

## IN MEMORIAM



LUISE ABRAMOWSKI  
(1928-2014)

THERESIA HAINTHALER

PHILOSOPHISCH-THEOLOGISCHE HOCHSCHULE SANKT  
GEORGEN

One of the great scholars in Patristic and History of dogma and in Syriac studies, combining theology and philology, literary criticism and editorial work, in the second half of the 20th century up to now, passed away in the night of November 2-3, 2014 in Tübingen, Prof. Dr. Luise Abramowski. Born July 8, 1928 in Schwentainen, East Prussia (Eastern Germany at that time, now Poland) in an ancient noble family which can be traced back to the 16th century, she was the eldest child among five others. Her father, Rudolf Abramowski,

served as a pastor of the German Reformed community in Riga (1929-1939), himself a scholar in Old Testament and Orientalistics, esp. in Syriac (e.g. on Dionysius of Tel-Mahrē and the legacy of Diodore of Tarsus in Syriac<sup>1</sup>). He died on the way to forced labour in the Urals, deported by the Russian army, at the age of 44 in March 1945.

Luise Abramowski studied in Berlin and then in Bonn where she also graduated and defended her thesis (1956). She made her habilitation (1962) on the *Liber Heraclidis* of Nestorius, published in CSCO 242, Subsidia 22 (1963), a ground breaking study in research on Nestorius from the point of view of literary criticism. She published, together with Alan Goodman the Syriac Manuscript Cambridge Univ. Libr. Ms. Or. 1319: *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts I-II* (Cambridge 1972). In 1974 she took the chair of Church History in Tübingen and remained in this town till the end of her life. In 1982 she was elected Fellow of the British Academy.

She had learned Syriac already in 1948, at the age of hardly 20, and later gave courses in this language till 1998, even after her retirement. Her support for the younger generation of scholars, esp. in Syriac – recorded already from the early 70s in Bonn – is now reported by people in Great Britain as well as in India or Korea. With her sharp intellect and very precise and solid judgement, sober without any prejudice, she was a natural authority, even for senior scholars, and thus educating a lot of people.

For an autobiographical essay she chose the title “history of dogma and literary criticism” (“Dogmengeschichte und Literaturkritik”), thus indicating the main emphasis and tools of her work. Attentive to the historical context and often based on philological observations and textual criticism, she could come to new insights in theology and difficult theological questions. A very dense and demanding style and formulations to the point are characteristics of her writings.

Her important contributions to patristic research from the fourth to the sixth century, esp. to the Trinitarian and Christological controversies from the fourth to the seventh centuries, to Gnosticism and other areas, also to the medieval and

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<sup>1</sup> Bibliography in: H. C. Brennecke, E. L. Grasmück, C. Marksches (eds.), *Logos*. FS Luise Abramowski = BZNW 67 (Berlin, New York 1993), 634-640 (by H. C. Brennecke).

the Reformation period,<sup>2</sup> have to be valued for a different readership. Her publications in Syriac studies, the main interest in the context of *Hugoye*, include, besides the monograph on the *Liber Heraclidis* of Nestorius, groundbreaking studies on Babai the Great<sup>3</sup> or, nourished by findings in the Syriac version of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the presentation of his (Theodore's) theology, available also in English (in her book *Formula and Context*, 1992). How the monk Dadisho Qatraya re-interpreted Theodore in the sense of the desert fathers in order to keep Theodore's authority in the realm of spirituality is the subject of an article published in *The Harp*.<sup>4</sup> The Syriac version of Patristic texts (Gregory, Epiphanius) often helped to reconstruct dogmatic positions. The project of an edition of Brit. Lib. Add. 12.156 could not be realized – the manuscript remained on her desk till the end of her life – but led to several published articles.<sup>5</sup>

Already her first publication in 1955, apart from a review in 1952, dealt with Narsai.<sup>6</sup> Later studies on Narsai have been added,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See her Bibliography in: *Logos*. FS Abramowski, 619-632 (till 1992); *ZAC* 12 (2008) 5-9 (for the period 1993-2008). From 1993-2000 cf. L. Abramowski, "Dogmengeschichte und Literarkritik," in: D. Meyer (ed.), *Kirchengeschichte als Autobiographie* (Köln 2002) 1-15, here: 13-15.

<sup>3</sup> "Die Christologie Babais des Großen," *OCA* 197 (1974) 219-244; "Babai der Große: Christologische Probleme und ihre Lösungen," *OCP* 41 (1975) 289-343.

<sup>4</sup> "Dadisho Qatraya and his Commentary on the Book of the Abbas Isaiah," *The Harp* 4 (1991) 67-83.

<sup>5</sup> "Die Anakephalaiosis zum Panarion des Epiphanius in der Handschrift Brit. Mus. Add. 12156," *Mus* 96 (1983) 217-230; "Zur geplanten Ausgabe von Brit. Mus. add. 12156," *TU* 133 (1987) 23-28; "On the fragments of Theodore of Mopsuestia in Brit. Libr. add. 12.156 and the christological fragment in double tradition," *The Harp* 6, Nr. 3 (1993) 199-206; "Über die Fragmente des Theodor von Mopsuestia in Brit. Libr. add. 12.156 und das doppelt überlieferte christologische Fragment," *OrChr* 79 (1995) 1-8.

<sup>6</sup> "Das Konzil von Chalkedon in der Homilie des Narses über die drei nestorianischen Lehrer," *ZKG* 66 (1954/55) 140-143.

<sup>7</sup> "Die liturgische Homilie des Ps. Narses mit dem Messbekenntnis und einem Theodor-Zitat," *BJRL* 78 (1996) 87-100; "Narsai, Ephräm und Kyrill über Jesu Verlassensruf Matth. 27,46," in: H. J. Feulner (ed.), *Crossroad of Cultures. Studies in liturgy and patristics in honor of G. Winkler*, *OCA* 260 (Rom 2000) 43-67; Narsai (ca. 415? - 502), Hom. LIV (30) Mingana

and finally a monograph on Narsai which will be part of the volume on the Christology of the Church of the East for the series “Christ in Christian Tradition,” started by Alois Grillmeier. She got to know him already at her first participation of the Oxford Patristic Conference in 1955, which she attended till 1999 (with one exception), where she presided over the concluding session in the Sheldonian theatre. Her volume on the Christology of the Persian Church (more than 600 pages) is not yet published and has to be completed with a chapter on Ishoyahb III – she was drafting this chapter when she had to stop her work after July 9, 2014. In this volume she analyzes the East Syrian Christology from Narsai to Timothy I, including the synods and catholicoi of the fifth to the seventh century, with authors like Mar Aba, Babai, Ishoyahb I and II, but also spiritual authors like John of Dalyatha. In 2005 she gave a first summary of her results so far.<sup>8</sup> The reconstruction of the Theodorian-Edessene position of Philoxenus of Mabbug’s opponent Ḥabib was already published in volume 2/3 of “Christ in Christian Tradition” in 2002 (German) rep. in 2013 (in English).<sup>9</sup> An important study dealt with the title patriarch and catholicos.<sup>10</sup>

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II, 114-130: “Unser König Jesus”, der “gekreuzigte Mann”, in: P. Gemeinhardt, U. Kühneweg (eds.), *Patristica et Oecumenica* = FS W. Bienert (Marburg 2004) 157-166; Narsai, Homilie XI. “Über die Väter, die Lehrer,” ed. F. Martin, *Journal Asiatique* 1899 (Text), 1900 (Übersetzung), in: *The Harp* 20 (2006) = FS Rev. Dr. Jacob Thekeparampil, 333-348.

<sup>8</sup> “Die nachephesinische Christologie der edessenischen Theodorianer,” in: L. Greisiger, C. Rammelt, J. Tubach (eds.), *Edessa in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit: Religion, Kultur und Politik zwischen Ost und West. Beiträge des internationalen Edessa-Symposiums in Halle an der Saale, 14.-17. Juli 2005* = *Beiruter Texte und Studien* 116 (Würzburg 2009), 1-9.

<sup>9</sup> “Aus dem Streit um das ‘Unus ex trinitate passus est’: Der Protest des Ḥabib gegen die Epistula dogmatica des Philoxenus an die Mönche,” in: T. Hainthaler (ed.), *A. Grillmeier †, Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche, Band 2/3: Die Kirchen von Jerusalem und Antiochien nach 451 und 600*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2002, 570-647; English: “From the controversy on ‘Unus ex trinitate passus est’: The protest of Ḥabib against Philoxenus’ Epistula dogmatica to the Monks,” in: T. Hainthaler (ed.), *A. Grillmeier †, Christ in Christian Tradition 2/3: The Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch from 451 to 600* (Oxford, 2013) 545-620.

<sup>10</sup> “Der Bischof von Seleukia-Ktesiphon als Katholikos und Patriarch,” in: D. Bumazhnov, H. R. Seeliger (eds.), *Syrien im 1.-7. Jahrhundert nach Christus: Akten der 1. Tübinger Tagung zum Christlichen Orient*,

Incidentally, she could make some additions to earlier publications, or the Nestorian collection.<sup>11</sup>

Busy work was a determining factor in the last years, again and again interrupted by many stays in the hospital. Different forms of cancer and laborious and painful treatment, longstanding, interrupted her work. However, she was not complaining, only perhaps sighing about the stop of her work. Till the end with a clear mind, she was very attentive and compassionate for other ill people and respectful of the medical staff, totally refraining from herself, giving a marvelous example.

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15. – 16. Juni 2007 = *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum* 62 (Tübingen, 2011) 1-55.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. “Zu den Schriften des Michael Malpana / Badoqa,” *OLA* 89 (1999) 1-10.