

Preface

If the idea of the unity of the Euroasian continent is strong and deeply rooted in Italy this is mainly due to some exceptional scientific personalities such as Giuseppe TUCCI and Santo MAZZARINO. Both have exerted a deep influence on me in an indirect way. TUCCI through my father, who inherited from him besides his academic responsibilities also his cultural horizons; while MAZZARINO through my teacher from the beginning Mario MAZZA, from whom I have learnt almost everything I know.

From them I have learnt the need to overcome cultural barriers that grow higher the more one decides to face complex themes that are not circumscribable inside set scientific-disciplinary fields. The study of the relationships between East and West, between the Greek-Roman world and the Iranian world represents a field within ancient history needing at this point such a large amount of specific know-how that it cannot be faced by single scholars who are specialists in single disciplines. A multidisciplinary approach that, while tackling single problems, is able to 'melt' the latest data from all the disciplines involved appears necessary. In such a framework the agreement of scientific collaboration first between the IsIAO with its President, my father Prof. Gherardo GNOLI and the Director of the Institute of Iranology of the Vienna Academy of Sciences Prof. Dr. Bert G. FRAGNER was made. Also the Faculty of Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of the University of Bologna, Ravenna Branch, and in particular its Dean, my good friend and colleague Prof. Antonio PANAINO, is involved in this collaboration. And it is within this framework that my publication is to be situated.

This work represents the development of the theme of a lecture I held at the Institute of Iranology of the Vienna Academy of Sciences on 28th September 2005 bearing the title: “Edessa and Palmyra between Rome and Iran.” To the Director of the Institute of Iranology Prof. Dr. Bert G. FRAGNER and my dear friend and highly considered colleague Dr. Velizar SADOVSKI I owe all my gratitude for that invitation and for the subsequent encouragement to set down in this short monograph both the considerations I exposed then and the consequent stimulating reflections. My gratitude also goes to all those who were there that afternoon in Vienna and who contributed with their interventions to the deepening of the subjects I exposed there, so first of all to the staff of the Institute of Iranology as well as to Prof. Dr. Michael ALRAM of the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, with whose presence I was much honoured.

This book is dedicated to my father and my wife.

Ravenna, 2 February 2007