



ARVAND GUŠNASP

ARVAND GUŠNASP, Sasanian *marzbān* of Georgia under Kōsrow I. According to the Georgian passion of St. Eustace of Mtskheta, an anonymous hagiographical work of the late 6th century, Arvand Gušnasp was already in office during the 10th year of Kōsrow's reign (A.D. 540-541). He was transferred from Georgia six months after the first date indicated for him in this text, presumably in A.D. 541. Arvand Gušnasp's headquarters were in Tiflis (Tbilisi); he had a lieutenant named Vistām, who commanded the castle at the former capital at Mtskheta, higher up the river Kor (Kura) valley. At Mtskheta, there lived a certain Eustace (originally called Gvirobandak), a Persian shoemaker who had come to Georgia and become a Christian. The Persian shoemakers' guild denounced Eustace to the Persian military authorities, who brought him before Arvand with seven other converts to be judged. Arvand Gušnasp began by treating these Christians severely, having their noses pierced, and chaining them up in jail under sentence of death. Six months later, Arvand released them from prison, as a farewell gesture to the local people, when recalled from Georgia by King Kōsrow. Arvand is portrayed by the Christian hagiographer as avaricious and deceitful. He persuaded two of the Christians to revert to the Zoroastrian faith by promising them a valuable reward. When these two, Baxdiad and Panāgušnasp by name, accepted his offer, he released them; "But of the reward and handsome compensation he had promised them, he gave them not one farthing." Elsewhere, however, Arvand Gušnasp is shown as cultivating the goodwill of the local Georgian aristocracy and Church leaders, and behaving very politely towards them. Although the names Arvand and Gušnasp are both common,



this particular official does not seem to appear in any source other than the Vita of St. Eustace.

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