



ELĪJĀ BAR ŠĪNĀJĀ

ELĪJĀBAR ŠĪNĀJĀ or ELIAS OF NISIBIS (Ar. Elīya b. Šīnā; Lat. Elias Nisibenus), prominent Nestorian polyhistor (Nisibis, 975-1049). His work is an important source for Sasanian history. In 1002 he was made bishop of Bēt Nuhādrē in Adiabene, and in 1008 metropolitan of Nisibis (Naṣībīn). He wrote in Syriac and Arabic on theological issues, i.e., apologetics against Muslims and other Christian churches and treatises on ethics, asceticism, and canon law. He also wrote scholarly works, e.g., a Syriac grammar and a Syriac-Arab lexicon. His renowned *Chronography* on history is preserved in a single manuscript with only a few major lacunae. It is divided into two parts, in Syriac with Arabic translation following each paragraph for most of the first part. The first part, modeled on the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, treats universal and ecclesiastical history up to 1018 C.E. in the form of tables, usually with accurate references given to the sources. The second part is a manual of the different calendars used in the Orient.

The *Chronography* contains valuable information on the history of the Sasanians and on the church of Persia. The chronological list of the Sasanian kings (VII, pp. 42 f.) is based on the chronology of James of Edessa (d. 708), now preserved only in fragments. An analogous list (VII, pp. 44 ff.) enumerates the patriarchs of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The chronicle proper starts with the Roman emperors from Tiberius on and the kings of Edessa and is supplemented with data on the patriarchs and popes (VII, pp. 73-102; the Sasanian era is dealt with on pp. 91 ff.). The following part deals with Islamic history and the gradual occupation of the Sasanian empire by the Arabs (through VII, p. 137). The



Chronography is important because of its valuable chronology and its use of sources now lost—Syriac surveys of Sasanian history and the metropolitans of Nisibis, several other ecclesiastical histories of the Christian church in Mesopotamia and Persia (among them those of the well-known John of Ephesus), for earlier periods works of the renowned Greek authors Socrates, Scholasticus, and Eusebius, a Syriac tract on the history of the caliphs, and a lost work of the 9th century scientist Abū Jaʿfar Moḥammad K̅vārazmī.

The second part of the *Chronography* is devoted to calendars and includes calculations of the Syriac and Persian new years, including the so-called era of Yazdegerd (See CALENDARS). In discussing several Zoroastrian calendars, it provides an account of several calendars dealing with feasts and holidays. Though Elījā and Bīrūnī (q.v.) were contemporaries, there is evidently no interdependence between their respective works on chronology.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Syriac and Arabic text of the *Chronography* is found in *Opus chronologicum*, ed. and tr. E. W. Brooks, *Scriptores Syriacae*, 3rd ser., VII-VIII, Paris, 1909-10 (Figure 1).

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