

Kerdir's Naqsh-e Rajab inscription

In the translation the names of kings are given in their popular forms-Ardashir, Shapur, Bahram, Hormizd-rather than in contemporary pronunciation. In contrast, a simplified version of this pronunciation (without diacritics) is reserved for the names of Mazdean gods-Wahram, Ohrmezd. Hypothetical translations are marked with an asterisk and words added to the translation for clarity are bracketed. Slanted type is employed for the transcription of Middle Persian terms and (within brackets) for hypothetical restorations of the text.

I, Kerdir the Mobed, shall (continue to) be obedient and well-wishing (towards) the gods and Ardashir, king of kings, and Shapur, king of kings.

And for that service which I have done towards the gods and Ardashir, king of kings, and Shapur, king of kings, he-Shapur, king of kings-made me absolute and authoritative in (the matter of) the rites of the gods, at the court and from province to province, place to place, throughout the Magian land. And at the command of Shapur, king of kings, and with the support of the gods and the king of kings, from province to province, place to place, the rites of the gods were much increased, and many Wahram fires were established, and many magians were (made) content and prosperous, and many charters (relating to) fires and mages were sealed and great profit came to Ohrmezd and the gods, and great harm to Ahreman and the demons.

And (as for) these several fires and rites which (are mentioned) in the inscription, he-Shapur, king of kings-made an assignment even more so especially to me, (with the words,) 'Let this be your basic resource, and as you know that a deed (will be) good for the gods and for us, act so.'

And documents, charters and records which were made at that time, under Shapur, king of kings, at court and throughout the empire, from place to place,-on them has been written thus, 'Kerdir the Herbed.'

And after Shapur, king of kings, went to the place of the gods and his son Hormizd, king of kings, established himself in the kingdom, Hormizd, king of kings, gave me cap and place to place, throughout the empire made me likewise in (the matter of) the rites of the gods more absolute and authoritative, and named me 'Kerdir the Mobed of Ohrmezd' in the name of the god Ohrmezd. Then also at that time from province to province, place to place, the rites of the gods were much increased, and many Wahram fires were established, and many magians were (made) content and prosperous, and many charters (relating to) fires and mages were sealed.

And documents, charters and records which were made at that time, under Hormizd, king of kings, at court and throughout the empire, from place to place,-on them has been written thus, 'Kerdir the Mobed of Ohrmezd.'

And after Hormizd, king of kings, went to the place of the gods and Bahram, king of kings, son of Shapur, king of kings, and brother of Hormizd, king of king, established himself in the kingdom, he, Bahram, king of kings, in the same way held me in dignity and honour, and at court and from province to province, place to place, made me likewise in (the matter) the rites of the gods absolute and authoritative. Then also at that time from province to province, place to place, the rites of the gods were much increased, and

many Wahram fires were established, and many magians were (made) content and prosperous, and many charters (relating to) fires and mages were sealed.

And documents, charters and records which were made at that time, under Bahram, king of kings,- on them has been written thus, 'Kerdir the Mobed of Ohrmezd.'

And after Bahram, king of kings, son of Shapur went to the place of the gods and Bahram, king of kings, son of Bahram, who in the empire (is) generous and righteous and kind and beneficent and altruistic, established himself in the kingdom, for love of Ohrmezd and the gods and (for) his own soul he made for me in the empire a higher position and honour, and gave me the position and honour of the magnates, and made me at court and from province to province, place to place, throughout the empire in (the matter of) the rites of the gods (yet) more authoritative and absolute than I was before.

And he made me Mobed and judge of the whole empire. And he made me director and authority over the fire of Anahid-ardashir and Anahid the Lady (in) Stakhr. And he named me 'Kerdir, soul-saver of Bahram, Mobed of Ohrmezd.'

And from province to province, place to place, throughout the empire the rites of Ohrmedzd and the gods became more important and the Mazdayanian religion and magians were greatly honoured in the empire and great satisfaction befell the gods and water and fire and beneficent creatures, and great blows and torment befell Ahreman and the demons, and the heresy of Ahreman and the demons departed and was *routed from the empire. And Jews and Buddhists and Hindus and Nazarenes and Christians and Baptists and Manichaeans were smitten in the empire, and idols were destroyed and the abodes of the demons disrupted and made into thrones and seats of the gods.

And from province to province, place to place, the rites of the gods were much increased, and many Wahram fires were established, and many magians were (made) content and prosperous, and many charters (relating to) fires and mages were sealed.

And documents, charters and records which (have been) made under Bahram, king of kings, son of Bahram,-on them has been written thus, 'Kerdir, soul-saver of Bahram, Mobed of Ohrmezd.'

And I, Kartir, from the beginning have been at great trouble and pains for the sake of the gods and the lords and my own soul. And many fires and magians in the empire of Eran-Persia, Parthia, Khuzestan (=Susiane), Asurestan (=Mesopotamia), Meshan (=Mesene), Nodshiragan (=Adiabene), Adurbaigan (=Atropatene), Spahan, (Ray), Kirman (=Karmania), Sagestan (=Sakastene), Gurgan (=Hyrcania), Mar v, Heart, Abarshahr (=Khorasan), Turestan (=Tourene), Makuran, the Kushan country up to Peshawar-I havemade prosperous.

And also in the land of Aneran, the fires and magians which were in the land of Aneran where the horses and men of the king of kings reached- the city of Antioch and the land of Syria and what is attached to the province of Syria, the city of Tarsos and the land of Cilicia and what is attached to the province of Cilicia, the city of Caesarea and the land of Cappadocia and what is attached to the province of Cappadocia, up to the land of Graecia (=Pontus?) and the land of Armenia and Iberia (=Georgia) and Albania and Balasagan up to the Gate of the Alans, Shapur, king of kings, with his horses and men conquered them all and he took booty and burned and laid them waste-there too, at the command of the king of kings, I made arrangements for the magians and the fires which were in those lands, I did not let them be harmed or taken as booty, and those which anyone had thus taken as booty I took and allowed them back to their own land.

And I made the Mazdayasnian religion and the good magians noble and honoured in the empire, and the heretics and the destructive men, who in the Magian land did not adhere to the doctrine regarding the Mazdaasnian religion and the rites of the gods-them I punished, and I tormented them until I made them better.

And I made many documents (and) charters (relating to) fire and mages, and with the support of the gods and the king of kings and on account of me in the empire of Eran many Wahram fires were established, and many kin-marriages performed, and many men who were unbelievers became believers, and many were those who held the doctrine of the demons, and on account of me they left that doctrine of the demons, and many radpassag (ceremonies) were held, and the religion was much studied in various ways, and also the rites of the gods were much increased and became more important-which has not been written in this memorial, for if it had been written it would have been (too) much.

And also from my own resources I have from place to place founded many Wahram fires, and I have celebrated from my own resources I have from place to place founded many Wahram fires, and I have celebrated from my own resources, from *gah* to *gah*, *10,552 *radpassages*, and in one year there were *63,312 *passages*.

And in the empire, (and) as far (as was possible) from my own resources, I have performed many other rites of the gods [of various kinds] which, if I had written them on this memorial, would [then have been (too) many].

But just as from the beginning I have been obedient and well-wishing towards the gods and the lords, [so too from] the gods and the lords great dignity and honour befell [me and while] living I have become eminent in dignity in the empire.

And this too I prayed towards the gods, '[Just as you] gods have made me eminent in dignity [while living, so] too if you gods are able, then also with regard to the hereafter, concerning this worship and the rites as they are practiced in the empire, and [for the sake of] my soul, show me [2-3 ww.] the nature of [the righteousness] and unrighteousness [of these rites.] And just] as I [prayed] from the beginning and have endured trouble and pains (for) the gods, so too henceforth with regard to the hereafter may I be better and more confident in the matter than [anybody] else. And whoever [may see] this [memorial and] read it out, [let] him be more confident in his own [soul ?] about [this worship and] rites.

And when I had prayed towards the gods, then I set this sign that, '[If you] gods are able, then show me the nature of heaven and hell. And just as he shows [in] the Nask, that men [when] they may have [passed away], then [whoever] (was) righteous, him his own Den [leads] to heaven, and whoever (was) sinful, him also his own Den leads to hell, [so too] let it be revealed to me [while] (I am) living, that at that time when I shall pass away and [me] won [Den] comes [to meet me], if [I should be] righteous, [then let my] Den appear to me just as one who goes towards heaven, and if I should be unrighteous, the [let] it appear to me just as one who leads towards [hell].'

And when [I saw] this worship and the rites and the [Mazdayasnian] religion, [which] are [now] performed among the living, and asked about [their nature] with regard to the hereafter, then I performed rites mightily. And in Persia and Sagesstan and several other provinces many magians were (made) [content and prosperous], when I prayed to the gods as has been written in this memorial. And [at the time of] Shapur, king of kings, I mad a *kind of *death, for (the sake of) the rites of the gods, and my own soul, so that I

might be righteous, and if I should be unrighteous, [then too] I might take [a warning ? from] the gods. I have stood by this also, that ‘If I should be righteous, and you gods now show me righteousness with regard to the hereafter, then too I shall hold this doctrine of you gods, and if I should be unrighteous, and you gods should now [show] me unrighteousness with regard to the hereafter, [then].’

[And] the *mortals whom I have seen in the *kind of *death said thus, ‘We see a princely horseman, *radiant, and he is mounted on a noble horse, and has a banner [in his hand 2-3 ww. ? there a] man[visible ?] and *seated on a golden throne, and (one) appearing (like) the double of Kerdir himself, and a *fellow-traveller is (...)ing [2-3 ww.].’

‘And on that road]where that man, Kerdir’s] double, and that woman are going, there [another] prince (becomes) visible, *radiant and seated on a golden throne. And a set of scales stands before him, like [one who takes 2-3ww.]. And now that woman and that man who (is) just like Kerdir’s double stand [before] that prince and [2-3 ww] arrives.’ And they said thus, ‘That man, Kerdir’s double, and that woman went forth past that prince [3-4 ww] and go on towards the east, and they [go] on that [very bright] road.’

‘and now another prince appears, [*radiant] and *seated on a golden throne, and (he has) a *ciyen (at) his hand, and (he is) more noble than those whom we have seen before.’ And when they [3-4 ww they] said, ‘A *ciyen is visible on this side, just like a [very wide ? pit] having no bottom, and being full of snakes and [scorpions 2-3 ww] and lizards and other noxious creatures.’

Those *mortals who were seated in that *kind of *death, when they saw those several forms and *semblances of hell, then they became very despondent, [and 3-4 ww]them (?) not from the *ciyen (?) and there [2-3 ww And I?] said, ‘Do not [be afraid.] (There is) no way for you but to tell what you see.’

And they said thus, ‘Ablade [has been set over] that pit like a bridge. And that woman and the man, Kirder’s double, [went] froth [to the pit] and there the bridge stood [before] (them). And that bridge became [much] wider and now it appears greater in width than in length. And that woman and the man, [kirder’s double,] have [2-3 ww.].’

And they said thus, ‘Another prince appears, *radiant, [and] nobler [than those] whom we have seen before, and from that side he comes forth to the bridge, and now he reaches the bridge, and now [he crosses to this side] and takes the hand of [that] woman [and the man], Kirder’s double. And that prince [there? 1-2ww.] he goes forth onto [that] bridge and [that man], Kerdir’s double and the woman go after him. And now they have gone over to that side of the bridge an [go] on towards the east [3-5 ww.] dignified and *brave.

And now a palace appears, [noble ? 5-7 ww.] appears in the sky, and that prince [goes] before that man, kerdir’s double, and the woman behind that man, kerdir’s double. [10-12 ww. ? in the] hand went into that [? palace].’

And they said thus, ‘We have [not seen] anything more noble and bright than this. [3-5ww.] most [9-11 ww.] *seated on [] and that prince goes forth. And that *palace (has) a golden throne [erected ?] before (it) [3-4 ww. And] we [saw ?] that man, Kerdir’s double [8-10 ww.]now that man, Kerdir’s double, and the woman at first go up to the vestibule and far up [3-4 ww] and a golden throne [3-4 ww.] lord

[4-5 ww. ? double] on [2-3 ww.] went [] the woman and sat in the *radiance (?) of Wahram.'

And now that man, Kerdir's double, [? Takes] bread and meat and wing [7-8 ww.] he on a throne [3-4 ww.] much [4-5 ww...] much [] comes forth and presents [it ? to] that man, Kirder's double, and gives [] to them [1-2 ww.] and he [ca. 10-12- ww.] and that [prince] in [] and keeps pointing towards that man, kerdir's double, with (his) finger and smiling. And that [man, Kerdir's double, ?] bears [=pays reverence to him].

And when once [the gods had made me, Kerdir] while living [eminent] in dignity, then [I prayed thus, that] 'Henceforth with regard to the hereafter show me the nature of heaven and hell, and righteousness and unrighteousness, in this way [that ca. 11-16 ww.] I have (always) been [obedient and] well-wishing [to the lords and the gods].'

But afterward, when once the gods had shown me these matters concerning the hereafter in this way, then I became even more obedient and well-wishing towards the gods and more liberal and true to my own soul and I became more confident about this worship and the rites which are performed in the empire.

But whosoever may see this memorial and read it out, let him be more liberal and true to the gods and the lords and his own soul and let him also be more confident in this worship and the rites and the Mazdayasnian religion, which are now performed among the living, and henceforth let him not be at all disobedient. And / for they should know for certain that there is a heaven and there is a hell, and he who is virtuous goes to heaven and he who is sinful is cast into hell, and whosoever may be virtuous and behave well with regard to good deeds, renown and prosperity will fall to this his material body and blessedness accrue to his durable soul, as it fell to me Kerdir.

And I wrote this memorial for this reason, that I, Keridir, since ling ago (have) set my seal upon many documents (and)charters (relating to) fires and to mages, of (different) rulers and lords, and my own name has often been written in (several) places on (such) documents, charters and records, so that whosoever at (some)future time may see a charter, a record or a document or some other memorial, may know that I am that Kerdir who under Shapur, king of kings, was called 'Kerdir the Mobed and Herbed', and under Hormizd king of king, and Bahram (I), king of kings, the sons of Shapur, was called 'Kerdir, soul-saver of Bahram, Mobed of Ohrmezd.'

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