

possible that this is merely the plural of *mālyā* “full,” i.e., the Life is (ful)filled by the power of the excellencies mentioned.

Burtea’s translation is lucid and his commentary, though concise, is nonetheless valuable. He has identified numerous lexical items not found within the pages of Macuch and Drower’s dictionary and which are potentially unique to this short manuscript. Most importantly, this edition represents the fruit of original research, and his insights—particularly when original to him and not uncritically accepted from his predecessors—are quite valuable.

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Kings, Countries, Peoples: Selected Studies on the Achaemenid Empire. By PIERRE BRIANT, translated by AMÉLIE KUHRT. *Oriens et Occidens*, vol. 26. Stuttgart: FRANZ STEINER VERLAG, 2017. Pp. xxv + 633. €99.

“Magisterial” is an adjective one often finds applied to the work of Pierre Briant, especially to his *From Cyrus to Alexander* (2002), but it is equally applicable to the book under review, a collection of his French papers rendered elegantly in English by Amélie Kuhrt (herself a magisterial scholar of Achaemenid history). The papers span the years 1979 to 2008, with most dating to the 1990s and 2000s. In fact, the two papers from the 1970s (chaps. 10 and 20) were already included in Briant’s (1982) first volume of collected papers. Chapter 18, a commentary on and analysis of the Aramaic customs from Egypt, is coauthored with Raymond Descat. The papers have not been changed, save for providing references to English editions of books where available (including, notably, Briant 2002) and the very welcome insertion of cross-references. The exceptions are chapter 14, which is abridged, and chapter 28, which condenses two longer papers.

A lengthy preface follows a full bibliography of Briant’s work (which begins with his 1964 MA thesis). This preface contains some biographical details, such as the happenstance that led to Briant’s initial involvement in the Achaemenid History Workshops (p. 3 n. 7). Primarily, however, it discusses the reception of the papers in the collection, and provides references to recent bibliography and overviews of relevant developments and new discoveries. In this respect it serves a similar purpose to his “*Bulletins d’histoire achéménide*” (Briant 1997; 2001). It also includes remarks on how Briant’s own thinking has changed. For example, in discussing chapter 5, he notes that:

I have to admit (although I do not reject) that the concept of the of ‘*ethno-classe dominante*’, which has entered the vocabulary of Achaemenid history specialists, requires some clarification, in view of numerous studies published in the last thirty years on the concept of ethnicity and the realities of intercultural contacts. (p. 5)

For the most part, however, he stands by his findings. This is especially evident in his discussion (pp. 26–29; see also pp. 600–601 n. 37) of the reaction to his 1979 remark that Alexander “could be regarded as the ‘last of the Achaemenids.’” After making some observations on how and why this remark has been accepted or rejected, he reiterates his view that “it is crucial to realize that Alexander had no other imperial model, save for the one constructed by the Achaemenids ... available to him—

which explains why he knew both how to enter on Darius' still living heritage and how to set his power on a new foundation" (p. 29).

The papers themselves are divided into five groups, entitled "Achaemenid Asia Minor," "Achaemenid Egypt," "The Great King, Land and Water," "Communications and Exchange," and "The Transition from the Achaemenid Empire to Alexander and the Hellenistic Kingdoms," with one paper (his contribution to the proceedings of the 1983 Achaemenid History Workshop) serving as a kind of introduction to the rest. Many of the papers in Parts IV and V pertain to Asia Minor as well.

These headings are also employed in the preface, and the reader will be well served by consulting the relevant section of the preface in conjunction with the chapters themselves. Chapters 10 and 26 make particular use of the Persepolis Fortification Archive, and chapters 14 and 21 are primarily historiographical essays, although all of the papers in this collection have strong historiographical elements. The volume ends with three indices, covering personal names, peoples and places, and ancient sources.

With this collection one can identify the anatomy of a typical Briant paper, though naturally there are variations. Such a paper usually consists of three basic elements (which are not always presented in the same order). First, there is a close examination of the source material, usually a text such as an inscription (e.g., chaps. 2, 3, 4, 25), an excerpt from an ancient author (e.g., chaps. 13, 28), a collection of papyri (e.g., chap. 6), or in one instance a corpus of seals and coins (chap. 11). There also is a survey of previous interpretations of the source material, in which Briant pays particular attention to the assumptions underlying those previous interpretations, especially the orientalist prejudices that characterized much of the early scholarship on the Achaemenids. In fact, chapter 14 is entirely devoted to a study of Montesquieu's depiction of the Persians. Lastly, he provides new or alternative interpretations of the source material, usually with reference to a complementary but underutilized body of evidence and a broader vision of the empire informed by a *longue durée* perspective.

This hypothetical anatomy of a typical Briant paper is further supported by the explicit statements of methodology that appear in this book. Notably, at one point he states that the historian's task is "to dissect hypotheses and arguments in order to show, understand, explain and perhaps cast doubt on the divergent interpretations of one and the same document" (p. 110). Elsewhere he approvingly quotes Pierre Vidal-Naquet's (1984: 346) remark that scholarship results in "probabilities, not certainties" (p. 606). These statements illustrate Briant's clear awareness of the constructed nature of our knowledge of the Achaemenids, a topic that he touches on at the beginning of chapter 15 as well.

Limited space precludes full discussion of each chapter, but a few remarks are in order. Chapter 5 ("The Ruling Class and Subject Populations in the Achaemenid Empire: The Egyptian Example") is the fullest articulation of Briant's *ethno-classe dominante* concept. As noted above, he has subsequently refined his view (p. 5), especially in light of the discovery of the funerary stela of Djedherbes, which provides the first clear evidence of marriage between Persians and Egyptians in this period (pp. 239–41; see also Briant 2002: 949). But the *ethno-classe dominante* is only one element of this paper; it also is a meditation on the broader question of Egyptian "nationalism" as an explanation for the revolts against Achaemenid rule. He argues that:

There certainly existed in Egypt a sense of belonging to a specific ethno-cultural community, a sense which was able to survive well given that the strategy of the Achaemenid authorities never sought to assimilate subject populations culturally. But this sense remained too diffuse to form the solid cement for *general* insurrections, whose sole and proclaimed objective it would have been to expel the Persians. (p. 200)

He further suggests that loyalty, on the part of Egyptians and others, to the Great King and the empire operated on a personal level (pp. 201–2). In other words, some people identified with the empire and others did not, and these identities did not necessarily cleave to ethnic groups or social classes. This is an important point, since it is still all too easy to find blanket statements about Egyptian resistance to Achaemenid rule. Indeed, chapter 6 illustrates the complex ways that ethnic, religious, and political identities intersected at Elephantine in this period.

Chapter 25 (see also pp. 571–73 and chap. 2) also makes a complementary point about the complexity of Persian identity, namely that, although Persian names and cults persisted in the Hellenistic

and Roman periods in Asia Minor, this does not mean that the Persians themselves did. Rather, the implication is that certain aspects of Persian identity and culture had become a lasting (and admittedly ill-defined) part of the multicultural landscape of Asia Minor. There is an interesting parallel for this in Egypt: the “Persians of the Epigone” who are attested in Ptolemaic sources. By the second century BCE this term had come to be a status designation, one which provided a degree of social mobility, rather than a marker of ethnicity (Vandorpe 2008). Thus, in both Egypt and Asia Minor Persian identity seems to have gone beyond ethnic origins alone.

This volume inspires many such brainstorming, and it has much to offer even to someone reading these papers for the second or third time. Especially in combination with *From Cyrus to Alexander* (Briant 2002) and the newly published collection of his English-language papers (Briant 2018), it provides easy access to Briant’s vast scholarship on the Achaemenid Empire, and is essential for any library that supports the study of ancient Persia. Of course, individual readers may bemoan the omission of favorite papers (in my case, Briant 1988!), but naturally this does not detract from the immense value and utility of this collection.

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Parthika: Greek and Roman Authors’ Views of the Arsacid Empire. Edited by JOSEF WIESEHÖFER and SABINE MÜLLER. *Classica et Orientalia*, vol. 15. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2017. Pp. xiii + 312. €78.

This volume is the second resulting from the conference “Bilder des Orients: Megasthenes, Apollodoros von Artemita und Isidoros von Charax,” organized at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel in 2012. The first volume, *Megasthenes und seine Zeit / Megasthenes and His Time*, edited by Josef Wiesehöfer, Horst Brinkhaus, and Reinhold Bichler (*Classica et Orientalia*, vol. 13, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz) came out in 2016. The papers in this volume focus on Apollodoros of Artemita (three contributions) and Isidoros of Charax (four contributions). They are preceded by an elaborate paper on Greek acculturation in the Arsacid empire.

The second half of the volume contains four contributions—on Flavius Josephus, Trogus-Justinus, Tacitus, and Arrian, important authors for the Graeco-Roman perspective on Parthia and the Parthians. Although the title on the cover is in English (the title page also has a German title: *Griechisch-römische Bilder des Arsakidenreiches*), only three papers are in English; the others are in German (eight) and French (one). The short introduction by the editors is also in German.