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Historiography and palaeography of Sasanian Middle Persian inscriptions

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Stellingen behorend bij het proefschrift *Historiography and Palaeography of Sasanian Middle Persian Inscriptions* door Olivia Ramble

1. Inscriptional and cursive Middle Persian should not be regarded as representing a diachronic palaeographical evolution (from the former to the latter), but as different, synchronically used graphic registers.
2. A close study of the palaeography of the Persis coins and pre-Sasanian engraved silver vessels reveals the presence of a flourishing scribal tradition specific to pre-Sasanian Persis, characterised by a number of local innovations and a marked tendency towards ligatures.
3. Several monumental inscriptions betray a trace of the now lost Sasanian manuscript material.
4. A close study of the use of key vocabulary and phrasing reveals that Kerdīr's KKZ contains numerous allusions and references to Šābuhr I's ŠKZ, constituting one of the rare examples of intertextuality within the corpus of monumental Sasanian inscriptions.
5. The intricate textual referencing between Kerdīr and Šābuhr's inscriptions on the Ka'ba of Zoroaster at Naqš-e Rostam illustrates the extent to which ŠKZ provides the literary, as well as the political, legal and ritual backdrop to KKZ. The close textual relationship between ŠKZ and KKZ, and the clear legal and ritual framework it establishes, reflects the formal transfer of a pious foundation's guardianship from a reigning king to a priest.
6. An examination of the relevant descriptions in the works of Roman, Byzantine, Syriac and Armenian authors reveals that the details they provide on Sasanian royal inscriptions and the writing system used by the Sasanian administration are little more than fanciful literary embellishments: Late Antique historiography had little or no contact with either cursive or monumental Middle Persian.
7. The nineteenth century debates concerning the nature – Semitic or Indo-European – of the Middle Persian language are reflected to some extent in more recent studies which highlight the difficulty of determining, in the case of early Parthian and Middle Persian (and Elymaean) texts and inscriptions, whether these present 'corrupted', faulty Aramaic or already a form of heterography. What such controversies illustrate is the difficulty in distinguishing a language from its writing system.
8. The key to unlocking the mechanisms of the heterographic writing of Middle Persian was provided to Western scholars by Parsi priests. Their contribution to the development of Iranian studies has often been neglected in the modern historiography of the field.

9. The very first trigger for European interest in Persia's pre-Islamic past may be traced to the identification by Spanish-Portuguese diplomats of the ruins of Čehelmenār, or 'Forty Columns', with the famous Persepolis of classical literature.
10. In a Sasanian context 'Iranian' (*ēr*) means Zoroastrian and nothing else.
11. Almost all recent innovations in Iranian studies are based on illegally looted antiquities. The only exception is the work on newly discovered Avestan manuscripts in Iran, which have all remained with their original owners or in Iranian libraries.
12. A trans-disciplinary international symposium dedicated to the research mistakes (in the translations of key terms, the interpretation of functions of monuments and bas-reliefs, the dating of artefacts and texts) made by different researchers in Iranian studies since the 18th century and to this day would contribute to bridging the gap and lack of collaboration between the different constitutive disciplines of this field of research by offering a theme of study common to all; it would also constitute a healthy exercise.