

Charlotte Lerouge-Cohen, *Souvenirs du passé perse à l'époque hellénistique* (Arménie, Cappadoce, Commagène, Perside, Pont, Royaume arsacide), Peter Lang, Bruxelles 2022, pp. 502 + figs. 8 + 3 maps; ISBN 978-2-8076-1392-8

The lands once held by the Achaemenids and later incorporated into the Hellenistic empires largely preserved their Persian heritage (administrative structure, culture, and religion), with new rulers underlining their genealogical ties to the Achaemenids. The Achaemenid heritage played a particularly significant part for states ruled by Hellenistic dynasties of Iranian descent. Although histories of these states have been thoroughly studied by the scholarly community, it has not been satisfactorily answered so far why (and how) rulers of certain Hellenistic states of Iran and eastern Anatolia would build their political ideology on their Achaemenid heritage. The recently published monograph by Chr. Lerouge-Cohen attempts to fill this gap in our knowledge.

A preeminent specialist on history of ancient Parthia, Chr. Lerouge-Cohen (Université Paris Nanterre) has long examined its reception in ancient texts, with her voluminous output (such as her book on images of the Parthians in ancient literature¹) valued by other scholars in the field. Her newest monograph, *Souvenirs du passé perse à l'époque hellénistique...*, builds upon her previous historical studies of the Iranian world. The author's focus lies on durability of the Achaemenid heritage in states that rose upon the ruins of ancient Persia, and on its political and ideological significance. The extant sources on the Hellenistic polities indicate that rulers of Armenia, Cappadocia, Commagene, Pontus, Persis and Parthia, influenced by the Iranian culture, readily alluded to and maintained customs of imperial Persia. These monarchs would either highlight their genealogical ties to the Achaemenids or other Persian notables, imitate the Persian royal titlature, include elements of the ceremonial Persian garb in their public image, or emulate customs of the Persian courtly etiquette.

The monograph comprises a lengthy introduction (presenting the *status quaestionis* and discussing analyzed types of sources, pp. 29–65) and three topical sections (two chapters each). The volume is capped by a short conclusions section (pp. 445–450), a works cited section (pp. 451–494), and a brief *index nominorum* (pp. 499–502).

The first section of the monograph discusses the origin, chronology, history, culture, and religion of the above mentioned Hellenistic states, not only giving the reader an idea of their history but also highlighting their complex ties.

¹ *L'image des Parthes dans le monde gréco-romain. Du début du Ier siècle av. J.-C. jusqu'à la fin du Haut-Empire Romain*, Stuttgart 2007.

The second part of the monograph addresses problems hinted at in the preceding section. Notably, the author frequently returns to the matters that she has already discussed in the monograph. These frequent reexaminations of facts and topics previously presented in other contexts result from the monograph's structure. Every section and chapter separately examine each of the above mentioned states with regard to the section's focal point. This type of structure facilitates fact-checking but introduces a degree of repetition. In both chapters of the second part, the author critically examines extant sources and their scholarly interpretations, frequently putting forth other readings of the material, especially apropos the origin of the Ariarathid dynasty of Cappadocia and the Mithridatic dynasty of Pontus (pp. 194–248). The second chapter of this section concentrates on the alleged Achaemenid descent of Iranian monarchs ruling the Hellenistic states. The author appraises the veracity of every one of these Iranian dynasties' claims to descent from the Achaemenids or Persian notables; furthermore, she uncovers social and political motives for claiming a Persian origin. Lerouge-Cohen surmises that no Hellenistic ruler of Iranian origin could truly claim a genealogical link to the elites of Persia: none of them directly succeeded the Achaemenids, their origins traceable only to the 3rd or 2nd c. BCE. In other words, all of Hellenistic kings' claims of the Achaemenid dynastic descent were legends spun in the much later period. However, these dynastic claims featured prominently in the royal ideology and propaganda, legitimizing the rule of those who made them.

In the third section of the monograph, the author juxtaposes surviving sources on the Achaemenid titlature with testimonies on titles assumed by Hellenistic rulers of Iranian and Greek extraction. The Hellenistic titlature show very little direct influence of the Persian one. The title of 'the King of Kings,' occasionally traced to the Achaemenids, in fact was first used by the Arsacids and then adopted by many Hellenistic rulers. Another alleged example of enduring Persian heritage in the Hellenistic period concerns Hellenistic Iranian monarchs depicted as wearing a headgear named *kyrbasia*, with the final chapter of this section investigating this claim. The author underscores the difficulty of ascertaining whether a *kyrbasia* was a part of the Persian royal garb (and, hence, a part of the surviving cultural heritage). Relevantly, depictions of *kyrbasia* appear solely on coins minted by the Persian satraps. Moving beyond numismatic evidence, depictions of head coverings resembling a *kyrbasia* appear outside the Persian world, among the nomads of Central Asia. Consequently, it cannot be proven that depictions of Hellenistic rulers who wore a *kyrbasia* consciously allude to the Persian part of their royal heritage.

One should stress that the author repeatedly notes that the idea of Persian heritage was conceptualized very differently among the Iranian dynasties of eastern Anatolia and those of Iran proper.

Lerouge-Cohen's chosen mode of presentation makes her monograph an original contribution to the field of study: the author collects a wealth of sources and testimonies that paint a fairly clear and comprehensive picture of the history and culture of Iranian monarchies of the Hellenistic era. The monograph includes a number of intriguing interpretations and hypotheses, some of which challenge the scholarly consensus. The work will certainly be of interest to all scholars of the Hellenistic period. However, despite all the inherent value of this monograph, one needs to mention some imprecise or false statements made by the author, with the following lines mentioning but a few. On p. 49, the

author states that tetradrachms of Mithridates I had already gone into circulation under his reign, whereas they actually appeared only after Mithridates II's conquest of Mesopotamia. The author claims that the relief of Hung-i Nauruzi depicts Mithridates I (p. 56). Although A. Invernizzi did propose to identify the depicted character as Mithridates I many years ago,² the most recent research on this relief questions this identification.³ Furthermore, Lerouge-Cohen specifies that Susa and Elymais became parts of the Parthian Empire after 140 BCE (p. 140 and note 164), whereas they fell under its power several years later. One cannot also fully agree with the author's statement that "Les Arsacides ne se sont probablement jamais réclamés d'ancêtres achéménides (...) cette interprétation m'a paru, au moins, à questionner et ré-examiner, avant d'être éventuellement admise" (pp. 36–37), although to address this issue lies beyond the scope of this review.

What is more, the author repeatedly interprets her material with no references made to the recent scholarly works on the subject. Although Lerouge-Cohen never specifies when the monograph's text was finished, its impressive bibliography does not cite many seminal publications in the field, either issued in the last few years or somewhat earlier. Finally, the selection of cited works appears somewhat arbitrary, with a number of key publications on the discussed issues not included.⁴

In sum, Chr. Lerouge-Cohen's recent monograph, despite some of its faults and controversies mentioned above, is definitely a recommended reading for all scholars interested in history of the Hellenistic and Iranian monarchies. A groundbreaking publication on a hitherto unexplored topic, the monograph opens up a number of research avenues and poses intriguing questions.

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² Cf. Elymaeans, Seleucids, and the Hung-e Azhdar Relief, *Mesopotamia* 33, 1998, 219–259.

³ Cf. V. Messina, A New Proposal for Identifying the Kings Represented on the Hung-e Azhdar Rock Relief, *Iranica Antiqua* 49, 2014, 331–345.

⁴ To illustrate the point at hand: the section on the Seleukid coinage omits works by A. Houghton, C. Lorber, O. Hoover, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue*, 4 vols., Lancaster, PA–New York 2002–2008. Similarly, there is not cited p.ex. M. Geller, G. Traina, 'Tigranu, the Crown Prince of Armenia': Evidence from the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries, *Klio* 95, 2013, 447–454; D. Engels, A New Frataraka Chronology, *Latomus* 72, 2013, 28–82 (= *id.*, *Benefactors, Kings, Rulers. Studies on the Seleucid Empire Between East and West*, Leuven–Paris–Bristol, CT 2017, 247–306), etc.