

‘FORGOTTEN QUEEN’. WAS THE JEWISH WOMEN ŠĪŠĪNDUXT THE MOTHER
OF THE IRANIAN ŠĀHĀNŠĀH WAHRĀM V GŌR?

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ABSTRACT: The origin of the mother of the Iranian šāhānšāh Wahrām V (420-438), son and successor of Yazdgird I (399-420), is, in scholar literature, treated marginally. The literary source which mentions Wahrām’s Jewish maternal background is the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (‘The Provincial Capitals of Ērānšahr’). These considerations are an attempt to ‘recover the memory’ of Šīšīnduxt, the Jewish women at the Iranian court, by methodical re-analyzing of the historical texts.

Introduction

It seems surprising that the topic above has not generated interest among either Jewish or Iranian historians. On the other hand, the overwhelming masculinization of Iranian history must be pointed out, a masculinization clearly visible even with regard to the Pre-Islamic period.¹ Recent research has changed the picture of women in this period of Iranian history. The depictions of women on official royal inscriptions and reliefs, or coinage, prove the high position of women in the court hierarchy of the Sasanians. The very fact that the females in the royal family had their own seals illustrates their power. Owning seals confirmed that the women could be the parties to trade transactions and official matters. Their testimony was acceptable in court and they enjoyed the right to an equal share in inheritance.² The sacrifices for the souls of the living and deceased women of the royal dynasty attest to the recognition of their official status held at the Sasanian court. The considerations below are an attempt to ‘recover the memory’ of Šīšīnduxt, the Jewish women at the Iranian court, by a methodical re-analysis of the historical texts.

The origins of the mother of Iranian šāhānšāh Wahrām V (420-438), son and successor of Yazdgird I (399-420), is, in scholar literature, treated marginally.³ The entry published by *Encyclopaedia Iranica* states literally: ‘His mother was said to have been Šōšanduxt, a daughter of the Jewish exilarch’.⁴ Similar statements are made by J. Marquart⁵ and A.S. Shahbazi,⁶ J. Neusner⁷ wrote that Bahrām’s mother might have been the daughter of the

¹ Daryaei 2008; McDonough 2011.

² Malekān, Mohammadifar 2013.

³ This matter was analyzed only at the end of the 19th century by J. Darmesteter (1889; 1889a; 1893).

⁴ Klíma 1988.

⁵ Marquart 1931, par. 74.

⁶ Shahbazi 2003.

⁷ Neusner 1970, 11.

Exilarch. T. Daryaee⁸ does not reject the idea of the Jewish origin of the mother of the king; however at the same time he notes that it might have been an effect of Jewish propaganda. R. Frye⁹ dismisses the historicity of Wahrām’s Jewish maternal background, mentioning only Jewish folktale and propaganda. According to S. Malekzadeh ‘Such questions still need to be addressed’.¹⁰ The considerations below are an attempt to tackle the matter.

Jews in the Sāsānian Empire

At the beginning of the 3rd century CE, the main center of Jewish settlements were Babylonia (*pārsīg Āsōristān*¹¹) and the southern region of Mesopotamia – Mesene (*pārsīg Mēšān*¹²). It must be noted here that except for some towns (e.g. Sura, Pumbadita,¹³ and above all Nehardea¹⁴) and smaller districts (e.g. the Māḥōza district near Seleucia-Ctesiphon¹⁵), the Jews were a distinct minority. The majority of the Jewish population was formed of farmers.¹⁶

The takeover of power in Iran by the new dynasty in 224¹⁷ changed the status of Jews in the empire.¹⁸ In spite of the Iranian concept of the power, based on the divine sanction of the sacred Sāsānian lineage,¹⁹ and despite the fact that Zoroastrianism was consistently promoted by kings,²⁰ influencing relationships with the non-Zoroastrian religious communities and practices, it is impossible to assume any mass persecutions²¹ (even in regard to the declaration of the Zoroastrian high priest Kartīr).²² The king was the protector of order in the world, not only in the political realm but also in religious spheres.²³ The Sāsānian kings abolished Jewish legal autonomy, taking over supervision of the local courts of justice.²⁴ Jewish religious practices inconsistent with mazdean doctrine, violating the Zoroastrian drive to protect the sanctity of fire, water and earth, were forbidden.²⁵ This regarded, first of all, the ritual

⁸ Daryaee 2006, 498.

⁹ Frye 1983, 143.

¹⁰ Malekzadeh 2013.

¹¹ Oppenheimer 2005; on the impact of the Persian Sasanian context on the Babylonian Talmud, see Mokhtarian 2015; B. Cohen postulates not treat Babylonia as one uniform region, see Cohen 2010, 44.

¹² About the Mesenean Jews, see Paz 2018.

¹³ On the Euphrates, more than 100 km. from Ctesiphon.

¹⁴ In the early 60s of the 3rd century, the town of Nehardea was destroyed by the invading Palmyrene forces; De Blois 1975, 12–16.

¹⁵ Madā’en was a suburb of the Sāsānian capital of Ctesiphon.

¹⁶ Eckstein, Botticini 2012, 96.

¹⁷ Syväne, Maksymiuk 2018, 99, 111–112.

¹⁸ Widengren 1961; Brody 1990.

¹⁹ Choksy 1988; Soudavar 2003.

²⁰ Mosig-Walburg 1982; Wiesehöfer 1993.

²¹ Kalmin 2006, 121–148.

²² Boyce 1970; Payne 2015, 23–58.

²³ Shaked 2008, 103–117.

²⁴ Neusner 2009.

²⁵ Discussion in Kalmin 2006, 132–136.

preparation of meat, the use of ritual baths, and the burial of the dead.²⁶ Most likely in the early-Sasanian period some destruction of the synagogues occurred.²⁷ It seems, however, that no open conflict with the Persian authorities burst as this may be deduced from the official declaration that the Persian kings were the sovereigns of their lands.²⁸

Since the 3rd century CE the existence of the Babylonian Exilarchate is confirmed.²⁹ The Exilarch (*Rosh ha-Gola* ‘head of the exile’) was the head of the Jewish community in Babylon, who enforced the decisions of the rabbinical court.³⁰ There is no extant epigraphic evidence, which would allow us to believe that the Exilarch was to be included among the *wuzurgān*,³¹ the most important noble families of Sāsānian society.³² The idea that the Exilarch was responsible in front of the king for the tax excise from the Jews is not well-founded.³³ According to the sources Jews paid two types of taxes: land tax (*tasqa*) and poll tax (*kraga*).³⁴ The Sāsānian court could not afford to underestimate the Jewish community in Iran where the population increased significantly during the 3rd and 4th centuries (better economic conditions prompted migrations of Jews from the Land of Israel and Egypt³⁵), and the community’s economic activity was a potential source of income for the state.³⁶

Several high-ranking Jewish figures (apart from the Exilarch) regularly visited the Šābuhr I’s court (242-272).³⁷ According to Christian hagiographic literature the Jews and the Zoroastrian clergy worked hand in hand in persecuting the Christians during of the rule Šābuhr II (309-379).³⁸ J. Neusner points out that, even leaving aside the credibility of the

²⁶ Boyce 1979, 14–15; Herman 2010.

²⁷ B. Yoma’ 10a [B. Yoma’ = *Ein Yaakov: The Ethical and Inspirational Teachings of the Talmud compiled in the sixteenth century by Rabbi Yaakov Ibn Chaviv*, a translation with commentary by A. Y. Finkel, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford 1999]: ‘They [Persians], too, are destroyers of synagogues, and they are no better than the Romans’ (transl. by A. Y. Finkel).

²⁸ B. Bathra 55a [B. Bathra = R. Moses b. Nachman, *Ramban on Baba Bathra 55a*, New York 1964]: ‘the law of the kingdom is law’. (transl. by I. Gafni 2006, 796).

²⁹ Herman 2012.

³⁰ Gafni 1999.

³¹ At the very top of the society was the *šāhānšāh* and below him were ranks of nobles: 1) the local kings who held important posts (*šahrdārān*); 2) the members of Sāsānian family who were not direct descendants of the ruler (*wāspuhragān*); 3) the heads of the most important noble families most of whom consisted of Parthians (*wuzurgān*); 4) the ‘householders’ (*katag xʷatāyān*), 5) the lesser nobility (*āzādān*) and the military elite.

³² Herman 2012, 37–38; *contra* Oppenheimer 2005, 377–378.

³³ Stausberg 2012, 175; Herman 2012, 176–181.

³⁴ Goodblatt 1979.

³⁵ Leibner 2009, 60.

³⁶ Panaino 2004, 392; Elman 2007.

³⁷ Mokhtarian 2012.

³⁸ Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2. 9, 1-2 [Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica = The Sacred Writings of Hermias Sozomen*, eds. P. Schaff, H. Wace, transl. by Ch.D. Hartranft, New York 2018]: ‘When, in course of time, the Christians increased in number, and began to form churches, and appointed priests and deacons, the Magi, who as a priestly tribe had from the beginning in successive generations acted as the guardians of the Persian religion, became deeply incensed against them. The Jews, who through envy are in some way naturally opposed to the

sources describing the direct participation of the Jews in the persecution of the Christians, it must be clearly stated that the Christians could not observe any kind of enmity between Jewry and the Iranian court.³⁹ What is more, the mother of the king, present in the text of Babylonian Talmud as *ifra* Hormozd was to cover them with her patronage.⁴⁰ Even Šābuhr’s deportations of Jews from Armenia to Iran,⁴¹ ‘are not to be interpreted as hostile to the Jews’.⁴²

The beginning of the 5th century was marked by the policy of tolerance⁴³ towards the Christians in the actions of the royal Iranian court introduced by Yazdgird I.⁴⁴ The ruler, nicknamed, by the Perso-Arabic sources, ‘the Sinner’⁴⁵, enjoyed the positive opinion of not only Christian historiography⁴⁶, but also, which is even more important for the considerations below, in Jewish literature.⁴⁷

Šīšīnduxt in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*

The literary source which mentions Wahrām’s Jewish maternal background is the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (The Provincial Capitals of Ērānšahr).⁴⁸ The short Middle Persian (*pārsīg*) text on geography enumerates the cities and of their builders. According to the text, the *Ērānšahr* is divided into four major quarters: *xwarāsān*, *xwarbārān*, *nēmrōz* and *Ādurbādagān*. This picture represents the administrative reforms of Kawād I (488-531) and

Christian religion, were likewise offended [...] Thus the Magi, with the co-operation of the Jews, quickly destroyed the houses of prayer.’ (transl. by Ch.D. Hartranft).

³⁹ Neusner 1972.

⁴⁰ Khanbaghi 2006, 8.

⁴¹ P’awstos Buzandac’i 4.55 [P’awstos Buzandac’i = P’awstos Buzand’s, *History of the Armenians*, translated by R. Bedrosian, New York 1985]: ‘From the city of Artashat they took 9,000 households of Jews [...]. They took the great city of Eruandashat and took thence [...] 30,000 Jewish households [...]. They also took the city of Zarehawan in Bagrewand, leading away from it [...] 8,000 Jewish households [...]. They took the great city of Zarishat, which was located in the district of Aghiovit, leading off 14,000 Jewish households [...]. They took the secure city of Van, in the district of Tozb, [...] and leading from it [...] 18,000 Jewish households [...]. They took [Naxchawan] and demolished it as well. They took thence [...] 16,000 Jewish households [...]. The captives were taken to king Shapuh of Iran, in the country of Iran [...]. they took all the other captives and settled them, some in Asorestan, some in the country of Xuzhastan.’ (transl. by R. Bedrosian). Of course, given numbers are suspicious.

⁴² Neusner 1969, 69.

⁴³ Becker (2014, 7) believes that the statement ‘anachronistic, modern notions borrowed from liberal political philosophy’, e.g. ‘tolerance’ in discussing the religious communities of Sāsānian Iran, however his proposals cannot be found convincing.

⁴⁴ McDonough 2008; Herman 2014.

⁴⁵ Ṭabarī 847 [Ṭabarī = *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, edited by M.J. de Goeje, Leiden 1893; *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, translated by C.E. Bosworth, New York 1999].

⁴⁶ *Synodicon orientale*, 17–18 [*Synodicon orientale* = *Synodicon orientale ou recueil de synodes nestoriens*, ed. J.B. Chabot, Paris 1902]; Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.8, 18 [Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* = *Socratis Scholastici Ecclesiastica Historia*, edited by R. Hussey, Oxford 1853].

⁴⁷ Elman 2009; Elman 2010.

⁴⁸ De Jong 2008.

Xusrō I Anōšīrvān (531-579).⁴⁹ The final redaction of the text was made at the break of 8th and 9th centuries however originally it was written at the time of Xusrō II (591-628). Perhaps its archetype was the book on geography, the *Ayādgār ī Šahrīhā* ('Memoir of Cities'), written at the order of Kawād I.⁵⁰ For the first time the text was edited by K.J. Jamasp-Asana⁵¹.

In the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* the name Šīšīnduxt is present twice:

1) *šahrestān [ī] šūs ud šūstar šīšīnduxt zan ī yazdgird ī šābuhrān kard čiyōn duxt ī rēš-galūdag jahūdagān šāh mād-iz ī wahrām ī gōr bād* ('The city of Šūs and Šūstar were built by Šīšīnduxt, the wife of Yazdgird, the son of Šābuhr, since she was the daughter of Reš Galut, the king of the Jews and also was the mother of Wahrām Gōr. '; transl. by T. Daryae).⁵²

2) *šahrestān ī gay gizistag *aleksandar ī flīpus kard. mānīšn ī jahūdān ānōh būd. pad xwadāyīh [ī] yazdgird ī šābuhrān nīd az xwāhišn ī šīšīnduxt u-š zan būd.* ('The city of Gay was built by the accursed Alexander, the son of Philip. The dwelling of the Jews was there. During the reign of Yazdgird, the son of Šābuhr, (the Jews) were led there by the request of Šīšīnduxt who was his wife. '; transl. by T. Daryae).⁵³

Passage 10 of the text, in which the author names Narsēh as a founder of the city of Xwārazm, should be pointed out: *šahrestān ī xwārazm *narsēh ī jahūdagān kard* ('The city of Xwārazm was built by Narsēh, the son of the Jewess. '; transl. by T. Daryae).⁵⁴

Commentary

The name Šīšīnduxt would have been Šūsān in Hebrew, meaning 'lily' (שושן), in Persian Sūsan⁵⁵. The word *duxt* in *pārsīg* denominates 'daughter'.⁵⁶ The text does not specify her father's name and the only remark of him identifies him as 'Reš Galut, the king of the Jews'. Wahrām Gōr was born around the 400s.⁵⁷ It would seem that the father of Šīšīnduxt was

⁴⁹ Rubin 1995.

⁵⁰ Tavadia 1956, 204.

⁵¹ Jamasp-Asana 1913.

⁵² *ŠĒ* 47 [*ŠĒ* = *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, *A Middle Persian Text on Geography, Epic and History*, ed. T. Daryae, Costa Mesa 2002].

⁵³ *ŠĒ* 53.

⁵⁴ *ŠĒ* 10.

⁵⁵ Modi 1898, 142.

⁵⁶ See e.g. *ŠKZ: pārsīg* I 26 [*ŠKZ* = M. Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften. Studien zur Orthographie und Phonologie des Mittelpersischen der Inschriften zusammen mit einem etymologischen Index des mittelpersischen Wortgutes und einem Textcorpus der behandelten Inschriften*, Leiden, 1978]: 'ud Rōdduxt ī duxš ī Anōšag duxt' (Princess Rōdduxt, daughter of Anōšag) (transl. by K. Maksymiuk).

⁵⁷ Ferdowsī's information that he was born in the eighth year of Yazdgird I's reign (407/8) [*Firdawsī, Šāh-nāma*, transl. by D. Davis, New York 2007, 600]: 'Then, at the beginning of the eighth year of his reign, at the spring equinox, a son was born to him under an auspicious star. Delighted with his little son Yazdegerd named him Bahram.' (transl. by D. Davis); but according to Ṭabarī 863: 'Bahram assumed the royal power when he was twenty years old' (transl. by C.E. Bosworth).

Kahana I, who was the Exilarch.⁵⁸ Darmesteter believes that her father was Huna bar Nathan.⁵⁹ Accepting the hypothesis of Wahrām’s Jewish maternal background, Narsēh, who appears in passage 10, must be identified as his brother, as he was described as ‘the son of a Jewess’.⁶⁰ According to Ṭabarī, Wahrām had a brother named Narsēh, whom he appointed the governor of Xwarāsān.⁶¹ In this case it should be stated that Šīšīnduxt gave Yazdgird two sons: Wahrām and Narsēh.

The *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* lists two cities: Šūs and Šūstar in Xūzestān,⁶² which were to be founded by Šīšīnduxt. Šūs (Susa⁶³) was conquered by Ardaxšīr I (224-242) in 224 after his victory over King Šād-Šābuhr of Ešfahān⁶⁴ and rebuilt by the *šāhānšāh*. The city was the administrative center of the district (*xorrā*) bearing the same name. From about 300, Šūs was the seat of a Christian bishop.⁶⁵ Šābuhr II also rebuilt Šūs after having destroyed it when suppressing a revolt (c. 350),⁶⁶ renaming it Ērān Xwarrah Šābuhr (Ērān, glory of Šābuhr).⁶⁷ In 410 (during the reign of Yazdgird I), the diocese of Susa was mentioned at the Synod of Mār Ishāq.⁶⁸ Šūstar (Šostar, Tostar) was a fortress city on a cliff to the west of which runs the river Pasitigris (modern Kārūn), of huge strategical and commercial importance.⁶⁹ According to Persian tradition,⁷⁰ the Roman prisoners captured after the defeat of Valerian (253-260) in the Battle of Edessa were settled in the city.⁷¹ By order of Šābuhr I they were to carry out

⁵⁸ See *Appendix IV: Lists of Exilarchs* in Herman 2012, 341.

⁵⁹ Herman (2012, 329) claims that: ‘In sum, although there is no certainty, it appears unlikely that Huna bar Nathan was the Exilarch’.

⁶⁰ ‘yahūdagān’ word present e.g. in the *Gizistag Abāliš*, par. 10 (the small Pahlavi dialectical treatise from the 9th century CE) [*Gizistag Abāliš* = *Gujastak Abalish*, ed. A. Barthelemy, Paris, 1887].

⁶¹ Ṭabarī 866: ‘when Bahram Jur returned to Ctesiphon from his expedition against Khagan the Turk, he appointed his brother Narsi as governor of Khurasan and assigned him Balkh as his capital [there]’ (transl. by C.E. Bosworth).

⁶² Xūzestān in the Greek sources *Susianē*, in Syriac *Bēth-Hūzāyē*, the mediaeval Islamic province of Ahwāz.

⁶³ Gyselen, Gasche 1994.

⁶⁴ Ṭabarī 818; Baḷ’amī 71–72 [Baḷ’amī = Bal’amī, *Tarjumih-i Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī*, ed. M.J. Mashkur, Tehran, 1959].

⁶⁵ The bishop of Susa, Mīlēs, was executed in about 340 [*Chronicle of Seert*, I 26 (*Chronicle of Seert* = *Histoire nestorienne inédite (chronique de Séert) I/2*, ed. A. Scher, Paris, Turnhout, 1907; repr. 1981)].

⁶⁶ The king used 300 elephants to destroy the city. Sozomen (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.14) describes the event without providing the name of the city. Identification with Susa based on Ḥamza Ešfahānī 37 [Ḥamza Ešfahānī = *Annalium, Libri X. [Ketāb tārīx senī molūk al-arż va ’l-anbū]* I. *textus arabicus*, ed. J.M.E. Gottwaldt, Leipzig, 1844].

⁶⁷ Ṭabarī 840: ‘He further founded in the province of al-Ahwaz two cities, one called Iran-Khurrah-Sabur, which means ‘Saber and his land,’ and which is called in Syriac al-Karkh, and the other al-Sus, a city he built at the side of the fortress’ (transl. by C.E. Bosworth); Kettenhofen 1994; Gyselen 1998.

⁶⁸ *Synodicon orientale*, 273–274.

⁶⁹ Arabic form Tustar.

⁷⁰ Ṭabarī 827: ‘It is mentioned that he compelled al-Riyānūs [Valerian] to set to work building a dam (*shādurwān*) at Tustar, whose breadth was to be one thousand cubits.’; Ṭabarī 840: ‘He led an expedition into the land of the Romans, took a great number of prisoners there, and then planted [them] in the city of Iran-Khurrah-Saber, which the Arabs called al-Sus after shortening the name’ (transl. by C.E. Bosworth); Ṭabarī erroneously attributing foundation of the city to Šābuhr II.

⁷¹ Kettenhofen 1982, 97–99.

engineering works to complete a dam, popularly known as the Band-i Qaysar (Caesar's dam/bridge).⁷² According to sources, Šābuhr II had most of the captives settled in Ērān-Xwarrah-Šābuhr (Šūs), Šūstar and Ērānšahr-Šābuhr (Karkā dā-Lādān).⁷³ The third city listed in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* in association with Šīšīnduxt was the city of Gay (Spāhān, Ešfahān).⁷⁴ The beginning of Jewish settlement in Spāhān is traced by the Arabic sources to the Achaemenid period.⁷⁵ In Muslim times the center of the city was called al-Yahūdīyah (the town of Jews).⁷⁶ According to Movsēs Xorenac'i, Šābuhr II deported many Jews from Armenia to Spāhān, in the 369s.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The author of the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* names in his text both historical and mythical personages deriving from Iranian tradition. Alongside Alexander of Macedon,⁷⁸ Ardaxšīr,⁷⁹ Čōl Xāgān⁸⁰ appear e.g. Frāsiyāk⁸¹ or Wištāsp.⁸² Could this allow a rejection of the information about the origin of Wahrām's mother?⁸³ As was clearly evidenced above, the cities listed in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* and associated with Šīšīnduxt did exist before 5th century CE and she cannot be credited with their foundation. However if the information is compared with the cities which were, according to *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, founded by Alexander of Macedon, we must notice that as far as other sources confirm that he founded Merv (Alexandria in Margiana) and Harēv (Alexandria Ariana),⁸⁴ but he did not found the

⁷² Kleiss 1983, 106.

⁷³ Ṭabarī 840: 'He led an expedition into the land of the Romans, took a great number of prisoners there, and then planted [them] in the city of Iran-Khurrah-Saber, which the Arabs called al-Sus after shortening the name' (transl. by C.E. Bosworth); Ṭabarī 845.

⁷⁴ The city of Ešfahān comprised two adjoining towns: Jayy (Gay), the fortified town called *Šahrestān*, and the other was two miles to the west, al-Yahūdīyah; the descriptions of the city, see Hansman 2006.

⁷⁵ On the first Jewish settlers in Iran see Lavi 1999, 23–31; on Ešfahān, see Pourshariati 2014, 10.

⁷⁶ Ibn al-Faqīh 261–262.

⁷⁷ Movsēs Xorenac'i 3.35 [Movsēs Xorenac'i = Movsēs Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, translated by R.W. Thomson, Cambridge, Mass. 1978]: 'At the same time there arrived a command from king Shapuh that they should destroy and raze the fortifications of all cities and bring the Jews into captivity, including those Jews living by the same Jewish law in Van Tosp whom Barzap'ran Rshtuni had brought there in the days of Tigran. These Shapuh settled in Isfahan' (transl. by R.W. Thomson); P'awstos Buzandac'i (4.55) mentions only Āsōristān and Xūzestān, but Movsēs records the deportation to Spāhān; Topchyan 2007, 443, n. 38, 445–446.

⁷⁸ *ŠĒ* 5, 12, 53; Maksymiuk 2018.

⁷⁹ *ŠĒ* 13, 15, 25, 40, 43, 44, 48, 51. Ardaxšīr I; Syvānne, Maksymiuk 2018, 19–79.

⁸⁰ *ŠĒ* 9; Čōl Xāgān, the Türk Xāqān, who was killed by Wahrām Čōbīn; Harmatta, Litvinsky 1996, 368.

⁸¹ *ŠĒ* 7, 38, 58; Frāsiyāk (Afrāsīāb), the mythical Tūranian king, a descendant of Tūr, one of the three sons of the Iranian mythical king Ferēdūn.

⁸² *ŠĒ* 4, 6, 8, 16, 36; Wištāsp, the mythical Kayāniān king, patron of Zoroaster.

⁸³ J. Darmesteter 1889, 41: 'Elles ont tous les caractères de l'authenticité historique, car elles concordent parfaitement avec une série de renseignements fournis d'autres sources'.

⁸⁴ *ŠĒ* 12: 'šahrestān ī marw ud šahrestān [ī] harē gizistag skandar ī hrōmāyīg kard' (The city of Marv/Merv and the city of Harēv/Herat were built by the accursed Alexander the Roman) (transl. by T. Daryae). The foundation of Marv by Alexander is attested in Pliny (Plin. *Nat.* VI 18): 'Next comes the district of Margiane [...] in it Alexander founded the city of Alexandria'; Olbrycht 2014, 100–101, 103–104.

city of Gay (Spāhān) mentioned before.⁸⁵ This inconsistency of the text does not undermine in any way the historicity of Alexander. It should be also mentioned that the act of foundation does not necessarily, and definitely not in every case, mean building the city from scratch but might mean the reconstruction of a town or administrative changes, as was the case of the city of Hira.⁸⁶

G. Herman in his truly insightful study of the Exilarch in the Sāsānian Era wrote: ‘The Jewish associations presented here are equally questionable. We can assume that the name Šīšīnduxt is associated with the cities Susa and Šūštar due to a combination of factors. They comprise a phonetic similarity between the names; a biblical precedent in the story of Esther; and the presumed existence of a sizeable contemporary Jewish community’.⁸⁷

Were the Iranian traditions mixed up in case of Šīšīnduxt? Could the Achaemenid heritage have been recalled in the royal ideology of power to ascribe Wahrām’s mother Jewish origin, and therefore associating her with Esther of the Old Testament? According to Iranian tradition Bahman’s mother,⁸⁸ a Kayāniān king, was Astūrīā (i.e. Esther).⁸⁹ The King had five children (two sons: Dārā and Sāsān and three daughters: Humāy Čīhrāzād, Bahmanduxt and Farīk). Humāy was the mother of Bahman’s son Dārā.⁹⁰ Bahman designated her to be his successor.⁹¹ According to the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān*, Ardašīr’s lineage, went back to Bahman through Humāy.⁹² Ṭabarī related Ardašīr to Bahman through Sāsān, not through Humāy.⁹³ Probably fictitious connections of Ardašīr I were one of the elements of the legitimization of the power of the Sāsānids.⁹⁴ This does not, however, impair the argument of identification of Astūrīā with Esther.

Humāy was mentioned in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*:

⁸⁵ ŠĒ 53.

⁸⁶ ŠĒ 25: ‘šahrestān ī hērt šābuhr ī ardaxšīrān kard’ (The city of Hira was built by Šābuhr, the son of Ardaxšīr) (transl. by T. Daryae).

⁸⁷ Herman 2012, 160–161.

⁸⁸ Bahman son of Esfandīār, is not mentioned in the *Avesta*; He is thus identified not only with the Achaemenid Artaxerxes I (465–425 B.C.) but also with Cyrus the Great (559–530 B.C.).

⁸⁹ Ṭabarī 688: ‘Bahman’s mother was Astūryā, that is Esther, the daughter of Jair b. Shimei b. Kish b. Misha b. King Saul (Ṭālūt) b. Kish b. Abiel b. Zeror b. Becorath b. Aphiah b. Jesse b. Benjamin b. Jacob b. Isaac b. Abraham, God’s friend. The mother of Bahman’s son was the slave Rahab bint Pinchas, of the children of Rehoboam b. Solomon b. David.’ (transl. by C.E. Bosworth); for Esther, see Koller 2014, 57–64.

⁹⁰ Macuch 2010.

⁹¹ Ṭabarī 688: ‘Khumani, Bahman’s daughter, succeeded to the throne [...] She was nicknamed Shahrazad’ (transl. by C.E. Bosworth).

⁹² *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* 1.6 [*Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* = Kār-Nāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān, transl. by B. Faravashi, Tehran 1354/1975].

⁹³ Ṭabarī 813.

⁹⁴ Daryae 1995; Morsalpour, Ghiasi 2018.

šahrestān [ī] *tūzag humāy ī čīhr-āzādān kard; ‘The city of Tūz⁹⁵ was built by Humāy, the daughter of Čīhr Āzād’. (*ŠĒ* 45; transl. by T. Daryaei).

In the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* the word ‘Čīhrāzād’ is the name of the mother of Humāy. However, according to the sources it was her epithet or the epithet of her mother.⁹⁶ The information about Humāy cannot be rejected with full certainty. Therefore, if the family connections of other persons listed in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* are confirmed by other literary sources, then why would the authenticity of the remark considering the origin of Wahrām’s mother be rejected? Doubtless, the author of the text was familiar with Iranian tradition,⁹⁷ why would the fictitious personage of Šīšīnduxt be artificially added to it? In the light of the considerations above, it should be stated that Šīšīnduxt was the mother of Iranian šāhānšāh Wahrām V Gōr.

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⁹⁵ Pourshariati 1995.

⁹⁶ Doostkhah 2004.

⁹⁷ By no means the similarity of the names Wahrām and Bahman can become an argument here.

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