

VARAHRAN III (CE 293), son of Hormazd I

After the death of Varahran II, his **son and heir** (shown facing the combined bust of Varahran II and his wife, Rezme on the obverse of his earlier coins) **did not ascend the throne**. The Council of Lords probably considered him not worthy of ascending the throne. The throne was open to Varahran III, son of Hormazd I and to Narseh, son of Shahpur I.

The coins of Varahran III were probably not minted (he ruled for only 4 months). His 'known' coins have been **attributed to those coins of Varahran II**, which show a single bust of Varahran II (without his wife, Rezme and son). These single bust coins of Varahran II, minted during the latter part of his reign, had the words '*Va ANIRAN*' omitted from the legend on the obverse side (as below). These coins were conveniently used as those of Varahran III during the 4 months of his rule.

Obverse: *'MaZDISN BaGI VaRaHRAN MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN, MiNUCheTRI MeN IeZDAN'* (**Defender of the Faith - Mazdayasna, Behram, King of Kings of Airan, of celestial Aryan origins**). '*Va ANIRAN*' has been omitted.

Reverse: *'NuRa ZI VaRaHRAN'* (**Fire of Behram**). Fire attendants are King and Priest.

Varahran III was, in fact, most disinclined to ascend the throne but the Council of Nobles, somehow convinced him and managed to place him on the throne. He held on for 4 months only but when Narseh, second son of Shahpur I, (who had been previously bypassed many times by the Council of Nobles) contested the throne, he gave it up peacefully in favor of Narseh.

NARSEH (CE 293-303), son of Shahpur I (Silver Drachma)



Coin:

Obverse: 'MaZDISN BaGI NaRShaHI MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN Va ANIRAN, MiNUCheTRI MeN IeZDAN' (***Defender of the Faith -Mazdayasna, King of Kings of AIRAN of celestial Aryan origins***). Laminated tiara shows multiple palm twigs and four truncated Palm leaves (one in front and back and one on each side). Embroidered silk cloth covering Orymbos and hair is ornate with jewels. Ribbons hold straight locks of hair cut short at the back. Beard tip is tied with ribbon, holding gemstones. Pearl necklace has gemstones. Embroidered border of cape is open in front.

Reverse: 'NuRA ZI NaRShaHI' (***Fire of Narseh***). Fravahar symbol to right and **Bull's Head symbol (appears for the first time)** to the left of Fire. Fire attendants are King (with crown showing Orymbos) to the left and Priest (with Mithra crown) to the right of the Fire Altar. Both hold a small bundle of Barsom rods in the left hand. The right hand rests on the sword halter.

Ancestral lineage: Having been by-passed several times as heir, by the Nobles, while busy campaigning against the Romans in Armenia, he had a rock inscription carved at the present **Naqsh-e-**

Rustom, clearly establishing his legitimate genealogy as the son of Shahpur I.

Campaigns:

***CE 294:** Following his father's footsteps he embarked on regaining full possession of Armenia which had revolted during his father Shahpur I's rule. During the reign of Varahran II, **Diocletian in CE 286** had expelled the Iranian garrisons and installed Tiridates as a puppet King. Narseh first won the **Battle of Carrhae** in Mesopotamia against the Roman Commander **Galerius** sent by Diocletian, his father-in-law.

***CE 296:** He then conquered Armenia and drove out Tiridates.

***CE 301:** **Galerius**, however, returned with a huge army of 25,000 men comprised of the combined Roman legions and the regrouped Armenian cavalry of Tiridates and imposed a crushing defeat on the Iranians at Ctesiphon. Narseh was severely wounded in battle. He escaped but his wife, children and some noblemen were taken hostages. To recover his family he was forced to sign a **humiliating peace treaty** ceding Armenia, Kurdistan and all five provinces of Mesopotamia to Rome. **Nisibis**, the largest city in Mesopotamia, was to remain a common emporium for commercial transactions. This peace was to last for 40 years.

***CE 301:** At first, the wounded Narseh took his son, Hormazd as co-ruler.

***CE 302:** Remaining in constant ill health after the injury, he abdicated in favor of son, Hormazd II

Contemporary Roman Emperors



Diocletian CE 284-305



Galerius CE 305-310

HORMAZD II (CE 303-309), son of Narseh
(Silver Drachma)



Coin:

Obverse: *'MaZDISN BaGI AUHRMaZDI MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN VA ANIRAN, MiNUCheTRI MeN IeZDAN'* (***Defender of the Faith-Mazdayasna, Hormazd, King of Kings of Airan and AnIran, of celestial Aryan origins***). Tiara shows a winged eagle (a wing on each side, the tuft of the tail at the back and the head and beak in front showing a pearl suspended from its beak). Silk cloth covering hair and Orymbos is ornate. Tiara, Necklace and Earrings are studded with large gemstones. Orymbos, curled locks of hair at back and beard tip all tied with ribbons. Tip of beard holds gemstones. Embroidered border of the cape is open in front.

Reverse: *'NuRA ZI AUHRMaZDI'* (***Fire of Hormazd***). Uncrowned head suggests that the **bust in flames is that of Zarathushtra**. Altar shaft is decorated with ribbons. Fire attendants are King on left (with crown showing Orymbos) and the Priest on the right (wearing Mithra crown). They hold a sizable bundle of barsom rods with both hands.

*Early in life Hormazd II had married the daughter of the Kushan King of Gandhara in Pushkabur (modern Kabul), of whom he had two sons, **Adar-Narseh** and **Hormazd**.

***CE 308:** Late in life, he married a young *Jewish lady, Ifra-Hormazd*. *Hormazd II* however died before their son, **Shahpur** was born.

***CE 309:** On his death his eldest son, **Adar-Narseh** claimed the throne but the Council of Nobles deposed him and had him assassinated. The Council of Nobles also imprisoned the second son, **Hormazd**, who escaped to Constantinople (to return later). The, yet, unborn son of his young Jewish wife was declared King.

Administration:

Hormazd had a strong *taste for architecture*. He planned and supervised the tasteful reconstruction of a new City, **Ram-Hormazd** near the present Straits of Hormuz. He rebuilt several towns and villages, which were dilapidated. He improved the irrigation channels, which helped increase tillable land for agriculture with greater yield of the crops.

His humane nature and *sense of justice* made him set up a **High Court** for grievances from the under-privileged.

Campaigns:

***CE 307-309:** Hormazd firmly eliminated **Roman incursions** under Galerius from Armenia under the pretext of the safeguarding of Christian interests.

Contemporary Roman Emperor



Galerius CE 305-310