

A Historiographical Study of The Life and Reign of Bahram V

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This paper will focus on the secondary sources which mention Bahram V. Bahram (421-438 AD) was the 14th king of the Sasanian dynasty. He is also known as Bahram Gur¹ in medieval Persian literature because of his obsession with hunting “wild ass²”. Bahram’s life and kingship are laden with unsolved ambiguities. Many primary sources from various different contexts and in a variety of languages cover his life and reign and each offer a somehow different narrative of events, such as his maternal lineage, succession to the throne, administrative pronouncements and wars on the frontiers.

I will not indulge in providing a narrative of the events of Bahram’s life and kingship here. I intend to only focus on an assessment and overview of the scholarship which mentions Bahram, specially parts of which who add something further to the common storyline. In general, the history of Bahram’s kingship and the early fifth century history of the Sasanians lack any significant scholarly research. Available secondary scholarships which mention Bahram do not exceed one short chapter and no monograph has so far focused on this era. Bahram is mentioned in scholarship only when an aspect of his reign or period is found useful in backing a larger argument about other topics. Furthermore, when mentioning Bahram, authors oftentimes have merely relied on one group of sources and have not engaged critically with the primary sources. Moreover they have not made use of a comparative methodology, which has resulted in repetitive or contradictory narrations of the events of Bahram’s life and kingship. However the gaps and contradictions that appear in the scholarship is helpful in leading the way for future scholars. Gaps can be filled, and contradictions can be resolved. The points that authors raise about Bahram can lead to larger questions about his life and time and can subsequently be useful in preparing the grounds for a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the early fifth century Iran, and a biography of Bahram V and his reign.

In this paper, I have chosen to thematically categorize the debates on Bahram. This is because available scholarship is rarely in conversation with one another and they also vary significantly in length. Subsequently a thematic arrangement can provide readers with a more wholesome account of the historiography on Bahram from the 19th century to the present.

¹ For more information on Bahram’s role in medieval Persian literature see Hanaway, W.L. “Bahrām V Gōr in Persian Legend and Literature”. *Encyclopedia Iranica (Online Edition)*. 1988.

² The Persian word for wild-ass is *gur*. Both Christensen (1944, p.376) and Neusner (1970, p.37) believe that this epithet was most probably given to Bahram due to his shrewd behavior (37).



Bahram: A Jewish prince in Exile?

Jewish Lineage

Regarding Bahram's life before enthronement, three topics have received most attention; his maternal lineage, his role at the Arab court of Lakhmid³ and his position as crown prince. Neusner⁴ presents a well researched account of the position and condition of Jews in the Sasanian era. Meanwhile he touches on the issue of the maternal lineage of Bahram. He states that some narratives claim that Bahram's mother might have been the daughter of Hana b. Nathan the Exilarch. He argues that based on the birth year of Bahram which was approximately 407-408; Yazdegird I –Bahram's father-- could not have been married to Hana's daughter. He adds that there is a greater probability based on Jewish Babylonian sources that Bahram's queen mother could have been the daughter of Kahare who was Exilarch till 410. He also points out that this aspect of Bahram's life is absent from many later sources (11). Neusner does not further comment on the possible reasons for such omission and leaves it open to further research.

Frye⁵ also points to the maternal lineage of Bahram in his encyclopedic article on the political history of the Sasanians. Unlike Neusner, Frye dismisses the historicity of Bahram's Jewish maternal background and claims it to be mere Jewish folktale and propaganda (143). However he does not provide any evidence or proof to back this argument.

Daryaee⁶ mentions the probability of Bahram's Jewish lineage in an article on the construction of history and memory in the Sasanian era. While focusing on the extent to which Sasanians were aware of earlier historical events and persona, Daryaee points to the close ties between Sasanian kings and their Jewish subjects. He identifies Sisin-dokht, the daughter of the Jewish Exilarch as Bahram's mother and emphasizes her influence by stating that the cities of Shush and Shushtar are attributed to her. Daryaee does not dismiss the probability of Bahram's Jewish maternal lineage; however he does acknowledge that this story might be the product of Jewish propaganda (498).

If Bahram was truly born to a Jewish mother, how did that influence the conditions of Persian Jews in Babylon? Did Bahram's Jewish side contribute to his being sent away from court?

³ An Arab dynasty, clients of the Sasanian kings. They ruled in central Iraq from the fourth to the seventh centuries B.C. See: Lammens, H. and Shahid, I. "Lakhm," in *Et V*, 1986, p. 632., Rothstein, G. *Die Dynastie der Lakhmiden in al-Hira: Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin, 1899. On the relations between Iran and Arabs see: Bosworth, C.E. "Iran and the Arabs before Islam," in *Camb. Hist. Iran III* (1), 1983, pp. 593-612.

⁴ Neusner, J. *A History of Jews in Babylonia*, Vol.5, Leiden, 1970

⁵ Frye, R.N. "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians," *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. 3(1), 1983 p.116-181.

⁶ Daryaee, T. "The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 55.4 (2006): 493-503.

Questions as such still need to be addressed in order for us to have a clearer picture of the power dynamics at the Sasanian court in the early fifth century.

Prince in Exile

Historians have sufficed to merely mentioning Bahram's upbringing at the Lakhmid court during his youth. In his article on Sasanian paintings, Compareti⁷ talk about the paintings at palace of Khavarnag⁸, claimed to be built by the Lakhmid king, Al-Mundir, in whose court Bahram resided before his coronation. Following that Compareti argues that Bahram resided at the Lakhmid court as a hostage and compares Bahram's position to the Chinese practice of keeping hostages at the Kushan court (7).

This interesting argument can enjoy further justification and explanation. Was Bahram "sent" to the Arab court or "taken" by them as a hostage? What the circumstances, conditions and reasons lead to Bahram's and why were the Lakhmids chosen as Bahram's hostage destination? Further research can shed light on the political alliances of the Sasanians with their Arab clients during the early fifth century and can illuminate the power dynamics behind Sasanian courtly decisions and policies specially those concerning the position of princes and future heirs.

Bahram the Crown Prince of Persia

Not much has been written on Bahram's position at the Sasanian court and matters of succession during his absence from the Ctesiphon. Rawlinson⁹ uses numismatic evidence to investigate this issue. His work provides the earliest and most extensive examination of Bahram to this date. Rawlinson dedicates chapter 14 of his book on the history of the Sasanians to Bahram's kingship. While discussing the reign of Yazdegird I¹⁰ (399 – 420 A.D.), he argues that Yazdegird's coins reveal that Bahram was in fact not the first choice for the throne. Early minted coins have Yazdegird's name and the name of "Ardeshir". Rawlinson assumes that Ardeshir must have been a son of Yazdegird, and the designated heir. Only later coins mint the names of Yazdegird and Bahram. Rawlinson guesses that Ardeshir either died or offended his father which ultimately led to Bahram's appointment as heir. Although Rawlinson doesn't develop this

⁷ Compareti, M. "The State of Research on Sasanian Painting", *e-Sasanika*, 13, 2011.b (printed version in: *The International Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 1, 11: 108-152.).

⁸ See: Wursch, R. "Kavarnaq", *Encyclopedia Iranica (Online Edition)*, 2013.

⁹ Rawlinson, G. *The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy or the Geography, History, and Antiquities of the Sassanians or New Persian Empire*, New York, 1882.

¹⁰ For more information on King Yazdegird I, also known as Yazdegird "the sinner", see Neusner, J. *A History of Jews in Babylonia :V. Later Sasanian Times*, Leiden, 1970., Van Rompay, L. "Impetuous Martyrs? The situation of the Persian Christians in the last years of Yazdegird I (419-20)," in M. Lamboigts and P. van Duen eds, *Martyrium in multidisciplinary Perspective. Memorial Louise Rechmans*, Louvain, 1995, pp. 363-75., Shahbazi, Sh. "The Horse that killed Yazdegerd," in K. Eslami and D. Daryaee eds., *Festschrift Hans Peter Schmidt*, 2003., Shahbazi, Sh. "Yazdegird I", *Encyclopedia Iranica (Online Edition)*, 2003.

hypothesis further, it is worth noting specially with regard to Bahram's relationship with his father, the incidents which followed Yazdegird's death, the subject of Bahram's kingship and his relationship with the courtly elite (278).

Succession and Enthronement of Bahram

Sasanian history is filled with episodes of rivalry over succession. Although the path to ascending the throne was restricted to the house of Sasan, it was not a smooth one. The courtly elite and the Zoroastrian high clergy had a lot to say on which son of the deceased king would be crowned as king. In his monograph Fisher¹¹ focuses on the subject of pre-Islamic Arab identity as clients of the Roman and Sasanian Empire, he provides a hypothesis for the reason why Al-Mundir¹² aided Bahram in his attempt to take the throne after Yazdegird's passing. Fisher states that the short period after Yazdegird's decease gave the Zoroastrian clergy an opportunity to once again overtake Christian prosecutions which had been halted under Yazdegird I. Fisher argues that Al-Mundir was more in favor of Bahram becoming the future king of Iran because he viewed Bahram as an anti-Mazdean candidate. In case of Bahram ascending the throne, the Arab tribe of Al-Mundir would be saved the trouble of getting involved in Christian prosecutions dictated by the Sasanians to their vassals. Al-Mundir's eagerness to avoid Christian prosecution had a twofold benefit; first he wouldn't have to disobey the Persian clergy's order of Christian prosecution, and second and more importantly he wouldn't have to alienate his Christian minority (67).

Bahram finally wins his way through the rivalries and is crowned as the king as Persia. Some scholars believe that he won this position partly because of his policy of aligning with the clergy and winning their trust. Although Fisher's hypothesis needs further explanation and proof of being based on justifiable evidence, it is interesting and opens new doors of research on Bahram's kingly policies and also to the political and cultural influences of Sasanians and their Arab clients on each other. It also stands in contradiction with later events of Bahram's reign. Bahram not only picked up Christian prosecution but also is reported to have been as a supporter of the Zoroastrian fire temples and a follower of the Mazdean religion. Was Bahram a true Zoroastrian, or did he forsake his non-Mazdean beliefs for the sake of power?

Coronation and enthronement does not guarantee a long period of kingship. There are several instances in Sasanian history where kings have been dethroned soon after their coronation. Aligning with the clergy and the courtly elite advantages and beliefs also had long term benefits which lasted even after the king's demise. It somewhat guaranteed that the king would be portrayed in positively in idle Persian hagiographies.

In his monograph on the history of Iran under the Sasanians, Christensen assumes that by leaving the affairs of the kingdom in the hands of the elite, Bahram won their affection and thus was portrayed in positive light in Sasanian accounts (377).

¹¹ Fisher, G. *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*. OUP Oxford, 2011

¹² See Rothstein, G. *Die Dynastie der Lahmidien in al-Hîra*. Diss. 1899, p. 52, 55, 58, 69-70.



McDonough shares the same opinion. In an article entitled “A Question of Faith? Persecution and Political Centralization in the Sasanian Empire of Yazdegard II (438-457 CE)”¹³ he points to Bahram’s positive portrayal in Persian and Arabic sources and argues that Bahram gained this positive reputation by aligning with the Zoroastrian clergy soon after assuming the crown (77).

In line with McDonough’s statement about Bahram’s religio-political inclinations and decisions, Rose¹⁴ turns our attention to Bahram and his consideration of Zoroastrian fire temples. In her monograph on Zoroastrianism, she states that Bahram was much remembered for his offerings and sacrifices to the Azar-Gushnasp¹⁵ fire temple and that he had bestowed the crown jewels of the defeated Hephthalite¹⁶ king and queen to this temple on his way back to Ctesiphon (122). It is ambiguous whether Bahram truly did align with the clergy, and if so, was his decision to appease them was a political move or an act of sincerity. Was Bahram’s benevolence and pure goodness that won him his positive reputation or was it just the will of the clergy to portray their ally in a good way?

The subject of larger political and ideological bases behind events is once again brought to mind. Possible well researched answers to questions may as well show us the extent to which early fifth century clergy were influential in sabotaging a Sasanian monarch’s kingship in cases of confrontation or disagreement, how they channeled their influence and power at the Sasanian court and how much the authority of the Sasanian king had altered since the third century.

Administrative Decisions and Kingly Interests

The Rise of the Marzbans

Bahram’s possible political decision of aligning with the elite and the clergy leads us to his other political and administrative decisions mentioned in scholarship. In a short section on the important events of Bahram’s reign, Christensen¹⁷ gives Bahram credit for being the first king to introduce *marzbans*¹⁸ into the Sasanian administrative system (201-203). The position of the

¹³ Drake, H.A. *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006.

¹⁴ Rose, J. *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction*. IB Tauris, 2011.

¹⁵ One of the three holy Zoroastrian fires of ancient Iran. See Boyce, M. “Adur Gushnasp”. *Encyclopedia Iranica (Online Edition)*. 1983.

¹⁶ For more information on the Hephthalites see: Ghirshman, R. *Les Chionites-Hephthalites*. Vol. 13. l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1948. Litvinsky, B.A. “The Hephthalite Empire” in B. A. Litvinsky et al., eds., *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia, III: The crossroads of civilizations: A.D. 250-750*, Paris, 1996, pp. 135-62. Bivar, A.D.H. “Hephthaltes”, *Encyclopedia Iranica (Online Edition)*, 2003.

¹⁷ (Christensen, 1944.)

¹⁸ *marzban* can be translated as “protector of the frontiers”. *Marzbans* were governors assigned by the Sasanian court to oversee affairs of their vassal lands such as Armenia and Georgia. See G. Gnoli, “The Quadripartition of the Sassanian Empire,” *East and West*, vol. 35, 1985, pp. 265-270. On the role of Bahram in the rise of the Marzpanate period in Armenia see Traina, G. *428 AD: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire*. Princeton University Press: 2009, p.4.

marzbans, their specific responsibilities, and how they were different from previous Sasanian governors has not been researched yet and can illuminate the inner administrative changes and specific foreign policies of Bahram's period.

Nowrooz and Alms-giving

Christensen¹⁹ also points to the Sasanian kings custom/policy of distributing alms and wealth among the poor during the annual Persian New Year festivity of *Nowrooz*²⁰. He groups Bahram with Khosro Anushiravan and Ardashir e Babakan-- the founder of the dynasty—and mentions their fame for opening their treasury to the poor and needy on *Nowrooz* (537). The historicity of Bahram's generosity as reported in primary sources is left to be tested by future scholars. Also, Bahram's kingly benevolence should be placed within the larger scene of Sasanian kingly traditions and customs. Were such acts based on a populist policy of pacifying the subjects or was it a political maneuver for the neighboring empires and rivals to watch? How effective were such moves in giving the house of Sasan more legitimacy and reason to hold on to their crown?

The Kingly Title of Ramshahr

Numismatic evidence also point to possible new administrative policies especially regarding kingly legitimacy. Daryaee²¹ points out that the legend of *ramshahr*²² --the title used by the last Kayanid²³ king, Wishtasp— which means “who maintains peace in the realm” was first minted on Bahram and his father's coins (500). This observation is of great importance in the subject of Sasanians claims of royal legitimacy in the early fifth century. The changes that the early fifth century brought about which ultimately pressed the house of Sasan to seek new sources of legitimacy in their struggle to remain on the throne are to be researched.

Music and the Importation of Gypsies

Not all kingly actions and decisions have a political background. I believe that in route to providing and analyzing the biography of Bahram, Scholars should not only view him as a king, but also as an ordinary man, with his own peculiar interests, likes and dislikes. One of Bahram's decisions, which has a less political and a more cultural aspect is his importation of gypsy musicians and dancers into Iran. In a monograph which covers more than a millennium of Persian history, Wiesehöfer²⁴ points to Bahram's love for music and his reputation for giving

¹⁹ Christensen, 1944.

²⁰ See Boyce, M. Nowruz i. In the Pre-Islamic Period. *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online edition), 2009.

²¹ (Daryaee 2006)

²² See Daryaee, T. "History, Epic, and Numismatics: On the Title of Yazdgerd I (Ramshahr)," *American Journal of Numismatics*, vol. 14, 2002, pp. 89-95.

²³ A legendry dynasty in the Persian epic tradition that ruled before the Achaemenid times. See: Kayanian. For a general historiography of the Kayanids see: Skajervo, P.O. Kayanian xiv. The Kayanids in Western Historiography. *Encyclopaedia Iranica (Online Edition)*. 2013.

²⁴ Wiesehöfer, J. *Ancient Persia From 550 BC to 650 AD*, trans. from German by Azizeh Azodi, London and New York, 1996.



high ranks to courtly singers and poets (159). Boyce²⁵ also mentions Bahram and his reputed love of music while looking at the Parthian *gosans*²⁶. She references a quotation from Al-Masudi's *Mujmal o Tavarikh* and says that Bahram decided to import gypsies into Iran, in order to fulfill man's need for music while drinking wine and that Bahram's decision was because he saw that there was no other pain in the kingdom other than that. He then provided the gypsies goods and accommodation so that they would sing and play for the poor free of charge. Then Boyce turns attention to the role of music in royal hunt and adds that musicians who are depicted in Bahram's hunting scenes were not just intended for the amusement of the king but were used to lure prey towards the hunter with their music.

In the late Sasanian era, Hunting, music, and kingship ideology went hand in hand and the religious, royal and military uses of music can provide interesting insight into the Sasanian court customs. This gives rise to issues such as, different musical instruments used at Bahram's court, the significance of each, and the traditions and ideologies which accompanied different modes of music in that era. Visual artifacts, such as ceramics, plates and rock reliefs, which depict minstrels and their instruments, can be helpful in providing a clearer image of the state of music in the Bahram's era and the late Sasanian era in general.

In a monograph focused on the history of the Sasanian Empire, from its dawn to its twilight in the seventh century, Daryae²⁷ tells us about Bahram's love for music, feasting, drinking and hunting which won him eternal fame in Persian literature and Near Eastern art (23).

Canepa²⁸ also looks at the subject of hunt in late Antiquity and mentions Bahram. Canepa's argument in his book on ideal of sacral kinship in the late Sasanian and Roman Empire, tells us that hunt was not just a hobby for the king to pick up but was also a skill of great importance both symbolically and literally. Canepa tells us about Bahram and his fame in hunt while he focuses on the broader topic of hunt and its importance in late antiquity and the connection of hunting to ideas of kingship in the Sasanian and Roman world. It can be inferred from his argument that although medieval art and literature depict Bahram²⁹ as the hunter king, neither hunting competence nor fame for hunt was exclusive to Bahram (175). What remains unchallenged is that in *longue duree* no other skilled Sasanian hunter king has enjoyed the lime light like Bahram has. What still needs to be researched is the answer to why and how bahram succeeds in becoming the protagonist of later romances as the one and only Sasanian hunter king.

²⁵ Boyce, M. 'The Parthian Gosan and Iranian Minstrel Tradition', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1, (1957a)

²⁶ A Parthian term, which means poet-musician. See: Boyce, M. Gosan. *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 11, 167, 2002

²⁷ Daryae, T. *Sasanian Persia, The Rise and Fall of an Empire*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009.

²⁸ Canepa, M. *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran*. Univ of California Press, 2009.

²⁹ For analysis of artifacts depicting Sasanian hunt see: R. Ettinghausen, "Bahram Gur's Hunting Feats or the Problem of Identification," *Iran* 17, 1979, pp. 25-31.

Bahram's 421 A.D. Campaign on the Western Frontiers

As Canepa stated, in the ancient world hunting was seen as a symbolic war field and kings and emperors were expected to be victorious on both grounds. One of the incidents of Bahram's kingship was his campaign on the Western frontiers with Rome. In an article on the two Roman-Persian wars of the fifth century, Greatrex³⁰ deals with Greek sources and aims at providing a solution to the existent controversies and ambiguities about the two wars. In his opening passage he introduces the first fifth century Roman-Persian war, which took place during Bahram's kingship in 421³¹. He mentions the reasons behind it increased hostilities between the two empires, one of which was that the Sasanians had despoiled Roman merchants of their goods earlier on that year (2). He further adds that Bahram himself was present at the battlefield and initially succeeded in pushing the Romans away from Nisbis. The war was agreed to be concluded by a single combat — dual— which resulted in the defeat of the Persian combatant and an ultimate peace treaty (7). While recognizing the historicity of the single combat scene, Greatrex states that Greek sources are not clear on whether the single combat took place in the first or second fifth century war and argues that it very probable that it occurred during Bahram's war in 421 (9).

Wiesehöfer³² on the other hand dismisses the historicity of the single combat scene between the Persian and the Roman warrior. In his contribution to a volume of essays on how early cultures and civilizations across the world dealt with war and peace, Wiesehöfer provides a quotation from Malalas³³ which depicts the final scene of Bahram's 421 A.D war against the Romans where both sides agreed on Bahram's suggestion for a single jousting combat, which resulted in the defeat of the Persian warrior. This scene which frames Bahram in an outlook of war avoidance might be aimed at depicting Bahram's tendency to avoid full scale war with Rome and consequently reflects a non-heroic image on him. Wiesehöfer argues that such a scene never took place, and Malalas is only narrating it, because he was familiar with the motif of single combat and its importance in the Iranian context (130).

Although both Greatrex and Wiesehöfer aim at breaking the trend of accepting and retelling the reports of primary sources without scrutiny, their arguments still need to be strengthened

³⁰ Greatrex, G. "The Two Fifth-Century Wars between Rome and Persia." *Florilegium* 12 (1993): 1-14.

³¹ For the role of Lakhmid Arabs in this war see Shahid, I. *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*. Dumbarton Oaks Pub Service, 1984.

³² Wiesehöfer's Chapter in this volume is entitled "From Achaemenid Imperial Order to Sasanian Diplomacy: War, Peace, and Reconciliation in Pre-Islamic Iran" in Raaflaub, K.A. *War and Peace in the Ancient World*. Wiley-Blackwell: 2008.

³³ John Malalas (491-578 AD) , a Greek chronicler from Antioch. See E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, and R. Scott (eds.), *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1990) (*Byzantina Australiensia*, 6), pp. 1–25.



and backed with evidence. What really happened at the 421 war is still to be found out and will ultimately shed more light on the military and foreign policies of Bahram. Never the less, not only details of Bahram's 421 war with Rome but also its precursors, and the later economic and social effects of this battle/peace treaty should be analyzed and researched using a comparison of all primary sources and not just one group.

Overall Success

Scholars have different views on the overall success of Bahram during his 18 year kingship. Daryaee sees the overall image of Bahram as a "successful" ruler and one who has been triumphant in his way to the throne, his peace treaty with the Romans, his victory over the Hephtalites³⁴, and his involvement in the affairs of Armenia plus being well reputed in middle Persian texts and hagiography (23).

Frye³⁵ on the other hand seems to imply that Bahram must not be seen as responsible for the successes of his time and that he had no direct role in ruling his empire. He states that the affairs of the empire were left solely in the hands of Mehr-Narseh³⁶, Bahram's prime minister. (143-145).

Gignoux also talks about Bahram's success in kingship. He provides a short biography of Bahram and groups Bahram with those who reigned "successfully". He describes him as a "great hunter who loved pleasure and music more than the affair of the state, which he left to his minister." (133-134) Bahram's success in spite of his abandonment of the affairs of the state creates an unresolved contradiction in Gignoux's narration.

A similar contradiction can be found in Rawlinson's account. He states that neither courtiers nor subjects were happy to have Bahram as king, but then adds that Bahram was seen as a generous and benevolent king. (393-403)

Did Bahram truly leave the affairs of the state in the hands of ministers while he rode around his empire in search of pleasure? Under what circumstances is a ruler, irresponsible enough to abandon his affairs in return for pleasure is depicted as "successful"? The existence of such ambiguities in the primary sources and a lack of in depth scholarship further justify the need for conducting further research on Bahram's kingship.

Conclusion

As it is evident from this historiography, Bahram has not been the main focus of any specific monograph. Some authors mentioned here are helpful in providing readers with a summary of Bahram's life and reign, while others help us by shedding light more controversial areas of Bahram's life and kingship plus leading future scholars to historical gaps and holes in the

³⁴ On the Hephtalites see: Ghirshman, Roman. *Les Chionites-Hephtalites*. Vol. 13. l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1948.

³⁵ (Frye 1983)

³⁶ For more information on Mihr-Narseh see Daryaee, T. Mehr-Narseh. *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online edition), 2012.



accounts on Bahram. Hopefully gaps and controversies can be overcome with use of a comparative study of all available primary sources plus a parallel study of archeological findings such as numismatics and artifacts.