Donald Whitcomb. "From Shahrīstān to Medina Revisited"

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REFERENCES

Donald Whitcomb. "From Shahrīstān to Medina Revisited", *Eurasian Studies* 16 (1-2), 2018, p. 77-99

- 1 The author re-examines the Sasanian cities in Fars (Jūr /Fīrūzābād, Bīšāpūr, Istakhr) and Khuzestan (two cities of Jundi Šāpūr) through the archaeological evidence. He began by describing the above-mentioned prominent cities and added the results of new archaeological researches for a better understanding of urban development during the Sasanian period. Apart from the large cities, he provides valuable information and interpretation on other Sasanian and Islamic cities such as Šīrāz / Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Dare-Šahr, Arrajān (Veh-az-Amīd-Kavād), etc. The author discusses Hugh Kennedy's views (From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria", *Past and Present* 106, 1985, 3-27) on the urban transition from Late Antiquity to the Islamic period and the urban transition of Iranian cities. Additionally, he followed the medieval *geographer's* reports of the Sasanian cities such as the report of Muqaddasī and *Yâqût al-Hamawī*.
- 2 Interestingly, he defines the Sassanian and Islamic quarters of each site and divides the internal part of each city into several orthogonal grids of blocks. For the cities of Bīšāpūr and Jundi Šāpūr, he considers the Taḥt-i Nišīn sector as the oldest part, which he borrows from the central district of the Fīrūzābād with a diameter of 400 m (figs. 4, 7, 14 and 15). For the Bīšāpūr city, he considers four gates mentioned in medieval Islamic texts and notes: "the Bāb Šahr (western gate) opens onto the circular area (on Fig. 7), which could possibly be recognized as the older part of the town" (p. 84). He believes the Jundi Šāpūr was an imperial foundation of Ardašīr reflecting Sasanian (and

older) urban concepts; later that Šāpūr changed to a Western rectilinear city form and its institutions (p. 92).

- 3 D. Whitcomb criticizes Hugh Kennedy's idea's which considered the Sasanian cities only in light of the western, and classical city. Finally, he concludes that the Sasanian cities as it was "oriental" show the problem of interpretation. The evidence for Sasanian cities uses the foundations of Ardašīr and Šāpūr, that is, the *early* Sasanian city of the third century. The implication of these later urban foundations is that Sasanian cities may have had more than one model of form and institutions, a complexity that requires consideration before addressing changes and continuities with the early Islamic occupations (p. 95). The paper offers an excellent overview of the Sasanian city and provides engaging readings and a very useful framework for the careful archaeological fieldwork.
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