



## ABBĀ ISAI AH

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**ABBĀ** (“Father”) **ISAI AH**, late 4th century A.D., author of Christian ascetical texts; from these it appears that he was a hermit who lived in the desert of Scete in Egypt, of whom several anecdotes are told in the *Apophthegmata patrum* (see, e.g., [Figure 1](#)). The generally accepted identification of him with the Monophysite Isaiah of Gaza (d. ca. 488) has recently been refuted (see R. Draguet, *Les cinq recensions de l’Ascéticon syriaque d’Abba Isaïe*, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, CXX-CXXIII, Louvain, 1968). After Abbā Isaiah’s death, his disciple Peter collected his writings and sayings into a book, usually known by its Greek title, *Asketikon*. This work was influential in the development of Eastern Christian asceticism and spirituality. Originally written in Greek (or possibly Coptic), it underwent translation into many languages and many recensions, in the course of which various unauthentic matter was interpolated. The standard Syriac recension, which represents a late stage in the corpus attributed to Abbā Isaiah, is divided into twenty-six “discourses” (Greek *logoi*).

Abbā Isaiah’s writings were apparently held in esteem among the Nestorian Christians of Central Asia. A fragment of a Sogdian version of the fourth Discourse, translated from Syriac, is found in MC C2 (see Sogdian Literature: Christian). The manuscript also includes a Sogdian translation of part of a commentary on the fifteenth Discourse by [Dādišo’ Qaṭrāyā](#).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also A. Guillaumon in *RHR* 151, 1957, p. 114.