

Amir Harrak, *Catalogue of Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts: Manuscripts Owned by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage*, CSCO 639 / Subs. 126 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011). Pp. xl + 149 including 7 plates; €75.

J.F. COAKLEY, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The forty-three Syriac-script manuscripts of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage form a miscellaneous collection. Most (29) are East Syriac; fewer are Western (12) and Melkite (2); and there is an admixture of texts in Garshuni Arabic, Kurdish and neo-Aramaic. One or two manuscripts are old (mss. 30520, no later than 1379; and 27098, Melkite, perhaps ca. 1500); the rest are from the 17th–20th centuries. The variety of the manuscripts, the fact that they had not been listed or noticed before (they carry numbers but no other information about their acquisition), and the limited time that Amir Harrak had to examine them, made his catalogue a challenge to produce. He has, however, made a definitive record of the collection that offers much interesting historical material along the way.

About half the manuscripts are liturgical books from the Church of the East. To judge by their accession numbers (30518–30543 with 4 gaps) they were all acquired at one time. Their colophons, as far as they are preserved, link them to Hakkari (mostly Lower Tiari and Ṭhoma), not Iran or Mosul from where most surviving East Syriac manuscripts come. One of the books (no. 30529) was written near Dohuk by a Ṭhoma scribe in 1927 and purchased from him by another Ṭhoma man in 1931. (The purchaser's note mentions wistfully it seems the village church of Mazra'a.) Perhaps all the manuscripts were there then; and may one imagine that the villagers were so attached to these souvenirs of their old home church that they did not offer them for sale to Mingana who was otherwise sweeping up such manuscripts in 1924–9?

The contents of these manuscripts from the Church of the East are generally well known, since, as Harrak observes, they belong to the usual set of service books of village churches. Even so, they witness to some less common observances including the *Ba'uta* of the Virgins (ms. 30522; 'observed in some places by girls' according to A. J. Maclean in 1894); the rite of augmenting *taybuta* (a kind of holy oil; in the *Taksa* ms. 30528); and the memorial of

the repentant thief (*gayyasa*, Matt 27:44) on Easter Monday (ms. 30532). Some less well-known saints also appear: Mar Zay‘a the local saint of Jilu (ms. 30519); Mar Isaac Rabolanaya (ms. 30541; rendered by Harrak ‘of (De)rabun’ but he seems to be unidentified) and the curious Mar Ṭlaye of Mazra‘a in Ṭhoma (mss. 30543 and 30518, in the latter of which the name is written with *seyame* and apparently construed as a plural (‘children’)). Also noteworthy is a leaf inserted in ms. 30518 containing the colophon from a lost *Hudra*. This *Hudra* was written in 1712 by a member of the Šekwana family of scribes from Alqoš for the village of Beth Ra’ole (spelled in other ways in other manuscripts) in Tiari. In his colophon this Catholic scribe shows that he knew the language of his Old-Church clients, invoking the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, ‘Mother of our Lord, Christ’.

Harrak pays particular attention to the elaborate colophons of these East Syriac manuscripts mainly because they demonstrate, as he says (p. xxix), the persistence of classical Syriac learning into modern times. He gives extensive excerpts from them, with careful translations. I noticed only occasional problems. The word ܥܕܬܐ is one such, sometimes translated ‘church’, sometimes ‘monastery’, and sometimes ‘monastery’ in quotes as if to denote uncertainty. I think ‘church’ is to be preferred everywhere at this period. Another arises with the names of the patriarchs Mar Shimun. Colophons typically praise Mar Shimun—sometimes absurdly, as in ms. 30541, ‘a star that shines and flashes in the sky of the church’ etc.—but they only very rarely specify his given name. Harrak confidently supplies this information on the basis of a list of patriarchs drawn up by W. A. Wigram, but this is a very doubtful authority for the period before 1840. Ms. 30522 dated 1753 actually claims to have been partly written by Mar Shimun; but whether (p. 60) this was really Muktaş Shimun, who, if he was patriarch at all, is of quite uncertain date, had better be left undecided.

Behind these manuscripts in importance, but still of interest, are books with western or western-influenced Catholic texts, mostly West Syrian except notably two works by the Chaldean (Diyarbakir) patriarch Joseph II (mss. 1840, 3319). These West Syrian texts include a translation of the Latin commentary on the Gospels by Cornelius à Lapide (ms. 107, in Garshuni); several catechisms and liturgical books of apparently semi-western genre; and a long encyclical letter (ms. 41912 dated 1812, in Garshuni)

from the Melkite Patriarch promoting confession and western Marian devotions.

Other more or less noteworthy manuscripts in the collection are a short West Syriac manual of medicine and divination (ms. 41404); an unstudied text known as the *Ladder of the Christian* (ms. 41550, in Garshuni; a manuscript in the west is Manchester Syr. 62); a Melkite *Triodion* in Syriac and Arabic (ms. 27098); a Kurdish grammar in Syriac by Ablāḥad of Alqoš (ms. 18078 dated 1888); a document probably by the same author recording wars and epidemics in the years 1760/1–1879 (ms. 170); and a collection of *durikyata* (ms. 22933), hymns in neo-Aramaic.

The organization of the catalogue is a little infelicitous: the different texts are discussed in some detail in the introduction, and then for each manuscript all the rubrics are quoted before a section of ‘comments’ goes back and takes up points of interest. I would have found it clearer if all the data and discussion had been grouped together under each text in each manuscript, in the way familiar in other catalogues. Part of the difficulty is that the contents of the manuscripts are not always set out completely with beginning and ending folio-numbers; but this is doubtless a consequence of the conditions under which they had to be read, and is excusable. In passing, I may also remark that the printers Peeters ought not to use such tight letter-spacing in their estrangela font that *seyame*-s and vowel-points collide with neighbouring letters.

A catalogue of a collection of manuscripts like this one, exhibiting several languages, obscure proper names, and ecclesiastical terms specific to different churches, has to have been a long and difficult labour; but Amir Harrak (who, to be sure, gives credit to several expert helpers with the more esoteric material) handles the codicology, languages and terminology with assurance. We can concur with his hope (p. xxxii) that the catalogue ‘will surely contribute to our understanding of the long and rich history of Syriac literature.’