

KARTIR'S INSCRIPTIONS

Kartir, Moabadan-Moabad of the early Sasanian empire in the third century

The Naqsh-e Rostam Inscription

1. And I, Kartir, the Magi-master (Magu-paiti = Mobed), have been shown to be of good service and loyal to the Yazads and Shahpuhr, King of Kings. For that service that I have rendered to the Yazads and Shahpuhr, King of Kings, Shahpuhr gave me authority and power in matters of the divine services at court and in kingdom after kingdom, place after place, throughout the whole empire in the magus-estate. And by the command of Shahpuhr, (2) King of Kings, and the provision of the Yazads and the King of Kings in kingdom after kingdom, place after place, many divine services in magnificence and many Warharan fires were established, and many magi became happy and prosperous, and many fires and magi were imperially installed. And Ahura Mazda and the Yazads attained great profit, while great confusion resulted for Ahriman and the devs. And for these many fires and services which are in the writing on my position thus in manner (3) Shahpuhr, King of Kings, made a testamentary instruction to the heir apparent: "Let this house be your foundation, and as you may know, that for the Yazads and us was well done, so let be done!" And in imperial documents and records that were made at that time under Shahpuhr, King of Kings, at court and throughout the whole empire in place after place, in those records it is written: "Kartir, the Herbed." And then Shahpuhr, King of Kings, to the deities' (4) throne passed away.

Then his son Hormizd, King of Kings, rose over the empire. And Hormizd, King of Kings, conferred on me miter and cincture and created for me a higher rank and dignity, and at court and in kingdom after kingdom, place after place, throughout the whole empire he gave me more authority and power in matters of the divine services, and created for me the title "Kartir, Ahura Mazda's magus-master" after the name of Ahura Mazda, the Deity. And thereupon in kingdom after kingdom, place after (5) place, many divine services were performed in magnificence, and many Warharan fires were established, and many magi became happy and prosperous, and many fires and magi were imperially installed. And in imperial documents and records which at that time under Hormizd, King of Kings, at court and throughout the whole empire in

place after place were made, in those this was recorded: "Kartir, Ahura Mazda's magus-master." And then Hormizd, King of Kings, to the deities' throne passed away.

6. Then Varahran, King of Kings, son of Shahpuhr, King of Kings, and brother of Hormizd, King of Kings, rose over the empire. And Varahran, King of Kings, also held me in high honor and dignity and at court and in kingdom after kingdom, place after place, gave me authority and power for divine services of every sort. And thereupon in kingdom after kingdom, place after place, many divine services were performed in magnificence and many Warharan fires were established, and many magi became happy (7) and prosperous, and many fires and magi were imperially installed. And in documents and imperial rescripts and records which were made at that time under Varahran, King of Kings, in those also this was recorded: "Kartir, Ahura Mazda's magus-master." And then Varahran, King of Kings, son of Shahpuhr, to the deities' throne passed away.

Then Varahran, King of Kings, son of Varahran, who in the empire is devout and sincere and faithful (to his promises) and well behaved and beneficent, rose over the empire. And by the grace of Ahura Mazda and the Yazads and for his own (8) soul's sake he made my position of superior rank and dignity in the empire, and he conferred upon me the rank and dignity of the grandees, and at court and in kingdom after kingdom, place after place, throughout the whole empire for the divine services he gave me more authority and power than as I had before, and he made me magus-master and judge for the whole empire, and he made me master of ceremonies and powerful overlord at the fire of Anahid-Ardashir and Anahid, the Lady at Istakhr. And they created for me the title "Kartir, (9) Varahran's Soul-savior, Ahura Mazda's Magus-master."

And in kingdom after kingdom and place after place throughout the whole empire the services of Ahura Mazda and the Yazads became preeminent, and great dignity came to the Mazdayasnian religion and the magi in the empire, and the Yazads and water and fire and small cattle in the empire attained great satisfaction, while Ahriman and the devs were punished and rebuked, and the teachings of Ahriman and the devs departed from the empire and were abandoned. And Jews, Sramans (Buddhists), (10) Brahmins, Nasoreans (Orthodox Christians), (Gnostic) Christians, Maktak (Baptisers), and Zandiks (Manichaeans) in the empire were smitten, and destruction of idols and scattering of the stores of the devs and god-seats and nests was abandoned. And in kingdom after kingdom and place after place many divine services in magnificence and many Warharan fires were established, and many magi became

happy and prosperous, and many fires and magi were imperially installed. And in documents and imperial rescripts and records, under Varahran, King of Kings, son of Varahran, (11) which were made, in was recorded, "Kartir, Varahran's Soul-Savior, Ahura Mazda's Magus-master."

And from earliest times onward for the sake of the Yazads and noble lords and for my own soul's sake, I, Kartir, saw much trouble and toil. And I made prosperous many fires and magi in the empire of Iran. And I also, by command of the King of Kings, put in order those magi and fires which were for the territory outside Iran, wherever the horses and men of the King of Kings arrived -- the city of Antioch and the country of Syria (12) and what is beyond Syria, the city of Tarsus and the country of Cilicia and what is beyond Cilicia, the city of Caesarea and from the country of Cappadocia to Galatia, and the country of Armenian and Georgia, and Albania, and from Balaskan to the Alans' pass. And Shahpuhr, King of Kings, with his own horses and men visited with pillaging, firing, and havoc. (13) But I did not allow damage and pillaging, and whatsoever pillaging had been made by any person, those things I had taken away and returned to their own country.

And I made prominent and reverend the Mazdayasnian religion and magi who were correct within the empire, while heretical and unstable men, who within the magus-estate in matters of the Mazdayasnian religion and divine services did not observe orders, these I punished with corporal punishment (14), and I rebuked them and made of good odor. And I established many fires and magi, and executed imperial documents. And by the provision of the Yazads and the King of Kings and by my efforts many Warharan fires were established in the empire of Iran, and many kin marriages were made, and many people who had become unfaithful (to their vows), became faithful again. There were also many who had come to follow the doctrines of the devs, and by my efforts they forsook those doctrines of the devs and accepted instead the doctrines of (15) the Yazads. And many *ltps'ks* [1] were held. And much consideration of religion of various kinds and other divine services also became very magnificent and superior, which are not written in this inscription for lack of space.

1. D. N. Mackenzie, *Henning Memorial Volume*, p. 264, concludes that *ltps'k* denotes 'the whole ceremony of the gahambar.'

And by me for my own house also in place after place many Warharan fires were established, and for those many fires that I

established for my own house I offered for every feast, feast after feast, 1133 ltps'ks (16), and that makes for 1 year 6798 ltps'ks. And for my own house I created other divine services also, of various kinds, which, if they were written in this inscription, would have become too much.

I wrote this inscription so that in the future anyone who sees imperial records or documents or other (17) inscriptions will know that I am that Kartir who under Shahpuhr, King of Kings, was entitled "Kartir, the priestly school master," and under Hormizd, King of Kings and Varahran, (18) King of Kings, I was entitled "Kartir, Ahura Mazda's magus-master," and under Varahran, King of Kings, son of Varahran, I was entitled "Kartir, Varahran's Soul-savior, Ahura Mazda's magus-master." And whoever may see or read this inscription, may that one be to the Yazads and noble lords and himself devout and sincere, that one (just) so, as I (19) have been, in order to attain good fame and fortune for this bone-endowed body, and salvation for the soul.

The Naqsh-e Rajab Inscription

(1) I, Kartir, am known in the empire for righteousness and eminence, and known to (2) have been of good service and good will to the Yazads and lords. Further I to the Yazads ward this also (3) thus promised, that, if by the help of the Yazads I, Kartir, for the living upon (4) highest rank were made to look then also by me further to the departed ward of heaven (5) and hell the essential features would be outlined (or proclaimed or enlarged) for the sake, also, of these divine services as within the empire they are performed, for the sake of these also. (6) Further, of whatever kind they may be, that were to be outlined by me by way of becoming more authoritative, and that (7) thus, as I had promised to the Yazads. Further by me those which were established, even thus as by me it (was to be done for) (8) heaven and hell, for these services also orthodoxy and heterodoxy (in) their essential features (9) were (to be) outlined.

Now for me then, when by the help of the Yazads this also was established, to the departed (10) ward this thus was outlined, then (to) the Yazads of much better service and will (11) have I become. And for my own soul I have become more provident and quiet. (12) And also on these offerings and services which within the empire are performed much (13) more authoritative have I become. And whosoever sees this inscription (14) and reads it, that one for Yazads and lords and his own soul straight (15) and right let him be. And beyond this, also, in the

offerings and services and the Mazdayasnian religion, (16) which is now performed for the living, let him become more authoritative.

Now another (17) matter; not everyone may issue a command at will. Let it be known what I have decided: (18) There is a heaven and there is a hell. And whoever is a welldoer shall go straight to heaven. (19) And whoever is a sinner shall be cast down to hell. And whoever is a welldoer and after (20) welldoing persistently runs, this one (in) this bone-endowed body good fame and prosperity (21) shall attain and also (in) this bone-endowed spirit orthodoxy shall (he) overtake, (22) as I, Kartir, have attained. Now I have written this inscription for this purpose, that (23) since for me, Kartir, from of yore onward by rulers and lords many fires (24) with (their) magi by imperial deeds were instituted and for me the great glory of my own name (25) on imperial deeds and documents stands written, that whoever in future (26) time imperial documents or deeds or other inscriptions may see, that one (27) should know, that I am Kartir, who (under) Shahpuhr, King of Kings, Kartir the (28) Magupat [Magus-master] and Ehrpat was entitled; and under Hormizd, King of Kings, and Varahran, King of (29) Kings, son of Shahpuhr, Kartir, Ahura Mazda's Magupat was entitled; and under Varahran, (30) [King of] Kings, son of Varahran, Kartir, Soul-savior of Varahran and Ahura Mazda's Magupat was entitled.

(31) Written by Buhtak, scribe of Kartir, the Lord.

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