

= Shahrbaraz =

Shahrbaraz (Persian : ???????) or Shahrvaraz (Middle Persian : ?ahrwar?z) (died 9 June 630) was king of the Sasanian Empire from 27 April 629 to 9 June 630 . He usurped the throne from Ardashir III , and was killed by Sasanian nobles after forty days . Before usurping the Sasanian throne he was a general (spahbed) under Khosrau II (590 ? 628) . He is furthermore noted for his important role during the climactic Byzantine ? Sasanian War of 602 ? 628 , and the events that followed afterwards . His name Shahrbaraz is actually an honorific title , and means " the Boar of the Empire " , attesting to his dexterity in military command and his warlike person , as the boar was the animal associated with the Zoroastrian Izad Vahram , the epitome of victory .

= = Early life = =

Shahrbaraz belonged to the House of Mihran , one of the Seven Parthian clans ; he was the son of a certain Ardashir . During Shahrbaraz 's later life , he joined the Sasanian army , where he rose to high offices , and was appointed as spahbed of N?mr?z . He was married to the sister of the Sasanian king Khosrau II , Mirhran , whom Shahrbaraz had one boy with named Shapur @-@ i Shahrvaraz . Shahrbaraz also had another son named Niketas the Persian , who may be from the same woman or from another .

= = War against the Byzantine Empire = =

Shahrbaraz is first mentioned when Khosrau II started the last and most devastating of the Byzantine ? Sasanian wars , which was going to last 26 years . Khosrau II , along with Shahrbaraz and his other best generals , conquered Dara and Edessa in 604 , and in the north , the Byzantines were driven back to the old , pre @-@ 591 frontier before Khosrau II gave them most of Sasanian Armenia , parts of Mesopotamia and western half of the Kingdom of Iberia . After reconquering lost territory , Khosrau II withdrew from the battlefield and handed military operations to his best generals . Shahrbaraz was one of them . In 610 , Heraclius , an Armenian of probable Arsacid descent , revolted against the Byzantine Emperor Phocas and killed him , crowning himself as Emperor of the Byzantine Empire . After becoming Byzantine Emperor , he prepared a major counter @-@ attack against the Sasanians outside Antioch in 613 , but was decisively defeated by Shahrbaraz , who inflicted heavy losses on the Byzantine army and then captured the city , giving the Sasanians naval access to the Mediterranean sea .

After the Byzantine defeat outside Antioch , Heraclius and his brother Theodore , along with General Nicetas , combined their armies in Syria , but were defeated by Shahrbaraz and his forces who besieged Damascus and captured it along with a large number of Byzantine troops as prisoners . Furthermore , Shahrbaraz also defeated a Byzantine army near Adhri 'at , which was important enough for the Arabs to write it down in Quran .

One of most important events during his career was when he led the Sasanian army towards Palaestina , and after a bloody siege captured Jerusalem , a city sacred to the Christians . After his conquest of Jerusalem the Holy Cross was carried away in triumph . In 618 , Shahrbaraz was ordered by Khosrau II to invade Egypt , and by 619 , Alexandria , the capital of Byzantine Egypt , was in Sasanian hands .

After the fall of Alexandria , Shahrbaraz and his forces extended Sasanian rule southwards along the Nile . By 621 , the province was securely in Sasanian hands , and a certain Sahralanyozan was appointed as its governor . In 622 , Heraclius counter @-@ attacked against the Sasanian Empire in Anatolia . Shahrbaraz was sent over there to deal with him , but was eventually defeated by him .

After Heraclius ' victory , he marched towards Caucasian Albania and wintered there . Shahrbaraz , along with Shahin and Shahraplakan were later sent by the orders of Khosrau II to trap the forces of Heraclius . Shahin managed to rout the Byzantine army . Due to jealousy between the Sasanian commanders , Shahrbaraz hurried with his army to take part in the glory of the victory . Heraclius met them at Tigranakert and routed the forces of Shahraplakan and Shahin one after the other .

After this victory , Heraclius crossed the Araxes and camped in the plains on the other side . Shahin , with the remnants of both his and Shahrbaraz 's armies joined Shahrbaraz in the pursuit of Heraclius , but marshes slowed them down . At Aliovit , Shahrbaraz split his forces , sending some 60,000 troops to ambush Heraclius while the remainder of the troops stayed at Aliovit . Heraclius launched a surprise night attack on the Sasanian main camp in February 625 , destroying it . Shahrbaraz only barely escaped , naked and alone , having lost his harem , baggage , and men .

Heraclius spent the rest of winter to the north of Lake Van . In 625 , his forces attempted to push back towards the Euphrates . In a mere seven days , he bypassed Mount Ararat and the 200 miles along the Arsianias River to capture Amida and Martyropolis , important fortresses on the upper Tigris . Heraclius then carried on towards the Euphrates , pursued by Shahrbaraz . According to Arab sources , he was stopped at the Satidama or Batman Su River and defeated ; Byzantine sources , however , do not mention this incident . Another minor skirmish between Heraclius and Shahrbaraz took place at the Sarus river near Adana . Shahrbaraz stationed his forces across the river from the Byzantines . A bridge spanned the river , and the Byzantines immediately charged across . Shahrbaraz feigned retreat to lead the Byzantines into an ambush , and the vanguard of Heraclius ' army was destroyed within minutes . The Sasanians , however , had neglected to cover the bridge , and Heraclius charged across with the rearguard , unafraid of the arrows that the Sasanians fired , turning the tide of battle against the Sasanians . Shahrbaraz expressed his admiration at Heraclius to a renegade Greek : " See your Emperor ! He fears these arrows and spears no more than would an anvil ! " The Battle of Sarus was a successful retreat for the Byzantines that panegyrists magnified . In the aftermath of the battle , the Byzantine army wintered at Trebizond .

= = = Siege of Constantinople = = =

Shahrbaraz , along with a smaller army , later managed to slip through Heraclius ' flanks and beeline for Chalcedon , the Sasanian base across the Bosphorus from Constantinople . Khosrau II coordinated with the Khagan of the Avars so as to launch a coordinated attack on Constantinople from both European and Asiatic sides . The army of Shahrbaraz stationed themselves at Chalcedon , while the Avars placed themselves on the European side of Constantinople and destroyed the Aqueduct of Valens . Because of the Byzantine navy 's control of the Bosphorus strait , however , the Sasanians could not send troops to the European side to aid their ally . This reduced the effectiveness of the siege , because the Sasanians were experts in siege warfare . Furthermore , the Sasanians and Avars had difficulties communicating across the guarded Bosphorus ? though undoubtedly , there was some communication between the two forces .

On 7 August , a fleet of Sasanian rafts ferrying troops across the Bosphorus was surrounded and destroyed by Byzantine ships . The Slavs under the Avars attempted to attack the sea walls from across the Golden Horn , while the main Avar host attacked the land walls . Patrician Bonus ' galleys rammed and destroyed the Slavic boats ; the Avar land assault from 6 to 7 August also failed . With the news that Theodore had decisively triumphed over Shahin (supposedly leading Shahin to die from depression) , the Avars retreated to the Balkan hinterland within two days , never to threaten Constantinople seriously again . Even though the army of Shahrbaraz was still encamped at Chalcedon , the threat to Constantinople was over .

Disappointed by Shahrbaraz 's failure , Khosrau II sent a messenger bearing a letter to Kardarigan , who was the second in command of the Sasanian army . The letter said that Kardarigan should kill Shahrbaraz and take his army back to Ctesiphon , but the bearers of the letter were intercepted in Galatia by Byzantine soldiers , who gave the letter to Constantine III who in turn gave it to Heraclius . After reading the letter , he offered to show the letter to Shahrbaraz in a meeting at Constantinople . Shahrbaraz accepted his proposal and met Heraclius at Constantinople , where he read the letter and switched over to Heraclius ' side . Shahrbaraz then changed the contents of the letter , making it state that Khosrau II wanted 400 officers killed , ensuring that Kardarigan and the rest of the army remained loyal to him .

Shahrbaraz then moved his army to northern Syria , where he could easily decide to support either

Khosrau or Heraclius at a moment's notice . Still , with the neutralization of Khosrau 's most skilled general , Heraclius deprived his enemy of some of his best and most experienced troops , while securing his flanks prior to his invasion of Iran .

= = Overthrow of Khosrau II = =

In 627 , Khosrau sent Shahrbaraz a letter , which said that he should send his army to Ctesiphon . Shahrbaraz , however , disobeyed , and moved to Asuristan , where he set up a camp in Ardashir Khurrah . Khosrau then sent Farrukhzad to negotiate with him . However , Farrukhzad made a secret conspiracy against Khosrau and joined Shahrbaraz .

One year later , the feudal families of the Sasanian Empire , who were tired of war against the Byzantines and Khosrau 's oppressive policies , freed Khosrau 's son Kavadh , who had been imprisoned by his own father . The feudal families included : Shahrbaraz himself , who represented the Mihran family ; the House of Ispahbudhan represented by spahbed Farrukh Hormizd and his two sons Rostam Farrokhzad and Farrukhzad ; the Armenian faction represented by Varaztirots II Bagratuni ; and finally the Kanarang . In February , Kavadh , along with Aspad Gushnasp , captured Ctesiphon and imprisoned Khosrau II . Kavadh II then proclaimed himself as king of the Sasanian Empire on 25 February , and with the aid of Piruz Khosrow , executed all his brothers and half @-@ brothers , including Khosrau II 's favorite son Mardanshah . Three days later , he ordered Mihr Hormozd to execute his father . With the agreement of the nobles of the Sasanian empire , Kavadh then made peace with the Byzantine emperor Heraclius , which made the Byzantines regain all their lost territories , their captured soldiers , a war indemnity , along with the True Cross and other relics that were lost in Jerusalem in 614 .

Following the loss of territory required for the peace treaty , the embittered aristocracy started forming independent states within the Sasanian Empire . This divided the resources of the country . Furthermore , dams and canals became derelict , and a devastating plague erupted in the western provinces of Iran , killing half of the population along with Kavadh II , who was succeeded by Ardashir III .

= = Usurping the throne = =

After the death of Kavadh II , Heraclius sent Shahrbaraz a letter saying :

On 27 April 629 (or 630) Shahrbaraz besieged Ctesiphon with a force of 6 @, @ 000 men . He was , however , unable to capture the city , and then made an alliance with Piruz Khosrow , the leader of the Parsig (Persian) faction , and the previous minister of the Empire during the reign of Ardashir 's father , Kavadh II . He also made an alliance with Namdar Jushnas , who had succeeded him as the spahbed of N?mr?z in 626 . Shahrbaraz , with the aid of these two powerful figures , captured Ctesiphon , and executed Ardashir III along with many Sasanian nobles , including Ardashir 's minister Mah @-@ Adhur Gushnasp . Shahrbaraz then became the new shah (king) of the Sasanian Empire , and killed Kardarigan , who opposed Shahrbaraz after his usurpation of the Sasanian throne .

Heraclius also acknowledged Shahrbaraz 's Christian son Niketas , as his heir . An Iranian Christian as the heir of the Sasanian Empire opened the chances of the Christianization of Iran . After some time , Shahrbaraz had Shamta , the son of the former financial minister Yazdin , crucified on a church in Margha . The reason of this execution was reportedly because the latter had insulted Shahrbaraz during the reign of Khosrau II . Forty days later , 9 June 630 , during a ceremony , Shahrbaraz was killed by a spear thrown by Farrukh Hormizd , who then helped Borandukht , the daughter of Khosrau II , to ascend the throne .

= = Legacy = =

Shahrbaraz had played an important role in the Byzantine ? Sasanian War of 602 ? 628 , and the events that occurred after the war ; his mutiny against Khosrau II resulted in a Byzantine Pyrrhic

victory and caused the Sasanian Empire to fall into a civil war . After the death of Shahrbaraz , his son Shapur @-@ i Shahrvaraz deposed Borandukht and became king of the Sasanian Empire . His reign , however , did not last long , and he was shortly deposed by the Sasanian nobles . During the same period , Niketas entered in the service of the Byzantines , and would later appear as one of the Byzantine generals at the Battle of Yarmouk during the Arab ? Byzantine wars .