In reconstructing the ritual environments of the Roman and Sasanian courts and their interaction, this project analyzes a broad archive of texts, structures, objects, and images; however, the two fields of Roman/Byzantine studies and Middle Iranian studies have arrived at conflicting approaches to the use of textual material, and in order to carry out a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary project, these approaches have had to be reconciled. At the end of the last century, Philippe Gignoux advocated a hierarchy of sources that the field of Middle Iranian studies, and this project, generally accept: primary—documents written in the languages of, and at the same time as, the Sasanian empire; secondary—documents in the same languages but post-Sasanian; tertiary—documents in all other languages (including Greek and Latin texts from the Roman empire). Rika Gyselen expanded Gignoux’s approach to include visual and archaeological material: unquestionably contemporary and authentic material such as rock reliefs, coins, archaeologically derived artifacts, and seals form the primary sources, and objects such as silver plate and silk, which lack provenance or come from post-Sasanian manufacture, form the secondary and tertiary sources. Conclusions relying only on secondary and tertiary documents should not be the basis for specific or fundamental claims and should always defer to primary sources when possible.

By necessity, this approach must be modified to deal with questions of

cross-cultural (and cross-disciplinary) interaction. My methodological goal has been to find a middle ground between stringent Middle-Iranian scholarship, which would discount the Roman and Byzantine scholarship entirely, because it relies on non-Sasanian sources, and Roman and Byzantine studies’ over-privileging of Greek and Latin textual sources when dealing with the Sasanian empire, all while integrating visual and archaeological evidence on an equal footing with textual evidence. Thus I do not hesitate to consider “tertiary” textual or visual evidence, but classify the strength of the conclusions one can draw from it according to this amended hierarchy of sources.

Conventions and abbreviations for all Iranian material conform as far as possible to those used by *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (*EIr*). Corresponding to *EIr*, the names of Sasanian kings of kings are in their New Persian, rather than Middle Persian, form (Šāpūr for Šābuhr, Bahrām for Wahrām, etc.). The transliteration system for New Persian and Arabic is that jointly adopted by *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and the Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum. Pahlavi material follows D. N. MacKenzie’s *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*. Abbreviations for Greek and Latin authors conform to those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* first; then, for sources not covered in the *OCD*, the conventions (though not necessarily the editions) used in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (*ODB*). For modern scholarly material, I follow the abbreviations in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and suggested by Dumbarton Oaks (the latter are available in pdf format at doaks.org). Abbreviations not included in these lists or needing clarification I include below. All translations in the text are my own unless indicated.

*AchHist*  
*Achaemenid History.*

*AcOr*  
*Acta Orientalia.*

*ActIr*  
*Acta Iranica.*

*BAI*  
*Bulletin of the Asia Institute.*

*Balami, Tārīḵ*  

*Bundahišn*  

*CambHistIr*  
*Cambridge History of Iran.*

*El*  

*Elr*  
Hamza

IrAnt
Iranica Antiqua.

IrDenk
Iranische Denkmäler. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag for the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Teheran, 1932–.

Jāḥīz

KKZ
Kerdīr, Ka’ba-ye Zardošt inscription.

LTUR

Mašūdī, Murūj

MedAnt
Mediterraneo Antico.

NPEA

NPI
Narseh, Paikuli inscription.

Perses sasanides

Persia e Bisanzio

Skjærvø, Paikuli

ŠKZ

ŠN