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THE PARTHIAN AND EARLY SASANIAN EMPIRES:
ADAPTATION AND EXPANSION

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THE PARTHIAN AND EARLY SASANIAN EMPIRES:
ADAPTATION AND EXPANSION

PROCEEDINGS OF A CONFERENCE HELD IN VIENNA, 14–16 JUNE 2012

Hardcover Edition: 978-1-78570-207-5
Digital Edition: 978-1-78570-208-2 (epub)

Edited by

VESTA SARKHOSH CURTIS, ELIZABETH J. PENDLETON,
MICHAEL ALRAM AND TOURAJ DARYAEE

Published by the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS)
Archaeological Monographs Series



BIPS

Contents

 OXBOW | books

© Oxbow Books 2016
Oxford & Philadelphia
www.oxbowbooks.com

Published in the United Kingdom in 2016 by
OXBOW BOOKS
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by
OXBOW BOOKS
1950 Lawrence Road, Havertown, PA 19083

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Hardcover Edition: 978-1-78570-207-5
Digital Edition: 978-1-78570-208-2 (epub)

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Curtis, Vesta Sarkhosh, editor. | Pendleton, Elizabeth J., editor. |
Aram, Michael, editor. | Daryaee, Touraj, 1967- editor.

Title: The Parthian and early Sasanian empires : adaptation and expansion :
proceedings of a conference held in Vienna, 14–16 June 2012 / edited by
Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, Elizabeth J. Pendleton, Michael Aram and Touraj
Daryaee.

Description: Oxford : Oxbow Books, 2016. | Series: Archaeological monographs
series | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016017931 (print) | LCCN 2016021369 (ebook) | ISBN
9781785702075 (hardback) | ISBN 9781785702082 (eBook) | ISBN 9781785702082
(epub) | ISBN 9781785702099 (mobi) | ISBN 9781785702105 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Arsacid dynasty, 247 B.C.-224 A.D.—Congresses. |
Parthians—Congresses. | Sassanids—Congresses. | Iran—History—To
640—Congresses. | Iran—History—640-1256—Congresses. |
Iran--Antiquities—Congresses. | Coins, Parthian—Congresses. | Coins,
Sassanid—Congresses.

Classification: LCC DS285 .P375 2016 (print) | LCC DS285 (ebook) | DDC
935/.064—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016017931>

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Printed in the United Kingdom by Short Run Press, Exeter

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Front cover: Rock carving at Naqsh-e Rostam, Iran: Ardashir I (left) tramples the defeated Parthian king Artabanus IV and receives his symbol of kingship from Ohrmazd, the Wise Lord, © G. Herrmann; Sasanian silver coin, showing bust of Ardashir I (AD 224–240) and the Zoroastrian fire, © Trustees of the British Museum.

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In 2011 it was decided to hold an international conference at the British Museum on the Partho-Sasanian periods in connection with the *Sylloge Nummorum Parthorum* (SNP) project. This international project, directed by Dr Michael Alram and Dr Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, has as its aim the publication of a series of volumes dealing with the coinage from the beginning of the Parthian period in the third century BC to its ending with the advent of the Sasanians in the early third century AD. The project is principally numismatic in nature but also deals with the history, religion and art of the Parthian period. Coin holdings from the American Numismatic Society, the Berlin Coin Cabinet, the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, the British Museum, the Coin Cabinet of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, and the National Museum of Iran in Tehran will be published by representatives of these institutions, who are working in close cooperation with Chris Hopkins, the database manager of www.parthia.com. He has custom-built a web-based database for this project,

The Birth of the Sasanian Monarchy in Western Sources

Andrea Gariboldi

University of Bologna

The last notable political achievement of Arsacid foreign policy was the peace signed with the Romans in 218 AD.¹ Although some years later Cassius Dio (LXXX 3–4) and Herodian (VI 2, 1–2) wrote about serious trouble on the eastern border of the Roman empire, reporting the murder of Artabanus and Ardashir's ascent to the throne, which should be dated to 224 AD,² the Romans did not immediately realise the revolutionary character of the new Sasanian empire.

The territorial claims (supposedly) advanced by the Persians created apprehension on the Roman side.³ Herodian, who says that he was a contemporary of Artabanus (Hdn VI 2, 7), is very clear on one point at least: a bold protagonist in the Orient, called Artaxerxes/Ardashir, the king of the Iranians, seized power from the Parthians and killed their Great King Artabanus, who wore the double diadem (Hdn VI 2, 1).⁴ These remarks are scanty but correct. The title of *basileus megas* (of Babylonian and Achaemenid origin) was characteristic of the Parthian dynasty but was never officially adopted by the Sasanian kings,⁵ while the double diadem sometimes adorns the king's head in the late Parthian and Elymaian art.⁶

Yet in Roman literary texts there is no single term used to describe the Sasanians, who are generally defined as Persians, Medians or even Parthians (not always for purely rhetorical reasons), even by very competent historians, like Ammianus Marcellinus.⁷ Modern historiography has usually emphasised that his digression about the Persis region, in particular, is very generic and imprecise.⁸ One might even think that Ammianus, who should have been well informed about the difference between Parthians and Sasanians, was not the author of this *excursus*. He was personally present during the campaigns of Constantius II against Shapur II. Moreover, he was a direct witness of the siege of Amida in 359 AD and a contemporary witness of the great Persian expedition of Julian in 363 AD.⁹ Ammianus was a native of Antioch and served with the Roman army as *protector*

(a kind of military attaché): this important position gave him access to secret documents and official letters, and he also participated in delicate missions behind the Roman *limes*. Nevertheless, in his *Histories* we do not find a single reference to the dynastic change in Persia, when Ardashir brought to an end a regime which had lasted five centuries.

How can we explain this surprising omission? Ammianus was an enthusiastic supporter of Julian's aggressive policy against the barbarians. He thought that a strategy mainly based on military containment along the Mesopotamian border was not sufficient to meet the Persian threat. Julian, who was welcomed by the Phoenician community on the eve of the Persian campaign as *barbarorum extinator*, "the terminator of the barbarians",¹⁰ once proclaimed to his troops: *abolenda nobis natio molestissima, cuius in gladiis nondum nostrae propinquitatis exaruit cruor* (H. XXIII 5, 19) – "We must destroy this pernicious people, on whose swords the blood of our relatives is not yet dry." Julian's references to recent Roman defeats clearly alluded to the catastrophic Oriental campaigns of Gordian III, Philip the Arab and Valerian. Julian visited Gordian's tomb at Zaitha, where he celebrated sacrifices in his honour.¹¹ He was anxious to fight and desired to add to his official titles the cognomen *Parthicus*.¹² The Roman emperor represented himself as the avenger of the soldiers killed at Carrhae; the final solution thunders in the threatening words (echoing those of Cato), *abolenda nobis natio*.

Julian, like a tragic actor, was confronted by a host of ill omens: the strange and sudden deaths of soldiers, unexpected thunderbolt strikes and, in particular, the discovery of a huge dead lion pierced by javelins, which the Etruscan haruspices (who used to accompany the Roman emperor in battle) explicitly interpreted as the impending death of *one* king. Without listening to his advisers, Julian rushed against the Persians, led by Shapur II. Ammianus has harsh words for the Persian king; in addition to

describing him (correctly) as an old man, *longaevus ille Sapor* (*H. XXVII* 12, 1), he calls him *efferatus, truculentus, irritabilis, asperrimus, astutus* and *immaniter arrogans*, “enormously arrogant”. Yet the Roman historian knows the meaning of some Sasanian royal titles, such as *saansaan*, “King of Kings” (*šāhān šāh*), and *pirosen*, “victor in wars” (*pērōz*).¹³ In the *Histories*, setting aside the generic digression on the usages and customs of the Persians (*H. XXIII* 6), which is clearly based on the sixth book of the *Geography* of Ptolemy, there is little information about the Persian nobility or the administration of the Sasanian empire. The short sketch of the Magi and Zoroaster’s religion openly derives from classical Greek sources, such as Herodotus and Plato. Nevertheless, Ammianus never defines the Persians as “barbarians” but adopts the terms *natio* or *gentes*.

In general, the ethnic *Persae* is more commonly used in the *Histories* than *Parthi*. It is important to note that Ammianus links the Parthian dynasty to the Sasanians, about whom, in practice, he has nothing of note to say; as Willem Drijvers correctly pointed out, Ammianus does not actually distinguish between Parthians and Sasanians.¹⁴ He completely omits to explain how the Sasanians came to power in Iran (but was this included in one of the lost books?), and curiously confers on Shapur II the royal title of the deified Arsaces, *Solis frater et Lunae*, “brother of the Sun and Moon”.¹⁵ Ammianus’s historical anachronism is evident when he writes: “Hence they venerate and worship Arsaces as a god, and their regard for him has been carried so far, that even down to the memory of our time (*ad nostri memoriam*) only a man who is of the stock of Arsaces, if there is one anywhere, is preferred to all in mounting the throne.”¹⁶ Ammianus’s principal intent was to prove an historical continuity, and even a genealogical one, between the Parthians and the Sasanians, in order to distort the facts. The falsification is manifest when he affirms that *in his time* only an Arsacid man could ascend to the throne. This misrepresentation of history cannot be casual in Ammianus, and especially in the fourth century AD, when the Roman emperors no longer bore the official title *Parthicus* but the more correct *Persicus/Persikos*.¹⁷

The first emperor to employ the epithet *Persicus Maximus* (rather than *Parthicus Maximus*) was Philip the Arab (attested in an inscription from Rome).¹⁸ Philip optimistically celebrated on some of his coins the *pax fundata cum Persis*,¹⁹ although in fact he had to ransom his army and was forced to renounce the Roman protectorate over Hatra and part of Armenia. The Romans tried to conceal the disastrous campaigns of Gordian III, even if in Zonara (XII 17) the memory of the young emperor “falling from his horse” during a pitched battle with the Persians still survives. Santo Mazzarino has shown that the Greco-Roman historiography concerning the Persian wars of the third century, including Ammianus’s account,

is completely altered.²⁰ The historic deformation of the traditional version, the so-called “vulgate”, attributes Gordian’s death to an internal plot of Philip, rather than admitting Shapur’s responsibility.

In Roman inscriptions up to the reign of Probus both *Parthicus* and *Persicus* are attested interchangeably as Roman imperial titles, but from Carus onward, the correct term *Persicus* became popular also in literary texts. If so, why did Julian, along with Ammianus, insist on *Parthici cognomentum*? Julian aimed at revitalising the old Roman anti-Parthian tradition, going back to the battle of Carrhae and to Trajan’s victories over the Parthians, and of course he dreamed of becoming a new Alexander the Great. Julian even confessed, in his letter addressed to Themistios, that he feared that he would not be able to equal the military virtues of Alexander. But were the dream of emulating Alexander and the model of Trajan sufficient to generate a desire to obtain an anachronistic title, thus cancelling the Sasanians from history?

Alain Chauvot, in an important study on the Roman perception of the barbarians, observed that in Julian’s orations we can detect an ambiguous attitude towards the Parthians. In the first panegyric dedicated to Constantius, which was written around 356/7 AD, the “Asiatic” barbarians were deemed as one single Oriental nation that fought first Alexander and then the Romans; the Persians were considered as simply the remains of the Macedonian empire. We find in this text the confusing classical conflation of Medians, Parthians and Persians. The Romans were the natural successors of Alexander in the Persian wars. In the second panegyric for Constantius (358/9 AD), Julian’s opinion rapidly seems to change: he mentions only the Parthians, as though the Sasanians never existed.²¹ It is worth citing a passage from the *Second Oration*, which should be seriously considered in the historiographical debate conducted by many Iranologists on the subject of the Sasanians’ memory (real or presumed) of their Achaemenid past.²² According to Julian, the Sasanians were terribly afraid of being mistaken for Parthians, hence they tried to exalt many aspects deriving from the Achaemenid tradition, such as, for instance, their style of dress and military tactics. Julian describes the Persian siege of Nisibis in 350 AD by the troops of Shapur II (*Iul. Or.* III 63a-b):

Ἐνταῦθα κοσμεῖ τὴν στρατιὰν τὸν Περσικὸν τρόπον· διασώζουσι γὰρ καὶ ἀπομιμῶνται τὰ Περσικὰ οὐκ ἀξιοῦντες, ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, Παρθυαῖοι νομίζεσθαι, Πέρσαι δὲ εἶναι προσποιούμενοι. Ταῦτά τοι καὶ στολῆ Μηδικῇ χαιρουσι καὶ ἐς μάχας ἔρχονται ὁμοίως ἐκείνοις ὄπλοις τε ἀγαλλόμενοι τοιοῦτοις καὶ ἐσθήμασιν ἐπιχρύσοις καὶ ἀλουργέσι. Σοφίζονται δὲ ἐντεῦθεν τὸ μὴ δοκεῖν ἀφεστάναι Μακεδόνων, ἀναλαβεῖν δὲ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχαίου βασιλείαν προσήκουσαν. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ξέρξην μιμούμενος ἐπὶ τινος χειροποιήτου καθήστο γηλόφου, προσήγε δὲ ἡ στρατιὰ ξὺν τοῖς θηρίοις. Ταῦτα δὲ ἐξ Ἰνδῶν εἶπετο, καὶ ἔφερον ἐκ σιδήρου πύργους τοξοτῶν πλήρεις.²³

“Thereupon [Shapur II] arrayed the army in the Persian fashion. For they keep up and imitate Persian customs, it seems to me, because they do not wish to be considered Parthians, and so they pretend to be Persians. That is surely why they prefer the Median manner of dress; and when they march to battle they look like them, and take pride in wearing the same armour and dress adorned with gold and purple. By these means they try to evade the truth and to make it appear they have not revolted from Macedon, but are merely resuming the empire that was theirs of old. Thus their king, imitating Xerxes, took position on an artificial elevation; then the army advanced with wild beasts (it is said that they came from India); they brought onward the iron towers full of archers.”

These words of Julian are paradigmatic, in my opinion, not only for understanding the terminological oscillation between Parthians and Persians in the Roman sources, but also because they indicate that the disappearance of the Sasanians from both Julian’s speeches and Ammianus’s *Histories* was a deliberate choice of political anti-propaganda. In substance, as much the Sasanians presented themselves as natural heirs of the Achaemenids, avoiding any mention of their Parthian heritage, so by contrast Julian, a true master of rhetoric, insisted on the fact that the Sasanians were merely Parthians disguised as Persians. This anti-rhetoric technique employed by Julian may explain why the Sasanians disappear from Ammianus’s digression on Persia (which was purposely inserted in his work between Julian’s speeches and the narration of the Persian expedition), where it is claimed that the Sasanians descend from Arsaces. The error of Ammianus cannot be accidental. In the above-mentioned passage, Julian describes precisely the manner in which his enemies besieged towns, and, notwithstanding some allusions to Herodotus in the way Shapur is likened to Xerxes, who admired his fleet from the heights of Abydos²⁴ (although Nisibis compares poorly with Athens), it clearly emerges that Sasanian propaganda was aimed at producing evidence for the ancient Achaemenid origins of the new Iranian empire.

The Parthian era was perceived by Zoroastrian historiography as a very negative period, linked to the deeds of the “accursed Alexander” (*gizistag Aleksandar*), who set on fire the sacred books of the *Avesta*, killed many religious authorities and caused the fragmentation of Persian political power.²⁵ The propaganda invented by the Sasanians themselves, embedded in the *Stories* of Agathias and also reported by later Muslim historians, deliberately shortened the duration of the Parthian kingdom, saying that the reign of the Arsacid (*Aškānid*) rulers lasted only for 266 (or 270) years, which is roughly half of the real period.²⁶

Julian, by contrast, stressed that the Macedonian realm passed from the Seleucids to the Romans, thus the neo-Persian power should be considered subject to Rome; he does not mention, like other classical sources, the territorial claims of the Sasanians, who, it was said, were

restoring the old dimensions of the Achaemenid empire that stretched from India to the Aegean Sea. (Was this a Roman exaggeration, suggested by Herodotus?) Julian enters into the deep motivations of those revisionist ambitions. Thus the “Apostate” was fully aware of the new political form that grew in Persia, and combatted this problem by denying it. I surmise that the philosopher emperor wanted to be called *Parthicus* in order to frustrate the ideological aspirations of his enemies, because the Sasanians deemed the Parthian kingdom as the political descendent of the Seleucids. In the event of Roman success, the Romans planned to hand over the Sasanian kingdom, after the death of Shapur II, to the Persian prince Hormisdas/Ohrmazd (the elder brother of Shapur), who was living in Rome as an exile.²⁷ Julian relied on this Ohrmazd, who served in the Roman cavalry, when he conferred on him the command of the Roman army during the transfer from Constantinople to Antioch.

The modern historians who strongly denied any possibility that the Sasanians could remember, at least to some extent, their Achaemenid past (the famous *historical amnesia*),²⁸ stating that it was just an *interpretatio romana*,²⁹ useful to the publicity of the Roman emperors, grasped, in my opinion, only one important side of this intricate question. Julian, in fact, distorted the meaning of the propaganda of his enemies, insisted on the hetero-ethnic of “Parthians” and connected his campaigns to Trajan’s wars; indeed, in a rare moment when the mask of the historical fiction falls away, he admits that the Sasanians wanted to be called Persians, because they were not Parthians: Πέρσαι δὲ εἶναι προσποιούμενοι, “they pretend/simulate/presume to be Persians”.

It is important that Julian informs us that the Sasanians considered the Achaemenids as their ancestors, in opposition to the Parthian background. What kind of direct or indirect knowledge they had about the Achaemenids is another unresolved problem. In any case, it is doubtful that the idea of the Sasanians as heirs of the Achaemenids could exist *only* in the western historiographical paradigm of the *imitatio Alexandri*,³⁰ because the Sasanian national epic/history, for instance, attested in the *Kārnāmag* of Ardashir, elaborated the assumption that Ardashir was descended *az tōhmag ī Sāsān ud nāf ī Dārāy šāh*, “from the seed of Sāsān and from the lineage of king Darius”.³¹ Similarly, Tabari writes that “he arose in Fārs seeking, as he alleged, to avenge the blood of his paternal cousin Dārā, son of Bahman, son of Isfandiār, on whom Alexander had made war and had killed two of the latter’s chief commanders”.³²

The contradictory and derogatory genealogy of Ardashir, collected by Agathias (II 27), states that Ardashir was actually the son of a σκυτοτόμος, a “cobbler” or shoemaker, by name Pābag, but Agathias also reports that he stemmed ἐκ σπέρματος Σασάνου, “from the seed of Sāsān”, which is the correct Greek translation of the formula that we find in the inscription of Narseh (NPi § 80), *ō tōhm čē Sāsānagān*, “to the family of Sāsān”.³³ In the Zoroastrian texts, the

Parthian Dark Age was connected with a process of political disintegration, also weakened by the Hellenistic influence, which only Ardashir could reunify and revitalise with his nationalistic Iranian pride. There is a significant passage of the *Bundahishn* (XXXIII 19–20), in which the birth of the Sasanian dynasty is clearly joined to the former periods:

*pas andar xwadāyīh ī Dārā(y) ī Dārāyān Aleksandar ī kēsār az Hrōm dwārist ō Ērānšāhr āmad ud Dārā(y)-šāh ōzad ud hamāg dūdag ī xwadāyān ud mow-mardān ud paydāgān ī Ērānšāhr abesihēnīd ud was marag ātaxš afsārd ud dēn ī mazdēsān ud zand stad ō Hrōm frēstād ud abestāg sōxt ud Ērānšāhr pad nawad kardag-xwadāy baxt. Pas andar ham hazārag Arda(x)šīr ī Pābagān ō paydāgīh āmad ud ān kardag-xwadāyān ōzad ud xwadāyīh win(n)ārd ud dēn ī mazdēsān rawāgēnīd ud ēwēnag ī was wirāst ī pad tōhmag ī ōy raft.*³⁴

“Then during the reign of Dārā, the son of Dārā, Alexander the Caesar moved from Rome and came to the Iranian kingdom, he killed king Dārā and destroyed all the families of the rulers, the Magi and the notables of the Iranian kingdom; he extinguished a great number of fires and took away the *Zand* of the Mazdean religion and sent it to Rome; he set on fire the *Avesta* and divided the Iranian kingdom among ninety house-rulers. Then, in the same millennium, came Ardashir, the son of Pābag, he killed those lords and restored the sovereignty, promoted the religion of the Mazdeans, established many customs and went with his own stock.”

Ardashir, restoring the good religion that was dispersed by the accursed Alexander, restored the mythical Iranian tradition and presented himself as the natural continuator of a millenary royal saga. Thus, the Sasanian monarchy found its legitimation among the members of Sāsān’s family, whose historical origin is unfortunately lost in myth. Sasanian inscriptions do not say explicitly that Sāsān was Ardashir’s father or grandfather; this was assumed by later historians. But there is the possibility that the “lord” (*xwadāy*) Sāsān claimed royal blood from some Indo-Parthian dynasty.³⁵ In any case, it is unlikely that all these peculiar aspects of Sasanian kingship could be really understood outside the Iranian context. We cannot exclude *a priori* that all the abundant mentions, both in the Greco-Roman and in the Iranian sources, that refer to the rights of the Persian “ancestors” (πρόγονοι/*maiores*) could have something to do with the Achaemenid past, even if confused. Rahim Shayegan has recently demonstrated that the tradition of evoking one’s forebears in royal inscriptions, always within the selfsame dynasty, is typical of the Iranian conception of kingship. As a matter of fact, the ancestors are mentioned in Old-Persian texts (*apaniyāka-*), in Middle-Persian and Parthian inscriptions (*ahēnagān/hasēnagān*), and also the inscription of Rabatak offers a reconstruction of Kanishka’s genealogy.³⁶ What we can maintain is that all this convergence of sources mentioning the forefathers of the kings was not a pure invention of the western authors, but an integral part of

the mythical elaboration of the Sasanian State. This mythical elaboration was then picked up by the Romans.

In the end, we still lack clear evidence about the identity of these venerable ancestors: were they the Achaemenids, the Fratarakās or mythical kings, like the Kayānids, who never existed in history? We receive different answers according to each source. As we have seen, Ardashir was not presented in the *Bundahishn* as a direct descendant from the Achaemenid family, but rather as the legitimate restorer of kingship over the Iranian lands, and this exactly corresponds to the Roman view.

The ancient debate that flourished on the true origin of the Persian kings indicates that the Romans did in fact realise that a new era had started with Ardashir, once one looks beyond their strongly denigrating propaganda against their Oriental enemies. Unfortunately, it is impossible to find out just one monolithic truth, but I hope to have shown that sometimes terminological confusions may conceal more recondite political motivations.

Notes

- 1 Dąbrowa 1984, p. 160.
- 2 Felix 1985, p. 25–42, collects the ancient sources about Ardashir’s reign; see also Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, p. 9–15; Hackl, Jacobs, Weber 2010, p. 169; Alram, Gyselen 2003, p. 21–31; Frenzo 2002, with further bibliography.
- 3 Kettenhofen 1984; *idem* 2002; Wiesehöfer 1986; Gnoli 1996; Huysse 2002; Shayegan 2011, p. 30–38.
- 4 Alföldy 1989, p. 229–237.
- 5 Shayegan 2011, p. 41–45; Muccioli 2013, p. 403–409.
- 6 Wiesehöfer 2006, p. 401–408; von Gall 1980.
- 7 Paratore 1966; Pugliese Carratelli 1971, p. 598–599.
- 8 Feraco 2004, p. 110–111; Drijvers 1999, p. 195; Brok 1975, p. 49–50.
- 9 Bowersock 1978, p. 105–119; Drijvers 2006, p. 46: “In 363 he took part in the disastrous Persian expedition of Julian, of which he presents an elaborate description in Books 23–25 of the *Res Gestae*”. On Julian’s *Perserfeldzug*, see also Brodka 2009, p. 78–88; Blockley 1988; Fornara 1991; Barnes 1998; Smith 1999.
- 10 Bowersock 1978, p. 122–123; Chauvot 1998, p. 174–175.
- 11 According to Ammianus, Gordian’s tomb was at Zaitha (*H. XXIII* 5, 7), while Zosimus says that it was near Dura (*Zos. III* 14, 2). See Fornara 1991, p. 8; Edwell 2008, p. 69.
- 12 *Ornamentis inlustrium gloriarum inserere Parthici cognomentum ardebat* (*H. XXII* 12, 2); Potter 2004, p. 517–518; Drijvers 1999, p. 203.
- 13 *Persis Saporem saansaan appellantis et piroson, quod rex regibus imperans et bellorum victor interpretatur* (*H. XIX* 2, 11). See Drijvers 2006, p. 53.
- 14 Drijvers 1999, p. 195; *idem* 2006, p. 52–61.
- 15 *Unde ad id tempus reges eiusdem gentis praetumidi appellari se patiuntur Solis fratres et Lunae* (*H. XXIII* 6, 5). Cf. *XVII* 5, 3: *Rex regum Sapor, particeps siderum, frater Solis et Lunae*. Drijvers 1999, p. 198; *idem* 2006, p. 60; Muccioli 2009, p. 89.
- 16 *Quam ob rem numinis eum vice venerantur et colunt eo usque propagatis honoribus, ut ad nostri memoriam non*

- nisi Arsacides, si sit usquam, in suscipiendo regno cunctis anteponatur* (H. XXIII 6, 6).
- 17 Chauvot 1992, p. 116–117.
- 18 *CIL* VI 1097. Ziegler 1964, p. 142–143.
- 19 Alram, Blet-Lemarquand, Skjærvø 2007, p. 12–13.
- 20 Mazzarino 1971; Edwell 2008, p. 171–173.
- 21 Chauvot 1998, p. 164–169; *idem* 1992, p. 118–119: “A la confusion inorganisée du premier *Eloge* se substitute une confusion délibérée. Tout se passe comme si les Perses sassanides n’existaient pas [...] Aux Sassanides, qui se présentent comme les héritiers des Achéménides, dont ils revendiquent les anciens territoires, Julien oppose implicitement qu’ils ne sont que des Parthes déguisés en Perses”.
- 22 Shayegan 2011, p. 361–368; Gariboldi 2011, p. 42–50.
- 23 Lacombrade 1964, p. 133.
- 24 Hdt. VII 44.
- 25 Daryae 2007.
- 26 Gnoli 2013, p. 43–47; Gariboldi 2011, p. 78–81; Cameron 1969–70, p. 105 (Agath. II 26, 1).
- 27 Amm. Marc. XVI 10, 16; XXIV 1, 2; Zos. II 27; Zos. III 11, 3; Zon. XIII 5. John of Antioch (F266), tells the curious story of Ohrmazd’s flight from his Persian prison, with the help of his mother and wife who prepared for him iron chains full of pearls (as a symbol of royalty); he fled to Licinius. But according to Zosimus, Ohrmazd found a knife-file inside a fish brought by his wife. There are interesting similarities between the romantic stories of Kawād and Ohrmazd, who were both able to escape from prison with the help of their women. About the role of Hormisdas in Roman strategy, see Shayegan 2011, p. 367–368. (Libanios *Ep.* 1402); Gariboldi 2011, p. 44; Potter 2004, p. 517; Mosig-Walburg 2000, p. 78–82; Blockley 1992, p. 9–12.
- 28 Yarshater 1971; Daryae 2002.
- 29 Kettenhofen 1984; Straub 1986; Huyse 2002; Shayegan in this volume.
- 30 Huyse 2002, p. 307: “Il est possible, même vraisemblable, que les Sassanides aient revendiqué des territoires jadis en la possession de leurs ancêtres. Il est en revanche hautement improbable qu’ils aient circonscrit le territoire revendiqué d’une façon aussi précise que les revendications formulées par les auteurs gréco-romains le laissent à supposer. Il est de surcroît tout à fait exclu qu’ils aient fait référence à Cyrus ou à d’autres rois achéménides, encore moins au maudit Alexandre le Grand.” Yarshater 1971, p. 519, evidenced that a real *historical amnesia* of the Achaemenid past started in Iran during the Parthian period; the question was debated also by Gnoli 1989, p. 124: “Some sort of memory, however vague, of the Achaemenian past must have existed anyway during the Parthian period and, to some extent, must have been less vague in Fars, the cradle of the ancient dynasty”; Shayegan 2011, p. xiv: “The portrayal of the Sasanians as heirs to the Achaemenids thus existed as an intrinsic part of the Roman *imitatio*, which not only sought to evince the historical continuity of the Greco-Roman world by vindicating Alexander’s legacy, but also to bestow a similar perception of permanence upon the history of the east by depicting the Sasanians as cognizant heirs of the Achaemenids.”
- 31 Daryae 2002, p. 5.
- 32 Ṭabarī 814: Bosworth 1999, p. 3.
- 33 Gariboldi 2005; Shayegan 2011, p. 14–17.
- 34 Pakzad 2005, p. 366–367.
- 35 There are coins of a certain Farn-Sāsān who ruled in Sakastān in the late Parthian and early Sasanian period, but he was an enemy and not a vassal of the Sasanian kings. See Nikitin 1994; Alram 2007, p. 234–235; Olbrycht in this volume.
- 36 Shayegan 2008; *idem* 2011, p. 14–29 and *passim*; also in this volume.

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