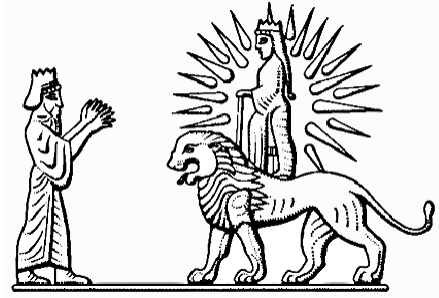


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TOMMASO GNOLI Ravenna

'Paşgribā' at Hatra and Edessa

The pivotal term of this contribution is syr. *paşgribā*, a loanword from mp. *pasāgrīw*.¹ The compound, constituted by two elements, *pasā* and *grīw*, should be literally translated as 'after-self,' 'après-soi,' 'Nach-Selbst' after Walter Bruno Henning's classical interpretation.² It sporadically appears starting from the middle of the 2nd century A.D. as a qualification of people always connected to a royal family. All existing interpretations decidedly vary depending on the meaning given to the preposition *pasā*, if it shall be considered either a static or a dynamic one. In the former case the adverb 'after' would indicate a secondarity in a fixed and determined hierarchy, thus a "second after the King," a "Vice-King," a "representative of the King." In the latter case, on the contrary, by giving to the adverb its pure temporary meaning, a significance of "hereditary or designated Prince," "Crown-prince" will result. Both these interpretations are correct from an etymological point of view, but the

choice between them implies important differences about the idea of kingship we attribute to the Iranian world. For this reason, notwithstanding the scarcity of evidences of this term, studies about this word do not lack. To restrict our attention to the most recent ones, let me remind the excellent commentary to the *Hymn of the Pearl* by Poirier (1981),³ or the most recent work by Eduard Khurshudian on the Parthian and Sassanian administrative institutions (1998).⁴ If I dare to commit myself to go back to the subject, it is because of the recent publication of a new Syriac document, where this term appears as referred to a member of the royal family of Edessa in the middle of the 3rd century A.D. This evidence allows to give the term a no more ambiguous significance: it will finally be possible to choose between the two above mentioned accepted meanings on the basis of already acquired data about the history of the last years of the monarchy of Edessa.

Preceding evidences of *paşgribā*

Before we go on with the analysis of this new evidence, it will anyway be nec-

essary to remember the scarce occurrences of the term *paşgribā*.

¹ In this form the term recurs in the word-list of M. Boyce, *A Word-List of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, Acta Iranica 9a, Leiden Téhéran Liège 1977, 74: "Middle Persian 'deputy, representative' (used of Mani's successor, the head of the Man. community)."

² W.B. Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, APAW 10, Berlin 1936, 512-513.

A. Panaino & G. Pettinato (eds.)
MELAMMU SYMPOSIA III (Milano 2002)
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³ P.-H. Poirier, *L'hymne de la perle des Actes de Thomas*. Introduction, texte, traduction, commentaire, Louvain-la-Neuve 1981, 212-223.

⁴ E. Khurshudian, *Die Parthischen und Sasanidischen Verwaltungsinstitutionen nach den Literarischen und Epigraphischen Quellen*. 3. Jh. v. Chr. – 7. Jh. n. Chr., Jerewan 1998, 184-192.

We find it in Syriac at Edessa in a non dated inscription carved on one of the columns of the citadel dominating the town to dedicate a statue “for Šalmat, the queen, daughter of Ma‘nu, *paşgribā*,”⁵ and in two literary works, both of great importance for the Syriac literature from many points of view. The manuscript Add. 12150 of the British Library dating back to 411 A.D and containing the Syriac translation of the *Theophania* attributed to Eusebius of Cesarea, is the most ancient ever dated Syriac manuscript.⁶ Here this term appears in a polemic context, which badly helps to explain the effective institutional contents of the term:

It was actually because of this that God, the Saviour and the Merciful, was necessary to the human genre. Because, if only some communities would have dedicated themselves to such a mistake (idolatry) perhaps badness could have been less. But now the chiefs of the towns, the leaders of the peoples and the Kings of the regions, the princes of the countries and the *paşgribā* of the peoples, all of them are absolutely and completely affected by the mistake of demons and the various gods.

The last Syriac occurrence of the term, obviously excluding the new document about to be presented, shall be read in a beautiful poetic tale of clear gnostic for-

mulation, known as the *Hymn of the Soul* or *Hymn of the Pearl*, being a part of the tradition of the apocryphal *Acta Thomae*.⁷ Here, at the verse 48, the son of the Parthian king who from the far Hyrcanian mountains was sent down to Egypt to fetch “the one pearl, which is in the midst of the sea around the loud-breathing serpent” (vv. 12-13), is called *paşgribā*:

48. and with thy brother, our *paşgribā*, thou shalt be in our kingdom.

Elsewhere, at the verses 15 e 42, he is indicated as ‘the second,’ *trayānā*:

15. and with thy brother, our *trayānā*, thou shalt be heir in our kingdom.

42: and from thy brother, our *trayānā*, to thee our son, who art in Egypt, greeting!

In these context the term is usually interpreted as ‘representative of the King,’ as the translations of Poirier (‘vice-roi’), Klijn (‘viceroy’), Beyer (‘Stellvertreter’) abundantly show (the latter did not perceive any difference between the three above cited verses, ascribing to metrical reasons the adoption of either the Syriac or the Iranian form of the same word – as he evaluates).⁸

In Middle Persian the term is attested at the line 346 of the *Book of Prayers and Confession* published by Henning (M

⁵ H.J.W. Drijvers, J.F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene. Texts, Translations and Commentary*, Handbuch der Orientalistik 1. Abt. Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten, Bd. 24, Leiden – Boston – Köln 1999, 45-48, nr. As 1 = H.J.W. Drijvers, *Old-Syriac (Edesseean) Inscriptions*, Leiden 1972, nr. 27. On these inscription cfr. now the interesting observation by S.K. Ross, *Roman Edessa. Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114-242 CE*, London – New York 2001, 1 sgg., as the very starting point of his book.

⁶ S. Lee, *Eusebius on the Theophania, a Syriac version*, London 1842; Id., *Eusebius on the Theophania, Translated into English*, Cambridge 1843; H. Gressmann, *Eusebius Werke III. 2: Die Theophanie. Die*

griechischen Bruchstücke und Übersetzung der syrischen Überlieferung, GCS 11, Leipzig 1904.

⁷ Poirier, *L’hymne de la Perle*, cit. n. 2; all English translations below are taken from A.F.J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas. Introduction – Text – Commentary*, Suppl. to Novum Testamentum 5, Leiden 1962, partic. 120-125, 273-281 (commentary, but not engaged with our topic); K. Beyer, *Das syrische Perlenlied. Ein Erlösungsmythos als Märchengedicht*, ZDMG 140, 1990, 234-259.

⁸ Beyer, *Das syrische Perlenlied*, cit., 253: “‘Der Zweite’ ist nach der persischen Entsprechung in 48 und dem griech. und lateinischen Gebrauch der Stellvertreter.”

801),⁹ who translated it as 'Stellvertreter' too:

[335] We adore this wonderful Bema and this bright throne, on which you have sat. [338] We adore the shining diadem, that you put on your head. [340] We adore the beautiful figure and this beautiful picture. [345] We adore all the community of elects and first of all your blessed *psʹgryw*, o Lord. [348] We adore the great teachers.

Always in Manichaean texts, but this time in Sogdian, the term appears in further two very damaged contexts: in the *Xwāstwānīft*, translated by Jes Asmussen as 'Spokesman':¹⁰

... provo[ca]tion before the *pšʹryw*, the Holy Ghost;

and in another context referred to by Asmussen, pointing out to an opinion of Ilya Gershevitch, who translated the term as 'emissary' or 'deputy'.¹¹

More interesting for the comprehension of the effective constitutional contents of the term would be the Aramaic evidences, all coming from the city of Hatra.¹² The term appears in seven inscriptions, showing some graphic differences on which cfr. Geo Widengren, author of the best study about the term's morphology:¹³ *pšgrbʹ* (Hatra 28), *pzgrjbʹ* (Hatra 36), *pšgrjʹ* (Hatra 195), *pšgrjbʹ*

(Hatra 287; 367; 368; 375).

In these seven texts the term is referred to two different people, both called 'Absamyā or 'Abdsamyā. The former was a son of the king Sanatruq I bar Naṣru, while the latter 'Absamyā was his uncle, son of the following king Sanatruq II. From these evidences from Hatra clearly results that the title was due to the members of the royal house, sons of kings. Unfortunately it is not possible to reconstruct a complete list of the kings of Hatra between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century because news are too fragmentary. André Mariq, thanks to his very fine historical feeling, anyway maintained he could opt for the meaning of "prince héritier" or "héritier présomptif du trône," as he said that "accepter le sens de 'vice-roi' ce serait décréter arbitrairement l'existence d'une institution dont même la monarchie de type parthe la mieux connue, l'Arménie, ne nous a laissé aucun exemple ... La traduction par prince héritier, au contraire, ne fait pas difficulté: il n'est pas de monarchie sans héritiers du trôn."¹⁴ Mariq's thesis did not attract the favor it deserved: notwithstanding the acceptance by Francesco Vattioni, it was immediately rejected by Benveniste in his work *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien*,¹⁵ and thus it met a great difficulty

⁹ Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, cit., 27-28.

¹⁰ J.P. Asmussen, *Xwāstwānīft. Studies in Manichaeism*, Acta Theologica Danica 7, Copenhagen 1965, 238.

¹¹ I. Gershevitch, *A Parthian Title in the Hymn of the Soul*, JRAS 1954, 124-126; Id. *A Grammar of Manichaean Sogdian*, Oxford 1954, 174. The additional reference is to the still unpublished fragment M 116.

¹² The inscriptions from Hatra were collected by F. Vattioni, *Le iscrizioni di Hatra*, AION Suppl. 28, Napoli 1981; B. Aggoula, *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes*, IFAPO – BAH 139, Paris 1991; Id., *Remarques sur les inscriptions hatréennes XVI-XIX*, "Syria" 67, 1990, 397-421; Id., *Remarques sur les*

inscriptions hatréennes XX-XXIII, "Syria" 71, 1994, 397-408.

¹³ G. Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forsch. des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 70, Köln – Opladen 1960, 28-29, n. 102.

¹⁴ A. Mariq, *Hatra de Sanatruq*, "Syria" 32, 1955, 275-279 = *Classica et Orientalia*, IFABeyrouth, Paris 1965, 3-7, in partic. 4-5.

¹⁵ E. Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien*, Travaux de l'Institut d'études iraniennes de l'Université de Paris 1, Paris 1966, 51-56, who cites H. Volkmann, *Der Zweite nach dem König*, "Philologus" 92, 1937-1938, 285-316.

in clearing its path, because of the high authority of its opposer and it was finally definitively rejected in one of the most important editions of the inscriptions of Hatra, the only updated and complete one, the one by Benjamin Aggoula¹⁶ – the other one by the Italian scholar Vattioni is even more accurate, but it is not so updated, as far as the new findings are regarded, as the former one. After Aggoula, Vattioni has been more cautious while translating the term in a very important contribution of his published postumous,¹⁷ but Harnack did not in his article expressly devoted to the Parthian titlature in Ḥatra¹⁸ whose contents, as we know, has been rejected by Boyce,¹⁹ Widengren²⁰ and Poirier,²¹ all of whom dealt both the literary contexts and

the epigraphical occurrences of the term.

The list of the occurrences of the term would not be complete if we did not hint also to a most probable Greek evidence. On a coin from Edessa and published for the first time by Babelon we read on the obverse,²² ΑΒΓΑΡΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, on the reverse ΜΑΝΝΟΣ or ΜΑΝΝΟΣ ΠΑΙΣ. Considering that the personage represented on the reverse is bearded and in no case his somatic types can characterize a boy, with good reasons this Ma'nu has been identified with the father of the Queen Šalmath whom we have already met in the inscription of the citadel and thus it is not awkward to read the word ΠΑΙΣ on the coin as an abbreviation for *paşgribā*.

The papyri from the Euphrates

So far the existing evidences of the term till 1990 have been presented. In that year on the antiquarian market a group of documents was found, seventeen of which were in Greek and two in Syriac. On one of the latter texts the term under discussion would appear once more. This new discovery is of particular value as it permits to reconstruct with a

high degree of certainty the complex events of the history of Edessa in the first half of the 3rd century, thus offering indirectly a sure explanation of the term we are dealing with in this contribution.

The two most interesting documents for us, the ones in Syriac, were published in 1990 and 1993 by Javier Teixidor²³ and they respectively regard the extinction of

¹⁶ Aggoula rejects these translation also in P 2, certainly mistaking: cfr. B. Aggoula, *Studia Aramaica* III. 1 *Deux parchemins en graphie édessénienne provenant de la Mésopotamie romaine*, "Syria" 69, 1992, 391-399, about which cfr. T. Gnoli, *Roma, Edessa e Palmira nel III sec. d.C. Problemi istituzionali. Uno studio sui Papiri dell'Eufrate*, Monografie di MedAnt 1, Roma – Pisa 2000, 70-71 n. 14. Cfr. also B. Aggoula, *L'institution royale à Hatra*, "Syria" 71, 1994, 159-170.

¹⁷ F. Vattioni, *Hatra*, Supplemento n. 81 agli Annali IUO – 54 fasc. 4, Napoli 1994 [but 1996], 8: "un titolo di un detentore del potere è *pšgrbh'* [...] che viene considerato o erede al trono o luogotenente ed è portato da due personaggi."

¹⁸ D. Harnack, *Parthische Titel, vernehmlich den Inschriften von Hatra*, in F. Altheim, R. Stiehl

(Hrsgg.), *Geschichte Mittelasiens im Altertum*, Berlin 1970, 492-549.

¹⁹ Boyce, *A word-list of Manichaean*, cit. n. 1.

²⁰ Widengren, *Iranisch-semitisch Kulturbegegnung*, cit., n. 12.

²¹ Poirier, *L'hymne de la perle*, cit., n. 2.

²² E. Babelon, *Numismatique d'Edesse en Mésopotamie*, in Id., *Mélanges numismatiques*, 2^{ème} série, Paris 1893, 258-260, Pl. V, nr. 8 and 9; Hill, *BMC Mesop.*, ci and 96, nr. 36 and 37.

²³ J. Teixidor, *Deux documents syriaques du III siècle après J.-C., provenant du moyen Euphrate*, CRAI 1990, 144-166, with the complete first document (P 2) and the heading, i.e. the first nine lines, of the second one (P 3) which was entirely published thereafter in Id., *Un document syriaque de fermage de 242 après J.-C., "Semitica"* 41-42, 1993, 195-208.

a debt and the renewal of a contract for the rent of some land. Both were written up by a certain “Worōd son of Nišaryahab, son of Philotas, from the village of Beth Purīn, which is on the Euphrates.”²⁴ These documents together with another contract discovered in the excavations of Dura Europos in 1939, PDura 28, represent the only documents written in Syriac on a perishable material, excluding the literary codices, and thus they are an indispensable tool for the study of the Edessean handwriting in the phase preceding the flourishing of the Syriac literature. According to the recent publication of all the epigraphic and papyrological syriac material by H.J.W. Drijvers, and J.F. Healey, in the *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, we will refer to these three documents by means of the following abbreviations: P(archment) 1 (= PDura 28), P 2 (= PMesopotamia A), P 3 (PMesopotamia B).²⁵

The importance of these documents does not dry up either in their linguistic aspects or in their paleographic ones: they all actually contribute to explain substantially the history of the reign of Edessa during the 3rd century. Dated back to an extremely short lapse of time – respectively in 243 (P 1), on 28 Dec. 240 (P 2) and in Sept. 242 (P 3) –, these three documents present so different dating formulas that they show up very clearly the differences of the institutional situations following each other in Edessa.

In the year six of Autokrator Caesar Marcus Antonius Gordianus Eusebes Eutuches Sebastos, in the consulship of Annius Arrianus and of Cervonius Papus, in the month of Iyyar, the year five hun-

dred and fifty-four in the former reckoning, and in the year thirty-one of the liberation of Antoniana Edessa the Glorious, Colonia, Metropolis Aurelia Alexandria, in the priesthood of Marcus Aurelius Antiochus, eques Romanus, son of Belšu, and in the strategos-ship of Marcus Aurelius Abgar, eques Romanus, son of Ma’nu son of Aggay and of Abgar son of Ḥapsay son of Baraqa for the second time, on the ninth day (P 1).

In the month of Former Kanun of the year five hundred and fifty-two, in the third year of Autokrator Caesar Marcus Antonius Gordianus the Fortunate and Victorious, and in the second year of Aelius Septimius Abgar the king son of Ma’nu, *paşgribā*, son of Abgar the king, who was honoured with the consular rank in Urhoy, in Edessa, the great city, mother of all the cities of Bet Nahrin, this document was written in Hayklā New Town of Hunting, of Abgar the king, on the twenty-eighth day (P 2).

In the fifth year of Autokrator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Gordianus Eusebes Sebastos, in the consulate of Vettius Atticus and of Lepidus Praetextatus, in the month of Elul of the year five hundred and fifty-three in the former reckoning, in the year thirty of the liberation of Antoniana Edessa the Glorious, Colonia, Metropolis Aurelia Alexandria, this document was written in Marcopolis Thera, in the priesthood of Marcus Aurelius, hiercus, son of ‘Akkay, and in archonship of Marcus Aurelius Alexandros son of Severus and Bar‘ata son of Šalamsin, on the first day of the month (P 3).

To reconstruct the history of the last years of the reign of the renowned Mesopotamian city even on the basis of these documents of exceptional value is not my task in this contribution. More modestly

²⁴ P 3, ext. 6-7.

²⁵ *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene. Texts, Translations and Commentary*, *Handbuch*

der Orientalistik 1. Abt. Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten, Bd. 24, Leiden – Boston – Köln 1999, 232-248.

here I want to analyze a term appearing, in the second of our documents, as referred to a member of the ruling family in Edessa. To do this it is always necessary to hint synthetically to the dates acquired about the last years of the Edesseean dynasty of the Abgarids.²⁶

The very long reign of Abgar bar Ma'nu (the eighth king with his name, known also as the 'Great') lasted over 30 years from 177/8 to 212 A.D. In that year Abgar Severus acceded to the throne and he reigned together with his son, most presumably, only for seven months until the beginning of 213.²⁷ At that time Caracalla intervened declaring the fall of the Edesseean dynasty, so that the ancient kingdom was annexed to the procuratorial province of Osrhoene, which had been created in 195 by Settimius Severus. As Jakob of Edessa says: "In the days of Abgar Severus the kingdom was taken away from them [*scil.* from the Edesseeans], when the Romans expelled him ... and he created Aurelian son of Ḥabsāy *hegemōn*, instead of the king; after they had imposed them a tribute of servitude."²⁸ From that moment on our literary sources do not mention any king in Edessa anymore, but two apparently false pieces of news, which could anyway count on some confirmation on a

numismatic basis. In 530 Seleucid (218/219 A.D.) Elias of Nisibis provides us with the mention of an Edesseean king who was unknown to all other historians: an Abgar Šapirā ('the Handsome'), while Jakob of Edessa affirms that the reign of the Edesseeans "was completely abolished in the fifth year of the Roman Caesar Philip, in 560 (Seleucid Era = 248 A.D.)." All the data of the literary tradition ascribing to Caracalla the responsibility of extinguishing the Edesseean monarchy seem confirmed by the discovery of P 3, the parchment of Dura, stating that 213 had been the year of the beginning of the new 'freedom era' in Edessa. Nevertheless, the fact that it was impossible to confine these two pieces of news to the world of phantasy has been confirmed by the existence of some silver coins representing royal figures with the name of Abgar on the reverse and of Gordian III on the obverse.

Apparently clashing data from the literary tradition and from the numismatic one, the latter pertaining to the history of the Edesseean kingdom, began to coincide only after the discovery of our parchments. It was easy to infer how P 2 presents us with an institutional situation, inside the kingdom of Edessa, differing from the one offered by P 1 and 3. The

²⁶ For the discussion of these documents and of the various deriving works cfr. the bibliography at the end of my monograph Gnoli, *Roma, Edessa e Palmira*, cit. n. 16. To the work there listed add J. Gascou, *Unités administratives locales et fonctionnaires romains. Les données des nouveaux papyrus du Moyen Euphrate et d'Arabie*, in W. Eck, E. Müller-Luckner (Hrsg.), *Lokale Autonomie und römische Ordnungsmacht in den kaiserzeitlichen Provinzen vom 1. bis 3. Jahrhundert*. Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien 42, München 1999, 61-73; A. Luther, *Abgar Prahates filius rex (CIL VI, 1797)*, "Le Muséon" 111, 1998, 345-357; L. van Rompay, *Jacob of Edessa and the Early History of Edessa*, in R.J. Reinink, A.C. Klugkist (eds.), *After Bardaisan. Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christi-*

anity in Honour of Professor H.J.W. Drijvers, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 89, Leuven 1999, 269-285; L. Migliardi Zingale, *Diritto romano e diritti locali nei documenti del Vicino Oriente*, *SDHI* 65, 1999, 217-231; Ross, *Roman Edessa*, cit. n. 5.

²⁷ By means of a confrontation between our documents and the literary sources – in particular Jacob of Edessa – emerged that Caracalla removed Abgar Severus, not Abgar the Great, as sometimes maintained before: cfr. A. Luther, *Elias von Nisibis und die Chronologie der edessenischen Könige*, "Klio" 81, 1999, 180-198, partic. 194; Gnoli, *Roma, Edessa e Palmira*, cit., 74-79.

²⁸ *Iacob. Edess.*, 281-282 [211] Brooks; cfr. Gnoli, *Roma, Edessa e Palmira*, cit., 79 sgg.

end of the monarchy had been substituted by a 'freedom era,' which would begin at the moment of the inclusion of the kingdom in the procuratorian province of Osroene, under Caracalla in 213. As already testified by numismatics, the revocation of the independence of the town by the Roman government did not represent a no-way-back point: also P 1 testifies that in 239-240 a king reigned in Edessa, Aelius Septimius Abgar we read about in our document. After the end of his reign, preceding September 242, the calculation of the years started again following the 'freedom era,' which had begun under Caracalla.

But Aelius Septimius Abgar is told about, in P 2, as "the king son of Ma'nu, PŞGRYB', son of Abgar, the king": he is qualified as *MLK*, but at the same time he is son of a personage who possesses only the qualification of *paşgribā*. There is no doubt that Ma'nu *paşgribā* son of a king named Abgar and in his turn father of another king Abgar can be understood as the designated heir to the throne of Edessa during the short reign of his father Abgar Severus. He would surely have followed him, if the intervention of Rome had not put a temporary end to the reign of the Abgarids. All his life long he remained the legitimate, potential heir to the throne, because the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* tells about Ma'nu 'reigning' 26 years long, that is until 239 A.D. He actually never reigned, he always remained in the position of *paşgribā*, also when Rome decided to give back to Edessa its ancient dynasty. For reasons we ignore, the choice of Rome did not fall on Ma'nu but on an Abgar, presumably his son, who Elias of Nisibis, the only source

mentioning him, calls 'the Handsome' (Šapirā), and who would reign between 218/9 and 220/1. After this short lapse of time Rome directly took back the control on Edessa, where it started again the reckoning of the years following the new 'freedom era.' When Ma'nu *paşgribā* died in 239, according to what can be deduced from the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, Aelius Septimius Abgar was appointed king by Rome. The fact that in 241 he defines himself "son of Ma'nu *paşgribā*," confirms that Ma'nu died without ascending the throne of Edessa.

It is a pity that so much still escapes about the history of this buffer state in the Roman Near East. The greatest damage is represented by the fact that we do not know anything about the reasons leading the Roman government to deprive our Ma'nu of its trust in him, preferring his son Abgar Šapirā, while he was still alive. Neither we can reach any certainty about the reasons compelling Rome to revoke the king's power in Edessa twice or three times: in 212, taking it away from Abgar Severus, in 220/1 from Abgar Šapirā, in 241 from Aelius Septimius Abgar.²⁹ Our sources testify with certainty that only the first interruption derived from a formal dethronement of the king, but the extreme shortness of the other two reigns and the fact that the latter ones remained unknown to the great majority of the literary Edesean tradition, seems to point out that they were actually puppet governments Rome arbitrarily created and revoked.

The Edesean case eliminates any possible ambiguity about the significance to be given to the term *paşgribā*, which in the third century certainly did not indi-

²⁹ Ross, *Roman Edessa*, cit., tries to answer these questions, but his replies are not always convincing: cfr., e. g., my remarks in the discussion of this book,

A. Camplani, T. Gnoli, *Edessa e Roma. A proposito di un libro recente*, *MedAnt* 4, 2001, 41-68, partic. 41-47.

cate a representative of the King, a Plenipotentiary or a Vice-King, but it designated the Heir to the Throne, the Crown-Prince who was appointed in Hatra in the second century and in Edessa in the third century with a word transliterated from Middle Persian.

This leads us to some considerations on which I would like to close my contribution. The idea of kingship characterizing the Achaemenians, the Parthians and the Sasanians has been the object of many discussions together with the importance of coregency. I just want to remember that one of the most important documents about this institution dates back to the Achaemenid period, i. e. the letter of Xerxes where he affirmed: "I am Xerxes, son of Darius who made me the greatest after him."³⁰ Nevertheless it seems inappropriate to refer to coregency, but as an easy way to define the term, which has to be attentively evaluated every time. The Assyrian derivation of this coregency has already been underlined by Henry Frankfort,³¹ who cites a passage of a prism of Esarhaddon where the fact that it was actually a matter of designation instead of a coregency appears perfectly clear:

I was the younger brother of my adult brothers. (Yet) my father who begat me exalted me in the assembly of my brothers as the command of Assur, Shamash, Marduk, Nebo, Ishtar of Nineveh, and Ishtar of Arbela, saying: 'This one is my successor.' He questioned Shamash and

Adad through oracles. They replied to him in affirmative: 'It is he who should be thy successor.'

I think we could agree with Ahn and Khurshudian when they maintain that a real coregency has never existed in the Persian empire.³² The fact that Cyrus made Cambyses King of Babylon can be usefully compared with the vastly attested use to make of the heir to the throne a prince of a part of the reign, which happens in the modern monarchies – not necessarily of the same one. It is not possible to go deeper and set a comparison between the title of King of Babylon of the future Achaemenid King and the one of Prince of Wales of the British King-to be, not only because any strong anachronism shall be avoided, but also because we do not know the real attributions of the heir to the Achaemenid throne, neither we know if those attributions have always remained the same.

Frankfort, as well known, attributed to Egypt the primateship on the idea of coregency: "The Late Assyrian kings attempted to smooth the transition from their reigns to those of their successors by an equivalent of the Egyptian institution of coregency" (p. 243). I cannot tell if these ideas this great scholar expressed so clearly more than half a century ago have resisted to the continuous progress of the studies. This goes far beyond my competencies. What has to be done is to emphasize the sure Mesopotamian and Late Assyrian derivation also of the idea

³⁰ Cfr., e. g., Khurshudian, *Verwaltungsinstitutionen*, cit., 25-26.

³¹ H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature*, Chicago 1948, 101 e 242.

³² G. Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im achämenidischen Iran*, Acta Iranica 31, Leiden 1992; Khurshudian, *Verwaltungsinstitutionen*, cit., 15-16: "Die Institution einer solchen Mitregentschaft ist

weder für den achämenidischen noch den parthischen oder den sasanidischen Iran bekannt. Die wörtliche Bedeutung des altiranischen Terminus, aus dem *bidaxš* hervorgegangen, 'der Zweite im Reich' ... hängt wahrscheinlich mit dem iranischen Mythologem des Mitregenten des Königs zusammen. Dieses Mythologem ... hat keinen tatsächlichen historischen Hintergrund."

of coregency-designation. Nevertheless when we find it as applied in the Roman era, the concept appears expressed by means of an Iranian loanword in a Semitic language, Syriac, while it is simply transliterated in Greek. It is meaningful that in the only occurrence of the term in Greek, the abbreviation ΠΑΙΣ is mistaken in the mangling of a word having no significance and substituting it with a more familiar one to the ears of a Greek person, but completely without any meaning in that context. Multilingual and multicultural contexts in those border regions did not live in a peaceful situation and they could represent a source of communication problems.

A last note, finally, on the possibility of comprehension of this dynastic concept in a Greek-Roman context. In Greek the idea of succession is expressed by the term διαδοχή, which represents the only possible way to translate the concept of succession itself. It was widely used in philosophical precincts, where the term indicates the succession of the teachers of a school, and from there to the religious field with the episcopal διαδοχαί, the term had difficulties to assert itself in politics, where it knew a certain success only during the Hellenistic era as desig-

nation of the successors of Alexander. The concept missed the idea of anticipated designation so that it could be usefully compared to the Persian and Syriac *paşgribā*.

In Rome on the contrary, the idea of a designated successor was naturally well known to the spirit of a leading class desperately trying to impose a succession scheme based on adoption – with the choice of the ‘best’ by the *princeps* – on a slow but inexorable domination of the hereditary succession. Nevertheless the terms adopted to indicate the title of the reigning emperor and the designated successor, *Augustus* and *Caesar*, respectively, were so much ‘internal’ in the Roman world that they resulted non exportable elsewhere. This is why the exegetic hypothesis recently proposed by Andreas Luther about a famous and difficult inscription preserved at Musei Capitolini, in Rome,³³ preserves all its appeal: *D.M. Abgar Prahates filius rex principis Orrhenoru(m) Hodda coniugi bene merenti feci(t)*: maybe is it not possible to consider the expression *filius rex principis* as an attempt to translate into Latin the term *paşgribā*? (a son-king of the prince?).

³³ A. Luther, *Abgar Prahates filius rex (CIL VI 1797)*, “Le Muséon” 111, 1998, 345-357.