

Sebastian P. Brock, *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in with a Guide to the Persian Martyr Acts*. Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac: Text and Translation, 1. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008. ISBN 978-1-59333-222-8.

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This volume inaugurates the new series edited by Adam Becker and published by Gorgias Press which will make available in bilingual Syriac/English editions the Persian Martyr Acts composed from the fourth century to the Islamic period, recounting the persecutions of Christians at the hands of Sasanian authorities (224–651). While many of these texts have certain historical events at their core others are clearly descriptions of the heroic deeds of revered martyrs and confessors of a purely legendary or mythological character. This corpus of martyrologies has for the most part already been printed (the lion's share in the second and fourth volumes of P. Bedjan's *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*); however, *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in* had never before been published in full. The launching of this exciting new series with this inaugural volume from Sebastian Brock therefore not only marks a fundamental contribution to the study of Syriac martyr acts but also another significant milestone in the publication and study of Syriac literature as a whole.

The *History of Ma'in* of Sinjar, a general under Shapur II (309–379) who would suffer as a confessor subsequent to his conversion to Christianity, had previously received significant scholarly attention only twice: in his *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (Leipzig, 1880) G. Hoffmann had dedicated six pages to providing an annotated summary of the text, which was followed almost a century later by M. Fiey's 1971 *Le Muséon* article 'Ma'in, général de Sapor II, confesseur et évêque' (vol. 84: 437–53). In his comprehensive and concise 'Introduction' Brock succeeds in admirably advancing the state of scholarship on this text. Following a synopsis and outline of the text, Brock notes its 'literary pretensions', identifying key biblical allusions (e.g., IV Macc 6.10; Acts 8.36, 9.16) and literary models (e.g., the *Life of Abraham of Qidun*, as well as some 'general parallels' with the *Martyrdom of Qardagh*). The date and setting of composition, the *History's* topography (including a map of the broader Mesopotamian region

relevant to the text) and chronology, as well as the text's historicity all receive thorough examination, and Brock is careful to note where his conclusions differ from that of previous scholarship (or, such as in his discussion of the text's date of composition, where his conclusions, despite being built upon differing interpretations of the evidence, nevertheless on the whole agree with previous studies).

The *History* is transmitted by only one manuscript, British Library Add. 12,174, dated to the late twelfth century and written in the monastery of Mar Barsaumo (a note at the end of the manuscript, indicating that it had been commissioned to fill a gap in the library's holdings, was written by Patriarch Michael the Great). Brock's edition reproduces the text in the manuscript while adding section numbers, resolving abbreviations and correcting obvious scribal errors; deviations from the manuscript are detailed in the apparatus. The text and translation appear in facing pages. The Syriac is printed in Estrangelā and the translation is eminently readable while remaining a faithful guide to the Syriac for novice readers. The detailed annotation clarifies and comments upon historical, prosopographical, linguistic, textual, and theological matters while making reference to significant scholarly studies as well as parallels in Syriac literature (both published and in manuscript).

A valuable appendix follows the index of names and biblical references. Brock's 'Guide to the Persian Martyr Acts' presents the entirety of the Syriac texts in a chronological arrangement headed by the reigning Sasanian monarch and makes reference to all previous printed editions and significant studies as well as the relevant ancient translations. This is followed by a concordance to Bedjan's AMS II and IV, a listing of the Syriac, Greek, Armenian, Sogdian, Arabic and Coptic manuscripts, the major Greek translations, and a bibliography preceded by a discussion of general guides, reference works and major ancient sources. Brock's 'Guide' is itself then followed by an Index covering all the Syriac Acts of Persian Martyrs in which personal names, biblical personal names, place names, and, all the names of Persian Martyrs appearing at the end of British Library Add. 12,150 (a manuscript copied in Edessa and dated to 411) as well as names preserved in Deir al-Surian Fragment 27 which are additional to F. Nau's edition of BL Add. 12,150 in PO 10.

This inaugural volume to Gorgias Press's new series of 'Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac' marks an auspicious beginning. The value of S. Brock's contribution to this series is far out of proportion to its modest size or price, and will no doubt be of interest to all students of Syriac Christianity as well as martyrdom in late antiquity, who will all find that its pages repay serious study.