



GERMANY XI. IRANIAN COINS IN THE FEDERAL BANK OF GERMANY

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The origins of the coin collection of the Deutsche Bundesbank, a part of its important Münz- und Geldscheinsammlung, date from the time of World War I (1914-18), when the Deutsche Reichsbank received large numbers of coin donations from private individuals; in the following years, it enlarged this early nucleus by purchase, pursuing the aim of building up a universal coin collection. In the final year of World War II (1939-45), the greater part of the collection was irrecoverably lost. Only a very small part could be bought back by the Bank Deutscher Länder, followed by the Deutsche Bundesbank. Through renewed collecting activity, the humble remains of the former collection of the Deutsche Reichsbank have been constantly extended over the years.

Altogether, the collection comprises about 90,000 items from all over the world, including a considerable number of Iranian coins and medals. Apart from a very few pieces, they are all minted in either gold or silver. The earliest specimen dates to the first half of the 5th century BCE, the latest to the first



half of the 20th century CE. As the nature of the collection of Iranian coins is, due to the eventful history of the coin collection of the Deutsche Bundesbank, more the result of haphazard, rather than systematic, collecting, it does not provide a representative picture of the coinage in Iran during this long period. Nevertheless, it comprises a number of excellent pieces as well as of rare or very rare specimens. Some coins are even of special historical interest. The chronological distribution of the material is rather uneven. There is a concentration of ancient coins, almost all minted in precious metal, as well as of modern coins of the 19th and early 20th century CE, while issues dating from the Middle Ages and the early modern period are hardly represented.

The Sasanian coins constitute the majority of the ancient coins issued by the [Achaemenid](#), the Parthian ([Arsacid](#)), and the [Sasanian](#) kings, including a few issues of the early Sasanian rulers of Fars ([Persis](#)). In comparison, however, far more numerous are the coins and medals of the rulers of the modern Persian kingdom. Almost all of these pieces were issued by members of the Qajar or Pahlavi dynasties, in the period between the early 19th and the third decade of the 20th century. Below is a general chronological overview of the Iranian coins in the collection, with notes on those of special historical interest.

Ancient coins. Except for a very few pieces all specimens are minted in precious metals, mostly in silver. They include the following:

(a) Achaemenid coins. The coinage of the Achaemenid dynasty is represented only by four specimens, one [daric](#) (*dareikos*; gold) and three sigloi (silver). A fourth siglos, which has been included in this group of the Achaemenid coins, is a modern forgery of the 19th century, made by the famous German forger Hofrat Carl Wilhelm Becker. The genuine Achaemenid coins are all common pieces, minted between 485 and 340 BCE at the latest, that is, from the time of Xerxes I (r. 586-565 BCE) to that of [Artaxerxes II](#) (r. 404-359 BCE), or [Artaxerxes III](#) (r. 359-338 BCE).

(b) Parthian coins. The group of fourteen Parthian coins, consisting of one tetradrachm and 13 drachms (see [DIRHAM](#)), comprises only pieces of the common Parthian type (reverse: Arsakes/Aršak enthroned or sitting on the *omphalos*, the navel of the earth). They cover the period from 124/123 BCE to 51 CE, that is, from the rule of Mithradates II (123-88/87 BCE) to that of Vonones II (51 CE), although not all of the Parthian rulers of this period are



represented in the collection.

(c) Coins of Persis. Three rare drachms in fine condition, one minted by Šāpur, son of Pāpak, as king (of Persis/Fars; 205/6-? CE), the two others by Ardašir, son of Pāpak, as king of Persis (Ardašir V, after 205/5-before 223/4 CE, thereafter, [Ardašir I](#)), are items of considerable historical interest. They lead us back to the earliest phase of Sasanian history in Fars (Persis), confirming the succession of the sons of Pāpak, as kings in Stakr/[Eštakr](#), as it is related by the literary tradition.

(d). Sasanian coins. The collection comprises forty-one Sasanian coins, covering the whole period of Sasanian rule, from the reign of Ardašir I (223/24-240/41 CE), founder of the Sasanian dynasty, to that of the last Sasanian king, Yazdegerd III (633-51 CE). However, not all of the Sasanian rulers are represented. The majority of the coins are minted in silver, nine are minted in gold, and only one in billon. It is worth noting that the collection contains a considerable number of relatively rare fractions (1/6): two [dinar](#) fractions and thirteen drachm fractions. For instance, of six coins attributed to Ardašir I, five are fractions, including the two dinar fractions.

The items of the group of Sasanian coins are of varying quality and condition. Besides some stylistically or technically base ones, there are some pieces of very fine quality. Two coin types are of special historical interest. The first one was minted by [Bahrām II](#) (r. 276-93) in gold and in silver, depicting on the obverse the busts of the king, the queen, and the crown prince holding a wreath. On the reverse is the king and a female person with a wreath in her hand beneath the fire altar ([Figure 1](#)). The coins of this type supposedly celebrate the installation of the son of Bahrām II, [Bahrām III](#), as Sakān-šāh (cf. Mosig-Walburg, 2006-07, pp. 89-91). The second coin type of historical interest is a special issue, a dinar of [Kosrow II](#) (r. 592-628; [Figure 2](#)), depicting on the reverse a bust, the head surrounded by flames. It was minted during his war against the Byzantines, presumably in order to propagate a specific political message in close relation to that war (Mosig-Walburg, 2009, *passim*) Worth noting is another interesting and relatively rare coin of the time of [Kosrow II](#); it is of base metal (*aes*), worth 12 Byzantine nummi, and was minted in Alexandria. Although it was part of the Byzantine monetary system in Egypt, it nevertheless reveals elements which suggest that it was minted during the Sasanian occupation of Egypt (619-29 [?] CE ; see [EGYPT iv. Relations in the Sasanian period](#)) ([Figure 3](#)).



Medieval coins. (a) Post-Sasanian/[Arab-Sasanian coins](#). The earliest coins of the small medieval group in the collection are three specimens that, although minted after the fall of the Sasanian empire in 651, still follow the Sasanian minting tradition. The first coin is of base metal (*aes*) and was minted by a local ruler in [Ardašir-Korra](#) in Fars, perhaps shortly after the Arab conquest. This coin, which depicts an angel (archangel Gabriel?) on the reverse, is extremely rare. Only two pieces of this type are actually known ([Figure 4](#)); for the early Arab-Sasanian coins in Fars, see Gyselen). The two other coins, both hemidrachms, come from Tabarestan. The first was minted by Farhān (711/12-730/31), a local ruler, before the Arab conquest of this province, the second by the Arab governor Hānī (r. 788-89). (For a presentation of the ancient to post-Sasanian groups, see Mosig-Walburg, 2006-07, *passim*.)

(b). [Buyid](#) and [Mongol](#) rulers in Iran. The coin collection comprises only three further coins from the Middle Ages: one dinar of a Buyid ruler, minted in the middle of the 10th century as well as one dinar and one dirham dating to the time of Mongol rule, namely the early 13th and the second half of the 14th century, respectively.

Modern coins. The majority of the large group of Iranian coins from modern times (at present 94 items held in the collection) are minted in gold, among them a considerable number of medals (of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, r. 1848-96); only two specimens are minted in silver, and two in copper. Different denominations are represented. The earliest modern coin is from the reign of Safavid Shah [Esmā'il I](#) (r. 1502-24), and the latest from that of Reżā Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-41). The majority of coins in this group were minted under the Qajar dynasty, from [Fath-'Ali Shah](#) (r. 1797-1834) to [Aḥmad Shah](#) (r. 1909-25).

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