

PREFACE

In 1965 Han J.W. Drijvers (1934-2002) published a new English translation of *The Book of the Laws of Countries. Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa*, based on the Syriac text in the edition of F. Nau. It was his first major publication. The year thereafter his PhD thesis *Bardaisan of Edessa* appeared, still the standard study on this Edessene thinker. In this thesis *The Book of the Laws of Countries* (BLC) is an important subject of study, since it is the primary text for our knowledge of Bardaisan's ideas and one of the most important texts for understanding the intellectual climate of northern Mesopotamia at the end of the second century and the first decades of the third century CE.

For many years now this English translation of the BLC has been unavailable, and I am therefore happy that the Gorgias Press was willing to reprint it. The new introduction, which should be read as complementary to the original one, has no pretension of presenting new insights but is only meant to provide some basic knowledge about Bardaisan and the text in which his ideas are best expounded. For more profound discussions detailed studies on Bardaisan should be consulted.

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