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SAMITUM-WOVEN SILK TEXTILE WITH AN ENTHRONED SASANIAN KING

IRAN OR CENTRAL ASIA; 7TH-8TH CENTURY

H: 94; W: 85 CM

The motif of a Sasanian king on a throne carried by ibexes is unusual. A single textile from Egypt and Sasanian silver bowls feature corresponding depictions, but with the ruler seated and leaning on his sword. This magnificent silk shows a king – presumably Khusrau II (r. 591-628), who was deceased at the time – holding a flower in each hand that in turn mimics the flanking “trees of life” with grapes, winged palmettes, and opulent blossoms.

In the 1370s, the North African historian Ibn Khaldun wrote about Muslim *tiraz* textiles, which bear the names and titles of ruling princes. He believed that the phenomenon succeeded the pre-Islamic royal custom of using true portraits of these rulers or other figures that were to symbolize them.

This textile, woven shortly after the Muslim takeover in Iran and

Central Asia, supports Ibn Khaldun's interesting statement.

Published in:

Kjeld von Folsach: "A set of silk panels from the Mongol period" in Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom (eds.): *God is beautiful and loves beauty: the object in Islamic art and culture*, New Haven 2013, p. 233, fig. 224;

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer: *The Human Figure in Islamic Art – Holy Men, Princes, and Commoners*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2017, fig. 37, p. 149;

Mariachiara Gasparini: *Transcending patterns: Silk Road cultural and artistic interactions through Central Asian textile images*, Honolulu 2020, pl. 8 and pp. 63-65 (wrong acc.no. in book);