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Pierre Briant, Francis Joannès (ed.), *La transition entre l'empire achéménide et les royaumes hellénistiques. Persika, 9*. Paris: De Boccard, 2006. Pp. 476. ISBN 978-2-7018-0213-8. €75.00 (pb).

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

This volume, the ninth in the collection Persika, contains the proceedings of a conference held in 2004. As the editors Pierre Briant and Francis Joannès explain in their introduction, the issue of 'continuity and change' is not a new one for historians. What is new, however, is the decision to focus on a short period of 'transition', the twenty years preceding and following Alexander's conquest, i.e., 350-300 BC. Such a choice corresponds to the chronological duration of some documentary corpora;[1] more importantly, it allows one to look at structural changes and continuities, beyond Alexander's conquest, in a precise way, without getting lost in the longue durée. (The problem is of course to distinguish between changes resulting from long- or short-term local developments, and changes that were direct consequences of the Macedonian conquest--see Kuhrt's conclusion.) The desire for precision and attention to detail is also recognizable in the choice of a regional approach: after two papers on general themes (culture and chronology), four papers focus on Mesopotamia; two further papers discuss the administrative and economic aspects of the transition in Asia Minor; the remaining three papers look at specific regions (Egypt, Transeuphratene, Persis). Missing: central Asia, as is somewhat ruefully acknowledged by the editors in their introduction. All papers are of very high quality; this is an important volume, not least in that it provides advanced surveys of research on the period around Alexander's conquest in the various areas affected by it.

P.-A. Beaulieu opens the volume with a paper on 'L'organisation de la recherche scientifique au IV siècle av. J.-C.'. Taking as its background the famous opposition in Diodorus between the Chaldaeans, who can dedicate their lives to philosophy, being free from public duties, and who pass this on to their children, and the Greeks who, having to earn a living, move (in an amateurish way) from one subject to another, Beaulieu first locates the place of the astronomer/astrologer (*tupsar Enuma Anu Enlil*) in fourth-century Mesopotamia. A tablet from Yale shows that the Esagil employed fourteen astronomers already in the IV century BC;[2] in the same period, more than fifty lamentation priests, and at least sixty-six exorcists, worked under the protection of the temple. Such was the situation when Alexander arrived in Babylon; and in Babylon this tradition continued. From here, Beaulieu moves to Alexandria and the Mouseion: as he shows, if peripatetic influence played a key role in the founding of the library, its organization is in many ways closer to Mesopotamian and Near Eastern practices than to that of the libraries of Greek city-states. The synthesis of Greek and 'Babylonian' tradition in Alexandria represents thus innovation within continuity.

Boiy follows with an analytical study of the chronology of the fifty years at the centre of the volume. The first part provides the reader with an overview of the dating formulas of

cuneiform texts; next, the dating formulas of Aramaic inscriptions, papyri and ostraca are analyzed. Finally, the dating formulas of these sources (and of the coins from Sidon) are put together and analyzed against the background of the Greek narrative provided by Diodorus (the numerous tables are extremely helpful). The immediate purpose is to provide a precise chronology of the period[3]--but there is an (underlying) historiographical aspect in all of this, since the choice of dating formulas in the various documents is also a way of shaping history, from above if the change was imposed by a central authority, or 'from the ground', when the decision was taken by local authorities or the scribes themselves.[4] A first appendix offers a quick discussion of the changes in royal titulature in the 50 years in question; a second appendix gives an updated conversion table, for the same period, of Babylonian dates into the Julian Calendar.

An explicit combination of historiographical and historical attention marks Joannès' contribution, "La Babylonie méridionale: continuité, déclin, ou rupture?" Taking as starting point the fact that in his conquest Alexander went as far as Babylon, but not further south, Joannès chooses to focus on southern Mesopotamia. A comparison of two king lists, one from Babylon, one from Uruk, both of them written much later than the events, shows that if the overall duration of fifty years from the first year of Alexander to the last of Seleucus is the same, the two lists diverge in how they 'apportion' the period: the list from Uruk puts Seleucus' control in 311, ignoring altogether Alexander IV, and giving six years to Antigonus, while the list from Babylon gives six years to Alexander IV and four to Antigonus. However, in other cuneiform documents from the south, the dating formula with Antigonus is used for ten years (at least until 308: either because the scribes recognized his authority, or because they did not have exact information on the legitimate authority at any given moment). The royal list is thus clearly a rewriting of history, reasserting Seleucid legitimacy. Ruptures and changes did exist (e.g. the increased circulation of coins; possibly a higher redistribution of land; a change in the balance of power between temples and civic/royal administration), but, besides the smoothing over caused by rewritings of history, there are also structural continuities (e.g. in the role of leading families; in the taxation system; in the use of juridical documents that were introduced first in the late Achaemenid period). Joannès concludes that the main socio-economical and administrative structures in southern Mesopotamia function under the sign of a continuity that goes back, beyond the Achamenid kings, to the Mesopotamian tradition.

In his "Agricultural Management, Tax Farming and Banking: Aspects of Entrepreuneurial Activity in Babylonia in the Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Periods", M. Jursa offers a full treatment of the archive of Mûranû and his son Ea-tabtanâ-bullit, active in Babylon in the first half of the third century. Jursa publishes for the first time five of the thirty-eight tablets of the archive; an appendix gives a collated text of the other tablets, as well as four additional new texts from other archives; two additional tablets from the archive of Mûranû are mentioned in an addendum, one of which joins an already known document, thus bringing the total number of documents to 39. The close analysis of the documents allows Jursa to recognize in Mûranû and his son contractors of Esagila, involved in different entrepreneurial activities on behalf of the temple: rent farming, tax-farming for tithes and other taxes (note the discussion of the *tagmânu* and *bît abistâti* institutions). Documents from the archive show also that Mûranû and Ea-tabtanâ-bullit deposited funds with other private businessmen. The ensuing discussion of deposits and banking activities is then contextualized: while Mûranû's agricultural activities are comparable to those attested for the sixth century by the temple archives, there is no early parallel for his large portfolio of income-farming activities. On the other hand, archives from first-century Mesopotamia show private businessmen taking over the management of core areas of a temple's economy and administration. The archive of Mûranû is seen to occupy a central position in this evolution.

The question of continuity is viewed in the following paper through the lens of etymology: in "Iranica in post-Achaemenid Babylonian Texts", M. Stolper looks at Iranian words and names in texts from ancient Mesopotamia (all Iranica in post-Achaemenid texts are collected in an appendix). While in the main lines the pattern seems to fit the usually accepted notion of continuity between Achaemenid and Hellenistic Mesopotamia, the detailed analysis which follows shows that there are important nuances. In particular, the archives from Uruk offer a markedly different pattern from those from Babylon: in Uruk, we find no Iranian personal names, but there is, ca. a hundred years after the Macedonian conquest, a marked presence of Greek names; in Babylon, where in the Achaemenid period Iranian names had been well attested, Iranian names resurface in the record after the conquest, while Greek names are comparatively rare. What is interesting in all this is the suggestion that some Iranian titles, as e.g. *ganzabarru*, attested in Hellenistic Uruk, do not represent the persistence of an Achaemenid office but rather the extension by a Hellenistic administration of an Achaemenid title. In his conclusion, Stolper points to the limits of the evidence, and the different ways in which it can be looked at -- not simply through the dichotomy of continuity, survival, or rupture, but in terms of reintroduction, preservation, coexistence.

The point about the difference between Uruk and Babylon is picked up again (along similar lines) in R. van der Spek's contribution, "The Size and Significance of the Babylonian Temples under the Successors". Van der Spek suggests that memories of the destruction of Babylon by Xerxes are shaped by the desire to construct a parallelism with Xerxes' destruction of Athens, and that the Esagila still functioned at the time of Alexander, although its tower may have been in disrepair (he accepts however that there were revolts in the second year of Xerxes' reign, and that their punishment finds a reflection in the end of many temple archives, with archives of a new social group beginning at the same time). Moreover, the cuneiform documents attest the existence, in Hellenistic Babylon, of a remarkable number of temples, active organizations involving thousands of people, from lamentation priests and astronomers to bakers and millers and to scribes. Although the foundation of Seleucia, at some point between 305 and 300 BC, must have turned Babylon into a provincial city, the kings continued to visit Babylonia (Antiochus I in particular resides in Babylon from 293 BC, or possibly earlier, until the death of his father in 281 BC). The city certainly suffered in the period of the early Successors (as is shown by the rise in prices in the astronomical diaries), but recovered, and remained culturally important. Two appendices collect the Greek sources on Babylon, and the cuneiform ones; the latter include hitherto unpublished material, to appear in BCHP (among them, the 'Bagayasha chronicle', with its mention of *politai* and *peliganes*; the 'Ruin of Esagila', with the mention of an offering in Greek fashion by Antiochus I on the Esagila, and of the clearing of the debris by elephants, troops and wagons).[5]

With Briant's wide-ranging paper, we turn to Asia minor. Here, a number of important issues are raised: first of all, Alexander's position in respect to the organization of the conquered territories (and his choices concerning coinage): Briant contests the widely-held view according to which Alexander would have been interested in conquest only, and not in administration. Another open issue concerns the role that epichoric languages (and epichoric populations: Lycians, Carians) will have played under the Achaemenid and Macedonian domination (in this context, Briant also suggests that the presence and role of Iranians in Asia minor in the Hellenistic period may have been overestimated). Finally, he critically discusses the respective importance of Achaemenid inheritance, of Macedonian tradition, and of innovation in the organization of Hellenistic kingdoms. Briant is especially good in raising methodological issues and showing how very open so many questions still are.

Descat follows in the same vein, opening with some well-taken methodological reflections on how to tackle economic history and economic change in a wide geographical area, over a

relatively short period of time. His main point would seem to be that there is a change in the course of the fourth century (and more specifically in the second half of the fourth century, a period which he thinks can be taken as a distinct 'historical unit' in terms of economic history) on both sides of the Aegean (i.e. in the economy of the Greek cities and in the way the Achaemenid kings deal with their grain surplus), and that the conquest of Alexander inserts itself more or less seamlessly into this.

A seamless--or even more, an unnoticed transition seems to have been also the fate of Egypt: M. Chauveau and C. Thiers open their contribution "L'Égypte en transition: des Perses aux Macedoniens" by recognizing that in Egypt, the Macedonian conquest is part of a rapid, even chaotic succession of regimes; moreover, both Persian and Macedonian kings are subsumed by the clergy into the Egyptian model: only retrospectively, as historiographical constructs, are some kings seen as aliens. Alexander's conquest, they seem to say, simply accelerated the integration--"probablement inévitable" of Egypt in the Greek Mediterranean. This is an interesting way of looking at the historical situation--I suppose that one could ask what is required for a change to be a change: one thinks of the foundation of Alexandria (almost not discussed), which had an enormous impact on the rest of the ancient world--but not on Egypt itself? Here too, two appendices list pertinent biographical Egyptian texts, and temple restorations. Discussing the temple restorations, Chauveau and Thiers affirm that the priests and their desire to connect the new kings to a glorious past are behind these works, and not the Argead kings ("l'analyse des parois des temples ne peut donc être versée au dossier d'un interventionnisme ou d'une prise de conscience du système politico-religieux de l'Égypte par les Argéades", p. 397), all the more since only the priests would have been able to see and understand these texts. The argument is convincing; yet one wonders why this outburst of activity around the temples, exactly at the moment of the arrival of the Macedonians: can it really be simply because of better economic conditions?

The next area to be examined is the Transeuphratene: after a general introduction, A. Lemaire offers a minute description of what is know for the period 350-300 BC for each one of the main regions and cities. He concludes that Hellenism and monetary economy transformed the region, but that each area may have had a different specific history. He moreover shows that the main changes should be connected not so much to the conquest of Alexander, who appears as 'le dernier des Achéménides', as to the campaigns of Ptolemy in 312.

Finally, R. Boucharlat tackles the fate of Persis, through an analysis of the fate of its royal residences, Susa, Persepolis and Pasargadae. The archaeological data are scarce, and the sources not always reliable; on the whole, it seems clear that there was no interruption in the life of these centres, notwithstanding traces of destruction, especially at Persepolis; but there was a change, and these residences lost much of their importance. The real difficulty is the absence of archaeological data on the life of these centres as cities: it is known that Susa continued to have a certain importance; Persepolis and Pasargadae may have been only seats of royal power, in which case, once their ideological function was lost, they were bound to decline (see on this A. Kuhrt's final remarks).

How successful is the volume in achieving its goal of describing the transition from the Achaemenid empire to the Hellenistic kingdoms? The individual papers are worth reading in themselves: they give an updated status quaestionis, often including discussion of hitherto unpublished material, and ample bibliographies. The angle through which the question is approached may differ, as also in some cases the chronological range, mainly because of the type of evidence, but common threads are noticeable: thus, a theme that comes up more than once in the 'Mesopotamian' papers is that of the distinction between northern and southern Mesopotamia, between Uruk and Babylon. When one looks at the entire area covered by the Achaemenids (the absence of central Asia is here sorely missed), the picture is less evident:

changes worked in different ways, at slightly different moments, and at different levels. But if the answer has to be 'transitions', that is already an important achievement.

List of Authors and Contributions

P. Briant and F. Joannès, Introduction.
P.-A. Beaulieu, De l'Esagil au Mouseion: l'organisation de la recherche scientifique au IVe siècle avant J.-C. (pp. 17-36)
T. Boiy, Aspects chronologiques de la période de transition (350-300) (pp. 37-100)
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M. Chauveau, Ch. Thiers, L'Égypte en transition: des Perses aux Macédoniens (pp. 375-404)
A. Lemaire, La Transeuphratène en transition (c. 350-300) (pp. 405-441)
R. Boucharlat, Le destin des résidences et sites perses d'Iran dans la seconde moitié du IVe siécle avant J.-C. (pp. 443-470)
A. Kuhrt, Concluding remarks (pp. 471-476).

Notes:

1. Besides the Babylonian materials, the editors point to recently found Aramaic documents from Bactria and Idumaea: thirty documents on leather in Imperial Aramaic, dating to the fourth century BC and reflecting the practice of the Achaemenian administration in Bactria and Sogdiana, and eighteen inscribed wooden sticks, for use as tallies, dated to the third year of King Darius III (preliminary presentation by S. Shaked, *Le satrape de Bactriane et son gouverneur. Documents araméens du IV s. avant notre ère provenant de Bactriane*, *Persika* 4, Paris 2004 -- neither these documents nor more generally Central Asia are discussed in the volume); and ca. 1900 Aramaic ostraca from Idumaea, covering the period 362-312, and discussed in this volume at 58-59, 416-419.
2. The document has meanwhile been edited by Beaulieu himself in A.K. Guinan et al. (ed.), *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty*, Leiden Boston Köln 2006.
3. There is a more detailed treatment of the period 332-305 BC in Boiy's *Between High and Low. A Chronology of the Early Hellenistic Period*, Frankfurt am Main 2007, reviewed in BMCR 2008.09.27. The discussion on the dating of the Idumean ostraca with Alexander years (III or IV) is still open. At p. 59 Boiy addresses only tangentially the objections raised by Lemaire (p. 418, this volume): it seems odd, in a group of ostraca supposedly coming from the same place (Makeddah), to have a succession Alexander IV on 7/7/315, Antigonus on 20/7/315, then again Alexander IV on 21/7/315, then again Antigonus on 7/8/315 and afterwards. Two more problematic documents are mentioned by Boiy in *Between High and Low*, 91; the discussion continues (see now B. Porten and A. Yardeni, "The Chronology of the Idumean Ostraca", in M. Cogan and Dan'el Kajn (edd.), *Treasures on Camels' Humps*, Jerusalem 2008, 237-249.)
4. I owe much to recent postings on the Seleucids list by O. Hoover, T. Boiy and C.Bennett.
5. A number of the documents to be published in BCHP are available as online pre-publications at Mesopotamian chronicles.

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