

New publications on Iran

Art of Ancient Iran. Copper and Bronze, the Houshang Mahboubian Family Collection

by Houshang Mahboubian. London: Philip Wilson, 1997. pp. 345, copious colour ill., two maps. £95.

This magnificently produced volume presents the unique collection of ancient copper and bronze artefacts from Elam, Luristan, Amlash, Kaluraz and Urartu, as well as from the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian periods of Iran, acquired by Houshang Mahboubian and his family. The inspiration came from his father, Dr Benjamin Mahboubian (1868-1968) who was the first Iranian to carry out extensive excavations in the Iranian world.

A brief introduction (pp. 13-33) provides a geographical and historical framework for the artefacts, and is followed by detailed descriptions and illustrations of over 400 selected objects from the collection. These are accompanied by anecdotes about the circumstances under which some of these objects came to be incorporated into the collection, both by Dr Benjamin Mahboubian in the first decades of our century and by his son, later on. In the appendix, Dr Peter Northover analyses the history of early copper and its alloys, examining the metal contents of many objects in the collection.

The volume provides a rare opportunity to look at some seldom-exhibited examples of early copper and bronze art from the Iranian world. These objects show the tremendous continuity in Iranian artistic tradition from the very early to the late periods.

Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies

(Pt. 1. Old and Middle Iranian Studies), edited by Nicholas Sims-Williams. *Beiträge zur Iranistik 17*, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1998. pp. v+179, 17 plates, hb.

This volume contains the proceedings of the Third conference of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* (SIE), convened in Cambridge, U.K. in 1995. The editorial committee has sensibly decided to publish papers dealing with Old and Middle- and Modern Iranian topics in two separate volumes, unlike its unwieldy Bamberg (1991) predecessor. As the editor notes, several papers were either revised or withdrawn by their contributors prior to publication. As a result, we are offered a solid set of studies by leading Iranists in epigraphy, religious history, linguistics, literature, numismatics, paleography and sphragistics. Papers have been thematically arranged in two sections, "Religions and cultures of ancient Iran" and "Texts and languages". Only salient features can be highlighted here.

Martin Schwartz ably arrays possible etymologies for the Pahlavi divinity *ssn* (Gk. **Σασάν**) as a follow-up to Philippe Gignoux's analysis of the enigmatic figure, *Sāsān*, of that dynasty's namesake. Schwartz has now already elaborated on his hypothesis in the Vladimir Livshits *Festschrift*, (*Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, vol. 10, 1998). Gherardo Gnoli strengthens his recent position in favour of a sixth-century dating of Zarathustra by examining a Manichaean dating of the prophet which, he contends, stems from an *interpretatio Judaica* of Zoroaster as Ezekiel. He demonstrates that this dating was transmitted to the Manichaeans in a Hellenistic setting. In examining Classical and New Persian sources, Gnoli ingeniously exhibits how two otherwise antagonistic traditions, Mazdean and Manichaean, concur on a similar dating of the seer. James Russell lucidly dismisses the question of conversion to Manichaeism by

any Armenian monarch. By examining Manichaean, Sogdian and Armenian Christian writings, he concludes that Mar Gabyrab's putative apostolic mission was possibly based on an overhauling of older Armenian textual evidence when transmitted to Central Asia. The Sogdian text places his travels to Erevan (misidentified as Arebanos) during the late 3rd century B.C., a time when Zoroastrianism flourished in Armenia; also, the invention of the Armenian script occurs only after the 5th century B.C. Iris Colditz provides a valuable overview of Manichaean doctrinal judgements in dealing with apostates, debtors and sinners which, interestingly, reflected Sasanian legal penalties for similar culprits. This consonance reveals the politic position adopted by Mānī and his cohorts to garner wider popular acceptance. Rika Gyselen examines six seals that display archaic features of dress. An Elamite or Achaemenid influence in the apparel of the inscribed figure becomes problematic since this particular style is absent in the Parthian era. The (re)-emergence of this during the Sasanid era remains a *non-liquet*. Iradj Mochiri examines copies of eleven badly preserved Sasanid coins in private collections. Stylistic features of Kavād I are discussed, but given their inferior metallic quality it is difficult to identify their provenance or reason of issue. A. D. H. Bivar offers an informed and occasionally humorous discussion of the life and times of Ali Mirdrakvandi, the Luri tribesman, author and factotum of American and British officers during wartime Iran, whose imaginative if tragi-comic writings display Old Iranian cosmic overtones.

Turning to the linguistic and textual section, there are learned discussions of diverse Old and Middle Iranian languages. Antonio Panaino attempts a translation of three *daēvic* utterances in Yt. 19.57, 19.60 and 19.63. Hintze, according to him, avoided this in her edition of the *Zamyād Yašt* so as to preserve the "rhetorical effect" (p. 71 n.1); Panaino, however, postulates a sexual connotation in these utterances and, perhaps over-pedantically, offers Latin translations for the same which may leave some students and readers nonplussed. Nicholas Sims-Williams' emendations to the sensational Rabatak inscription mark a watershed for Bactrian and Kushan studies. His revised text and translation accompanied by an appendix of possible Chinese etymologies of Kanishka's ancestors will be essential reading for Central Asian history. Ronald Emmerick again displays his expertise in Khotanese by deciphering an archaic orthographic feature of the diacritic, *ei*. Werner Sundermann analyses varying readings of a difficult Middle Persian matrimonial term. Oktor Skjærvø offers yet another seminal study of linguistic and thematic parallels. His masterful comparison of a Sogdian fable with the Paikuli inscription further strengthens the fact that the Iranians, among other ancient peoples, were cognisant of literary traditions, which, although cast afresh in varying milieu and epochs, betray an indigenous oral heritage. Philip Huyse re-evaluates Kerdir's inscriptions to suggest readings for three ambiguous phrases in the light of recent research. Enrico Morano assembles and re-edits a Parthian crucifixion hymn from the Turfansammlung (including for the first time M 390) with a translation and commentary. Taken together, the scattered readings of the manuscripts logically describe the betrayal, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Carlo Cereti provides a useful *catalogue raisonné* of Avestan, Pahlavi and Pāzend manuscripts in Italian museums and universities which continues in the trend of his earlier findings from the Bhandarkar collection, Pune, India (see *East & West*, vol. 46, 3-4 (1996) [1997]: 441-51). Christiane Reck offers an up-to-date report on the cataloguing of the Middle Iranian fragments in Sogdian script under the aegis of the *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* project. An impressive "multi-volume catalogue" for all Middle Iranian fragments from the Turfan expeditions is also in progress (p. 148). Ludwig Paul provides a survey of the Zazaki language, its dialects and select morphological features in relation to other modern West Iranian languages.

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