

Der Ktaba d-Durrasa (Ktaba d-Ma'nata) des Elija von Anbar. Memra I-III. Edited and translated by Andreas Juckel, Leuven 1996 (=Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 226/227), LX and 414, LXXIV and 340 pages.

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- [1] Andreas Juckel has devoted himself for many years to a remarkable East Syriac theological didactic poem from the tenth century. With the two thick volumes indicated, he publishes the first three of ten *Memre* in Syriac text along with German translation, and presents the author and the work in detailed introductions. The “Book of the Study” of Elias of Anbar gained little attention in western scholarship until now. ‘Abdisho bar Brika mentions it in his catalogue of authors, and so it appears in Band III/1 of J.S. Assemani’s *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (1725). The relevant histories of literature also take it into consideration. In Baumstark’s contribution (unfinished by him and carried on by Ruecker), “Die syrische Literatur,” in “Handbuch der Orientalistik” (*Erste Abteilung*, 3. Band: Semitistik, Leiden 1954), Ruecker mentions Elias only briefly on p. 190. In Baumstark’s hand-copied manuscript, which is no longer in print and is among his posthumous works (cf. R. Baumstark/H. Kaufhold, Anton Baumstarks wissenschaftliches Testament, in: *Oriens Christianus* 82, 1998, 1–52; here: 6f., 44 Ms. 30), Baumstark does not exceed that which he wrote already in his “Geschichte der syrischen Literatur,” which appeared in 1922. Since the publication has been discontinued, the passage should be quoted here: “‘Poetic’ form was used...above all by Bishop Elias of Anbar (§38a), and a certain Emmanuel, the ‘Vigilant’ [Syr. shahara] (§38b), first around 922/3 and 963 respectively, whose two large didactic poems, the ‘Book of the Study’ authored by the former while yet a deacon, and ‘the Centuries’ having a total inventory of 40,000 rhymed and quite varied heptameters, were in a position to unite secular learning of a realized theological content with the elaborate form of a structure from ten hundreds in a range of eight, to a range of 40 verses of ascending strophes.”

- [2] The negligible interest in the work is explained not least by the fact that one has relied on the manuscripts, or, as the case may be, on the descriptions in manuscript catalogues, and only a few

quotations appearing in print. (The passages named in Baumstark's history of literature are to be completed with J.E. Manna, *Morceaux choisis*, Mosul 1901, Volume 2, 124–42.) Juckel corrected that for the first time with his Bonn Ph. D. dissertation of 1983 and produced a pioneering work, in which he critically edited the first *Memra* with translation and introduction. He gave a general overview in a paper at the 4th Symposium Syriacum in 1984 in Oosterhesselen; at the 5th Symposium Syriacum in Leuven in 1988, he reported on the “typology and angelology” (published in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 229 and 236 respectively). He dedicated a contribution on the angelology to his teacher C. Detlef G. Mueller, in connection with whose Festschrift (P.O. Scholz and R. Stempel [eds.], *Nubien und Oriens Christianus*, Koeln, 115–59), he also edited and translated the portion devoted to the angelic teaching (*Memra* 9, 1–20).

[3] That Juckel took up a good deal of his dissertation again in the present edition is no shortcoming, because the dissertation is only of limited access. The author otherwise in many respects exceeds his earlier work. As is customary in the volumes of the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, the introduction to the edition is about the basic text (pp. XI–LX), while the introduction to the translation tells us about the author and the content of the work (pp. XXII–LXXXIV). Both parts are distinguished by a thoroughness which is exemplary and which one seldom meets elsewhere.

[4] The author could have drawn on more manuscripts for his edition—especially one important one from Jerusalem—as they were available at the time of his dissertation. Since he himself travelled in the Orient, he was in the position to consider almost all known text witnesses. With the unknown it is scarcely possible to reckon. All available 19 manuscripts go back to an archetype, the most recent dating to the thirteenth century, and fall into two groups. Six manuscripts belong to an “older group,” among which is the best—namely the Ms. Syr. 8 of the Greek-Orthodox patriarchy in Jerusalem from the year 1554, which previously belonged to the East Syrian monastery there. The majority of the manuscripts compose a “younger group,” and can be traced back to the copyist school of Alqosh. Two show a non-uniform text character. Excerpts are to be found in some additional manuscripts.

- [5] The author describes the manuscripts thoroughly, renders the essential passages of the scribal notes in text and translation, and bases his arrangement in the aforesaid groups and their possible dependences. Also considered are the excerpts that have appeared in print. Juckel then summarizes the transmission situation. The text of the edition is essentially based on the Jerusalem manuscript; the variants are of course noted, in so far as they go beyond orthography. Since the editions in *CSCO* are printed in *estrangela*, vocalization is lacking. The editor of the series should consider whether one ought to depart from this principle for texts of later Syriac authors, and use rather the West or East Syriac script.
- [6] The reviewer can only say, that he finds nothing to find fault with in the introduction to the edition and also has nothing considerable to add! J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, Beirut 1965, mentions on p. 366 an individual folio from the work in Tell Keph, written in 1699 by Yalda bar Daniel from Alqosh. On the town of Shak (cf. p. XXII), one could refer to J.-M. Fiey, *Nisibe*, Leuven 1977, 217f. or now to J.C.J. Sanders, *Assyro-chaldese christenen in oost-Turkije en Iran*, Hernen 1997, 58 and map 1. The Metropolitan Joseph, the writer of the manuscript in question (1825), lived there, as it follows from Ms. Berlin or. fol. 3124 (cf. J. Assfalg, *Syrische Handschriften*, Wiesbaden 1963, No. 1, p. 2). He was evidently the East Syrian Bishop of Gazarta (cf. also J.-M. Fiey, *Oriens Christianus Novus*, Beirut 1993, 76; as evidenced by 1835, 1846), and is probably the same who was named as restorer for 1808 in an additional Berlin manuscript (E. Sachau, *Verzeichniss der syrischen Handschriften*, Berlin 1899, No. 31). I would interpret the name Lwys "Lewis" of the writer who copied 1956 (p. XXXII), rather as French "Louis." The name Kaushaba (p. XI), I would transcribe as *iausaba*, because it comes from Hadbeshabba. The name Kaushaba there is probably to be written Karamles (Karmeles has not yet been used).
- [7] In his second introduction Juckel compiles the scanty accounts of the life of Elias of Anbar. It is striking that Elias had to retract a false doctrine in 922/3, and yet was chosen as Patriarch in 937 (which he all the same could not become then on other grounds). Since we have no unbroken lists of the bishops of Anbar, it is probably not to be entirely excluded that the Elias of 922/3 was a predecessor of the same name as our author, especially since his work, which, according to the colophon of the Jerusalem

manuscript, he wrote as bishop, offers no hint of the contested doctrine.

- [8] Juckel next elucidates the perplexing external literary forms of the century. It is divided, or, as the case may be, subdivided, into 3 parts (*pelguta*), 10 *Memre*, 30 centuries (*ma'uta*), 3000 strophes (*reša*), 10,000 sections (*tar'a*) and 40,000 verses (*petgāma*), whereupon the number of the centuries of *memrā* 1 to 10 were decreased and for that reason the number of sections were increased. Juckel is of the opinion that the organization into 10 *Memre* imitated the nine angel choruses extending around the chorus of the souls in the "Heavenly Hierarchy" of Dionysios Areopagite. I cannot conceal my skepticism with regard to whether Juckel can show throughout an influence from the Areopagite. At any rate, I have not found explicit indications for such a model in the three published *Memre*. Also, with regard to the contents I take this assumption—without knowledge of the complete work at any rate—not to be compelling. It could also be a matter therefore of an elaborately devised, purely external arrangement without symbolical meaning, yet Juckel himself writes on p. XXXV of the translation volume: "...neither the individual themes of angel choruses in the *Memre*, nor the century, are content-related organizational elements of the *Memrā* or the *Pelguta*. The transparent form is confronted with a disparate content, the individual strophe alone possesses a completeness of theme and content." With the form so well-proportioned, especially also in consideration of the hundred-fold number of the centuries, an arrangement in 10 *Memre* appears entirely obvious. As for the rest of the "Heavenly Hierarchy," it is treated especially with the ninth *Memre* as previously edited by the author, without any recognizable reference back to the whole.

- [9] With regard to the contents, from *Memrā* to *Memrā* the text consists of steadily longer wisdom sayings and admonitions that are, for the most part, ordered without any particular relation to content. It probably revolves primarily around monks. This milieu becomes very clear, not least in those sayings contradictory to the political correctness of today, such as: "If you see on the way a lion who has taken a woman as prey, entreat that you might find such a prey of the lion every day." (I/1/75; one finds several similar to it.) Yet the text is also ordered in lays involving pronouncements on wives and hereditary rights of children. Overall, the material appears to me to be disparate. Much is based on the Bible,

nevertheless it is difficult to demonstrate that Elias did not make use of older sayings-collections. The scope of the work speaks against the idea that everything occurred to him on his own; admittedly, I am unable to name any particular source.

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The understanding of the text is not always so simple. Juckel gives some explanations and refers to biblical and other quotations in the footnotes to the translation. As far as one goes by them, they are surely matters of opinion.

Thus, for example, in the passage: "The name 'Abraham' through its letters teaches us the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Faith and the Holy Baptism" (I/10/58), I would note that the beginning letters of these Syriac terms yield the name Abraham. Without any further information, however, the sentence is certainly not understandable to those who know no Syriac.

In spite of the reminder, "The superficial reading is the same as a rotten doorpost, and it resembles an ear of grain, which gives no flour" (II/5/95/2), the reviewer cannot claim to have compared text and translation well enough. He is limited to a few spot checks. In some few places I understand the text somewhat differently.

I/2/57: "Distribute among the sons the inheritance during one's lifetime and before death, that they are not, instead of brothers and friends, become enemies and adversaries." I would translate it more clearly with a certain nuance: "..., thereupon they not...become enemies and adversaries" (because they could not come to terms over the dividing of the estate after the death of the testator).

II/1/68/1: "Place your account in the town before the time of the journey, so that, if your cargo falls on the way, the (business-)partner not steal it from you" makes no proper sense. It is also not the question of a business partner (*shawtāpā*), but of *shuptā* "division/sharing." In my opinion, it means: "..., thereupon, if your cargo (or participle: your bearer, your beast of burden?) falls on the way, no division meets you (because the beast can carry only a portion)."

III/3/67/1 must allude to the parable of the entrusted talents (Matthew 25, 14ff. and parallels), so that it ought to be translated: "Hide not erudition for a convenient and advantageous time, that you perhaps not hear the creditor (here may be better literally: the lord of the debt), that he judge you on account of (unkept) tax (*rebbitā*)."

(Juckel: "... the one who judges you on account of

usury.”) In fact, the word “tax” (Syr. *Rebbiṭā*) appears in Mt. 25, 27 and/or Lk. 19, 23—this passage is conspicuously intended.

[11] The well-planned indices are extremely useful. Both volumes contain indices to their respective introductions. The text volume offers further indices of the Greek foreign and loan words (pp. 349–52) as well as Syriac terms (pp. 353–412!). They are as indispensable for the development of the contents as the index of Bible passages (pp. 276–84), Syriac and Greek writings (pp. 285f.), important topics (pp. 287–326), Old Testament topics and subjects (pp. 327–34) as well as the personal and geographical names (pp. 335–7) in the translation volume.

[12] All in all, both of the volumes leave no desire wanting. They offer a sure foundation for using the contents of the work, yet also the form of the centuries borrowed from Greek literature, whose last important and independent Syriac representative was Elias of Anbar. It is pleasing that this extensive work, which certainly even in the future will not stand in the center of scholarly interest, found such a thorough, careful, and well-informed editor. Hopefully, Juckel can soon produce the remaining two thirds of the work. In view of its great scope, one could well reiterate the entreaty representative of Elias in the “Book of the Study” at the close of several centuries: “Lord, guide me to the completion of the book.”