

New Russian view on Sassanid Empire. Polemic with book: М. Мочалов, Д. Полежаев,  
*Держава Сасанидов 224 - 653 годы*, Москва 2016, 208 с. ISBN. 978-5-91678-317-9

For many years Sassanid Empire has been attracting a continuing popularity of scientists from around the world. It is examined by historians as a powerful element of the geopolitical puzzle Eurasia during the period of late antiquity, and the orientalists who study the history and culture of Iran in the period before the birth of Islam. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that there are very little monographies about the Empire and the exciting works are very deactualised. The first general considerations on the history of Iran in the period before Islam were taken by researchers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rawlinson and Voux created works of the crucial importance.<sup>1</sup> With the development of archaeological research conducted in Iran in the 30s and 40s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the interest of great Sassan's descendants were arising. The result of this research was quoted by many researchers all over the world work by Christiansen.<sup>2</sup> The subsequent monographs were written only in the 80s and 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Frey and the third volume of the monumental history of Iran issued by the University of Cambridge and the monograph Chegini and Nikitin.<sup>3</sup> In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the monograph on the history of Iran's Sassanid wrote Daryae.<sup>4</sup>

The Mochalov's and Polezhaev's work is a synthetic attempt to present the history of Iran in that period. The book issued by the Lomonosov's publishing house in a series of monographs "History / Geography / Ethnography" presents a very concise picture of the history of the Sassanid state. The recipient becomes encouraged by simple language, linear narrative, lack of problematic chapters and an excellent selection of sources fragments presented in the form of an annex. The authors did not avoid minor mistakes, however they not decrease cognitive value especially for the reader for whom this book would be the first encounter with this subject. Michael Mochalov is a historian interested in the Middle East in ancient times. His current research interests were focused on the development and decline of the Neo-Assyrian monarchy, which he has devoted two books so far.<sup>5</sup> In his works he is trying to focus on the political history of the ancient powers. For Dmitry Polezhaev, historian, the "Sassanids' Lease 224s – 653s" is the literary debut.

The work of Russian historians has been divided into eight chapters: Ардашир I, Шапур I, Меж двумя Шапурами. Империи в 272 – 309 годах, Шапур II Великий - долгожитель при власти, Военный кулак Сасанидов, Сасанидская держава в 379 - 498 годах, Золотая эпоха, Упадок и гибель Сасанидского Ирана (Ardashir I, Shapur I, Between Shapur's. Empire in 272 – 309, Shapur II the Great - live long in power, Sassanid's arsenal, Sassanid state in 379s – 498s, Gold Age, The fall of the Sassanid Empire). The content of individual parts corresponds to titles. Additionally, authors inserted the table of battles fought by the army of Iran. The table clarifies which of the Kings fought a battle, where, when, with which from neighbouring Rulers, and what was the result. Another annex is a collection of source fragments corresponding to described in the work events in which the reader will find, among other extensive extracts of Ammianus Marcellinus, John of Ephesus, Bishop Sebeos and Ferdousi.

The historians' book presents a very modern interpretations of the history of the Iranian Sassanid, presenting a content that reflects the opinion of modern scholars on various aspects of its functioning. They emphasise that the Sassanid Empire was a continuation of Arsacides *Imperium Parthicum* and, not a completely new geopolitical creation. And so, instead of applied since the Rowllison's *New Persian Empire* the modern scholars started to write more often about *Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy*.<sup>6</sup> Families of Parthian

<sup>1</sup> G. RAWLINSON, *The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World or the History, Geography, and Antiquities of Chaldaea, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, Parthia, Sassania or New Persian Empire*, 3, New York 1875, W. VAUX, *Ancient history from the monuments. Persia, from the earliest period to the Arab conquest*, London 1884.

<sup>2</sup> A. CHRISTIANSEN, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Copenhagen 1944.

<sup>3</sup> R. FRYE, *The History of Ancient Iran*, München 1984, *Cambridge History of Iran*, III, ed. E. YARSAHTER, part 1, Cambridge 1983, N.N. CHEGINI, A. V. NIKITIN, *Sasanian Iran*, Paris 1996.

<sup>4</sup> T. DARYAEE, *Sasanian Persia: rise and fall of the empire*, London 2009.

<sup>5</sup> M. MOCHALOV, *Drevnyaya Assiriya*, Moskva 2014; M. MOCHALOV, *Assiriyskaya derzhava. Ot gorodagosudarstva - k imperii*, Moskva 2014.

<sup>6</sup> P. POUSSHARIATI, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, New York 2009, K. MAKSYMIOUK, *Rewiev of: Parvaneh Pourshariati, Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire. The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran*, New York 2009. *Upadek państwa perskiego*, „Meander” 64-67, 2009-2012, p. 300-304.

origins constituted the elite of the royal court in Ctesiphon.<sup>7</sup> Studies highlight the contribution of the most important Parthian families of Iranian Plateau in the development of the Iranian Sassanid dominion of which are two Russian authors are well versed. An excellent example of their good knowledge of the present more than one week research jokingly emphasises the importance of Parthian clans and their importance in Iran HISTORY: since the outbreak of the war between Ardashir I and IV Artaban weightingly in 224. Mochalov and Polezhaev emphasise the role of the Suren clan in the success of Ardashir against Arsacides.<sup>8</sup> Russian researchers pay also attention to the fact that Parthian clans Karin, Suren and Mehran ruled the important countries belonging to the Sassanid Iran: Armenia, Chorastans and Caucasian Albania.<sup>9</sup>

The authors describe a highly efficient complex period of fighting between Iran and Rome in the mid-third century. On deeper reflection, however, deserve their description of a peace treaty between Philip Arab blindly say that Zonaras besides huge financial compensation Rome agreed to the inclusion of parts of Armenia and northern Mesopotamia to Iran<sup>10</sup>. This assertion, however, is not justified. About territorial cession in favour of Iran does not write any source outside the Western Zonaras, and Shapur inscriptions on the Fars called *Res Geste Divii Saporii* do not mention a word about clawing heritage of his ancestors back from Romans.<sup>11</sup> Regaining control of Armenia, Lazica and Iberia, and the provinces of northern Mesopotamia was for Sassanids a strategic objective. It allowed to control countries, still formally governed by a Arsacides included culturally in the *Eransharh*. The issue of recovery of the satrapy of the Mesopotamian torn Arsacides by Severius was undertaken in almost all offensive operations conducted by the kings of Iran in the third century and the first half of the fourth century. It is doubtful that Shapur I do not describe such success if indeed it took place.<sup>12</sup>

Another issue that needs a comment is addressed by the authors issue of the expedition Emperor Karus (282 - 283). It was a venture of a special meaning in the relationship of the Empire of Iran in the third century sense, because it was the only one which ended for the Roman Empire with a success in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century for which life has paid the commander of the army of the Romans, Emperor Karus. The authors already in the introduction indicate that they want to pay attention to it and raise the issue of mysterious death of the ruler asking: “Например что же все-таки случилось с победоносным императором Каром в палатке под Ктесифоном?”<sup>13</sup> (What happened for example with the victorious Emperor Karus in a tent under Ctesiphon?) Unfortunately, the authors devoted too little place to this war not bothering an attempt to explain the causes of the disaster of the expedition, and unfortunately they do not take the effort to clarify the causes of death of the Emperor. The thunderstruck which repeat the epoch authors concisely is one of the constant elements of historical literature from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Unusual weather events and unforeseen catastrophes characterized the world whose inhabitants could not understand. The truth of the theory of lightning shocks was considered right even in science in 30s of the last century.<sup>14</sup> Today, researchers rather agree that Karus after the capture of the capital of Iran was assassinated by his own corps officers.<sup>15</sup> Incorrect information is that supposedly Numerian, who took power after his father withdrew without starting peace talks with Wahram II.<sup>16</sup>

Numerian considered the war ended after compromised himself to losing in Carrhae of 284, then he returned to Rome trying to safe his position in the state.<sup>17</sup> It also is not certain if he could start peace talks

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<sup>7</sup> K. MAKSYMUK, *The Parthian nobility in Xusrō I Anōšīrvān court*, [in:] *Elites in the Ancient World*, v. 2, D. OKOŃ, P. BRIKS (eds.), Szczecin 2015, p. 189-198.

<sup>8</sup> M. Mochalov, D. Polezhayev, *Derzhava Sasanidov 224 - 653 gody*, Moskva 2016, p. 13 [in Russian].

<sup>9</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 28-29.

<sup>11</sup> Zon. (2009) XII 19.

<sup>12</sup> Vide: B. DIGNAS, E. WINTER, *Rome and Persia in late antiquity: Neighbors and rivals*, Cambridge 2007, p. 119-122; K. MAKSYMUK, *Pogranicze persko – rzymskie w działaniach Husrowa I Anuszirwana (531 – 579). Geneza problemów polityczno – religijnych w relacjach Iranu i Rzymu w okresie sasanidzkim*, Siedlce 2011, p. 40; T. SIŃCZAK, *Wojny Cesarstwa Rzymskiego w latach 226 – 363*, Oświęcim 2016, p. 39-41.

<sup>13</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 61-62.

<sup>14</sup> T. JONES, *A Chronological problem: The Date of the Death of Carus*, „The American Journal of Philology” 59, 1938, p. 341.

<sup>15</sup> H. D. MAYER, *Carus*, [in:] *Lexikon der Alten Welt*, col. 551; D. POTTER, *The Roman Empire a t bay AD 180 – 395*, London 2004, p. 279; J. ROTH, *Roman Warfare*, p. 230.

<sup>16</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> Zon. (2009) XII, 30; K. MAKSYMUK, *Geografia wojen...*, p. 44.

because we are not certain if the army that broke up the Romans in Carrhae, was commanded personally by Wahram. The Romans successes in Mesopotamia resulted from tearing Iran dynastic war between Wahram II and his brother Hormizd the king of Sistan of 283 – 285.<sup>18</sup> As a result, Wahram could stay against the Romans on another front and send one of the aristocrats loyal to him. In the table battle which is placed as an annex to the book any information about the war from the years 283 – 284 cannot be found.<sup>19</sup>

In the chapter on Szapur II (309 - 379), authors present different dates of battles in Armenia, instead of publishing their table as an annex to the book. Mochalov and Polezhaev describe the first conquest of Shapur's camp in Atropatene by *sparapet* Mamikonian in 372, and then battle of Bagabanta in 373.<sup>20</sup> In the table authors provide information about the pending battle of Bagabanta and the subsequent, winning for the Armenians battle in the camp in the Persian Atropatene. Both battles took place in 373.<sup>21</sup> The incorrect sequence of events in the table should be noted. Sparapet Musztak from the clan of Mamikonias actually destroyed the army of Shapur I and took captive all his harem in the Atropatene camp in 372.<sup>22</sup> The battle of Bagabanta or Wagabanta took place in the summer of 373. The successive cavalry of Iran batches were stopped by the Roman legions, but did not smite the army of Shapur because the emperor Valens (364 - 378) strictly forbade going into the pursuit of escapers and taking offensive action against the Iranians not to provoke Shapur to break the peace treaty from 11 VII of 363.<sup>23</sup>

The synthetic character of the book also forces on the authors some simplifications and causes in an unacquainted incorrect overview of some of the processes that took place in Iran in the of 5<sup>th</sup> century. There is no doubt that after many conflicts with Rome in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and implementation almost all assumed by the Sassanid political purposes resulted in the fact that the empire rulers focused on the internal affairs. Furthermore, the changing geopolitical environment in this period forced the Sassanids to change the direction of their policy in the Eastern one. In 468 they done a powerful expedition against living in border areas of Sistan Kidaryts. The King's army won their capital Walam and relocated survivors to the region of northern India.<sup>24</sup> Iran, like the Roman Empire, during this period was also faced with the onslaught of nomadic tribes which arrived from Asia. White Huns, or as some of the contemporaneous historians call them the Hephthalites, in the 70s and 80s of the 5<sup>th</sup> century plundered far eastern rims of Iran significantly reducing economic potential of the region. The problem for contemporaneous rulers in Ctesiphon were also nomads which came from behind the Caspian gates: the Huns and Alans. Fights with the nomads from the steppe will have become the Peroz cause of the tragic death when he was trying to pacify them in 484. The tragic death of the ruler becomes a hotbed of long and bloody civil war between the pretenders to the throne of Iran.

The disastrous expedition organized by the King become permanently inscribed into consciousness of Iranians. Dynastic disputes were the Sassanid, just like the previous dynasty Arsacydów, a problem which has repeatedly negatively affect the defense capabilities of the state. This was particularly dangerous, especially in a situation in which aggressive actions were taken by the Roman emperors. All these factors have led to impairment significantly the economy of the empire and completely emptied the royal treasury. Another pressing issue for Sassanids in the 5<sup>th</sup> century was the problem of the Caucasus monarchy. Intensive actions aimed to make the elite of these communities fight with Sassanids were mainly focused on trying to get them involved with the court in Ctesiphon. In the light of vast social masses Sassanids were focused to break them away from the Christian religion and enforce on them Zoroastrianism. Especially when strong repressions become a source of ruling against Iran, administration took place in 483 – 484. The authors of the book do not see in this revolt effects of anti-Christian policy of King Peroz court.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that the symbol of the repression used by Sassanids to Armenians and Georgians, was the martyrdom of St. Shushanik.<sup>26</sup> The martyr was the princess of Armenian family of Mamikonians known from their resistance to the policy of the court in Ctesiphon. She was married to a Vardan, the Georgian prince

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<sup>18</sup> A. SHAHBAZI, *Hormizd Kušanšah* [in:] *Encyklopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hormozd-kusansah>, 24 IV 2015.

<sup>19</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 162.

<sup>20</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 162.

<sup>22</sup> Faust. Buz., (1953) V 2.

<sup>23</sup> Amm. Marc. XXIX 1. 1.

<sup>24</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Z. KAKACHISHWILI, *Świadkowie Chrystusa w Gruzji od IV do IX wieku*, Warszawa 2016, p. 114.

from the principality of Lower Kartlia, which was the Sassanid steward of the region. The Georgian king and Persian satrap is portrayed as a symbol of national betrayal till today. Vardan overstrained his wife with fanciful tortures when she refused to convert to Zoroastrianism. The martyr's death of Princess of 17 IX of 472 was the signal for resistance, which mobilized Armenian and Iberian nobles of to fight against Iranian domination. Summarising the discussion on the excerpt of two Russian researchers, it can be concluded that the only rising issues of race and religion, which will drain the Iranian treasury of the state gradually will force Sasanids to reorganize the foreign policy of the West in the second half of the fifth century, which the authors seem not to notice. Their attempts to explain the reasons of the start of the Iranian expeditions against the Empire of 502 seem to be a little bit naive. Authors of the monograph suggest that the king Kawad hoped for a swift victory over the armies of the Emperor because of the support he was supposed to receive from Hephthalites and other interdependent peoples.<sup>27</sup> The reason of the invasion was going to be a desire to force the Romans tribute to maintain the Caucasian Gate, unfortunately it is said to be a formal cause.<sup>28</sup> It should be noted once again that that the authors intentionally or negligently mislead the reader. The problem of securing the northern border of Iran from nomads of the "Black Sea", the area of today's Ukraine and southern Russia from attacks of nomadic tribes was common for Empire and Iran, in principle, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The problem of maintaining fortresses in the Caucasus region was already signaled by the peace treaty concluded by Philip I and Shapur. Probably in 244 the Roman Empire for the first time committed itself to permanent financial contribution to Iran in order to maintain security strongholds protecting northern Armenia, Syria and the north western part of Asia Minor from nomads invasions.<sup>29</sup> The peace treaty of 244, the year in which the Tiber empire of the Tiber to Iran 500 000 dinars is frequently referred to as the first in which the Empire committed itself to maintain the defense system in the Caucasus.<sup>30</sup> Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the problem of maintaining fortresses which were supposed to protect both Empires from nomads was a stable element of policy between them. It should be emphasized that the war itself of 502 – 506 was the first military conflict between the superpowers on a large scale, from the moment of signing the peace treaty by both parties in 363 that has been described by the authors quite accurately.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult to agree with the summary of the conflict. The authors in fact state quite generally, that through prolonging battles with hordes of Huns which ravaged the Plateau Iranian region and Armenia in 506, signed peace treaty which perpetuated prewar status quo. It is therefore necessary to more closely analyze the end of several years of conflict. During the armistice talks in the autumn of 506, the Romans were represented by Celer and Areobindus. On behalf of Kawad the ceasefire was signed by the commander of the army in the rank of *spahbad*. Both sides committed to suspend hostilities for seven years.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, in agreement on ceasefire, Romans agreed to pay the Persians of 500 pounds of gold every year. There also came to war prisoners exchange. Sasanids failed to destroy the system of Roman fortifications in the region. Amida, which modernization annoyed so much Sasanids commanders, returned under the control of the emperor. In addition, the Romans were able to expand the system of fortifications in the East creating a powerful fortress in Daraa.<sup>33</sup> The Persians conquered the Roman part of Armenia, nevertheless it was still a safety hinterland for escaping from persecution of Armenian aristocrats. Although, it can be argued, the ceasefire treaty restored the status quo, but only if we take into account the territorial cessions. Kawad managed to fill the treasury state with gold and ransoms plundered from Amida and abduct many captives to Iran. But the most important achievement of the king, which should be noted by historians of Iran in this period, was the consolidation of power and the effective transfer of tensions inside the country beyond its borders.

We also should refer to the poorly explained by the authors causes of the Caucasus war, which broke out in 526, and quickly swept across the Middle East, becoming the next picture of widening circles of conflict with Iran Empire in the sixth century.<sup>34</sup> The Roman historian, Procopius extremely accurately describes

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<sup>27</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> Zos. III 32. 4.

<sup>30</sup> E. WINTER, *Die sasanidisch-römischen Friedensverträge des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Ch.*, Frankfurt 1988, p. 97-107, K. MAKSYMUK, *Polityka Sasanidów...*, p. 55-57, K. MAKSYMUK, *Finanz Siedlungen in den säsänidisch-römischen Beziehungen*, „Historia i Świat“ 5, 2016; . B. DIGNAS, E. WINTER, *Rome and Persia in late antiquity...*, p. 120; T. SIŃCZAK, *Wojny Cesarstwa Rzymskiego z Iranem ...*, p. 39-41.

<sup>31</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 105-106.

<sup>32</sup> Proc. Bell. (1914–1928) I, 9. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Proc. Bell. (1914–1928) I, 10. 13-15.

<sup>34</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 107-108.

the diplomatic insult which happened to the Iranians by the emperor in Constantinople and quotes the letter he had sent to the Emperor Kawad: “Unjust indeed has been the treatment which we have received at the hands of the Romans, as even you yourself know, but I have seen fit to abandon entirely all the chargers against you, being assured of this, that the most truly victorious of all men would be those who, with justice on their side, are still willingly overcome and vanquished by their friends. However I ask of you a certain favour in return for this, which would bind together in kingship and in the good will which would naturally spring from this relation not only ourselves but also our subjects, and which would be calculated to bring us to a satiety of the blessings of peace. My proposal, then is this that you should make my son Chosroes, who will be my successor to the throne, your adopted son.”<sup>35</sup>

It is hard to be surprised that the Sassanids were so annoyed when they received a refusal. Romans dismissed the Persian legation, being afraid of secret trial to take over the Sassanid throne in Constantinople and their claims to rights of succession of the throne after the death of Emperor Justin. Talks about the adoption of Khosrau were moved nearby the river Tigris about two days journey from the Persians fortress of Nisibis. The Khosrau arrived there also. During the negotiations, unfortunately, Persian negotiator raised the issue of Lazyka expressing concern that there started to be stationed Roman garrisons, while the country has been long in the orbit of Persia. Outraged by the postulate of Persians Romans agreed to adopt Chosroes by Justin I, but only under the condition that it will happen on the rights of the barbarians. Sassanids saw it as an insult even more from taking Lazyka and broke off talks with Rome.<sup>36</sup> Finally, it was the formal reason for starting the war with the Empire. But the fact is that the tension in the region has grown substantially since the signing by both parties of the ceasefire in November the 506. It also matters that the Caucasus was a day before warfare, the fact of which authors seem not to notice. From the time of Emperor Valens Iberia and Lazica had been divided between empires: the western part of today’s Georgia or Lazica was assigned to Sauromaces - Empire protégé. On the other hand, the eastern part of Georgia came under the authority of Aspacerus, the ruler sovereign to the rolling dynasty in Ctesiphon.<sup>37</sup> The safety of Roman nominees, apart from the army which Valens, were going to be protected by fortresses of legionaries.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the region of Caucasus the aggressive policy of Iran was arising again, going to convert dwellers into Zoroastrianism. The Christian inhabitants of Georgian areas were seeking protection in the Roman Cesare. The opinion of the western Caucasus as of exemplary Christians after that had been widespread in the Empire: “This nation [Iberians] is Christian and they guard the rites of this faith more closely than any other men known to us, but they have been subjects of the Persian king, as it happens, from ancient Times.”<sup>39</sup>

The conflict between mentioned Empires about a kind of a buffer zone was just inevitable. The entire sixth century can be called the period of violent struggle for dominance in hundreds of kilometers away areas. Rome and Iran competed at the western Caucasus, Mesopotamia in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, and even in the region of Indian Ocean islands. The Empire merchants and Persia had been trading in the vast areas of the Indian Ocean. The trade routes of the two countries crossed even in Sri Lanka. Historians know about the powerful commercial emporium located probably in Mantai, the reef that separates Sri Lanka from the Indian subcontinent. It was a colony inhabited probably by the Persian Christians. There had been found a huge amount of Sassanid and Roman ceramic.<sup>40</sup> Coins from both countries had been found so far from these areas, in Perm in Russia. In the chapter, which title suggests that the reader should be familiar with the period of the greatest prosperity of the Iranian dynasty is missing a trill to grasp the global view of the rivalry between the two countries.

In view of many simplifications and misunderstandings that authors apply in their work, a recognition deserves the fragment of the book which describes the conquest and occupation of Egypt by Khosrau II.<sup>41</sup> In 618 the army of Szachrbaraz got through the Sinai Peninsula to North Africa and after the successes in Palestine proceeded to the conquest of the North Africa.<sup>42</sup> Then, began the greatest battle of the Egyptian

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<sup>35</sup> Proc. Bell. (1914–1928) I 11. 7-9.

<sup>36</sup> Proc. Bell. (1914–1928) I 11. 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Amm. Marc. (2001) XXVII 12, 17.

<sup>38</sup> N. LENSKY, *Failure of Empire: Valens and Roman State in Fourth Century A.D.*, California 2003, p. 173.

<sup>39</sup> Proc. Bell. (1914–1928) I 12. 3.

<sup>40</sup> J. SEPHARD, *Europa i świat zewnętrzny*, [in:] *Wczesne średniowiecze*, R. McKitterick (ed.), Warszawa 2010, p. 235.

<sup>41</sup> M. MOCHALOV, D. POLEZHAYEV, *Derzhava Sasanidov...*, p. 137-142.

<sup>42</sup> Theoph. (2006) AM 6107.

expedition by Persians - the siege of Alexandria.<sup>43</sup> The city resisted fiercely, and after a long siege surrendered in the June of 619.<sup>44</sup> Russian researchers seem to perceive the uniqueness of the situation and emphasize the importance, highlighting the issue of Egyptian in a separate chapter. And it's hard to deny them. As noted Jalalipur, it is significant that Sassanids, who had previously abstained from permanent conquests, satisfying only the economic needs by ravaging Roman provinces and in this way maintained a huge country and a large group of government employees for ten years.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, Sassanids during his reign over Egypt in 619 + 629 were favorably accepted by Christians Monophysites. Christians of monophysites churches fiercely fought down by the imperial administration, stubbornly promoting after Chalcedon orthodoxy.

To the observations devoted to Iran's exploitation of this rich country, in principle, should only be added an information about the governor of the country, which played in the empire of Chosroes an extremely important role. Egypt was governed by an elected by the king an official Saraleneozan, who acted in the occupied country administrative and military roles. The official collected taxes, passed judgments, and after the departure from Egypt of the great leader Scharbaraz was also involved in the supervision of the occupying army garrisons in the province. Saraleneozan, of course if we accept that it is a proper name, not the one distorted in the court message title, was in the empire of King Khosrau Parweza an officer of competence *marzaban*, although as states Jalalipur preserved on papyrus lists punish him calling, *karframan-idar* which can be translated as "a regional judge".<sup>46</sup>

The book has been published in an aesthetic way, unfortunately, the authors did not plan to enrich it with a map! And so the reader may only depend on territorial descriptions of Iran in a particular periods. It should be noted that the borders of the Sassanid Empire evolved dynamically over nearly a half thousand years. Especially in the first and last period of the monarchy Sassanid borders Iran changed extensively: when Ardashir fought with neighboring countries supporting Arsacides in the twenties of the third century, and the Chosroes II conquered the Middle East after the death of Emperor Maurice in 602. It can also be noticed that the borders of the territories conquered by the king were comparable to the achievements of the Achaemenid old Persian era. The eye delight cleverly chosen by the authors illustrations placed over each introduction to the book chapters.

Summing up, the book two Russian historians, even though the material is uneven, is an excellent introduction to the history of Iran during the Sassanid monarchy for people who have not been in contact with the subject. The book despite minor factual glitches, serves as a brief guide to the history of the Middle East in the period preceding the advent of Islam. Despite the many deficiencies, the authors ably and smoothly outline dynasty, which nearly 450 years reign coincided to a period of dynamic changes in the region. The war which was led by the Roman Empire was contributed to the scale and speed of the Islam development in the seventh century. The Sassanid reign also had an impact on population movements in the region and change the ethnic transformations of the population. Culture of Iran from the times of reign of this dynasty lasted much longer than lived the descendants of the Sassan family. Small format, accessible language, sparingly used in scientific apparatus - was transferred almost entirely to the end of the book, which constitute unquestionable advantages for both the reader unrelated to his scientific work, and for students. The work's bibliography is an important guide for the Polish reader. Let us hope that the synthesis will be also released in our country and become a means of scientific development for students, and introduction for those interested in the ancient Orient. Polish market is clearly lacking popular science monographs on the history of Iran during this period. Sassanid state still requires a new research because, as the authors note in the summary, it was active in the international arena since its birth and was one of the centers of the late antic world.

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<sup>43</sup> Mich. Syr. (2013) XI 1.

<sup>44</sup> Chron. (1861) 724.

<sup>45</sup> S. JALALIPUR, *Persian occupation of Egypt 619 – 629: Politics and Administration of Sasanid*, e – Sasanika Graduate Paper 10/2014, p. 1, <http://sasanika.org/esasanika/persian-occupation-egypt-619-629-politics-administration-sasanians/> 19 V 2015.

<sup>46</sup> S. JALALIPUR, *Persian occupation of Egypt...*, p. 9-10.

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