

Karin Mosig-Walburg, *Römer und Perser. Vom 3. Jahrhundert bis zum Jahr 363 n. Chr.*, Computus Druck Satz & Verlag, Gutenberg 2009, 383 pp., ISBN 13: 978-3-940598-02-8

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in Roman-Persian relations in the Sassanid period. This can be seen in the large number of new books and studies devoted to this subject and to other aspects of the Iranian history of the time. This renewed interest was likely spurred by intensified research into the Late Empire (4th–7th centuries A.D.) which calls for close analysis of Roman-Persian relations and their impact, whether direct or indirect, on various areas of life in the eastern Roman Empire. Increasingly often, scholars reach for previously disregarded works by Late Roman, Armenian, and Oriental authors. These offer a radically different perspective of long-known events and help to verify their interpretations, some formed many decades ago.

One example of the new insight into the subject is the habilitation dissertation by Karin Mosig-Walburg. The author considers Roman-Persian relations from the beginning of the Sassanid state till the peace concluded between Shapur II and Emperor Jovian in 363 A.D., with a focus on the period chronologically marked by the truce between Diocletian and Narses (298) and the peace of 363 A.D. (cf. pp. 11–15). A discussion of Roman-Persian relations from the ascent to power of the Sassanid dynasty's founder Ardashir I to the time of Narses is found in Chapter I: *Rom, Persien, und Armenien im 3. Jahrhundert* (pp. 19–89). Significantly, it emphasizes the importance of Armenia as a vital part in those relations in the 3rd century A.D. (pp. 63–89). Chapter II: *Der Krieg zwischen Narse und Diocletian und der Friedensvertrag des Jahres 298* (pp. 91–148) describes in detail questions concerning the war Diocletian waged against Narses and the clauses of the truce which concluded it. An assessment of this truce, as seen from both sides, is the subject of Chapter III: *Die Bewertung des Friedensvertrages des Jahres 298 vom römischer und von persischer Seite* (pp. 149–155). Subsequent chapters present a chronological order of Roman-Persian relations up to the 330s. (IV: *Die römisch-persischen Beziehungen vom Jahr 298 bis zum Beginn der 30er Jahre des 4. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 157–192) including the period of fighting in those years, concluded with a truce in 337, in which Armenia also played a significant role (V: *Der Beginn des römisch-persischen Krieges in den 30er Jahren des 4. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 193–266). In a separate chapter, the author questions the point, so far fully accepted as true, about Constantius I and Constantius II using the religious question in relations between Rome and the Sasanids (VI. *Die Rolle der Religion in der Perserpolitik Constantins I. und Constantius' II*, pp. 267–282). The last two chapters concern the Persian expedition by Julian the Apostate (VII. *Der Perserfeldzug Julians*, pp. 283–304) and the truce with Persia which, after this emperor died in 363, was signed by his successor (VIII. *Der Friedensvertrag des Jahres 363*, pp. 305–324). The book closes with a synthetic summary of the author's findings (IX. *Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung*, pp. 325–332).

With its innovative approach, Mosig-Walburg's work stands out among the papers published so far devoted to Roman-Persian relations in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. The author devoted much attention to assessing the credibility of sources; in the process, she formulates many valuable remarks as to their relevance to a reconstruction of historical events. Equally interestingly, she shows Armenia as an underestimated participant in a diplomatic game between Rome and the Sasanids, and offers a well-grounded polemic with the accepted view about the presence of Christians in the Sasanid empire as largely influencing the political relations between the two states.

Students of the history of Rome and Iran in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. will find in Mosig-Walburg's book many new, convincingly presented interpretations of known events. I have no doubt that this work will be included in the canon of literature on the subject.

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