



Arms and Armor from Iran

The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period

Publication

PUBLICITY | Dr. Hannes Möhring has extensive experience and done lots of research in the field of Art History and History of The Middle East with lots of publications, such as "Saladin: Der König und seine Zeit 1138-1193", "Saladin und der dritte Kreuzzug," "König der Könige - Der Bamberger Reiter in neuer Interpretation", "Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit", etc. He has written lots of reviews on many art books on the renowned art magazine "Kunstbucheizeiger" and other publications

Author

Editors

Forewords

Acknowledgement

April 2007, Translation Book Review on www.kunsbuchanzeiger.de:

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The manufacture of (damascus) steel, edged weapons, and armor has a history in Iran that goes back to thousands of years. This fact is presented to the reader of this book in a very impressive way. Half of the content of the book consists of big, continuous three-column pages with many black-and-white pictures, and the other half contains a catalog that shows an abundance of excellent color pictures in full overview and detailed view as well as exact descriptions of presented artifacts with measurements and weights. All inscriptions are transcribed and translated. Admittedly, the transcription of Arabic and Persian does not always fulfill the scientific requirements. For example, the name of Sultan Saladin, who is also famous in Europe, is transcribed as "El-Sultan-Salah-el-Din el-Aiubi" (page 123) instead of Sultan Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (or Aiyubi).

Artifacts from ten Iranian museums build up the core of the material. There are no firearms, but a variety of different types of swords, daggers, maces, axes, spearheads, bows and arrows, shields, and armor from the bronze age to the 20th century are presented in full detail and classified. The emphasis is placed on the shamshir (the tail of lion), a sword that originally had a straight blade. Based on different examples, the author can show that highly curved swords were already made under the rule of Timur the Lame (died 1405) and not – as assumed before – under the Safavid Shah Abbas I (died 1629). However, the saber

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did not fully replace the double-edged straight sword.

A number of shamshirs with a curved blade, but no daggers or other weapons, bear the maker's mark Assadollah (the lion of God), the title of the fourth Caliph Ali. This maker's mark was a considerable worry and challenge for the previous researchers. It is clear from the chronological framework that this could not be the name of one smith. Based on good arguments, the author is of the opinion that only men who excelled in their craft with excellent mastery were allowed to supply their forged blades with such a mark that served as an honorary title.

Based on general cultural background, the author attempts to show the development of different types of weapons. He intends to and stresses the cultural uniqueness and autonomy of Iran and separates it from general Islamic culture, i.e. Arabo-Islamic and Turco-Islamic culture. Consequently, for example, the author analyzes the literary genre of the manuscripts on warfare, the ancient methods of training in duels, and the great Persian tradition of wrestling, as well as the statements of the manuals about the legendary sword of the Caliph Ali as well as the questions of iconography of the widespread state symbol of Iran, "the emblem of the lion and the sun," and the motif of a lion fighting a bull.

Eight years of research can be seen in the result. The book shows on each page how intensively the author dealt with the important research questions. It will probably be a standard work among experts and professional circles very soon, where a foundation for further reputable research is provided.

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