

Late Antiquity, A Guide to the Postclassical World, G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar, eds., The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1999 (2000, 2nd ed.), ISBN 0-674-51173-5.

Late Antiquity is widely known in world history as the transitional period (3rd-8th cent. A.D.) from ancient times to the Middle Ages. The features of this transitional period are well known; the emergence of the new monotheistic religious systems of Christianity and Islam, the transformation of the Roman Empire into Byzantium, the invasion of the Germanic tribes into the Roman lands and the like. The particular interest in this period is due to its syncretistic developments in religion, arts and letters. In the developments mentioned above the Graeco-Roman tradition is presented as the predominant one, and not without reason.

The edition of *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* is a remarkable work reflecting the intense effort made by the editors and the contributors to accumulate information in a critical and up-to-date historical approach. What is stimulating in this volume is the aim to extend the territorial and time limits of Late Antiquity in order to include Roman-Byzantine Empire, Sasanian Iran and early Islam. This review aims to show to what extent they are successful in reaching their goal in relation to Sasanian Iran.

The hardcover volume consists of 786 pages and its protective paper-cover is illustrated with the St. Vitale mosaic of Ravenna presenting the *Court of the Empress Theodora*. The introductory part of the volume includes the introductory note of the editors (pp. vii-xiii) and two maps: one of the Roman Empire (p. xv) and another of the Near Eastern world (p. xvi). The pure content of the volume is developed into two sections; a series of

world. His vivid and documented picture of the Persian Empire, his treasury of references examined in "Research Notes," his ready and reliable keys in the glossary and indices to all aspects of the Achaemenid history, his attempt to restore the true character and worth of Darius III and Alexander, and his contribution to the demonstration of the *course* and *continuity* of the historical process which shaped the ancient world from Cyrus to the establishment of the Seleucid state, all combine to make an indispensable research tool for the students of the Achaemenid studies.



ژرفشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی

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and discredit Darius. He tries to enhance a hypothesis first fabricated by an Assyriologist Hugo Winckler (*Untersuchungen zur altorientalische Geschichte*, Leipzig, 1888, pp. 128ff.) and then elaborated by sensationalist writers who increasingly satisfied themselves with the view that ancient sources can be discarded in favor of titillating reconstructions characteristic of successful journalism. According to this fabrication, contrary to the testimonies of Darius and Herodotus, Camyses did not kill his only brother Bardiya/Smerdis, and when the former was in Egypt the latter usurped the kingship; but Darius, who was not related to Cyrus and had no right to the throne, came and with the help of six Persian magnates treacherously killed Bardiya, and then publishing lies throughout the Empire that this man had been an imposter, a Mede called Gaumata, he himself usurped the throne, and to strengthen his claims he married the sisters and the only daughter of the True Bardiya. The reconstructed tale has become so popular that recent scholarship no longer bothers to admit that this is merely a fantasy. The counter arguments are either ignored or not understood. How else could Professor Briant elaborate this fabrication without considering the studies of George Rawlinson, George Maspero, Eduard Meyer, Josef Marquart, A. Poebke, P.J. Junge, Geo Widengren, Arnold Toynbee and Walther Hinz? Or the detailed refutation of it by this writer which appeared in 1994 in so public a venue as the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (VII, pp. 43-44)? The reader should have been given the full account of the counter arguments and alerted to the fact that the reconstructed story is nothing more than that: a reconstructed story. Those who wish to know history should go to the sources themselves, as did the aforementioned scholars. Indeed, all that the denigrators of Darius have said fails to invalidate the view expressed by the first scholar who read the Behistun, Sir Henry Rawlinson: "dignified simplicity, truthfulness and self-denial characterize this curious record" (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1847, p. 47).

Obviously, any review of such treasury of scholarly undertaking can only be selective in scope. The points of disagreement noted do not detract from the great value of Professor Briant's *opus magnum*. We concur with the verdict of the learned translator (p. xx) that "Clearly, this massive work represents only the first monument along the new highway through the crossroads of the ancient world," and are convinced that Iranian studies will long remain beholden to Professor Briant's rebuilding of the Achaemenid

the basis of this ideology. Now, as is well known, the winged-figure originated in Egypt, where it symbolized Horus the Sun god, but it must be emphasized that various Western Asiatic peoples who borrowed this symbol, each gave it a different connotation suitable to its own national beliefs. In Assyria the king is sometimes shown as an archer emerging from the circle, or as a winged-man hovering above the Assyrians engaged in fighting, feasting, or hunting, thus proving that in the Assyrian art the winged-human in the circle represented the royalty of Assyria, and that the common view that it symbolized Assur, the god of war and the patron deity of Assyria, is groundless. In Iran, the symbol appears for the first time at Behistun above the figure of Darius the Great. There and in many cases it is a winged-man wearing a crown, in other cases it appears as a winged-circle. The "Ahuramazda" theory ignores the fact that *these two separate representations cannot symbolize the same entity*. Herodotus (I, 31) and others testify that the early Persians had no cult images, and when Ahuramazda is shown in later Iranian art, He never appears as winged. In some instances, one sees the symbol being protected by Persian soldiers or members of the royal guard, and this would have been very strange indeed if the *protected* symbol was meant to represent the *Protecting God*. More to the point, on his coins issued at Tarsus, Tiribazus, a prominent courtier of Artaxerxes II, depicted the winged-man as *a nude bust*, and even the wildest imagination cannot entertain the idea that this *nude bust* could have been understood as Ahuramazda! At Persepolis and on seals, the human bust emerging from the circle is identical in feature and costume—even in crown—to the Achaemenid king, and must therefore be typifying the Royalty. When the symbol hovers above ordinary people or trees and animals, it usually lacks the human bust. In such cases, the symbol represents the Iranian Glory. In the same way, when kings and princes are shown under the winged-circle, they are depicted merely as Iranians. Precisely for this reason, at times the *two distinct* figures are *both* shown in a single context.

Of the cases where Professor Briant's interpretive historiography can be questioned none is more consequential than his approach to the identity of the man who usurped Cambyses' throne and the struggle of Darius the Great in regaining his family's rights. The author goes into great length in attempting to contradict the historical evidence (Behistun and Herodotus)

Thus, "This *xšaça-*" comprised not only Persis and Media, but other countries mentioned in the earlier paragraph – it was the Achaemenid Empire.

In the second part of the introduction (pp. 17-18), Professor Briant follows a chronology (based on P. de Miroschedji's assessment) for the early Achaemenid kings that manifestly contradicts our sources. The correct chronology is the old one that he disregards (see A.Sh. Shahbazi, "Cyrus I," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* VI, 1993, p. 516; D.T. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 287): Since Cyrus the Great was born in 599 B.C. (Dion, Frag. 8 in Jacoby, *FHG* II, 90, says that he came to the throne [in 559 B.C.] at the age of forty), his grandfather, Cyrus I, would have to be placed around 645 B.C.

With regard to the interpretation of the Winged-symbol in Achaemenid art, Professor Briant declares (p. 900): "Individual in the winged disc: for a long time, historians have engaged in debates on his identity (e.g. Shahbazi 1974, 1980); Lecoq's (1984) demonstration that the figure is Ahura-Mazda has convinced me completely." The references are to my articles ("An Achaemenid Symbol," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, NF 7, 1974, pp. 135-144 and 13, 1980, pp. 119-143), where I showed the fallacy of the Ahuramazda interpretation and argued that a) there are *two symbols* (the winged-man and the winged circles), and b) that they represent the Kavian Glory and the Iranian Glory respectively. It seems to me that Professor Briant has not fully read my articles (that may explain why he reproduced my hand drawing in it but credited it to a certain Houtkamp, see above!), and has not noted the demolition of Lecoq's "demonstration" by P. Calmeyer ("Zur bedingten Göttlichkeit des Grösskonins", *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 14, 1981, pp. 55-60) and the careful evaluation of the case by Gregor Ahn (*Religiöse Herrschaftslegitimation im achämenidischen Iran = Acta Iranica* 31, Leiden-Louvain, 1992, pp. 99-217). My own detailed refutation of this "demonstration" and those of the overeager novices in the field who jumped upon Lecoq's bandwagon is in the press. Therefore, I will confine myself here to a few remarks.

One of the most important constituent of the Iranian ideology has been the belief in the "God-given Fortune," Avestan *Xvarenah*, Old Persian *Farnah*, New Persian *Far/Farrah*. The Persian kingship – a theme discussed in Professor Briant book in great detail – saw its justification primarily on

In some instances, Professor Briant's emphatically stated views are provocative. Thus, he begins his introduction with the question: "Was there an Achaemenid Empire?" In answering this question, he first remarks that "the term *Empire* implies a territorial authority", and then notes that "it has no exact correspondence in any ancient languages: the inscriptions of the Great Kings refer both to the land (Old Persian *būmi*) and the people (Old Persian *dahyu/dahyāva*)." Leaving aside the linguistic slips (correct forms: *būmi*-*dahyu*-/*dahyāuš*; the form *dahyāva* is the nomin. plural fem. of *dahyu*), the verdict is unjustified. Not only did an exact correspondence to *empire* exist in an ancient Iranian language (Avestan *daijhusasti*-; see J. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, Paris, 1892, I, p. 388; II, p. 465; I. Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mythra*, Cambridge, 1959, pp. 115-116, 233, 296-299), but also can we trace one in the Old Persian, for *xšāça-* (Old Iran. *xšābra-*; New Pers. *šahr*), which normally signified "kingship/kingdom," could, by extension conditioned on the size of the "kingdom," mean an *empire*. Two statements of Darius the Great is enough to prove the point (many more can be cited). He proclaims (Behistun, Old Persian, col. I, ll. 11-12 = Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 117, 119) "By the favor of Ahuramazda I am King. Ahuramazda bestowed the *xšāçam* on me," and he immediately explains (ll. 13-24):

These are the *dahyāva* which came to me; by the favor of Ahuramazda I was king of them: Persis, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, (Greek) Islanders, Lydia, Inonia, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Charsmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Maka, altogether 23 *dahyāva*. Proclaims Darius the King: These are the *dahyāva* which came to me; by the favor of Ahuramazda they were my subjects; they bore tribute to me; what was said to them by me either by night or by day, that was done.

Clearly, here the *xšāça-* which Ahuramazda bestowed on Darius consisted of 23 *dahyāva*, and was thus exactly an *empire*. Likewise, when narrating how Gaumata the Magus (Mede) usurped the Achaemenid throne, Darius states (ll. 44-7):

This *xšāça-*, which Gaumata who was a Magus (i.e., a Mede of the tribe of Magus, not a priest) took away from Cambyses, this *xšāça-* from long ago had belonged to our family (i.e. the Achaemenid). Afterwards, Gaumata the Magus took (it) from Cambyses; he took to himself both Persis and Media and other *dahyāva*.

order of Alexander. In fact, the unfinished façade has no cavity for burial! Again, reading the first part of the introduction to the book, one gets the *impression* that Professor Briant has personally developed the case against the Hellenocentric school of ancient historians. A few words about earlier pioneers in this field would have cleared such a misapprehension. The case against Hellenocentrist view was exhaustively treated by Amir Mehdi Badi since 1963. In twelve volumes of painstaking research (*Les Grecs et les Barbares: L'autre face de l'Histoire*, Lousanne and Paris, 1959-1991), Badi cited or quoted every passage of Greek and Roman historians dealing with the Achaemenid Persians and their relations with the Greeks and Macedonians, and subjected them to critical examination, concluding every time that modern historians of Greece and Rome have distorted the Greaco-Persian relations and denigrated the Achaemenid state and its leaders far more than had their ancient predecessors. Particularly noteworthy is Badi's thesis that Alexander strove to be counted as an Achaemenid King of Kings. Likewise, the eminent historian Chester G. Starr must be mentioned as a pioneer of the case against the Hellenocentrism (see his "Greeks and Persians in the Fourth Century B.C. A Study in Cultural Contacts before Alexander," *Iranica Antiqua* 11, 1976, pp. 39-99 and 12, 1977, pp. 49-115). In lines similar to Briant's thesis, Starr showed the fallacy of the notion of the "decadence" of the fourth century Persian Empire by pointing out that the so-called process of "Hellenization" in the East did not start with Alexander, as was usually supposed. He wrote (1976, p. 71; cf. p. 82): "The writ of the Persian king was unquestioned in Greece, at least after Cnidus. Its potency was always restored whenever challenged in some part of the Near East. The conventional picture in modern accounts of a state in serious decline and driven by dissension may correspond to that sketched by Xenophon and Isocrates but it does not accord with historical reality." Starr documented (pp. 70-71, 93) the progress of the Iranian culture in Asia Minor by Iranian nobility settling there, and the continuation of this progress after the fall of the Achaemenids. He explained the peaceful interweaving of the Iranian and Greek cultures in Asia Minor and on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and concluded that Alexander's "invasion distorted and disrupted, rather than accelerated the processes which were at work in the fourth century", and that "only on the surface, and only from the point of view of Western civilization, is the conventional praise of the results of Alexander's conquest justified" (1977, p. 109).

inscription: "This is Persian", etc. The late Professor Calmeyer, who knew the Achaemenid world better than any one I knew, described (*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 15, 1982, pp. 105-187; 16, 1983, pp. 109-263) the scene as "A statistical" map of the Achaemenid Empire, and the wording of Darius clearly supports his view. Professor Briant does not accept this interpretation and in negating it he writes (p. 734) that the replicated reliefs on the tomb of Artaxerxes III [i.e., that located east of the Hundred Column Hall] "do not include Armenian, Lydians, Egyptians, or Indians – for reasons that obviously have nothing to do with facts concerning territorial dominion. The lists and depictions do not claim to represent a statistical abstract of the Empire, any more at the end of the Empire than in earlier eras." This is most puzzling. A glance at the relevant literature (by E. Herzfeld, G. Walser, and E.F. Schmidt) shows that the throne-bearers on the tomb of Artaxerxes III *do include* Armenian, Lydians, Egyptians, and Indians (see particularly Schmidt, *Persepolis III*, Chicago, 1970, pp. 106, 108-111, Pls. 70, 71A).

Some readers would no doubt like to read "lively" interpretations of the sources even if they are subjective speculations. They may not feel the need for a detailed counter argument in every case, or may want to simply opt for a contrary view, precisely as the author does when he wants to avoid a controversial issue (see his comments on the veracity of Darius' account, pp. 895-897, and on the Winged-man of the Achaemenid art, p. 900; cf. our retort below). But in tracing the development of the Achaemenid history and society, no serious reader can approve of the methodological problem (which unfortunately plagues modern scholarship in many fields) arising from occasional neglect of prior scholarship and the resulting wrong attribution. A few examples suffice here. My own hand drawing of the image of a Persian king in front of a fire altar (which I had published in the article on Farnah symbolism in 1980, cited at p. 1113, at p. 131, Fig. 5) is reproduced at p. 250, Fig. 36, but is credited to a certain Houtkamp (see p. xiii) who has published an article in 1991 (cited at p. 1089). Similarly, the image of a seal showing Persians in combat (p. 215, Fig. 18e) was drawn by O.M. Dalton but here it is attributed to "Moorey." Since 1975 the attribution of the unfinished tomb at Persepolis to Darius III has been abandoned (see W. Kleiss and Peter Calmeyer, "Das unvollendete achaimenidische Felsgrab bei Persepolis," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, NF 8, 1975, pp. 14-24), and yet we read (p. 734) that this was the tomb in which Darius III was buried by the

author and the appearance of eight volumes of relevant studies in the series *Achaemenid History* (Leiden, 1987-1994; the French original of the present work constituted volumes 9 and 10; and *The Essay in Memory of David M. Lewis*, reviewed in an earlier issue of this journal, appeared as volume 11).

Thus the author is well qualified to engage in writing on ancient history. That there are shortcomings in his book is natural enough, for perfection is unreasonable in any major historical investigation, particularly when an author is more at home with classical texts and art than with Persian sources. Clearly, Professor Briant has made a gallant effort to take into account all the sources available to him, and to document his discussions. However, the picture of the Achaemenid Persia given in this book will not convince all. Professor Briant characteristically presents his studies in a style remarkably documented and *excitingly interpretive*. And it is this overriding desire for personal insight that renders quite a number of his explanations and conclusions difficult to accept (see below). The school of historiography he follows seems at time to negate or underestimate pieces of evidence – classical and native – by reading into them hypothetical set motives, traditional concepts and favorite tales, which can then readily be dismissed. This creates methodological problems. Thus, the source-evaluations and conclusions of such cases as the Cyrus saga, the usurpation of Gaumata the Mede, the accession of Darius the Great and his relationship with the family of Cyrus, the murder of Xerxes, the massacre of the royal family by Artaxerxes III, and many other episodes in the history of the Achaemenid period are highly speculative and open to serious question. One case concerning the interpretation of certain tomb reliefs may be examined here (another case, the identity of Gaumata the Mede, will be mentioned below). As is well known, Darius the Great ornamented the façade of his rock-cut tomb at Persepolis with a sculptured scene which was copied by those of his successors: above the “eternal abode” (imitating the Tachara) two rows of figures each in national costume, carry the monumental throne of the Great King upon their raised hands; on the throne stands the king in front of his royal fire while above hovers a winged-man whose identity is controversial. An inscription of Darius (=DNa) carved next to his figure states: “If now thou shalt think that ‘How many are the countries which King Darius held?’ look at the sculpted (men) who bear the throne” (see R.G. Kent, *Old Persian. Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, 2nd rev. ed., New Haven, 1953, pp. 137, 138). Each of the thirty throne-bearers is additionally identified by cuneiform

modern references in support of a theory, the more *acceptable* it becomes. Professor Briant seems to have fallen into both pitfalls. He could be excused for not **having seen** (much less read) the *only* detailed biography of Cyrus the Great (by the present reviewer, Shiraz, 1970, well used by D. Stronach in his *Pasargadae*, Oxford, 1978), wherein he could have found ample discussions as to the nature of the sources and the questions related to the rise of the Achaemenids, but he would have obliged his readers if he could have shown why Rawlinson or Meyer, G. Maspero or P.J. Junge, were of no use to him. Any detailed history of a topic is expected to start with a through analysis of its historiography, whereby the merits and faults of the previous scholarship could be demonstrated and the justification for siding with one school and **disregarding** another determined.

Now we shall turn to the qualifications of the author. The course that led him to the **creation** of this monument is chronicled in his introduction. He had begun as a student of ancient history with specialization in the Hellenistic period. An attempt to understand the condition of the land and peasants of the late fourth century B.C. Greater Phrygia sparked the interest in the Near Eastern history, and evoked a desire to discover the non-Greek roots of the Hellenistic states and culture. The author became aware that ancient historians and their Western successors had seen the Near East (or "Asia", as they called it) in general and the Achaemenid state in particular from the point of view of the Greeks. The prevalent "Hellenocentric" school advocated by J.G. Droysen and his overeager disciples (none of pioneers mentioned above could be accused of belonging to that school) "insisted unequivocally" that Alexander's conquest "had shaken up the political, economic, and cultural structures of 'Asia' from top to bottom." One could not, of course, avoid relying on ancient Graeco-Roman sources, but the nature of the Achaemenid Empire and the many peoples that inhabited it should not have been studied merely as a prelude to the brilliant career of Alexander. One needed to answer the old questions of how and why did the Persian state fall to the Macedonian onslaught? It became obvious to the author that "Alexander and his successors took much of the Achaemenid system," so much so that he could **speak** of Alexander as the "last of the Achaemenids" (p. 2). From 1983, Professor Briant met a number of scholars who shared his view, and united, they strove to rid the scholarship from the Hellenocentrism of earlier savants. The result was a series of article by the

Achéménide”, *Annales* 1995, No. 5, pp. 1109-1126). Two Persian translations (*Tārīkh-e emperāturī-ye Hakhāmanešīān az Kuroš tā Eskandar*, tr. Mehdi Semsār, 2 vols., Tehran, 1377/1998; and *Emperāturī-ye Hakhāmanešī*, tr. Nāhīd Frughān, 2 vols., Tehran, 1380/2001) have made Briant’s monumental book available to Iranians, who have received it with obvious enthusiasm. The long-awaited English version, which “differs very little from the French edition” (p. xv; for some of the differences see *ibid.* with n 2) provided by a noted translator and able scholar, will undoubtedly enhance the prestige of the book in the English speaking world.

Faced with this massive work, a reader active in the field of the Achaemenid studies is bound to ask several questions: Was there a necessity for such a book? Was the author qualified to handle so many topics? Has he succeeded in giving a true picture of the Achaemenid history based on available sources? Is his method of documentation sound? First we shall evaluate the necessity of such a work. A detailed history of the Achaemenid period is certainly a desideratum, and the present volume goes a long way to fulfill this necessity, but it is too interpretive and too “modern” a work to remain unchallenged for long. The history of Achaemenid Empire has a long historiography, and no new account of that state can be complete unless it takes prior scholarship fully into consideration. The foundations of the Achaemenid studies are not the publications of modern revisionist historians who sacrifice their sources in favor of sensational fantasies. Those bases are the works of earlier, more sober, scholars who evaluated every piece of evidence and every argument unemotionally and with balanced reasoning, leaving out all subjective imagination. The present reviewer firmly believes that any serious study of Achaemenid history must still start from the two classics: George Rawlinson’s *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient World*, vols. II-III, London, 1871, and Eduard Meyer’s *Geschichte des Altertums* III-IV, Leipzig and Berlin, 1883. The first is mentioned but not used and the second is ignored. Despite their age, and contrary to the foolish denigration of such works by certain revisionists, they remain the mines of information provided by classical sources and contain judicial interpretations which contrast with the wild assessments pervading modern scholarship. It is a general assumption – and a wrong one – that a recent study must be better than an old one just because the latter is *old*. It is also a general assumption – and again a wrong one – that the *more* one lists

(pp. 31-61), and the administration of these early rulers in Chapter 2 (pp. 62-96) which ends with the questionable thesis (see below) of "Bardiya's Usurpation" (pp. 97-106). Chapter 3 (pp. 107-138) is a highly personal interpretation of the events recorded in the Behistun record-relief, and we shall have something to say about that later (see below, pp. 76-77). The remaining events of the reign of Darius are studied in Chapter 4 (pp. 139-164). Persian kingship, ideologies, court ceremonials, and relationship of the royalty with various subject people are dealt with in detail in the next four chapters (pp. 165-356), territories, communication and trade in Chapter 9 (pp. 357-387), state revenues, and administration in Chapters 10-11 (pp. 388-471), and Darius the Great's relations with his subjects in Chapter 12 (pp. 472-514). The reigns of Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, Darius II, Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III and Darius III are chronicled in Chapters 13-15 (pp. 515-692). The political, social and military conditions of the later fourth century B.C., Darius III, his satraps and armies, "Alexander's Aggression," his conquest, his transformation into "the last of the Persian Great Kings" are studied in the last three chapters (pp. 693-873). The text ends with a summation emphasizing the continuity of historical processes from the Neo-Babylonian Empire to that of the Seleucids. Then follows what is perhaps the most useful part of the book, "Research Notes" (pp. 877-1052). All through the text, every point discussed is documented by ancient sources of diverse kinds (Greek, Roman, Babylonian, Aramaic, Hebrew, and, of course, Persian) cited in brackets. References to modern writers (archaeologists, art historians, historians, philologists, scholars of religions) are reserved for the "Research Notes", which together with the massive bibliography (pp. 1059-1124), constitute a treasury of erudite scholarship. Six indices (Sources, Personal names, Divine names, Geographic names, Ancient words, and Topics) guide the reader to exact location of every point discussed, and seven maps and sixty-five in-text figures provide useful illustrations for various aspects of the Achaemenid history, art and religion. Professor Briant has "systematically updated" this book by publishing supplements and on occasions revising his stance. His analyses of more recent studies in Achaemenid fields appear in the *Bulletin d'Histoire Achéménide* (1997ff.).

Since its publication in French (*Histoire de l'Empire perse. De Cyrus à Alexandre*, Paris, 1996), the work has been reviewed by various scholars, most notably Professor Matthew Stolper ("Une vision duré de l'histoire