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Michael R. Jackson Bonner, The Last Empire of Iran. Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2020, ISBN: 978-1-4632-0616-1

Dr. Michael Richard Jackson Bonner is a scholar who majors in the history of Iran. He is a linguist with a significant background in classical literature and studies of the Late Antiquity of the Near East. Although he specializes in Iran under the Sasanian rule, his competences extend much further. He is proficient in both the pre-Islamic history of the Mediterranean world and the origins of Islam.

His thesis (MPhill, Oxford 2010) on Iran in the 6th century was published in 2011 by Studia Iranica, a series published by Peeters Publishers in Louvain, under the title *Three neglected sources of Sasanian history in the reign of Khusraw Anushirvan.* A doctoral thesis (DPhill, Oxford 2014), which also related to Iran, was published in 2015 in the Res Orientales series, entitled *Al-Dīnawarī's Kitāb al-Aḥbār al-Ṭiwāl: a historiographical study of Sasanian Iran.*

Michael RJ Bonner's latest publication, *The Last Empire of Iran*, tells the story of the Sasanian dynasty, rulers of the last Iranian empire, from its uprising in the 3rd century to the Arab conquests in the 7th century. The book is a narrative presenting the Iranian Sasanian as a powerhouse between Rome and the nomadic world of Inner Asia. Bonner, presenting the military and political history of the Iranian Sasanian, made an attempt to tell them a little differently than it was in the few existing publications. According to him, the history of late antiquity in the modern narrative, due to the domination of the late Roman Empire and the Mediterranean world, neglects the former peoples of Central Asia. He showed that these folk, through their goals, both military and political as well as commercial, impressed the Roman and Iranian states, and therefore deserve to be included in history. And not as demons or supernatural forces or barbarians. He focused on military and political matters

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to demonstrate that the Sasanian state could become a power like the Roman Empire or China.

He pointed out how difficult it is to rely on historical sources, no literary source of which was created by the Sasanian. The sources of the Roman world, which was hostile, are therefore not perfect. They show little interest in information about politics, culture or religion. Bonner delved into these messages and read "between the lines" Rome's fear of the Sasanian, their diplomacy, propaganda and espionage. He also used the latest archaeological and sigillography data. Importantly, the author also knows the classical Armenian language which is a key to analyze Armenian sources and be able to use them. This is important as they actually come from the Iranian world. Particularly noteworthy is Bonner's use of oriental messages in original languages, primarily Arabic texts, which enabled the author to understand not only the linguistic nuances, but also the historical nuances of the events described.

In terms of materials used and content, Bonner's work does not arouse any doubt. Although the 'Introduction' (1-6) lacks information that would contain the objectives, methodology and outline of chapters, the book is intended as a didactic aid, so as a possible textbook for students, such a division is not necessary. The work is divided into 10 chapters: 'Eurasia from the Conquests of Alexander to the Fall of Parthia' (7-23); 'The Establishment of the House of Sasan' (25-48); 'From Shapur I to Shapur II' (49-91); 'The World of the Nomad' (93-122); 'Humiliation and Heresy' (123-170); 'The Iranian Recovery' (171-235); 'Triumph and Tribulation' (237-266); 'The Last War of Antiquity' (267-311); 'The Collapse of the House of Sasan' (313-340); 'Observations on the Fall of the Iranian Empire' (341-347). The work is supplemented by an extensive 'Bibliography' (349-387) and person and geographical 'Index' (389-396).

The author carefully used various types of existing sources. He displayed absolute knowledge of the primary sources. The book is written in an understandable language, it is consistent and transparent. He combines historical knowledge with a fine writing style. It presents a chronological study of the turbulent history of the Sasanian as well as analyzing wider issues. It is a superior scientific material.

Michael RJ Bonner's *The Last Empire of Iran* is the best source for learning and textbook that has been written in recent years. It provides a clear and complete picture of the history of the Sasanian Empire.