

# **GRANHOLM GENEALOGY**

**PERSIAN ROYAL ANCESTRY**

**KINGS, 226 - 651**

## INTRODUCTION

Persia, called Iran since 1935, has the oldest and best recorded history of our early royal ancestry. The era covered here is the Sassanian Empire. Uniquely, the kings in succession from the first to the last are our direct great grandparents. The first one, King Ardashir I, the 59<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, reigned during 226-241 and the last one, King Yazdagird III, the 43<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather, reigned during 632 – 651. He married Maria, a Byzantine Princess, which ties into our Byzantine Ancestry. See *Byzantine Royal Ancestry*. After the fall of the Sassanian dynasty Persia was conquered and divided into Arab Caliphates, of them the present Iran and Iraq.

Throughout this period Persia was mostly at war with the Goths, Huns, Byzantines, Romans, Turks and others, many of them our ancestors, a situation which still seems to go on there.

On the next pages I have listed our Persian ancestors and **highlighted** those for who I have found some additional information. The list shows how that lineage ties into us via other royalities.

## Descendants of: Ardashir I King of Kings of Persia As Related to: Lars Erik Granholm

- 1 **Ardashir I King of Kings of Persia** #18351 d. 242 (59th great grandfather)
- 2 **Shapur I the Great King of Persia** #18350 (58th great grandfather)
- 3 **Narseh King of Persia** #18349 (57th great grandfather)
- 4 **Hormizd II King of Persia** #18348 d. 309 (56th great grandfather)
- 5 **Shapur II the Great King of Persia** #18346 (55th great grandfather)
- 6 **Ardashir II King of Persia** #18347 d. 383 (55th great-uncle)
- 6 **Shapur III King of Persia** #18345 d. 388 (54th great grandfather)
- 7 **Bahram IV King of Persia** #18344 (53rd great grandfather)
- 8 **Yazdegerd I King of Persia** #18343 d. 421 (52nd great grandfather)
- 9 **Bahram V King of Persia** #18342 (51st great grandfather)
- 10 **Yazdegerd II King of Persia** #18340 d. 457 (50th great grandfather)
- 11 **Balash King of Persia** #18341 (50th great-uncle)
- 11 **Peroz I King of Persia** #18339 d. 484 (49th great grandfather)
- 12 **Kavadh I King of Persia** #18338 d. 531 (48th great grandfather)
- 13 **Khosrau I Emperor of Persia** #18337 b. 501 d. 579 (47th great grandfather)
- 14 **Hormizd IV King of Persia** #18336 d. 590 (46th great grandfather)
- 15 **Khosrau II Parvez Emperor of Sasanian Persia** #18264 d. 628 (45th great grandfather)  
m. **Maria Princess of Byzantium** #18265 (See *Byzantine Royal Ancestry*)  
[daughter of Maurice Tiberius Emperor of Byzantium and Constantia Empress of Byzantium, 46<sup>th</sup> great grandparents]
- 16 **Kavadh II King of Persia** (44<sup>th</sup> great uncle)
- 16 **Dukhtzanan Princess of Sasanian Persia** #18233 (45th great-aunt)  
m. **Shah-Varez Emperor of Sassanian Persia** #18232
- 16 **Shahryar Prince of Sasanian Persia** #18335 (44th great grandfather)
- 17 **Yazdagird III Emperor of Sasanian Persia** #18215 (43rd great grandfather)  
m. **Manyanh Princess of Byzantium** #18214  
[daughter of Constantine III Emperor of Byzantium #18216 and Gregoria #18217]
- 18 **Izdundad Princess of Sasanian Persia** #18212 (42nd great grandmother)  
m. **Bustanai ben Haninai Exilarch of Jews** #18211  
[son of Haninai Exilarch of Jews in Babylon #18213]
- 19 **Hisdai Shahrijar Exilarch of Jews in Baghdad** #18210 d. 665 (41st great grandfather)
- 20 **Daughter of Hisdai Princess of Exilarchs** #18209 (40th great grandmother)  
m. **Natronai ben Nehemiah of Jewish Exile** #18208
- 21 **Habibai of Jewish Exile** #18207 b. 700 (39th great grandfather)

22 **Natronai al-Makir Theodoric Duke of Toulouse** #16068 b. 730 d. 804 (38th great grandfather)  
m. **Alda (Hilda) Princess of the Franks** #16067

[daughter of Pepin the Short King of the Franks #16023 and Bertrada of Laon Queen of the Franks #16024

23 **Redburga (Saint Ida) Queen of England** b. 788 m. Egbert III King of Wessex and Kent b. 784 d. Nov 838

24 **Aethelwulf King of Wessex and Kent** b. 795 d. 13 Jan 858 m. Osburh (Osburga) of Wright Queen of England b. 810 d. 852  
m. Judith Princess of Holy Roman Empire b. abt 846

25 **Aethelred I King of Wessex and Kent** b. 843 d. 872

26 **Aethelhelm Ealdorman of Wiltshire** b. 859 d. 898 m. Aethelgyth of Mercia

27 **Aethelfrith Ealdorman of Wiltshire** b. 890 d. 924

28 **Eadric Ealdorman of Wiltshire** m. Aethelgifu of Wiltshire

29 **Aethelwerd "the Historian" Thegn of Sussex** b. 920 d. 998 m. Aethelfled of Wessex b. 920

30 **Aethelmaer Ciel "the Great" Thegn of Sussex** b. 940 d. 1015 m. Aethelthrit of Wessex b. 940

31 **Wulfnoth Thegn of Sussex** b. 960 d. 1015

32 **Godwin Earl of Wessex** b. 992 d. 15 Apr 1053 m. Gytha Thorkelsdottir, Countess

33 **Harold II Godwinson King of England** b. abt 1022 d. 14 Oct 1066 m. Edyth (Ealdgyth) Swannesha b. 1025 d. abt 1086  
m. Aldgyth (Edith) of Mercia Queen of England d. aft 1070

34 **Gytha Haraldsdotter Princess of England** b. ABT 1053 d. 1 May 1107

m. 1074 Vladimir II "Monomach" Grand Duke of Kiev b. 1053 d. 19 May 1125

35 **Mstislav I (Harald) Grand Duke of Kiev** b. 1076 d. 15 Apr 1132

m. Christina Ingesdottir Princess of Sweden b. ABT 1078 d. 18 Jan 1122

36 **Ingeborg Princess of Russia** b. ABT 1099 d. 1140 m. Knud Eriksson Lavard King of Denmark b. 12 Mar 1091 d. 7 Jan 1131

37 **Valdemar I the Great King of Denmark** b. 14 Jan 1131 d. 12 May 1182

m. Sofiya Vladimirovna Princess of Russia b. 1140 d. 5 May 1198

38 **Richiza Valdemarsdotter Princess of Denmark** b. ABT 1178 d. 8 May 1220

m. Erik X Knutsson King of Sweden b. 1180 d. 10 Apr 1216

39 **Märtha Eriksson Princess of Sweden** b. ABT 1213 m. Nils Sixtensson Sparre av Tofta b. ABT 1188

40 **Sixten Nilsson Sparre av Tofta** d. 1310 m. Ingrid Abjörnsdottir b. Abt 1220

41 **Abjörn Sixtensson Sparre av Tofta** b. ABT 1240 d. 1310 m. Ingeborg Ulfsson Ulf b. ABT 1258 d. AFT 1307

42 **Ulf Abjörnsson Sparre** b. 1348 m. 1330 Kristina Sigmundsdottir Tre Klöverblad b. 1295

43 **Karl Ulfsson Sparre av Tofta** m. Helena Israelsdottir b. 1340 d. 1410

44 **Margareta Karlsdottir Sparre av Tofta** d. 1429 m. Knut Torndsson Bonde b. ABT 1377 d. 1413

45 **Karl VIII Knutsson Bonde King of Sweden** b. 1409 d. 15 May 1470

46 **Karin Karlsdottir Bonde** m. Erensisle Björnsson Djäkn d. bef 1447

47 **Märta Erensisledottir Djäkn** m. Johan Henriksson Fleming b. 1465 d. AFT 1514

48 **Anna Johansdottir Fleming** b. 1435 d. 1505 m. Olof Pedersson (Wildeman) Lille d. 1535

49 **Karin Olofsdottir Wildeman** b. 1465 d. 1535 m. Ludolf Boose b. 1465 d. 1535

50 **Johan Ludolfsson Boose** b. 1526 d. 1596 m. Ingeborg Henriksdottir

51 **Kirstin Johansdottir Boose** b. 1576 d. 1646 m. Bertil von Nierohrt b. 1582 d. 1652

52 **Maria Bertilsdottir von Nierohrt** b. 1612 d. 1682 m. Carl Henriksson Lindelöf b. 1605 d. 1668

53 **Carl Carlsson von Lindelöf** b. 1642 d. 1712 m. N.N. Laurisdottir Laurentz

54 **Anna Maria Carlsdottir von Lindelöf** b. 1670 d. 1 Feb 1747

m. Ericus Christierni Orenius b. ABT 1658 d. 2 Mar 1740

55 **Margareta Eriksson Orenia** b. 16 Jan 1710 d. 1804 m. Johan Urnovius b. 1706 d. 1783

56 **Christina Margareta Urnovia** m. 20 Dec 1781 Johan Flinck

57 **Johan (Flinck) Årenius** b. 12 Jan 1787 d. 6 Nov 1823

m. 15 Mar 1810 Ulrika Abrahamsdottir Sevon b. 9 Jun 1784

58 **Johan Gustaf Johansson Årenius** b. 5 Jun 1810

m. Johanna Carolina Röring b. 24 Jun 1802 d. ABT 1839

59 **Charlotta Constantia Renlund** b. 4 Jun 1830 d. 28 Jan 1905

m. 19 Mar 1854 Erik Eriksson Käll b. 24 Jun 1829 d. 23 Jan 1905

60 **Johanna Karolina Eriksson Käll** b. 9 Jan 1863 d. 8 Nov 1934

m. 24 Mar 1887 Karl-Johan Granholm b. 14 Mar 1866 d. 22 Jun 1920

61 **Erik Anton Granholm** b. 28 May 1906 d. 29 Jan 1959

m. 20 Aug 1933 Karin Hildegard Kasén b. 3 Jul 1914 d. 2004

62 **Lars Erik Granholm** b. 28 Jul 1934

# Ardashir I

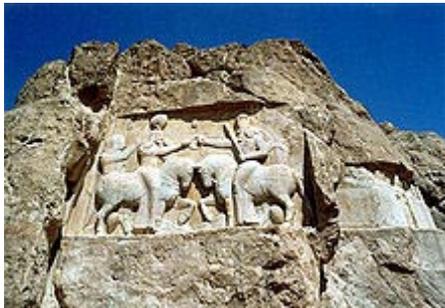


**Ardashir I**, founder of the [Sassanid dynasty](#), was ruler of [Istakhr](#) (since 206?), subsequently [Persia](#) (since 208?), and finally "King of Kings of [Persia](#)" (since 226) with the overthrow of the [Parthian Empire](#). The dynasty Ardashir founded would rule for four centuries until overthrown by the [Rashidun](#) Caliphate in 651.

*Silver coin of Ardashir I with a fire altar on its verso (British Museum London)*

Ardashir ("Who has the Divine Order as his Kingdom") is also known as **Ardashīr-i Pāpagān** "Ardashir, son of Pāpağ"

*Relief of Ardashir I, Naghsh-e-Rostam, near Persepolis, Iran*



Ardashir was born in the late 2nd century in [Istakhr](#), what is present-day [Fars](#) in [Iran](#), then a vassal kingdom of the [Parthian Arsacids](#). According to one tradition, he inherited the throne of [Istakhr](#) from his father Pāpağ (sometimes written as Pāpak or Babak) who had deposed the previous king [Gochihr](#) to gain the throne for himself. His mother may have been named Rodhagh. Prior to succeeding his father, Ardashir is said to have ruled the town of [Darabgerd](#) and received the title of "[argbadh](#)". Upon Pāpağ's death,

Ardashir's elder brother Šāpūr ascended to the throne. However, Ardashir rebelled against his brother and took the kingship for himself in 208.

Most Scholars have assumed that Ardashir's father was Papak, a vassal king, and his grandfather was Sasan. However, there is another theory of his lineage, which is found in the Middle Persian book *Book of Deeds of Ardashir Son of Papak*. This story is later confirmed by Ferdowsi's *Shahname*. This theory suggests that Sasan married the daughter of Papak after the latter discovers that Sasan is of royal Achaemenid descent. Hence Ardashir was born. From here onwards Sasan disappears from the story and Papak is considered the father. Ardashir helped Papak conquer some parts of Fars. It is possible that after Papak's death, his son Shapur, had a short reign which was probably ended by an accidental death. Around 211/12 Ardashir became ruler of Papak's kingdom, which was confined to central Fars. Soon he extended his realm into Kerman to the east and Elymais to the west, and demanding fealty from the local princes of [Fars](#) and gaining control over the neighboring provinces of [Kerman](#), [Isfahan](#), [Susiana](#), and [Mesene](#).

This expansion came to the attention of the Arsacid Great King, [Artabanus IV](#), who ordered his vassal, the ruler of Khuzestan, to confront Ardashir. It was Ardashir, however, who emerged victorious in that battle. In 226, [Artabanus IV](#) himself invaded [Fars](#) to defeat the rebelling

Ardashir. The latter won the first battle, but with heavy losses on both sides. In the second battle, the Parthians suffered a greater loss, and Ardashir was again deemed the victor. Their armies clashed once again in a final battle at [Hormizdeghan](#), near the modern city of [Bandar Abbas](#). At this encounter, the Parthian army was completely defeated, and [Artabanus IV](#) was killed. According to one account, Ardashir and Artabanus fought in close combat on horseback. Ardashir pretended to flee, turned around in the saddle and shot Artabanus through the heart.

## War with Rome

In the latter years of his reign, Ardashir I engaged in a series of armed conflicts with Persia's great rival to the west – the [Roman Empire](#).

Ardashir I's expansionist tendencies had been frustrated by his failed invasions of Armenia, where [a branch of the Arsacids](#) still occupied the throne. Given Armenia's traditional position as an ally of the Romans, Ardashir I may have seen his primary opponent not in the Armenian and [Caucasian](#) troops he had faced, but in Rome and her [legions](#).



*Ghaleh Dokhtar, or "The Maiden's Castle," Iran, built by Ardashir I in AD 209, before he was finally able to defeat the Parthian empire.*

In 230 Ardashir I led his army into the Roman province of [Mesopotamia](#), unsuccessfully besieging the fortress town of [Nisibis](#). At the same time, his cavalry ranged far enough past the Roman border to threaten [Syria](#) and [Cappadocia](#). It seems that the Romans saw fit to attempt a diplomatic solution to the crisis, reminding the Persians of the superiority of Roman arms, but to no avail. Ardashir I campaigned unsuccessfully against Roman border outposts again the following year (231). As a result, the Roman emperor [Alexander Severus](#) (222–235) moved to the east, establishing his headquarters at [Antioch](#), but experienced difficulties in bringing his troops together and thus made another attempt at diplomacy, which Ardashir I rebuffed.

In 237, Ardashir — along with his son and successor [Shapur I](#) (240/42–270/72), who was his co-ruler since 239/40 — again invaded Mesopotamia. The successful assaults on [Nisibis](#) and [Carrhae](#) and the shock this caused in Rome led the emperor to revive the Roman client-state of [Osroene](#). In 240/41, Ardashir I and Shapur finally overcame the stubborn fortress of Hatra. Ardashir I died in the year 242, but Shapur was already crowned as "king of kings" in 240..

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur_I)

# Shapur I

**Shapur I** or also known as **Shapur I the Great** was the second [Sassanid](#) King of the [Second Persian Empire](#). The dates of his reign are commonly given as 240/42 - 270/72, but it is likely that he also reigned as co-regent (together with his father) prior to his father's death in 242.

Shapur was the son of [Ardashir I](#) (r. 226–240 [died 242]), the founder of the Sassanid dynasty and whom Shapur succeeded. His mother was Lady Myrōd who—according to legend—was an [Arsacid](#) princess. The Talmud cites a nickname for her, "Ifra Hurmiz", after her bewitching beauty.

## War against the Roman Empire

Ardashir I had, towards the end of his reign, renewed the war against the [Roman Empire](#). Shapur I conquered the [Mesopotamian](#) fortresses [Nisibis](#) and [Carrhae](#) and advanced into [Syria](#). [Timesitheus](#), father-in-law of the young emperor, [Gordian III](#), drove him back and defeated him at the [Battle of Resaena](#) in 243, regaining Nisibis and Carrhae. Timesitheus died shortly afterward, and [Philip the Arab](#) (244–249) murdered Gordian III after his defeat at the [Battle of Misiche](#). Philip then concluded an ignominious peace with the [Persians](#) in 244. With the Roman Empire debilitated by [Germanic](#) invasions and the continuous elevation of new emperors after the death of [Trajan Decius](#) (251), Shapur I resumed his attacks.

*A fine cameo showing an equestrian combat of Shapur I and Valerian in which the Roman emperor is seized, according to Shapur's own statement, "with our own hand", in year 256.*



Shapur conquered [Armenia](#), invaded Syria, and plundered [Antioch](#). Eventually, the Emperor [Valerian](#) (253–260) marched against him and by 257, Valerian had recovered Antioch and returned the province of Syria to Roman control. In 259, Valerian moved to [Edessa](#), but an outbreak of plague killed many and weakened the Roman troops defending the city which was then besieged by the Persians. In 260, Valerian arranged a meeting with Shapur to negotiate a peace

settlement but was betrayed by Shapur who seized him and held him prisoner for the remainder of his life. Shapur advanced into [Asia Minor](#), but was driven back by defeats at the hands of [Balista](#), who captured the royal harem. [Septimius Odenathus](#), prince of [Palmyra](#), rose in his rear, defeated the Persian army and regained all the territories Shapur had occupied. Shapur was unable to resume the offensive and lost Armenia again.

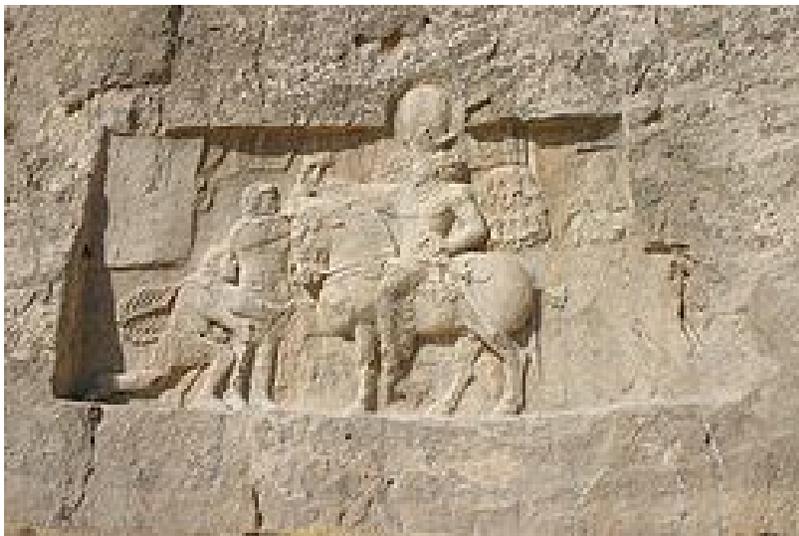
*The Humiliation of Valerian by Shapur I. Pen and ink, Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1521*



One of the great achievements of Shapur's reign was the defeat of the Roman Emperor Valerian. This is presented in a mural at [Naqsh-e Rostam](#), where Shapur is represented on horseback wearing royal armour and crown. Before him kneels [Philip the Arab](#), in Roman dress, asking for grace. In his right hand the king grasps the uplifted arms of what may be Valerian; one of his hands is hidden in his sleeve as the sign of submission. The same scene is repeated in other rock-face inscriptions. Shapur is said to have publicly shamed Valerian by using the Roman Emperor as a footstool when mounting his horse. Other sources contradict and note that in other stone carvings, Valerian is respected and never on his knees. This is supported by reports that Valerian and some of his army lived in

relatively good conditions in the city of [Bishapur](#) and that Shapur enrolled the assistance of Roman engineers in his engineering and development plans.

*Wax figure of Shapur I in Fars History museum*



*Rock-face relief at Naqsh-e Rostam of Shapur (on horseback) with Philip the Arab and Emperor Valerian.*

# Narseh

*Image of King Narseh on a coin minted during his reign.*



**Narseh** (whose name is also sometimes written as **Narses** or **Narseus**) was the seventh [Sassanid](#) King of [Persia](#) (293–302), and son of [Shapur I](#) (241–272). Narseh overthrew the increasingly unpopular [Bahram III](#) in 293 with the support of most of the nobility.

During Narses' time, Rome was ruled by [Diocletian](#) and it was with Diocletian and his son-in-law [Galerius](#) that Narses was engaged in eight years of constant warfare.

In 296, fed up with incursions made by the Armenian [monarch Tiridates III](#), Narses invaded [Armenia](#). Surprised by the sudden attack, Tiridates fled his kingdom. The [Roman Emperor Diocletian](#) dispatched his son-in-law [Galerius](#) with a large army to Tiridates's aid.

Galerius invaded [Mesopotamia](#), which Narses had occupied hoping to check his advance. Three battles were fought subsequently, the first two of which were indecisive. In the third fought at [Callinicum](#), Galerius suffered a complete defeat and was forced to retreat. Galerius crossed the [Euphrates](#) into [Syria](#) to join his father-in-law Diocletian at [Antioch](#). On his arrival at Antioch, Galerius was rebuked by Diocletian who disgraced him for his shameful defeat at the hands of Narses. Vowing to take revenge, Galerius made preparations throughout the winter of 297 and invaded Armenia with 25,000 men.

Supported by the Armenians, Galerius surprised Narses in his camp and inflicted a crushing defeat on the latter forcing him to flee in haste. His wife, prisoners, his sisters and a number of his children were captured apart from his prodigious military chest. Eastern [Mesopotamia](#) was recovered by the Romans and Tiridates was reinstated as the monarch of Armenia.

But Galerius dismissed Aphraban without giving any definite answer, at the same time accusing the Persians of ill-treating [Valerian](#). In the meantime, he consulted Diocletian at Nisibis who persuaded Galerius to offer terms of peace to the Persians.

Narses did not survive for long after the conclusion of this humiliating treaty. He [abdicated](#) in 301, in favor of his son, [Hormizd](#), probably ashamed at the humiliation he had suffered. He spent the last years of his life in self-renunciation.

It is not known for how long Narses survived his abdication. However, it is well-known that Narses was already dead by the time of Hormizd's death in 309 for the throne passed onto Hormizd's still-unborn son [Shapur](#).

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hormizd\\_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hormizd_II)

## Hormizd II

*Coin of Hormizd II as Kushansha.*

**Obv:** Corrupt Persian legend with name of Hormizd II. Characteristic lion head-dress of Hormizd II. Swastika between feet. Brahmi monogram to right.

**Rev:** Shiva with bull.



**Hormizd II**, was the eighth [Persian](#) king of the [Sassanid Empire](#), and reigned for seven years from 302 to 309. He was the son of [Narseh](#) (293–302),

After his death his oldest son [Adarnases](#), who had a cruel disposition, was killed by the grandees after a very short reign; another son, Hormizd, was held prisoner, while the throne was reserved

for the child of his concubine, [Shapur II](#). Another version has it that Shapur II was the son of Hormizd II's first wife, and that while still pregnant she was made to wear a crown over her pudenda so that the baby would be born as a king.

Relief "The Equestrian Victory of Hormizd II"



His son Hormizd escaped from prison in 323 with the help of his wife, and found refuge at the court of [Constantine I](#) (324–337) ([Zosimus](#) ii. 27; [John of Antioch](#), fr. 178; [Zonaras](#) 13–5). In 363, Hormizd served against Persia in the army of the Roman emperor [Julian](#) (361–363); in turn his son, of the same name, later served as proconsul.

# Shapur II

**Shapur II the Great** was the ninth King of the Persian [Sassanid Empire](#) from 309 to 379. During his long reign, the Sassanid Empire saw its first golden era since the reign of [Shapur I](#) (241–272).

*"King of kings of Iran and Aniran"*

## Early childhood

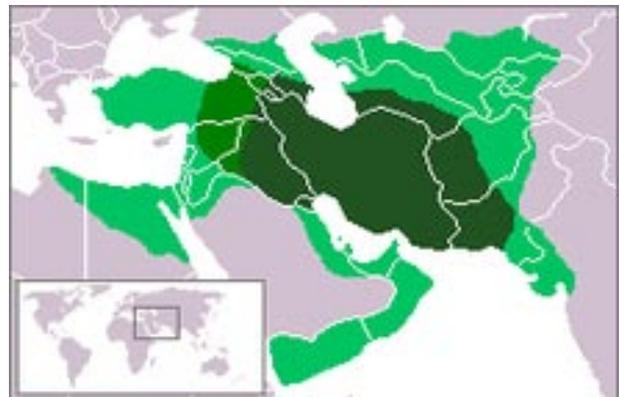


When King [Hormizd II](#) (302–309) died, Persian nobles killed his eldest son, blinded the second, and imprisoned the third ([Hormizd](#), who afterwards escaped to the [Roman Empire](#)). The throne was reserved for the unborn child of one of the wives of Hormizd II. It is said that Shapur II may have been the only king in history to be crowned *in utero*: the crown was placed upon his mother's belly. This child, named Shapur, was therefore born king; the government was conducted by his mother and the magnates. But when Shapur II came of age, he turned out to be one of the greatest monarchs of the dynasty.

## Conquests

*Dark green: the Sassanid empire; Medium green: contested territory; Light green: temporarily occupied in the seventh century during war with the Byzantine Empire, three hundred years after Shapur's reign.*

During the early years of the reign of Shapur, [Arabs](#) crossed the [Persian Gulf](#) from [Bahrain](#) to "Ardashir-Khora" of [Pars](#) and raided the interior. In retaliation, Shapur led an expedition through [Bahrain](#), defeated the combined forces of the Arab tribes of "[Taghlib](#)", "[Bakr bin Wael](#)", and "[Abd Al-Qays](#)" and advanced temporarily into [Yamama](#) in central [Najd](#). Arabs named him, as "Shabur Dhul-aktāf" or "Zol 'Aktāf" that means "The owner of the shoulders" after this battle.



In 337, just before the death of [Constantine I](#) (324–337), Shapur II broke the peace concluded in 297 between [Narseh](#) (293–302) and Emperor [Diocletian](#) (284–305), which had been observed for forty years. A twenty-six year conflict (337–363) began in two series of wars, the first from 337 to 350. After crushing a rebellion in the south, he headed toward Mesopotamia and recaptured [Armenia](#). From there he started his first campaign against [Constantius II](#), a campaign which was mostly unsuccessful for Shapur II. He was unable to take the fortress of Singara in the [Siege of](#)

[Singara](#) (344). Shapur II also attempted with limited success to conquer the great fortresses of Roman [Mesopotamia](#), [Nisibis](#) (which he besieged three times in vain) and [Amida](#).

Although often victorious in battles, Shapur II made scarcely any progress. At the same time he was attacked in the east by nomad tribes, among whom the [Xionites](#) are named. He had to interrupt the war with the Romans and pay attention to the east. After a prolonged struggle (353–358) they were forced to conclude a peace, and their king, [Grumbates](#), agreed to accompany Shapur II in the war against the Romans.

In 358 Shapur II was ready for his second series of wars against Rome, which met with much more success. In 359, Shapur II conquered [Amida](#) after a siege of seventy-three days, and he took [Singara](#) and some other fortresses in the next year (360). In 363 the Emperor [Julian](#) (361–363), at the head of a strong army, advanced to Shapur's [capital](#) at [Ctesiphon](#) and defeated a superior Sassanid army at the [Battle of Ctesiphon](#), however he was killed during his retreat back to Roman territory. His successor [Jovian](#) (363–364) made an ignominious peace, by which the districts beyond the [Tigris](#) which had been acquired in 298 were given to the Persians along with Nisibis and Singara, and the Romans promised to interfere no more in Armenia. The great success is represented in the rock-sculptures near the town Bishapur in [Persis](#) (Stolze, *Persepolis*, p. 141); under the hoofs of the king's horse lies the body of an enemy, probably Julian, and a supplicant Roman, the Emperor Jovian, asks for peace.

Shapur II then invaded Armenia, where he took King [Arshak II](#), the faithful ally of the Romans, prisoner by treachery and forced him to commit suicide. He then attempted to introduce [Zoroastrian](#) orthodoxy into Armenia. However, the Armenian nobles resisted him successfully, secretly supported by the Romans, who sent King [Pap](#), the son of Arshak II, into Armenia. The war with Rome threatened to break out again, but Valens sacrificed Pap, arranging for his assassination in Tarsus, where he had taken refuge (374). Shapur II subdued the [Kushans](#) and took control of the entire area now known as [Afghanistan](#) and [Pakistan](#). Shapur II had conducted great hosts of captives from the Roman territory into his dominions, most of whom were settled in [Susiana](#). Here he rebuilt [Susa](#), after having killed the city's rebellious inhabitants.

By his death in 379 the Persian Empire was stronger than ever before, considerably larger than when he came to the throne, the eastern and western enemies were pacified and Persia had gained control over Armenia.

# Ardashir II

*High relief at Taq-e Bostan of the investiture of Ardashir II, flanked by Mithra and Ahura Mazda*



**Ardashir II** was the tenth [Sassanid](#) King of Persia from 379 to 383.

He is believed by some to be the **son** and by others to be the brother of Shapur II. However, it is well-known that under the reign of his predecessor, [Shapur II of Persia](#) (309–379), Ardashir II had served as governor-King of [Adiabene](#), where he had reportedly persecuted [Christians](#).

However, the acts of brutality against Christians attributed to him severely contradict the unanimous view that he was the most kind and virtuous of the Sassanian rulers. Ardashir II was given the epithet

"Nihoukar" or "Beneficent" by the Persians. The Arabs called him "Al Djemil" or "the Virtuous". According to the "Modjmel-al-Tewarikh," he took no taxes from his subjects during the four years of his reign, and thereby secured to himself their affection and gratitude.

## Relations With Armenia

Soon after his accession, events in [Armenia](#) seemed to occupy Ardashir's attention. [Arshak II](#)'s son [Pap](#) had been murdered during Shapur's reign and the [Romans](#) had replaced him with a certain [Varazdat](#) who was a distant member of the [Arshakuni](#) family. However, real power was in the hands of a certain [Moushegh](#) who appeared to be a noble in the Armenian court. Moushegh was suspected of having conspired with the Emperor of Rome and was murdered by Varazdat. This act roused the [indignation](#) of Moushegh's brother [Manuel](#) who rebelled against Varazdat and with the support of [Persia](#) deposed him and placed upon the Armenian throne Zernandukht, the widow of Pap and [Arshak III](#), Pap's son, who made Manuel the [Sparapet](#) or [Commander-in-chief](#). In return for their services, Manuel allowed the Persians to maintain a [garrison](#) in Armenia.

But this arrangement did not work for long. A [nobleman](#) named Meroujan wrongly informed Manuel that the [commandant](#) of the Persian garrison desired to capture him. Enraged, Manuel fell upon the ten thousand Persian soldiers stationed in Armenia and murdered them. But Manuel died soon afterwards and confusion followed. Desirous of maintaining peace in the borderlands, the Roman Emperor [Theodosius I](#) and Ardashir II decided upon a treaty. But Ardashir II died in 383 before the treaty could be signed. The treaty was eventually signed and [ratified](#) by his son Shapur III in the year 384.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur\\_III\\_of\\_Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur_III_of_Persia)

## Shapur III

*Image of Shapur III (l.) on a coin minted during his reign.*



**Shapur III** was the eleventh [Sassanid](#) King of Persia from 383 to 388. Shapur III succeeded his brother [Ardashir II](#) in the year 383.

Negotiations between the [Romans](#) and the [Persians](#) which had begun in the reign of [Ardashir II](#) culminated in a [treaty](#) of mutual friendship in the year 384.

According to this treaty, [Armenia](#) was partitioned between the Romans and the Persians. Therefore two kingdoms were formed, one a [vassal](#) of Rome and the other, of Persia. The smaller of these, which comprised the more western districts, which was assigned to Rome was committed to the charge of the [Arshak III](#) who had been made king by [Manuel Mamikonian](#), the son of the unfortunate [Pap of Armenia](#), and the grandson of the [Arshak II](#) contemporary with [Julian](#). The larger portion, which consisted of the regions lying towards the east, passed under the suzerainty of Persia, and was handed over to an [Arshakuni](#), named [Khosrov III](#), a [Christian](#). Thus friendly relations were established between [Rome](#) and [Persia](#) which survived for thirty-six years.

## Memorials of Shapur's Reign



Shapur III left behind him a [sculptured memorial](#), which is still to be seen in the vicinity of [Kermanshah](#). It consists of two very similar figures, looking towards each other, and standing in an arched frame. On either side of the figures are inscriptions in the Old [Pahlavi](#) character, whereby we are enabled to identify the individuals represented with the second and the third Shapur. They are identical in form, with the exception that the names in the right-

hand inscription are "Shapur, [Hormizd](#), [Narses](#)," while those in the left-hand one are "Shapur, Shapur, [Hormizd](#)." It has been supposed that the right-hand figure was erected by [Shapur II](#) and the other afterwards added by Shapur III; but the unity of the whole sculpture, and its inclusion under a single arch, seem to indicate that it was set up by a single sovereign, and was the fruit of a single conception.

Shapur III died in 388, after reigning a little more than five years. He was a man of simple tastes, and was fond of spending his time outdoors in his tent. One version says that, on one such occasion, when he was thus enjoying himself, there was a violent [hurricane](#) which blew the tent under which he was sitting. The falling tent-pole struck him fatally on his head resulting in his death a few days later. However, though most of his subjects believed in the authenticity of this story there were whispers that he could have been the victim of a conspiracy hatched by his courtiers.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahram\\_IV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahram_IV)

## Bahram IV

*Image of Bahram IV (l.) on coin from his reign.*



**Bahram IV** was twelfth [Sassanid](#) King of Persia (388–399), son and successor of [Shapur III of Persia](#) (383–388), under whom he had been governor of [Kerman](#); therefore he was called **Kermanshah**. He later founded the city of [Kermanshah](#) in Western Persia which was called after him. It was a glorious city in [Sassanid](#) period about the 4th century AD when it

became the capital city and a significant health center serving as a summer resort for [Sassanid](#) kings.

[Armenia](#) had been divided during the reign of [Shapur III](#) according to the terms of a peace treaty. But this arrangement barely survived the reign of Shapur III. By about 390, [Khosrov III](#), the King of Armenia under Persian suzerainty grew wary of his subordination to [Persia](#) and entered into a treaty with the [Roman Emperor Theodosius I](#) who deposed [Arshak III](#) and made him the king of a united Armenia in return for his allegiance. Enraged Bahram IV took Khosrov prisoner and confined him to the Castle of Oblivion and made his brother [Vram-Shapuh](#) upon the Armenian throne. Khosrov had appealed to Theodosius for help but the latter refused to intervene as it would constitute a breach of the peace of 384.

*Hellenistic-era depiction of [Bahram](#) as [Hercules](#) carved in 153 B.C.*



Bahram IV is often regarded as a harsh man who entirely neglected his duties. His conduct, it is recorded, grew so unbearable that he was ultimately assassinated by his own troops who surrounded him and shot him with arrows.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdegerd\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdegerd_I)

# Yazdegerd I

Coin of Yazdgard I, *Marw mint*



**Yazdegerd I**, or **Izdekerti** ("made by God"), was the thirteenth [Sassanid](#) king of Persia and ruled from 399 to 421. He is believed by some to be the son of [Shapur III](#) (383–388) and by others to be **son of [Bahram IV](#)** (LG in *Encycl. Britannica*) (388–389). He succeeded to the Persian throne on the assassination of Bahram IV in 399 and ruled for twenty-one years till his death in 421.

Yazdegerd I's reign is largely uneventful. The king is described as being of a peaceful disposition. There were cordial relations between Persia and the [Eastern Roman Empire](#) as well as between Persia and the [Western Roman Empire](#). Early during his reign, Yazdegerd was entrusted the care of the Roman prince [Theodosius](#) by his father [Arcadius](#) on the latter's death in 408, and Yazdegerd faithfully defended the life, power and possessions of the Roman prince.

Yazdegerd promoted [Christianity](#) in the early years of his reign and later opposed it. His alternate persecution of [Zoroastrians](#) and later Christians earned him the epithets of **Al Khasha** or "the Harsh" and **Al Athim** or "the Wicked" and **Yazdegerd the Sinner**. However, his general disposition towards the citizens of the Persian Empire was good. They gave him the epithet of **Ramashtras** or "the most quiet".

The later part of his reign was occupied by his attempts to convert [Armenia](#) to Zoroastrianism. During his last days, there took place a civil war between his sons. [Bahram V](#) emerged victorious and claimed the throne. Yazdegerd I died in 421 and was succeeded by his son Bahram V or **Bahramgur**.

When [Bahram IV](#) was assassinated in 399, his son Yazdegerd succeeded him. The Persian soldiers who had murdered Bahram IV did not hurt him on account of his excellent character and fine disposition. The general tenor of his rule was quite peaceful.

## Relations with Rome

The [Ostrogoth](#) invasion of 386, the revolt of Maximus in 387, the Antioch revolt of 387, the invasion of [Gaul](#) in 388, the massacres at [Thessalonika](#) and the rebellion of Argobastes and Eugenius in 393 had severely weakened the [Roman Empire](#). Between 386 and 398, Gildo the Moor ruled an independent kingdom in [Africa](#), and in 395 the [Goths](#) took to arms under their leader [Alaric](#). But Yazdegerd on his accession to the throne desisted from assuming any aggressive posture towards the Eastern Roman Emperor [Arcadius](#) or the Western Roman Emperor [Honorius](#). Yazdegerd's extreme tranquility and his reluctance to invade the Roman Empire earned him the epithet "Ramashtras," "the most quiet," or "the most firm," he justified his assumption of it by a complete abstinence from all military expeditions.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Religious policy

According to Wein, Yazdegerd I was a wise, benevolent, and astute ruler.<sup>[8]</sup> He was also known for his religious tolerance, towards both Christians and [Jews](#). For example, the [Talmud](#) (Ksubos, 61a) relates that [Ameimar](#), [Rav Ashi](#), and [Mar Zutra](#) would sit in his court. However, excessive zeal of the [Christian bishop](#) of [Ctesiphon](#), Abdaas, provoked a reaction, and when he tried to burn the Great [Fire temple](#) of Ctesiphon, Yazdegerd I turned against the Christians (see following).

## Persecution of Christians

Yazdegerd immediately switched sides when Abdaas burnt down the fire temple at Ctesiphon and refused to rebuild it. The burning evoked a strong reaction from the Magi, and Yazdegerd was forced to take action. Yazdegerd responded by authorizing Zoroastrian priests to destroy Christian churches all over the Empire. Christians were arrested in large numbers. There was widespread [slaughter of Christians](#) in the Persian Empire for the next five years. Christian churches all over the nation were destroyed, and Christians driven off from the kingdom.

A few Christian subjects boldly confessed their faith in Christ, but many others sought to conceal their beliefs. However, they were all arrested and slaughtered in large numbers. Thus Isdigerd alternately oppressed both Zoroastrians as well as Christians and earned the disaffection of both the parties. He earned the epithets of "Al-Khasha" or "the Harsh," and "Al-Athim" or "the Wicked".

## War of succession

When Yazdegerd I was overcome by mortal illness in the year 419, Shapur immediately rushed to Ctesiphon to claim the Sassanian throne leaving behind a viceroy to govern Armenia. But the viceroy-designate was killed soon after Shapur left Armenia. A battle of succession followed and lasted for three years after Yazdegerd's death. Shapur was treacherously killed by the courtiers in the initial stages of the battle. Bahram V arrived from Hira and captured the throne after defeating the Persian nobles with an Arab army in a three-year-long battle.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahram\\_V](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahram_V)

# Bahram V

*Silver coin of Bahram V with fire temple on its verso (British Museum , London)*



**Bahram V** was the fourteenth [Sassanid](#) King of [Persia](#) (421–438). Also called **Bahramgur**, he was a son of [Yazdegerd I](#) (399–421), after whose sudden death (or assassination) he gained the crown against the opposition of the grandes by the help of [Mundhir](#), the [Arabic](#) dynast of [al-Hirah](#).

## Reign

Bahram V began his reign with a systematic persecution of the [Christians](#), among whom [James Intercisus](#).

## War with Rome

The persecution of [James Intercisus](#) led to a [war with the Eastern Romans](#).

In the year 421, the Romans sent their general [Ardaburius](#) with an extensive contingent into Armenia. Ardaburius defeated the Persian commander Narseh and proceeded to plunder the province of [Arzanene](#) and lay siege to [Nisibis](#). Ardaburius abandoned the siege in the face of an advancing army under Bahram, who in turn besieged Theodosiopolis.

## Invasion of the Huns

During the later part of Bahram V's reign, Persia was invaded from the north-east by [Hephthalite hordes](#) who ravaged northern Iran under the command of their [Great Khan](#). They crossed the [Elburz](#) into [Khorasan](#) and proceeded as far as the ancient town of [Rei](#). Unprepared, Bahram initially made an offer of peace and submission which was well-received by the Khan of the Hephthalites. But crossing [Tabaristan](#), [Hyrcania](#) and [Nishapur](#) by night, he took the [Huns](#) unawares and massacred them along with their Khan, taking the Khan's wife hostage. The retreating Huns were pursued and slaughtered up to the [Oxus](#). One of Bahram's generals followed the Huns deep into Hun territory and destroyed their power. His portrait which survived for centuries on the coinage of [Bukhara](#) (in contemporary [Uzbekistan](#)) is considered to be an evidence of his victory over the Huns.



*Bahram Gur is a great favorite in Persian literature and poetry. "Bahram and the Indian princess in the black pavilion." Depiction of a Khamsa (Quintet) by the great Persian poet Nizami, mid-16th-century Safavid era.*

## Legends associated with Bahramgur

Numerous legends have been associated with Bahram. One account says that he aided an Indian king in his war against China and that, in return for his help, the Indian king made over the provinces of Makran and Sindh to Persia. The Lurs of Persia, it is argued, are the descendants of musicians sent to Persia by the grateful Indian monarch. However there does not exist any historical proof in support of this story. Other accounts suggest that he married an Indian princess. However, the conclusion of such a marriage alliance is regarded as highly dubious once again due to lack of evidence. His name is also associated with a legendary Indian prince of the Punjab.

## Legacy

Bahram V has left behind a rich and colorful legacy which has survived to the present day. He is especially a favorite of the writers who have woven numerous legends and fantastical tales around him. His fame has survived the downplay of

Zoroastrianism and the Anti-Iranian measures of the Umayyads and the Mongols and many of the stories have been incorporated in contemporary Islamic lore.

His legacy even survives outside Iran. He is the King who receives [The Three Princes of Serendip](#) in the tale that gave rise to the word [Serendipity](#). He is believed to be the inspiration for the legend of Bahramgur prevalent in the Punjab.

For example, the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, by Edward Fitzgerald, quatrain 17:

*"They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:  
And Bahram, that great Hunter - the Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep."*

To which Fitzgerald adds the following footnote: "Bahram Gur - *Bahram of the Wild Ass* from his fame in hunting it - a Sassanian sovereign, had also his seven palaces, each of a different colour; each with a Royal mistress within; each of whom recounts to Bahram a romance. The ruins of three of these towers are yet shown by the peasantry; as also the swamp in which Bahram sunk while pursuing his *Gur*."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdegerd\\_II\\_of\\_Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdegerd_II_of_Persia)

# Yazdegerd II

*A coin of Yazdegerd II.*



**Yazdegerd II** ("made by God,"), fifteenth [Sassanid](#) King of [Persia](#), was the son of [Bahram V](#) (421–438) and reigned from 438 to 457.

In the beginning of his reign, Yazdegerd quickly attacked the [Eastern Roman Empire](#) with a mixed army of various nations, including his [Indian](#) allies, to eliminate the threat of a Roman build-up. The Romans had been constructing fortifications in the nearby Persian territory of [Carrhae](#), in anticipation of subsequent expeditions. The Roman Emperor, [Theodosius II](#) (408–450), asked for peace and sent his commander, [Anatolius](#), personally to Yazdegerd's camp. In the ensuing negotiations in 441, both empires promised not to build any new fortifications in their border territories. Yazdegerd, gathered his forces in [Neishabur](#) in 443 and launched a prolonged campaign against the [Kidarites](#). After numerous battles, he crushed them and drove them out beyond the [Oxus](#) river in 450.

During his eastern campaign, Yazdegerd grew suspicious of [Christians](#) in the army and the nobility and expelled many of them. He then persecuted the [Assyrians Christians](#) and, to a much lesser extent, [Jews](#). Advancing his pro-[Zoroastrian](#) policy, he battled an uprising of [Armenian Christians](#) in the [Battle of Vartanantz](#) in 451.

In his later years, Yazdegerd became engaged again with the Kidarites until his death in 457. He pursued strict religious policies and persecuted various [minorities](#).



*Depiction of the battle by Grigor Khanjian*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balash>

# Balash

*Coin showing Balash and a fire altar with two attendants.*



**Balash** (in the Greek authors, *Balas*; the later form of the name *Vologases*), the eighteenth **Sassanid** King of Persia in 484–488, was the brother and successor of **Peroz I of Persia** (457–484), who had died in a battle against the **Hephthalites** (White Huns) who invaded **Persia** from the east.

## Reign of Balash

Balash was made King of Persia on the death of his brother **Peroz** fighting the Huns.

Immediately after ascending the throne, he resolved to drive the Hephthalites out of Persia. With this goal in mind, he dispatched an armed contingent under an officer named **Sukra** or Sufraii to destroy the Huns. He surprised the Huns and forced them to enter into negotiations.

Soon after the victory over the Huns, Balash concluded peace with the Armenians. The conditions of the peace were as follows:

- (i) All existing fire-altars in **Armenia** should be destroyed and no new ones should be constructed.
- (ii) **Christians** in Armenia should have freedom of worship and conversions to **Zoroastrianism** should be stopped.
- (iii) Land should not be allotted to people who convert to Zoroastrianism
- (iv) The Persian King should, in person, administer Armenia and though the aid of Governors or deputies.

A few months later, **Zareh**, son of Peroz rose in rebellion. Balash put down the rebellion and slew him.

Soon after this, **Kavadh**, another son of Peroz revolted and being unsuccessful sought the assistance of **Hephthalites** and arrived in **Ctesiphon** at the head of a large Hephthalite contingent. Balash did not survive for long after this invasion.

Balash is praised by Christian historians as a mild and generous monarch, who made concessions to the **Christians**.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peroz\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peroz_I)

# Peroz I

*Coin of Peroz I, showing the ruler, and a fire altar with two stylized attendants.*



**Peroz I** (Pirooz, Peirozes, Priscus, [Persian](#): "the Victor"), was the seventeenth [Sassanid](#) King of Persia, who ruled from 457 to 484. Peroz I was the eldest son of [Yazdegerd II of Persia](#) (438–457).

On the death of Peroz I's father, [Yazdegerd II](#), the younger son of the deceased Emperor,

Hormizd seized the throne in the absence of his elder brother Peroz who had been posted as the Governor of distant [Sistan](#) forcing Peroz to seek the protection of the Hephthalites.

The [civil war](#) in [Persia](#) had affected the nation so much as to cost a province. Vatche, the king of Aghouank (Albania), rebelled against Persian rule and declared himself independent while the brothers were busy fighting amongst each other. So once Peroz I ascended the throne in the year 457, he led an army into Albania and completely subjugated the nation.

## The First Campaign Against the Huns

No sooner had Persia recovered from the famine, than war broke out with the Huns of the north. Provoked by an insult heaped upon him by Khush-Newaz, Peroz led an invasion of the Hephthalite country forcing them to retreat. But when Peroz pursued the Hephthalites to the hills, he suffered a crushing defeat and was forced to yield to the Huns and pay them tribute. More importantly, he had to surrender his son [Kavadh I](#) to Khush-Newaz as [hostage](#).

## The Second Campaign against the Huns and Peroz I's Death

Towards the end of his reign, Peroz gathered an army of 50,000-100,000 men and, placing his brother [Balash](#) at the head of the government in [Ctesiphon](#), he invaded the Hephthalites in order to avenge the insult heaped upon him during the first campaign. He set up his position at [Balkh](#) and rejected the terms of peace offered by Khush-Newaz. However, when a showdown with the Persians seemed imminent, Khush-Newaz sent a small body of troops in advance in order to trick Peroz into an ambush. The plan was successful, and the Persians were defeated with great slaughter, Peroz being one of the victims. Khush-Newaz, however, treated the body of his erstwhile friend with dignity and dispatched it to Persia to be buried with full honors. Balash was crowned the next Emperor of Persia.

Soon afterwards, the Hephthalites invaded and plundered Persia. Persia, however, was saved when a noble Persian from the [Parthian family of Karen](#), [Zarmihr](#) (or Sokhra/Sufra), raised [Balash](#) (484–488), one of Peroz I's brothers, to the throne.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavadh\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavadh_I)

# Kavadh I

Image of Kavadh I on one of his coins.



**Kavadh I**, also spelled **Kaveh** and **Kavad** (born 449, ruled 488–531), was son of [Peroz I](#) (457–484) and the nineteenth [Sassanid](#) King of Persia from 488 to 531. He was crowned by the nobles in place of his deposed and blinded uncle [Balash](#) (484–488).

At this time the empire was utterly disorganized by the invasion of the [Ephthalites](#) or White Huns from the east. After one of their victories against Peroz I, Kavadh I had been a hostage among them for two years, pending the payment of a heavy ransom. In 484 Peroz I had been defeated and slain with his whole army. Balash was not able to restore the royal authority. The hopes of the magnates and high priests that Kavadh I would suit their purpose were soon disappointed.

## Mazdaki sect

Kavadh I gave his support to the [communistic](#) sect founded by [Mazdak](#), son of [Bamdad](#), who demanded that the rich should divide their wives and their wealth with the poor. His intention evidently was, by adopting the doctrine of the Mazdakites, to break the influence of the magnates. But in 496 he was deposed and incarcerated in the "Castle of Oblivion ([Lethe](#))" in [Susiana](#), and his brother [Djamasp](#) (496–498) was raised to the throne.

Kavadh I, however, escaped and found refuge with the [Ephthalites](#), whose King gave him his daughter in marriage and aided him to return to Persia. In 498 Kavadh I became King again and punished his opponents. He had to pay a tribute to the Ephthalites and applied for subsidies to [Rome](#), which had before supported the Persians. But now the Emperor [Anastasius I](#) (491–518) refused subsidies, expecting that the two rival powers of the East would exhaust one another in war. At the same time he intervened in the affairs of the Persian part of [Armenia](#) and restored [Iberia](#) to Iran's effective control.

Kavadh I joined the Ephthalites and began war against the [Byzantine Empire](#). In 502 he took Theodosiopolis in Armenia; in 503 Amida on the [Tigris](#). In 505 an invasion of Armenia by the western Huns from the [Caucasus](#) led to an armistice, during which the Romans paid subsidies to the Persians for the maintenance of the fortifications on the Caucasus.

When [Justin I](#) (518–527) came to the throne in Constantinople, the conflict began anew. The Persian vassal, [al-Mundhir IV ibn al-Mundhir](#), laid waste [Mesopotamia](#) and slaughtered the monks and nuns. In 531 [Belisarius](#) was defeated at the [Battle of Callinicum](#). Shortly afterwards Kavadh I died, at the age of eighty-two, in September 531. During his last years his favourite son [Khosrau I](#) had had great influence over him and had been proclaimed successor.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khosrau\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khosrau_I)

# Khosrau I

*Hunting scene showing king Khosrau I.*



**Khosrau I** (also called **Xusro I**, **Khosnow I**, **Chosroes I** in classical sources, most commonly known in Persian as **Anushirvan**, [Persian](#): meaning *the immortal soul*), also known as **Anushiravan the Just** (Born c. 501, ruled 531–579), was the favourite son and successor of [Kavadh I](#) (488–531), twentieth [Sassanid](#) Emperor (Great King) of Persia, and the most famous and celebrated of the Sassanid Emperors.

He laid the foundations of many cities and opulent palaces, and oversaw the repair of trade roads as well as the building of numerous bridges and dams. During Khosrau I's ambitious reign, art and science flourished in Persia and the Sassanid

Empire reached its peak of glory and prosperity. His rule was preceded by his father's and succeeded by [Khosrau II](#)'s (590–628) whose reign came to be considered the *dark age* in the history of the Sassanid Empire.

## Early life

According to early historical sources, Khosrau I was Kavadh I's third son through a [hephthal](#) princess [Newandukht](#), granddaughter of [Hephthal III](#), commonly called [Turandot](#). His mother endeavored to ascend him to throne, then expatriated his half-brother, Kavoos, first son of Kavadh I, to Mazandaran. After proclaimed as [heir apparent](#), he appears to have had a major influence over his father [Kavadh I of Persia](#) and helped him in the worst situations during the later years of his rule. He was apparently also behind many of his father's decisions.

According to the Roman Historian [Procopius of Caesarea](#), Kavadh I tried to have his third son Khosrau adopted by the Eastern Roman emperor [Justin I](#) in the mid-520s. This is the first time that Khosrau is mentioned in the sources. After Romans and Persians had failed to reach an agreement about the adoption, a new war began in [526](#) which was to last until [532](#).

## Conquests

At the beginning of his reign Khosrau I concluded an "Eternal Peace" with the [Roman Emperor Justinian I](#) ([527–565](#)) in 532, who wanted to have his hands free for the conquest of [Africa](#) and [Sicily](#). But his successes against the [Vandals](#) and [Goths](#) caused Khosrau I to begin the war again in [540](#).

He invaded [Syria](#) and sacked the great city of [Antioch](#), deporting its people to [Mesopotamia](#), where he built for them a new city near [Ctesiphon](#) under the name of "Khosrau-Antioch" (*Veh Antiok Xusro*) or "Chosro-Antioch": the account of [Procopius](#) in his *De bello Persico ii* reads as:

“ Xusro I founded a city in [Assyria](#), in a place that was a day’s march away from the city of [Ctesiphon](#); he named it ‘Xusro's Antioch’ and settled all captives from Antioch there, for whom he even had a bath and a [hippodrome](#) built and whom he provided also with other comforts. For he brought along the charioteers and musicians from Antioch and other [Romans](#). Moreover, at public expense he took more care in catering for these people from Antioch than was customary for captives, and (he did so) for their entire life, and gave orders to call them ‘the royal ones’ so that they would not be responsible to any magistrate but the king alone. When one of the other Romans had escaped and managed to seek refuge in Xusro's Antioch and when one of the inhabitants claimed that he was a relative, the owner was no longer allowed to remove this captive, not even if one of the highest ranking Persians happened to have enslaved the man. ”

In 545, an armistice was concluded, but in 547 the Lazi returned to their Roman allegiance and the [Lazic War](#) resumed, continuing until a truce was agreed in 557. At last, in 562, a peace was concluded for fifty years, in which the Persians left Lazica to the Romans, and promised not to persecute the [Christians](#), if they did not attempt to make proselytes among the [Zarathustrians](#); on the other hand, the Romans had to pay annual subsidies to Persia.

Meanwhile in the east, the [Hephthalites](#) had been attacked by the [Turks \(Göktürks\)](#). About 560, Khosrau I united with them to destroy the Hephthalite Empire. In 567 he conquered [Bactria](#), while he left the country north of the [Oxus](#) to the Turks. From that time till the conquests by [Islam](#), Yemen was dependent on Persia, and a Persian governor resided here. In 572, [Armenia](#) and [Iberia](#) rebelled against Persia with Roman support, beginning a new war in which Khosrau I conquered the city of [Dara](#) on the [Euphrates](#) in 573, but after a largely unsuccessful incursion of Anatolia in 576 he was heavily defeated by the Romans in a battle near [Melitene](#). He sued for peace in 579, but while negotiations with the Emperor [Tiberius II](#) (578–582) were still going on, Khosrau I died and was succeeded by his son [Hormizd IV](#) (579–590).

## Reforms

Khosrau I introduced a rational system of [taxation](#), based upon a survey of [landed possessions](#), which his father had begun, and tried in every way to increase the welfare and the revenues of his empire. In [Babylonia](#) he built or restored the [canals](#). His army was in discipline decidedly superior to the Romans, and apparently was well paid. He was also interested in [literature](#) and [philosophical](#) discussions. Under his reign, [chess](#) was introduced from [India](#) and many books were brought from India and translated into [Pahlavi](#). Some of these later found their way into the literature of the [Islamic world](#). His famous minister [Burzoe](#) translated Indian [Panchatantra](#) from [Sanskrit](#) into middle Persian language of [Pahlavi](#) and named it [Kelileh o Demneh](#). This [Middle Persian](#) version was a few centuries later translated by Iranian Muslims into Arabic and then found its way to Europe. The Arabic version was also used to render a [New Persian](#) version of the book.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hormizd\\_IV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hormizd_IV)

## Hormizd IV

*Coin of Hormizd IV, found at Karakhodja, Chinese Central Asia.*



**Hormizd IV**, son of [Khosrau I](#), reigned as the twenty-first [King of Persia](#) from 579 to 590.

He seems to have been imperious and violent, but not without some kindness of heart. Some very characteristic stories are told of him by [Tabari](#). His father's sympathies had been with the nobles and the priests. Hormizd IV protected the common people and introduced a severe discipline in his army and court. When the priests demanded a persecution of the Christians, he declined on the ground that the throne and the government could only be safe if it gained the goodwill of both concurring religions. The consequence was that

Hormizd IV raised a strong opposition in the ruling classes, which led to many executions and confiscations.

When Hormizd IV came to the throne in 579, he killed his brothers. From his father he had inherited a war against the [Byzantine Empire](#) and against the [Turks](#) in the east, and negotiations of peace had just begun with the Emperor [Tiberius II](#) (47<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), but Hormizd IV haughtily declined to cede anything of the conquests of his father.

Determined to teach the haughty prince a lesson, the Roman General [Maurice](#) crossed the frontier and invaded Kurdistan. The next year, he even planned to penetrate into Media and Southern [Mesopotamia](#) but the [Ghassanid](#) sheikh al-Mundhir allegedly betrayed the Roman cause by informing Hormizd IV of the Roman Emperor's plans. Maurice was forced to retreat in a hurry but during the course his retreat to the Roman frontier, he drew the Persian general Adarman into an engagement and defeated him.

In 582, the Persian general Tamchosro crossed the Perso-Roman frontier and attacked Constantia but was defeated and killed. However, the deteriorating physical condition of the Roman Emperor Tiberius forced Maurice to return to Constantiople immediately. Meanwhile [John Mystacon](#), who had replaced Maurice, attacked the Persians at the junction of the Nymphius and the Tigris but was defeated and forced to withdraw. Another defeat brought about his replacement by [Philippicus](#).

Philippicus spent the years 584 and 585 making deep incursions into Persian territory.<sup>[1]</sup> The Persians retaliated by attacking Monocartium and [Martyropolis](#) in 585. Philippicus defeated them at Solachon in 586 and besieged the fortress of Chlomonon. After an unsuccessful siege, Philippicus retreated and made a stand at Amida. Soon, however, he relinquished command to Heraclius in 587.

In the year 588, the Roman troops mutinied and taking advantage of this mutiny, Persian troops once again attacked Constantia but were repulsed. The Romans retaliated with an equally unsuccessful invasion of Arzanene, but defeated another Persian offensive at Martyropolis.

In 589, the Persians attacked Martyropolis and captured it after defeating Philippicus twice. Philippicus was recalled and was replaced by Comentiolus under whose command the Romans defeated the Persians at Sisauranon. The Romans now laid siege to Martyropolis but at the height of the siege news circulated in Persia about a Turkish invasion.

The Turks had occupied Balkh and Herat and were penetrating into the heart of Persia when Hormizd IV finally dispatched a contingent under the general [Bahram Chobin](#) to fight them back. Bahram marched upon Balkh and defeated the Turks killing their Khan and capturing his son.

Soon after the threat from the north was exterminated, Bahram was sent to fight the Romans on the western frontier. He was initially successful, warding off an Iberian offensive against Azerbaijan, raiding in Svaneti and defeating a Roman attack on Albania, but was defeated by the Roman general Romanus in a subsequent battle on the river Araxes. Hormizd, jealous of the rising fame of Bahram, wished to humiliate him and sent him a complete set of women's garments to wear. Bahram responded by writing him an extremely offensive letter. Enraged, Hormizd sent Persian soldiers to arrest Bahram but they moved over to Bahram's side. Now Bahram moved to Persia with a large army to depose the haughty monarch and place himself on the throne.

Besides, Hormizd's behavior had now turned so unbearable that his son, Khusrau broke into open revolt. With a civil war brewing in Persia, Hormizd did not survive on the Persian throne for long. The magnates deposed and blinded Hormizd IV and proclaimed his son [Khosrau II](#) King. The sources do not agree on how Hormizd was killed: Theophylact states that Khosrau killed him a few days after his father was blinded; the Armenian historian [Sebeos](#) states that Hormizd's own courtiers killed him.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khosrau\\_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khosrau_II)

## Khosrau II

**Khosrau II** (**Khosrow II**, **Chosroes II**, or **Xosrov II** in classical sources, sometimes called *Parvez*, "the Ever Victorious" ) was the twenty-second [Sassanid King of Persia](#), reigning from [590](#) to [628](#). He was the son of [Hormizd IV](#) (reigned [579–590](#)).

Khosrau II was inferior to his grandfather in terms of proper education and discipline. He was haughty, cruel, and given to luxury; he was neither a warrior-[general](#) nor an [administrator](#) and, despite his brilliant victories, did not personally command his armies in the field, relying instead on the [strategy](#) and [loyalty](#) of his [generals](#). Nevertheless [Tabari](#) describes him as:



*Excelling most of the other Persian kings in bravery, wisdom and forethought, and none matching him in military might and triumph, hoarding of treasures and good fortunes, hence the epithet Parviz, meaning victorious.*

According to legend, Khosrau had a [shabestan](#) in which over 3,000 [concubines](#) resided.

*Gold coin with the image of Khosrau II*

In [622](#), the Byzantine Emperor [Heraclius](#) ([45th great grandfather](#)) (who had succeeded [Phocas](#) in [610](#) and ruled until [641](#)) was able to take the field with a powerful force. In [624](#), he advanced into northern [Media](#), where he destroyed the great fire-temple of [Ganzhak](#) ([Gazaca](#)). Several years later, in [626](#), he captured Lazistan ([Colchis](#)). Later that same year, Persian general [Shahrbaraz](#) advanced to [Chalcedon](#) and attempted to capture [Constantinople](#) with the help of [Persia's Avar](#) allies. His maneuver failed as his forces were defeated, and he withdrew his army from [Anatolia](#) later in [628](#).

Following the [Khazar invasion of Transcaucasia](#) in [627](#), Heraclius defeated the Persian army at the [Battle of Nineveh](#) and advanced towards [Ctesiphon](#). Khosrau II fled from his favourite residence, Dastgerd (near [Baghdad](#)), without offering resistance. Meanwhile, some of the Persian grandees freed his eldest son [Kavadh II](#) (he ruled briefly in 628), whom Khosrau II had imprisoned, and proclaimed him King on the night of [23–4 February](#), 628. Four days afterwards, Khosrau II was murdered in his palace. Meanwhile, Heraclius returned in triumph to Constantinople and in 629 the True Cross was returned to him and Egypt evacuated, while the Persian empire, from the apparent greatness which it had reached ten years ago, sank into hopeless anarchy. It was overtaken by the armies of the first [Islamic Caliphs](#) beginning in [634](#).

## Muhammad 's letter to Khosrau II

Khosrau II is also remembered in [Islamic](#) tradition to be the Persian king to whom [Muhammad](#) had sent a messenger, [Abdullah ibn Hudhafah as-Sahmi](#), along with a letter in which Khosrau was asked to preach the religion of Islam. In [Tabari](#)'s original Arabic manuscript the letter to Khosrau II reads:

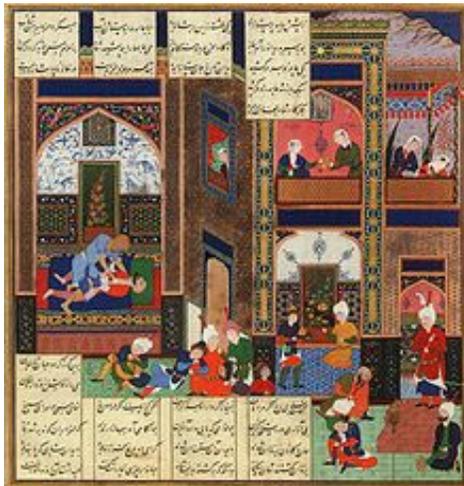
ميجرلا نمجرلا لالا مسب  
 نا دمش و ملوسر و مللاب نمآ و يدلا عبتا نم يلع مالس . سرفلا ميظع ىرسك ىلا لالا لوسر دمحم نم  
 سانلا ىلا لالا لوسر ىناف ، لالا اعذب كوعدا . ملوسر و مدبع دمحم نا و مل كي رشال مدحو لالا الال  
 سوجملا مئا نافي تيبا نافي . ملست ملسافي . نيرفالكلا يلع لوقلا قحي و ايح ناك نم رذنال ءفاك  
 كي يلع .

English translation:

*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful*

*From Muhammad, Messenger of God, to Chosroes, Ruler of Persia. Peace be on him who follows the guidance, believes in God and His Messenger and bears witness that there is no one worthy of worship save God, the One, without associate, and that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger. I invite you to the Call of God, as I am the Messenger of God to the whole of mankind, so that I may warn every living person and so that the truth may become clear and the judgement of God may overtake the disbelievers. I call upon you to accept Islam and thus make yourself secure. If you turn away, you will bear the sins of your [Zoroastrian](#) subjects.*

*The assassination of Chosroes, in a Mughal manuscript of ca 1535, Persian poems are from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh*



The [Persian](#) historian [Tabari](#) continues that in refusal and outrage, Khosrau tore up Muhammed's letter and commanded [Badhan](#), his vassal ruler of [Yemen](#), to dispatch two valiant men to identify, seize and bring this man from [Hijaz](#) (Muhammad) to him. Meanwhile, back in [Madinah](#), Abdullah told Muhammad how Khosrau had torn his letter to pieces and Muhammad's only reply was, "May his kingdom tear apart", and predicted that Khosrau's own son shall kill him. The narration carries on with accounts of their encounter and dialogue with Muhammad and conversion of Badhan and the whole Yemenite Persians to Islam subsequent to receipt of shocking tidings of Khosrau's murder by his own son, [Kavadh II](#).

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavadh\\_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavadh_II)

## Kavadh II

*Coin of Kavadh II*



**Kavadh II** (Siroes), twenty-third [Sassanid](#) King of Persia, son of [Khosrau II](#) (590–628), was raised to the throne in opposition to his father in February 628, after the great victories of the Emperor [Heraclius](#) (610–641). He put his father and eighteen brothers to death, began negotiations with Heraclius, but died after a reign of a few months.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdgerd\\_III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdgerd_III)

# Yazdegerd III

*Coin of Yazdgerd III, Sakastan mint, Dated RY 11.*



**Yazdgerd III** (also spelled *Yazdegerd* or *Yazdiger*, **Persian**: "made by God") was the twenty-ninth and last king of the **Sassanid dynasty** of **Iran** and a grandson of **Khosrau II** (590–628). His father was Shahryar whose mother was Miriam, the daughter of the **Byzantine Emperor Maurice**. Yazdgerd III ascended the throne on 16 June 632 after a series of internal conflicts.

Yazdgerd III reigned as a youth and had never truly exercised authority. The **Muslim conquest of Persia** began in his first year of reign, and ended with the **Battle of al-Qādisiyyah**. Yazdegerd sought an alliance with Emperor **Heraclius**, who was an old rival of the **Persian Empire**.

Following the battle of al-Qādisiyyah, the Arabs occupied **Ctesiphon**, and the young King fled eastward into **Media** going from one district to another, until at last he was killed by a local miller for his purse at **Merv** in 651.<sup>[21]</sup>

**Ferdowsi** a contemporary of **Mahmud of Ghazni** recounts the killing of Yazdegerd by the miller at the behest of **Mahuy Suri**

“ Mahui sends the miller to cut off his head on pain of losing his own, and having none of his race left alive. His chiefs hear this and cry out against him, and a **Mobed** of the name of Radui tells him that to kill a king or prophet will bring evil upon him and his son, and is supported in what he says by a holy man of the name of Hormuzd Kharad Shehran, and Mehronush.

The miller most unwillingly goes in and stabs him with a dagger in the middle. Mahui's horsemen all go and see him and take off his clothing and ornaments, leaving him on the ground . All the nobles curse Mahui and wish him the same fate. ”

The **Zoroastrian religious calendar**, which is still in use today, uses the **regnal year** of Yazdgerd III as its base year. Its **calendar era** (year numbering system), which is accompanied by a Y.Z. suffix, thus indicates the number of years since the emperor's coronation in 632 AD.

Yazdgerd's son **Pirooz II** fled to **China**. Yazdgerd's daughter **Shahrbanu** is believed to be the wife of **Husayn ibn Ali**. Yazdgerd's other daughter Izdundad was married to **Bustanai ben Haninai**, the Jewish **exilarch**. The Bahai religious leader **Bahá'u'lláh**'s ancestry can be traced back to Yazdgerd III.