



BALĀŠ VIII. BALĀŠ, SASANIAN KING OF KINGS

Balāš, Sasanian king of kings (484-88) (Gk. Balas, Blasēs, Blassos, Valas, etc.). Balāš, son of Yazdegerd II (r. 438-57), was chosen by the magnates of the kingdom—of whom the most influential at that time were Zarmehr Sōkrā and Šāpūr Mehrān—to succeed his brother Pērōz (r. 459-84) after the latter had been defeated and killed in an expedition against the Hephthalites (Huns) in a.d. 484 (Łazar P'arpec'i, Venice, pp. 544-47, par. 87; Langlois, II, p. 352; Procopius, 1.5.2; according to Ṭabarī, I, p. 882, and Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rik*, I, p. 185, Balāš was Pērōz's son). Balāš, who was of a pacific and conciliatory temperament, made peace with Vahan Mamikonean, leader of the Armenian rebellion (P'arpec'i, pp. 547ff., pars. 88-97; Langlois, II, pp. 353ff.). As a result of this agreement, Balāš received the aid of Vahan Mamikonean against his brother Zarer or Zareh, who had put himself forward as claimant to the throne. Thanks to the Armenian cavalry, Zarer was defeated and killed (P'arpec'i, pp. 589-95, pars. 93-95; Langlois, II, pp. 360-61). Thereafter Vahan was welcomed with great pomp by Balāš, who named him at first *hazarapet* and later *marzbān* of Armenia (P'arpec'i, pp. 597-620 pars. 95-99; Langlois, II, pp. 361-65). Balāš wished to be humane and benevolent. The legend engraved on the obverse of his coins, *hwkd wld'hš* (the good prince Walāxš), is significant (see Göbl, I, p. 51, table XV, pl. 11, nos. 178-79) and according to a tradition of the Islamic period, he took great care of the welfare of his humblest subjects (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 134). Balāš showed favor to Christians. At the opening of the synod that took place at Seleucia in a.d.



486, presided over by the catholicos Acacius, he was saluted as the “good and amiable Walāš, King of Kings” (*Synodicon Orientale*, p. 53, tr. p. 299). It seems that he even sent Acacius as his ambassador to the emperor Zeno in 485 or 486 (*Synodicon Orientale*, p. 527, tr. p. 553; cf. pp. 300, n. 3, and 533, n. 6). In another action, he ordered Baršaumā, bishop of Nisibis, together with the *marzbān* Kardag Naḵwergān, to carry out the demarcation of the frontiers between the Sasanian and Roman empires (*Synodicon orientale*, pp. 529-30, tr., pp. 536-37). On the other hand, Balāš incurred the disapproval of the Magians because he wished to endow the cities with public baths in the Roman manner (Wright, p. 12). Equally he displeased his troops (*ibid.*) and he was no more successful in satisfying the notables, who, probably urged on by Zarmehr Sōḵrā, deposed him after four years of his reign in order to replace him with his nephew Qobād/Kavād (Theodorus Lector, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.51 = *Patrologia graeca* LXXXVI, p. 209). The foundation of Balāšābād (Walāxšābād), near Seleucia on the Tigris, has been attributed to Balāš (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 134) through an anachronism. It has already been demonstrated that the true founder of this city was the Arsacid Balāš I (see above).

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