

THE SASSANIAN DYNASTY

(CE 224-641)

SHAHPUR I (CE 240-271), son of Ardeshir I

(Silver Drachm)



Obverse: *'MaZDISN BaGI SHaHPUHRI MaLKAN MaLKA AIRAN, MiNUCheTRI MeN IeZDAN'* (**Defender of the Faith - Mazdayasna, Shahpur, King of Kings of Airan, of celestial Aryan origins**). Tiara, its 4 turrets (one front and back and one on each side), cap of silk cloth (covering hair and large Orymbos) and attached earflaps all decorated with pearls. Curled locks of hair and tip of beard tied with ribbon, holding gemstones. Gemstone necklace. Decorated border of Cape on nape of neck and shoulders held in front by a jewel clip.

Reverse: *'NURA ZI ShaHPUHRI'* (**Fire of Shahpur**). Fire Altar is smaller (of the Sassanian type). Fire attendants King on right (with crown showing Orymbos) and Priest on left (with Mithra crown) face away from the Fire Altar. Outer hands hold spear and the other rest on hip. Front of garments have decorated borders.

Campaigns:

In the East: A series of campaigns led to the Capture of Bactria and Sughda, thus opening up the Silk Route to China. He set up a new Kushan Kingdom with his son, Hormazd, the vassal governor, based in Khorasan.

In the West: Shahpur continued his father's conquests and by CE 242 had conquered all Mesopotamian fortresses and penetrated as far as Antioch, the Roman Eastern Capital.

***CE 244-249: Phillip I** reconquered Antioch, concluded a peace treaty giving up Armenia and claims in Mesopotamia and returned to Rome.

***CE 249-251:** Instigated by **Trajan** Armenia revolted and tried to defect to Rome. Shahpur reentered Armenia and quelled the revolt.

***CE 253-260: Valerian I** violated the peace treaty and made many attempts to repossess Mesopotamia. In the **Battle of Edessa CE 258** his army was routed. During the battle Shahpur **himself** captured Valerian.

The **Roman Odenathus [(CE 257-267), his wife, Zenobia and son, Vabalathus CE 267-271]**, who had ruled the Roman enclave of Palmyra independent of Rome, attacked Shahpur's retreating army to rescue Valerian but failed to do so. Valerian died a captive CE 260.

***CE 260-271:** Shahpur pressed on and again seized Antioch and Caeseria but left Palmyra alone to act as a buffer state between Rome and Airan.

Engineering works:

Founded City of **Bishapur**. At Gondeshapur he allowed Roman prisoners to settle with Iranian wives and with their labour built the **Bridge over the River Shustar** (350x 6 meters). He built a **Dam** made of stone blocks united by mud and lime and strengthened by iron clamps to harness the waters for irrigation. He ordered **Bas-reliefs** and **Rock Inscriptions** indicating the grandeur of the time, that was Airan. (The rock carvings of Naqsh-e-Rustom show Valerian kneeling to pay homage to Shahpur).

Mani and Manichism:

Born in **CE 215**, Mani was brought up in a Jewish-Christian community. His first vision at age 12 claimed that he had received instructions from heavenly twins. At age 25, in a second vision, he was implored to become an 'Apostle'. He proclaimed his mission of a '**Religion for all mankind**' with a flare at the Coronation of Shahpur CE 240. His doctrine was a strange amalgam of several religions, adopting the principles of good and evil from **Zoroastrianism**, ascetism from **Buddhism**, angelism and demonism from the Jewish **Talmud** and pacifism from **Christianity**. He attracted a large congregation. Initially, he seemed to have great influence at court but Shahpur realised his teachings were contrary to the tenets of

his own faith. In CE 268 he banned the sect and exiled Mani, who then travelled to India, Tibet and China spreading his message.



Philip I CE 244-249



Trajan CE 249-251



Valerian I CE 253-260



Zenobia CE 267-273