

Social Status of Women in the Sassanid Period (Based on the Seals and its Effects)

Abstract

The knowledge gained in the field of social history in ancient Iran has constantly caused complications for researchers due to the method of historiography and the limitation of written sources. Meanwhile, the remnants of the Sassanid period (224-651 AD) provide researchers with more information in terms of quantity and quality. Nonetheless, the share of women as a significant population in society is limited. The issue under investigation in this study is how to recognize the situation of women in the Sassanid period based on the remaining seals of the mentioned period. This research has been done by a descriptive and analytical method whilst focusing on library data. The findings of the research indicate that according to the seals, stamps, coins and other works of art of the Sassanid period, in addition to the status of the queen, women have also reached the status of monarchy. Scenes of women next to men in the act of flower-giving acts considered as a request for matrimony and marriage is seen. The use of women's motifs on seals and other works of art can be considered as a new development and attitude towards women in Sassanid society.

Research aims:

1. A study of the position of women in Iranian society in the Sassanid period.
2. An analysis of the position of women in the Sassanid era based on the seals of this period.

Research questions:

1. What was the position of women in the Sassanid period in terms of social status?
2. What is the narration of the position of women in society in the remaining seals of the Sassanid period?

Keywords: Sassanid period, seals, position of women.

Introduction

The Sassanid monarchy ruled Iran for more than 4 centuries (224-651 AD) bestowed special features in terms of political, social and cultural structure. During this period, social classes and groups each had a unique position and characteristics. In the meantime, women, like other members of society, had special roles and responsibilities. The necessity of discussing women and reflecting on their position in the seals of the Sassanid period is the main topic of study in this paper since it is difficult to study and analyze the position of women in this period due to the resources left from this period. The sources left from ancient Iran, which include inscriptions, coins, seals and other works, are limited in quantity. One of the main reasons for this shortcoming is the reliance on oral tradition in pre-Islamic Iranian literature. With the passage of time and the prevalence of writing in the Sassanid period, written literature gradually replaced oral literature. One of the limitations that the sources of the history of ancient Iran have always faced is not dealing with social history and the monopoly of historiography on political and court issues. Our knowledge of men and women, in other words, the general class of society in the Sassanid period is limited. Women in ancient Iran as a significant population of society have played various roles in society, but in the surviving works according to the traditions of that time are less portrayed. Art flourished during the Sassanid period and this prosperity was reflected in various aspects of art. The seals of the Sassanid period are among the applied works of art of this period whose analysis can shed light on parts of the social history of the Sassanid period.

A review of the background of the present study shows that various studies have been conducted in the field of Sassanid art so far that the themes of women have also been studied. In these studies, the presence of women in works of art or specifically the seals of ancient Iran in general has been studied. One of these researches is an article entitled: "The Theme of Women on the Seals of Iran: From the Pre-Linear Period to the End of the Sassanid Period", which was written by Nusrat al-Muluk Mesbah Ardakani and Abolghasem Dadvar Has been published in the Quarterly Journal of Women's Research 2008 No. 4. In this work, the authors have also mentioned the presence of women in the seals of the Sassanid period. They believe that the role of women in this period is related to Anahita, the goddess of water (Ardakani, Dadvar, 2008: 177). The present study intends to analyze the role and position of women in the Sassanid period by using descriptive and analytical methods and relying on library data using the content analysis approach of the Sassanid period and the dark corners left by the status of women in this Clarify the course.

Conclusion

One of the characteristics of the works of art of the Sassanid period is the use of women's motifs on works of art. Most of the surviving images of Sassanid women belong to queens and court women who are embossed on engravings, and on stamps, insignia, vessels and coins. The study of seals and the effects of Sassanid seals indicates the wide use of seals in political, economic and social activities between diverse levels of society. Women also used the seal as a part of the society to accomplish administrative, legal and other affairs. Some of the motifs of women on Sassanid seals are: images of queens, goddess Anahita, single faces of court women, images of man and woman next to each other, mother and child, woman praying and woman dancing. The variety used in the subjects of women's seals indicates that women in Sassanid society, despite some strict rules that were imposed on them by Zoroastrian clerics; Compared to previous governments, they were more involved in social, economic, and political activities and gradually gained a better status by revising some religious laws; As the owner of the property, they also had the right to choose a spouse, marriage, divorce and inheritance. Images of men and women next to each other on Sassanid seals, which have been interpreted as a marriage contract, can also be considered as indications of women's enjoyment of social rights and influence from neighboring cultures. However, the small number of seals left from this period has made it impossible to achieve a complete picture of the status of women in the

Sassanid period. Undoubtedly, the dominance of the class structure on the status and position of individuals and groups in Sassanid society has caused non-court women not to play a significant role in society, and the lack of traces of them in seals, especially administrative seals, can confirm this claim. Unquestionably, it should not be overlooked that seals were generally considered a luxury item of this period, so their study was more effective in recognizing the status of court women and the extent of their presence in the political and social structure of this period.

References

November (2013), translated by Genghis Molaei, Tehran: The Great Islamic Encyclopedia. [In Persian]

Ardavirafnameh (2012), Research by Rahim Afifi, Tehran: Toos, Ch3. Avesta (the oldest songs of Iran), (2013), Jalil Dostkhah Research, Volumes 1 and 2, Ch 17, Tehran: Morvarid. [In Persian]

Bartholomew, Christian (1337), Woman in Sassanid Law, translated by Naser al-Din Sahib al-Zamani, Tehran: Atai Press Institute. [In Persian]

Brusius, Maria (2013), Ancient Iran, translated by Issa Abdi, Tehran: Mahi, Ch 2. [In Persian]

Prada, Aidat (2012), Art of Ancient Iran (Pre-Islamic Civilizations), translated by Yousef Majidzadeh, Tehran: University of Tehran, Ch4. [In Persian]

Pope, Arthur, Ackerman, Phillips (2008), A Journey in Iranian Art, Volume 2, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural, Ch 2. [In Persian]

Hassani, Mirza Mohammad (1393), Newly discovered Sassanid reliefs (2004-1950 AD), Tehran: Phoenix, Ch 1. [In Persian]

Hosouri, Ali (2007), "Themes of Sassanid decorative seals", Fall 2007, Art and People, Vol. 7, pp. 13-10. [In Persian]

----- (1396), "Mehr of Sassanid shepherds", Diar, vol. 4, pp. 10-3. [In Persian]

Daryaei, Touraj (2013), Sassanid Empire, translated by Khashayar Bahari, Tehran: Farzanrooz, Ch1. [In Persian]

Daryaei, Touraj (2013), The Untold Stories of the Sassanid Empire, translation of Haqqani song, Mahmoud Fazeli Birjandi, Tehran: Parseh, Ch 2. [In Persian]

Dimz, Orly (2009), Sculpture and Iconography in Pre-Islamic Iran, translated by Ali Akbar Vahdati, Tehran: Mahi, Ch1. [In Persian]

Rajabi, Parviz (2008), The Lost Millennia, Volume 5, Tehran: Toos, Ch3. [In Persian]

Shahbazi, Alireza Shapoor (2010), History of the Sassanids (translation of the Sassanid section of the history of Tabari and its comparison with the history of Balami), Tehran: University Publishing Center, Ch. [In Persian]

Shahzadi, Rostam (2007), Zoroastrian Civil Law during the Sassanids, Tehran: Forouhar, Ch 2. [In Persian]

Talaei, Hassan (2014), Mehr in Iran from the beginning to the beginning of Islam, Tehran: Samat, Ch 2. [In Persian]

Erian, Saeed (2003), Guide to Middle Iranian Inscriptions (Pahlavi-Party), Tehran: Cultural Heritage Organization, Ch1. [In Persian]

Farnbagh Dadgi (2011), Bandesh, Mehrdad Bahar Research, Tehran: Toos, Ch.4[In Persian]

Gholizadeh, Khosrow (2013), Mythological Encyclopedia of Animals and Related Terms, Tehran: Parseh, Ch1. [In Persian]

Christensen, Arthur (1372), Iran during the Sassanids, translated by Rashid Yasemi, Tehran: Book World, Ch8. [In Persian]

Colon, Dominguez, Edith Prada (2015), Mehr in the Near East and Ancient Iran, translated by Pouria Khadish, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural, Ch1. [In Persian]

Gatha, (2012), Hymns of Zoroaster, translated into Persian by Firooz Azargashsab, Tehran: Forouhar, Ch1. [In Persian]

Gershman, Roman (2011), Iranian art during the Parthian and Sassanid eras, translated by Bahram Farhoushi, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural, Ch3. [In Persian]

Lukonin, Vladimir, G., (1365), Sassanid Iranian Civilization, translated by Enayatullah Reza, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural, Ch 2. [In Persian]

Lukonin, Vladimir, G., (2014), "Political, Social and Administrative Institutions, Taxes and Trade", History of Iran Cambridge, from the Seleucids to the collapse of the Sassanid government, Volume 3, translated by Hassan Anousheh, Tehran: Amirkabir, Ch. [In Persian]

Mesbah Ardakani, Nusrat al-Muluk, Dadvar, Abolghasem (2008), "The Theme of Women on the Seals of Iran", Quarterly Journal of Women Research, No. 4, pp. 182-161. [In Persian]

Nasrollahzadeh, Sirus (2005), The name of Sassanid genealogy from the beginning to Hormoz II, Tehran: Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, Ch1. [In Persian]

Nairi, Siva (2000), Secrets to the Seal (selected from a collection of seals donated by Dr. Nairi to the National Museum of Iran), Tehran: Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization. [In Persian]

Vandidad (Part Three of the Avesta Book), (2012), translated by Seyyed Mohammad Ali Da'i al-Islam, Tehran: Danesh Library, Ch1. [In Persian]

Wieshofer, Yousef (2011), Ancient Iran (from 550 BC to 650 AD), translated by Morteza Saebofar, Tehran: Phoenix, Ch 11.

Hertzfeld, Ernst (2002), Iran in the Ancient East, translated by Homayoun Sanati-Za, Tehran: Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies. [In Persian]

Hintz, Walter (2013), New Finds from Ancient Iran, 2013, translated by Parviz Rajabi, Tehran: Phoenix, Ch4. [In Persian]

Yahaghi, Mohammad Jafar (2015), Culture of Myths and Fiction in Persian Literature, Tehran: Contemporary Culture, Ch5. [In Persian]

Foreign resources:

Bivar, A.D.H, Catalog of the western Asiatic seals in the British museum stamp seals, II: The Sasanian dynasty, published by the Trustees of the British museum, London, 1969.

Brunner, Christopher, J., Sasanian Seals in the Moore Collection: Motive and Meaning in some popular Subjects, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980.

Brunner, Christopher, J. Sasanian Stamp seals, in the Metropolitan, Museum of art, New York, 1978.

Daryaei, T., Sasanian Persia, the rise and fall of an empire, I.B Tauris & Co, LTd, 2009.

De waele, Surle Bas- Relief Sasanide de Tang- e Qandilet le Bas- Relief au couple de Barm- e Delak Revuede s Archeologues et Historien d'Art de Louvain, Vol XL, 1978.

Gignoux, ph., DĒNAG, Encyclopaedia Iranica, Vol. 5, Fasc. 3. P.282, 2011.

Harper, Oliver, The Royal Hunter Art of The Sasanian Empire, 1978, New York.

Gyselen, R., New Evidence for Sasanian Numismatics: The Collection Of Ahmad Saedi, Published by the group for the Study of the Civilization of the Middle East, 2004.

Lukonin, V.G., IRAN II, Des Seleucides aux Sassanides, ISBN 1 75130 00078979, 1967.

Macuch, M., The use of seals in Sasanian jurisprudence. In: Sceaux d 'orient et leur emploi. (Res Orientales) Ed. Rika Gyselen, Bures-Sur-Yvette, 1997, 79-87. free university Berlin.

Perikhanian, The book of A Thousand Judgements) A Sasanian Law Book (, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, California U.S.A, 1997.

Ritter, N. C, On The Development of Sasanian Seals And Sealing Practice: A Mesopotamian Approach, Leiden, 2017, pp.99-114.

www.sasanids.com

[www. Tarikh10- Blogfa.com](http://www.Tarikh10-Blogfa.com) .