

## BOOK REVIEWS

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J. F. Coakley, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in Cambridge University Library and College Libraries Acquired since 1901* (Ely, Cambridgeshire, U.K.: The Jericho Press, 2018). Pp. vii + 212; £60 or \$80.

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Coakley's beautifully printed catalogue of Syriac manuscripts that were added to the collections of the Cambridge University Library since 1901 is a complement to the two-volume work of William Wright and Stanley A. Cook, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (1901). Coakley's work lives up to the fine descriptive cataloguing standards of its predecessor and also incorporates some new features. It includes a total of 112 manuscripts or groups of fragments, including 13 of Western origin.

After the table of contents, preface, and introduction, Coakley includes a "Conspectus of the manuscripts" (pp. 5–8) giving the library number or "classmark," basic contents, date, and classification (East or West Syriac) of each manuscript, similar to the "Index of Manuscripts" at the end of the catalogue of Wright and Cook. The "Works cited and abbreviations" following the conspectus (pp. 9–12) is indicative of this

catalogue's function as a guide to previous work on these manuscripts. The body of the catalogue spans 187 pages (pp. 13–199). Finally, Coakley includes five indexes (pp. 201–12): “Authors and texts,” “Scribes,” “Other personal names,” “Places and monasteries,” and “Other manuscripts cited.”

The manuscripts in the catalogue include Bibles, liturgical books, theological works, *memre*, grammars, lexicons, hagiographies, and apocryphal literature. Along with manuscripts that are Syriac in both script and language, there are some texts in Arabic Garshuni, Malayalam Garshuni, and Neo-Aramaic. However, as Coakley explains on p. vi, the catalogue excludes manuscripts in Christian Palestinian Aramaic. Of particular note among the manuscripts in the catalogue are a polyglot (Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, and Arabic) Psalter studied by Sebastian Brock and assigned by him to a fourteenth-century Egyptian provenance (Or. 929, pp. 27–29); a Syriac amulet originating from Iran and dating to the sixth or seventh century (Or. 2480, pp. 156–58); and several Syriac texts from the Cairo Genizah, mostly undertexts of palimpsests (pp. 159–61).

In the tradition of the catalogue of Wright and Cook and of Wright's three-volume *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1870), Coakley's catalogue is richly descriptive in style. Each entry includes not only basic data and an identification of the main texts on the manuscript, but also an elaborate analysis of the contents, as well as comments on the script, ownership notes, marginalia, and acquisition of the manuscript where applicable. As a typical example, the description of Or. 1142, a manuscript of the *Ethicon* of Bar Hebraeus, opens (p. 60) with a small-print paragraph that includes (1) basic codicological data (support, dimensions, foliation, quires, date, and binding); (2) script and layout, including a judgment on the script (“Written in a regular Serto hand”); (3) date; and (4) detailed description of the binding and its

condition. Next, the title and author of the main text of the manuscript are given in Roman script, with a footnote referencing Takahashi's treatment of this title and this manuscript. Then follows a detailed breakdown of the contents of the manuscript, including both the main text and the paratexts added by the scribe. For the main text, Coakley gives the English and the Syriac of the rubrics, even listing the individual *memre* of the *Ethicon* with the number of chapters in each and where they are located on this manuscript. For the colophon, he transcribes the Syriac of the main part, followed by an English sentence giving the names of the scribe and his mother by way of summary. Coakley then transcribes a prayer from fol. 324b, added by one "Karas, bishop of Mar Behnam," in the cryptic "alphabet of Bardaisan" (Coakley gives the original cryptic characters with Syriac transliteration underneath). The entry concludes with a report of Teule's treatment of this manuscript in the latter's edition of the first part of the *Ethicon*. The high level of description makes this catalogue more than just a means of accessing the manuscripts. Rather, the book is a study in its own right. This is particularly true for the descriptions of liturgical texts, in which Coakley lists the text for each feast day (see, for example, the description of Or. 1296, an East Syriac collection of hymns, on pp. 100–108). Especially helpful is the synoptic table showing the "Contents of East Syriac Gospel lectionary manuscripts in this catalogue" (pp. 89–93).

The catalogue is notable for its fine typography, a hallmark of Coakley's Jericho Press. Following in the tradition of the catalogue by Wright and Cook, the Syriac fonts (Estrangela, Serto, and East Syriac) are appropriate to the manuscript being catalogued. One striking feature that goes beyond the previous catalogue is the use of red font to indicate rubrication in the manuscripts. This adds variety to the printed page, alt-

though some readers might find it distracting. The catalogue of Wright and Cook, by contrast, uses overlining to indicate rubrication. In any case, it is helpful to have the rubrics marked, especially in large blocks of Syriac text.

Another feature that goes beyond the catalogue of Wright and Cook is the inclusion of fifteen high-quality color photographs (pp. 14, 16, 22, 24, 28, 37, 53, 63, 74, 151, 157, 163, 164, 166, 169). As Coakley explains on pp. vi–vii, some of these photographs show scripts that are interesting paleographically, while some are included “on account of peculiarities or special beauty, or with an eye to the possibilities of identifying a scribe.”

A general issue raised by this catalogue is that of standardization in names and in the titles of works. On p. vii in the preface, Coakley explains his *modus operandi* in the spelling of names:

Personal and geographical names in this catalogue are treated inconsistently. ‘John’ is the name of the Apostle; but forms like Yuḥanan, Yoḥanan, Yawnan, etc. are retained for others. Names ending in *-iel* are not straightforward to transliterate from Syriac and I have almost always kept their usual English forms. Other conventional names are also kept: Ephrem, Barhebraeus, Khamis, etc., and place-names Mosul, Marbhishu’, Telkef, etc. Other Syriac names and words are transliterated according to a simplified system without macrons or doubling. East Syriac forms are used except for West Syriac liturgical terms (*Fenqitho*, *lilyo*, etc.). I hope this system will be comfortable for the majority of users.

The transliteration of Syriac names in Roman script has long been a complex issue; many modern systems compete with

each other and with Latinized spellings that have been in conventional usage in the West since the early modern era. In this digital age, when print works are quickly becoming converted to computer-searchable formats, it becomes increasingly important for print as well as digital works to reflect a concern for standardization. This applies equally to titles of works, for example *Ethicon* vs. *Itikon* (the latter is the spelling used by the Library of Congress Authority File). As Coakley states, at the time of writing of the preface it was expected that “in due course most readers will be consulting [the catalogue] on line.” Thus, this catalogue is a reminder of a broad need to be more intentional about standardization for the sake of a machine “readership,” in order to ensure future access.

The level of scholarship evident in Coakley’s catalogue is of the highest caliber, matching the importance of the manuscripts catalogued therein. There is no doubt that this book will continue to be a crucial reference work in companionship with the catalogue of Wright and Cook.