

IN MEMORIAM

Hans Daiber (1942-2024)

On the 13th of August 2024, the German Orientalist Hans Daiber died at the age of 82 on Mallorca, the island of Ramon Llull where he had lived since 1999, not far from L'Alqueria Blanca. He was famous for his studies of Graeco-Arabic and Islamic philosophy and theology.

He received his secondary education in the Southern German boarding schools of Maulbronn and Blaubeuren. At school, he already showed an inclination towards Oriental studies: he gave a presentation on an ancient Egyptian topic and, in addition to the obvious Latin and Greek, he took Hebrew. These prestigious Protestant institutions were supposed to be followed by theological studies in Tübingen, and Daiber did go to Tübingen, but he soon switched to the Semitic languages: Hebrew, Syriac, Akkadian and, of course, Arabic, which he studied with Helmut Gätje and Rudi Paret.

In 1963, he followed Helmut Gätje to Saarbrücken, where he completed his doctorate under the latter's supervision in 1967. From 1968-1977, he was an assistant professor in Heidelberg, with an interruption of two years as a staff member of the German Orient Institute in Beirut, during which time he travelled extensively in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, where he acquired many printed Arabic books and manuscripts. At the Heidelberg University Library, he was known for his hundreds of book orders. His sedulous studies culminated in his habilitation in 1976, which in Germany opens the way to a professorship.

In 1977, he accepted a professorship at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Shortly afterwards he was invited to become a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was asked to continue the Academy's project *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus*, initiated by H.J. Drossaart Lulofs, which he did with enthusiasm, together with Remke Kruk. It resulted in a series of publications of the Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew translations of Aristotle's works, medieval paraphrases and commentaries and other works related to Aristotle. Daiber inspired a number of Dutch doctoral students to publish in this series. During his professorship in Frankfurt, from 1995 onwards, the series was continued and has now reached 25 volumes. In Frankfurt he also attracted PhD-students from other countries, such as Japan, South Africa and Egypt. Works not related to Aristotle landed in another series founded in 1986 and edited by Daiber, with Anna Akasoy, Emilie Savage-Smith and Ayman Shihadeh: *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science*, in which text editions, translations, handbooks and studies mainly on the history of ideas in early Islam were published. This series has now 130 volumes, among which two by his own hand.

He was a visiting professor at the University of Tokyo in 1992 and at ISTAC in Kuala Lumpur in 2001. As late as 2024, he was considering returning to Malaysia to teach, but he did not live to see it.

Daiber had already studied Syriac as a student. In his later years, he devoted himself to the Syriac heritage so thoroughly that he could also be called a Syriacist.

The number of his works is enormous. Of the monographs I will mention only a few: on two Islamic theologians, Mu‘ammar ibn ‘Abbād and Wāṣil ibn ‘Atā’; moreover *Aetius Arabus, die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung* and the voluminous *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy*, 3 vols., Leiden, 1999-2007. His articles and smaller writings have recently been updated and reprinted in collaboration with his wife Helga, in six (!) volumes: *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, Leiden 2021-2023. Another way to get access to his work is the bibliography given in his Festschrift: *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages, Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation in Honour of Hans Daiber*, eds. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven, Leiden 2008, and a more recent one by Serdar Aslan, <https://islam-akademie.de/index.php/bibliographie-terminologie/1100-hans-daiber-1942-bibliographie>.

After his retirement, Daiber sold his library of 8,000 printed volumes to the Qatar National Library. Previously, two collections of mainly Arabic manuscripts had already gone to the Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, where they were digitised: https://ricasdb.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/daiber/db_index_eng.html. A later collection of manuscripts, catalogued in *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, vol. V, is still in the estate and will be transferred to a suitable institution as soon as one is found.

The present writer had the pleasure of being Daiber’s assistant for thirty years, both in Amsterdam and in Frankfurt. I was never his student, but during the many years of working with him I came to appreciate him very much: his all-embracing erudition, but also his humanity and humour, and of course I learned a lot. Technically, Hans was my “boss”, but he never gave me that feeling; he did not fit the stereotype of “the German professor”. So, when he accepted the chair in Frankfurt and invited me to join him, I gladly did so. We were a team, always loyal to each other. At the moment I am still working on a project of his design, for *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus*. I look up his publications daily and when I read the long emails with advice that he sent me until shortly before his death, I still hear his voice.

Wim Raven
Kassel (Germany)