

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

## The Sassanians (New Persia) <sup>1</sup>

By George Rawlinson

Lesson	Titles
SASS001	Chapters 1 to 3
SASS002	Chapters 4 to 6
SASS003	Chapters 7 to 9
SASS004	Chapters 10 to 12
<b>SASS005</b>	<b>Chapters 13 to 16</b>
SASS006	Chapters 17 to 19
SASS007	Chapters 20 and 21
SASS008	Chapters 22 to 24
SASS009	Chapters 25 and 26
SASS010	Chapters 27 and 28

### 13. Isdigerd I

Varahran IV. was succeeded (A.D. 399) by his son, Izdikerdt or Isdigerd I. whom the soldiers, though they had murdered his father, permitted to ascend the throne without difficulty. He is said, at his accession, to have borne a good character for prudence and moderation, a character which he sought to confirm by the utterance on various occasions of high-sounding moral sentiments. The general tenor of his reign was peaceful; and we may conclude therefore that he was of an unwarlike temper, since the circumstances of the time were such as would naturally have induced a prince of any military capacity to resume hostilities against the Romans. After the arrangement made with Rome by Sapor III. in A.D. 384, a terrible series of calamities

had befallen the empire. Invasions of Ostrogoths and Franks signalized the years A.D. 386 and 388; in A.D. 387 the revolt of Maximus seriously endangered the western moiety of the Roman state; in the same year occurred an outburst of sedition at Antioch, which was followed shortly by the more dangerous sedition, and the terrible massacre of Thessalonica; Argobastes and Eugenius headed a rebellion in A.D. 393; Gildo the Moor detached Africa from the empire in A.D. 386, and maintained a separate dominion on the southern shores of the Mediterranean for twelve years, from A.D. 386 to 398; in A.D. 395 the Gothic warriors within and without the Roman frontier took arms, and under the redoubtable Alaric threatened at once the East and the West, ravaged Greece, captured Corinth, Argos, and Sparta, and from the coasts of the Adriatic already marked for their prey the smiling fields of Italy. The rulers of the East and West, Arcadius and Honorius, were alike weak and unenterprising; and further, they were not even on good terms, nor was either likely to trouble himself very greatly about attacks upon the territories of the other. Isdigerd might have crossed the Euphrates, and overrun or conquered the Asiatic provinces of the Eastern Empire, without causing Honorius a pang, or inducing him to stir from Milan. It is true that Western Rome possessed at this time the rare treasure of a capable general; but Stilicho was looked upon with fear and aversion by the emperor of the East, and was moreover fully occupied with the defence of his own master's territories. Had Isdigerd, on ascending the throne in A.D. 399, unsheathed the sword and resumed the bold designs of his grandfather, Sapor II., he could scarcely have met with any serious or prolonged resistance. He would have found the East governed practically by the eunuch Eutropius, a plunderer and oppressor, universally hated and feared; he would have had opposed to him nothing but distracted counsels and disorganized forces; Asia Minor was in possession of the Ostrogoths, who,

<sup>1</sup> This Grace Notes study of material in the public domain is published for free distribution. Edited by Warren Doud, [warren.doud@gmail.com](mailto:warren.doud@gmail.com), Austin, Texas.

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

under the leadership of Tribigild, were ravaging and destroying far and wide; the armies of the State were commanded by Gainas, the Goth, and Leo, the wool-comber, of whom the one was incompetent, and the other unfaithful; there was nothing, apparently, that could have prevented him from overrunning Roman Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Syria, or even from extending his ravages, or his dominion, to the shores of the Aegean. But the opportunity was either not seen, or was not regarded as having any attractions. Isdigerd remained tranquil and at rest within the walls of his capital. Assuming as his special title the characteristic epithet of "Ramashtras," "the most quiet," or "the most firm," he justified his assumption of it by a complete abstinence from all military expeditions.

When Isdigerd had reigned peaceably for the space of nine years, he is said to have received a compliment of an unusual character. Arcadius, the emperor of the East, finding his end approaching, and anxious to secure a protector for his son Theodosius, a boy of tender age, instead of committing him to the charge of his uncle Honorius, or selecting a guardian for him from among his own subjects, by a formal testamentary act, we are told, placed his child under the protection of the Persian monarch. He accompanied the appointment by a solemn appeal to the magnanimity of Isdigerd, whom he exhorted at some length to defend with all his force, and guide with his best wisdom, the young king and his kingdom. According to one writer, he further appended to this trust a valuable legacy--no less than a thousand pounds weight of pure gold, which he begged his Persian brother to accept as a token of his goodwill. When Arcadius died, and the testament was opened, information of its contents was sent to Isdigerd, who at once accepted the charge assigned to him, and addressed a letter to the Senate of Constantinople, in which he declared his determination to punish any attempt against his ward with the extremest severity. Unable

to watch over his charge in person, he selected for his guide and instructor a learned eunuch of his court, by name Antiochus, and sent him to Constantinople, where for several years he was the young prince's constant companion. Even after his death or expulsion, which took place in consequence of the intrigues of Pulcheria, Theodosius's elder sister, the Persian monarch continued faithful to his engagements. During the whole of his reign he not only remained at peace with the Romans, but avoided every act that they could have regarded as in the least degree unfriendly.

Such is the narrative which has come down to us on the authority of historians, the earliest of whom wrote a century and a half after Arcadius's death. Modern criticism has, in general, rejected the entire story, on this account, regarding the silence of the earlier writers as outweighing the positive statements of the later ones. It should, however, be borne in mind, first that the earlier writers are few in number, and that their histories are very meagre and scanty; secondly, that the fact, if fact it were, was one not very palatable to Christians; and thirdly, that, as the results, so far as Rome was concerned, were negative, the event might not have seemed to be one of much importance, or that required notice. The character of Procopius, with whom the story originates, should also be taken into consideration, and the special credit allowed him by Agathias for careful and diligent research. It may be added, that one of the main points of the narrative--the position of Antiochus at Constantinople during the early years of Theodosius--is corroborated by the testimony of a contemporary, the bishop Synesius, who speaks of a man of this name, recently in the service of a Persian, as all-powerful with the Eastern emperor. It has been supposed by one writer that the whole story grew out of this fact; but the basis scarcely seems to be sufficient; and it is perhaps most probable that Arcadius did really by his will commend his son to the kind

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

consideration of the Persian monarch, and that that monarch in consequence sent him an adviser, though the formal character of the testamentary act, and the power and position of Antiochus at the court of Constantinople, may have been overstated. Theodosius no doubt owed his quiet possession of the throne rather to the good disposition towards him of his own subjects than to the protection of a foreigner; and Isdigerd refrained from all attack on the territories of the young prince, rather by reason of his own pacific temper than in consequence of the will of Arcadius.

The friendly relations established, under whatever circumstances, between Isdigerd and the Roman empire of the East seemed to have inclined the Persian monarch, during a portion of his reign, to take the Christians into his favor, and even to have induced him to contemplate seeking admission into the Church by the door of baptism. Antiochus, his representative at the Court of Arcadius, openly wrote in favor of the persecuted sect; and the encouragement received from this high quarter rapidly increased the number of professing Christians in the Persian territories. The sectaries, though oppressed, had long been allowed to have their bishops; and Isdigerd is said to have listened with approval to the teaching of two of them, Marutha, bishop of Mesopotamia, and Abdaas, bishop of Ctesiphon. Convinced of the truth of Christianity, but unhappily an alien from its spirit, he commenced a persecution of the Magians and their most powerful adherents, which caused him to be held in detestation by his subjects, and has helped to attach to his name the epithets of "Al-Khasha," "the Harsh," and "Al-Athim," "the Wicked." But the persecution did not continue long. The excessive zeal of Abdaas after a while provoked a reaction; and Isdigerd, deserting the cause which he had for a time espoused, threw himself (with all the zeal of one who, after nearly embracing truth, relapses into error) into the arms of the opposite party. Abdaas had ventured to burn down the great Fire-Temple of Ctesiphon, and had then

refused to rebuild it. Isdigerd authorized the Magian hierarchy to retaliate by a general destruction of the Christian churches throughout the Persian dominions, and by the arrest and punishment of all those who acknowledged themselves to believe the Gospel. A fearful slaughter of the Christians in Perga followed during five years; some, eager for the earthly glory and the heavenly rewards of martyrdom, were forward to proclaim themselves members of the obnoxious sect; others, less courageous or less inclined to self-assertion, sought rather to conceal their creed; but these latter were carefully sought out, both in the towns and in the country districts, and when convicted were relentlessly put to death. Nor was mere death regarded as enough. The victims were subjected, besides, to cruel sufferings of various kinds, and the greater number of them expired under torture. Thus Isdigerd alternately oppressed the two religious professions, to one or other of which belonged the great mass of his subjects; and, having in this way given both parties reason to hate him, earned and acquired a unanimity of execration which has but seldom been the lot of persecuting monarchs.

At the same time that Isdigerd allowed this violent persecution of the Christians in his own kingdom of Persia, he also sanctioned an attempt to extirpate Christianity in the dependent country of Armenia. Varahran-Sapor, the successor of Chosroes, had ruled the territory quietly and peaceably for twenty-one years. He died A.D. 413, leaving behind him a single son, Artases, who was at his father's death aged no more than ten years. Under these circumstances, Isaac, the Metropolitan of Armenia, proceeded to the court of Ctesiphon, and petitioned Isdigerd to replace on the Armenian throne the prince who had been deposed twenty-one years earlier, and who was still a prisoner on parole in the "Castle of Oblivion"--viz. Chosroes. Isdigerd acceded to the request; and Chosroes was released from confinement and restored to the throne from which he had been

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

expelled by Varahran IV. in A.D. 391. He, however, survived his elevation only a year. Upon his decease, A.D. 413, Isdigerd selected for the viceroyship, not an Arsacid, not even an Armenian, but his own son, Sapor, whom he forced upon the reluctant provincials, compelling them to acknowledge him as monarch (A.D. 413-414). Sapor was instructed to ingratiate himself with the Armenian nobles, by inviting them to visit him, by feasting them, making them presents, holding friendly converse with them, hunting with them; and was bidden to use such influence as he might obtain to convert the chiefs from Christianity to Zoroastrianism. The young prince appears to have done his best; but the Armenians were obstinate, resisted his blandishments, and remained Christians in spite of all his efforts. He reigned from A.D. 414 to 418, at the end of which time, learning that his father had fallen into ill health, he quitted Armenia and returned to the Persian court, in order to press his claims to the succession. Isdigerd died soon afterwards (A.D. 419 or 420); and Sapor made an attempt to seize the throne; but there was another pretender whose partisans had more strength, and the viceroy of Armenia was treacherously assassinated in the palace of his father. Armenia remained for three years in a state of anarchy; and it was not till Varahran V. had been for some time established upon the Persian throne that Artases was made viceroy, under the name of Artasiris or Artaxerxes.

The coins of Isdigerd I. are not remarkable as works of art; but they possess some features of interest. They are numerous, and appear to have been issued from various mints, but all bear a head of the same type. It is that of a middle-aged man, with a short beard and hair gathered behind the head in a cluster of curls. The distinguishing mark is the headdress, which has the usual inflated ball above a fragment of the old mural crown, and further bears a crescent in front. The reverse has the usual fire-altar with supporters, and is for the most part very rudely executed. The ordinary

legend is, on the obverse, "\_Mazdisn bag ramashtras Izdikerti, malkan malka Airan,"\_ or "the Ormazd-worshipping divine most peaceful Isdigerd, king of the kings of Iran;" and on the reverse, "\_Ramashtras Izdikerti,"\_ "the most peaceful Isdigerd." In some cases, there is a second name, associated with that of the monarch, on the reverse, a name which reads either "Ardashatri" (Artaxerxes) or, "Varahran." It has been conjectured that, where the name of "Artaxerxes" occurs, the reference is to the founder of the empire; while it is admitted that the "Varahran" intended is almost certainly Isdigerd's son and successor, Varahran V., the "Bahram-Grur" of the modern Persians. Perhaps a more reasonable account of the matter would be that Isdigerd had originally a son Artaxerxes, whom he intended to make his successor, but that this son died or offended him, and that then he gave his place to Varahran.

The character of Isdigerd is variously represented. According to the Oriental writers, he had by nature an excellent disposition, and at the time of his accession was generally regarded as eminently sage, prudent, and virtuous; but his conduct after he became king disappointed all the hopes that had been entertained of him. He was violent, cruel, and pleasure-seeking; he broke all laws human and divine; he plundered the rich, ill-used the poor, despised learning, left those who did him a service unrewarded, suspected everybody. He wandered continually about his vast empire, not to benefit his subjects, but to make them all suffer equally. In curious contrast with these accounts is the picture drawn of him by the Western authors, who celebrate his magnanimity and his virtue, his peaceful temper, his faithful guardianship of Theodosius, and even his exemplary piety. A modern writer has suggested that he was in fact a wise and tolerant prince, whose very mildness and indulgence offended the bigots of his own country, and caused them to represent his character in the most odious light, and do their utmost to blacken his

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

memory. But this can scarcely be accepted as the true explanation of the discrepancy. It appears from the ecclesiastical historians that, whatever other good qualities Isdigerd may have possessed, tolerance at any rate was not among his virtues. Induced at one time by Christian bishops almost to embrace Christianity, he violently persecuted the professors of the old Persian religion.

Alarmed at a later period by the excessive zeal of his Christian preceptors, and probably fearful of provoking rebellion among his Zoroastrian subjects, he turned around upon his late friends, and treated them with a cruelty even exceeding that previously exhibited towards their adversaries. It was probably this twofold persecution that, offending both professions, attached to Isdigerd in his own country the character of a harsh and bad monarch. Foreigners, who did not suffer from his caprices or his violence, might deem him magnanimous and a model of virtue. His own subjects with reason detested his rule, and branded his memory with the well-deserved epithet of Al-Athim, "the Wicked."

A curious tale is told as to the death of Isdigerd. He was still in the full vigor of manhood when one day a horse of rare beauty, without bridle or caparison, came of its own accord and stopped before the gate of his palace. The news was told to the king, who gave orders that the strange steed should be saddled and bridled, and prepared to mount it. But the animal reared and kicked, and would not allow any one to come near, till the king himself approached, when the creature totally changed its mood, appeared gentle and docile, stood perfectly still, and allowed both saddle and bridle to be put on. The crupper, however, needed some arrangement, and Isdigerd in full confidence proceeded to complete his task, when suddenly the horse lashed out with one of his hind legs, and dealt the unfortunate prince a blow which killed him on the spot. The animal then set off at speed, disembarrassed itself of its accoutrements, and galloping away was never

seen any more. The modern historian of Persia compresses the tale into a single phrase, and tells us that "Isdigerd died from the kick of a horse:" but the Persians of the time regarded the occurrence as an answer to their prayers, and saw in the wild steed an angel sent by God.

#### **14. Varahran V**

It would seem that at the death of Isdigerd there was some difficulty as to the succession. Varahran, whom he had designated as his heir, appears to have been absent from the capital at the time; while another son, Sapor, who had held the Armenian throne from A.D. 414 to 418, was present at the seat of government, and bent on pushing his claims. Varahran, if we may believe the Oriental writers, who are here unanimous, had been educated among the Arab tribes dependent on Persia, who now occupied the greater portion of Mesopotamia. His training had made him an Arab rather than a Persian; and he was believed to have inherited the violence, the pride, and the cruelty of his father. His countrymen were therefore resolved that they would not allow him to be king. Neither were they inclined to admit the claims of Sapor, whose government of Armenia had not been particularly successful, and whose recent desertion of his proper post for the advancement of his own private interests was a crime against his country which deserved punishment rather than reward. Armenia had actually revolted as soon as he quitted it, had driven out the Persian garrison, and was a prey to rapine and disorder. We cannot be surprised that, under these circumstances, Sapor's machinations and hopes were abruptly terminated, soon after his father's demise, by his own murder. The nobles and chief Magi took affairs into their own hands. Instead of sending for Varahran, or awaiting his arrival, they selected for king a descendant of Artaxerxes I. only remotely related to Isdigerd--a prince of the name of Chosroes--and formally placed him upon the throne. But

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

Varahran was not willing to cede his rights. Having persuaded the Arabs to embrace his cause, he marched upon Ctesiphon at the head of a large force, and by some means or other, most probably by the terror of his arms, prevailed upon Chosroes, the nobles, and the Magi, to submit to him. The people readily acquiesced in the change of masters; Chosroes descended into a private station, and Varahran, son of Isdigerd, became king.

Varahran seems to have ascended the throne in A.D. 420. He at once threw himself into the hands of the priestly party, and, resuming the persecution of the Christians which his father had carried on during his later years, showed himself, to one moiety of his subjects at any rate, as bloody and cruel as the late monarch. Tortures of various descriptions were employed; and so grievous was the pressure put upon the followers of Christ that in a short time large numbers of the persecuted sect quitted the country, and placed themselves under the protection of the Romans. Varahran had to consider whether he would quietly allow the escape of these criminals, or would seek to enforce his will upon them at the risk of a rupture with Rome. He preferred the bolder line of conduct. His ambassadors were instructed to require the surrender of the refugees at the court of Constantinople; and when Theodosius, to his honor, indignantly rejected the demand, they had orders to protest against the emperor's decision, and to threaten him with their master's vengeance.

It happened that at the time there were some other outstanding disputes, which caused the relations of the two empires to be less amicable than was to be desired. The Persians had recently begun to work their gold mines, and had hired experienced persons from the Romans, whose services they found so valuable that when the period of the hiring was expired they would not suffer the miners to quit Persia and return to their homes. They are also said to have ill-used the Roman merchants who traded in the Persian

territories, and to have actually robbed them of their merchandise.

These causes of complaint were not, however, it would seem, brought forward by the Romans, who contented themselves with simply refusing the demand for the extradition of the Christian fugitives, and refrained from making any counter-claims. But their moderation was not appreciated; and the Persian monarch, on learning that Rome would not restore the refugees, declared the peace to be at an end, and immediately made preparations for war. The Romans had, however, anticipated his decision, and took the field in force before the Persians were ready. The command was entrusted to a general bearing the strange name of Ardaburius, who marched his troops through Armenia into the fertile province of Arzanene, and there defeated Narses, the leader whom Varahran had sent against him. Proceeding to plunder Arzanene, Ardaburius suddenly heard that his adversary was about to enter the Roman province of Mesopotamia, which was denuded of troops, and seemed to invite attack. Hastily concluding his raid, he passed from Arzanene into the threatened district, and was in time to prevent the invasion intended by Narses, who, when he found his designs forestalled, threw himself into the fortress of Nisibis, and there stood on the defensive. Ardaburius did not feel himself strong enough to invest the town; and for some time the two adversaries remained inactive, each watching the other. It was during this interval that (if we may credit Socrates) the Persian general sent a challenge to the Roman, inviting him to fix time and place for a trial of strength between the two armies. Ardaburius prudently declined the overture, remarking that the Romans were not accustomed to fight battles when their enemies wished, but when it suited themselves. Soon afterwards he found himself able to illustrate his meaning by his actions. Having carefully abstained from attacking Nisibis while his strength seemed to him insufficient, he suddenly, upon receiving large

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

reinforcements from Theodosius, changed his tactics, and, invading Persian Mesopotamia, marched upon the stronghold held by Narses, and formally commenced its siege.

Hitherto Varahran, confident in his troops or his good fortune, had left the entire conduct of the military operations to his general; but the danger of Nisibis--that dearly won and highly prized possession--seriously alarmed him, and made him resolve to take the field in person with all his forces. Enlisting on his side the services of his friends the Arabs, under their great sheikh, Al-Amundarus (Moundsir), and collecting together a strong body of elephants, he advanced to the relief of the beleaguered town. Ardaburius drew off on his approach, burned his siege artillery, and retired from before the place. Nisibis was preserved; but soon afterwards a disaster is said to have befallen the Arabs, who, believing themselves about to be attacked by the Roman force, were seized with a sudden panic, and, rushing in headlong flight to the Euphrates (!) threw themselves into its waters, encumbered with their clothes and arms, and there perished to the number of a hundred thousand.

The remaining circumstances of the war are not related by our authorities in chronological sequence. But as it is certain that the war lasted only two years, and as the events above narrated certainly belong to the earlier portion of it, and seem sufficient for one campaign, we may perhaps be justified in assigning to the second year, A.D. 421, the other details recorded--viz., the siege of Theodosiopolis, the combat between Areobindus and Ardazanes, the second victory of Ardaburius, and the destruction of the remnant of the Arabs by Vitianus.

Theodosiopolis was a city built by the reigning emperor, Theodosius II., in the Roman portion of Armenia, near the sources of the Euphrates. It was defended by strong walls, lofty towers, and a deep ditch. Hidden channels conducted an unfailing supply of water into the heart of the place, and the

public granaries were large and generally well stocked with provisions. This town, recently built for the defence of the Roman Armenia, was (it would seem) attacked in A.D. 421 by Varahran in person. He besieged it for above thirty days, and employed against it all the means of capture which were known to the military art of the period. But the defence was ably conducted by the bishop of the city, a certain Eunomius, who was resolved that, if he could prevent it, an infidel and persecuting monarch should never lord it over his see.

Eunomius not merely animated the defenders, but took part personally in the defence, and even on one occasion discharged a stone from a balista with his own hand, and killed a prince who had not confined himself to his military duties, but had insulted the faith of the besieged. The death of this officer is said to have induced Varahran to retire, and not further molest Theodosiopolis.

While the fortified towns on either side thus maintained themselves against the attacks made on them, Theodosius, we are told, gave an independent command to the patrician Procopius, and sent him at the head of a body of troops to oppose Varahran. The armies met, and were on the point of engaging when the Persian monarch made a proposition to decide the war, not by a general battle, but by a single combat. Procopius assented; and a warrior was selected on either side, the Persians choosing for their champion a certain Ardazanes, and the Romans "Areobindus the Goth," count of the "Foederati." In the conflict which followed the Persian charged his adversary with his spear, but the nimble Goth avoided the thrust by leaning to one side, after which he entangled Ardazanes in a net, and then despatched him with his sword. The result was accepted by Varahran as decisive of the war, and he desisted, from any further hostilities. Areobindus received the thanks of the emperor for his victory, and twelve years later was rewarded with the consulship.

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

But meanwhile, in other portions of the wide field over which the war was raging, Rome had obtained additional successes.

Ardaburius, who probably still commanded in Mesopotamia, had drawn the Persian force opposed to him into an ambushade, and had destroyed it, together with its seven generals. Vitianus, an officer of whom nothing more is known, had exterminated the remnant of the Arabs not drowned in the Euphrates. The war had gone everywhere against the Persians; and it is not improbable that Varahran, before the close of A.D. 421, proposed terms of peace.

Peace, however, was not exactly made till the next year. Early in A.D. 422, a Roman envoy, by name Maximus, appeared in the camp of Varahran, and, when taken into the presence of the great king, stated that he was empowered by the Roman generals to enter into negotiations, but had had no communication with the Roman emperor, who dwelt so far off that he had not heard of the war, and was so powerful that, if he knew of it, he would regard it as a matter of small account. It is not likely that Varahran was much impressed by these falsehoods; but he was tired of the war; he had found that Rome could hold her own, and that he was not likely to gain anything by prolonging it; and he was in difficulties as to provisions, whereof his supply had run short. He was therefore well inclined to entertain Maximus's proposals favorably. The corps of the "Immortals," however, which was in his camp, took a different view, and entreated to be allowed an opportunity of attacking the Romans unawares, while they believed negotiations to be going on, considering that under such circumstances they would be certain of victory. Varahran, according to the Roman writer who is here our sole authority, consented. The Immortals made their attack, and the Romans were at first in some danger; but the unexpected arrival of a reinforcement saved them, and the Immortals were defeated and cut off to a man. After this, Varahran made peace with Rome through the

instrumentality of Maximus, consenting, it would seem, not merely that Rome should harbor the Persian Christians, if she pleased, but also that all persecution of Christians should henceforth cease throughout his own empire.

The formal conclusion of peace was accompanied, and perhaps helped forward, by the well-judging charity of an admirable prelate. Acacius, bishop of Amida, pitying the condition of the Persian prisoners whom the Romans had captured during their raid into Arzanene, and were dragging off into slavery, interposed to save them; and, employing for the purpose all the gold and silver plate that he could find in the churches of his diocese, ransomed as many as seven thousand captives, supplied their immediate wants with the utmost tenderness, and sent them to Varahran, who can scarcely have failed to be impressed by an act so unusual in ancient times. Our sceptical historian remarks, with more apparent sincerity than usual, that this act was calculated "to inform, the Persian king of the true spirit of the religion which he persecuted," and that the name of the doer might well "have dignified the saintly calendar." These remarks are just; and it is certainly to be regretted that, among the many unknown or doubtful names of canonized Christians to which the Church has given her sanction, there is no mention made of Acacius of Amida.

Varahran was perhaps the more disposed to conclude his war with Rome from the troubled condition of his own portion of Armenia, which imperatively required his attention. Since the withdrawal from that region of his brother Sapor in A.D. 418 or 419, the country had had no king. It had fallen into a state of complete anarchy and wretchedness; no taxes were collected; the roads were not safe; the strong robbed and oppressed the weak at their pleasure. Isaac, the Armenian patriarch, and the other bishops, had quitted their sees and taken refuge in Roman Armenia, where they were



<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

received favorably by the prefect of the East, Anatolius, who no doubt hoped by their aid to win over to his master the Persian division of the country. Varahran's attack on Theodosiopolis had been a counter movement, and had been designed to make the Romans tremble for their own possessions, and throw them back on the defensive. But the attack had failed; and on its failure the complete loss of Armenia probably seemed imminent. Varahran therefore hastened to make peace with Rome, and, having so done, proceeded to give his attention to Armenia, with the view of placing matters there on a satisfactory footing. Convinced that he could not retain Armenia unless with the good-will of the nobles, and believing them to be deeply attached to the royal stock of the Arsacids, he brought forward a prince of that noble house, named Artases, a son of Varahran-Sapor, and, investing him with the ensigns of royalty, made him take the illustrious name of Artaxerxes, and delivered into his hands the entire government of the country. These proceedings are assigned to the year A.D. 422, the year of the peace with Rome, and must have followed very shortly after the signature of the treaty. It might have been expected that this arrangement would have satisfied the nobles of Armenia, and have given that unhappy country a prolonged period of repose. But the personal character of Artaxerxes was, unfortunately, bad; the Armenian nobles were, perhaps, capricious; and after a trial of six years it was resolved that the rule of the Arsacid monarch could not be endured, and that Varahran should be requested to make Armenia a province of his empire, and to place it under the government of a Persian satrap. The movement was resisted with all his force by Isaac, the patriarch, who admitted the profligacy of Artaxerxes and deplored it, but held that the role of a Christian, however lax he might be, was to be preferred to that of a heathen, however virtuous. The nobles, however, were determined; and the opposition of Isaac had

no other result than to involve him in the fall of his sovereign. Appeal was made to the Persian king and Varahran, in solemn state, heard the charges made against Artaxerxes by his subjects, and listened to his reply to them. At the end he gave his decision. Artaxerxes was pronounced to have forfeited his crown, and was deposed; his property was confiscated, and his person committed to safe custody. The monarchy was declared to be at an end; and Persarmenia was delivered into the hands of a Persian governor. The patriarch Isaac was at the same time degraded from his office and detained in Persia as a prisoner. It was not till some years later that he was released, allowed to return into Armenia, and to resume, under certain restrictions, his episcopal functions. The remaining circumstances of the reign of Varahran V. come to us wholly through the Oriental writers, amid whose exaggerations and fables it is very difficult to discern the truth. There can, however, be little doubt that it was during the reign of this prince that those terrible struggles commenced between the Persians and their neighbors upon the north-east which continued, from the early part of the fifth till the middle of the sixth century, to endanger the very existence of the empire. Various names are given to the people with whom Persia waged her wars during this period. They are called Turks, Huns, sometimes even Chinese, but these terms seem, to be used in a vague way, as "Scythian" was by the ancients; and the special ethnic designation of the people appears to be quite a different name from any of them. It is a name the Persian form of which is *\_Haithal\_* or *\_Haiathleh\_*, the Armenian *Hephthagh*, and the Greek "*Ephthalites*," or sometimes "*Nephthalites*." Different conjectures have been formed as to its origin: but none of them can be regarded as more than an ingenious theory. All that we know of the *Ephthalites* is, that they were established in force, during the fifth and sixth centuries of our era, in the regions east of the Caspian, especially in those beyond the Oxus

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

river, and that they were generally regarded as belonging to the Scythic or Finno-Turkic population, which, at any rate from B.C. 200, had become powerful in that region. They were called "White Huns" by some of the Greeks; but it is admitted that they were quite distinct from the Huns who invaded Europe under Attila; and it may be doubted whether the term "Hun" is more appropriate to them than that of Turk or even of Chinese. The description of their physical character and habits left us by Procopius, who wrote when they were at the height of their power, is decidedly adverse to the view that they were really Huns. They were a light-complexioned race, whereas the Huns were decidedly swart; they were not ill-looking, whereas the Huns were hideous; they were an agricultural people, while the Huns were nomads; they had good laws, and were tolerably well civilized, but the Huns were savages. It is probable that they belonged to the Thibetic or Turkish stock, which has always been in advance of the Finnic, and has shown a greater aptitude for political organization and social progress.

We are told that the war of Varahran V. with this people commenced with an invasion of his kingdom by their Khacan, or Kahn, who crossed the Oxus with an army of 35,000 (or, according to others, of 250,000) men, and carried fire and sword into some of the most fertile provinces of Persia. The rich oasis, known as Meru or Merv, the ancient Margiana, is especially mentioned as overrun by his troops, which are said by some to have crossed the Elburz range into Khorassan and to have proceeded westward as far as Kei, or Rhages. When news of the invasion reached the Persian court, the alarm felt was great; Varahran was pressed to assemble his forces at once and encounter the unknown enemy; he, however, professed complete indifference, said that the Almighty would preserve the empire, and that, for his own part, he was going to hunt in Azerbaijan, or Media Atropatene. During his absence the government could be conducted by Narses,

his brother. All Persia was now thrown into consternation; Varahran was believed to have lost his senses; and it was thought that the only prudent course was to despatch an embassy to the Khacan, and make an arrangement with him by which Persia should acknowledge his suzerainty and consent to pay him a tribute. Ambassadors accordingly were sent; and the invaders, satisfied with the offer of submission, remained in the position which they had taken up, waiting for the tribute, and keeping slack guard, since they considered that they had nothing to fear. Varahran, however, was all the while preparing to fall upon them unawares. He had started for Azerbaijan with a small body of picked warriors; he had drawn some further strength from Armenia; he proceeded along the mountain line through Taberistan, Hyrcania, and Nissa (Nishapur), marching only by night, and carefully masking his movements. In this way he reached the neighborhood of Merv unobserved. He then planned and executed a night attack on the invading army which was completely successful. Attacking his adversaries suddenly and in the dark--alarming them, moreover, with strange noises, and at the same time assaulting them with the utmost vigor--he put to flight the entire Tatar army. The Khan himself was killed; and the flying host was pursued to the banks of the Oxus. The whole of the camp equipage fell into the hands of the victors; and Khatoun, the wife of the great Khan, was taken. The plunder was of enormous value, and comprised the royal crown with its rich setting of pearls. After this success, Varahran, to complete his victory, sent one of his generals across the Oxus at the head of a large force, and falling upon the Tatars in their own country defeated them a second time with great slaughter. The enemy then prayed for peace, which was granted them by the victorious Varahran, who at the same time erected a column to mark the boundary of his empire in this quarter, and, appointing his brother Narses governor of Khorassan,

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

ordered him to fix his residence at Balkh, and to prevent the Tatars from making incursions across the Oxus. It appears that these precautions were successful, for we hear nothing of any further hostilities in this quarter during the remainder of Varahran's reign.

The adventures of Varahran in India, and the enlargement of his dominions in that direction by the act of the Indian king, who is said so have voluntarily ceded to him Mekran and Scinde in return for his services against the Emperor of China, cannot be regarded as historical. Scarcely more so is the story that Persia had no musicians in his day, for which reason he applied to the Indian monarch, and obtained from him twelve thousand performers, who became the ancestors of the Lurs. After a reign which is variously estimated at nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, and twenty-three years, Varahran died by a death which would have been thought incredible, had not a repetition of the disaster, on the traditional site, been witnessed by an English traveller in comparatively recent times. The Persian writers state that Varahran was engaged in the hunt of the wild ass, when his horse came suddenly upon a deep pool, or spring of water, and either plunged into it or threw his rider into it, with the result that Varahran sank and never reappeared. The supposed scene of the incident is a valley between Ispahan and Shiraz. Here, in 1810, an English soldier lost his life through bathing in the spring traditionally declared to be that which proved fatal to Varahran. The coincidence has caused the general acceptance of a tale which would probably have been otherwise regarded as altogether romantic and mythical.

The coins of Varahran V. are chiefly remarkable for their rude and coarse workmanship and for the number of the mints from which they were issued. The mint-marks include Ctesiphon, Ecbatana, Isaphan, Arbela, Ledan, Nehavend, Assyria, Chuzistan,

Media, and Kerman, or Carmania. The ordinary legend is, upon the obverse, *\_Mazdisn bag Varahran malha,* or *\_Mazdisn bag Varahran rasti malha,* and on the reverse, "Yavahran," together with a mint-mark. The head-dress has the mural crown in front and behind, but interposes between these two detached fragments a crescent and a circle, emblems, no doubt, of the sun and moon gods. The reverse shows the usual fire-altar, with guards, or attendants, watching it. The king's head appears in the flame upon the altar. (PLATE XXI. Fig. 2).

According to the Oriental writers, Varahran V. was one of the best of the Sassanian princes. He carefully administered justice among his numerous subjects, remitted arrears of taxation, gave pensions to men of science and letters, encouraged agriculture, and was extremely liberal in the relief of poverty and distress. His faults were, that he was over-generous and over-fond of amusements, especially of the chase. The nickname of "Bahram-Gur," by which he is known to the Orientals, marks this last-named predilection, transferring to him, as it does, the name of the animal which was the especial object of his pursuit. But he was almost equally fond of dancing and of games. Still it does not appear that his inclination for amusements rendered him neglectful of public affairs, or at all interfered with his administration of the State. Persia is said to have been in a most flourishing condition during his reign. He may not have gained all the successes that are ascribed to him; but he was undoubtedly an active prince, brave, energetic, and clear-sighted. He judiciously brought the Roman war to a close when a new and formidable enemy appeared on his north-eastern frontier; he wisely got rid of the Armenian difficulty, which had been a stumbling block in the way of his predecessors for two hundred years; he inflicted a check on the aggressive Tatars, which indisposed them to renew hostilities with Persia for a quarter of a century. It would seem that he did not much

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

appreciate art but he encouraged learning, and did his best to advance science.

### 15. Isdigerd II

The successor of Varahan V. was his son, Isdigerd the Second, who ascended the Persian throne without opposition in the year A.D. 440. His first act was to declare war against Rome. The Roman forces were, it would seem, concentrated in the vicinity of Nisibis; and Isdigerd may have feared that they would make an attack upon the place. He therefore anticipated them, and invaded the empire with an army composed in part of his own subjects, but in part also of troops from the surrounding nations. Saracens, Tzani, Isaurians, and Huns (Ephthalites?) served under his standard; and a sudden incursion was made into the Roman territory, for which the imperial officers were wholly unprepared. A considerable impression would probably have been produced, had not the weather proved exceedingly unpropitious. Storms of rain and hail hindered the advance of the Persian troops, and allowed the Roman generals a breathing space, during which they collected an army. But the Emperor Theodosius was anxious that the flames of war should not be relighted in this quarter; and his instructions to the prefect of the East, the Count Anatolius, were such as speedily led to the conclusion, first of a truce for a year, and then of a lasting treaty. Anatolius repaired as ambassador to the Persian camp, on foot and alone, so as to place himself completely in Isdigerd's power--an act which so impressed the latter that (we are told) he at once agreed to make peace on the terms which Anatolius suggested. The exact nature of these terms is not recorded; but they contained at least one unusual condition. The Romans and Persians agreed that neither party should construct any new fortified post in the vicinity of the other's territory--a loose phrase which was likely to be variously interpreted, and might easily lead to serious complications.

It is difficult to understand this sudden conclusion of peace by a young prince, evidently anxious to reap laurels, who in the first year of his reign had, at the head of a large army, invaded the dominions of a neighbor. The Roman account, that he invaded, that he was practically unopposed, and that then, out of politeness towards the prefect of the East, he voluntarily retired within his own frontier, "having done nothing disagreeable," is as improbable a narrative as we often meet with, even in the pages of the Byzantine historians. Something has evidently been kept back. If Isdigerd returned, as Procopius declares, without effecting anything, he must have been recalled by the occurrence of troubles in some other part of his empire. But it is, perhaps, as likely that he retired, simply because he had effected the object with which he engaged in the war. It was a constant practice of the Romans to advance their frontier by building strong towns on or near a debatable border, which attracted to them the submission of the neighboring district. The recent building of Theodosiopolis in the eastern part of Roman Armenia had been an instance of this practice. It was perhaps being pursued elsewhere along the Persian border, and the invasion of Isdigerd may have been intended to check it. If so, the proviso of the treaty recorded by Procopius would have afforded him the security which he required, and have rendered it unnecessary for him to continue the war any longer.

His arms shortly afterwards found employment in another quarter. The Tatars of the Transoxianian regions were once more troublesome; and in order to check or prevent the incursions which they were always ready to make, if they were unmolested, Isdigerd undertook a long war on his northeastern frontier, which he conducted with a resolution and perseverance not very common in the East. Leaving his vizier, Mihr-Narses, to represent him at the seat of government, he transferred his own residence to Nishapm, in the

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

mountain region between the Persian and Kharesmian deserts, and from that convenient post of observation directed the military operations against his active enemies, making a campaign against them regularly every year from A.D. 443 to 451. In the year last mentioned he crossed the Oxus, and, attacking the Ephthalites in their own territory, obtained a complete success, driving the monarch from the cultivated portion of the country, and forcing him to take refuge in the desert. So complete was his victory that he seems to have been satisfied with the result, and, regarding the war as terminated, to have thought the time was come for taking in hand an arduous task, long contemplated, but not hitherto actually attempted.

This was no less a matter than the forcible conversion of Armenia to the faith of Zoroaster. It has been already noted that the religious differences which--from the time when the Armenians, anticipating Constantine, adopted as the religion of their state and nation the Christian faith (ab. A.D. 300)--separated the Armenians from the Persians, were a cause of weakness to the latter, more especially in their contests with Rome. Armenia was always, naturally, upon the Roman side, since a religious sympathy united it with the the court of Constantinople, and an exactly opposite feeling tended to detach it from the court of Ctesiphon. The alienation would have been, comparatively speaking, unimportant, after the division of Armenia between the two powers, had that division been regarded by either party as final, or as precluding the formation of designs upon the territory which each had agreed should be held by the other. But there never yet had been a time when such designs had ceased to be entertained; and in the war which Isdigerd had waged with Theodosius at the beginning of his reign, Roman intrigues in Persarmenia had forced him to send an army into that country. The Persians felt, and felt with reason, that so long as Armenia remained Christian and Persia held to the

faith of Zoroaster, the relations of the two countries could never be really friendly; Persia would always have a traitor in her own camp; and in any time of difficulty--especially in any difficulty with Rome--might look to see this portion of her territory go over to the enemy. We cannot be surprised if Persian statesmen were anxious to terminate so unsatisfactory a state of things, and cast about for a means whereby Armenia might be won over, and made a real friend instead of a concealed enemy.

The means which suggested itself to Isdigerd as the simplest and most natural was, as above observed, the conversion of the Armenians to the Zoroastrian religion. In the early part of his reign he entertained a hope of effecting his purpose by persuasion, and sent his vizier, Mihr-Narses, into the country, with orders to use all possible peaceful means--gifts, blandishments, promises, threats, removal of malignant chiefs--to induce Armenia to consent to a change of religion. Mihr-Narses did his best, but failed signally. He carried off the chiefs of the Christian party, not only from Armenia, but from Iberia and Albania, telling them that Isdigerd required their services against the Tatars, and forced them with their followers to take part in the Eastern war. He committed Armenia to the care of the Margrave, Vasag, a native prince who was well inclined to the Persian cause, and gave him instructions to bring about the change of religion by a policy of conciliation. But the Armenians were obstinate. Neither threats, nor promises, nor persuasions had any effect. It was in vain that a manifesto was issued, painting the religion of Zoroaster in the brightest colors, and requiring all persons to conform to it. It was to no purpose that arrests were made, and punishments threatened. The Armenians declined to yield either to argument or to menace; and no progress at all was made in the direction of the desired conversion.

In the year A.D. 450, the patriarch Joseph, by the general desire of the Armenians, held a

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

great assembly, at which it was carried by acclamation that the Armenians were Christians, and would continue such, whatever it might cost them. If it was hoped by this to induce Isdigerd to lay aside his proselytizing schemes, the hope was a delusion. Isdigerd retaliated by summoning to his presence the principal chiefs, viz., Vasag, the Margrave; the Sparapet, or commander-in-chief, Vartan, the Mamigonian; Vazten, prince of Iberia; Vatche, king of Albania, etc.; and having got them into his power, threatened them with immediate death, unless they at once renounced Christianity and made profession of Zoroastrianism. The chiefs, not having the spirit of martyrs, unhappily yielded, and declared themselves converts; whereupon Isdigerd sent them back to their respective countries, with orders to force everywhere on their fellow-countrymen a similar change of religion.

Upon this, the Armenians and Iberians broke out in open revolt. Vartan, the Mamigonian, repenting of his weakness, abjured his new creed, resumed the profession of Christianity, and made his peace with Joseph, the patriarch. He then called the people to arms, and in a short time collected a force of a hundred thousand men. Three armies were formed, to act separately under different generals. One watched Azerbaijan, or Media Atropatene, whence it was expected that their main attack would be made by the Persians; another, under Vartan, proceeded to the relief of Albania, where proceedings were going on similar to those which had driven Armenia into rebellion; the third, under Vasag, occupied a central position in Armenia, and was intended to move wherever danger should threaten. An attempt was at the same time made to induce the Roman emperor, Marcian, to espouse the cause of the rebels, and send troops to their assistance; but this attempt was unsuccessful. Marcian had but recently ascended the throne, and was, perhaps, scarcely fixed in his seat. He was advanced in years, and naturally

unenterprising. Moreover, the position of affairs in Western Europe was such that Marcian might expect at any moment to be attacked by an overwhelming force of northern barbarians, cruel, warlike, and unsparing. Attila was in A.D. 451 at the height of his power; he had not yet been worsted at Chalons; and the terrible Huns, whom he led, might in a few months destroy the Western, and be ready to fall upon the Eastern empire. Armenia, consequently, was left to her own resources, and had to combat the Persians single-handed. Even so, she might probably have succeeded, have maintained her Christianity, or even recovered her independence, had her people been of one mind, and had no defection from the national cause manifested itself. But Vasag, the Marzpan, had always been half-hearted in the quarrel; and, now that the crisis was come, he determined on going wholly over to the Persians. He was able to carry with him the army which he commanded; and thus Armenia was divided against itself; and the chance of victory was well-nigh lost before the struggle had begun. When the Persians took the field they found half Armenia ranged upon their side; and, though a long and bloody contest followed, the end was certain from the beginning. After much desultory warfare, a great battle was fought in the sixteenth year of Isdigerd (A.D. 455 or 456) between the Christian Armenians on the one side, and the Persians, with their Armenian abettors, on the other. The Persians were victorious; Vartan, and his brother, Hemaiag, were among the slain; and the patriotic party found that no further resistance was possible. The patriarch, Joseph, and the other bishops, were seized, carried off to Persia, and martyred. Zoroastrianism was enforced upon the Armenian nation. All accepted it, except a few, who either took refuge in the dominions of Rome, or fled to the mountain fastnesses of Kurdistan.

The resistance of Armenia was scarcely overborne, when war once more broke out in the East, and Isdigerd was forced to turn his

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 15</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

attention to the defence of his frontier against the aggressive Ephthalites, who, after remaining quiet for three or four years, had again flown to arms, had crossed the Oxus, and invaded Khorassan in force. On his first advance the Persian monarch was so far successful that the invading hordes seems to have retired, and left Persia to itself; but when Isdigerd, having resolved to retaliate, led his own forces into the Ephthalite country, they took heart, resisted him, and, having tempted him into an ambuscade, succeeded in inflicting upon him a severe defeat. Isdigerd was forced to retire hastily within his own borders, and to leave the honors of victory to his assailants, whose triumph must have encouraged them to continue year after year their destructive inroads into the north-eastern provinces of the empire.

It was not long after the defeat which he suffered in this quarter that Isdigerd's reign came to an end. He died A.D. 457, after having held the throne for seventeen or (according to some) for nineteen years. He was a prince of considerable ability, determination, and courage. That his subjects called him "the Clement" is at first sight surprising, since clemency is certainly not the virtue that any modern writer would think of associating with his name. But we may assume from the application of the term that, where religious considerations did not come into play, he was fair and equitable, mild-tempered, and disinclined to harsh punishments.

Unfortunately, experience tells us that natural mildness is no security against the acceptance of a bigot's creed; and, when a policy of persecution has once been adopted, a Trajan or a Valerian will be as unsparing as a Maximin or a Galerius. Isdigerd was a bitter and successful persecutor of Christianity, which he--for a time at any rate--stamped out, both from his own proper dominions, and from the newly-acquired province of Armenia. He would have preferred less violent means; but, when they failed, he felt no scruples in employing the extremest and

severest coercion. He was determined on uniformity; and uniformity he secured, but at the cost of crushing a people, and so alienating them as to make it certain that they would, on the first convenient occasion, throw off the Persian yoke altogether.

The coins of Isdigerd II. nearly resemble those of his father, Varahran V., differing only in the legend, and in the fact that the mural crown of Isdigerd is complete. The legend is remarkably short, being either \_Masdisn kadi Tezdikerti\_, or merely \_Kadi Yezdikerti\_--i.e. "the Ormazd-worshipping great Isdigerd;" or "Isdigord the Great." The coins are not very numerous, and have three mint-marks only, which are interpreted to mean "Khuzistan," "Ctesiphon," and "Nehavend."

#### **16. Perozes; Hormisdas III**

On the death of Isdigerd II. (A.D. 457) the throne was seized by his younger son Hormisdas, who appears to have owed his elevation, in a great measure, to the partiality of his father. That monarch, preferring his younger son above his elder, had made the latter governor of the distant Seistan, and had thus removed him far from the court, while he retained Hormisdas about his own person. The advantage thus secured to Hormisdas enabled him when his father died to make himself king; and Perozes was forced, we are told, to fly the country, and place himself under the protection of the Ephthalite monarch, who ruled in the valley of the Oxus, over Bactria, Tokaristan, Badakshan, and other neighboring districts. This king, who bore the name of Khush-newaz, received him favorably, and though at first, out of fear for the power of Persia, he declined to lend him troops, was induced after a while to adopt a bolder policy. Hormisdas, despite his epithet of Ferzan, "the Wise," was soon at variance with his subjects, many of whom gathered about Perozes at the court which he was allowed to maintain in Taleqan, one of the Ephthalite cities. Supported by this body of refugees, and by an Ephthalite contingent, Perozes ventured to advance against his

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 16</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

brother. His army, which was commanded by a certain Raham, or Ram, a noble of the Mihran family, attacked the forces of Hormisdas, defeated them, and made Hormisdas himself a prisoner. The troops of the defeated monarch, convinced by the logic of success, deserted their late leader's cause, and went over in a body to the conqueror. Perozes, after somewhat more than two years of exile, was acknowledged as king by the whole Persian people, and, quitting Taleqan, established himself at Ctesiphon, or Al Modain, which had now become the main seat of government. It is uncertain what became of Hormisdas. According to the Armenian writers, Raham, after defeating him, caused him to be put to death; but the native historian, Mirkhond, declares that, on the contrary, Perozes forgave him for having disputed the succession, and amiably spared his life.

The civil war between the two brothers, short as it was, had lasted long enough to cost Persia a province. Vatche, king of Aghouank (Albania) took advantage of the time of disturbance to throw off his allegiance, and succeeded in making himself independent. It was the first object of Perozes, after establishing himself upon the throne, to recover this valuable territory. He therefore made war upon Vatche, thought that prince was the son of his sister, and with the help of his Ephthalite allies, and of a body of Alans whom he took into his service, defeated the rebellious Albanians and completely subjugated the revolted country.

A time of prosperity now ensued. Perozes ruled with moderation and justice. He dismissed his Ephthalite allies with presents that amply contented them, and lived for five years in great peace and honor. But in the seventh year, from the death of his father, the prosperity of Persia was suddenly and grievously interrupted by a terrible drought, a calamity whereto Asia has in all ages been subject, and which often produces the most frightful consequences. The crops fail; the

earth becomes parched and burnt up; smiling districts are change into wildernesses; fountains and brooks cease to flow; then the wells have no water; finally even the great rivers are reduced to threads, and contain only the scantiest supply of the life-giving fluid in their channels. Famine under these circumstances of necessity sets in; the poor die by hundreds; even the rich have a difficulty in sustaining life by means of food imported from a distance. We are told that the drought in the reign of Perozes was such that at last there was not a drop of water either in the Tigris or the Oxus; all the sources and fountains, all the streams and brooks failed; vegetation altogether ceased; the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air perished; nowhere through the whole empire was a bird to be seen; the wild animals, even the reptiles, disappeared altogether. The dreadful calamity lasted for seven years, and under ordinary circumstances the bulk of the population would have been swept off; but such were the "wisdom and the beneficence of the Persian monarch," that during the entire duration of the scourge not a single person, or, according to another account, but one person, perished of hunger. Perozes began by issuing general orders that the rich should come to the relief of their poorer brethren; he required the governors of towns, and the head-men of villages, to see that food was supplied to those in need, and threatened that for each poor man in a town or village who died of want he would put a rich man to death. At the end of two years, finding that the drought continued, he declined to take any revenue from his subjects, remitting taxes of all kinds, whether they were money imposts or contributions in kind. In the fourth year, not content with these measures, he went further: opened the treasury doors and made distributions of money from his own stores to those in need. At the same time he imported corn from Greece, from India, from the valley of the Oxus, and from Abyssinia, obtaining by these means such ample supplies that he was able to furnish an



<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

adequate sustenance to all his subjects. The result was that not only did the famine cause no mortality among the poorer classes, but no one was even driven to quit the country in order to escape the pressure of the calamity.

Such is the account which is given by the Oriental authors of the terrible famine which they ascribe to the early part of the reign of Perozes. It is difficult, however, to suppose that the matter has not been very much exaggerated, since we find that, as early as A.D. 464-5, when the famine should have been at its height, Perozes had entered upon a great war and was hotly engaged in it, his ambassadors at the same time being sent to the Greek court, not to ask supplies of food, but to request a subsidy on account of his military operations. The enemy which had provoked his hostility was the powerful nation of the Ephthalites, by whose aid he had so recently obtained the Persian crown.

According to a contemporary Greek authority, more worthy of trust than most writers of his age and nation, the origin of the war was a refusal on the part of the Ephthalites to make certain customary payments which the Persians viewed in the light of a tribute.

Perozes determined to enforce his just rights, and marched his troops against the defaulters with this object. But in his first operations he was unsuccessful, and after a time he thought it best to conclude the war, and content himself with taking a secret revenge upon his enemy, by means of an occult insult. He proposed to Khush-newaz to conclude a treaty of peace, and to strengthen the compact by adding to it a matrimonial alliance. Khush-newaz should take to wife one of his daughters, and thus unite the interests of the two reigning families. The proposal was accepted by the Ephthalite monarch; and he readily espoused the young lady who was sent to his court apparelled as became a daughter of Persia. In a little time, however, he found that he had been tricked: Perozes had not sent him his daughter, but one of his female slaves; and the royal race of the Ephthalite kings had been disgraced by a

matrimonial union with a person of servile condition. Khush-newaz was justly indignant; but dissembled his feelings, and resolved to repay guile with guile. He wrote to Perozes that it was his intention to make war upon a neighboring tribe, and that he wanted officers of experience to conduct the military operations. The Persian monarch, suspecting nothing, complied with the request, and sent three hundred of his chief officers to Khush-newaz, who immediately seized them, put some to death, and, mutilating the remainder, commanded them to return to their sovereign, and inform him that the king of the Ephthalites now felt that he had sufficiently avenged the trick of which he had been the victim. On receiving this message Perozes renewed the war, advanced towards the Ephthalite country, and fixed his headquarters in Hyrcania, at the city of Gorgan. He was accompanied by a Greek of the name of Eusebius, an ambassador from the Emperor Zeno, who took back to Constantinople the following account of the campaign.

When Perozes, having invaded the Ephthalite territory, fell in with the army of the enemy, the latter pretended to be seized with a panic, and at once took to flight. The retreat was directed upon a portion of the mountain region, where a broad and good road led into a spacious plain, surrounded on all sides by wooded hills, steep and in places precipitous. Here the mass of the Ephthalite troops was cunningly concealed amid the foliage of the woods, while a small number, remaining visible, led the Persians into the cul-de-sac, the whole army unsuspectingly entering, and only learning their danger when they saw the road whereby they had entered blocked up by the troops from the hills. The officers then apprehended the true state of the case, and perceived that they had been cleverly entrapped; but none of them, it would seem, dared to inform the monarch that he had been deceived by a stratagem. Application was made to Eusebius, whose ambassadorial character would protect him from an outbreak, and he was requested to let Perozes

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 18</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

know how he was situated, and exhort him to endeavor to extricate himself by counsel rather than by a desperate act. Eusebius upon this employed the Oriental method of apologue, relating to Perozes how a lion in pursuit of a goat got himself into difficulties, from which all his strength could not enable him to make his escape. Perozes apprehended his meaning, understood the situation, and, desisting from the pursuit, prepared to give battle where he stood. But the Ephthalite monarch had no wish to push matters to extremities. Instead of falling on the Persians from every side, he sent an embassy to Perozes and offered to release him from his perilous situation, and allow him to return with all his troops to Persia, if he would swear a perpetual peace with the Ephthalites and do homage to himself as his lord and master, by prostration. Perozes felt that he had no choice but to accept these terms, hard as he might think them. Instructed by the Magi, he made the required prostration at the moment of sunrise, with his face turned to the east, and thought thus to escape the humiliation of abasing himself before a mortal by the mental reservation that the intention of his act was to adore the great Persian divinity. He then swore to the peace, and was allowed to return with his army intact into Persia.

It seems to have been soon after the conclusion of his disgraceful treaty that serious troubles once more broke out in Armenia. Perozes, following out the policy of his father, Isdigerd, incessantly persecuted the Christians of his northern provinces, especially those of Armenia, Georgia, and Albania. So severe were his measures that vast numbers of the Armenians quitted their country, and, placing themselves under the protection of the Greek Emperor, became his subjects, and entered into his service. Armenia was governed by Persian officials, and by apostate natives who treated their Christian fellow-countrymen with extreme rudeness, insolence, and injustice. Their efforts were especially directed against the

few noble families who still clung to the faith of Christ, and had not chosen to expatriate themselves. Among these the most important was that of the Mamigonians, long celebrated in Armenian history, and at this time reckoned chief among the nobility. The renegades sought to discredit this family with the Persians; and Vahan, son of Hemaiiag, its head, found himself compelled to visit, once and again, the court of Persia, in order to meet the charges of his enemies and counteract the effect of their calumnies. Successful in vindicating himself, and received into high favor by Perozes, he allowed the sunshine of prosperity to extort from him what he had guarded firmly against all the blasts of persecution--to please his sovereign, he formally abjured the Christian faith, and professed himself a disciple of Zoroaster. The triumph of the anti-Christian party seemed now secured; but exactly at this point a reaction set in. Vahan became a prey to remorse, returned secretly to his old creed and longed for an opportunity of wiping out the shame of his apostasy by perilling his life for the Christian cause. The opportunity was not long in presenting itself. In A.D. 481 Perozes suffered a defeat at the hand of the barbarous Koushans, who held at this time the low Caspian tract extending from Asterabad to Derbend. Iberia at once revolted, slew its Zoroastrian king, Vazken, and placed a Christian, Vakhtang, upon the throne. The Persian governor of Armenia, having received orders to quell the Iberian rebellion, marched with all the troops that he could muster into the northern province, and left the Armenians free to follow their own devices. A rising immediately took place. Vahan at first endeavored to check the movement, being doubtful of the power of Armenia to cope with Persia, and feeling sure that the aid of the Greek emperor could not be counted on. But the the popular enthusiasm overleaped all resistance; everywhere the Christian party rushed to arms, and swore to free itself; the Persians with their adherents fled the country;

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

Artaxata, the capital, was besieged and taken; the Christians were completely victorious, and, having made themselves masters of all Persarmenia, proceeded to establish a national government, placing at their head as king, Sahag, the Bagratide, and appointing Vahan, the Mamigonian, to be Sparapet, or "Commander-in-Chief."

Intelligence of these events recalled the Persian governor, Ader-Veshnasp, from Iberia. Returning into his province at the head of an army of no great size, composed of Atropatenians, Medes, and Cadusians, he was encountered by Vasag, a brother of Vahan, on the river Araxes, with a small force, and was completely defeated and slain.

Thus ended the campaign of A.D. 481. In A.D. 482 the Persians made a vigorous attempt to recover their lost ground by sending two armies, one under Ader-Nerseh against Armenia, and the other under Mihran into Iberia. Vahan met the army of Ader-Nerseh in the plain of Ardaz, engaged it, and defeated it after a sharp struggle, in which the king, Sahag, particularly distinguished himself. Mihran was opposed by Vakhtang, the Iberian king, who, however, soon found himself overmatched, and was forced to apply to Armenia for assistance. The Armenians came to his aid in full force; but their generosity was ill rewarded. Vakhtang plotted to make his peace with Persia by treacherously betraying his allies into their enemies' hands; and the Armenians, forced to fight at tremendous disadvantage, suffered a severe defeat. Sahag, the king, and Vasag, one of the brothers of Vahan, were slain; Vahan himself escaped, but at the head of only a few followers, with whom he fled to the highland district of Daik, on the borders of Home and Iberia. Here he was "hunted upon the mountains" by Mihran, and would probably have been forced to succumb before the year was out, had not the Persian general suddenly received a summons from his sovereign, who needed his aid against the Roushans of the low Caspian region. Mihran, compelled to

obey this call, had to evacuate Armenia, and Vahan in a few weeks recovered possession of the whole country.

The year A.D. 483 now arrived, and another desperate attempt was made to crush the Armenian revolt. Early in the spring a Persian army invaded Armenia, under a general called Hazaravoug. Vahan allowed himself to be surprised, to be shut up in the city of Dovin, and to be there besieged. After a while he made his escape, and renewed the guerilla warfare in which he was an adept; but the Persians recovered most of the country, and he was himself, on more than one occasion, driven across the border and obliged to seek refuge in Roman Armenia, whither his adversary had no right to follow him. Even here, however, he was not safe. Hazaravoug, at the risk of a rupture with Rome, pursued his flying foe across the frontier; and Vahan was for some time in the greatest danger. But the Persian system of constantly changing the commands of their chief officers saved him. Hazaravoug received orders from the court to deliver up Armenia to a newly appointed governor, named Sapor, and to direct his own efforts to the recovery of Iberia, which was still in insurrection. In this latter enterprise he was successful; Iberia submitted to him; and Vakhtang fled to Colchis. But in Armenia the substitution of Sapor for Hazaravoug led to disaster. After a vain attempt to procure the assassination of Vahan by two of his officers, whose wives were Roman prisoners, Sapor moved against him with a strong body of troops; but the brave Mamigonian, falling upon his assailant unawares, defeated him with great loss, and dispersed his army. A second battle was fought with a similar result; and the Persian force, being demoralized, had to retreat; while Vahan, taking the offensive, established himself in Dovin, and once more rallied to his side the great mass of the nation. Affairs were in this state, when suddenly there arrived from the east intelligence of the most supreme importance, which produced a pause in the

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 20</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

Armenian conflict and led to the placing of Armenian affairs on a new footing.

Perozes had, from the conclusion of his treaty with the Ephthalite monarch (ab. A.D. 470), been tormented with the feeling that he had suffered degradation and disgrace. He had, perhaps, plunged into the Armenian and other wars in the hope of drowning the recollection of his shame, in his own mind as well as in the minds of others. But fortune had not greatly smiled on him in these struggles; and any credit that he obtained from them was quite insufficient to produce forgetfulness of his great disaster. Hence, as time went on, he became more and more anxious to wipe out the memory of the past by a great and signal victory over his conquerors. He therefore after some years determined to renew the war. It was in vain that the chief Mobed opposed himself to this intention; it was in vain that his other counsellors sought to dissuade him, that his general, Bahram, declared against the infraction of the treaty, and that the soldiers showed themselves reluctant to fight. Perozes had resolved, and was not to be turned from his resolution. He collected from all parts of the empire a veteran force, amounting, it is said, 50 to 100,000 men, and 500 elephants, placed the direction of affairs at the court in the hands of Balas (Palash), his son or brother, and then marched upon the north-eastern frontier, with the determination to attack and defeat the Ephthalites or perish in the attempt. According to some Oriental writers he endeavored to escape the charge of having falsified his engagements by a curious subterfuge. The exact terms of his oath to Khush-newaz, the Ephthalite king, had been that he would never march his forces past a certain pillar which that monarch had erected to mark the boundary line between the Persian and Ephthalite dominions. Perozes persuaded himself that he would sufficiently observe his engagement if he kept its letter; and accordingly he lowered the pillar, and placed it upon a number of cars, which were attached together and drawn by a train of

fifty elephants, in front of his army. Thus, however deeply he invaded the Ephthalite country, he never "passed beyond" the pillar which he had sworn not to pass. In his own judgment he kept his vow, but not in that of his natural advisers. It is satisfactory to find that the Zoroastrian priesthood, speaking by the mouth of the chief Mobed, disclaimed and exposed the fallacy of this wretched casuistry.

The Ephthalite monarch, on learning the intention of Perozes, prepared to meet his attack by stratagem. He had taken up his position in the plain near Balkh, and had there established his camp, resolved to await the coming of the enemy. During the interval he proceeded to dig a deep and broad trench in front of his whole position, leaving only a space of some twenty or thirty yards, midway in the work, untouched. Having excavated the trench, he caused it to be filled with water, and covered carefully with boughs of trees, reeds, and earth, so as to be undistinguishable from the general surface of the plain on which he was encamped. On the arrival of the Persians in his front, he first of all held a parley with Perozes, in which, after reproaching him with his ingratitude and breach of faith, he concluded by offering to renew the peace. Perozes scornfully refused; whereupon the Ephthalite prince hung on the point of a lance the broken treaty, and, parading it in front of the Persian troops, exhorted them to avoid the vengeance which was sure to fall on the perjurer by deserting their doomed monarch. Upon this, half the army, we are told, retired; and Khush-newaz proceeded to effect the destruction of the remainder by means of the plan which he had so carefully prepared beforehand. He sent a portion of his troops across the ditch, with orders to challenge the Persians to an engagement, and, when the fight began, to fly hastily, and, returning within the ditch by the sound passage, unite themselves with the main army. The entire Persian host, as he expected, pursued the fugitives, and coming unawares upon the concealed trench plunged into it, was inextricably entangled, and easily

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 21</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

destroyed. Perozes himself, several of his sons, and most of his army perished. Mruzdocht, his daughter, the chief Mobed, and great numbers of the rank and file were made prisoners. A vast booty was taken. Khushnewaz did not tarnish the glory of his victory by any cruelties; he treated the captives tenderly, and caused search to be made for the body of Perozes, which was found and honorably interred.

Thus perished Perozes, after a reign of (probably) twenty-six years. He was undoubtedly a brave prince, and entitled to the epithet of Al Merdaneh, "the Courageous," which he received from his subjects. But his bravery, unfortunately, verged upon rashness, and was unaccompanied (so far as appears) by any other military quality. Perozes had neither the sagacity to form a good plan of campaign, nor the ability to conduct a battle. In all the wars wherein he was personally engaged he was unsuccessful, and the only triumphs which gilded his arms were gained by his generals. In his civil administration, on the contrary, he obtained a character for humanity and justice; and, if the Oriental accounts of his proceedings during the great famine are to be regarded as trustworthy, we must admit that his wisdom and benevolence were such as are not commonly found in those who bear rule in the East. His conduct towards Khushnewaz has generally been regarded as the great blot upon his good fame; and it is certainly impossible to justify the paltry casuistry by which he endeavored to reconcile his actions with his words at the time of his second invasion. But his persistent hostility towards the Ephthalites is far from inexcusable, and its motive may have been patriotic rather than personal. He probably felt that the Ephthalite power was among those from which Persia had most to fear, and that it would have been weak in him to allow gratitude for a favor conferred upon himself to tie his hands in a matter where the interests of his country were vitally concerned. The Ephthalites continued for

nearly a century more to be among the most dangerous of her neighbors to Persia; and it was only by frequent attacks upon them in their own homes that Persia could reasonably hope to ward off their ravages from her territory.

It is doubtful whether we possess any coins of Hormisdas III., the brother and predecessor of Perozes. Those which are assigned to him by Mordtmann bear a name which has no resemblance to his; and those bearing the name of Ram, which Mr. Taylor considers to be coins of Hormisdas, cannot have been issued under his authority, since Ram was the guardian and general, not of Hormisdas, but of his brother. Perhaps the remarkable specimen figured by M. Longperier in his valuable work, which shows a bull's head in place of the usual inflated ball, may really belong to this prince. The legend upon it is read without any doubt as Auhrimazd, or "Hormisdas;" and in general character it is certainly Sassanian, and of about this period.

The coins of Perozes are undoubted, and are very numerous. They are distinguished generally by the addition to the ordinary crown of two wings, one in front of the crown, and the other behind it, and bear the legend, \_Kadi Piruzi\_, or \_Mazdisn Kadi Piruzi\_, i.e., "King Perozes," or "the Ormazd-worshipping king Perozes." The earring of the monarch is a triple pendant. On the reverse, besides the usual fire-altar and supporters, we see on either side of the altar-flame a star and a crescent. The legend here is M--probably for malka, "king"--or else Kadi, together with a mint-mark. The mints named are numerous, comprising (according to Mordtmann) Persepolis, Ispahan, Rhages, Nehavend, Darabgherd, Zadracarta, Nissa, Behistun, Chuzistan, Media, Kerman, and Azerbaijan; or (according to Mr. Thomas) Persepolis, Rasht, Nehavend, Darabgherd, Baiza, Modai'n, Merv, Shiz, Iran, Kerman, Yezd, and fifteen others. The general character of the coinage is rude and coarse, the reverse of the coins showing especial signs of degradation.

<b>HISTORY 809</b>	<b>Page 22</b>
<b>SASS005: Chapters 13 to 16</b>	a Grace Notes study

Besides his coins, one other memorial of the reign of Perozes has escaped the ravages of time. This is a cup or vase, of antique and elegant form, engraved with a hunting-scene, which has been thus described by a recent writer: "This cup, which comes from Russia, has a diameter of thirty-one centimetres, and is shaped like a ewer without handles. At the bottom there stands out in relief the figure of a monarch on horseback, pursuing at full speed various wild animals; before him fly a wild boar and wild sow, together with their young, an ibex, an antelope, and a buffalo. Two other boars, an ibex, a buffalo, and an antelope are strewn on the ground, pierced with arrows. The king has an aquiline nose, an eye which is very wide open, a short beard, horizontal moustaches of considerable length, the hair gathered behind the head in quite a small knot, and the ear ornamented with a double pendant, pear-shaped; the head of the monarch supports a crown, which is mural at the side and back, while it bears a crescent in front; two wings surmounting a globe within a crescent form the upper part of the head-dress. On his right the king carries a short dagger and a quiver full of arrows, on his left a sword. Firuz, who has the finger-guard of an archer on his right hand, is represented in the act of bending a large bow made of horn." There would seem to be no doubt that the work thus described is rightly assigned to Perozes.

---