



HORMOZD IV

HORMOZD IV, Sasanian great king (r. 579-90 C.E.). He succeeded Kōsrow I Anōšīravān just as the latter was negotiating a peace treaty with the Byzantine empire, hoping to leave a stable and prosperous state as his inheritance (Menander Protector, tr., p. 153). Anōšīravān had appointed Hormozd as his heir after having observed in him the qualifications of a worthy prince (Ṭabari, I, p. 966; tr., V, p. 265; Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 252, no. 3, where other sources are given). The choice was also politically motivated, since Hormozd's mother was a daughter of the *kāqān* (supreme ruler) of the Turks, while his other sons were all from women of lowly origin (*awlād al-suqa*; Dinavari, eds. 'Āmer and Šayyāl, pp. 74-75; Ya'qubi, *Ta'rikò* I, p. 187; Mas'udi, *Moruj*, ed. Pellat, sec. 632) Oriental sources as well as modern scholars (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 168, no. 3; Schaeder, p. 41; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 30; Frye, p. 162) identify his maternal grandfather with Sinjibu (Silzibul), the *Kāqān* of the Turks, who united with Anōšīravān in about 560 to destroy the power of the Hephthalites (Hayāṭela), and gave him his daughter in marriage. Hence Hormozd is referred to as "Torkzād" and "Torkzāda" (son of a Turk) in the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, VIII, pp. 326, 328, 416; Ṭa'ālebi, *Gorar*, pp. 639-40; apparently corrupted to *lulzād* (?) in Biruni, *Aṭār*, p. 122). However, there is a chronological difficulty in accepting this relationship. Following the division of the Hephthalite kingdom between Persia and the Turks, Sinjibuthreatened east Persian borderlands; Kōsrow sent his son Hormozd against him, and the *kāqān* withdrew to his own territory (Dinavari, eds. 'Āmer and Šayyāl, p. 68). Thus Hormozd must have been born around 540 (his own son, Kōsrow II Parvēz, was at least thirty years old at his accession in 590),



long before Sinjibu became Ƙosrow's neighbor. Josef Marquart (1898, pp. 199-200) noted that Sebēos (tr., pp. 17-18) identified Hormozd's mother as a "daughter of the Ƙāqān of the Turks (T'etalac'ik)" and called the latter Kāyēn, whereas Mas'udi (*Moruj*, ed. Pellat, II, p. 211) gives Fāqom (variants: Fāqr/Falḡ) as the name of Hormozd's mother, and adds that she was a daughter of the king of the Ƙazars who dwelt in the neighborhood of Bāb al-Abwāb (i.e., Darband, q.v.). Marquart made the plausible conclusion that Hormozd's maternal grandfather was the *kāqān* of the Ƙazars (who are often called Turks in other sources), and that Mas'udi had transferred the father's name (or title if one take *qāyēn* as Turkish "in-law") to the daughter. Ebn Ƙordāḏbeh (pp. 259 ff.), too, speaks of Anōširavān and the king of the Ƙazars arranging to marry each other's daughters.

Hormozd's character displeased everyone. His descent, says Sebēos (tr. p. 18), "made Hormozd even greater than his paternal ancestors and equally greater and wilder than his maternal relatives." In trying to control the nobility, he resorted to harshness, denigration, and execution. In hoping to outdo his father in justice, he sided with the lower classes, who in the end gained no relief and turned against him (Theophylactus, 3.16.8-13; Ṭabari, I, p. 988; tr., V, p. 295; Bal'ami, ed. Bahār, pp. 1071-73; Dinavari, ed. 'Amer and Šayyāl, pp. 75, 78; see further Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 264, n. 5 cont. at 265, 268, n. 1). He wanted to reduce expenditure, so he cut the military pay by a tenth (Theophylactus, 3.16.13). He rejected a petition submitted to him by the Zoroastrian clergy to persecute Christians by stating his desire that all his subjects were to exercise their religion freely, but he also antagonized the Zoroastrian clergy, allegedly killing many of them, even the chief *mowbed*, and alienated the nobility by killing thousands of them (Ṭabari, I, p. 991; tr., V, pp. 297-98; Bal'ami, ed. Bahār, pp. 1072-73; Mas'udi, *Moruj*, ed. Pellat, sec. 632; *Šāhnāma*, Moscow, VIII, pp. 319 ff.). In diplomacy he showed inflexibility, even poor judgement. He disrupted the peace negotiations with the Byzantines and made demands (payment of "tribute") that the Romans could not accept (Menander, frag., 23.9-24-12529). They also angered him by accepting an imposter as a son of Ƙosrow (John of Ephesus, 6.29; see also Mosig-Walburg, pp. 71-72). Consequently a ruinous war ensued, which continued through his entire reign. His contemporary, Menander Protector, lamented that "the Romans and the Persians would have made peace, had not Ƙosrow left this life and his son, Hormisdas, a truly wicked man, assumed the crown" (tr., pp. 207-9). The anonymous *Guidi Chronicle* (q.v.; tr. Nöldeke, p. 5) asserted that Hormozd "laid a heavy yoke on his nobility and the entire people." Modern



historians are more sympathetic. Theodore Nöldeke (*Geschichte der Perser*, p. 264, n. 5) regarded such judgements as unfair and considered Hormozd a well-meaning sovereign who intended to restrain the nobility and clergy and ease the burden of the lower classes: “His effort was on the whole justified, but the unhappy outcome shows that he was not the man to reach such lofty goals with peace and competence” (see also Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 441-43).

At Hormozd’s accession, Tiberius Caesar offered to sign a peace treaty by giving up all claims to Armenia and exchange the Roman-occupied Arzenere for the Persian-held Dārā (a Byzantine outpost in upper Mesopotamia). Hormozd refused, and Tiberius sent Maurice, the general of the east, to prepare for war (Menander Protector, tr., pp. 209-15; Theophylactus, 3.17.1-3; John of Ephesus, 6.22; the chronology of Hormozd’s reign as proposed by Higgins, pp. 24 ff., cannot be followed here). A Roman army invaded Kurdistan and devastated the region as far as Media (Theophylactus, 3.17.4). Then another Roman army marched into Mesopotamia intending to take Ctesiphon by surprise. The Persians countered by invading Roman Mesopotamia and threatening Maurice’s line of retreat (Theophylactus, 3.7.5-8), and also by defeating the Roman force in Armenia (Menander Protector, tr., pp. 215, 217, and p. 283, Blockley’s n. 292). Maurice defeated (Theophylactus 3.17.11) or at least checked (John of Ephesus 4.26) the Persian force near Callinicum, and inflicted heavy losses on the Persians again in 581 (ibid.; Theophylactus, 3.18.1-2; Evagrius, 5.20); and when Maurice rushed to Constantinople to assume the crown (August 582), his commander continued the war. The Persians were successful at first (Theophylactus, 1.9.4-10, 12.1-7, 13.1.1) but were defeated later, and the two sides plundered each other’s border territories (ibid., 1.13-14). In 585 “the peace-loving” Hormozd “commanded” the Romans “to purchase peace with much gold and glorious gifts” (ibid., 1.15.1-11), but Maurice decided that the conditions were unacceptable, and the war continued (ibid., 1.15.11-14). The Romans and their Ghassanid allies defeated a Persian force near Dārā in 586 but were then beaten back with heavy losses. The gains and losses continued for the next four years (Theophylactus, 1.15.14-15, 2.1-9, 2.10 ff., 3.1.6, 4.2.1; Evagrius, 6.14.16). The war was going badly for Persia in 589 when the Caucasian barbarians invaded through the Caucasus passes and the “Turks” (i.e., the Hephthalites) marched into the eastern provinces of the empire. Only the generalship of Bahrām Čōbin (q.v.) saved the country from the eastern nomads, but Hormozd’s ingratitude forced him to rise in rebellion in 590.



Meanwhile, Hormozd's harsh treatment of the nobility led to a general revolt under the leadership of his own brothers-in-law, Bendōy and Wistahm/Besṭām, who first deposed and then murdered Hormozd with the full complaisance (despite the claim to the contrary in the official history) of Hormozd's own son, Ƙosrow II Parvēz (for details see under [BESTĀM O BENDŌY](#); see also Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 277, n. 1, 281, n. 1). Ƙosrow had been appointed the king of Albania (Jāvānšir, apud Toumanoff, pp. 381, 383) and was called Alānšāh (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IX, pp. 23-24, 28). From his seat at Partaw/Barda'a (q.v.), he supervised the conspiracy and the resulting revolt.

Hormozd left no monuments. His coins portray him wearing a crown similar to that of his father but with a very high cap; they are dated to year 1 through 12 of his reign (Göbl, p. 52, pl. 12, nos. 200-201).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. D. H. Bivar, "The History of Eastern Iran," in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III, pp. 181-231.

Scholasticus Evagrius, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with the Scholia*, ed. Joseph Bidez and Léon Parmentier, London, 1898; repr., Amsterdam, 1964.

Robert Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, tr. Paul Severin, Braunschweig, 1971.

Guidi Chronicle, tr. Theodor Nöldeke as "Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik, übersetzt und commentiert," *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-hist. Kl. 128, 9, Vienna, 1893, pp. 1-48, Vienna, 1893.

Martin J. Higgins, *The Persian War of the Emperor Maurice (582-602) I: The Chronology with a Brief History of the Persian Calendar*, Washington, D.C., 1939.

John of Ephesus, *Historiae ecclesiasticae*, tr. J. M. Schönfelder as *Die Kirchengeschichte des Johannes von Ephesus*, Munich, 1862.



Josef Marquart, “Historische Glossen zu den alttürkischen Inschriften,” *WZKM* 12, 1898, pp. 157-200.

Menander Protector, *Historikon syngramma*, ed. and tr. with notes R. C. Blockley as *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, Classical and Medieval texts, papers and monographs 17, Liverpool, 1985.

K. Mossig-Walburg, “Der Flucht des persischen Prinzen Hormizd und sein Exil in römisches Reich – eine Untersuchung der Quellen,” *Iranica Antiqua* 35, 2000, pp. 69-110.

Hans H. Schaeder, *Iranica I: Das Auge des Königs*, Berlin, 1934.

Sebēos, *Patmut'īwn i Herakłn*, tr. F. Macler as *Histoire d'Héraclius par l'éveque Sebēos*, Paris, 1904.

Simocatta Theophylactus, *Historiae*, tr. Michael and Mary Whitby as *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, Oxford and New York, 1986.

Cyril Tourmanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, Washington, D.C., 1963.