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**FERDOWSĪ'S «KING OF THE ALANS»\***

When Bahrām Čōbīn [BČ] and Kōsrow II Parvēz [KP] (AD 590-628) address one another before battle in Ferdowsī's *Šāhnāma*, Kōsrow is called by his opponent (and also calls himself) “king of the Alans” (الان شاه *Alān šāh*) four times:<sup>1</sup>

الان شاه چون شهریاری کند      ورا مرد بد بخت یاری کند

[43, 215] BČ “When the king of the Alans rules / evil men support him”

مرا چون الان شاه خوانی همی      زگوهر به يك سو نشانی همی

[43, 231] KP “When you call me king of the Alans / you just mention a part of my lineage”

الان شاه بودی کنون کهتری      هم از بنده بندگان کمتری

[43, 237] BČ “You were king of the Alans, now you are less / even lower than a slave of slaves”

الان شاه مارا پدر کرده بود      که بر ما زدام تو آزرده بود

[43, 314] KP “My father had made me king of the Alans / since he was afflicted for me because of your tricks”

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In the last verse *Ḳosrow* is said to have been appointed *Alān šāh* by his father Hormozd IV (AD 579 -90). From this assertion it can be inferred that we are not dealing with a true king of the Alans, but with a Persian title.

According to Ferdowsī [43, 3229-51],<sup>2</sup> *Ḳosrow Parvēz* chose 48,000 men from Iran –all of them experienced, brave and warlike horsemen– and divided the world into four parts (جهانرا ببخشید بر چار بهر *ġahān-rā bebaḡšīd bar čār bahr*), sending four detachments of 12,000 men alternately to: [1] the Byzantine border (مرز روم *marz-e Rūm*), [2] Zābolestān, [3] the road of the Alans (راه الانان *rāh-e Alānān*) and [4] the Hephthalite border (مرز هیتال *marz-e Heitāl*) in *Ḳorāsān*.

This fourfold division is also recorded in a different way by the so-called “Letter of Tansar”:<sup>3</sup>

و هیچ آفریده را که نه از اهل بیت ما باشد شاه نمی باید خواند ، جز آن جامعت را که اصحاب  
ثغورند ، الان [و] ناحیت مغرب و خوارزم و کابل

“No other man who is not of the people of our household should be named King, except for the Lords of the Marches of Allān, the region of the West, *Ḳārazm* and *Kābol*”

From this passage we know that the “Lord of the March of Allān” (صاحب ثغر الان *\*ṣāḡheb-e ṣaġr-e Allān*) was named *šāh*, which matches Ferdowsī’s *Alān šāh* (the form *الان* is arabicised in the mss., maybe following the more usual *اللان*). According to Christensen, “par le «commandant des marches du pays des Alains», il faut entendre sans doute un des quatre grands *marzbāns* (margraves): il avait le privilège de s’asseoir sur un trône d’or, et sa dignité se transmettait, par exception, à ses successeurs qui s’appelaient «les rois du trône»”.<sup>4</sup> Christensen’s remarks are based on the anonymous *Nihāyat al-Irab* (written before AD 1050), where it is said that, after an –otherwise anachronistic– Khazar invasion of Armenia and Azerbaijan, *Ḳosrow I Anūšīrvān* built a stone wall in Armenia and appointed one *marzbān* with 12,000 cavalry to guard it; his base was *Bāb al-Abwāb* and he was accorded the privilege of sitting on a golden throne.<sup>5</sup> No need to say that the figure of 12,000 cavalry matches with the horsemen sent by *Ḳosrow Parvēz* to the “road of the Alans” and to the other “parts of the world” in Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāma*. Finally, a passage in *Ḥamza Iṣfahānī* states that *Anūšīrvān* presented to the governors of the marches beautiful robes of honor decorated with the effigies of different animals after which they got their names: a wild boar (*baġrā*) for the *\*Baġrānšāh*, a lion (*šīr*) for the *Šīrwānšāh*, an elephant (*fil*) for the *Fīlānšāh* and a crow (*ālāna*) for the *Alānšāh*.<sup>6</sup> In spite of his wonderful etymologies, *Ḥamza*’s passage is of interest inasmuch as it also links the lords of the marches to *Anūšīrvān* and, of course, because it is the third source to attest a title *Alānšāh*.

Other works recall the quadripartite division of Late Sasanian Iran without mentioning the Alans: for example, the Armenian geography *Ašxarhac ‘oyc’* (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>7</sup> the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (8<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>8</sup> Ṭabarī (840-923)<sup>9</sup> and Ṭa’ālibī (961-1038):<sup>10</sup>

SOURCE	WEST	SOUTH	NORTH	EAST
Ferdowsī	<i>marz-e Rūm</i>	<i>Zabolestān</i>	<i>rāh-e Alānān</i>	<i>Ḳorāsān</i>
<i>Nāme-ye Tansar</i>	<i>nāḥiyat-e mağreb</i>	<i>Kābol</i>	<i>Allān</i>	<i>Ḳ’ārazm</i>
<i>Ašxarhac ‘oyc’</i>	<i>k’usti *xorbaran</i>	<i>k’usti nm̄ōj</i>	<i>k’usti Kapkoh</i>	<i>k’usti xorasan</i>
<i>Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr</i>	<i>kust ī xwarwarān</i>	<i>kust ī nēmrōz</i>	<i>kust ī Ādurbādagān</i>	<i>kust ī xwarāsān</i>
Ṭabarī	<i>mağrib</i>	<i>nīmrūz (bilād al-Yaman)</i>	<i>Ādurbāyğān (bilād al-Ḳazar)</i>	<i>mašriq (Ḳorāsān)</i>
Ṭa’ālibī	<i>al-‘Irāq (aṭrāf al-Rūm)</i>	<i>Fārs, Kirman, al-Ahwāz</i>	<i>kuwar al-ğabal (Ādurbāyğān)</i>	<i>Ḳorāsān (+close regions)</i>

The original forms are those attested in the *Ašxarhac ‘oyc’*, in the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* and in Ṭabarī, following the cardinal points: West (Pahl. *xwarwarān*, Arm. *\*xorbaran*, Arab. *mağrib*), South (*nēmrōz*, *nm̄ōj*, *nīmrūz*) and East (*xwarāsān*, *xorasan*, *mašriq*). In the first two works they are combined with Pahl. *kust (ī)*, Arm. *k’usti* “side, region (of)”, just as they appear in a seal fragment and several clay sealings of the generals of the four cardinal points found in the last two decades, which have proved the historicity of the quadripartite division of Late Sasanian Iran.<sup>11</sup>

The North cardinal point (*abāxtar*) is lacking, since it was considered as the region of demons, and it was replaced by the name of the northern province of *Ādurbādagān* (Arab. *Ādurbāyğān*), by the “regions of the mountains” (Arab. *kuwar al-ğabal*), that is to say the Caucasus (Arm. *Kapkoh* < Pahl. *Kaf kōf*) or by northern peoples like Alans and Khazars. Anyway, the constellation Seven bears or Ursa Major (*Haftōring* < Av. *Haptōringa-*) is recorded as “general of the North” (*abāxtar spāhbed*) in a mythical passage of the *Bundahišn* dealing with the chief stars of the cardinal point sectors.<sup>12</sup>

Gyselen has published the seal impressions of Gōrgōn and Sēd-ōš, both of them of the Mihrān family, showing a horseman in armour and bearing the titles “well-omened (is) Husraw, grandee, spāhbed of the Aryans, side of the North” (*hužadag-husraw wuzurg ērān kust ī ādurbādagān spāhbed*), as well as a third bulla from the side of the North with an unclear name (Husraw?) and the title *hužadag-Ohrmazd* “well-omened (is) Ohrmazd”.<sup>13</sup>

Even the short monography about Sasanian Persia contained in both the *Weishu* 魏書 and the *Beishi* 北史 mentions a *xuebobo* 薛波勃 in charge of the troops and cavalry of the “four directions” (*si fang* 四方), probably the *Ērān-*

*spāhbed* preceding the appointment of the four generals.<sup>14</sup> Anyway, as we have seen, sources favour dating this division under *Qosrow I Anūšīrvān* and not under *Qosrow II Parvēz*, since the two *Qosrows* are often confused – a view supported by modern scholarship.<sup>15</sup>

Coming back to the starting point, is there any additional evidence showing that *Qosrow Parvēz* was put in charge of the “Side of the North” – at any time? The answer is affirmative: the Georgian chronicles state that, after the death of *Bakur III*, the last Chosroid king of *K‘art‘li* (ca. AD 580), “the king of the Persians *Urmizd* gave *Ran* and *Movakan* to his son, who was called *K‘asre Ambarvez*. He came and resided at *Bardav*”.<sup>16</sup> *Bardav* (MPers. *Pērōzāpāt*, Arm. *Partaw*, Arab. *Barda‘a*) was the chief town of Caucasian Albania (MPers. <‘ld’n> *Arrān*, Georg. *Ran*) and a frontier strong point after *Kavād I* (AD 488-531) fortified it against the Huns.<sup>17</sup> *Ferdowsī*,<sup>18</sup> *Ṭabarī*<sup>19</sup> and *Ṭa‘ālibī*<sup>20</sup> agree in telling that *Qosrow* fled to Azerbaijan before his clash with *Bahrām* for fear of his father, while *Theophylact Simocatta*<sup>21</sup> says that he departed there after *Hormozd* had been deposed, but in fact they all confirm a relation of *Qosrow* with the *kust ī Ādurbādagān* before his accession to the throne. When *Qosrow* marches against *Bahrām*, *Ferdowsī* [43, 11] informs us that he sets off with an army from *Barda‘a* and *Ardabīl* ( از بردع واردبیل *sepāhī az Barda‘a ō Ardabīl*),<sup>22</sup> as well as Armenian troops, a fact which recalls our Georgian source when mentioning *Bardav* as *K‘asre*’s residence. Furthermore, *Ardabīl* was the capital of *Ādarbāyğān* and the dwelling place of a *marzubān* at the time of the Muslim conquest according to *al-Balāḍurī*.<sup>23</sup>

Another *Alān šāh* is mentioned previously by *Ferdowsī* [34, 393-4] after the death of *Yazdegerd the Unjust* (AD 420). Since there was no king occupying the throne, the latter was claimed by some grandees ( مهان *mehān*):<sup>24</sup>

الان شاه وچون پهلوان سپاه    چو بیورد و شکنان زرین کلاه  
همی هر یکی گفت شاهی مراست    هم از خاک تا برج ماهی مراست

“The king of the Alans, the Pahlavān of the army, / *Bīvard* and *Šaknān* of the golden helmet, / each one of them said: «sovereignty is now mine, / mine from the earth to the moon’s sphere»”

There is one thing calling my attention: the fact that there are four pretenders to the throne. If one of them is an *Alān šāh*, the other three could be the three remaining *marzbānān* of the Late Sasanian period, here anachronically placed in earlier times. The title *pahlavān-e sepāh* “hero of the army” is so often used by *Ferdowsī* that it adds little to our knowledge.<sup>25</sup> However, it reminds me of the

military title *asped ī pahlav* “Parthian chief of the cavalry”, present on the seal of three *spāhbedān* of the Eastern side.<sup>26</sup> Bīvard and Šaknān are otherwise unknown in the *Šāhnāma* (Wolff<sup>27</sup> labels the former as an “edler Iranier”, the latter as an “iranischer Held”; Mohl<sup>28</sup> gives the rubric “noble iranien” for both of them). In the poem the name Bīvard is also carried by a Turanian vassal of Afrāsyāb, a native of Kāt (13b, 850 کاتی *k ātī*), while Šaknān remains a *hapax*. Justi<sup>29</sup> knows nothing more about them both and their names do not seem to be documented in epigraphical Middle Persian<sup>30</sup>.

What duties did the “general of the North” have?<sup>31</sup> Geographically, they were no doubt related to the Caucasian passes of Darial<sup>32</sup> and Darband,<sup>33</sup> which had an important strategic role since the earliest times, the Sasanian period being no exception to this rule. According to the sources, the Gates could be opened at will (Gr. ἀνοίγω, Arm. *banal*, Georg. *gaḡeba*) in order to facilitate the entrance of Northern allied troops in case of need.<sup>34</sup>

— the “Gate of the Alans” often appears in Sasanian inscriptions of the 3rd century as the northern border of the Sasanian empire: in this way ŠKZ § 2 states that Šābuhr I (AD 240-70) ruled “as far as Mt. Caucasus and the Gate of the Alans”;<sup>35</sup> cf. also KKZ 12 “as far as the Gate of the Alans” (probably the same text, though much damaged, is to be found in KNRm 39 and KSM 19).<sup>36</sup>

— during the wars of Xosrov II, king of Armenia († AD 252), against Sasanian Iran, this king “opened the Gates of the Alans and the stronghold of Čor; he brought through the army of the Huns in order to attack Persian territory”.<sup>37</sup>

— under Pērōz (AD 457-84) the Persians “opened the Gates of the Alans, brought out a large contingent of Huns and fought for a year with the king of the Albanians”.<sup>38</sup>

— according to Procopius (writing ca. AD 551-3) the spurs of the Caucasus extend “as far as those very passes which provide entrance for the Hunnic nations inhabiting that region into both Persian and Roman territory. One of these passes is called Tzur, while the other has been named the Caspian Gates from ancient times”.<sup>39</sup>

— among the provisions set out in the treaty between Justinian and Anūšīrvān in AD 561-2, the following agreement was reached: “through the pass at the place called Tzon and through the Caspian Gates the Persians shall not allow the Huns or Alans or other barbarians access to the Roman Empire, nor shall the Romans either in that area or on any other part of the Persian frontier send an army against the Persians”.<sup>40</sup>

Two other pieces of evidence could throw some light on the nature of the *Alān šāh*:

(1) some Greek papyri from Oxyrhynchus dating back to the Sasanian occupation of Egypt (AD 619-628) under Ƙosrow Parvēz mention a high officer named Σαραλανεοζαν,<sup>41</sup> which has its counterpart in the title *štr' l'nywc'n* or *štr' l'nywc'n /Šahr-Ālānyōzān/* known from several of the Berlin Middle Persian papyri.<sup>42</sup> The Armenian sources also mention a Sasanian general named *Alanaozan* related to the Armenian Aršakuni dynasty in the service of Šābuhr II (AD 309-79).<sup>43</sup> Weber understood *Ālānyōzān* as “auf die Alanen begierig” sc. “die Alanen bekämpfend” and concluded that he was a representative of an Armenian branch of the Sasanian nobility.<sup>44</sup> As for myself, it is interesting that in one fragmentary papyrus *Šahr-Ālānyōzān* appears close to a cavalry *kanārang* (Gr. χαναράγγης, Bactr. καραραγγο < \**kanār-drang*- “who secures the borders”), maybe the same person, which reinforces his identification as a (former) margrave close to the *marzbānān* or *spāhbedān* of the Late Sasanian period and, more concretely, the one in charge of the side of the North, in any case temporarily transferred to Egypt.<sup>45</sup>

(2) Judith Lerner<sup>46</sup> recently published “a banded agate seal of a characteristic Sasanian shape, executed in the Sasanian style, and bearing a Middle Persian inscription”, read by Prods Oktor Skjaervø as “Asay, Prince of Alan”, maybe a name related to the Ἀσαῖοι, a Sarmatian people.<sup>47</sup> The seal probably dates to the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century and depicts “a recumbent stag, his legs drawn up beneath his body”, maybe “an ancestral emblem” linked to the owner’s “Scythian” or steppe nomad heritage (see our Fig. 1). I am grateful to my friend Juan José Ferrer, who helped me to read the inscription as <’s’dy ZY ’ld’n BRPYTAy> *Asā(y) ī Alān wispuhr*. The only problem is that, even if the stag suggests an Alan origin, in epigraphic Middle Persian <’ld’n> does not stand for *Alān* (usually <’l’n’n> *Alānān* “Alans” as in KKZ 12 & KNRm 39), but for *Arrān* “Albanians”.<sup>48</sup> Anyway, if the owner was a real Alan prince, a possible relationship to our *Alān šāh* should be taken into account.

All in all, available evidence leads to the following conclusions:

— Ferdowsī tells us that Ƙosrow Parvēz was appointed *Alān šāh* by his father Hormozd IV; this title is also known by Ḥamza Iṣfahānī and indirectly by the “Letter of Tansar”, which states that the Lord of the March of Allān should be named *šāh*.

— following the quadripartite division of Late Sasanian Iran under Ƙosrow Anūšīrvān, in both Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāma* and the “Letter of Tansar” the Alans are



Fig. 1. Seal of Asāy, prince of Alān (photo: Christie's, see n. 46)

identified with the “side of the North”, normally associated with the province of Ādurbādagān or the Caucasus mountains in other extant sources.

— the Caucasian passes of Darial (“the Gate of the Alans”) and Darband played a key strategic role in the defence of the Northern provinces of the Sasanian empire, probably the most important task performed by the “General of the Side of the North” (*kust ī ādurbādagān spāhbed*).

— we have enough data to suggest that the *Alān šāh*, if not directly identical to the *spāhbed* or *marzbān* of the Side of the North, was at least a subordinate military commander under his authority. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the title *Alān šāh* was actually in use as such during the Sasanian period, since it is only reported by later sources.

— several Byzantine and Eastern sources associate Ƙosrow Parvēz with the province of Azerbaijan and/or the cities of Barda'a and Ardabīl during his youth, which backs the hypothesis that the Side of the North or at least the Caucasian marches were placed under his rule, which would explain his appointment as *Alān šāh* as recorded by Ferdowsī.

— the title Σαραλανεοζαν / *Šahr-Ālānyōzān* known through several Greek and Middle Persian papyri dating back to the Sasanian conquest of Egypt by Ƙosrow Parvēz and the agate seal owned by a certain Asāy, prince of Alān, could be two pieces of this jigsaw puzzle, inasmuch as they are first-hand documents of the Sasanian period related to the Alans, but caution is required because of their uniqueness and difficult contextualization.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Jules Mohl, vol. VII, p. 22-25, 30-31; D. Davis, *Shahnameh. The Persian Book of Kings* (NY: Viking, 2006), 778-9, 781.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Mohl, vol. VII, p. 272-75 (lacking in Davis' translation).

<sup>3</sup> *Nāme-ye Tansar* ed. Moğtaba Mīnovī (Tehrān: Ḥ'ārazmī, 1975<sup>2</sup>), 54; translated by Mary Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar* (Roma: IsMEO, 1968), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1944<sup>2</sup>), 65.

<sup>5</sup> Edward G. Browne, "Some Account of the Arabic Work entitled *Nihāyatu 'l-irab fī akhbāri 'l-Furs wa 'l-Arab*, particularly of that part which treats of the Persian Kings". *JRAS* 32/2 (1900): 195-259 (see p. 227).

<sup>6</sup> Ḥamza Iṣfahānī *Tā 'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ wa 'l-anbīyā* ed. Beirut 1969, p. 51-53 (*non vidī*); cf. Parvaneh Pourshariati, "Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī and Sāsānid Historical Geography", *Res Orientales* XVII (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 111-140 (see p. 131); the interpretation of the titles is based on I.M.E. Gottwaldt, *Hamzae Ispahanensis Annalium Libri X* (Petropoli-Lipsiae: Leopold Voss, 1844), vol. II, p. 43 (*Rex Apri, Leonis, Elephanti, Corvi*).

<sup>7</sup> *Aṣṣarḥac 'oyc'* L29, ed. Arsène Soukry (Venice: Imprimerie Arménienne, 1881), 40; Robert H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Aṣṣarḥac 'oyc')*. *The Long and Short Recensions* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), 72.

<sup>8</sup> Touraj Daryaee, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr. A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History* (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2002), p. 8, 13-16, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Ṭabarī, ed. Michael Jan de Goeje I 894; Clifford E. Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*. Vol. V: *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen* (NY: State University of New York, 1999), 149 n. 385.

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Zotenberg, *Histoire des rois des perses par ... al-Tha 'ālibī* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900), 609.

<sup>11</sup> Rika Gyselen, *The Four Generals of the Sasanian Empire: Some Sigillographic Evidence* (Roma: IsIAO, 2001), 11-14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ir. & Ind. Bd II 7* (ed. Raqī Behzādī, p. 6 in TITUS-Server) *Tištār xwarāsan spāhbed, Sadwēs xwarwarān spāhbed, Wanand nēm-rōz spāhbed, Haftōring abāxtar spāhbed*; cf. Ferdinand Justi, *Der Bundeshesh* (Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1868), 4 "Haptoiringa des Nordens Heerführer"; Antonio Panaino *EIr XI* (2003) 533-4 s.v. *Haftōrang*.

<sup>13</sup> Rika Gyselen, *Sasanian Seals and Sealings in the A. Saeedi Collection*, AcIr 44 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 272-77; cf. his *The Four Generals*, 44-5.

<sup>14</sup> *Weishu* CII 2270-72; *Beishi* XCVII 3222-23; see François Thierry, "À propos des monographies du *Weishu* (554) et du *Beishi* (659) sur le royaume de Perse", *Res Orientales* XVII (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 141-156 (see p. 145, 149).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 370; Richard N. Frye, "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians", *CHI* 3.1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), 154;



Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (London-NY: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 94-101; Daryaei, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, p. 7-11.

<sup>16</sup> K'art'lis C'xovreba ed. S. Qauxc'išvili, p. 217 *mašin mep'eman Sparst'aman Urmizd misc'a dzesa t'wssa Rani da Movakani, romelsa erk'ua K'asre Ambarvezi. movida da dadžda Bardavs*; see Robert W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 228.

<sup>17</sup> Clifford E. Bosworth *Elr* III (1989) 779-80 s.v. *Barda'a*.

<sup>18</sup> *Shahnama* 42, 1781 ed. Mohl, vol. VI, p. 692-3 *همی تاخت تا انزابادگان hamī tāht tā Ādar Ābādgan* "he hastened to Ā."; Davis, *Shahnameh*, 768.

<sup>19</sup> Ṭabarī, ed. de Goeje I 993-95; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 303-4, 306 in several passages: "he fled to / set out from / left secretly for Azerbaijan".

<sup>20</sup> Ṭa'ālībī in Zotenberg, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 660 *وهرب الى آذربيجان wa-haraba ila Ādarbāyḡān* "he fled to A.".

<sup>21</sup> Theophyl. Sim. IV.3.13 ἐπὶ τὸ Ἀδραβιγάνον τὴν ἀπόδρασιν ἐπεποίητο "he made his escape to A."; Michael Whitby–Mary Whitby, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 107.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. Mohl, vol. VII, p. 6-7; Davis, *Shahnameh*, 774.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Balāḡurī *Futūḥ al-Buldān* ed. Michael Jan de Goeje, 325; Francis Clark Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, vol. II (NY: Columbia University, 1924), 19 [537].

<sup>24</sup> Ed. Mohl, vol. V, p. 524-5; Davis, *Shahnameh*, 612.

<sup>25</sup> Fritz Wolff, *Glossar zu Ferdosis Schahname* (Berlin: DMG, 1935), 493 s.v. *siḡāh* 9. Bahrām Čōbīn is often recorded by Ferdowsī as *pahlavān-e seḡāh* under Hormozd IV; Theophyl. Sim. III.18.11-12 labels him as "general of the Persian company" (στρατηγὸς τοῦ Περσικοῦ ἄθροίσματος) and "*darīḡbed* of the royal hearth" (δαριγβεδοῦμ τῆς βασιλικῆς ἐστίας), a title close to that of *κουροπαλάτης*; Whitby–Whitby, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 101-2.

<sup>26</sup> Gyselen, *Sasanian Seals and Sealings*, 52, 56-58, 252-54 *sub* III/5a, 6a, 7a; cf. his *The Four Generals*, 24-26.

<sup>27</sup> Wolff, *Glossar*, 175, 570 s.v.

<sup>28</sup> Ed. Mohl, vol. VII, p. 549b s.v. *Biwerd*, 729a s.v. *Scheknan*.

<sup>29</sup> Ferdinand Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg: N.G. Elwertsche Vbh, 1895), 69 s.v. *Bīwerd*; 279 s.v. *Šaknān*.

<sup>30</sup> At least in Philippe Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique*, IPNB II.2 (Wien: VÖAW, 1986) as well as his *Supplément [1986-2001]* to the former work (IPNB II.3, Wien: VÖAW, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> On this respect see Mehrdad Ghodrāt-Dizaji, "Ādurbādagān during the Late Sasanian Period: a Study in Administrative Geography", *Iran* 48 (2010) 69-80.

<sup>32</sup> Parth. <'l'n̄n TROA> *Alānān bar*, MPers. <'l'n̄n BBA> *Alānān dar*, Gr. πύλαι Ἀλανῶν, Arm. *drownk' Alanac'*, NPers. در الان *Dar-i Alān*, Georg. *Darjala*, Arab. باب اللان *Bāb al-Lān* "the Gate(s) of the Alans", sometimes misnamed as Gr. Πύλη Κασπία, Κάσπιαι πύλαι "the Caspian Gate(s)" in Byzantine sources.

<sup>33</sup> MPers. <BBAbnd> / NPers. در بند *Darband* “Closed Gate”, Gr. Τζούρ, Τζόν, Arm. *Čoray / Čolay / Honac* ‘pahak’ “the stronghold of Čor / Čol / the Huns”, Arab. باب صول *Bāb Šūl*, but later commonly known as باب الابواب *Bāb al-Abwāb* “the Gate of Gates” or just as الباب *al-Bāb* “the Gate”.

<sup>34</sup> Flav. Ios. *Ant. Iud.* XVIII.97 tells that in AD 35 the king of Iberia and the king of Albania “opened the Caspian Gates” (τὰς θύρας τὰς Κασπίας ἀνοίξαντες) and brought in the Alans against the Parthian king Artabanus; cf. Tac. *Ann.* VI. 33 *Hiberi locorum potentes Caspia via Sarmatam in Armenios raptim eff<und>unt*. For the Armenian verb see Agat’angelos & Elišê in our notes 37-38 (*banal / bac* ‘in zdrowns *Alanac*’); see also *K’art’lis C’xovreba* ed. S. Qauxc’išvili, p. 66 = Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 78, where the “Khazars” try to capture Daruband “in order to open the broad pass” (*rat’ame’a ... gamages kari p’art’o*) and invade Persia under Mirian (AD 284-361).

<sup>35</sup> Philip Huysse, *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka’ba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ) I-II, CII III.1* (London: SOAS, 1999), Bd. 1, p. 22-23: MPers. <OD pl’c OL \*kpy \*kwpy W-’l’n’n BBA> *tā frāz ō Kaf kōf ud Alānān dar*; Parth. <HN prhš OL kpy ΘWRA W ’l’nn TROA> *yad fraxš ō Kaf kōf ud Alānān bar*; Gr. [ἔως ἔμπρ[οσθεν] Καπ ὄρους καὶ πυλῶν [Ἀλα]νῶν.

<sup>36</sup> KKZ 12 <OD pl’c OL ’l’n’n BBA> *tā frāz ō Alānān dar*; cf. Michael Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, AcIr (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 426.

<sup>37</sup> Agat’angelos 19 (ed. G. Têr Mkrte’ean–St. Kanayean, p. 16) *ew banal zdrowns Alanac* ‘ew zČoray pahakin, hanel zzôrs Honac’, *aspatak dnel i kolmans Parsic*’; cf. Robert W. Thomson, *Agathangelos. History of the Armenians* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), 36-37.

<sup>38</sup> Elišê (ed. E. Têr Minasean, p. 198) *bac* ‘in zdrowns *Alanac*’ *ew hanin gownd bazowm i Honac*’, *ew křowec’an tari mi and Ałowanic’ ark’ayi*.

<sup>39</sup> Proc. VIII.3.4 ed. H.B. Dewing (London–Cambridge, Mass.: William Heinemann–Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), p. 74 ἐς τὰς διεξόδους ἐξικνουῦνται αὐτὰς αἶ τὰ τῆδε ὠκημένα Οὐννικὰ ἔθνη ἐς γῆν τήν τε Περσῶν καὶ Ῥωμαίων ἄγουσιν. ὧν περ ἄτερα μὲν Τζούρ ἐπικέκληται, ἡ δὲ δὴ ἔτερα Πύλη ἐκ παλαιοῦ Κασπία ἐκλήθη.

<sup>40</sup> Men. Prot. fr. 6.1 ed. Roger C. Blockley (Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 1983), 70-1 ὡς διὰ τῆς στενοπορίας τῆς εισόδου τοῦ λεγομένου χώρου Τζόν καὶ τῶν Κασπίων πυλῶν μὴ ἐφεῖναι Πέρσας ἢ Οὐννοὺς ἢ Ἀλανοὺς ἢ ἐτέροισι βαρβάρους πάροδον ποιεῖσθαι κατὰ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείας, μήτε δὲ Ῥωμαίους ἐν αὐτῷ δήπου τῷ χώρῳ μήτε μὴν ἐν ἄλλοις Μηδικοῖς ὀρίοις στράτευμα στέλλειν κατὰ Περσῶν.

<sup>41</sup> P.Oxy. 3637 (AD 623); P.Oxy. 3797 (AD 624); BGU 2 377; see Dieter Weber, “Ein bisher unbekannter Titel aus spätsassanidischer Zeit”, in *Corolla Iranica. Papers in honour of Prof. Dr. David Neil MacKenzie on the occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday*, ed. Ronald E. Emmerick and Dieter Weber (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 228-35.

<sup>42</sup> Dieter Weber, *Berliner Papyri, Pergamente und Leinenfragmente in mittelpersischer Sprache*, CII III.4 (London: SOAS, 2003), 7-11, 31-2, 59-61, 63-4, 112 (P. 136, 145, 172, 174, 256).

<sup>43</sup> Movsēs Xorenaci III.34 (ed. M. Abelean–S. Yarowt‘iwnean, p. 298-9) *zAlanaozan omn pahlavik ... or êr azgakiç ‘Aršakay* “a certain Alanaozan Pahlavik ... who was a relative of Aršak”; P‘awstos Bowzandac‘i IV.38 (ed. K‘. Patkanean, p. 129) *Alanayozann, or Pahlawn êr*; see Robert W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats‘i. History of the Armenians* (Ann Arbor: Caravan Books, 2006<sup>2</sup>), 287; Nina Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmut‘iwnk‘)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 163, 344-5.

<sup>44</sup> Weber, “Ein bisher unbekannter Titel”, 234.

<sup>45</sup> Weber, *Berliner Papyri*, 60 (P. 172) *kn‘lng Y‘LH-š‘n PRŠY‘n* /kanārang ī awēšān asbārān/ “der *kanārang* jener Ritter”; cf. Walter B. Henning, “The Bactrian Inscription”, *BSOAS* 23/1 (1960) 47-55 (see p. 50-51); Vladimir G. Lukonin, “Political, Social and Administrative Institutions: Taxes and Trade”, *CHI* 3.2 (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), 731; Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides*, 104, § 488.

<sup>46</sup> Judith A. Lerner, “An Alan Seal”, *BAI* 19 (2005[2009]), 83-89. Skjaervø’s reading was taken from Christie’s New York catalogue, where the seal was sold on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1998 (sale 9020, lot 231, p. 106-7).

<sup>47</sup> Ptol. V.9.16, ed. Karl Friedrich August Nobbe (Lipsiae: Caroli Tauchnitii, 1845), vol. II, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> Philippe Gignoux, *Glossaire des Inscriptions Pehlevies et Parthes*, CII SS I (London: Lund Humphries, 1972), 15.

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