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Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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Contents

Notes

1. Keenan **Baca-Winters**: Victorious: The “Arrogance” of Šāhanšāh Xusrō Parvīz **01**
2. Touraj **Daryaee**: Whipping the Sea and the Earth: Xerxes at the Hellespont and Yima at the Vara **04**
3. Touraj **Daryaee**; Nina **Mazhjo**: Dancing in Middle & Classical Persian **10**
4. Götz **König**: The *Niyāyišn* and the *bagas* (Brief comments on the so-called Xorde Avesta, 2) **16**
5. Daštūr Firoze **M. Kotwal**: *Jamshīdī Nō-Rūz* : Faċts v/s Myth **25**
6. Lloyd **Llewellyn-Jones**: An orgy of Oriental dissipation? Some thoughts on the ‘Camel *lekythos*’ **31**
7. Marc **Morato**: The Turkish Iranian emigration as perceived by the Maathir al- Umara (1544-1629) **39**
8. Mohsen **Zakeri**: Survey of *Šāhnāme* sources 1. The so-called **Paykār* and **Sagēsarān* **44**

Reviews

1. Vahé S. **Boyajian**: Asatrian, Garnik S. & Viktoria Arakelova. 2014. *The religion of the Peacock Angel: the Yezidis and their spirit world*. (Gnoštica: Texts & Interpretations). Durham, UK: Routledge. 157 pp., £63.00, ISBN 978-1-84465-761-2. **50**
2. Touraj **Daryaee**: Shahbazi, A. Shapur, *Tārīḥ-e sāsānīān. Tarjome-ye baḥš-e sāsānīān az ketāb-e tārīḥ-e Ṭabarī va moqāyese-ye ān bā tārīḥ-e Bal‘amī [Sasanian History. Translation of the Sasanian Section from the History of Ṭabarī and its Commparission with the History of Bal‘amī]*, Tehran, Iran University Press, 1389š/2010. Pp. 811. ISBN 978-964-01-1393-6. **53**
3. Shervin **Farridnejad**: Timuș, Mihaela. 2015. *Cosmogonie et eschatologie: articulations conceptuelles du système religieux zoroāstrien*. (Cahiers de Studia Iranica 54). Paris: Peeters Press. 288 pp., €30.00, ISBN 978-2-910640-40-8. **55**
4. Lloyd **Llewellyn-Jones**: Briant, Pierre. 2015. *Darius in the shadow of Alexander*. (Trans.) Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 608 pages, \$39.95, ISBN 9780674493094. **57**
5. Lloyd **Llewellyn-Jones**: Bridges, Emma. 2014. *Imagining Xerxes: ancient perspectives on a Persian king*. (Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception). New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 256 pp., £65.00, ISBN 9781472514271. **59**

Obituary

1. Ehsan **Shavarebi**: Malek Iradj Mochiri (1927–2015) **61**

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Shahbazi, A. Shapur, *Tārīḥ-e sāsānīān. Tarjome-ye baḥš-e sāsānīān az ketāb-e tārīḥ-e Ṭabarī va moqāyese-ye ān bā tārīḥ-e Bal‘amī [Sasanian History. Translation of the Sasanian Section from the History of Ṭabari and its Comparison with the History of Bal‘ami]*, Tehran, Iran University Press, 1389š/2010. Pp. 811. ISBN 978-964-01-1393-6.

Touraj Daryae

It was the publication of Th. Nöldeke's *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, in 1879 that for the first time a scholarly treatment of Sasanian history came to light. Through the past century, there has been much advancement in the study of the material culture, such as numismatics, seals and archaeology, but the treatment of Tabari still stands as the single most important continuous narrative for the history of the Sasanian Empire. The late A. Zaryab Kho'i translated Nöldeke's tome into Persian and added valuable notes to it in 1979, which outside of Iran went largely unnoticed. In 1999, the late C.E. Bosworth brought out a new translation of Tabari into English with copious notes. If one was to do a history of the Sasanian Empire, these three translations each gave important information,

based on the Islamic histories and recent Western scholarship.

In 2010, the late A. Sh. Shahbazi published a new translation of Tabari's section of the Sasanian Empire. What makes this study superior, which appears to have escaped the attention of Western scholars (no doubt because it is in Persian), is the full translation of the Sasanian section. By reading Shahbazi's work it becomes apparent that until this work not all parts of the history pertaining to the Sasanian had been translated, neither by Bosworth, nor by Nöldeke. Furthermore, Shahbazi compared Tabari with that of the History of Bal'ami which provides us with good information that at times is missing in Tabari. These sections of Bal'ami are inserted in the Persian translation of Tabari in the parentheses, followed by footnotes on their significance. What makes Shahbazi's work of much importance is the notation to the text. The previous translator's of Tabari for the Sasanians were mainly Islamic historians and were less interested in Sasanian history per se. Shahbazi was an important historian of ancient Iran who knew the latest works on Sasanian history. This deep knowledge of Sasanian and ancient Iranian history is apparent in the 1322 notes to this history of Tabari translation, often citing important works and in many instances clearing up some of the vague issues in history. Even more impressive is the 75 page index to the text which is the most detailed study of Sasanian history to Tabari. Lastly, Shahbazi's 91 page introduction to the study of Sasanian history is a must read for anyone interested in writing a new history of the period.

The reason for this new translation and study of Tabari having gone unnoticed in the academic circles is mainly due to the fact that it was done in Persian. While one may be able to compare the translation of Tabari in this work with the previous studies, the notation and attention to Sasanian history in this work is far superior than the previously mentioned works. With this new edition of Tabari, which is really much more, one can begin to write a new history of the Sasanian Empire. Sh. Shahbazi has rendered a great service, which he sadly did not see its publication during his lifetime.

