

Abstract

Following diploma thesis is focused on decorative motifs of Achaemenid small-scale art. Borders of the Achaemenid Empire stretched from the river Indus to Bulgaria and from Egypt to the Black sea. It was associated with dynasty of Persian kings, who ruled over the empire between 559 – 331 BC. During its existence a characteristic art with its own style and iconography was formed. The main aim of the thesis is to present iconographical analysis of decorative motives appearing in Achaemenid small-scale art. Due to the vast range of decorative motives thesis is focused only on motives of animals.

The analysis is conducted on diverse spectrum of objects included in studied collection. It consists of 397 objects namely jewellery, plaques, bracteates, toreutics, coins, stamp and cylinder seals and their impressions, horse-harness strap dividers, weapons, scabbards and scabbard tips and small scale sculpture. These objects are decorated with total of 822 animal motives, which are sorted into six chapters. The introduction is followed by second chapter, in which beasts of prey are described. Here belongs lion, dog, fox, leopard and other beasts of prey without more specific interpretation. Next chapter includes motives of wild animals where ibexes, gazelles, deer and wild boars. In the following chapter domestic animals like sheep, bovines, horses, camels and zebu are investigated. Fifth chapter includes motives of birds: accipitriformes (eagles, hawks), falconidae (falcons), anseriformes (swans, ducks), ciconiiformes (storks), strigiformes (owls) and unspecified bird motives. Sixth chapter is focused on iconographical analysis of mythical creatures such as winged lions, winged ibexes and winged bulls, griffins and other zoomorphic and anthropomorphic beasts. Seventh chapter includes rare motives: hyena, monkey, hare, fish, tuna and dolphin. Eighth chapter summarizes motives in studied collection.

In the iconographic analysis, the position of motives (sitting, lying, jumping...), its decorative context (scene, individual) and proportion of representation of the animals (head, body, forepart...) is examined. Subsequently a total amount of objects with decorative motives is summarized and its relationship to specific representations is assessed. In conclusion, decorative features commonly used in Achaemenid small-scale art are described. Relations between motives and decorated objects are summarized and differences in occurrence of single motives across regions of the Achaemenid Empire are evaluated.