

Shervin Farridnejad. *Die Sprache der Bilder: Eine Studie zur ikonographischen Exegese der anthropomorphen Götterbilder im Zoroastrismus*

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Shervin Farridnejad. *Die Sprache der Bilder: Eine Studie zur ikonographischen Exegese der anthropomorphen Götterbilder im Zoroastrismus* [The language of images: A study on iconographic exegesis of the anthropomorphic divine images in Zoroastrianism]. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018, 534p. (Iranica 27)

- 1 With the exception of a few works, the iconography of Zoroastrianism has received little serious scholarly attention before 2014. Research on the subject has so far been mostly restricted to Sasanian art and the iconography of Anāhitā, cf. e.g. the works by Dorothy G. Shepherd ("The Iconography of Anāhitā: Part I." In: *Berytus Archeological Studies* XXVIII: 47–86, 1980) and Lars-Ivar Ringbom ("Zur Ikonographie der Göttin Ardivi Sura Anahita." In: *Acta Academiae Aboensis. Humaniora: humanistiska vetenskaper, socialvetenskaper, teologi. Åbo: Åbo Akad. Acta Academiae Aboensis: Humaniora* XXIII, 2, 1957). Therefore, each new publication on this topic is awaited with great interest. *Die Sprache der Bilder* is an inside look at representations of ancient Iranian anthropomorphic deities and their role in the Zoroastrian pantheon with the methodical approach of an exegetical iconography.
- 2 The book answers the question of whether an entity "Zoroastrian art" can be defined for the Pre-Islamic art of Iran and contests the claim of "There is no Zoroastrian art"

mentioned by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin 2007: 1083 (“Zoroastrianism and Parsism.” In: *The New Encyclopædia Britannica. Macropædia. Knowledge in Depth*. Vol. 29. Chicago: 1083–1088). The methodological approach taken in this book is a mixed methodology based on a *harmonizing* and *diversifying* approach. Farridnejad explains the long-term existence of a selected leitmotif by a harmonizing approach and uses a diversifying approach to study the development of Zoroastrian imagery and different iconographical solutions in the case of anthropomorphic representations of the gods.

- 3 The book is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, existing iconographic and iconological interpretation methods are presented. This chapter also deals with the complicated characterization of Zoroastrian iconography. The purpose of the second chapter is to define the terms “image” and “Anthropomorphism”, and to explore their different manifestations in the context of a religious studies analysis. This chapter also discusses the question of to what extent Zoroastrianism has an iconic or anti-iconic attitude. The third chapter gives a brief overview of the anthropomorphic idols and their terminology in western religions and cultures of the ancient oriental regions. These serve as a template for the study of the Zoroastrian anthropomorphic deities.
- 4 The fourth chapter is concerned with the Zoroastrian texts from the Old and Middle Iranian periods and their anthropomorphic concepts of gods. In the last chapter, the pictorial sources from the ancient Iranian period are examined. By following certain leitmotifs of the anthropomorphic representations of the gods of the Zoroastrian pantheon, the author undertakes an iconographic exegesis of the image; the purpose of this investigation is the clarification of relationships of anthropomorphic representations of the gods to Zoroastrian religion.
- 5 The results of this study indicate that images provide a different approach to understanding the religious beliefs of the ancient Iranians and to interpreting religious and political texts, including Old and Middle Iranian inscriptions and theological Zoroastrian texts.

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