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## SOME NOTES ON A RECENT EDITION OF THE LIFE OF ST. STEPHEN OF MAR SABAS\*

The hagiographic texts of Syro-Palestine from the early Islamic period are of inestimable value for those scholars of Islam and Christianity alike who are concerned with social-historical issues; they offer precious insight into strata of society only hinted at in the voluminous Muslim sources in Arabic. Of these hagiographic texts, one of the most important is the Life of St. Stephen of Mar Sabas (d. 794), written in Greek by Leontius of Damascus, a disciple of the saint for the last few years of the former's life [*BHG* 1670]<sup>1</sup>. Not only does it offer us our fullest glimpse of Palestinian monasticism in the early Islamic period, but also a host of insights into such things as Muslim/Christian relations, the effects of Islamic taxation on the Christian communities, and the transition to an Arabophone society<sup>2</sup>. At a time when contemporary Muslim sources tend to concentrate on the activities of a religious and political elite, with an eastern purview focusing on Muslim activities in Khurasan and Iraq, any source which sheds light on the undercurrents of Syro-Palestinian history is much to be welcomed.

\*I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the editors of the *Analecta Bollandiana*, in particular Prof. U. Zanetti s.j., for helpful comments on an earlier version of this communication.

<sup>1</sup> Concerning Leontius and his Life of St. Stephen, see J.-M. SAUGET, *Premières recherches sur l'origine et les caractéristiques des synaxaires melkites (XI<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (= *Subs. hag.*, 45), Bruxelles, 1969, pp. 369-371; J. NASRALLAH, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'Église Melchite du v<sup>e</sup> au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. II, t. 2, Louvain, 1988, pp. 155-159; A. EHRHARD, *Das griechische Kloster Mar-Saba in Palästina*, in *Römische Quartalschrift*, 7 (1893), pp. 49-50; S. VAILHÉ, *Les écrivains de Mâr-Saba*, in *Échos d'Orient*, 2 (1899), pp. 40-41; H.-G. BECK, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich* (= *Byzantinisches Handbuch*, 2. Teil, 1. Band), München, 1959, pp. 507-508.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the comments of Y. HIRSCHFELD, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, New Haven, 1992, p. 248 ('His [Stephen's] biography is thus one of the most important sources regarding monastic life in the Judean desert after the Byzantine period'); as well as those of G. GARITTE, *Le début de la Vie de S. Étienne le Sabalite retrouvé en arabe au Sinaï*, in *AB*, 77 (1959), p. 332 ('La Vie ... du moine Étienne de Saint-Sabas ... est un document du plus haut intérêt, qui trace un tableau extrêmement vivant et détaillé de la vie des moines palestiniens au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et qui fournit des données précieuses pour l'histoire de l'Église de Jérusalem'.)

The original Greek version of this *Vita* is not wholly extant; the codex Paris Coislin 303, the only Greek ms. in which the text is preserved, transmits it less its first three quaternions (of a total of 15.5). This acephalous text has been edited, provided with a Latin translation, and published in the *Acta Sanctorum*<sup>3</sup>. In 1954 G. Garitte discovered a Georgian version of chapters 159-165 of the Greek Life, an autonomous sermon on the importance of the vigil for monks; this he published with a Latin translation<sup>4</sup>. Although he suspected that the Georgian fragment may have been translated not from Greek, but from a Semitic intermediary (either Arabic or Syriac)<sup>5</sup>, the question remained open until 1959, when he announced the discovery of two copies of a complete Arabic version of the Life at Mount Sinai (codices 505 and 496)<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, he translated into Latin that portion of the Arabic *Vita* corresponding to the lost beginning of the Greek original, announcing also his intention to do a complete edition and translation for the *CSCO*, a project apparently either abandoned or unfinished by the time of his death<sup>7</sup>.

Recently the study of the Life of St. Stephen has reached a new level with an edition of the full Arabic Life (with Italian translation) by Bartolomeo Pirone<sup>8</sup>. It is this edition which forms the subject of this notice. My comments are divided into four parts: (i) the principles of Pirone's edition, (ii) his choice of base manuscript, (iii) comments on a number of obscure passages, and (iv) the accuracy of Pirone's edition.

<sup>3</sup>AASS, Iul. t. 3, pp. 524-613.

<sup>4</sup>G. GARITTE, *Un extrait géorgien de la Vie d'Étienne le Sabaitte*, in *Le Muséon*, 67 (1954), pp. 71-92.

<sup>5</sup>GARITTE, *Un extrait géorgien...*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup>GARITTE, *Le début...*, pp. 332-369.

<sup>7</sup>The Greek text of the vita was translated into Italian in 1983 by Camillo CARTA, with introduction and notes by B. BAGATTI, *Leonzio di Damasco, Vita di S. Stefano Sabaita (725-794)* (= *Quaderni de 'La Terra Santa'*), Jerusalem, 1983. For that part of the text which is only extant in Arabic, the translator had recourse to Sinai Arabic 505, nevertheless following closely Garitte's Latin translation of the relevant sections (pp. 15-16). Carta's translation is nowhere cited in the bibliography to Pirone's edition/translation (see n. 8). This is strange, for he was clearly dependent upon it for the content of many of his notes: compare, for example, notes 1, 2, 3, and 1 (pp. 378-82) of Pirone's edition/translation with notes 112-115 (pp. 151-153) of Carta's translation.

<sup>8</sup>Leonzio di Damasco, *Vita di Santo Stefano Sabaita (725-794)*. Testo arabo, introduzione, traduzione e note (= *Studia Orientalia Christiana*, Monographiae, 4), Cairo - Jerusalem, 1991.

(i)

Professor Pirone uses for his edition the two Sinai mss. discovered by Garitte: cod. 496 (A) and cod. 505 (B)<sup>9</sup>. He also brings to bear an Arabic excerpt of the Life, corresponding to Greek chapters 162-165 (part of the autonomous sermon on the importance of the vigil)<sup>10</sup>. For the latter he employs ms. Paris, Bib. Nat. 139 (ff. 327-329), which he refers to as C<sup>11</sup>. He also notes that another copy of this fragment can be found in the library of the monastery of Belmont, to which, however, he did not have access<sup>12</sup>.

For his edition, he follows what he calls the *CSCO* method of editing texts, choosing ms. A as his base: A, rather than B, in that the former is dated (A.D. 1293), whereas the latter can at best be assigned on palaeographic grounds to the thirteenth century<sup>13</sup>. He further argues that A and B present so few variants that one can suppose them to be both copies of an identical ancestor<sup>14</sup>. We shall return to this point shortly.

Pirone follows his base manuscript closely, wisely refraining from making too many corrections within the text itself, instead assigning most of these to the notes. For this restraint, he is to be praised, as the Arabic of the *Vita* is weak, full of deviations from Classical Arabic with regard to orthography, morphology, and syntax; these deviations, characteristic of Middle Arabic in all its forms, have been well described for the Sinai collection by Joshua Blau<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>9</sup>Note that Garitte had referred to ms. 505 as A, and ms. 496 as B. In what follows, Pirone's system of references is used.

<sup>10</sup>The importance of the fragments was first, I think, noted by Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'Église Melchite*, p. 155. He, however, seemed unaware that these two fragments represented an excerpt from the Life of St. Stephen, rather than an independent ascetic treatise.

<sup>11</sup>G. TROUPEAU, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Bibliothèque nationale*, vol. I, Paris, 1972, p. 101.

<sup>12</sup>R. HADDAD - F. FREJATE, *Manuscrits du couvent de Belmont (Balmand)*, Beirut, 1970, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup>Leonzio di Damasco..., p. 5, 19.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>J. BLAU, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic, Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium* (= *CSCO*, Subs. 27-29), Louvain, 1966-1967. For similar features found in Jewish and Samaritan Arabic, as well as the early Arabic papyri, see J. BLAU, *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic: A Study of the Origins of Middle Arabic*, London, 1965; P. STENHOUSE, *Samaritan Arabic: An Analysis of its Principal Features Based on Material Found in MSS of the Kitab al-Tarikh of Abu 'l-Fath*, in *The Samaritans*, ed. A.D. CROWN, Tübingen, 1989, pp. 585-623; S. HOPKINS,

Pirone's decision to follow his base manuscript without excessive standardization is especially brave given the learned censure this practice has received at the hands of Khalil Samir<sup>16</sup>. At issue here: whether these deviations stem from the copyists or are present in the original form of the Arabic *Vita*. If the former be the case, then how best should such texts be edited when autographs are lacking, especially when dealing with works such as the Life of St. Stephen represented by only a few manuscripts? This extremely complex but crucial set of questions I treat at greater length elsewhere<sup>17</sup>.

## (ii)

Pirone's choice of A as the base for his edition is unfortunate. Not only is the manuscript carelessly written, but also the scribe was seldom consistent in his use of diacritical marks (*nuqaṭ*)<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, many words in A are only to be explicated by recourse to B. That A is dated and B is not, seems a wholly inadequate justification for choosing it as a base manuscript. Moreover, it is quite probable that A is in fact a direct copy of B, not both A and B from a now lost exemplar.

First, as Garitte has already pointed out<sup>19</sup>, in ms. B (f. 108r, line 5) the final *bahu* in the word *fa'aṣābahu* is written in the margin perpendicularly to the lines of the text (as was the scribe's custom when lacking space at the end of a line). As this *bahu* resembles the letter *ḥā'*, the scribe of ms. A read the word as *fa'aṣāḥa* (f. 40r, line 13), a reading which makes no sense in the context and can best be accounted for by supposing the direct dependence of A on B.

Second, in ms. B (f. 112r, line 4) the *mīm* in *وطيتموها* is poorly formed, merging with the following *wāw* in such a way as to be barely legible. The scribe of A (f. 45r, line 3) read this word as

*Studies in the Grammar of Early Arabic, Based upon Papyri Datable to before 300 A.H./912 A.D. (= London Oriental Series, 37), Oxford, 1984.*

<sup>16</sup> Khalil SAMIR, *La tradition arabe chrétienne: État de la question, problèmes et besoins*, in *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, ed. Kh. SAMIR (= *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 218), Rome, 1982, pp. 52-85; *Id.*, *Trois versions arabes du Livre des Juges: Réflexions critiques sur un livre récent*, in *Oriens Christianus*, 65 (1981), pp. 87-101.

<sup>17</sup> For an examination of the issues at stake, see the introduction to the English translation of this Life which I hope soon to publish; other points of philological and historical interest will also there be treated.

<sup>18</sup> As was also noted by GARITTE, *Le début...*, p. 337.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

وطيتها, a reading not only unintelligible but also morphologically impossible – again, a mistake that is best explained by supposing the direct dependence of A on B.

Although it is clear that A should not be taken as the base manuscript for an edition, further work must be done on the relation of the manuscripts of the Life of St. Stephen. Not only is the status of the fragment represented by C unclear (as well as Garitte's Georgian version of that same autonomous sermon), but also both A and B bear numerous corrections (between the lines and in the margins) by later hands, the provenance of which is unclear.

## (iii)

We turn now to a number of problematic passages.

1. In chapter 70 of the *Vita* (345.13-14), Leontius gives an account of an occasion when the Holy Spirit spoke through St. Stephen in a manner much more direct than was usually the case. In the midst of this account, he describes the radiance with which Stephen's face shone. In ms. A (f. 140v, lines 10-12), as well as in Pirone's edition, we read the following: *bal zahara lī fī dālika al-waqt mumtali' tawarru' wa-haybah wa-wadā'ah wa-farah wa-bi-haybah kaṭīrah*. The passage is problematic on two accounts: (i) the repetition of *haybah* and (ii) the syntax of the preposition *bi*.

Although this is not noted by Pirone, in ms. B (f. 188v, line 4) the critical phrase reads: *وبهلب كثير*, with two dots below the *lām*. As it stands, the reading of ms. B makes no sense.

Perhaps the text is best to be emended by supposing that *بهلب* is actually the two words *به بها* written too close to one another. As hamzas are seldom written in the ms., this would be the scribe's way of writing *بهاء به*, which would be a fair attempt at rendering the participle *καθαλατισμένη* of the original Greek (sec. 157, 598E). Supposing then that A copied *directly* from B, when confronted with this anomalous text, the scribe read *هلب* as a feminine noun following the preposition *bi*, emended the *lām* to a *yā*, and changed to feminine the gender of *kaṭīr*. Perhaps also it was the same scribe who added two dots below the *lām* in ms. B: his way of correcting the text from which he was copying.

2. In chapter 73 (357.9-10) Leontius describes a monk named Theodulus who was unable to bear living in a single place, but much preferred to wander about from monastery to monastery. After Theo-

dulus was brought to recognize the error of his ways, he declared of himself that he had spent all his life in negligence, dissipation, and vanity. He then compared himself to something. The Arabic reads: *miṭla mamlūk hālik min mawḍi' ilā mawḍi'*. As it stands, the text is problematic: not only does the metaphor of a slave not accord with the previously expressed ideas, but also the syntax of the prepositions *min* and *ilā* is difficult to construe<sup>20</sup>. Sense can be made of the passage if, first, we take *hālik* not in its Arabic sense ('to be destroyed, go to ruin'), but as if from Syriac (cf. *halōkō*, 'one who walks on foot, a peripatetic')<sup>21</sup>; and second, if we emend *mamlūk* to read *sa'lūk* ('vagabond'). The passage would thus be translated: 'like a vagabond walking about from place to place'. This would bring us fairly close to the original Greek of the passage (sec. 164, 601A): οἰοεὶ τις ἀγύρτης, καὶ πλανήτης ἐκ τόπου τόπον ἀμείβων. The corruption is understandable, supposing ignorance of the Syriac overtones of *hālik*.

3. In chapter 74 (363.10) Leontius provides the reader with a long list of the saint's spiritual and ascetic aphorisms. Among those relating to the topic of gluttony we find the following: *allaḍī bi-l-ḥanḡarah*<sup>22</sup> *wa-l-šab' yurīd wa-yumāḥik an yaḡlib šaytān al-zinā'*, *fa-huwa yušbih allaḍī yuḡfi' laḥīb al-nār bi-l-zayt*<sup>23</sup>. At question here is the verb *yumāḥik* and its governance of the *an* clause: for according to the major dictionaries of Classical Arabic, this verb bears a rather limited range of meanings ('to quarrel or argue with someone'). The scribe of ms. A may also have sensed a problem here, for he left out the phrase *an yaḡlib*, an omission which helps the sense, but leaves *yurīd* without governance (f. 148<sup>r</sup>, line 11)<sup>24</sup>. It is likely that the

<sup>20</sup>For these reasons, Pirone's translation is not convincing: "come uno schiavo sfacchito, passando di luogo in luogo" (p. 356).

<sup>21</sup>Syriacisms are not infrequent in the text, for example: 41.7, نول ('web'), cf. syr. *nawlō*; 115.6 and 153.9, نياح ('satisfaction, rest'), cf. syr. *nyōhō*; 147.8, مرح ('insolent'), cf. syr. *marōh* — this is clearly the reading of ms. B (both ر and ح are 'protected' (مرح), a practice which the scribe employs for difficult readings) and is, I think, to be preferred to the مزح of Pirone's edition, who here follows ms. A without noting the reading of ms. B; 251.5, قنيان ('landed property'), cf. syr. *qenyōnō*. Alternatively, one could suppose that *hālik* is a corruption of *sālik*.

<sup>22</sup>Although not so used in Classical Arabic, this is the normal word our translator employs for 'gluttony'; cf. also the adjectival form *ḥanḡarānī* (147.9).

<sup>23</sup>The original Greek reads: ὁ μετὰ γαστριμαργίας καὶ κόρου τὸν τῆς πορνείας δαίμονα νικῆσαι φιλονεικῶν, ὁμοίος ἐστὶ τῷ μετὰ ἐλαίῳ σβεννύοντι ἐμπυρισμόν (sec. 168, 603B).

<sup>24</sup>At some point *an yaḡlib* was added in the margin by a later hand, though this is not noted by Pirone.

Arabic translator intends the expression *yurīd wa yumāḥik* to function as an equivalent of φιλονεικέω, each word of the two capturing one aspect of its semantic range. But how to account for the syntax? One possible solution would be to posit an otherwise unattested (but related) meaning for *māḥak*: e.g., 'to strive vigorously'. Another option: to understand *wa yumāḥik* as a rather careless *wāw al-ḥāl*<sup>25</sup>. Alternatively, one can appeal to a phenomenon well-attested in Syriac: two verbs so closely associated 'that the government of the one, which may not be at all that of the other, operates for the entire combination, and the object stands next to the verb to which it by no means belongs'<sup>26</sup>. Of the three, the latter option seems the better. The resulting text would thus be translated: 'Whoever through gluttony and satiety [of food] wishes and is contentious that he might conquer the devil of adultery, resembles one who extinguishes the flames of a fire with oil'.

4. Towards the end of chapter 75 (373.5-7) Stephen is presented as exhorting his disciples to imitate 'the few, the chaste [fathers]'. The passage is as follows (following ms. A rather than Pirone's edition):

- ولكن جاهدوا حتى<sup>1</sup> تحصوا مع هولاء القليلين الاطهار
- فان القليل في كل منحل
- لان ذهب قليل اخير<sup>2</sup> من ربوات رصاص كثير
- وشعاع ضو يسير<sup>3</sup> اخير<sup>4</sup> من غمام كثير
- ورايحه طيبه قليلا • اخير من رايحه رديه كثير

<sup>1</sup> Illegible in B due to water damage || <sup>2</sup> Reading of AB: not the بخير of Pirone's edition || <sup>3</sup> Reading of A: not the تشير of Pirone's edition || <sup>4</sup> illegible in B due to water damage.

At question here is the phrase: فان القليل في كل منحل. Water damage in ms. B (f. 196<sup>r</sup>, line 17) makes the word following *kull* unreadable<sup>27</sup>; but it is clear in ms. A (f. 152<sup>r</sup>, line 6). I am not able to identify منحل in such a way as to make sense of the phrase. Neither, seemingly, was Pirone, for the word in question is followed in his

<sup>25</sup>Cf. BLAU, *Grammar of Christian Arabic*, sec. 401, vol. III, p. 510, on the use of *wāw al-ḥāl* in Christian Arabic texts.

<sup>26</sup>Th. NÖLDEKE, *Compendious Syriac Grammar*, transl. J. A. CRICHTON, London, 1904, sec. 336, p. 273.

<sup>27</sup> Only a final *lām* is legible. The water damage in ms. B vis-à-vis this passage is nowhere noted by Pirone.

edition by a question mark. Whatever this phrase may mean, it is clearly an attempt to render the original Greek expression (sec. 173, 605B): ἐπειδὴ τὸ τίμιον πανταχοῦ ὀλιγώτερον πέφυκε. Perhaps it is best to emend *منحل* to read *maḥall*, thus representing the Greek πανταχοῦ (= *fī kull maḥall*), and to suppose a lacuna after *maḥall*, capable of being filled by the Greek.

In the Greek original ὀλιγώτερον is a predicate adjective while τὸ τίμιον is the subject. Stephen bids his disciples to be numbered among 'the few (τοῖς ὀλίγοις), for the valuable is everywhere more rare (ὀλιγώτερον)'. He does not say that what is rare is more valuable. We must then conclude that the Arabic translator has misunderstood the sense of Leontius' Greek, transposing subject and predicate. But in this he was not alone. The Latin translation in the AASS renders the phrase, 'quia quod rarius est, id magni ubique est pretii' (sec. 173, 605E); similarly, Carta and Pirone<sup>28</sup>. Be that as it may, this correction would yield a translation something like the following: 'Nonetheless, strive that you might be numbered among those few, the chaste, for what is scarce is everywhere [more valuable]. A little gold is better than a lot of lead; a few rays of the sun are better than many clouds; a little bit of pleasant odor is better than a great amount of foul odor'.

5. Finally, let us consider three related passages in Pirone's edition. In chapter 74 (361.9-10) Leontius describes Stephen's mouth as being 'full of grace, overflowing with wisdom, speaking of piety', as well as *الله الهادي لكلام* — such is Pirone's edition, whereas in fact both mss. A and B read *الهاذ*<sup>29</sup>. In chapter 74 (365.7) we find the virtue of patience defined as 'a cutting off of boredom, a concern for death', and *الهديد بالصليب* — again Pirone has tacitly emended his mss., for A and probably also B read *الهديد* (probably for *الهديد*)<sup>30</sup>. Again, in chapter 81 (393.15) we are told that Stephen was 'intent on the knowledge of God' and that he *كان يهدا*. But on this passage Pirone notes that the mss. read *يهد*. In fact both mss. A and B clearly read *يهذ*<sup>31</sup>. In the Greek original underlying each of these three passages we find, respectively: μελετήσαν (sec. 166, 602F), μελέτημα (sec. 169, 603C), and ἐμελέτα (sec. 185, 612F). Clearly it

<sup>28</sup> Carta, 'poiché le cose rare sono quelle che hanno più valore' (p. 150); Pirone, apparently following the Greek text here, 'poiché le cose rare hanno sempre più valore' (p. 372).

<sup>29</sup> A (f. 147<sup>v</sup>, line 15), B (f. 192<sup>v</sup>, line 16). Pirone never notes his tacit 'correction'.

<sup>30</sup> A (f. 149<sup>r</sup>, line 2), B (f. 194<sup>r</sup>, line 7).

<sup>31</sup> A (f. 159<sup>r</sup>, line 13), B (f. 201<sup>v</sup>, line 10).

is a question of a single root, not the two or perhaps three implied in Pirone's edition. That root is *h-d-d* and it seems to bear the meaning 'to be intent upon something, meditate upon something'<sup>32</sup>.

(iv)

Unfortunately, Pirone's edition of the Arabic text is plagued with errors. A few of these have been pointed out above. Many are no doubt a result of misprints<sup>33</sup>; others, however, stem from misreadings of the manuscripts or lack of care in recording significant variants between mss. A and B. To give a sense of the pervasiveness of these errors, I include here a list of the major problems found in just the first chapter of the text (pp. 23, 25): (i) the first word of the text proper bodes a rather inauspicious beginning: in Pirone's edition we read *مينن* (23.2), whereas both mss. contain *مينن* (< *مين*); (ii) after the word *الشيخ* (23.4) both mss. add *العجيب*; (iii) instead of *بعظمتها* (23.7), both mss. read *بعظمها*; (iv) after the word *لان* (23.9) both mss. add *ليس*; (v) instead of *يابس* (23.15), ms. B reads *بايس*, the latter fitting the context more closely; (vi) the reading *للا ميين* (25.1) is only found in ms. B, where it seems to be a correction of the second hand written over an erasure; as for ms. A, the reading is unclear, perhaps *للحرير* or *للحرنين*, or even *للخرس* (the latter fitting well the context, even if forcing the reading); it seems rather hard to read it as *للعرين* (as Pirone does, p. 25, note 10); (vii) the reading *نطقًا به* (25.1; the reading of ms. A is *نطاقًا*, as recorded p. 25, note 10: though we should remark that it seems to be written over an erasure) forces the evidence of the ms., for B bears the unintelligible form *نطقاتين* (again seemingly written over an erasure; it may in fact be that just is part of the erasure), perhaps for *ناتقين* or better *نطاء* (the latter being a 'home-made' *ḡam' al-taksīr* intended to parallel the following word, *ḥukamā'*); and (viii) instead of *للمتوانين* (25.8), ms. B reads *للمتوانيين*.

<sup>32</sup> Lexical support for this is rather hard to find in the standard dictionaries of Classical Arabic. Lane offers two basic meanings of *h-d-d*: 'to cut something quickly' or 'to read/recite something quickly'; so also, A. de B. Kazimirski and *al-Mu'ḡam al-Wasīf*. The root is not present in Dozy, Fagnan, and Wehr. Only *al-Munḡid* (17th edition) comes close, offering, in addition to the two meanings signaled by Lane, the equivalent 'lahaḡa bihi'.

<sup>33</sup> That they are misprints is to be concluded from the fact that the Italian translation often follows the reading of the manuscripts, even when the Arabic edition errs.

Any edition, even a poor one, is better than none at all: a fact of which all dedicated users of Migne are well aware. In this regard Prof. Pirone is to be thanked, offering as he does an earnest attempt at editing a rather difficult text of the utmost importance for scholars of the early Islamic period. But the shortcomings of this edition are not to be ignored. Enough has here been indicated to show that extreme circumspection must be exercised, that the edition cannot yet replace the mss. of the *Vita*.

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*Résumé.* L'article est consacré à la récente édition par B. Pirone (Jérusalem - Le Caire, 1991) de la version arabe de la Vie de S. Étienne de Mar Sabas (BHG 1670), une source importante pour l'histoire de la Terre Sainte au début de la période islamique. Y sont abordés: les principes d'édition, le choix du manuscrit de base, l'interprétation de quelques passages obscurs et la qualité du texte édité. L'article, à travers plusieurs corrections textuelles proposées du texte établi par B. Pirone, illustre aussi les difficultés rencontrées par les éditeurs de textes arabes chrétiens.

VIENT DE PARAÎTRE

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