

In addressing the original forms of these and other churches, Shalev-Hurvitz insists upon finding similarities where none may have existed. Indeed, it is hard to draw sweeping conclusions based on a limited and incomplete data set. Sameness is emphasized throughout by repetition of measurements, and while a 50-foot diameter may be common in early Byzantine churches (see P.A. Underwood in *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 1949), it is unclear where exactly Shalev-Hurvitz is measuring – interior, exterior, or midpoint of supports? At the Ascension, Mary's Tomb, and Scythopolis, the 50-foot measurements are for entirely imaginary colonnades. Sameness is also emphasized by using the Dome of the Rock – the only fully standing of the centrally planned buildings – as the model for reconstructing the elevation of many others. The analyses of proportional systems are similarly flawed. Colourful overlays, superimposing one plan on top of another, only confuse the issue, particularly when many of the details are either imaginary or incorrectly rendered.

Finally, the study gives too much agency to Jerusalem as an architectural centre. Syria had its own strong building tradition, as did early Christian Italy. S. Lorenzo in Milan does not need the Anastasis Rotunda to make sense; similarly S. Stefano Rotondo in Rome may be best viewed as a failed formal experiment rather than an architectural copy. Justinian's churches in Constantinople are likewise out of place in this discussion. The Romanesque pilgrimage choir developed independently and does not presuppose knowledge of the monuments of Jerusalem – a bizarre suggestion. As Cyril Mango once wisely commented (in *Muqarnas* 1991), criticizing the typological approach in Byzantine architectural studies, “buildings are labeled and pigeon-holed like biological specimens according to formal criteria: where a resemblance is found a connection is assumed even across a wide gulf in time and space”. It is unfortunate to see this approach dominate a study in a series for which he was a founding editor.

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ALBERTO CANTERA:

Vers une édition de la liturgie longue zoroastrienne: pensées et travaux préliminaires.

(Studia Iranica. Cahier 51.) 429 pp. Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2014. €70. ISBN 978 2 910640 37 8.

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The book under review presents an outline and summary of the ongoing work on the Avesta in Salamanca, which has become a major hub of Avestan studies under the direction of Alberto Cantera. While there are already several articles by A. Cantera and his team, this is the first book-length presentation of the research. The aim of the investigations that led to this book is stated clearly from the outset: a new edition of the Avestan texts is needed, in the present case the Long Liturgy. Even a cursory glance reveals that these are not mere *Vorarbeiten* but a text that deserves to be ranked alongside Geldner's *prolegomena* in importance.

The book is divided into four main chapters of unequal length (plus a fifth serving as summary and outlook), each dealing with certain aspects of the Avestan manuscript tradition. In addition, the book features numerous images after the

main text, and six appendices (one an example of how a new edition of the text will look).

Chapter 1 (pp. 33–76) is devoted to the history of Avestan studies with a focus on questions related to the editions of the texts in the nineteenth century. The second chapter (pp. 77–185) deals with the manuscripts of the long liturgy, their history and their scribes. Chapter 3 (pp. 187–271) provides a detailed analysis of the data concerning the age of the long liturgy and its ritual and the changes they underwent over the centuries. The last major chapter (pp. 273–360) takes up the linguistic side of the transmission of the Avesta.

In his approach to the Avestan tradition, the author adeptly combines two research strains of recent decades and takes them to a completely new level. On the one hand, Cantera stresses the importance of the manuscripts in contrast to the text edited by Geldner, something that has been the hallmark of the Erlangen school since the first works in this vein by Karl Hoffmann. Scholars such as Almut Hintze have taken studies of this kind beyond the apparatus and manuscript editions of Geldner, which were still the main tools for Hoffmann, by again highlighting the importance of manuscript work for Avestan studies. Cantera has now systematically been gathering manuscripts which can in part be accessed via the internet platform www.avesta-archiv.com. On the other hand, the author recognizes the importance of ritual practice for Avestan, something that has figured prominently in the work of the French scholar Jean Kellens in recent years. That ritual practice and the recitation of Avestan have had major repercussions for the development of the texts and the writing of manuscripts has not, until now, been a topic of intense research.

While this combination can be considered a major methodological breakthrough in itself, the author goes even further on several occasions as can be seen in the fascinating observations on the sociological conditions for manuscript production in chapter 2.

Cantera raises serious doubts about the existence of a unified text during Sasanian times (the “Sasanian archetype” of the Erlangen school) and clearly states that even if it existed, its reconstruction would be impossible on methodological grounds (cf. p. 360). Instead he aims for a far less remote point in time for the text to be established, resting on the attested readings of the manuscripts. Given the diachronic and diatopic variation of the manuscripts, the editor has to make a choice about which point in space and time his text should represent. Cantera opts for the early Iranian manuscripts (p. 362), which have been inadequately represented in the older editions. While one might wonder if the ultimate consequence of such a line of argument would not be to refrain from editing a text at all and to publish only facsimiles of single manuscripts, Cantera allows for “obvious modernizations” (p. 363) to be corrected on linguistic grounds.

The methodological centrepiece is of course the contextualization of the manuscripts within the tradition. This is approached mainly through evidence from three independent fields: the information provided by the colophons of the manuscripts; palaeographical and orthographical investigations; and the quantitative degree of agreement between single manuscripts. However, these “indices de coincidence” should be taken with caution, since they are not as straightforward as their matter-of-fact presentation in various tables suggests. It would have been fair to provide the reader with a detailed account of how these numbers came about. For example, it is not made clear what the basic counting unit is. While this might be a problem more of exposition than of method, the interpretation of the data seems more problematic. Attributes such as high degree of agreement seem to be assigned basically on personal knowledge of the manuscripts, and the

boundary between qualitative and quantitative analysis is blurred to some extent. Modern statistics would have provided sophisticated tools for handling the data and testing their significance. The results thus acquired could then have served as a starting point for discussion and interpretation.

After reading the book, no one will have any doubts that we really do need a new edition of the long liturgy and that scholars are now in a far better position to achieve a more balanced view of the Avesta than Geldner was. It is to be hoped that the new edition will be essentially a digital one. This is not to say that a traditional edition in the shape of a book would not be an additional benefit, but only an electronic edition could do justice to the complicated circumstances of the transmission. Furthermore, it would be less cumbersome to use for systematic research on the texts and more accessible in general than a printed text with a massive apparatus like the one in the example edition (cf. Appendix 6).

Vers une édition de la liturgie longue zoroastrienne is definitely a must-read for everyone working on Avestan: linguists, scholars of religion and Iranologists alike.

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DENISE AIGLE:

The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality.

(Iran Studies.) xiii, 392 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2015. €107.

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This is an unexpected and refreshing historical study of the Mongol Empire by a scholarly commentator whose analysis is always worthy of attention. The book is a combination of new and previously published papers: Aigle has reviewed, rewritten and merged these into the present work, a study in anthropological history. The book is divided into four loosely connected sections which in turn are divided into a number of autonomous essays held together by a common theme. This organization allows for a very wide spectrum of interest and at the same time admits some very penetrating and detailed analyses.

The introduction establishes Aigle as a committed apologist for those who view the Mongol centuries in a more positive and sympathetic light than previous generations of scholars who harkened to Ibn al-Athir's lament on the advent of the Tatar hordes. Her interest in the Mongols was initially sparked by the Ilkhanate of Iran and it is from the perspective of the Ilkhanid experience that she views the greater Chinggisid empire. While acknowledging the trauma of Chinggis Khan's invasion of Iran in 1218–22, Aigle stresses that the Ilkhanid period allowed the "widest freedom for the country's religious communities" (p. 5) and opened up a period of "intense cultural exchange" (p. 6). She stresses that long-distance trade became the key to the transformation of the emerging empire and its economic recovery, with all levels of society becoming beneficiaries of Mongol policies and their imperial vision.

However, Aigle identifies two other traits the Chinggisids nurtured and which led to the sustained growth and wide acceptance of the "invaders". From early on the Chinggisid elite recognized the need for diplomacy and efficient communication, and understood that continued pillaging and destruction would not ensure either their survival or their growth. In addition, the Chinggisids exhibited a great respect