Published: December 15, 1993
Last Updated: September 14, 2016

CROWN III. ON MONUMENTS FROM THE ISLAMIC CONQUEST TO THE MONGOL INVASION

CROWN

iii. On monuments from the Islamic conquest to the Mongol invasion

Richard Ettinghausen suggested that the Omayyad caliphs, rulers of the first Islamic dynasty (41-132/661-750), wore three kinds of official headdress: the *tāj* (crown), the *emāma* (turban; see ʿamāma), and the *qalansowa ṭawīla* (tall conical hat). The last he traced to a Parthian origin; it appears to have been borrowed by the Omayyads from Persia as early as the reign of ʿAbd-al-Malek (65-86/685-705; 1972, pp. 30-33; Sourdel-Thomine, pl. 72a-b; cf. Levy, p. 330). It was worn on such occasions as the opening of a new mosque, and Ettinghausen has argued that at the mid-8th-century palace of Ḵerbet al-Mafjar, now in Israel, it was suspended in the manner of the Sasanian hanging crown (1972, p. 32; see ii, above). Although the general form of a conical hat or helmet did not have Sasanian antecedents, the ribboned diadems, crescents, and globes were clearly of Persian origin (Ettinghausen, 1972, pl. XX/68). A low form of the *qalansowa* is apparently represented on Omayyad coins (for

references, see Ettinghausen, 1972, p. 325). The *qalansowa* and the turban were the only tokens of sovereignty bestowed on the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Motawakkel at his installation in 232/847 (Levy, p. 324), but the former was no longer an exclusive royal prerogative. A version of silk wrapped on a reed or wood frame had become generally fashionable, despite the disapproval of certain caliphs (Levy, p. 326; Serjeant, p. 14). The tall version, decorated with a lattice pattern, is worn by the figure of Cepheus in manuscript of Ṣūfī's *Ṣowar al-kawākeb al-ṯābeta* (Treatise on the fixed stars), dated 460/1009-10, probably copied and illustrated in Shiraz and now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Wellesz, pl. 2 fig. 3; *EIr.* V, p. 769 pl. LXXXVIII). Ettinghausen traced the continuing popularity of this type through the 14th and 15th centuries (1972, p. 33). ʿAbbasid caliphs also wore a low cap bound with a diadem, tied with ribbons, and described as a *taqīya* (Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler, p. 240, pl. 154d).

One of the most durable types of royal headgear was the winged crown, first observed on coins and reliefs of the Sasanian Bahrām II (276-93) and adopted for the stucco figure of a ruler, perhaps the caliph, on the facade of the Omayyad palace of Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Ḡarbī in Syria (Schlumberger, 1939, pls. XLV/3, XLVI/1). Daniel Schlumberger described it as a cap of felt or metal bordered by a metal band with central jewel and flanked by a pair of wings, worn without diadem or *corymbus* (1939, p. 327). Although fragmentary, this representation appears to be a direct descendant of the Sasanian crown translated into a new form (pace Ettinghausen and Grabar, p. 390 n. 89). A second Omayyad variation on the Sasanian winged crown is found in a wall painting, generally identified as the "kings of the earth," in the audience hall of the 8th-century building at Qoṣayr ʿAmra in Jordan. The Sasanian king is represented wearing a skullcap with wings framing a tall stem with volutes, surmounted by a crescent (Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler, pl. VIII). Post-Sasanian silver vessels of the 8th-11th centuries demonstrate the continued popularity of crowns (particularly that of Ardašīr III, 628-29) incorporating stepped crenellations, crescents, small ribbed globes, and jeweled diadems with ribboned ties. They are worn by figures engaged in royal pursuits like hunting and feasting (Orbeli and Trever, pls. 15-18, 83).

The third official headdress of the Omayyad caliphs was the turban. Although it was the quintessential headdress for all males in the Islamic world, according to Arabic sources, it also remained important as a royal symbol through the ʿAbbasid period, being the specified headgear on certain

ceremonial occasions. For example, the turban was donned by each caliph at his installation, and a black turban (the chosen color of the ʿAbbasids) was presented to the Saljuq sultan Ṭoḡrel Beg (429-55/1038-63) on his entry into Baghdad (Levy, pp. 331, 332, 336). Ṭoḡrel Beg is portrayed on a gold medallion wearing an elaborate, tulip-shaped turban (Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler, pl. 267b).

Few early representations of the turban survive from Persian contexts, and those that do seem often to be on nonroyal figures, as in the 11th-century Ṣūfī manuscript, where several personifications of constellations wear flat turbans, some tied with floating ends (Wellesz, pls. 2/4: Boötes, 4/8: Auriga, 7/14: Sagittarius). A wall painting at Laškarī Bāzār in Afghanistan, also dated to the early 11th century, includes a youthful figure wearing a small turban (Schlumberger, 1952, pp. 251-70, pl. XXXII/2). A royal representation of a turbaned figure on an 11th-century silver plate was considered by Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar to be a turning point in metalwork, from traditional Sasanian to purely Islamic motifs (p. 236, fig. 249).

Female figures wearing crowns or royal headdresses seem rarely to have been represented in the early centuries of Islam; none is from a Persian context. A stucco figure from the facade of the Omayyad palace of Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Ḡarbī in the Syrian desert wears a crown of stylized leaf forms closely resembling Sasanian vegetal crowns of the goddess Anāhīd (Schlumberger, 1939, p. 349 fig. 21; Harper, 1978, p. 109 fig. 42; idem, 1981, p. 35 fig. 11).

A second female headdress consists of a jeweled or beaded diadem, often tied with floating ribbons, which recalls the fillets of Sasanian queens depicted on rock reliefs but also of dancers on silver bottles and ewers (Harper, 1978, p. 60 fig. 18; idem, 1981, p. 34 fig. 9). In the Islamic period these diadems were worn not by queens but by richly dressed figures who may have been of high rank or merely court dancers and musicians. In the early 11th-century Ṣūfī manuscript the personified constellations Cassiopeia and Andromeda were depicted as dancers with diadems ornamented by central rosettes in crescents, recalling the small *corymbus* in a crescent of late Sasanian crowns (Wellesz, pls. 3/6, 5/10, 6/12).

Under the Saljuqs and successor dynasties

The turban continued to be worn by kingly personages in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Two enthroned rulers on an inlaid brass candlestick from

upper Mesopotamia are described in bud-shaped turbans (Rice, pp. 283-326, fig. 40/f, k), whereas rounded turbans are found on Persian ceramics of the Saljuq period (Lane, pl. 63a). In the manuscript of *Varqa wa Golšāh* from the end of the 12th century the Persian rounded turban is worn by the hero Varqa and others but not by kingly figures (Melikian-Chirvani, 1970, nos. 42-54). Although the turban thus certainly remained a royal symbol throughout the first centuries of Islam, it seems to have been a less potent token of royal authority than the crown.

By the 12th century the crenellated crown had been transformed into a three-pointed version, consisting of reversed, heart-shaped leaves with interior volutes. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani remarked about such a crown worn by the lunar figure in the frontispiece to a manuscript of *Ketāb al-deryāq* (Theriaca) dated 595/1199 that it represented the final evolution of the Sasanian crown, with pointed elements derived from Samanid ceramic motifs (1967, pp. 3-51, fig. 1; *Survey of Persian Art* V, pl. 559A). Although it does not appear on Persian ceramics of the 12th and 13th centuries, it is worn by the "king of Syria" in the illustrated manuscript of *Varqa wa Golšāh* (plate xxiii; Melikian-Chirvani, 1970, fig. 40h; cf. comparable versions from Mesopotamia; Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler, pl. 268b; Du Ry, p. 109). Related to this three-pointed crown was one consisting of two points framing a tripartite crenellated form. Probably also of Sasanian origin, this crown does not seem to have been worn beyond the mid-12th century. It can be observed on a 12th-century Persian ceramic vessel (Grube, p. 185 fig. 132), as well as in a number of contexts in other parts of the Islamic world (Philon, pl. XXA, p. 219 fig. 462; Ettinghausen, 1942, p. 114 fig. 3).

A tall, fur-trimmed hat with a triangular metal plaque set into the front, of Central Asian origin, appears to have been the last new type of royal headdress introduced by Islamic rulers before the Mongol conquest (see clothing viii, pp. 773, 775). D. S. Rice identified it as the *šarbūš* (1957, p. 324), which he thought might be a triangular diadem. In his view it was characteristic of the military hierarchy but was also adopted by the Saljuq rulers in Persia and their vassals and successors (1957, p. 324; plate xxiv). It was not represented in Persian art until the late 12th and early 13th centuries. It was depicted on enthroned figures on ceramics and metalwork (Ettinghausen and Grabar, p. 349 fig. 373; *Survey of Persian Art* V, pls. 243, 516, 517, 651, 661, 667, 668, 673B, 688, 707, 773, 1308, 1316, 1339; Atıl, p. 96 fig. 42; Grube, p. 203 no. 142), on a royal personage in the sole illustrated manuscript of *Varqa wa*

Golšāh, from about the turn of the 13th century (Melikian-Chirvani,1970, no. 53), and on Sultan Jalāl-al-Dīn Ḵʷārazmšāh (617-28/1220-31) on the "Freer battle plate" (plate xxix; ca. 625/1230; *Survey of Persian Art* V, pl. 675; Rogers, p. 224, pl. I; see iv, below). The version of the fur-trimmed cap in these Persian representations is shorter and wider than those from upper Mesopotamia and northern Syria (Rice, 1957, p. 317 fig. 40a, d; idem, 1953, pls. 14-19. p. 134 fig. c). In this period princes also wore turbans of modest size (*Survey of Persian Art*, pls. 632, 633, 642 cf. 664, 672, 679, the last showing Bahrām Gōr). Representations of royal women do not survive in Persian Islamic art before the late 12th or early 13th century. On ceramics richly clad women in the presence of high-ranking male figures usually wear the diadem, which, if not royal, was at least a symbol of elevated station. It was usually adorned with a bud-shaped jewel at the center and often tied with floating ribbons (Atıl, p. 92, pl. 41; *Survey of Persian Art* V, pls. 651, 687, 693; Grube, no. 183, facing p. 233).

By the late 12th century in Persia the winged crown was no longer an exclusively male symbol of royalty but had become a mark of high rank for both men and women. Persian ceramics and stucco reliefs of the Saljuqs and their successor states are the vehicles on which these crowns are most clearly defined; they are formed of two curved wings flanking a bud-shaped jewel, the latter possibly a development of the small globe on late Sasanian crowns (plate xxv; Atıl, p. 118, pl. 52; *Survey of Persian Art* V, pl. 687; Jenkins, p. 19 no. 19; Ettinghausen and Grabar, p. 290 fig. 307). A Persian manuscript of Ṣūfī's *Ṣowar al-kawākeb* dated 647/1249 in the Topkapı Saray library in Istanbul includes a depiction of the typical Saljuq winged crown encircling the heads of Cassiopeia and Andromeda, who are dressed as dancers (Wellesz, pls. 19 fig. 47, 20 fig. 49).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

E. Atıl, *Ceramics from the World of Islam*, Washington D.C., 1973.

G. Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting. The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art*, Berkeley, 1981.

M. Bahrami, “Some Objects Recently Discovered in Iran,” *Bulletin of the Iranian Institute* 6-7, 1946, pp. 71-77.

C. J. Du Ry, *Art of Islam*, New York, 1970.

K. Erdmann, *Die Kunst Irans zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin, 1943.

R. Ettinghausen, “Painting in the Fatimid Period. A Reconstruction,” *Ars Islamica* 9, 1942, pp. 112-24.

Idem, *Arab Painting*, Cleveland, 1962.

Idem and O. Grabar, *The Art and Architecture of Islam. 650-1250*, London, 1987.

R. Ghirshman, *Persian Art. The Parthian and Sassanian Dynasties, 249 B.C.-A.D. 651*, New York, 1962.

H. Goetz, “The History of Persian Costume,” *Survey of Persian Art* V, pp. 2227-56.

E. J. Grube, *Islamic Pottery of the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection*, London, 1976.

P. O. Harper and P. Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period* I. *Royal Imagery*, New York, 1981.

M. Jenkins, “Islamic Pottery. A Brief History,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 40, 1983, pp. 1-52.

A. Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery. Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia*, New York, 1948.

R. Levy, “Notes on Costume from Arabic Sources,” *JRAS*, 1935, pp. 210-338.

A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, “Trois manuscrits de l’Iran seldjoukide,” *Arts Asiatiques* 16, 1967, pp. 3-51.

Idem, “Le roman de Varqe et Golšâh,” *Arts asiatiques* 22, 1970, pp. 1-262.

G. C. Miles, “The Iconography of Umayyad Coinage” (review of J. Walker, “A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum”), *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, pp. 207-13.

U. Monneret de Villard, *Le pitture musulmane al soffitto della Cappella Palatina*

in Palermo, Rome, 1950.

P. Pal, ed., *The Nasli Heeramaneck Collection*, Los Angeles, 1973.

H. Philon, *Early Islamic Ceramics. Ninth to Late Twelfth Centuries*, Athens, 1980.

D. S. Rice, "The Aghani Miniatures and Religious Painting in Islam," *Burlington Magazine* 95, 1953, pp. 128-34.

Idem, "Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili," *Ars Orientalis* 2, 1957, pp. 283-326.

M. Rogers, "Ceramics," in R. W. Ferrier, ed., *The Arts of Persia*, New Haven, Conn., 1989, pp. 255-70.

D. Schlumberger, "Les fouilles de Qasr al Heir el Gharbi, 1936-1938," *Syria* 20, 1939, pp. 324-73.

Idem, "Le palais ghaznévide de Lashkari Bazar," *Syria*, 29, 1952, pp. 220-51.

R. B. Serjeant, "Material for a History of Islamic Textiles up to the Mongol Conquest," *Ars Islamica* 9, 1942, pp. 54-92.

J. Sourdel-Thomine and B. Spuler, *Die Kunst des Islam*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 4, Berlin, 1973.

J. Walker, *A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum* I. *A Catalogue of the Arab-Sassanian Coins*, London, 1941.

E. Wellesz, "An Early al-Sufi Manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. A Study in Islamic Constellation Images," *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, pp. 1-26.