

Sassanidische Spuren

in der byzantinischen,
kaukasischen und islamischen
Kunst und Kultur

Sasanian Elements
in Byzantine, Caucasian
and Islamic Art and Culture

Abstracts



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Byzanz zwischen
Orient und Okzident



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From one Edge of the (post)Sasanian World to the other. Mobility and Migration between the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Indian Ocean in the 4th to 9th Centuries CE

Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Wien/Vienna)

Imperial formations have been identified as “regimes of entanglements”, in which “certain structural and habitual circumstances (...) allow for the establishment of long term linkages” between individuals and places due to the mobility of people, object and ideas (Mulsow – Rübke 2013, p. 17; cited after Schuppert 2014 [in German]). These regimes have an enduring impact on the routes and modes of mobility across larger distances even after the fragmentation or collapse of an empire.

This paper will present the Sasanian Empire as such a “regime of entanglement”, also for the first centuries after the integration of its territories in the Early Islamic Empire. The focus will be on three “edges” – the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf – which were located at the peripheries of the (post)Sasanian World, but central for processes of exchange with neighbouring people and cultures. Historical and archaeological evidence will be combined with concepts and tools of network theory and HGIS. As will be demonstrated, the movements and migrations between and across these edges provide also the background for the mobility of objects and elements of Sasanian art and culture across entire Afro-Eurasia and the first Millennium CE.

The Image of Byantium in Persian Epics: from Firdawsi to Nizami

Rustam Shukurov (Moskau/Moskow)

The paper focuses on the content and evolution of the concept of Rum in major Persian epic texts from the eleventh through the beginning of the thirteenth century. An attempt will be made to deconstruct its different chronological and conceptual layers.

The Representation of Composite Creatures in Sasanian Art. From Early Coinage to Late Rock Reliefs

Matteo Compareti (Peking/Beijing)

Among the decorative motives that embellish the royal garments in the late Sasanian rock reliefs at Taq-i Bustan (Kermanshah), a winged creature with a dogface and peacock tail appears two times. It was erroneously identified long ago with the *Simurgh* (Avestan *Saena Maregha*, Pahlavi *Senmurv*) of Persian epic and mythology. In our opinion, that creature is actually the representation of Iranian *Farr* (Avestan *Xwarenah*, Pahlavi *Xwarrah*) and it was probably introduced from eastern Iran (Sistan, Bactria or Sogdiana) into Persia at the very end of the Sasanian period. Several objects of art such as textiles and metalwork embellished with this creature are most likely post-Sasanian or Central Asian in origin. Some third century Sasanian coins present also members of the royal family wearing a crown in the shape of heads of creatures that are not easily identifiable. Such creatures could be just real animals (wild boar) or a dragon-like monster possibly close to the prototype of the symbol for *Farr* that was going to become very popular in Persia only at the end of the Sasanian period and in early Islamic time. Furthermore, crowns in the shape of birds appear quite early on Kushano-Sasanian coins. Just this bird could be the real *Simurgh*. In fact, every hint to be found in Persian sources seem to suggest that the *Simurgh* was a fantastic bird (and not fantastic composite creature) protector of the family of Rustam. It was only during the fourth century that Sasanian kings started to associate themselves with the mythical (and Zoroastrian) Kayanids who were not in good terms with “pagan” eastern Iranians such as Zal and Rustam. For this reason, it would be very improbable to find representations of the *Simurgh* in pre-Islamic Persian arts.

Senmurv – Beschützer von Konstantinopel?

Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger (Bochum-Mainz)

Sassanidische Kunstgegenstände waren während der Blütezeit des Imperiums (224/226–642/651) sowohl im Osten als auch im Westen bekannt. Die Motive und Formen wurden auch nach dem Niedergang des Reiches vor allem durch die islamischen Nachfolger auf ihrem einstigen Territorium verwendet und verbreitet, wenngleich sich die Bedeutungen geändert haben könnten. Doch stellt sich die Frage, ob sassanidische Motive auch nach Ende des Reiches, und ohne ihre ursprüngliche Bedeutung zu verlieren, immer noch durch Perser nach Byzanz vermittelt worden sein könnten. Diese Frage wird am Beispiel einer persischen Persönlichkeit am byzantinischen Kaiserhof bzw. einer Gruppe von Persern im byzantinischen Dienst (9. Jh.) und anhand einer bestimmten Skulptur an der Blachernen-Mauer von Konstantinopel näher beleuchtet werden.

Kalila wa-Dimna – Der Löwe als symbolische Form

Thomas Dittelbach (Bern)

Eine Konstante westöstlicher Bildsprache ist die Figur des Löwen. Der Löwe ist ambivalent, kann apotropäische, aber auch bedrohliche Fähigkeiten besitzen. Er wechselt zwischen profaner und sakraler Bedeutungsebene und beansprucht gleichzeitig positive und negative Eigenschaften. Ein Erklärungsmodell für diese Ambivalenz liegt in der Oral History.

Nur gesprochene und erzählte Kunst kann ungehindert territoriale und konfessionelle Grenzen überschreiten, kann in kürzester Zeit Distanzen überwinden, die für Objekte der Bildkünste nur mit Mühe zu überwinden sind. Dabei stellt sich der Grad der Transformation solcher Objekte aus materieller Kunstproduktion trotz längerer „Reisedauer“ vom Morgenland in das Abendland (oder vice versa) in der Regel als ungleich geringer dar als bei schneller tradierten, erzählten Werken. Das gilt besonders für Zeiten, deren Kommunikationswege an Handelsrouten und Reisewege gebunden waren. Die Leitfiguren narrativer Erzählkunst können wir als symbolische Formen begreifen, da sie in ihrer psychophysiologischen Dimension (E. Cassirer) imstande sind, formale und inhaltliche Transformationen, besonders Hinzufügungen und Umdeutungen, zu ertragen, ohne ihre Dominanz einzubüßen.

Eine der wirkungsmächtigsten erzählten Geschichten des Mittelalters stellt die Fabelsammlung „Kalilah und Dimna“ dar, die auf das altindische Sanskrit-Werk Pañcatranta zurückgeht und Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts auf Veranlassung des sassanidischen Königs Chosroe I. ins Persische übersetzt und ergänzt wurde. Einer der Protagonisten der Erzählung ist der Löwe. Aber wie in den Bildkünsten ist er auch hier eine höchst ambivalente Figur und agiert vermeintlich widersprüchlich in dem verschachtelten Gefüge der einzelnen Episoden. Mein Beitrag möchte anhand ausgewählter Bild- und Textbeispiele zeigen, welche Wege die Fabelsammlung aus dem sassanidischen Persien in das christliche Abendland genommen hat und welchen Transformationen sie im Vergleich zu den Bildern ausgesetzt war.

Sassanidischer Baudekor in Byzanz: der Fall der Fall der Polyektoskirche in Konstantinopel

Arne Effenberger (Berlin)

Der einzigartige Baudekor der Polyektoskirche wird von der überwiegenden Zahl der Forscher auf sassanidische Anregungen und die allgemeine Vertrautheit mit orientalischem Formengut zurückgeführt. Gleichwohl sind viele Fragen nach wie vor offen. Sie betreffen u. a. den Prozess der Auswahl und Anverwandlung bestimmter Motive und die dahinter stehenden schöpferischen Absichten. Im Vortrag werden einige neuere Erklärungsmodelle referiert. Anhand eines bestimmten Kapitellornaments wird nach dem möglichen Vorbild gefragt und der Versuch unternommen, den Umbildungsvorgang zu erklären.

Georgian Reception of Sasanian Art

Nina Iamanidze (Paris)

The Sasanian Empire was the most powerful opponent of Rome, later of Byzantium, for the world dominance. The relations of Georgia with its great neighbor were complex, including all spheres of political, social-economic and cultural life. Sasanian invasions which at the end of antiquity caused the weakening of the authority of Roman Empire over Georgia, resulted in the conquest of K'art'li (eastern Georgia) in 523, while Lazica (western Georgia), was still under the influence of Byzantium. Although the close link with spiritual centers of eastern Christianity and Byzantine influence have affected the perception of art by Georgians, Sasanian culture seems to be one of the major substrates which inspired it from the time of its establishment and has significantly contributed to the formation of its iconography and ornamental repertoire. The elements borrowed from Sasanian art seem like one of the main sources of inspiration of Georgian artists. The process of their reception was complex and had different extents. This paper will explore how the symbols, motifs and themes arrived from Sasanian world were perceived, assimilated and mixed with local Georgian traditions.

Architectural Decorations of the Armenian Churches of the 7th and the 10th–11th Centuries and Their Presumably Sasanian Sources

Armen Kazaryan (Moskau/Moskow)

Late antique Armenian architecture, enriched especially in the seventh century, was mainly based on the classical tradition, and the creators of Armenian churches were inspired by the architectural ideas of the centres of the Byzantine Empire. Nevertheless, Armenia was in long-term historical relations with the Iranian world, and sometimes was considered as a part of this political and cultural world. The flourishing of Armenian architecture in the seventh century started during the last decades of the Sasanian state. In the first quarter of the century, when powerful shahinshah Khosrow II Parviz (591–628) issued a special privilege to the Christians of his country, the Armenian *catholicos* Komitas Akhtsetsi (613–628) built the church of St. Hripsime and a new dome of Ejmiatsin Cathedral. The church of Hripsime opened new directions of the evolution of plan, forms of façade niches, portals, windows, cornices and ornaments. Aside to the simplified Hellenistic motives of ornamentation of windows' archivolts, there are geometric and floral ones, known in samples of the Sasanian carved stucco. Such motives we find on the archivolts of the high tholobate of Ejmiatsi and also on the capitals of the twisted columns of its order decoration. On one capital we see a Senmurv, which may be at the first time created on Armenian edifice. Large cross on the dome of St. Hripsime represented by a relief rays; it seems as an image of sun, and it has a close parallel to domes' decoration in Sasanian monumental buildings (Fire temple of Neysar). And the ornamentation of small squinches into the under-dome transition of this church probably reflects stucco carving motives.

The images of Sasanian fire temples and palaces, as well as the status of these constructions as a works by powerful shahinshahs, likely influenced on the Armenian architecture also after the fall of the Sasanians. The appearance of monumental blind arcade on the façades of Armenian churches in the last third of the seventh century was an indicator of that reality. The study of the problem of genesis of that motive, represent its relation to the development of a similar order-like decor in the architecture of the Sasanian Iran, Early Christian architecture of Northern Mesopotamia, Northern Syria and Cilicia.

At the advanced stage of Bagratid epoch (second half of the 10th to the mid of the 11th century) the theme of blind arcade was revived, and some elements of it were changed by others, which possible had oriental origin. One of them is the spherical shape of columns' bases and capitals. At the same time, the features of ornamentation became more oriental and in some cases, it seems like a carpet; the bright examples are presented in the zhamatun (pre-church) of Horomos Monastery served as a mausoleum of Armenian king (1038). Taking into account that

mentioned direction were typical also for numerous Arabic buildings in the wide region of the Orient, it is too difficult to understand, did these parallels developed traditions inspired from old Sasanian heritage independently from each other or not. Of course, beside the objective impressive character of Sasanian decoration, the addressing to it in this epoch had been preserved due to its political context. Notable that Ani kings represented themselves as shahinshahs (the typical Iranian form of the king of kings) into the lapidary inscriptions and, unlike Christian kings, represented themselves in a turban and in a vest on the statues and reliefs.

Umayyad Reception of Sasanian Architecture

Markus Ritter (Wien/Vienna)

„Sasanian influence“ in art and architecture beyond the place and time of Sasanian rule has been argued in quite sweeping lines in the past. With regard to early Islamic architecture under Arab rule in Western Asia, an indebtedness to motifs and techniques of building and decoration from the Sasanian period has been acknowledged in a general way, seen as continuity and transfer within the newly created Arab empire, in which the Eastern half consisted of former Sasanian territory. While continuity is self-explanatory to some degree, it may be useful to phrase the active aspect of transfer and adaptation as reception.

Consensus holds that architecture under the Umayyad caliphs developed in the Syro-Palestinian Levant, or Bilad ash-Sham, and was indebted mostly to late Roman and early Byzantine traditions, while after 750 a power shift to Mesopotamia under the successor dynasty of the Abbasids gave more weight to ancient “Oriental” including Sasanian traditions. In this view, a West-East and Roman/Byzantine-Sasanian binary is molded into a chronological sequence. Yet it is clear that a wealth of motives from Sasanian art belonged to the vocabulary of Umayyad decorative media already in early monuments. With regard to Umayyad architecture scholars are skeptical about the amount and nature of Sasanian elements. Looking to palaces, Bier (1993) concluded that Sasanian models were probably more strongly present through literature and metaphor, thus on a conceptual level.

This paper reviews the discussion and the evidence by probing the audience halls of Umayyad residences and palaces. While one prominent case of an aiwan with a subsequent square domed room is known, adopting a Sasanian palatial scheme, the majority uses a three-aisled hall with or without a subsequent room of various type. These halls are usually understood from the familiar basilica scheme in late Roman and early Byzantine architecture, such as by Creswell (1969) when comparing the three-aisled hall with triconch in the palace of Mshatta in Jordan with churches in Egypt. The paper argues that this familiarity may be deceptive, particularly when looking to examples realized in late antique forms. Instead it points out characteristics that differ from the scheme and from audience halls in late antique architecture. It relates them to what is known on Umayyad ceremonial, since Grabar (1955), from textual sources. Tracing the earliest known examples in Arab architecture of Mesopotamia, the paper discusses how form and spatial concept may have adopted Sasanian models.

Sasanid Influence on Seljuk Art and Architecture

Osman Ervşar (Antalya)

Seljuk civilization was influenced by some other civilizations from the moment it emerged. Some of these influences disappeared in time while some others were determining factor in shaping Seljuk civilization. Although the Seljuk walk, which began in the 10th century, was a struggle for survival in the Central Asian prairie, it developed with the success in the military field from the beginning of the 11th Century onward and new achievements in the level of civilization.

The subject of this presentation is to provide some features of the Seljuk art and architecture where we consider the presence of Sasanid influence, and to explain the relationship of these to the Sasanid art. There are many elements, which belong to the Sasanids, in the Seljuk culture. Unfortunately, an adequate evaluation of these elements in the Seljuk art have not been made. Although some publications suggested that some elements of the Seljuk art were of Sasanid base, its development and origin was not examined. This report will discuss the Sasanid influence on Seljuk art and architecture through examples and point to the origins of some trends in Seljuk art.

Sasanids, whose cultural background is very old, had disappeared long before the Seljuks entered Iran. The 12th Century is a period when amazing cultural masterpieces were produced in Anatolia, Iran and Turkmenistan region. There are main factors, which shaped the culture and art during this period. While some of these cultural factors remained within the boundaries of their own region, some of them went beyond their own boundaries and continued to exist in cultural exchange for a long time, without being dependent on the region. From the moment they emerged, the Seljuk culture had the influence of the original region of their nation on the one hand and the local cultures in regions they moved to on the other. The Sasanid culture is one of these.

Traces of Sasanid art and architecture will be examined in the Seljuk culture. But, before discussing the dimensions of this cultural influence and to get a better understanding of the extend of the reflection of this influence in the Seljuk culture it should be pointed out that the fact that the sultans following Kilicarslan II reign consistently named their children after the heros in chronicle written in verse, which is based on Sasanid stories in origin, had a meaning more than a coincidence I believe. Influence of the Sasanid culture on Seljuk architecture and art can be seen in different forms. However, it can be seen that the Seljuks included some phenomena from their own cultural past in this influence, instead of a sole Sasanid reflection. Resulting art can be evaluated as an art, which is not based solely on imitation but has some

innovation of its own. The Sasanid influence on Seljuk art can be seen in and around palaces and public areas. When the provided examples are examined, it will be evident that many elements, which belong to the Sasanid culture, were perceived as the indigenous culture of the Seljuks.

Iran Seljuk culture is inside a vision of values islamically. The fact that the Sasanids are in the Seljuk culture vision should not be surprising. Because, the Seljuk culture always interacted with other cultures in the regions it spreaded and products related to this interaction were created as a result. Contribution of the Sasanids was both long term and the determining factor for the later stages of the culture in this implication, which is defined as the syncretism element of the Turkish art and culture specific to the Seljuks.