

Martin Heimgartner, *Die Briefe 42–58 des ostsyrischen Patriarchen Timotheos I*, CSCO 644 (Textedition) and 645 (Einleitung, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen) / Syr. 248–9 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012). Pp. xxx + 144 and xciv + 137; €60 and €75.

**J. F. COAKLEY, SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

This fine edition completes (almost) the publication of the 59 letters of the East Syriac patriarch Timothy I (in office 780–823) in the CSCO.¹ Letters 1–39 were published with a Latin translation by O. Braun in 1914–15, but his project got no further. Perhaps it is as well. The letters benefit from—indeed, require—a modern-language translation and the kind of commentary that the old CSCO did not run to but that we now definitively have in the work of Martin Heimgartner.

Any editor of Timothy's letters and specifically of letters 42–58 has first to elucidate their contents.² The long letter 42, concerned with problems in the interpretation of Aristotle, requires a good deal of technical commentary. The present reviewer can only admire the thoroughness with which Heimgartner has provided this. The shorter letters present different problems, being occasional and alluding to circumstances that have to be deduced. For example, letters 45, 51–3, 55, 56 taken together give a picture of the province of Elam and in particular the difficulty that faced Timothy and his metropolitan Sergius of filling vacant sees there. All this too is carefully worked out by Heimgartner. Letter 47, describing how Timothy arranged the copying of the Hexapla, is not so clear in its details as a modern scholar would like, and so we have useful notes

¹ Letter 59, the dialogue with the Caliph al-Mahdi, was edited by Heimgartner in 2010 (CSCO 631–2 / Syr. 244–5). Letters 40 and 41 have to be sought in separate editions: letter 40 by Mar Thoma Darmo (Trichur 1982), and letter 41 by R. Bidawid (Rome 1956). A complete publication history of the letters is given by Heimgartner in the present translation volume, pp. xi–xvii.

² A more concise survey of these letters than in the Introduction here can be found in Heimgartner's article "Zur Edition der Briefe 42–58 des ostsyrischen Patriarchen Timotheos (780–823)," in R. Voigt, ed., *Akten des 5. Symposiums zur Sprache, Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen, Berlin 2006* (Aachen: Shaker, 2010), 59–74.

about for example whether in 47.2 ܡܬܠܝܡܐ refers to vellum, or might be a very early reference to paper.

In his Introduction the editor refers only in passing (p. xix) to the difficulty of translating Timothy's Syriac, specifically his dense clauses introduced by ܐܝܡ ... ܡܬܝܢ (which may or may not have anything to do with a fondness for Aristotelian syllogisms). But it deserves mention here that Timothy's elevated style often challenges translation in other places, as anyone will know who has read his letters with students. I wonder if his own correspondents were always quite sure of his meaning. Heimgartner succeeds admirably, I think, with the hard passages, and points out the more extreme difficulties in footnotes.

The text of most of the letters is that of the "base manuscript" Baghdad Chaldean Monastery 509 ("B", dated 1299). It is laid out line for line, although punctuated by the page-breaks for all the secondary manuscripts. This seems over-fussy, although once used to it, I found the shorter lines actually made for easier reading. If, however, the editor has decided to reproduce the text of a base manuscript exactly, then I think all emendations need to be signalled somehow. It is not quite logical that some readings are indeed marked with < > while others appear in the text unmarked and the reader has to notice the words "Konjektur Heimgartner" in the apparatus or go to the translation where they are explained. The other issue raised by a strict transcription of the base manuscript is that of diacritical points. The manuscript B, we are told (edition volume, p. xiv), has no vowels, only these points; and they should be regarded as important enough to elicit a correction if wrong. I noticed in 58.1 ܡܬܠܝܡܐ "that superfluous matter" which should be ܡܬܠܝܡܐ "it is a superfluous matter." The translation assumes the correction, but the reader who is trying to puzzle out this obscure sentence needs to be helped. The difference between ܡܬܠܝܡܐ "on the one hand" and ܡܬܠܝܡܐ "from" is also crucial; likewise ܡܬܠܝܡܐ (enclitic) and ܡܬܠܝܡܐ (*hu*, not enclitic); and in several places where the sense of these words seemed wrong I would have liked to be sure that the pointing was *sic* in the manuscript. Otherwise, in such a carefully edited text it is a little disappointing to find any errors at all, but such things as ܡܬܠܝܡܐ for ܡܬܠܝܡܐ (44.1) and ܡܬܠܝܡܐ for ܡܬܠܝܡܐ (53.4) are at least easily spotted by the reader.

Volumes of the CSCO typeset by Peeters use a fine legible estrangela font, which however has developed a fault in recent years.

The letters ܐ ܕ ܐ too often touch adjacent letters and points. One of the two *seyame* points on ܐܬܬܐ for example is obscured. The letters ܕ ܐ have spurious white space around them, so that words like ܐܬܬܐܬܐ and ܐܬܬܐܬܐ stop the eye while the brain determines that they are one word and not two. These technical issues, all involving kerning pairs, ought not to be difficult to correct, and the look of the Syriac text would be much improved.

None of these remarks is meant to cast any doubt on the high quality of Martin Heimgartner's work in editing and making accessible these important letters.