

YAZDEGARD II (CE 438-456) son of Varahran V

(Silver Drachma)



Coin:

Obverse: *'MaZDISN KaDI IeZDKaRT MaLKAN MaLKa'* (**Of the Faith - Mazdayasna, Yazdegard the fortunate, King of Kings**). Tiara has four turrets (one front and back and one on each side). Crescent clip holds the small Orymbos. Ribbons hold curled locks of hair. Beard tip has been tied with ribbon, holding tuft of hair and pearls. Necklace and earrings bear large gemstones. Embroidered border of Cape held in front by jewel.

Reverse: *'NaVaKI IeZDKaRT'* [**Yazdegard, adorer (of Fire)**]. The word *'RAST'* (**meaning Just**) has been inscribed on Altar Shaft, which is decorated with ribbons. Fire attendants are King and the Prince, both holding a long bundle of Barsom rods (tied with 4 knots of Palm leaf strips). Short Capes flow behind shoulders.

Campaigns:

***CE 455-456:** The discontent in Armenia created by the Roman legions against Zarathushti citizens continued, in spite of

Theodosius II's friendly disposition and another Peace Treaty in CE 440. Yazdegard, compelled to use force, entrusted Commander Mir Narseh to enter Armenia. After a series of campaigns, he managed to capture and imprison the extremist leaders.

***CE 443-456:** In the East, **the Hephthalites** had regrouped and regular missions to quell the unrest were undertaken during the 13 years.

***In the Mountain Passes of the Caucasus the Huns, a people of mystery and terror,** made several incursions but were checked by the combined forces of Rome and Airan. Frustrated by these blockades, **Attila the Hun (lived CE 406-453)**, with his vast hoards, struck directly at Rome. Their unpredictable manner of fighting was much dreaded. They appeared from several fronts in no regular order, extremely swiftly, with discordant cries, dispersed, and rapidly came together again in loose array, spreading havoc over large areas and pillaging the army camps. From a distance, they used sharpened bones as missiles to kill and during close combat, they threw a net over the enemy before killing. As early as CE 378 they had imposed a crushing defeat on an organized Roman army under Valens. They extracted tribute in gold from the Byzantine Emperors and, in return, settled down along the River Danube mainly in Hungary, attacking only when they wanted to increase the tribute. Theodosius II was, once more, forced to double his annual tribute.

***His persecution of the Jews** had reached such proportions that they discontinued the writing of their Palestinian Talmud. He, even, forbade them to celebrate the Sabbath and dissolved their right to impose their own law on Jewish offenders. Yazdegard II died in CE 457.

HORMAZD III and PIRUZ I

(CE 457-459) (CE 459-484),
sons of Yazdegard II
(Silver Drachma)



(Coin of Hormazd III): No coins of Hormazd III are known to have been minted)

(Coin of PIRUZ I above):

Obverse: 'MaZDISN KaDI PiRuChi' (*Of the Faith- Mazdayasna, Piruz the fortunate*) Crown has large wings with crescent clip holding Orymbos. Tiara bears a single layer of pearls, a single turret at the back and a crescent in front. Flowing locks of hair are curled. Beard is short-trimmed. Tiara, necklace and earrings bear large gemstones.

Reverse: In CE 461, a cosmic occurrence of the close conjunction of Venus and the Moon was noted. *From this date, the symbolic use of the Star and the Crescent became the accepted standard of Zarathushti good fortune and glory. The Star is to left & the Crescent to right of Fire.* The Altar Shaft is decorated with ribbons. The Capes falling backwards over the shoulders are short. *The Fire attendants are King (with a single-turreted crown and Orymbos on the left) and Priest (on the right) with both their hands held forwards in reverence.*

Mint: 'DA' (*Darabgard*). *There is no Regnal Year*, which appears on his coins only from Years 3 to 8 of his reign.

Yazdegard II's two sons, Piruz and Hormazd (born of Dinak), both contested the throne. In the absence of Piruz as Governor in Seistan, the younger brother, Hormazd declared himself, King. Piruz, with the help of a large Hephthalite army, defeated Hormazd in battle and took the throne.

Administration:

***CE 459-461:** Although **the crops failed for 5 consecutive years**, food was collected at specific centers and properly apportioned by rationing throughout the Empire.

*He was **more intolerant to the Jews than his father**. He passed a decree that all orphaned Jews were to be brought up as Zarathushtrians. The Hebrew scriptures were redacted during his reign. The Jews consequently discontinued their progressive writing of the Talmud.

Campaigns:

***CE 459:** During the two years of uncertainty during the reign of Hormazd III there had been unrest in **Ardan (Albania)**. The Governor, **Vatche** (a son of Piruz's sister) threw off his allegiance and declared Ardan independent. Again, with the help of his Hephthalite allies Piruz subjugated the province.

***CE 460:** A mutiny occurred in **Gurgan (Georgia)**. When he invaded, he was trapped in his camp by deceit and had to pay homage.

***CE 464:** There was a terrible drought, which lasted 7 years. Even the wells dried up. In the second year of drought, Piruz remitted taxes. By the fourth year grain had to be imported from India, the Oxus Valley and Greece. With the difficulties created by the drought and the two revolts, Piruz found it difficult to continue his annual payment of the reward due to the Hephthalites for their help. The **Hephthalite Chief, Khush Nawaz** was further

antagonized by Piruz when he sent a commoner, instead of his daughter in hand of marriage. When they attacked, he took to the field against the same people who had helped him ascend the throne and drove them beyond the Oxus. There were some early gains but through treachery, the Hephthalites captured Piruz and his son, Kavad.

***CE 465: Leo I (CE 457-474)** helped the release of Piruz on condition his son, Kavad was left hostage. In addition, Piruz was forced to pay homage to the chief by becoming prostrate and to take an oath never to invade Hephthalite territory beyond a certain pillar of peace on the banks of the Oxus.

***CE 481-483:** With the connivance of **Zeno (CE 474-491)** **Armenia next revolted** because of his attempts at persecuting the Christians in the Zarathushti Zone. Piruz defeated the radical elements after a long and costly campaign but the Armenian Commander Vahan escaped and remained a fugitive.

***CE 484:** Another wing of **the Hephthalites under the command of Khingila Khan attacked the Kushan Capital, Balkh.** Piruz took the full force of 100,000 men, his division of 500 Elephants and his entire Cavalry. Piruz kept the oath he had taken by having his elephants carry the pillar ahead of his army. Again through deceit, the Hephthalites won. Piruz's army was enticed into fields containing deep trenches, camouflaged by foliage. The attacking elephants were trapped as they fell into the trenches. Piruz, some warriors and commanders sustained severe wounds from which they succumbed.

Contemporary Roman Emperors



Leo I CE 457-474



Leo II CE 473-474



Zeno CE 474-491

VALAKHSH (CE 484-488),
brother of Piruz I

(Roman BALAKESH / Greek VOLOGASES)

(Silver Drachm - courtesy of the British Museum)



Coin:

Obverse: 'HuKaD VaLaKhSh' (*Valakhsh of Good Fortune*). Tiara has four turrets (one front and back and one on each side). Crescent clip (rather than ribbons) holds small Orymbos. Curled locks of hair. Beard is short. Earrings and necklace bear large gemstones. ***Flames issuing from Left shoulder*** (Indo-Scythian symbol of power and strength).

Reverse: Bust of King appears on Fire Altar partly engulfed in the flames. Star to left and Crescent to right of Fire. Fire attendants are King and Prince with both hands held forwards in reverence.

Mint mark 'NI' (*Nihavand*) to the right. There is no **regnal date**.

After the death of Piruz I, the Council of Nobles not being in a hurry to appoint another misfit, ruled Airan for months. Reluctantly, the Nobles by-passed his son, Zareh and instead, appointed **Piruz's brother, Valakhsh**, who was Governor of the Sakas in Seistan, since they considered him the right person to

initiate peace with the Hephthalites. He was successfully able to enter into a non-aggression Treaty with them.

Campaigns:

*Because **Zareh** was not selected to the throne he instigated a civil war. Valakhsh sought the help of the fugitive Armenian Commander, **Vahan**. With the help of Vahan's Armenian Cavalry and of **Zeno's** Roman legions Zareh was defeated. He was pursued and slain.

*Vahan then laid down his **terms of treaty** to the Iranian Commander, Nikhor. The treaty sought to: - 1) destroy all Fire temples in the Zarathushtrian Zone of Armenia 2) seek full liberty of worship to Christians and 3) demand the building of new churches in place of the destroyed Fire Temples. These were not acceptable to the Council of Nobles. Before Valakhsh had an opportunity to ratify the Treaty, he was seized, deposed and blinded.

Contemporary Roman Emperor



Zeno CE 474-491