

ritual of the month Nisan, in Ann Guinan et al. (eds), *If a Man Builds a Joyful House...: Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty* (Cuneiform Monographs 31, Leiden), 173–86.

A. R. George

THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

JEAN MAURICE FIEY (ed. LAWRENCE I. CONRAD):

Saints Syriaques.

(Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, 6.) xxi, 224 pp.

Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004. \$35. 0 87850 111 8.

The late Jean Maurice Fiey is best known for his detailed ecclesiastical and geographical surveys of ancient and modern Syriac Christian communities, but he also worked on Syriac hagiography. The publication of this book owes much to Professor Conrad who, after Fiey's death in 1995, undertook the very difficult task of editing the manuscript. The latter had been written during the Lebanese civil war in less than ideal conditions: it had been poorly typed on a very old typewriter by a non-Francophone, non-Syriacist assistant, before being partially revised by Fiey himself, with the incorporation of suggestions from Conrad and Sebastian Brock.

Fiey's introduction gives much basic information. He notes that there was no process of canonization in the Syriac churches comparable to that in the Roman Catholic Church. Thus the title Mar or Mart is given to any venerable person, including bishops during their lifetime, and the relics of anyone considered particularly holy were often fought over. The lives and deeds of many of these saints were recorded by contemporaries, in response to public admiration for the sanctity of an individual. It only remained then for the bishop to recognize this veneration as something to be celebrated liturgically. Inevitably some saintly figures who lacked a biographer have been forgotten, while others whose names alone survived were "written up" at a much later date, and not necessarily with any degree of accuracy. Local cults celebrating a saint were eventually recognized officially by the inclusion of the saint's name in a local or more general calendar. Thus the process of "canonization" appears to be democratic and decentralized, with recognition starting at the grassroots level. In addition to the calendars, Fiey has also drawn on the martyrologies. The survey covers both eastern and western Syriac churches, but uses only the very earliest of the Maronite calendars which happens to be an adaptation of a Melkite calendar. As for modern scholarship, Fiey was aware of errors in the "classic" works of Western scholarship such as Wright, Duval, Chabot, Baumstark and Ortiz de Urbina, and so he relied more heavily on the Arabic work of Barsaum, *The Scattered Pearls*, which he wished to make more widely available (it has since become available in the English translation of Matti Moosa).

The work is arranged according to the alphabetical order of saints' names, rather than following chronological order. It presents an assemblage of facts derived from sources edited, unedited and largely inaccessible. It includes Fiey's attempts to solve the problem of the identity of some saints, who were otherwise unknown or had been confused with others of the same name. Numbered entries supply the names and spheres of renown of each figure,

whether bishop, martyr, ascetic, monk, nun, etc., some indication of date if known, a short summary of the traditions concerning the saint, and then a list of sources for this information and relevant bibliography. The list covers saints from Western and Eastern Syriac churches, drawn from calendars of all periods and covering both major and minor figures.

It is interesting to survey the type and distribution of names, though the book could hardly be used for a fully scientific statistical survey. Names are frequently Persian, Arabic, Greek or Latin, depending to some extent on the saint's origin. However, names found in the Bible are at least as common. The mainly New Testament names John/Yochanan and Simeon (as in Simon Peter) are the most popular, with 27 occurrences for John and 14 for Simeon. There are four Pauls and four Thomases listed. The commonest Old Testament names are frequently those of figures associated with Mesopotamia. Jacob is particularly popular among Syriac bishops, writers, and saints from the region of northern Mesopotamia, the most famous being of course the Jacobs of Serugh, Nisibis, and Edessa, plus Jacob Baradaeus. In fact there are 12 different Jacobs recorded in Fiey's list. They are closely followed by ten Abrahams, and three Benjamins, but only three Isaacs: is it any coincidence that according to the Bible, Isaac was not born in the region of Aram? There are nine Daniels and six Jonahs (Yawnan), perhaps reflecting the proximity of Babylon and Nineveh respectively. Other Old Testament names are far fewer: Isaiah (3), 1 Ezekiel (1), no Jeremiahs, Moses (3), Joseph (4, perhaps also influenced by the husband of Mary), Samuel (1), Elijah (5), and Elisha (2). Angel names include Michael (4) and Gabriel (4). These names may not all have been baptismal ones but were perhaps adopted on entering monastic life. Rifqa Rayyis, a Maronite nun of the nineteenth century, was christened Butrusiya (Pierrette) but took the name of her deceased mother, Rifqa (= Rebecca), on entering an enclosed order. Theophoric names such as Isho'yaw ("Jesus gave"), Isho'sawran ("Jesus [is] our hope") and the similar Sawrishi', Ithallah ("there is a God!") may be based on Hebrew or Greek models, but to modern ears are reminiscent of Quaker names.

Though the book depends largely on tradition (given the difficulties of research in this field), and cannot therefore be a fully scientific work, the present reviewer has none the less found it a useful tool. Syriacists owe Professor Conrad a debt of gratitude for his efforts in ensuring its publication.

Alison Salvesen

SULEIMAN ALI MOURAD:

Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣṣrī (d. 110/728 CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship.

(Islamic Philosophy Theology and Science, LXII.) xi, 339 pp.
Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. 90 04 14829 9.

The life and teaching of the renowned Umayyad preacher and religious leader al-Ḥasan al-Baṣṣrī has repeatedly been examined by prominent Western scholars such as L. Massignon, H. H. Schaeder, H. Ritter and more recently J. van Ess. The public impact of his sermons and scholarly activity was evidently great but varied in his lifetime. After his death diverse schools of