Kunstlandschaft – artistic landscape

Literature:

Ute Engel: Kunstgeographie und Kunstlandschaft im internationalen Diskurs. Ein Literaturbericht, in: Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte 27, 2009, pp. 109-120;

eadem: Kunstlandschaft und Kunstgeschichte. Methodische Probleme und neuere Perspektiven, in: F. Felten/ H. Müller/H. Ochs (Hrsg.): Landschaft(en). Begriffe – Formen – Implikationen, Wiesbaden 2012, S. 87-114

*Regional characteristics of art – art as an indicator of regional identity*

Early 20th cent.: House types, connection between architectural forms and geographic/climatic factors

1920s: Characteristics of art according to characteristics of the region, with ethnic components, form a “Kunstlandschaft”

1930s: Abuse of the term “Kunstlandschaft” for nationalist political claims as propagated by the NSDAP (“deutscher Kulturboden”)

1960s Revision of the notion of constant stylistic features in a geographic space (Kenneth Clark/Reiner Hausherr)

1980s: Rhein und Maas. Space of action, regional factors in the making of medieval art: Centers, workshops, markets

1989ff: Revival of a “Geography of Art” in eastern Europe, connected with east European national independence. Thomas da Costa Kaufmann: A medieval and early modern region of artistic interaction can be seen in Central Europe rather than East Central Europe.

*Individual Studies:*

Christophe Herrmann: Preußenland. Empirical study with mapping of architectural features, conclusions on paths of development

Brigit Bornemeier: Kunstgeographie. Origins of German Renaissance architecture, on the basis of a large corpus of buildings, however outdated and schematic

Donat Grueninger: Regionalisierung: Individual actors, art as a product of social networks

Thomas da Costa Kaufmann (2005): Geohistory of Art, mitigating theoretical thrust in favour of flexible approaches

Simone Hespers (2007): Deconstuction of “Kunstlandschaften”, which are more myth than productive concepts. Promotes the study of exchange and hybridity rather than

Conference 2004 „Historische Landschaft – Kunstlandschaft?“: Upper Rhine Valley. Rich historical information on ecclesiastical organisation allows comparison with artistic production in many media. Economical factors: Monetary history, markets, guilds can modify and enhance this picture. However, the region was also part of a trans-regional network, connected in all directions. How can the importance of regional factors be assessed? Regional conventions of style can be followed and can be connected with certain masters and patrons. Style was a hallmark, sometimes close to a regional “brand”.

There are perceptible differences between works of art that can be geographically ordered, and therefore explained in geographical terms

The concept of “Kunstlandschaft” remains debatable. If applicable, it has to be explained in models, e. g. as centers interconnected with certain ways of relationship, or as a defined are of relative stylistic homogeneity. Exchange and intermingling are always part of this picture. The concept might be justified if contemporary sources attribute specific products to a region.

It can be asked whether a term that is less fraught with ideological ballast from the 20th century is more convenient, e. g. plainly “artistic region”, “regional style”, “style of the workshop from XY”. This would avoid connotations of nationalism, and liberate the approach from doubtful essentialism.

Work in the Khurasan project implies the identification of regional styles, perhaps also workshops, *below* the level of the province of Khurasan, i. e. further differentiation.

*Examples from 12th cent. architecture:*

a)

Sangān-i Pāīn (Khurasan-i Razavi), Masǧid-i Gunbad, 531/1137; Signature: Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Marwazī

The stucco decoration shows notable parallels with certain elements in the decoration of Ribāṭ-i Šaraf (see below).

Cf. Marv Oasis, Vakil Bazar: Mausoleum of Abdallah b. Buraida, with signature of Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr as-Sifadanǧī (from Sifadanǧ, a village in the Marv Oasis)

Rādkān (Khurasan-i Razavi), tomb tower, 60[2]/1205-06. Signature Abū Bakr … al-bannāʾ al-Marwazī (?)

b)

Ribāṭ-i Šaraf (Khurasan-i Razavi), 508/1114-15 and 549/1154-55

Inscription on rear iwan: Ḥurrira hāḏihi l-kitāba ʿalā yadai Abī Manṣūr Saʿd b. Muḥ. aṭ-Ṭarāʾifī as-Saraḫsī ġafara Llāh lahu wa-li-wālidaihi

Sangbast, so-called Ribat with Mausoleum attributed to the governor Arslān Ǧāḏib, but dated c. 500/1100 according to stylistic features by J. Sourdel-Thomine, signature on minaret terminating with “as-Saraḫsī”

Marv, Mausoleum of Sultan Sanǧar (1st half of 5th/12th cent.), signature Muḥammad b. Atsiz (or: ʿAzīz?) as-Saraḫsī

Jar Kurgan (Surhkan Darya), minaret. Vertical inscription: ʿAmal ʿAlī b. Muḥammad as-Saraḫsī