



ABSTRACTS

Rabbis and Mobeds in Sasanian Babylonia: Shared Religious/Legal Discourse in Sasanian Babylonia

Yaakov Elman

The Jews in Babylonia lived in reasonably close proximity to their Zoroastrian overlords for well over a millennium, and the Babylonian Talmud, the most influential product of Rabbinic Judaism, was produced entirely within the temporal confines of the Sasanian era, that is, during the third through the sixth centuries. It is thus hardly surprising that many parallels exist between the two systems of civil and ritual law. This is true both of the *Madayan _ Hazar Dadestan* and of compilations, which, though technically post-Sasanian, nevertheless contain a good deal of earlier material, some of which is evidenced by the *Videvdat*—in particular, the *yast n_ _yast*.

In this essay, the sixth of a series, some parallels and contrasts in *n_* chapter 2 are examined. Both the parallels and the contrasts indicate that the Babylonian rabbis and the Iranian priests/jurisconsults shared a common universe of discourse. When they differed on the specific details of their rulings, they did so because of the different valence that certain institutions had in their religious systems. Thus, in the end, the Zoroastrian purities laws, though in certain respects more severe than the rabbinic ones, are in other respects either less severe or merely equally so, because the consequences of a strict application of these laws would lead to even more serious consequences which the rabbinic system would prevent in other ways. In the end, the need to make these rules applicable to daily life exercised a restraining influence. A comparison of the ways that these two neighboring systems address these problems sheds light on both systems.

Bactrian letters from the Sasanian and Hephthalite periods. Nicholas Sims-Williams

More than 150 documents in Bactrian have come to light during the past ten years. In addition to the legal and economic documents edited in the first volume of my *Bactrian documents from Northern Afghanistan* (Oxford, 2000), and a couple of fragmentary Buddhist texts, these include a large number of letters, which will be published in the second volume of my edition. Apart from their formulaic greetings, which resemble those employed in Sogdian, the Bactrian letters tend to be difficult to understand, in particular because we lack a great deal of information which could be taken for granted by the writers. Nevertheless, the letters can tell us a great deal about the language, history and culture of Afghanistan during the 4th and 5th centuries of the Christian era.

The Aramaic Heritage in One Expression of the Sasanian Inscription of Paikuli

Andrea Piras

The aim of the present paper is concerning a possible Aramaic suggestion of the Sasanian inscription of Paikuli:

The ipsissima verba of the king Narseh, recorded in his letter addressed to the usurpator Warahran, include the Middle Persian expression *shad-dyl*, *shad-zyrd* in the Parthian version, both denoting the positive condition of the „happy heart%“.

These statements have been fashioned on the corresponding Aramaic syntagm *tyb lbby*, a very ancient formula belonging to the Mesopotamian cultural heritage of legal documents and to its particular style, using metaphors of joy in order to signify the emotional state of spontaneity and uncoerced willingness.