

not an "honorific" act by the successors. Furthermore, the matter of the succession of Phriapitus, an oddity for the beginning of the dynasty, will be solved since he would be the son of Artabanus/Arsaces II and not his father's great-grandnephew. This can be further strengthened by the Ostracon 2-L above that mentions a great-grandson of Arsaces I (a son of Phriapitus?) which might be the Phraates I.

Conclusion

The traditional account of the founding of the Parthian dynasty has been dismissed by the historians who have suggested a new genealogy for the early Arsacid rulers. While presenting a believable and logical chronology of the early Arsacid history, these accounts create a new confusion regarding the names and succession patterns of these rulers.

On the other hand, a new ostracon from Nisa can help us to read the available sources in a new light and try to bring together the various accounts. Our conclusion from these new sources is that the title Arsaces, common among all Arsacid kings, was indeed a family name for the rulers of the Parnii family. The tradition of adding the title to the personal name of the king then started from the first ruler, Arsaces I, whose personal name was Tiridates, and continued by his son, Arsaces II whose individual name was Artabanus.

"family" or tribe name was quite common among the Parthian nobles. Families of Sûren, Kâren, Espahbað, Nauðar, and other Parthian noble families all carried their personal names as well as the above family names. Additionally, the tradition of having a regal name was also common from the Achaemenid times, as almost all Achamenid emperors after Darius II seem to have chosen a dynastic name upon their accession.

Additionally, in the matter of the succession of Phriapitus, we run into the problem of his unusual succession following the death of Arsaces II, a grand-cousin of Phriapitus. It is often suggested that Arsacid succession was not based on the pattern of son following the father and it was rather left to a council of nobles to decide the future king. However, we have no reason to believe that this pattern was established in the early Arsacid times. It seems that the above system was recognised when the Arsacid noble families were well established in the court system of the country, such as the rise of the Sûrens to prominence during the time of Mithradates II. We can see that indeed the preferred pattern of succession during the earlier times was the succession of the son to the father, as seen in the case of Arsaces I and II and Phriapitus and Phraates I.

By taking the above suggestion as a base and using the "traditional" genealogies of the Arsacid kings and adding the ostracon No.2-L, drawing a conclusion will not be hard. After accepting J. Wolski's chronology of the beginning of the Arsacid dynasty, we can see that the first king (Arsaces I) was ruling from 247-217/214 BCE, the time assigned to the rule of Tiridates by Arrianus. This would mean that the rule of Arsaces according to Arrian (250-247 BCE) is legendary. Consequently, we can suggest that Arsaces I and Tiridates are indeed one and the same person! Meaning that Arsaces, being a family name, was the official title of the ruler who was personally called "Tîrdâd". In the same manner, Arsaces II was the ruling title of the son of Tîrdâd/Arsaces I, the king that was traditionally called Artabanus (Ardavân).

To further clarify, it is suggested that adding the title Arsaces (ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ) to the names of kings from Phriapitus to Artabanus V (IV in Sellwood) is only a tradition starting from the first king himself and

1. 'ršk MLK' BRY npt
2. 'ršk Q'YLw
3. NDBT' ZNH Ć'RN' 2 x ILP

"Aršak, the king, son of grandson (2) of Aršak. Accounted (3) this offering – 2000 e(phas) of barley".

Here, the king in question is a great-grandson (*BRY npt*) of Arsaces I, probably the grandson of Arsaces II by extension. This shows that the succession of Phriapitus to the throne of a second-cousin, Arsaces II, is as fictional as Wolski proposes the Tiridates and Artabanus to be. As we are almost sure of the succession to Phriapitus, his son Phraates I and his issues, we would find the suggestion at odds with the rule of an Arsaces who would have been a grandson of Arsaces I.

Tirdâd Arák and Ardavân Arák?

Almost all accounts written by Greek and Roman historian about the founding of the Arsacid dynasty are written much later than the date of actual events. Sources closer to the date of the founding of the dynasty, such as Apollodorus of Artemita, have also lived at least 100 years after the real events. Also, these sources have been not from inside the "circle" of Parthian court and thus could have only known the events from second hand sources.

It is easy to imagine that these sources, as well as their references inside the Parthian society, could have confused the order and players of the events. Both sets of accounts, those of "Justinians" and those of "Arrians", seem to report the events from independent sources, probably various legends inside the Parthian society.

On the other hand, Strabo's famous statement that "all of them were called Arsaces..." has added to the confusion of naming the Parthian kings. While everyone agrees that the rest of the Arsacid's possessed individual names as well as the title of Arsaces, historians seem not to doubt that the first two rulers' personal name was "Aršak".

However, other than writings of Greek and Roman historians, we have no reason to completely accept the "honorific" status of the name Arsaces. We can as easily theorise that the name was a family or branch name of the rulers of the Parnii tribe from whom Arsaces I originated. As we see in later Parthian times, the tradition of having a

4 *Farhang, Linguistics*

was followed directly by Phriapitus. This version of history, supported by the numismatic finds and taken as the standard by Sellwood in his catalogue of Parthian coins, has slowly become the prominent account of the genealogy of early Arsacid rulers.

As reported by Wolski and those who have completed his theories, the rule of Arsaces I started in the spring of 247 BCE, following the revolt of Andragoras against the Seleucid rule, although Wolski does suggest that Andragoras might be a legendary character. Arsaces I ruled until 217 or 214 BCE and was succeeded by his son, Arsaces II. It was during the rule of Arsaces II that Antiochos III subdued the eastern satrapies and subjugated the newly found Arsacid dynasty. Arsaces II was then succeeded in 191 BCE by Phriapitus, a great-grandnephew of his father, who ruled until 176 BCE.

The account above completely dismisses the idea of the rule of Tiridates and Artabanus, and consequently Arrianus' history. Wolski suggests that this history was forged later under the influence of Phriapitus and his successors in order to legitimize the rule of the "younger" branch of the dynasty.

Proposals and New Discoveries

Wolski himself suggests that a way to find solutions to historical problems is to let the power of imagination and theorising roam freely. Although the suggestion might sound rather careless, it can be a useful one in the case at hand. The evidence presented to support the above account of early Arsacid history seems undeniable and even more than that, they provide a more logical version of this history. However, their dismissal of traditional accounts and elimination of Tiridates and Artabanus oppose the same logic as well.

One of the most important problems with Wolski's account is the matter of the succession of Phriapitus. Logically, there would be no reason for the succession of a second cousin of Arsaces II to his throne, when in all likelihood, Arsaces II might have had a son himself or his first cousin, the unnamed father of Phriapitus, might have been alive.

Indeed, another ostrakon (No. 2-L) discovered from Nisa and recently published by V. Livshitz suggest that Arsaces II did have issues:

Traditional accounts of the beginning of the dynasty, mostly mentioned in Greek and Roman sources and no doubt taking their evidence from Iranian legends, tell us that Arsaces and Tīrdād, two brothers who lead the Parnii tribe, attacked the Seleucid satrapy of Parthia around 250 BCE. In the accounts which were preferred by many modern historians, mostly trusting the history of Arrianus, Arsaces I was succeeded in 248 by his brother Tiridates who ruled until 217 BCE and was followed by his son Artabanus I (217-191 BCE).

In this version of Arsacid beginnings, most credit for the establishment of the dynasty was given to its second king, Tiridates, the brother of Arsaces I and the rule of Arsaces himself was reduced to two years. This version of history logically contradicts with the historical importance of Arsaces himself, a founder supposedly so well respected that his successors chose his name as their honorific dynastic names.

With the discovery of a large collection of coins from Nisa that included many coins from Arsaces I and Arsaces II, as well as the important discovery of the Aramaic ostraca from the same place, historians were prompted to reconsider the above account. To begin with, the sheer number of the coins from Arsaces I easily dismissed the idea of his short, two year rule, making it necessary to give him a longer reign than previously suggested. Additionally, the existence of the coins of Arsaces II also contradicted greatly with the rule of Tiridates and Ardavan I, suggesting that Arsaces II should be given the credit for the rule after Arsaces I.

Additionally, the discovered Nisa ostraca, mostly economic documents, provide for interesting genealogical conclusions. Their references left no doubt about the existence of Arsaces II, mentioned in previously ignored accounts of Justin, and his relation to Arsaces I. Ostrakon number 1760, obviously from many years later, also gives us the idea that Phriapitus was the great-grandnephew of Arsaces I.

All of the above evidence made it necessary to write a new version of the early Arsacid history. A few have tried to reconcile the account of Arrianus and his followers with the new discoveries, allowing for the existence of Artabanus prior to the rule of Phriapitus. Others, lead by J. Wolski, took the extreme view and denied the existence of Tiridates and Artabanus I and instead proposing that Arsaces II (217/214-191)

2 *Farhang, Linguistics*

kings or rulers without a clear family line. This problem is particularly evident in the genealogy of the first Arsacid kings, namely from Arsaces I, the founder of the dynasty, to Phriapitus, the supposed third (or fourth) ruler.

The traditional accounts of the foundation of the Arsacid dynasty, largely accepted by modern historians, have been challenged by the archaeological findings in Nisa and the numismatic evidence. New versions of this genealogy have been presented, sometimes eliminating known monarchs and creating new ones. Of this the most significant is the elimination of Tîrdâd I and his son Ardavân (Artabanus I), the supposed brother and nephew of Arsaces I. Instead, a new king called Arsaces II, attested in both sources, has been restored as the successor of Arsaces I and predecessor of Phriapitus.

This article will try to present evidence to show that the total elimination of Tîrdâd and Ardavân in favour of Arsaces II has been rather rushed and unnecessary. While it is certainly true that Arsaces II was the successor of Arsaces I, the problem of the existence of Tîrdâd and Ardavân can be solved if we interpret the name Arsaces (Arshak) as a dynastic name and treat Tîrdâd and Ardavân as the personal names of the first two monarchs of the dynasty. This proposal will not only solve the above problem, but will present a more logical pattern of succession for Phriapitus whose previous position as the grand-nephew of Arsaces I left a big doubt about his legitimacy. It is hoped that this article is looked at as a proposal for further research and interpretation.

Analysis of the Problem

The beginning of the Arsacid dynasty and their origin in the eastern parts of the former Achaemenid lands is covered in a fog of myths and inaccurate historical accounts. Most histories, whether ancient or modern, have concentrated their narrative on the history of the western parts of the Macedonian-Seleucid territories and even in later dates, have only considered the history of the east in relation to their contacts with the west, whether Greece or Rome. Furthermore, the confused state of Seleucid territories during the period of the founding of the Arsacid dynasty and the legends associated with Arsaces I, has helped to make the history of this era even more vague.

Tirdād and Ardavān

A New Look at the Genealogy of the Early Arsacids

Khodadad Rezakhani
UCLA, Dept. of History

Introduction

The universal problem in historiography of the Pre-Islamic Iran is the absence of first-hand accounts of historical events. This is particularly true for the Arsacid period (247 BCE-224 CE) when sources become particularly rare. Traditionally, most of our knowledge from this period comes from the histories written by Greek and Roman historians (and geographers) such as Justin, Ammianus Marcellinus, Arrianus, and Strabo, as well as the accounts by Isidore of Charax and Moses Khorenets'i, the famous Armenian writers.

Needless to say, these accounts leave a lot of details, and even many major events, unclear. Major sections of Arsacid history are unknown to us and from many Arsacid kings we have, in the words of Ferdowsi, "only heard names". This lack of information has put a greater emphasis on the interpretation of archaeological discoveries and has of late brought many of the Arsacid "dark-spots" to light. Research on Arsacid coinage, the ostraca from Nisa, and lately the astronomical tablets from Babylon, have succeeded in presenting us with a more clear and cohesive picture of the Arsacid history, although by no means can we claim to possess a comprehensive history of this very important era of Iranian history.

Among the most ambiguous details of the Arsacid history is the genealogy of its kings. This problem is rather well-spread throughout the nearly 500 years of their rule where there are numerous "unknown"