

ARDESHIR II (CE 379-383), **brother of Shahpur II**

(Silver Drachma)



Obverse



Reverse

Coin:

Obverse: *'BaGI ARTa(K)HSHaTRi MaLKAN MaLKA'* (**Defender of the Faith, Ardashir, King of Kings**). Having taken the title Ardashir (the first Sassanian and founder of the Dynasty 55 years ago, he fashioned his crown as a replica of his great ancestor (Ardashir I CE 224-242). The Tiara is thin, bearing a single layer of pearls and tied at the back with ribbons. Ornate silk cloth covers hair and Orymbos, which is tied at the waist by a ribbon. Curled locks of hair and beard tip tied with ribbon, holding gemstone. Necklace and Earrings bear large gemstones.

Reverse: There is **no legend**. The top Fire plate is decorated. Satr is to the right and crescent to the left of the flames. The shaft of the Fire altar is double conical (**a feature occurring for the first time on a Sassanian coin**) – the two cones pointing to the middle and decorated by ribbons. The Fire-attendants are Priests handling with both hands a bundle of Barsom rods held together by two ligatures. A short decorative cape runs down behind the shoulders.

As the Governor of Atrapatan -modern Adzerbaijan (CE 344-376), before he ascended the throne, he had taken harsh measures against the Christians.

An aged Prince and not at all as strong in character as his brother, Shahpur, he was not as much respected by the Nobility. He further opposed them by taking strong measures against them and by being generous to the peasantry. He gained the title of Nikukar (*'the beneficent'*) because he was instrumental in waiving all overdue taxes.

Campaigns:

***CE 383:** When **Manuel, son of the 'Bab'**, King of Armenia died there was anarchy and turmoil in Armenia. Ardeshir was unable to cope. The danger of Rome interfering had become imminent.

The exasperated nobles, finally deposed him during the same year for his inaptitude at and a soft approach to governing and administration.

SHAHPUR III (CE 383-388)

2nd son of Shahpur II

(Silver Drachm)



Coin:

Obverse: *'MaZDISN BaGI ShaHPuHRI MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN Va ANIRAN'* (**Defender of the Faith, Shahpur, King of Kings of Airan and An-Airan**). Tiara shows a thick lamina, which is richly decorated and studded with gemstones. Curled locks of hair and beard tip tied with ribbon, holding gemstones. The necklace and earrings bear large gemstones.

Reverse: *'ATUR ZI ShaHPuHRi'* (**Fire of Shahpur**). From this period onwards the word **'ATUR'** replaces **'NURA'** for **Fire**. Bust of King with his thick lamina crown and necklace seen in flames. Straight Shaft of the Altar is decorated with ribbons and bears the word *'RAST'* meaning **'Just'**. Attendants are King and Prince (both crowns show the royal Orymbos) holding a long bundle of Barsom rods with both hands. Short Capes hang behind shoulders.

***CE 384:** Immediately on ascending the throne, he sent a deputation to **Gratian (CE 367-383)** the Byzantium Emperor with a plea of promoting peace and friendship between the two nations. The Council of Nobles was again displeased because it did not think such a move was necessary.

CE 385: He extended courtesies to Armenia and gave his sister to the newly installed King, Khusru in Armenia.

CE 388: Shahpur lived a leisurely life. He was fond of excursions and hunting. While encamped in an open field, during a hunt, a severe hurricane destroyed the camp and his tent. He is said to have **died of injuries he sustained from his collapsing tent.**

Contemporary Roman Emperor



Gratian CE 367-383

VARAHRAN IV (CE 388-399)

3rd son of Shahpur II

(Silver Drachm)

Coin:



Obverse: *'MaZDISN BaGI VaRaHRAN ZI MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN'* (**Defender of the Faith - Mazdayasna King of Kings**). The word *'ANIRAN'* has been omitted and appears no more on any Sassanian coins after this period. Tiara has a large turret in front and wings at the back. Silk cloth is ornate. Curled locks of hair and beard tip tied by a ribbon, holding gemstones. Gem stone necklace.

Reverse: *'ATURI VaRaHRAN'* (**Fire of Behram**). Fire attendants are King and Prince (both wearing crown with one front turret), holding long bundle of Barsom rods tied together with four ligatures. *'RAST'* (**Just**) inscribed on shaft of Fire Altar.

Mint monogram appears for the first time on a Sassanian coin (see *'AS'* for *'Asphahan'* between the right of Fire and the Bundle of Barsom Rods).

Varahran IV assumed the title **'KermanShah'** because, as a Prince, he was a popular administrator and Governor of the Province of Kerman.

Campaigns:

***CE 391:** His urge to remain on friendly terms with Rome and Byzantium was so strong he entered into a peace treaty with the **Byzantine Emperor Valentinian II (CE 375-392)**. Since the

conflict of interest in Armenia continued between Rome and Airan, he assisted in partitioning Armenia into a western Christian Zone, ruled by a Roman Governor and a Zarathushtrian Zone, ruled by the Armenian, (but Christian) Khusru. Khusru, however, played a deceitful role in trying to promote revolt, with the support of the Byzantine Emperor **Theodosius I (CE 379-395)** hoping to convert the entire nation to Christianity. Behram invaded Armenia, seized Khusru, imprisoned him and placed his own Zarathushti brother, Varahran-Shapur as governor of the Zarathushti zone.

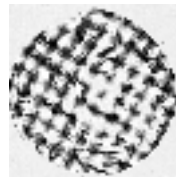
This partition of Armenia lasted during the rest of the Sassanian Dynasty. After Airan was lost to the Arabs CE 641 the entire population of Armenia was converted to Christianity. Zarathushti Fire Altars were systematically destroyed by the Romans legions and, slowly, conversion to Christianity was imposed as an obligation in the guise of a civil duty.

CE 399: While on a hunting trip, Behram was **killed by a stray arrow** shot by some bandits during their affray.

Contemporary Roman Emperors



Valentinian II CE 375-392



Theodosius I CE 379-395