**), in conspicuous agreement, contain only between 85.4 and 85.8% silver.³¹ If these results are supported by further analysis, this could be seen as confirmation of the mint classification proposed here. In addition, Ardashir’s coinage reform, which aimed at a clear improvement in the standard of coinage, was implemented earlier in Group/Mint B (“Hamadan”) than in Group/Mint C (“Ctesiphon”), where this step did not take place until Phase 3.

Ardashir also appears to have exercised a stabilising influence in the case of the tetradrachms in Group/Mint C (“Ctesiphon”) by setting the fineness at around 23% and the weight between 12 and 13.20 g. In addition, there was a wealth of bronze coinage, also on the Arsacid model and also concentrated in Group/Mint C. According to my classification, three different denominations ($\text{Æ}/2$, $\text{Æ}/3$, $\text{Æ}/4$) were issued. The mean weight of the heavier type was 3.60 g ($\text{Æ}/2$) and the

²⁹ Of fundamental importance is McDowell 1935.

³⁰ Schinaja 1967.

³¹ On metal analyses cf. the essay by Linke/Schreiner in this volume (*I.3.a. Metallurgie*).

middle type 2.00 g (Æ/3), while the weight of the smallest unit (Æ/4) ranges from 1.26 to 0.82 g. The boundaries between the individual values, however, are fluid and the classification thus only provisional. In Group/Mint B (“Hamadan”) large bronze coins (Æ/1) were also issued (Type IIc[?]/3a; nos. 17–19) with weights between 17.85 and 14.82 g.

The third and final period of Ardashir’s rule is marked primarily by conflict, beginning around 230 AD, with Iran’s traditional enemy, Rome. Apparently Ardashir felt he was now powerful enough to push Sasanian expansion to the west as well.³² The first attack took place, as already mentioned, around 230 AD: Nisibis was besieged, and Sasanian troops thrust as far as Syria and Cappadocia.³³ Severus Alexander arrived with his army in Antioch in the winter of 231/232 and launched a counter-offensive in the spring of 232. The fighting likely ended without a clear victory, and both sides suffered rather large losses. Nevertheless, the Roman emperor had succeeded in maintaining the Roman positions on the middle Euphrates River. Alexander spent the winter of 232/233 in Antioch before returning to Rome in triumph.³⁴

Ardashir was more successful in the south-west against the Arabs than he had been against the Romans, and he succeeded in conquering Bahrain. It is not possible, however, to determine exactly when the Arabian campaign took place, and we are forced more or less to speculate.³⁵ It can also not be assumed that Ardashir personally commanded every campaign, and it is possible that more than one advance occurred simultaneously.³⁶

Following Severus Alexander’s withdrawal, there were three to four years of peace on the western front (Herodian 6, 6, 6) before a new advance into northern Mesopotamia took place in 235/236³⁷, in the course of which Nisibis and Carrhae were captured by the Sasanians.³⁸ April 239 brought an Sasanian attack on Dura-Europos.³⁹ In 240/241 Ardashir finally succeeded in conquering Hatra. Afterwards he handed over rule to his son Shapur and died only a year later in 241/242 (*II.A.2.4. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*).

The final phase of Ardashir’s reign, which may be roughly dated from ca. 229/230 to ca. 240, was marked not only by foreign-policy successes and defeats, it also reflected the apogee of his domestic power. His position as the new King of Kings was now undisputed, and all the lands of the former Parthian Empire had been subjugated. The new structures of the Sasanian state conceived by Ardashir were now quickly implemented. They were of necessity built on the Arsacid model with regard to monarchy, religion and administration, but there were numerous new aspects as well. These new ideas are apparent both in the coinage and in the monumental rock sculptures of Firuzabad, Naqsh-i Rostam and Naqsh-e Rostam, which were primarily intended to document Ardashir’s victory over the Parthians as well as the divine legitimacy of his rule

³² According to Dio Cassius 80, 4, 1 f. and Herodian 6, 2, 1 f. it was Ardashir’s declared foreign-policy goal to restore the former boundaries of the Persian Empire. According to Kettenhofen 1984, however, Ardashir’s demand for the old Achaemenid territories is an *interpretatio romana*; also critical is Potter 1987; cf. also Wiesehöfer 1993, p. 225 and Winter/Dignas 2001, p. 75 ff. A critical summary of the scholarly discussion is now in Kettenhofen 2002.

³³ On the sources s. Felix 1985, p. 32 ff.; a short summary of events and additional literature in Winter/Dignas 2001, p. 87 ff.

³⁴ On the chronology of events cf. also Kettenhofen 1995, p. 161 ff.

³⁵ According to Tabari the conquest of al-Bahrain followed the eastern campaign, which in turn followed the conquest of Ctesiphon; in contrast, the *Nihayat* places the Arabian campaign after the conquest of Ctesiphon; see Widengren 1971, p. 752 ff. as well as Schippmann 1990, p. 17 f., n. 33 with additional literature. Kettenhofen (TAVO, B V 11) dates the Arabian campaign around 235, Harmatta 1965, p. 193 around 237/238.

³⁶ According to Kettenhofen 1995, p. 171, n. 74.

³⁷ Here I follow the convincing arguments of Kettenhofen 1995.

³⁸ In 243 Gordian III (238–244) succeeded in reconquering the two cities; details in Kettenhofen 1982.

³⁹ According to a graffito found in Dura-Europos (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* = SEG VII 734b); see Kettenhofen 1982, p. 20 with additional literature as well as Kettenhofen 1995, p. 171.

(pls. 42–45).⁴⁰ In the immediate vicinity of the old imperial capital Ctesiphon, Ardashir built a new residence, which he called Weh-Ardashir.⁴¹ In addition, he founded numerous cities, which played an important role in economic and cultural life, but also in the new administrative organisation of the empire, which aimed at increased centralisation.⁴²

The coinage in this third and final period of Ardashir's reign can be divided into two phases (**Phases 3 and 4**; *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 2: Typensynchronogramm* as well as *II.A.2.3. and 2.4. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*). Phase 3 is marked by the introduction of a new coin type on the obverse, which shows Ardashir with a covered, artificial hairstyle (*II.A.1.1.c. Typologie*). The fabric that covers the top of his head and the *korymbos* is either without (Type IIIa) or with ear flaps and nape-guard (Type IIIb). Also new is the legend to which *kē čīhr az yazdān* (“whose family/seed [is] from the gods”) has been added.⁴³ The idea of the “divinity” of the Sasanian kings has Hellenistic roots and can be traced through the Arsacids as well as the Persian Frataraka back to the Seleucids.⁴⁴ The Sasanian king was, however, not a real god (*yazd*), like Ahuramazda, but only of “divine descent” (*kē čīhr az yazdān*). But these divine qualities elevated him far above all other people and represented the core of his legitimacy to rule on earth. Thus for his subjects he was quasi a “god” (*bay*), whom the gods (*yazdān*) had chosen to reign over Iran as King of Kings. Although the idea of the divineness of kings was rooted in the Hellenistic legacy of the Sasanians, Ardashir adapted it to his political purposes, embedding it in the religion of Mazdaism and, in an unparalleled propaganda campaign, making it the focus of a new state ideology.

The writing and image on the reverse remain almost unchanged; the only variation is in the altar pillars (*II.A.1.2.b. Typologie* as well as *II.A.2.3. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*): in addition to the rounded pillar which is already familiar (Type 3a), we now find a squared pillar which as a rule is marked by three raised bars (Type 3b) as well as another three special forms (Types 3c–3e; *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 1: Reverstypologie*), which, however, play a secondary role with regard to quantity. Other criteria for classification are the diadem bands on the obverse and reverse, which are either smooth (*G*) or transversely ribbed (*R*). The altar flames also vary, and I have provisionally divided them into three main groups (*Flames 1–3*; *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 1: Reverstypologie*). The boundaries between the individual groups, however, are fluid, and the variety within each group is quite diverse, so that the scheme presented here should be seen only as a rough introduction.

It is striking that the coins of Type IIIa (fabric covering without ear flaps and nape-guard) as a rule always depict the altar with rounded pillar on the reverse (3a), while coins of Type IIIb (fabric covering with ear flaps and nape-guard) mostly depict the altar with a squared pillar (3b). There are exceptions of course: the squared pillar is found in a few isolated instances in Type IIIa (*II.A.3. Häufigkeit der Typen und Nominalien, Tab. 5: Stückzahlen II*; nos. **A16, A29**). Type IIIb is less uniform: while the squared pillar is predominant here (3b), there are a relatively large number of rounded pillars (3a) as well (*II.A.3. Häufigkeit der Typen und Nominalien, Tab. 7: Stückzahlen IV*). It should be noted that coins from the same obverse die sometimes have a

⁴⁰ On the relative chronological sequence of the rock reliefs of Ardashir I cf. the convincing analysis by Meyer 1990, which corresponds outstandingly with the numismatic evidence. Because the crowns worn by Ardashir on his reliefs are found only on the coins of Minting Phase 3 (Type IIIa, IIIb, VII), the rock reliefs must have been commissioned at that time, thus in the final 10 years of his reign.

⁴¹ Tabari (Nöldeke 1879, p. 15 f.); together with Ctesiphon called al-Mada'in (“the two cities”) by the Arabs. On Weh-Ardashir and Sasanian urban life in Mesopotamia see also, for example, Simpson 2000.

⁴² Summarised in Wiesehöfer 1986/1, p. 375 with additional literature as well as in Wiesehöfer 1993, p. 243 ff.

⁴³ Of fundamental importance are Sundermann 1988 and Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 11 f.

⁴⁴ See now Panaino 2002.

squared pillar and sometimes a rounded pillar on the reverse (nos. **A36/A37**; **A38/218**); this proves, in any case, that these coins all come from one and the same mint.

The typological criteria just mentioned permit the conclusion – with all due caution – that Types IIIa and IIIb were produced at two different mints and thus that the bipartition of minting as noted in Phase 2 continued. However, the relationship between the two blocks of minting and the previous issues of Groups B and C from Phase 2c remains problematic. As explained in the following, I have assigned Type IIIa to Mint C (“Ctesiphon”) and the coinage of Type IIIb to Mint B (“Hamadan”) (*II.A.6.4. Münzstätten und Funde*).

In both groups/mints there are two special issues each that depict Ardashir with special crowns (Types IV-VII; *II.A.1.1.d. Typologie*). The assignment of these coins to the two Groups/Mints C and B is based primarily on the reverse. All the types IV and V have rounded pillars (3a), and I have thus assigned them to Group/Mint C (“Ctesiphon”). Types VI and VII as a rule have squared pillars (3b) and thus belong to Group/Mint B (“Hamadan”). This remains an hypothesis, because I have thus far discovered no relationship between the reverse dies of principal and special issues that would support the system described. These special types appear to have been minted as additions to the two principal issues in Groups/Mints C (Type IIIa/3a) and B (Type IIIb/3b) and thus set new directions, which are perhaps related to certain religious (?) celebrations.

With regard to the coinage standard and denominations, it should be noted that the final fine turning of the new currency system was carried out in Phase 3 (*II.A.5.5. Nominalien*). The weight of the gold dinar (Type IIIa/3a; no. **128**; Type IIIb/3a; no. **A40**) was reduced by more than 1 g and now ranged between 7.24 and 7.40 g. At that weight it was in any case heavier than the Roman aureus, but lighter than the Kushan dinar. Unusual is a double dinar (14.34 g; Type IIIa/3a; no. **A14**), which finds parallels in the double aureus (binio) of Caracalla as well as in the double dinar of the Kushan king Wima Kadphises. A dinar subdivision weighing 1.45 g is also known (no. **A19**) – a denomination already found with the same weight in Phase 2c. Based on the reduced dinar standard, however, it should be considered a 1/5-dinar. It should be added that the main focus of gold coinage has now clearly shifted from Group/Mint B (“Hamadan”) to Group/Mint C (“Ctesiphon”). The weight of the drachm has been raised uniformly to ca. 4.20 g, and the average silver content in both groups/mints lies at around 90.6% ($\pm 2.1\%$).⁴⁵ There is a reduction in the minting of copper coins relative to the preceding Phase 2c, although all four values ($\text{Æ}/1\text{-}\text{Æ}/4$) were minted. The weights and sizes of blanks may be found in the *Tables 9–13: Gewichte I-V (II.A.5. Nominalien)*.

In Phase 3 the mint in Marw (Group/Mint D) was probably finally opened. Evidence is provided by an edition of small bronze coins ($\text{Æ}/2$) of Type IIIa/3a (no. **259**), whose characteristic, somewhat coarser style distinguishes them from the contemporary issues of Group/Mint C (cf. nos. **159–163**) and which were likely produced as small change for local needs (*II.A.6.4. Münzstätten und Funde*). The location of Marw is based in this case solely on the evidence of finds.⁴⁶ If a causal relationship is assumed between the beginning of coinage in Marw and Ardashir’s eastern campaign, the numismatic evidence could be an indication – as reported by Tabari – that minting began only after the conquest of Ctesiphon.

Also part of Phase 3 are the so-called “throne-successor coins” (Type VIII/3a; nos. **235–245**; **A54–A60**), whose basic problematic nature is discussed in Chapter *II.A.1.1.e. Typologie*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ On metal analyses cf. the essay by Linke/Schreiner in this volume (*I.3.a. Metallurgie*).

⁴⁶ Loginov/Nikitin 1993.

⁴⁷ On the “throne-successor coins” cf. also the quite controversial but informative discussion between Mosig-Walburg (1980 and 1990) and Göbl (1983/2 and 1991). They also discuss everything else that had been written up to that time about the “throne-successor coins”. To me personally – after careful examination of all the facts and

Drachms and large bronze coins ($\text{Æ}/1$) of this type were issued (*II.A.3. Häufigkeit der Typen und Nominalien, Tab. 8: Stückzahlen V*). The main focus of production is clearly the large bronze coins, of which there are three different series. In their chemical composition, they are quite different from all of Ardashir's other bronze coins, and because they are completely lacking in tin they can be described as "pure copper coins". Most of these issues were likely produced in the second half of the third minting phase. The attribution of the "throne-successor coins" to one of the two Groups/Mints C and B remains open, although it cannot be ruled out that perhaps an additional mint was also involved, perhaps located in the area of Sakastan-Arachosia (*II.A.6.4. Münzstätten und Funde*).

In summary, it should be pointed out again that Phase 3 represents the main focus of Ardashir's minting and was likely also the longest period within his reign as King of Kings. There are two main types (IIIa[4a]/3a[2b] and IIIb[4a]/3b[2b]), which were presumably struck at the same time at two Groups/Mints (C and B). In addition, there are two special types respectively (Type IV[4a]/3a[2b], V[4a]/3a[2b] and Type VI[4b]/3b[2b], VII[4a]/3b[2b]), which were produced alongside the two principal issues. The classification of the "throne-successor coins" (Type VIII[5]/3a[2b]) is unclear. They were issued in any case over a longer period in Phase 3 – probably from the second half to the end of the phase. The period from about 228/229 or 229/230 until around 238/239 may be assumed as the approximate chronological context for Phase 3 (*II.A.2.3. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*).

The fourth and final phase of Ardashir's minting can at present be understood only in Group/Mint C ("Ctesiphon") (**Phase 4**, Type IIIa/3a; nos. **246–258, A61**; *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 2: Typensynchronogramm*). The decisive typological-stylistic criterion for classification of the coins is provided primarily by the altar flames, which are delineated in small strokes, one above the other (*Flames 4*; *II.A.1.5. Typologie, Abb. 1: Reverstypologie*). These "broken" flames are the only clearly definable element also found on the coins of Shapur I. Gyselen assigned these coins of Shapur I (cf. nos. **A2, A6, 3, A11, 9–13, A20**) to Style Groups A and C, resulting in a seamless transition from Ardashir's Phase 4 in Group/Mint C to Shapur's early phase in Groups A and C.⁴⁸ A further indication of the late date of this group of coins is a new type of diadem bands on the obverse (cf. nos. **252** and **255**), which is found for the first time in Phase 4 of Ardashir and which continues under Shapur I in Groups A and C (cf. Shapur I., nos. **1** and **3**).

Gyselen assigned the coins of Shapur I that represent the typological bridge to the coins of Ardashir's Phase 4 to Shapur's main mint, which presumably was Ctesiphon – a hypothesis, that has a certain probability. Thus Ardashir's issues from Phase 4 should also have come from the same mint, as well as Types IIIa, IV, V/3a minted in Phase 3, which in my opinion definitely came from there. All of these issues would then be assigned to Ardashir's Group/Mint C ("Ctesiphon"), while Types IIIb, VI, VII/3b belong to Group/Mint B ("Hamadan"). The result of this classification is that the focus of minting beginning with Phase 3 shifts from Group/Mint B ("Hamadan") to Group/Mint C ("Ctesiphon"), a development that accords definitely with the course of political events. Conclusive proof for the correctness of this assumption, that would result, for example, from trans-phase connections between the reverse dies of coins of Groups B and C from Phases 2c and 3, cannot be provided at present. I have also been unable to discover typological-stylistic connections between the two phases of minting or groups.

Drachm production in Phase 4 was by no means low. This is evident not only from the quantities (*II.A.3. Häufigkeit der Typen und Nominalien, Tab. 8: Stückzahlen V*) but also obvious from the

based on the preliminary coinage framework outlined here – Göbl's arguments remain convincing. See also the paleographic analysis of Skjærvø in this volume (*I.2. Paleography*).

⁴⁸ See also Gyselen in this volume (*II.B.6.1. Ateliers monétaires et périodisation*).

various mint marks. I have thus proposed a minimum of a year as an approximate chronological context for Phase 4; this, however, is purely speculative. The only certain chronological reference as *terminus ante quem* is the accession to the throne of Shapur I (*II.A.2.4. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*).⁴⁹ The inscriptional and literary sources indicate that Shapur received the diadem of the great king during the lifetime of his father in 240 (between April and September). In this connection, there has been repeated discussion of a joint reign of Ardashir and Shapur.⁵⁰ From the numismatic side, the theory of a co-regency was created by linking the literary sources to the so-called “throne-successor coins”, the problematic nature of which I have already sufficiently discussed here (*II.A.1.1.e. Typologie* and *II.A.6.4. Münzstätten und Funde*). In my opinion, they may be ruled out as proof of a joint reign of father and son. Shapur’s coinage shows that he succeeded his father as *šāhān šāh Ērān kē čīhr az yazdān*⁵¹ without limitation.

However, from the pictorial side, the reliefs of Salmas and Darabgird (**pl. 45, figs. 6, 7**), which were interpreted by Meyer 1990⁵² with quite convincing arguments as evidence of Shapur’s co-regency, could indeed indicate that Ardashir actually elevated his son Shapur to the rank of co-regent. If one accepts Meyer’s interpretation, the designation of Shapur as co-regent must have occurred in any case before 239/240 – most likely in our minting Phase 4 at the latest – and is in my opinion on no account related to the acceptance of the *διάδημα μέγιστον* described in *CMC*. The coinage – and thus most likely also the actual governmental power – continued to remain, however, in Ardashir’s hands.⁵³ Not until the acceptance of the *διάδημα μέγιστον* does Shapur become “king of kings of the Iranians”, and then he wears his own crown as well.

Regardless of the nature of Ardashir’s retirement, Shapur directly succeeded him as King of Kings. Soon after the transfer of power, Ardashir died, probably in the spring of 242.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ On this controversial date cf. especially the summarising presentations of Sundermann 1990 and Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 6–9.

⁵⁰ According to Chaumont 1974, for example, who however later rejected this theory in Chaumont 1979; cf. also Kettenhofen 1982 and Sundermann 1990.

⁵¹ The theory developed by Mosig-Walburg 1980 and 1990 on the basis of imperfect coin legends concerning the stepwise rise of Shapur from “king of Iran” to “king of kings of Iran and non-Iran” must be decisively rejected here once again: These legends normally never existed! Cf. also Skjærvø (*I.2. Paleography*) and Gyselen (*II.B.1.1.a.2. Types monétaires*) in this volume.

⁵² Meyer 1990, p. 263–282, 289–292, 297–299.

⁵³ A division of governmental power – as was usual in Rome at the time – can, in my opinion, be ruled out.

⁵⁴ Altheim-Stiehl 1978, p. 115 and Mosig-Walburg 1980, p. 124 have already connected the date given by Elias of Nisibis for Shapur’s accession to the throne (553 sel. = 241/242) with Ardashir’s year of death, as had Nöldeke 1879, p. 412 f. More recently Kettenhofen 1995, p. 177, n. 112 gave the spring of 242 as the date of Ardashir’s death and the beginning of Shapur’s sole reign, pointing to the inscription of Abnun (Barm-i Dilak) published by Skjærvø 1992 (**pl. 49, figs. 15a, 15b**).

b. Shapur I (240–272)

Rika Gyselen

The idea that Ardashir I and his son Shapur I ruled as co-regents has been defended by many modern authors, proposing different kinds of arguments. One of these arguments is based on the crown worn by Shapur I in the rock reliefs at Salmas (where he is shown with his father Ardashir I, **pl. 45, fig. 6**) and at Darabgird (**pl. 45, fig. 7**), and which is not the one he usually wears, that is to say a mural crown placed around a *korymbos*. In the relief at Salmas, Shapur I wears the same kind of crown as that worn by his father in the same relief, but he is easily recognisable thanks to the typical way his hair is arranged in large buns. There is no *a priori* objection to the idea that the relief at Salmas was carved at a time when Shapur was closely associated in government, but whether this association amounted to co-regency remains open to discussion. The relief at Darabgird has been the subject of many interpretations.¹ What is certain is that it was altered by Shapur I after his victory over Valerian, but the first state of the relief has been given various attributions, among others to Ardahsir² or to the period of the co-regency of Ardashir I and Shapur I,³ that is to say before the enthronement of the latter. In fact, as in the relief at Salmas, Shapur I is seen there wearing the same crown as his father Ardashir I in the reliefs at Firuzabad, Naqsh-i Rajab and Naqsh-i Rostam celebrating his investiture (**pl. 42, fig. 3, pl. 43, pl. 44**). However, the rock reliefs of Salmas and Darabgird are not the only representations where Shapur I wears such a crown. On the large cameo of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (**pl. 47, fig. 11**), which is considered to represent the victory of Shapur I over the Roman emperor Valerian, which occurred in 260, Shapur I wears a similar crown but without the two large hair buns. If this great victory is in fact the theme of this representation, the object cannot be dated to the period of the supposed co-regency but must necessarily be after 260. On the cameo, Shapur I and Valerian are represented in single combat. It is in this context that one can place the interpretation of the crown proposed by Göbl, who considers it a “Kriegskrone”, a kind of lighter crown more suitable for wear during combat.⁴ However that may be, Shapur I never wears such a “reduced” crown on any of his coins.

On the other hand, what does seem certain is that Shapur I became king⁵ while his father Ardashir I was still alive, a fact exceptional enough for many ancient historians to have written it down.⁶ Ardashir I would have lived another year and a month, or more than a year after his son took the throne.⁷ Ardashir’s death maybe occurred in the year 241/242.⁸ Without seeking to dispute this tradition, one must however mention a primary source brought to light a decade ago which might eventually indicate that Ardashir I was still alive in the third year of Shapur I’s reign. This was a fire altar raised by a private individual and discovered in the neighbourhood of Shiraz (**pl. 49**).⁹ On each of the four sides, under an arcade held up by two columns, there is the effigy

¹ Among others, Herrmann 1969, Hinz 1969, Trümpelmann 1975 and recently Meyer 1990.

² For example, Herrmann 1969.

³ Among others, Meyer 1990.

⁴ Göbl 1974.

⁵ He had already been adult for a considerable time, since he was born when Ardashir I was still not emperor. According to Hinz 1969, p. 137–139, Shapur I would have been some 45 years old in 242.

⁶ The question is dealt with by Chaumont 1974.

⁷ Chaumont 1974, p. 135, n. 13. Cf. *I.I.a. Ardashir I*, n. 54.

⁸ At this time, the Sasanian year began in September. For the dates see Tabari (Nöldeke 1878), Anhang B. Also Bickerman 1983.

⁹ Illustrations of this fire altar may be found in the *editio princeps* of Tavoosi/Frye 1989, with Ardashir I and Shapur I in particular shown in figs. ii and iv. For a new edition and translation see Gignoux 1991. Other publications

of a person who is identified by an inscription on the arch above. Only two names and titles are of interest to us here: these of Ardashir, King of Kings, and of Shapur, King of Kings.¹⁰ On the lintel above these arcades a long inscription gives the year 3 of the reign of Shapur I as the date (*post quem* ?) of the monument.¹¹ Why should one have let the name and the effigy of Ardashir I appear on a monument of year 3 of the reign of Shapur I? There are two plausible explanations. Either we have here an act of homage to the deceased father of the reigning monarch or Ardashir I was in fact still alive at this time.

When the first studies were made of this inscription on the fire altar, it seemed that it might fix the date of year 3 of Shapur's reign. It was understood that the setting up of this fire altar followed the victory of Shapur I over the Romans at Misikhe.¹² Since then, however, it has been shown that this passage should be given another reading.¹³ All the same, there is here the very useful information that in the third year of the reign of Shapur I the Romans had been threatening the Sasanian Empire and that they were beaten. Even if the name of Misikhe is not explicitly mentioned here, the connection with the battle of Misikhe has greater attraction. The exact date of this battle gained by Shapur I is not known but can not be earlier than 242/243.¹⁴ If it took place in the year 3 of the reign of Shapur I (= 242/243 or 243/244), as the inscription would seem to suggest, this would mean that the era in which the count is made began in the year 239/240, 240/241 or 241/242¹⁵, depending on whether or not one takes into consideration that the year 242/243 or 243/244 was not included in the time reckoning.

During the first years of his reign, Shapur I brought to its conclusion the military programme of his father, which was in a general way directed against the Roman Empire, certain Asian provinces of which were contiguous with Sasanian territory. Among the aims of Ardashir I had been the conquest of the town of Hatra in northern Mesopotamia. This place was finally taken between April of 240 and April of 241.¹⁶ According to certain authors it was rather during the reign of Ardashir I (*II.A.2.4. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*) that this event took place, while for others it was Shapur I who lay hold of Hatra.¹⁷ This victory was followed by Sasanian advances in the north of Syria, where the Sasanians occupied Resaina (Ra's al-'ain) and Singara.¹⁸ The Roman reaction was not long in coming. The Roman armies advanced on the Sasanian Empire, managed to reconquer Carrhae, inflicted a defeat on the Sasanians at Resaina and won back Nisibis. However, Shapur I succeeded in blocking their path to Ctesiphon at Misikhe, a town situated on the left bank of the Euphrates. In this battle the Roman emperor Gordian III lost his life¹⁹ and Shapur I gave to Misikhe the honorific name of Peroz-Shapur, "Victorious (is) Shapur". In

have been devoted to this monument: Livshits/Nikitin 1991 (appeared in 1992), MacKenzie 1991, Skjærø 1992, Sundermann 1993.

¹⁰ Tavoosi 1989, p. 29.

¹¹ *Idem*.

¹² Gignoux 1991.

¹³ Skjærø 1992.

¹⁴ Ghirshman 1975, p. 265 and Kettenhofen 1982, p. 132 date it to February (?) of 244, which means the year 243/244. Another date is the winter 242/243 (Taqizadeh 1943/46, p. 10–12).

¹⁵ This is also Shapur's first year for Taqizadeh (Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 116) at a time that the inscription of Barm-i Dilak was not yet discovered. However, if the battle at Resaina took place in 242/243, the beginning of the reign of Shapur I has to be put in 239/240 or 240/241.

¹⁶ This means the year 239/240 or 240/241. Cf. Chaumont 1974 and in particular p. 140–143.

¹⁷ Ghirshman 1975, p. 264: "La prise de Hatra est une victoire obtenue sous les deux princes Ardachir et Châpour".

¹⁸ For a discussion about this point and the dates see Kettenhofen 1982, p. 29–30.

¹⁹ An account of this may be found in ŠKZ: Huysse 1999, vol. 1, p. 25–27 and a commentary in vol. 2, §6–7.

244 the new Roman emperor, Philip the Arab, concluded a peace treaty with Shapur I by which Armenia was left by the Romans to the Sasanians.²⁰ Despite the rather inglorious end to this war, Philip the Arab expressed pride in himself for this peace on certain of his coin issues.²¹ This first Roman war – or at least those of its events which put the Sasanians in a good light – were recounted by Shapur I in his lengthy inscription on the Ka'ba of Zoroaster (**pl. 48, fig. 12–13**).

The question of whether it was Ardashir I together with his son Shapur or Shapur I while his father was still alive who took Hatra brings us back to the problem of the date of the accession of Shapur I to the throne. In point of fact Hatra fell to the Sasanians some time between 12 April, 240 and 1 April, 241²² and the victory would have been credited to the king then reigning. The relatively recent discovery of new sources has revived research about the date of the accession of Shapur I to kingship. Certain such texts belong to the Manichean tradition, in particular the hagiography of Mani, which provides correspondences between the life of Mani and the reigns of Ardashir I and Shapur I, with which he was contemporary. Insofar as this literary genre attaches more importance to symbolism than to accurate dating, these sources are not easy to take advantage of.²³ There is also a primary source consisting of an inscription discovered by Ghirshman at Bishapur (**pl. 48, fig. 14**).²⁴ Engraved in Parthian and Pahlavi on a column, it dates from the year 58 of the “Sasanian” (?) era, from the year 40 of the reign of Ardashir I and from the year 24 of the reign of Shapur I. So here one has a remarkable concordance between three eras, in particular the one between the beginning of the reign of Ardashir I and the reign of Shapur I. Clearly under these conditions the date to give to the commencement of the reign depends on the one that is attributed to the commencement of the reign of Ardashir I. Certain historians consider that the commencement of the reign of Ardashir I should be placed immediately after his victory over the Parthian king at Hormizdagan (this is the theory followed by M. Alram in this volume), while others consider that it was with the seizure of the Parthian capital that his reign effectively commenced. These events have mostly been given the dates of 223/224 and 226/227 and most authors agree in placing the Battle of Hormizdagan on 28 April, 224. Let us return for a moment to the inscription of Bishapur, dated to the year 40 of the era of Ardashir I and the year 24 of that of Shapur I. This would imply that sixteen years passed between the beginning of the reign of Ardashir I and the beginning of the reign of Shapur I. Henning, who makes the reign of Ardashir I start with his great military victory over the last Parthian king in April of 224, counts the sixteen years as follows: the first is 223/224 (date of the commencement of the reign of Ardashir I), then fourteen years follow, and the sixteenth year is 238/239.²⁵ This dating can correspond either with the traditional reckoning and the tradition passed on by Tabari – a reign for Ardashir I of 14 years and 10 months²⁶ – or with that followed by Jacob of Edessa, who gives a reign of 15 years.²⁷ If one follows these literary traditions, and takes the month of April 224 as the commencement of the reign of Ardashir I, then one must take the reign of Shapur I as commencing either in February of 239 or in April of the same year, which gives us the year

²⁰ Chaumont 1976, p. 168.

²¹ They bear the formula “Pax fundata cum Persis” (*The Roman Imperial Coinage IV/3, Gordianus III – Uranius Antoninus*, London, 1949, no. 69, pl. 7, 2).

²² See among others Chaumont 1974, p. 140.

²³ The studies using the Manichean sources mentioned here may be found in the discussion that M. Alram has devoted to the chronology of the reign of Ardashir I (*I.A.2.4. Chronologie und Ablauf der Prägung*).

²⁴ Ghirshman 1936. The bibliography of this inscription (ŠVŠ) may be found in Gignoux 1972, p. 10–11, see also Back 1978.

²⁵ Henning in Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 117–118.

²⁶ Tabari (Nöldeke 1878), p. 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Anhang A.

238/239. The Bishapur inscription confirms this date when one counts in the oriental way.²⁸ However, Henning concludes “that the year beginning on September 23, 239, was counted as Shapur’s year of accession”.²⁹ He probably means “coronation”. Indeed, following the *Fihrist*’s dating Shapur’s coronation could have taken place at 12 April, 240 or at 9 April, 243.³⁰

We have provisionally accepted an opinion which is widely, but certainly not unanimously, followed and have therefore chosen 12 April of the year 240 for the coronation of Shapur I.³¹ We still have to decide whether the era of Shapur I began with his accession to the throne (238/239?) or with his crowning (239/240 or 242/243). This is a debate which does not concern us here. In any case, these dates, whichever one is chosen, are correlative with the date chosen for the commencement of the reign of Ardashir I. These doubtful dates may from time to time be settled by data coming from Roman sources, which have their own chronological references. But even these do not always enjoy unanimous agreement so that it is rare to reach a consensus even for important historical events, such for example as the victory of Shapur I over the Roman emperor Valerian.³²

In his inscription on the Ka’ba of Zoroaster Shapur I mentions only his military campaigns against the Romans, with nothing said about his other military expeditions. Fortunately one sometimes finds in historiography some information about them. So for example the Chronicle of Arbela³³ says that “Shapur, in the first year of his reign, went to war against the Chorasians and the Medes of the mountains, and vanquished them in a violent battle.”³⁴ The Medes of the mountains have been identified with the populations of Adurbadagan,³⁵ a region which opens the way to those parts situated south of the Caucasus, in particular Armenia. As for the Chorasians, these appear to have been the inhabitants of Khwaresm, beyond the Oxus.³⁶ To arrive there, Shapur I would have had to cross Khorassan,³⁷ Margiana and perhaps Bactria. Without any doubt, at this time Marw was part of the Sasanian Empire, as is shown by the Marw issues of Sasanian dynastic coinage.

²⁸ Many orientals consider that one is 16 when one is in one’s sixteenth year, that is to say having completed fifteen years.

²⁹ Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 118.

³⁰ Richter-Bernburg 1993, p. 78; etc.

³¹ The alternative is 9 April, 243 (Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 116). For a discussion see for example Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 109 for the table with the different dates for the accession of Shapur I to the throne which might be fixed from the literary sources and p. 116 bringing out the converging opinions of the two authors. Other dates (for the accession to the throne or the coronation) according to Higgins 1939, were 1 March, 240, 12 April, 240 according to Henrichs/Koenen 1970, p. 129, 132 and the summer of 240 according to Chaumont 1979, etc.

³² For the date of this event see Huyse 1999, vol. 1, p. 11, n. 42.

³³ This source, published for the first time in 1907 together with a French translation, was at first widely used by historians. Some twenty years later there were doubts about its authenticity and these were followed by real controversy about this Syriac source. See now Jullien/Jullien 2001, who has restored its reputation for the greater part.

³⁴ Christensen 1944, p. 219. For another opinion about the time of this expedition see Chaumont 1974, p. 145, n. 71.

³⁵ Markwart 1931, p. 52.

³⁶ Some authors cast doubt on any effective conquest of Khwaresm by Shapur I (for which see Kettenhofen 1995, p. 7–8), but however that may be, this region was attached to the Sasanian Empire fifty years later, for Narseh (293–303) names in his inscription at Paikuli a Khwaresm-shah among his allies (Skjærvø 1983, *passim*).

³⁷ Ohrmazd, the son of Shapur I, governed Khorassan at the beginning of the reign of Shapur I (see Nöldeke 1879, p. 45). If that corresponds to the facts, the function in any case dates to before 252, when this (same?) Ohrmazd became “King of Armenia”. According to Hinz (Hinz 1969, p. 137–139), Ohrmazd would have been born about 231. This would make Ohrmazd at the commencement of the reign of Shapur I an adolescent really young to be in charge of Khorassan. Manichaean sources mention Peroz, a brother of Shapur I, as governor of Khorassan before the coronation of Shapur as King of Kings (Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 110).

Still according to the Chronicle of Arbela, Shapur I went on to submit the Geles, the Delamites and the Gurganians, who dwelt in the distant mountains around the Caspian Sea.³⁸ Although it is impossible to fix these events with any precision, it is certain that the submission of the Geles was obtained before the inscription on the Ka'ba of Zoroaster was engraved, and probably even before the Third Roman War. In point of fact, the Gelan region is mentioned in this inscription as a vice-royalty confided to Wahram, who would have been a son of Shapur I,³⁹ and also in the enumeration of the regions which are in the empire mention is made of Gurgan and of all the mountain area of Parishkhwar, of which Delan, the country of the Delamites, was a part.

Although the military activity of Shapur I might have been a continuation of that of his father, yet by his choice of iconography on the reverse side of his coinage he makes a clear distinction from that of Ardashir I. First of all, he chose another type of fire altar than that of Ardashir I with its little pillars. The fire altar on the coinage of Shapur I is composed of a base of several blocks of diminishing size superimposed and a shaft surmounted with three flat stones and an *ateshdan*. The second important change in iconography consists of the addition of a personage on each side of the fire altar. It was this motif of a fire altar flanked by two persons that was to constitute the model for the coinage up till the end of the Sasanian dynasty and even later in the Arab-Sasanian imitations. Some sovereigns (Shapur II, Ardashir II, Shapur III) were to return to the type of altar introduced by Ardashir I, but this type remains minimal in their general coinage as compared to the type with the fire altar flanked by two individuals. However, it should be noted that in the coinage posterior to Shapur I these two persons are not always identical and their identity is not necessarily the same as on the coinage of Shapur I. The juxtaposition of a fire altar and of a person is not a new idea in the "Iranian" coinage, since this motif is to be found on certain issues of coinage of the Frataraka of Persis (pl. 40, E27-E28).⁴⁰ While there cannot be any doubt that on the latter it was the intention to represent a Zoroastrian priest before the fire altar, the case is quite different for the coinage of Shapur I. Here the person does not face the fire altar but has his back turned to it. Nor does he hold the *barshnom* or ritual bundle in his hand, as is the case on the Persis coinage,⁴¹ but instead a sceptre and a sword. He also wears a mural crown and has a knotted beard and a beribboned diadem, all royal attributes which show that one is in the presence of the king himself. At present such an identification is almost unanimously accepted.⁴² The doubling of the personage is no cause for great astonishment as the principle of symmetry lies deep in the tradition of ancient Near Eastern art.

In choosing this new type of reverse, the intention of Shapur I was to stress the role of the king and in that way to express a dynastic idea.⁴³ By introducing the legend "Fire of Ardashir", Ardashir I had wished to make a direct allusion to the action by which each king began his reign, the establishment of his fire. Shapur I takes this same formula, but by changing the iconography

³⁸ Christensen 1944, p. 219; Jullien/Jullien 2001, p. 62.

³⁹ It is generally admitted that this Wahram, the Gelan-shah, was the son of Shapur I who later seized the Sasanian crown after the disappearance of his brother Ohrmazd. However, while the ŠKZ says explicitly that the Meshan-shah, the king of Sakastan, Turan and Sind (Narseh, the future King of Kings), and the Great King of Armenia Ohrmazd-Ardashir were sons of Shapur I, nothing similar is said about the Gelan-shah.

⁴⁰ Alram 1986, pl. 19.

⁴¹ Still used in Zoroastrian ritual, for which see Dastur F. M. Kotwal / J. W. Boyd, *A Persian Offering. The Yasna: a Zoroastrian High Liturgy* [Studia Iranica, Cahier 8], Paris, Association pour l'Avancement des Études iraniennes, 1991.

⁴² See for example Pfeiler 1973/2, who has presented a complete and convincing argument for this identification, and also Ghirshman 1975. While not explicitly rejecting it, R. Göbl however prefers to designate these persons by the very noncommittal appellation of "Assistenzfiguren" (for example Göbl 1971).

⁴³ Also Mosig-Walburg 1982.

of the reverse he draws attention to another aspect of royalty. The position of the king with his back to the fire is not without meaning. It clearly expresses his role as a guardian of the fire in its double quality as dynastic fire and as the central symbol of the Zoroastrian cult. The choice of this motif was certainly not a matter of chance and might well have come as a royal stand in the face of the Zoroastrian clergy. Too little is known about the exact relations which united but also divided the royalty and the Zoroastrian clergy to allow an exact understanding of the purpose of Shapur I in choosing for his entire coinage a motif which represented him as Protector of the Sacred Fire. By stressing his role as guarantor of the Zoroastrian religion, it was perhaps easier for Shapur I to pursue a policy of religious tolerance towards the other religions practised in his empire.⁴⁴

The period from the accession to the throne or the coronation to the peace signed with the Romans in 244 may be considered to have been the first phase (**phase 1a**) of the coinage of Shapur I dominated by style A. In point of fact a certain number of monetary issues in the A style do have certain features in common with those of phase 4 of Ardashir I's coinage, in particular the quincuncial layout of the flames (= "broken flames") on the fire altar to be found on the reverse and incidentally the kind of ribbons of the diadem on the obverse. It is precisely in the A style that most coin types are engraved. This is systematic for the types Ia, Ib and IIb. Much of the IIa1 type also belongs to the A style, which is further to be seen in some issues of type IIc. However, in view of the frequency of style A (*II.B.2.5. Productivité des différents styles, fig. 47*), it seems that the A style must have continued for at least thirteen years. If one trusts such data, only part of the issues in the A style could have belonged to the first phase of the coinage of Shapur I. On reaching this point in the discussion one might also bring in the data concerning the frequency of the different types (*II.B.1.2.d. Productivité des différents types*), according to which type IIc could have covered a period of about twenty-seven years and all the other types taken together about three or four years. Although these conclusions based on frequency may be interpreted in several ways, by way of hypothesis we have attributed to this first period all the types of the A style which include coins presenting the quincuncial layout of the flames which is so typical and found in the coinage of phase 4 of Ardashir I. With these groups the type IIa2 of style B and type IIa1 of style Abis have been associated chronologically. This will be explained in the following paragraphs.

To this first period belong the monetary types Ia and Ib. Here Shapur I does not wear his crenellated crown but a sort of *kolah* not unlike the Phrygian cap. This *kolah* is always associated with ear flaps and sometimes with a nape-guard (type Ia). It is covered entirely in the case of type Ia, and partially in that of Ib, by the plumes of a bird whose head crowns the top of the cap. Below its beak there is sometimes a pearl (type Ib).⁴⁵ Most authors, at least those who accept the theory that Shapur I became the King of Kings during the lifetime of his father, consider that these issues of coinage date from the very beginning of the reign of Shapur I, when Ardashir I was still alive. According to them, Shapur I must have preferred to be shown with the head-cover that he wore as crown prince rather than with his own royal crown.⁴⁶ It is indeed the same kind of *kolah* as that worn by Shapur I as crown prince on the relief of Ardashir I at Firuzabad (**pl. 42, fig. 2**), although it is not really possible to make out if there the animal's head is in fact that of a bird. Whether or not one should follow certain authors in interpreting the bird's head

⁴⁴ It is interesting to read Chaumont 1988, p. 56–99 on this matter.

⁴⁵ One may recall the presence of a pearl below the horse's head which terminates the *kolah* of one of the persons (often considered to be the crown prince Ohrmazd (II)) on the relief of Narseh at Naqsh-e Rostam. For an illustration of this relief see Vanden Berghe 1983, pl. 32.

⁴⁶ Among others Ghirshman 1975.

as symbol of the god Verethragna (= Wahram), one of whose avatars was an eagle, is a more general question that we shall not deal with here. Less convincing is the effort to make a connection with the goddess Anahita and with an eventual investiture by her.⁴⁷ This type of coinage with the *kolah* is extremely rare, which could be the case of an issue which did not last long, being limited to the time when Ardashir I was still alive or the period between the accession to the throne and the coronation of Shapur I. But this very argument can also be used in support of the idea that it was a matter of a limited issue to commemorate some great deed of Shapur I which he performed during the years when style A dominated the issues of the principal mint, and one naturally thinks of the taking of Hatra at the beginning of his reign.⁴⁸

As for the stylistic aspect, the coins on which Shapur I wears the *kolah* are indistinguishable from those on which he wears the crenellated crown without ear flaps (type IIa1), both being in the A style, and it is not unlikely that the latter type represents the “current” issue of those first years of his reign. Apart from type IIa1 of style A, two other series of coinage may well be considered, for reasons of a different order, also to have been struck at the beginning of his reign.

The first issue is the IIa1 type of the “Abis” style. Of this style only one drachm is known, and it is in such a bad state of preservation that it is difficult to decide whether it should be considered close to style A or attributed to another different style, perhaps belonging to another mint. The other coins of style “Abis” are all in copper with a large die (Æ/1), most if not all of which have been over-struck on type VIII/3a of Ardashir I, commonly known as the “crown prince” type. Incidentally, for this VIII/3a type of Ardashir I, one also finds that it is very rare on drachms and very common on copper coinage. Also, it presents a problem in a large measure analogous to the one we are faced with about knowing the location of the mint where this coinage of Ardashir Ier was struck.

The second issue belongs to the IIa2 type and is in the B style. This IIa2 type has been attributed to the mint at Marw (*II.B.1. Types monétaires*).⁴⁹ Style B is strikingly different to style A, which seems to bring out that the engravers of coins at Marw enjoyed a certain liberty. This very special style may be explained by the existence of a local tradition for issuing coinage.⁵⁰ The striking of this IIa2 type of style B may have occurred at the time when Shapur I was at Marw organising his military expeditions beyond the Oxus. In any case, it is not impossible that throughout the reign of Shapur I Marw retained a particular style of coinage, since a type IIc/1b gold coin (no. **A51**) from Marw, therefore necessarily of later date, also presents certain stylistic particularities, even though following the general type.

Type IIc of style A also includes some coins (group A/a) on which the flames have a quincuncial arrangement. According to our hypothesis, this group A/a should therefore be attributed to the first period of Shapur I's reign. However, such an attribution raises a number of questions that would not come up if one dated all the coins of style A and of type IIc to after the peace of 244. But then other problems appear. Let us try to untangle this knot. If we attribute all the coins of style A (type IIc) to the time after the peace of 244, then we might suggest that it was then that type IIc was created. Indeed, one can very easily be of the opinion that the time after the peace of 244 was an appropriate one for the establishment of a new kind of monetary obverse which would be that of all the coinage minted subsequently under Shapur I. This would be thoroughly plausible if only group A/a did not bear the flames in a quincuncial layout as in the other types

⁴⁷ Göbl 1971, p. 9 and also elsewhere in his articles.

⁴⁸ This is the hypothesis that we follow here. This seizure of Hatra is sometimes put before the opening of his reign (for this, see among others Chaumont 1974).

⁴⁹ Loginov/Nikitin 1993.

⁵⁰ One might also invoke here its distance from the Central Mint, but this argument does not appear to us entirely convincing.

at the beginning of his reign. If in fact one attributes this A/a group to the early part of the reign, this means that at this time coins were being minted with both small and large dies. In point of fact, type IIc/style A shows a small monetary die, unlike all the other types attributed to the 1a phase, showing large dies. From this point of view, type IIc1/style A is close to the coinage of phase 4 of Ardashir I, which all present a small die. But during phase 3 of Ardashir I, the diameter of the die does not seem to be very representative. In fact one finds there in any one coin type very different diameters. May one therefore presume that it was this tradition of phase 3 that was carried on during the first four years of Shapur I's reign and that it is only a coincidence if all the coins of phase 4 of Ardashir I (which in any case probably lasted only a year) are struck on a small die? If one supposes the coexistence of both small and large dies, then one can only presume that it was only by pure chance that all the coins of types Ia, Ib and IIa1 had a large die. A richer documentation would certainly give an answer to this question. If one accepts that the two kinds of die coexisted during the first four years, there is no problem about attributing group A/a to them. It would also remain to be seen whether or not group A/a (type IIc/1a) was completely contemporaneous with types Ia, Ib and IIa1. If on the other hand one decides to place all type IIc/1a after 244, one has to ask why Shapur I should have waited for several years before going back to a small die for coinage as in phase 4 of Ardashir I. As our knowledge stands at present, there is no decisive argument that can decide whether group A/a should be placed before or after the peace of 244. Our attribution, therefore, of group A/a of type IIc, and consequently of style C, to this first part of the reign of Shapur I is purely hypothetical.

The conclusive argument for separating the other style A groups from group A/a and putting them after 244 is the absence in them of the typical layout of flames. Yet another feature could establish a chronological cut between group A/a and certain other groups of style A. In point of fact, group A/a never bears a dynastic emblem, whereas groups A/d and A/g bear one and group A/b bears two. Each of these symbols is in evidence on the rock relief of Ardashir I at Firuzabad (**pl. 42, fig. 2**). The first emblem, designated by the term *frawahr*, figures on the trappings on Ardashir I's horse and is intimately connected with royalty (see under Ardashir I). The second emblem is composed of a ring surmounted by a crescent and is placed on a support. This also appears on the relief at Firuzabad, where it embellishes the trappings of Crown Prince Shapur's horse. Clearly it is not a symbol peculiar to Shapur I, but is a dynastic emblem, for it is also to be found on the coinage of some of his successors. In our opinion, it is a symbol connected with fertility, expressed by a crescent, and seeks to stress the continuity of the royal line. These signs are not to be found at random in the coinage (*II.B.3. Éléments secondaires*). Their presence is limited to certain styles and stylistic groups and most certainly has a precise meaning according to where the symbol is placed, but in order to find the meaning we have no indication other than the coinage itself. The *frawahr* is already to be found in the coinage of Ardashir I, but only on the obverse side, on the bust, more precisely the shoulders, of the king. It is only in Shapur's B style that such a position for the *frawahr* is to be found (no. **A9** and perhaps also no. **A10**). In some groups of style A it figures above the crown, between the *korymbos* and the last crenellation of the crown. One is driven to ask oneself what reason could have caused this royal emblem to be engraved. Was it to stress some royal exploit or in the particular case of the style A groups, posterior to the peace of 244, is there an allusion here to the colossal sums paid by the Romans to obtain their soldiers' freedom, sums which served to swell the royal treasury? After the recent discovery of a seal of the treasury on which the central motif is the *frawahr*, it is now known that this emblem could be connected with the treasury.⁵¹

⁵¹ Gyselen 2003/2.

As for the second emblem, in style A it only figures on the column of the fire altar. One of the more plausible interpretations is that the symbol of the continuity of the royal line is an allusion to the igniting (= foundation) of a fire for or by the successor to the throne. One must not forget the importance the foundation of the fire held for members of the royal family. The whole second half of the inscription of Shapur I (ŠKZ) is devoted to it.⁵² It was certainly not a matter of chance that the fires he founded were first of all for himself, secondly for the Queen of Queens, his wife, and thirdly for his son Ohrmazd-Ardashir, who was given the title of Great King of Armenia and later became Shapur's successor. According to certain sources,⁵³ Ohrmazd(-Ardashir) had already been associated with the first Sasanian expeditions which led to the conquest of Nisibis and Carrhae under the reign of Ardashir I.⁵⁴ There can be little doubt that the future Ohrmazd I played an important role during the reign of his father and it seems likely that he was designated heir apparent by Shapur I quite early on.⁵⁵ A certain passage in the inscription of Shapur (ŠKZ)⁵⁶ might refer to such an event, one which occurred soon after the victory of Misikhe. It cannot be ruled out, therefore, that by placing this symbol on the column of the fire altar Shapur I wished to show that he had a successor who would in his turn establish the dynastic fire. However, this symbol in the same position is to be found on coins (group P/g) issued much later, since the type is IIC/1b. Clearly the king could for one reason or another stress that he had chosen his heir or that he had founded a fire for his heir at different moments of his reign.

If one attributes groups Ab-Ah, characterised among other things by a small die, to the years subsequent to the peace of 244, it appears plausible that the other styles produced on a small die can also be dated to this phase 1b. So one would readily attribute style E to it and, secondarily, style D. Unlike the coins of style A, those of style E do not bear any explicitly dynastic emblems.⁵⁷ According to whether or not one supposes the coexistence of the coins of large dies and those of small ones, one can fix the other styles of type IIC/1a – F-O – which all show a large die, as from the time of styles A and E (phase 1b) or afterwards (phase 1c) (for discussion of the topic see *II.B.2. Styles monétaires*).

One must also ask whether type IIC/1a (and secondarily IIC/2a) was stopped suddenly to be replaced by type IIC/1b (phase 2), or if certain mints or workshops continued to strike it. In favour of the latter hypothesis there is the evidence of a coin (no. **A65**) of type IIC/2a, which shows a style – M – very different from the other styles of type IIC/1a. But it is also true that all the coinages of type IIC/2a show characteristics that are somewhat particular when compared to the styles of type IIC/1a. However that may be, this style M presents too many analogies with certain coins issued by one or other of the first successors of Shapur I for one not to be tempted to place them preferably near the end of the time of Shapur I himself. Clearly, when it is a question of only one coin, in such a case one has to be careful. However, it might confirm the persistence of type IIC/2a, if not of type IIC/1a, after the introduction of type IIC/1b.

⁵² Huyse 1999, vol. 1, § 32–51 (p. 45–64).

⁵³ *Historia Augusta*, mentioned by Ghirshman 1975, p. 266. Concerning the age of Ohrmazd at that moment, see n. 37.

⁵⁴ Several authors recognise Ohrmazd-Ardashir in one of the smaller personages – added later – which figure on the relief of Ardashir I at Naqsh-e Rostam between the god and the king (**pl. 43**). For references see Ghirshman 1975.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* for the references.

⁵⁶ Huyse 1999, vol. 1, p. 24–25, and vol. 2, p. 39. But the state of preservation of this passage does not justify its being used to support this supposition.

⁵⁷ Some rare exceptions exist (see *II.B.3. Éléments secondaires*).

After mentioning the peace of 244 in his inscription on the Ka'ba of Zoroaster, Shapur I does not recount any other expedition or event up till the renewal of hostilities with Rome in 252. But we have already noted that in general only affairs with Rome are related there. There is no allusion to politico-military happenings in other parts of the empire, nor any reference to administrative and monetary reforms. Shapur I stipulates that it is only because of the Roman emperor's mendacity and his injustice towards Armenia that he must commit himself to a new expedition. In the first paragraph, Shapur I makes mention of his victory at Barbalissos and then enumerates the towns he seized.⁵⁸ Parallel with this action, the Sasanians occupied Armenia in the year 252 and Ohrmazd-Ardashir, Shapur's own son, became Great King of Armenia.⁵⁹ It was from Armenia that the Sasanian armies subsequently set out to conquer the other countries south of the Caucasus such as Iberia (=Wirozan), Segan, Albania and Balasagan, which became provinces or vice-royalties of the Sasanian Empire. It was from Armenia that Ohrmazd-Ardashir went to the help of the Sasanian armies when they made incursions into Syria or Cappadocia. The itinerary and chronology of this second Roman war have been discussed at much length⁶⁰ and there is no need to turn to them except for the one case of Dura-Europos. In fact, this was one of the rare towns situated outside Sasanian territory where Sasanian coinage has been found in an archeological context containing also some forty Pahlavi and Parthian inscriptions attributable to the period of the occupation of the site by the Sasanian armies.⁶¹ Although total agreement about the dates of this Sasanian presence is lacking,⁶² there seems little doubt about a first occupation starting in March of 253.⁶³ It followed the conquest of the town, which could only have happened when the Sasanian armies were on their way back from their incursions into Syria and Cappadocia. In April of 254, Dura-Europos had already been retaken by the Roman armies. One last episode in 256 put the Sasanians once again in relation with the town.⁶⁴ Subsequently, Dura-Europos was abandoned and it passed into oblivion. The archeological context in which Shapur's coinage was found provides a *terminus ante quem* to be placed probably in April of 254 or in 256 at the very latest. All the coins are of the IIC/1a type and of style A or E (phases 1a and 1b). Clearly, one cannot ignore the fact that perhaps these findings were only chance ones and other coins of other types and styles may one day be discovered in the ruins of the site. But up to the present this information provided by archeology agrees entirely with what we know about the period of the issue of type IIC/1a and styles A and E, which can be put between 244 and 252 (see *II.B.6.2. Périodisation et événements historiques*).

From 254 onwards, Rome reacted against the Sasanian incursions into its eastern provinces. Emperor Valerian arrived in Antioch⁶⁵ during the same year and organised the counter-offensive. In his inscription, Shapur I does not say a single word about military matters for the years 254–259, perhaps because of the reverses he suffered. Shapur I resumes his account of activities with the events of 260 and his victory at Carrhae (=Harran) over Valerian, whom he led into captivity in the Fars.⁶⁶ After this brilliant victory, Shapur I undertook an expedition to Syria,

⁵⁸ Huyse 1999, vol. 1, p. 28–33, §9–17.

⁵⁹ According to Lukonin 1969, p. 170, Ohrmazd-Ardashir (as Ohrmazd I?) emitted coins with the title "Great King of Armenia", but we never came across such a coin.

⁶⁰ Most recently in Huyse 1999, where one may find the principal references to other studies.

⁶¹ A complete account of this question has been given by Grenet 1988.

⁶² An outline has been given by Huyse 1999, vol. 2, p. 65–70. See also Grenet 1988.

⁶³ Grenet 1988, p. 143.

⁶⁴ They came to besiege the town once again or to defend it against Roman assailants.

⁶⁵ An inscription shows that in January of 255 Valerian was certainly in Antioch and an issue of gold coinage in 255 confirms his presence. See among others Grenet 1988.

⁶⁶ Huyse 1999, vol. 1, p. 37.

Cilicia and Cappadocia for a second time and once again laid hold of the town of Antioch, where there was a Roman mint for coinage. A part of the population was deported to Sasanian territory. Samosata, where there was another Roman mint, also fell into Sasanian hands. It has been clearly demonstrated (see *I.3.a. Metallurgie*) that the poor quality Sasanian drachms were ones struck with Roman silver, probably taken as booty with the seizure of Antioch and/or Samosata. After numerous raids on Cilicia and Cappadocia, the Sasanian armies turned back towards 263. On their way home these armies were attacked by Odheinat, an Arab chief who reigned over the town of Palmyra in the Syrian Desert.⁶⁷ The Sasanians waged war unsuccessfully against Palmyra, the ally of Rome, up till the year 265.⁶⁸

If one considers that the coin hoards found in Cilicia and Cappadocia (*II.B.5. Informations d'ordre archéologique*) belong to the period of the Sasanian incursions, it follows that the types of coinage found there had been minted previously. Therefore types IIC/1b and IIC/1d, which appear in these hoards alongside type IIC/1a, must have been the product of the years preceding 260. Such an attribution agrees with results of the study of the frequency of the different types (*II.B.2.5. Productivité des différents styles*), which suggest the year 258 more or less for the commencement of type IIC/1b. One may add a third argument to confirm the existence of type IIC/1b at the time of the Sasanian raids into Syria and Cilicia. In point of fact, if the copper-silver alloy (= billon) of the poor quality drachms was taken from the Romans in 260–261, the type and style of these coins should correspond to a type and style that were current during those years. However, all these billon drachms follow type IIC/1b and their style is close to the P style, particularly the P/b, a group which chronologically is to be placed at the commencement of style P.

Judging by the composition of the hoard found in Cilicia, type IIC/1d was anterior to 260 (see above). It is characterised by the legend “Shapur – Shapur” on the reverse side instead of the usual “Fire of – Shapur”. I. Pfeiler has seen this insistence on putting Shapur’s name on each side as an explicit intention to indicate that the persons to be found on either side of the fire altar both represent King Shapur I. One might hesitate to accept this interpretation and prefer to see it as an error on the part of the engraver. However this may be, stylistically this type IIC/1d is close to type IIC/1c. On the latter the expression “Fire of” must be read on the left side, anti-clockwise (so resembling type IIC/1a), while “Shapur” is on the right, clockwise. The characteristic feature of this type is the arrangement of the two parts of the legend one above the other (when turning the coin 90° to the right) instead of in a circle. As style T, which goes together with this type IIC/1c, is very specific, it has come to our mind that it might have been produced by a mint other than those which struck types IIC/1a and IIC/1b. After consideration of the systematic presence of the *frawahr* on the column of the fire altar, we have had the idea that it might refer to a new “royal” foundation of Shapur I (Weh-Andiyok-Shapur, Bishapur, ...) peopled by the deportees of the second “Roman War” (*II.B.3. Éléments secondaires*). Although Shapur I does not explicitly mention massive deportations during this second Roman war, it is known from other sources that at this time there was a first deportation of part of the population of Antioch.⁶⁹ In any case, if style T (type IIC/1c) is earlier than style U (type IIC/1d) and the latter necessarily came out before 260, it is impossible for the royal city having the mint to have been founded after the third Roman war. It has necessarily to be after the second Roman war. As a hypothesis, one might hold the view that this new mint chose another arrangement for the legend (placing it in parallel instead of in the arc of a circle), but followed the type usual during this epoch (IIC/1a) by putting the

⁶⁷ Christensen 1944, p. 225.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Chaumont 1988, p. 59.

first part of the legend to the left of the iconographic motif and the rest of the legend to the right. One should not forget to mention that such a parallel arrangement is to be found on certain series of coins of Wahram II (276–293), except that the beginning of the legend is on the right and the rest is on the left (as in type IIc/1b of Shapur I). It must be added that these coins of Wahram II were engraved in a style fairly analogous to the style T of Shapur I and that it is quite likely that Shapur's style T coins and these Wahram II coins came from one and the same mint. Should one conclude that, between type IIc/1c (style T), ending towards 258 (?), and these Wahram II coin series, this mint stopped striking coins? One might fill the gap if one considered that type IIc/1d, which follows a style (U), more or less analogous to style T, followed chronologically type IIc/1c. In point of fact, on type IIc/1d the second part of the legend is well and truly on the left as it is on type IIc/1b. However, there still remains the question of explaining why the legend to the right in type IIc/1d is always faulty. There one does not find the usual expression "Fire of", but instead "Shapur" usually written mirrorwise, which makes one think either that the engraver wrongly understood his model or that "Fire of" was intentionally replaced by the name of the king. Afterwards, under Wahram II, there was a return to the usual legend "Fire of", engraved clockwise. However, it is necessary to repeat that such a reconstitution remains purely hypothetical in the present state of our knowledge.

In his inscription, Shapur I is explicit about his having made the Roman emperor Valerian prisoner with his own hands. The capture of the Roman emperor in person was so extraordinary that this event must have made a profound impression and Shapur I did not waste the opportunity to recall this victory, which he represented on several rock reliefs. However, this is not the only victory that these reliefs indicate, but rather they give a synthesis of these victories over the Romans taken together. Several reliefs actually show two Roman emperors (relief of Naqsh-i Rostam, **pl. 46, fig. 8**) and some even three (Darabgird and the two reliefs of Bishapur, **pl. 45, fig. 7**).⁷⁰ None of this dynastic propaganda transpires in coinage, unless the presence of the dynastic emblems, in particular the *frawahr*, are to be taken as allusions to this victory. We have already seen that it is not impossible for certain issues of coinage to have been alluding to the victory of Misikhe and the peace of 244 concluded with Philip the Arab. Nor can it be ruled out that certain coin issues of style P (IIc/1b) bearing dynastic emblems also commemorated the victory of Shapur I over Valerian. But, unlike the style A series (groups A/b and A/c), which might represent issues lasting one or two years – the time during which the victory over the Romans was being celebrated –, the issues of style P with one or two dynastic emblems (groups P/d, P/e, P/f, P/g, P/h) are far too abundant to have been only a short-lived production. One is more inclined to give them the whole period from the victory to the end of the reign of Shapur I.

According to certain ancient authors, Shapur's reign lasted thirty years and two months⁷¹, but other alternatives are thirty years and fifteen days and thirty-one years, six months, and nineteen (or eighteen) days.⁷² The date for the end of Shapur's reign depends on the date taken for the opening of his reign. It seems to us that there is no way for getting agreement between the different sources,⁷³ so discussion about the commencement of Shapur's reign is certainly not closed.⁷⁴ We have chosen the year 240 for the beginning of the reign of Shapur I simply for the

⁷⁰ For a synthetic study of the representations in these reliefs, and also for the cameo of Paris, see Göbl 1974. Meyer 1990 also gives a good general view.

⁷¹ Nöldeke 1879, p. 413–414.

⁷² These figures depends of the date choosen for the beginning of the reign (Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 113).

⁷³ One can recall Henning's conclusion "We sorely need a fresh piece of unambiguous evidence to decide these questions" (Taqizadeh/Henning 1958, p. 121). Unfortunately, we are still waiting for such a piece of evidence!

⁷⁴ We are grateful to Philip Huyse for having taken the time and trouble to discuss this point.

sake of continuity between the reign of Ardashir I and that of Shapur I in this volume. As a matter of fact one can take three different dates for the beginning of the reign of Shapur: his accession to the throne in the lifetime of his father Ardashir I, the death of Ardashir I and the coronation of Shapur I. The distinction between these three different events may explain the different durations given by ancient authors for the reign of Shapur I. This means that there are many factors which put obstacles in the way of an exact appreciation of the rare data available for fixing the year of the end of Shapur's reign. While taking into consideration the different plausible opinions, we have chosen as a hypothesis the year 272/273.

The present study has shown the existence of several phases in the coinage of Shapur I without it being possible, however, to establish a relationship between these phases and precisely-dated historical events. But it should not be forgotten that our knowledge about the reign of Shapur I is more or less limited to his military exploits and that on the other hand absolutely nothing is known about any reorganisation or reforms of the administrative or monetary system. It is evident that it was these latter actions that determined the changes of types of coinage and the localisation of the mints. With the exception of a principal mint, probably at Weh-Ardashir, and another at Marw, nothing is known about the identity of the mints which struck coins under Shapur I. In this study it is only on the basis of stylistic criteria that any effort has been made to decide how many mints were working at different times during Shapur's reign (*II.B.6. Ateliers monétaires et périodisation*). The data obtained have to be interpreted with caution when trying to form a general picture. Generally speaking, new mints were set up either in the peripheral regions whose economic and political role took on importance under Shapur I, or in the heart of the Empire in the ancient centres or in the new poles which grew up rapidly thanks to the contribution of new populations resulting from the deportations. Among the regions of the first category, one recalls the vice-royalties that Shapur I confided to his sons, including Mesene in southern Mesopotamia, a stop on the caravan roads on the way to the Persian Gulf and a place where a tradition of minting had existed since Seleucid times, Sakastan in the Iranian East, which controlled the traffic to India and had known monetary activity under the Indo-Parthians, and finally Armenia. As for the second group, one should mention such royal foundations of Shapur I as Weh-Andiyok-Shapur which received the deportees from Antioch and also a town such as Bishapur, a royal city where Shapur I undertook major works and ordered the execution of several of his rock reliefs in the vicinity. Nor can one forget such a town as Susa, which had monetary activity before the Sasanians took power, or Hamadan, which had had an important mint under the Parthians and probably carried on under Ardashir I.

We have attributed the privilege of creating new types of coinage to the principal mint. One notices that at the commencement of the reign of Shapur I there was a rapid succession of types of obverse. After the peace of 244 the IIc type of obverse became the norm and the later typological modifications all concerned the arrangement of the legend on the reverse side. But despite the existence of these few types, the coinage under Shapur I was generally speaking very homogeneous in its typology. There can be no doubt that it was Shapur I who created the true Sasanian monetary type which was to be the model for minting up to the end of the 7th century. By way of contrast, for the denominations and weight standards Shapur I followed the model that his father Ardashir I had put in place during phase 3 of his coinage. He also followed him for the titles, something which still causes astonishment. In fact the coinage of Shapur I, an instrument of dynastic propaganda *par excellence*, does not bear the title "the Mazdean, the Lord Shapur, King of Kings of the Aryans and of the non-Aryans, whose essence is from the gods" which figures on all the royal inscriptions of Shapur I and also on the private inscriptions of the time. The title mentioned on the coinage omits the "non-Aryans". Between the coinage and the rock reliefs there is also a difference in the royal crown. The one worn by Shapur I on the reliefs is close to, though not identical with, the one on the IIa type coinage

of the commencement of his reign. However, the state of preservation of the reliefs does not always allow too much certainty about this point. However, one may still wonder why on the reliefs and inscriptions Shapur I does not wear the same kind of crown nor bear the same title as on his coins, all the more that they are two supports for one and the same dynastic propaganda.