

RESEÑAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS / BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN E. CURTIS (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Persia and the Achaemenid Period*. Cambridge, James Clarke & Co, 2020. xiv + 217. ISBN 978 0 227 17705 1. € 97.50

The volume under review is a memorial volume to the late Terence Mitchell, formerly a curator in the British Museum, and it comprises a brief introduction with a bibliography of the honoree's publications, eight essays, and a name index. A number of high-quality color photographs accompany the essays as relevant.

The most pleasing offering of the volume begins the essays, Paul Collins' "Five Unpublished Persepolis Relief Fragments in the Ashmolean Museum" (1–9), which does precisely what the title proclaims. The article briefly describes the said fragments with some preliminary notes on how they appeared in the Oxford collection yet escaped scholarly notice. This will be of use to scholars of Achaemenid art and the antiquities trade.

The editor follows with the essay, "Where did the Persian Kings Live in Babylon?" (10–33). He asks this question since he finds it unlikely Cyrus would have merely appropriated Neo-Babylonian palaces. In practice he provides a survey of some previous analyses of the dating of the three excavated palace complexes—and the suggestions some were in fact augmented or even built under Persian rule. In the end he suggests that, perhaps, the so-called Summer Palace was in fact an Achaemenid raised platform for a palace that literally superseded one of Nebuchadnezzar's.

Third is C. B. F. Walker's "The Use of Seals in Babylonia under the Achaemenids" (34–45). Walker provides an overview of the typology of seals extant in northern Babylonia, relevant published seal corpora, the location of their impression on documents through time and genre, and some of the prominent iconographical themes. He notes some broad changes through time. A handful of adventurous asides leavens the contribution.

Allan Millard, "An Iranian in the Court of King Nebuchadnezzar" (46–50) offers an extended footnote that reads as apologetics through his-

toriography. Instead of working from data that Iranians had been migrating to the alluvial plains,¹ the author uses a plausibly Iranian name in Daniel 1 (Ashpenaz) to suggest the text remembers an official not preserved in the so-called Court Calendar. Certainly, this is not impossible. Texts now biblical are among our sources, but one must assess their veracity honestly rather than assume their documentary value *a priori*.

The most prodigious offering is the posthumously offered “Biblical Archaeology in the Persian Period” by the honoree, Terence Mitchell (51–157), which was apparently originally written in 2005 (vii). Despite the implication of the title, the essay is more a maximalist approach to biblical philology illustrated with examples from the British Museum’s collections than an overview of archaeology. The essay covers familiar issues in biblical scholarship’s discussions of the Persian Period, such as the Cyrus Cylinder, the religion of the Achaemenids, the relative dates of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the mortar and pestles found at Persepolis. Six mostly philological appendices finish the essay. Consonant with its date, the essay’s interlocutors are mostly from the 1990s or earlier.

A biblical theme continues with Shahrokh Razmjou’s “The Textual Connections between the Cyrus Cylinder and the Bible, with Particular Reference to Isaiah” (158–174). Razmjou covers the familiar ground of the similarities between the two named sources in their depiction of Cyrus, albeit without reference to the extensive literature on the subject.² He lists twelve basic similarities, and, despite awareness of a broader royal tradition, prefers to explain these via a deliberate dissemination of the cylinder like Darius’s apology from Behistun.

The last two essays turn to the Sasanian Empire. The first is Prudence Harper’s “Interpreting Sasanian Beards: Significant Images in an Interconnected World” (175–198), the bulk of which focuses on two anomalous depictions of beards, though the discussion ranges more broadly. The first appears on a silver plate found in Strelka, Russia (near the Ural Mountains), now in the Hermitage, and the beard of Ohrmazd at Taq-e Bustan. The former

¹ E.g., Zadok 1976.

² Not even Kittel 1898, Smith 1963, or Boyce 2000, not to mention anything more recent.

she relates to engagements with the Sasanian's Hephthalite neighbors, the latter to Khusro II's openness (indeed, indebtedness) to the Byzantines. This essay will likely be of considerable interest to Sasanian scholars.

Mahnaz Moazami finishes the book with "Sasanian-Zoroastrian Intellectual Life in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD" (199–213). The essay forwards the thesis that the texts known as the *Pahlavi Vidēvdād* and *Zand-ī Fragard ī Jud-Dēw-dād* show late Sasanian scholars as similarly scholastic as their Hellenistic counterparts. Overviews of the two texts and their relationship are placed in a broad context of late antique religious developments. A more satisfying analysis would interact with a broader array of scholarship on the interaction between oral and literate transmission and assist the reader with more elaborate documentation.

Overall, the book dallies with a handful of attractive topics in two discrete time periods, although it could have been more ambitious in commitment to freshness or to secondary literature. The volume's inclusion on library shelves will please those with a compulsion towards thoroughness.

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

- BOYCE, M. 2000. "Persian Religion in the Achaemenid Age." In: D. DAVIES and L. FINKELSTEIN (eds), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 279–307.
- KITTEL, R. 1898. "Cyrus und Deuterocesaja." In: *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 18, pp. 149–162.
- SMITH, M. 1963. "II Isaiah and the Persians." In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83, pp. 415–421.
- ZADOK, R. 1976. "On the Connections between Iran and Babylonia in the Sixth Century B.C." In: *Iran* 14, pp. 61–78.

JASON M. SILVERMAN
University of Helsinki