

**SHAHPUR II, the Great (CE 309-379)**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> son of Hormazd II**

(Silver Drachmas)



**Coins:**

**Obverse of above Silver coins:** *'MaZDISN BaGI ShaHPUHRI MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN VA ANAIRAN, MiNUCheTRI MeN IeZDAN'* (**Defender of the faith - Mazdayasna, Shahpur, King of Kings of Airan and AnIran, of celestial Aryan origins**). Tiara bears four turrets (one in front and back and one on each side). Silk cloth covering hair and Orymbos is ornate. Earrings and necklace have large gemstones. Ribbons hold Orymbos, curled locks of hair at the back. Beard tip tied with ribbon holds gemstone.

**Reverse:** *'NuRA ZI ShaHPUHRI'* (**Fire of Shahpur**). Fire attendants are King to the left (the crown shows the Orymbos) and Priest (with Mithra Crown) to the right of Fire Altar holding sizable bundle of Barsom Rods with both hands. The first silver coin shows the **bust of king** engulfed in flames. The Shaft of Fire Altar is decorated. The second silver coin has the **Fravahar symbol** on the decorated Altar Shaft.

### **Shahpur II was declared king before his birth:**

The council of Nobles had declared Shahpur, king in **CE 308**, even before he was born to his Jewish mother, Ifra-Hormazd. **Born CE 309, he was crowned King, Shahpur II forty days after his birth.** The Council of Nobles headed by a wise counselor, **Shahroy** carried out the affairs of the State until Shahpur reached mature age and was strong enough to be tutored properly in the arts, humanities and matters of defense and warfare.

### **Campaigns:**

**\*CE 325:** Brought up to rule as the defender of the faith, the infant King kept the aspirations of the Council of Nobles. Seeing there was no warrior King on the throne they could identify with, the **Arab tribes** indulged in petty border incursions and pillaging. Those living in the region around the City of Ram-Hormazd were fearful of repeated aggressive invasions from the Al Khatif leaders. At the mature age of 16, Shahpur ventured on his first mission. At first he succeeded in defeating and driving away the marauding bands but they returned. Shahpur then collected an organized army and set sail for the Gulf of

Hormuz. This time he captured them and brought them to Ctesiphon captives, with chains attached to metal rings passed through their shoulders.

\***Constantine I (CE 307-337)** was titled '*The Great*' after he agreed to call the Council of Nicaea in **CE 325**, which reached an agreement declaring Christianity a State religion. The authenticity of his conversion was much debated since he continued to remain a devoted worshipper of Mithra. He encouraged and took part in the **12 day Festival of Mithra commencing 24<sup>th</sup> Dec** each year and, even, erected several **Mithriums and monuments to Mithra**. For 400 years after his death, laws forbidding the Festival of Mithra were ignored. The exasperated Christian clergy ultimately decided to eliminate belief in Mithra, only by joining in the festivities and slowly replacing the motifs by Christian ones.

\***CE 330:** Shahpur, having obtained earlier gains with the Al Katif Arab tribes, put down a revolt of the Arab Tribes in Susa and relocated the City, calling it ***Airan Khurra Shahpur*** (*Shahpur, Khwarena of Airan*).

\*Born of a Jewish mother he was **partial to the Jews but not to the Christians**. He levied a tax on the Churches and when they complained closed them down and confiscated their property. Constantine **CE 337** sent a deputation to rectify matters but when they failed he prepared to invade Ctesiphon. Constantine died suddenly during the plan for invasion. The Roman Empire was divided between Constantine's 3 warring sons. **Constantius II CE 337-363** inherited the Eastern section. There was unrest in Armenia, too, after Tiridates died.

\***CE 337:** He was forced to commence **hostilities against Rome** because of persistent interference by the Romans, aided by his half-brother, Hormazd, (who had escaped from prison in CE 323 and fled to Constantinople). Shahpur, thus, nullified the 41-year Peace Treaty (signed by his grandfather, Narseh CE 298). At first, he tackled small bands of Romans, who had crossed the Tigris to infiltrate, avoiding pitched battles.

**\*CE 338-340:** He **invaded Mesopotamia** with a greater force and conquered minor Roman fortresses. His two three-month sieges to capture the large Roman commercial metropolis of Nisibis failed to materialize.

**\*CE 341: Anarchy in Armenia** (ruled by the Commander, Tiranus) led him to invade and capture Tiranus. Shahpur left a large garrison and placed Tiranus' son, Arsaces, as King thus making him a powerful ally.

**\*CE 348:** On his way to conquer Nisibis, he overwhelmed the Roman legions of **Constantius (CE 337-361)** in the **Battle of Singara**. He, thus broke the power of Rome. Unable to restore the lost ground, the Romans sent overtures to commence peace negotiations CE 356-358 but Shahpur pressed on until he had ceded **all of Mesopotamia to Airan, by CE 363**.

**\*CE 350-357:** He began his campaign in the northeast with a large army of elephants and cavalry against the nomadic Sakas, repeatedly invading the Kushan states. It took 7 years to subdue their hit and run tactics.

**\*CE 351:** Arsaces of Armenia changed his allegiance after marrying the wife of the late Constance, late brother of Constantius II.

**\*CE 359-360:** Shahpur re-entered Mesopotamia and conquered the Roman Fortresses of **Amida, Singara and Edessa**. The aged Constantius II sent envoys to seek peace but Shahpur's aim was to recover the lands of his Achaemenid ancestors. Constantius II soon after died.

**\*CE 360-363:** His cousin, Julian a Commander was appointed Emperor in Rome. Julian's first step on reaching Constantinople 11 Dec 361 was to suppress Christianity and reintroduce the Roman pagan beliefs. His great dream was to capture Ctesiphon and destroy it.

**\*CE 363:** With his Roman legions 95,000, aided by Hormazd's forces of 5000 and 20,000 Armenian cavalry of Arsaces, the cumbersome army

proceeded southwards along the Euphrates along with ships in the river carrying provision to lay siege to Ctesiphon. The siege did not succeed and with the onset of winter decided to retreat. Shahpur then engaged the retreating army. In the **Battle of Ctesiphon (26 June 363)** the Roman army was completely routed and in disarray. Julian was mortally wounded in another battle that soon followed.

**\*CE 363:** An obscure Commander, **Jovian (CE 363-364)** was selected Emperor. Shahpur pressed on hurling his main force on the rear of the retreating Roman columns until they reached the security of Samarah. Seeing that Shahpur was determined in his siege of Samarah and all hopes of reaching Antioch were in vain **Jovian sought peace, which were on Shahpur's terms - 27 June 363.** 1) All 5 Roman provinces east of the Tigris were to be ceded to Airan and Armenia to Airan. 2) The commercial metropolis of Nisibis, Singara and Carrhae were to be surrendered to Airan. 3) Rome was allowed to continue to retain Antioch and Caesaria but all Christian interference in Mesopotamia and Armenia was to cease. This humiliating treaty was a blow to the prestige of Rome.

**\*CE 370:** The Romans under **Valentian I (CE 364-375)** and **Valens (CE 364-378)** continued to interfere in Armenian affairs. Shahpur, then, invaded Armenia as retribution for the treachery of **Arsaces**, displaced him and left a strong garrison overseeing his son, (**'Bab'**) **Para** as Governor.

Thus, **Shahpur the Great returned Airan once more to its former zenith** by restoring under his suzerainty the land of his ancestors and the past glory of the Hakhamni era. Shahpur II ruled for 70 years. He survived 8 Roman Emperors (see under), whom he doggedly pursued to obtain his gains.

On the reverse side of a specially minted issue of his **Gold Denar** is depicted the **Fire Altar of the Hakhamani era.** (See Photo under)

Notice the massive size of the Altar Shaft and the bulky Fire Plates supported on mushroom-shaped stools on which rest the *'Lion's Paw' pillars* (as seen in the thrones of the Achaemenian relief at Persepolis).



Contemporary Roman Emperors



Constantine the Great CE 307-337



Constantius II CE 337-361



Julian CE 360-363



Jovian CE 363-364



Valentinian I CE 364-375



Valens CE 364-378