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## A reverse of a unique coin of Shapur I in the context of the Sasanian-Roman peace treaty of 244

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**Abstract:** *The Sasanian king Shapur I held a series of victorious campaigns against the Roman Empire. They were described in an inscription at Ka'be-ye Zardosht in Naqsh-e Rostam, and their visual display are the victory reliefs made on his order in Western Iran. The interludium of the wars was the peace treaty of 244 concluded by the Shahanshah Shapur I and the emperor Philip the Arab. The article aims in re-analysing of the reverse of a unique gold double dinar of Shapur I, first published by Michael Alram, in perspective of iconography compared with the royal reliefs and its legend in historical context.*

**Key words:** Sasanian Coins, Shapur I, Philip the Arab, Sasanian-Roman Wars, Peace Treaty of 244

### Introduction

In 2007 and 2008 Michael Alram presented in the research publications the gold double dinar of Shapur I from a private collection, with a unique iconography of the reverse [Fig. 1].<sup>1</sup> The legend identifies the depicted rider as *Shahanshah* Shapur I (242-272), and a personage standing in front of him as the Roman emperor Philip the Arab (244-248). The iconographic, palaeographic, and philological analyses seem to confirm the authenticity of this coin. In 2014, Ehsan Shavarebi published in the journal of *Studia Iranica*, a paper in which he attempted “a more precise interpretation of the unique scene illustrated on its reverse.”<sup>2</sup> The aim of current article is re-analysis of a reverse of this coin, in iconographic perspective comparing the visual details with the royal reliefs and contextualizing of the legend in comparison with the historical sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Alram, Blet-Lemarquand & Skjærvø, 2007: 19, figs. 18-19; Alram, 2008: 23, fig. 15. On the obverse of this coin see Yücel, 2017: 332-334, 338-340.

<sup>2</sup> Shavarebi, 2014: 282.



Fig. 1. A coin of Shapur I. Private collection (photo after Shavarebi, 2015: 60, fig. 19; drawing by François Ory).

## Description

Denomination: Double Dinar

Metal: Gold

Weight: 14.85 g.

Diameter: 28 mm.

Die axe: 12 o'clock

Obverse: mzdysn bgy šhpwhry MRKAN MRKA 'yr'n W'nyr'n MNW ctry MN yzd'n

Reverse: ZNE ZK AMTš prypws kycry AP hrwm'y PWN bkyW OBDk YKAYMWN / HWE d

## Reverse of the coin

The scene, depicting a rider with an accompanying personage on foot, is fitted to the circular format of the coin, framed by the roundel of the small semi-circular pieces representing pearls or beads. The line is discontinued in one place by the outstretched top element of the crown of the rider. Inside of the circle, alongside the framing line runs the pehlevi inscription. The line of inscription is broken in two places: firstly, by the short line defining the bottom, or ground level of the scene on which rest the hooves of the horse and feet of the standing personage, secondly by the crown of the rider, i.e. the very top of the scene.

The silhouette of the rider marks the vertical axis of the scene. The composition is thus dominated by the sharp, slender triangle defined by the line of the ground and top of the rider's crown. The sides of the triangle are further marked by the shoulders and arms of the rider, oblique body of the standing figure and position of the hind leg of the horse. The body of the rider is disproportionately large in comparison of the horse. Thus, the composition marks clearly the mounted personage as the paramount element and main subject of the scene. Both, the horse and the figure standing aside, to the lower left of the rider, are acting as the supplementary objects, almost the props supplementing the main figure being a subject. The personage on foot covers part of the horse's neck, clearly standing aside of the rider, not disturbing his motion.

The rider is shown turned left, with his torso straight, stretched vertically. His head is depicted in profile, shoulders frontally and hips with the visible left leg again in profile. The right leg is not shown, being covered by the trunk of the horse. The visible leg is slightly bent, with thigh gently oblique and shin straightened vertically. The foot is stretched downwards in typical “ballerina foot”.

The rider is rather slender yet muscular, with well marked chest, rounded shoulders and pronounced biceps. These anatomical features are visible despite the worn tunic recognizable by the textile folds by the armpits, long sleeves, belly and lower rants floating behind him on the saddle. He is wearing wide baggy trousers clasped at the ankles which is marked by the wavy lines behind the leg.

The head of the main personage is turned left. His face is hieratically oriented towards the direction of the pace of the horse with sight directed into distant space in front of him, seemingly ignoring the personage standing by him. His face is emotionless, with a pronounced aquiline nose and mustache and beard tied to form a small globe at the bottom. The rider wears a large crenelated crown with long earflaps, reaching below the jaw line, with globular korymbos extending out of its top. The stylized tufts of the curled hair float behind the personage’s head. Above them, seemingly a diadem floating in the wind is located, tightly fitted under the letters of the Pehlevi inscription. Across his muscular torso run two oblique stripes crossing at the center of the chest creating an X pattern however no element covers the junction. Behind the back of the rider float two ribbons of a diadem.

His right arm is elevated slightly with an upper forearm raised sharply up and hand directed to his mouth. The hand right before the mouth is shown in a gesture with a thumb touching the middle finger and leaving the index finger free, extended but slightly bent. The ring finger is also sharply bent behind the middle finger. The pinky finger is rather unclear, either bent or slightly extended. His left arm falls down behind the torso with the forearm bent almost horizontally, with a hand holding the sheathed sword. The sword, suspended on a narrow strap attached to the belt, is long bladed, narrow with the handle fully covered in the grip and cross-guard with no quillons. The elements touching the guard seem to represent the folds of the tunic rather. The small part extending above the hand might be a pommel or a terminal of the pommel-less handle. The hand covers the handle clinched around it with an exception of the index finger slightly extended. It seems likely that the left hand, resting on the sword repeats the gesture of the raised right hand.

In front and behind the hips of the rider are placed two protrusions marking the extended elements of the “horned saddle”. Over the front saddle “horn” a strap seems to be suspended connected to a pronounced round element on the horse’s chest suggesting a phalera, defining the strap as either a chest strap or a strap supporting it, however no other trace of the chest-strap is visible.

The horse has the three legs visible. The left front leg is covered by the standing figure, it may be intended to be suggested raised in a dressage pace, characteristic to Roman and Sasanian artwork, or standing.

The head of the horse is turned down with part of the neck covered by the standing personage, however disciplined curvature of the neck can be reconstructed. It has a straight forehead. The horse wears a bridle with cheek-pieces rather than a curb or hackamore with the shanks. Neither the nose-strap nor the elements hanging from the mouth are visible however there is a possibility that they would be covered by the personage standing by the rider.

Between the ears horse has the oval korymbos with the short ribbons floating behind it. The mane is short trimmed with longer tufts left longer in equal distances. The tail is covered in a tight tube with the lower part hanging free and two ribbons floating at the top. Under the belly of the mount hangs the almond-shaped tassel.

The standing personage wears a cloak loosely hanging from his shoulders. His legs are slightly bent, either naked or covered with a tight fabric. His head is round with two extensions of the diadem protruding from the back of his head. He has a flat nose and flashy cheeks. He has only the right arm visible, hanging loosely, with the forearm slightly turned up with the hand terminating at the knee of the rider.

According to the transcription and the translation by Prods Oktor Skjærvø the reverse legend of the coin reads as follows:<sup>3</sup>

ēn ān ka-š firipōs kēzar ud hrōmāy pad bāz ud bandag<Th> estād hēnd

This (was at) that (time) when the Caesar Philip and the Romans stood in tribute and subjection to him

### Historical Context

The trilingual Shapur I's inscription on the Ka'be-ye Zardosht at Naqsh-e Rostam describes in detail the three victorious wars with Rome fought by Iran in the 3rd century CE.<sup>4</sup> Direct reference to the legend of the reverse can be found in the fragment of this inscription describing the peace treaty of 244 concluded by Shapur I and Philip the Arab (ŠKZ 5/4/9-10):

Pārsīg: ud filipos kēsar amāh ō nemastīg āmad, ud gyān xūn dēnār panzsad-hazār ō-n dād, (ud) ped bāz ēstād.

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<sup>3</sup> Alram, Blet-Lemarquand & Skjærvø, 2007: 23.

<sup>4</sup> Back, 1978: 284-371.

Pahlav: W plypws kysr LN OL nymstyk ATYt W gy'n DME dynr IIII-C ALPYN OLYN YNTNt pty b'z HQAYMWt.

Greek: Φίλιππος ὁ Καῖσαρ εἰς παράκλησιν ἦλθεν καὶ τ[ῶ]ν ψ[υ]χῶν α[ὐ]τ[ῶ]ν ἀντίτεμ[α] π[ε]ντακοσίαν χεῖλιάδα δηναρίων ἡμεῖν ἔδοτο καὶ εἰς φόρους ἡμεῖν ἔστη.

and Philip Caesar came to terms to us, and, as ransom for the life, he gave us 500,000 denars, and became tributary to us.

The private Middle Persian inscription on the fire-altar at the site of Barm-e Delak (province Pars) dated for the third year of Shapur,<sup>5</sup> refers indirectly to this event. Its issuer of a name Abnūn obliged himself to fund the fire altar if Shapur defeats the Romans who attacked Iran (ŠAb 1.11-2.14)<sup>6</sup>:

pas kū \*āšnawēn kū Hrōmāy āyēnd pas an yazdān \*pāy[w]ēhēn kū [ag]ar [Šā]buhr ī š[āh]ānšāh \*čēr[īhād]/\*čēr[bawād] Hrōmāyīn zanād u-šān wattar kūnād [kū(š?) pad ban[da]gīh ēstēnd ēg \*nixwārān tā ādur-ēw ēdar nišāyān. pas kū āšnūd kū Hrōmāy āmad hēnd ud Šābuhr ī šāhān šāh zad hēnd u-š wattar kard [\*hēnd tā-n pad bandagīh ēstēnd ēg-im niwist ādur-ēw] nišāyān u-š Pattāy- Šābuhr-Abnūn nām kard

After I heard the Romans were coming, then I implored the gods that if Šābuhr, the king of kings, were to be victorious, beat the Romans, and vanquish them, so that they were submissive to him, then I would hasten to establish a fire here. and it was named Remain Šāpūr (and) Abnūn.

If the interpretation of Philip Huyse, who believes that in inscription of Shapur not the silver denarii were mentioned but *denarius aureus*,<sup>7</sup> than, indeed an enormous amount of 12,5 million (silver) *denars* is meant.<sup>8</sup> Such great amount could not be interpreted as the redemption of Roman captives.<sup>9</sup> Suggestion that Philip the Arab “was obliged to make annual subsidiary payments to the Sasanian king, money which had previously been used for the protection of the fortresses in the Caucasus”<sup>10</sup> cannot be sustained. Firstly, in case of Philip the Arab that was one-time lump sum based on

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<sup>5</sup> Creation of this inscription is chronologically associated with the march of the Roman armies to Asurestan and defeating the emperor Gordian III (238-244) in the battle of Misikhe in 244. On the campaign, see Kettenhofen, 1983; Maksymiuk, 2024: 441-442. For a discussion of the emperor's death, see MacDonald, 1981; Claes & Tavernier, 2018; Mosig-Walburg, 2023: 278-281.

<sup>6</sup> Gignoux, 1991; Skjærvø, 1992; MacKenzie, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Huyse, 1999: vol. 2, 51-52, note 103.

<sup>8</sup> Alram & Gyselen, 2003: 164, note 221: “dann sollte es sich bei der Zahlung des Philippus Arabs wohl eher um 500.000 Aurei gehandelt haben, die 12,5 Millionen Denaren entsprachen.”

<sup>9</sup> As interpreted by Dignas & Winter, 2007: 120.

<sup>10</sup> Dignas & Winter, 2007: 190.

the particular political-military situation.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the conquest of Armenia by the Sasanian armies took place only in 252/253,<sup>12</sup> therefore the cost of keeping of the fortresses could not be one of the clauses of the peace treaty of 244.<sup>13</sup> The amount cannot be assumed a war reparations,<sup>14</sup> because this term has very specific legal meaning. The conception was familiar to the Romans which is attested by the remark of Herodian regarding the agreement after a battle near Nisibis in 218,<sup>15</sup> when Macrinus (217-218) paid 200 million sesterces to Iranian monarch Artaban V (216-224),<sup>16</sup> but the idea was unknown in Iranian tradition.<sup>17</sup>

In ŠKZ inscription the Middle Persian term of *bāz* (gr. φόρος), was used, which should be interpreted as the tribute. What's more, in the legend of the reverse mentioned was not only the word of *bāz*, but phrase *bandak/bandag* suggesting the subordinate.<sup>18</sup> Similar content can be found on the fire-altar at Barm-e Delak.

The Iranian sources often mention the tribute, but in majority of the cases they are interpreted as the subordinate.

Bahrām also sent one of his military commanders to Transoxania in the land of the Turks and instructed him to fight the people there. So he made war on them and wrought great slaughter among them, until they promised submission to Bahram and the payment of tribute.<sup>19</sup>

What should be noted is that these did not have to be large sums, but rather symbolic recognition of the superiority of the king of Iran.

The chieftains of Persia and India told Rostam that every year the kingdom of Kabul was required to hand over as tribute the hide of a cow. But the king of Kabul was sure that, now his son-in-law was Rostam's brother, no one would be concerned about a cow skin worth a few coins. But when the time came for the tribute to be paid it was demanded, and the people of Kabul took offense at this.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Körner, 2004: 324, states that this is inconclusive.

<sup>12</sup> Maksymiuk, 2024: 442.

<sup>13</sup> Discussion on the regular payments, see Maksymiuk, 2016: 149-157.

<sup>14</sup> Daryaei, 2009: 7; Weber, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Hdn. 4.15.8.

<sup>16</sup> Cass. Dio 79.27.1; Circa 50 million *denars*, see Alam & Gyselen, 2003: 164, note 221.

<sup>17</sup> On omitting Iranian context in interpretation of sources, see Börm, 2008, and Maksymiuk, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Eilers, 1988.

<sup>19</sup> Ṭabarī 865.

<sup>20</sup> Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 424.

However, it should be emphasized that the above-mentioned excerpts from source texts referred to fixed (regular) payments, which were also understood in late antique Western texts either as a sign of dependence or as a form of subsidy for specific military actions. An example of such an interpretation is an excerpt from the text of Procopius of Caesarea (Procop. *Pers.* 2.10.21-24)<sup>21</sup>:

‘Οὐκοῦν,’ οἱ πρέσβεις ἔφασαν, ‘ὑποτελεῖς Πέρσαι βούλονται Ῥωμαίους ἐς φόρου ἀπαγωγὴν ἔχειν.’ ‘Οὐκ,’ ἀλλὰ στρατιώτας οἰκείους,’ ὁ Χοσρόης εἶπεν, ‘ἔξουσι τὸ λοιπὸν Πέρσας Ῥωμαῖοι, μισθὸν τῆς ὑπουργίας αὐτοῖς χορηγοῦντες ῥητόν: ἐπεὶ καὶ Οὐννων τισὶ καὶ Σαρακηνοῖς ἐπέτειον χορηγεῖτε χρυσόν, οὐ φόρου αὐτοῖς ὑποτελεῖς ὄντες, ἀλλ’ ὅπως ἀδήωτον γῆν τὴν ὑμετέραν φυλάξωσιν ἐς τὸν πάντα αἰῶνα.’

‘It is clear’, replied the envoys, ‘that the Persians wish to reduce the Romans to the rank of tribute-paying subjects.’ ‘No’, said Khusrō, ‘the Romans will have the Persians as their own soldiers in future and will be paying them a fixed sum for their service. You give an annual payment to some of the Huns and Saracens, not because you are their subjects but so that they can keep your land from ever being plundered.’ (transl. Greatrex)

Only a few Roman sources mention the peace treaty of 244.<sup>22</sup> None of them mention financial arrangements, they only suggest that as part of the agreement Philip the Arab could cede Armenia and northern Mesopotamia to Shapur.<sup>23</sup> It should be emphasized that Shapur remained silent on all territorial arrangements.<sup>24</sup>

## Visual Context

The discussed scene does not have analogies in the Sasanian coinage or the corpus of the Sasanian silver vessels circulating in the academic discourse,<sup>25</sup> however the group clearly refers to a certain visual formula from the triumphal reliefs of Shapur I (and possibly one of Shapur II<sup>26</sup>), where the royal rider, sits on a walking

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<sup>21</sup> See especially Börm, 2008. For a detailed discussion with literature on another passage by Procopius concerning payments (Procop. *Pers.* 8.15.17-18), see Greatrex, 2022: 466-467; see also Theoph. Sim. 3.9.10.

<sup>22</sup> Winter, 1988: 83-89.

<sup>23</sup> Zonar. 12.19 (Mesopotamia and Armenia); Evagr. 5.7 (Armenia). *Contra Zos.* 3.32.4 (Rome did not lose any territories).

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of possible territorial arrangements, see Kettenhofen, 1982: 34-35; Mosig-Walburg, 2023: 281-287 (with literature). On Sasanian strategy, see Maksymiuk, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> The exception here is the Sogdian or Choresmian imitation of the Sasanian silver from Siberia (see Fedorova & Baulo, 2021: 64, fig. 3). The object cannot however attest actual Sasanian iconography but its perception in the centuries after the fall of the dynasty.

<sup>26</sup> Maksymiuk, 2017.

steed and, in his motion, he counters the personages in the humble poses, wearing the clearly Roman, or non-Persian attire.<sup>27</sup>

The Sasanian image-building is rather schematic and formulaic, as was illustrated in series of publications of Skupniewicz.<sup>28</sup> These conventions which developed from earlier Iranian or Hellenistic sources might illustrate certain conservatism in taste of Iranian elites when it comes to objects of applied arts but in monumental royal iconography of power it is clear that the formulae were carefully controlled and contained legible propagandistic message.<sup>29</sup> This creation of a canon of the motifs allowed certain independence from available workforce. The astonishing difference in craftsmanship quality between the reliefs from regions within the empire (where the skilled workforce must have been abundant), like Bishapur VI or Darabgerd and Salmas, where all of them represent the versions of the same composition, proves that the pool of the formulae, suitable for the royal propaganda was limited. The group on the discussed coin does not follow directly the patterns which are known from the royal rock reliefs.

In the group of the images of the theme of the king riding in slow pace towards humble group of foreigners has below “canonical” versions of composition:

King riding left, with his left hand resting on the hilt of the sword and right arm extended forward, holding the raised arm of one of the figures standing in front of him (2). This composition is attested in the reliefs of Naqsh-e Rostam VI [Fig. 2] and Salmas.<sup>30</sup> The composition derives clearly from the scenes of mounted investiture of both Ardashir I and Shapur (Naqsh-e Rajab IV). We cannot be certain of the position of the bodies of the riders on the relief Bishapur I, however given the symmetrical layout, it would be sound to expect it being the form of mounted investiture with the kneeling foreigner added in front of the king. Therefore, Bishapur I would mark an important stage in development of the discussed formula when other elements started to be added to the investiture scene (1). It seems that the convention of the mounted king holding in his extended right hand the arm of the foreigner was partly imitated on the so-called Shapur cameo from Bibliotheque Nationale, where the figure of Persian victor is shown on galloping horse just as the Roman opponent who holds a sword in his other hand.<sup>31</sup> The originality of the latter object has been challenged, however, even if it was a modern product, it proves how strong were the elements of the Sasanian canonical principles.

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<sup>27</sup> Maksymiuk, 2012; Canepa, 2013; Shavarebi, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Skupniewicz, 2015, 2020, 2021, 2025; Maksymiuk & Skupniewicz, 2024b.

<sup>29</sup> Of course the propagandistic character of all actions of the Persian court, regarding military successes of Shapur on the western front should be borne in mind. Analogical actions of the Roman emperors should be mentioned of which an excellent example is decoration of the Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki, see also Maksymiuk & Skupniewicz, 2024a.

<sup>30</sup> To this model would refer the silver plate from Siberia published by Fedorova & Baulo, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Skupniewicz, 2022.

King riding right, with his right arm extended forward, with the hand on the head of one of the figures standing in front of him (Daragberd) (3). This scheme seems a reversal of the model represented by Naqsh-e Rostam and Salmas (2), with an additional exception that the king does not hold the hand of the foreigner but places his own on the head. The foreigner with the royal hand on his head still performs the same gesture, rising his hand which seems a continuation of the gesture of surrender from the Achaemenid iconography derived from Neo-Assyrian imagery.<sup>32</sup> The change of direction allowed not showing a sword and at the same time neither we depicted the quiver packed with arrows.<sup>33</sup> The king holds an elongated object in his right hand but that does not seem to be any form of weapons. This lack of shown arms is surprisingly peaceful and might suggest that the particular subjugation of the opponents was achieved not by military means or king decided to imitate this time the religious iconography. The body stretched below the horse indicate that the process was not bloodless. It must be noted here that on mysterious Naqsh-e Rajab I the king does not carry the quiver and the sword side is hidden, but he has his dagger attached to the thigh.

Another model of depicting the king in front of the group of foreigners shows him riding right with both arms bent and moved slightly back (4), as exemplified by Bishapur II, Bishapur III, the Shapur I relief and the relief of Bahram II also in Bishapur. Although the reliefs share similar layout, the significant difference between them is the presence of the standing figure behind Shapur whom the king holds by the wrist, such figure does not exist on the relief of Bahram II. Also, the right hand of Bahram II was not preserved so it is impossible if he held any kind of attribute there (like an obscure object held by Shapur on Daragberd, mentioned above), but he hold a bundle of arrows and a bow in his left. In both reliefs, the kings carry large Sasanian quivers. Certainly this model should be associated with Naqsh-e Rajab I where the king is depicted in very similar way, however without the quiver or a figure standing behind him. Also, we do not know what was the king facing in this case.

This brief description of the models of the models of the royal triumphal pageant needs to be supplemented by the minor formulae of depicting other figures in the scenes. These conventions would not affect the composition but might influence strongly the message of the scene.

A foreigner kneeling on one knee with his arms outstretched (a), as can be seen on Bishapur I, Bishapur II, Bishapur III, Naqsh-e Rostam VI. Here again, Bishapur I seems to be a precursor of the model as it varies from the remaining ones in greater dramatism which seemingly later was found inappropriate and replaced by more reserved forms.

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<sup>32</sup> Skupniewicz, 2024; Skupniewicz & Maksymiuk, 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Skupniewicz, 2021.

The foreigners raising their hands in gesture of surrender (b). The model is present in Naqsh-e Rostam VI, Bishapur II and Salmas (reversed – the right hand runs across the personage’s body), Bishapur III (the left arm is raised), Darabgerd (the king does not hold the raised hand).

The foreigners on bent legs approaching the king with slightly extended arms (c), as presented on Darabgerd.

The Persian attendant standing straight with his arms crossed over (d) – Bishapur II and Bishapur III. Often accompanied by another Persian with the raised left hand.

The dead body under king’s horse’s hooves (e). Bishapur I, Bishapur II, Bishapur III, Darabgerd. This element is shared with the scenes of combat both with humans as well as with the beasts and derives from Bronze Age tradition, adopted through Assyrian and Achaemenid iconographies.

## Conclusions

Such brief systematization copies the approach to the “heroic encounters” or “icons of violence”<sup>34</sup> and results in simple combination of structural and additional elements. Naturally, such typology is not needed to order a modest number of Sasanian reliefs, yet, it allows certain clarity in perception of the Sasanian art and would work well in wider context. For the current topic i.e. iconographic and historical analysis of the golden coin of Shapur, such a dull approach can illustrate the uniqueness of the item despite its superficial similarity to the triumphal reliefs. The composition reminds to an extent formula 2 “King riding left, with his left hand resting on the hilt of the sword and right arm extended forward, holding the raised arm of one of the figures standing in front of him”, however, king’s arm is not extended and he does not hold the standing personage’s arm. Neither the group qualifies as a reversed version of model 3 (Darabgerd), however the pose of the standing personage clearly relates to this relief in reversed form. The figure on foot depicted on the coin is far too close to the king in terms of iconography of the rock reliefs. It covers front part of the horse which is not practiced in the reliefs.

The king does not participate in the “scene”. His head is turned left, not noticing the personage apparently touching his knee. It is not the encounter that we observe on the rock reliefs. Also, king’s indifference looks more like absence. The king does not participate in the scene. Yes, he performs a gesture, but the gesture is clearly not addressed to the standing personage. Because of lack of any interaction within the group, it should be suggested that the personage is merely an attribute of the king. The gesture of the king is not addressed to the figure below and neither it is to the portrait on the obverse, as it would be in case of Hellenistic, Greko-Parthian and

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<sup>34</sup> Skupniewicz, 2015, 2020, 2021, 2025.

Indo-Greek coins. It is the viewer who is the addressee of the gesture performed by the great king, conqueror of the Romans. This might allow to explain the function of the object. Clearly golden coins were not to circulate, they were rather the commemorative medallions, perhaps souvenirs to the people who distinguished themselves in particular situation. It is therefore possible to propose that the object was a kind of award granted to the commanders who participated in Shapur's Roman wars, perhaps commemorating its anniversary, as the iconography was not yet fully developed.

In conclusion, we need to mark truly unique nature of the discussed coin, medallion or token. It is without any direct analogy however after excluding its narrative function which would relate it with the royal reliefs and excluding it as form of actual currency a commemorative function should be proposed. Iconographic analyse suggests that the gesture performed by the king must be addressed to the viewer who should be assumed a recipient of the lavish royal gift commemorating participation in victorious warfare.



Fig. 2. Shapur's triumph relief at Naqsh-e Rostam VI (photo by Diego Delso). [Public Domain: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Naghsh-e\\_rostam,\\_Ir%C3%A1n,\\_2016-09-24,\\_DD\\_12.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Naghsh-e_rostam,_Ir%C3%A1n,_2016-09-24,_DD_12.jpg)]

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