

meeting of cultures (pp. 1-2). It is needless to stress the importance of such an approach for a deeper understanding of form and thought in ancient historiography in general.

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Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, ed., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material (Papers of the First Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam)* (The Darwin Press, Princeton 1992) (= *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* I), pp. xiv + 428

Gerhard Endress and Dimitri Gutas, ed., *A Greek and Arabic Lexicon: Materials for a Dictionary of the Mediaeval Translations from Greek into Arabic*, Fascicle 1, (E.J. Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln 1992) (= *Handbuch der Orientalistik/Handbook of Oriental Studies, Erste Abteilung: Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten/The Near and Middle East XI*. Band), pp. 30 + 96 + 20

The transition from late Antiquity to Islam has never really received the amount of attention that it deserves, and in recent decades, with the decline in the numbers of students for the classical languages, it has occasionally appeared that studies in this borderland between cultures were doomed to decline, too. More recently, however, the general field of cultural frontiers and of transitions from one culture to another has begun to arouse a greatly heightened degree of interest. The present studies demonstrate the importance of much work that is being done now, and also illustrate the potential to be derived from scholarly collaboration in a field, or a group of fields, where isolation has too often been the companion to creative endeavour. The first volume, under the editorship of Averil Cameron and Lawrence Conrad, is the outcome of a workshop on the theme "Late Antiquity and Early Islam" held in London in 1989, and the first in a series of projected publications, not only of the proceedings of workshops, in this area. The work itself, like the interest of which it is an earnest, is greatly to be welcomed; although, perhaps inevitably, it raises some questions of method and approach, it also illustrates well a number of problems and of areas in which scholars in different fields have much to learn from each other.

This first volume contains an introduction and eight papers, ranging from twenty-five to over eighty pages in length. In the Introduction, the editors lay out the main problems which they and their colleagues seek to address, both in this series of volumes and in the series of workshops which will underlie it. One of the main difficulties which they hope to attack is the increasing compartmentalisation of scholarship which seems to accompany the acknowledged growth of interest in the period of change in the Near and Middle East between the mid-sixth century and the mid-eighth century. This segmentation is itself in part related to the enormous expansion and increasing sophistication of the work that is being done; but keeping abreast of new work is thereby becoming all the more difficult.

The project aims therefore to facilitate communication between workers in different fields, and also to provide opportunities for inter-disciplinary cross-fertilisation; the editors hope to encourage more synthesis and integration between history and archaeology, and also to address the need for efforts to make widely scattered material in various subjects more easily available. All this is highly commendable, and very important especially

for a field which, like this one, lies at the meeting-point of a number of independent or semi-independent areas of scholars' interests and research. This meeting ground has all too often in the past suffered from precisely the sorts of blinkeredness that the editors point to, and their efforts to bring about the changes desired can only be welcomed. At the same time, one may perhaps question whether more effort should not be devoted to encouraging younger scholars to attempt, beyond the mere awareness of the existence of other fields and of some of the results of work in neighbouring areas, to cross precisely those inter-disciplinary boundaries that the editors complain of. Meetings at frontier fences are not enough; people should be working across the fences and, in particular, striving to make use of evidence and source materials in and from a variety of cultures and languages. All this is of course no more than the obvious, and many of the papers in this collection demonstrate the participants' real awareness of the importance of these issues, if also their understanding of the difficulties involved in trying to resolve them.

The papers fall broadly into three groups, defined by the language of the source, Greek, Syriac or Arabic: Michael Whitby looks at Greek historical writing after Procopius; Averil Cameron at changes in themes and styles in Greek literature in the seventh-eighth centuries; John Haldon at Anastasius of Sinai; and G.J. Reinink at Pseudo-Methodius' attitude to the rise of Islam. Hans Drijvers studies the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles. Wadad al-Qadi asks how authentic early Islamic state letters may be; Stefan Leder examines the *khobar* as a basic unit of Arabic historical writing; and Lawrence Conrad, in what is at eighty-five pages by far the longest paper in the volume, examines "The conquest of Arwad: a source-critical study in the historiography of the early medieval Near East". Wadad al-Qadi's and Lawrence Conrad's papers offer something of the flavour of this rich meal.

In "Early Islamic State Letters: the Question of Authenticity" Wadad al-Qadi looks at a single literary genre of the early Islamic period, letters or epistles, *rasa'il*, addressed usually by a state official to a public audience. Virtually all of these letters are recorded by writers who flourished in or after the third/ninth century; therefore a first task has to be to establish their authenticity. Given the large number of such letters and the fact that they are widely scattered in the sources, and given too the enormous effort required to prove (or disprove) the authenticity of a single document, Wadad al-Qadi here settles on a group of texts attributed to 'Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya al-Katib, the secretary to the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan b. Muhammad (who died, like 'Abd al-Hamid himself, in 132/750 at the hands of the 'Abbasids). The letters cover a wide variety of subjects and if genuine constitute an important body of source material for the last quarter of a century of Umayyad rule. Wadad al-Qadi argues that the fact that none of them is recorded for us by a written source earlier than a century after the death of their supposed author should not worry us unduly; this fact has more to do with the pace of the recording movement in Islamic civilization than with the letters themselves. While it may have implications for such matters as the detail of the linguistic form of the texts, it may not be very significant as an argument against the documents' overall authenticity. With regard to the survival of different versions of the same letter, and attributions of a single letter to different authors, al-Qadi suggests a more tempered approach, in one case arguing for authenticity on grounds related to the nature of the transmission, and in another rejecting the letter's authenticity on similar grounds. This attempt to solidify to some degree the slippery material which we have for early Islamic history is very welcome, especially at a time when so

much of that material seems to be in the process of disintegration. Conrad's study of the source on Arwad offers a different approach altogether.

Arwad is a tiny, almost waterless island two kilometres off the coast of Syria just south of Tartus; its two protected anchorages and easily defended location, made of it, despite its tiny size (it is 800 metres long from north to south and only 500 metres wide), a site of considerable importance for long periods. Conrad argues here that the siege and the ultimate (and equally inevitable) fall of Arwad to the Arabs in 29/650 should be seen not just as a minor detail in the history of the conquest of Syria, but rather as "the important first stage of a long naval campaign" that brought the Muslims closer to their ultimate objective — Constantinople. This gives the siege of Arwad more significance than it has hitherto been granted by historians. He argues further that close study of the various sources available illuminates the mutual perceptions of the local Christians and their new rulers as well as teaching us about the character of the historical traditions and writing of the early medieval Near East.

Perhaps the most disturbing — though not therefore nowadays the most surprising — of Conrad's conclusions here is that "In historical terms th[e] corpus of [Arabic-Islamic] material [for the conquest of Arwad] tells us little that does not disintegrate upon closer historiographical inspection" (p. 386). Conrad goes on to argue that the problems implied by this have a broader application — to other areas of historical event, to other areas of historical source material and even to their use by modern scholars. There is much to be learned from the process of eliminating the layers of later historiographical addition, as he stresses, but, as he also points out, this process also makes it all the more difficult to attempt to establish and to study what really happened. In the context of the sixth to the eighth centuries in the Near East, however, it may be that this is as far as we can hope to go. Each of these papers, like the others in the volume, is deeply concerned with the value of the source materials as indirectly informative about their authors' periods; what emerges from them is the abiding need to establish how far they may reflect historical realities in what they purport to report of the past.

Endress' and Gutas' *A Greek and Arabic Lexicon: Materials for a Dictionary of the Mediaeval Translations from Greek into Arabic* is a reminder both of more traditional approaches and of how much basic work remains to be done at every level of this subject. Its very title recalls the great lexicographical achievements of the nineteenth century. At first sight it is astonishing that such a work as this was not produced during that century, or at least in the first part of this. If Gotthelf Bergsträsser had lived perhaps we should not have had to wait until now for the start of this project. It is welcome also because it demonstrates that scholars still exist who can work on both sides of the linguistic divide illustrated by the collection discussed above. Unlike a century ago, such combinations of skills are all too rare in these times.

This is the first fascicle of what seems bound to be a large work. It contains the Introduction, a preliminary list of sources, and entries running from alif to the root alif-kha'-ra'. In the Introduction the editors explain the aims and structure of the dictionary. Its stated aims are, *inter alia*, to document the vocabulary and syntax of Classical and Middle Arabic; to illustrate the development of a scientific and technical vocabulary in Arabic; to advance the study of the nature and chronology of the translation movement from Greek into Arabic; and also to contribute to the establishment of the texts both of Greek originals and of their Arabic translations. The planning of such a work is replete with difficulties, more than in, say, a glossary of Latin translations from Greek: the multiple

forms of Arabic letters, and the multiple interpretations which individual forms can have, mean that a wide variety and large number of difficulties arise: for example, the ordering of forms found in the manuscripts. The editors stress, rightly, that the present state of research in the field now permits the production of a dictionary of this sort, despite the inadequate quality of many existing text editions and the fact that many important texts still have not been edited at all. But a work such as this cannot be other than interim.

The basis of the dictionary was provided by Arabic texts whose Greek originals have survived, and is founded on the material in the various glossaries included in published editions. This has led to a certain imbalance: medicine is very well represented, not only because of the sheer bulk of the works of Galen and Hippocrates which were translated into Arabic but also because the editors of these texts in their Arabic versions actually included glossaries in their editions. In order to offset this imbalance somewhat, the editors have also included word-by-word glossaries of selected texts from other areas prepared specially on cards for this project, as well as sporadic gleanings by the editors themselves.

The work is very user-friendly: it is divided into a number of clearly defined sections, and cross-reference between them is easy. In the future, presumably it will be, or become possible to update existing fascicles in some cumulative manner. The work is arranged basically as an Arabic-Greek dictionary, but it is provided also with a Greek-Arabic glossary, and there are indices of Greek proper names and transliterated words, of variant passages in the two languages and of Greek quotations. The list of sources is full (at least as full as it can be at present) — here especially updating will be necessary and welcome.

The usefulness of such a work needs no emphasis, and it is clear that its potential importance extends far beyond the lexicographic, and also beyond those broader aims that the editors outline for themselves. If philologists and other textual scholars will learn much from this work, historians too will benefit greatly from the availability of this material in this form. One important result of all this should be not only to encourage further research in the field of translation and transmission itself (as well as contributions to the dictionary), but also to stimulate work on related questions in the broader historical fields associated with the translation movement in the eighth to the tenth centuries. If there is, nonetheless, a fear, it is that alluded to by the editors in their Preface to what will certainly become a standard work of frequent reference: in expressing the hope that other scholars will be willing to contribute suggestions, criticisms and additional material for future fascicles, they hint at the possibility that the completion of the project may lie far in the future. Let us hope not.

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Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *Women Like This — New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Graeco-Roman World* (*Society of Biblical Literature — Early Judaism and its Literature* 1), (Scholars Press, Atlanta 1991)

This book is a collection of new studies on a topic which since the late 1970s has been the subject of intensive research and debate — the history of Jewish women in the period which shaped both Judaism and Christianity for the next two millennia. The eleven articles in the volume cover a large array of literature — including the major Jewish writings and some Christian compositions pre-dating the rabbinic *corpora* (conspicuously missing are the works of Josephus) — in which women make an appearance.