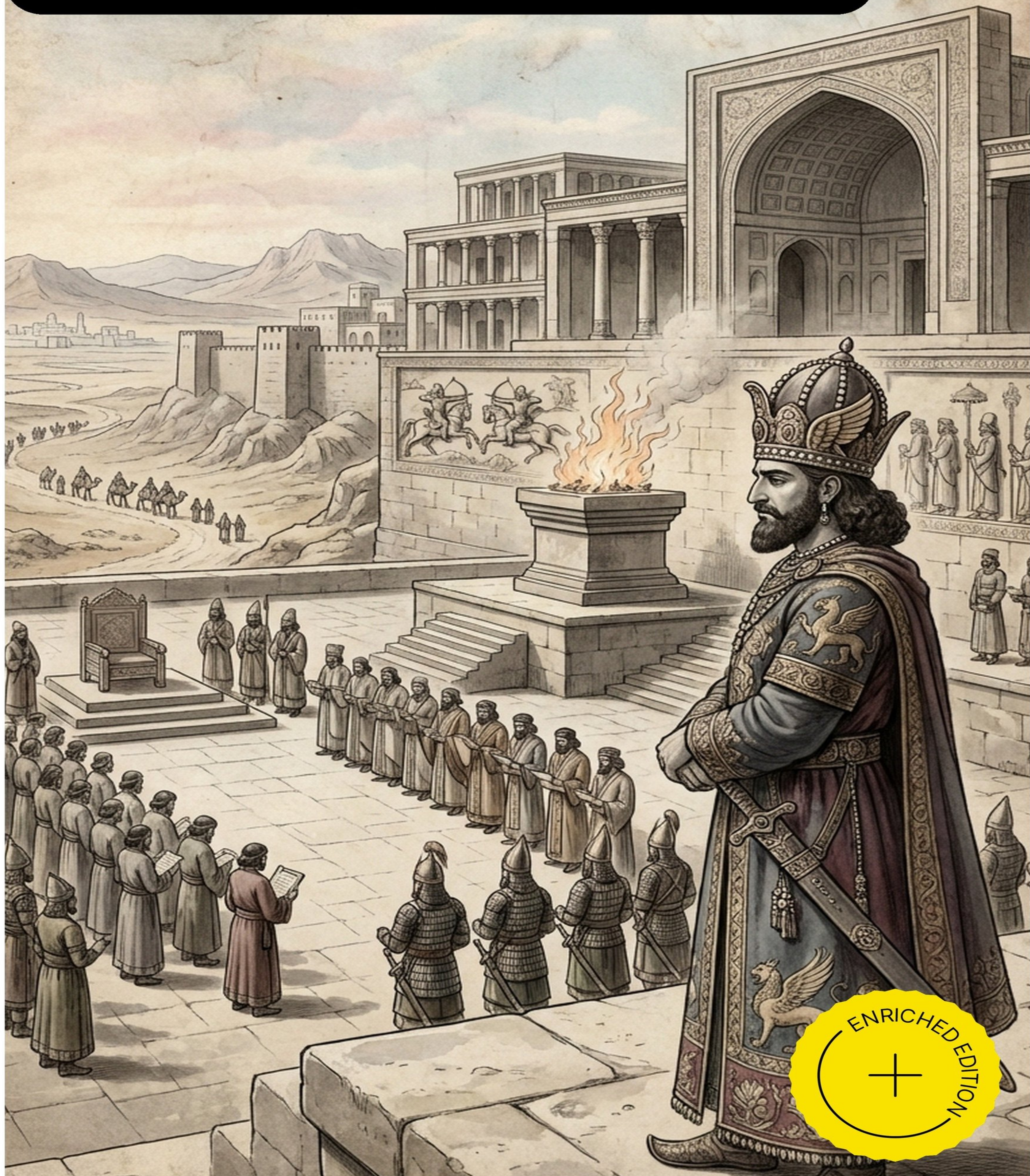
GEORGE RAWLINSON



HISTORY OF THE SASANIAN EMPIRE

George Rawlinson

History of the Sasanian Empire

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Nolan Mercer

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Introduction

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At the heart of George Rawlinson's History of the Sasanian Empire lies the tension between imperial vision and the stubborn realities of late-antique power. In this study, a distinguished Victorian historian reconstructs the rise and breadth of the New Persian dynasty that ruled Iran and its neighbors for centuries, mapping how institutions, beliefs, and armies forged a durable state. Without assuming prior knowledge, the book ushers readers into courts, frontiers, and cities where policy, ritual, and war intertwined. The result is a panoramic entry point into one of antiquity's most consequential empires, rendered with patient exposition and a scholar's eye for pattern.

History of the Sasanian Empire is historical nonfiction, written in the measured idiom of nineteenth-century English scholarship and anchored in the Near Eastern world of the third to seventh centuries. The setting spans Iranian plateaus, Mesopotamian riverlands, Caucasian corridors, and contested borderlands with Rome and steppe peoples. Composed in the Victorian era, it reflects the period's effort to synthesize classical testimonies with the antiquarian evidence then available. Readers encounter a work that balances narrative with analysis, seeking to clarify chronology, institutions, and geography while keeping the political story intelligible. The book's scope is continental, yet its lens remains attentive to administrative detail.

Rawlinson frames the narrative around the dynasty's emergence from regional power to imperial arbiter, explaining how succession, ideology, and military reform shaped a state capable of sustained competition with Rome. Chapters typically open with a political outline before turning to administration, religion, law, and culture, so the reader moves from campaign to council chamber with steady orientation. The author evaluates claims of continuity with earlier Persian models, sifts debates among classical writers, and pauses for descriptions of cities, roads, and coinage. Without dwelling on minutiae, the book assembles a coherent arc that privileges clarity of sequence over speculative reconstruction.

Readers will find a steady, lucid voice that favors measured judgments and careful transitions over rhetorical flourish. The prose reflects the confidence and limits of its age: sourced to classical and early medieval testimonies, cautious about conjecture, and attentive to material traces then known. Rawlinson writes with an instructor's patience, defining terms, situating places, and summarizing contested points before advancing. The tone remains formal yet accessible, inviting general readers without sacrificing scholarly rigor. Maps and institutional summaries, where provided in editions, serve as wayfinders, but the momentum comes from clear organization and a consistent effort to connect detail with overarching structures.

The book's themes cohere around sovereignty, legitimacy, and cultural synthesis. It explores how religious institutions intersected with kingship, how legal and fiscal systems enabled consolidation, and how frontiers fostered

both conflict and exchange. Diplomatic ritual and warfare are treated alongside urban development, court ceremonial, and artistic patronage, showing an imperial identity negotiated across diverse peoples and landscapes. Rawlinson is attentive to the Sasanian dialogue with earlier Persian precedents and with Rome, tracing claims of inheritance and rivalry without forcing simple binaries. Across these pages, ideology and infrastructure appear as twin pillars of durability, always tested by succession, geography, and ambition.

For contemporary readers, this history illuminates a formative engine of Eurasian connectivity whose institutions, trade routes, and religious debates still echo in today's cultural and geopolitical landscapes. The Sasanian world mediated encounters among Iranian, Semitic, and Hellenic traditions, and the book helps clarify how ideas traversed languages, law codes, and borders. Its sustained attention to administration and diplomacy offers comparative insight into how large states balance central authority with local autonomy. In an era seeking deeper context for Iran and its neighbors, Rawlinson's synthesis provides a foundational map, revealing continuities and contrasts that enrich discussions of identity, governance, and cross-cultural exchange.

Approached with the awareness that it reflects Victorian methods and the sources available at the time, History of the Sasanian Empire remains a lucid gateway to a complex past. It equips readers to follow dynastic narratives, decode administrative vocabulary, and recognize the interplay of religion, economy, and military power across late antiquity.

As a work of synthesis, it invites comparison with newer research rather than competing with it, opening questions that subsequent scholarship continues to refine. Above all, it offers sustained attention to a pivotal empire whose structures and stories reward patient reading and repay reflection far beyond its pages.

Synopsis

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George Rawlinson's History of the Sasanian Empire surveys the rise, structure, and decline of Iran's last pre-Islamic dynasty through a careful synthesis of classical testimony, eastern chronicles, inscriptions, and numismatics. He opens by situating the Sasanians within the landscapes of Iran and Mesopotamia and by contrasting their political temperament with their Parthian predecessors. The work's organization moves from setting and origins to a largely chronological narrative, before turning to institutions, religion, arts, and the reasons for eclipse. Throughout, Rawlinson emphasizes verifiable evidence and cross-comparison of sources, seeking to reconstruct a coherent trajectory for an empire that stood as Rome's—and later Byzantium's—principal eastern counterpart.

The narrative begins in Persis, where Ardashir I overturns Arsacid rule and reasserts a centralized monarchy rooted in Iranian traditions. Rawlinson traces the early consolidation of power, the establishment of a more disciplined administration, and the revival of royal symbols that signal a new political program. Under Shapur I, the monarchy projects force westward and stabilizes frontiers through warfare, negotiation, and infrastructural measures. These episodes are presented as foundational, defining the state's confidence and the scale of its ambitions. The early rulers, in Rawlinson's account, set patterns—dynastic legitimation,

administrative centrality, and strategic rivalry—that continue to guide imperial policy.

Having secured the throne, subsequent kings confront the durable realities of rule: great noble houses, provincial interests, and a professionalized military establishment. Rawlinson describes the evolving balance between crown and aristocracy, highlighting court ceremony and bureaucratic routines that integrate diverse regions. He foregrounds the consolidation of Zoroastrian orthodoxy as a state-supporting force, while noting the tensions that religious authority could introduce into governance. The treatment of Christians and other communities is framed through legal measures, episodic repression or tolerance, and the political calculus of frontier diplomacy. His analysis stresses how religious leadership and secular administration intertwine to sustain legitimacy and social order.

Rawlinson's middle chapters explore the empire's long rivalry with Rome and Byzantium, using campaigns, sieges, and treaties to chart shifts in regional dominance. Armenia appears as a perennial hinge, both buffer and prize, where alliances and conversions carry strategic weight. Defensive works, fortified lines, and riverine strongpoints are examined as instruments of deterrence as much as conquest. To the east and northeast, steppe and Central Asian pressures—whether from nomad confederations or settled principalities—compel adaptation in cavalry tactics and frontier management. The result is a portrait of a state perpetually balancing multiple theatres, calibrating force with diplomacy to preserve its geopolitical posture.

Beyond warfare, the study turns to the internal mechanics of prosperity and control. Provincial governance, tax collection, and standardized coinage reveal a fiscal system capable of supporting standing armies and monumental projects. Rawlinson reads material culture—palatial architecture, rock reliefs, and religious precincts—as statements of ideology and administrative reach. Irrigation schemes and caravan routes signify economic integration from Mesopotamia to Iran’s plateau, with trade connecting the empire to wider Eurasian circuits. Law and custom, while anchored in tradition, are shown adapting to administrative needs. These chapters underscore the Sasanians as state-builders whose cultural and economic programs reinforced political coherence.

A high point emerges under reforming monarchs who consolidate institutions and patronize scholarship alongside military preparedness. Rawlinson emphasizes administrative regularization, clearer chains of command, and more predictable revenue as hallmarks of durable governance. Intellectual life benefits from exchanges with neighboring civilizations and from courtly interest in science and letters, which the author treats as both cultural prestige and practical statecraft. These developments, in his argument, do not erase earlier tensions; rather, they harness them, keeping nobility, clergy, and bureaucracy in workable equilibrium. The empire’s confidence in this period illustrates how institutional refinement can magnify strategic options without dissolving inherited constraints.

The closing sections follow renewed western conflicts, costly victories and reversals, and a debilitating cycle of

factionalism that weakens central authority. Rawlinson links fiscal strain, disease, and contested succession to a loss of strategic flexibility just as energetic powers rise on the southern frontiers. He refrains from sensationalism, instead weighing structural causes against contingent misjudgments. The book concludes with reflections on Sasanian legacies in governance, legal thought, and artistic vocabulary, asserting their imprint on subsequent Iranian and regional polities. By charting both endurance and vulnerability, the study offers a measured account of how a formidable imperial system achieved brilliance and met its historical limits.

Historical Context

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The Sasanian Empire arose in 224 CE when Ardashir I, a local ruler from Fars, overthrew the Arsacid Parthians and proclaimed himself shahanshah. Centered on Mesopotamia with its royal seat at Ctesiphon, the monarchy claimed Achaemenid heritage while building a distinct late antique state. Zoroastrianism, organized under a powerful priesthood, became the official religion, its fire temples and legal norms shaping court and society. Royal rock reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rajab advertised sovereignty, and a prolific silver coinage broadcast royal ideology across provinces. Nobility and great clans shared power with the crown, while heavy cavalry and siegecraft anchored imperial military strength.

From its beginning, the empire's foremost rival was Rome and, later, Byzantium. Shapur I defeated several emperors and captured Valerian at Edessa in 260, a shock recorded by Roman and Persian sources. After Julian's failed invasion (363), Jovian ceded key fortresses like Nisibis, shaping a fortified frontier in Mesopotamia and Armenia. Long reigns, notably that of Shapur II, saw repeated wars that alternated with treaties and tributes. Control over Armenia and the Caucasus influenced diplomacy and defense. These conflicts compelled administrative cohesion, revenue systems, and a professional army that could garrison frontiers while mounting deep raids into Roman territory.

Religion and society were defining arenas of Sasanian governance. The high priest Kartir, known from rock inscriptions, advanced Zoroastrian orthodoxy under Shapur I and his successors, while the prophet Mani was executed under Bahram I. Christian communities expanded within imperial borders; the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 organized the Church of the East under a catholicos, aligning it institutionally apart from Roman churches after later doctrinal disputes. Jewish academies thrived in Mesopotamia. Commerce along the Silk Road linked Iran with India, Central Asia, and the Mediterranean, funding cities and fortresses and giving the court leverage over interregional trade.

Political order rested on cooperation and rivalry between kings and aristocratic houses. Cavalry elites and the dehqān landed gentry supported a disciplined army known for cataphracts and composite bows. Kavad I faced fiscal crisis and social unrest, amid which the Mazdakite movement preached radical redistribution; its influence was curbed, and Khosrow I Anushirvan undertook reforms of taxation, provincial command, and justice. He and his allies destroyed the Hephthalite power in the 560s, stabilizing the northeast. Monumental architecture, including the great vaulted hall at Ctesiphon, expressed royal magnificence, while coin types and inscriptions standardized titles, regnal years, and religious symbols.

The last great confrontation with Byzantium defined the empire’s final decades. Under Khosrow II (r. 590–628), Sasanian armies occupied Syria, Egypt, and much of Anatolia, capturing Jerusalem in 614 and taking the relic of

the True Cross. Emperor Heraclius then launched counteroffensives from 622, culminating in victory near Nineveh in 627 and a settlement restoring Byzantine losses. Internal coups followed, weakening central authority. Within a few years, Arab Muslim forces defeated Sasanian armies at al-Qadisiyyah (636) and Nahavand (642). The dynasty ended with the death of Yazdegerd III in 651, closing a four-century chapter of Iranian monarchy.

George Rawlinson, Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, published his Sasanian study in 1876 as The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy. Writing in Victorian Britain, he drew primarily on Greco-Roman authors (Ammianus, Procopius, Agathias), Armenian and Syriac chronicles, and Arabic-Persian historians such as al-Tabari, alongside numismatic and epigraphic evidence, including Shapur I’s trilingual inscription. Philological work on Middle Persian was developing, and archaeological exploration in Iran was limited, so textual synthesis dominated. Rawlinson’s narrative aimed to organize chronology, geography, and dynastic succession for English readers, situating Iran alongside classical polities that already occupied central places in 19th-century historical curricula.

His approach reflects prevailing methods and assumptions of his milieu. Rawlinson privileges political and military history, explaining institutions through royal actions and foreign wars, and often contrasts Persia with Rome or Byzantium. He applies moral and religious judgments common to Anglican Victorian scholarship, yet he systematically collates sources and tests narratives against coins, titles, and regnal formulas. Some details have been

revised by later Iranian studies, but his synthesis helped fix sequences of reigns, frontier zones, and major campaigns for Anglophone audiences. The book exemplifies how 19th-century historians turned disparate classical, ecclesiastical, and Islamic materials into continuous accounts of Late Antiquity.

The work mirrors Victorian concerns with empire, frontiers, and civilizational continuity. By tracing Sasanian rivalry with Rome and the transition to the early Islamic period, Rawlinson presented Persia as a principal actor shaping Eurasian order, law, and diplomacy. His admiration for administrative vigor and suspicion of heterodoxy echo contemporary British ideals and anxieties, even as he acknowledges Persian resilience and cultural sophistication. The book thus functions both as a compendium of late 19th-century learning and as a commentary on power, religion, and statecraft, inviting readers to measure ancient imperial strategies against the expectations of its own age.

History of the Sasanian Empire

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MAP OF THE
SASSANIAN EMPIRE

Chapter I.

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Condition of the Persians under the Successors of Alexander—under the Arsacidce[1]. Favor shown them by the latter—allowed to have Kings of their own. Their Religion at first held in honor. Power of their Priests. Gradual Change of Policy on the part of the Parthian Monarchs, and final Oppression of the Magi. Causes which produced the Insurrection of Artaxerxes.

> “The Parthians had been barbarians; they had ruled over a nation far more civilized than themselves, and had oppressed them and their religion.”
>
> Niebuhr, Lectures on Roman History, vol. iii. p. 270.

When the great Empire of the Persians, founded by Cyrus, collapsed under the attack of Alexander the Great, the dominant race of Western Asia did not feel itself at the first reduced to an intolerable condition. It was the benevolent design of Alexander to fuse into one the two leading peoples of Europe and Asia, and to establish himself at the head of a Perso-Hellenic State, the capital of which was to have been Babylon. Had this idea been carried out, the Persians would, it is evident, have lost but little by their subjugation. Placed on a par with the Greeks, united with them in marriage bonds, and equally favored by their common ruler, they

could scarcely have uttered a murmur, or have been seriously discontented with their position. But when the successors of the great Macedonian, unable to rise to the height of his grand conception, took lower ground, and, giving up the idea of a fusion, fell back upon the ordinary status, and proceeded to enact the ordinary role, of conquerors, the feelings of the late lords of Asia, the countrymen of Cyrus and Darius, must have undergone a complete change. It had been the intention of Alexander to conciliate and elevate the leading Asiatics by uniting them with the Macedonians and the Greeks, by promoting social intercourse between the two classes of his subjects and encouraging them to intermarry, by opening his court to Asiatics, by educating then in Greek ideas and in Greek schools, by promoting them to high employments, and making them feel that they were as much valued and as well cared for as the people of the conquering race: it was the plan of the Seleucidae to govern wholly by means of European officials, Greek or Macedonian, and to regard and treat the entire mass of their Asiatic subjects as mere slaves. Alexander had placed Persian satraps**[2]** over most of the provinces, attaching to them Greek or Macedonian commandants as checks**[1q]**. Seloucus divided his empire into seventy-two satrapies; but among his satraps not one was an Asiatic—all were either Macedonians or Greeks. Asiatics, indeed, formed the bulk of his standing army, and so far were admitted to employment; they might also, no doubt, be tax-gatherers, couriers, scribes, constables, and officials of that mean stamp; but they were as carefully excluded from all honorable and lucrative offices as the

natives of Hindustan under the rule of the East India Company. The standing army of the Seleucidae was wholly officered, just as was that of our own Sepoys, by Europeans; Europeans thronged the court, and filled every important post under the government. There cannot be a doubt that such a high-spirited and indeed arrogant people as the Persians must have fretted and chafed under this treatment, and have detested the nation and dynasty which had thrust them down from their pre-eminence and converted them from masters into slaves. It would scarcely much tend to mitigate the painfulness of their feelings that they could not but confess their conquerors to be a civilized people—as civilized, perhaps more civilized than themselves—since the civilization was of a type and character which did not please them or command their approval. There is an essential antagonism between European and Asiatic ideas and modes of thought, such as seemingly to preclude the possibility of Asiatics appreciating a European civilization. The Persians must have felt towards the Greco-Macedonians much as the Mohammedans of India feel towards ourselves—they may have feared and even respected them—but they must have very bitterly hated them. Nor was the rule of the Seleucidae such as to overcome by its justice or its wisdom the original antipathy of the dispossessed lords of Asia towards those by whom they had been ousted. The satrapial system, which these monarchs lazily adopted from their predecessors, the Achaemenians, is one always open to great abuses, and needs the strictest superintendence and supervision. There is no reason to believe that any sufficient watch was kept over their satraps by the Seleucid kings, or even any system

of checks established, such as the Achaemenidae had, at least in theory, set up and maintained. The Greco-Macedonian governors of provinces seem to have been left to themselves almost entirely, and to have been only controlled in the exercise of their authority by their own notions of what was right or expedient. Under these circumstances, abuses were sure to creep in; and it is not improbable that gross outrages were sometimes perpetrated by those in power—outrages calculated to make the blood of a nation boil, and to produce a keen longing for vengeance. We have no direct evidence that the Persians of the time did actually suffer from such a misuse of satrapial authority; but it is unlikely that they entirely escaped the miseries which are incidental to the system in question. Public opinion ascribed the grossest acts of tyranny and oppression to some of the Seleucid satraps; probably the Persians were not exempt from the common lot of the subject races.

Moreover, the Seleucid monarchs themselves were occasionally guilty of acts of tyranny, which must have intensified the dislike wherewith they were regarded by their Asiatic subjects. The reckless conduct of Antiochus Epiphanes towards the Jews is well known; but it is not perhaps generally recognized that intolerance and impious cupidity formed a portion of the system on which he governed. There seems, however, to be good reason to believe that, having exhausted his treasury by his wars and his extravagances, Epiphanes formed a general design of recruiting it by means of the plunder of his subjects. The temples of the Asiatics had hitherto been for the most part

respected by their European conquerors, and large stores of the precious metals were accumulated in them. Epiphanes saw in these hoards the means of relieving his own necessities, and determined to seize and confiscate them. Besides plundering the Temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, he made a journey into the southeastern portion of his empire, about B.C. 165, for the express purpose of conducting in person the collection of the sacred treasures. It was while he was engaged in this unpopular work that a spirit of disaffection showed itself; the East took arms no less than the West; and in Persia, or upon its borders, the avaricious monarch was forced to retire before the opposition which his ill-judged measures had provoked, and to allow one of the doomed temples to escape him. When he soon afterwards sickened and died, the natives of this part of Asia saw in his death a judgment upon him for his attempted sacrilege.

It was within twenty years of this unfortunate attempt that the dominion of the Seleucidae over Persia and the adjacent countries came to an end. The Parthian Empire had for nearly a century been gradually growing in power and extending itself at the expense of the Syro-Macedonian; and, about B.C. 163, an energetic prince, Mithridates I., commenced a series of conquests towards the West, which terminated (about B.C. 150) in the transference from the Syro-Macedonian to the Parthian rule of Media Magna, Susiana, Persia, Babylonia, and Assyria Proper. It would seem that the Persians offered no resistance to the progress of the new conqueror. The Seleucidae had not tried to conciliate their attachment, and it was impossible that they should dislike the rupture of ties which had only galled

hitherto. Perhaps their feeling, in prospect of the change, was one of simple indifference. Perhaps it was not without some stir of satisfaction and complacency that they saw the pride of the hated Europeans abased, and a race, which, however much it might differ from their own, was at least Asiatic, installed in power. The Parthia system, moreover, was one which allowed greater liberty to the subject races than the Macedonian, as it had been understood and carried out by the Seleucidae; and so far some real gain was to be expected from the change. Religious motives must also have conspired to make the Persians sympathize with the new power, rather than with that which for centuries had despised their faith and had recently insulted it.

The treatment of the Persians by their Parthian lords seems, on the whole, to have been marked by moderation. Mithridates indeed, the original conqueror, is accused of having alienated his new subjects by the harshness of his rule; and in the struggle which occurred between him and the Seleucid king, Demetrius II., Persians, as well as Elymseans and Bactrians, are said to have fought on the side of the Syro-Macedonian. But this is the only occasion in Parthian history, between the submission of Persia and the great revolt under Artaxerxes, where there is any appearance of the Persians regarding their masters with hostile feelings. In general they show themselves submissive and contented with their position, which was certainly, on the whole, a less irksome one than they had occupied under the Seleucidae.

It was a principle of the Parthian governmental system to allow the subject peoples, to a large extent, to govern

themselves. These peoples generally, and notably the Persians, were ruled by native kings, who succeeded to the throne by hereditary right, had the full power of life and death, and ruled very much as they pleased, so long as they paid regularly the tribute imposed upon them by the “King of Kings,” and sent him a respectable contingent when he was about to engage in a military expedition. Such a system implies that the conquered peoples have the enjoyment of their own laws and institutions, are exempt from troublesome interference, and possess a sort of semi-independence. Oriental nations, having once assumed this position, are usually contented with it, and rarely make any effort to better themselves. It would seem that, thus far at any rate, the Persians could not complain of the Parthian rule, but must have been fairly satisfied with their condition.

Again, the Greco-Macedonians had tolerated, but they had not viewed with much respect, the religion which they had found established in Persia. Alexander, indeed, with the enlightened curiosity which characterised him, had made inquiries concerning, the tenets of the Magi, and endeavored to collect in one the writings of Zoroaster. But the later monarchs, and still more their subjects, had held the system in contempt, and, as we have seen, Epiphanes had openly insulted the religious feelings of his Asiatic subjects. The Parthians, on the other hand, began at any rate with a treatment of the Persian religion which was respectful and gratifying. Though perhaps at no time very sincere Zoroastrians, they had conformed to the State religion under the Achaemenian kings; and when the period came that they had themselves to establish a system of

government, they gave to the Magian hierarchy a distinct and important place in their governmental machinery. The council, which advised the monarch, and which helped to elect and (if need were) depose him, was composed of two elements—-the *Sophi*, or wise men, who were civilians; and the *Magi*, or priests of the Zoroastrian religion. The Magi had thus an important political status in Parthia, during the early period of the Empire; but they seem gradually to have declined in favor, and ultimately to have fallen into disrepute. The Zoroastrian creed was, little by little, superseded among the Parthians by a complex idolatry, which, beginning with an image-worship of the Sun and Moon, proceeded to an association with those deities of the deceased kings of the nation, and finally added to both a worship of ancestral idols, which formed the most cherished possession of each family, and practically monopolized the religious sentiment. All the old Zoroastrian practices were by degrees laid aside. In Armenia the Arsacid monarchs allowed the sacred fire of Ormazd to become extinguished; and in their own territories the Parthian Arsacidae introduced the practice, hateful to Zoroastrians, of burning the dead. The ultimate religion of these monarchs seems in fact to have been a syncretism wherein Sabaism, Confucianism, Greco-Macedonian notions, and an inveterate primitive idolatry were mixed together. It is not impossible that the very names of Ormazd and Ahriman had ceased to be known at the Parthian Court, or were regarded as those of exploded deities, whose dominion over men’s minds had passed away.

medical school that became an influential center of medicine, philosophy, and learning in late antiquity.

61 A mid-6th-century conflict between the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire and Sasanian Persia over Lazica (roughly modern western Georgia), lasting intermittently and involving strategic and diplomatic contests over the Black Sea frontier.

62 The name used by Greek and Latin writers for Hormazd (Hormizd) IV, the Sasanian king who succeeded Khosrow I (Anushirwan) and ruled roughly c. 579–590 AD.

63 A Sasanian general (also called Varahran in the text) who served under Hormizd IV, won victories against Turkic forces in the late 580s, and later led a rebellion against the king.

64 A Turkic-speaking people and polity active from the early medieval period who controlled steppe areas north of the Caucasus; in this account they are described as invading parts of Armenia and Azerbaijan during the late 6th century.

65 A Middle Persian coin legend (rendered here in Latin characters) meaning roughly 'May Ahura Mazda increase' or 'Ahura Mazda has increased', commonly inscribed on Sasanian coinage including issues attributed to Hormisdas.

66 Circesium was a Roman/Byzantine frontier fortress and military station at the junction of the Euphrates and the Khabur rivers, controlling eastern approaches into

Mesopotamia; it is commonly identified with the site near modern Busayrah on the lower Euphrates in the Syria/Iraq border region.

67 Comentiolus was a senior Byzantine commander serving as the empire's chief military official for the eastern provinces (the title here indicates the leading military prefect or magister militum for the East); he was active under Emperor Maurice in the late 6th century and was resident at Hierapolis as described in the text.

68 Eberwiz is given in the text as an alternative name for Chosroes II (also called Parviz); it is a variant transliteration used in some medieval and modern sources to refer to the same Sasanian king.

69 Bindoes is named here as one of Chosroes II’s uncles who supported the young king during his restoration but was later seized and drowned in the Tigris on Chosroes’s orders.

70 Khatun is a title used in Turkic and related steppe societies for a noblewoman or queen-consort; in the passage it refers to the Khan’s wife who is involved in the plot against Bahram.

71 Sergiopolis (the shrine town of St. Sergius) was an important early Christian pilgrimage site in Syria (often identified with Resafa) where a revered martyr’s shrine

attracted devotion from Syrian and Mesopotamian Christians.

72 Seraglio here denotes the women’s quarters or harem of a ruler’s household — the secluded domestic precinct where wives, concubines, and female attendants lived in many Middle Eastern courts.

73 Canzaca refers to a place where the Byzantine emperor Heraclius wintered after crossing the Zagros; it is generally identified with Ganzak (also spelled Ganzaga), an ancient city in north-western Persia near the modern Takht-e Soleyman area, though exact identification is not certain.

74 "Kavat-Firuz" is the Middle Persian legend found on certain Sasanian coins and denotes the issuing monarch (Kobad/Kavad) together with an epithet; the element 'Firuz' (Piruz) is commonly rendered as ‘victorious’ in medieval Persian names.

75 Abu-bekr (commonly transliterated Abu Bakr) was a close companion and father-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad who became the first Caliph (Islamic leader) after Muhammad’s death, ruling the early Muslim polity in the early 7th century (c. 632–634 CE).

76 Moseilama (often written Musaylima in modern scholarship) was a 7th-century Arab figure who claimed prophethood and led a rival movement to early Islam; he

was defeated and killed in the campaigns that followed Muhammad's death (around the early 630s CE).

77 Hira (al-Hirah) was the capital of the Lakhmid Arab kingdom on the western Euphrates in southern Mesopotamia, a client state of the Sasanian Empire and an important frontier town in late antique Arab–Persian relations.

78 The durufsh-kawani (Drafsh-e Kāvīān in Persian) is the legendary Persian standard described here as the leathern apron of the blacksmith Kawah, later richly ornamented and revered as a national or royal banner in Sasanian tradition.

79 The Sassanians (more commonly spelled Sasanian) were the ruling Persian dynasty from roughly AD 224 to 651, which succeeded the Parthian Empire and governed a large territory in Iran and Mesopotamia until the early Islamic conquests.

80 Achaemenidae refers to the Achaemenid dynasty of ancient Persia, the imperial house that ruled approximately c. 550–330 BC (including rulers such as Cyrus the Great and Darius I) and whose monumental sites like Persepolis are mentioned in the chapter.

81 Hatra was an ancient fortified city in northern Mesopotamia (in modern Iraq) that flourished under Parthian-era vassal rulers from about the 2nd century BC to