

**Book Review on Ritual and Art: Matthew P. Canepa. (2009). *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 425 pages.**

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**Özet**

Kitap, Roma ve Sasani İnan arasındaki ilişkiyi inceliyor, Krallıkların sanat ve rituel vasıtasıyla otoritelerine işaret ediyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tarih, Sanat, Ortaçağ, Roma, İnan

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**Abstract**

The book investigates the relationship between Roman and Sasanian Iran through art and ritual of Kingships to point their authority.

**Keywords:** History, Art, Medieval, Roman, Persian

*The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*, the intent of this volume is to focus on “a pivotal period in political and religious history, poised between the ancient and medieval worlds in the Mediterranean and the Near East, and offers an analysis of the conditions and motivations that enabled these two hostile systems of sacred universal sovereignty not only to coexist, but to foster cross-cultural exchange and communication even in the face of an undying rivalry” (p.1). Given this, author Matthew P. Canepa details the visual material in cultural context with other uttering elements, rituals and power, about Sasanian and Roman royal interaction.

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The book is organized into nine chapters. In the first chapter, the author starts with the introduction which is the general structure of the book. The following chapter is related to the methodological framework and historical background. Moreover, this chapter presents how Roman and Sasanian cities and palaces become landlord for overlapping ritual displays with using architectural and visual elements. In the third chapter, the writer outlines how Roman and Sasanian utilize the past changes to endure patiently each other's right in order to survive during the third century. In addition, the chapter tells the relationship between visual-ritual and urbanization. New Rome used visual-ritual system to shape the past based on Constantinople's urban environment such as "arches, triumphal columns, and churches bear witness to many urban interventions intent on capturing its memorial significance" (p.46). The following chapter tells about Sapur I, King of Kings of Iran and non-Iran. After chapter four, the author gives examples of art works with photography, which makes the relationship between art and ritual more understandable. Chapter five deals with the emergence of Roman potency in the third century. The cases are meticulously researched and well documented, and include maps of Roman and Sasanian royal interaction. A weakness of the book is its lack of depth of the Roman courts. In contrary to Roman materials, the author gives more details about Sasanian Iran including pictures and data.

A central thesis of the book is to explore the cultural and political interaction (also competition) between Roman and Sasanian Iran within art and ritual of Kingships to indicate their power. Chapter 6 looks at the Roman and Sasanian courts' triumphal motifs for defeated enemy. Transformation of images of triumph emerges as diplomatic ritual—bearing gifts—during the sixth and seventh century between the two realms. For instance, Barberini ivory panel (p.116) represents a triumphant Roman emperor with a figure bearing gifts in Persian dress. This example is important to demonstrate diplomatic ritual as an art work. Chapter 7 gives detail about the diplomatic reception rituals—the envoy ritual—in the Roman and

Sasanian Iran. In this ritual, the protocol, the envoy and his men possess some hierarchy and imperial rules which is explained within details in the book. The origin of this ritual probably stands on indigenous practices. The diplomatic reception ritual presents with an art sample Presbytery mosaic of church of San Vitale which appears ecclesiastical hierarchy. Chapter 8 deals with gift exchange. This diplomatic gifting with its aboriginal roots carries adaptation for involving the differences between cultures. Each example in every chapter makes the rituals' purpose and the relationship between Roman and Sasanian courts more understandable.

In the final chapter, author Matthew P. Canepa looks at the basic visual and ritual markers of royalty. He explores how and why standard visual motifs show parallelism to symbolize the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns' royal power. For instance, in both sovereigns, the nimbus, diadem, and red footwear are the idea of kingship as a visual expression. The author closes the book with epilogue and mentions Rome and Sasanian Iran's relationship "as brothers and enemies" (p.224). Finally, the book tells that these two kingships seriously influenced "Mediterranean, Near East, Central and South Asia, and China from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century" (p.225).

Overall, the book is a good reference book for scholars and people interested in ritual and art. In conclusion, this book represents the relationship of rituals in time and space, in belief and action, and in art.