

## A SOURCEBOOK FOR ROMAN–PERSIAN RELATIONS

E. WINTER, B. DIGNAS: *Rom und das Perserreich. Zwei Weltmächte zwischen Konfrontation und Koexistenz*. Pp. 334, ills. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001. Paper, £34.80. ISBN: 3-05-003451-3.

Rome's relations with Sasanian Persia continue to attract the production of sourcebooks. The new millennium has witnessed not only the publication of the work here under review, but also that of volume two of *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, covering the period 363–630, by G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu (London, 2002). The work of Winter and Dignas differs, however, in many respects from other sourcebooks in the field. As the editors of the series of which this volume is a part make clear in their introduction, the book is aimed at providing a sample of sources in order to stimulate discussion of the issues arising from them. Hence the reader will find only seventy-five different 'materials' (as the authors call them) in the work, arranged according to a thematic structure. Again, unlike many sourcebooks, the range of evidence cited is quite diverse: the majority of the items are quotations from the literary sources (among whom Procopius figures prominently), but there are also inscriptions, maps, photographs of objects and sites, sketches of coins, and diagrams.

In the introduction, W. & D. emphasize their intention to focus on Persia directly as far as possible, in an effort to counteract the tendency to allow the Roman sources to shape accounts of relations between the two powers. The book thus concentrates more on Persia than on the Roman empire, examining issues such as the goals of Sasanian foreign policy and the reciprocal influence which the two great powers exerted on one another. In the initial two chapters the authors offer first a brief account of Rome's relations with Parthia up to the overthrow of the Arsacids (pp. 25–35), and then a more thorough overview of the course of Romano-Persian relations from the third century to the seventh (pp. 37–71). There are frequent cross-references to the materials section of the work, allowing the reader to pursue particular issues in more depth.

The bulk of the work consists in the 'materials' section. This is divided thematically into seven chapters of unequal length. The first is very short and concerns the objectives of the Persians in the west; it contains an excellent discussion of the third-century evidence, notably the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, well illustrated by diagrams of the precise positioning of the inscription on the Ka'ba-i Zardusht. The authors well draw out the links to the Achaemenid heritage of the Sasanians, arguing that they were indeed aware of the extent of the territories once subject to the Persians (pp. 82–3). The second chapter, concerning the wars fought between the two powers, is much longer. W. & D. cover all the principal conflicts, linking together their extracts by a brief narrative; inevitably there is some overlap with the overview offered earlier in the work. The third chapter, also lengthy, deals with diplomatic relations, offering extracts and detailed discussions of the treaties of 244, 298, 363, 422, 562, and 628. As one might expect, given W.'s expertise in this field, there is much detailed and useful analysis of these treaties here, particularly of that of 562 (pp. 164–77).

Chapter 4 focuses on the Arab policies of the two powers. One sequence of materials concerns Hatra, another Palmyra, and the final one examines the Lakhmid and Ghassanid allies of each empire. The bias is clearly towards the earlier period here: even in the final section, some time is spent discussing the fourth century ruler Imru'al-Qays. Somewhat oddly, his career is discussed in connection with an extract

quoted from Tabari; although the Nemara inscription is discussed (p. 199), this much earlier piece of evidence is not cited in full. The fifth chapter is another high-point of the work, dealing with shared interests of the two powers. One of these is the area of trade and the measures agreed upon by the two sides to regulate this, largely in the interests of security, but also for economic reasons. The other series of extracts concerns the Caucasus region, the source of so many disputes. Chapter 6 analyses the religious policies of the two powers. The authors concentrate on developments within Persia, stressing the close links which grew up between the king and the Zoroastrian clergy, a situation paralleled in the Roman empire. There is also a section on the position of Christians within the Persian empire (pp. 245–50), focusing chiefly on the fifth century. The final chapter offers a brief discussion on communication between the two powers, such as the transfer of ideas through the resettling of captive peoples. The book concludes with a bibliography, a list of Sasanian kings, a chronological table, a somewhat eccentric glossary (only seven pages in length), and first-rate indices. The lack of any bibliography of the primary sources is striking, although the footnotes in the text provide some orientation concerning the texts cited.

This is without doubt a book from which both the general reader and the expert will derive benefit. The translations provided, all original, follow the ancient texts closely. However, there are a number of problems inherent in the work. The thematic structure has advantages, allowing for interesting discussions of (for example) the evolution of diplomatic relations or of trade between the two powers, but it also makes for a certain amount of repetition, e.g. concerning Khusro I's invasion of the Roman East in 540 (pp. 60–1, 126–8). It also results in an inevitable unevenness of treatment: while the cities taken by Khusro in 540 are twice discussed, there is no mention at any point of the significant engagements at Dara and Callinicum in the 530s. And while the range of materials chosen for the book is commendably broad, the selection of literary extracts is remarkably narrow and dominated by classical sources such as Procopius, Ammianus, and the *SHA*. While four excerpts from the much later Arab historian Tabari are given, the only Syriac sources presented are two extracts concerning the martyrdoms under Shapur II. Although frequent reference is made to A. Luther, *Die Syrische Chronik Josua Stylites* (Berlin, 1997), no citation from this vital source is offered, nor are there any extracts from John of Ephesus. Nevertheless, W. & D. have produced a very useful volume, which is accessible enough to be used by the general public (as is the editors' intention), but detailed and up-to-date enough in its scholarship as to be of use also to researchers more familiar with the field.

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## LATE ANTIQUE RULERS

F. KOLB: *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*. Pp. 274. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001. Paper, €19.80. ISBN: 3-05-003432-7.

Kolb's work on the ideology of the ruler in late antiquity presents itself as a 'first survey' of the field, introducing 'some new ideas' and providing a basis and an encouragement for more detailed study (p. 10). The book thus is relatively short, and consequently the two terms of the title, 'Herrscherideologie' and 'Spätantike', have to be understood restrictively. K. is concerned exclusively with the ideology and legitimization of imperial rule, leaving aside potentially interesting comparisons with the ideological foundations of power in both the Christian and the bureaucratic élites