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Saints in Syriac: A Little-Tapped Resource

SEBASTIAN P. BROCK

Syriac provides the third largest surviving literature of late antiquity, and consequently it offers materials that are potentially of considerable interest to the historian of that period. This is especially the case with hagiography, thanks to the facility with which these texts crossed and re-crossed linguistic boundaries. Besides numerous Lives written originally in Syriac, there is a large number of translations from Greek, often surviving in manuscripts many centuries older than the earliest Greek witnesses. After this essay draws attention to some examples of Syriac hagiographical texts which are of particular interest, the possible implications of the earliest Syriac translation for the prehistory of Palladius's *Lausiaca History* are considered.

Syriac is the third largest surviving literature of late antiquity, coming after the much more familiar Greek and Latin literatures. This literature has, however, all too often been marginalized by historians of the late antique world, and this can be attributed to two main (and interrelated) reasons: in the first place, modern scholars have (often unconsciously) taken over the disdain of the classical world for languages and literatures other than Greek and Latin. Secondly, the separating off, in the Western educational system, of the teaching of Oriental languages and literatures from that of classics, has meant that students of the Graeco-Latin world are all too often left unaware of what was going on in the surrounding cultures. When one is dealing with the Eastern Mediterranean world of late antiquity this is a serious loss. Happily, however, in certain quarters steps have been taken in recent years to try to remedy this situation.

This article is based on a paper given at the conference entitled "History as Translation," held at the University of Liverpool in June 2005, to mark the Vicennial Celebration of the series *Translated Texts for Historians*.

The fourth to seventh centuries c.e. witnessed a large literary output in four different Late Aramaic dialects: Jewish Aramaic, Mandaic, Manichaean Aramaic, as well as Syriac (in origin, the Aramaic dialect of Edessa). Of these, Syriac literature is by far the most extensive, while Manichaean, where it survives, does so in translations into other languages, and only an infinitesimal amount is preserved in an Aramaic dialect that is fairly close to Syriac.

Hagiography was a literary genre in late antiquity where texts were particularly apt to cross, and sometimes, re-cross linguistic boundaries, and so an awareness of the existence of the hagiographical literature in Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Syriac is likely to be of importance at some stage or other for anyone who is concerned with hagiographical texts in Greek and Latin. Amongst these Oriental Christian languages Syriac can be said to have a special significance. Partly this is a consequence of the sheer quantity of hagiographical writing in Syriac, both by indigenous authors and in the form of a huge number of translations, mostly from Greek; but of equal importance is the fact that many texts are preserved in Syriac in early manuscripts, dating from the fifth to ninth centuries, in other words earlier than the vast majority of Greek hagiographical manuscripts.¹

One of the most dramatic cases of a saint's life being preserved in an early manuscript concerns the Syriac Life of Simeon the Stylite, produced in his monastery shortly after his death in 459. The earliest of the several surviving manuscripts containing this is dated 473, only fourteen years after his death.²

The Syriac Life of Simeon is of course quite different from the Greek, but in the case of hagiographical texts which originated in Greek and quickly developed a highly complex textual and literary tradition, the early date of

1. A general introduction to Syriac hagiographical literature can be found in a contribution by S. P. Brock to *Byzantine Hagiography: A Handbook*, ed. Stefanos Efthymiadis (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming). A very useful guide to specifically Syriac saints is provided by Jean-Maurice Fiey in *Saints syriaques*, ed. L. I. Conrad (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2004); unfortunately the planned *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Syriaca*, intended to replace Paul Peeters's *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Bruxelles: Societ  des Bollandistes, 1910), has come to a standstill.

2. British Library, Add. 14484. An English translation of the Syriac Life is given by Robert Doran, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 103–223 (and Introduction, 45–66, where he discusses the relationship between the three different text forms, and the evidence of the Georgian version, made from Syriac).

the Syriac manuscript witnesses can be of very great importance. A good example is provided by the Chronicle known as Ps-Zacharias, preserved in an unique manuscript of c. 600: the compiler not only supplemented the work of Zacharias of Mytilene but also prefaced it with a number of hagiographical texts, including the Life of Silvester and the Legend of the Sleepers of Ephesus; both were to prove extremely popular and influential. Not only does Syriac provide, in each case, one of the earliest textual witnesses, but it can also offer some antecedents to the forms of the legends in the Chronicle of Ps-Zacharias. As is well known, the bishop who in fact baptized Constantine was Eusebius of Nicomedia, whose Arian connections soon caused embarrassment: an early solution was to change Eusebius of Nicomedia into Eusebius of Rome, and this stage is reflected in the so-called “Julian Romance” in Syriac, a work which was to provide some important motifs taken up by the influential late seventh-century Apocalypse of Ps-Methodius.³ This re-identification, however, posed chronological problems, and one solution to this can be found in the long poem on the Baptism of Constantine by Jacob of Serugh (died 521) in which the bishop who baptized him is bishop of Rome, but he is left unnamed.⁴ The identification of Silvester as the bishop, as found in the Chronicle of Ps-Zacharias⁵ finally proved the most acceptable—at least until the time of Lorenzo Valla.

The Legend of the Sleepers of Ephesus is another text which enjoyed very great popularity, and it even features, in an adapted form, in the Qur’an.⁶ It so happens that Jacob of Serugh also wrote a narrative poem

3. This has been shown by Gerrit Reinink in a number of publications: see especially his edition and annotated German translation in CSCO 540–41; Scr. Syri 220–21 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993).

4. Edited with Italian translation by Arthur L. Frothingham, *L’omelia di Giacomo di Sarûg sul battesimo di Costantino imperatore*, Reale Accademia dei Lincei 279; Memorie 3:VIII (Rome: coi tipi del Salviucci, 1882). The Syriac text of this and of Jacob’s poem on the Sleepers of Ephesus (see n 7, below) is reprinted in the supplementary volume 6 of the reprint of Paul Bedjan, *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 297–330.

5. Book 1, ch. 7; edited with Latin translation by Ernest W. Brooks, *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo ascripta*, I, CSCO 83, Scr. Syri 38 (repr. Leuven: Imprimerie orientale L. Durbecq, 1953 [original edn, 1919]), 56–93 (trans. CSCO 87, Scr. Syri 41:39–65). The Syriac represents a translation of BHG3 1628–30. On it see W. Levison, “Konstantinische Schenkung und Silvester Legende,” in *Miscellanea F. Ehrle* II, ST 38 (Rome: Città del Vaticano, 1924), 227, 235–36, and R. J. Loenertz, “Actus Sylvestri: Genèse d’une légende,” *RHE* 70 (1975): 426–39.

6. Sura 18.

on them, as well as on the Baptism of Constantine.⁷ Although he antedates Ps-Zacharias's Chronicle by more than half a century, Jacob clearly already knows the basic components of that particular narrative.⁸ Actually, an even earlier Syriac witness survives. This is a manuscript in St Petersburg (New Series 4) which may even date from the fifth century, and thus perhaps not all that long after the beginnings of the cult on Panayir dag outside Ephesus⁹ and the starting point of the narrative, which Honigmann very plausibly argued was some time in the 440s.¹⁰ Unfortunately the text of this manuscript has not so far been published, though Van Esbroeck made a preliminary study, indicating its interest.¹¹

The early date of many Syriac manuscripts is likewise of considerable importance for the study of the early development of traditions concerning the Dormition of Mary, and good use of these has recently been made by Shoemaker.¹²

Syriac not infrequently preserves texts translated from Greek whose Greek originals have either been entirely lost, or survive only in fragmen-

7. Edited with Italian translation by Ignazio Guidi, *Testi orientali inediti sopra i sette dormienti di Efeso*, Reale Accademia dei Lincei 232; *Memorie* 3:12 (Rome: R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1885), 16–33. An English translation is to appear in the Festschrift for Michael Lattke.

8. Book 2, ch. 1; CSCO 83:106–22. A slightly different form is incorporated into the eighth-century Zuqin Chronicle and is also found separate; a misguided composite edition was attempted by Arthur Allgeier in a series of articles in *OC* 12–15/16 (1915–18); this has (rightly) received serious criticism from subsequent scholars writing on the subject. Only one of the Sleepers is named in Jacob, Iamlika = Iamblichos of the Zuqin Chronicle (against Dionysius in Ps-Zacharias): two different lists of names were already in circulation in the sixth century (Gregory of Tours, in his *Passio septem dormientium*, was to fuse them together by identifying them as their pre- and post-baptismal names: see B. Krusch, *MGH: Scriptorum Rerum Merovingicarum* 7.2 [Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1920], 761–62).

9. F. Miltner, *Forschungen in Ephesus*, 4.2. *Das Cömeterium der Sieben Schläfer* (Vienna: Österreichischen Archäologischen Institute, 1937); Clive Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 42–43, 84–86; Renate Pillinger, “Kleiner Führer durch das Sieben Schläfer-Coemeterium in Ephesus,” in *Mitteilungen zur christlichen Archäologie* 7 (2001): 26–34.

10. Ernest Honigmann, “Stephen of Ephesus (Apr. 448–Oct. 551) and the Legend of the Seven Sleepers,” in his *Patristic Studies*, ST 173 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1953), 124–68.

11. Michel van Esbroeck, “La légende des Septs Dormants d’Ephèse selon le codex syriaque N.S. 4 de Saint-Petersbourg,” in *VI Symposium Syriacum*, ed. René Lavenant, OCA 247 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1994), 189–200.

12. Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

tary or modified form. Such is the case of the long recension of Eusebius's Palestinian Martyrs, preserved in the earliest dated literary manuscript in Syriac, British Library Add. 12150, "that wonderful volume" (as William Cureton once described it), completed in Edessa in November 411.¹³

In a few cases Syriac hagiographical texts provide our only, or our main, historical source. This applies notably to the various texts concerning the martyrdoms during the period of persecution by Shapur II, starting in 344, and those in Najran in the early sixth century. In both cases, the background was power politics, in the former case, open conflict between the Roman and Sasanian Empires, and in the latter, dispute over the control of profitable trade routes.¹⁴

The character of the different Acts of the martyrs under Shapur II varies enormously; some are little more than brief lists of names, while others may be short factual accounts or consist of more literary elaborations probably based on early oral material (thus notably the two related accounts of the martyrdom of Simeon bar Sabba'e, bishop of the winter capital Seleucia-Ktesiphon). Others again are later and largely legendary compilations, such as the Acts of Qardag, a product of the late sixth century.¹⁵ Only a small beginning has been made so far on sorting out some of the literary problems involved.¹⁶ Here it might be mentioned that some of these martyr acts survive in very early manuscripts; this is the case, for example, with the Acts of Miles of Susa.¹⁷ It so happens that the Acts of

13. Edited with English translation by William Cureton, *History of the Martyrs in Palestine by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861). Some isolated chapters also feature in Vatican syr. 160, probably of the sixth century; these were edited by S. E. Assemani, *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum*, II (Rome: Typis Josephi Collini, 1848; repr. Farnborough: Gregg, 1970).

14. For this aspect the succinct article by Sidney Smith, "Events in Arabia in the Sixth Century," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16 (1954): 425–68 is still well worth reading; see also Irfan Shahid, "Byzantium and South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979): 233–94. A good recent survey of the texts and chronological problems involved can be found in Christian Robin, Joëlle Beaucamp, and Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, "La persécution des chrétiens et la chronologie himyarite," *Aram* 11/12 (1999/2000): 15–83.

15. For the Acts of Qardagh see now Joel Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

16. Most notably by Gernot Wiessner, *Untersuchungen zur syrischen Literaturgeschichte*, I, *Zur Märtyrerüberlieferung aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II*, *AbhAk-WissGöttingen*, phil.-hist. Kl. III.67 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), on which see also the review in *JTS* (n.s.) 19 (1968): 300–309.

17. The Acts survive (incomplete) in British Library, Add. 14654 of the fifth century and 17204 of the fifth/sixth century. The text is virtually identical with that

Miles were not among the collection translated into Greek,¹⁸ although surprisingly he turns up in the Old English Martyrology.¹⁹ Information concerning the Persian martyrs under Shapur was brought to the Roman Empire by Marutha, bishop of Mayfarqin/Martyropolis, on his return from his embassy to Yazdgard I, and his presence at the Synod of Seleucia-Ktesiphon in 410. Dramatic evidence of this is provided by the last folios of the manuscript copied in Edessa in November 411, already cited: following a calendar of saints there comes a list of Persian martyrs, arranged according to their ecclesiastical rank (where applicable). Unfortunately the final folio is badly torn and many names at the end of the list have been lost. Happily, however, three small fragments, which include some names of women martyrs, have recently been identified among the fragments of Syriac manuscripts which still remain at Deir al-Surian in Egypt (the origin of the British Library manuscript).²⁰

The Acts of the Persian Martyrs provide one of the comparatively small number of cases where a hagiographical text travels from Syriac to Greek,²¹ rather than the reverse. In passing it is worth mentioning another case, where the text in question was to prove extremely influential in both Greek and Latin (and thence into medieval vernaculars). This is the Life of the Man of God, originating from Edessa in the fifth century. It was evidently shortly afterwards translated into Greek, and in this language the hero was given a name, Alexius, and the narrative was expanded; in this adapted form it was translated not only into Latin, but also back into Syriac.²²

As is the case in Greek and Latin, hagiography in Syriac comes in a great variety of literary forms, among which those in verse are comparatively common. Ephrem (d. 373) already celebrated a couple of local saints in

published by Paul Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1891), 260–75.

18. Edited by Hippolyte Delehaye in *PO* 2, fasc. 4 (1905).

19. See Christopher Hohler, "Theodore and the Liturgy," in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 222–35, at 225–26.

20. I am most grateful to His Grace Bishop Mattaos of Deir al-Surian, and the Librarian, Fr. Bigoul, for permission to cite this material.

21. For the edition, see n 18, above.

22. *BHO* 36–42, *BHG3* 51, *BHL* 286. The earliest text in Old French happens to be a translation of this Life: see C. J. Odenkirchen, *The Life of St Alexius in the Old French Version* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). For another example of Syriac hagiography reaching medieval Europe see Margot Schmidt, "Orientalischer Einfluss auf die deutsche Literatur: Quellengeschichtliche Studie zum 'Abraham' der Hrotsvit von Gandersheim," *Colloquia Germanica* 1/2 (1968): 152–87.

stanzaic poetry,²³ while Jacob of Serugh wrote a considerable number of verse homilies on individual saints, though none of these could be described as setting out to provide a biography of the saint in the way that several later narrative poems do.²⁴ Obviously each hagiographical text needs to be studied individually with a view to learning what were its particular setting, purpose, and sources. Only then will it be of serviceable use for the historian.

It is widely recognized that hagiography often serves as propaganda. This does not only concern the promotion of particular cults or shrines, but in the couple of centuries following the Council of Chalcedon almost all hagiography contains an element of theological propaganda. In surviving Greek hagiography this can readily be seen in Cyril of Scythopolis's various Lives. The anti-Chalcedonian counterparts to this, though composed in many cases in Greek, not surprisingly only survive in Syriac (or other Oriental Christian) translation. A particularly interesting and informative case is the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, a Georgian prince who had been sent as a hostage to the imperial court, but who became a monk, settling in Palestine.²⁵

Syriac is particularly rich in lives of anti-Chalcedonian saints belonging to the sixth century. Many of these, such as Elias's Life of John of Tella²⁶ and (above all) John of Ephesus's delightful Lives of Oriental Saints,²⁷ are splendid sources for social history.

23. Julian Saba (the "Elder") and Abraham of Qidun. Only some of these poems attributed to Ephrem are genuine: see (for those on Julian Saba) Sidney Griffith, "Julian Saba, 'Father of the Monks' of Syria," *J ECS* 2 (1994): 185–216.

24. Such as the East Syriac Life of John of Dailam (seventh/eighth century); excerpts with English translation in *Parole de l'Orient* 10 (1981/2): 123–89.

25. A new edition of the Syriac text (originally published by Richard Raabe in 1895), together with English translation, by Cornelia Horn and Robert Phenix, is forthcoming in the SBL series Writings from the Greco-Roman World.

26. Edited, with Latin translation, by Brooks in *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, *CSCO* 7–8; *Scr. Syri* 7–8 (1907; repr. 1960).

27. Edited, with English translation, by Brooks in *PO* 17–19 (1923–24); on them see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990). These two works concern Syrian Orthodox saints; a good example of hagiography from the Church of the East from this period is Babai the Great's Life of the Martyr George, on which see especially Gerrit Reinink, "Babai the Great's Life of George and the Propagation of Doctrine in the Late Sasanian Empire," in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient*, ed. Jan W. Drijvers and John W. Watt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 171–93.

In the case of Zacharias Rhetor's *Life of Severus of Antioch*²⁸ we are not dealing with generalized anti-Chalcedonian propaganda, but with a much more specific issue: The work deals primarily with his student days at Beirut, and stops precisely at the point when he became patriarch of Antioch (in 512). The whole purpose of the work is to dispel rumors concerning his pagan origins and claims that he had participated in pagan sacrifices, put about by his enemies. On the former point, the rumors were clearly based on fact, although the suppression of this fact in the Syriac tradition was so successful that it was only when the Coptic version of Severus's Homily 27, on the circumstances of his baptism at the shrine of St Leontius of Tripoli, was published that it became evident that the surviving Syriac version of this homily (originally given in Greek, of course) had been deliberately "edited," so as to remove Severus's own account of his background in paganism.²⁹

There is at least one dramatic case of a hostile Life: the Syriac *Life of Maximus the Confessor* survives not quite complete in a seventh/eighth-century manuscript of Monothelete origin, and it must have been written within a few decades of Maximus's death in 662, perhaps around the time of the Sixth Council.³⁰ Its most surprising facet lies in the place of Maximus's origin: instead of Constantinople, as in the Greek Vita tradition, it is Palestine. Although the scurrilous story in the Syriac Life about Maximus's parentage can be dismissed as fabrication, the details about his early career in Palestine, his association with the Monastery of St Chariton and friendship with Sophronius, all deserve to be taken seriously. Although quite a number of scholars specializing in Maximus have rejected the evidence of the Syriac Life more or less out of hand, it is interesting that a recent comparison of the Greek and Syriac Lives has come out in favor of the Syriac Life's claim of a Palestinian origin for Maximus.³¹

28. Edited with French translation by M. A. Kugener, in *PO* 2, fasc. 1 (1904); an English translation is in preparation, to appear in the series *Translated Texts for Historians*.

29. Gerard Garitte, "Textes hagiographiques orientaux relatifs à s. Léonce de Tripoli, II: L'homélie copte de Sévère d'Antioche," *Mus* 79 (1966): 333–86. The Coptic has a paragraph, suppressed in the Syriac translation, where Severus describes how he prayed to St Leontius, asking him "to pray to your God for me that he may save me from the cult of the pagans and from the customs of my ancestors." The Syriac translation is only preserved in the seventh-century revision by Jacob of Edessa, ed. Maurice Brière and Francois Graffin, in *PO* 36 (1974).

30. Edited, with English translation, in S. P. Brock, "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor," *AB* 91 (1973): 299–346, repr. in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), ch. 12.

31. Christian Boudignon, "Maxime le Confesseur était-il constantinopolitain?" in *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek Patristic and Byzantine Texts presented to Jacques*

* * *

In order to illustrate the potential interest of Syriac sources for hagiographical texts in a little more detail, I take two influential texts, both concerning early Egyptian monasticism, whose early Syriac version may or may not have important implications for the literary origins of the two works in question, namely Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, and Palladius's *Lausiac History*.

Although the Syriac translation of Athanasius's *Life of Antony* had been published long ago by Budge in his *Paradise of the Fathers*,³² and a study had been made of some of the early manuscripts by Schultess,³³ it was not until the edition and accompanying detailed study of the Syriac manuscript tradition by Draguet in 1980 that the possible implications of the Syriac translation were clearly brought out.³⁴ The Syriac translation is transmitted in two forms, a long and a short recension. Draguet showed convincingly that the short recension was simply a subsequent abbreviation, and that the long one represented the original translation; this long recension not only exhibits many differences from the Greek, but is also considerably longer. How should all this be explained? In the long introduction to his translation volume Draguet put forward the intriguing hypothesis that the Syriac translation was based on a lost Copticizing Greek text, which accordingly cannot have been by Athanasius.³⁵ Early reactions, by Barnes, Louth, and Gould to this dramatic possibility were generally favorable, and Barnes even suggested that the original life was in Coptic.³⁶ In due

Noret, ed. Bart Janssens, Bram Rosen, and Peter van Deun, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 137 (2004): 11–43; he concludes (p. 43) “Maxime n’était donc très probablement constantinopolitain, mais bien palestinien.”

32. Ernest A.W. Budge, *The Book of Paradise, being the Histories and Sayings of the Monks and Ascetics of the Egyptian Desert by Palladius, Hieronymus and others, according to the Recension of ‘Anan-isho’ of Beth ‘Abhe*, II (London, 1904), 3–92. The Syriac text was also published by Paul Bedjan, in his *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* V (Leipzig/Paris: Harrassowitz, 1895; repr. 1968), 1–121.

33. Friedrich Schultess, *Probe einer syrischen Version der Vita Sancti Antonii* (Leipzig, 1894).

34. René Draguet, *La vie primitive de s. Antoine conservée en syriaque*, CSCO 417–18, Scr. Syri 183–84 (Leuven: Peeters, 1980).

35. This is set out in the long introduction to his translation volume in CSCO 418. In passing it is worth noting that, according to Schultess (*Probe*, 25), his great teacher Theodor Nöldeke had already suggested that the Syriac might go back to a form of Greek text earlier than the transmitted one.

36. Timothy Barnes, “Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The Problem of the Life of Antony,” *JTS* (n.s.) 37 (1986): 353–68; Andrew Louth, “St Athanasius and the Greek Life of Antony,” *JTS* (n.s.) 39 (1988): 504–9; Graham Gould, “The Life of Antony and the Origins of Christian Monasticism in Fourth-century Egypt,” *Medieval His-*

course, however, serious objections to Draguet's hypothesis were raised by Abramowski, Lorenz, and Brakke.³⁷ Brakke, in particular, was able to show that the "Copticisms" that Draguet claimed to find reflected in the Syriac in fact could be paralleled from other early Syriac texts (though his suggestion concerning influence from Christian Palestinian Aramaic would not seem plausible). All these scholars, however, were primarily interested in the question from the point of view of the Greek text, and it was left to a Japanese scholar, Takeda, to provide a convincing explanation of why the Syriac text was both different and longer.³⁸ As he pointed out, there are good parallels for other early Syriac translations which in effect constitute expanded paraphrases rather than true translations; furthermore, thanks to his close study of the monastic terminology used, Takeda was able to show that the Syriac translator had sought to re-present and adapt Antony and early Egyptian asceticism for the benefit of Syriac readers who were familiar with a different indigenous type of ascetic tradition.

While Draguet's theory concerning the Syriac translation of the *Life of Antony* has been shown to be untenable, it would seem that there could be rather more to be said for his interpretation of certain puzzling features in the earliest form of the Syriac translation of another classic of Egyptian monasticism, Palladius's *Lausiac History*, the texts of whose complex Syriac tradition Draguet had studied and published two years earlier than his edition of the Syriac version of the life of St Antony.³⁹ The Greek text of the *Lausiac History* survives in two basically different forms, a short

tory 1:2 (1991): 3–11. Draguet's thesis was also followed by F. G. Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 257–62.

37. Louise Abramowski, "Vertritt die syrische Fassung die ursprüngliche Gestalt der Vita Antonii? Ein Auseinandersetzung mit der These Draguets," in *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont. Contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux*, Cahiers d'Orientalisme 20 (Geneva: P. Cramer, 1988), 47–56; R. Lorenz, "Die griechische Vita Antonii des Athanasius und ihre syrische Fassung," *ZKG* 100 (1989): 77–84; David Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac Versions of the Life of Antony," *Mus* 107 (1994): 29–53.

38. Fumihiko Takeda, "A Study of the Syriac Version of the Life of Antony—A Meeting Point of Egyptian Monasticism with Syriac Native Asceticism" (DPhil diss., Oxford, 1998); "The Syriac Version of the Life of Antony: A Meeting Point of Egyptian Monasticism with Native Syriac Asceticism," in *Symposium Syriacum VII*, ed. René Lavenant, *OCA* 256 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1998), 185–94; "Monastic Theology of the Syriac Version of the Life of Antony," *SP* 35 (2001): 148–57. Takeda discusses the various reactions to Draguet's theory in the introduction to his dissertation, 29–37.

39. René Draguet, *Les formes syriaques de la matière de l'Histoire Lausiaque*, CSCO 389–90, 398–99; Scr. Syri 169–70, 173–74 (Leuven: Peeters, 1978).

and a long recension. Butler held that the short recension was the earlier form, and it was this text that he edited.⁴⁰ The long recension, which takes on a number of different forms, still awaits a critical edition.⁴¹

The Syriac versions of the *Lausiatic History* are preserved in a large number of manuscripts, several of which date from as early as the sixth century, and so these represent witnesses to the text that are several centuries earlier than any Greek manuscript. Most of the Syriac manuscripts later than the seventh century represent the text adopted in the compilation of various Egyptian monastic texts by `Ananisho`, known as the Paradise of the Fathers.⁴² Draguet distinguished between four different Syriac text forms, which he names R1–4. His view of the relationship of these to the Greek texts can most conveniently be seen in diagrammatic form in figure 1 (an asterisk denotes a stage in the textual history that no longer survives).⁴³

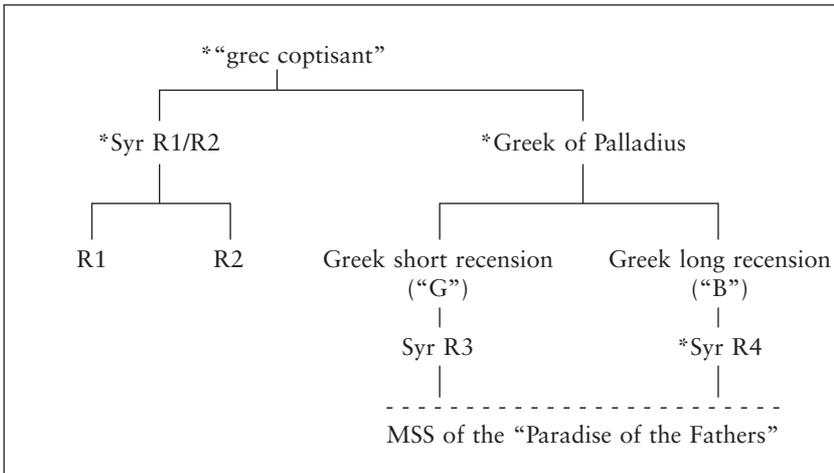


Figure 1.

40. Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiatic History of Palladius*, II, *Introduction and Text*, TSt 6.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904).

41. Not only does the sequence of episodes vary, but some manuscripts present a fusion with materials from the *Historia Monachorum*.

42. Edited by Budge in *The Paradise of the Fathers* and by Bedjan in *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* VII (1897).

43. Taken from p. 82* of Draguet's introduction to the first volume of his translation (Scr. Syri 390).

Of the four Syriac text forms, R1 and R2, each preserved in a single sixth-century manuscript,⁴⁴ are of particular interest; neither contains the Letter addressed to Lausus, or anything like the full text of the *Lausiaca History*,⁴⁵ but for those chapters which are present there are a considerable number of differences from the Greek, two of which (according to Draguet) imply that Palladius cannot have been the original author of those particular chapters.

In section 12 of the first chapter (on Isidore), where the Greek, followed by R3, has “. . . when I approached him [sc. Isidore] in my youth . . . ,” R1 and R2 provide at the beginning “when I entered the desert *with your* (fem.!) *holy mother* so that we (= R1; “I,” R2) might see the saints. . . .” At first sight one might suppose that the feminine form of the suffix was simply due to a scribal error. This, however, seems unlikely on several counts: although the difference between the feminine and masculine second singular personal suffix on the surface seems small, involving just one small letter, the presence or absence of *yodh* (*-ky* fem., as against *-k* masc.), the pronunciation is quite different (*-ek(y)* as against *-ak*), and a sixth-century scribe, for whom Classical Syriac was still very much a living language, would be fully aware of the difference. Furthermore, whereas scribes not infrequently inadvertently provide the much more frequent masculine form instead of the feminine, the reverse would be a most improbable occurrence. In any case, the fact that the feminine form is independently present in *both* R1 and R2 makes it totally unlikely that we are just dealing with a corruption. At least for the Syriac translator behind R1 and R2 we have to accept that he understood that this first chapter, at least, was addressed to a woman. This could of course very well be due to a misunderstanding on his part, since the underlying Greek would not make a distinction;⁴⁶ but we are still left with someone’s mother as the travelling companion of the author. Who was she? A possibility is indicated below.

The second passage to which Draguet pointed attention was in the first section of Chapter 10, on Pambo. Here the Greek, along with R3, has

44. Vatican Syr. 123 (Draguet’s A) and British Library, Add. 12175 (his B), respectively.

45. R1 has (with many lacunae) Prologue 9–10, and chapters 1–29 (the MS breaks off before the end of this chapter). R2 has Prologue 10, and chapters 1–5, 15, 16, 20, 42, 24, 19, 39; earlier in the manuscript ch. 38 (on Evagrius) features, but is attributed to Basil!

46. Coptic, however, would, though a Coptic origin of the Syriac does not seem probable (though translation from Coptic into Syriac is attested later on, in the tenth century). For the probable explanation of the feminine suffix, see below, n 54.

only: “On this mountain there was also the blessed Pambo, the teacher and master of the bishop Dioscorus, of Ammonius, Eusebius, and Euthymius, and of Origen, the nephew of Drakont(ios). . . .” By contrast R1 provides an extra phrase: “In this mountain were Pambo, the spiritual teacher, and bishop Dioscorus—it was he who made me a priest—and Ammonius, Eusebius, Anthimus, and Evagrius, nephew of Drakontios. . . .” Draguet assumed that these two passages in R1 ruled out the possibility that Palladius was the author, and he supposed instead that Palladius had simply reused someone else’s narrative.⁴⁷

Unlike the case with his theory concerning the origin of the *Life of Antony*, Draguet’s views on the pre-history of the extant Greek text of the *Lausiac History* have received little attention. Flusin remarked in passing that he doubted that Draguet was correct, but he gave no reasons.⁴⁸ A variation on Draguet’s interpretation was given by Bunge in a study of Coptic excerpts from the *Lausiac History*;⁴⁹ according to him, certain features, present in both the Syriac and Coptic, are absent in the Greek text; since all these could be seen as Origenist (in fact Evagrian) elements, Bunge suggested that their absence from the Greek was due to their having been expurgated from the text in the course of the Origenist controversies of the sixth century.⁵⁰ Since Bunge was concerned with passages in R3 which are absent from R1 and R2, these latter recensions do not feature in his schema (see figure 2).

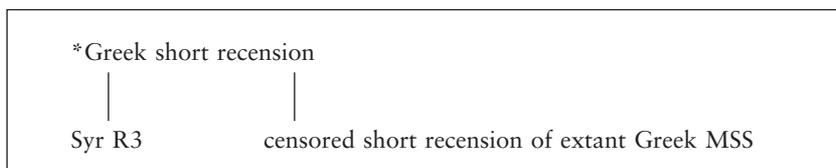


Figure 2.

47. See especially the introduction to the first volume of his translation (CSCO 390), 80*–81*.

48. In *DSAM* 12 (1984): 117, 120. A good general overview of Palladius’s career is given by E. D. Hunt, “Palladius of Helenopolis: A Party and Its Supporters in the Church of the Late Fourth Century,” *JTS* (n.s.) 24 (1973): 456–80.

49. Gabriel Bunge, “Palladiana, I. Introduction aux fragments coptes de l’Histoire Lausiaque,” *Studia Monastica* 32 (1990): 79–127.

50. A well-known case concerns the text of Evagrius’s *Kephalaia Gnostica*, of which a single Syriac manuscript has preserved the unexpurgated text (S2 in the edition by Antoine Guillaumont in *PO* 28 [1958]).

As far as the distinctive elements in R1 and R2 are concerned, Bunge supposed that they point to Palladius as having reused c. 420, and read-dressed, an earlier work of his.

The most serious challenge to Draguet's views so far comes from Nickau,⁵¹ who rightly points to certain weaknesses in Draguet's arguments (e.g., the fact that the Greek underlying R1 and R2 at 1.12 would not have distinguished here between a male or female addressee), though he perhaps dismisses some of the problems raised by the text of R1 and R2 too easily. While he admits that they might represent a first edition by Palladius, he ends up by preferring to see them as a later abridgement.

Since so little is known about the details of Palladius's life (most of which have to be abstracted from the *Lausiaca History* anyway),⁵² there seems no good reason why both passages should not go back to an earlier edition by Palladius, addressed to someone other than Lausus. Could this possibly have been Publicola, the son of Melania the Elder, with whose children Palladius stayed in Rome when he went there in 405, in support of John Chrysostom? Publicola is known to have died some time before 408.⁵³ As a prominent public figure in Rome who was not only the son of his greatly admired friend, Melania the Elder, but also the father of his hosts in Rome, Publicola would be an eminently appropriate person to whom to dedicate a work on the Egyptian monks. If Palladius had indeed dedicated an earlier edition of his work to Publicola, then the change of dedication to Lausus would be natural enough in a revised (and presumably expanded) edition dating from c. 420, long after Publicola's death. Furthermore, since Palladius had by then long been a bishop, the reference to his ordination to the priesthood would no longer be of particular interest, and so he omitted it. This would of course nicely provide the identity of "your mother" as Melania the Elder.⁵⁴ If there is anything in this suggestion, then perhaps one might go on and suggest that, even though R1 and R2 provide differing contents, they might provide some idea of the

51. Klaus Nickau, "Eine Historia Lausiaca ohne Lausus. Überlegungen zur Hypothese von René Draguet über den Ursprung der Historia Lausiaca," *Zeitschrift für Antike und Christentum* 5 (2001): 131–39.

52. Flusin gives a survey of the evidence in his article in *DSAM*, cols 113–16.

53. According to D. Gorce, *Vie de sainte Mélanie*, SC 90 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962), 37 n 2, it was probably not more than a year before Paulinus of Nola's *ep.* 45, probably of 15 May 408.

54. The feminine suffix in the Syriac will then simply be due to the Syriac translator perhaps inadvertently taking the Greek adjectival *sos*, necessarily in a feminine form with *meter*, as referring to a woman. This hypothetical earlier edition could fit Socrates' note on Palladius in his *b. e.* 4.23 (end).

extent and contents of this earlier edition. This, however, is not a subject that can be discussed further here. In any case, one can agree with Bunge's remark that "la g n se litt raire de H[istoria] L[ausiaca] reste encore en bonne partie un myst re."⁵⁵

What is not really made clear in Draguet's introduction, even though the evidence is all to be found there, is that the early Syriac manuscripts indicate that already by the beginning of the sixth century the materials from both the *Historia Lausiaca* and the *Historia Monachorum* were circulating in a number of different collections.⁵⁶ This is especially clear in the case of manuscripts of R3, where one can discern at least four different groupings in sixth-century manuscripts:

- (1) A collection of 18 numbered chapters, among which are included a few derived from the *Historia Monachorum*, and accompanied by Jerome's *Life of Paul*. (Thus Draguet's C and D; both of sixth century.)
- (2) Another collection, evidently dependent on (1), but with 15 chapters, and incorporating a number of *apophthegmata*. (Thus Draguet's E, G and J; all of sixth century.)
- (3) A considerably larger collection, but with no overlaps with (1) and (2), and without material from the *Historia Monachorum* and the *Life of Paul*. (Thus Draguet's H.)
- (4) Smaller selections, such as are found in his K and L.

Several other sixth-century manuscripts just contain isolated chapters in the midst of other materials.

As Draguet pointed out,⁵⁷ the presence of Jerome's *Life of Paul* in (1) led at an early date to the attribution of the whole collection to "Hieronymus"; this is reflected in Budge's edition of the *Paradise of the Fathers*, where ironically (in view of the modern attribution to Rufinus) the *Historia Monachorum* is attributed to Jerome.

55. Bunge, "Palladiana, I," 124.

56. Peter T th (Budapest), who has made an edition (as yet unpublished) of a sample from the Syriac translation of the *Historia Monachorum*, has isolated a text form that is analogous in character to Draguet's R1 and R2. (I am most grateful to Peter T th for letting me see his materials). In view of the recent edition of the Latin translation of the *Historia Monachorum* by Eva Schulz-Fl gel (in *Patristische Texte und Studien* 34; 1994), the need for one of the Syriac is all the greater.

57. Introduction to his text volume, 22*, and translation volume, 62*-64*.

What would seem to be an important desideratum for the future is a detailed study of the various sixth-century Syriac collections of Egyptian monastic texts, in their own right, and not just from the point of view of the separate collections which we know today as the *Historia Lausiaca*, *Historia Monachorum*, and *Apophthegmata*.⁵⁸

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58. I have in preparation a study of the collection to be found in Add. 12173 (first part), 14648 and Sinai Syr. 23 (Draguet's E, J and G).