

## A BRONZE BUST OF SASSANID KING (SHAPUR II)

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Persia, 4th century A.D.

Bronze

H: 40 cm, L: 30.4 cm

Reference: 18116



18116

The Sassanid King Shapur II is represented by a cast bronze torso which originally belonged to a composite statue that showed him majestically enthroned, his finely articulated hands resting on a sword (cast separately and now lost). He wears a high, crenellated, tripartite crown with ribbons attached at the back. His forehead is encircled by a diadem adorned with two rows of pearl beads. His luxurious hair is rendered in massed ranks of stylized curls that flow widely out and down onto his shoulders, symmetrically framing the long, thin face. Shapur is dressed in a tight-fitting, long-sleeved tunic marked by sinuous rills; over this, he wears a belt and halter, both double-beaded with pearls and clasped at the waist with a large circular medallion bordered with the same gems. He is richly outfitted in large bead-and-pearl earrings, pearl bracelets, and a heavy pearl necklace with two round jeweled pendants, one intact, the other preserving traces of a sun disc.

An expression of impassive authority is conveyed by the large, slightly bulbous, almond-shaped, fully-rimmed eyes with incised circular pupils; a sculpted natural brow connecting with a long, straight nose; and a tiny, thin-lipped mouth. The carefully worked beard closely follows the contours of the chin, while the large, wavy moustache extends horizontally the width of the face. The Sassanids were a Persian dynasty originating in Fars, who established a powerful empire that extended throughout the Iranian plateau between A.D. 224-226 and A.D. 651, making their capital at Ctesiphon. In western chronicles, the most celebrated event in Sassanid history was King Shapur I's victory in A.D. 260 over the Roman emperor Valerian, who was taken prisoner along with several thousand of his soldiers. Comparison with similar stepped, crenellated crowns on coin portraits supports the identification of this bust as that of Shapur II (reigned A.D. 309-379) whose glorious seventy year tenure fortunately had a Roman

eyewitness, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, an officer in the army of Emperor Julian the Apostate

### PROVENANCE

Ex-private collection, United Arab Emirates, 1968.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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