



## ZURWĀNDĀD

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**ZURWĀNDĀD**, the eldest son of the grand vizier (*wuzurg framādār*) **Mehr Narseh**, who appointed him to the high religious office of chief *hērbed* during the reign of the Sasanian king Bahrām V Gōr (r. 420-38, q.v.) in the 5th century CE (Ṭabari, I/2, p. 869, tr., p. 104).

His name, Zurwāndād (created by Zurwān), is significant in that it points out the possible prominence of Zurvanite tendencies in the 5th century CE, although it does not necessarily indicate that its bearer was a Zurvanitebeliever. Robert Zaehner has suggested that in the 5th century, Zurvanism was in ascendancy, especially during the reign of Yazdgerd II (r. 438-57; Zaehner, p. 47). Mehr Narseh's Zurvanite belief is further corroborated by the evidence from the Armenian sources, where he is said to have imposed Zoroastrianism (Armenian *awrēnk 'deni mazdezn*), but, instead in his proclamation to the Armenians, he provides a clear Zurvanite doctrine (Elišē, p. 78). Furthermore, Ṭabari reports that as part of his beneficent policies, Mehr Narseh laid out three large gardens and planted 12,000 date palms in one of them, 12,000 olive trees in the second garden, and the same number of cypress trees in the third one (Ṭabari, I/2, pp. 870-71, tr., p. 105). The number 12,000 is associated with the Zurvanite doctrine, as the allotted time from the creation of the cosmos until its end (Wikander, p. 177).

Zurvanism seems to have been shunned during the reign of Pērōz (r. 459-87), when Mehr Narseh apparently was accused of having committed a sin, although the accusation did not cause him to be dismissed from his office. There is also the mention of a Zurwāndād/Zarwāndād as a great sinner along



with Mazdak in the Pahlavi *Vendidad* (IV.49), which may be a reference to Mehr Narseh's son. In the *Vendidad*, Zurwāndād is mentioned as having had authority, but he had been sinful and destructive and, besides, had disputed the "creator of the corporeal world," that is, Ohrmazd (*čiyōn zarvāndād uš pahikār abāg astwandād*; ed. Jamasp, p. 134).

According to Ṭabari, Mehr Narseh founded four villages in Fars, and erected a fire temple in each of them, one for in his own name and the rest in those of his three sons. The one that was for the sake of Zurwāndād's soul was called Zarāvandādān (Ṭabari, I/2, p. 870; tr., p. 105).

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