



15th August 2019

Shāhanshāh

Money Talks



Money talks: this is a journey into the ancient past of Iran, a complex subject associated with power, legitimacy, authority, political propaganda and nationalism.

This 500 Rial banknote issued in 1944 by the last Shah (King) of Iran, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi (r.1941-1979) has many symbols combining a historical journey that spans 2500 years. **This is the long story of Iran.**

The banknote shows the ruins of the palace of King Darius (522-486 BC) at Persepolis, modern Takht-iJamshid, in Iran. The king's title "**Shāh**" is the ancient Persian word for "King". "**Shāhanshāh**", the title of our exhibition, means "King of Kings". Today money might be metaphorically interpreted as "the King of Kings", and never before in human society has money played a more vital role than it does today.

The royal image combined with the ancient ruins and the Persian title "King of Kings" in 20th century Iran is an attempt to reawaken and strengthen Iran's national identity.

500 Rial banknote of Iran - 1944
showing here the ancient palace of
King Darius at Persepolis &
Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (above)

©Trustees of the British Museum





Banknote

British Museum Collection Online:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1984-0605-2277