

## Preface

It is with great pleasure that the authors and editors of this collection of essays present this volume to DIETER WEBER as a token of our appreciation and gratitude for the many scholarly contributions with which he has enhanced our field of studies. As one of the very few colleagues who have endeavoured to disentangle the extremely ambiguous Pahlavi cursive script he has indeed dedicated a large part of his scholarly work to “deciphering the illegible”, hereby providing access to some of the most significant original documents of the late Sasanian and early Islamic era.

It is most regrettable and a cause for great sadness that our friend and colleague PHILIPPE GIGNOUX, the scholar with whom DIETER collaborated most closely on the decipherment of these texts, passed away before seeing the publication of the *Festschrift*. In his contribution to this volume, one of his last articles to be printed, he pays tribute to the many years of fruitful collaboration with the dedicatee, conducted in an atmosphere of mutual esteem despite many differences of opinion.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to all those who have made this volume possible: to DIETER’s friends and colleagues for contributing so many excellent papers; to KIAN KAHROM for his meticulous typesetting, to YUHAN SOHRAB-DINSHAW VEVAINA and the Bahari Fund at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford, to NICHOLAS SIMS-WILLIAMS and the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* (CII), to ADRIANO ROSSI and the *Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l’Oriente* (ISMEO), and to ADAM BENKATO and the Bita Daryabari Presidential Chair of Iranian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, for providing generous subsidies toward the publication costs.

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The Editors