Sasanian Society

I. Warriors II. Scribes III. Dehqāns

by

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Foreword

The late Professor Ahmad Tafazzoli was invited to deliver the first lecture series of the Ehsan Yarshater Distinguished Lectures in Iranian Studies in 1996 (April 1-5) at Harvard University’s Center for Middle Eastern Studies. The lectures treated of the social classes of Sasanian Persia (3rd-7th centuries C.E.). The Zoroastrian priestly class was however not included as such in the lecturer’s treatment. Unfortunately Professor Tafazzoli did not live long enough to elaborate his lectures for publication. Even so, the text which was received by Mrs. Tafazzoli posthumously presents the most detailed and authoritative treatment of Sasanian social classes to date.

As there were some lacunae in the footnotes and the bibliography, the text of the lectures was sent to Professor D.N MacKenzie who kindly agreed to check the footnotes and the bibliography. He also partially edited the manuscript. As he did not have access in his present place of residence to some of the works mentioned in the footnotes the assistance of Professor A. Shapur Shahbazi was sought to identity the details of some of the works in the bibliography.

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University would like to express its gratitude to both scholars for their selfless and generous assistance.

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About the author

Professor Ahmad Tafazzoli was born in Isfahan on December 16, 1937. He studied at the University of Tehran where he received a B.A. in Persian Language and Literature in 1959. He then went to London in 1961 to pursue his studies with the renowned Iranist W.B. Henning and he received an M.A. in Old and Middle Iranian Languages from the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London in 1965. From London he went to Paris, where he continued his research with the late Professor J. de Menasce. In 1966, he obtained his Ph.D. in the Pre-Islamic Iranian Languages from the University of Tehran with a dissertation entitled "A Critical Edition of the Ninth Book of Dēnkard."

Upon his return from London he was employed by Bonyād-e Farhang-e Iran (Iranian Cultural Foundation) which was headed by Professor Parviz Natel Khanlari and had planned a series of glossaries of the Middle Persian texts as a preliminary step toward compilation of a documented lexicon of Persian.

In 1968 he was appointed Assistant Professor and in 1973 as Associate Professor of Middle Persian and Avestan in the Department of Old Iranian Languages in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Tehran. In 1978 he was promoted to the rank of full professor.

While he continued his cooperation with the Bonyād-e Farhang-e Iran, he was also appointed by the Iranian Ministry of Art and Culture a member of editorial committee for a critical edition of the Shāhnāme under the chief editorship of the late Mojtahad Minovi.
After the revolution of 1979, when the new Academy of Persian Language and Literature was instituted, he was elected a member and later he assumed the vice-presidency of the Academy for scientific research; he continued to hold that position until his death on January 13, 1997. In 1996 he was made Consulting Editor for Middle Iranian Languages to the Encyclopaedia Iranica, to which he frequently contributed.

Professor Tafazzoli was a prolific scholar and made remarkable contributions to the advancement of our knowledge of Middle Iranian languages, particularly Middle Persian. He published a considerable number of articles in Persian, French and English. He was the editor, with Philippe Gignoux, of Memorial Jean de Menasce (1974). Among his books one may mention Vāženāme-ye Minu-ye Xrad (Glossary of the Dādestān-i Mēnōg i Xrad, 1969) and a Persian translation of its text, Tarjome-ye Minu-ye Xrad (1975); Osture-ye Zandegī-ye Zardusht (the Legend of Zoroaster, 1992, with Jaleh Amuzgar); Anthologie of Zādspram (1993, with Philippe Gignoux), Zabān-e Pahlavi va dastur-e ān (A grammar of Middle Persian, 1995, with Jaleh Amuzgar); and of Tārīkh-e Adabiyyāt-i Iran piš az Islam (History of Iranian Literature Prior to Islam, 1998), which contains a detailed and most useful treatment of the Middle Persian works and documents.

He was awarded the Prix Ghirshman in 1994 by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres of Paris for his work in the field of Iranian Studies and especially for Anthologie de Zādspram. In Iran in 1995 the same book was named the best book of the year in the international category. In 1996, he was awarded a honorary doctorate by the University of Saint-Petersburg in recognition of his scholarship.

He was a member of Société Asiatique (France) since 1971; of Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Council (England) since 1972; of The International Committee of Acta Iranica (Belgium) 1981; a founding member of Anjoman-e Athar-e Melli (Society for Preservation of National Monuments (1980-1981); and a member of the Scientific Consultative Body of The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia (1987).

He was a mainstay of the Nāme-ye Farhangestān, the organ of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, where his latest articles were published.

Professor Ahmad Tafazzoli was a dedicated scholar who devoted his entire career to research and instruction. His modesty and lack of pretensions was in sharp contrast with his extensive knowledge.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters.
I. Warriors

The Pahlavi term for ‘warrior’ was artēštār, derived from Avestan rabāēštār-, originally meaning ‘one who stands in a chariot’. It was used to designate the estate of warriors in the pre-Islamic literature, and survived in the Sāhnāma, where it is corrupted to nys’ly’n in the manuscripts, the correct form of which should probably be tēštāriyān, as I have suggested elsewhere.1

The colour of their clothes is said to have been ‘red’ or ‘purple’, in both the native and the foreign sources. Thus in a passage of the Dēnkard it is stated:

ud andar paymōgān pad ān ī suxr ud may-gōn paymōzan kē pad harwisp pēsišn pēšid ēstēd pad sēm ud zarr ud karkēhan ān-īz ī be widābāg yākand

‘And among the clothes, the garment which is red and wine-coloured, adorned with all kinds of ornament, with silver and gold, chalcedony, and shining ruby (belongs to warriors).’

Again in the Great Bundahišn:2

ud wāy ī wah jāmag ī zarrēn ud sēmēn ī gohr-pēšid ī argawān ī was-rang paymōxt ēstād, brahmag ī artēštārīh

‘Vāy, the Good, donned a garment of gold and silver, adorned with precious stones, purple and multicoloured, (namely) the costume of warriorhood’.

Curtius Rufus (1st cent. A.D.), describing the movement of the Persian army of Darius III towards the battlefield, wrote that the sacred fire and accompanying Magi, leading the march, were ‘followed by 365 young men clad in purple robes,’ (one for each day of the year).3

4. P. 82, 3.3.10 ‘Magos trecenti et sexaginta quinque iuvenes sequebantur’
Warriors played an important part in the Sasanian society and enjoyed some privileges. A passage of the Škand-gumānīg-wizār, describing the position of each of the four Sasanian classes, reads as follows: 

"andar gēhān i kōdag i ast mardōm paydāsēnīd pad homānāgīh i ēn čahār pēṣaqān i gēhān čiyon abar sar āsrōnīh abar dast artēštārīh abar aṣkam wāstaryōšīh abar pāy hutuxūšīh"

"As to the microcosm, i.e. man, Ohrmazd made it manifest in the same manner as he did the four estates of the world, in such a way that to the head corresponds the estate of priests, to the hands corresponds the estate of warriors, to the belly the estate of cultivators and to the feet the estate of artisans".5

The idea that the state of warriors in the society is tantamount to the hands in the body also occurs in a passage of the Dēnkard: 

tan i mardān čahār pēšag i gēhān pad baxšīn, abar sar āsrōnīh ud abar dast artēštārīh ud abar aṣkamb wāstaryōšīh ud abar pāy hutuxūšīh

"The division of the body of man (corresponds to that of) the four estates of the world: to the head (corresponds) the estate of priests, to the hands the estate of warriors, to the belly the estate of cultivators and to the feet the estate of artisans".6

The same notion is found in the Letter of Tansar: 

"Know that according to our religion men are divided into four estates ... and their head is king. The first estate is that of the clergy; ... The second estate is that of the military (مسال, māsūl), that is to say of the fighting-men, of whom there are two groups, cavalry and foot-soldiers. Within them there are differences of rank and function. The third estate is that of the scribes ... The fourth estate is known as that of the artisans ... "7

The people belonging to an inferior estate were obliged to hold the warriors in respect:

punices amiculis velati,".8

5. ŠGW, I, 20 (de Menasce 1945, p. 24)

"As for the soldiers or fighting-men, he [the king of kings] has conferred positions of honour and favours of all kinds upon that group, because they are ever sacrificing their own lives and possessions and followers for the welfare of those who labour, devoting themselves to combat with the country's foes, while the common people sit at ease among their wives and children, enjoying repose and tranquility, safe and secure in their houses and in pursuit of their own livelihoods. It is fitting that the working people should salute them and bow before them, and that the fighting men in turn should show reverence to the nobles...".9

The duty of the warriors is described in the Pahlavi text Mēnōg i Xrad: 

"artēštārīn xwēškärīh dušmen zadan ud šahr ud bům i xwēš abē-būm ud āšān dāštān"

"The duty of the warriors is to strike the enemy and to hold their own country and land secure and tranquil".

In the same text the vices of the warriors are mentioned thus:10

"ahōg ī artēštārīn stahmagh i ud zadārīh ud mihrōdruzīh ud *anabaxšāwandīh i ud *jeh-gāyīh i ud abartanīh i ud tar-menisīh"

"The vices of the warriors are: oppression, violence, breaking faith, lack of remorse, whoring, arrogance and contempt".

For the warriors, valour (hunār) was considered the most noble ornament. The word hunār is used here in the same sense as in the Šāhnāma, namely 'skill in the affairs of war, bravery, manliness'. It is explained as nařīh ī az xwādīh 'manliness (resulting) from one's essence'.11

The most significant duty of the warriors was said to be the protection of the country against any aggression. In a passage of the Pahlavi Rivāyat it is stated that: 

az ahestāg paydāg kīt ka an-ēr dušman āyēnd pad šahr <I>
hênd ‘Many and innumerable troops that are armed and have adorned banners’.

Parth. ‘wn gwrd rzmywyz ky ‘sp’d hyést gryft prm’w gwnd ‘O warlike hero who has abandoned (his) army, fear has seized the troops’.

This term is often used in the Pahlavi texts in juxtaposition with spâh, as gund ud spâh l spâh ud gund.

The same term is frequently used in the Pahlavi papyri, and is borrowed into Arabic as jund, pl. junûd.

A special regiment of the Persian army seems to have been called gund i šâhân-šâh ‘the regiment of the king of kings’;

‘On the day when the battle of Qâdîsîya took place there were 4,000 (soldiers) with Rustam (son of Farrokhzâd) called jund šâhân-šâh’.

In the Pahlavi texts, however, the word gund is often used in the sense ‘army’, e.g.

ka gund nêt-swadây *a-bandag ud dên <a->burdâr ud zên anâbây-šîn ud âmûr-în a-nâm ud ganî-šaûd
‘If there is no army, the sovereign remains without servants, the religion without adherents, the arms become useless, mercy obsolete, and the treasury unprofitable’.

Another word is kârawân, meaning ‘troops on the march, military column’, the first element of which, kâr, derives from the Old Persian kâra- ‘army’: kârawân (i ĕrân-šâhr) ‘the army (of Iran-šâhr)’.

It is also used in Manichaean Parthian: ‘wd whwryd k’rw’n ‘and the troops are confused’.

14. ZWY ch. 7.8, pp. 115, 142.
15. Boyce, Reader, text ch. 1, p. 139.
16. E.g. Kânâmânagh chh. 5.2, 6.1, 8.1; ZWY ch. 7.10; ŠGW chh. 12.62, 14.29; Aydagâr i Jâmîspîg ch. 16.41, 45, 47, 49.
19. Aydagâr i Zârêrân, 27, 29 (Pahl. Texts, pp. 3.21, 4.2).
20. Boyce, Reader, p. 139, text ch. 1.
'wī dw k’rw’n ky pd mn rfynd ’n’s’g ‘and the two armies that attack me are innumerable’. 21
It is also used in the Pahlavi and Parthian inscriptions, written k’lw’n and k’rw’n respectively:
W hngwn MNW PWN ZK k’lw’n HWTH ‘And also those who were in that army’. 22
The word kārawān gradually lost its military meaning and was already used in Pahlavi in the sense of ‘group of people who travel together, caravan’, e.g., in kārnāmag, ch. 4.19.
APŠ k’lw’n-l glwh-l OL ptylk YATWNt ‘and a caravan, a group (of people), came to meet them’.

The Parthian word zāwar, corresponding to Persian zūr ‘strength’, is also used in the sense of ‘military force, army’:
z’wry hngwšn BDt ‘He gathered an army’. 23
prwmyn z’wry HWBDWt ‘the army of the Romans was destroyed’. 24
z’wry 70 ALPYN ... LHw z’wry s’rr ‘an army of 70,000 ... the chiefs of that army’. 25
‘yr’n š[try] z’wry hwnbwyd ‘we have composed/mobilized (?) an army of Eranšahr’. 26

The word also seems to occur, though corrupted, in the Pahlavi books:
Ardāwān az kustag kustag čiyōn az Ray *Dāmāwand Dailamān ud Padišxwārgar spāh ud *z’wl / *zōr xwāst
‘Ardāwān summoned army and forces from different regions such as Ray, Damāwand, Dailamān and Padišxwārgar’. 27

pas az ān was spāh gund <ud> *z’wl / *zōr ō ham kard ‘subsequently he gathered many armies and forces’. 28
Another current word was laškar, which is attested several times in the Dēnkard, book 8. 29 Cf. Armenian laškar, borrowed after the middle of the 5th century A.D. 30
The word hēn ‘hostile army’ is attested in Pahlavi as a learned word translating Avestan haēnā-. 31 It also occurs in Manichaean Middle Persian in the compound išknēn / iškam-hēn ‘destroying the hostile army’. 32 The word is borrowed into Armenian meaning ‘enemy army, thief, pirate’. 33 Cf. Pahl. hēnīh ‘piracy’ in the Kārnāmag. 34
The expression asp ud mard (SWSY' W GBR) ‘horses and men’, attested in the Pahl. inscriptions, seems to signify ‘army’. The same expression is also attested in the Dēnkard: asp ud mard ud zēn abzār ‘horses and men (i.e. army) and its arms and equipment’. 35

Military Posts

In the oldest documents of the Sasanian epoch, namely the inscriptions of the 3rd century A.D., the highest military dignity was ‘chief of the army, general’ (spāhbed in Mid. Pers., spāśbad in Parth.). In the inscription of Shapur at the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt a certain Raxš was mentioned as spāhbed, and the same person

23. SKZ, Parth. 1. 1.
24. SKZ, Parth. 1. 4.
25. SKZ, Parth. 1. 11; in the corresponding Pers. 1. 14 only [zr’]ywl(ily) is still legible.
27. Kārnāmag, ch. 7, 5, sp’h W *hwl (hardly āswwarr ‘stable’).
28. Dēnkard, pp. 729.19, 730.11, 731.6, 735.21, 738.10, 11, 761.23.
30. Y. 9.18, 57.25; ZYA ch. 117.2; ZYW ch. 6.6; Dkm pp. 601.21, 659.1.
31. Henning, Sogdica, Frag. 1, verso 17, pp. 31, 33.
35. KKLZ 11, 12; cf. KNNM 40; Faikuli § 23, 11/10, § 44, 22/20: Skjærvø, Faikuli, 3.1, pp. 37, 48.
37. SKZ Pers. 29, lūšy ZY sp’hpt, Parth. 24, lūšy sp’dpt.
was also mentioned in the inscription of Narseh at Paikuli. In the Pahl. texts the title Erân spâhbed is attested. It is probable that this title belongs to a later Sasanian period, like other titles such as Erân dihrbâd ‘Chief Secretary of Iran’ and Erân drustbâd ‘Chief Physician of Iran’. According to Tabari, Xusraw I, Anušîrawân, eliminated the post of Erân spâhbed and divided his duties between four spâhbeds according to the four cardinal points. Thus in the Pahlavi texts one often finds xwarasân spâhbed ‘general of the east’, xwarwarân spâhbed ‘general of the west’, nêmrozh spâhbed ‘general of the south’ and abâxtar spâhbed ‘general of the north’. Nevertheless, the post of spâhbedân spâhbed ‘the general of generals, commander-in-chief’ is also mentioned in the Bundahišn:

pad awêšân awtarân čahâr spâhbed pad čahâr kust gumârd <ud> spâhbed-e abar awêšân spâhbedân gumârd ... Tištâr xwarasân spâhbed, Sadwês nêmrozh spâhbed, Wanand xwarwarân spâhbed, Haftorâng abâxtar spâhbed, mëx <ir> gâh, kë mëx î maûni î āsman gowênd, spâhbedân spâhbed

‘Over these stars he (i.e. Ohrmazd) appointed four generals in the four directions, and he appointed a general over these generals.

... Tištâr (Sirius) is the general of the east, Sadwês (Fomalhaut?) the general of the south, Wanand (Vega) the general of the west, Haftorâng (the Great Bear) the general of the north, the Pole star, which is called the Peg in the middle of the sky, is the commander-in-chief’.

Instead of the word abâxtar ‘north’ the geographical name Adurbâyagân was also used for the region and the general, to avoid naming ‘north’, the region in which, according to the

Zoroastrian belief, the gate of hell is situated. Three of the four spâhbeds, of the east, south and west, are mentioned in the Pahlavi treatise entitled Sûr saxwar. The title nymwcv(y) sp’rpt(y) is found on a Sasanian bulla, published by Gignoux, which confirms Tabari’s account.

Another military title attested in the Pahlavi texts is artêštâran sâlār ‘chief of the warriors’. According to Tabari, one of the sons of Mihr-Narse, the grand vizier (wuzurg framâdâr), who lived in the 5th century A.D., *Kârdû by name, bore this title. In the text of Tabari it is attested in the form, artêštâran; artêštâran sâlār. According to Procopius, in the 6th century A.D., in the time of Kawâd (488–531 A.D.), a certain Siyâwaš bore this title: adrastadaran salânës / artêštâran sâlār. The same title is also attested in the Kârnâmâ and the treatise Wizarîn û carang.

According to Tabari the post of Artêštâran sâlâr was superior to that of spâhbed and was near the rank of Arghed ‘citadel chief’.

Artêštâran sâlâr was probably synonymous with spâhbedân spâhbed or Erân spâhbed. The same title is also found in a form emendable to artêštâran sâlâr in an Arabic text entitled Kitâb al-Taj ‘Book of the Crown’, describing the customs of the court of Xusraw I, Anušîrawân, at the Nowruz feast. It is translated into Arabic

34. Skjarvê, Paikuli. 3.1, p. 107 šify.
as 'the chief of the country’s horsemen'. At the king’s audience during this feast the Artēštārān-sallār was the fourth dignitary to deliver a speech, after 'the Chief Secretary of Taxes' (تبریز: کتاب الازمان) and 'the Grand Vizier' (رباب الازمان), apparently the equivalent of Pahlavi wuzurg framādār. In the Letter of Tansar the spabhbad-e spabhbadān (اسفهند استهبان) is mentioned alongside ‘the chief mowbed’ (میرهت میروان) and ‘the chief scribe’ (رأسه دیوان). There is every indication that, in spite of Ţabari’s assertion, the post of the commander-in-chief (spabhbedān spabhbed or artēštārān sallār) was not totally abandoned after the military reforms of Anūširavān, but rather that its holder was deprived of some of his powers.52

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The chief of the troops was called gundsālār, well attested in the Pahlavi paypri of the time of Xusraw II (591-628 A.D.) in the spelling gundsrdī. It is borrowed in Armenian as gundsarār. The title survived for some time after the fall of the Sasanian empire. Ţabari3 relates that in the year 36 A.H./656-7 A.D. one Māhūya, governor (marzbān) of Marw, came to visit Imām ‘Ali, the Muslim caliph, in order to re-confirm the treaty he had already concluded with Ibn ‘Amir, the Arab general. The caliph wrote a letter about this matter to the dehqāns (dahāqina), to the knights (asāwīra) and to the chiefs of the troops (jundsallārīn).

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Another military title was dizbed ‘fortress commander’, attested in the inscription of Shapur I at the so-called Ka’ba-ye Zardošt (Mid. Pers. 1. 32: dzpš; Parth. 1. 26: dzpš).54 Where a certain Tir-Mihr of the courtiers of Shapur is mentioned as dizbed of Šahrigird (Mid. Pers. štrkrt, Parth. štrkrt), a locality near Karkūk.55

A military post similar to that of the dizbed was argbed, well attested in documents foreign to Iran. According to Ţabari,56 among the officials of Gōzihr (Ar. خوسره), king of Istakhr at the end of the Arsacid period, there was a certain eunuch called Tirī who was argbed (Ar. ارگب) of Dārāgbird. When Ardašīr, the future Sasanian king, was seven years old his father entrusted him to Gōzihr with the request to educate his son. After the death of Tirī, Ardašīr assumed his office. On another occasion Ţabari,57 while describing the post of artēštārān sallār ‘Commander-in-chief of the army’, wrote that ‘this office was close to the rank of argbed’. Another personality of the Sasanian epoch who bore this title was Mīhr-Šāpūr, a high dignitary of the court of Yazdīgird I (399-421 A.D.).58 At the end of Sasanian times the bearer of this title was particularly responsible for taking care of the affairs of the royal households.59 [There is no good reason to prevent us identifying the Greek from arkapītēs, recorded in a parchement from Dura Europos dated 121 A.D., with argbed, in spite of Szemerényi’s objection, who denies the existence of such a title in Sasanian times.] As I have demonstrated elsewhere, one should not confuse this title with arzbed / hastbed ‘chief of the royal harem’ (Ar. هژب، Pers. هژب).

It seems to me that the post of argbed was superior to that of

51. Ed. Minovi, p. 27.
53. Ţabari, I, 6, p. 3249.
55. Maricq, p. 70 [328].
56. Ţabari, I, pp. 814-5.
57. Ţabari, I, p. 869.
58. Labourt, 1904, p. 97; Christensen, L'Iran, pp. 107, 271.
60. Tafażzolfi, 1990.
dizbed.

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The ‘Life Guards’ were called puštibânân and their commander puštibânân sālar,61 who was mentioned as one of the intimates of the king.62 Cf. Armenian p’uštıpanaç (gen. pl.), or p’uštıpan, satar.63

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Yet another military title, of Parthian origin, is hâmharz ‘adjutant, attendant’, attested in Man. Parthian (h’mbyrz) and in the Ayādgār i Zarērān,64 and borrowed into Armenian as ham(a)harz.65

Divisions of the Army

The army was divided, as elsewhere, into two main arms: the cavalry and the infantry. We read in the Dēnkard,66 ud andar artēštārih *aswārīh67 ud paygīh ud abārig artēštārih ... kār ‘In the estate of warriors (there are two groups): the cavalry and the infantry, and other military functions’.

The same statement occurs in the Letter of Tansar.68

‘The second estate is that of the military, that is to say of the fighting-men, of whom there are two groups, cavalry and foot-soldiers. Within them there are differences of rank and function’.

The word for ‘cavalry’ in Pahlavi is aswār (‘swb’l, PRŠY’),69 and for ‘infantry’ payg or payādag. The commander of the cavalry was called aswārān sālar (in the Wizārišn i ēaurang, § 10).70 In the Pahlavi papyri published by Hansen71 there is a word which he deciphered as PRŠY’nd’r’n. I believe (without seeing the original) that it should rather be read as *PRŠY’nsrdl i aswārān sālar ‘commander of the cavalry’.

An important official, according to the Letter of Tansar, was the instructor of the cavalrymen, مَوْتَبِّلُ الْاْسْأَوْرَهِ in Persian and الموكبل في الاسواره in Arabic, who had the duty ‘to keep the fighting-men in town and countryside practised in the use of arms and all kindred arts...’72

The word payg (pdk) ‘foot-soldier’ is well attested in Book Pahlavi,73 on an ostrac on from Dura (pdkły),74 in Man. Parth. (pdg / pa’dag),75 Armenian (payik), Syriac (pyg’ / paygā), and Arabic (fay).76 The word payādag is also attested in Book Pahlavi77 as well as in Man. Mid. Pers. (py’dg).78 The infantry

63. Hübschmann, p. 235; Nyberg, 1974, p. 163.
64. Pahl. Texts p. 1.6, 9.
65. Hübschmann, p. 177. See Bologna, pp. 50.
67. The text has ‘swb’l’n’; cf. aswārīh ud paygīh at Dēnkard, p. 541.8.
69. Minovi, § 5 end; Boyce, 1968, p. 41.
70. Ayādgār i Zarērān § 19 (Pahl. Texts p. 3.3); Ayādgār i Jāmāspīg, p. 16.16;
Dēnkard, p. 695.12-17; cf. paygīh ‘infantry’, DkM pp. 59.10, 541.2.
73. Hübschmann, p. 220; Bailey, BSOs 6, 1930, p. 78 (cf. new n. 81); Henning, loc.cit.
74. Wizārišn i ēaurang, § 31, Pahl. Texts, p. 117.1, 2.
formed the rearguard. It consisted of the mass of peasants taken for military service.\textsuperscript{79} The commander of the infantry was called \textit{paygān sālār}, preserved in Syriac (\textit{pygnslr}).\textsuperscript{80}

The cavalry naturally enjoyed more importance than the infantry. In a passage of the \textit{Ayādgār i Jāmāspīg}, a Zoroastrian apocalyptic text, where the upheaval of the Iranian society at the end of the world is predicted, it is stated that: \textit{aswār payg ud payg aswār bawēd}, 'a horseman will become a foot-soldier and a foot-soldier will become a horseman'.\textsuperscript{81}

There is also mention of 'charioteers' in the \textit{Ayādgār i Zarērān} § 27,\textsuperscript{82} called \textit{wardyūndār}.

In the reign of Anūšūrawān (531-579 A.D.) there existed an 'office of the army', similar to a modern Ministry of War, or defence, called \textit{diwān al-funj} \textsuperscript{83} or \textit{diwān al-muqātāla}.\textsuperscript{84} This was under the supervision of a Secretary (\textit{dibīr}),\textsuperscript{85} whose duties were described as:

1) inspecting the troops every four months,
2) improving the equipment of each group,
3) supervising the military inspectors who had the duty of training the army in the arts of horsemanship and in archery, and looking into the accomplishment of their tasks and their failure.

According to Tabāri, Dinawarī and Balʿamī a certain Pābag, son of *Behruwān,\textsuperscript{86} had this post in the reign of Anūšūrawān and enjoyed a considerable authority. For a military parade on the arena in front of the royal palace he constructed a platform covered with a precious carpet, on which cushions were placed.

He fixed the pay of each man from 100 up to 4,000 \textit{dirhams} according to his skill and his force, not less than 100 \textit{dirhams} for foot-soldiers and not exceeding 4,000 \textit{dirhams} for horseman.

\textbf{Ranks}

As we have already mentioned, the author of the \textit{Letter of Tansar} related that among the warriors there were differences of rank and function.\textsuperscript{87} In the \textit{Kārnāmag of Anūšūrawān}, only preserved in an Arabic translation, there is an allusion to the seven ranks (\textit{sabʿ marātib}) in the army.\textsuperscript{88} According to another Arabic text, entitled \textit{al-Siyāsatu l-ʿāmmīya}, the Umayyad army was also divided into seven ranks. It is further stated that 'another good rule is the one according to which nobody should be promoted to a superior rank before going through inferior ranks. In this respect the Persians have abundantly been praised'.\textsuperscript{89}

It seems reasonable to suggest that the seven ranks of the Umayyad army were imitated from the Sasanian army, as was proposed by Grignaschi. Points like this, as well as the Middle Persian military loan-words in Arabic such as \textit{`askar, jund, fayṣ}, indicate that the Muslims adopted the military organizations of the Sasanians.

\textsuperscript{76} Herming, \textit{Sogdica}, Frag. c (24), p. 25 f.
\textsuperscript{77} Christensen, \textit{L'Iran}, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{78} Nöldeke, Tabāri, p. 448; Hoffmann, \textit{Auszüge}, p. 47; Christensen, \textit{L'Iran}, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{79} Bailey, 1930, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Pah. Texts}, p. 3.22.
\textsuperscript{81} Dinawari, p. 74; cf. \textit{Šāhnāma}, VIII, p. 62, v. 16, \textit{diwān-lʿarz u sipāh}.
\textsuperscript{82} Tabāri, I, p. 963.14; Nöldeke, Tabāri, p. 247.
\textsuperscript{83} Kāšī in Tabāri and Dinawari.
\textsuperscript{84} The name is recorded as \textit{lbyrwʾn} in Tabāri (Nöldeke, p. 247), \textit{byrdʾn}, \textit{nyrwʾn}, etc. in Balʿamī, \textit{lhwdʾn} in Dinawari, 79. These seem to be corruptions of \textit{*bhrwʾn} *Behruwān (<Pahl. *weh-ruwān 'having a good soul'). Bābak is also mentioned in the \textit{Nawrūz-nāma}.
\textsuperscript{85} Minovi, § 11; Boyce, 1968, p. 48-9.
\textsuperscript{87} Grignaschi, 1966, p. 42, n. 76.
War

It will perhaps be useful to give an alphabetic list of words concerning war:


jang be nihrad ‘abandon war’, DkM 555.11.

kārezār ‘battle, battlefield’. k'lyc'l, Ayādgār i Zarērān § 100, Pahl. Texts. 14.3; Kārnāmag ch. 10, 17. Man MP k'ryc'r, q'ryz'r, Sundermann, KPT 735, KG 1494; Šbg. 416.

kōxišn ‘combat’. kwhššn, Kārnāmag ch. 10, 16.
kōxišn-dan ‘to fight, do battle’.
kōxišn-gyāg ‘battlefield’. kwhššn gyyk, DkM 115.15.
nibardidan ‘fight, do battle’. Man.Parth. nbrd'd, Henning, MM III.


pāhikār, paykār ‘battle’. ptk'l, Gr.Bd. 15.1. Cf. Man. MP p (ty)k’r [sic, not phyk’r, with Henning, MM II], Sundermann, KG.
Cf. Man. Parth. pdk'r- ‘to fight’, Henning, III.

razm ‘battle’. lcm, DkM 115 .19; Ayādgār i Zarērān §§ 39, 92, 100. Man. MP rzm, Šbg. q 41.
razmāh ‘battle’. Man. MP rzm’h, Henning, BBB; Sundermann, KPT; Šbg. q 13.
razmgāh ‘battlefield’. lcmg’s, DkM 469.15. Man. Parth. rzmg’h, Henning, MM III; Boyce, Reader, i. o.
mādayān i razm ‘the Corps of the Immortals’. m’tyg’d’n Y lcm, Gr. Bd. 28.5, 71.10.92


‘Single combat’ is called mard u mard ‘man and man, man to man’ (Ṭabari, I, 1034. 3, 2297. 7; Dinawari, p. 130.3; Bayhaqi, p. 11; Browne, Nihāya, p. 250; cf. also Christensen, L'Iran, p. 216.)

90. Gignoux, Glassaire, p. 15; Skjærvø, Paikuli, 3.1, p. 79.
91. See Bailey, TPhS, 1959, p. 105.
II. Scribes and secretaries

The Persian word dabīr comes from Middle Persian/Pahavi dibīr ‘scribe’, which in turn is derived from Old Persian *dipīra, probably borrowed from Elamite tup-pi-rrattipīra.1 The function of a dabīr, ‘scribeship’, was called dibīrī(h) in Middle Persian (Parthian dibīrīft).2

The Sasanians inherited their chancery system, like other administrative institutions, from the Parthians. There is little extant information about the Parthian chancery or scribeship. Nevertheless, the word dibīr and its Aramaic heterogram SPR’ are well attested in the Parthian documents, and the names of several dibīrs occur in the texts.

The oldest attestations of the word are in the Nisa documents, dating from the 1st century B.C., where the names of several dibīrs are preserved:

Rāmānak dibīr [r’mnk SPR’], no. 1713
Wiwān (?) dibīr [wywn SPR’], no. 455
Aṭīdāt (?)/ Atarrāt dibīr [‘ttd/ tt SPR’], no. 541
Mihrēnak dibīr [mtrynk SPR’], no. 604
Xšētak dibīr [hsytk SPR’], no. 812
Barzmēdan dibīr [brzmytn SPR’], no. 20664
Bōzan dibīr [bwzn SPR’], no. 2066
Raśnēn dibīr [(r)šyn SPR’], no. 2675 (2085).5

In all these early Parthian documents, as well as in the

2. MMP dbyrty, Henning, MM II; dbyrty, Pahl. Texts, 63.2; Parth. dbyrty, MM III, Sundemann, KG.

inscriptions of the early Sasanian period and on a Parthian seal published by de Menasce,6 the heterogram SPR’ is used. It is certain, however, that its phonetic equivalent was dibīr, since not only is the word designating a ‘chief scribe’ always spelt dpyrpyt dibīrbed in the Nisa documents (see below), but the form dpyr is also used once in the Parthian graffiti of the synagogue of Dura Europos, from the third century A.D.:

*Sīhār dibīr wuzurg [syh’(?) dpyr LB’] ‘*Sīhār, the great scribe’ (DF 56).7

Moreover, the forms dbyr and dbyrty are well attested in Manichaean Parthian, and once dbyrbya.8

One comes to the conclusion that the Aramaic SPR’ was used as a heterogram in Parthian and early Middle Persian. Later on it was replaced by its phonetic equivalent dpyr in Middle Persian writings, whereas the Parthian scribes preferred to continue the use of the heterogram SPR’ for dibīr down to the Sasanian period, although they kept the form dpyrpyt in its phonetic guise.

Dibīrs constituted an important group of the third estate of the Sasanian society, so far so that some sources name this estate as the estate of the dibīrs. Thus in the Letter of Tansar it is stated: ‘The third estate was that of the secretaries, and they too are divided into groups and categories, such as writers of official communications, accountants, recorders of verdicts and registrations and covenants, and writers of chronicles: physicians, poets and astronomers are numbered among their ranks’.9 Similar statements occur in the Arabic sources. Al-Jāhiz, describing the social classes of the time of Ardašīr (226-241 A.D.), the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, wrote ‘physicians, scribes and the astrologers (constitute the third class)’.10 Exactly the same

8. Henning, BBB; Sundermann, KG.
The introduction of the classes was attributed to most Islamic sources, whose information was derived from the Arabic translation of the Pahlavi *Xwadätñ-nämag*, to the legendary king Žomšēd. For example, Ţabarī wrote: ‘He grouped people in four classes: warriors (muqatila, Pahl. *artēstārān*), priests (*fuqaḥāʾ, Pahl. *ašrōnān*), secretaries (*Kuttāb, Pahl. *dibirān*, craftsmen (*sunna, Pahl. *hūtūxšān*) and farmers (*hurraš, Pahl. *wāstaryōšān*).’

Balʿamī mentioned them as 1) *laškāriān*, 2) *dānāʾān*, 3) *dibirān*, 4) *kišṭārvarān*, *pēšawārān*. In another account the art of dabiri was attributed to Ťahmūriḵ (Pahl. *Txarmōrāb*): ‘The first person who introduced scribeship was Ťahmūriḵ’. It may reflect the tradition related by Firdawsī, according to which the demons taught the art of writing to Ťahmūrāṣ. Secretaries had the important and delicate duty of handling the royal correspondence and of recording the orders, verdicts, speeches, words of counsel, exhortations, harangues, testaments, and other utterances of the king and of his high officials. They were also charged with recording everyday events, making chronicles, and some of them served in various state offices (*divāns*) or were engaged in writing, compiling, or copying books.

**Scribes as important political figures**

Throughout the whole Sasanian period there were secretaries who appeared as important political figures. A number of them are mentioned as such in the inscriptions of the early Sasanian kings and dignitaries.

In the inscription of Shapur I (241-72 A.D.) at the Kaʿba-ye Zardušt, a part of which is devoted to the members of the royal family and the dignitaries of his time and of the time of his father Ardašir (226-41 A.D.), we come across the name A(r)šad, the ‘(letter) scribe’ [*pad fjrawdag dibir* in Parth.]* from Ray, from the Mihrān family, mentioned among the retinue of Shapur I (M.Pers. 1. 34, Parth. 1. 28, Greek 1. 66): ‘*šit Zy dpwyr Zy mn rny, *ršit mtrt pty pwrtk SPR’

**AŠT AF NEEPAN EPI EHIΣTOQW**

In the Middle Persian and Parthian inscriptions in the synagogue at Dura Europos several dibir are mentioned among eminent visitors. They were probably the high army secretaries accompanying the Iranian army in its campaigns:

*yzdʾn[ht][m] pr[n]bg dpwyr zhmyn / Yazdān Farrōbāy dibir i zhmyn* ¹⁸

‘Yazdān-Farrōbāy the scribe of the zhmyn’. (DE 42)

*yzdʾnpisy dpwyr W dp[p]ywr Zy ldkylwcy / Yazdān-pēšs dibir ud dibir i ldkylwcy* ¹⁹

‘Yazdān-pēš the scribe and the scribe of *ldkyl lwcy*’ (DE 43.3-4)

*lšnky dpwr / Rašnag dibir ‘Rašnag the scribe’ (DE 46.3)*

*mthlwspndy (?) dpwr / Mahraspand (?) dibir ‘Mahraspand (?) the scribe’ (DE 47.2)*

*hwrmzdy dpwyr / Hormazd dibir ‘Hormazd the scribe’ (DE 49.2)*

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¹⁹. J. Harmatta, *Kara-Tepe*, I, p. 87, proposes the reading *lwky ‘messenger’.*
One *dibir* of Shapur I, *Abasā* (or *Afasā*) of Ḥarrān, left an inscription in which he reported having made a statue (*pahikar*) of the king, who in return had rewarded him with gold, silver, male and female servants, gardens and riches (*xvāstag*). He may have been more than a *dibir*, however, probably also a governor. During the reign of Xusraw I Antištrawān (531-79) a governor of Ctesiphon was addressed as *dabirbad* ‘Chief secretary’.21

Among the princes and the dignitaries who arrived in Asōrestān, at the place where the monument of Paikuš was made by order of King Narseh (293-302), is mentioned the secretary of finances, though his name is not mentioned in either version of the Paikuš inscription:

\[
PWN \text{št(}r^{-\text{m'}}l\text{)} \text{dp(yw)r} \quad (\text{M. Pers. 16})
\]
\[
p\text{įh} \text{štr-} \text{hmpr SPR} \quad (\text{Parth. 14})^{22}
\]

In the inscription of Shapur Sağānšāh, brother of Shapur II (309-79), at Persepolis, the title of a certain dignitary called Narseh can be reconstructed as *dibir* (ŚPs I, 1.7):23

\[
\text{nrš} \ Y \ d(p)\text{ywr?} / \text{Narseh t dibir *Narseh the scribe*.}
\]

He is associated with such dignitaries as *Sağēstān handarzbed* ‘the counsellor of Sağēstān’, Narseh the Magian, *Wēn*, satrap of Zarang:

\[
\text{[W]} \ '\text{pltyk p'ls'z't W sk's't / [ud] abārīg Pārs-āzād ud Sag-āzād}
\]
\[
\text{‘and other nobles of Pars and Zarang’.}
\]

The last phrase suggests that the scribe belonged to the rank of *āzādān*, i.e. the fourth rank of the Sasanian nobility.

In one of the graffiti of Kara-Tepe, old Termez, a certain

scribes or secretaries (*dp(yr*) named *zyk / Zig* is mentioned. He seems to have been the secretary of a Sasanian chief or a ruler of the boundary region, who ordered the inscription.24

One of Xusraw’s secretaries (*kuttāb*), called Pābag son of *Beh-rwān*,25 is said to have had the duty of taking the preliminary steps in carrying out Antištrawān’s land reforms. Later on, he was appointed chief of the military chancery (*dūwān al-jund*) and enjoyed much influence and prestige. In fact, his post is comparable to a present-day ‘Minister of War, or Defence’. He is described as having such qualities as ‘good descent, manliness, riches and efficiency’. The scene of a military parade arranged by this *Beh-rwān* is described in some Arabic sources. He had the audacity to reproach the king, once for not having been present at the parade and again for not having been completely armed.26

*Dibirs* were authorized to record their own names at the ends of inscriptions. They apparently had the duty of preparing the draft of the inscriptions from the verbal orders of the kings, or the dignitaries, and if necessary of translating them into other languages (e.g. Parthian and Greek). For example, the *dibir* of Shapur’s inscription on the Ka’ba-ye Zardušt, recorded only in the Parthian version (1.30):

\[
\text{dstvypyk ZNH LY *hwrmzd SPR* šylk SPR BRY}^{27}
\]

‘This is my handwriting: Ohrmazd, the scribe, son of Šērāg the scribe’.

The *dibir* of the inscription of Kirdēr (Kartir) at Naqš-e Rajab was one *Bōxtag*.28

\[\]
\[20\] Henning, *BSOS* 9, 1939, 825, n. 4 [= Selected Papers I, 603].
\[23\] Back, p. 493.
\[25\] Instead of Nahrwān, Bēruwān, etc., as in the MSS. See ‘Warriors’ above, n. 86.
\[27\] Back, p. 371.
\[28\] KNRe 1.31; Back, p. 487.
A number of the inscribed seals of Sasanian dibirs have been published:

\textit{māṣṭag Ray dibīr} ‘Maṣṭag, scribe of Ray’ \textsuperscript{29}

\textit{māṣṭag Sābit dibīr} ‘Māṣṭag, the scribe’. \textsuperscript{30}

\textit{bābōy dibīr} ‘Bābōy the scribe’. \textsuperscript{31}

From the excavation at Taxt-e Sulaimān two seals of the dibirs of the famous fire-temple Adur Gušnasp have been discovered:

\textit{māṣṭag ZY [...]ey dpywr / Mihrag i [...] dibīr} ‘Mihrag ... the scribe’. \textsuperscript{32}

\textit{BWHTWRY ZY ‘mtr’n ZY ‘twl ZY gwšnspy dpywr / Bōxtōg i Amihrān i Adur i Gušnasp dibīr}

‘Bōxtōg, son of Amihr, the scribe of the Fire of Gušnasp’. \textsuperscript{33}

Among the owners of seals in Sasanian times was also a Christian named Sebōxt:

\textit{3 BWHT DPYWR / SE-BōXT DIBĪR} ‘Se-bōxt the scribe’. \textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Dibirs} played an important part in the political events of the Sasanian period; for example, after the death of Yazdegird I (399-421) there arose a political crisis concerning his succession. The Persian nobles decided not to choose any of his sons, including Bahram (later king Bahram V Gö r, 420-38) as his successor. Instead, they nominated a certain prince called Xusraw. Among these nobles there were three dibirs: Gōdarz, secretary of the army (\textit{Kātīb al-jund}), Gušnasp-Adur (\textit{Jušnas-ādār}), the finance secretary (\textit{kātīb al-xarāj}), and Juwānōy, the chief scribe (\textit{sāhib al-dīwān al-rasā‘īl}), who was sent to Mundir in Hīrā to deter him from protecting Bahram, who was living there, having finished his education under the tutorship of Mundir. When Juwānōy met Bahram, however, he came to an agreement with him. \textsuperscript{35} Later both Juwānōy and Gušnasp were mentioned as secretaries for Bahram. \textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Dibirs} were also reported to have been consulted on knotty problems; an example is Xusraw Anūšīrawān’s consultation with his secretary Yazdgird and his chief mowbad Ardašīr about his proposed campaign against the Hephthalites (\textit{Haitālān}) and the Khaqan of China. \textsuperscript{37}

‘The king got the assembly room ready in his palace, to which went the king-worshiping knights along with the chief mowbad Ardašīr and others, such as Šāpūr and Yazdgird the scribe, and all wise men capable of showing the way ...’. Then, having explained the situation, the king asked them: ‘What do you see in all this? What should we do with the Turks and the Khaqan of China?’ The king’s counsellors advised him not to make war with them. Nevertheless, the king decided to campaign against the Hephthalites and the Khaqan of China.

In the course of the story the same personalities are often summoned for consultation. \textsuperscript{38} ‘They, together with some other wise men, were present at the seven catechismal sessions held in the presence of Xusraw to test young Buzurgmīhr Bōxtagān.’

The successor to the throne was customarily designated in the presence of the chief secretary and the chief mowbad. Thus Shapur II designated his brother Ardašīr as his successor in the

\textsuperscript{29} Brunner, p. 141, n. 9.

\textsuperscript{30} Bivar, p. 44, no. 120195; see Gignoux, \textit{Noms propres}, no. 25.

\textsuperscript{31} Gignoux-Gyselen, 1982, p. 51, no. 20.3.

\textsuperscript{32} Šahīna, p. 101 ff.

\textsuperscript{33} Gōbi, p. 52, no. 601.

\textsuperscript{34} Gignoux-Gyselen, 1987, p. 246, no. MCB 20.1


\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Šāhīna}, VII, p. 308, 82-84.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Šāhīna}, VII, p. 161 ff.; trl. VI, 1271 ff.


presence of the secretary (díbir), the chief priest (mowbadán mowbad) and Ardašīr himself.  
When a careful investigation was required concerning a complaint against the king’s agents or his tax-collectors, or against the agents of the members of the royal family, the king (in this case Anuširvān) would appoint one reliable man (amīn) from among his dabīrs (kuttāb), one from among the priests, and one from his attendants for the purpose.  
It was in compliance with the same rule that after the imprisonment of Xusraw II (590-628) in 628 A.D. his son Šērōya (Kawād II, r. 628) appointed his chief secretary (ra’is al-kuttāb = mihtar i dabīrān), called Aštād Gušnasp, to investigate his father’s alleged crimes.  
The powerful position of a dībir, however, carried with it the risk of severe punishment, or even death. For example, Dādbindād (Dād-windād), the chief secretary of the army (kātib; wasīr according to Bal’ami) under the last Arsacid king, Ardavān IV (ca. 216-24) was put to death by Ardašīr after his defeat of Ardavān.  
A secretary of Xusraw Anuširvān who ventured an objection to the king’s fiscal reforms was also put to death.  
The same king ordered the execution of eighty officials accused of corruption and oppression, among whom there were fifty secretaries (kuttāb).  

Dībir enjoyed certain privileges. They were among those exempted from taxes, like the royal princes (ahl al-buyūtā, i.e. Pahl. wāspurān), the grandees (al-‘uzāmā, i.e. Pahl. wuzurgān), warriors (al-muqātīla, i.e. arīštārān), priests (al-harābīda, i.e. herbadān, or rather āsrōnān) and servants of the king.  
They were authorized, like the king and the judges, to ride on gentle and steady horses (himlājī), and wore a special dress, except when accompanying the army.  

People of low extraction (bi-ṭaš), common persons (bāzārī) or the offspring of the servants were not as a rule allowed to become a dībir.  
Firdawsī narrates the story of a shoe-maker who asked that his son be educated as a dībir, in exchange for lending the king a considerable amount of money, but his request was refused.  
Anuširvān prohibited the sons of commoners (abnā’ al-āmma) from receiving a good education (ta’addūb) because, he said, when the sons of people of low class are educated, they seek high positions, and when they obtain them, they take the liberty of humiliating the nobles.  

The court secretaries were selected from among the young dībir by examination, conducted by the chief secretaries. After the names of the persons accepted had been submitted to the king, they were counted among the royal attendants. They were forbidden to associate with anyone not sanctioned by the king.  

Those less qualified in handwriting and intelligence were assigned to high officials (kārdār).  
Apart from his professional
skills (see below), a *dibir* was supposed to be a person of insight (*ahl al-baṣar*), continence (*ahl al-ʿiṣāf*) and efficiency (*ahl al-kifāya*); he was to be assigned tasks in which he was experienced.55 He was expected to be ‘the king’s tongue’ for those remote from him, his interpreter.56 The king expected his scribes to have an elegant style, a good knowledge of lexicography, and the ability to write with conciseness.57

The estate of *dibirs* was subdivided into several groups, the establishment of which was attributed to the mythical king Ṣamšāḏ. Jahšiyārī writes,58 ‘The first person who introduced (different) classes of people, arrived (different) groups of scribes and designated their ranks, was Ṣamšāḏ, son of *Wīwanghan*59. According to Ibn al-Balḵī,60 ‘he ordered that some members of the first estate (i.e. that of wise men) should learn scribeship (*dabīr*) and accountancy (*ḥisāb*).’

As we have seen, in the *Letter of Tansar* seven groups of officials are mentioned, the first four being categories of *dibir*, each with specific functions:

1) **Official correspondents**

The Pahlavi title for a correspondent was *frawardag* or *nāmag dibir* ‘scribe concerned with letters’. We have already met the term attested in the inscription of Shapur at the Ka’ba-ye Zardušt: *Arštād Mihrān pad frawardag dibir* (Parth. version, 28).

The kind of Pahlavi script used for letter-writing, probably a cursive script, was named in the Islamic sources *frawarda daftirih* (سهروده دفترې).61

55. Jahšiyārī, p. 6, citing Shapur I’s testament to his son.
59. Corrupted to ‘*wajih*’ in the Arabic text.
60. Ibn al-Balḵī, pp. 30-31.

The ideal correspondent was expected to have beautiful handwriting (*xīb-nibēg*), a swift hand (*rag-nibēg*), subtle knowledge (*bārīk-dāniš*), nimble fingers (*kāmgār-angust*) and wise speech (*frazānag-sawān*) – all qualities laid claim to by the young applicant in the story of ‘Xusraw and the page’.61 He also had to be skillful, vigilant and quick-witted, so that, if the king dropped a hint, he could understand the intention fully and express it in a fluent, smooth and pleasant style. He was also supposed to have some notion of various sciences.62

At the Sasanian court there were bilingual *dibirs* who also served as interpreters. The Parthian and Greek inscriptions of the early Sasanian kings were written by such bilingual secretaries. Tabari63 mentioned an Indian secretary who lived at the court of Xusraw II. The same king always had an Arab *dibir* as well, for example ‘Adī b. Zayd ‘Ilādī, whose father had also served this king and his father Hurmazd IV (579-90).64

It was customary for some *dibirs* to accompany the army into the field, and the commander-in-chief was supposed to consult them.65 The oldest evidence in this respect is the presence of certain *dibirs* in the Dura Europos campaign of Shapur I. The graffiti in the Dura Europos synagogue are the fruit of their activities. Sometimes such *dibirs* were also charged with reporting to the king in secret and spying for him; for example, when Bahram Cōbin, the famous commander of Hurmazd, became angry with this king and decided to revolt, Yazdak the scribe, together with another official, fled by night to inform the king.66 The same Yazdak, with the title *kāʿīb al-jund* ‘scribe of the army’, was mentioned among the attendants of Xusraw.

65. Jahšiyārī, p. 4.
66. Dinawari, p. 86.
The same title was borne by one of the grandees in the time of Yazdegerd I. The name of this function is not attested in the Pahlavi sources, but given that the form dabīr-i sipāḥ occurs in the Sāhnāma, the Middle Persian title may be conjectured as *spāh-dibīr or *gund-dibīr. One of these ‘army secretaries’ called Farrox took part in the seventh session of the dialogues held in the presence of Xusraw Anūširawān, in which Buzurgmīr and other sages participated. It may be deduced from the Sāhnāma that the ‘army secretary’ was entrusted with the function of issuing rations. In one of his ‘royal verdicts’ (tawqīf) Xusraw Anūširawān advised this functionary to supervise the payment of pensions to the orphans of dead soldiers. He was mentioned as dabīr in the Sāhnāma, but Bundārī in his translation used the term kātib al-jayš ‘secretary of the army’.

In a treatise about the rules of government attributed to Ardašīr and preserved in the Niyāya, it is maintained that before a war began, the tax-collectors (jubār) together with the scribes were sent to the enemy to be arbitrators (ḥakam) between the king and the enemy. A judge also accompanied them, to be available in case of differences occurring. He was called *spāh-dādwar.

A passage of the Nihāya shows well the importance of such secretaries, although it is tinged with exaggeration. It is stated that Ardašīr despatched together with the commander of the army (ṣāḥib al-jayš) a scribe who was invested with the power of taking necessary measures regarding the movement or staying in position of the army. The army should neither move off nor stay in position except in accordance with his advice and with his permission, and it should not disobey his advice in this respect.

Certain dibūrs were entrusted with the secret correspondence. They were called kātib al-sirr in the Arabic sources. The Pahlavi term was probably *rāz-dibīr, and the variant script used by such scribes was called rāz-dibīrīh or daftirīh in the Islamic sources. For example, Xusraw II, having killed Bindōya (Windőya) intended to kill his brother Bistām (Wistahm) also. He therefore ordered his kātib al-sirr to write a letter to Bistām summoning him for consultation. The office of confidential secretary survived into the Abbasid period.

2) Accountants

The accountants were further divided into sub-groups: The financial secretaries: The Pahlavi term designating these secretaries is (h)āmār-dibīr (štr 'ml') ḍpywr l hstr 'hrn SPR'), attested in the Paikuli inscription. The script used by them was named šahr-hamār-daftirīh in the Islamic sources. They handled tax affairs. Some were mentioned as kātib al-xaraj in the Arabic sources. During the reign of Xusraw Anūširawān they were charged with assessing the value of the land as the basis for a new system of taxation. The court accountants bore the title *kadaq-(h)āmār-dibīr, the script used by them being named kadaq-hamār-daftirīh in the Islamic sources. There were also accountants attached to the treasury called *ganj-(h)āmār-dibīr, with their own special kind of script called kanj-hamār-daftirīh in the Islamic sources. The term dabīr-i xazāna was also in use in the Islamic period. One of his

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67. Dinawari, p. 90; Browne, Nihāya, p. 240.
68. Dinawari, p. 57.
70. Sāhnāma, VIII, p. 272, v. 3756.
75. Hamza Iṣfaḥānī, pp. 64 f.; Ibn al-Nadīm, pp. 13 f.
76. Dinawari, p. 106.
77. Dinawari, p. 389.
79. Xwārazmī, p. 118, where all the following special script names are mentioned.
80. Tābarī, I, p. 960; Miskawayh, I, p. 98.
duties was to make a report of the inventory of the royal treasury to the king at the beginning of the new year. Thus Firdawsī relates that at the beginning of the new year the dabīr of Wahrām V (Gör) went to the king to let him know that the royal treasury was empty. The chief secretary of taxation (al-dabīrbād, kātib al-xarāj) was among the first state officials to congratulate the king in the New Roz audience. The title of the accountants of the royal stables was *āxwar-(h)āmār-dibīr, and their special kind of script was called āxwar- (āhwar-) hamār-dafirih in the Islamic sources.

The title of the accountants attached to the fire temples was ātaxšān-(h)āmār-dibīr, and the special kind of script used by them was called ātaxšān-(h)āmār-dafirih. Some inscribed seals of such men attached to the Adur Gušnasp fire-temple have been found:

Bōxtag i Amīhr i Adur i Gušnasp dibīr ‘Bōxtag, son of Amīhr, scribe of the fire-temple Gušnasp’.

Accountants of pious foundations were known as *ruwānagān-(h)āmār-dibīr, and the special kind of script used by them was called ruwānagān-dafirih in the Islamic sources.

Each canton of the Sasanian territory had its tax accountants, called in Pahlavi *šahr-dibīr (cf. Syriac šhrdvyr) and in Arabic kātib al-kūra. In a Syriac martyr text it is related that a šahr-dibīr together with the judge (rad) and the chief mowbed of Yazdgird II (439-57 A.D.) was in charge of the trial of the bishop Pethion. In a passage of the Kārnāmag of Anūšīrwān concerning the measures taken by this king for collecting taxes in a fair way, it is stated that ‘I have appointed:

in each land a man worthy of confidence (amīn), next to the governor, to surprise him... and I ordered that the judge (qāzī), the scribe of the canton (kātib al-kūra), the man worthy of confidence of the people of the region (amīn ahi al-balad) and the governor (āmil) should submit their (particular) accounts to the dīwān’.

3) Judicial secretaries

Secretaries responsible for recording judicial decisions and verdicts were probably called *dād-dibīrs. (A certain Xwādāy-būd, with the title dibīr, mentioned as a judicial commentator, may have belonged to this group). The special script kind of script used by them was called dād-dafirih in the Arabic sources.

4) Chroniclers

Certain dibīrs were responsible for recording daily events. One of them, a secretary of Shapur II called Xwarrabhūd (Arm. Xofohbowt), was captured by the Romans. In the Roman empire he learned Greek and wrote a book on the deeds of Shapur and Julian. Later he also translated into Greek a Persian book on the history of primitive times written by one of his Persian companions in captivity, Rāst-saxwan (Arm. Rastohown). Sergius, an interpolator for Xusraw Anūšīrwān, summarized the court archives and translated his summary into Greek; this work was used by the Greek historian Agathias. According to Baladurī, in a report pertaining to the late Sasanian period, the king’s orders and decisions were recorded

81. Bayhaqi.
82. Sūnmā, VIII, p. 392, vv. 1275-76.
84. Göbl, p. 52, no. 601; cf. p. 44, no. 15. (n. 32).
86. Hoffmann, Auszüge, p. 63-65.
88. The Pahl. equivalent may be 'wstwb' = Man. MP 'wstvwr', i.e. awstwdr 'reliable'.
89. MHD, I, p. 2, 1. 5.
90. Xwārazmī, p. 117.
92. Christensen, L'Iran, p. 76.
in his presence, and another official copied them into the royal monthly diary; the king put his seal on the diary, which was kept in the treasury. It is also related that Ardashir charged two intelligent pages, probably two junior dibirs, with dictating and recording what he said in the presence of his courtiers while he was drinking. The next day his dibir would read out his words to him.94

Hormazd IV, after his imprisonment, asked for a dibir to be sent to him with a book, in order to read to him ancient stories and the exploits of the kings.95

Those dibirs whose duty it was to know the rank, position and special place of each courtier probably belonged to this group; in instances of ambiguity or dispute they were consulted.96

**Copyists**

Little is known about the dibirs who engaged in writing down and copying secular and religious books in the Sasanian period. Those who transcribed or copied Zoroastrian religious books, especially the Avesta, were probably called *dên-dibir*, and the Avestan script was named in Pahl. *dên-dibirih*, and in the Islamic sources *dîn-dîfirih*.97

Manichaean dibirs, who were regarded as a class of the elect,98 played an important part in the expansion of their religion. They were well trained in writing the Manichaean script. The remaining fragments of the manuscripts found in Turfan, in Chinese Turkistan, usually show the skill of their copyists. Some pieces are outstanding specimens of calligraphic art.

The dibirs were usually among the members of the missionary delegations sent out to propagate Manichaeism. In a passage of a Middle Persian text concerning a mission sent by Mani to the eastern part of Iran,99 it is said that: 'When the Apostle of Light was in the city of Hulwân, he summoned Mar Ammon, the teacher, who knew the Parthian script and language (*pahlavânig dibirih ud izwân*), and sent him to Abarštahr, accompanied by Ardashan, the prince, and the brother scribes, together with book-painters (*nibêgan-niligr*)'. In another passage of a Manichaean text in Parthian100 we read thus: 'and when the Apostle was in Weh-Ardaxšir, he sent Patig, the teacher, Addax, the bishop, and Mani, the scribe, to Rome (i.e. the Roman territories)'. Another passage in Middle Persian101 concerning the last-mentioned mission reads thus: 'Then the lord (=Mani) sent to Adda three scribes, the Evangelion (and) two other books'.

The scribes and copyists usually remain unknown, their names being rarely mentioned. In the introduction to a hymn-book found among the Turfan fragments,102 which begins with the date of copying of the book, a dibir is mentioned who 'started writing (the hymn-book) by order of the leaders of the religion, but was not able to finish it'. The text then continues that the manuscript remained incomplete until a certain preacher (xrôh-xwân) named Yazdâmad ordered one Naxurig-rösxn (who writes of himself in the first person in the last paragraph of the surviving text) to finish it. He was also assisted by other dibirs (*hammîs dibîrân*).

The chief secretary bore the title *dibirbed*, attested in the Parthian documents from Nisa as *dyurpyt* (nos. 90.7=1543.7, 99.5=1469.5, 258.1=2150, 209.1=2172.1).103

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94. Jâhîz (attrib.), *Tâj*, p. 27.
96. Ibn al-Balî, p. 49.
98. See Henning, *BBB*, p. 28, II. 352 ff., where the *dyurpyt nywcr* 'brave scribes' are honoured before the *'rdwâwn pî'kîn* 'pure righteous' (electi).
In the inscription of Shapur I on the Ka’ba-ye Zardušt dibirbed is mentioned among the royal dignitaries. A certain Mard with this title was named among Ardašir’s retinue (ŠKZ, MP I. 29, Parth. I. 24). In the same inscription a dignitary called Ohrmazd, with the same title, was mentioned among Shapur I’s retinue; his father had borne the same name and the same title (ŠKZ, MP I. 34, Parth. I. 28). This latter dignitary is to be identified with the ‘whrmzyd dbyrbzd i Ohrmezdz dibirbed mentioned in a Manichaean Parthian text in company with a Sasanian lord (zwadāy) named Pērōz. They seem to have given Mani letters of safe-conduct, obviously in obedience of Shapur’s orders. The same title is also attested in Sogdian documents (ḏyprṭ, ḏyprpt). It was borrowed into Armenian as dprapet.

In the Arabic and Persian sources this title was given as dabirbad, dabīrfadī (dbyrfdī), and dabīrbad (dbyrbād). In some of the sources it was translated ra’is kutāb al-rasā’il.

Another title for the chief secretary, also known from Parthian times, was Pahlavi dibīrān mahist. The name and the title of the chief secretary of Wištāsp is mentioned in the Ayaḏgār i Zarērān as *Abarsām dibīrān mahist. It was translated in the Persian sources as mīhtar-e dabīrān, mīhtar dabīr, or busurg dabīr. The title wuzurg dibīr also occurs in an inscription at Dura.

The fact that the title dabirbad was used in the kitāb al-Taj

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104. Sundermann, KG, 1658.
105. Magh II and III.
108. Ibn al-Bakšī, p. 49 with n. 3.
110. Dinawarī, p. 112.
111. Pahl. Texts, p. 2.1, § 9, written ‘pl’hym Y ḏyrb’n mhst.

for the kātīb al-xarāfī indicates that he was chief secretary for taxation. The official so designated was the first person, after the king, to deliver a speech at the Nowruz ceremony. There must surely have been other categories of chief secretary.

The chief priest (mowbad), the chief secretary (dabirbad) and the chief religious teacher (hērbad) were present at public pleadings. It was also reported that on ‘delicate’ occasions the king dined only with three of his attendants, the chief mowbad, the dabirbad, and the chief of cavalry (ra’s al-'asāwīra). The dabirbad was expected to be the wisest, the most intelligent and the most vigilant of men.

After the Arab conquest of Iran, the Muslim rulers did not dispense with Iranian secretaries, who continued their service in different government offices. Islamic sources abound with the names of such Iranian secretaries enjoying admiration and esteem.
III. Dehqans

The Persian word dehqān is the Arabicized form of Syriac dhāqān, borrowed from Pahlavi dehγān, the older form of which was *dahīγān.1 It was borrowed into Armenian as dehkan.2 The original meaning of the word was ‘pertaining to deh’, the latter not in the later sense of ‘village’, but in its original sense of ‘land, country’ (from Old Persian dahyu-).

Dehγān was used in the late Sasanian period to designate a class of landed magnates. In a chapter of the Muṣnal al-tawārīx devoted to the titles of the kings and the dignitaries of pre-Islamic Persia (*Ajam), dehγān is defined as ‘chief’ (ra’īs) and lord (xudāwānd) of estates (tiyā’ u amlāk).3 From a passage of the apocalyptic Pahlavi treatise Zand i Wahman Yasn it may be inferred that the dehγāns were considered inferior in rank to āzādān ‘nobles’ and wuzurgān ‘grandees’;4

...was tis sōzdē ud wināhēnd ud mān az mānjēn, deh az dahigān, āzādē ud wuzurgē ud dehγānīh ... ē nēstī hrasēd

‘... (the offspring of the demon Xēšm) will burn and destroy many things, and (they will deprive) the house-owners of their houses and land-owners of their lands; the classes of nobles, grandees and land-magnates... will come to nought’.

In a passage of the Ardā Wirāz-nāmag, describing the position of different people in Paradise, they are also mentioned as inferior to kadag-xwadāyān ‘householders’;5

u m dida n i was zarren giā ud wistarag i xiūd ud bālīn abāb bōb i passazag kē-šān padiš nişāst hēnd kadag-xwadāyān ud *dehγān <ān> ruwān...

1. Margoliouth, p. 84a.
2. E.g. ZWY, 4.7 (K20 MT‘K’n), 4.54 (d’hh’k’n).
3. Hueschmann, p. 139, no. 186.
5. ZWY, 4.7.

‘and I saw many golden thrones with good bedding and cushions with suitably fine coverings, on which sat the souls of the masters of households and the landed magnates’.

In the Pahlavi treatise Xusraw ud Rēdag, the page to whom the king (obviously Xusraw II) set a series of questions, in order to test his aristocratic taste, has the name (or title?) waspuhr ‘principal’;6 In its Arabic rendering he is mentioned as belonging to a great dehγān family (min rū’asā al-dahāγin).7

According to Mas‘ūdī,8 the rank of dehγān in the Sawād region in the Sasanian period was also inferior to that of the šahrīgān (Arabicized form šahrīj) ‘Chief of the small cantons’ (ra’īs al-kūra). The name author counted the šahrīgās (Ar. šahrīja) and the dehγāns among the noble families (buyūt al-muṣarrāfa).9

Ya’qūbī mentioned dehγāns along with princes (abnā’ al-mulāk) as those belonging to the noble class (man lahu šaraf) and to the families of upper rank (al-bayt al-rāfi).10

In a Syriac text written in the first half of the 9th century A.D., dehγāns also occur alongside ‘noblemen’, both groups considered as ‘people who were chief among the believers of Adiabene’.11

The origin of the dehγān class is usually attributed in both Zoroastrian books of the 9th century and in Islamic sources to Wēkarto (Waygird), brother of Ḥosang, the legendary Iranian king;12

ān ówōn wēhih ud xwarrah did pad <wi>zidāghī az bun-gumēzīshīh tā abar madan i nōg nōg āhōgūmandīh i az dēwān

10. Muruji, I, section 662.
14. Dēnkard, p. 438. 7-12, Book V, ch. 4.2; Melé, Légende, p. 112-13.
A similar statement is found among the Islamic sources. The sovereignty (dahhāḏiyā) was founded by Hūšān and dehγānhood (dahqana) by his brother Waygird. In some sources, however, the innovation is credited to Manūḫihr.

Manūḫihr was the first who established the estate of dehqān (or: dehγānhood; dahqana). He appointed a dehqān in each village and made its people his servants and his servants, clothed them with humility and ordered them to obey him.

This same statement is recorded by Taʿalībi: 

Manūḫihr was the first who appointed a dehqān in each village, made its people his servants, clothed them with humility and compelled them to keep cows.

Ibn al-Balxi: 

Manūḫihr innovated the estate of dehqāns (or: dehγānhood; dehγān)...

and Balʿami: 

Manūḫihr said to the dehqāns, “I expect from you the prosperity of each village,” and he ordered the peasants thus, “Obey the commands of the dehqāns, so that the world may become prosperous!”

Nevertheless, since the term dehqān is not attested in early Sasanian documents, but is sometimes mentioned in the Pahlavi books (of the 9th century), and frequently occurs in descriptions of the Sasanian administration in early Islamic sources, it is permissible to suppose that dehγāns emerged as a social class as a result of land reforms in the time of Xusraw I (531–79).

According to Taʿalībi this king admonished the future king thus:
‘Take care of the estate of dehqān just as you take care of kingship, because they were like brothers, and our first ancestor Hōšang was dehqān as well as king’.

According to some sources Kawād (488-531) married a daughter of a dehqān, who considered himself a descendant of Frēdōn. The fruit of this marriage was Khosraw I, although in some sources the father of the girl is said to be a knight (aswār) or an ‘army commander’ (spāḥbed). According to the Šāhnāma, Bahram V (421-39) also married the daughters of a dehqān, named Burzēn.

In the late Sasanian period dehqāns and courtiers (wāspuhragān; Ar. aḥl al-buyūdāt) used to have audience with the king on the second day of the Nawrōz and *Xuršām-rōz festivals: the latter, celebrated on the first day of the tenth month Day, was their special feast day, on which the king ate and drank with the dehqāns and cultivators.

Management of local affairs was the hereditary responsibility of the dehqāns, and the peasants were obliged to obey them, but their estates must have been smaller than those of noble landowners. They probably represented the government among the peasants, and their main duty was to collect taxes.

A story related in the Šāhnāma is evidence for the importance of the financial role of dehqāns in Sasanian times. Anūširawān needed money for his campaign against the Romans, so he was advised by Bozorgmehr (Wuzurgmihr) to borrow money from merchants and dehqāns.

Dehqāns were divided into five sub-groups according to their social status, each distinguished by dress.

**Dehqāns in the Islamic period**

The Arabs started their aggression against Sasanian territory in the days of the Caliph Abū Bakr (11-113/632-34) with sporadic attacks on the lands of the dehqāns of the Sawād, the cultivated areas of southern Iraq. After the defeat of the Persian army in the time of Umar (13-23/634-44) and the gradual disappearance of the nobles who administered the country, the local gentry, i.e. the dehqāns, assumed a more important political and social role in their own districts, towns and villages. Some were able to protect their settlements from the conquering armies by surrendering and agreeing to pay the poll-tax (jīzya). For example, the dehqān of Zawābī in Iraq made a treaty with the Arab commander. ‘Urwa b. Zayd, in which he agreed to pay a tax of four dirhams for each inhabitant of his district. Bīštān, dehqān of Burs, also in Iraq, agreed with Zahra to construct a bridge for his army. When the Arab forces arrived at Mahrūd near Baghdad, the local dehqān agreed to pay a sum of money to Hāšim b. ‘Utba in order to deter him from killing any of the inhabitants of the district. Šīrzhād, the dehqān of Sābāt, a village near Mada’in (Ctesiphon), was able to save 100,000 peasants who had been besieged by the Arab army.

There are similar reports for other parts of the Sasanian empire. For example, Rabī’ b. Zayd was dispatched by ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Amir in the year 30/650-51 to Sīstān. When he reached a
fortified village called Zāliq, he was able to conquer its dehqān, who managed to survive by paying an amount of money. The dehqān of Herāt made a treaty with ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Amir, paying him fifty sacks of dirhams. When Qutaiba b. Muslim (d. 96/715) was appointed by Ḥajjāj as the governor of Khurasān in 85/704, the dehqāns of Balkh went out to meet him in Ṭāliqān and accompanied him in crossing the river.

Dehqāns who refused to collaborate with the Arabs, or who preferred resistance, either fled or lost their lives. For example Ṣahryār, one of the dehqāns of Ctesiphon, fought against the Arab army and was finally killed. The dehqān of Daskara near Baghdad was accused of treachery and executed at the order of Ḥāshim b. ‘Utba. When ‘Utba b. Šarwān, the Arab commander, arrived in Meshed (Dašt-e Mišān) and realized that the inhabitants had the intention of resisting, he fought with them and killed their dehqāns. Later on, when the dehqān of the region apostatized, he was put to death by Muḥāyra b. Šūba, the governor of Basra. At the end of the year 15 and the beginning of the year 16/637, when ‘Utba b. Šarwān attacked Sūq al-Ahwāz, its dehqān first prepared to fight against him, but then made a peace treaty, accepting to pay tribute. Subsequently he infringed the treaty and Abu Mūsā, the governor of Basra, attacked the Sūq al-Ahwāz and Nahr Tīrī districts in 17/638. The same governor also attacked Šūs (Susa), where the inhabitants fought against him. Finally its dehqān proposed a peace treaty on the condition that Abu Mūsā would give quarter to a hundred of his people. Abu Mūsā accepted this, but killed the dehqān himself. When Mūsā b. Xāzīm Salāmī arrived at the fortified city of Tirmidh he received its dehqān, but not having come to an agreement, the latter fled to Turkistan.

The fact that the last Sasanian king, Yazdīr d. 93 (632-51), sought support from the dehqāns is evidence of the rising power of this class at the end of the Sasanian empire. Thus after his defeat at Nahāwand he went to Isfahān, where its respected dehqān, called Matyār (*Mihrāyī), first promised to help him, but did not abide by his word. The king then went to Kirmān, seeking the help of its dehqān, but without avail. Finally he reached Marw, hoping to have the assistance of its dehqān, called Māhōya, but he was killed there.

In the early Islamic period, as in late Sasanian times, the dehqāns had the task of collecting taxes. They enjoyed a good reputation in this matter. When ‘Ubayd-Allāh b. Ziyād, the governor of ‘Irāq (d. 28/648), was reproached for employing the dehqāns for gathering taxes he defended his actions thus: ‘because they are better informed as regards collecting taxes (absar bi ‘l-jibāya) and more honest (‘awfā bī ‘l-amāna) than the Arabs. It is also easier to require them to pay the taxes they have received than the Arabs’.

From the 9th-century Syriac author Thomas of Margā we learn that the dehqāns paid tribute to the Sahārijān, their superiors. They were also responsible for the cultivation of the land, the maintenance of bridges and roads, and for providing hospitality to certain travellers. The lands of dehqāns in the region of Sawād, where the population had accepted Islam, were left to them and they were exempt from the poll-tax.

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38. Balāḏuri, p. 484.
40. Balāḏuri, p. 516.
42. Balāḏuri, p. 324.
43. Balāḏuri, p. 420.
44. Balāḏuri, p. 422.
46. Balāḏuri, p. 466; cf. also Dīnawarī, p. 140.
47. Balāḏuri, p. 514.
50. Wallis Budge, p. 257.
52. Balāḏuri, p. 325.
There were, however, dehqāns who adhered to their own faith. They had to pay the poll-tax. Nevertheless, there exist here and there some reports in the Islamic sources suggesting that life was not always easy for them. For instance Zādan, the dehqān of Sālihīn, who was dīmni, complained to ‘Umar, the caliph, against an agent of Sād b. Malik, who had caused him harm.53

Even those dehqāns who were converted to Islam were not always free from religious fanaticism, Arab racism or especially political conflicts. The case of Zādan-Farrox is a typical example. Ţabarī54 quotes a letter of complaint from Qaraža b. Ka‘b al-‘Anṣārī, written in 38/658-9 and addressed to the caliph ‘Ali. It runs as follows: ‘I inform the Commander of the Faithful that a group of horsemen on their way from Baṣra to Nīffar encountered one of the dehqāns of the lower Euphrates called Zādan-Farrox, who had already been converted to Islam. They said to him, “Are you Muslim or infidel?” He answered, “I am Muslim.” Then they said to him, “What do you say about ‘Ali?” He replied, “I speak well of him, he is the Commander of the Faithful and the lord of mankind.” They said to him, “O enemy of God, you have denounced the faith.” Then a band of them attacked him and cut him to pieces.” This dehqān was obviously the victim of the conflict between ‘Ali and his rivals.

In the days of Ḥajjāj b. Yūsf (d. 95/714) the river Tigris overflowed its banks. Ḥajjāj abstained from constructing a dam so that the overflowing water could damage the lands of the dehqāns, because he accused them of having assisted Ās‘at, who revolted against him.55

It may be inferred from various reports that in early Islamic times some dehqāns functioned almost as local rulers, especially in eastern Persia, and that any man of wealth or social prestige might thus be called dehqān. Sometimes the same person was called dehqān in one source and marzbān ‘governor’ in another. For example, in one report Ţabarī referred to men with the title marzbān of Kirmān and Marw and in another called the same men dehqān.56 Balādhurī mentioned the revolt of the dehqān of Sūs, whereas Dinawarī called the same person marzbān.57

Dewāštī (Arabicized forms Dwāštī, Dwasti: 87?-104/706?-22),58 the last ruler of Panjikand, Sogd and Samarqand, had the title of ‘lord’ or ‘king’ (šawb, šawī, šawīf, mār, mārshād)59 in the Sogdian documents excavated at Mount Mugh, but was designated dehqān by Ţabarī.60 His name and title dehqān seem to have continued in use among his descendants for some time, since the father of a certain religious traditionist (muhaddīj) named Xalaf (d. 300/912) was called Dwāštā, the dehqān of Ruxfīn.61

In a report recorded in the Tārīkh-e Sistān64 a certain Abarwēz son of Rustam once has the title of šāh ‘king, lord’ of Sistān, but another time is mentioned with the title dehqān.

A number of dehqāns of Transoxania are mentioned in the Hudūd al-‘alamī as more or less influential and prestigious personalities.

In Persian poetry before the 12th century A.D. the title dehqān meant ‘ruler, amīr, lord,’ especially in eastern Persia.65 Sūzānī praised some local rulers as dehqān in his poems,66 among

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54. Ţabarī, I, p. 3423.
57. Balādhurī, p. 466; Dinawarī, p. 140.
59. Livstol's, Mugh II, p. 136; Bogolubov-Smirenova, Mugh III, p. 67.
60. Mugh III, p. 37.
64. Ed. Bahārī, p. 81.
65. Ed. Sottocchi, pp. 82, 83, 100, 114.
them one with the title ‘ayn al-dahāqīn ‘the eye of the dehqān’.\textsuperscript{68} Dehqāns were sometimes mentioned alongside ‘princes’ (malik-zādāgan) and ‘grandees’ (mehtarān), sometimes together with ‘local rulers’ (mulūk) and ‘learned men’ (ahlbār)\textsuperscript{70}, sometimes with ‘local rulers’ (mulūk) and ‘governors’ (marzbānān),\textsuperscript{70} or with ‘knights’ (aswārān) and ‘army commanders’ (jund-sallārān).\textsuperscript{71}

It is clear that the term dehqān, which was used to designate a lower group of the noble class of Sasanian society, was gradually developed in the sense of ‘Persian noble’ after the Arab conquest and the disintegration of the Sasanian social class system.

The Arabs often consulted dehqāns on political and social affairs. For example, when ‘Ubayd-Allāh al-Muṣāriq\textsuperscript{72} was sent on a mission as the agent of Ḥāẓir in Fallūjatayn, the first question he asked his people was whether there was any dehqān with whom he could have consultation. He was referred to Jamīl al-Biṣāḥūrī. The Arab agent summoned him and consulted with him on how to administer the region. The dehqān gave him some pieces of advice, quoted by Jāḥṣīyārī.\textsuperscript{73}

In some instances the dehqāns were able to intervene on behalf of one of the parties to a conflict.\textsuperscript{74} The caliph ‘Uṯmān (23-35/644-56), for example, appointed ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Amīr as governor of Bāṣra, and Sa‘īd b. ‘Aṣ as governor of Kufa, writing to both that whichever of them first reached Khorasan, he would be amīr of the region. Both set out for Khorasan. One of the dehqāns of the region came to ‘Abd-Allāh and proposed to help him, provided that the Arab commander would exempt him and his family from paying taxes for ever. With the assistance of this dehqān ‘Abd-Allāh reached Qumis before his rival and was able to conquer Nīšāpūr in 30/650–51.\textsuperscript{75} The dehqāns of the regions of Fāriyāb, Marw, etc. took the part of Hārīt b. Surayj against ‘Aṣām b. ‘Abd-Allāh in 116/734.\textsuperscript{76}

In the first half of the 9th century A.D. Sahīb b. Sunbāt, who first sheltered Bābak Xurramdīn in his castle but later betrayed him to Afsīn, was a dehqān.\textsuperscript{77} Another dehqān, Ibn Šarvīn Ṭabarī, was appointed to bring Bābak’s brother ‘Abd-Allāh to Bagdad as a captive; on the way ‘Abd-Allāh asked to be treated in the manner of the dehqāns, and Ibn Šarvīn gave him wine.\textsuperscript{78}

Dehqāns enjoyed great respect and prestige at the court of the Samanids (204-819/395-1005). The poet Rūdakī, in an ode (gašīda) describing a banquet at the court of Naṣr b. Aḥmad (301-31/913-43), mentioned a dehqān called Pir Šāliḥ who sat with the nobles (jurraḥ) facing the ranks of the Amir and the Grand Vizier, Muḥammad Bālamī.\textsuperscript{79}

In the early Islamic centuries many important political figures of eastern Persia were dehqāns. For example, Aḥmad b. Sahīl b. Ḥašīm, the Samanid Amir, was a dehqān of Jīrāŋ (in Marw) and a descendant of Yazgird III.\textsuperscript{80} Aḥūṣ Muslim Khorasānī (Xurraṣānī), prominent leader in the Abbasid cause, is said to have been one of the dehqāns of Ḫaṣāh.\textsuperscript{81} Some personalities were descendants of dehqān families. The father of Nizām al-Mulk, the Saljuq grand vizier, for example, is reported to

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., pp. 311, 326.
\textsuperscript{69} Ṭabarī, II, p. 1237.
\textsuperscript{70} Muṣīm, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{71} Ṭabarī, I, p. 3249; Ballūqūrī, p. 505, where instead of jund-sallārān, *deh-sallārān ‘village chiefs’ are mentioned.
\textsuperscript{72} Recorded as ‘Ubayd b. Abī Muṣāriq by Mas‘ūdī.
\textsuperscript{73} Jāḥṣīyārī, p. 46; Muṣīm, p. 13, note.
\textsuperscript{74} Ṭabarī, II, 1420.
\textsuperscript{75} Ya‘qūbī, Beirut ed., II, p. 166-67.
\textsuperscript{76} Ṭabarī, II, p. 1569.
\textsuperscript{77} Muṣīm, p. 357.
\textsuperscript{78} Ṭabarī, III, p. 1231.
\textsuperscript{79} Tārīḵ-e Sīstān, p. 319.
\textsuperscript{80} Gardžī, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{81} Šīrī, p. 225.
have been a rich dehqān of the Baihaq region. In these early Islamic times many dehqāns, as the heirs of Sasanian gentility, led comfortable, even luxurious lives, like their forebears. Jahāz describes the table etiquette observed by the dehqāns, mirroring the aristocratic taste of Sasanian times, as follows:

"The dehqāns condemn the habit of gulping down food, hate gnawing a bone to pick it clean, blame those who take away the marrow from the bone; they eat with a spoon, cut the meat with a knife, keep silence while eating, avoid futile words but prefer to murmur (zamzam)."

A story recorded by Jahāsiyāri demonstrates well the aristocratic taste of the dehqāns in the early Islamic period. It runs as follow:

"Fażl b. Marwān related that one day when he and Ishāq b. Sūrīn were in Baradān, a village near Baghdad, Fażl b. Ja'far b. Yaḥyā the Barmakids passed them, being followed by a Zoroastrian man with a long neck. When the latter reached us he asked for some cold water. He was given an earthen pot full of water. The pot did not appeal to him and he complained, saying, "Dehqānhood (dahqana) has nearly vanished; where is the silverware?" Ishāq replied, "It is forbidden in Islam." The man said, "Where is then some glassware?" ... This man was Fażl b. Saḥīl, the secretary (kātib) of Fażl b. Yaḥyā."

Balāḏūrī, describing in detail the amount of taxes that the people of Sawād were due to pay during the rule of the caliph 'Alī (35-40/656-61), mentioned three strata of people connected with farming: 1) dehqāns, who rode a mount and put a gold seal on their fingers, 2) the middle stratum, which consisted of traders, and 3) peasants.

Among the events of the same period Ṭabarī relates that Jaʿda b. Hubayra, the Arab commander, was dispatched to Khorasan. I Marw two Persian princesses fell into his hands as captives. He sent them to the Caliph, who offered them Islam so that he could give them in marriage. They asked him to marry them to the two sons of the Caliph, but 'Alī refused their request. Then, at the request of a dehqān, 'Alī let him marry them. The dehqān held them in respect, provided them with silk carpets and gave them food in gold vessels. In another similar version, recorded by Dinawarī, there was only one princess, who was given in marriage to one of the great dehqāns of 'Irāq (min 'uzama' dahqān) called Nāṣē.

As to the clothing and the appearance of the lady dehqāns of Transoxania, Balāḏūrī relates thus: "Saʿīd b. Abd al-ʿAzīz, governor of Khorasan under the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (101-5/720-24), was called xuḏīna, meaning "lady" (Sogdian xwist' ḵykh [sic]), because he used to wear a coloured garment and let his hair flow down like a dehqāna... and he had coloured cushions around him."

In an account concerning the refusal of the people of Sogdiana who were converted to Islam to pay poll-tax (jīz̄a) to Aṣrās, the Muslim governor, in the year 110/728-29, Ṭabarī wrote that the agents of Aṣrās humiliated the Persian grandees ('uzama al-ʿajami) and a certain 'Umayra was given power over the dehqāns. He tore their clothes violently, put their girdles around their necks and extorted taxes from them. From this account it may be inferred that dehqāns wore a girdle, which was regarded as the insignia of the nobility in ancient Iran. Balāḏūrī mentioned on another occasion the clothes and the girdles of
the noble ('uẓamā') captives of Sogdiana, which were taken away by Sa'īd b. 'Utmān and given to his attendants.

_Dehqāns_ used to offer presents to the caliphs and local rulers at the Nowruz and Mihragan festivals, just as their ancestors had done in Sasanian times. According to Qāżī Raṣīd (5th/11th cent.), the Nowruz presents offered to the kings of Persia were 10 million and those of Mihragan were 100 million (dirhams). The same amount was offered to the caliphs in the Islamic period. Jahiz relates that a group of _dehqāns_ offered 'Alī, the Caliph, silver bowls (jāmāt) containing xabīt (a dish made of dates with flour and butter) as Nowruz presents. The caliph distributed them among his attendants. Tabarī described in detail the presents offered to Asad b. 'Abd-Allāh Qasrī, governor of Khorasan, at the Mihragan feast at Balkh in 120/738. His account runs as follows:

'The agent of Herat, Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Ḥanafī, accompanied by Xūrāsān, the _dehqān_ of the region, offered presents valued at one million (dirhams), among which were two scale models of the palace, one made of gold and the other of silver, jugs (ʿabārīq) of gold and silver, trays of gold and silver. Both men came near Asad, who was seated on a throne, while the dignitaries of Khorasan were sitting on seats. The two men put down the palace scale models and behind these they placed the jugs, the trays, the brocade (materials) and other things, so that there was no place on the table-cloth (simār). Among the presents offered by the _dehqāns_ there was also a gold ball. Then the _dehqān_ delivered a speech in which he praised Asad, which pleased him very much. In reply to the _dehqān_'s speech, the governor addressed him thus: "You are the best _dehqān_ of Khorasan and your presents are the best..."

94. Bayhaqī, p. 366. See also Moḥammadī, p. 175.

Then Asad distributed the presents among his attendants.'

Hārūn al-Raṣīd (170-93/786-809), on his way from Baghdad to Tūs, fell ill in a village in Bayhaq and had to stay there for four months as the guest of a _dehqān_, who served him with magnificence and offered him precious gifts when he departed.

Islamic sources abound with anecdotes about _dehqāns_ illustrating their noble demeanours. For example, it is related that two Arabs from the Banī Asad tribe while travelling arrived at Rāwand, a town between Iṣfahān and Kashan, where they made friends with a _dehqān_, who accompanied them on their journey. Later on one of the Arabs died, and the other one, together with the _dehqān_, used to go to his grave, drinking wine and pouring some on his grave. It was not long before the _dehqān_ also passed away. Then the other Arab used to recite poetry about both their graves.

**Cultural significance**

Aside from their political and social significance, the _dehqāns_ played an important cultural role. Many participated in the courts of caliphs or governors, and after the establishment of the Persian dynasties in the east they served kings, princes and amirs as learned men who were well informed on the history and culture of ancient Iran. Bayhaqī reported that Ziyād b. Abīh (d. 56/675), while still governor of Baṣra, had in his service three _dehqāns_, who told him stories of Sasanian grandeur and pomp, causing him to think Arab rule much inferior. In the _Tārīḫ-e Sistān_ a number of wise sayings, similar to the Pahlavi _andarz_, are attributed to a certain Zoroastrian _dehqān_ named Rustam b. Ḥurmazd, who reportedly uttered them at the request of 'Abd al-ʿAzīz b. 'Abd-Allāh, an Umayyad governor of Sistān.

98. Bayhaqī, p. 299.
We have already referred to pieces of advice given by a dehqān named Jamil b. Baṣbuhrī to the agent of Ḥajjāj in Fallūjtātayn. \(^{100}\) The same dehqān, described as a prudent (ḥāzim) and leading personality (muqaddam), was said to have been referred to for consultation by other dehqāns, who had a complaint about the harm caused by Ḥajjāj. The wise dehqān gave them advice in the form of a short parable. \(^{101}\)

Firdowṣī often quoted such sayings from the dehqāns. \(^{102}\) In one of his verses he said, \(^{103}\) ‘Now little is left over from the wisdom that the wise credited to dehqāns’.

Anecdotes manifesting their skill in expressing witticism and quick repartee are preserved in the Islamic sources. What follows is an example recorded by Tawḥīdī. \(^{104}\)

‘Khosraw II confiscated the land of a dehqān and gave it to a certain Naxīraǰān (<Naxwīraḡān) as fief (iqṭā’). Following a complaint of the owner the king asked him, “Since when have you and your ancestors had this land in your possession?” “Since a long time,” replied the dehqān. The king then said: “It will remain in the hands of Naxīraǰān for some time, then it will be returned to you.” The man said: “What would have happened if you had entrusted your kingdom for a while to Bahram (Ḵobīn)?” Upon this reply the king returned him his land.’

The 9th-century author Ḫāţib \(^{106}\) also quoted some folkloric sayings of dehqāns.

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100 See n. 73 supra.
101 Jahāyārī, pp. 30-40.
102 Ṣāḥnūmī, IX, p. 211, v. 3380.
103 Ṣāḥnūmī, IX, p. 17, v. 112.
105 Who had usurped Xusraw’s throne for a short time at the beginning of his reign.

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Learned men

In both Arabic and Persian sources the names of many learned persons and men of letters, including theologians, are mentioned who were dehqāns or descendants of dehqān families. Several of them from the Bayhaq regions were mentioned by Ibn Funduq, \(^{107}\) among whom there was a jurisprudent (faqīh) named Abū Dujāna, who had also written a valuable (nafs) book on agriculture, of which Ibn Funduq quotes some passages. \(^{108}\) Several of such religious traditionists (muḥaddīṣ), dehqāns or descendants of dehqāns, belonging to the Samarqand regions are mentioned by Nasafi \(^{109}\) and those from Nišāpūr by al-Ḥākim. \(^{110}\) Some were patrons of Islamic religious scholars; for example, Ibn Funduq \(^{111}\) mentioned a wealthy dehqān from Sabzawār who in 418/1027 founded a religious school for a Koran commentator named Ibn Ṭayyeb.

Patrons of Persian culture

The majority of dehqāns favoured Persian culture, however, and some were patrons of renowned Persian poets. Rūdaki \(^{112}\) related that the dehqāns gave him money and riding animals. Farroḵī in his youth served a dehqān in Sistān and received an annual pension from him. According to one tradition, Firdowṣī himself was a dehqān. \(^{113}\) ‘Awfī mentioned a certain dehqān called ‘Ali Ṣāṭranǰ among the poets of the Saljuq period. \(^{114}\)
Most of the credit for the preservation of the stories in the national epic, the Šâhnâma, pre-Islamic historical and legendary traditions, and the romances of ancient Iran, belongs to the dehqân.

In the introduction of the Šâhnâma known as Bâysonghri, concerning the compilation of the Pahlavi Xwadây-nâmâ, the task of the final redaction of this work was credited to a dehqân. The passage runs as follow:

‘In the days of Yazdgerd (III), son of Ŝahryâr, the collection (of narratives which had been gathered during the reign of Khosraw I) was dispersed in the royal treasury. This king ordered a learned dehqân, who was one of the grandees (akâbir) of Madâ’in (Ctesiphon), ... to make a list (fihrist) of historical events (tawârîx), mentioning them sequentially from the reign of Gayomart till the end of the reign of Khosraw (II) Parswêz.115

Abû Mansûr Mu’ammarî, who compiled the prose Šâhnâma-ye Abû Mansûri (346/957), now lost, wrote in his preface, which does survive, that in gathering his material he summoned a number of dehqân from various cities of Khorasan, considered to be descendants of the ancient Persian kings.116

Bal’amî, too, attributed the information concerning the chronology of the ancient kings of Persia to dehqân, because: ‘this kingdom was at first in their hands, and they know whether a king reigned for a short or a long period’.117

Firdowsî often cited dehqân as sources, sometimes apparently oral ones, for his narratives.118 Other poets, too, such as Asadî Ṭûstî,119 Irânshâh,120 Nizâmî,121 referred to traditions from the

dehqân – even for the Arab stories.122 The term dehqân thus also came to be defined as ‘historian, one versed in history’.123

According to Gazzâlî,124 the Abbasid caliph Ma’mûn (198-218/813-33) summoned the Zoroastrian dehqân and asked them about the amount of money bestowed on those who received robes of honour in Sasanian times. Instead of giving a relevant answer, they uttered some maxims.

The profound attachment of the dehqân to the culture of ancient Iran also lent to the very word dehqân the sense of ‘Persian, Iranian’, especially ‘Persian of noble blood’, in contrast to Arabs, Turks, and Romans in particular. Firdowsî125 as well as other Persian poets of the 10th-11th centuries A.D. such as Nâsîr-e Xusrav,126 Farruxî127 Abû Ḫanîfa Iskâfî,128 and ‘Unsûrî,129 used the word in this sense.

Balâqûrî130 relates that: ‘Asras b. ‘Abd-Allâh al-Sulamî, governor of Khorasan (d. 111/729), increased the rations of the Arabs in Khorasan and humiliated the dehqân’. According to Tabari,131 Marwazân, governor of Yemen in the time of Xusrav I, had two sons, one Xurrah-Xusrav, who liked to recite Arabic poetry, and another, unnamed, a knight (aswâr) who spoke and lived in the manner of the dehqân (yatâdâhqa). An unnamed Arab poet mentioned Bûrân, the Sasanian queen (629-30) with the title dihqâna ‘lady dehqân’.132

112. See Safî, 1333, pp. 60-61.
113. Qazvînî, pp. 34-35.
117. Bânîshâh, Bahman-nâmâ, p. 17.
119. Sa’dî, Laiûl u Majnûn.
121. Divân, pp. 83, 156, 288.
123. Apud Bayhaqî, p. 856.
124. Divân, pp. 137, 239.
126. Tabari, I, p. 1040.
‘A lady dehqān (noble woman) before whom the kings bow in reverence, and taxes are sent to her in leather sacks’.

**Dehqāns and Zoroastrianism**

With the advent of Islam some dehqāns were steadfast in the religion of their forebears and some were artificially converted to Islam, but remained Zoroastrian at heart. Thus the word *diḥqān* sometimes meant a Zoroastrian in classical Persian texts, alone or in expressions such as ātā-i diḥqān, qibla-yi diḥqān ‘holy fire’ and dīn-i diḥqān ‘Zoroastrian religion’.  

**Dehqāns and wine**

As the remaining representatives of the pre-Islamic Persian aristocracy, in whose customs wine was an essential ingredient, dehqāns were also known both in classical Arabic literature and classical Persian texts both as the best wine-producers and as connoisseurs. For example:

> رَبّ عَزّ وَجَلّ، ذُرِّيّتَهُمَا مِن بِبَتِّ دِهْقَان

> ‘How much Bāḍarānji wine that I hunted out from the dehqān’s house’.

> خَطِبْنَا مَن الدُّهْقَان بِعَضَى بَيانَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ الكَبِيرِ

> ‘I asked the dehqān for the hand of one of his daughters; he gave me in marriage the oldest one in his women’s apartment’ (i.e. I requested of him a pot of wine and he gave me an old one).

In a beautiful Persian ode Baššār of Marw (4th/10th cent.), describing metaphorically the procedure for making wine,

writes:

آَمَنَذِرُكَ رَبِّ مَارَائِمُ زُورُدُرَبَتَ فِي دِهْقَان وَلَبْ وَقَدْنَاهُ مِن دِهْقَان هُمَّرَغِی

> ‘I did not notice at all that the dehqān was watching me from afar, while I was associating with those noble brides (i.e. bunches of grapes). Having flown into a great rage, he killed them and concealed their blood within the stones’.

Muslim rulers who disobeyed the Islamic order that prohibits drinking wine, procured it from dehqāns. Bayhaqi quoted al-Madā‘i, who related thus: ‘During the rule of Ziyād (d. 53/673), one of the dehqāns was once carrying wine on a donkey. The police stopped him and said to him, “Do you not know that the ruler (amīr) has prohibited wine from entering the city?” The man replied, “Yes, but this wine is for the ruler himself.”

With the development of the 'ṣillā' system, from the 11th century, and the decline of the landowning class, the dehqāns gradually lost their importance, and the word came to mean simply a farmer. The epigraphic evidence, however, as well as literary works, indicate that feudal dehqāns still existed in the 14th-15th centuries in some parts of Central Asia. The total disappearance of this class seems to have occurred in the 16th century. Since then the word dehqān has been used only in the sense of ‘farmer, peasant’.

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135. Naṣīr-e Xusraw, p. 118; Ibn Fundūq, pp. 28, 266.
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Dēnkard = DkM


Dīnawarī


D’jakonov-Livšic


DkM

See Dēnkard.

Farruxī


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