

EDITOR FOREWORD

It is with considerable pleasure that I have the privilege to present the reader with this first issue of SAIS' new *Bulletin of Parthian and Mixed Oriental Studies*, otherwise abbreviated as BP&MOS.

Pleasure because carrying the project to readiness has not been without difficulties. Originally two separate bulletins were planned, one for Parthian studies and the other for mixed oriental ones but, aside from financial considerations, it soon became obvious that Parthian studies alone would not sustain, at least from the outset, the existence of a new and regular academic publication.

The study of the Parthian civilisation has suffered this last century from such incredible negligence that the editor is indeed very proud to provide this new mean to stimulate the advance of knowledge on this fascinating and very important civilisation which, if it really needs reminding, faced and defeated so many times the might of Rome. If it is for these victories that the Parthian are the more often remembered, the sources of their *grandeur* and the numerous paths which caused them to be able to realize such fits are far from being understood.

As the study of Parthian coins is at present the main source of knowledge on the Parthian civilisation for western scholars, excavations conducted on the soil of the former empire bring gradually new data to be added to the little we know. It seems therefore particularly adequate to see as the first two contributions of the Parthian section of the bulletin on the one hand a western study based on coins and on the other an eastern coming one based on excavations.

Jerome Gaslain's study, a scholar now finishing a doctoral thesis in Paris, appropriately examines, through the iconography of coins and through a particular head dress - the nomadic *bashlik* - the birth, origin, traditions and expression of Parthian power and identity; starting with the rule of Arsace, who founded the glorious Parthian dynasty bearing his name.

Directly from Teheran comes in return a field based study which examines the monuments of one of the most important archaeological site of northern Iran in relation to other similar monuments found across the Parthian and Sassanid geography. The study presented by Mr Hassan Derakhshi and Dr. Farhang Khademi of Moddarres University, results from three seasons of excavation and contributes to our knowledge of Parthian architecture and construction materials. Not least it allows our understanding of the influences which have shaped it, including Urartian and Phoenician.

The third contribution by Dr. Nazenie Garibian de Vartavan, armenologist and wife of the undersigned, contributes to our knowledge of the Parthian heritage from the point of view of the Armenian civilisation and sources. As the Parthian Empire disappeared, the Parthian dynasts who ruled as kings of Armenia legated a wealth of cultural heritage to the Armenian nation to the point that to this day many daily words in Armenian, also found in modern Iranian, are Parthian. Dr. Garibian de Vartavan's reveals in her study an unknown influence of the Parthian civilisation on the ecclesiastical organization of the early Christian Armenia.

The second part of the bulletin is devoted to oriental studies in general with a strong specialisation on cross-cultural exchanges between the oriental civilisations. Of particular interest to the bulletin are thus contributions on trade of goods, exchange of ideas, religious iconography, exodus or similar population movements.

Prof. Michel Mazoyer of Paris University was kind to propose a study concerning honey in the Hittite civilisation, including a new meaning of the word LAL to also designate the Hittite "hydromel".

It is he, who with Dr Georges Depeyrot, ancient coins specialist at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales/CNRS* in Paris called independently a very same week to encourage the undersigned to finally bring BP&MOS to existence. Where Parthian studies are concerned Dr Depeyrot and his team are incidentally currently bringing to press the publication of Parthian coins from Georgia in the beautiful *Moneta* series (see <http://www.cultura-net.com/moneta/>).

The final and fifth study, by the undersigned, is classified under the Egyptology sub-heading since its main actors, the god Bes and the goddess Hathor are Egyptian. In fact, in the true spirit of this part of the bulletin, the study shows how the Bes-Hathor couple left Egypt, to travel across Phoenicia, Syria and Mesopotamia to settle in the art of these respective cultures.

Nine contributions were originally due to appear in this volume. In the end however two appeared to lack originality and two could not be ready by December 15. Thus instead of penalizing the authors who had worked throughout the summer to see the bulletin appear, it was decided to publish on time¹. The same policy will be adopted for future issues.

Dr. C. Tutundjian de Vartavan

¹ The present volume was completed on 24-02-06, hence with slightly over a month and half's delay which seems reasonable for a first issue.