

## BOOK REVIEW

*Trouble in the West: Egypt and the Persian Empire 525–332 BCE.* By STEPHEN RUZICKA. Oxford Studies in Early Empires. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xxv + 311. Hardcover, \$74.00/£45.00. ISBN 978-0-19-976662-8.

Though ancient Greek historians frequently make it appear that Greece was the main concern in the west for the Achaemenid Persian kings, figures present a different picture. It seems, therefore, appropriate to seek for a (more) balanced view on Persian interests in the west. Greek sources “make possible at least a skeletal account of the sixth–fourth-century Persian–Egyptian conflict” (xxiv–xxv). Such an account should, though, be fleshed out with additional evidence.

Ruzicka has set himself the task to provide, in twenty chapters, such a fleshed out account. The first chapter (3–13) starts with developments as early as the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE before it ends with the announcement of Cambyses’ campaign against Egypt in 525 BCE. Chapter 20 (210–18) constitutes both a short synthesis of the intervening chapters and a preview of developments in the Hellenistic period and beyond. In the chapters between, Ruzicka follows the Achaemenid Persian–Egyptian relation in chronological order.

A substantial part of the book (chapters 5–18) is devoted to the period of 401–341 BCE, when Persia had lost control of Egypt. The attention to this period fits the book’s title: it is the period in which the situation in Egypt was a major concern for the Achaemenids. Ruzicka describes, wherever possible, Persia’s strategies and actions in some detail, mainly based upon Greek literary texts. His treatment of these sources is not always satisfactory, however: regarding a passage of Diodorus (Diod. 15.93.1–6), e.g., he provides on the same page (152) two contradictory analyses, not signalling the different approach.

The downside of his method is indicated by Ruzicka himself, explaining that as a consequence of the King’s Peace of 386 BCE, Greek “sources turn primarily to Greek mainland affairs and provide only sparse information about developments in Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean” (83). Though archaeological

evidence might fill some gaps, Ruzicka uses it (too) sparsely. The same applies for his use of numismatic evidence.

I have some problems with Ruzicka's explanation for Persian expansion towards Egypt. First he mentions that it was "Cyrus' strategy ... to seek secure frontiers" (13); next he affirms Diodorus' observation (Diod. 1.31.6; 15.42.1) that "Egypt was 'fortified on all sides by nature'" (14) and that it generally was difficult to get to Egypt. Not to invade Egypt would, then, seem like having quite a secure frontier. Ruzicka points at Assyrian expansion into Egypt in the past and Egypt's role in "the middle territory" (i.e., Phoenicia, Philistia and adjacent territories) to explain the Achaemenids' almost constant urge to conquer Egypt. He fails to notice the inconsistency of ambitions that becomes visible by Persia's obvious incapability of securing a safe border on Egypt's western side. A more thorough analysis of Persian motives to (continue to) involve itself in Egypt might well have served the book's purpose.

Ruzicka pays much attention to the interaction between the occurrences in the Aegean basin and those in Egypt and the "middle territory" as well as Persia's role and activities in both theatres. Ruzicka's analyses, e.g. on the Persian-Athenian détente between c. 465 and 415 BCE, on the miscalculation of Abrocomas regarding Amyrtaeus' revolt in the period 404–401, and the relationship between the location and military importance of Egyptian Memphis are interesting and to the point.

The same conclusion goes for Ruzicka's discussion of the Persians' arrival in Egypt around 525 BCE. Starting with Herodotus' account, he complements it with Egyptian sources, like the text on the stele of Udjahorresnet.<sup>1</sup> This text significantly alters the picture of Cambyses drawn by Herodotus. The image emerging from Ruzicka's account of Cambyses, and later of Darius I, as an *Egyptian* king, seems to be largely correct and is, moreover, supported by Egyptian monuments. The consequences of the "fateful decision" (28) of Xerxes to administer Egypt as a *Persian* king sufficiently prove the importance of royal identity for the Egyptians. The discussion of the stela of Somtutefnakht (197) provides a welcome addition to the accounts of the conquest of Egypt by Artaxerxes III. This also goes for Ruzicka's discussion of the importance of the site of Bubastis in

<sup>1</sup> I am, though, slightly at a loss why Ruzicka displays (111) a photograph of the statue of the priestess Utahorresnet, dating to the Ptolemaic period, instead of the statue of physician and admiral Udjahorresnet, that should be dated to 519 BCE (cf., e.g., A.B. Lloyd, "The Inscription of Udjahorresnet: A Collaborator's Testament," *JEA* 68 (1982) 166–80 at 166), even though both statues look somewhat similar, have similar names, and sit in the same museum.

Egypt (188–9). On these topics Ruzicka does succeed in fleshing out Greek accounts. In Chapter 19 (199–209), moreover, discussing a period for which there is no Greek account, he fills the vacuum by presenting some relevant texts like Ptolemy's so-called Satrap Stela.

In spite of the critical remarks above, I am pleased with this account of the Achaemenids' western policy, an account, moreover, accessible to a wider audience. Possibly this aim of accessibility led to the decision to assemble all references into a single corpus of endnotes (227–83). Such a solution, however, does not invite or challenge the reader to follow up on the evidence: at the very least, a missed opportunity. For a wider audience the appendixes (A and B: 219–22) may be very helpful. The bibliography (285–306, with some emphasis on publications in English) is good, as are the maps (xiv–xviii) and the index (307–11).

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