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# REDEFINING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

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# REDEFINING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

*Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*

edited by

J.J. VAN GINKEL, H.L. MURRE - VAN DEN BERG, T.M. VAN LINT

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CONTENTS

*Introduction* . . . . . VII

*Abbreviations of journals and series* . . . . . XV

Michael G. MORONY, *History and Identity in the Syrian Churches* 1

Robert W. THOMSON, *Christian Perception of History – The Armenian Perspective* . . . . . 35

Amir HARRAK, *Ah! the Assyrian is the Rod of My Hand!: Syriac View of History after the Advent of Islam* . . . . . 45

Jan J. VAN GINKEL, *History and Community. Jacob of Edessa and the West Syrian Identity* . . . . . 67

Gerrit J. REININK, *East Syrian Historiography in Response to the Rise of Islam: The Case of John bar Penkaye's Ktābā d-rēš mellē* . . . . . 77

Sidney H. GRIFFITH, *Answering the Call of the Minaret: Christian Apologetics in the World of Islam* . . . . . 91

David THOMAS, *Explanations of the Incarnation in Early ʿAbbasid Islam* . . . . . 127

John W. WATT, *The Strategy of the Baghdad Philosophers. The Aristotelian Tradition as a Common Motif in Christian and Islamic Throught* . . . . . 151

Herman G.B. TEULE, *The Transmission of Islamic Culture to the World of Syriac Christianity: Barhebreaues' Translation of Avincenna's* kitāb al-išārāt wa l-tanbīhāt. *First Soundings* . . 167

James R. RUSSELL, *The Credal Poem* Hawatov Xostovanim *("I Confess in Faith") of St. Nersēs the Graceful* . . . . . 185

Seta B. DADOYAN, *A Case Study for Redefining Armenian-Christian Cultural Identity in the Framework of Near Eastern Urbanism – 13th Century: The Nāṣirī* Futuwwa *Literature and the Brotherhood Poetry of Yovhannēs and Konstandin Erzĕnkac'i – Texts and Contexts* . . . . . 237

Jos (J.J.S.) WEITENBERG, *Cultural Interaction in the Middle East as Reflected in the Anthropony of Armenian 12th – 14th Century Colophons* . . . . . 265

Sebastian BROCK, *The Use of Hijra Dating in Syriac Manuscripts. A Preliminary Investigation* . . . . . 275

Fabrizio A. PENNACCHIETTI, *Versioni cristiane e giudaiche di una legenda islamica* . . . . . 291

Heleen (H.L.) MURRE-VAN DEN BERG, *The Church of the East in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century: World Church or Ethnic Community?* . . . . . 301

Alessandro MENGOZZI, *Neo-Syriac Literature in Context: a Reading of the* Durekṭā On Revealed Truth *by Josep of Telkepe (17th century)* . . . . . 321

Theo M. VAN LINT, *The Gift of Poetry: Khidr and John the Baptist as Patron Saints of Muslim and Armenian Āšiqs – Ašułs* . . . . . 335

S. Peter COWE, *The politics of poetics: Islamic influence on Armenian Verse* . . . . . 379

*Index* . . . . . 405

# INTRODUCTION

"Cultural interaction in the Middle East since the rise of Islam" — such was the title of a combined research project aimed at describing the various ways in which the Christian communities of the Middle East expressed their distinct cultural identity in Muslim societies. This project was initiated in 1995, by a group of researchers of the universities of Groningen and Leiden, consisting of Han (H.W.J.) Drijvers, Gerrit J. Reinink, Lukas Van Rompay and Jos (J.J.S.) Weitenberg. The theme of cultural interaction was the common denominator of four research projects, which together covered over a thousand years of Christianity in West-Asia — from the early years of the rise of Islam till the end of the eighteenth century, with the main emphasis on the Syriac (Syrian-Orthodox and Church of the East) and Armenian communities, whose main languages were Syriac and Modern Aramaic, Arabic and Armenian. All these communities distinguished themselves from surrounding Muslim culture, often by their language and social structures, always by their religion and canon law. With the advantages of an interdisciplinary approach, the project aimed at describing in more detail the various ways in which these communities reacted to the ascendancy of Islam, from the earliest encounter in the seventh century up to the late eighteenth century, when Christians had become a relatively small minority in many parts of West Asia.

After funding had been secured from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), five more researchers were attached to the program: Jan J. van Ginkel and Barbara Roggema from Groningen, and Theo M. van Lint, Alessandro Mengozzi and Heleen (H.L.) Murre-van den Berg from Leiden.

Towards the end of the project, Van Ginkel, Van Lint, and Murre-van den Berg organized an international symposium for which the theme of the initial research proposals was given a slightly different slant. Rather than cultural interaction, cultural strategies became the principal theme, mainly because the research of the past years had shown that although in many cases "interaction" indeed characterized the developments within the Christian communities, in other times or places cultural isolation appeared to be just as important. It was decided, therefore, to use the

term "strategies" rather than "interaction". In addition, the theme of identity formation or consolidation was brought into the discussion, as the formation or protection of group identity seemed to be the most likely object of the "cultural strategies" involved. On April 7-10, 1999, the symposium "Redefining Christian Identity, Christian cultural strategies since the rise of Islam" took place at Groningen University. It was intended to bring together researchers who occupied themselves with the Christian communities of the Middle East: the Syrian Orthodox, the East Syrians, the Arabic-speaking Christians of the Melkite and Greek-Orthodox Churches, and the Armenians. In line with the scope of the initial research project, developments within the Coptic community of Egypt were not taken into account. Due to various factors, two papers could not be published here: Barbara Roggema's "Making sense of a vision. The Christian legend of Sergius-Bahira and messianic movements in early Islam", and Lawrence I. Conrad's "Homer in Syriac". All other contributions to the symposium are included in the present volume, whereas Sebastian Brock, who was not able to attend the symposium, submitted his contribution on paper only.

During the symposium it became clear that a number of distinct "cultural strategies" could be identified, some of which were used very frequently, others only in certain groups or at particular periods of time. The three main strategies that are represented in the papers of this volume are: (i) reinterpretation of the pre-Islamic Christian heritage; (ii) inculturation of elements from the new Islamic context; (iii) isolation from the Islamic context. Viewed in time, it is clear that the *reinterpretation* of older Christian heritage was particularly important in the first two centuries after the rise of Islam, the seventh and eighth centuries, that *inculturation* was the dominant theme of the Abbasid period, in the ninth to twelfth centuries, whereas from the Mongol period onwards, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, *isolation* more and more often occurs, although inculturation of elements from the predominantly Muslim environment never came to a complete standstill. Interestingly, neither the papers read at the symposium nor the research projects carried out in Groningen and Leiden explicitly address the possibility of a strategy of *assimilation*. The main reason for this almost certainly lays in the fact that inculturation and isolation strategies both implicitly reject assimilation, even when inculturation by its opponents often is viewed as just another form of assimilation. In the texts from the various Christian communities under discussion in this volume, group survival appears to be the predominant aim. Such an aim is hardly served by

assimilation, which tends to focus primarily on the survival and advance of the individual.

The first five contributions in this volume have as their central theme the adaptation and reinterpretation of the Christian world view from the pre-Islamic period. In the communities under discussion, this takes the form of a reinterpretation of history in which Muslims now had to be assigned proper roles. Two strands can be detected: one in which the Arab invasion is seen as a temporary punishment for Christian sins, the other in which the Arab conquests are seen in apocalyptic terms as clear signs of the end of times. Although some of the historical writings of this period attempt to understand the Arabs' role in history, other authors of this early period are much more concerned with the reformulation of denominational identities vis-à-vis other Christian groups. Apparently, internal Christian discussions were at least as important as the reflection on the newly established religion of Islam. This is also corroborated by the fact that in most cases where chroniclers do indeed deal with the Arab conquests, ethnic and political aspects of the conquest are represented as much more urgent than the religious challenge represented by a new monotheistic religion.

The articles of Michael Morony and Robert Thomson provide excellent introductions to this theme of historiography: Morony focuses on the developments of the seventh and eighth centuries in the Syrian Churches, whereas Thomson, in his article on "The Armenian Perspective", discusses historiography up to about the twelfth century. Morony stresses the importance of reading the chronicles as means to establish and strengthen group identities, especially in connection with prevalent interdenominational rivalries. Yet he also reminds us of the fact that the liturgical use of hagiographical writings, commemorating the Christian martyrs, might have influenced the communities perhaps more significantly than the chronicles, these being written and read mainly in priestly and monastic circles. Thomson's article makes clear that much the same themes are present in Armenian historiography, although perhaps at a later stage than in the Syriac-speaking communities, including the great importance of Pseudo-Methodius' apocalyptic interpretation of history. In addition, Thomson pays attention to the often positive interpretation of the west and the western Church in Armenian literature.

The articles by Amir Harrak, Jan van Ginkel and Gerrit Reinink offer a more detailed discussion of elements of Syriac historical writings

within the framework put up by Morony: Harrak shows how important the biblical paradigm is for the understanding of the Arab invasion, giving examples ranging from early apocalyptic interpretations to the identification of the Arabs with the Assyrians in the Chronicle of Zuqnin, the Arabs being God's chosen instrument to chastise the Israelites, "the rod of my hand". Van Ginkel argues that the Syrian-Orthodox theologian and Church leader Jacob of Edessa (636/8-708) is primarily delimitating inter-communal boundaries in his writings, especially between the Syrian-Orthodox Church on the one hand, and the Church of the East and the Chalcedonian Church on the other, whereas the boundary with the Muslim community is clearly of secondary importance. Reinink, finally, presents a detailed discussion of John bar Penkaye's *Ktābā d-reš mellē*, making clear that his is a typical monastic-ascetic reaction to the rise of Islam in which apocalyptic themes predominate.

After the initial reinterpretation of history, which in itself might be seen as a form of adaptation, Christians started to engage with Arab-Muslim culture in ways that justifiably may be understood as inculturation: the (re-)formulation of one's own tradition in the terms and concepts of the surrounding, often dominant culture. Although usually the term "inculturation" is used in cases where a religion enters into a new cultural context as a minority religion, the term is equally helpful when a former majority religion becomes a minority religion due to significant changes in the cultural and religious context. In the case of the Middle East, Christianity had to adapt itself to radically new circumstances in the centuries following the Muslim advance. The majority of such adaptations or assimilation strategies are rather straightforward, such as the growing use of Arabic instead of Greek or Syriac, and the use of personal names, literary forms and social structures originating in the dominant culture. Christian thinkers, however, also translated and re-used certain philosophical and theological concepts that had originated in Muslim thinking, indicating that the influence of Islam on Eastern Christianity has been more thorough and wide-ranging than some scholars are willing to admit.

On the other hand, however, one can also detect clear signs of an opposite tendency, i.e., towards isolation from the surrounding culture and a strengthening of the Syriac or Armenian heritage. Especially in the later periods, after the Christian communities had become considerably smaller and much more vulnerable, geographical, social, and cultural isolation proved a way forward every time communities were threatened

by the dominant culture. Such growing isolation from Muslim surroundings was often accompanied by a growing interest in the west and the western Church. Rather than waiting for future improvement of Muslim-Christian relationships, Christians in such circumstances often took active steps to ensure western support.

In the articles by Sidney Griffith, David Thomas and John Watt, various forms of inculturation constitute the dominant theme. Griffith's article, covering the mid-eighth to thirteenth centuries, provides the reader with a broad overview of the apologetic literature of the Christians of Syria and Mesopotamia, with special attention to the texts in Arabic. This survey of apologetic literature immediately introduces us to the theological and practical issues that occupied the Christians of that day. Although some assume that the apologetic genre has distinct 'isolationist' tendencies, Griffith makes clear that the literature he discusses is much more concerned with the reformulation of Christian dogma and practice in terms that are understandable for Muslims as well as for Christians in a Muslim context. Thomas, in his contribution, discusses texts by Theodore Abu Qurra, Habib b. Khidma Abu Ra'ita and Ammar al-Basri on the dogma of the Incarnation. He shows that changes made by these authors in the formulation and explanation of this dogma are clearly related to critical questions of Muslim contemporaries. John Watt, in his article on the "Baghdad Philosophers", discusses similar processes in the tenth century, among those Christians who occupied themselves with Aristotelian philosophy, in the line of Muslim scholars as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. The particular case of the transmission of Aristotle's *Organon* shows that Christians on the one hand participated in the current philosophical debates, but on the other hand used the Aristotelian concepts in ways that were clearly geared towards their own communities' particular needs.

In the thirteenth century, Gregory Barhebreaus, Syrian-Orthodox Primate of the East, also was actively involved in the transmission, translation and adaptation of Islamic philosophical heritage. Herman Teule discusses Barhebreaus' Syriac translation of Ibn Sina's *Kitāb al-išārāt wa-tanbīhāt* ("Book of remarks and admonitions"), which he proposes might have functioned as a teaching tool for Syriac students. During that same period, according to Seta Dadoyan's paper, Armenian urban youth also organized themselves in 'brotherhoods' that were strikingly similar to Islamic brotherhoods of that period. Erzincan in particular became a center of such brotherhoods, resulting in a specific type of brotherhood literature that gives us some taste of the interreligious and inter-ethnic

influences of these urban centers. Jos Weitenberg's article on personal names in Armenian colophons from the twelfth to fourteenth century sheds light on yet another aspect of cultural interaction in this particular period: the use of non-Armenian names within certain segments of the population. Women's names in particular seem to have been less 'sensitive' and therefore more open to such influences, whereas the names of scribes and priests are at the other end of the spectrum, almost all of these being traditional Armenian names.

It is perhaps in this priestly and clerical context that we also have to understand the staunch antagonist attitude of Nerses Snorhali, Armenian catholicos and theologian of the twelfth century. James Russell convincingly shows that Snorhali's works, perhaps in reaction to large-scale conversions to Islam, growing pressure of Byzantine and Roman emissaries, secularizing tendencies and continuing presence of 'pagan' Armenians, is clearly intended to strengthen the faith of the Armenian community by distancing it from the Islamic context, i.e., by reinterpretating the fall of Edessa (1144) and by renewal and popularization of the liturgy. Judging from the popularity of Snorhali's credal poem, one might say that he succeeded amazingly well.

Although Sebastian Brock's article on the dating of Syriac manuscripts covers the whole period under discussion (682-1911), it might well be read as a fitting conclusion to the articles covering the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, since his contribution makes clear that although dating according to the Muslim Hijra is found in manuscripts from all periods and all four denominations that produced Syriac manuscripts (Melkite, Syrian Orthodox, East-Syriac and Maronite), it is thirteenth century East-Syriac manuscripts originating in northern Mesopotamian that display the largest number of such datings, i.e. at the same time and in the same geographical area where the Syrian Orthodox Barhebreaus was doing his translations and adaptations from Arabic.

Apart from the concluding article, the remaining five articles have their main focus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this period, one gets the impression that especially in the remaining Syriac-speaking communities interaction mainly takes place at the popular level, whereas the theological and cultural reflection is primarily concerned with the maintenance and transmission of what had been produced earlier, be it in new and often creative forms, making use of the modern language and the increasing possibilities of manuscript production.

Fabrizio Pennacchietti's article traces the transmission of the legend of the "skull restored to life" in Christian as well as Islamic circles. His description may serve as an excellent example of how certain themes lead a life of their own in popular culture and transcend religious boundaries, at the same time retaining peculiar characteristics in each line of transmission. Murre-van den Berg's contribution is concerned with the development of a communal identity within that part of the once inter-ethnic Church of the East that survived the ravages of the early fourteenth century as a small, Aramaic-speaking community in northern Mesopotamia. She argues that ambiguous relationships with the western Church are matched by ambiguous relationships with the Islamic environment, although in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries clear signs of rapprochement to the former are detected. Alessandro Mengozzi takes a closer look at Neo-Aramaic popular poetry of these same Christians, and shows that there are a number of interesting instances of interaction by the poets' use of Islamic (rather than Arabic) vocabulary in the explanation of Christian dogma, alongside clear indications of antagonistic, anti-Islamic, sentiments. Van Lint's article on "The Gift of Poetry" presents yet another case of interaction not so much on the level of theology, but of popular poetry and its inspirational background attributed to John the Baptist in the case of the Armenian bards and to Khidr in case of the Turkish-Muslim poets, both figures having strong links with the Old Testament figure of Elijah. The volume is closed by Peter Cowe's article on "Islamic influence on Armenian Verse", the "politics of poetics". In this wide-ranging article on a millennium of Armenian verse, Cowe recapitulates many of the themes of the earlier articles: the importance of poetry as a field of cultural exchange and the rather different ways in which the Christian cultures of the Middle East have reacted to the Muslim culture of their neighbors: varying from antagonistic to far-reaching forms of indigenization and inculturation.

Three years after the symposium in Groningen, the editing of the volume is nearing its end and the editors express their gratefulness to all those that in various stages contributed to their project, in the initial stages of their research, during the symposium, and in the preparation of the volume. One of the main initiators of the project "Cultural interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam", however, did not live to see the end of the project. Earlier this year, February 11, 2002, Prof. Han J. Drijvers passed away after a protracted illness that already in 1999

prevented him from contributing personally to the symposium. Grateful for his contribution to the larger field of Syriac studies, and in particular for his continuing interest in the proceedings of this project, we dedicate this volume to his memory.

April 2002, Heleen MURRE-VAN DEN BERG

## ABBREVIATIONS OF JOURNALS AND SERIES

| | |
|---|---|
| AArmL | Annual of Armenian Linguistics |
| AO | Acta Orientalia |
| AK | Acta Kurdica |
| BAI | Bulletin of the Asia Institute |
| BM | Banber Matenadarani |
| CSCO | Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium |
| | Subs = Subsidia |
| | Syr = Scriptores Syri |
| EI | Encyclopaedia of Islam |
| GOTR | Greek Orthodox Theological Review |
| HA | Handes Amsoreay |
| JA | Journal Asiatique |
| JAOS | Journal of the American Oriental Society |
| JAS | Journal of Armenian Studies |
| JRAS | Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society |
| JSAS | Journal of the Society of Armenian Studies |
| MUSJ | Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph |
| OC | Oriens Christianus |
| OCA | Orientalia Christiana Analecta |
| OCP | Orientalia Christiana Periodica |
| OLA | Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta |
| OS | L'Orient Syrien |
| PdO | Parole de l'Orient |
| PG | Patrologia Graeca |
| PL | Patrologia Latina |
| PO | Patrologia Orientalis |
| POC | Proche Orient Chrétien |
| REArm | Revue des Études Arméniennes |
| ROC | Revue de l'Orient Chrétien |
| SBÖstAkadWiss | Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften |

# HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN THE SYRIAN CHURCHES

MICHAEL G. MORONY

The emergence of separate sectarian group identities among Christians in the Middle East was an historical process that lasted from the fifth century to about the seventh or eighth centuries, but the memory of that process was a powerful factor in the preservation of sectarian identities. The historical accounts that have survived among these Christian communities, because they were produced by their members and written for themselves, bear specific sectarian identities that are reinforced by being composed in different languages (Greek, Georgian, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic) or in different scripts. Those that begin with the creation of the world tend to identify with biblical history followed by that of the Christian Roman empire, but then diverge from the fifth century onwards. That is, the further back one goes, the more the past is shared.

The use of historical accounts to enhance group solidarity includes the way people are identified in the text. For instance, Dionysius of Tell Mahre uses 'we' and 'our' for Syrians in general and most often for Syrian Orthodox Christians. He makes a point of noting that Sergius son of Mansur, who denounced Athanasius Bar Gumaye to ʿAbd al-Malik, was a jealous Chalcedonian.[1] Likewise, according to the Chronicle of AD 819 the Syrian Orthodox church in Nisibis had to be built three times in 706-7, because the 'Nestorians' and Jews tore down at night what was built during the day.[2] In a similar vein we are told that the Syrian Orthodox patriarch, Mar Elias (710-24), consecrated a church at the village of Sarmada in the region of Antioch in 722 in spite of great resistance and vexations by the local Chalcedonians, who were perverse heretics.[3] A conflict that arose among the Chalcedonians at

[1] A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, 204; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioch (1166-1199)*, Paris 1899-1924, repr. Brussels 1963, II, 477; IV, 449.

[2] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 79. According to the biography of Simeon of the Olives (d. 734), the Syrian Orthodox bishop of Harran, the problem was that 'Nestorian' priests anathematized anyone working on the site. See S.P. Brock, "The Fenqitho of the Monastery of Mar Gabriel in Tur ʿAbdin", *Ostkirchliche Studien* 28 (1979), 176.

[3] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 491; IV, 456.

Constantinople in 709 was 'because of the profligacy of the Chalcedonians and their diabolic jealousy.'[4] Michael the Syrian describes a schism between Maximinites and Chalcedonians in Syria in 727 in which the monks of Beit Maron and the Chalcedonians called the Maximinites 'Nestorians' and 'companions of the pagans and Jews,' while the Maximinites called the others 'Severians,' 'Jacobites,' and 'theopaschites.'[5] Dionysius describes Theophilus of Edessa, one of his sources, as 'a Chalcedonian who regarded it as his birthright to loath the Orthodox. His presentation of all events which involved one of our number is fraudulent.' Dionysius says he will use selectively 'those parts which are reliable and do not deviate from the truth.'[6] In the same way the author of the Zuqnin Chronicle, in the late eighth century, identifies with the Syrian Orthodox Church hierarchy and monks and with anti-Chalcedonians in general,[7] while the so-called *Maronite Chronicle* (to 664 C.E.) has an anti-'Jacobite' tone.[8]

Dionysius himself notes and explains the narrowing of horizons and the emergence of sectarian historiography. He says that the names of the archbishops of the four (patriarchal) sees of Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch were included in Syriac literature, even those who were Chalcedonians, from the time of Chalcedon until the early eighth century. But the names of Chalcedonian archbishops at Rome and Constantinople were no longer mentioned in 'our' literature after the second Arab siege of Constantinople, and only the Orthodox archbishops of 'our people' and of the Copts of the sees of Antioch and Alexandria were mentioned. He gives two reasons for this. First, since the Arab empire had taken control of Syria and Egypt, where 'our people' and the Copts live, there was neither opportunity nor need to be interested in the Chalcedonians at all, because the latter hate and persecute the Orthodox. Second, the Chalcedonians had become even more doctrinally corrupt. The holy fathers who were writers in 'our Church' turned away from them because they added the heresies of two natures, volitions, and energic substances, and confessed Christ as two instead of one. Nor did these writers use their language (Greek) and their literature as formerly, while no Orthodox scholars remained in the region of the Chalcedonians,

[4] *Ibid.*, II, 482; IV, 452.

[5] *Ibid.*, II, 492-4; IV, 457-9.

[6] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 92; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 358; IV, 378.

[7] W. Witakowski, *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: A Study in the History of Historiography*, Uppsala 1987, 96.

[8] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 29.

which was why the names of their bishops were not included in any of 'our' books, except where it was absolutely necessary.[9] It is clear that for Dionysius the important boundary was between the Syrian Orthodox and the Chalcedonians. Although the Copts are included in his scope, it is significant that, in this passage, he does not even consider the other Monophysite Churches (Armenians and Abyssinians, who did not have patriarchal sees), to say nothing of the East Syrians ('Nestorians').[10]

There is little evidence of intersectarian Christian solidarity in the face of Islam and Arab rule. The suggestion that some Christians might have closed ranks and overlooked sectarian differences when confronted with Islam, based on the absence of sectarian references in an apocalyptic text,[11] is too sanguine a view. Even in 'The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles' Christian unity is seen in terms of the return of the Dyophysites to the true faith in the apocalyptic future.[12] Christians were more likely to denounce each other to their Muslim Arab rulers as they had to Persian kings and Roman emperors, as when the Chalcedonian patriarch Theophilactus bar Qanbara denounced the Maronites to Marwan II, who fined them 4,000 *dinars*.[13] Exceptions are difficult to find. There is an account of the life of Henania, bishop of the Severians from 795, in an ecclesiastical history composed by a "Nestorian," Denahisho', who identifies Henania as a "Jacobite" but gives a positive account.[14] We are also told that when Ibrahim, the *amir* of Harran, ordered the places of worship of the Syrian Orthodox, Chalcedonians, Jews, and Nestorians destroyed in 819, "all the confessions prayed to God to have pity on them." During the night God changed the mind of the *amir*, and in the morning he called the Christians and told them to rebuild what had been

[9] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 86, 93-4; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 486-7; IV, 453.

[10] But the account of the ecclesiastical union in 726 between the Armenians and the Syrian Orthodox in Michael the Syrian (*Chronicle*, II, 491, 496; IV, 457, 459) probably came from Dionysius.

[11] S. Ashbrook Harvey, "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches", *Byzantion* 58 (1988), 305; G.J. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: a Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam", in: A. Cameron and L. Conrad (eds.), *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I, *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, Princeton, New Jersey 1992, 168.

[12] H.J.W. Drijvers, "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: A Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period", in: A. Cameron and L. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I, *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1992, 195.

[13] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 511; IV, 467.

[14] *Ibid.*, III, 20; IV, 489. This is a double exception, since Dionysius of Tell Mahre is willing to use the account by Denahisho'.

demolished.[15] This image of interfaith solidarity, and its effectiveness, rests on the fact that they were all equally threatened. Otherwise not much changed. As Michael the Syrian describes the sectarian alignments in 1127, the Greeks opposed the Syrians, Egyptians, and Armenians, and occasionally the Nubians and Abyssinians (all Monophysites), while the Orthodox opposed the Chalcedonians and their brothers, the Nestorians (both Dyophysites). But at Jerusalem and Antioch Greeks, Franks, and the Orthodox lived in concord, while everywhere in the empire of the Turks the Orthodox were free from the vexations of the Chalcedonians. The Church would have enjoyed peace if not for its internal quarrels.[16]

Pan-Christian solidarity was not emphasized in Syriac historiography. Instead the solidarity of the confessional community against its rivals was emphasized and put in biblical terms. Syriac-writing historians identified the history of the biblical Israelites as part of their own past and inherited the biblical view of the operation of God in history. It was fairly normal in early Christian historiography to regard biblical events and people as typologically prefiguring events and people since the advent of Christ.[17] This already occurs in Aphrahat in the fourth century, for whom the persecution of the heroes of Israel prefigured that of Christ.[18] Reinink has shown that Pseudo-Methodius uses typologies to connect past events with apocalyptic future events,[19] but otherwise this was not common. Outside of Pseudo-Methodius there are few real examples of typological prefiguring. In Michael the Syrian's resume of the *Plerophories* of John Rufus, written shortly before 512, the fifth-century Juvenal is called a 'reborn Nestorius.'[20] Michael also reports that Heraclius the Younger was surnamed 'the new David,'[21] and quotes a seventh-century letter of Marouta to John of Antioch in which Babai is said to have called Bar Sawma a 'new Judas.'[22] In the twelfth century Michael calls each of two Saljuq princesses a 'new Jezabel.'[23]

[15] *Ibid.*, III, 47-9; IV, 505.

[16] *Ibid.*, III, 225-6; IV, 608-9.

[17] R.H. Bainton, "Patristic Christianity", in: R.C. Dentan (ed.), *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, New Haven 1955, 225-6; E. Dinkler, "Earliest Christianity", in: Dentan, *Op. cit.*, 186-88.

[18] J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, Leiden 1971, 133.

[19] Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius", 153, 164-5.

[20] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 80; IV, 211. John Rufus wrote in Greek, but the *Plerophories* were translated into Syriac very early. See Ashbrook Harvey, "Syriac historiography", 301-2.

[21] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 426; IV, 421. David was actually the name of a dead son of Heraclius.

[22] *Ibid.*, II, 438; IV, 426.

[23] *Ibid.*, III, 220, 306; IV, 607, 653.

But it was more common to use biblical antecedents to give meaning to contemporary events[24] through comparison, by using the biblical text to describe contemporary events, and by the immediate application of biblical prophecies to those events. The latter collapses time in what Witakowski calls presentism; events contemporary with the writer are seen as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies that were meant to refer to them.[25] Michael the Syrian cites John of Ephesus as saying at the beginning of the third book of his Ecclesiastical History that in this volume it is appropriate to use the lamentations of Jeremiah for Jerusalem to weep likewise over what happened to the Church during the reign of Justin II in the late sixth century.[26] The East Syrian, John bar Penkaye, in the late seventh century, used biblical allusions to describe contemporary events and circumstances, and in the context of the Muslim conquest says that the words 'one man chased a thousand and two men routed ten thousand' (Deut. 32:30) were written about the Arabs.[27] According to Anastasius the Sinaite 'the present generation' faced a period of spiritual crisis like that endured by the Israelites during the Babylonian Captivity.[28] In the Zuqnin Chronicle a cruel Arab governor of Mawsil in 770 is said to have been prophesied in the words 'He laid the earth waste in its fullness and made the world desolate as a desert' (Is. 14:17).[29] Dionysius of Tell Mahre tells how, during an attack by sectarian Magians on a fortress in 823, a monk took a lance, after the example of Phineas (Num. 25:7-8), and killed the leader of the attackers.[30] When the Muslims at Harran devastated two churches there in 834, Dionysius says that brought about that curse of the one who said 'The Lord changed their feasts to mourning' (Amos 8:10).[31] The lament of Dionysius at the end of his chronicle in 843 is full of biblical quotations that are applied directly to his own time.[32] Michael the Syrian says that Kilij-Arslan, the *sultan* of Iconium, fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah (17:5) in 1175.[33]

The Bible thus provided a context for understanding the significance of contemporary events and a ready-made repertoire of heroes and vil-

[24] R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, Princeton, New Jersey 1997, 189.
[25] Witakowski, *Syriac Chronicle*, 114-5, 143-4.
[26] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 292; IV, 336.
[27] S.P. Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century. Book XV of John Bar Penkaye's *Ris Melle*", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), 57.
[28] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, xix.
[29] Witakowski, *Syriac Chronicle*, 142.
[30] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, III, 51, IV, 509.
[31] *Ibid.*, III, 86; IV, 529.
[32] *Ibid.*, III, 109-11; IV, 542-43.
[33] *Ibid.*, III, 357; IV, 708.

lains. One of the textual strategies of Syriac authors was to identify the faithful of their own community with righteous Israelites and their enemies with biblical sinners and gentiles. This, of course, implied that the members of their own community were God's chosen people, and both Dionysius of Tell Mahre and Michael the Syrian sometimes call the Chalcedonian Greeks 'gentiles'.[34] This practice already existed in Late Antiquity and was there to be used in the Islamic period. In Michael the Syrian's account of the campaign of Khusraw I that took Antioch in the sixth century, Michael's source identifies the Persians with the biblical Assyrians and quotes Is. 10:5-6 (the rod of God's anger).[35] The Zuqnin Chronicle identifies Muslims with the biblical Assyrians (*'Atoraye*) as the rod of God's anger, also quoting Is. 10:5-6.[36] The matter is a bit more complicated in Michael the Syrian's account of twelfth-century events, because the province of al-Mawsil begins to be called Assyria in his text in the ninth century. Thus it is appropriate for Zangi to be called an Assyrian, but this has a biblical resonance. In his account of the fall of Edessa to Zangi in 1145 Michael says 'the Assyrian wild boar prevailed and devoured the delicious grapes.'[37] This might have come from Mar Dionysius of Amid, a deacon at Militene, whom Michael quotes in the same context as asking, 'Why has Edessa been struck by the rod of Assyrian anger more than all other lands?' alluding to Is. 10:5.[38] Dionysius of Amid also refers to 'the yoke of the Assyrians' in 1151.[39] Michael himself identifies the Turks with Gog and Magog.[40]

Thus it was entirely natural for Syriac-writing Christians to understand the Muslim-Arab conquest of the seventh century in their own terms, to identify the Arabs with the biblical Ishmael (as the Arabs themselves seem to have done), and to regard their coming as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses ('his hand is upon everyone', Gen. 16:12). This appears toward the end of the seventh century in John bar Penkaye[41] and also in the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. In the latter case the Arabs are identified with Ishmael 'the wild ass of the desert' (also Gen. 16:12).[42]

[34] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 251.
[35] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 207-8; IV, 288.
[36] Witakowski, *Syriac Chronicle*, 136, 142.
[37] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, III, 261; IV, 630.
[38] *Ibid.*, III, 265; IV, 631.
[39] *Ibid.*, III, 300; IV, 651.
[40] *Ibid.*, III, 149-51; IV, 566-7.
[41] Brock, "North Mesopotamia," 58, 73.
[42] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 230, 234. The seventh-century Armenian, Sebeos,

It was equally natural to apply the biblical view of the operation of God in history to understand events. There were abundant biblical precedents for explaining both natural and human-caused disasters as God's punishment for sin. That this is a major theme in Syriac historiography is surely significant, because it functions as a means of coping with all sorts of calamities. However, one also gets the impression that this kind of explanation of disasters served as a textual strategy to strengthen the authority of communal leaders (often the authors of chronicles) against deviant behavior: sin, schism, heresy, apostasy.[43] The view in Syriac historiography that afflictions were caused by sin goes back at least to Ephrem Syrus in the fourth century,[44] and to Joshua the Stylite's account of events at Amid and Edessa between 495 and 506. The latter is explicit that 'since their cause has not ceased, they, too, have not ceased until now'.[45] According to Joshua, the punishments we suffered were enough to rebuke us and our descendents, 'and to teach us by the memory and reading of them that they were sent upon us for our sins. If they did not teach us this, they would be quite useless to us'.[46] Joshua's explanation that Amid fell to Qubadh I because of the sins of its inhabitants is repeated in both the East Syrian (Arabic) Chronicle of Sirt,[47] and Michael the Syrian.[48] In the Syrian Orthodox tradition both John of Ephesus and the Syriac continuator of Zachariah Rhetor (both used by Michael the Syrian) took disasters to be signs of God's wrath.[49]

But Ashbrook Harvey's claim that there was a hiatus in the use of this explanation after the sixth century, that the Syrian Orthodox chronicles of the seventh through the ninth centuries merely record calamities without saying what they meant[50] is not entirely accurate. The mid-seventh-century History of Ahudemmeh and Marouta describes the invasion of Persian territory by Heraclius as a disaster caused by sins, luxury and the

also quotes Genesis 16: 11-12 with regard to Ishmael, without naming him. See R. Bedrosian, *Sebeos' History*, New York 1985, 121.

[43] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, xxviii-xxix.

[44] C. Villagomez, "Christian Salvation through Muslim Domination: Divine Punishment and Syriac apocalyptic Expectations in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries", *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998), 210-11.

[45] Ashbrook Harvey, "Syriac historiography", 299-301.

[46] P. Martin, *Chronique de Jesué le Stylite écrite vers l'an 515*, Leipzig 1876; repr. Nendeln, Liechtenstein 1966, XII, 5.

[47] A. Scher, "Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert) Seconde Parte (I)", *PO* VII,2 (Paris, 1950), 132-3.

[48] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 159; IV, 259.

[49] Ashbrook Harvey, "Syriac historiography", 302-3.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

love of money and says that the administration and institutions of the Persian kingdom were destroyed because they had acted wickedly.[51] In the late seventh century the East Syrian John bar Penkaye blamed the Byzantine theopaschite policy, vice and sectarian divisions for the Arab invasions as did the catholicos Timothy I in the late eighth century.[52] John also blamed moral degradation and laxity in the East Syrian Church for enabling the heretics (Syrian Orthodox) to use the respite under Muʿawiya to take over almost all of the Byzantine churches in the West.[53] The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (possibly Chalcedonian) says that God allowed the Children of Ishmael to enter the kingdom of the Christians not because He loved the former, but because of the wickedness and sin of the latter, similar to Moses and the Canaanites (Deut. 9:5). Chastisement by God was to test the faithful and to separate them from the faithless; by being chastised they are recognized as [God's] children, quoting Matt. 10:22, 24:13 'Blessed are you when people revile and persecute you'.[54] Even the Chronicle of Disasters, of 716, explains the plague and earthquakes of 712-13 and 715-16 as judgment for sins so the survivors would be rebuked and repent from their sins in fear.[55] This strategy is explicit in the Zuqnin Chronicle; historical examples of punishment for sin are presented in order to warn present and future generations against sinning. It should be enough for the God-fearing to see the punishment of previous generations in order to turn away from sin, lest they suffer likewise.[56] With regard to the evils arising from ʿAbd al-Malik's census in Syria in 691-2 the Zuqnin Chronicle says 'it is our own fault; because we sinned, slaves have become our masters'.[57] It is even more explicit in Dionysius of Tell Mahre's account of how during the conquest of Syria the Arabs took many Christians captive at the festival at the monastery of Mar Simeon the Stylite near

[51] F. Nau, "Histoires d'Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta, métropolitains Jacobites de Tagrit et de l'Orient", *PO* III,1 (1909), 77.

[52] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 52-3; A. Mingana, *Sources syriaques*, Leipzig 1908, 172-3. It should be noted that Sebeos also has Heraclius tell the Persians besieging Constantinople that the Persians were not victorious because of their bravery but because of the sins of the Byzantines (Bedrosian, *Sebeos*, 99) and says that the Hagarenes attacked the Armenians because 'we sinned against the Lord' (*Ibid.*, 154).

[53] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 62.

[54] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 231, 236-7.

[55] *Ibid.*, 45-7.

[56] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 54; Witakowski, *Syriac Chronicle*, 136-7. Michael the Syrian (*Chronicle*, III, 115; IV, 547) ascribes this passage to Ignatius of Militene.

[57] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 60.

Antioch. Dionysius answers those Christians who asked 'Why does God allow this?' by saying that it was allowed by justice, because instead of fasting, vigils, and psalm-singing the Christians engaged in intemperance, drunkenness, dancing, luxury, and debauchery at the festivals of the martyrs. They were punished because of God's anger.[58] In his epilogue Dionysius generalizes, 'We have angered God by our evil deeds. God has delivered the Christians into the hands of the enemy and they are ruled by those who hate them. They oppress us, but who repents?' There was not much time left for repentance, since the end of the world was approaching.[59] Dionysius' message to potential apostates is equally clear. When the Tanukaye Arabs were driven from their encampments near Aleppo in 813, he says that they deserved what happened to them, because they had abandoned their faith for a small advantage. They now, likewise, abandoned their fortune and left miserably, naked and without shoes.[60]

Michael the Syrian (or his source) even projects this view onto the Arabs and has Mu'awiya tell his troops when he attacked the land of the Jews in 640, 'the Lord delivers it into your hands because of the sins of its inhabitants'.[61] But the Arabs were subject to the same principle, and John bar Penkaye says that, although the Arabs were the tool of divine wrath, once they had fulfilled their task, God also punished them by dividing their kingdom,[62] without saying what their sin was. This is provided by Michael the Syrian, who explains the heavy casualties among the Arabs at the battle of the Khazir, in 685, by saying that they were the cause of their own disgrace because of their great pride and impiety.[63] In the early eighth century the Edessene Apocalyptic Fragment predicted that the East would be devastated because of the oppression and unbelief of the Muslims.[64]

A consoling sub-strategy in all of this was to see the true believers as a righteous minority in a world of sin. In Syriac historiography this seems to go back to the *Plerophories* of John Rufus as preserved in Michael the Syrian. With reference to the Council of Chalcedon John quotes Moses saying 'Don't participate in evil with the multitude' (Ex.

[58] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 422; IV, 417.
[59] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 251.
[60] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, III, 31; IV, 497.
[61] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 431; IV, 423.
[62] Brock, "North Mesopotamia," 53, 60-1.
[63] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 471; IV, 445.
[64] S. Brock, "Edessene Apocalyptic Fragment," in: Palmer *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 244.

23:2), and refers to the three who remained faithful in Persia when all the captives of Judah worshipped the statue, and says that this is to be considered with regard to the multitude at Chalcedon in the synod of the apostates. He also quotes the passage that 'one who does the will [of God] is better than one thousand' (Eccl. 16:3).[65] This is given a significant new dimension in the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius where right after a reference to only 7000 Israelites being left who worshipped God in the time of Elijah, but through whom all of Israel was saved (I Kings, 19:18; Rom. 11.4), the text strategically adds that so too in this time of chastisement by tyrants a few people out of many will remain as Christians.[66] By its placement in the text it is implied that the righteous few might redeem the rest. While this is clearly meant to encourage steadfastness, it also seems to offer a potential way out of difficult circumstances.

This potential is realized by the theme of repentance. Apart from the reference to repentance in the Chronicle of Disasters in 716 noted above, in all the accounts of disasters caused by sin during the seventh and early eighth centuries, which are retold to discourage people from causing new disasters by sinning, next to nothing appears to be said about how to deal with a disaster once it occurs, beyond accepting God's judgment, or how to relieve it.[67] The message is entirely negative and aimed at curbing sinful behavior. The seventh-century East Syrian History of the monastery of Beth Qoqa in Adiabene is something of an exception. It tells how, during the Arab conquest, villagers along the Zab river took refuge on an island in the middle of the river only to be threatened by a rise in the river. They climbed trees to escape the water, but were saved

[65] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 82-3; IV, 212.

[66] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 234.

[67] This is not to say that services of intercession did not occur, but only that they do not seem to be mentioned in the chronicles for this period. According to 'Amr (*De patriarchis*, 43) days of repentance, services of intercession, litanies, and rogation processions were instituted in the East Syrian Church under the catholicos Ezekiel (ca. 570-581) to end a plague. The event was commemorated by an annual three-day fast in the third week before Lent from at least the seventh century. According to the Chronicle of Sirt (II, 313) the Rogation of the Ninevites was created by Sabhrisho', the metropolitan of Beth Garme during an epidemic of plague in the middle of the seventh century. See J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, Beirut 1965-68, II, 498; A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, *CSCO* 266, Subs 26, Louvain 1965, 220; and W.A. Wigram, *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church*, London 1910, 213-4. It is worth noting that Sebeos tells how, during an Arab naval attack on Constantinople during the thirteenth year of his reign, Constans (II) put on a hair shirt, sat on ashes, and ordered a fast to be proclaimed in Constantinople after the fashion of Nineveh (Bedrosian, *Sebeos*, 170).

by the prayers of Mar Sabhrisho'.[68] In another incident monks and villagers took refuge from an Arab raid in a fortified tower, where there was only a single jar of water. Due to the prayers of Mar Sabhrisho' the water lasted and was enough for everyone, and the Arabs were driven off by flaming stones hurled by an invisible hand.[69] A version of this story is included in the eleventh-century Arabic Chronicle of Sirt with the difference being that the monks and villagers took refuge in a church near the monastery, and the holy man blessed (*barraka*) the water jar.[70] The theme of miraculous deliverance is more familiar in hagiography than in the chronicles, and served to enhance the reputation and prestige of saints.

Repentance seems to be introduced as an historiographic strategy in the text of Michael the Syrian (probably from Dionysius of Tell Mahre) at about the middle of the eighth century. During the disasters of 745, even though the scourge of famine and plague was so violent, people did not repent, and so the calamity increased. Then Marwan II, the king of the Arabs, who did not even believe in God, repented himself and wrote a letter to the entire Arab empire to repent. On the same page the great earthquake that devastated most of Syria in 745 caused springs of water at Ba'albek to turn into blood. But after the penance of the inhabitants and frequent rogations, the water returned to its natural state.[71] The effect of this passage is, of course, to encourage repentance and the performance of services of intercession as a way to deal with disasters, which also serves to enhance the role and authority of the clergy. Intercession could also avert disaster. According to Dionysius of Tell Mahre, when Arab rebels threatened to destroy the ciborium of the church of Edessa in 812, the Christians turned to God, decreed a fast and prayed. God, 'who is near and fulfills for whomever invokes Him in truth' (Ps. 144:18), inspired Yahya ibn Sa'id to tell the rebels to go away, and they did so because the Lord willed it.[72]

Much later spiritual intervention is also employed to deal with locusts. Michael the Syrian chronicles frequent plagues of ravenous locusts in

[68] Mingana, *Sources syriaques*, 223-4.

[69] *Ibid.*, 229-30. His prayers also obtained the release of seven monks, who were captured by Arabs. Sebeos also tells how the Christians of the Sasanian empire successfully engaged in fasting and prayers to prevent the removal of the body of Daniel to Maurice by Khusraw II (Bedrosian, *Sebeos*, 43-4).

[70] A. Scher, "Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert) Seconde Parte (II)", *PO* XIII,4 (Paris, 1950), 583-5.

[71] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 508-9; IV, 466.

[72] *Ibid.*, III, 22; IV, 492.

the Jazira until the middle of the ninth century with no indication that anyone did anything about them. Then, in the late eleventh century, his accounts change. When there was an invasion of locusts in 1080, the patriarch (Mar John) pronounced an interdict against them, forbade them to destroy the crops, but left to them the field near which they were found for their food. At that, all the locusts in the region gathered in that field, devoured it, and perished.[73] In 1120 flying locusts came to Militene and ate a little of the crops, but, because there were frequent and pious rogations, they did not devour any more, perished, and disappeared.[74] In 1134, when locusts were numerous in the region of Edessa, the Christians brought out the hand of Mar Bar Sawma, and the locusts left without causing any damage in the entire region. Michael also says that when people went out in processions and prayers, the mouths of the locusts were bound, and they caused no more damage to crops.[75] The textual strategy here, of course, is the message that such measures were effective. However, it is significant that, apart from the rogations, this was not a matter of intercession or God's direct intervention, but of the power and authority of the patriarch and the potency of the relic, and the usefulness of both for the material well-being of people.

The general view that developed in Syriac historiography is that disasters are caused by sin and are sent to punish sin and to teach people not to sin, but that disasters can also be relieved or averted by repentance and eventually by the intervention of the Church and its relics. This included the view that God sends warning signs of impending disaster for those who have the sense to understand them.[76] The issue is how to interpret them, and often strange and unusual natural phenomena are merely noted in the text without saying what people thought they meant or what the reader should think. But often enough these signs are said in the text to signify subsequent events, although it must be said that this is done with the advantage of hindsight. For example, John bar Penkaye says that since the schism (caused by the Council of Chalcedon) God sent portents involving the sun, earthquakes, and fearful signs in the sky that only indicated the wickedness of the heretics and what was to come upon the earth. But the warnings were not heeded, so God sent the Barbarians.[77] Michael the Syrian gives some idea of what these warning

[73] *Ibid.*, III, 177; IV, 582.
[74] *Ibid.*, III, 208-9; IV, 598-99.
[75] *Ibid.*, III, 238; IV, 615.
[76] Witakowski, *Syriac Chronicle*, 138-9, 142.
[77] Brock, "North Mesopotamia," 60.

signs were. He reports that, when three stones fell from the sky in the mid-fifth century, many people thought they were a sign of the corruption in the churches, the expulsion of the Orthodox confession, and the introduction of the perverse heresy of the Dyophysites,[78] and that the darkness that covered the earth when Marcion took the crown signified the darkness he would cause and blindness for the religion.[79] A comet that appeared at the beginning of the reign of Justin I like a large menacing lance pointing down was a sign of the apostasy and ruin of the Church, which was about to come.[80] When a sword appeared in the sky stretching from south to north for thirty days in 634, many people thought it signified the coming of the Arabs.[81] When three columns of fire appeared in the sky in 745, and in 746 dust obscured the sky from the beginning of March to mid-April, there were meteors from the beginning of January, and a great column of fire in the sky, everyone said that these signs indicated war, bloodshed, scourges, and punishments.[82]

The importance of insisting that such phenomena had meaning and were warnings from God as a textual strategy lies in the fact that there were people who denied that they had any such meaning. According to John bar Penkaye, when God sent earthquakes, portents in the skies, locusts, raiders, and a plague on oxen as warnings, people said it was just chance.[83] When the disasters of 1173 carried off people, animals, and birds, and God justly more or less punished the entire universe, unbelief was greater than the punishment. When the crops were destroyed in September and October, the astrologers attributed the calamity to luck.[84] During the winter of 1173-4 libertines fasted in spite of themselves, drunkards abstained, and kings, the rich, governors, and the poor continued in their prayers, tears, and alms. But the astronomers said the calamity was caused by the conjunction of Saturn with Mars, that the conjunction had passed and with it the calamity, and that it would not recur for many years, so rogations were useless, and there was no need for alms.[85] Clearly such explanations pulled the rug out from

[78] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 36; IV, 182-3.

[79] *Ibid.*, II, 72; IV, 205.

[80] *Ibid.*, II, 170; IV, 265-6. Anastasius, the predecessor of Justin I, turned out to be the last emperor who favored the Monophysites.

[81] *Ibid.*, II, 414; IV, 411.

[82] *Ibid.*, II, 507-8; IV, 465.

[83] Brock, "North Mesopotamia," 63.

[84] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, III, 350-1; IV, 703.

[85] *Ibid.*, III, 352; IV, 704-5.

under the logic of Syriac historiography, and thus threatened the authority and utility of the Church.

There was also something of a debate, or at least a difference of opinion, over whether signs and disasters signified God's punishment for sin or the approaching end of the world. To wish for the end of the world reflects extreme alienation, anxiety, a radical desire to escape from current tribulations, and hope for deliverance in the near future.[86] Apocalyptic themes in Syriac historiography seem to go back to the *Plerophories* of John Rufus which contains prophecies, many of which are openly apocalyptic, of the evils brought upon the Church by the Chalcedonians and the imminent arrival of the Antichrist and the end of the world, with what Ashbrook Harvey calls 'anti-Chalcedonian apocalyptic rhetoric.'[87] It is equally significant that this includes the theme that the schism in the Church would last until the arrival of the Antichrist and/or the end of the world,[88] and that Michael the Syrian chose to include a summary of this material in his chronicle. Joshua the Stylite disagreed with those who were tempted to say that the end of the world had come in 502. He argued that 'these things did not happen to us because it was the latter times, but that they took place for our chastisement, because our sins were great'.[89]

There was a cluster of apocalyptic expressions in the late seventh and early eighth centuries in John Bar Penkaye, the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, the Apocalypse of John the Little, the Edessene Apocalyptic Fragment, and the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles (the latter four outside the chronicle tradition).[90] This appears to have been provoked by the disorders of the second Muslim civil war in the 680s accompanied, as they were, by natural disasters, when non-Muslims in general seem to have expected the end of Arab rule as an event leading up to the end of the world. The civil war was followed by the anti-Christian policies of the Marwani restoration that sought to demonstrate that Muslim rule was there to stay.[91] It is probably significant that, before all this happened in

[86] For this and other interpretations of Syriac apocalyptic literature see Ashbrook Harvey, "Syriac historiography", 304-5; and Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, xxvi.

[87] Ashbrook Harvey, "Syriac historiography," 301-2.

[88] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 72, 82; IV, 205, 211-12.

[89] Martin, *Chronique de Josué le Stylite*, XLIII, 41-2. Joshua adds that it could not be the end of the world because the war between the Romans and the Persians did not encompass the entire world and the false Christ had not yet appeared.

[90] See Villagomez, "Christian Salvation", 214-18.

[91] Drijvers, "Twelve Apostles", 193, 209-10, 213; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 237-9; Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius", 186.

his text, Michael the Syrian reports that, when a rainbow appeared at night in 678, everyone who saw it thought that the end (of the world) would come that year.[92] It is certainly significant that Jacob of Edessa, in the late seventh century, responded to the apocalyptic expectations raised among the East Syrians and the Syrian Orthodox alike by these circumstances by emphasizing the enforcement of ecclesiastical law as a weapon against apostasy.[93] It should be added that apocalyptic expectations could be antinomian, that Chalcedonians/Dyophysites are not generally blamed for bringing about the end of the world in these apocalypses, and that in Pseudo-Methodius the last Roman emperor is given a positive role. All of this had a potential for undermining the authority and leadership of the Syrian Churches among their own flocks and their preferred view of history. It is after this that Michael the Syrian includes in his text an account (probably from Dionysius of Tell Mahre) of how Cyriacus, the bishop of Sijistan, together with a malicious physician, Bar Salta of Resh'ayna, composed a book of lies, which they called the *Apocalypse of Henoch*, and had it presented to the caliph, Marwan II.[94] This seems to be a textual strategy to debunk the apocalyptic genre as a fraud.

For the Church leaders and monks who wrote the chronicles it was important to maintain communal solidarity, doctrinal identity, and ecclesiastical authority through a particular interpretation of the meaning of portents and disasters and how to deal with them. This also applies to the way in which religious persecution is treated in these texts. Persecution was both by non-Christians and by Christians of each other. In Michael the Syrian the Chalcedonian heresy had been established tyrannically by the sword, both originally and again in the seventh century.[95] The statement that Christians were persecuted by the Synodites (Chalcedonians) in 575 implies that the latter were not even Christians.[96] Dionysius of Tell Mahre records that during the persecution of the Syrian Orthodox followers of Severus in 599 under Maurice 400 monks were killed in Edessa.[97] Otherwise, persecution meant losing their churches. According to Michael the Syrian, after his victory over the Persians, Heraclius ordered the nose and ears cut off and the house looted of anyone who

[92] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 456; IV, 436.
[93] Drijvers, "Twelve Apostles", 20.
[94] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 507; IV, 465.
[95] *Ibid.*, II, 457; IV, 437.
[96] *Ibid.*, II, 312; IV, 348.
[97] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 118.

did not support the Synod of Chalcedon. This persecution lasted a long time, and many monks supported the synod, especially the monks of Beit Maron, Mabbugh, Hims, and the southern region, who took over most of the churches and monasteries.[98]

Both John bar Penkaye[99] and Michael the Syrian[100] note that Christians were also persecuted in the Persian empire in the late Sasanian period. But John bar Penkaye argues that this persecution had been useful. In an utterly tendentious account, that completely minimizes the bitter rivalry between the East Syrians and the Syrian Orthodox in the Persian empire in the early decades of the seventh century ('some internal scandals'), he claims that, as long as pagan kings were in control, the fear of persecution led the affairs of the Church to be conducted in an orderly way, and that, since the Church in Persia had been under the rule of Magians until the arrival of the Arabs, it had nothing else with which to contend. It was thus spared the internal consequences of religious peace, the theological bickering that arose once the Romans were ruled by Christian kings, whose interference resulted in ecclesiastical corruption and intrigues.[101] He promotes a particular view of the past which seems to say that Christians are better off if they are ruled by non-Christians, that Christians are ruined by peace and quiet and by the interference of Christian rulers in Church affairs.

In a famous passage Dionysius of Tell Mahre blames the persecution of the Syrian Orthodox by the Chalcedonians for the Arab conquest. When God, Who determines sovereignty and gives power to whom He chooses, saw the wickedness of the Romans, who, when they had power, pillaged the churches and monasteries of the Syrian Orthodox, He brought the sons of Ishmael from the south to deliver them from the Romans. If they had suffered some damage, because the churches, which had been taken from them and given to the Chalcedonians, remained with the latter, since, when the cities surrendered to the Arabs, they attributed to each confession the places of worship which were found in their possession, it was still no small advantage to be saved from Roman tyranny and to be at peace.[102] It should be noted that, since the Chal-

[98] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 412; IV, 409-10; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 143.

[99] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 53.

[100] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 305; IV,344.

[101] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 53, 58-9.

[102] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 412-13; IV 410; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 141.

cedonians held the old churches, that had been built before the Arab conquest, the destruction of new churches in former Roman territory under Muslim rule became more of an issue for the Syrian Orthodox, because they had been built after the conquest.

Dionysius also preferred to explain the Arab conquest of Egypt by the persecution of the Copts by the Chalcedonians, which led the Patriarch Benjamin to go to the Arabs and promise to deliver Alexandria to them if they would drive out Cyrus and give him the churches. When the Arabs agreed, Benjamin's partisans delivered Alexandria, and Benjamin got the churches. Dionysius adds that from that time until now (the 840s) Chalcedonians had not prospered in Egypt, there were only a few there, and the Orthodox Copts have occupied the churches and monasteries until today.[103]

The message is obvious that it was better for the Syrian Orthodox to be ruled by the Arabs than by the Chalcedonians. This may have been with the advantage of hindsight and a way of accommodating to the reality that Arab rule was firmly established, but they appear to have meant it. There was no denying that the Arab conquest had been violent and destructive in some places, but probably no more so than the long war between the Romans and the Persians that had preceded it or earlier Persian invasions. Michael the Syrian treats the wars between the Arabs and the Byzantines in much the same way that the wars between the Persians and the Romans are treated in his text. But he also tells how the Syrian Orthodox bishop, Epiphanius, fled from the Arabs during their conquest of Syria only to be killed as a martyr by the Roman general, Gregorius, in Cilicia and says that, when the Romans retreated from Syria, they robbed, pillaged, and devastated the land more than the Arabs, as though it belonged to the enemy.[104] The sufferings of Christians were not necessarily seen as persecution but tended to be explained to themselves as punishment for their own sins.

In a number of ways incidents that could be taken as examples of the persecution of Christians by Muslims tend to be mitigated by the way they are treated in the text, often by blaming someone else. For instance Dionysius of Tell Mahre explains the removal of crosses from churches in the caliphate of 'Uthman by blaming the Jews. When the Arabs tried to rebuild the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem only to have the building collapse, Jews told them that its building was prevented by the cross fac-

[103] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II. 433; IV 422-3.
[104] *Ibid.*, II, 422-4; IV, 415-18.

ing it on the Mount of Olives. The cross was taken down and the temple built, which was the reason the Arabs took down many crosses and became enemies of the cross and persecutors of the Christians, because the latter venerated it. The Arab governor, who ordered the removal of crosses from churches, is said to have been under the influence of malicious advisors and treated Christians in the province of Damascus as enemies, but, when Jews took it upon themselves to take down the crosses, he stopped them, and the order ceased to be enforced.[105] The impact of Dionysius' brief notice that ʿAbd al-Malik ordered crosses to be taken down and all the pigs to be killed in 694 is softened in the text by the way it is immediately followed by his substantial account of the lucrative career of Athanasius bar Gumaye as the caliph's finance director in Egypt.[106] In 709 the patriarch, Mar Elias, presented himself to the caliph al-Walid I (705-15), who welcomed him with joy and treated him with honor. This is the same al-Walid, who, on the very next page, is said to have hated the Christians and destroyed their churches. In between is an account of the martyrdom of Christian Arabs, who would not convert to Islam, in which the accounts of how the body of their chief, Mu'adh, did not decay nor was eaten by animals for several days, and of how Shamʿalla was forced to eat flesh from his own thigh[107] are reminiscent of accounts of the Persian martyrs and of Chalcedonian persecutions. Old themes thus begin to be reapplied, but the construction of this passage leaves one with a sense of ambivalence.

A passage describing the anti-Christian policies of ʿUmar II also seems a bit ambivalent. It begins by giving a rational explanation for why ʿUmar II oppressed the Christians (note the larger nonsectarian category). One reason was to establish the laws of the Muslims firmly. The second was because the Arabs had not taken anything at the recent siege of Constantinople, and many of them had perished. In one breath we are told that they (presumably the Muslims) called him a zealot for their laws and that he had a reputation for being pious and far from evil, and in the next breath we are told that he ordered the oppression of Christians in every way to make them become Muslims.[108] That is, ʿUmar II was not a wicked ruler; he was just a good Muslim. Chalcedonians are

[105] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 431-2; IV, 421-2; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 169-70.

[106] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 475; IV, 477-9.

[107] *Ibid.*, II, 480-81; IV, 450-51.

[108] *Ibid.*, II, 489; IV, 455-6. The subsequent details in this passage are similar to those in the so-called Covenant of ʿUmar.

almost never described this way. This passage shows a remarkable degree of empathy; it is almost as though ʿUmar II is being excused.

Persecution is thus associated with conversion/apostasy. When Marwan II ordered the Chalcedonians to take Theophilactus bar Qanbara as their patriarch, the latter got a decree and an army from Marwan II with which to persecute the Maronites to get them to adopt the heresy of Maximus.[109] There are no mitigating features in this passage, but rather several negative ones. Theophilactus was not elected patriarch; he is said to have been Marwan's goldsmith at Harran (probably to discredit him); and on the next page Marwan is described as a "tyrant king."[110] That is, Theophilactus was the henchman of a tyrant, and in this case Christians persecuted each other. When the caliph al-Mahdi went to Aleppo in 779 and saw the Christian Tanukaye, he ordered them to become Muslims and subjected them to torture. About 5,000 men apostatized, but one of their shaykhs, named Layth, suffered martyrdom. The women escaped to the churches of the West.[111] In a story that is reminiscent of martyrologies under the Persians, a pagan (Muslim) Qurashi, who lived near a church and threw clods at the priest through its window, converted to Christianity when he saw a lamb in the place of the bread and wine on the altar. He entered a monastery and was baptized, but was then questioned, imprisoned, and tortured by the caliph Harun, who had him beheaded and put his head on the wall of Rafiqa. A light from heaven surrounded the head, and a Christian took it at night and carried it to a city in Persia.[112] This story seems entirely legendary, but it echoes a theme from Sasanian Iran, where Magians who converted to Christianity were subject to capital punishment (as were Muslims). This theme is useful as a strategy in the text, where it serves to offset the apostasy of Christians to Islam by suggesting that Muslims might also convert to Christianity at the same time that it celebrates martyrdom.

Persecution was also blamed on the behavior of Christians. The monks of Gubba Barraya were a constant thorn in the side of Syrian Orthodox patriarchs in the early ninth century. In 807 they slandered the patriarch, Cyriacus, to the caliph Harun, accusing Cyriacus of appointing their bishop without their consent, of being an enemy of the king and of all the Muslims, of building churches in Roman territory, and of sending letters to the Romans. This resulted in an edict that ordered the churches

[109] *Ibid.*, II, 511; IV, 467.
[110] *Ibid.*, II, 512; IV, 468.
[111] *Ibid.*, III, i; IV, 478-9.
[112] *Ibid.*, III, 18-19; IV, 487-8.

of the region of Tagra to be destroyed along with every new church. Churches were demolished not only at Tagra, but also in the villages around Antioch and Jerusalem, both the ancient churches and the Syrian Orthodox church at Jerusalem. Everyone cursed the Gubbaye, who were the cause of the ruin.[113] In 820 Basilius, the Syrian Orthodox metropolitan bishop of Tagrit, took over the town, its public administration, and the collection of taxes, and imposed tribute on the Muslims. The latter rose against him and mistreated everyone because of him, even killing the pigs in the streets in their zeal. Both Basilius and the Muslims of Tagrit went to Baghdad, where the latter complained about the Christians with regard to the *semantra*, the cross, wine, and pigs 'that enter the masjid', and accused Basilius and the notable, Abdun, of outraging their prophet. This resulted in a decree to abolish the laws of the Christians and to arrest Basilius and Abdun. Basilius fled, but Abdun was martyred. In a typical martyr story the caliph, Ma'mun, first tried to make Abdun convert to Islam by flattery, and the promise of presents, honors, and dignities, then by threats and torments. After seven months in prison Abdun was martyred and his body gibbeted with accompanying prodigies and miracles.[114]

Persecution was thus seen mainly as a threat to confessional identity, to church buildings, and to Christian law. Toleration was a matter of the autonomy of faith more than anything else. According to John bar Penkaye the Arabs only required the payment of tribute during the reign of Mu'awiya and left people free to hold any belief they liked.[115] As Michael the Syrian described the situation in the twelfth century, the Franks occupied Antioch and Jerusalem, and the prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church were among them without being persecuted or molested. Although the Franks agreed with the Greeks about two natures (in Christ), they differed from them on many other points of faith, but they made no difficulty on the subject of faith, nor tried to arrive at a single formula, but considered as Christian whomever venerated the cross, without inquiry or examination. The Turks, who occupied most of the lands where Christians lived, had no idea of sacred mysteries, and, since they considered Christianity to be an error anyway, were not interested in professions of faith, nor in persecuting anyone for his faith, as the wicked and heretical Greeks were.[116]

[113] *Ibid.*, III, 19-21; IV, 488-90.
[114] *Ibid.*, III, 48-9; IV, 506.
[115] Mingana, *Sources syriaques*, 175.
[116] *Ibid.*, III. 222; IV, 607.

Relatively speaking, both the East Syrians and the Syrian Orthodox believed that they were better off under Arab-Muslim rule, and this is reflected in their views of the past and their historical accounts.[117] John bar Penkaye[118] and Dionysius of Tell Mahre[119] both gave accurate descriptions of Islam. They also took advantage of what they knew about Islam that would favor Christians. According to John bar Penkaye the advent of the Arabs and their conquest of the Persian kingdom was part of the divine plan, because God had prepared them beforehand to honor Christians and especially monks.[120] Dionysius of Tell Mahre actually quotes a version of Abu Bakr's instructions to the Arab armies that he sent to Syria, that came from some Arabic source. The soldiers are told not to kill the old, children, or women, nor to force the stylite down from his place or harass the solitary. The latter are devoted to God's service. Nor are they to cut down trees, damage crops, maim domestic animals, etc.[121] Both of these statements serve as useful textual strategies by communicating to other Christians what Muslims were supposed to do (or not to do). It could be held up to the latter when their behavior was different.[122]

Historiographically speaking the Arabs/Muslims are integrated rather smoothly into the structure of chronicles. A Syriac "Account of the Generations" written in 775 contains a list of rulers in which Roman emperors from Tiberius to Heraclius are followed by Muhammad and a succession of caliphs almost as though there was a continuation or transference of legitimacy from the Romans to the Arabs.[123] It seems to have been more common, however, for the caliphs to replace the Persian kings after the fall of the Sasanian dynasty, with a brief overlap from Abu Bakr to the death of Yazdagerd III. The Zuqnin Chronicle integrates Byzantine emperors and Arab rulers, as does Michael the Syrian, who also incorporates the *hijri* year with the other chronological systems

[117] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 84. According to the *Chronicle of Sirt*, the troubles associated with the Arab conquest lasted for five years, the Arabs took *jizya* from the *dhimmis*, and treated them well. There was prosperity and Christians rejoiced in Arab rule. Between the battle of Qadisiyya and the fall of al-Mada'in the Arabs settled in the Persian cities, destroyed the fire temples, and honored the Christians (Scher, "Chronique de Séert", II, 581-2, 628).

[118] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 61; Mingana, *Sources syriaques*, 175.

[119] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 403-5; IV, 405-7.

[120] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 57.

[121] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 145.

[122] Dionysius in fact describes their behavior differently before Abu Bakr's instructions in the text (*Ibid.*, 130) and afterwards (*Ibid.*, 149).

[123] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 52.

he uses from the point where Islam is introduced in his text. At the very least this sort of textual integration amounted to an implicit historiographic legitimation of the caliphate.

One of the most important historiographic strategies employed in Syriac literature was to claim that the Arabs had granted some Church leader a document at the time of the conquest. This does not appear to have been a seventh-century issue or motif. None of these claims seem to be any earlier than the ninth century and some are much later. Michael the Syrian (or his source) reports that in 637, when ʿUmar I went to Palestine, Sophronius, the bishop of Jerusalem, got a treaty for the entire land, and that ʿUmar I wrote a diploma (*sigillon*) for him that forbade any Jew to live in Jerusalem.[124] The East Syrian tradition claimed that the catholicos, Ishoʿyahbh II (628-44/47), had received some kind of document from the Muslims at the time of the conquest. But this does not appear to be mentioned by John bar Penkaye.[125] The eleventh-century Arabic Chronicle of Sirt (translated from an earlier Syriac chronicle) reports that Ishoʿyahbh II sent presents and 1,000 silver staters to Muhammad by means of Gabriel, bishop of Mayshan, and that ʿUmar I gave Ishoʿyahbh II a document in 638 for the inhabitants of al-Mada'in, that granted protection to Christians and their churches and guaranteed that no Christian would be forced to become a Muslim, provided the Christians remained neutral. It was witnessed by ʿUthman ibn ʿAffan and al-Mughira ibn Shuʿba.[126] It is Mari, writing in Arabic in about 1300, who says that the document ʿUmar I gave to Ishoʿyahbh II excused the latter's brothers, servants and followers (*ashyaʿ*) from paying the *jizya*.[127] It was the thirteenth-century Syrian Orthodox historian, Bar Hebraeus, who associated the famous Convention of Najran with Ishoʿyahbh II. According to this account Ishoʿyahbh II concluded

[124] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 425; IV, 419-20.

[125] Nor do similar claims occur in Sebeos. The peace treaty he reports between the Ishmaelite prince (Muʿawiya) and Theodore, lord of Rshtunik', and all the princes of Armenia was basically a military alliance and says nothing about the religious privileges of Christians in Armenia (Bedrosian, *Sebeos*, 158). Ibn Hawqal reports that Armenians preserved charters (*ʿuhud*) in the tenth century that dated to the beginning of Islam and allowed them self-government with the payment of tribute (essentially what Sebeos says) and the preservation of the status quo. These had been honored by the Muslim government until the tenth century, when neighboring Muslim rulers attacked the Armenians, despising their *dhimmi* status, although they had more than one treaty (*ʿad*). See Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, II, Beirut and Paris 1964, 343.

[126] Scher, "Chronique de Séert", II, 618-23.

[127] J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, III.2, Rome 1728, 95. This is not mentioned in the Chronicle of Sirt.

a pact with Muhammad, 'the prophet of the Arabs,' through the intervention of Sa'id, the Christian ruler of Najran, that protected Christians from attack, promised that the Arabs would not make Christians perform military service or change their manners and laws, that the Arabs would help them repair their old churches, that the tax on the poor would not exceed four *zuze* and the tax on merchants and the wealthy would be ten *zuze* per man, and that a Christian woman in Arab service would not be forced to give up her faith or to neglect fasting and prayer.[128]

The Convention of Najran had surfaced in 878-9 in the form of a yellowed registry parchment sealed with Muhammad's seal in the possession of a certain Habib the monk, who claimed it was from the *Bayt al-Hikma*, and that he had been in charge of what was in it before he became a monk.[129] Abel saw it as an apologetic converse to the Covenant of 'Umar,[130] while Fiey regarded its circulation by the East Syrian scribes from Dur Qunni between 852 and 885 as part of an Islamic-Christian rapprochement.[131] But, Scher is closer to the mark in saying that it was forged by Christians to induce the Muslims to spare them.[132] Given the previous discussion, it is most likely that it served as an historiographic strategy to preserve Christian communities by claiming that particular rights and privileges had been granted by Muhammad himself. It also seems to reflect or to be related to the theoretical issue that had developed in Islamic administrative law concerning the taxation of particular places depending on whether they had been conquered by force or had surrendered peacefully (*e.g.* the *Kitāb al-Kharāj* of Abu Yusuf).[133] It is no accident that Christians began to refer to such documents by the ninth century after about a century of threats to church buildings and pressures for conversion/apostasy. By employing them Christians were raising the ante.

The Chronicle of Sirt also claims that the Muslims favored Isho'yahb-h's successor, Mar Ammeh (647-650), because, when he was bishop of

[128] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, II, Rome 1721, 418; *Ibid.*, III.2, 94-5; Bar Hebraeus, *Chron. Eccles.* ii, col. 117.

[129] Scher, "Chronique de Séert", II.2, 601. The text of the agreement is on pages 601-18.

[130] A. Abel, "La Djizya: Tribut ou Rançon?", *Studia Islamica* 23 (1970), 8.

[131] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, III, 190.

[132] Scher, "Chronique de Séert", II.2, 602.

[133] See A. Noth, "Zum Verhältnis von kalifaler Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in Umayyadischer Zeit: die 'Sulh'- ''Anwa' Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq", *Welt des Islams* 14 (1973), 150-62.

Nineveh, he supplied them with food at the time of the conquest of al-Mawsil.[134] Again, it is Mari who adds that this was the reason the fourth caliph, ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, gave Mar Ammeh a document.[135]

On the side of the Syrian Orthodox the life of Gabriel of Qartmin (593-667) tells how he preferred the coming of the Arabs to the oppression by the Byzantines, how he helped the Arabs, and afterwards went to their *amir* in the Jazira, who welcomed and honored him and gave him a document (*prostagma*) signed by his own hand, that granted him everything he asked. According to this document all the *suryaye* (Syrian Orthodox) were free to exercise their church customs: to use the *semantra*, hold festival celebrations and funeral processions, and to build churches and monasteries. Priests, deacons, and monks were freed from paying tribute, and the tribute of other people was set at four (*zuze*?). The pagan (Muslim) Arabs were instructed to take great care to preserve the lives of the *suryaye*.[136] It is not clear when this biography was written, but the provisions ascribed to this document make the most sense with the advantage of hindsight. In the life of Simeon of the Olives (d.734) we are told that, when he wished to build churches and monasteries inside the walls of Nisibis, he took presents to the king of the Arabs who gave him a document upholding Christian laws in Arab territory and ordering everyone to honor Simeon and his monastery. Because of this and his own sanctity he was honored by the governors of Nisibis, Harran, Edessa, and Amid.[137] This biography is said to have been written toward the end of the eighth century[138] but a reference to the building of a *madrasa* in the text[139] suggests that the form in which it survived is no earlier than the eleventh or twelfth century.

There is some evidence of how such claims and documents were used in the ninth century. Apparently a document purporting to be a diploma signed by the caliph, ʿAli, was kept at the monastery of Gubba Barraya. According to Dionysius of Tell Mahre, Simeon, the brother of the rival Syrian Orthodox patriarch, Abiram, took the diploma of Gubba Barraya to Baghdad in 823 where the descendants of ʿAli, seeing a diploma of

[134] Scher, "Chronique de Séert", II.2, 630.

[135] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III.2, 95. This is obviously anachronous; ʿAli did not become caliph until 656.

[136] Brock, "North Mesopotamia", 57.

[137] Brock, "Fenqitho", 176.

[138] *Ibid.*, 179.

[139] *Ibid.*, 176.

ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, helped Simeon to get a diploma (of investiture) for Abiram.[140] Dionysius also records his own audience with al-Ma'mun in 829, in which he addressed the caliph:

> The people of al-Mawsil say that they surrendered their city to the Arabs voluntarily, and those who took possession had promised them by treaty that their church would not be taken down and that their laws would not be abolished, but this judge has ruined their church and put an end to their laws.[141]

Al-Ma'mun then ordered his chief judge, Yahya, 'If the people of al-Mawsil show you that their city was taken peacefully, allow them to preserve the laws that were conceded to them by the one who conquered it'.[142]

To recapitulate, authentic seventh-century accounts indicate that the Syrian Orthodox were most concerned at that time about relief from persecution by the Chalcedonians and about punishment by God for their sins. Concern for preserving church laws and customs and church buildings is most likely to have arisen from the eighth century onwards. The retrojection of these later issues back to the conquest period in the form of concessions originally made by the Arabs was an historiographical strategy to give these claims chronological precedence. But by doing this, their own historical record told them that the Arabs had not always lived up to these agreements. There were two further strategies to which they could resort. One was to appeal to their own construction of history and hold up these agreements to the Arabs in order to get them to comply. The other was to excuse the Arabs by comparison with the Romans. As Michael the Syrian put it, 'if the Arabs did not keep their promises, neither did the Romans even more, and not only with regard to the Arabs but among themselves'.[143]

Michael the Syrian himself says that he employed this construction of history in dealing with the Muslim authorities. He describes how he boldly addressed the lieutenant of the *amir*, Sayf ad-Din, at Nisibis in 1175, telling him:

> There are three books which contain precepts: the Law for the Hebrews, the Gospel for the Christians, and the Qur'an for the Muslims. Examine all three,

[140] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, III, 57; IV, 310.
[141] *Ibid.*, III, 69; IV, 520.
[142] *Ibid.*
[143] *Ibid.*, II, 446; IV, 432; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 188.

> especially yours, and you will see that God does not command kings to direct the affairs of the faith by the sword, since faith is acquired freely and not by constraint. Likewise, since God gave the empire to the Muslims, from Muhammad until today, none of the just kings who have reigned have trampled the law of God, but they have observed it. According to God's permission, they have imposed all sorts of tribute and every kind of corporal servitude on Christians, but they did not claim authority in matters of faith.[144]

And he says that it worked.

Nevertheless, going back to Theodosius II and Anastasius, Michael the Syrian did believe that it was important to have the government on one's side, Christian or not. The Syrian Orthodox patriarch, Severus bar Mashqa, in the time of Mu'awiya, is described as a severe man, who had the support of the Arabs.[145] The Maronites used their own construction of history as a textual strategy to explain this. In the *Maronite Chronicle* (to 664) the arrangement between the 'Jacobites' and Mu'awiya is represented as the result of the defeat of the 'Jacobites' in a disputation with the Maronites at Damascus in June, 659. The result of this defeat was that Mu'awiya ordered the 'Jacobites' to pay 20,000 *denarii* and to be silent. This is said to have been the origin of the custom according to which the 'Jacobite' bishops paid that amount of gold to Mu'awiya annually (at least for the next five years), so Mu'awiya would not withdraw his protection and allow them to be persecuted by the Church.[146] In the middle of the second Muslim civil war, in about 684, in the time of the Syrian Orthodox patriarch, Julianus of Antioch (d. 708), Denha, the metropolitan of Tagrit, John, bishop of Karma, and Joseph of the Taghlib (or the Arabs) wished to ordain bishops without the permission of the patriarch according to the custom before Chalcedon. Julianus deposed Denha and Joseph and replaced them with his own candidates, and thus 'triumphed by the

[144] Michael the Syrian *Chronicle*, III, 359; IV, 709.

[145] *Ibid.*, II, 456; IV, 436.

[146] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 29-31. Palmer suggests that the Syrian Orthodox were more successful than the Maronites in adapting to the new political reality. A similar strategy is employed in the Syrian Orthodox tradition which claims that Mar Ahoudemmeh defeated the 'Nestorian' catholicos before Khusraw I, that the Orthodox outnumbered the 'Nestorians' there by five to one, and that Khusraw I allowed the Orthodox to build a church as the result (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 251; IV, 313). The view that the Orthodox multiplied in the East under Khusraw I is repeated by Bar Hebraeus (Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, II, 410).

help of God and the action of the king', and the entire Syrian Orthodox Church was at peace.[147]

But government support could be a two-edged sword. Accounts about who had government support and how they got it are treated tendentiously in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. When the patriarch, John of Antioch, took fifty camelloads of presents to the caliph, Marwan II, at Harran, he is said to have been well received, the king wrote a diploma for him and gave him authority over all ecclesiastical affairs, so the jealous bishops turned against him.[148] The favorable tone of this account contrasts with that according to which Athanasius Sandalaya gave silver to ʿAbdullah, the brother of the king (Marwan II), incited him against the patriarch, and tyrannically got a diploma of a metropolitan from him without the agreement of the patriarchs and the bishops.[149] When the patriarch, Georgius, who did not have permission from al-Mansur or a royal diploma, was imprisoned by the caliph at Baghdad in 765, al-Mansur assembled the bishops and bullied them into nominating David as patriarch. Al-Mansur gave David a diploma and Persian (soldiers), who went around with him and forced the faithful to receive him. It is said that David was rejected by everyone and that the bishops he ordained were expelled.[150] These accounts probably come from Dionysius of Tell Mahre, a patriarch himself, and are likely to have been expressed differently if they had come from the partisans of Athanasius Sandalya[151] or David. That the behavior described in these accounts was simply business as usual is suggested by the 'Nestorian' biography by Denahishoʿ of Hanania, the 'Jacobite' bishop of Marde and Kephar Touta from 793, that reports approvingly that Hanania 'gave gold in quantity to the governors, and silenced by his wisdom the anger of his detractors'.[152]

At any rate, government authorization in the form of a diploma of investiture had become indispensable for the worldly legitimation of

[147] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II, 475-6; IV, 448. The phrase seems to be a trope. It is not certain which 'king' is meant, since, at that time, ʿIraq was not under the control of the caliph at Damascus.

[148] *Ibid.*, II, 506; IV, 464.

[149] *Ibid.*, II, 515; IV, 470.

[150] *Ibid.*, II, 527-9; IV, 476-7. Georgius was imprisoned at Baghdad for nine years, until al-Mansur died.

[151] An alternative version may, in fact, have existed. The late thirteenth-century Martyrology of Rabban Sliba lists an annual commemoration of Athanasius Sandalaya on 21 May. See P. Peeters, "Le martyrologue de Rabban Sliba", *Analecta Bollandiana* 27 (1908), 133. According to Peeters, Athanasius Sandalaya enjoyed a veritable cult at Qartmin.

[152] *Ibid.*, III, 20; IV, 489.

Syrian Orthodox patriarchs by the latter eighth century. When Joseph of Gubba Barraya (790-92) was chosen to succeed Gregorius in 790, Joseph went to Baghdad to receive his diploma.[153] Dionysius of Tell Mahre himself tells how he went from Antioch to Baghdad in 820 to get the diploma from the caliph, al-Ma'mun, 'according to the usage of preceding patriarchs', and how it was procured for him by Tahir.[154]

The role of Tahir in this account demonstrates how important it was to have friends in high places for intercession and patronage. Rabban Hormizd the Persian is said to have healed or revived the son of the Muslim governor of al-Mawsil, who then helped Rabban Hormizd to build his monastery in about 640.[155] This and other such stories (*e.g.* that Mu'awiya had ordered the great church at Edessa to be rebuilt after an earthquake, or in the Life of John of Dailam[156]) may have been intended to discourage attacks by Muslims on churches and monasteries, since their building had been authorized by Muslim rulers themselves. In the second year of the caliph, al-Mahdi, the Syrian Orthodox bishop, Theodosius, was able to intercede with the *amir* of the Jazira for the patriarch, Georgius, because Theodosius interpreted in Arabic during the audience and was very well regarded by the *amir*.[157] When the monks of Gubba Barraya accused the patriarch, Cyriacus, to the caliph, Harun, in 807, the matter was entrusted to Isma'il ibn Salih, Harun's secretary, who knew and liked the patriarch, investigated the charges the monks made against him, recognized their perversity, and exiled them.[158]

Whether or not such events actually occurred, the bias in these stories served the historiographical function of guarding against internal schism by demonstrating that the 'right' bishops and patriarchs had pull with the Muslim government. Otherwise it was a matter of 'tyranny'. These accounts were yet another textual strategy to enhance a particular structure of authority in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Syriac chronicles clearly employed a number of devices to encourage communal identity and solidarity, to discourage deviant behavior, and to protect church buildings, monasteries, usages and laws. But, outside of the claims made in the chronicles themselves, it is difficult to know how

[153] *Ibid.*, III, 10-11; IV, 483-4.
[154] *Ibid.*, III, 47; IV, 505.
[155] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, II, 538.
[156] See S.P. Brock, "A Syriac Life of John of Dailam", *PdO* 10 (1981-82), 132, 139-40, 148-9, 165, 167-8.
[157] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, III, 4; IV, 479.
[158] *Ibid.*, III, 20; IV, 489.

effective these strategies really were or how many of the ordinary faithful actually knew about them. The intended audience for the chronicles seems to have been other churchmen and monks, and the historical lessons appear to have been meant for them. How many of them actually read the chronicles and how often? Michael the Syrian was certainly well-read and had access to a wide range of materials, which he used to construct his chronicle (some of them already encapsulated in the chronicles of John of Ephesus, Jacob of Edessa and Dionysius of Tell Mahre). For the others it would be useful to examine letters and sermons for references to past events, their interpretation, and the communication of this interpretation in public. For the time being the commemoration of Church heroes and heroines in the liturgy is one way to gauge how a particular view of the past was used to communicate the communal identity in a more or less public way.

The annual commemoration of saints, martyrs, and other Church leaders in the liturgy reinforced a particular view of history and the identity of the community. It served as a revalidation of collective memory and probably had a wider impact than the chronicles, because each commemoration was repeated more often (at least once a year and sometimes twice or more), and because it reached a larger audience. Fiey suggested that one of the reasons for the foundation of monasteries was the desire by the founder to be commemorated in the liturgy, and he estimated that one-third of the Christian population were monks.[159] According to Brock, the East Syrian verse panegyric (*memra*) of the life of John of Dailam was originally composed as a homily to be read on the annual commemoration of the saint in the monasteries he had founded in the early eighth century near Arrajan in Fars.[160] Otherwise, there is little indication of what the actual content of these commemorations included, but there does seem to be a connection between saints whose biographies were preserved and saints who were commemorated. The East Syrian liturgical calendar is believed to have taken shape at about the beginning of the seventh century, while nothing that survives in the Syrian Orthodox tradition is earlier than the late seventh century.[161]

It is not possible here to engage in a detailed comparison of Syriac liturgical calendars, but some general observations about their represen-

[159] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, I, 14-15.

[160] Brock, "John of Dailam", 126. These monasteries probably did not survive after the thirteenth century; John's commemoration survived in the Syrian Orthodox tradition.

[161] S. P. Brock, "A Calendar Attributed to Jacob of Edessa", *PdO* 1 (1970), 416.

tation of history and communal identity are in order. One is that the traditions were not static; the calendars were subject to historical change and local variation. It is possible that differences in the dates for the same commemoration served as markers for different communal identities.[162] Another observation is that the saints who are commemorated are taken out of their historical context, and their commemorations do not occur in the liturgical calendars in any historical chronological order, but as discrete items arranged according to the days of the year on which they supposedly died or were martyred.[163] Nevertheless, these commemorations in the annual cycle served to remind the faithful of the past figures with whom their community identified. Biblical figures and early martyrs (including the Persian martyrs) before the separation of the churches tend to be shared, while later figures tend to be more local or specific to the community. Multiple commemorations for the same figure seem to indicate the relatively greater importance of that individual for the community. Sometimes commemorated figures are well known in ecclesiastical history; sometimes one gets the feeling that otherwise unknown saints have been inserted into the historical texts from the calendars. Some of these figures are not known anywhere outside of the liturgical calendars.

A Syrian Orthodox calendar ascribed to Jacob of Edessa, that survives in a manuscript of 1688, may not actually go back to him,[164] but seems to have some archaic features. It mainly commemorates biblical figures, apostles, early martyrs, and early Egyptian monks. But it includes Mar Mattai on 24 July and 18 September,[165] the founder of the famous monastery near al-Mawsil; and Mar Zayna and his sister Sarah on 22 November, two seventh-century martyrs unknown in the other calendars, whose cult seems to have been localized in the region of the maphrianate in the East.[166] There do not seem to be any figures later than the seventh century.

[162] For instance in the liturgical calendar of the monastery of Mar Gabriel (Qartmin) on Tur ʿAbdin the Maccabean martyrs are commemorated on 1 August, the normal date (Brock, "Fenqitho", 172), while in the East Syrian calendar they are commemorated on the Friday after the third Sunday of the Resurrection, usually observed on the first Tuesday of May. See A.J. Maclean, *East Syrian Daily Offices*, London 1894, 274.

[163] An exception is Rabban Hurmizd of Shiraz who is commemorated on 1 September in the East Syrian calendar, the day, long after his death, when he opened the eyes of a blind man (Maclean, *Daily Offices*, 282). Rabban Hurmizd is also commemorated on the Monday after the third Sunday of the Resurrection (*Ibid.*, 274).

[164] Brock, "Calendar", 415, 427.

[165] *Ibid.*, 420, 424-5.

[166] *Ibid.*, 417, 422.

The Syrian Orthodox Martyrology of Rabban Sliba of Hah (d. 1340), represents the liturgical usage of the monastery of Qartmin on Tur ʿAbdin. According to Peeters' analysis, it includes saints common to the entire eastern Church: apostles, ancient martyrs, doctors of the early Church; local saints; obituary notices for Antioch, Harran, and Edessa; and a capricious selection of saints from Byzantine hagiography, omitting those who were known to be Chalcedonian.[167] Among figures from the Muslim period who are commemorated, it is worth noting Georgius the patriarch, "who was imprisoned in Baghdad of the Muslims," on 2 December,[168] Antonius Qoraishiya, 'of the lineage of ʿUmar', on 25 December,[169] and John of Dailam on 31 March.[170] Could there have been a particular strategy involved in commemorating the martyrdom of a Muslim convert on Christmas?[171]

The role of the legendary Mar Awgin (Eugene, d. April, 363) and his disciples in bringing monasticism from Egypt to Mesopotamia in the fourth century is remembered in both the Syrian Orthodox and East Syrian calendars. The legend is no earlier than the ninth century but was written back into history at the appropriate point in the later chronicles.[172] The liturgical calendar of the monastery of Mar Gabriel (Qartmin) on Tur ʿAbdin commemorates Mar Awgin, the "great head of the divine band of the seventy godly men," on 23 January and 20 April, his disciple Shallita on 15 June and 15 November, his disciple Mar Melke of Clysma on 21 April and 1 September, and his disciple Isaiah of Aleppo on 1 October (the regular date is 15 October).[173] At the very least this serves to emphasize the importance of this tradition for the monastic community. In the East Syrian calendar Mar Awgin is com-

[167] Peeters, "Rabban Sliba", 129-34. There are also four Byzantine intrusions in the calendar ascribed to Jacob of Edessa: saints Eupraxia and Olympia on 25 July, the Theotokos on 31 August, John Chrysostom on 14 September, and the apostle and evangelist John on 26 September (Brock, "Calendar", 420, 425-6).

[168] Peeters, "Rabban Sliba", 143, 169.

[169] *Ibid.*, 144, 171.

[170] *Ibid.*, 150, 178.

[171] 'The birth of our Lord in the flesh' is commemorated on 25 December in the liturgical calendar ascribed to Jacob of Edessa (Brock, "Calendar", 418, 422).

[172] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III.2, 860-74; J.-M. Fiey, "Aones, Awun et Awgin (Eugene): aux origines du monachisme mésopotamien", *Analecta Bollandiana* 80 (1962), pp. 52-81; J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide* (Paris, 1904), pp. 302-5.

[173] Brock, "Fenqitho", 171-4. Mar Melke of Clysma is also commemorated on 1 September along with his disciple, Mar Euthalius of al-Mawsil, in the calendar ascribed to Jacob of Edessa (Brock, "Calendar", 420, 425).

memorated on the Friday after the third Sunday of the Hallowing of the Church, and his disciple Mar Shallita on 10 August and 19 September[174]

It may also be significant that some ten commemorations in the East Syrian calendar are scheduled on Fridays (more than any other day of the week save Sunday). These include (1) the Syrian Doctors and Mar Sabhrisho' of Beth Garme, (2) Mar Aba the catholicos, (3) the forty martyrs of Sebaste, (4) the (Persian) confessors (under Shapur II), (5) the Maccabean martyrs, (6) Mar Sargis and Mar Yaqu (James) of Suwa, (7) Mar Mari the disciple of Mar Addai, (8) Mar Shimun bar Saba'i the fourth-century catholicos and martyr, (9) Eliya the Tishbite and Mar Isho'yahbh, (10) and Mar Awgin.[175] It is possible that Friday was considered an appropriate day to commemorate martyrs, because that was the day on which Christ was crucified.[176] But not all of these figures were martyrs, and martyrs are commemorated on other days of the week and in the special lessons on days of the month,[177] that might fall on any day of the week in succeeding years. It is also possible that these Friday observances might have served to enhance and fortify a Christian identity on the Muslim day of congregational worship, by giving Christians something special to do on at least some Fridays. Secondarily, they might also have served to disassociate Christians from Jewish preparations for the Sabbath.

There is much more that could be done with the liturgical material from an historiographical point of view. But at least it seems clear that liturgical calendars could be used to promote a particular communal identification with the past. In this respect they popularized an historical outlook that is also found in the chronicles. This was an outlook that identified with biblical and early Christian history, but when the point was reached, probably by the early eighth century, that it had to be admitted that neither sectarian fragmentation nor the Arab/Muslim conquest were likely to be reversed, historical narratives became increasingly parochial and geographically centered on Syria and/or Upper Mesopotamia. History became a vehicle to emphasize sectarian boundaries and to accommodate to Muslim rule.

The Syrian monks and churchmen, who were responsible for historical narratives, began by presenting portents as warnings and disasters as punishment sent by God in order to strengthen the authority of commu-

[174] Maclean, *Daily Offices*, 280, 282.
[175] *Ibid.*, pp. 268, 274, 276, 278, 280.
[176] I owe this suggestion to C. Villagomez.
[177] Maclean, *Daily Offices*. 282-3.

nal leaders against deviant behavior: sin, schism, heresy, and apostasy. They saw themselves as the remnant of the faithful and tended to identify with the biblical Israelites and to identify the Arabs with Ishmael and his descendants, and saw Muslim rule in terms of relief from persecution by Chalcedonians. These themes never disappeared, but during the eighth and ninth centuries they were overlaid by the efficacy of repentance and the utility of rituals to deal with disasters and the importance of Church leaders being favored by Muslim rulers in order to enhance and preserve the authority of the clergy. By the ninth century Muslim threats to church buildings and customs, and pressures for conversion resulted in an appeal to historical claims that the Muslims themselves had granted protection from such threats to Church leaders at the time of the conquest. All of these means were used to preserve communal solidarity, doctrinal identity, and ecclesiastical authority. It is clear that both the sectarian fragmentation of the Christian Church in the East and the Arab/Muslim conquest were equally important in the use of history to consolidate communal identities among Syriac-using Christians.

# CHRISTIAN PERCEPTION OF HISTORY – THE ARMENIAN PERSPECTIVE

ROBERT W. THOMSON

My purpose today is to offer a few pointers in answer to the question: How did Christian Armenians define — or rather, redefine — their identity after the rise of Islam? More specifically, how did Armenian historians explain this new phenomenon, how did they come to terms with it, and how did they fit it in to the broader picture of Armenian self-definition? Now the very title of the Symposium, "Redefining Christian Identity," presupposes some earlier definition of Christian identity which needed readjustment in the mid-seventh century and later. The Armenians did indeed have a notable tradition of history writing already two centuries old by that time. So what follows may be roughly divided into two categories. The first is the adaptation of older imagery for the new situation; the second is the development of new modes of historical explanation — although these two aspects overlap to a certain degree. The simplest way to proceed is to look briefly at the main points of the earlier historiographical tradition and use them as guidelines for comparison.[1]

The writing of history by Armenians does not go back to the earliest period of Armenian history, despite the influence of Hellenistic culture from the time of Alexander the Great. Works by Armenian authors in Greek, or other languages of the Near East, have not survived, nor did they leave any acknowledged impression on later Armenian historians, if we disregard the alleged "Temple Histories" of Movsēs Xorenac'i.[2]

[1] For the early historiographical tradition in Armenia see J.-P. Mahé, "Entre Moïse et Mahomet: Réflexions sur l'historiographie arménienne," *REArm* 23 (1992), 121-153; and R.W. Thomson, "The Writing of History: the Development of the Armenian and Georgian Traditions," *Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo*, XLIII), Spoleto 1996, 493-514. For editions and translations of the Armenian histories see R.W. Thomson, *A Bibliography of Classical Armenian Literature to 1500 AD*, Turnhout 1995.

[2] For the disputed sources of this, the most influential of all Armenian historians, see the Introductions to R.W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i. History of the Armenians* [Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 4], Cambridge, MA, 1978, and A. et J.-P. Mahé, *Histoire de l'Arménie par Moïse de Khorène*, Paris 1993.

Writing in the native tongue began circa 400 of the Christian era with the invention of the Armenian script, which was itself a conscious stage in the Christianization of the country.[3]

The first point to make, then, is that historical writing developed in a Christian context, influenced in particular by the bible but also by a mass of patristic works including biographies, martyrdoms, and full-scale histories. The most important of these was undoubtedly the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, rendered from its Syriac version at an early date. Later on other histories were translated from Greek: Eusebius's *Chronicle*, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus — of which an abbreviated adaptation was also made — and the *Jewish Wars* of Josephus.

Opinions may differ as to which are the major original works that determined Armenian attitudes to their own place in the world, and the question is bedevilled by disputes about dating. But I would venture to identify three Histories which particularly influenced the writers who tried to come to grips with Islam. The first is the History of Armenia's conversion attributed to Agat'angełos, supposedly king Trdat's own secretary. The complicated textual development of the story, the earliest layers of which did not survive in Armenian, is not our present concern.[4] The most important feature for today's theme is that king Trdat and saint Gregory the Illuminator are said to have visited the emperor Constantine soon after his own conversion. The pact agreed between them on that occasion will reappear in a variety of guises in later writers and undergo some surprising developments.

The second author is Eliše, whose influential *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* describes in detail the revolt of 450 against the Sasanian shah and its aftermath. Most Armenian historians thought of their works as having a moral purpose; history was the record of God's providence in the world, and the reader was encouraged to follow the exam-

[3] For the role of Maštoc', inventor of the script, in the conversion of Armenia see R.W. Thomson, "Mission, Conversion, and Christianization: the Armenian example," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12/13 (1988/89), 28-45; reprinted in his *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity*, Variorum (Aldershot) 1994. The Life of Maštoc' was written within a decade of his death by his disciple Koriwn. For the most recent translation of the two recensions, with a detailed commentary, see G. Winkler, *Koriwns Biographie des Mesrop Maštoc'* [OCA, 245], Rome 1994.

[4] For a survey of the many different recensions in Armenian, Greek, Arabic and Syriac see G. Winkler, "Our Present Knowledge of the History of Agat'angełos and its Oriental Versions," *REArm* 14 (1980), 125-141; and M. van Esbroeck, "Agathangelus," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum. Supplement-Lieferung* I/2, Stuttgart 1985, 239-248.

ples of virtuous conduct. But for Ełišē virtuous conduct is not seen in terms of individual merits. For him, Armenian moral virtue is linked to the survival of the people. The Armenians were fighting for the survival of specifically national traditions — literally "patrimonial laws." His model is that of the Maccabees, and his particular concern is apostasy — abandoning God and the church means treachery to the Armenian people. The dilemma faced by Armenians as both loyal subjects of the shah and loyal members of the Christian church was set out at greater length by Łazar P'arp'ec'i. But it was Ełišē's work that had the greatest influence on later generations and served as the model for T'ovma Arcruni's description of Armenia in the Muslim world.[5]

If Ełišē emphasized the example of the Maccabees, the later Movsēs Xorenac'i saw a more direct connection between Armenia and ancient Israel. His attempt to provide a Jewish origin for his Bagratuni patrons is not immediately relevant here. It is rather the general parallel between the fortunes of Israel and of Armenia, developed under the influence of the bible and Josephus, that was picked up by many Armenian historians and adapted to later circumstances. Movsēs is not quoted by Armenian writers until T'ovma Arcruni in the tenth century, but from then on his History dominates the Armenian historiographical tradition.

The rise of Islam did not dramatically change the Armenian concept of the writing of history, in the sense of what purpose histories might serve. The new problem was rather how to come to grips with the new power — conceptually, I mean, not militarily. I shall not here deal with Armenian explanations of the origin of Islam and the figure of Muhammad,[6] but confine my remarks to the ways in which historians viewed the contemporary situation. The collapse of the old world order in the seventh century and the rise of Islam found their first Armenian historian in Sebēos. This unknown author of the second half of the seventh century is not only the first to describe the early Muslim victories; he is also the first to attempt an explanation of dramatic historical change.[7]

That the Arabs were descended from Ismael, son of Abraham by Hagar, had been accepted by Christian writers long before the seventh

[5] For editions and translations of these authors see Thomson, *Bibliography*.

[6] For a general survey see R.W. Thomson, "Muhammad and the origin of Islam in Armenian literary tradition," in: D. Kouymjian (ed.), *Armenian Studies in Memoriam Haïg Berbérian*, Lisbon 1986, 829-858.

[7] The most recent translation, with historical commentary, is R.W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History attributed to Sebēos* [Translated Texts for Historians], Liverpool 1999. This is based on the critical edition of the Armenian text, *Patmut'iwn Sebēosi*, by G.V. Abgaryan, Erevan 1979

century. Early Armenian historians had had no particular reason to discuss the Arabs' origins, but the relationship of Arabs to the Jews as sons of Abraham from different mothers was a well-known biblical theme; and it features in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius. According to the Armenian Homilies known as the *Yačaxapatum Čaṙkʿ* — attributed to Saint Gregory, but of uncertain date — all kings descend from Abraham.[8] For most Armenian writers, however, stress is put on the Arsacids as descendants of Abraham through his wife Ketura.[9] As for the Arabs, Sebēos naturally referred to them as descendants of Hagar or Ismael, or as Tačiks, the old name for the nomadic Arabs of northern Mesopotamia. More difficult to explain was why they had suddenly disturbed the ordered nature of things. The answer is to be found in biblical prophecy.

Sebēos offers two lines of argument: a series of disconnected quotations from the Old Testament which refer to a scourge coming from the south, and an explicit interpretation of Daniel's vision of four beasts associated with four kingdoms.[10] The prophet had not identified the kingdoms, but Sebēos explains them as those of the Greeks, the Persians, the people of the north, and the Muslims — i.e. peoples from the four cardinal points of the compass. Daniel is mentioned by previous Armenian writers, primarily in connection with the fiery furnace; but the idea of the successive kingdoms as preordained does not appear in Armenian texts before Sebēos.

Armenians never gave the Muslims a name related to "Islam" — that is, some Armenian term which might be related to the idea of surrender or submission to God. In addition to the geographical and biblical names noted above, however, one expression gradually became more and more common, namely the word *aylazgi*, which means someone of a foreign tribe or race. It is common in the Armenian Old Testament for the enemies of Israel, the Philistines. Eznik, in the fifth century, uses the word in this explicit sense.[11] So does Ełišē, referring to the forces of the foreigners scattered by David.[12] Here the context is an exhortation to the Armenian soldiers before the battle of Avarayr, where Vardan and his

[8] Homily 20, p.228; for editions and translations of the *Yačaxapatum Čaṙkʿ* see Thomson, *Bibliography*, p.216-7. An English translation is now being prepared by R. Darling Young.

[9] E.g. Movsēs Xorenacʿi, Book II, chs. 1 and 68.

[10] Sebēos, pp. 72, 141-2, 162, 176.

[11] Eznik, §246, with regard to Ezechiel 24.14; editions and translations in Thomson, *Bibliography*, 117-121.

[12] Ełišē, p.128.

companions were to meet their death. Except for this allusion, however, *aylazgi* is never applied to the Persians.

The adaptation of *aylazgi* for Muslims indicates the continuing dominance of the Old Testament image. Although not used by Sebēos or Łewond, writing in the early period of Muslim domination, it became a favorite expression for later writers.[13] It can, of course, be ambiguous in certain contexts. The twelfth century Lawcode of Mxit'ar Goš, for example, is based on earlier canon law as well as more recent texts and oral traditions.[14] Since *aylazgi* frequently appears in pre-Islamic canon-law, especially in canons translated from Greek,[15] its use in Mxit'ar is not necessarily confined to Muslims. He occasionally uses the term *Mahmetakank'*, an adjective derived from the Armenian for Muhammad, but this is not particularly common in Armenian medieval texts. In the Cilician revision of Mxit'ar's lawcode made in 1265 by Smbat the Constable, brother of king Het'um, the earlier *aylazgi* is usually rendered by *t'urk'* or *tačik*.

Let us now turn to the way in which the imagery used by Ełišē for the Sasanians is adapted by the later T'ovma Arcruni to describe the Muslim foes of a later century. In their descriptions of battle-scenes and martyrdoms both were drawing upon stock figures of speech derived from a shared tradition, in which the Books of Maccabees and hagiographical motifs played a major role. But in T'ovma there are long passages, not just words or phrases, which recall the earlier writer. His description of the caliph Jafar al-Mutawakkil's plans for the suppression of Armenia is based on Ełišē's long description of the shah Yazkert II and his attempt to suppress Christianity in Armenia.[16] Elsewhere images of a disturbed bear, a venomous snake, a fiery furnace, a roaring dragon, or a monster feeding on human flesh are deliberate attempts to recall the famous description of Armenian resistance to the Sasanian shah's anti-Christian tyranny.[17]

[13] E.g. T'ovma Arcruni, p.110.

[14] For an English translation with commentary of the critical edition of *Mxit'ar Goš, Girk' Datastani*, ed. H. T'orosyan, Erevan 1975, see R.W. Thomson, *The Lawcode [Datastanagirk'] of Mxit'ar Goš* [Dutch Studies in Armenian Language and Literature, 6], Amsterdam — Atlanta, GA 2000.

[15] See the indices to the critical edition of the Armenian Book of Canon Law, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, ed. V. Hakobyan, 2 vols., Erevan 1964, 1971.

[16] T'ovma, II 5; cf. Ełišē, pp. 7, 16-17, 22. The parallels were noted much earlier by J. Muyldermans, "Un procédé hagiographique," *HA* 40 (1926), 24-25.

[17] See the discussion of T'ovma's sources in the introduction to R.W. Thomson, *Thomas Artsruni. History of the House of the Artsrunik'* [Byzantine Texts in translation], Detroit 1985.

Another point emphasized by Ełišē is taken up by T'ovma; he stresses that when unity was broken, resistance crumbled. Many Armenian writers refer to the chronic inability of Armenian noble families to coordinate their policies in a harmonious manner. T'ovma's extended simile of the severance of a body's limbs as a figure for the loss of national unity is taken directly from Ełišē. Unlike the latter, however, T'ovma does not use the consciously Old Testament concept of a covenant between church and warriors for the preservation of Armenian liberties. Nor does he declare explicitly that the historian's task is to encourage the reader to draw moral lessons; he is more inclined to follow Movsēs Xorenac'i in stressing the striving for worldly glory and the historian's responsibility to leave a good memorial of such deeds. Nonetheless, his constant deliberate echoes of Ełišē remind the reader of that similar earlier dilemma: How are the Armenians to combine their Christian traditions with political loyalty to a non-Christian overlord? What Ełišē and Łazar had worked out in their descriptions of resistance to the shah, T'ovma applies to his accounts of resistance to the caliph and the emirs of Azerbayjan. But despite his constant adaptation of Old Testament language, unlike Sebēos he draws on no explicit prophetical imagery to explain the course of events.

That God was using the Arabs for his own purposes is noted by Łewond, writing at the end of the eighth century. He likens Armenian suffering from Muslim invasions to the suffering of the Jews of old. God inflicted punishment on them for their sins by means of foreign races; we are now suffering because of our sins, says Łewond.[18] It was not new to suppose that God punished Armenians for their backsliding. But the explanation of foreign invasions as the means to accomplish that end is a feature of the Muslim period. It is taken to its furthest extreme in the eleventh century work of Aristakēs Lastivertc'i. One example may suffice.

In the middle of his History a long passage describes the Turks' attack of 1047 into Vaspurakan and their advance the following year to the plain of Karin.[19] Here, as elsewhere, Aristakēs's language is based on biblical expressions. His explanation of the disasters is also based on biblical themes. Like many Armenian writers before him, he regards the

[18] Łewond, *Patmut'iwn*, ed. K. Ezean, St. Petersburg 1887, ch. 3; translation in Z. Arzoumanian, *History of Lewond*, Philadelphia 1982.

[19] *Patmut'iwn Aristakisi Lastiverte'woy*, ed. K. Yuzbašyan, Erevan 1963, ch. 11, p.65; translation and commentary in M. Canard and H. Berbérian, *Aristakes Lastiverdsi, Histoire d'Arménie* [Bibliothèque de Byzantion, 5], Brussels 1973.

Old Testament and the fortunes of Israel as a pattern for the more recent history of Armenia. Just as in the past the sins of Israel angered God, who in turn brought down punishment upon the Israelites through foreign races, so now the anger of God has again been aroused by the backsliding of the Armenians. And once again foreign races are the means of punishment. The Armenian sins are primarily those of the citizens living in towns — usury, luxury, and profiting from the sweat of the poor. This is not the place to elaborate on the theme of the city as a source of evil, an old Armenian idea since in their traditional society cities did not serve as a focus of social, religious, or political life.[20] Rather I would note that punishment by foreign races first comes to the fore in Armenian descriptions of attacks by Islamic peoples.

Although in some respects there were parallels between the Muslim rulers and the Sasanian shahs whom they replaced, Armenians had not previously had to explain their own place within the greater Iranian world.[21] That was taken as given; what needed explanation was the exact relationship between ruler and governed. Even if Sasanian Persians invaded Armenia and wrought destruction when their subjects rebelled, they were not regarded as foreign races avenging Armenia's misdeeds. Nor before the Muslim period had Armenian writers developed a tradition of hoping for salvation from outside. By this I mean — not that Armenians did not seek help from Byzantium when pressed by Persia, but rather they did not develop any wishful dreams of an apocalyptic nature where future salvation is linked to dramatic upheavals and divine intervention.

The most famous of such apocalypses is that ascribed to Methodius, originally composed in Syriac and known in many languages.[22] Some of the ideas found there are echoed in Armenian texts, although a complete Armenian translation does not seem to be extant. A long quotation is

[20] See N.G. Garsoïan, "The Early-Mediaeval Armenian City: An Alien Element?" *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16-17 (1984-85), (*Ancient Studies in Memory of Elias Bickerman*), 67-83.

[21] A useful survey may be found in N.G. Garsoïan, "Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Elements in Arsacid Armenia," *HA* 90 (1976), 177-234; reprinted in her *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians*, Variorum (London) 1985. See also eadem, "The Locus of the Death of Kings: Iranian Armenia — the Inverted Image," in: R.G. Hovanissian (ed.), *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, ed. [UCLA Studies in Near Eastern Culture and Society, 3] Malibu, CA, 1981, 27-64; reprinted in her *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians*. Here she collects the contradictory references in early texts as to whether the Persians regarded Armenia as part of "Ērān" or "Anērān," esp. 29 ff.

[22] See the recent edition by G.J. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO, 220, 221), Leuven 1993.

found in the History of Step'annos, bishop of Siunik', composed in 1299.[23] It comes as an Appendix to a description of the life and work of his namesake and predecessor, the Step'annos who is famous for his translations of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus and other patristic texts made in Constantinople in the second decade of the eight century.[24] It is not clear whether the later Step'annos implies that the earlier one was responsible only for the long extract quoted, or for the whole of the Apocalypse. In any event, the extract cited comes from the Greek version of Methodius, not the original Syriac. And it is unclear which Step'annos is responsible for additions that bring in Armenia.

Be that as it may, this long quotation refers to the Romans overcoming the Ismaelites and bringing peace to east and west. But then Gog and Magog, releasing all the wild peoples who had been confined to the north by Alexander the Great, will devastate the world and the son of perdition will appear. This will be followed by the second coming of Christ, the extermination of the impious, and the ascension of the just to heaven like luminous stars. The tradition that the first Step'annos may have translated the Apocalypse brings us to the role of such texts in Armenian; for they first appear only in the Islamic period.

Before then, however, Armenians had not been unfamiliar with prophecies of future events, which could of course be adapted to take new situations into account. Here we should mention the prophecy of Nersēs I, patriarch of Armenia in the mid-fourth century, as related in the *Buzandaran*, which is a fifth century composition of unknown authorship. According to the author of this History [widely, if incorrectly, known as P'awstos], Nersēs had rebuked king Arshak for his evil ways and bade him redeem himself from the wrath of God. "For, says Nersēs, I have seen a vision that perdition and destruction are advancing on this doomed realm of Armenia." Our fifth century author had in mind the division of Armenia into Roman and Iranian sectors which occurred in 387, some fourteen years after Nersēs' death.[25]

[23] Step'annos Orbelean, *Patmut'iwn nahangin Sisakan*, ed. N. Emin. Moscow 1861, ch.32; French translation by M. Brosset, *Histoire de la Siounie par Stéphannos Orbélian*, St. Petersburg 1864, 89-94.

[24] On the translations of this Step'annos see the introduction to R.W. Thomson, *The Armenian Version of the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite* (CSCO, 488), Leuven 1987; and M. Findikyan, "Bishop Step'annos Siwnec'i: A Source for the Study of Medieval Armenian Liturgy," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 44 (1995), 171-196.

[25] *Buzandaran*, IV, 3. See the commentary ad. loc. in N.G. Garsoïan. *The Epic Histories attributed to P'awstos Buzand: Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk'* [Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 8], Cambridge, MA, 1989. For editions and secondary literature see Thomson, *Bibliography*, 185-187.

In the tenth century an elaborate *Life of Nersēs* was composed; it is attributed to a priest Mesrop from Vayoc' Jor in Siwnik'.[26] In turn this *Life* was subjected to later revisions, though unfortunately we possess no study of the progressive recensions of the text.

According to the later version of Nersēs' prediction, after fifty years the priestly line of Saint Gregory and the royal line of the Arsacids would come to an end.[27] This refers to the abolition of the monarchy in 428. One hundred and fifty years after that the Persians will capture Jerusalem and take the Cross captive — which is not very exact reckoning in order to bring us to 614. When the Cross is returned the Greeks will no longer rule over Jerusalem; the Ismaelites will replace them. The latter will subject the Greeks to tribute until the time of the coming of the valiant race of the Romans, who are called Franks, who will capture Jerusalem and remove the subjection of the Greeks. As for Armenia, numerous afflictions will befall the country, including the oppression of the Archers — an expression usually associated with the Mongols, but also used of the Seljuks. But salvation will come from the Romans. These ideas were picked up by Matthew of Edessa in the twelfth century and later Armenian historians.[28]

Furthermore, there was a totally independent Armenian tradition involving the west, which long predated the Crusaders or Turks. This was now associated with these new circumstances. We return to Agat'angełos and the supposed meeting between the newly converted kings Constantine and Trdat of Armenia, who were accompanied by their patriarchs, Eusebius of Rome (later replaced by Pope Silvester) and Gregory the Illuminator. Whether the original story is a reminiscence of the visit of Trdat I to Nero's court, or whether it reflects some subsequent treaty between Rome and Armenia, is unclear.[29] In any event, with certain variations, it is enshrined in Armenian literature from the fifth century.[30]

[26] *Patmut'iwn S. Nersisi Part'ewi Hayoc' hayrapeti* [Sop'erk' Haykakank', 6], Venice 1853; French translation by J.-R. Emine in V. Langlois (ed.), *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie*, vol. II, Paris 1869, 21-41.

[27] *Life of Nersēs*, 89-91.

[28] On the adaptation of these prophecies to the Crusaders and Mongols see R.W. Thomson, "The Crusaders through Armenian Eyes," in Angeliki E. Laion and Roy Parvia Mottahedeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Washington, D.C. 2001, 71-82.

[29] See M.-L Chaumont, "Une visite du roi d'Arménie Tiridate III à l'empereur Constantin à Rome," in *L'Arménie et Byzance. Histoire et Culture* [Publications de la Sorbonne, Série Byzantina Sorbonensia, 12], Paris 1996, 55-66.

[30] For an overview see R.W. Thomson, "Constantine and Trdat in Armenian Tradition," *AO* 50 (1997), 277-289.

The arrival of the Crusaders, normally called "Romans" by Matthew of Edessa and other Armenian historians, immediately made this old tradition topical. The story of the meeting of Trdat with Constantine underwent elaborate developments; and at the same time a major theme of the Pseudo-Methodian *Apocalypse* was woven into the tale — namely, the introduction of the Romans into predictions of salvation from the Muslims, the coming of Anti-Christ, and the last things.

In Cilicia, an unknown Armenian author of the late twelfth century developed an elaborate scenario combining earlier traditions with apocalyptic ideas from Pseudo-Methodius and other writers. Disguised as a homily, this document was ascribed to Epiphanius of Salamis [to whom were attributed the apocryphal *Lives of the Prophets*, for example] rather than to an Armenian authority such as Nersēs or his grandson Sahak.[31] The homily attributed to Epiphanius, which includes reminiscences of the fall of Ani to the Byzantines and the arrival of the Turks, refers back to the visit of Trdat and Gregory to Rome at the summons of Constantine. However, the author adds the interesting information that the two kings and their patriarchs proceeded to visit Jerusalem, where they divided the holy places between the two parties. The holy sites are not here identified, but later versions of the story will be very precise on this point.[32]

But we have gone beyond my immediate theme, and I must bring these comments to a close. In the first centuries of Islam Armenian interpretations of the advent of the Muslims were relatively sober. The newcomers were viewed in more or less traditional ways developed in Armenian writing of the Sasanian period. But the subsequent arrival of Turks, Crusaders, and then Mongols, finally ended patterns of traditional Armenian society. From the eleventh century on Armenians indulged in ever more implausible fantasies, which combined themes from their own historical record with foreign apocalyptic notions.[33]

[31] G. Frasson, *Pseudo Epiphanii Sermo de Antichristo* [Bibliotheca Armeniaca, 2], Venice 1976. Attributed to the patriarch Sahak I is a prophecy that the Armenian kingdom will be restored in the Arsacid line and the patriarchate restored to the descendants of Gregory the Illuminator. This was later incorporated into the *History* of Łazar P'arp'ec'i. A Greek version is also known; see G. Garitte, "La vision de S. Sahak en grec," *Le Muséon* 71 (1958), 225-278.

[32] Thomson, "Constantine and Trdat," 286-288.

[33] For later developments down to modern times see N.G. Garsoïan, "Reality and Myth in Armenian History," in *The East and the Meaning of History. International conference (23-27 November 1992)*, [Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Studi orientali, 13], Rome 1994, 117-145.

# *AH! THE ASSYRIAN IS THE ROD OF MY HAND!*: SYRIAC VIEW OF HISTORY AFTER THE ADVENT OF ISLAM

AMIR HARRAK

## *Introduction*

When the Arab armies took the Byzantine and the Persian empires by surprise during the early part of the 7th century, and as they began to rule the ancient lands of Syria and Mesopotamia following what seemed to be quick victories, Syriac writers, some of whom were eyewitnesses to the events themselves, were unsure of their significance. It took them at least a century to find for the new Arab masters a raison d'être in their historical analysis. In this paper, we will first survey the earliest literary sources related to the Syriac view of history at the time of the Arab conquest and shortly after. We will then proceed to speak more in detail about the 8th century on the basis of a poorly exploited Syriac source, which seems to have introduced a new way of interpreting the historical events involving the Arabs and Islam.

## *Early Syriac Attitudes to the Advent of Islam*

The Syriac literary sources of the 7th century containing references to the Arab conquest of the Near East and to Islam have been previously analyzed by S. Brock and lately by Robert Hoyland;[1] there is, therefore, no need to go through them in detail. Prominent among these sources is the eschatological history of John of Phenek, who wrote at the end of the 7th century,[2] the correspondence of the Catholicos Isho'yahb III (died in

[1] S. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emerging Islam," in J. H. A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Papers on Islamic History, 5), Carbondale-Edwardsville 1982, 9-21 = S. P. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquities*, London 1984, VIII. Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 13), Princeton, New Jersey 1997, 116ff, 257ff.

[2] A. Mingana, *Sources Syriaques*, 1 (Leipzig 1907), 141*-71*. S.P. Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkāyē's Rīš Mellē," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), 51-75.

659) with Simon, bishop of Rew-Ardashir,[3] the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius written in Mesopotamia during the second half of the 7th century,[4] and others. In light of these sources, one can safely say that during the 7th and early 8th centuries Syriac authors were struggling to find a religio-historical meaning in the events that were unfolding with the conquest of the Near East by the Arabs. The events happened very quickly, leading to drastic changes in terms of international and local politics, administration and taxation of the conquered lands, which highlighted social fragmentation on the basis of religious adherence, and the sudden disappearance or shrinking of long-established kingdoms, one of which was Christian. These events must have created great uncertainties in the minds of the people at large.

Two main attitudes of the Syriac authors to the changing world around them can be detected in their own writings. The first one highlighted the expectation that the end of the world was imminent. This apocalyptic approach is found in all of the above-mentioned sources, as well as in contemporary Byzantine and Armenian sources.[5] Some sources reflect awareness that a new kingdom had arisen to succeed earlier kingdoms, following a futuristic view of world history found in the Book of Daniel.[6] This book, which speaks of four world kingdoms following one another before the arrival of the Son of Man, served as a major source for the Syriac writers of the 7th century in their attempt to understand history. Other sources spoke literally about "the end of the world that has arrived" (John of Phenek),[7] in such a way that the anti-Christ was expected to come. The rise of the Greek king after a specific number of apocalyptic weeks to destroy the "barbaric" Ishmaelites, securing the final victory of the Christian empire, occupied the mind of the Christians at the end of the 7th century (Ps.-Methodius).

[3] R. Duval, *Išo'yahb patriarchae III liber epistularum*, CSCO 11, 12, Syr 11, 12, Paris 1904-1905, vol. 11:251, 13-23 (text), vol. 12:182, 1-9 (Latin trans.).

[4] S.P. Brock, "An extract from the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius," in A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Translated Texts for Historians, vol. 15) Melksham 1993, 222-242. Brock, "Edessene Apocalyptic Fragment," id., 243-250, which has affinities with Ps.-Methodius, is perhaps chronologically too late to include it among 7th century sources.

[5] Byzantine: Ed. N. Bonwetsch, *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizanti* (Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist.Kl. n.F 12, 3:1910), p. 63; the letter of Maximos the Confessor in *Ep.* 14 in *PG* 91, col. 540. Armenian: F. Macler, *Histoire d'Héraclius par l'évêque Sebeos*, Paris 1904.

[6] Daniel 5:19.

[7] "Here are famines, earthquakes and plagues; only one thing is missing for us: the advent of the Deceiver;" Brock, in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), 72.

The second attitude reflected the belief that God used the "barbaric nation from the desert"[8] as a (temporary) tool to punish the Christians for their sins. The definition of "sin" depended on the identity of the writer. For John of Phenek, who was an East Syriac writer, it was the failure of his "Nestorian" church to oppose the Monophysites and the Chalcedonians vigorously; this is obviously a sectarian attitude also found in other Christian authors. For Pseudo-Methodius it was mostly sexual license. In any case, sin leading to divine punishment is not an interpretational innovation of the 7th century. Ancient and medieval people saw in every mishap, whether warfare, famine, plague, or seismic catastrophe, a divine warning, calling guilty humans to repentance.[9]

*8th Century Attitude to the Advent of Islam*

In contrast to the 7th-century sources, where there is no unanimous interpretation of the events brought about by the Arabs, 8th-century sources reflect a new and more stable attitude among Syriac writers toward the Arabs and Islam. While during the 7th century the Book of Daniel was heavily used for historical analysis, and thereby brought an apocalyptic view of the advent of Islam, during the 8th century the Book of Isaiah served as the main source for historical interpretation.[10] More than a century of Arab and Islamic rule led Syriac writers to believe that this new era represented the fulfillment of prophecies set in the Bible within God's plan of salvation.

The most important among the 8th century Syriac sources is undoubtedly the Chronicle of Zuqnin, written in 775/6. In the last part of the work, the Chronicler discussed extensively events that took place mainly during the first decades of the Abbasid rule. The history which he himself witnessed unfolding around him was a mere replay of ancient Israelite history. His descriptions of events are made in light of biblical models, namely those found in the Book of Isaiah, in such a way that

[8] This expression was used by Maximos the Confessor, writing between 634 and 640; see Brock, in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 72. John of Phenek did not hesitate to dub the Arab kingdom barbaric; Mingana 141*, 10-142*, 7, 145*, 7-20 (Syriac text).

[9] For more details about the 7th century see Brock, "Syriac Views...".

[10] The main theme in this book, as is well-known, is that God is the absolute master of history. He uses the Assyrian king and his army to chastise sinful Judah, but the Assyrian forgets that he is an instrument in the hand of the Lord. Instead, he becomes intoxicated with his military success, and even undermines the god of Israel, considering him as an idol among many others. God severely punishes the Assyrian because of his arrogance, and thereby asserts that he is the One who determines the course of history.

even individual people involved in these events were given biblical proto-types. The past was for him a paradigm for the present.

*Ah! the Assyrian...*

As a first step, the Chronicler equated the Arabs, his contemporaries, with the powerful Assyrians of the past, on the basis of a striking prophecy of Isaiah, where they are called God's tool of punishment (Isaiah 10:5-34). Like the Assyrian, the Arabs were not only alien to God's chosen people but were even unaware that they were but an instruments in the hand of God. Therefore, they boasted on account of their successes in conquering lands and people, but God always stood behind those Christians who had absolute faith in him to rescue them.

In Part IV of the Chronicle, the chronicler admitted that the land suffered "bitter affliction in our day and in our time, at the hands of the Assyrians, whom the Prophet described: *The Assyrian is the rod of my anger, and the stick of my punishment is in his hand; I will send him against an idolatrous nation and I will command him against a malicious people*".[11] In discussing the Abbasid defeat of the Umayyads in the year 748/9, the Chronicler identified the Abbasids more specifically with the Assyrians. Their physical description was prophesied by the prophets, and they were in fact black according to Nahum 2:10: *The faces of all of them are black like the blackness of the pot.* The Chronicler amusingly commented that not only were the Abbasids black, but also were black-clothed, a fact for which they were called in Arabic *musawwada*, which he translated into Syriac as *ūkōmē* "black-(clothed)".[12] They were likened to horses, because "just as the horse has a mane on the head and the neck, they too had long hair like the mane of the horse".[13] In vain one would compare this description of the Abbasids having long hair with the ancient Assyrians shown in reliefs typically

[11] A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnin Parts III and IV A.D. 488-775* (Mediaeval Sources in Translation 36), Toronto 1999, 138. (English translations of biblical passages in this article are made directly from Syriac, as quoted by the Chronicler of Zuqnin.) The biblical passage above has been the subject of several studies recently; see for example S. Mittmann, "'Wehe! Assur, Stab meines Zorns' (Jes 10, 5-9. 13a, beta-15)." in V. Fritz, K.-F. Pohlmann & H.-C. Schmitt (eds.), *Prophet und Prophetenbuch. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag* (Beihefte zur *ZAW* 185), Berlin 1989; S. A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis* (SBL Dissertation Series 123), Atlanta, Georgia 1990, 256-259. On Isaiah and native Assyrian propagandistic sources, see P. Machinist, "Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983), 719-737, esp. 734f.

[12] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 179f.

[13] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 179.

with long and stylized hair. The description is based on Joel 2:2-4, and found its way into the Legend of Bahira: "God called the Assyrian 'rod', and in like manner was the coming of the sons of Hashim over the earth (...)—they used to grow long hair like that of women".[14] The destruction of the land by the Abbasids was literally prophesied by Isaiah, including *God's rod*, because the Abbasids "used to hold in their hands sticks each studded with iron spikes at its end."[15] He likened them to swarms of "bees that are in the land of Assyria" (Isaiah 7:18-19), because of their overwhelming numbers, and to the crackling of the fiery flame (Joel 2:4-7), hungry eagles, and evening wolves (Habbakuk 1:8-9), on account of their bloodthirsty behaviour and plundering of the land.[16]

The economic policies initiated by the Arabs, which did not always please the Syrian Christians, were viewed as the counterpart of the Egyptian slavery of the Hebrew people.[17] Although here the Chronicler of Zuqnin did not fully equates the Syrians with the Hebrews, the slavery was nonetheless imposed by the biblical "Slaves" (Genesis 16:1-15) on the "Sons of Aram". This was in the context of the census ordered by Caliph Abdul-Malik which led to the levying of the poll-tax on every male adult: "From this time onward the Sons of Hagar began to reduce the Sons of Aram to Egyptian slavery... The slaves ruler over us!"[18] The Abbasid governor of the Jazira, Musa son of Muṣ'ab, was not outside God's plan: "The prophets prophesied about him, saying: *He destroyed the land completely* (Ezekiel 30:12) *and made the world like a desert* (Isaiah 14:17).[19] His policy of overtaxation, corporal punishment of fugitives from the tax, and blatant exploitation of the Jazira's human and agricultural resources, was seen as a blow struck by the Assyrian: "The prophets had previously announced the matter...: *The Assyrians marched against us, holding in their hands the rods of anger, and the stiff sticks of the punishment of the rod of the Lord are in their hands* (cf. Isaiah 10:5).[20] The mark which he stamped on the neck of

[14] R. Gottheil, "A Christian Bahira Legend," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 13 (1898), 230.

[15] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 178: With their sticks studded with iron spikes, the Abbasids "looked like those who go out to kill dogs," according to the Chronicler.

[16] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 180.

[17] Census always meant bad omen in the Chronicle of Zuqnin: see Harrak, *Chronicle*, 147, 149, 234, 254, 256, 263, and 267.

[18] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 148.

[19] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 223.

[20] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 272.

people as evidence that they paid poll-tax, was the same as "the mark of that beast (placed) on the forehead" as mentioned in Revelations 20:4.[21] Even the relation of Caliph al-Manṣur with Musa, whom he appointed as governor over the Jazira, was awkwardly prefigured by the relation of God with the sons of Jesse, whom he chose as kings over Israel: "*I found for Jesse a son according to my heart* (1 Samuel 16:1ff)—'Abd-Allah son of Muḥammad found in Musa a man according to his heart, so that he might walk before him in iniquity at all times".[22]

But the "Assyrian" was a mere tool of punishment, as the Book of Isaiah makes clear. Should the Christian return to God with faith, prayer, and total submission to him, then *God would punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride* (Isaiah 10:12). Nowhere is this literary motif involving the Assyrian more evident than in the Chronicler's description of the Arab siege of the Byzantine fortress of Kamakhon (Syriac Qamḥ).[23] The siege was laid by the Muslim 'Abbas, brother of Caliph al-Manṣur, after the Byzantines led by the Christian Sergius refused to surrender to the Arabs. 'Abbas failed in his bid to invade the fortress, and for the Chronicler, behind the Byzantine victory stood God who rewarded Sergius with it, for two reasons: one, Sergius' integrity, for he "was gentle, calm, God-fearing, and compassionate toward the poor," and two, the solid faith of the besieged Byzantines, who "devised for themselves an invincible weapon and built for themselves an impregnable wall, that is God their Creator." The Chronicler's anticipated conclusion reveals that for him (as was the case with any other Syriac writer), God was behind history: "Truly, my brothers (says the Chronicler), God has rewarded this man (Sergius) in that he saved him, together with all the people who were with him inside the fortress, from the hands of the Assyrians!"

The Chronicler believed that the Arab siege of Kamakhon by the Muslim 'Abbas was in fact prefigured by the siege of Jerusalem at the

[21] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 236. The author of Narrationes variae (see *Chronica Minora* I, edidit I. Guidi, CSCO 1, Syr 1, Paris 1903, 336:3-5) is more pragmatic about these tokens: They were placed on the necks of people "to crush them, mock them, and insult them."

[22] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 224. There are many other events placed in biblical contexts: Yazid II made himself adversary of the Creation when he ordered "white dogs, white pigeons, and white cocks be killed"; Ja'far, son of Caliph al-Manṣur and governor of Mosul, took away "everything, including the ritual vessels" belonging to the Monastery of Mar Matta near Mosul, and as a consequence, he suffered the same troubles which his prototype Beltesshazzar had endured, after he confiscated the vessels of the Temple in Jerusalem; Harrak, *Chronicle*, 155, 229, subsequently.

[23] For the account and identification of geographical names see Harrak, *Chronicle*, 207f.

hands of the Assyrian Sennacherib. As the army of Hezekiah was small so was the army of Sergius, and as the army of Sennacherib was powerful so was the army of 'Abbas. And as Hezekiah "went up to the house of the Lord... and prayed to the Lord" (Isaiah 37: 14-15), so did Sergius "rush to the refuge of prayer" with sad tears in such a way that he heard the same message previously heard by his personal prototype, Hezekiah: *He will not invade this town* (Isaiah 37:34), and *I will put a ring in the nose of this Assyrian and I will cause him to return with shame by the way in which he came* (Isaiah 37:29).[24] Thus, only absolute faith in God can secure a Savior who would bring about Christian victory.

The biblical past serving as a paradigm for present events is best evidenced in the speech of the Assyrian cup-bearer near the wall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:28-35 and Isaiah 37:10-13) paraphrased by the Chronicler to such an extent that almost only geographical and personal names were changed. Compare between a) Isaiah 37:10-13 (Peshitta version), and b) the (supposed) speech of the Arabs, who derided the Byzantines near the wall of Kamakhon, "like the (Assyrian) cup-bearer":

> a) *Do not let your God in whom you rely deceive you, saying that Jerusalem will not be delivered into the hands of the king of Assyria. Lo, you yourself have heard all which the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, how they have destroyed them, and can you escape? Have the gods of the nations which my fathers destroyed delivered them: Gozan, Harran, Rezeph, the citizens of Eden that are in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?*
>
> b) "Who, among all nations, has escaped from the hands of 'Abd-Allah son of Muḥammad (=Caliph al-Manṣur)? Did you not hear what he did to Marwan and to the family of Hisham, that he made them disappear from earth? Where is the King of Egypt, Africa, the Nubians and the Moors? Where are the Kings of Armenia, Baishan, Media and Persia? Did you not hear what he did to the kings of Sind and India? Who among the kings of the earth, was able to deliver his land from his hands, in order that you might escape from his hands?"[25]

[24] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 272.

[25] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 209. The Chronicler had a practice of casting his descriptions of current events into already existing literary molds. His description of the plague which took place during the 8th century was fully modelled on the description of the Great Plague (of Justinian) by John of Ephesus; see A. Harrak, "Literary Borrowings in the Chronicle of Zuqnin, Part IV: The Account of the Mid-8th Century Bubonic Plague," *III World Syriac Conference, Kerala*, September 1994.

*History of the Assyrian motif*

The biblical motif of the Assyrian as instrument of God's wrath was used much earlier than the time of the Chronicler of Zuqnin. It is found in early Syriac sources, as, for instance, in the *Liber Graduum* (9th Sermon 13-19),[26] and was applied to the Persians by the 6th century author of an Edessene Chronicle wrongly attributed to Joshua the Stylite of Zuqnin. The Chronicler of Zuqnin was aware of this short Chronicle, including the motif in question, since he copied it *verbatim* and inserted it in his world Chronicle. The motif of the Assyrian must therefore have been borrowed from the Edessene Chronicler. Talking about Byzantine and Persian warfare that took place at the beginning of the 6th century, the author of the Edessene Chronicler claimed that "(God) changed the relieving sigh which we breathed, at last, into torments, striking us at the hand of the Assyrian, who is called 'rod of anger'".[27] The wording of this passage highlights the reputation of the Assyrians as instrument of wrath, which the Chronicler of Zuqnin exploited in his description of the historical events according to the biblical model.

The choice of the biblical motif involving the Assyrians was not without some historical and geographical justification. The fact that it was applied to the Persians by the Edessene Chronicler and to the Abbasids by the Chronicler of Zuqnin, whom he always called *parsōyē* "Persians" (*ṭayyōyē* "Arabs" for him were the Umayyads)[28] suggests that both authors must have been aware that the homeland of the Assyrians, *Athor*, was Mesopotamia. This land was dominated by the Sassanians at the time of the Edessene Chronicler, and it was from there and more to the east that the Abbasid movement started[29] at the time of the Chronicler of Zuqnin. What *Athor* meant to the Chronicler was simply east in a general sense. This understanding has its root in Byzantine-Sassanian times, when Nisibis, to the east of Amida where Zuqnin was also located, divided the Near East into east and west. St Ephrem, who was familiar with the role played by Nisibis as a border post during the 4th century,

[26] *Liber Graduum*, a source dealing with spirituality, is dated to the late 4th or beginning of the 5th century; see S. Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, Kotayyam 1997, 28.

[27] J. B. Chabot, *Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, I, T. CSCO 91, Syr 43, Paris 1927, 240:1-3.

[28] The Chronicler of Zuqnin, an eyewitness to the Abbasid uprising, was the first Syriac writer making distinction between these and the Umayyads, using the two terms mentioned above.

[29] See Harrak, *Chronicle*, 178 n.1.

named Persia "filthy Assyria, Mother of corruption", in *Carmina Nisibena* VI:7. St Ephrem may have borrowed this association from Ezra 6:22, where the Persian king was named "King of Assyria". The same association was made by Pseudo-Ephrem, an apocalyptic Syriac source dated to the Arab era, in reference to warfare between "Assyrians" (i.e. Persians) and "Romans" (i.e. Byzantines).[30]

The Persians were also named Assyrians by the 6th century West Syriac author John of Ephesus, in the context of the sack of Dara by Khosrau.[31] This was also the case in the *Life of Theodore of Edessa*, whereas in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, Photius (9th century) said that he had been appointed by the emperor "to serve on the embassy to the Assyrians",[32] that is the Arabs during the Abbasid era. Northern Mesopotamia, ruled by the Sassanians and later by the Abbasids, was commonly named Athor/Athur (Aramaic form of the ancient Assyrian *Ashur*) in Syriac (and Arabic) sources until at least the end of the 14th century. It is in this geographical sense that 'Imad-al-Din Zangi, the Atabeg ruler of Mosul, was called in the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian "the Assyrian pig (who held sway, crushing beautiful grapes)".[33] This is a reference to his invasion of Edessa in which many Edessenes were massacred in 1144/5. Thus, the Chronicler of Zuqnin conveniently used an existing motif, fitting it into the paradigm he applied.

*The Assyrians as Pagans*

In addition to the "rod of anger" associated by the Bible with the Assyrians, the Chronicler of Zuqnin described them as pagan, in line with both the Book of Isaiah and the rest of Syriac literature. The late story of Mar Behnam talks about this martyr's father Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and a pagan who did not hesitate to put his own son to death after he converted from paganism to Christianity.[34] The mother of the Persian martyr Qardag was also "from the famous tribe of Sennacherib, whereas

[30] E. Beck, ed., *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones III*, CSCO 320, Syr 138, Louvain 1972, 61 ll. 49 and 61.

[31] *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, ed. E.W. Brooks, CSCO 105, Syr 54, Paris 1935, 292:5.

[32] *Photius, Bibliothèque*, texte établi et traduit par René Henry, tome 1, Paris 1959, 1:1.

[33] J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, vol. IV, Paris 1910, 630.

[34] P. Bedjan, *Acta martyrum et sanctorum syriacae* II, 1892, Hildesheim 1968, 397-441, esp. 401ff.

his father was from the tribe of Nimrod"; the three of them are said to have been members of the "Assyrian royal family".[35]

As for the late story of Mar Awgen (Eugene), it alleges that this Egyptian monk converted Sarguga, a city in Assyria, in which supposedly "Šar-uṣur, son Sennacherib, had settled when he fled from the city of Nineveh," after he assassinated his father. In Sarguga, the parricide "built his father's temple and was revering it, and the offspring and progeny of this one was preserved until the time in which the Saint arrived there."[36] The reference to Sennacherib, which is obviously based on 2 Kings 19:37 and Isaiah 37:36-38, meant to highlight the paganism that ruled the region "until the time in which the Saint arrived there," determined to uproot it. Even Assyrian rock reliefs still surviving in northern Iraq, were considered as true marks of paganism. The 9th century bishop Thomas of Marga talked about monastic cells cut by pioneering monks near Khinis: "When you enter them, you would be amazed to see the crosses cut in rocks that were not subjected to steel, depicted devotionally inside the cave(s)."[37] As for the caves cut into rocks subjected to steel, i.e. the Assyrian rock reliefs, Thomas leaves room to speculate that they had to be purified by the ascetics and that by the mere fact of living in them.[38]

As for the association of the Arabs as specifically pagans, it was already made during the 7th century by the Monothelete author of a Syriac life of Maximos,[39] but the term seems to refer to non-believers in general, as suggested by Brock.[40] In fact all occurrences of the term "pagan" in Syriac literature before the second half of the 8th century refer to the pagans in general, including Zoroastrians, Jews, Manicheans, and others. The Chronicler of Zuqnin may have followed suit in calling the Arabs "pagans", and in this case this naming may not be part of the Assyrian motif under discussion. But because he went out of his way in doing so, there is reason to believe that the "paganism" of the Arabs is partly due to the biblical paradigm he applied. Let us, therefore, examine the terminology which he used in reference to Muslims and Islam:[41]

[35] Bedjan, *Acta* II, 443:6-8.

[36] Bedjan, *Acta* III, 376-479, esp. 446.

[37] P. Bedjan, *Liber superiorum*, Paris-Leipzig 1909, 347.

[38] A. Abūnā, *Kitāb al-ru'asā' (Book of Superiors), Mosul 1966, 258 note 1.*

[39] S. P. Brock, "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor," *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973), # 18= S. P. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquities*, XII.

[40] Brock, "Syriac Views..." 201 note 27.

[41] For most of the terms discussed hereafter see A. Harrak, "Arabisms in Part IV of the Syriac Chronicle of Zuqnin," in: R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII* (OCA 256), Rome 1988, s. v.

First, he called the Arab empire *malkūthō* "kingdom" in the secular sense of the word, versus such an Islamic name as *dār al-Islām* "the land of Islam".

Second, he named Muḥammad *malkō* "king", whereas his main titles in Islam were *nabī* "Prophet" and *rasūl* "Messenger (of God)". When he referred to him as a Prophet or *rasūlō* (Arabic *rasūl*), it was because "they (= the Muslims) called him" so, or because the terms occur in Islamic prayers which he transcribed into Syriac.

Third, he referred to the head of the Islamic state with the term *malkō* "king", whereas he was called *khalīfa* "Caliph" in Islam. In fact this term as well as *malkūthō* "kingdom" discussed above are commonly used in Syriac and Christian Arabic literatures, as well as in Jewish sources,[42] and no doubt for theological reasons in both cases. To call the Caliph *ḥaliftō* is to acknowledge the Prophet Muḥammad of whom the Caliph was a "successor". The Chronicler was aware of the literal meaning of Arabic *khalīfa(t)* since he transcribed the word into Syriac (*ḥaliftō*) even if only once, in reference not to a Caliph but to the "deputy" of an Arab governor in the Jazira.[43] Other secular titles were given to Caliphs, such as *shulṭōnō* "ruler" (from Arabic *sulṭān* "sultan"), and *amīrō* "prince" (from Arabic *amīr*). In a few instances he used casually the Islamic caliphal title *amīrō da-mhaymnē* (from Arabic *amīr-al-mu'minīn* "Prince-of-the-believers").

Fourth, besides the familiar names of *ṭayyōyē* "Arabs", "sons of Hagar", *mhagrē* "Hegirites", and *mašelmōnūthō* "Islam",[44] used to refer to Islam and Muslims, the Chronicler on several occasions applied to them the terms *ḥanpūthō* "paganism" and *ḥanpē* "pagans". In the story of Mar Ḥabib, bishop of Edessa, the monks of the monastery of Mar Abel were threatened by an Arab official to be sold into slavery in case they would not return to him money previously entrusted (by him) to the door keeper. The people of Edessa are reported to have experienced great pain at seeing the monks lowered "from the rank of apostleship in the world to the rank of slavery among pagans," no doubt in reference to Muslims.[45] In another account, a young monk in the monastery of Mar Matta is said to have given up monasticism, and living prodigally, "he ended up in paganism (*ḥanpūthō*) and apostasised (*aḥnep*)".[46] Elsewhere, the Chronicler used hostile terms in dubbing the Arab empire

[42] Harrak, "Arabisms," 482f s.v. MLK.
[43] Harrak, "Arabisms," 478f, s.v. ḤLF.
[44] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 154.
[45] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 249.
[46] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 321.

as *malkūthō hōdhē rashi'tō ōf d-lō alōh* "impious and even godless kingdom", and *ḥanpūthō... gumsō w-faḥtō d-'abdhōnō* "paganism (...) pit and chasm of perdition".[47]

Fifth and finally, the Syriac author used the verb *'aḥnep* "to become pagan", to refer to the act of apostasy to Islam, although in this case the verb denotes the conversion to any religion other than Christianity. Besides the latter verb, the Chronicler used the root *hgr* to refer to the same action.

Though the Chronicler took the Arab kingdom as pagan, and to put it in a kinder word, secular, it was not his mandate to attack Islam as a religion. When he condemned ablution and prostration, it was because the Muslims performed them on the altar, inside the church of Edessa, in a context marked by violence in the early 770s. In the Chronicler's account dealing with the advent of Islam, he certainly credited the Prophet of Islam with good deeds, such as teaching the Arabs about the oneness of God, and turning them from cults of all kinds; nowhere in his Chronicle did he slander him, as is true indeed in all Syriac chronicles. But he also referred to him as "their" prophet, as seen above, claiming that they named him so because he instituted laws for them that were suitable to their lascivious and sensual nature.

All Syriac historians talked about the Islamic state using secular terms. The best of what was said about the Prophet Muḥammad comes from the mouth of the East Syriac Patriarch Timothy I before Caliph al-Mahdi at the end of the 8th century. Asked what he thought about Muḥammad, the Patriarch listed his virtuous deeds and that he "walked in the path of the prophets," concluding: "Who would not praise, honor, and venerate him who fought for the cause of Allah? He showed his zeal for the Almighty, not with words alone, but even with the sword too!"[48] Dionysius of Tell-Mahre wrote that Muḥammad, Abu-Bakr, and 'Umar I had lived in modesty and self-abasement "as a prophet ought to live,"[49] though neither he nor Timothy I admitted the prophethood of Muḥammad. One might add the fact that all Syriac historians consistently called the holy city of Islam al-Medina, by its ancient pre-Islamic, i.e. pagan, name, Yathrib. These details highlight the secular, not to say pagan, nature of the "Assy-

[47] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 324, 332.

[48] H. Putman, *L'Église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, Beirut, 1975, 31-32 § 159-163 (Arabic text).

[49] *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens* I, ed. I. B. Chabot CSCO 81, Syr 36, Paris 1920, 275.

rian", as far as the Chronicler of Zuqnin is concerned, since the Christian people are God's people, and the Arabs are only God's rod of punishment.

Seeing the prophet of Islam and the caliphs as mere human beings (with virtues and vices) by Syriac chroniclers contrast with their view as especially virtuous men by Muslim historiography—in the case of the caliphs, this was no doubt because of the fact that they were successors of the Prophet of Islam. Thus Caliph al-Manṣur was described in the Chronicle of Zuqnin as an insecure ruler, relying on magicians and diviners to make important state decisions, and as one who was so temperamental that his anger was likened to a bear's growl. Moreover, his greed and love of money was highlighted through claims, some of which are nowhere found in Arab histories, such as coveting people's cattle, namely buffalo cows. When he decided to built the wall of 'Aqula (Kufa), he tricked the local people in such away that they ended up building the city-wall, while the Caliph "spent not a *fuls* on it."[50] In another account dealing with the imprisonment of George the Patriarch by al-Manṣur, the latter was described as someone who did not hesitate to befriend anyone who informed him about people "being in possession of something", i.e. money to covet.[51]

True, al-Manṣur's greed was publicly known through his Arabic nickname *abul-dawaniq* "chief of the stingy people".[52] But when al-Ṭabari (10th century) reported about the building of the wall of 'Aqula with more or less the same details given by the Chronicler of Zuqnin, he reported it rather passively. He just mentioned that al-Manṣur allotted five *dirhams* to each resident of the city, but ended up by collecting forty *dirhams* from each resident as a contribution toward the building of the wall.[53] The negative side of the Caliph was hinted at by the History of al-Ṭabari, but indirectly and perhaps with some humor, through a poem composed by a local resident of 'Aqula: "Oh, my fellow citizens, for the treatment we got from the Prince-of-the-Believers! He allocated five (*dirhams*) to each of us, but he taxed us forty!". Nevertheless, a sharp contrast to the account of the Chronicler of Zuqnin is found in the His-

[50] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 233, 220, 240, and 277 subsequently.

[51] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 220.

[52] Interestingly, this nickname is also known in a Syriac account about Edessa written by Basil bar Shumana (died in 1172) and incorporated in the Chronicle of Patriarch Michael the Syrian: *mnṣwr dwnq; see Chabot, Chronique IV, 640:3.*

[53] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk (History of the Messengers and the Kings), vol. VIII, ed. by M. Ibrahim, Cairo 1979, 46.*

tory by Al-Mas'udi (10th century), who described al-Manṣur with rather positive words.[54]

We have seen that the Chronicler of Zuqnin, along with all other Syriac authors, interpreted events in light of the biblical past, including the historical misfortunes considered as a punishment by God rather than as a consequence of personal failure. Nowhere is this true than in the invasion of Edessa "the Blessed City" by Zangi, the ruler of Mosul, in 1145, when people thought that the city was devastated because "the blessing which our Lord had given to Abgar became null".[55] Other Syriac writers shared with the Chronicler of Zuqnin the belief that God had sent the Arabs as a punishment, giving them victory over evil-doers.[56] Dionysius bar Salibi (12th century) reported that the Syriac people complained that the "Assyrian yoke" was indeed too heavy for them to endure.[57] Dionysius of Tell-Mahre went as far as seeing the Arabs as the saviors of the West Syriac people from the Roman evil-doers (that is the Chalcedonians)[58], an attitude known during the 7th century (cf John of Phenek). But he did not spare his church and the other Christian churches the blame that their theological disagreement brought them suffering at the hands of the Muslims. These destroyed two newly built churches in Harran on Easter day in 834 A.D., and, thus, "The (Christians) of Harran suffered the curse according to which *God turned their feasts into mourning*."[59]

As is clear, Syriac writers took people behind misfortunes as a tool in God's hand rather than a power in control of historical events. This atti-

[54] "Al-Manṣur was indescribable as far as his firmness, sound mind, and proper administration were concerned. He would give lavishly if giving meant benefit, but he would withhold even the minimal sum where the giving was a waste (of money). Ziad related about him, (saying:) 'If I had one thousand (healthy) camels and one of them was with mange, I would have taken care of the latter, as if I did not have any one except it.' Abu Ja'far left behind 600 million *dirhams* and 14 million *dinars*, and with all this he was thrifty with his money, paying attention to trifles which commonality would ignore. Thus he made an agreement with his cook that the latter would keep the heads, feet, and hides (of the sheep), in exchange for supplying the firewood and the spices. Out of his generosity, he awarded his paternal uncles, ten in number, ten thousand *dirhams* in one single day!" *'Alī ibn Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī: Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Jewels), edited by M. M. Qumayḥa, vol. III, Beirut 1986, 376 (Arabic text).*

[55] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 638 right column. According to this Chronicle, Basil son of Shumana, bishop of Edessa, who wrote about the history of Edessa on the basis of Jacob of Edessa, fought this claim.

[56] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 422.

[57] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 651 right column at the bottom of the page lines 6-7.

[58] Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, 158, 164.

[59] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 529 right column lines 20-24.

tude found in Syriac chronicles reflect an apologetical rather than an analytical way of assessing negative events. In this, the Syriac authors shared with other Semitic peoples a characteristic way of thinking attested in as early as Babylonian and Assyrian literary sources and in the Bible as well. But some Syriac authors questioned this traditional view of history, namely that misfortunes and other evils originated in God's treatment of humans. The Chronicler Dionysius of Amida, when he was still deacon in Malatia, wrote as follows in connection with the invasion of Edessa by Zangi which led to the massacre of many Edessenes: "There are some people of hot temper who explain events according to their own way of thinking, saying: Why did Edessa suffer *the Assyrian rod of anger* more than all other places, and why did it sit in mourning alone, unlike the other cities like her? The Scriptures reply to them: Great are God's deeds, unfathomable are his thoughts, and his actions cannot be ever understood, though he reveals his mysteries to his servants sometimes. But you must consider that happenings and destruction do not occur randomly and according to one's own pleasure, as pagans think, but with the Lord's permission, (...) they do not always happen because of sins (...)".[60]

John bishop of Mardin went even further, in asserting that it was not proper to say or think that all the catastrophes and punishments were sent by God upon humanity, and that Scriptures made the same claim. A hot debate concerning this issue took place between him and Timothy bishop of Gargar and the solitary Abu Ghalib, who failed to change his mind. John's pragmatic analysis of the invasion of Edessa became even controversial among the Syrians, who started to question why would God allow the massacre of priests and monks, and the violation of the virgins, etc. John answered, saying: "No order was issued by the Lord so that the Turks might overpower Edessa and Tell-Arsenius and that all the atrocities be brought about by the onslaught! If there had been a Frankish contingent in Edessa, Zangi would not have conquered it!".[61] John published an extensive document containing scriptural quotations and "natural arguments" in defense of his view of history. Nevertheless, many writers refuted his claim in writing, among them were Iwannes of Kayshum, Bar Andras, and the monk Saliba "who was a learned man and famous".[62] John was thought to have made his independent judg-

[60] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 631 right column.
[61] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 632 right column.
[62] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 633 left column.

ment "because he was not instructed with the Scriptures during his childhood, but grew busy with his reading of them during his old age, acquiring the divine treasures that are hidden in them..."[63] As is clear, Syriac authors in general never went far away from the biblical and ancient belief that negative events were caused by divinity to punish humanity, nor from the biblical model that the Assyrian rod was God's tool of chastisement.

*The Boasting of the Assyrian*

There remains, however, the "boasting of the Assyrian" in the biblical motif, which led God to severely punish him, according to Isaiah 10:12. It is a normal attitude among humans to wish a bad end to any despotic power, especially if they do not share that power. As will be shown below, all Syriac authors throughout the centuries hoped to eventually witness the victory of the Cross over the Crescent, and, thus, our 8th-century Chronicler could well have been one of them.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that the Chronicler of Zuqnin intentionally discussed the "boasting of the Arabs" in his biblical paradigm. First, boasting is an integral part of the Assyrian motif, expressed both in the speech of the Assyrian cup-bearer near the wall of Jerusalem, and in the speech of the Abbasid enemy near the wall of Kamakhon. Arrogance can also be seen in the son of 'Akki, the Abbasid governor of the Jazira, who went to war against the Armenians in 754/5 with pride and excessive confidence, but badly failed at the hands of the Christian Kushan. Nonetheless, arrogance here may be due to youth, which "is akin to disorder," according to the Chronicler, for whom the son of 'Akki was simply "a second Rehoboam, the foolish son (of Solomon) who followed the counsel of the young men who had grown up with him".[64]

Second, the Chronicler discussed expressly the boasting of the new Muslims of the Jazira, former Christians who defected to Islam.[65] Large numbers of Christians apostatized as early as the time of the East Syriac Catholicos Isho'yahb III of Adiabene (580-659), who eyewitnessed the advent of the Arabs. Writing to the Metropolitan of Rew-Ardashir, he admitted that huge crowds of Syriac Christians in Persia shifted to Islam,

[63] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 631 left column.

[64] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 191.

[65] The Chronicler was more exposed to Syriac converts to Islam than to Muslims of Arab origin, a fact which explains why he talked about the arrogance of the converts.

despite the fact the Arabs "not only do they not oppose Christianity, but they praise our faith, honor the priests and Saints of our Lord, and give aid to the churches and monasteries".[66] He, nonetheless, confessed that though the Arabs did not compel the Christians to abandon their faith, they imposed upon them to give up half of their yields.[67] During the second half of the 8th century in Syria, huge crowds, and sometimes entire Syriac villages converted to Islam under no pressure from anyone. The economic factor was certainly one reason behind the massive conversion.

At any rate, the new converts used to return to their native regions, "boasting and rising against the truth".[68] They looked down on the Christians and addressed them with hostile statements, attacking the very tenets of their religion using Koranic verses. True disputations, in a polemical atmosphere, took place between both antagonistic groups, which covered classical topics found in later apologies and disputations. The denial of the divine nature of Jesus and his role as a mere prophet, "like Moses, Elijah, and Muḥammad,"[69] dominated the hostile disputation, and the answers of the Christians, namely of the Chronicler, are of the type found in later apologies and disputations.[70]

The success of the Arabs in their military undertakings, which resulted in the establishment of an extensive and powerful kingdom, was behind their boasting. The success became for them an equivocal proof that God was on their side against the Christian kingdom, and an indication that Islam was the true religion. Dialogues and disputations between Christians and Muslims reflect this characteristically confident attitude among the Muslims. For the Chronicler of Zuqnin, this boasting had its

[66] *Liber epistularum*, 251:14-15.

[67] *Liber epistularum*, 251:21-23.

[68] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 324.

[69] Harrak, *Chronicle* 327.

[70] Note that the first historical disputations took place not between Arab Muslims and Christians, but between these and Christian apostates, as the Chronicle of Zuqnin suggests. The disputations reported in this Chronicle (written in 775) occurred several years prior to the seemingly first historical dialogue between Timothy I (780-823) and al-Mahdi (775-785). The oral disputations between new Muslims and Christians reported by the Chronicler of Zuqnin must have opened the eyes of Syriac writers to compose fictitious dialogues and disputations, in which they included not only common questions asked by Muslims but also ready-made answers to their questions. The earliest of such fictitious disputations are the dialogue between Patriarch John I (631-48) and an Arab Commander (see M. F. Nau, "Un colloque du Patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 716 d'après le ms. du British Museum *Add.* 17193," *JA* 9 [1915], 225-279) and the dialogue between a monk of Beth Hale and an Arab notable (ms Diyarbakir 95 fols. 1-8).

echo in Isaiah, where the Assyrian king took himself for more than the "stick" in the hand of the Lord, and therefore he was to be crushed in the Lord's land and mountains (Isaiah 14:25).[71]

Third, the boasting of the Arabs generated the expectation among Christians that one day a God-fearing (Christian) saviour would rise to fulfill the victory of Christ over the rod of chastisement, Islam. The Chronicler expected him among the Byzantines, though these were Chalcedonians, and rejoiced in the victory of Sergius over 'Abbas at the fortress of Kamakhon. He may have seen in John son of Daddi, a man of Maipharqat who rebelled against Arab rule in that region, an aspiration toward self-rule. In this enterprise, John "grew exceedingly strong since he made God his own chief".[72] Kushan, the Armenian general whom we mentioned earlier, was admired, and his fight with and victory over the son of 'Akki were described in great details. But beyond these limited attempts at salvation, our Chronicler had little hope that a Christian king would ever rise again to repel God's chastisement, Islam. This explains why his Chronicle ends with a negative, not to say bitter, tone, easily detected in his last account dealing with Cyrus, a man of Harran martyred at the hands of the Abbasid governor of the Jazira in 770.[73] Later Syriac writers coped with the Arabs, preferring them over the evil Chalcedonians. This was the attitude of the West Syriac patriarchs Dionysius of Tell-Mahre and Michael the Syrian. The latter was convinced that the Muslims imposed the *jizia* "poll-tax" on the Christians and expected obedience from them because it was an order of God.[74] Basil, bishop of Edessa, claimed that, while the Syrian people rejected the Greeks because of their heresy and evil doings, they lived in harmony with the Muslims, adopting even their own Arabic language and script; this was at least the case of the Christian citizens of Edessa around 1031.[75] Other Syriac authors, like Timothy I, did their best to understand Islam, but never to the extent of legitimizing God's rod of anger.

By the 13th century, the saviour almost materialized in the person of the Mongol Ilkhan Hulego and his wife Dokuz-khatun "the believer".

[71] The arrogance and overconfidence of the Arabs are best expressed in the speech of 'Abbas near the Byzantine fortress of Kamakhon, which echoes the arrogant speech of the Assyrian cup-bearer, as seen above.

[72] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 181ff.

[73] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 321ff.

[74] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 709: line 7: "Through God's command, they (= the Muslims) subjected the Christians to every kind of tribute and every kind of physical servitude."

[75] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 640: lines 15-17.

Bar-Hebraeus was confident that the triumph of the Cross over the Crescent was finally about to take place; he did not hide his admiration for the Mongols and his support for their rule, though he never undermined Islam and the Arabs. The following is what he said at the death of Hulego in A.D. 1265: "He had no rival with regard to his wisdom, magnanimity, and admirable manners. And during the summer Dokuz-khatun, the believing queen, (also) departed. A great sorrow befell the Christians throughout the whole world because of the departure of these two great lights, who made the Christian religion triumphant."[76] And around 1220, that is decades before the defeat of the Mongols at 'Ayn Galuth at the hands of the Muslims, a Syriac manuscript (Vat. Syr. 559, f. 223v) depicted Constantine and his mother Helena with Mongol facial features, and clad with the royal attire of Mongol style.[77] The two officials were not identified by name, but one cannot resist seeing in them Hulego and Dokuz-khatun, the Constantine and Helena of the Mongol era.[78] The rod of anger was about to turn into God's salvation for his (Christian) people. The victory of the Cross over the Crescent was expected to be as important as the victory of the Cross over Roman paganism under Constantine. Bar-Hebraeus did not live long enough to witness the disastrous failure of this expectation.

Syriac chronography ends with a few pages added to the World Chronicle of Bar-Hebraeus by his own brother al-Ṣafi, who succeeded him as maphrian in 1288. In some places, the latter even edited his brother's Chronicle, adding details that did not fit the time of Bar-Hebraeus, as the late Fr. Fiey has pointed out.[79] In one edited place, al-Ṣafi bitterly commented that the Mongols (who were hoped to achieve the Christian victory), themselves turned into yet another rod of chastisement, even worse than the "Assyrian rod of anger": "Because they (the Mongols) saw modesty and such other virtues mostly in the Christian people, they liked them greatly, mainly at the beginning of their rule and for a short while. But suddenly their love turned into hatred, in such a way that they did not bother to look at them with the eyes.

[76] *The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus Gregory Abūl-Faraj 1225-1286*, Vol. II: Syriac Text, (ed. by) E. A. W. Budge, Oxford 1976, 161v (left column) lines 3-13.

[77] J. Leroy, *Les Manuscrits Syriaques à Peintures: Album*, Paris 1964, pl. 99:2.

[78] Another MS housed at the British Library, add. 7170, shows the same depiction but here the figures were identified as Constantine and Helena; Leroy, *Les Manuscrits*, pl. 99:1.

[79] See Fiey's Introduction to the Arabic translation of Bar-Hebraeus' Chronography, *Ta'rīkh al-zamān li-'abī al-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn 'ibn al-'Ibrī, (translated by:) 'Isḥāq 'Armalah, Beirut 1991, 9.*

Then they renegated altogether, myriads upon myriads from all nations".[80]

In time of such deep hopelessness and helplessness previously experienced by the Chronicler of Zuqnin, the latter drew strength from the divine plan of salvation, which he summarized at the end of his account about apostates.[81] The basic lesson of his summary was that God never neglected the human race even in his worst chastisement. After more than four centuries, Michael the Syrian reiterated the same belief: "We have to realize that though God allowed the Arabs and the Turks to rule over us because of our own sins, He had not once given up on us in any way, nor would he ever give up on us! On the contrary, He protects us and saves us from all our enemies, and that is because of the mercy he has on His church".[82]

*Conclusion*

The apocalyptic tone found in 7th century Syriac historical and other literary sources dealing with Islam is not attested in late 8th century historical writing. There are certainly late apocalyptic sources, such as the legend of the monk Behira mentioned above, but these do not belong to Syriac historiography. There is also another approach to history, polemical and defensive in character, found mostly in Syriac dialogues and disputations with the Muslims. These form another literary genre, essentially distinct from Chronography, and need to be studied independently, a task beyond the goal of the present paper.

By the late 8th century, that is after more than one century of well-established Islamic rule, the Syriac people looked at history as being purely a history of salvation. The history of the Israelites became a prophecy of the chains of events now experienced by the Syriac people. This attitude toward history can be detected in Syriac chronography until the end of the 14th century. But the 8th-century Chronicler of Zuqnin went farther in his discussion of the historical events. Nations, individuals, and even toponyms of the biblical past were prototypes of the same entities encountered by him. The Abbasids were not the Muslims of Mesopotamia and the East who inaugurated a new historical era, but the Assyrians of the Old Testament resurrected. Hezekiah was the biblical

[80] *The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus*, 126 (left column) lines 11-19.
[81] Harrak, *Chronicle*, 330-1.
[82] Chabot, *Chronique* IV, 700.

prototype of the Byzantine Sergius, and Sennacherib was the prefigure of Caliph al-Manṣur. Even the Byzantine fortress of Kamakhon was prefigured by ancient Jerusalem.

Here we are not dealing simply with fulfillment of biblical prophecies, but with a replay of biblical history, in which the modelling consisted not of simile or metaphor but of full equation and identification. Even biblical metaphors ceased to be such in the Chronicle of Zuqnin, for through the "rod of anger" metaphor, for instance, its author saw the Arabs as the ancient Assyrians in disguise. Thus, as far as the Chronicle of Zuqnin is concerned, the issue is no longer historicity but paradigm. Although this kind of historical interpretation seems awkward if not unorthodox altogether, it, nonetheless, reflects one view of history, which fits the major theme of the present conference, "Christian Cultural Strategies since the Rise of Islam". From the last named perspective, one might justifiably speak of the programmatic role of biblical history.

# HISTORY AND COMMUNITY
# JACOB OF EDESSA AND THE WEST SYRIAN IDENTITY

J.J. VAN GINKEL

In the seventh century the rise of Islam thoroughly changed the life of the Christians of the Middle East. All of a sudden the various Christian communities found themselves in new political and religious circumstances and in interaction with a culture, which itself was in an highly accelerate phase of evolution. Gradually the new rulers began promoting a new language and new forms of expression creating a new culture, although deeply rooted in the various cultures of the classical — for lack of a better word — cultures of the region. Rather than having one Christian movement dominating society, supported by the state, the various Christian churches were forced to contend with each other on the basis of equality, while being watched over by a none-Christian government. They were now living in a cultural environment, where many of the old and established cultural dogmas were challenged. 'Hellenistic' and 'Semitic' elements once again had to be moulded into a new form of symbiosis.

Christian communities and Christian leaders had to respond and redefine their identity — in relation to the new government, to the new, state-supported religion and to the other Christian communities.[1]

It is within this context that Jacob of Edessa[2] manifested himself as a theologian and a scholar and became a founding father within the West-

[1] There is no clearcut introduction to the seventh and early eighth century in the Middle East but R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others saw it. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (*Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 13), Princeton 1997 provides in his first chapter and his bibliography a good starting point.

[2] On Jacob see e.g. H.J.W. Drijvers, "Jakob von Edessa", *TRE* 16 (1987), 468-470, for a detailed discussion of his life see A. Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde I Westsyrische Originalurkunden 1A* (*CSCO* 307, *subs* 35) Louvain 1970, 207-212 and O.J. Schrier, "Chronological Problems Concerning the Lives of Severus bar Mašqā, Athanasius of Balad, Julianus Romāyā, Yoḥannān Sābā, George of the Arabs and Jacob of Edessa" *OC* 75 (1991), 62-90, for a more or less complete bibliography on Jacob and his works see D.Kruisheer & L. Van Rompay, "A bibliographical *Clavis* to the Works of Jacob of Edessa", *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* I,1 (1998) [http://syrcom.cua.edu/hugoye/vol1no1/clavis.html]

Syrian Church. Born around 636 or 638 near Antioch, Jacob was educated in both Greek and Syriac in the monastery of Qennešre and in the city of Alexandria. He became bishop of Edessa for the West-Syrian Church in 684, but abdicated in 688 over a canonical dispute with his patriarch Julian (687-708). He withdrew to a scholarly life in various monasteries, but remained an authoritative figure within his community. He became the focal point of a scholarly group of contemporaries — e.g. George of the Arabs (d. 724), John the Stylite (d. 737/8). In 708 he was re-established as bishop of Edessa, but died after a few months while on route to move his library to Edessa.

Jacob was actively involved in the translation or revision of translations into Syriac of many Greek works, both theological and philosophical. By and large his works were integrated into Syriac culture, at least the West-Syrian tradition, and it was expanded upon by later scholars, like Moses bar Kepha, Dionysius Bar Salibi or Michael the Syrian[3].

In the following some characteristics of Jacob's work are discussed from the perspective of community building.

*Jacob and the Arabs*[4]

In Jacob's literary work the most well-known references to Arabs and Islam come from his correspondence. From the Letter on the Genealogy of the Virgin it becomes clear that Muslims do address Christians on religious matters[5]. However, the topic of the letter is the provenance of Mary and the argument is not specifically aimed at the Muslims, but

[3] As a result not all his work has survived unscathed. His work was reused by later authors rather than copied. As a result we are not always allowed access to the original work by Jacob. Furthermore, not every innovation or adaptation by Jacob was accepted. For example Jacob's diacritical signs in Syriac orthography or his Bible revision did not become the standard for his community. Nevertheless Jacob had a strong influence on the evolution of West Syrian culture. On Jacob's literary work and its influence see K.D. Jenner, R.B. ter Haar Romeny (eds.,) *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of his Day*, (forthcoming)

[4] For a more elaborate discussion see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* 1997 and R.G. Hoyland, "Jacob of Edessa on Islam", in: G.J. Reinink, A.C. Klugkist (eds.), *After Bardaisan. Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J.W. Drijvers* (*OLA*, 89), Louvain 1999, 149-160

[5] Text and translation in F. Nau, "Lettre de Jacques d'Édesse sur la généalogie de la sainte vierge", in idem, *Lettres choisis de Jacques d'Édesse* (*Extrait de la Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*) Paris 1906 35-54, on Muslim-Christian debate especially p 42 (text), p 49 (translation) "whenever someone talks with you and questions you and presses you on this topic (sc. whether Mary belonged to the line of David) whether he be Muslim or Christian.."

against all who deny that Mary is from the House of David and the Mother of Christ, whether heretics, *mhaggrāyē* or Jews. First and foremost it is illustrative of an ongoing inter-Christian debate as part of the dispute on the humanity of Christ. Muslims are referred to as agreeing with the Christians against the Jews that Mary was indeed from the house of David and therefore that the prophesy that the Messiah would be from the house of David has been fulfilled. In an elaboration on the Muslims Jacob also states that Muslims call Christ not only The Word of God, — which is correct — but also the Spirit of God "in their ignorance", since they are unable to distinguish between Word and Spirit. In turn they therefore are unwilling to call Christ God and Son of God. This is the most explicit "theological" criticism of Islam by Jacob, but only in two or three sentences. It clearly illustrates that he has knowledge of the new religion and of an exchange of religious views, but in his works this exchange is not explicitly present. Jacob has knowledge of Islam and its rituals — for example the direction of prayer[6] — but he only uses this knowledge in his works to illustrate an argument which has little to do with Islam as such.

With regard to Jacob's implicit response to both Islam and the political changes of the seventh century the most pronounced example might be the apocalypse at the beginning of the Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, which has been attributed to Jacob by Han Drijvers[7]. This text seems to belong to a larger apocalyptic tradition which flourished during the second half of the seventh century in northern Mesopotamia[8]. However, the attribution of this text to Jacob of Edessa has not yet been accepted[9]. This text would also be the only explicit and extensive response by Jacob to the loss of Syria by the Byzantine Empire.

[6] Item 10 in Letter 14 to John the Stylite (fol 124a of BL Add 12.172), translated in P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world*, Cambridge, New York 1977, 173 n. 30.

[7] H.J.W. Drijvers, "The Testament of Our Lord: Jacob of Edessa's Response to Islam", *ARAM* 6 (1994) 104-114;

[8] G.J. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: a Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam", in Av. Cameron, L. I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (*Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Isla*,1.1) Princeton 1992, 149-187, idem, *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius übersetzt von G.J. Reinink*, (*CSCO* 541, *Syr* 221), Louvain 1993, v-xlv ("Einleitung"), H. Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion auf die einfallenden Muslime in der Edessenischen Apokalyptik des 7.Jahrhunderts* (*Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe* XXIII, *Theologie*, Bd. 256), Frankfurt am Main 1985

[9] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (1997) 263 n. 16

Jacob's letters on the Predestination have also been seen as a form of implicit response to Islam. However, as M. Cook has convincingly argued, the ongoing discussion within Islam on predestination seems to have come about only very gradually and does not seem to have been dominating Islamic theological debate in the seventh century to such an extend that a Christian response was to be expected. More importantly the material used by Jacob in his argument can be traced to a pre-Islamic Christian debate on Predestination. Again, rather than responding to Islam, Jacob is involved in a debate with fellow-Christians.[10]

The Arabs do figure more prominently in the collections of Jacob's various canonical rulings and his answers to questions on problems of everyday life, preserved in collections of the Šū'ālē — Pūnāyē — genre[11], but these references are on matters of social conduct[12]. In addition in the collection of Jacob's rulings the main focus is on internal Christian and ecclesiastical affairs. The number of rulings referring to Arabs is limited, references to their specific religion and its consequences are rare, to say the least.

To conclude this first part of the article Jacob's interest in Arabs and Islam was very limited. His references to Islam are not aimed at a debate with the new religion or a defence against a hostile government, but it is part of an internal West-Syrian and Christian debate. The references do hint at contacts on theological matters, but do not show a hostile or beleaguered attitude, but rather a co-existence, however uncomfortable at times it may have been.

Considering that the arrival of Islam and the Arab conquest of much of the region of the Middle East must qualify as the most revolutionary event for centuries the lack of references to the Arabs and Islam in Jacob's works is striking. Within his theological and scholarly work there is no explicit debate or exchange of ideas with the new religion

[10] M. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma. A Source-critical Study*, Cambridge 1981, chapter 15 "An Epistle of Jacob of Edessa", 145-152

[11] See Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen I B*, (1970), 273-298; They are closely related to works of the Responsen-genre in Jewish literature and the 'erotapokriseis' in Greek or 'quaestiones' in Latin literature: see H. Dörrie, H.Dörries, "Erotapokriseis", *RAC*, 6, 342-370, B.Studer, 'Die theologische Literatur vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert, Spätantike mit einem Panorama der byzantinischen Literatur, in: L.J. Engels, H. Hofmann (eds.), *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, 4, Wiesbaden 1997, 355-402, especially 391-392

[12] See Hoyland, *Jacob*, 153-155. In some scholia by Jacob there are also references to Arabs, see index G. Phillips, *Scholia on Passages of the Old Testament by Mar Jacob Bishop of Edessa*, London 1864

even though this would seem to be the largest challenge to the Christian communities. In short Jacob does not use "Islam" or "the Arabs" as "touch-stones" in his definition of his community or group. They are part of the Christian environment, but not in a "defining" way.

Far more prominent in Jacob's work are the other Christian communities. In several letters theological "ammunition" for future debate is handed out to the correspondents. Jacob translated several works of leading Greek anti-Chalcedonian theologians. In the following a few remarks will be made about some of the methods used by Jacob to define his community in this rivalry.

In his work Jacob perceives the present from the perspective of the past. Not only did Jacob write historiography — his Chronicle is more than just a continuation of the Chronicle of Eusebius — but throughout all of his work there is a wealth of historiographical material, both in contents and in form. In his *Hexahemeron*[13] he collected as much as he could of previous traditions and forged it into an encyclopaedia-like work of knowledge. His *Encheiridion*[14] collects and summarises knowledge about the philosophical terms to be used in the inner-Christian debate. Jacob's literary exploits usually focus on identity as part of the tradition of Christianity and especially his own community.

Later Syrian historiographers like Dionysius of TelMahre and Michael the Syrian characterise Jacob as an important link in the historiographical tradition of the West-Syrian community.[15] In the following Jacob's response to the new challenges will be analysed on the basis of his letters to John of Litharba, which are by topic related to the genre of historiography.

Jacob did not write 'historiography' in his letters, nor did he present in them an elaborate account of any period of history, nor did he embark on a theoretical discussion of the subject. However in answering chrono-

[13] I.-B. Chabot, *Iacobi Edesseni Hexaemeron, seu in opus creationis libri septem* (*CSCO* 92, *Syr* 44), Paris 1928, A. Vaschalde, *Iacobi Edesseni Hexaemeron, seu in opus creationis libri septem* (*CSCO* 97, *Syr* 48) Louvain 1932

[14] G. Furlani, "L'Encheiridion di Giacomo d'Edessa nel testo siriaco", *Rendiconti della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* (Ser. 6) 4, 1928, 222-249

[15] See e.g. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, Paris, 1899-1910, Book XI chapter 17 (t. IV 450; t. II 482-483), On Jacob as an inspiration of Michael see D. Weltecke, *Die "Beschreibung der Zeiten" von Mōr Michael dem Grossen (1126-1199)*, CSCO 594, Subs 110, Louvain 2003, 183-193

logical and exegetical questions he does provide some insights into his view of history and historiography. One of the letters, which is of interest in this respect is the Letter on the Divine Economy. After a short introduction on establishing what is meant by this term, the letter consists of a large collection of quotations from the bible and church fathers regarding the Logos Creator. The letter has been revised in later times by, among others, Dionysius Bar Salibi, but seems to contain at its core a letter by Jacob.[16]

The letter is a presentation of the history of the world up until the sixth century, but not of events, but of repeated proof of God's involvement with the world, a line of witnesses until Severus of Antioch[17]. The letter stands also in the tradition of collections of creeds by church fathers proving orthodoxy of one's own community against the others.

This letter is but an example of many works of Jacob in which the continuous tradition is the main topic. The remnants of his Chronicle, and the many letters on matters regarding chronology[18] illustrate this tendency. In Michael the Syrian's account of "religious" affairs before the time of Christ, there are many references to Jewish high-priests, explicitly based on a list of all Jewish high-priests by Jacob.[19] This elaborate list was a precursor of the many lists of bishops which can be found in various chronicles, illustrating the continuous Christian tradition.

The importance of "the past" to Jacob is not an isolated case, but is coherent with late antique and Christian culture. Most of the Christian historiography was intended first of all to create a sense of continuity within the Christian community — a link to Christ. A second motif was to present the Christian community as an ancient group, in response to

[16] This letter is not published yet, but has been preserved in several manuscripts and in different versions (e.g. Bodleian Marsh 101). In addition there are brief entries (originally as marginalia) on the various figures referred to in the text — like prophets and judges and church fathers.

[17] The Letter by Jacob is based on earlier Greek material, as can be seen for example by the use of Greek names of several Church fathers including Severus of Antioch.

[18] By continuing the Chronicle of Eusebius, and by correcting this Chronicle for example by way of long discussions with John of Litarba about the exact year of the Birth of Christ, but also by elaborating on the various empires and kingdoms and lines of rulers, in relation to what we would call Jewish history, but which to Jacob is Christian history before Christ. The text selection in Nau, *Lettres choisis* illustrates the importance of chronology in the correspondence between Jacob and John the Stylite.

[19] See Van Ginkel, "Jacob von Edessa in Michael Syrus' Chronografie", In: (M. Tameke ed.) Syriaca. 2. Deutsches Syrologen-Symposium (Juli 2000), Wittenberg), Münster 2002, 115-124

the ideological usance of Antiquity and Post-Antiquity culture that age provides authority. Like people traced back their ancestry to the times of Greek mythology, so Christianity had claimed to be the true continuation of the Hebrew (rather than Jewish) history.[20]

A third reason for writing history was to illustrate the boundaries with other communities, usually those who are "neighbours" to the author — again not only physical, but also religious, ideological or otherwise — or at times even those who are or have been part of the community. By writing history, the continuation of events, it was proven that other Christian sects had deviated from the right path, but one's own group had remained true to Christ, had remained orthodox. In this context it is interesting that we have no remnants of a contemporary account by Jacob of his own time. Although it must have been part of Chronicle, there are no traces of such an account in his other works.

A third "defining" topic in Jacob's work is the Syriac language. Not only did he strengthen the community by translating or revising the previous translations of the works of anti-Chalcedonian leaders, who for the larger part had written them in Greek, but in addition Jacob tried to create a more standardised form of Syriac. Jacob wrote a grammar, invented vocalisation signs[21] and integrated material from the Greek culture into the Syriac culture. Although this stress on the Syriac language may have helped in later centuries in preserving Syriac as the language of his community, it is doubtful whether the influence of the Arab language in his time was strong enough to cause this "boosting" of the Syriac language. The population of Syria and Mesopotamia still spoke predominantly "Syriac" in his life time. The Arab language did grow in stature during his life, when Abd al-Malik replaced Greek and Persian by Arab as the administrative language, but Syriac as such seems to have been less threatened. Rather than defending the community against the Arab language, it seems that Jacob was acutely aware that Greek and knowledge of Greek became increasingly impopular — he himself was forced out of a monastery for propagating the study of Greek works. It

[20] Literature on early Christian perception of History and Historiography is immense. See e.g. Glenn F. Chesnut, *The first Christian histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius* Macon, Ga. 1986 (2nd ed., rev. and enl.)

[21] G. Phillips, *A Letter by Mar Jacob, Bishop of Edessa, on Syriac orthography; also a tract by the same author, and a discourse by Gregory Bar Hebraeus on Syriac accents*, London 1869, A. Merx, "Fragmenta Grammaticae Jacobi Edesseni ex Guilelmi Wright editione descripta", in Id., *Historia artis grammaticae apud Syros* (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* IX,2) 1889, 73-84.

is in this context that we should see both his translation activity and theoretical works on his language. Rather than being able to rely on a continuous exchange with the Greek tradition — a large number of the anti-Chalcedonian texts up until the sixth century had been written in Greek — was about to fall away.[22] Syriac now became the only language to carry the message for the larger part, not only of the community, but also of its leaders. In this context there was no room for mistakes or errors. The importance of texts can be seen by the flourish of florilegia (in essence also Jacob's letter on divine Economy). Although not his main objective Jacob's efforts for the Syriac language did help make it one of the most characteristic and defining elements of West Syrian culture.

*Conclusion*

Jacob belonged to a generation of Christian leaders which had to reorganise and reorient their community as a result of the new political situation. Jacob created a new foundation for his community by collecting, combining and systematising the emanations of the various traditions — Christian, Jewish and pagan, Graeco-Roman and Semitic. Rather than creating a new, original foundation, Jacob looked back at the past. Rather than directly responding to the new challenge of Islam and the new political situation in explicit and original terms, he — following tradition — spend most of his efforts to preserve the best of the older traditions and adjusting them for the new situation. To make these roots available to the theological and pastoral leaders of his church was his main objective. In this context it is not the boundary between Christianity and Islam that took his interest, but rather the internal- Christian boundaries — against the East Syrian church and the Chalcedonian church. It was within this rivalry that the West Syrian Church had found its existence and Jacob was working on these roots, preserving them, selecting them, at times adjusting them, for posterity. To Jacob those first questions about Arab government, Islam the new religious challenge and the explanation of the collapse of the Christian Empire, Byzantium, were not less important, but probably less pressing.

[22] S. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning", in N.G. Garsoïan, T. Mathews, R. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium. Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, Washington D.C. 1982, 17-34, S. Brock, "Towards a History of Syriac Translation Technique", in R. Lavenant (ed.), *IIIo Symposium Syriacum 1980* (*OCA* 221), Rome 1983, 1-14

An explanation can only be hypothetical. Firstly the Arabs seem not to have directly challenged the existence of the Church, in the sense of active proselytisation and harsh theological debates. These challenges mainly start in the eighth century, i.e. at the end of Jacob's life or after his death. In addition Jacob was not in the front-line as parish priest or local bishop. He spend most of his time in monasteries working on his scholarly exploits. He was an authority for the community, but the direct questions came for the most part from clergy and monks, who may have acted as a filter between Jacob and the parishioners. Jacob found his solution in the books he was reading.

# EAST SYRIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY IN RESPONSE TO THE RISE OF ISLAM: THE CASE OF JOHN BAR PENKAYE'S *KTĀBĀ D-RĒŠ MELLĒ*

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The *Ktābā d-rēš mellē* ("Book of the Main Points", viz. of world history), written by the East Syrian monk John bar Penkaye about 687,[1] is one of the rare works in East Syrian tradition dealing with the history of the world from Creation to the author's own days.[2] Moreover, John's world history does not seem to have exerted any influence on later East Syrian historiography. In the *Chronography* of Elias of Nisibis (written in 1018),[3] which is "the only East Syrian chronological work conceived on a large scale to have survived",[4] it is not mentioned or used as a source.[5] The later East Syrian exegetical tradition, however, was more

[1] For the date of its composition, see now the discussion in R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (*Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 13), Princeton, N.J. 1997, 199-200. Edition of the second part (books X-XV) by A. Mingana, *Sources Syriaques, II. Bar-Penkayé*, Mosul 1908, 1*-171* (henceforth quoted by the abbreviation JbP, Mingana (ed.)). For a synopsis of the manuscripts, see T. Jansma, "Projet d'édition du kᵉtābā dᵉrēš mellē de Jean bar Penkaye", *OS* 8 (1963), 96-100. I quote the still unedited books I-IX according to the Syriac numbering of the folios of the manuscript *Mingana 179* (abbrev. JbP, Mingana (ms.)). French translation of book XV by Mingana, *Sources Syriaques*, 172*-197* (abbrev. JbP, Mingana (transl.)); English translation of the end of book XIV and the major part of book XV by S.P. Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkaye's Riš Melle", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987) (repr. in: idem, *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology*, Aldershot 1992: II), 57-74 (abbrev. JbP, Brock (transl.)).

[2] Cf. S.P. Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing: a Survey of the Main Sources", *Journal of the Iraqi Academy, Syriac Corporation* 5 (1979/80) (repr. in: idem, *Studies*: I), 21-27. East Syrian historiography was dominated by monastic and ecclesiastical history and hagiography; cf. L.I. Conrad, "Varietas Syriaca: Secular and Scientific Culture in the Christian Communities of Syria after the Arab Conquest", in: G.J. Reinink and A.C. Klugkist (eds.), *After Bardaisan: Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J.W. Drijvers* (*OLA*, 89), Leuven 1999, 98.

[3] The last year which is mentioned is 1018. The manuscript, in which the work is preserved, was written in 1019; cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 421-422.

[4] Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing", 26-27.

[5] For a survey of Elias' sources, see L.-J. Delaporte, *La chronographie d'Élie bar Šinaya, métropolitain de Nisibe* (*Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études*, 181), Paris 1910, VII-XIV.

interested in John's work.[6] The reason for this doubtless lies in the character of the composition. "It is not our intention", John writes, "to relate the things of this world: what happened in one age or in another, but (rather) how our things were administered by divine dispensation, and further how the devil roused envy against these things through weak people whom he found to serve his will".[7] John was well aware of the fact that he was not writing a chronicle.

A. Baumstark's definition of the *Ktābā* is still relevant: it is "eine eigenartige, zwischen Weltgeschichte und theologisch orientierter Geschichtsphilosophie die Mitte haltende Arbeit in 15 Büchern".[8] Baumstark attached little or no value to John's work as a historical source, however. In so doing, he was perhaps too severe in his opinion.[9] The last section, book XV, contains interesting historical information concerning emergent Islam, the Arab conquests, the first Arab Civil War, the rise of the Umayyad dynasty, the second Arab Civil War, the revolt of Mukhtar in Iraq between 685 and 687 and the effects of these events, in particular on the Christian population in North Mesopotamia.[10] John's report of these events has, indeed, deservedly attracted scholarly attention in the past two decades; not only have John's historical data been used by modern historians,[11] but attention has also been paid to John's own view and explanation of the rise of the new Arab power in the Middle East.[12]

[6] For the quotations in Ishaq Eshbadnaya's prose commentary on his poem "On the Divine Dispensation", see G.J. Reinink, *Studien zur Quellen- und Traditionsgeschichte des Evangelienkommentars der Gannat Bussame* (*CSCO* 414, Subs 57), Louvain 1979, 50.

[7] JbP, book XIV, Mingana (ed.), 116*,*17-21*.

[8] A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, 210.

[9] A. Baumstark, "Eine syrische Weltgeschichte des siebten Jahrh.s", *Römische Quartalschrift* 15 (1901), 273; cf. Jansma, "Projet d'édition", 103-104.

[10] John's report of the rise of the "kingdom of the children of Hagar" actually begins at the end of book XIV, Mingana (ed.), 141*, *9*; Brock (transl.), 57.

[11] Cf. G. Rotter, *Die Umayyaden und der zweite Bürgerkrieg (680-692)* (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, XLV,3), Wiesbaden 1982, 214-216; M.G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, Princeton, N.J. 1984, 346, 370, 379-380.

[12] S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam", in: G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (*Papers on Islamic History*, 5), Carbondale-Edwardsville 1982 (repr. in: idem, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, London 1984: VIII), 9-21, 199-203; H. Suermann, "Das arabische Reich in der Weltgeschichte des Johannàn bar Penkàje", in: P.O. Scholz and R. Stempel (eds.), *Nubia et Oriens Christianus. Festschrift für C.D.G. Müller* (*Bibliotheca Nubica*, 1), Köln 1987, 59-71; G.J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser", in: W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (*Mediaevalia Lovaniensia*, I, 15), Leuven 1988, 82-111; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 194-200, 524-525, 532-534, 537.

As a contribution to this symposium on Christian cultural strategies since the rise of Islam, I should like to adduce some arguments for the following thesis: If we consider John bar Penkaye's *Ktābā d-rēš mellē* as a whole, we may conclude that this world history was composed first of all as a Christian response to the rise of Islam, with the purpose of providing the author's co-religionists with the intellectual means, based upon *their* conception of history, wherewith to acquire a right explication of the actual historical situation in which they were living.

It is important to note, first of all, that the "Sitz im Leben" of the *Ktābā* was the monastery of John of Kamul. This monastery was situated in North Mesopotamia, on the south-west slope of Mount Judi, about 100 kilometres north-east of Nisibis.[13] The abbot of this monastery in John's days was a certain Sabrisho', and we may assume that he is to be identified with the Sabrisho', to whom John frequently addresses himself in the *Ktābā*.[14] There are strong indications for the assumption that John wrote the *Ktābā* by special request of his abbot. In his very last words, after having given a summary of the subjects treated in the *Ktābā*, John addresses the following words to the abbot: "Now, this is for the most part in brief the history of the temporal world, O my dear Sabrisho'. We have composed this history 'in main points' (*b-rēš mellē*), because otherwise we should not have been able to (complete) this writing. So, it is 'main points' (*rēšā d-mellē*) that we have written; you can find the full (information) in all the books" (viz. of the library of the monastery).[15]

*Ktābā d-rēš mellē* is the title which John himself gives to his world history.[16] This title does not represent a generic definition — in regarding the generic affinity John generally uses the term *taš'ītā*, "history"[17] —,

[13] J.-M. Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (*CSCO* 388, Subs.54), Louvain 1977, 199-201.

[14] For the connection between John and this monastery and its abbot Sabrisho', see A. Scher, "Notice sur la vie et les œuvres de Yohannan bar Penkayē", *JA* 10/10 (1907), 162-167; for a discussion of the historicity of the data in John's *Life*, which is preserved in Jacobite manuscripts, see Jansma, "Projet d'édition", 89-92; cf. also Fiey, *Nisibe*, 200; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 194-195.

[15] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 170*, *12-16*, Mingana (transl.), 197*. A similar remark is made in JbP, book X, Mingana (ed.), 28*, *3-9*.

[16] JbP, book IV, Mingana (ms.), f.34$^{r}$, *5*; book XI, Mingana (ed.), 30*, *9*; book XIII, Mingana (ed.), 88*, *1-2*; book XIV, Mingana (ed.), 116*, *14*; book XV, Mingana (ed.), 170*, *5*, Mingana (transl.), 197*.

[17] JbP, book I, Mingana (ms.), f.1$^{v}$, *12*, 2$^{r}$, *4*, 2$^{v}$, *3*; book III, f.17$^{r}$, *14*; book X, Mingana (ed.), 28*, *4*; book XIII, Mingana (ed.), 98*, *18*; book XV, Mingana (ed.), 170*, *12*, Mingana (transl.), 197*. John distinguishes his *taš'ītā*, "history", not only from the chronicle *stricto sensu* (see above, n.7), but also from the *drāšā*, "controversial treatise",

but it is closely bound up with the specific object (*nīšā*) of the work.[18] Throughout his work John emphasises that he will only relate the necessary things which are in accordance with the object of the *Ktābā*: "I remind you all the time, O my dear Sabrisho', of the object (*nīšā*) that we have proposed, lest we, entangling ourselves in a multitude of stories, should be agitated and lose sight of this book which we have called (Book of the) 'Main Points' (*rēš mellē*). This has been our object (*nīšā*) from the beginning, that we should relate which things God has done for us in His goodness, and which things we have presumptuously committed against Him in our wickedness. For this is the main topic (*qēpālē'ōn*/κεφαλαιον) of all our books (*mēmrē*)".[19] The choice of the material from the sources and the pursuit of conciseness are, therefore, determined by the scope of the work. The history, which John is writing, essentially concerns the chronological process of interaction between God's dealing with mankind and the human response to God's works, throughout the history of the temporal world. But there may be an additional reason for John's pursuit of conciseness. The size of every single book (*mēmrā*) seems to be restricted by certain practical rules. John's *mēmrē* are in a way independent literary unities, which are often provided with introductory and concluding remarks. The reason for this seems to be that these were meant to be read before an audience.[20] There is one place — the beginning of *mēmrā* VIII — which strongly suggests that John himself read the *mēmrē* in the presence of the abbot Sabrisho' and perhaps also of the assembled brothers of the congregation, since John here refers to the preceding *mēmrā* which was presented "yesterday".[21] This is not an insignificant detail, since it confirms our general impression that the composition of the *Ktābā* served educational purposes in a very specific socio-religious and historical context.

and the biblical commentary. For his work not being a *drāšā*, see book X, Mingana (ed.), 6*, *19*; book XIV, Mingana (ed.), 139*, *4-6*; for his work not being exegetical in nature, see book VIII, Mingana (ms.), f.70$^{v}$, *23*; book XII, Mingana (ed.), 68*, *18-20*.

[18] J.P. Margoliouth, *Supplement to the Thesaurus Syriacus of R.Payne Smith*, Oxford 1927, 319b — referring to John's world history — translates *rēš mellē* with "epitome", "chief events". Scher, "Notice", 161, n.2, prefers "Premiers principes", whereas Baumstark, "Eine syrische Weltgeschichte", 274, gives "Hauptredepunkte". John's use of the expression may be suggested by the Syriac text of Hebr.5:12, but it is my opinion that he is relating its meaning rather to the Greek word κεφαλαιον, "chief point" or "main point".

[19] JbP, book XI, Mingana (ed.), 30*, *6-12*.

[20] At the end of book III, Mingana (ms.), f.24$^{v}$, *19-21*, John says that he is finishing his *mēmrā* at this point to prevent the reader from being overtaxed.

We shall therefore now examine the question of the direct historical conditions under which the *Ktābā* was composed. The year 67 AH = 686/7 AD is the crucial date.[22] In that year the supporters of the rebel leader Mukhtar b. Abi'Ubayd were defeated in Kufa by an army under the leadership of Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr, the brother of the Meccan rival caliph 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, and Mukhtar was killed in the governor's palace in the town in April 687.[23] Mukhtar's death, however, did not put an end to the political chaos in Iraq; on the contrary, Nisibis, which since the battle on the river Khazir near Mosul (the summer of 686) has been under control of non-Arab prisoners-of-war, belonging to Mukhtar's troops,[24] now became the centre of anti-Arab rebellion,[25] and from all quarters of the country there came ex-captives flocking to Nisibis to join their fellow-slaves in the city. "They captured many fortresses", John reports, "and the fear of them fell on all Arabs, for they gained the victory wherever they went".[26] However, the local population suffered from more than merely the afflictions occasioned by political skirmishes. A still more disastrous event occurred in the same year 687, when devastating plague broke out, with a no less severe famine in its wake. This was to cause a complete disruption of public and religious life.[27]

[21] JbP, book VIII, Mingana (ms.), f.68$^{r}$, *2*.

[22] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 160*, *3-6*, Mingana (transl.), 187*, Brock (transl.), 68.

[23] For the rebellion of Mukhtar in Iraq (685-687), see H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates. The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, London-New York 1986, 95-96; G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam. The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, London-Sydney 1986, 51-53; Rotter, *Die Umayyaden*, 93ff., 218. Mukhtar's death (3rd April 687) is the last dateable political event recorded by John; cf. book XV, Mingana (ed.), 158*, *10-14*, Mingana (transl.), 186*, Brock (transl.), 66.

[24] John reports that these ex-captives of war were called *šurtē* because of "their zeal for righteousness" (book XV, Mingana (ed.), 157*, *22*-158*, *1*, Mingana (transl.), 186*, Brock (transl.), 66. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 198, plausibly argues that the name is to be connected with the "chosen men (*šurta*) of God" mentioned in the Muslim sources. For Mukhtar's use of the prisoners of war, who were formerly slaves of the Kufan Arabs, see ibid., 197-198. For the settlement of Persian prisoners of war in Kufa, cf. M.G. Morony, "The Effects of the Muslim Conquest on the Persian Population of Iraq", *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 14 (1976), 50, 59.

[25] Even before Mukhtar's death the anti-Arab sentiments of the *šurtē* had manifested themselves in Nisibis. When Mukhtar's general Ibrahim b. al-Ashtar appointed his brother as commander over the *šurtē* in Nisibis, they killed Ibrahim's brother and all his associates, "since they preferred to have someone from their own ranks as commander, and Ibrahim and his brother belonged to the Arabs"; JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 158*, *5-10*, Mingana (transl.), 185*, Brock (transl.), 66.

[26] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 158*, *15-19*, Mingana (transl.), 186*, Brock (transl.), 67.

[27] For John's description of the terrible consequences of these natural disasters, see book XV, Mingana (ed.), 160*, *3*-165*, *8*, Mingana (transl.), 187*-192*, Brock (transl.), 68-72; cf. Rotter, *Die Umayyaden*, 65-68.

According to John, these calamities would not be misunderstood: "These are the causes of this chastisement (*mardūtā*) that has come upon us today, O my dear brother Sabrisho'. 'This is our wickedness that has become bitter and reached unto our hart'.[28] Indeed, I know that 'the end of the ages has come to us';[29] I know from the holy Scriptures, and in particular from our Lord's words, that everything written has been fulfilled".[30] Having arrived at this point of his world history, John risks an actual prediction concerning the nearest future, when he foretells that the ex-captives, who are flocking together in North Mesopotamia and Nisibis, will definitively destroy the Arab power.[31] In doing so, they will be fulfilling God's will, ushering in the last events of world history. The latter consist of the advent of a barbarous people "from afar", as predicted by the prophets, who will destroy the Byzantine empire, and, after that, the advent of Antichrist, being the last calamity preceding the advent of the Kingdom of the Lord.[32] In the following *Epilogue* of the *Ktābā* John again uses apocalyptic imagery, but this is now to express the edifying objectives of his work as follows: "that we may be placed on the threshing-floor in the East, and that we may not know the South, and that we may not receive the trial of the North".[33] What do these abstruse words mean? The word *'edrā*, "threshing-floor", is a biblical metaphor for the Judgement Day.[34] The "East" represents, of course, the good side in the eyes of the Christians; it is the zone of light and the divine Epiphany.[35] But what does John mean with the "North" and the

[28] Cf. Jer.4:18.

[29] Cf. 1 Cor.10:11; the same reference occurs in the *Prologue* (see below, n.43).

[30] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 165*, *9-14*, Mingana (transl.), 192*, Brock (transl.), 72.

[31] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 167*, *1-8*, Mingana (transl.), 194*, Brock (transl.), 73. John is referring to the angel's words concerning Ishmael in Gen.16:12, which he considers to be a prophecy concerning the rise and fall of the Arab-Islamic power; cf. book XIV, Mingana (ed.), 142*, Brock (transl.), 58. For Pseudo-Methodius' applying Gen.16:12 to the Arab-Islamic conquests, see G.J. Reinink, "Ismael, der Wildesel in der Wüste. Zur Typologie der Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 75 (1982), 342-343; idem, "Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser", 92, 95.

[32] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 167*, *13*-168*, *4*, Mingana (transl.), 194*-195*, Brock (transl.), 73-74 (Ez. 38-39; cf. also Deut. 28:49). John compares Antichrist with an "evil hidden in good, like deadly poison in honey" because of Antichrist's deceiving activities (cf. 2 John 1:7, 2 Thess.2:9-10, Mark 13:22).

[33] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 168*, *15-17*, Mingana (transl.), 195*.

[34] Cf. Matth.3:12, Luk.3:17.

[35] Cf. Matth.24:17.

"South", and why is the "West" lacking? I suggest that with the "trial of the North" the eschatological barbarous people of the North is meant,[36] who will destroy the Byzantine empire in the "West" (hence the "West" is lacking in this list of zones).[37] By his exhortation "not to know the South", John is perhaps exhorting his fellow-Christians not to take the side of the "South", representing the Arab-Islamic power,[38] but rather to share his view that the Arabs will soon pass out of the stage of world history.

Though the apocalyptic notes in the last book of John's world history have not remained unnoticed,[39] we may, if we consider the *Ktābā* as a whole, carry this conclusion an important step further. It appears that the point of departure for the composition consists in John's firm conviction that the signs of the times indicate unmistakably that history has taken a decisive turn: God now has withdrawn his Providence definitively from mankind; there is no longer the possibility of restoration, and, therefore, the course of the dramatic events of the end of times is already in progress and cannot any more be arrested. In fact, John's description of world history from the Creation to the end of times serves to demonstrate that history has arrived at that irreversible point. Like his contemporary, the author of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*[40], John takes the present situation as his (psychological) point of departure, and like Pseudo-Methodius he explains the present by giving an account of the past from the very beginning of the world;[41] the differences between their works are determined, rather, by

[36] Cf. a.o.Ez.38:15, Jer.1:14-15.

[37] For John the "West" represents the Roman/Byzantine empire and the former Byzantine territories in the Middle East; cf. e.g. book XIV, Mingana (ed.), 121*, *16*, 123*, *8*, *15*, 131*, *13*, 132*, *8*, 140*, *5*; book XV, Mingana (ed.), 146*, *5*, *10*, 147*, *18*, 155*, *15*, *2221*, 156*, *3*, *6*, *10*, 157*, *14*, *17*, Mingana (transl.), 174*-176*, 183*-185*, Brock (transl.), 61-62, 64-66.

[38] In the Syriac apocalypses of the end of the seventh century the Arabs are called "the arm of the South" (cf. Dan.11:15; in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*; see further below, n.40) and "the South wind" (cf. Dan.7:2, 11:5); in the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*; see further below, n.72).

[39] Cf. S.P. Brock, "Syriac Sources for Seventh-Century History", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1976) (repr. in: idem, *Syriac Perspectives*: VII); Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 199.

[40] First critical edition with German translation of the Syriac text by G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (*CSCO* 540, 541, Syr 220, 221), Louvain 1993. An English translation of the second part (chapters X,6-XIV,13) by S. Brock in: A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (*Translated Texts for Historians*, 15), Liverpool 1993, 222-242.

[41] Cf. Suermann, "Das arabische Reich", 60.

other factors, such as the literary genre they use for their argumentation, the different perspectives from which they look at history, and the different topical (historical and ecclesiastical) circumstances under which they were writing their works.[42]

The extent to which the "apocalyptic" perception of the present lies at the root of John's work becomes obvious when we read the *Prologue*. Here John says that his intention of expounding world history from the double perspective of God's merciful acting with the human race and of man's ingratitude towards God throughout the generations, is above all prompted by the imminent Doomsday: "....for it is right (to do so), since now, as the blessed Paul says, 'the end of the ages has come to us',[43] and, therefore, the Judgement is imminent".[44] "Why do people not want to believe", John exclaims in the introduction of book IV, "that God (will) also (accomplish) the things which He at present promises, I mean the advent of the 'Son of Perdition' (Antichrist)[45], or the end of the temporal world, or the Resurrection, or the Judgement, or the passing into immortal life? For it beseems us to believe, that as (God) did not lie in those former things, so He will also not lie in those last things. But also this (viz. God's accomplishing His promises now and man's unbelief) is a sign of God's mercifulness and an indication of our contention".[46] According to John, history shows that God always fulfils His promises. In so doing, God wishes to teach mankind to believe and trust in Him.[47] In relating the history after Alexander the Great, including the Seleucids and Ptolemies, with special attention given to the history of the Jews (particularly the Maccabees) — these are the topics of book IV — John, in fact, wants to provide his auditors or readers with arguments — taken from the 'lessons of history' and from God's instructive dealings with mankind[48] — which will let them acquire a right view of their own days. Once again, we can see, how much the present, in which according to John the eschatological drama has begun to be enacted, underlies and pervades the whole work.

[42] See below, n.73. Pseudo-Methodius was written in 691/2 in Sinjar or in the region of the nearby Mount Sinjar in North Mesopotamia; cf. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse* (transl.), *Einleitung*, XII-XXIX.

[43] 1 Cor.10:11 (see above, n.29).

[44] JbP, book I, Mingana (ms.), f.2$^{r}$, *18-20*.

[45] 2 Thess.2:3.

[46] JbP, book IV, Mingana (ms.), f.25$^{v}$, *5-12*.

[47] JbP, book IV, Mingana (ms.), f.24$^{v}$, *27*- f.25$^{v}$, *5*.

[48] For the notion of the divine *paideia* in John's work, see below, n.62.

One example may be given of John's consistent use of motifs from Scripture and Tradition throughout the *Ktābā* to demonstrate the rightness of his view that history has now run its course in the "apocalyptic times". Among the sources used by John, the holy Scriptures inevitably take the first and most prominent place.[49] Although John repeatedly emphasises that the *Ktābā* is not a work of biblical exegesis,[50] its conception of history is thoroughly modelled by the biblical exegesis and theology of the School of Nisibis[51] — in particular by the Syriac translations of the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia.[52] One of the key biblical passages on which is based Christian doctrine concerning the advent of Antichrist is 2 Thess.2.[53] In book XV John follows Theodore's exegesis of 2 Thess.2:7 in explaining the words "that which is restraining now" (Syr. *haw mā d-hāšā 'ahīd*)[54] that prevents Antichrist from being revealed as God's providential care (*btīlūtā*).[55] When God will withdraw

[49] As also John himself emphasises: book IV, Mingana (ms.), f.34$^{r}$, *16-27*. For John's sources, see Baumstark's remarks, "Eine syrische Weltgeschichte", 279-280.

[50] JbP, book VIII, Mingana (ms.) f.70$^{v}$, *23*; book XII, Mingana (ed.), 68*, *18-19*.

[51] For the School of Nisibis in general, see A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (*CSCO* 266, Subs 26), Louvain 1965; G.J. Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the Sixth-Seventh Century", in: J.W. Drijvers and A.A. MacDonald (eds.), *Centres of Learning. Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (*Brill's Studies in Intellectual History*, 61), Leiden-New York-Köln 1995, 77-89.

[52] Cf. Baumstark, "Eine syrische Weltgeschichte", 279; Jansma, "Projet d'édition", 104-105. Although John mentions Theodore very rarely by name (he quotes him under the name *mpaššqānā*, "the Interpreter", in book I, Mingana (ms.), f.8$^{r}$, *10*), Theodore's biblical exegesis, hermeneutical principles and theological ideas are ubiquitous. For the influence of the Syriac translations of Theodore in the School of Nisibis, see R. Macina, "L'homme à l'école de Dieu. D'Antioche à Nisibe: Profil herméneutique, théologique et kérugmatique du mouvement scoliaste nestorien", *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 32 (1982), 87-124, 263-301; 33 (1983), 39-103.

[53] Cf. L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist. A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents*, Diss.Leiden 1995, 63-96; B. McGinn, *Antichrist. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, San Francisco 1994.

[54] Brock translates *haw mā d-hāšā 'ahīd* by "he who now holds (power)" (JbP, Brock (transl.), 72), in accordance with the Greek text of 2 Thess.2:7 (*ho katechôn*). I prefer to translate the Syriac text by a neuter ("that which") as in 2 Thess.2:6.

[55] Cf. the East Syrian exegete Isho'dad of Merv (ca.850), ed. M.D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*, Vol. V, Part I (text), Part II (transl.), Cambridge 1916, 131, *21* (text), 89 (transl.). According to Isho'dad Theodore would have explained "that which is restraining" (2 Thess.2:7) sometimes as God's providential care (*btīlūtā*), sometimes as His will (*remzā*). The Syriac translation of Theodore's commentary on 2 Thessalonians is lost. The Latin translation and the Greek fragment have *providentia*, resp. *boulè*, reflecting, as it seems, both Syriac *btūlūtā* and Syriac *remzā*!; cf. H.B. Swete, *Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni in Epistolas B.Pauli Commentarii*, Vol.II, Cambridge 1882, 55, *10*, *21*. Theodore's explica-

His *btīlūtā* from mankind, then the way will lie open for the revelation of the "Wicked One" (Antichrist) and the last stage of the eschatological drama will become effective. According to John, this point-of-no-return in history is actually coming to pass in his own time:[56]

> "And here are famines, earthquakes and plagues; only one thing is missing for us — the advent of that 'Deceiver'.[57] I think that these are his birthpangs, as our Lord said: 'These are the beginnings of the birthpangs',[58] and (as) further the blessed Paul (said): 'If that which is restraining now is out of the way, then the Wicked One shall be revealed, whom our Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and will destroy by means of the revelation of His advent'.[59] What is 'that which is restraining' if not the *care of our Lord* (*btīlūtā d-māran*)? Behold, He has taken it away from mankind today, and there is no restoration at all!"

The concept of God's *btīlūtā* runs through John's world history like a continuous thread. Again and again, when John comments on his source-material by adding personal notes, he turns to the theme of God's providential care for mankind. Human history shows God's care from the beginning of the world, and it is this care that throughout the ages acts upon the historical course of events.[60] The object (*nīšā*) of God's care is, John repeatedly says, that mankind will be converted to the knowledge of the truth and will thus attain salvation.[61] The way to that goal is prepared by God's *paideia*, the pedagogical process by which He wishes to lead mankind from the state of childhood to adulthood.[62] This continu-

tion of this verse occupies a rather exceptional place in the Greek patristic exegetical tradition here, which generally explains the "restraining" (power) as the Roman empire: as long as the Roman empire exists Antichrist will not be revealed; see G. Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie* (*Münchener Universitäts-Schriften*, 9), München 1972, 55.

[56] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 165*, *20*-166*, *7*, Mingana (transl.), 192*-193*, Brock (transl.), 72.

[57] 2 John 1:7.

[58] Matth.24:8.

[59] 2 Thess.2:7-8.

[60] Cf. JbP, book III, Mingana (ms.), f.17$^{r}$, *10*, f.17$^{v}$, *4*; book IV, Mingana (ms.), f.30$^{r}$, *25*, f.32$^{r}$, *1-2*, f.33$^{v}$, *27*, f.34$^{r}$, *15*; book V, Mingana (ms.), f.35$^{v}$, *19*, f.36$^{r}$, *7*, f.38$^{r}$, *11*, *26*, f.38$^{v}$, *2*; book IX, Mingana (ms.), f.77$^{v}$, *16*, *25*, f.82$^{v}$, *12*, f.83$^{r}$, *12*, *14*; book XI, Mingana (ed.), 29*, *3*, *8*, 55*, *1*; book XIII, Mingana (ed.), 88*, *13*, 97*, *21*; book XV, Mingana (ed.), 168*, *19*, Mingana (transl.), 195*.

[61] Cf. JbP, book III, Mingana (ms.), f.17$^{r}$, *10-11*, f.17$^{v}$, *4-5*; book IV, Mingana (ms.), f.30$^{v}$, *18-19*, f.34$^{r}$, *8*, *15-16*; book V, Mingana (ms.), f.39$^{r}$, *14*.

[62] The key passages for this idea in John's world history are: book VI, Mingana (ms.), f.44$^{v}$, *18*-46$^{r}$, *5*; book XIII, Mingana (ed.), 96*, *15*-98*, *15*; book XV, Mingana (ed.), 168*, *8*-170*, *10*, Mingana (transl.), 195*-197*. This notion is deeply rooted in the the-

ous process of divine care has culminated in the advent of Christ.[63] However, whereas history continually shows God's *btīlūtā*, is shows likewise man's unceasing behaviour of *tālōmūtā*, "faithlessness", which evokes corrective divine chastisement.[64] But up to now God's merciful care for mankind has made these periods of tribulation and punishment always be succeeded by new opportunities and chances for correction and restoration.

John's world history begins with God's *btīlūtā* towards mankind, and it ends with God's withdrawal of the *btīlūtā* from mankind. Thus the circle is completed. The time of chastisement by the Arab-Islamic conquests[65] has been succeeded by the very last opportunity in history for man's correction, by God's creating the most favourable political, social and religious conditions during the reign of Mu'awiya I (661-680).[66] Since the Christians have not seized this last chance, but on the contrary, have become *tālômē*, "faithless", again,[67] God has ended the time of peace and prosperity by allowing to happen the second Arab Civil

ology of Theodore of Mopsuestia (cf. R.A. Greer, *The Captain of our Salvation. A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews* (*Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese*, 15), Tübingen 1973, 202-206; R.A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Oxford 1963, 173-189; U. Wickert, *Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia* (*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 27), Berlin 1962, 89-101), and it became a basic motif in the theological view of history which was developed in the School of Nisibis (cf. Macina, "L'homme à l'école de Dieu" (33), 44-52; Reinink, "Edessa Grew Dim", 83-85; D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch. A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East*, Cambridge etc. 1982, 63-64).

[63] JbP, book XI, Mingana (ed.), 29*, *5-13*.

[64] Cf. JbP, book I, Mingana (ms.), f.2$^{r}$, *14*, *24*, *26*, f.7$^{v}$, *19*; book II, Mingana (ms.), f.13$^{v}$, *28*; book III, Mingana (ms.), f.17$^{r}$, *11*; book IX, Mingana (ms.), f.83$^{r}$, *13*; book X, Mingana (ed.), 28*, *6*; book XII, Mingana (ed.), 70*, *15*; book XV, Mingana (ed.), 168*, *22*, Mingana (transl.), *195**.

[65] According to John this divine chastisement was provoked by the wickedness of the heretics in Byzantium and the persecution of the Christians in Persia: JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 145*, *1-20*, Mingana (transl.), 173*-174*, Brock (transl.), 60. The Arabs themselves were thereupon punished by God's kindling the first Arab Civil War: book XV, Mingana (ed.), 145*, *21*-146*, *8*, Mingana (transl.), 174*, Brock (transl.), 60-61.

[66] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 146*, *10*-147*, *11*, Mingana (transl.), 175*, Brock (transl.), 61-62.

[67] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 154*, *5*, Mingana (transl.), 181*. The faithlessness of the Christians is described in detail in the foregoing section: The time of prosperity and religious tolerance under Mu'awiya was abused by the "heretics" (here the Monophysites) who turned the churches of the "Romans" (Byzantines/Chalcedonians) to their impious opinion, whereas it induced a complete demoralisation of the East Syrian community, in which injustice, secularisation, and disregard of the East Syrians' own faith and religious identity predominated.

War.[68] When the Christians still disregarded God's warning signs,[69] and did not mend their impious ways, His *btīlūtā* was removed from mankind for ever, and thus no obstacle remained for arresting the terrifying last events of the history of the temporal world.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasise that literary sources such as John bar Penkaye's *Ktābā d-rēš mellē* — like the apocalyptic texts produced shortly thereafter in North Mesopotamia (the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*,[70] the *Edessene Apocalypse*[71] and the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*[72]) — should be read as documents which are to a very large extent conditioned by the socio-religious and political problems of the present. One might suggest that John wrote his world history at the special request of his abbot Sabrisho', who was in urgent need of an answer to the following question which circulated in his monastic milieu namely: Do the dramatic contemporary events, indeed, indicate the imminent end of times? John's affirmative answer — based upon the arguments derived from the conception of history which was the current one in his community — reflects the view which was also shared by the clergy of other Christian communities of the time in North Mesopotamia: the inter-Arab conflicts of the Second Civil War would be bound to result in the downfall of the Arab empire. However, as to the precise circumstances under which Arab rule would come to an end, and as to the course and the development of the ensuing eschatological scenario, the Nestorian John and the Jacobite witnesses of the end of the

[68] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 154*, *13-22*, Mingana (transl.), 182*, Brock (transl.), 63.

[69] JbP, book XV, Mingana (ed.), 158*, *20*-159*, *20*, 161*, *1*-163*, *1*, 164*, *10*-165*, *9*, Mingana (transl.), 186*-192*, Brock (transl.), 67-72.

[70] See above, n.40.

[71] Edition and French translation by F. Nau, "Révélations et légendes. Méthodius.-Clément.-Andronicus", *JA*, sér. IX, t.9 (1917), 415-452. English translation by Brock in: Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, 243-250. This apocalypse, which is dependent on Pseudo-Methodius, was written in 692 in Edessa or in one of the monasteries in the vicinity of Edessa; cf. G.J. Reinink, "Der edessenische 'Pseudo-Methodius'", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990), 31-45.

[72] Edition and English translation by J. Rendel Harris, *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles together with the Apocalypses of Each One of Them*, Cambridge 1900. The author of this apocalypse probably was acquainted with Pseudo-Methodius: cf. H.J.W. Drijvers, "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: A Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period", in: Averil Cameron and L.I. Conrad (eds,), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (*Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 1), Princeton, N.J 1992, 107-147. This apocalypse was composed shortly after 692; see my article "Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", in Xristianskij Vostok II (VIII) (2001), 227-241, esp. 231.

seventh century held different views: these were determined by their differing religious and spiritual outlooks, on the one hand, and by the rapidly changing historical conditions, on the other hand.[73]

[73] Firstly, the Jacobite apocalypses of the end of the seventh century, following the well-known tradition that the Roman/Byzantine empire will exist until the end of times (cf. the exegesis of 2 Thess 2:7 explaining the "restraining" power as the Roman/Byzantine empire; see above, n.55), which already earlier in the seventh century was represented by Pseudo-Ephrem (cf. G.J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Ephraems 'Rede über das Ende' und die syrische eschatologische Literatur des siebten Jahrhunderts", *Aram* 55 (1993), 437-463), connect that tradition with the idea of the Christian empire's eschatological world dominion. Secondly, from 691/2 on one could doubt whether the inter-Arab conflicts alone would cause the ruin of the Arab empire. The Jacobite apocalypses of the end of the seventh century prophesy that the Byzantine emperor is about to destroy the Arab power definitively. They seem to respond not only to the caliph 'Abd al-Malik's successes in restoring Umayyad control, but also to the caliph's politico-religious and anti-Christian propaganda; cf. G.J. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam", in: Cameron-Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, 181-187, and, in particular, my article "Early Christian Reactions to the Building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem" (above, n.72).

# ANSWERING THE CALL OF THE MINARET: CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS IN THE WORLD OF ISLAM

SIDNEY H. GRIFFITH

## *I. Awakening to the Challenge of Islam*

Muslims have been in dialogue with Christians from the very beginnings of Islam. The Qur'ān itself in a number of well-known verses addresses Christians directly, sometimes calling them 'People of the Book' (*an-Nisā* IV:171), once hailing them as 'Gospel People' (*al-Mā'idah* V:47), and a number of times referring to them by the somewhat enigmatic name 'Nazarenes' (*al-Baqarah* II:62). For the most part, when the Qur'ān thus addresses Christians it is to admonish them to judge according to what God has revealed in the scriptures, to warn them not to go extremes in their religion, not to speak of God in terms of 'Three' (*al-Mā'idah* V:73). A number of times the Qur'ān insists that Jesus, son of Mary, the Messiah, is but a messenger of God, and a man, like Adam before him (*āl-'Imrān* III:59). Moreover, in one famous passage the text emphatically denies that the Jews either killed or crucified Jesus, declaring that it only "seemed so to them" (*an-Nisā* IV:157). As for the Christians themselves, the Qur'ān is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, the text says that by comparison to Jews or polytheists, the 'Nazarenes' are the closest to the believers in love, since there are priests and monks among them and they are not arrogant (*al-Mā'idah* V:82). On the other hand the Qur'ān also warns Muslims not to take 'People of the Book' as friends, suggesting that they will not be satisfied until they convert you (*al-Mā'idah* V:51). Furthermore, many of their scholars and monks behave arrogantly and are interested only in money (*at-Tawbah* IX:34).

Clearly, in the ensemble, the Qur'ān's attitude to Christians is somewhat polemical, at the same time tolerant, but censorious.[1] When then in the second third of the seventh century the Arab Muslim armies occupied the territories of the Oriental Patriarchates of the Christians, they were somewhat prepared religiously to come to terms with them. Often

[1] See Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians; an Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

they made treaties which in one form or another allowed the continued practice of Christianity in return for the payment of a special tax (*al-jizyah*; *at-Tawbah* IX:29), within the confines of certain conditions and stipulations, designed to regulate the low social profile required of subject religious groups living under Islamic rule.[2]

Christians, for their part, at least those living in the recently occupied territories beyond the borders of Arabia, at first seem to have taken little or no active interest in Islam as a religious challenge. Rather, the earliest reports of the Islamic conquest to be found in Greek, Syriac, Coptic and Armenian texts concentrate for the most part on giving the details of the hardships and disabilities endured by the Christian communities at the hands of the invading 'Saracens'.[3] Some authors found the cause of the tribulations they suffered at the hands of the invading Arabs in the sinfulness of the Christians themselves, or in the rise of what they regarded as heresies or schisms in their own communities. Other authors sought to explain the conquest in apocalyptic terms, drawing on deeply rooted traditions associated with interpretations of biblical prophecies, most notably those rooted in the book of Daniel.[4] But in the first century of Islam, few Christian writers took any serious cognizance of Islam's own doctrine's, its religious objections to Christianity, or to the Qur'ān's anti-Christian polemics.[5] Rather, they concentrated on polemics of their own, against what they regarded as the demon-inspired depredations of

[2] See Antoine Fattal, *Le Statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'islam* (Beyrouth, 1958).

[3] See the texts presented and discussed in Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It; a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, 13; Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997), esp. pp. 53-519. See also Andrew N. Palmer *et al.*, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Translated Texts for Historians, 15; Liverpool:, 1993); Amir Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn Parts III and IV; A.D. 488-775* (Mediaeval Sources in Translation, 36; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999).

[4] In this connection see especially G. J. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: a Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," and Han J. W. Drijvers, "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: a Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period," in Averil Cameron & Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I; Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Studies In Late Antiquity and Early Islam, 1; Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1992), pp. 149-187 & 189-213.

[5] Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem (d. c. 639), in an Epiphany sermon of the mid 630's, spoke obliquely of Islamic beliefs when he referred to the conquest and asked rhetorically, "Why is the cross mocked? Why is Christ, who is the dispenser of all good things and the provider of this joyousness of ours, blasphemed by alien mouths...? ... They are raised up more and more against us and increase their blasphemy of Christ and the church, and utter wicked blasphemies against God." Quoted, with only a slight revision, from the translation of Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 72-73.

the marauding Saracens; a theme with a long pre-Islamic history in Christian texts. In the seventh century, only the Syrian Orthodox writer, and sometime bishop, Jacob of Edessa (c. 708) seems to have envisioned the possibility of commending Christian teachings to Muslims, using for this purpose, if only briefly and as an aside, an accurate analysis of Islamic teaching about Jesus, as it is found in the Qur'ān.[6] Otherwise, among the Greek-speaking commentators on current events in the seventh century, only Anastasius of Sinai (d. c. 700) refers with any specificity to conversations with Arabs about religion, or cites what one might now recognize as Islamic religious teaching about Jesus.[7]

The symbolic development in Muslim/Christian relationships in the early Islamic period, the one which seems in hindsight to have signalled the inauguration of serious interreligious controversies between Christians and Muslims, is also the phenomenon that most noticeably declared in the public sphere the Islamic bid for social hegemony in the now securely occupied territories of the eastern Christian patriarchates. It was the campaign of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (685-707) and his sons and successors, roughly in the first third of the eighth Christian century, culturally and politically to display Islam, and thereby symbolically to appropriate the Arab-occupied territory for the new political reality in the world, the burgeoning Islamic commonwealth.[8] From the religious perspective, the program for the display of Islam had two principal features: positively, there were the efforts in stone, mortar, and coinage, as it were declaratively to broadcast the Islamic *shahādah* throughout the caliphate; negatively, there was the correlative campaign to erase the public symbols of Christianity, especially the ubiquitous sign of the cross.[9] Positively the most dramatic enactment was the building of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik's monument to Islam in Jerusalem, the Dome of

[6] See François Nau, "Lettre de Jacques d'Edesse sur la généalogie de la sainte Vierge," *ROC* 6 (1901) pp. 518-520, 523-526. As will many Christian apologists in later times, Jacob clearly refers, but not by name, to the Qur'ān's summary rejection of Christian beliefs about Christ in IV *an-Nisā'* 171. See also Han J. W. Drijvers, "The Testament of our Lord: Jacob of Edessa's Response to Islam," ARAM 6 (1994), pp. 104-114.

[7] See Sidney H. Griffith, "Anastasios of Sinai, the *Hodegos* and the Muslims," *GOTR* 32 (1987), pp. 341-358.

[8] For more commentary on this phenomenon see Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[9] See Sidney H. Griffith, "Images, Islam and Christian Icons; a Moment in the Christian/Muslim Encounter in Early Islamic Times," in Pierre Canivet & Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais (eds.), *La Syrie de Byzance a l'Islam VIIe-VIIIe siècles* (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1992), pp. 121-138.

the Rock, with its explicitly anti-Christian inscriptions.[10] But perhaps the policy with the most far-reaching subsequent effects was the caliph Umar II's program for promoting the equality of all Muslims, be they Arab conquerors or new converts to Islam. This policy would in due course become a plank in the political platform of the movement that at mid-century brought about the ʿAbbasid revolution and ushered in the era of the growth and development of the classical culture of the Islamic world. Socially speaking these developments had their effects among the Christians living under the caliphs' rule; they may well have made conversion to Islam a more attractive option than heretofore, especially among the more upwardly mobile Christian families.[11] And so it was that by the middle of the eighth century historical circumstances began to favor the efforts of the Christian communities to inculturate themselves into the world of Islam.

The first step of inculturation was the adoption of the Arabic language in the churches. For a number of reasons, this step seems to have been taken first in the 'Melkite' communities, whose ecclesiastical and cultural center was Jerusalem, with her attendant monastic establishment.[12] But it was not long before the other churches followed suit. By the mid-ninth century the 'Melkites', 'Jacobites', and 'Nestorians' would all be fluent in Arabic, and by the mid-tenth century the 'Copts' in Egypt had joined them, and were poised to become the major producers of Arab Christian texts by the thirteenth century.[13] By far the greatest number of texts produced in Arabic by the Christian communities in the Islamic world in the eighth and ninth centuries were translations of the Scriptures and the patristic and liturgical classics of the churches. These translations were for the most part done from Greek and Syriac originals. Arguably, this translation activity did as much for the identity of the Christian communities in the Islamic world as the comparable translation movement among the contemporary Muslim scholars in Baghdad

[10] See now Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996).

[11] See, e.g., Louis Massignon, "La Politique Islamo-Chretienne des Scribes Nestoriens de Deir Qunna a la Cour de Bagdad au IXe siècle de notre ere," in Louis Massignon, *Opera Minora* (3 vols., Y. Moubarac (ed.); Beirut: dar al-Maaref, 1963), vol. I, pp. 250-257.

[12] See Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1992); *idem*, "From Aramaic to Arabic: the Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), pp. 11-31.

[13] See Samuel Rubenson, "Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabization of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt," *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1966), pp. 4-14.

did to define the cultural life of the ʿAbbasid elite in the same, classical period of the formation of Arab Islamic culture.[14]

It was within this context, in the eighth century, that we find the first literary awakening of the Christian communities to the specifically religious challenge of Islam. The earliest texts emanate from Syria/Palestine and they are in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic. The one of them that is most familiar to westerners is contained in Chapter CI of the *de haeresibus* section of John of Damascus' (d. c. 749/754) landmark work, *The Fount of Knowledge*.[15] While there has been scholarly discussion about the authenticity of this work, it clearly emanates from the 'Melkite' milieu of the eighth century, and most likely from the pen of John himself. Its importance for the present inquiry is to be seen in the fact that while this author is certainly hostile to Islam, and not above engaging in caricature in his presentation of Islamic ideas and practices, he is clearly well informed, not least about Islam's view of Christian faith and works. In fact, the topics he mentions are those that will be the standard ones in Muslim/Christian apologetics and polemics for centuries to come. But his work is also the only one of its kind in Greek to appear in the world of Islam. Thereafter, from the ninth century onwards, Greek Christian texts on Islam are produced in Byzantium; they are totally polemical and can in no way be thought to have an apologetical dimension. Their purpose is to demean, even to ridicule Muḥammad, the Qurʾān, and Islam.[16] It is otherwise with the works written in Syriac and Arabic within the Islamic world, beginning in the eighth century. Here there is an important dimension of apology for Christianity to be found in the texts, in response to the challenge of Islam. It is an apology that seeks to commend the veracity of Christianity to Christians and others in the

[14] In this connection see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture; the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998). See also Kate Leeming, "Byzantine Hagiographies in Arabic: Three Translations from a Ninth Century Manuscript Copied at the Monastery of Mar Saba in Palestine (Vaticanus Arabicus 71)," (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1997).

[15] See the text, English translation, and discussion in Daniel Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: the 'Heresy of the Ishmaelites'* (Leiden: Brill, 1972). See also D. Sahas, "John of Damascus on Islam Revisited," *Abr-Nahrain* 23 (1984-1985), pp. 104-118; R. Le Coz, *Jean Damascène: écrits sur l'Islam* (Sources Chrétiennes, 383; Paris: Cerf, 1992); Andrew Louth, "A Christian Theologian at the Court of the Caliph: Some Cross-Cultural Reflections," *Dialogos* 3 (1996), pp. 4-19. For the more recent bibliography see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 480-491.

[16] See Theodore Adel Khoury, *Les théologiens byzantins et l'Islam: textes et auteurs, VIII^e-XIII^e* (Leuven & Paris, 19690; *idem*, *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam, VIII^e-XIII^e siècles* (Leiden, 1972).

Islamic world, often in the very religious idiom of Islam. While it not infrequently also includes a polemical component, in that it argues that Islam is not the true religion, apology's primary goal is the defense of the Christian religion.

The purpose of the present study is to discuss the different genres of apologetic writings to be found in the mostly Syriac and Arabic works produced by Christians in the Islamic world from the eighth century to the time of the Crusades; to determine their principal audience; to highlight their central issues and apologetical strategies; and to inquire into the debt their authors owed to Islamic, anti-Christian polemic. It will be seen that the call of the Minaret, if one may so describe the religious challenge of Islam, elicited from Christians living in the caliphate a range of new apologetical strategies, not previously in evidence in Christian theology, and that within the churches of the Islamic world they might even be seen to have fostered a certain development of doctrine, the articulation of Christian thought in a new cultural idiom. In this context the dynamics of the interpretation of the Bible and of the Qur'ān interacted to give birth to a Christian theology of a new and unfamiliar profile. It contributed eventually to the evolution of that estrangement between the Greek and Latin-speaking Christians of western Christendom and the mostly Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic-speaking Christians of the Islamic commonwealth that became one of the cultural markers of the passage in Christian history from the period of Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.[17]

## *II. The Genres of Christian Apology*

Aramaic, in its Syriac dialect, and Coptic were undoubtedly the major languages of the indigenous Christian communities in the territories occupied by the Muslim Arabs in the seventh century; Greek accompanied them throughout the area as the language of philosophical and theological high culture, but from the ninth century onwards it was eclipsed by Arabic, into which language many of the principal Greek texts, philosophical, scientific, and religious, were soon translated.[18] But it was in Syriac that the earliest Christian apologetic texts composed in the world

[17] See Sidney H. Griffith, "Byzantium and the Christians in the World of Islam: Constantinople and the Church in the Holy Land in the Ninth Century," *Medieval Encounters* 3 (1997), pp. 231-265.

[18] See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*; Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries*.

of Islam first appeared.[19] All of them, it is interesting to note, are dialogical in form and literary structure. The earliest texts, all of them written in the eighth century, are: "the interrogation of Patriarch John I (631-648) by a Muslim Emir,"[20] "The Debate of a Monk of Beth Ḥālē with an Arab Notable;"[21] "Chapter X of the *Scholion* of Theodore bar Kōnī (fl. c. 792);"[22] and the "Epistle" of Patriarch Timothy I (780-823) in which he recounts his debate with the Caliph al-Mahdī (785).[23] In these, and other early texts, both in Syriac and Arabic, the principal genres of Christian apology in the world of Islam are already evident. One may list them under the following four headings: 'the monk in the emir's *majlis*'; 'the master and the disciple'; the epistolary exchange; and the formal, apologetical treatise.

## A. The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*

Three of these texts, excluding Theodore bar Kōnī's work, are the earliest examples of a distinct genre of Christian apologetical literature, which, in Arabic became the most popular of all the apologetical genres: 'The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*'.[24] Typically, as the name implies, the

[19] For a general survey of these texts see Sidney H. Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: from Patriarch John (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)," in Bernard Lewis & Friedrich Niewöhner (eds.), *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* ( 25. Wolfenbütteler Symposion, 1989; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), pp. 251-273.

[20] See François Nau, "Un colloque du patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 716," *JA*, series 11, 5 (1995), pp. 225-279. See the English translation in N. A. Newman (ed.), *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue; a Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.); Translations with Commentary* (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993), pp. 7-46. See also Samir Khalil Samir, "Qui est l'interlocuteur musulman du patriarche syrien Jean III (631-648)?" in Han J. W. Drijvers *et al.* (eds.), *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984* (OCA, 229; Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1987), pp. 387-400.

[21] See the very brief description of this unpublished text in Peter Jager, "Intended Edition of a Disputation between a Monk of the Monastery of Bet Ḥālē and One of the Êayoye," in Drijvers, *IV Symposium Syriacum*, pp. 401-402. See also Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 465-472.

[22] See A. Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī Liber Scholiorum* (CSCO 55, 69; Paris, 1910, 1912), vol. 69, pp. 231-284. See also Sidney H. Griffith, "Theodore var Kōnī's Apology for Christianity," *OCP* 47 (1981), pp. 158-188.

[23] See the text published in Alphonse Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies; Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshuni, Edited and Translated with a Critical Apparatus* (vol. II; Cambridge, 1928), pp. 1-162. English translation alone in Newman, *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, pp. 163-267.

[24] See Sidney H. Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*," in Hava Lazarus Yafeh *et al. The Majlis; Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam* (Studies in Arabic Language and Literature, 4; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 13-65.

texts in this genre feature accounts of monks or other ecclesiastics summoned into the presence of Muslim authorities and required to defend their faith in open debate with a caliph, an emir, and/or a phalanx of Muslim scholars. The narrator tells the story of their encounter and details the course of the conversations. In the case of Patriarch John I and the Muslim emir, the narrative is in the form of a letter, sent as if from the Patriarch himself by a member of his entourage. It tells of the occasion, on Sunday, 9 May, probably in the year 644, when the patriarch was allegedly summoned to appear before the emir ʿUmayr ibn Saʿd al-Anṣārī to answer questions about Christian faith and practice. According to the narrator, the letter was composed in the first place to allay fears in the Christian community about the patriarch's safety. But there are other issues as well, including an intra-Christian agenda. For example, the narrator says that the patriarch spoke to the emir in behalf of all the Christians, not just for his own 'Jacobite' community; even the 'Melkites' are said to have prayed for him. What is more, although the encounter between the patriarch and the emir is said to have taken place at a very definite time in the first half of the seventh century, all indications are that the text itself, in the form in which we have it, was written in the early eighth century.[25] This circumstance calls attention to the fact that the narrative has a literary and social function of its own, independent of its historical roots. It is an apologetical text, intended for circulation in the Syriac-speaking community. In its narrative the reader is invited to participate imaginatively with the narrator in a scenario into which a Christian has been brought to give an account of himself and his ways of faith, both to himself and to an inquisitive, domineering Muslim, in a context that mirrors with some verisimilitude the very religiously challenging milieu in which he, the reader, actually lives. The narrative details furnish this scenario of verisimilitude; its social function, in the context of the story's composition, extends beyond a simply documentary purpose to an exemplary one.

The same can be said with even more confidence about the account of the debate between the monk of Bēt Ḥālē and a Muslim notable. In this narrative the background details are kept to the minimum; there is no real chance of learning anything concrete about the interlocutors, other than the fact that it is surely plausible that a monk in a monastery in the environs of Antioch in the first third of the eighth century could well

[25] See Gerrit J. Reinink, "The Beginnings of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam," *OC* 77 (1993), pp. 165-187.

have had the opportunity to get into a conversation about religion with a disabled Muslim soldier. In the narrative the emphasis is on the debate itself, on the topics the two men are said to have discussed, and on the fact that in each instance the monk could give such satisfactory answers to the Muslim Arab's questions that were it not for social pressure, as the narrative has him say in conclusion, the Muslim would have become a Christian. The topics are those that would be the standard ones in Christian apologetical literature produced in the Islamic world for the next millennium and more. They include: the faith of Abraham; the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation; the estimation of the status of Muḥammad as prophet, and of the Qur'ān as scripture; the Christian practice of venerating crosses and icons; and how to recognize the true religion. The action in the story is in the monk's deft handling of the Muslim's questions; he always scores the debater's point, and thus shows the Syriac reader how the religious challenge of Islam can be met.[26]

In Patriarch Timothy's account of his conversations with the caliph al-Mahdī the same topics are discussed. The patriarch himself composed the letter in which the account is given, addressed to his friend Sergius. He was in the habit of writing public letters of this sort; one might even call them letter-treatises, the epistolary conventions being just that, a matter of conventional literary style.[27] The reader is invited to observe the patriarch giving brilliantly satisfactory answers to the Islamic challenge to Christian faith in a way that not only commended the veracity of Christian doctrines and practices, but did so in a style that subtly discounted the claims of Islam in seemingly inoffensive language. It is no wonder that this text circulated in the Christian communities for centuries in its own language, in an abbreviated form as well, and in Arabic translation.[28]

From the ninth century onward the genre, 'The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*' flourished, especially in Arabic. One finds the names of some of the most well-known Arab Christian apologists associated with it. In this connection, after the account of Patriarch Timothy's encounter

[26] See Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 465-472. See also Sidney H. Griffith, "Disputing with Islam in Syriac: the Case of the Monk of Bēt Ḥālē and a Muslim Emir," Syriac Symposium III, The Aramaic Heritage of Syria, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, 17-20 June 1999, *Hugoye*, 3.1 (2000) [*http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/vol3no1*].

[27] See Eva Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface* (Studia Semitica Upsaliensia, 11; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

[28] See Hans Putman, *L'Église et l'islam sous Timothée I (780-823)* (Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq, 1975).

with al-Mahdī, one thinks the most immediately of the dialogue of the monk Abraham of Tiberias with the emir ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī in Jerusalem around the year 820,[29] of the debate of Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 755-c. 830)in the *majlis* of the caliph al-Maʾmūn (813-833),[30] of the *Kitāb al-majālis* of Elias bar Shināyā (975-1046),[31] and of the debate of the monk George as-Simʿānī with the Muslim scholars of Aleppo in the twelfth century.[32] To judge by the number of the surviving manuscripts, these texts have had a wide popularity in the Arab Christian world.

One might also include in this category one of the most popular of all the Christian apologetical texts in the world of Islam, the so-called 'Christian Baḥīrā Legend'.[33] While it does not, strictly speaking, feature a monk answering for Christianity in an emir's *majlis*, the central scene in the story is not so far removed from this setting. Within the context of an apocalyptical narrative explaining the rise and early history of Islam, the text includes an account of a series of meetings between Muḥammad and the monk Baḥīrā, in which the reader learns that whatever is good and true in the teachings of Islam and in the Qurʾān, Muḥammad learned from the monk. The story circulated widely in all the Christian communities; in its original form it was composed in Syriac, but it was soon

[29] See Giacinto Būlus Marcuzzo, *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hāšimī à Jérusalem vers 820* (Textes et Études sur l'Orient Chrétien, 3; Rome: 1986).

[30] The text is still unpublished. See the brief summary in Alfred Guillaume, "A Debate between Christian and Muslim Doctors," *JRAS* (Centenary Supplement, October, 1924), pp. 233-244; *idem*, "Theodore Abu Qurra as Apologist," *The Moslem World* 15 (1925), pp. 42-51.

[31] The Arabic text is published in Louis Cheikho, "*Majālis Ilīyā Muṭrān Nusaybīn*," *al-Machriq* 20 (1922), pp. 33-44, 112-117, 117-122, 267-270, 270-272, 366-377, 425-434. See also the detailed study in Samir Khalil Samir, "Entretien d'Elie de Nisibe avec le vizir Ibn ʿAlī al-Maghribī, sur l'Unité et la Trinité," *Islamochristiana* 5 (1979), pp. 31-117. See Samir Khalil Samir, *Foi et culture en Irak au XIe siècle; Elie de Nisibe et l'Islam* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1996).

[32] The text was published by Paul Carali, *Le Christianisme et l'Islam. Controverse attribuée au moine Georges du Couvent de St. Siméon (Séleucie) soutenue devant le Prince El-Mouchammar Fils de Saladin en 1207* (Beit Chebab, Lebanon: Imprimerie Al-Alam, 1933). English translation in Alex Nicoll, "Account of a Disputation between a Christian Monk and Three Learned Mohammedans on the Subject of Religion," in *The Edingurgh Annual Register for 1816* (vol. IX, parts I. and II.; Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1820), pp. ccccv-ccccxlii.

[33] Syriac and Arabic recensions of the story are published in Richard Gottheil, "A Christian Bahira Legend," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 13 (1898), pp. 189-242; 14 (1899), pp. 203-268; 15 (1900), pp. 56-102; 17 (1903), pp. 125-166. See also Sidney H. Griffith, "Muḥammad and the Monk Baḥīrā: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times," *OC* 79 (1995), pp. 146-174.

translated and somewhat transposed into Arabic. In the Syriac recension, the apocalyptic narrative is more pronounced; in the Arabic recension, in which the story seems to have had its widest circulation, the central scenario of the catechizing of Muḥammad by the monk is enhanced, in line, it seems, with the heightened interest in debate and apologetics among Arabophone Christians from the ninth century onward. The point of the narrative is to maintain that in its original form, the Qur'ān, as Baḥîrâ is supposed to have taught it to Muḥammad, proclaimed the truth, as Christians see it, about all the issues in controversy between Muslims and Christians. According to the story, this true Islamic scripture was subsequently corruped by Jews and others into the form in which the Islamic community now has the Qur'ān.[34] In the narrative the monk is the principal character, who artfully commends the truths of Christianity. In this way his role approximates that of the principal characters in the works that more properly comprise the apologetical genre, 'the Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*'.

B. The Master and his Disciple

Theodore bar Kōnī (fl. c. 792) seems to have been the first Syriac writer to employ the genre, 'the Master and his Disciple', in a Christian apologetical work written in response to the religious challenge of Islam. At the heart of the genre is the 'Question and Answer' style of textual presentation. In time to come the literary conventions of this scholarly style would contribute much to the formalities of the Christian and Islamic science of *kalām*, the systematic discipline of interreligious disputation in Arabic.[35] Bar Kōnī used this 'Question and Answer' style throughout his summary presentation of the doctrine of the Assyrian Church of the East, in the book which he entitled simply *Scholion*.[36] In it he included a chapter,

[34] On this theme see Sidney H. Griffith, "The Qur'ān in Arab Christian Texts; the Development of an Apologetical Argument: Abū Qurrah in the *Majlis* of al-Ma'mūn," Proceedings of the V Conference on Christian Arabic Studies, Lund, 16-18 August 1996, *PdO* 24 (1999), 203-233.

[35] See Michael Cook, "The Origins of *Kalām*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (1980), pp. 32-43; Hans Daiber, "*Masā'il wa-Aḏjwiba*," in *EI*, 2nd ed., vol. VI, pp. 636-639.

[36] A. Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī Liber Scholiorum* (CSCO 55, 69; Paris, 1910, 1912); R. Hespel, R. Draguet, *Théodore Bar Koni Livre des Scolies* (CSCO 431, 432; Louvain, 1981, 1982). See also Sidney H. Griffith, "Theodore bar Kōnī's *Scholion*: a Nestorian *Summa Contra Gentiles* from the First Abbasid Century," in N. Garsoïan *et al.* (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington, 1982), pp. 53-72.

Chapter X, specifically dedicated to the apology for Christianity in response to questions posed by a would-be Muslim.[37] In the preface to the chapter, Bar Kōnī explained his choice of genre in the chapter this way:

> Although it is a full refutation against the *ḥanpē*,[38] and a ratification of the faith, we are putting it in questions [and answers] according to our custom in the whole book; the student takes the part of the *ḥanpē*, and the teacher the part of the Christians.[39]

Within the framework of the questions and answers in this 'Master' and 'Disciple' scheme, Bar Kōnī discusses the principal topics of controversy between Christians and Muslims, beginning with Christian usages that have a public face, such as the rite of Baptism, the Eucharist, and the practice of venerating the cross. Then he moves on to the doctrines which are always at issue, the Trinity and the Incarnation. The Master's answers to the Disciple's questions are clever defenses of the doctrines and practices under challenge. The persuasive character of the arguments advanced are vouched for in the conclusion, where the Disciple/Muslim is made to declare:

> Even though I believe that these things are so, I cannot abandon the tradition (*mashlmānūtā*) that I hold and become a convert because I am ashamed of the reproach that is in human disgrace.[40]

This Question and Answer format became quite popular among later, Arabic-speaking, Christian apologists, even when they dispensed with the literary *dramatis personae* of the more popular 'Master' and 'Disciple' dialogues and adopted a very academic tone. An example of this genre in one stage of its evolution may be seen in the 'Question and Answer' dialogue included as Chapter XVIII in the comprehensive, apologetical work which the present writer calls the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*.[41] The table of contents of this work gives the following description of the chapter:

[37] See Sidney H. Griffith, "Chapter Ten of the *Scholion*: Theodore bar Kōnī's Apology for Christianity," *OCP* 47 (1981), pp. 158-188.

[38] The *ḥanpē* are the Muslims, the Syriac term being cognate to the Arabic term *ḥanīf* (pl. *ḥunafā'*). See the discussion in Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad, his Scripture and his Message according to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the First Abbasid Century," in T. Fahd (ed.), *La vie du prophète Mahomet; colloque de Strasbourg-1980* (Paris, 1983), pp. 118-122.

[39] Scher, *Liber Scholiorum*, vol. 69, p. 232.

[40] Scher, *Liber Scholiorum*, vol. 69, p. 283.

[41] This important work is still unpublished, but it is available in its entirety in British

> In chapter eighteen, in our answer to their questions to us about the Trinity, about Christ, our Lord, and his incarnation, about baptism, ablutions, marriage, and the rest of their questions about those features of Christianity concerning which we are in disagreement with them, we have cited from their own theology (*kalām*) and descriptions (*ṣifāt*) of Christ, our Lord, what will give the believers the advantage over them in their questions to them — to the effect that Christ is God, the Word, the uncreated Creator of creation; he is prior to the worlds (*ʿālamīn*), and his origin is not from the virgin Mary.[42]

The text is disposed in the form of thirty-four questions, to which the writer gives answers along the lines set forth in the paragraph just quoted. One notices the author's avowed intention to quote from Islamic sources in his text, thereby making a bid for credibility in the interreligious context. The popular character of the discourse is still evident, even though the 'dialogue' has been included as a chapter in a much more systematic work. In fact it circulated independently of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica* in several other manuscripts.[43] And among the many unpublished Arab Christian manuscripts there are yet other examples of texts in this genre awaiting study. A good case in point is a work which is contained in a twelfth century Sinai manuscript, purporting to be a monk's replies to a Muslim *shaykh*'s questions about the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, which the Muslim posed after having read a work entitled simply 'Refutation of Christians' (*ar-radd ʿAlā n-naṣārā*). As the title paragraph announces, the work is presented as a reply to questions put to a Priest/Monk by a Muslim *shaykh* in Jerusalem, and it is entitled, *Questions and Answers, Rational and Divine* (*masāʾil wa ajwibah ʿAqliyyah wa ilāhiyyah*).[44]

By the first half of the ninth century this genre of apologetical literature had become highly developed among the Christians who were par-

Library Oriental MS 4950, written by Stephen ar-Ramlī in the year 877 A.D. at the monastery of Mar Chariton in the Judean desert. See Sidney H. Griffith, "Greek into Arabic: Life and Letters in the Monasteries of Palestine in the 9th Century; the Example of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*," *Byzantion* 56 (1986), pp. 117-138; *idem*, "A 9th Century Summa Theologiae Arabica," in *OCA* 226 (1986), pp. 123-141; *idem*, "Islam and the Summa Theologiae Arabica; *Rabīʿ* I, 264 A.H.," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), pp. 225-264.

[42] Quoted from Griffith, "Islam and the Summa Theologiae Arabica," pp. 247-248.

[43] See Griffith, "Islam and the Summa Theologiae Arabica," p. 235.

[44] Sinai Arabic MS 434, 1137-1139 A.D., f. 171r. For a further description see Rachid Haddad, *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), p. 38.

ticipating with Muslim intellectuals in the *'ilm al-kalām*. A good example of it may be seen in the work called *Kitāb al-masā'il wa l-ajwibah* by the 'Nestorian' writer of the period, ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī.[45] As the title indicates, the substance of the work is a sequence of questions (*masā'il*) and answers (*ajwibah*), which are arranged numerically under four topical chapter headings (*maqālāt*). But the questions and answers themselves are not now disposed in the text according to the old *Erotapokriseis* style of the 'Master' and 'Disciple' dialogues. Rather, they are phrased in the conditional style familiar from Islamic *kalām* texts. Here the 'question' is the protasis of the statement, and the 'answer' is its apodosis, e.g., "If someone says (*in qāla qā'ilun*) or asks (*sa'ala sā'ilun*) such and such, we say (*qulna*) thus and so." With this device ʿAmmār proceeds to develop his argument in defense Christian doctrines in a system of consecutive dilemmas designed to thwart the views of his adversaries.

ʿAmmār introduces the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa l-ajwibah* with a preface that is in the form of a prayer for the reigning caliph, whom he does not name, and for himself, that he might accomplish the task before him. His view of the caliph's responsibilities, as revealed in the preface, is instructive. The *amīr al-mu'minīn* is the one who has the care of God's religon, ʿAmmār says,

> To exert an effort to strengthen it, to certify the knowledge of it, to set up the argument (*al-ḥujjah*) against those who disclaim it, or deny it, or differ from it, or turn away from it... so that he may thereby encourage the Muslims, hold them together, scritinize their opinions, exercise discernment, in the balance of the mind with which God has graced him, when something comes to his ears which departs from their doctrine, or the meanings of their arguments.[46]

ʿAmmār prays that in his own weakness and deficiency in the face of the task before him, God will encourage him "to attempt that for which my ability is too little, before which my power of reflection falls short of the burden that has been put upon me in this matter, to bring it to comple-

[45] See Michel Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī: apologie et controverses* (Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq, 1977), pp. 91-265. See also Sidney H. Griffith, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-burhān*: Christian *Kalām* in the First Abbasid Century," *Le Muséon* 96 (1983), pp. 145-181; Bénédicte Landoron, *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak: attitudes nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam* (Études Chrétiennes Arabes; Paris Cariscript, 1994), pp. 60-66.

[46] Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, pp. 93-94.

tion for the *amīr al-mu'minīn*."[47] Then ʿAmmār states the purpose for the composition of his book. He says:

> What I have set out upon in this book, God strengthen and aid the *amīr al-mu'minīn*, is the advancement of argumentation concerning the Creator, be He blessed and exalted; a statement concerning the attestation of the oneness of His lordship, praise and glory be to Him, and holy be His names; the establishment of an argument against those who deny Him; and, in behalf of His economy (*litadbīrihi*), the endorsement of a proof, the truthfulness of which cannot be refuted, and a process of reasoning (*qiyās*), the verity of which cannot be invalidated.[48]

If the reader did not know otherwise, thus far he would certainly think the author of this piece was a Muslim. Hayek argues that ʿAmmār's prefatory dedication of his work to the caliph, as if in composing it he were complying with an official request, was a ploy on the author's part "to assure himself of a *captatio benevolentiae* from the Muslim reader."[49] But, since such dedications were conventional also among Muslim scholars, one may just as well understand it to be an intentional bid on ʿAmmār's part to be taken seriously as a participant in the ongoing dialogue of the *mutakallimūn*. One gathers as much from his statement of the book's purpose. His concern with demonstrating the existence and oneness of the Creator, along with the presentation of arguments geared to refute 'deniers', certainly accords with similar concerns on the part of the contemporary Muslim controversialists. It is only when he comes to his reasoning about God's economy, as revealed in the divine scriptures, that ʿAmmār launches into his specifically Christian apology. He attempts to show that the basic Christian doctrines are logically consequent upon the conclusions he reached earlier, in the first part of his treatise. There is no reason to doubt that with this methodology, ʿAmmār intended to commend belief in Christianity, in the scholarly idiom of the day, to the intellectuals who were the adepts in the Islamic *ʿilm al-kalām*, as well as to those Arabic-speaking Christians who may have been liable to be convinced by Islamic arguments. His work represents the highpoint of the development of the scholarly, literary genre of the 'Master' and his 'Disciple', in the service of Christian apologetics.

[47] Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, p. 94.
[48] Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, pp. 94 & 95.
[49] Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, p. 17.

C. The Epistolary Exchange

A very popular genre in Christian apologetics in the Islamic world in early Abbasid times was the epistolary exchange. Typically there is an initial letter in which a Muslim correspondent is represented as calling a Christian to Islam, detailing the reasons why he should consider Islam the true religion; in reply, there follows a text attributed to a Christian correspondent, whose much longer letter defends the veracity of Christian doctrines, and attacks the claims of Islam to be the true religion. The correspondents may be well-known persons in the world of early Islam, or their names may signify their religious confession. In either case, it is important to remember that in the forms in which we now have the texts, the letters of both parties may be thought to make up a single apologetical work.

There are three such epistolary exchanges that have received much scholarly attention in modern times. They are: the correspondence of Leo III (717-741) and ʿUmar II (717-720);[50] the correspondence between the Muslim character, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ismāʿīl al-Hāshimī and the Christian character, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī;[51] and the correspondance between a Muslim astronomer at the caliphal court in Baghdad, Abū ʿIsā Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim, and two well-known Christian scholars and courtiers, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and Qusṭā ibn Lūqā.[52] Of the three works, by far the most influential one has been the al-Hāshimī/al-Kindī correspondence.

ʿAbd Allāh's letter is a very summary statement of the Islamic *shahādah* and the five pillars of Islam. ʿAbd al-Masīḥ's reply on the other hand is a long defense of the standard Christian doctrines and practices, according to the customary outline of topics in the more popular apologies for Christianity, along with a vigorous polemic against the Qur'ān, the prophet Muḥammad, and the teachings and practices that are characteristic of Islam. The two letters circulated as units of a single work, and the correspondents are presented as members of the court of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833). The author of the al-Hāshimī/al-Kindī correspondence is completely anonymous. In all likelihood, he was a 'Nestorian'.

[50] See the discussion and bibliography in Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 490-501.

[51] See the discussion and bibliography in Landron, *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak*, pp. 78-89. See the English translation in Newman, *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, pp. 355-545.

[52] See Khalil Samir & Paul Nwyia, *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre ibn al-Munaggim, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā* (PO XL,4, no. 185; Turnhout: Brepols, 1981).

Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the names of the correspondents are authentic names of genuine persons. All three elements of each name amount to a neat, confessional statement of the two creeds, Christianity and Islam. While all of the elements of each name are quite commonly found among the names of contemporaries, their neat symmetry in the present instance suggests that they are literary *personae*. Furthernore, it is hardly credible that any Muslim intellectual, even in the court of al-Ma'mūn, would have been party to the summary portrait of Islam that is found here, a mere preface to al-Kindī's rebuttal; or who would be in any way associated with a work that so negatively depicts Islam, the Qur'ān, and the prophet Muḥammad. A distinguishing feature of the al-Kindī apology for Christianity, which makes it somewhat unique among the Syriac or Arabic apologies of the first Abbasid century, is the bluntness with which it dismisses the religious claims of Islam, in an impudent tone of voice that disparages the Qur'ān and Muḥammad in a way that is reminiscent of the Byzantine anti-Islamic polemical treatises written in Greek.

The al-Hāshimī/al-Kindī correspondence has circulated widely among Christians in medieval and modern times. It was popular among the 'Melkites', 'Jacobites', and 'Nestorians' in the Middle East; it was adopted by Mozarab Christians in Spain, where it was translated into Latin on the commision of Peter the Venerable (d. 1156) in the twelfth century,[53] and it has been used in English and French translations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Christian missionaries seeking to convert Muslims.[54] By its very popularity it has somewhat overshadowed the other works in this genre of apologetical writing, a circumstance which should not mask the fact that the genre itself was a popular one from the ninth century onward.

Unlike the al-Hāshimī/al-Kindī correspondence, the other two works mentioned in this category, the Leo/ʿUmar correspondence, and the correspondence of al-Munajjim with Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, involve historical characters. Nevertheless, as the texts have circulated in the Christian communities they have taken on a literary life of their own,

[53] See Jose Muñoz Sendino, "Al-Kindi, Apologia del Cristianismo," *Miscelanea Comillas* 11 & 12 (1949), pp. 339-460; James Krtizeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

[54] See, e.g., the edition and Frence translation published by Pasteur Georges Tartar, *Dialogue islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Ma'mūn (813-834); les épîtres d'al-Hashimī et d'al-Kindī* (2 vols.; Combs-La-Ville, France: Centre Évangélique de Témoignage et de Dialogue, 1977).

independently of any actual events that may have inspired their composition in the first place. In them the letter (*ar-risālah*), an important literary genre in its own right, became an apologetical treatise in the literary format of an epistolary exchange, one that made its bid for verisimilitude in the world of Islam by reason of the fact that in Islamic history there was already the literary precedent, recorded in the *sīrah* literature, that in his day Muḥammad had himself provided for letters to be sent out by messengers from him to Roman, Persian, and Abysinnian leaders, among others, summoning them to Islam.[55]

Already long before the rise of Islam, in Greek and Syriac texts among others, it had become conventional to use the formalities of letter-writing in composing the prefaces to treatises on a wide variety of subjects. Typically, the writer would address his treatise to someone who is represented as having written to him requesting information on the subject to be discussed. After modestly protesting his inabilities, and soliciting prayers, the writer would then carry on with the treatise. It was a convention that could easily be combined with many other literary genres, including all the ones being discussed in the present communication.[56] What makes it distinctive in this particular instance is that the claim of letters actually sent and received, to or from known or totally fictional characters, is an important literary element in the apologetical narrative of the genre which I am calling the 'Epistolary Exchange'.

D. The Apologetical Treatise

While the most well-known and colorful works of Christian apologetics in the Islamic world were anonymous and composed in the literary genres already discussed, the major apologists whose names we know wrote tracts of a less dramatic, more expository character. They were often letter-treatises, with prefaces of the kind described above, called *'egartā* in Syriac, or *risālah* in Arabic. Alternatively, many of them bear the simple name, 'treatise', or 'tract' (*mēmrā* in Syriac, *maymar*/ *mīmar*, or simply *kitāb* in Arabic), and they discuss all the topics at issue between Christians and Muslims. As often as not they are exercizes in Christian *kalām*, in which the authors make a bid to defend Christian beliefs and

[55] See A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad; a Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 652-659. On the apologetic and literary character of this work see J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu; Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (London Oriental Series, vol. 34; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[56] See Riad, *The Syriac Preface*.

practices utilizing the apologetic conventions in which the Muslim controversialists in the Middle Ages were in the habit of commending Islamic faith and life. Alternatively, some of them proceed in a more philosophical and formally logical mode, again, in the manner of the philosophers in the world of Islam.

The earliest Christian, apologetical treatise of this sort is an anonymous one, called by its modern editor, "On the Triune Nature of God."[57] It was written in Arabic in the eighth century, most probably around the year 755 A.D.[58] It is an essay in which the author proposes to defend the truth of the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation on the basis of biblical testimonies, including the Qur'ān. At the beginning of the work the author wrote:

> We do not separate God from his Word and his Spirit. We worship no other god with God in his Word and his Spirit. God Showed his power and his light in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms and the Gospel, that God and his Word and his Spirit are one God and one Lord. We will make this clear, if God wills, in these revealed scriptures, to anyone who wants understanding, [who] perceives things and recognizes

[57] Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God* (Studia Sinaitica, no. VII; Cambridge, 1899), pp. 1-36 (English); 74-107 (Arabic). See Samir Khalil Samir, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity," in Samir Khalil Samir & Jørgen S. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 57-114.

[58] There is some scholarly disagreement about the date. See Mark N. Swanson, "Some Considerations for the Dating of *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* (Sinai Ar. 154) and *Al-Jāmi' wujūh al-īmān* (London, British Library or. 4950)," in Samir Khalil Samir (ed.), *Actes du 4e Congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes* in *PdO* 18 (1993), pp. 117-141. There is a line in the text which says, "If this religion were not truly from God it would not have stood so unshakably for seven hundred and forty-six years." (Sinai Arabic MS 154, f. 110v.) Swanson convincingly makes the point that the author would most likely have counted the years according to the Alexandrian world era. But he then goes on to suppose that the lapse of 746 years should be counted from the year of Christ's crucifixion, which theologically might have been taken by the writer to mark the end of Judaism and the beginnng of Christianity. Accordingly, Swanson dates the text to the year 788 A.D., or 746 years from the crucifixion, which, according to the computation in the Alexandrian world era, would have taken place in the year 42 A.D. It seems more likely to me that whatever his theological view may have been, the writer would have meant 746 years from the beginning of the calendrical sequence of Christian years, which begins with the Incarnation in all systems; according to the computation of the Alexandrian world era, the Incarnation would have happened in the year 9 A.D. Therefore, in my opinion, one should add 746 years to 9, in order to arrive at the year 755 A.D., as the most likely year for the composition of the work. See also Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 503, n. 9, who accepts Swanson's date.

> the truth, and opens his breast to believe in God and his scriptures.[59]

Another work, written in Syriac, which may well be the second oldest Christian apologetical treatise from the early Islamic period, takes a completely different approach. It is a letter-treatise, written by Patriarch Timothy I in the year 780/781, and addressed to a man named Sergius, the future metropolitan of Elam. In it the patriarch defends the veracity of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and justifies several Christian religious practices, on the basis of the proper definition of philosophical terms and the deployment of Aristotelian logic. In fact, he says that in the letter he is reporting the gist of his conversations on these matters with an Aristotelian philospher at the caliph's court.[60]

The earliest writer of Christian apologetic treatises in Arabic whose name we know is Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 755 - c. 830). He flourished in the first decades of the ninth century and wrote some sixteen treatises in Arabic on topics in Christian theology, with Muslims always among the silent dialogue partners. His purpose was to explain the tenets of 'Melkite' theology in the Arabic idiom of the contemporary discussions about religion among the Muslim *mutakallimūn*, as well as to defend the proposition that Christianity is the true religion.[61] In the first generation of Christian theology in Arabic, Abū Qurrah was joined by fellow 'Melkites', like the author of the now anonymous *Summa Theologiae Arabica*, and Peter of Bayt Ra's, author of a long apologetical work called *Kitāb al-burhān*.[62] Among the 'Jacobites' the first apologist to write treatises in Arabic was Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā'iṭah, a contemporary and debating-partner of Theodore Abū Qurrah. His works include defenses of the 'Jacobite' Christology of Severus of Antioch (c. 465-538) against the attacks of the 'Melkites', as well as arguments in behalf of the doctines of the Trinity and the Incarnation against the

[59] Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 3. I have slightly adapted the translation.

[60] The letter is published in Hanna Cheikho, *Dialectique du langage sur Dieu de Timothée I (728-823* (Rome, 1983). See Thomas R. Hurst, "The Syriac Letters of Timothy I (727-823): a Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy," (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1986).

[61] For discussion and further bibliography see Sidney H. Griffith, "Faith and Reason In Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion," in S. Kh. Samir & J. S. Nielsen, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)* (Studies in the History of Religions, vol. LXIII; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1-43.

[62] For discussion and bibliography on these two works see Sidney H. Griffith, "The View of Islam from the Monasteries of Palestine in the Early 'Abbāsid Period," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (1996), pp. 9-28.

challenges of Islam.[63] In the 'Nestorian' community, after Patriarch Timothy I, whose works have been discussed above, the most notable apologist, also mentioned earlier, was ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, who flourished in the ninth century. In addition to the *Kitāb masāʾil wa l-ajwibah*, which we have already discussed, ʿAmmār also wrote a very closely reasoned tract on the discernment of the true religion called, *Kitāb al-burhān*.[64]

For the later generations of apologists, it will be sufficient for the present purpose simply to mention some of their names. A number of them are immediately recognizeable by reason of their major contributions to the intellectual life of the early Abbasid caliphate. Among them were Israel of Kashkar (d. 872), the author of a popular treatise, "On the Unity and Trinity of God;"[65] Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (d. 873), well-known for his role in the translation of Greek philosophical and scientific texts into Arabic;[66] Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (d. 974), a 'Jacobite' from Taqrit, who was both a famous logician and a formidable apologist for Christianity;[67] Severus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 1000), the first Copt whose name we know who wrote Christian theology in Arabic;[68] Elias of Nisibis (d. c. 1049), a controversialist whose works were widely distributed in the Christian communites in the eleventh and twelfth centuries,[69] and Paul of Antioch, a twelfth century 'Melkite' bishop whose efforts to defend Christiantiy and its teachings on the basis of texts cited from the Qurʾān elicited a strong Islamic reaction.[70] Many more names could be mentioned, but

[63] See Georg Graf, *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾiṭa* (CSCO 130, 131; Louvain: Peeters, 1951). See also Sidney H. Griffith, "Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah, A Christian *mutakallim* of the First Abbasid Century," *OC* 64 (1980), pp. 161-201.

[64] See the discussion in Sidney H. Griffith, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*: Christian *Kalām* in the First Abbasid Century," *Le Muséon* 96 (1983), pp. 145-181.

[65] See Bo Holmberg, *A Treatise on the Unity and Trinity of God by Israel of Kashkar (d. 872)* (Lund: Plus Ultra, 1989).

[66] On Ḥunayn see Landron, *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak*, pp. 66-71. See also Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture; the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), esp. pp. 133-145.

[67] For discussion and bibliography see E. Platti, *Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe* (OLA 14; Leuven, 1983). See also Gerhard Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī: an Analytical Inventory* (Wiesbaden: Reichert: 1977).

[68] For discussion and bibliography see Sidney H. Griffith, "The *Kitāb Miṣbāḥ al-ʿAql* of Severus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ: a Profile of the Christian Creed in Arabic in Tenth Century Egypt," *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1996), pp. 15-42.

[69] See Samir, *Foi et culture en Irak*.

[70] See Paul Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche, évêque melkite de Sidon (XIIes.)* (Recherches, t. XXIV; Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964).

perhaps these will suffice to call to mind the range of works produced by Christian apologists in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages. The enterprise reached its apogee in Egypt in the thirteenth century, with the activities of a remarkable family of scholars who worked in Ayyubid times not only to produce their own treatises but to compile collections of the works of many of the earlier apologists who wrote in Arabic, from all the Christian communities. They were the four brothers, who are collectively often called the *awlād al-ʿAssāl*; they flourished between the years 1230 and 1260. The two of them who were the most active in apologetics were Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl and aṣ-Ṣafī ibn al-ʿAssāl.[71] In the end the Copts became the most prolific producers of Christian texts in Arabic in the Islamic world.[72]

### *III. The Topics and Strategies of Christian Apology in the Islamic World*

The apologetical agenda for Christian controversialists in the Islamic world was largely set in response to the challenges to Christian faith voiced by Muslims, as they are now found recorded in two kinds of early Islamic texts: first, the Qurʾān, and secondly, in the *Sīrah* literature. It is particularly important in this connection to take cognizance of the issues that emerged in the project to define the biography of Muḥammad, from the time of Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq (d. 768), whose name is associated with the first systematic efforts in this enterprise, to that of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Hishām (d. 834), whose recension of Ibn Isḥāq's biography of the prophet gained almost canonical status under the title, *Sirat rasūl Allāh*. The sixty some years during which this work was coming to its maturity among Muslims correspond to the years in which the Christian apologetic undertaking in the Islamic world was finding its first expression, as we have seen. And, as Uri Rubin has recently shown, the image of Muḥammad that emerges from the *Sīrah* rests basically on an Islamic adaptation of the scriptural themes of attestation, preparation, revelation, persecution, and salvation, as they are found in the biblical profiles of prophetic figures in Judaism and Chris-

[71] See A. Wadi, *Studio introduttivo su al-Muʾtaman Ibn al-ʿAssāl e la sua Summa dei Principi dell Religione* [Arabic] (Studia Orientalia Christiana Monographiae, 5; Cairo & Jerusalem: The Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, 1997). See also the text of this work, along with an Italian translation, in A. Wadi & B. Pirone, *Al-Muʾtaman Ibn al-ʿAssāl, Summa dei Principi della Religione* (Studia Orientalia Christiana Monographiae, 6-9; Cairo & Jerusalem: The Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, 1998-2002).

[72] See n. 13 above.

tianity.[73] Moreover, in his studies of the *Sīrah* literature almost twenty years earlier John Wansbrough had shown that the Islamic development of these themes, in what he aptly styled as *The Sectarian Milieu*, can be seen to express the Islamic, apologetical/polemical response to the religious claims of Judaism and Christianity, as they would have been marshalled against Islam.[74] In this connection he identified a dozen or so "polemical *topoi*", the origin of which, he said, "was interconfessional polemic and... their selection was imposed upon the early Muslim community from outside."[75] The same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the topics of Christian apology and polemic in the world of Islam.

For convenience sake one may list the topics of the Christian apologies under two headings: those developed in response to the teachings of the Qur'ān, as they were interpreted by the Islamic *mufassirūn* and systematized by the *mutakallimūn*; and those designed to rebut the claims of the Islamic prophetology, as it was elaborated in the *Sīrah* literature just described. In general, the more popular works of apologetics featured a heavier concentration on topics under the latter heading (i.e., the Islamic prophetology), while the authors of the systematic treatises tended to concentrate their attention on the defense of the Christian doctrines directly challenged by the Qur'ān.[76]

A. Responding to the Teachings of the Qur'ān

The principal Christian articles of faith directly challenged by the Qur'ān are the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Virtually every Christian apologetical work produced in Syriac or Arabic in the early Islamic period included a defense of these doctrines. Often the agenda was broadened to include such other issues as the authenticity of the canonical Gospels, the doctrine of the freedom of the will in moral choices, and issues in Christian life and worship, such as the sacraments

[73] See Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: the Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims; a Textual Analysis* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 5; Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995).

[74] J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu; Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (London Oriental Series, vol. 34; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[75] Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*, p. 14. For the list of the *topoi* see *ibid*, pp. 40-42.

[76] For a systematic survey of the topics of controversy and the Christian response to them in the broad range of Arab Christian literature in the early period see Paul Khoury, *Materiaux pour servir a l'étude de la controverse théologique islamo-chrétienne de langue arabe du VIIIe au XIIe siècle* (3 vols., Religionswissenschaftliche Studien, vols. 11/1, 2, 3; Würzburg: Echter Verlag/Altenberge: Telos-Verlag, 1989, 1991, 1997).

of Baptism and the Eucharist, the veneration of the cross and the holy icons.

The authors of the apologetical treatises typically approached the discussion of the Trinity and the Incarnation in two ways: they argued either from scripture, or from reason; sometimes they employed a combination of the two strategies. Always their efforts were to show that the standard Christian doctrines reflect the teachings of the uncorrupted scriptures and that the traditional dogmatic formulae were not vulnerable to the charges levelled against them by Muslim polemicists. Special efforts were expended to find an appropriate Arabic vocabulary in terms of which to translate the technical expressions of Christian theology as they had been deployed in Greek and Syriac. This enterprise often involved the effort to define certian Arabic terms in a technical way for the purpose of theological discussion, even when the ordinary connotations of the terms in common usage militated against the senses intended in doctrinal contexts.[77] This was to remain a major problem for Christian theology in Arabic; by the time of the earliest apologists, all of the religious vocabulary in Arabic had already been co-opted by Islamic religious discourse, which often systematically excluded the very meanings wanted by Christians, or at the very least Islamicized them in an unfamiliar way.

In defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, most Christian apologists adopted the strategy of situating the discussion in the context of the debate already underway among Muslim *mutakallimūn* about the ontological status of the divine attributes (*ṣifāt Allāh*) as expressed in 'the beautiful names' (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*) of God culled from the Qur'ān.[78] Typically this involved the claim that all of the attributes of essence and action can reasonably be shown to presume the presence of three substantial attributes: 'existing' (*mawjūd*), 'living' (*ḥayy*), and 'speaking' (*nāṭ'iq*),[79] on which all the other attributes can logically be argued to depend. The apologists then proposed that these three substantial attrib-

[77] In this connection one need only mention the term *jawhar*, used by philosophers and theologians to translate the Greek term *ousia*, but which in Arabic inevitably suggests a concrete nugget like a jewel, or an atom.

[78] See Richard M. Frank, *Beings and their Attributes: the Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978); Daniel Gimaret, *Les noms divins en islam, exégèse lexicographique et théologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

[79] Different Christian authors at different times and places used different vocabulary to identify the three substantial attributes. See Khoury, *Matériaux pour servir à l'étude de la controverse théologique*, vol. II, esp., pp. 13-113.

utes indicate the three *hypostases* (*qnōmē* / *aqānīm*) of the one God, who is one in *ousia* (*jawhar*) as the Christians teach, and three in the divine *personae* (*parṣōpē* / *wujūh, ashkhāṣ*), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of which, according to the Christians, the Bible so clearly speaks.[80]

Often in the more systematic treatises the apologists embedded this kind of argumentation in the larger context of a theory of human knowledge and a theodicy which shared all the characteristics of a typical exercise in Islamic *kalām*.[81] It can be seen that in this way their intentions were to commend the credibility of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and other doctrines as well, in the very idiom of the Islamic religious discourse of their day. It is in this novel form of speech that traditional Christian trinitarian theology came to be inculturated into the intellectual world of Islam in a design largely unfamiliar to Christians outside of that world.

B. Responding to the Claims of Islamic Prophetology

In the *sīrah* and *ḥadīth* literature of the early Islamic period, Muslim scholars elaborated a Qur'ān-based history of salvation which enabled the *mutakallimūn* of their community to develop an apologetical line of argument in defense of the true prophethood of Muḥammad based on what they called the *dalā'il an-nubuwwah*, or the 'indications of prophecy'. In the context of the controversy with Christian apologists, the claims of this 'prophetology' were marshalled in arguments about the identity of the true religion. The topics that were always included under this heading were the integrity of the scriptures, the teachings about God and the messengers who claimed to have been sent by God, the signs by which the messengers might be recognized, the religious practices of the followers of the true religion, such as the direction they faced when at prayer, the moral teachings of the messengers, the character of the rewards and punishments awaiting human beings at the end of this life, and the true status of Muḥammad, the Qur'ān, and Islam.

This agenda can be found in almost all of the more popular genres of Christian apologetics in Syriac and Arabic in the early Islamic period.

[80] See the discussion of 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's deployment of this line of reasoning in Sidney H. Griffith, "The Concept of *al-uqnūm* in 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's Apology for the Doctrine of the Trinity," in Khalil Samir (ed.), *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes (Goslar, septembre 1980)* (OCA 218; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982), pp. 169-191.

While it is evident that Christian apologists and polemicists were engaged in rejecting the claims of Muslims under all of these headings, and that they were bent on proving that Christianity alone is the true religion which promotes the true teaching on all of these subjects, the agenda itself is a distinctly Islamic one. This outline of topics, and the prophetology on which it rests, would not be found in a Christian apologetical work outside of the context of the dialogue with Islam.

Two issues in particular are worth special attention in connection with this topical agenda. This first of them is that almost all of the Christian apologists argued that the decisive factor in proof of the claim of Christianity to be the true religion is the attestation of the evidentiary miracles worked in testimony to its veracity by Jesus, and those worked in Jesus' name by his apostles and disciples.[82] The apologists came back to this theme again and again, and they often contrasted it with the situation in Islam. A number of them even quote the Qur'ān passages which seem to dissociate Muḥammad himself from any claim to be a Thaumaturgos, and they attack the Islamic appeal to the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'ān (*i'jāz al-qur'ān*), sometimes going to great lengths in the attempt to demonstrate that the text of the Islamic scripture is anything but inimitable, and claiming greater admiration for other Arabic compositions.[83] It is interesting to observe in this connection that it is precisely in the ninth century, the era of the first appearance of some of the most polemical Christian attacks against the Qur'ān,[84] that one finds the earliest systematic development of the doctrine of the *i'jāz al-qur'ān* among the Muslim *mutakallimūn*.[85]

The second issue worth special attention in connection with the Christian effort to argue, in the context of Islamic prophetology, that Chris-

[81] See Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian *Kalām*." See also Sidney H. Griffith, "The Muslim Philosopher al-Kindi and his Christian Readers: Three Arab Christian Texts on 'The Dissipation of Sorrows'," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78 (1996), pp. 111-127.

[82] Only one Christian apologist, and then in only one work, argued that Christianity could be proved to be the true religion solely on rational grounds, without appeal to the evidentiary force of the miracles worked by Jesus and the disciples. He was Theodore Abū Qurrah. See Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām," pp. 1-43.

[83] In this connection, see in particular the appropriate passages in the "Apology of al-Kindī," in the texts cited in Landron, *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak*, pp. 78-89; Newman, *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, pp. 355-545; Tartar, *Dialoge islamo-chrétien*.

[84] For more on this theme, see Griffith, "The Qur'ān in Arab Christian Texts."

[85] See Richard Martin, "The Role of the Basrah Mu'tazilah in Formulating the Doctrine of the Apologetic Miracke," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39 (1980), pp. 175-189.

tianity is the true religion is the scheme of negative criteria the apologists devised specifically in the effort to exclude Islam from any claim to be the true religion, at least to their own satisfaction. It is a unique contribution to the apologetical/polemical enterprise, and so deserves a special mention here. While several of the apologists whom we have mentioned employed this argument, it was perhaps the most succinctly expressed by ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī in his *Kitāb al-burhān*. He put it as follows, in the context of his discussion of the necessity of miraculous signs as indicators of the true religion. He said,

> Intelligent people will be obliged to confess one of the religions because it was established in the world on account of God's signs, only when they do not find in it any one of the motives of this world (*asbāb ad-dunyah*), which by its persistence, could enable it [i.e., the religion] to be established.[86]

ʿAmmār's list of seven unworthy, worldly motives for espousing a religion includes the following items: the sword (*as-sayf*), bribes and cajolery (*ar-rishan wa l-muṣānaʿah*), ethnic bigotry (*al-ʿAṣabiyyah*), personal preference (*al-istiḥsān*), tribal collusion (*at-tawāṭuʾ*), and licentious laws and practices (*at-tarkhīṣ fī sh-sharāʾiʿ*).[87] He and other apologists argue that people have embraced Islam and other religions for one or more of these reasons, whereas, they contend, no one has chosen Christianity, nor has he remained a faithful Christian, for any of these reasons.[88]

Some Christian apologists, most notably the author of the *risālah* of al-Kindī, but a number of others as well, echoing these concerns, have argued at a considerable length that by reason of their worldly qualities, Muḥammad cannot be considered a prophet, nor can the Qurʾān be esteemed a book of divine revelation, nor can Islam be the true religion. These writers present the case as graphically as possible, and they highlight every trait they can portray as morally objectionable from a Christian perspective. Most of the popular works that develop these themes are anonymous. In addition to the al-Hāshimī/al-Kindī correspondence, one thinks particularly in this connection of a number of the works in the genre, 'The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*',[89] at the end of which even the

[86] Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, p. 29.

[87] See Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, pp. 30-33.

[88] For more discussion of this apologetical line of reasoning see Sidney H. Griffith, "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference: Annual Publication of the Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* 4 (1979), pp. 63-87.

[89] See Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*."

Muslim emir or the caliph is sometimes made to agree with the Christian protagonist, even to say that only social pressure prevents his becoming a Christian. For example, at the end of the "Dialogue of the Monk of Bēt Ḥālē with an Arab Notable," the latter is made to say:

> I testify that were it not for the fear of the government and of shame before men, many would become Christians. But you are blessed of God to have given me satisfaction by your conversation with me.[90]

Generally speaking, works of popular apologetics, such as the purported transcripts of interviews between monks and emirs, survive in a greater number of manuscript witnesses than other apologetical and polemical tracts written by Christians in the early Islamic period. It seems clear that the primary intention of their authors was to dissuade Christians themselves from acceding to the temptation to convert to Islam; secondarily the works may have been intended to give the Christian reader a sense of the superiority of his faith over Islam, and to induce a sense of shame in any Muslim reader who might pick up the work. But this observation brings up the whole issue of the audience for whom the Christian apologists wrote.

### *IV. The Audience for Christian Apology in the Islamic World*

Broadly speaking, one may think of the audience of the Christian apologists who wrote in the world of Islam as being made up of both Christians and Muslims, and as ranging from the general population of the literate to the intellectually and socially elite in both communities. The circumstances vary from work to work.

The earliest texts were clearly addressed to the Christian community. Certainly this was the case with works composed in Syriac, which very few if any Muslims would have been prepared to read. As for the works composed in Arabic, by the very nature of the case they would be open to the perusal of any person literate in the Arabic language. But given the prefatory remarks of many of the authors it is clear that Christians themselves were the primary audience for the apologetical texts, in all the genres. Often the texts are addressed to inquirers whose names are mentioned, or they are presented as reports of how a monk or bishop fared in an emir's or caliph's *majlis*. Presumably these works were addressed to

[90] Translated from the original Syriac, as contained in a private transcript of Diyarbakir MS 95, p. 16.

the Christian community. On the other hand, some texts did find Muslim readers. And the more formal treatises, which deal with philosophical or theological topics, often seem to have elicited a response from Muslims. One thinks, for example, of the Muʿtazilī *mutakallim* ʿĪsā ibn Ṣabīḥ al-Murdār (d. 840), who wrote against Theodore Abū Qurrah,[91] of the caliph, probably al-Maʾmūn, to whom ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī all but dedicated his *Kitāb masāʾil wa l-ajwibah*,[92] and of the *mutakallim* Abū Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. c. 840), who wrote a tract against ʿAmmār by name.[93] Perhaps the most famous instance of a Christian apologetical work which attracted the attention of Muslim readers is Paul of Antioch's *risālah* to a Muslim friend in Sidon,[94] in which he argues in behalf of the veracity of Christianity from the Qurʾān. No less a figure than Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) wrote his famous *al-Jawāb aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ* specifically against an abbreviated form of Paul's *risālah*.[95]

Clearly, therefore, at least some Muslims took cognizance of Christian apologetical and polemical works. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Christians themselves were the primary audience for such works. But the broader consideration of the audience of these works still raises two other issues, one literary and one historical. The literary question inquires about the author's intentions in composing his work; how did he put it together in view of his intended audience? The historical question is concerned with what can be learned about the actual relations between Muslims and Christians in the early Islamic period from the works included in these several genres of apologetics and polemics that have been reviewed here. In other words, do their narratives have an historical *fundamentum in re*?

From the literary perspective, one must distinguish between the popular genres of apologetics and the more scholarly exercises in controversial theology, the *kalām* texts, and the works of philosophical theology. The latter are instances of a formal, academic enterprise, in which

[91] See Johann W. Fück, "Some Hitherto Unpublished Texts on the Muʿtazilite Movement from Ibn-al-Nadim's Kitāb-al-Fihrist," in S. J. Abdullah (ed.), *Professor Muhammad Shafi Presentation Volume* (Lahore, 1955), p. 62. The later Muʿtazili scholar ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) also mentioned Abū Qurrah's name in connection with a report of the beliefs of the 'Melkites'. See ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamdhānī, *Al-Mughnī fī abwāb at-tawḥīd wa-l-ʿAdl* (vol. V; Cairo, 1958), p. 144.

[92] See Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī*, pp. 93-94.

[93] See Fück, "Some Hitherto Unpublished Texts," pp. 57-58.

[94] See Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, pp. 169-187 (French); 59-83 (Arabic).

[95] See the discussion, edition, and English translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's work in Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity; Ibn Taymiyya's al-jawab al-sahih* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1984).

both Muslims and Christians engaged. While they are dialogical in character, and serious in their apologetical intent, they are didactic and logically rational in their presentation of material. Their authors do not, by and large, seem to have attempted to engage the reader's imagination; they do not seem to have intended to instill an attitude in the reader, nor to affect his mood, nor to prompt him to a course of action. Rather, with a show of rational demonstration, their purpose was to convince the reader of the credibility of Christian beliefs, and to make an appeal to the authority either of reason or of divine revelation, or both. The authors seem always to have been seriously earnest in their intentions. They wanted to convince the reader of the truth of the matter as they saw it.

The more popular genres, on the other hand, have about them an air of entertainment. They have serious points to make and important truths to communicate, but they also bespeak an attitude of superiority, almost in disguise, which they want to suggest to the reader. To wit, Christians really do have the true answers to religious questions, all appearances to the contrary not withstanding, and Muslims are deluded. The characters in the narratives of the popular genres of apologetics and polemics are types; they are usually not recognizable personally, but they suggest readily recognizable *personae* in the society; their names are most often symbolic, even when they are the names of real persons. In the narratives they are playing a role, not representling themselves in any real way. And the role is most often that of a Christian who cannot be bested in an argument about religion by a Muslim. Subliminally, the details of the narratives themselves suggest the superiority of Christianity to Islam. In the repartee of debate in the narrative the characters bring delight to the reader in their one-up-manship, and in the cleverness and acuity of their responses to provocative questions. If only it were so in real life! But what about real life? Do these texts reflect it in any significant way? Here we come to the historical questions.

Many modern scholars are sceptical about the idea that there is much of a historical *fundamentum in re* for the more popular genres of Christian apologetics in the early Islamic period. For example, G. R. Reinink, in an article considering the report of the conversation between Patriarch John III and the emir ʿUmayr ibn Saʿd, says the following:

> The oldest examples of Syriac apologetics in response to Islam are not the result of actual Muslim-Christian dialogue or disputation, but have to be considered as literary fictions

> written by Christians for the members of their own communities, with the purpose of warding off the increasing danger of apostasy. It is *au fond* "reactive" literature.[96]

Other scholars have registered similar judgments about the historicity of the encounters between Muslims and Christians which the more popular apologetic works produced by Christians in the early Islamic period seem to report. At the very most, the more sceptical commentators are prepared only to concede that in some instances there may have been encounters between the Christian spokesman and the Muslim official named in a given text, but that later writers, mostly anonymous, have simply used these well-known occasions as settings for their literary exercises in religious apologetics and polemics. What leads scholars to this judgment are a number of factors, chief among them being two considerations: most accounts are written by unnamed writers long after the events they claim to narrate; and most of them deal with the prophet Muḥammad, the Qur'ān, and Islam in such a negative and openly polemical way that it hardly seems possible that such statements could ever have been uttered in an emir's *majlis*, or in any other public forum. It is further remarkable that such negative texts in Arabic have circulated at all, let alone seemingly so prolifically, over so many centuries within the world of Islam. It all seems so unlikely to modern scholars, given their ideas about what medieval Muslim authorities would or would not tolerate. Moreover, there is scarcely any mention of any of these events in Islamic sources. Nevertheless, when all is said and done, we do have these texts and we must come to some understanding about their historical verisimilitude, or lack thereof.

In this connection it may serve the historian well to consider the role of the institution of the *majlis al-munāẓarah* in Islamic, Arabic society, as a setting for free discussion about religion, among many other things.[97] One knows from many reports how popular such sessions were among numerous medieval Muslim scholars and officials. What is more, there are also reports about how some Muslims in those days were themselves shocked and offended when they attended such *majālis* for the first time. In this connection, one may cite an interesting passage from

[96] G. J. Reinink, "The Beginnings of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam," *OC* 77 (1993), p. 186.

[97] See the remarks of Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam; the Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), esp. pp. 58-60.

the biographical dictionary of the Spanish Arabs by the eleventh century author Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥumaydī (d. 1095). He tells the story of a certain Abū ʿUmar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṣaʿdī, who visited Baghdad at the end of the tenth century. While he was there, Abū ʿUmar twice visited the *majālis* of some famous Muslim *mutakallimūn*, but he vowed he would never attend them again. He is reported to have given the following account of his experience:

> At the first session I attended I saw a *majlis* which included every kind of group: *Sunnī* Muslims and heretics, and all kinds of infidels: Majūs, materialists, atheists, Jews and Christians. Each group had a leader who would speak on its doctrine and debate about it. Whenever a leader arrived, from whichever of the groups he was, the assembly rose up for him, standing on their feet until he would sit down, then they would take their seats when he sat. When the *majlis* was jammed with its participants, and they saw that no one else was expected, one of the infidels said, "You have all agreed to the debate, so the Muslims should not argue against us on the basis of their scripture, nor on the basis of the sayings of their prophet, since we put no credence in it, and do not acknowledge him. Let us dispute with one another only on the basis of arguments from reason, and what observation and deduction will support." Then they would say, "Agreed." Abū ʿUmar said, "When I heard that, I did not return to that *majlis*. Later someone told me there was to be another *majlis* for discussion, so I went to it and I found them involved in the same practice as their colleagues. So I stopped going to the *majālis* of the theologians, and I never went back.[98]

Hearing such a report as this one, the modern scholar would perhaps be well advised to be cautious in his judgments about what might or might not have been allowed in open debates in medieval times. These well known, even notorious, open debates provided the real-life *fundamentum in re* for many of the literary compositions of the popular, Christian apologies in Arabic and Syriac. Their fictional character, to be successful, would seem to have required at least the verisimilitude of a recognizable social behaviour of the time and place. In such a way an author could transmit in his narrative the signals his reader would need, suc-

[98] Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis* (ed. Muḥammad ibn Tāwīt aṭ-Ṭanjī; Cairo, 1953), pp. 101-102.

cessfully to imagine a situation not irrelevant to his own as a Christian in an Islamic society, who wanted to be reassured that while it was not widely recognized, he still might well be convinced that his own Christian religion really was the true one, and that it could be shown to be so, even in the idiom of, and within the social conventions of, the Arabic-speaking world of Islam.

### *V. The Portrait of Islam in Christian Apology*

The Christian apologetical texts in Syriac and Arabic from the early Islamic period reflect the fact that their authors had a detailed knowledge of Islam, of the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* literature, of the biography of the prophet, and of the history the caliphate. However, for the most part, the ways in which they used this information, to present a profile of Islam, its institutions and teachings, in a manner that made it particularly vulnerable to Christian polemic, was not true to what could be considered a fair view of Islam on its own terms. At its best Islam was presented in these texts as something on the way to the truth, or even as in some way fulfilling some biblical promises. For example, in the account of the monk Abraham's performance in the *majlis* of the Muslim emir in Jerusalem in the early ninth century, the unknown author says of the Qur'ān's claim that Muḥammad was the "seal of the prophets" (XXXIII *al-Aḥzāb* 40):

> He is not a prophet (God preserve you); he is only a
> king with whom God was pleased, by means of whom
> and in whom God fulfilled his promise to Abraham
> regarding Ishmael.[99]

Christians in the early Islamic period not infrequently spoke of Muḥammad as a king pleasing to God for having saved the Arabs from idolatry. The further idea voiced here, that in the person of Muḥammad and his mission God fulfilled a promise to Abraham in regard to Ishmael (Gen. 17:20) is singular. It shows a deeper sensitivity to Islamic religious claims. It sounds a theme which one does not hear again in so many words in Christian responses to Islam until the interreligious writings of Louis Massignon in the twentieth century![100]

Regarding Muḥammad, Patriarch Timothy I was perhaps the most generous of all the Christian apologists. In the Arabic account of his ses-

[99] Marcuzzo, *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade*, # 110.

[100] See Sidney H. Griffith, "Sharing the Faith of Abraham: the 'Credo' of Louis Massignon," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8 (1997), pp. 193-210.

sion in the *majlis* of the caliph al-Mahdī, the patriarch is made to declare:

> Muḥammad deserves the praise of all reasonable men because his walk was on the way of the prophets and of the lovers of God. Whereas the rest of the prophets taught about the oneness of God, Muḥammad also taught about it. So he too walked on the way of the prophets. Then, just as all the prophets moved people away from evil and sin, and drew them to what is right and virtuous, so also did Muḥammad move the sons of his community away from evil and draw them to what is right and virtuous. Therefore, he too walked on the way of the prophets.[101]

As for the Qur'ān, again we may quote from the account of Patriarch Timothy's encounter with the caliph. This time we quote from the presumably original, Syriac text, where we find the following statement:

> Our King said to me: "Do you not believe that our Book was given by God?" And I replied to him: "It is not my business to decide whether it is from God or not. But I will say something of which your majesty is well aware, and that is all the words of God found in the Torah and in the Prophets, and those of them found in the Gospel and in the writings of the Apostles, have been confirmed by signs and miracles; as to the words of your Book, they have not been corroborated by a single sign or miracle. ... Since signs and miracles are proofs of the will of God, the conclusion drawn from their absence in your Book is well known to your Majesty."[102]

So we see that even the friendliest of Christian apologists who lived in the world of Islam in the early Islamic period stopped well short of accepting Muḥammad as a prophet, in any canonical sense, and of accepting the Qur'ān as a book of divine revelation. Nevertheless, the portrait of Islam as it is found in the writings of the apologists in this milieu is recognizably true to the reality, albeit somewhat out of focus from an Islamic perspective. And the apologetical works themselves are obviously products of the Islamic world; they could not be confused

[101] Robet Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdī (IIe/VIIIe siècle), *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977), p. 150 [Arabic].

[102] A. Mingana, "Timothy's Apology for Christianity," *Woodbrooke Studies* 2 (1928), pp. 36-37.

with Christian texts produced in any other cultural milieu of the early medieval period.

*VI. Apology and Christian Theology in Arabic*

It is almost a truism to say that all theology is apologetic. And the success of apology is generally measured by the degree to which it manages successfully to speak the language of the milieu in which it is produced. This language in turn shapes to some extent the very theology the apology articulates and defends. In this way, in new intellectual contexts, a certain development in Christian doctrine has historically taken place. It happened in the Arabic-speaking world of Islam. No where else have Christian doctrines been presented in terms reminiscent of the Qur'ān and its interpretation, nor has Christian discourse been shaped to such an extent by the presuppositions of Islamic prophetology. Nevertheless this theological and apologetical expression of the Christian faith was just one part of the massive effort of Christians living in the world of Islam to inculturate their communities into the larger way of life of what has been called the Islamic commonwealth. The larger enterprise was the translation movement that began in early Abbasid times and lasted until the thirteenth century. During this time Near Eastern Christians literally translated their whole heritage, patristic, theological, scriptural, and liturgical, from Greek, Syriac, and Coptic into Arabic.[103] Even in this enterprise they took on the dress of Islamic culture because the very religious terms of Arabic, which they perforce had to use, inevitably retained the flavor of their first usage in the Islamic religious lexicon.

The net effect of the successful inculturation of Near Eastern Christianity into the world of Islam has been a certain estrangement from the churches of the west. This phenomenon began already in the ninth century, and was complete by the end of the eleventh century, when the Crusaders from western Christendom failed even to recognize much brotherhood of faith with the eastern Christians they encountered, and almost no common sense of religious identity. This situation is characteristic of the medieval period, and its beginning in the ninth century might be taken definitively to mark the boundary between the world of Late Antiquity and the the Middle Ages. The Apologists had their role to play in bringing about this consequence, and the development in Christ-

[103] In this connection see Sidney H. Griffith, "Arab Christian Culture in the Early Abbasid Period," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*, 1. n. 2 (1999), 25-44.

ian doctrine which their work helped to achieve stands as the sign of it. In the end, the Christian response to the call of the minaret, as it was articulated by churchmen living in the world of Islam, was largely unintelligible in the west.

# EXPLANATIONS OF THE INCARNATION IN EARLY 'ABBASID ISLAM

DAVID THOMAS

One of the best known among the Arab Christians from the early centuries of 'Abbasid Islam was the Nestorian Patriarch of Baghdad Timothy I, who was consecrated in 163/780 and continued in office until the end of his life in 207/823. His patriarchate covered one of the most intensely active periods in the history of Christian-Muslim relations, and coincided with the reigns of the most illustrious 'Abbasid caliphs, al-Mahdi (158/775-169/785), Harun al-Rashid (170/786-193/809) and al-Ma'mun (198/813-218/833) as well as with the leading Christian and Muslim theologians whom we shall discuss in this essay. His well-known dialogue with the first of these rulers, al-Mahdi, is among the fullest accounts from this period of meetings between Christians and Muslims, and of the topics they discussed.[1]

Not long before this debate was held, Timothy wrote to his friend the priest Sarjis to tell him of another exchange in which he had recently taken part.[2] He relates that as he was in the entrance way to the royal court he was approached by a person "who was well instructed in the thought of Aristotle",[3] and a discussion about religious issues ensued. Not surprisingly for a discussion between a Christian and a Muslim, this centred on the nature of God and the Incarnation of the divine Word.

Among the issues which the Muslim Aristotelian raises on the Incarnation is one which gives an eloquent indication of the contemporary state of relations between the two faiths. It connects the doctrine with the other important issue over which there was active disagreement, the doctrine of the Trinity. The Muslim asks:

> If the three hypostases are infinite and not divided in any way, as you say, how was it possible for one of them to take flesh and become incarnate,

[1] See A. Mingana, "The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi, Woodbrooke Studies 3", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 12 (1928), 137-298.

[2] Timothy's Letter No. 40, ed. (Syriac) and trans. (French) H. P. Cheikho, *Dialectique du langage sur Dieu, Lettre de Timothée I (728-823) à Serge*, Rome 1983.

[3] *Ibid.*, 187f. (French).

> while the others did not? Either the Incarnation was of all three, or undoubtedly of none of them.[4]

This is a deceptively subtle point. Beneath its surface argument that the hypostases must all have become incarnate if any one of them did, lies the even more serious difficulty that either the three effectively act as a unity or they each act independently. Hence any answer must choose between reducing God to an undifferentiated singularity, as he is perceived in Muslim teaching, or multiplying him into three distinct divinities, and conceding the Qur'anic accusation levelled in Q 4.171, 5.73 and 5.116 that in actuality this is the Christian belief.

In his reply Timothy shows some unease. He first protests that it is inappropriate to inquire into God is this way, irritably retorting, "Why do you always keep on coming back to the same thing, like a circle which revolves around itself?" And his substantive response takes the form of metaphors, which both reveal the true difference between himself and his interlocutor and disclose his own unease at having to discuss this matter. He suggests that in the same way that the sun's light and heat are united in the air through which they pass, though of these three only the light is visible to the eye, and in the same way that the soul, the spirit and speech of a human being are one, though of these only speech is expressed through the voice, so the three hypostases remain united, and only the Word became incarnate:

> God, who is in everything and above everything, employed the one man alone as a mediator.[5]

This use of metaphors, elegant though they are, implies that Timothy may not have had a more straightforward reply to hand. And this in turn suggests that the question was not part of the debate about the Incarnation or the Trinity to which he was accustomed, and so rather than present a rational argument he was forced to rely on imagery. Even more revealingly, this Muslim question and the Christian answer show the different theological presuppositions of the two participants. For Timothy the incarnate Word is an expression of the entire Godhead, and his metaphorical explanations go some way in showing that the one triune God is at work in and through the human Jesus, which is why he can call this individual a mediator between God and humankind. He has no notion in his mind about a single member of the Godhead separating off

[4] *Ibid.*, 263, para. 275 (French).
[5] *Ibid.*, 263-5, paras. 276-9 (French).

and uniting with the human; the truth that the whole Godhead was involved in the Incarnation seems so obvious to him that he maybe underestimates the importance of emphasising it fully in his picturesque reply. The Muslim, on the other hand, perceives this doctrine as depicting a number of discrete entities within the Godhead, each of them identifiable by name and hence subsistent separately from one another. And if the doctrine states that the Word or Son alone is implicated in the Incarnation, then it logically follows that there must be division within the Godhead, the only alternative being that if there was no separation all three Persons must have been involved. This is the opposition between Muslim realism and Nestorian Christian nominalism.

Whether or not this Aristotelian opponent was a real person,[6] the question with which he is credited in this dialogue was certainly known widely at the time in which the exchange is supposed to have taken place. In Timothy's more famous debate with al-Mahdi, which was held in 165/781, soon after this meeting in the entrance way to the court,[7] the Caliph asks him in very similar terms:

> If the Persons are not separated by remoteness and nearness,... the Father, therefore, and the Spirit also clothed themselves with the human body, together with the Son; if the Father and Spirit did not put on a human body with the Son, how is it that they are not separated by distance and space?

And Timothy replies in the same way as to the Aristotelian, employing metaphors with very similar themes.[8] Further, the question appears in the series on the Incarnation in another Nestorian work, the *Kitab al-masa'il wa-al-ajwiba*[9] of 'Ammar al-Basri, who was quite probably a contemporary of Timothy,[10] where a presumably fictional Muslim interrogator asks quite simply:

> If the Son became incarnate, *tajassada*, without the Father or the Spirit, why could not the Father and Spirit have become incarnate without the Son?[11]

[6] *Ibid.*, 58f.; Cheikho suggests that Timothy may have invented this interlocutor in order to make the debate appeal to Muslims as well as Christians.

[7] See Mingana, "Apology", 147, 220 nn. 2 and 3; H. Putman, *L'Église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, Beirut 1975, 184f.

[8] Mingana, "Apology", 162f.

[9] M. Hayek, *'Ammar al-Basri, apologie et controverses*, Beirut 1977.

[10] See Hayek, *'Ammar*, 19; S. Griffith, "'Ammar al-Basri's *Kitab al-Burhan*: Christian *Kalam* in the First Abbasid Century", *Le Muséon* 96 (1983), 147f.

[11] Hayek, *'Ammar*, 205f., Part Four, question 16. It is likely that the preceding question, which is incomplete, was also on the same point.

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[11] Hayek, *'Ammar*, 205f., Part Four, question 16. It is likely that the preceding question, which is incomplete, was also on the same point.

Again, the Jacobite Habib Ibn Khidma Abu Ra'ita, who was also active from the early third/ninth century,[12] addresses it in some detail at the beginning of his *Letter on the Incarnation*, where an opponent raises the problem of how only one hypostasis rather than all three became incarnate.[13]

The question is explored most fully by the Muslim polemicist Abu 'Isa Muhammad b. Harun al-Warraq, who was probably a slightly younger contemporary of these Christians.[14] Like Abu Ra'ita, he addresses it at the point in his *Kitab al-radd 'ala al-firaq al-thalath min al-Nasara* where he begins to attack the Incarnation,[15] and his objections correspond closely to those mentioned in the Christian works, though they are understandably expressed with more force. Abu 'Isa begins by arguing that if the uniting, *ittihad*, of the Word and human was an action performed by all three hypostases together then it is difficult to understand why only the Word alone was implicated in it; conversely, if it was an action performed by the Word alone, the other two hypostases might also have performed their own independent acts of uniting. He goes on to show that if the Word alone was involved in the action of uniting it must possess some quality that the other hypostases do not, and he concludes by exposing the complications that arise in this divine action from the differing Melkite, Jacobite and Nestorian interpretations of the doctrine of the Trinity.[16]

Abu 'Isa's treatment of the question is a characteristically impressive demolition of the Christian position, though his success rests entirely upon the logical presupposition he shares with Timothy's Aristotelian opponent, that the divine substance and hypostases are distinct entities which are capable of being distinguished from one another, and are each able to act alone. His inferential arguments provide the clearest example of the interpretation assumed by Muslim thinkers at this time of how the Incarnation took place.

[12] See S. Griffith, "Habib ibn Hidmah Abu Ra'itah, a Christian *mutakallim* of the First Abbasid Century", *OC* 64 (1980), [161-201], 164f.

[13] G. Graf, *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Habib Ibn Hidma Abu Ra'ita* (CSCO 130 [text], 131 [German trans.]), Louvain 1951, text 27-30, paras. 1-6.

[14] See D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, Cambridge 1992, 17f., where it is argued that he died sometime around 250/864.

[15] E. Platti, *Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, Yahya Ibn 'Adi, de l'Incarnation* (CSCO 490 [text], 491 [French trans.]), Louvain 1987. This contains Yahya Ibn 'Adi's response to the second part of Abu 'Isa's *Radd*, where the text of his refutation is preserved in a series of long quotations.

[16] *Ibid.*, text 3-15, paras. 1-10.

A comparison of the slightly different formulations of this question and the answers attempted by each of these theologians might give revealing insights into the close relationship between some or maybe all of them.[17] But what is important for the purpose of this essay is to note that the question which Timothy I and 'Ammar attempt to answer, and to which Abu Ra'ita gives his main attention, must have had a Muslim origin. The whole idea of the hypostases acting as three individuals in concert to effect an action for one of them is wholly foreign to Christian concepts of the Trinity, as the Christian authors attempt to stress. It fits much more easily into a Muslim context, where following the Qur'an the Persons of the Trinity are construed as three individuals, and the possibility of their being distinct with separate activities can be entertained. Further, the fact that all three Christian authors we have mentioned give it some serious consideration, despite not always concealing their impatience with it, suggests that they were becoming aware of and having to adjust to a new situation in theological discourse. This was one in which Muslims participated fully in exchanges about Christian doctrines, and raised questions and objections that were difficult to ignore and could sometimes, as here, determine the direction of debate.

The period in which this question about the participation of God as Trinity in the Incarnation was being discussed in this form was one of considerable cultural adjustment for many of the Christian populations who lived under Muslim rule. At this time, which can roughly be demarcated as the three or so decades before and after the beginning of the third/ninth century, the first sustained expositions of Christian doctrines in Arabic appeared, at the hands of some of the scholars mentioned above and their contemporaries.[18] The rapid change from Syriac and

[17] For example there is the similarity between Timothy and Abu Ra'ita in the metaphors they employ, and between Abu Ra'ita and Abu 'Isa al-Warraq in the details they discuss.

The question continued to be popular in later years. In a summary of arguments from the late third/ninth century Mu'tazilite Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 303/915-6), given by 'Abd al-Jabbar in *Al-mughni*, vol. V, ed. M. Khudayri, Cairo 1958, 141.1f., it appears as follows: "He [Abu 'Ali] forced them to say that uniting was possible for the other two hypostases as it was for the hypostasis of the Word, because their substance was one, and what was possible for part of it was possible for the rest." It also appears in a more garbled form in al-Maturidi's (d. 333/944) attack on Christianity, see D. Thomas, "Abu Mansur al-Maturidi on the Divinity of Jesus Christ", *Islamochristiana* 23 (1997) [43-64], 50.2-12; and in the fourth/tenth century theologians Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, *Kitab al-tamhid*, ed. R. J. McCarthy, Beirut 1957, 93.14-18, and 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Mughni*, vol. V, 114.6-9.

[18] The earliest known exposition of Christian doctrine in Arabic is the anonymous

Greek — it is striking that John of Damascus fifty years before apparently felt no compulsion to come to grips with Arabic in order to set out his doctrines — suggests that there were pressures upon them from both outside and inside the Christian communities to which they belonged.

Outside pressures, of which our opening question is a vivid illustration, would have arisen from the increasing awareness among Muslims of the nuances in Christian doctrines, including confessional variations, and their consequent ability to make searching analyses and ask disquieting questions.[19] In addition, the development in Muslim theological thinking of a distinctive methodology and argumentative approach would have compelled Christians to take heed and attempt to respond by expressing their own beliefs according to the new forms of discourse. 'Ammar al-Basri's adoption of principles from current *kalam* explanations in order to portray the Trinity,[20] and Theodore Abu Qurra's borrowing of Qur'an teachings that were particularly sensitive at this time in order to justify the Incarnation,[21] are just two examples of Christians recognising this situation. Christian theologians who sought to defend their doctrines were, willingly or not, drawn into the circles of Muslim theology, where they came to observe the same codes of procedure and to employ the same terminology as the Muslim *mutakallimun*, who in turn seem to have been sufficiently familiar with their explanations to rebut them according to commonly recognised methods.[22]

But there must also have been growing internal pressures upon Christian theologians which urged them to express their ideas in Arabic. On the one hand, increasing segments of the Christian population must by

treatise which has been called by its first editor *Fi tathlith Allah al-wahid*. It has been dated to the middle of the second/eighth century; see S. K. Samir, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (c.750)", in S. K. Samir and J. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, Leiden 1994, 61-4; also S. Griffith, "The View of Islam from the Monasteries of Palestine", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (1996), 11 and n. 20.

[19] See, for example, the summaries of the main Christian doctrines given at this time by al-Qasim b. Ibrahim al-Hasani, in I. di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello zaydita al-Qasim b. Ibrahim", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 9 (1921-2), 314.23-318.8; and by Abu 'Isa al-Warraq in Thomas, *Polemic*, 66-77, paras. 1-15.

[20] On this see S. Griffith, "The Concept of *al-Uqnum* in 'Ammar al-Basri's Apology for the Doctrine of the Trinity", in K. Samir (ed.), *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, Rome 1982, 169-91.

[21] See the discussion about this below.

[22] This is suggested by the title of the Mu'tazilite Abu al-Hudhayl al-'Allaf's lost work, *Kitab 'ala 'Ammar al-Nasrani fi al-radd 'ala al-Nasara*, and by 'Isa Ibn Subayh al-Murdar's lost *Kitab 'ala Abi Qurra al-Nasrani*, on which see Griffith, "Concept of *al-Uqnum*", 170f. (the missing reference at this point to the latter work appears in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist*, ed. M. Rida-Tajaddud, Tehran 1971, 207.6).

this time have come to regard Arabic as a practical advantage, and even a fashionable acquisition if they wished to succeed in Muslim society. Abu 'Uthman al-Jahiz at this time tells of Christians who used Muslim names in order to pass themselves off as persons of consequence,[23] which they would hardly have done if they did not normally converse in Arabic. And even among Christian theologians themselves, Arabic was at least as popular as any other language: Abu Ra'ita composed four tracts against fellow Christian Melkites in Arabic,[24] and Theodore Abu Qurra wrote a confession of faith,[25] which he may have delivered at his consecration as bishop,[26] in Arabic. On the other hand, Christian theologians who moved among Muslim intellectuals, engaged in similar theological and scripture-based pursuits, and participated with them in discussions and explorations in their common first language, would presumably have naturally come to adopt the methods and techniques they encountered as their own.

The further clarification of this latter point takes us into our main discussion. Christian theologians in the early 'Abbasid period, like their counterparts at any other time, were engaged in the activity of explaining their beliefs to Muslims and also to themselves in the most appropriate language and thought-forms. Thus the doctrinal articulations they have left bear features of both apologetic, intended to present and defend the doctrines for the sake of opponents, and innovation, the product of translating the authoritative legacy of faith into contemporary contexts. The two features are closely bound together. In order to explore them and show how the attempt is made to give the doctrine of the Incarnation new shape while preserving its essential character, we shall discuss defences of the Incarnation presented by the three leading theologians to whom we have referred above, Theodore Abu Qurra, 'Ammar al-Basri and Habib b. Khidma Abu Ra'ita, who belonged respectively to the Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites. Their works constitute the major body of Arabic Christian writings which have survived from this time. In order to assess the characteristics of the Muslim background against which they wrote, we shall also examine the refutation of the Incarnation

[23] Al-Jahiz, "Al-radd 'ala al-Nasara", in J. Finkel (ed.), *Thalath rasa'il li-Abi 'Uthman ... al-Jahiz*, Cairo 1926, 18.9f.

[24] Graf, *Schriften*, epistles III, IV and VII; see also Griffith, "Abu Ra'ita", 166f.

[25] I. Dick, "Deux écrits inédits de Theodore Abuqarra", *Le Muséon* 72 (1959) [53-67], 56-9 text, 60-2 French.

[26] I. Dick, *Theodore Abuqarra. Traité de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie religion*, (Patrimoine arabe chrétien 3), Jounieh and Rome 1982, 64/XVI.

of the independent Shi'ite Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, which is the fullest treatment of the doctrine by a Muslim from the whole of the early Islamic period.

Beginning with the defence of the Incarnation among Arab Christian theologians, we have seen in the example above of the frequently discussed problem of the relationship between the Trinity and the act of Incarnation how a Muslim preoccupation influences the nature of Christian discourse. Indeed, in the case of Abu Ra'ita, where the question is discussed as the first major point in his examination of the doctrine as a whole, it actually influences the shape of the entire discussion. The Muslim concern is with the question of how God is involved in the event of the Incarnation and the human life of Jesus. For Muslims themselves, of course, this is entirely unacceptable on both explicitly Qur'anic and logical grounds, and starting from this position they question how God can be implicated as participant,[27] and further how only one part of the Trinitarian God, one hypostasis, can be involved.[28]

In effect, this preoccupation, as it is directed towards Christian claims that God was in Christ, moves the emphasis of the doctrine from the manner in which the divine and human characters came together in the one person of the Messiah to the possibility that this could have happened at all. In consequence, Christians are challenged to find arguments to justify the very basis of their belief rather than the form in which they express it.

One of the most innovative responses to this challenge is contained in a brief work of Theodore Abu Qurra (c. -d. 215/830), who was the Melkite Bishop of Harran in the early years of the third/ninth century, and one of the Christian apologists who was best known to contemporary Muslim intellectuals.[29] In this short tract, his apologetic approach is to base his explanation of the Incarnation on concepts that Muslims themselves would feel obliged to acknowledge, and so require them to accept his point at the risk of rejecting their own teaching.

[27] The simpler form of the question is evident in the pseudonymous Letter of the Caliph 'Umar to the Emperor Leo III; see D. Sourdel, "Un pamphlet anonyme d'époque 'Abbaside contre les Chrétiens", *Revue des Études Islamiques* 34 (1996) [1-33], 27.6-13, where the Muslim asks: Who governed the universe when God descended, *nazala*, and was born?

[28] Thomas, "Abu Mansur al-Maturidi", 50ff., section 2.

[29] See S. Griffith, "Reflections on the Biography of Theodore Abu Qurrah", PdO 18 (1993), 143-70.

The tract[30] begins with an unidentified opponent asking, even if human sins could only be forgiven by the divine Son bearing our sufferings himself, how the Son could nevertheless have willed to be enclosed by a body.[31] Whoever this opponent was, and whether or not he was real, his question moves the debate away from the issue of redemption, about which his words clearly show he is well informed, to the issue of God becoming limited. In one statement he shifts the emphasis onto the typically Muslim preoccupation with the charateristics of God.

Theodore's response is to demonstrate that God is not enclosed or restricted in this body, and he does so by the ingenious device of comparing God's presence in the human body with his presence on the heavenly throne.

> [God] made for himself a throne on which to sit in the heavens from the time that he first created [beings, *khalaqahum*]. This was not because of his need of a throne on which to sit, but because of their need to be aware of the place of his abode, so that they could worship him in it and he could instruct them about his affairs from it.[32]

He goes on to argue that God's being seated on the throne does not preclude him from being in all places, but that it is expressly a means by which creatures can direct themselves towards him. In the same way the Son, who is not bounded or in need of being located in any place, became located in the body which he took from Mary for the sake of human salvation.

Theodore does not refer to the Qur'an in this answer, and in fact takes his illustrative references from the Old Testament, but he touches on a very sensitive issue for contemporary Muslims. At this time there was lively debate over the exact meaning of references to God establishing himself on the throne in such verses as Q 10.3, 13.2 and 20.5, with some saying that it cannot be taken literally and others that its actuality must not be questioned though its modality should not be inquired into.[33] But all Muslims had to accept this teaching in one form or other and acknowledge that God had a particular relationship with the heavenly throne. Theodore is evidently tapping into this debate and using it as a

[30] C. Bacha, *Les oeuvres arabes de Théodore Aboucara*, Beirut 1904, 180-6; trans. (German) by G. Graf, *Die arabischen Schriften des Theodor Abu Qurra*, Paderborn 1910, 178-84.

[31] Bacha, *Oeuvres*, 180.14-19.

[32] *Ibid.*, 181.5-7.

[33] See e.g. Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, *Kitab maqalat al-Islamiyyin*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul 1930, 157.8f. Abu Ra'ita also employs this comparison; see Graf, *Schriften*, 45.14ff.

shorthand means of explaining that the Incarnation is about relationship rather than restriction.

He goes on to meet the objections that the throne is wide while the body of the human was narrow, which he answers by saying that anything in heaven or the earth is too narrow to accommodate God;[34] and that the throne is pure while the body of a human being cannot compare, which he answers by arguing that humanity is the most noble of God's creatures and that the Messiah's body was without sin, and also that there are many Biblical precedents for God being similarly located, in the burning bush, the pillar of cloud and the ark of the covenant.[35] His arguments all make the simple point that there is no logical objection to the Incarnation, while there is impressive scriptural support.

The whole thrust of this short work of Theodore Abu Qurra is to defend the possibility of the Incarnation. Issues such as its purpose and the manner in which it occurred are ruled out as irrelevant, even though both the opponent and Theodore himself are obviously fully aware of them. The debate has moved onto the opponent's preoccupation with the total distinction between God and the human, and Theodore is forced to argue in these terms in order to stand any chance of sustaining his case.

As a result of this redirecting of emphasis, the Christological descriptions in the tract are rather attenuated and lacking in explanation. Theodore's main concern, in response to the question at the opening, is to show that the divine Son is not restricted by the human body, but he is not then able to explain how redemption is part of the purpose of the Incarnation. He does argue at one point that the human body became the means by which the Son might reveal his actions and words to humankind in a way that was advantageous for them, and through which they might be able to relate to him,[36] seeming to suggest that the purpose of the Incarnation was reassurance and guidance for lost humanity, but he says nothing about the divine and human becoming one individual. While his statement is not incompatible with the Chalcedonian definition of the Incarnation, which holds that in the one person the two natures remained distinct, it places so much emphasis on the fact of the distinction between them that it appears to bring the reality of the uniting into question.

[34] Bacha, *Oeuvres*, 183.7-11.

[35] *Ibid.*, 183.12-186.10.

[36] *Ibid.*, 180.19-181.4, and see Thomas, *Polemic*, 70.5-7, where Abu 'Isa al-Warraq reports two unidentified explanations of the Incarnation which involve exactly this logic.

A little later Theodore again explains the Incarnation in even more revealing terms:

> We recognise that the eternal Son is in every place without limit, is not restricted by anything and has no need to be located in any place; but that in his compassion for the need in us humans of salvation, the blessed one became located in the body which he took from Mary the pure virgin, and exposed it to the sufferings and pain which by its being affected made it a ransom for us from the curse of the law. For this reason, he was located in it through his mercy, and this body became for us the equivalent of the throne in heaven.[37]

He leaves unexplored the precise manner in which this 'locating', *hulul*, took place, and takes great care to confine the sufferings experienced by the Messiah to the human body alone: the Son 'exposed it to the sufferings and pain', *wa-'arradahu ila al-alam wa-al-awja'*. So he is able to avoid any accusation that the divine Son is implicated in the confinement and sufferings of the human body, as his opponent requires, and presumably in his own mind he keeps faith with the Creed of Chalcedon, in which the divine and human activities of the Messiah are attributed separately to the two natures.[38] But his reticence and apparent urgency to prove that the Incarnation does not imply confinement of the divinity creates the impression that only the human nature suffered and died. Muslim polemicists pounced on descriptions such as this, and in the hands of such an implacable opponent as Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, for example, it was reduced to the argument that if the divine nature did not suffer and die then the Messiah, who was both human and divine, must have ceased to exist by this point.[39]

This short work of this leading Arab Christian theologian can be seen to contain clear indications of how pressure from opponents was causing tension between traditional portrayals of the Incarnation and the demand for fresh explanations. In the process new arguments had to be coined, and unforeseen implications surfaced at the centre of debate.

Connected with this problem of defending the possibility that the uncircumscribed and infinite Creator could become implicated in the experiences of a limited, created individual, Theodore elsewhere in his works addresses the issue of whether God can have a Son. Stated briefly, in one tract written against an unidentified "opponent of the Son", *jahid*

[37] Bacha, *Oeuvres*, 182.15-20.

[38] See pp. 184.18-185.4 of this tract for a brief reference to these distinct qualities and activities.

[39] Platti, *Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, Yahya Ibn 'Adi* text, 71-3, paras. 63-5.

*li-al-ibn*,[40] he argues that if God could not beget a Son he would be incapable of doing something which humans can, and that if he can beget a Son this Son must be eternal with him because his willing is identical with the act itself of begetting.[41] In another he argues that God must in principle have mastery, *ri'asa*, and that since this quality requires an object and any created object is inferior (since it entails a necessary relationship between the two), this object of his mastery must be an equal who is of his own nature and hence a Son.[42]

As Theodore discusses them, these arguments are part of the Christian defence of the Trinity, though this characteristic is only apparent since he has translated original questions that would have arisen from the Qur'anic censure of God taking a human son into his own framework, in which the relationship exists within the Godhead.[43] Unlike his discussion in the tract on God becoming incarnate, here he moves the issue onto a central Christian focus, though his method is similar in that he appeals to principles of power, sovereignty and mastery in God on which both Christians and Muslims would agree.[44]

Considering these three tracts together, we glimpse an important characteristic of the whole theological debate between Christians and Muslims at this time. On the one level, the rhetoric of Theodore's arguments is directed towards setting out the truths of his own faith in terms that will be comprehensible and, more importantly, convincing to his opponents. This is where we find changes in the form in which the doctrines under discussion are presented. But on a deeper level, the essence of the truths themselves remains unaffected. For in all three tracts the assertion that relationship is a necessary characteristic of God, whether this is with a human individual or within his own being, is not brought into the discussion. So, while the varied forms of expression encounter challenge and maybe undergo tortuous adjustment, the truths that lie at the heart of these forms are not addressed. The Muslim preoccupation with the distinctiveness of God only engages with an aspect of the Christian doctrine as a whole.

In the light of this observation, it is significant that these two Trinitarian tracts by Theodore caused more reaction from Muslims in the

[40] Bacha, *Oeuvres*, 80.13.

[41] *Ibid.*, 75-82; Graf, *Abu Qurra*, 160-8.

[42] Bacha, *Oeuvres*, 91-104; Graf, *Abu Qurra*, 184-98.

[43] The arguments of the two tracts reappear in Theodore's *Maymar fi wujud al-khaliq wa-al-din al-qawim*, ed. Dick, *Traité de l'existence du Créateur*, 224-8.

[44] See e.g. al-Qasim b. Ibrahim, *Radd 'ala al-Nasara*, 305.13-21, employing the same principle to prove precisely the opposite point that God cannot be in a relationship.

years immediately following than any other identifiable Christian arguments. Abu 'Isa al-Warraq took issue with the claim, which he attributes to an unnamed Christian, that if God is superior he must be able to beget a Son,[45] while later in the third/ninth century al-Qasim al-Balkhi (d. 319/931) mockingly argued that the analogy upon which this argument rests is invalid, for if God must be attributed a Son if he is to be perfect, then on the basis of the same analogy with humans he must have two eyes and hands as well.[46] And the argument evidently attained some notoriety among Muslims, since in the latter fourth/tenth century 'Abd al-Jabbar not only knew Theodore by name, calling him Qurra al-Malki, but also knew his argument about God's mastery, though he found it rather shallow.[47] The reason why these *mutakallimun* centred on these particular Christian arguments was that they saw there threats to their own doctrine of the strict oneness of God, for whom relationships of the kind suggested in them were out of the question. The intention behind the doctrine did not appear to interest them.

But this typifies the polemical situation in which Christians attempted to maintain and explain the doctrine of the Incarnation. They were often forced onto ground which was at the periphery of their main doctrinal concerns, as the Islamic expression of faith was borne in upon their beliefs. Hence the delicate issue of the precise mode in which Christ could be understood as both human and divine, how his life and death were a decisive moment in history, and other questions that formed the staple of intra-Christian debate, were necessarily displaced by the questions of whether God could be related to another being, or whether the divine could come into contact with the human, as we have seen. What remains difficult to resolve is how deeply the traditional Christian appreciations of the Incarnation were affected by these challenges. For if the reason for the significance of the life and death of Christ were marginalised, Christians had little cause to reassess them or seek to formulate them afresh.

This is a rather different issue from that of the Trinity. It can be shown with precision that Christian theologians at this time, some of whom we have mentioned above, were employing concepts from the debate about God and his attributes currently being conducted within

[45] Thomas, *Polemic*, 132.11-13.

[46] Quoted from his *Kitab awa'il al-adilla fi usul al-din* by 'Isa b. Ishaq Ibn Zur'a, in P. Sbath, *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologétiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens*, Cairo, 1929, 60.14-16.

[47] 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Mughni*, vol.V, 144.11-145.19.

Islam to re-express and defend their own doctrine of the Godhead, and they met with varying degrees of success.[48] But in this case they were furnished with concepts about the relationship between the essence, *dhat*, of God and his attributes, *sifat*, that at least appeared to be amenable to Arabic formulations about the divine substance, *jawhar*, and Persons, *aqanim*, of the Trinity. On the matter of the Incarnation, however, there was no underlying common issue.[49] Muslims were concerned with maintaining the distinctiveness of God, as we have seen, and so the main debate neither touched the doctrine in itself nor provided any readily available conceptual constructions, like those generated within the Muslim attributes debate, upon which to base an articulation.

If in these tracts Theodore Abu Qurra is challenged to prove the fundamental possibility of God becoming incarnate and having a Son, the Nestorian 'Ammar al-Basri gives a much fuller response in his *Kitab al-Burhan*, where he demonstrates the necessity of God appearing in the flesh, with explicit references to Muslim objections. This is one of the two works known from 'Ammar,[50] and its section on the Incarnation is one of the most forthright defences of the doctrine that has survived from the early Islamic period.[51]

In this presentation, the context of Muslim opposition is set from the outset by two objections which incorporate the Qur'anic denial that God could have taken a wife or a son (Q 72.3), and the assertion that he has neither begotten nor been begotten (Q 112.3). 'Ammar replies to the first that the divine relationship between Father and Son does not derive from an act, as in creatures, but is in God's essence and is not subject to change;[52] and to the second, following Theodore Abu Qurra, he answers that if God were not able to beget he would be inferior to creatures who can.[53] As with Theodore, his consideration of these fundamental issues shows his awareness both of the polemical context, and of the challenge before him to counter fundamental objections to the possibility of the Incarnation.

[48] See Griffith, "Concept of *al-Uqnum*", esp. 174-87; D. Thomas, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Islamic Era", in L. Ridgeon (ed.), *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, Richmond 2001, 78-98.

[49] See the similar remarks of S. Griffith, "Habib ibn Hidmah Abu Ra'itah", 191f.

[50] Edited in Hayek, *'Ammar*.

[51] It is admirably summarised in Griffith, "'Ammar al-Basri's *Kitab al-Burhan*", 172-7.

[52] See al-Qasim b. Ibrahim's argument against precisely this point in di Matteo, "Confutazione", 318.14-319.13.

[53] Hayek, *'Ammar*, 56-62.

He proceeds from this discussion to present four reasons why God might or should appear in human form. The first begins from the requirement that since humans are created without an innate knowledge of God, it has been necessary throughout history for God in his mercy and kindness to communicate the fact of his existence and his commands by means that they could understand. Thus he spoke to Adam, Noah and others as a human, *ka-al-insan*, to Moses from a bush, as Muslims agree, *kama yuqirru al-mukhalifun*, and from a cloud. And even Muslims will acknowledge that their Book mentions human qualities of God by which he can be understood, and that they are enjoined to direct their worship of him to the concrete form of his house, the Ka'ba. But if God has met the human need for a perceptible means of communication in such ways as these, anyone who is rational will accept that his appearance in a human form must be far superior.[54]

This first point contains an intricate combination of Christian beliefs and concessions to Muslim sensitivities. It tells the story of Biblical salvation history in the form of God's repeated calls to humankind, basing the whole progression upon his creation of humans as free and responsible, and his own characteristics of generosity and will for relationship. But it also repeatedly refers to teachings that Muslims themselves must accept, and very carefully refrains from giving any indication that these theophanies prejudice the distinctiveness of God. The closest 'Ammar comes to this is in his reference to God's appearing in a human form, *zuhur Allah li-al-nas fi bashar minhum*,[55] but he does not explain how God is in the human.

'Ammar's second reason complements this historical account with what we might call a psychological argument. Humankind have a desire to know, and engage in many forms of discovery. They want to know about God, and even Muslims agree that they will be satisfied on the day of resurrection when they will behold him. It is inconceivable that a generous God would not satisfy this desire, and so he revealed himself to them in a body perceptible to their senses, *al-tajalli lahum fi jasadin taqa'u 'alayhi hawassuhum*.[56]

'Ammar's third reason is based on God's justice. Since he has issued his commands and prohibitions, then he must in fairness make these clear in person and come in person to judge. It is impossible for him to be revealed in his own essence, so he has made a veil which both reveals

[54] *Ibid.*, 62-7.
[55] *Ibid.*, 67.3.
[56] *Ibid.*, 67f.

and conceals him. This is in the form of a human substance, *jawhar al-insan*, which is the most apt veil he could choose.[57]

His fourth reason is that since God has given humankind power in the world which is passing he should in his generosity also give them power in the world which is permanent. He has done this by himself becoming manifest in a man and so making human sovereignty a thing that will last.[58]

All four of these reasons are concerned with the possibility of God making himself known directly to humankind, and go even further in suggesting that if he is generous and benevolent this is a necessity. 'Ammar indicates by his repeated references to Muslims and their teachings as he presents his explanation that he has in mind potential objections from them, and as in the preliminary considerations he has dealt with previously his careful arguments show how he is responding to the pressure to prove not how the Incarnation took place but that it could have occurred at all.

In the rest of this exposition of the Incarnation 'Ammar elaborates upon themes introduced in these four reasons. He contends that God's purpose in appearing in human form was to call humankind to his ways. This was the culmination of his generous acts to them:

> I mean a man whom he formed from the Virgin Mary without matter from semen. He spoke to the world from him, addressed them through his tongue, he was friendly enough to be seen by them in him, and came close to them through him. When they were far away from him through the trickery of Satan over them, he gave them victory over their foe, and made them powerful over him. And, through the tongue of a body of one of them with which he was united, he called them to know him without any messenger, *rasul*, between him and them.[59]

The reference at the end of this passage is maybe the most significant in the whole of 'Ammar's presentation. Here he clearly rejects the Muslim doctrine that God communicates only through human messengers, in accordance with the logic of all his preceding arguments that because God is generous and desires relationship he communicates directly. And he implies that because God was present in Christ and spoke through him in his own voice, this utterance is superior to any that could involve transmission through intermediaries. Thus he presents a direct challenge to Islam by asserting that in comparison with this immediate presence of

[57] *Ibid.*, 68f.
[58] *Ibid.*, 69.
[59] *Ibid.*, 70f.

God any other claimed communication is inferior and by implication irrelevant.

However, despite this courageous rebuttal of Islamic claims, 'Ammar's portrayal of the divine action here harmonises closely with Muslim expectations. God himself is one who leads, guides and appeals, and the history of his communications with his creatures is remarkably close to the history of prophetic messengers promoted within Islam. The signal difference is that whereas the Qur'an gives warrant for a line of chosen messengers, 'Ammar identifies a line of oracles through a variety of human and non-human media.[60] As a culmination the Messiah is primarily a teaching voice, in whom the human is passive and emptied for the divine manifestation through him. Again, this is curiously close to Muslim teachings about the prophetic seizure of Muhammad and other messengers. And in consequence, the traditional Christian integrity of the Messiah as an individual becomes weakened and incomplete.

'Ammar by no means surrenders his Nestorian tradition in this presentation, but the major emphasis of defending the possibility of the Incarnation, and insisting that the communication of God through Christ is not so much unique in kind as the culmination of a series, betrays his acknowledgement of the polemical milieu within which he is writing. His direct and barely concealed references to Islamic teachings and beliefs underline this. In sum, his portrayal of the Incarnation in response to Muslim insistence shifts the centre of emphasis from the historical Messiah to the activity of God who uses the human body for a supreme demonstration of his generosity towards his creatures in instructing and appealing to them. The argument responds to the pressure of Islamic preoccupations, and comes to focus on the manner in which God is able to relate to the world while retaining his distinctiveness.

The third contemporary Christian theologian discussed here, the Jacobite Habib b. Khidma Abu Ra'ita who knew Theodore Abu Qurra,[61] also attempts to explain the Incarnation in his second letter, *Fi al-tajassud*, in circumstances very similar to those of 'Ammar al-Basri.[62] Again, the

[60] Views reported from some anonymous Muslims, *min al-mutakallimin*, of this period conform to the same principle, that God chooses the means to communicate which is best suited to a particular time and circumstance; al-Jahiz, *Radd*, 25.5-26.5.

[61] Graf, *Schriften* trans., I-II.

[62] There are many resemblances to the main points that follow in Abu Ra'ita's *Risala ... fi ithbat din al-Nasraniyya wa-ithbat al-thaluth al-muqaddas*, 131-59, on which see Griffith, "Habib ibn Hidmah Abu Ra'itah", 191-8.

context is established at the start, when a Muslim opponent, *mukhalifuna*, raises the issue we have mentioned above, of the involvement of the Godhead in an action that only affects one hypostasis.[63] And then in the following paragraphs Abu Ra'ita presents the Monophysite interpretation of the Incarnation as embodiment and indwelling, *sukun*, a more formidable challenge than that taken up by his Nestorian or even Chalcedonian co-religionists.

Abu Ra'ita begins his defence by trying to clarify precisely what he means by embodiment, *tajassud*, adducing a series of similes to show how one thing may become embodied in another without either of them changing their condition, *hal*. Thus, fire which cannot be seen or sensed because of the fineness of its substance becomes tangible, *tatajassama*, in a corporeal body such as a piece of wood or a wax candle, but the fire is still fire and the body is still a body. Similarly, the human soul becomes embodied in the physical body but the two remain body and soul.

> The same is the teaching about the Word, though surpassing this since it has neither breadth nor extent. It became embodied in a body endowed with a rational soul, in an embodiment which was real, lasting and necessary, without separation, transformation or change. It was still the Word and the body was still a body, although their coming together was not into two but into one embodied hypostasis, truly God and truly man, one not two.[64]

Here he sets out his doctrine with some precision, making the two important points that the divine Word and human body became one in reality, and that in the process neither of them was changed from its previous condition. He is evidently attempting at this initial juncture to demonstrate exactly what he means by the term *tajassud*, and also to say that such an occurrence is possible. The emphasis he places upon the fact that the divine Word does not undergo change shows how conscious he is of his Muslim opponent's preoccupation with this issue.

He goes on to explain that although the Word indwells the body, *sakana dhalika al-jasad*, it is not enclosed or limited by it, in the same way that light indwells the sun or the soul the body without being enclosed by them. And this indwelling is unlike God's dwelling in other things because the Word "was embodied in it and united with it, though in other things it is not embodied or united". This particular body is like other bodies in that it was created, but differs from them in being united, being honoured and given preference. It is like a firebrand which is lit up

[63] Graf, *Schriften* text, 27-30, paras. 1-6.
[64] *Ibid.*, 31f., para. 7.

by fire, for the two become united although neither the brand nor the fire have changed their natures.[65]

In these long and detailed explanations the central emphasis is upon the way in which the divine Word and human body could in reality become one, without the Word being affected in any way. Abu Ra'ita's particular concern for this second aspect of his argument shows how he is responding to Muslim sensitivities, which are typified in the objection:

> If the Word dwelt in the body as you describe, then the body surrounded it, and what is surrounded is limited, and what is limited is created, so then according to your claim God is created.[66]

And the result is that the Incarnation is characterised as something which may be physically possible, but is a somewhat arbitrary action in which the divine Word almost violates the human body by seizing it and then dwelling within and surrounding it.

Inevitably, the next point raised is about the reason why God became incarnate and a man. Abu Ra'ita explains that just as God made Adam and bestowed on him and his descendants his riches, so he became human to save them from the sins that had power over them. He could have forgiven them without becoming human, but he wanted to involve humankind in the action. This is because of his goodness and mercy, *salahuhu wa-rahmatuhu*.[67] Here, at the conclusion of the opening section of this second letter, we arrive at the true reason which underlies the whole of Abu Ra'ita's defence, and the origin of the Christian doctrine under scrutiny. God in his mercy willed to extend salvation to his creatures, and he chose to involve humankind in this action by himself becoming human. It is as though the argument has moved in a reverse order from the fact of the Incarnation and a defence of its possibility and manner, to the reason that made it historically necessary. Logically, in a treatise on the Incarnation the reverse order might be expected. But again we may detect the influence of the Muslim milieu and the pressure exerted by the context to explain how God could become involved intimately in a human body, without surrendering his divinity.

It will be seen that Abu Ra'ita has not abandoned the essential features of the Monophysite interpretation of the Incarnation, though it is evident that these have been pared down to a severely attenuated form.

[65] *Ibid.*, 32-5, paras. 8-11.
[66] *Ibid.*, 32.5-7.
[67] *Ibid.*, 35-7, para. 12.

So, just as he only discusses the reason why God willed to become human after giving justification for the occurrence itself, he does not examine the specific reason why the Incarnation took the form of indwelling. Consequently, a statement such as "reward and recompense are in accordance with the action [by humankind themselves] for reward, not in accordance with the action on their behalf by someone other than themselves",[68] which contains elements of an explanation as to why Christ had to be human in order to win a reward for humans, is left unexplored. As with the other Christian expositions examined above, this exposition and defence of the possibility of the Incarnation give a new emphasis to the formulation of the doctrine and threaten to transform it from a rational presentation of an act of grace, into one aspect of safeguarding the distinctiveness of God and his separation from all other beings.

It will be seen that Abu Ra'ita's exposition of the Incarnation shares similar features to those of Theodore Abu Qurra and 'Ammar al-Basri. In all three Christian theologians the prominent emphasis on preliminary questions attaching to the feasibility of the involvement of the eternal divinity in this event of human history, and the implication of the transcendent deity in creaturely experiences, is central. The actual mode of Incarnation, over which Christians differed among themselves, ceases to be a significant issue, and the different terms they employ, *tajassud, ta'annus, ittihad* and cognates, do not appear to be questioned or their different shades of meaning explained. The discussion becomes simplified to an examination of the one problem of how the divine becomes a body or human, or unites without abandoning its distinctiveness and entering into intimate involvement with the human body of the Messiah. As a result, the debate over the Incarnation in these Arab theologians tends towards being a formal exercise in defending the possibility of the event, and towards becoming an aspect of theodicy.

Such characteristics of the exposition of the Incarnation in Christian writings are also clearly discernible in Islamic works of the period. Among these, the relatively short yet extremely detailed and informed refutation of Christian beliefs by al-Qasim b. Ibrahim (d. 246/860) is entirely taken up with proofs that God could not have a Son and that Christian defences of this aberrant belief are flawed and unwarranted.[69]

[68] *Ibid.*, 36.18f.

[69] A full examination of this work and its place in Christian-Muslim disputes has not yet been attempted; see D. Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian

But it is the much more extensive refutation of the act of uniting, *al-ittihad*, in the *Radd 'ala al-thalath firaq min al-Nasara* of the third/ninth century Shi'ite Abu 'Isa al-Warraq that gives by far the fullest Muslim response, and shows unmistakably the main concerns that exerted pressure upon Christians at this time.

In its full form, Abu 'Isa's *Radd* comprises two long attacks on the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, as these are understood by the three major denominations of the Nestorians, Jacobites and Melkites, preceded by a detailed introductory exposition of Christian beliefs.[70] It is evident both in this introduction and in the main refutation of the Incarnation that Abu 'Isa's concern is with the issue we have seen reflected in the Christian works, the problems contained in the doctrine for the absolute transcendence and distinctiveness of God.

Looking first at the exposition of Christian beliefs in the Introduction, we find an elaborate account of the teachings of the three denominations on the following issues: the mode of uniting, whether this was between the divine Word and a human individual or the universal human; descriptive metaphors of the uniting; the origin of controversy over the nature of the Messiah; other disagreements over the divine and human elements within the Messiah; and whether his crucifixion and death affected the Messiah in both his human and divine natures.[71] These points all centre on the two focuses of the act of uniting itself, and the relationship between the human and divine natures in the person of the Messiah. Abu 'Isa's preoccupation in this Introduction is typified in his summary of Jacobite views on the crucifixion:

> They say: The divinity was crucified for us, that is, to save us. Their expression 'the divinity was crucified' is like their expression 'the human became divine'; they do not mean to suggest by it that the crucifixion and killing could have affected the divine nature if it were isolated and not united. For in their view this could only happen to it because it united with the human nature; if it had not done so the killing, crucifixion and suffering could not have happened to it.[72]

Polemic", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (1996) [29-38], 32-4, for a summary of its main arguments.

[70] The second part of the *Radd* is published in Platti, *Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, Yahya Ibn 'Adi* text; the introductory exposition of Christian beliefs can be found in Thomas, *Polemic*, 66-77. The present writer is in the course of preparing an edition and English translation of the second part of the *Radd*.

[71] Thomas, *Polemic*, 68-77, paras. 9-15.

[72] *Ibid.*, 75f., para. 15.

What is remarkable here is that Abu 'Isa refers to the Christian belief in the purpose and necessity of the crucifixion, *suliba al-ilah min ajlina, ay li-yukhallisana*. But neither here nor anywhere else in the *Radd* is he diverted from his arguments about the contradiction and illogic produced by claims that the divine Word was implicated in the human life of the Messiah to inquire into the nature of this belief.

His arguments throughout the second part of the *Radd* bear this out. In general, they follow the order of his exposition in the Introduction. In the first section, after an initial discussion of the participation of the three hypostases in the action of uniting, discussed above, which functions as a bridge passage between the first part of the *Radd*, on the Trinity, and this second, Abu 'Isa goes on to dissect the interpretations of the three denominations of the moment of uniting, the birth and the death of the Messiah. His purpose at every point is to force his Christian opponents either to acknowledge that the divine Word was successively concealed in Mary's womb, born, suffered pain and death, and then returned to life, or that it did not participate in these events. The consequence of the former alternative is that the teaching subjects the divinity to impossible experiences and so falls into incoherence and inconsistency, and the latter alternative separates the divinity from the human nature and so dissolves the individuality of the Messiah.

In the next section of his refutation Abu 'Isa examines metaphorical explanations of the action of uniting, some of which appear in the Christians authors we have discussed, and shows that in every case they are inappropriate or fail to preserve the inviolability of the divine nature. For example,

> Those who claim that the Word took the body as a temple and dwelling, *haykalan wa-mahallan*, and those who say that it put on the body like a garment, *iddara'at al-jasada iddira'an*, are forced to accept [what we have just argued]. And say to them: If this occurred in the way understood of bodies, you have made the Word into a restricted, moveable body which can move from a position or occupy it, can be close to its other two hypostases at times and be distant from them at others.[73]

There is an element of *reductio ad absurdum* in arguing of this kind, and the intention here is precisely to demonstrate according to shared norms of understanding about the nature of God that the doctrine is not rational.

In the third major section of the *Radd*, Abu 'Isa subjects the Christological formulas of the three major denominations to the same stringent

[73] Platti, *Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, Yahya Ibn 'Adi* text, 82f., para. 73.

scrutiny, and again he shows that in every case they fail for one or other of the reasons given above.[74]

A refutation of the length, detail and evident learning of this work deserves close and careful attention. But for our purposes it is enough to note that in all its many arguments it reflects the same Muslim preoccupation we have noted behind the Christian works discussed. Abu 'Isa is unusual among the Muslum polemicists of this time in possessing a thorough knowledge not only of the main outlines of Christian beliefs but also of the detailed features of their differing interpretations. Even so, he remains firmly Muslim in the way he employs his knowledge. Far from engaging with the reasons why Christians believe and argue what they do, he fixes his mind on the single issue of the threat contained in these doctrines to the simplicity and distinctiveness of God. It is not then surprising that in one of the very rare departures from his assumed stance of rational neutrality he concludes his main argument with a reference to Q 42.11: May God the One be exalted, nothing is like him, he is the all-hearing, all-seeing.[75]

If this Muslim refutation is at all representative of the kind of attitude towards the Incarnation of which Arab Christians became aware, it will be understood why their own works place such great emphasis upon the distinctiveness and inviolability of the divine Word. For the authors were simply responding to pressure from Muslim theological concerns, in exactly the same way that the Patriarch Timothy responded to questions from the Caliph al-Mahdi and the Aristotelian philosopher. As they were put on the defensive, they attempted to show that when the divine and human became one the Persons of the Godhead were not restricted or diminished in any way. In the process of this discussion between Christians and Muslims the articulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation became formalised, and the doctrine itself was emptied of its significance as it was separated from its context of the salvific intention and activity of God. The result was that the assertion that God in Christ willed to restore a relationship lost its force, and for purposes of debates between Muslims and Christians the doctrine was reduced to little more than an aspect of theodicy.

[74] *Ibid.*, trans. XIV-XVI, for a reconstruction of the structure of the second part of the *Radd*.

[75] *Ibid.* text, 203, para. 195. The ending of the *Radd* is problematic, though there is reason to suppose that this reference marks the brief conclusion in Abu 'Isa's original work.

# THE STRATEGY OF THE BAGHDAD PHILOSOPHERS THE ARISTOTELIAN TRADITION AS A COMMON MOTIF IN CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC THOUGHT

JOHN W. WATT

There is a story told of the caliph al-Ma'mun that Aristotle appeared to him in a dream and answered three questions put by the caliph. The story is transmitted in two versions, between which there are significant differences in wording.[1] In the first, the questions are of a practical nature concerning the role of the caliph in the formulation of religious policy, but in the second the questions concern the Good, and the answers place reason above religious authority and political considerations.[2] The first version was probably invented in circles around al-Ma'mun to justify the policy he was pursuing, while the second comes ultimately from Yahya b. 'Adi, head of the Baghdad school of Aristotelian philosophers in the tenth century. In all probability it was Yahya himself who was responsible for the second version, which offers a caliphal sanction for the study of Aristotelian philosophy. This latter version is thus an assertion of the claims of philosophy *vis-à-vis* those of religious law, but it was made by a Christian at the head of a predominantly Christian school at a time when the claims of the Islamic sciences to precedence over philosophy were being stridently advanced by some Muslim thinkers. The question therefore arises whether in the work of the Baghdad Aristotelians of the tenth century AD an element of Christian cultural self-identification may be detected, interwoven with their defence of philosophy, albeit a self-identification confined to a cultural elite and in theory open also to those of other faiths.

The Baghdad Aristotelians eventually had a profound influence on the course of Islamic philosophy. In all probability it was they who estab-

[1] Cf. the translation of the two versions and the illuminating analysis of them by D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, London-New York 1998, 95-104, which I follow here.

[2] 'I said: "What is the good?" He replied: "Whatever is good according to intellect." I asked: "Then what?" He replied: "Whatever is good according to religious law." I asked: "Then what?" He replied: "Whatever is good in the opinion of the masses".' (Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, Leipzig 1871-1872, 243,6-7, translated in Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 98.)

lished the supremacy of Aristotle as the master or 'First Teacher' in Arabic philosophy, and they restored the eight (or including Porphyry's *Isagoge* nine) volume *Organon*, now in Syriac and Arabic translations, as the logic curriculum at the base of the study of philosophy. Equally significant is the fact that al-Farabi, the 'Second Teacher' and real founder of Islamic Aristotelian philosophy, was educated in the school of these Baghdad Aristotelians.[3] The importance of this group is therefore beyond question, even though al-Farabi's work did not profoundly affect Muslim intellectual circles in his own day and the eventual integration of philosophy within the mainstream of Islamic thought owed more to the achievement of Ibn Sina, who, indebted though he was to al-Farabi, was critical of the Baghdad school. We have no account from the Christian members of this school as to how they viewed the relationship of their work in logic and theoretical philosophy to the political, cultural, and religious circumstances in which they were living. Most of the writings of Abu Bishr Matta have disappeared, and many of the philosophical treatises of his successor, Yahya b. 'Adi, have only recently been discovered and still await a comprehensive assessment.[4] Nevertheless, a consideration of the conditions known to be prevailing in Baghdad at the time, together with the evidence of the works of the school's greatest pupil, al-Farabi, may shed some light on the cultural and religious perspectives of these Christian philosophers.

The original version of al-Ma'mun's dream, if composed during that caliph's reign, had co-opted the foreign sciences, represented by Aristotle, in the service of al-Ma'mun's rationalist policy embodied in the institution of the *mihna* ('inquisition'). In the second half of the ninth century, however, traditionalist Muslim reaction against rationalism prevailed and, in the light of the earlier association between the *mihna* and the foreign sciences, generated some opposition to the latter, not so much to the 'practical' disciplines of medicine and astrology, but certainly to the more religiously sensitive discipline of philosophy. A

[3] On the textual and logical work of these philosophers, especially as documented in the Paris manuscript of the Arabic *Organon*, cf. R. Walzer, "New Light on the Arabic Translations of Aristotle", *Oriens* 6 (1953), 91-142 = R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford 1962, 60-113; F. W. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, Oxford 1981, lxviii-cxxxix; G. Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur", in: H. Gätje (ed.), *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie* II, Wiesbaden 1987, 429-431; H. Hugonnard-Roche, "Remarques sur la tradition arabe de l'*Organon* d'après le manuscrit Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ar. 2346", in: C. Burnett (ed.), *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts*, London 1993, 19-28.

[4] Cf. G. Endress, "Matta b. Yunus", in: EI² VI (1991), 844-846; idem, *The Works of Yahya Ibn 'Adi*, Wiesbaden 1977, passim.

cleavage thus appeared between on the one hand the adherents of the specifically Islamic disciplines, and on the other hand the pro-Hellenist circles which particularly admired the foreign sciences. Representative of the former group was Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), who in the introduction to his *Kitāb Adab al-kātib* eliminated most of the Greek legacy, and of the latter the philosopher al-Kindi (d. 870?), whose last years were passed under the shadow of the traditionalist reaction.[5]

The rise of this traditionalist culture (*adab*) represented a threat to the prestige within the Muslim world of the philosophers among the Syriac-speaking Christians, who for long had been closely associated with the cultural legacy of Greece. From the ranks of the Christians came the majority of the Graeco-Arabic translators, especially those who translated from Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Arabic. The long tradition of Syriac involvement particularly with Galenic medicine and Aristotelian logic, going back to late antiquity and continuing throughout the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, gave them a special role within the Arabic scientific and philosophical movement. Thus although Galen and Aristotle were no more Christian than Muslim, the prestige of the multilingual Syrians, whether Jacobite or Nestorian, who stood in the Hellenist tradition of those such as Sergius of Resh'aina and Jacob of Edessa, was closely bound up with the prestige of the foreign sciences. The learned Syro-Arabic Christians, who from the eighth to the tenth century AD were eagerly sought after by Muslim patrons as translators from Greek or Syriac, still found among Hellenophile Muslim scientists and high-ranking officials in Baghdad a keen interest in what they had to offer. While work in the medical field was hardly affected, the rise of the traditionalists pitched Christian and Muslim philosophers into the same camp on the side of the foreign against the Islamic sciences. Each stood to gain from the tacit support of the other, for philosophy was threatened by the traditionalists' implicit claim of its irrelevance within *Dār al-Islām*.

From the time of al-Ma'mun, Christians had also been exposed to exactly the opposite criticism, namely, that their religion was inherently irrational and, far from preserving the legacy of Greece, had persecuted

[5] Cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, cxii-cxxxix; Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur", 428-430; idem, "The Defense of Reason: The Plea for Philosophy in the Religious Community", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 6 (1990), 13-14; D. Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: A Milestone between Alexandria and Bagdad", *Der Islam* 60 (1983), 254 n.57; idem, *Greek Thought*, 157-166.

and obliterated it. In this perspective, evident, for example, in the works of al-Jahiz and al-Mas'udi, and especially in the celebrated history of philosophy 'from Alexandria to Baghdad' (*zuhūr al-falsafa*) recounted on the authority of al-Farabi in Ibn Abi Usaibi'a and al-Mas'udi, the Byzantines were presented as inferior to the Muslims precisely because they had accepted Christianity, an irrational religion, and consequently 'effaced the signs of philosophy, eliminated its traces, destroyed its paths, and changed and corrupted what the ancient Greeks had set forth in clear expositions'.[6] It is difficult to tell how deeply these criticisms troubled the Syro-Arabic Christians under Muslim rule. They originated in al-Ma'mun's anti-Byzantine foreign policy, and in being taken up by Muslim intellectuals were probably directed not so much against Christians as such, but against Muslims opposed to the Greek sciences, for whom the Byzantines were supposed to serve as a sombre warning.[7] Their impact on Syro-Arabic Christians may therefore have not been all that strong, but it is nevertheless hard to believe that the Christians remained totally untouched by them. In tenth century Baghdad, therefore, the Christian philosophers could be challenged in two directions: to prove to fellow Hellenists among the Muslims their fidelity to the legacy of Greek philosophy, and to campaign alongside them for philosophy against the traditionalists within a society under Muslim rule.

Against this background we may return to the most concrete achievement of the Baghdad school, the restoration of the entire ancient Alexandrian *Organon* as the basis of the study of logic, and its presentation in complete Syriac and Arabic translations. From the time of Sergius of Resh'aina, Aristotelian logic and Galenic medicine had been the Greek sciences above all others which had claimed the interest of Syriac scholars, yet in logic this had been focused principally on only the first two and a half Aristotelian books of the *Organon* (to *Prior Analytics* I. 7). This concentration on the beginning of the complete Alexandrian curriculum is the historical reality behind the tendentious criticism in the history of philosophy 'from Alexandria to Baghdad' (noted above) that

[6] Al-Mas'udi, *Murūj al-ḏahab*, ed. C. Pellat, Beirut 1965-1979, §741, translated in Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 89. For English translations of al-Farabi's account of the history of philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad, see F. Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, London 1975, 50-51; S. M. Stern, "Al-Mas'udi and the philosopher al-Farabi", in: S. Maqbul and A. Rahman (eds.), *Al-Mas'udi Millenary Commemoration Volume*, Aligarh 1960, 39-41. Arabic texts in Ibn Abi Usaibi'a, ed. A. Müller, *Ibn Abi Useibia*, Königsberg 1884, II, 134,30-135,24; Al-Mas'udi, *K. at-Tanbīh wa'l-Ischrāf*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden 1894, 121,16-122,14.

[7] Cf. Gutas, ibid., 83-95.

the Christians truncated the ancient Greek heritage, in this case specifically the assertion reportedly made by al-Farabi, whether fabricated by him or in repetition of existing polemic, that the bishops in council had forbidden the teaching of logic beyond the assertoric syllogisms because they were of the opinion that it would be damaging to Christianity.

In response to this criticism, and wishing at the same time to uphold the claims of philosophy against its exclusion or marginalization by Muslim traditionalists, the Christian philosophers of Baghdad, uniquely equipped as they were by their Syriac heritage, could strike no more effective blow for the cause of philosophy, and consequently for their own role within a Muslim society, than to restore in its fullness and expound with all available means the ancient Greek basis of logic, now in Syriac and Arabic translation. At one stroke it both demonstrated their fidelity to the complete philosophical legacy of Greece, and at the same time made available to both Christians and Muslims that whole legacy, in the area of logic at any rate,[8] in order to advance the universalist claims of philosophy against the particularist claims of traditionalist Islam. It was not without precedent in their tradition, for Syriac and Syro-Arabic translations had been made of the entire *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations* and Syriac commentaries written on some of them during the seventh to ninth centuries AD.[9] The Baghdad Aristotelians of the tenth century brought these forays together into a coherent whole which was at the same time a repristination of the ancient Alexandrian tradition. But also for the organisation and interpretation of the books within this curriculum according to the syllogistic premises asserted to be applicable to each, the Baghdad Aristotelians had a precedent in (Persian and) East-Syrian tradition in the work of Paul the Persian, whose introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle formed a 'milestone' between Alexandria and Baghdad and was probably translated into Arabic in the Baghdad circle.[10] Al-Farabi himself, despite his tendentious remarks concerning the alleged censorial actions of the bishops in council, went on to record how he read to the end of the *Posterior Analytics* with his (Christian)

[8] The philosophical interests of the Baghdad school did of course extend beyond logic. An impression of the range of Yahya b. 'Adi's interests can be gained from the inventory of his writings by Endress, *The Works of Yahya*, passim.

[9] Cf. S. P. Brock, "The Syriac Commentary Tradition", in: Burnett, *Glosses and Commentaries*, 4-5, 14.

[10] Cf. Gutas, "Paul the Persian", 231-267; esp. 250-254 on the Arabic translation (attributing it to Abu Bishr Matta).

teacher Yuhanna b. Hailan, and there is clear evidence that the earliest Arabic commentaries on the later books of the *Organon* stem from the Christian Aristotelians.[11]

Armed with the complete *Organon*, the members of this school fought on behalf of philosophy against both Arabic grammar and Muslim *kalām*. Thus they took the lead in representing both their own interests and that of Muslims favourably disposed to philosophy by proclaiming it to be a universal system of knowledge against adherents of traditionalist Islam,[12] and indeed probably also against the Christian medical circles devoted to the works of Galen, and in their criticisms both of *kalām* and of Galen they were followed by al-Farabi.[13] For Muslims favourably disposed to philosophy, and to Aristotelian philosophy in particular, the Syro-Arabic Christians were indispensable in giving them the greatest possible access to the ancient tradition, but they also had to maintain a certain distance from them so as to protect philosophy from the charge of being considered a specifically Christian enterprise. Thus al-Farabi, 'while following his teachers' lead in essentials, contrived to rebuke them over trifles.'[14] In this context one has to understand his remarks critical of Christianity in his history of philosophy (*zuhūr al-falsafa*) 'from Alexandria to Baghdad'. Whether the alleged chain of tradition linking Alexandria to the first named Christian teachers in Baghdad was basically forged by the school and then given an anti-Christian twist by al-Farabi, or whether the account was fundamentally of Muslim origin and from the outset carried an anti-Christian (i.e. anti-Byzantine) component,[15] in the form reported by al-Farabi it expresses a measured Muslim distancing from a predominantly Christian school which was recognised to have brought the teaching of Alexandria to life in Baghdad.

The ancient Alexandrian *Organon* included the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, not merely the set of books from the *Categories* (or Porphyry's *Isagoge*) to the *Sophistical Refutations*.[16] The Baghdad school appears to have

[11] Cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, cvi-cviii. Cf. also al-Farabi's remark in *The Attainment of Happiness* (*Tahsīl al-sa'āda*, Hydarabad 1927, 38,16-17) that the science of the final perfection to be achieved by man was 'expounded in the Greek language, later in Syriac, and finally in Arabic' (translated by M. Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, Ithaca 1969, 43).

[12] Cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, cxxii-cxxxix; Endress, "The Defense of Reason", 16-17.

[13] Cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, lxxx-lxxxi, cviii-cix, cxv.

[14] Ibid., cx.

[15] For the former interpretation, cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, cv-cxii; for the latter, Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 90-95.

[16] Cf. P. Moraux, *Les listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote*, Louvain 1951, 172-183.

been very interested in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. Both Abu Bishr Matta and Yahya b. 'Adi translated the *Poetics* from Syriac into Arabic, and Yahya also endeavoured, without success, to buy a manuscript containing the *Sophistical Refutations*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, (some or all) in the version of Ishaq b. Hunain, from Ibrahim b. 'Abdallah.[17] Three (Arabic) translations of the *Rhetoric* are mentioned by Ibn al-Nadim in the *Fihrist*: an 'old' (i.e. pre-Hunain) version, a version by Ishaq b. Hunain, and a version by Ibrahim b. 'Abdallah;[18] and a Syriac version of the work is mentioned by Ibn al-Samh.[19] It is therefore not surprising to find that al-Farabi, too, was greatly interested in these works, and wrote extensively on the former in particular.[20] In his work on *The Catalogue of the Sciences* he followed the ancient Alexandrian tradition of ascribing syllogisms with different kinds of premises to each of *apodeixis*, dialectic, sophistic, rhetoric, and poetics, linking each of them to the last five books of the *Organon* (*Posterior Analytics* through to *Poetics*) in a one-to-one correspondence.[21] There can scarcely be any doubt that this was the doctrine of the Baghdad school; we have already noted a 'milestone' on its road from Alexandria to Baghdad in the introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle by Paul the Persian, where this doctrine is reproduced in very much the same terms.[22]

In his work on *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, however, al-Farabi gave an exposition of the whole *Organon* dealing with the books in terms of their subject matter, function, and application. Thus in the *Categories* to the *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle is said to have 'canvassed the certain science', and in the *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations* to have 'given an account of the way to it and intercepted what stands in its way'. After this, he 'gave an account of the powers and arts by which man comes to possess the faculty for instructing whoever is not to use the science of logic or to be given the certain science', and therefore he first

> gave an account of the art [i.e. rhetoric] that enables man to persuade the multitude regarding all theoretical things and those practical things in

[17] Cf. Endress, *The Works of Yahya*, 26, 28, 34; M. C. Lyons, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica. The Arabic Version*, Cambridge 1982, xxvii; W. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik*, Beirut 1969, 112-114.

[18] Cf. Lyons, *Ars Rhetorica*, i.

[19] Cf. ibid., ii-vi.

[20] Cf. M. Aouad, "Aristote de Stagire: La *Rhétorique*. Tradition syriaque et arabe", in: R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* I, Paris 1989, 463-466.

[21] Cf. R. Walzer, "Zur Traditionsgeschichte der aristotelischen Poetik", *Studi italiani di filologia classica*, N.S. 11(1934), 5-14 = Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 129-136.

[22] Cf. above, p. 155, n. 10.

> which it is customary to confine oneself to using persuasive arguments based on particular examples drawn from men's activities when conducting their public business

and then

> gave an account of the art [i.e. poetics] that enables man to project images (*taḫyīl*) of the things that became evident in the certain demonstrations in the theoretical arts, to imitate (*muḥākāh*) them by means of their similitudes (*miṯālāt*), and to project images of, and imitate, all the other particular things in which it is customary to employ images and imitation through speech.[23]

How important these last aspects of the *Organon* were for al-Farabi becomes evident in his *Attainment of Happiness*, where the false philosopher is characterised as 'he who acquires the theoretical sciences without achieving the utmost perfection so as to be able to introduce others to what he knows insofar as their capacity permits', and the true philosopher as the 'one who has to possess both the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity', and the one who 'invents the images and the persuasive arguments, not ...for himself, (but)...for others'. When the knowledge of beings is acquired by *apodeixis*, the science comprising these cognitions is philosophy, but if they are known through images and imitation, and assent obtained by persuasive methods, 'then the ancients call what comprises these cognitions religion (*malaka*, read *milla*)'.[24] Al-Farabi combines Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* with Plato's political thought, and this group of concepts is elaborated at greater length particularly in the treatise on *The Principles of the Views of the Citizens of the Perfect State*. Philosophy is here proclaimed to be superior to religion and theology, as all forms of knowledge are subject to reason and the particular sciences to the universal demonstrative sciences and First Philosophy (metaphysics). A religious community therefore needs philosophy, either advising the ruler or embodied in the person of the perfect philosopher-king, but philosophy is also incomplete without religion, for true religion is a poetic imitation of philosophy in which what the philosophers know by strict demonstrations 'is imitated for each nation and for the people of each city through those similitudes which

[23] *Falsafat Aristūtālīs*, ed. M. Mahdi, Beirut 1961, 84,3-4; 84,5-7; 84,19-85,2; 85,4-7; translated by Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 92-93.

[24] *Taḥṣīl al-sa'āda*, 45,12-13; 39,11-12; 44,10-12; 40,7-11; translated by Mahdi, ibid., 48, 43, 47, 44.

are best known to them'.[25] In reviving the political side of Platonic philosophy, which apparently had little appeal to the Neoplatonist philosophers of late antiquity, al-Farabi did not therefore consider the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* to be insignificant appendages to the main body of the *Organon*, conserved only out of deference to the ancient Alexandrian tradition and the 'protection' of the apodeictic syllogism, but rather considered them to be integral to Aristotle's purpose and necessary subjects for study by the true philosopher. His thinking in this area was no doubt sharpened by the religious and political crises of his time and may have had a particular appeal to Shi'ite groups, but in its basic intention it is not a vindication of political Shi'ism, but rather of philosophy within a religious community.[26]

It was not al-Farabi himself, however, but his Christian teachers in Baghdad who revived the study of the whole *Organon*, in the case of Abu Bishr Matta even translating the *Poetics* from Syriac into Arabic.[27] As already observed, they have left us no account of their motives for this revival, and it is therefore not impossible that the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* were included purely out of fidelity to the ancient tradition of Alexandria.[28] Were this so, it would indeed be appropriate to characterise the inclusion of these two books as 'highly eccentric'.[29] In his exposition, however, of the role of these books within the *Organon* and in his claim to include politics and religion within the all encompassing sphere of philosophy, al-Farabi may have been following his teachers, as he did in so many other matters.[30] Much of the detailed elaboration of

[25] Ed. R. Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, Oxford 1985, 280,1-2 (transl. 281).

[26] Cf. Endress, "The Defense of Reason", 22-23; M. Mahdi, "Remarks on Alfarabi's *Book of Religion*", in: A. Hasnawi, A. Elamrani-Jamal, M. Aouad (eds.), *Perspectives arabes et médiévales sur la tradition scientifique et philosophique grecque* (*OLA* 79), Leuven-Paris 1997, 583-608.

[27] Cf. above 157.

[28] Cf. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 119-120. Besides respect for Aristotle, Heinrichs adds as possible motives for Abu Bishr's translation of an apparently unintelligble book his convictions concerning the generality of Aristotle's remarks and Aristotle's intentional obscurity. Heinrichs also notes that Abu Bishr translated the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Poetics*, and that he thus completed those parts of the Arabic *Organon* which had not been translated by the members of the school of Hunain. We know, however, that he had a clear idea of why the *Posterior Analytics* was important to him: it taught the method of demonstration. It seems rather unlikely that he would have undertaken the translation of the *Poetics* with no comparably clear idea as to why it was important. Not only did he translate these two works, he also commented on the *eight* books of logic (i.e. *Categories* to *Poetics*) in about seventy volumes, according to 'Abdallatif al-Baghdadi; cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, cviii, n.1.

[29] Zimmermann, ibid., xxiii.

[30] See above 156 and cf. Zimmermann, ibid., cxxiv, n.2: '... the circumstance that

the Farabian synthesis could stem from al-Farabi himself,[31] but the essential structure of the scheme, in particular the use of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* in the construction of a theory of religion which subordinates it to philosophy, is entirely appropriate to the Syro-Arabic Christian philosophers of Baghdad and the politico-religious situation in which they were living.[32] The supremacy of reason over religious tradition can be clearly seen in the thought of Christian writers of the school after al-Farabi, notably in the works of Yahya b. 'Adi and Ibn Zu'ra.[33] It is unlikely that these writers simply took this principle from al-Farabi,[34] and at an earlier date in the tradition of Aristotelian teaching the same idea is found in the latest phases of the Alexandrian commentators and in the work of Paul the Persian.[35]

Abu Bishr is here [in the debate with al-Sirafi over logic and grammar] held responsible for views we know to have been shared by al-Farabi adds to the impression that the latter in large measure depended on the former ... In contemporary eyes al-Farabi was but a fellow traveller of the Christian philosophers.'

[31] As part of this 'detailed elaboration', particular mention may be made of his presentation of a history of human development in *Kitāb al-Hurūf*, in which rhetoric and poetics appear twice: first in the pre-philosophical period of mankind as an inexact 'proto-philosophy', and subsequently after the appearance of *apodeixis* as the means by which the elite may address the masses. See *Kitāb al-Hurūf*, ed. M. Mahdi, Beirut 1969, §143, pp. 152-153, esp. 153,3-6, and cf. W. Heinrichs, "Die antike Verknüpfung von phantasia und Dichtung bei den Arabern", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 128 (1978), 273-284.

[32] Cf. above, 154.

[33] For Yahya, in addition to the 'Aristotelian dream' mentioned at the beginning of this article, cf. A. Périer, *Yahyā ben 'Adī. Un philosophe arabe chrétien du X^e siècle*, Paris 1920, 81-85, 140-147; and for his pupil Ibn Zur'a, cf. S. Pines, "La loi naturelle et la société: la doctrine politico-théologique d'Ibn Zur'a", in: *Studies in Islamic History and Civilisation (Scripta Hierosolymitana* 9), Jerusalem 1961, 154-190. While there is no evidence that these writers designated religious or theological expressions as imitative of philosophical ones, Ibn Zur'a designated them symbolic (*ramazū*), metaphorical (*kināya*), and near (*qarība*) to the divine matters; cf. P. Sbath (ed.), *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologétiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens du IX^e au XIV^e siècle*, Cairo 1929, 11,1-3, and Pines, ibid., 157. Abu Bishr Matta and Yahya b. 'Adi also implied, in their commentaries on *Metaphysics* 995^a2-5, that religious laws and stories were of a popular, socio-political character, the realities contained therein being capable of elucidation only by philosophy; cf. S. Pines and M. Schwarz, "Yahya ibn 'Adi's Refutation of the Doctrine of Acquisition (*Iktisāb*)", in: *Studia Orientalia memoriae D. H. Baneth dedicata*, Jerusalem 1979, 54-56. Cf. below, n. 53.

[34] Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, cxi, n.1, observes that 'the Christians closed ranks and repaid in kind' (i.e. dissociating themselves from the 'other' camp) and 'throughout P(aris, B.N. ar. 2346) al-Farabi is mentioned exactly once'. However, one should remember the close links reported between al-Farabi and Yahya b. 'Adi, a situation confirmed by the fact that the best manuscript of al-Farabi's *Perfect State* was written by a 'second generation' pupil of Yahya b. 'Adi, the Jacobite Christian Yahya b. Jarir, from Tagrit. Cf. Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 19-24.

[35] Cf. Gutas, "Paul the Persian", 247-250.

All the basic material of al-Farabi's interpretation of the *Poetics* goes back to the late antique Greek tradition, which was very familiar to the teachers of the Baghdad school. The key components were the 'logical' interpretation of the *Poetics* and the assimilation of rhetoric and poetics, the interpretation of Aristotelian *mimesis* (imitation) as figurative speech,[36] and the coupling of imitation (*mimesis*) and imaging (*phantasia*).[37] The significant new feature in al-Farabi is the introduction of religion into this sphere of thought, making religion the imitation and image of philosophy which brings happiness to the masses. It may be that he took this step because he was driven to find another context for Aristotle's *Poetics*, different from that offered by Arabic poetry.[38] His Christian predecessors, however, also knew no 'secular' poetry to which they could meaningfully apply it. In al-Farabi the philosopher-ruler as prophet-poet uses *miṯālāt* ('similitudes') to teach the crowd, and while indeed in the Qur'ān *amṯāl* are coined for the people, so too in the Syriac or Arabic Gospels Jesus teaches the crowd in *matlē* or *amṯāl*.[39] Fur-

[36] Aristotle's *mimesis* was rendered by *metdammyanūtā* in the Syriac version of the *Poetics* (in the fragment 1449$^{b}$24-1450$^{a}$9 cited by Jacob bar Shakko, edited by D. S. Margoliouth, *Analecta Orientalia ad Poeticam Aristoteleam*, London 1887, Arabic pagination 77-79), and by *tašbīh wa-muhākāh* or cognate terms in the Arabic; cf. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 117-123. Derivatives of the Syriac root *dm'* have the sense both of *similitudo* (likeness, imitation) and *imago* (image, figure); cf. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus*, 913-917, and Brockelmann, *Lexicon syriacum*, 156-157. The interpretation of Aristotelian 'imitation' as figurative speech is therefore easily understood in a Syriac language context. The same may be said for its association with *matlē* (see below); cf. in the Peshitta New Testament Matth. 13, 31 (... *matlā 'amtel... damyā*) and Mk. 4, 30 (... *ndammēh ... wba'ynā matlā namtlīh*) and the corresponding Arabic ([*qaddara*]... *maṯalan ... yušbihu*) and (...*nušabbihu ...au bi-ayyi maṯalin numaṯṯiluhu*). Reflexive forms of *dm'* are the usual renditions of *mimeomai*/*mimetes* in the Peshitta New Testament, and Form V of *mṯl* in the Arabic.

[37] Cf. R. Walzer, "Al-Farabi's Theory of Prophecy and Divination", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77 (1957), 142-148 = Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 206-219; Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, 146-154; idem, "Die antike Verknüpfung", 256-259, 270-272; and with some different perspectives, H. Daiber, "Prophetie und Ethik bei Farabi (gest. 339/950)", in: C. Wenin (ed.), *L'homme et son univers au moyen âge* (*Philosophes médiévaux*, 27), Louvain-la-Neuve 1986, 729-741; J. Lameer, *Al-Farabi and Aristotelian Syllogistics* (*Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science*, 20), Leiden 1994, 259-289; idem, "The Philosopher and the Prophet: Greek Parallels to al-Farabi's Theory of Religion and Philosophy in the State", in: Hasnawi et al., *Perspectives arabes*, 609-622. Among the senses of Syriac *dmūtā* (root *dm'*, see previous note) is that of *imaginatio*, 'mental image'; cf. Greek *eikon* and Arabic derivatives of *šbh*, and Payne Smith, *Thesaurus*, 914. The rendering of *mimesis* by *metdammyanūtā*, with its proximity to *dmūtā*, could therefore certainly have facilitated the association of 'imitation' and 'imaging' in a Syriac or Syro-Arabic linguistic context.

[38] Cf. Heinrichs, "Die antike Verknüpfung", 294-295.

[39] *Qur'ān*, Sūra 29, 42; Matth. 13 passim (Ps. 78, 2); Mk. 4 passim. Cf. above, n. 36. For al-Farabi, cf. above 158, and Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 475-479.

thermore, the allegorical interpretation of mythology and popular religious language by Greek philosophers as symbolic of a higher truth, a tradition with roots in Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, found its way into patristic thought along with the distinction between simple believers and those who ascended to the higher realms of knowledge, a distinction analogous to that between the multitude who could only grasp 'rhetoric' and the elite who understood philosophy.[40] Al-Farabi's theory may be a philosophical formulation of the Isma'ili doctrine of outer form and inner meaning,[41] but as a logician he belonged to the Baghdad school, and among the multilingual Christian teachers there under whom he studied the *Organon*,[42] he could also have learnt about the (Stoic) distinction between inner thought and outer word[43] and the allegorical interpretation both of pagan mythology and poetry (Homer) and the Bible.[44] It is of course true that for thinkers such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa philosophy remained a *propaideia* and the supreme science was theology,[45] but the Baghdad Christian philosophers had a much

[40] Cf. Walzer, ibid.; W. Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, Cambridge, Mass./Oxford 1961/1969, 46-53; H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford 1966, 73-79, 111-112.

[41] Cf. Heinrichs, "Die antike Verknüpfung", 296; H. Daiber, "The Ismaili Background of Farabi's Political Philosophy", in: U. Tworuschka (ed.), *Gottes ist der Orient, Gottes ist der Okzident* (*Kölner Veröffentlichungen zur Religionsgeschichte*, 21), Cologne 1991, 143-150, esp. 146-147.

[42] Daiber, ibid., notes that the Isma'ili author Abu Hatim ar-Razi, in whose work he believes the starting-point of al-Farabi's theory may be detected, 'does *not* (my italics) include elements from Aristotle's *Organon* and *Rhetoric*'.

[43] Cf. Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 476. The distinction between thought (*hawnā, hušśabā, sukkalā*) and perceptible word (*meltā ragguštanītā*) is a prominent theme in Antony of Tagrit's Syriac *Rhetoric*, Book 1, chapter 1; cf. P. E. Eskenasy, *Antony of Tagrit's Rhetoric Book One*, Harvard University Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, Mass. 1991, 87-90.

[44] As Platonists of the time of Origen interpreted Homer allegorically, so Origen, and following him the Cappadocian fathers, interpreted even the historical books of the Old Testament as illustrations of metaphysical or ethical truths. Cf. Origen's reference to I Kings 19,18 (referring to Romans 11,4) in *De Principiis* IV,2,6, and the discussion of spiritual exegesis in Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant. Canticorum* (ed. H. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VI, Leiden 1960), prologue, with reference to Origen (13,3). This work of Gregory of Nyssa was translated at an early stage into Syriac; cf. A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, 79. That these ideas were familiar to Syriac-speaking Christians in the Islamic period is again clear from Antony of Tagrit, who, interpreting the 'battles of the gods' in Iliad 20,67-74 and 21,403-407 as figurative expressions of ethical truths (Ares represents anger, Athena prudence, etc.), does the very same with I Kings 22,30-34 (Ahab represents frenzied violence, the bowman who shot him the art which pierces it); cf. J. W. Watt, *The Fifth Book of the Rhetoric of Antony of Tagrit* (CSCO 480, 481), Louvain 1986, 77-78/66-67.

[45] This probably also applies to the early ninth century fore-runners of the Baghdad

higher estimation of Aristotle and philosophy than had these theologians, and in this respect they stood closer to someone like Synesius of Cyrene (see below). The elements of al-Farabi's theory, however, were all available to the Baghdad philosophers; surrounded as they were on the one hand by a Muslim 'crowd' and Muslim theologians, and on the other hand by Muslim philosophers with whom they felt a much closer affinity, it may well have been these Christian philosophers who first interpreted 'religion'[46] as an imitation of philosophy and thus brought it within the sphere of Aristotelian poetics.[47]

If the revival of the entire *Organon* was in part a response of the Christian philosophers to the conditions of late ninth and tenth century Baghdad, the rhetorical and poetical interpretation of religion associated with al-Farabi's account of the *Organon* may also stem from his Baghdad teachers and could certainly explain their interest in the last two books. Obliged as they were to defend their role as philosophers within a Muslim society in a way which neither antagonised those Muslims who were favourably disposed towards them nor undercut the legitimacy of their own Christian confessions, the exposition of religion as a necessary complement of philosophy and an imitation of it through the similitudes best known to a particular nation would have been well suited to further their aims. It would both have bound them together with Muslim philosophers in the defence of reason against the jurists of traditionalist Islam, and also allowed them, when they so wished, to argue for Chris-

school, such as Job of Edessa, who argued for the divinity and humanity of Christ on the basis of (1) Nature, (2) the books of the Prophets, and (3) the Gospel. This may assume (as is certainly the case in the similarly constructed but later treatise entitled *The Cause of all Causes*) that ultimate truth is only accessible to those who accept Christian doctrine, even though the beginning of the discussion is based on reason alone. Cf. G. J. Reinink, "Communal Identity and the Systematisation of Knowledge in the Syriac 'Cause of all Causes'", in: P. Binkley (ed.), *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts*, Leiden 1997, 275-288, esp. 278-283.

[46] The term mostly used by al-Farabi, *milla* ('community', 'confession'), was employed in the Qur'ān in reference to Muslims, Christians, Jews, or pagans. In the Baghdad school it might have been used to render a Syriac term such as *šubhā* (= Greek *doxa*), with the double meaning of 'belief' and 'praise', in the general sense of an unspecific ancestral religious belief; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1074$^{b}$12-13. Other possible Syriac precursors of this sense of the Arabic term include *tawdītā* and *dehltā*.

[47] For Aristotle (*Poetics* 1447$^{a}$22), poetry produces *mimesis* 'through rhythm and speech and harmony'. *Mimesis* through pleasing/useful speech (Syriac *meltā mahnyanītā* = Greek *hedusmenos logos*; *Poetics* 1449$^{b}$25-29 = Margoliouth, *Analecta Orientalia*, Arabic pagination 77,4-8) becomes the 'imitation through speech' (*al-muhākāt bi'l-qaul*) of al-Farabi (above, 157-158 and n. 23). Al-Farabi associated 'upholders of religion' (high religious dignitaries) with 'masters of the spoken word' (*ḏawū 'l-alsina*), i.e. orators and poets; cf. Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 437-438.

tianity, or indeed for its Jacobite or Nestorian varieties, as a closer imitation of ultimate truth than the religion professed by their opponents.[48] While the last generations of translators, from Abu Bishr Matta onwards, mostly knew only Syriac and Arabic and did not have direct access to the Greek legacy, their predecessors or contemporaries who did know Greek could have transmitted to them, either by oral teaching or by Syriac translations now no longer extant, not only the teaching of Plato himself or summaries thereof, but also some examples of Platonists in late antiquity which could usefully be applied to their own conditions. One of the commentators on Aristotle most favoured by the Syro-Arabic philosophical tradition was Themistius,[49] but Themistius was also a political philosopher and orator, and two extant orations in Syriac translation and a Syro-Arabic translation by Ibn Zur'a prove that his political Platonism was known to and admired by Syro-Arabic Christians. As a pagan monotheist under Christian emperors, and a vigorous proponent of the importance of philosophy for the wise governance of the state, the case of Themistius would have provided an intriguing paradigm for Christian philosophers under Muslim caliphs, philosophers who like Themistius were convinced that only by true philosophy could a state be properly governed.[50] And in another late antique author who held similar views to Themistius on philosophy and rhetoric, the Christian bishop Synesius of Cyrene, who accepted ordination only on condition that he could philosophise (*philosophon*) at home while expounding myths (*philomython*) in public — i.e., privately hold to philosophical truths like the immortality of the soul while publicly expounding religious beliefs like the resurrection of the body — the Syro-Arabic Christians had an example of 'how a Christian educated in the Aristotelian and Platonic syllabus of the pagan school could be a sincere Christian and still not abandon his belief in the ultimate superiority of philosophy'.[51] We have no manuscript evidence of Syriac or Arabic translations of Synesius, but similarities between some passages in the *Dio* of Synesius and the

[48] Cf. al-Farabi, *On the Perfect State*, ed. Walzer, 278,15-280,1: 'Some of those who know them through similitudes which imitate them know them through similitudes which are near to them, and some through similitudes slightly more remote, and some through similitudes which are even more remote than these, and some through similitudes which are very remote indeed'. On the terminology 'near' (*qarība*), cf. above (on Ibn Zur'a), n. 33.

[49] Cf. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary*, ci-civ.

[50] Cf. J. W. Watt, "From Themistius to al-Farabi. Platonic Political Philosophy and Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the East", *Rhetorica* 13 (1995), 17-41.

[51] R. Walzer, "Arabic Transmission of Greek Thought to Medieval Europe", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 29 (1945-6), 180.

*Rhetoric* of Antony of Tagrit give us grounds for thinking that Synesius may have been read in the Christian Orient.[52]

For the Christian Aristotelians of Baghdad, the defence of reason against a traditionalist Islam based on the Qur'ān and the *šarī'a* was therefore also a defence of their legitimacy and importance within a Muslim society. The interpretation of religion as an imitation of philosophical truth for the benefit of the populace could enable them to be both philosophers and Christian theologians, a combination most strikingly evident in the works of Yahya b. 'Adi.[53] But it has rightly been emphasised that their 'claims...about the intellect were not mere window dressing'.[54] Their interpretation of philosophy and religion enabled them to argue both for Christianity *vis-à-vis* Islam and for one brand of Christianity *vis-à-vis* another (Jacobites and Nestorians) in a way which, extolling the supremacy of reason, made them worthy participants in that great movement in history known as the classical renaissance in Islam.

[52] Cf. J. W. Watt, "From Synesius to al-Farabi. Philosophy, Religion, and Rhetoric in the Christian Orient", in: R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII* (*OCA* 256), Rome 1998, 265-277.

[53] Cf. Endress, *The Works of Yahya*; E. Platti, *Yahya ibn 'Adi, théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 14), Louvain 1983; idem, "Yahya b. 'Adi and his Refutation of al-Warraq's Treatise on the Trinity in Relation to his other Works", in: S. H. Samir and J. S. Nielsen, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period* (*Studies in the History of Religions*, 63), Leiden 1994, 172-191. Perhaps the best known example of Yahya's 'intellectualization' of Christian religion is his interpretation of the Trinity in terms of the 'mind, thinking, thought' of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 1074$^{b}$15-35. It is of course possible that Yahya was influenced here by al-Farabi; cf. E. Platti, "Yahya b. 'Adi, philosophe et théologien", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain au Caire* 14 (1980), 175-176. But Yahya was a pupil of both Abu Bishr and al-Farabi, and Abu Bishr was the senior of the two from whom the Aristotelian tradition passed to al-Farabi (cf. *Fihrist*, 264,4-5; al-Mas'udi, *Tanbīh*, 122,6-9). The interpretation may therefore have come from Abu Bishr. Cf. above, n. 33.

[54] Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 104.

# THE TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC CULTURE TO THE WORLD OF SYRIAC CHRISTIANITY: BARHEBRAEUS' TRANSLATION OF AVICENNA'S *KITĀB AL-IŠĀRĀT WA L-TANBĪHĀT*. FIRST SOUNDINGS.[1]

HERMAN G.B. TEULE

## *Introduction*

Translations from Arabic or Persian into Syriac are extremely rare. This is, of course, not surprising. Why, indeed, should the Syrians feel the need to translate texts from Arabic into their own language, that is to say, texts which mostly have their origin in a different, foreign religion, which is often perceived as inferior both from a cultural and religious point of view? Such an attitude of superiority is most clearly demonstrated by the East Syrian bishop, Elijah of Nisibis (978-1046). In a long discussion with the Arabic *wazīr* Abū l-Qasem al-Maghribī, a political man, but also a scholar interested in linguistic problems as well as in the interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims, the question of the pre-eminence of the Syriac tongue over Arabic is treated in the following manner:

> '(Abū l-Qāsem) said to me: "Do you possess sciences such as the Muslims have?" I said: "Yes, and even many more". And he said: "What proof do you have for this?" I said: "The proof is that the Muslims have many useful sciences taken from the Syrians, whereas the Syrians have no science taken from the Arabs".[2]

[1] I would like to thank Dr Jules Janssens (Louvain-la-Neuve) and Dott. A. Mengozzi (Leiden) for some bibliographical suggestions, and mr Hidemi Takahashi (Frankfurt aM) for sending me information about ms Florence Pal. Med. Or. 185.

[2] This discussion is described in the sixth session of Iliyya's *kitāb al-majālis*, which has not yet been edited in its entirety. The fragment under discussion was edited and translated by Khalīl Samīr, "Deux cultures qui s'affrontent: une controverse sur l'i'rāb au XI^e^ siècle entre Elie de Nisibe et le vizir Abū l-Qāsim" in *Mélanges Henri Fleisch*, MUSJ 48-49 (1974-5), 619-649 (reprinted in S. Khalil, *Foi et culture en Irak au XI siècle: Elie de Nisibe et l'Islam* [Collected Studies Series CS 544, Variorum Reprint] Aldershot 1996, nr XI). About Iliyyā, see B. Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak. Attitudes Nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam* [Etudes Chrétiennes Arabes], Paris 1994, 112ff. and 57, and Khalīl Samīr, "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien §22.4. Elie de Nisibe (975-1046)", *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977), 257-286.

This means that for Elijah the movement of the transmission of culture and science was still from the Christians to Muslims, which, of course, did not require Arabic texts to be translated into Syriac. Two hundred years later, the situation is reversed. Gregory Barhebraeus (d. 1286) alludes to this change, when he writes in his *Civil Chronicle*:

> "We from whom (the Arabs) have acquired wisdom through translators who were all Syrians, are now having to ask for wisdom from them."[3]

But did this somewhat bitter conclusion imply that translations into Syriac had become necessary? Judging from the number of such translations which have come down to us, the answer should be in the negative; apparently, many Syrians of that period had already learned to read Arabic themselves and were in no need of translations.

In spite of Elijah's assertions, however, translations from Arabic into Syriac were not entirely non-existent. A. Baumstark[4] mentions the well known examples of Qalilah and Dimna, translated into Syriac in the 10th or 11th century,[5] the *History of Sindhbān and his Philosophers* and the *Story of the Ten Wazīrs and the Son of King Azadbokt*, but all these writings belong to the genre of light reading and have nothing to do with sciences, which was Elijah's main concern. Also in this field, however, translations existed, though ignored by Baumstark. In his famous *risālah* to 'Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Munajjim, secretary to Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 861), Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq mentions that, exceptionally, three works of Galen had *not* been translated from Syriac or Greek into Arabic, which was normally the case, but the other way round, first from Greek into Arabic, and next, at the request of a Christian doctor from Gundešabur, practising in Baghdād, Yūḥannā b. Māsawayh, from Arabic into Syriac.[6]

[3] *The Chronography of Barhebraeus*, St Ephrem the Syrian Monastery 1987 (this ed. is based on the former editions of P. Bedjan and E.A.W. Budge), 90, col. 2.

[4] A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, 283f. It is clear that the present article is concerned only with translations of Arabic texts having their origin in the cultural or religious world of Islam, whereas Baumstark also deals with originally Christian Arabic texts.

[5] Ed. W. Wright, *The Book of Kalīlah and Dimna, translated from Arabic into Syriac*, London 1884.

[6] Ed. G. Bergsträsser, "Hunain Ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen", *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* XVII. Bnd 2, Leipzig 1925 (repr. 1966), 24 (*the Book on the Movements of the Breast and the Lung and the Book on the Voice*) and 49, a *kitāb fī l-aḫlāq*. In all three cases the translator was Ḥunayn's pupil, Ḥubayš. Ḥunayn (cf. Bergsträsser, 8) mentions that b. Māsawayh always expected a clear and careful translation. It is, however not clear why b. Māsawayh, knowing Arabic himself, asked for these translations from Arabic into Syriac. On b. Māsawayh, see G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur, II, Die Schift-*

But neither does this example invalidate Elijah's argument, for these translations deal with the science of the Greeks, not of the Arabs and Muslims.

The last example of a Syriac translation from Arabic is that of the book of Islam par excellence, the Qur'an. Most probably, this translation already existed, partly or in its entirety, before the time of the West Syrian Metropolitan of Amida (now: Diarbakir), Dionysius Barṣalībī (d. 1171), or was made by himself, though this latter possibility is not very likely, as pointed out by A. Mingana, who published what is left of this Syriac version.[7] It is obvious that, in this case too, there is no question of transmission of Arabic culture to the Christians; the translation was made by Christians with the unambiguous intention of refuting Islam[8] and of showing the inconsistencies of its Holy Book.[9]

Translations from Arabic, in the sense of transmission of Arabic science or philosophy, appear only with Barhebraeus. And to Arabic we should add Persian. As was to be expected, the study of his translations does not seem to be very popular. Quite understandably, scholars seem much more interested in his original writings, though a number of recent studies have demonstrated that these so-called original works are, as a matter of fact, translations rather than compositions of his own. Good examples are the parts devoted to practical philosophy, more particularly to economics, from the *Cream of Wisdom* (*Ḥēwat ḥekmtā*), which show important literal borrowings from the *Aḫlāq-e Nāsirī*, the *Book of Ethics*, composed in Persian by Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.[10] A short passage from

*steller bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Città del Vaticano 1947, 113. For an overview of Arabic translations into Syriac, see H. Teule, "Translations from Arabic into Syriac" in R. Ebied (ed.), *VIII Symposium Syriacum, University of Sydney, Eastern Christian Studies* 56, Louvain 2004.

[7] A. Mingana, "An ancient Syriac translation of the Kur'ān exhibiting new verses and variants", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 9 (1925), 188-235 and, after 240, an appendix with the Syriac text of Barṣalībī.

[8] At least, Barṣalībī uses the Syriac text to refute it: "we have confuted them (the Muslims) in many points from their own book; after that we have arranged in one systematic division parts of the Qur'ān, which has been translated from their language into Syriac, and we have shortly refuted it in the column that is below it...", Mingana, *a.c.*, 232 (the Syriac text of this passage in the appendix is illegible).

[9] Cf. S. Griffith, "Dionysius b. Salibi on the Muslims", in H. Drijvers a.o. (ed.), *IVth Symposium Syriacum* 1984 [OCA 229], Rome 1987, 353-356.

[10] Cf. Mauro Zonta, "Fonti Greche e orientali dell'economia di bar-Hebraeus nell'opera 'la crema della scienza'", *Supplemento n. 70 agli annali*, 52 (1992), fasc. 1, Napoli 1992, 49-90. Cf. also M. Zonta, "Structure and Sources of Bar-Hebraeus 'Practical Philosophy'" in *The Cream of Science*, in R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum VII. Uppsala University, Department of Asian and African Languages, 11-14 August 1996* [OCA 256] Rome 1999, 279-292.

Nāsir's *kitāb al-aḫlāq* can also be found in Barhebraeus' own *Book of Ethics*, known as the *Ethicon*.[11]

Another conspicuous example of Barhebraeus using and translating Islamic texts is the *Swād Sufyā*, a work composed at the request of some colleagues (*'aḥē*), wishing to be initiated into the principles of philosophy, which are explained to them with the help of Avicenna's theories as he found them in the *kitāb al-Najāt* or the *Šifā'*.[12] His so-called "Laughable Stories" also deserve mention. This work is partly a translation of an Arabic collection of wise sayings by famous persons, belonging to the genre of *adab*, known as the *Kitāb naṯr ad-Durr*. Its author was *Abū Sa'd Manṣūr*, a literator from Persia from the 11th century, whose sometimes salty sense of humour apparently appealed to Barhebraeus, who does not hesitate to present his Christian readership with the unexpurgated version of some of Abū Sa'd's anecdotes.[13] This example reminds us how much Barhebraeus was influenced by the standards and tastes of his Islamic surroundings. Finally, his two books on spirituality, the already mentioned *Ethicon* and the *Book of the Dove*, also contain many passages borrowed in a most literal way from al-Ghazālī and other Islamic authors.[14]

What distinguishes these works from translations in the strict sense of the word is that the author, when selecting passages from Islamic works and incorporating them into his own framework of ideas, is not prepared to reveal the identity of his sources. There is no mention whatsoever of Ṭūsī, Ghazālī or others, and only indirectly of Avicenna. One could explain this silence by referring to the fact that such was the normal practice of his time. We need only think of the work of Ghazālī, who copied intensively from his predecessors without acknowledging the provenance of his sources.[15] But in the case of Christian authors using Islamic texts, there may be something different at stake, viz. a certain

[11] See H. Teule, "'La critique du Prince'. Quelques aspects d'une philosophie politique dans l'oeuvre de Barhebraeus", in G. J. Reinink and A. C. Klugkist (ed.), *After Bardaisan. Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J.W. Drijvers* [OLA 89], Louvain 1999, 287-294.

[12] See H. Janssens, *L'entretien de la sagesse. Introduction aux oeuvres philosophiques de Barhebraeus*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège LXXV, Liège 1937.

[13] U. Marzolph, "Die Quelle der Ergötzlichen Erzählungen des Bar Hebräus", *OC* 69 (1985), 81-125.

[14] See A. Wensinck, *Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove together with some chapters from his Ethicon*, Leiden 1919. H. Teule, *Gregory Barhebraeus. Ethicon Mēmrā I*, CSCO 534/5, Louvain 1993.

[15] Cf. H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzali*, Jerusalem 1975, 18f.

reluctance to reveal the Islamic origin of some particular ideas. As far as Barhebraeus is concerned, it is clear that he even explicitly tries to keep his readers in the dark about these Islamic influences by substituting too obviously Islamic allusions by Christian examples, converting quotations from the Qur'ān into citations from the Bible, not mentioning Islamic key figures by their names or replacing their names by those of Christian authorities. To give a few examples: the famous traditionist (*muḥaddiṯ*) Abū Hurayra, remains anonymous and is introduced as: *malpānā (')nāš 'āmar*, some teacher says; the same holds true for the founder of the school of law which bears his name, imām al-Šafi'ī, appreciated by Barhebraeus for his views on asceticism. He receives the same anonymous status of *malpānā*; his colleague Ahmad b. Ḥanbal is even christianized, and is referred to as "Mar Ya'qūb", without any further specification. As to the quotations from the Qur'ān, Sura 40, 67 "God created us from dust" is replaced by Genesis 3, 19 "Dust you are...". And to end with an example in the domain of religious practice, the prayer of *istiḫāra*, a characteristic Islamic technical term designating the prayer for seeking advice from God, becomes a neutral and for Christians acceptable "prayer for the journey".[16]

An example of a different kind can be found in the *Cream of Wisdom*. In this philosophical work, Barhebraeus prefers to ascribe views on the repudiation of women, which he apparently shares (!), to the insights of the "wise" neo-Pythagorean philosopher, Bryson, rather than acknowledge their purely Islamic origin.[17] Apparently, the influence of Islam – of Islamic doctrines or persons – is something which should remain hidden,[18] especially in writings which affect the heart of the Christian faith, such as theology or spirituality. It would, indeed, go too far to recognize openly that his description of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem as found in the *Ethicon* is but an adaptation of the prescriptions of the Hajj, or that his views on the technique of the Jesus prayer – again in the *Ethicon* - are entirely based on those of contemporary Sufis.[19]

[16] Most examples are from the *Ethicon*, mēmrā I (transl. Teule), 117, 123, 126, 139;. the example of Ahmad b. Hanbal is taken from the *Laughable Stories* (cf. Marzolph, "Die Quelle", 108).

[17] Zonta, "Fonti greche", 17

[18] Another conspicuous example is his book of "canon law" known as the *Nomocanon*, with many prescriptions borrowed from *fiqh*, as demonstrated by C. Nallino, "Il diritto musulmano nel Nomocanone siriaco cristiano di Barhebreo", *Riv. degli studi orientali* IX (1921-23), 512-580 (reed. in id., *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti a cura di Maria Nallino, IV, Diritto musulmano. Diritti cristiani*, Roma 1942, 214-290

[19] H. Teule, "Al-Ghazālī et Bar'Ebrōyō. Spiritualités comparées » in Patrimoine Syriaque VI (1999), 211-227.

In the case of translations, things appear to be different. In this area, Barhebraeus clearly acknowledges the Islamic origin of the works which he thought fit to be translated into Syriac. Certainly, most of them were, so to say, neutral, and dealt more with culture or science than with religion, e.g. the *Qānūn at-Tibb*, Avicenna's medical canon, a philosophical treatise by his contemporary Aṯīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 1262) or a calendar. But also in the case of the subject of this paper, the *Book of Remarks and Admonitions* of b. Sīnā which has an important religious and mystical component, the translator fully recognizes its Islamic provenance, attributing it explicitly to the *Sābā rišānā Abu 'Alī Ḥusayn Bukārāyā*, the Šayḫ ar-ra'īs from Bukharā. In his *Civil Chronicle* (*maktbanut zabnē*), he also mentions this and proudly recognizes that he is the translator of one of Avicenna's "most wonderful books, the *Book of Admonitions and Remarks*; from Arabic into Syriac".[20]

*1. Previous literature*

The only study devoted to our subject is an article published by Giuseppe Furlani, shortly after the War.[21] I would like to propose two corrections and some additions.

Firstly, according to the Italian scholar, Barhebraeus' version is preserved in only one manuscript, now kept in the Vatican Library. Three other manuscripts, mentioned by Baumstark,[22] are said to contain another work with the same title as that of Avicenna's *Book of Admonitions and Remarks*, but said to have been written by Barhebraeus himself. To my knowledge, no such work of Barhebraeus exists. His younger brother, Barsaumā, does not mention it in the list of his brother's writings which he composed after the latter's death.[23] The same holds true for the other surveys of Barhebraeus' works which are to be found in several manuscripts,[24] or for the biography of Barhebraeus composed by Dioscorus of Gazarta, who carefully enumerates all the works written by Ibn al-'Ibrī.[25]

[20] *The Chronography of Barhebraeus*, St Ephrem the Syrian Monastery 1987, 204, col. 2.

[21] G. Furlani, "La versione siriaca del *kitāb al-Išārāt wat-tanbīhāt* di Avicenna" in *Rivista degli Studi orientali* XXI (1946) 89-101.

[22] A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, 317.

[23] J. Abbeloos and Th. Lamy, *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon ecclesiasticum III*, Louvain 1877, 475-481.

[24] Cf. J.S. Assemanus, *Bibliotheca orientalis II*, Rome 1721, 267-268.

[25] Dioscorus of Gāzartā, *Mēmrā 'al qaddīšā Grigurius Mapryānā d-hu Bar 'Ebrāyā*, ed. Y. Çiçek, Glane-Losser 1995.

Moreover, when studying the description of the manuscripts discarded by Furlani in their respective catalogues, one easily discovers that they contain the same text as that found in the Vatican manuscript. This means that the Syriac translation of the *Išārāt* is preserved in at least the four manuscripts already given by Baumstark. To this number we may add three or possibly four other copies, the description of which will be given in the next paragraph.

Secondly, Furlani[26] mentions that Barhebraeus would have translated only the first part of the *Išārāt*, the part dealing with logic. This observation may hold true for the Vatican manuscript used by Furlani, but from some other manuscripts it appears, that the Maphrian translated the entire work into Syriac, not only the logical introduction. This is confirmed by the passage in the *maktbānut zabnē* quoted above, which does not speak of a translation of the logical part only.

*2. The manuscripts*

The Syriac translation of the *Išārāt* is preserved in at least the following manuscripts. I had the opportunity to study personally a microfilm of number 4. For number 1, I received information from Mr. H. Takahashi.

1. Ms. Pal. Med. Or. 185 (Florence). According to the very succinct description by Assemani,[27] this manuscript was already copied by John, son of Bacchus, from Bartellī in the year 1278 during the lifetime of the translator. To this we may add that it was copied in the village of Bartelli itself (fol. 132v). The middle part of the manuscript (fols 61r-80v) is in a different hand. Besides the Syriac version, the manuscript also gives the almost complete text of the Arabic original, (in Arabic script, not in karšuni as is the case for the other, later manuscripts), beginning on p. 17, l. 7 (*tarkīb fī ḥaqīqatihi…*) of the edition of Forget.[28]
2. Ms. Vat. Syr. 191,[29] the only manuscript retained by Furlani and dated by him to the end of the 15th century. The copyist belonged to the Maronite church. This manuscript too gives the Arabic original (in karšuni), but again incomplete (the beginning corresponds to

[26] Furlani, "*versione syriaca*", 92.

[27] S. E. Assemani, *Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae et Palatinae codicum manuscriptorum orientalium catalogus*, Florence 1742, 327f.

[28] J. Forget, *Ibn Sīnā. Le livre des théorèmes et des avertissements publié d'après les mss. de Berlin, de Leyde et d'Oxford, 1e partie-texte arabe*, Leyde 1892.

[29] S.E. and J.S. Assemani, *Bibl. Apost. Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus III*, 408-409

Forget's edition, p. 17, l. 7; more details are given by Furlani (p. 91).

3. Ms Qandanāt, Malabar. Information about this manuscript is to be found in Mingana's Catalogue of Syriac manuscripts.[30] This manuscript, dated 1808 A. Gr. (1497 A.D., 14th of March), was written in the monastery of Deir al-Zaʿfarān by the priest-monk Thomas, son of Deacon Murād, son of the priest George, from the village of (Qastrā d-)-Kalibin, south of Mardin.[31] In 1927 it was brought to India by the Indian deacon Eugenius, who had been ordained *efisqufō* for the diocese of Qandanāt.[32]
4. Ms Charfeh 744,[33] written by Deacon Yaʿqūb b. Petrus from Bartellī in 1909 (24th of March) in the church of Mart Shmunī of the village of Bartellī.[34] The copyist belonged to the Syrian Orthodox Church, as can be derived from the names of the prelates mentioned in the colophon (fol. 108v). From fol. 8v onwards, the manuscript contains, besides the Syriac text, the incomplete karšuni text, beginning in Forget's edition on p. 18, l. 19 (*wahm watanbīḥ wa-iḏā kānaṭ*.).
Its *Vorlage* was the manuscript written by the priest-monk Thomas, son of Murād from Kastrā d-Kalībīn, in the Monastery of Deir al-Zaʿfarān in the year 1497 (14th of March),[35] viz. the Qandanāt manuscript, mentioned above, of which it reproduces the colophon (fol. 108r).

[30] Cf. A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham*, Vol. I, *Syriac and Garshūnī manuscripts*, Cambridge 1933, 1033-34. See also Ephrem I Barsaum, *Al-luʾluʾ l-manṭūr fī tārīḫ al- ʾulūm wa l-adāb al-suryāniyyah*, Glane-Losser 1987[4], 420, nr 9 and, especially, footnotes 5 and 6.
The collection of Qandanāt is not mentioned by J. van der Ploeg in his *The Christians of St Thomas in South India and their Syriac Manuscripts*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 1983. He mentions, however, a church of the Mother of God in Qandanāt (180).

[31] For the situation of Kalibin: Barsaum, *Al-luʾluʾ*, 519.

[32] This manuscript is probably now in Damascus/Maʿarret-Sednāyā. In the short description of the collection of the mss of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in G.B. Behnām, *Hayāt al-Batriark Afrām*, (Mosul 1959), one finds (150) manuscript "Damascus 6-4", written by Thomas al-Kalibīnī. in Deir al-Za farān in 1497.

[33] B. Sony, *Le catalogue des manuscrits du Patriarcat au couvent de Charfet-Liban* (in Arabic), Beyrouth 1993, 263 (Sony describes this ms in the section of karšuni mss; from his description it is not clear whether the first column of every leaf contains the Syriac text of Barhebraeus' translation).

[34] The name of the copyist is found in the colophon at the end of the ms, on fol 108r, and on fol. 44r (end of the first part, on logics). P. Sherwood incorrectly gives his name as ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ghīwarghīs ("Le fonds patriarcal de la bibliothèque manuscrite de Charfet", *OS* 2 (1957), 93-107, especially 98).

[35] Sherwood, "Le fonds patriarchal", 98:1597**.

5. Ms "Barsaum". In his *History of the Syriac Literature*, Patriarch Ephrem Barsaum mentions a personal copy dated 1907.[36] He made this copy himself, when he was still a monk in Deir al-Zaʿfarān. It too was copied from the Qandanāt manuscript.
6. Mingana 558,[37] dated to the 3rd of October, 1930 and copied at Homs by the priest Michael, son of George b. Jāʾ from Mardin, at the command of Severus Ephrem Barsaum. The manuscript was copied from an original written in 1907 (the "Barsaum" manuscript, mentioned *supra*), of which it gives the colophon together with that of the Qandanāt manuscript.
7. Ms. Paris 249, dated to the year 1633.[38] The copyist was the Maronite scholar Abraham Echellensis. Like the Maronite ms Vat. Syr. 191, it only gives the first part on logic. From Zotenberg's description it is not clear whether this manuscripts also contains the Arabic original, possibly in karšuni.
8. Ms Vat. Syr. Borgia 54, written in 1654.[39] The copyist was the same Abraham Echellensis, who again only copied the part on logic. For this manuscript either we do not know whether it has Avicenna's original Arabic (karšuni) text.
9. Ms Charfeh 743.[40] According to Sony's succinct description, the colophon (fol. 384), written in Syriac, states that the lines of this manuscript were translated from Arabic "into Syriac, i.e. karšuni"; does this mean that this manuscript only gives the karšuni text? But why, then, a colophon in Syriac? In any case, the copyist was the priest-monk Bīlāṭos b. Mīḥtār from the village Qāstrā ʿOrbiš in the district of Jurjur (i.e. in the region of Malatya), who was a monk in the monastery of Deir al-Zaʿfarān. The date given in the colophon could not be read by Sony, but, according to Ephrem Barsaum,[41] the copyist's *floruit* was in the 16th century.

From the foregoing it appears that, for some unknown reason, the manuscripts copied by Maronites only give the first part of the *Išārāt*. Secondly, the Syriac translation did not eclipse the Arabic original, which

[36] Barsaum, *Al-luʾluʾ*, 420.
[37] Mingana, *Catalogue*, 1031.
[38] H. Zotenberg, *Manuscrits orientaux. Catalogue des manusrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaïtes) de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris 1874, 207f.
[39] A. Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques du Musée Borgia aujourd'hui à la Bibliothèque Vaticane", *JA* 10e série (1909) 249-287.
[40] Sony, *Catalogue*, 263.
[41] Barsaum, *Al-luʾluʾ*, 494.

the Syrians continued to read, mostly in karšuni. Strangely enough, the beginning of the karšuni text is not the same in the different manuscripts.

*3. Reasons for the Syriac translation of the Išārāt*

A question to which we should try to find an answer, is why Barhebraeus undertook to make a Syriac translation of such a difficult work as the *Išārāt*. A first reason may be found in the popularity of this work among his favourite authors and in the scientific circles where he felt at home. Thus, Faḫr ad-Dīn ar-Razī, known to Barhebraeus who uses extracts from his work in his theological summa the *Candelabra of the Sanctuary*,[42] showed a strong interest the *Išārāt*.[43] He wrote a commentary on parts of it and composed a summary. The commentary was in its turn commented upon by Nāsir ad-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, who occupied himself during much of his life with the study of the *Išārāt* and who revised parts of his commentary several times.[44] Barhebraeus knew Ṭūsī, he writes sympathetically about him, both in his Syriac and Arabic chronicles[45] and must have met him in Marāgha, where Tūsī was the director of the famous observatory and which was Barhebraeus' favourite place of residence as a maphrian. When one compares the titles of the writings of both authors, one cannot escape the impression that Ṭūsī's scientific career was, so to say, a model for Barhebraeus' own scholarly activities.[46] Thus, Ṭūsī's interest in the *Išārāt* may have played a role in the maphrian's decision to make a translation. Qutb ad-Din al-Shirāzī (1236-1311), a younger contemporary of Barhebraeus, also working in Marāgha, continued this interest in the *Išārāt* and tried to harmonize the sometimes contradictory views of Ṭūsī and Rāzī.[47] Finally, it might be worthwhile to mention that also the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-Dīn*, Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *opus magnum*, much appreciated and used by Barhebraeus,

[42] Cf. *The Candelabra of the Sanctuary*, part IV, *On the Incarnation*, ed. J. Khoury, *PO* XXXI,1 (1904), 118, where the author, by way of exception, reveals the identity of his source: Faḫr ad-Dīn's *Muhassal*.

[43] Cf. art. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, EI², II 753 (G. Anawati).

[44] The text of Ṭūsī's commentary can be found in S. Donyā's edition of the *Išārāt*, 4 vol., in *Ḏaḫā'ir al-'Arab* 22, Cairo (Dār al-Ma'ārif), n.d.².

[45] Cf. *Chronography* (supra note 19), 478,2 and 479,1 and *Muḫtasar tārīḫ al-duwal*, ed. A. Sālihānī, Beirouth 1890, 501

[46] Cf. H. Koffler, *Die Lehre des Barhebräus von der Auferstehung der Leiber* [OCA 28] Rome 1932, 30f.

[47] EI² V 547-8 (E. Wiedemann). Qutb ad-Dīn was also a student of al-Ṭūsī, and, like Barhebraeus, interested in Ibn Sīnā's *Qānūn*.

contains some passages from the *Išārāt*. Discovering these extracts may have sharpened his interest in this major work of Ibn Sinā.[48]

There was also, however, one specific reason which prompted Barhebraeus to undertake this translation. In the introduction of several manuscripts it is mentioned that "the king of the doctors of the king of the kings of the world, Simeon; son of the priest Yešuʿ from Qalʿah Romaytā, the brilliant sun and radiating star of our times" had asked Barhebraeus to occupy himself with the *Išārāt*. By a piece of luck, this Symeon is a well known person, and his name brings us back to the scientific milieu of Marāgha, where, at the court of Hulagu, he occupied the important function of director of the medical staff, a position which yielded him enormous annual profits.[49] Barhebraeus acknowledges his role as protector of the Christians and of the Jacobite Church. As a medical man he had, of course, a keen interest in science and it was he who had invited Barhebraeus to compose his treatise on astronomy, known as the *Book of the Ascent of the Intellect* (*sullāqā d-hawnā*). This work is entirely based on Greek theories, especially of Ptolemy, but the editor of the work, François Nau, proved that Barhebraeus was only acquainted with them through the intermediary of Arab astronomers.

From his *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* we know that Barhebraeus lectured on Ptolemy to a group of students when he stayed in the city of Maragha.[50] Nau surmizes that the *sullāqā d-hawnā* is the result of these lectures. Maybe this also holds true for the *Išārāt*, the study of which might have been the subject of a course on Avicennian philosophy for Syrian students. This would explain why a Syriac translation of the work was necessary. It is difficult to assume that the Chief Doctor of Hulagu living in Maragha would not know Arabic himself, though we cannot exclude this possibility entirely since he was from Qalʿah Romaytā and Malatya, where Arabic was not the normal language of the Syrian Christians. But the fact that some manuscripts, including the oldest one copied during Barhebraeus' lifetime, also contain the Arabic original, besides the Syriac version, points to an environment of teaching and study.

[48] Cf. S. Pines, "Quelques notes sur les rapports de l'Ihyā' ʾulūm al-dīn d'al-Ghazzālī avec la pensée d'Ibn Sīnā" in *Ghazālī. La raison et le miracle (Islam d'hier et aujourd'hui)*, Paris 1967, 11-16.

[49] See the introduction to Barhebraeus' *sullāqā d-hawnā*, transl. F. Nau, *le livre de l'ascension de l'esprit sur la forme du ciel et de la terre. Cours d'astronomie...par... Barhebraeus, 2° partie*, Paris 1900, 1-2.

[50] *Chron. Ecclesiasticum* II, 444.

*4. The character of the Syriac translation*

It is now time to investigate how Barhebraeus handles the source text. Does he deal with it creatively, in a personal way, skipping and omitting passages as in his other works, or does he confine himself strictly to the role of translator and mediator, trying to render the difficult Arabic text into Syriac as faithfully as possible?

4.1 The Arabic Original

Does the fact that some manuscripts give the Arabic original text, be it in Syriac script, next to the Syriac version, mean that this text was the basis for Barhebraeus' translation, or was it added with a different purpose, e.g., as suggested above, for the training of students? The differences between the karšuni text and the Arabic of the critical editions of Forget and Donya seem minimal and are mostly minor omissions or inversions.[51] The Syriac obviously does not always follow the variants of the karšuni text, though a more definite judgement can only be made after a thorough comparison of the different manuscripts containing the karšuni text. There is, however, an important point that makes me think that the Arabic of the source text of the Syriac version must have been close to the karšuni text. According to the editions of Forget and Donya, the 2nd to the 4th part of the *Išārāt* are divided into ten *anmāṭ*, the plural of *namaṭ*, which means *method*, or *way*, the exact equivalent of the Syriac *šbilā*. In this context, however, Barhebraeus uses the latter term only once,[52] and he divides his translation into ten *mawtbē*. This corresponds rather to *marākiz*, plural of *markaz*, meaning "position", "halting place", etc., which term is indeed found in the karšuni text.

4.2 Islamic influences.

The *Išārāt* is essentially a book of philosophy and of general mystical theories; many comparable texts can be found in Greek philosophical writings. The fourth part, on mysticism, contains certain passages that would not be unbecoming in Christian mystical works. But the *Išārāt* is, of course, firstly a book of Islam, with many *implicit* allusions, but also some *explicit* references to the Islamic religious world. With reference to the theme of the present volume, it seems appropriate to investigate

[51] Some examples are given by Furlani, "*versione syriaca*", 100.

[52] For the sixth *namaṭ* (cf. ms Charfeh 744, fol. 74v). Barhebraeus uses *šbilā* to render *nahj*, the term which marks the subdivisions of the part on logic.

whether this emphasis on Islam constitutes a problem in a translation intended for Christian readership.

I mentioned earlier that in his other works Barhebraeus tries to conceal this Islamic background, but in the *Išārāt* nothing is omitted. The Qur'ān is called, as in the original, the *ktābā alāhāyā*, the Book of God; a passage from the Qur'ān is referred to as a "mēmrā of God most High" (*...qawlihi ta'ālā = mēmreh d-haw m'alay b-kul)*; he translates carefully the allusions to and the quotations from the Qur'ān, and only the reference to Muhammad in the introduction of the *Išārāt* is not translated. With regard to the Qur'anic quotations, it is difficult to decide whether Barhebraeus makes a new, personal translation or whether he makes use of an extant Syriac version. When it is possible to compare them with the quotations given by Dionysius Barsalibi in his tract against the Muslims, one finds one significant difference (Q. VI,76, see *infra*), but the material for comparison is rather limited, since only a few quotations are found in both Barsalibi's work and in Barhebraeus' translation.

Quotations from the Qur'ān in Barhebraeus' translation of the *Išārāt:*

- *Bismillahi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm: bšem alāhā mraḥmānā mraḥpānā* (Dionysius Barsalībī: idem).
- Qur'ān II 257 (*al-'urwah al-wuṯqā*): *šarbuqitā ḥlimtā*
- Qur'ān VI, 76 (*lā uḥibbu l-'āfilīn*: I do not love those who go down): *lā rāḥem(')nā l-hennon d-'ārbīn* (Dionysius Barsalībī has: *lā rāḥem(')nā l-hennon d-'āzlīn*)
- Qur'ān. XLI 53 (*sanurīhim ayyātinā fī l-'āfāq*: we shall show them our signs at the horizons): *hā, nḥawwē l-hon ātwātan b-'urizontihs*

Apparently, Barhebraeus sees no difficulties in translating an Islamic work, fully recognizing its Islamic religious background.

There are however a few allusions to the general and cultural world of Islam, where he takes more freedom. The city of *Mecca*, which is only mentioned by Avicenna by way of an example and could easily have been replaced by another toponym, is rendered by Barhebraeus by the pre-Islamic name of Medina, *Yaṯrib*, without affecting the meaning of the particular passage.[53] When Avicenna speaks of the pre-Islamic Imru l-Qays, "the extraordinary poet",[54] Barhebraeus provides his Syrian readers with the name of – surprisingly – "Homeros powiṭā", the poet Homer, apparently more familiar to his Syrian readers.

[53] Forget, *Ibn Sīnā*, 57.
[54] Forget, *Ibn Sīnā*, 88.

Another, even more notable example is the famous story of *Salamān wa-Absāl*, to which Avicenna makes an allusion in the beginning of the fourth part, dealing with Sufism.[55] This story is known to exist in two different versions. This is not the place to enter at length into the difficult interpretation of their symbolic meaning, since this paper is not on Avicenna, but on Barhebraeus. But in order to understand the latter's translation it is necessary to say a few words about both versions.[56] According to the first one, ascribed to Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq who is credited with an Arabic translation made from Greek, Salmān, a king's son and Absāl, his wet-nurse, were two desperate lovers. In this story, Absāl symbolizes the corporeal powers whereas Salamān represents the rational soul; both cling passionately to each other but are ultimately to be separated, in order for Salamān to be able to reach his final destination, the royal status for which he has been created. In the second version, which we know from a summary given by Naṣir ad-Dīn al-Ṭūsi, who believes Avicenna to be its author, Salamān and Absāl are two half brothers symbolyzing, according to the interpretation of Ṭūsī, the rational soul *(al-nafs al-nāṭiq)*, Salamān, and Absāl, the theoretical intellect (*al-'aql al-naẓarī*). Thus, we are faced with two quite different interpretations, on the one hand two brothers, seen as intellectual faculties which are complementary to each other, and on the other, a man and a woman, soul and body, symbolizing conflicting aspirations. Barhebraeus gives a somewhat surprising translation. Under his hand, Salamān and Absāl become "Solumun and Basiliyā" having, as in the case of Imru l-Qays and Homer, Greek names replacing the Arabic ones. At first sight, one is inclined to think that Barhebraeus alludes to the version ascribed to Ḥunayn, which as said above, had been translated from Greek and contains many names of Greek origin, and where the two persons are indeed a man and a woman. The story as Ḥunayn gives it, however, clearly has the names of Salāmān and Absāl, which makes this assumption questionable.[57] Another solution could be that "Solumun and Basiliyyā" refer to king Solomon and the legendary Queen of Sheba, around whose

[55] Forget, *Ibn Sīnā*, 199.

[56] Cf. H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (204-241: Ch. V: The Recital of Salāmān and Absāl), London 1960; N. Peter Joosse, "An example of Medieval Arabic Pseudo-Hermetism: the Tale of Salāmān and Absāl" in *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXXVIII/2 (1993), 279-293.

[57] The text of Ḥunayn can be found in: Ibn Sīnā, *Tis' rasā'il fi l-hikmah wa t-tabī'iyyāt*, Cairo 1326 AH, 157-180.

mythical relationship many stories circulated. A Syriac version of the Queen's questions to Solomon was known in the West Syrian tradition of roughly the period of Barhebraeus,[58] but it is again unlikely that the names as Barhebraeus gives them have been derived from this apocryphal text, where the name of Solomon is correctly read as *Šlimun* and the Queen of Sheba is called *Malkat Šeba*, not Basiliyyā. Avicenna himself calls the story of Salamān and Absāl a riddle and Barhebraeus does not solve it with his translation, probably intentionally maintaining the enigmatic character of this passage.

### 4.3 Faithfulness to the source-text

The title of the Syriac translation is *ktābā d-remzē wa-m'īranwātā*. One knows the different ways in which modern scholars have tried to render the title of the Arabic original, e.g. *Livre des théorèmes et des avertissements* (Forget), *Livre des directives et des remarques* (A.M. Goichon[59]) or the *Book of Remarks and Admonitions* (Shams Inati[60]). For *Išarāt*, literally 'indications', Barhebraeus chooses the word *remzē*, 'signs'. One may presume that this choice is based on the Arabic text of the *Išarāt*, where Avicenna himself uses the word *ramz*, in order to indicate the symbolic and deliberately ambiguous character of a certain passage, which Barhebraeus seems to apply to the whole work [61]*Tanbīh*, in its turn, is very precisely rendered by *m'īranūtā*, derived from *'ōr*, "to be awake", "something which arouses the attention", which corresponds exactly to the semantic field of *tanbīh* (*nabbaha min an-nawm*) and the function of this term in the context of the *Išarāt*.

Avicenna's work is characterized by a very precise, technical terminology, with terms and expressions borrowed from philosophy and the world of *tasawwuf*. With regard to the philosophical terminology, it is striking to notice that Barhebraeus systematically employs Greek equivalents for the Arabic terms used by Avicenna. The same phenomenon can be observed in his adaptations of passages from the *Najāt* or *Šifā'* in his Cream of Wisdom or in his translation of the ethical philosophy of

[58] Cf. S. Brock, "The Queen of Sheba's Questions to Solomon. A Syriac Version", *Le Muséon* 92 (1979), 331-345.

[59] Beyrouth-Paris 1951

[60] Cf. Shams C. Inati, *Ibn Sīnā Remarks and Admonitions* Part one: logic. Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto 1984; Part IV: *Ibn Sina and Mysticism*, Kegan Paul Int., London-New York, 1996.

[61] The passage of Salman and Absal, Forget, *Ibn Sīnā*, 199.

Naṣīr ad-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.[62] I limit myself to the following examples, taken from the logical introduction:

| Arabic: | Syriac: |
|---|---|
| *ālah* | *organon* |
| *muṭallaṭ* | *ṭrigonon* |
| *šakl* | *eskimā* |
| *qaḍīyyah* (proposition | *proṭasis* |
| *ḥāl* | *ḳaṭasṭasis* |
| *jumlah* | *ḳaṭasṭasis* |
| *nisbah* | *anulugiā* |

This means that for the technical vocabulary Barhebraeus harks back to the classical philosophical terminology which he could find in the extant Syriac translations of Greek philosophical texts and which was generally accepted in the Syrian philosophical schools.

Generally speaking, Barhebraeus' translation is very literal, not only in the sense that it tries to find an appropriate equivalent for each element in the sentences of Avicenna, but that it also takes into account the context in which a particular term is used by the Arabic philosopher. A good example is the word *murīd*, the normal expression used in Sufi circles to indicate a novice who wishes to be initiated into the esoteric sciences or wisdom. As such, Barhebraeus quite appropriately renders this term, in his spiritual writings, such as the *Ethicon* or the *Book of the Dove*, by *šarwāyā*, novice, the normal technical term for candidates for the monastic life. Since in the *Išarāt* the term *murīd* is related to *irādah*, the will as the principle of movement on the mystic path, Barhebraeus renders *murīd* by *meṣṭabyānā*, someone who is moved by *ṣebyānā*, the will.[63]

Another example of this faithfulness, in this case not to the literal text, but to its intention, is the way in which he renders the term *Ḥaqq*. For Avicenna, *Ḥaqq* is the *truth* in a philosophical sense, the first Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-awwal*) or God. It is not always clear which shade of meaning prevails in a particular passage. Instead of translating *ḥaqq* consistently by the same Syriac expression, the maphrian carefully distinguishes between *ḥaqq* as a term where the philosophical aspect is predominant in which case he renders it by *šrārā*, 'truth', and *Ḥaqq* as a designation for God, which he renders by *Šarrirā*, the 'faithful One', the 'trustworthy One'. The following passage is a good example, but it is clear that in

[62] Cf. H. Janssens, *Entretien de la sagesse*, 33 (and the lexicon 333ff.) and Zonta, "Fonti greche", 83ff.

[63] E.g. Forget, *Ibn Sīnā*, 201.

order to establish exactly in which instances Barhebraeus uses *Šarrirā* or *šrārā* one needs a careful edition of the Syriac text.

IX,3 (Forget, p. 199, ms Charfeh 744, fol. 96r; cf. translation of Inati, slightly adapted, p. 82):

> Asceticism (*zuhd, nzīrutā*) for one who is not a gnostic (*ʿārif, yadduʿtān*) is a kind of business deal... For the gnostic it is a kind of abstinence which distracts one's most innermost thought from Truth (*Ḥaqq, Šarrirā*)...
>
> Worship (*ʿibādah, ʾanwayutā*) for one who is not a gnostic is a kind of business deal... For the gnostic it is a kind of training of one's concerns and psychic powers... to orient them... from the side of error to the side of truth (*ḥaqq, šrārā*)...

Another important concept in the work of Avicenna is the notion of knowledge, for which he employs different terms, without clearly indicating which are the differences between them. Barhebraeus carefully chooses a different Syriac equivalent for each Arabic term:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *maʿrifa* | (gnosis) | *idaʿtā* |
| *muʿārafa* | (? intimate knowledge) | *ʿrimutā* |
| *ʿirfān* | (cf. *ʿārif* =*yadduʿtānā*, also found in other works) | *yadduʿtānutā* |

*Conclusion*

It is certainly much too early to formulate definite conclusions about the quality of Barhebraeus' translation of the *Išarāt*. It is, however, clear that Barhebraeus tried to render into Syriac all the different nuances of Avicenna's text in a very careful way, incidentally offering a personal interpretation rather than a strict rendering of the original text. His translation is also a good example of the fact that at least certain Christians of the 13th century shared the philosophical tastes and preferences of their Islamic neighbours and were not afraid of studying scholarly works originating in the world of Islam.

By way of an *exordium* I give here an example of the Syriac version. It is taken from the logical introduction and shows the faithful manner in which Barhebraeus handles his source text, respecting Avicenna's examples borrowed from Arabic and Persian, slightly adapting them to the Syriac idiom.[64]

[64] The Arabic text is taken from Forget's edition (27/8); I include in brackets the variants as found in the karšuni text of ms Charfeh 744; the Syriac translation by Barhebraeus is as given in this latter manuscript.

(It must be known that every predicative proposition must have, in addition to the idea of the subject and that of the predicate [Syriac: of the predicate and the subject], the idea of the union between the two. This is a third idea in addition to the other two. If one presumes that words correspond to ideas in number, than this third (idea) must have a third word signifying it. In some languages this word may be omitted, as is the case at times in the original Arabic language. An example of this is the statement "*Zayd kātib*" [Syr.: Socrates *kātubā*], when it must be "*Zayd huwa kātib*"[Socrates *itaw kātubā*]. But in some languages this word cannot be omitted. For example, in original Persian "*ast*" (cannot be omitted) when we say "*Zayd* [Socrates] *dabīrast*." This word is called "copula".)[65]

[65] Transl. Inati, I, 84 (cf. note 61)

# THE CREDAL POEM *HAWATOV XOSTOVANIM* ("I CONFESS IN FAITH") OF ST. NERSĒS THE GRACEFUL

JAMES R. RUSSELL

It is, perhaps, a truism that the men who by pen and sword help to shape the identity of a people become in later times defining factors themselves of nationhood, and are encountered, emulated, or re-evaluated, by others of those later ages impelled to redefine their identity, and are both borne up by, and laboring under, the influence of the great figures of the past. In the fourth century, the Arsacid nobleman Anak Surēn Pahlaw, known to later generations as St. Gregory the Illuminator[1] converted his cousin, king Trdat (Tiridates, MIr. Tīrdāt). A few generations later, Maštoc' or Maždoc', whose name means either, humbly, "hide-scraper", or perhaps "bearer of good tidings" (cf. Av. *mižda-*, Pers. *moždagānī*, etc.),[2] following the inventive Mānī, shaped from the Aramaic of the Iranian world and the Greek letters (with the help of an angelically-guided vision)[3] an alphabet for Armenian by which the Bible and the account of the Conversion, the latter ascribed to an otherwise unknown secretary of Trdat named, probably not coincidentally, Agathangelos, i.e., "bearer of good tidings", might be rendered into the national tongue, which hitherto had survived through an oral literature in which epic and lyric recitation had played the most prominent role.

[1] The Armenian term *lusaworič'* may perhaps render a Zoroastrian conception; for Zarathuštra "enlightened" (Phl. *rōšnēnīd*) king Vīštāspa and his court. An Armenian hymn plays upon the manner in which by the fire of the Spirit, the men chosen of the sinful Arsacid race by Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, extinguished the flame of the fire-worshipping (*krakapašt*) Persians. It is a common Zoroastrian belief that the light of a greater fire vitiates that of a lesser; so the imagery of light at the very inception of Armenian Christianity, whilst wholly well-founded within developing Christian imagery, cannot but have exerted a particular appeal amongst Armenians who had long professed the Iranian faith.

[2] See James R. Russell, "On the Name of Mashtots," *AArmL*, 15, 1994, pp. 67-78, on the etymology and possibly link to the Agathangelos.

[3] See James R. Russell, "On the Origins and Invention of the Armenian Script," *Le Muséon*, Tome 107, Fasc. 3-4, 1994, pp. 317-333, on the visionary aspect of the work of Maštoc' and its analogues in shamanistic writing systems, the comparison of the saint to Daniel, and the Manichaean reforms in writing the Aramaic script in the area, that preceded the invention of the Armenian letters.

The model person whom a Christian of Late Antiquity might follow could be the holy man, *theios anthrōpos*, or the sage, *gnōstikos*; and Gregory the saint and Maštoc' the visionary scholar, "better than Daniel", both emerging from the stratum of the Parthian nobility and therefore integrated from the start into Armenian conceptions of legitimacy, defined Armenia as Christian and became exemplars of its character, whilst, by the medium of a written language anchored in Syriac and Greek translated works, identifying Armenia irrevocably as distinct from Mazdean Iran and as incapable of being swallowed up by the Byzantine Christian power to the west or the Aramaic Christian culture to the south. Teaching Christianity, not only to the aristocracy, but to the nation as a whole, was an important aspect of the evangelistic work of the early patriarchs of the Armenian Church. So Koriwn writes in his *Life* of Maštoc': *...Skseal eranelwoyn Mašt'oc'i čaŕs yačaxagoyns, diwrapatums, šnorhagirs, bazmadimis i lusaworut'enē ew i hiwt'oy groc' margarēakanac' kargel ew yawrinel, li amenayn čašakawk' awetaranakan hawatoc'n čšmartut'ean. Yors bazum nmanut'iwns ew awrinaks i yanc'aworac's asti, aŕawelagoyn vasn yarut'ean yusoyn aŕ i handerjealsn, yeriwreal kazmeal, zi heštənkalk' ew diwrahasoyc'k' txmaragunic'n ew marmnakan irawk' zbałeloc'n linic'in, aŕ i st'ap'el ew zart'uc'anel ew hastahimn aŕ i xostac'eal awetisn k'aǰalerel.* "The blessed Mašt'oc' commenced to order and compose frequent orations, recounted with ease, gracefully written, and various, from the illumination and the juice of the prophetic books, replete with all the styles of the Gospel faith of truth. He composed and arranged many allegories and examples from this transitory life in them, especially about the hope for the future of resurrection, so that they might be easily received and readily accessible to the simplest and to those absorbed in material affairs, in order to rouse and waken them, and to encourage them on a firm foundation to the good tidings promised."[4] Maštoc' preached in Gołt'n (modern Naxiǰewan), where pre-Christian Armenian traditions and beliefs still thrived, in an oral culture. The term *txmar-agoyn*, "simple-st", meaning, one thinks, not so much foolish as simply unlettered, is of interest in this passage; for Nersēs Šnorhali will, as we shall see presently, use the very same word in the very same context- that of his own evangelistic efforts to teach the faith and inculcate it amongst Armenians of his day who

[4] Manuk Abełyan, ed., Koriwn, *Vark' Maštoc'i*, Erevan: Haypethrat, 1941, p. 78 (ch. 20).

were not literate, and who were swayed, to other faiths or to no religion at all.

There is a third type of ideal person who may be identified in this stage of nation-forming, a paragon of Christian virtue in the literal sense of that term as manliness- the warrior-martyr. St. Vardan, of the Mamikonean clan who were the hereditary commanders-in-chief of the Armenian Arsacid armies, is likened by tradition to the champion of Hellenistic Israel, Judah the Maccabee. As Robert Thomson has justly observed, Ełišē Vardapet's *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* of defense against a Sasanian campaign of forcible re-conversion to Zoroastrianism presents the Armenians as upholding their *hayreni awrēnk'*, "customs of the fathers"- the term is used often, to mean a Christian way of life. Since for the Armenians contemporary to Vardan who are represented as employing the expression, the Christian faith in their country had been a major force with political standing for at most somewhat under a century and a half; and its written expression in Armenian, only a third of that- Ełišē was either writing from the vantage-point of a much later time, by which date Christianity really was old enough in the land fairly to be thought ancestral; or else he is indulging in wishful thinking. Neither the comparison of Ełišē to Łazar's account of the events, nor the identification of the Hermetic and other sources of his citations, nor, indeed, any of his characterizations of Sasanian rulers compel us to reject utterly his claim to have been an eyewitness of the battle of Avarayr and to assign him to the reign of Xusrō I Anōšarwān. His narrative does not bristle with anachronisms,[5] as that of Movsēs Xorenac'i does, and, whatever the date of his *History*, he was fully aware of how recent, for Vardan's generation, the Conversion really had been.

So it would appear that, whatever the date of the book, Ełišē's frequent employment of the strongly-marked Iranian loan *awrēnk'* (OIr. **abi-daina*-; Phl. *ēwēn-ag*, cf. the *āyēnbed*, "master of (religious) cere-

[5] Just the opposite, in fact. Prof. Nina Garsoïan mentioned to me in conversation (New York, Dec. 1999) something I had never noticed before: that the Sasanian law code *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān* mentions the removal from his post and punishment of Mihrnarseh; and this must be the *wuzurg framadār* of Yazdagird II. I observed that the text of Ełišē records both his dismissal and punishment and the reason for it- the botched campaign that had hurt and alienated the Armenians, for whom somebody other than the King of Kings had to take the blame! It is the kind of detail a contemporary might have reported. Ełišē's famous citation of a Hermetic passage ("Death understood is immortality") whose translation belongs to the Hellenophilic school, might be thought to militate against an early dating- it cannot be an interpolation- but it may equally be argued that the first Armenian calques upon Greek began with the studies of the pupils of Maštoc'.

mony" at the Sasanian court; Pers. *āyīn*, "custom", as in the books called *āyīn-nāme*, "Mirrors for Princes", where the word has special reference to the customary deportment of noblemen) was a deliberate attempt to force the issue, to insist that a religion neither ancestral nor universally customary was both- to force an indissoluble union of the terms "Christian" and "Armenia", forcing the religion into the mold of sanctioned national institutions of immemorial age- cultural, social, and political. Ełišē's usage has the corollary effect of denying the possibility of being Armenian without being Christian as well. Yet he reports that the Sasanian proselytizers and their Armenian confederates enticed people to attend nocturnal revels, during which heathen songs were performed for their enjoyment- that is, the epic and lyric recitations of the *gusans*, "minstrels".[6] Of course, nothing could have been more ancestral

[6] In the text, the Magi are unable to persuade the Armenians to follow their form of Zoroastrianism; so the traitor Vasak Siwni takes over, despite the protestations of the disappointed and relenting Sasanian envoys. *Oč' inč' kamec'aw unkn dnel nma marzpann, zi srti mtawk' kaleal ēr zparskakan awrēnsn. Sksaw aynuhetew patrel zomans karaseaw ew zomans ołok'akan baniwk': zřamikn amenayn aheł baniwk' spařnac'eal srtat'ap' ařnēr. Hanapazord ařatac'oyc' zročiks tačarin, ew yerkarēr znuags uraxut'ean, mašelov zerkaynut'iwn gišerac'n yergs arbec'ut'ean ew i kak'aws lktut'ean, k'ałc'rac'uc'anēr omanc' zkargs eražštakan ew zergs het'anosakans, mecapēs govut'iwn matuc'anēr awrinac' t'agaworin. Bereal ēr ew yark'unust bazmut'iwn karaswoy, ew mium mium kašař gałt xt'ēr i patčařs pargewi ew patuoy: ew bazum nengut'eamb zanmeł mardik hrapurēr ew yink'n arkanēr.* "But the *marzpan* [i.e., Vasak] did not wish at all to heed him, for he had accepted the Persian ways in his heart of hearts. Thereafter he began to inveigle some with possessions, and others with cajoling words. Threatening all the common folk with frightful words, he made them lose heart. Daily he made more abundant the daily offerings to the palace, and drew out the chords of delight, wearing away the length of the nights in songs of inebriation and in partridge-dances of lewdness; sweetening for some the musical scales and heathen songs, he rendered praise greatly to the ways of the king. He had brought also from the royal court many possessions, and incited people, one by one, with bribes and honor; and with great deceitfulness he charmed sinless men and drew them to him" (Minasyan ed., Erevan, 1957, pp. 63-4). The "ways" are *awrēnk'*, a key term, as we have seen. Vasak's strategy seems to have been to distribute, either privately when discretion required it, or at feasts when ostentation suited the purpose better, prestigious objects brought from the Sasanian court to fellow noblemen he wished to attract through honor: these *karasik'* would most likely have been silver-gilt bowls and cups with royal portraits and hunting scenes. The *kargk'*, "orders" of music I take to be the various *dastgāhs* suitable to different occasions, seasons, or times of day- cf. the Indian *ragas*. Threats to commoners could have been simple coercion, or else the employment of texts like the *Ardā Vīrāz Nāmag*, with its threats of damnation in hell for unbelievers in the Zoroastrian faith. To the "heathen songs", compare the "satanic songs" St. Nersēs Šnorhali mentions in the prose introduction to *Hawatov xostovanim-* songs which people memorize with alacrity, though they do not manage to learn Christian prayers! Everywhere in medieval Christendom, the Church was at war with the the survivals of paganism in the entertainments of popular culture. It is rare that proponents of the latter, though, are afforded a chance to leave us their own thoughts in writing on the matter, given the ecclesiastical monopoly over manuscripts that survive. So it is perhaps worth-

or customary than precisely these celebrations, whose very popularity was a measure of the degree to which they alarmed the Christian clergy and undermined its own grip on the nation. A descendant of the Illuminator, Gregory Magistros Pahlawuni, Byzantine *dux* of Mesopotamia, one of the very few learned writers of any prominence in mediaeval Armenia who was not a churchman, whose Greek seal proudly labels him an Arsacid, cites approvingly, a full half millennium after Vardan, the elegy of king Artašēs. This is a fragment of oral epic whose source may go back to the early second century B.C. The king, recalling the royal hunt on the morning of Nawasard, the New Year feast, sighs, *mek' p'oł haruak' ew t'mbki harkanēak', orphs awrēn ēr t'agaworac'*: "We blew the trumpet and struck the drum, as was the custom (*awrēn*) of kings." Part of the real ancestral custom of Armenia, then, was the heroic epic, with the ethos of the warrior and his virile amusements, the image of the armed cavalier. We see it clearly, little-altered by the new values of Christianity, in the portrayal in the *Buzandaran*[7] of P'awstos of Vardan's fourth-century ancestor, Mušeł Mamikonean. The Persian king of kings hails him in the banquetting tent as the brave rider of the white horse; and the recital of the treacherous killing of the hero on the

while to cite the following remarks of an Iranian Armenian merchant, Elias Mušełean, who was arrested as a Persian spy by the Russians at Astrakhan. He copied a songbook in 1721, and appended this colophon: *Girk' xałic' eražštakanac' yarmareal ayl ew ayl aranc' ew pēspēs kapakc'ut'eanc' xərt'naimac' irac' aysink'n banastełc aranc' hnareal: vasn aynorik kamec'a hnareal aranc' asmunk'n grel ast lsoyealn, or i marmnawor xraxut'iwnk's ełbarc': aysu uraxanaln law hamarim, k'an t'ē bambasaxōsel zayls: ełew yamin tn. 1721, yunwari 25: sksec'i Dawrēž k'ałak'in orn ayžm tiren azgn parsic': gcagrec'aw caŕayi Ēlias Astuacatrean Mušieanc', cnunds Karnoy: serunds Xotrǰroy gawaŕin, c'ełic'n Gaspareanc'*. "Book of musical songs composed by divers hands, and obscure locutions on various subjects- that is, contrived by poets. I wanted to inscribe the sayings of skillful men heard here, which are for the bodily pleasures of the brethren. I think it better to make merry this way, than to slander other people. It was 25 January of the year of our Lord 1721 when I began this at Tabriz, which the Persians now rule: it was inscribed by the servant Elias Mušełeanc', son of Astuacatur. I was born at Karin [Erzurum], my lineage being of the Gaspareans of Xotrǰur province" (cit. by G. T'arverdyan, ed., *K'yoŕ-ōłli žołovrdakan vipasanut'iwn*, Erevan: ArmFAN, 1941, p. 11). "Brothers" here means most likely his fellow laypeople, rather than members of a fraternal order of the sort discussed below. Arm. *xał*, lit. "game", is a folk song.

[7] It is regrettable that Prof. Anahit Périkhanian's explanation of Arm. *buzand*, generally considered to mean "Byzantine", from an unattested Iranian compound **bavatzanta-*, hence "epic history", a supposition unsupported by solid evidence, has gained uncritical acceptance (see A. Périkhanian, "Sur arménien *buzand*," in Dickran Kouymjian, ed., *Armenian Studies in memoriam Haig Berbérian*, Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Fdn., 1986, pp. 653-7). Whoever Faustus was, his colorful tale of Aršak as Antaeus in Šābuhr's tent is attested also in Greek- a Byzantine connection, if the source is not the Armenian book itself.

field of battle is patterned clearly upon the prototype from the ancient stratum of Kayanian epic, remembered in the Parthian *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, "The Memorial of Zarēr".[8]

Whilst Mušeł fits neatly into ancient epic tradition, Vardan as a literary figure is both a continuator and an underminer of the Parthian heroic type of his ancestors: for all his martial valor, he accepts death willingly, as a Christian martyr. His very name, Vardan, a MIr. active participle, *vardān*, meaning "growing" that was customary in the Mamikonean family, is linked, typologically and etymologically, to Arm. *vard*, "rose"; and from there, to the redness of blood and the homological type of the Sun- both ancient images that Christians co-opted, re-employing them as symbolic of Christ and His redemptive blood shed in self-sacrifice, culminating in victory. By this infusion of the Christian trope of martyrdom into the ancient type of the Armeno-Parthian hero, with the devaluation and rejection of the pre-Christian *awrēnk'*, of which only parts are absorbed into the new Law, an Armenian Christian identity is forged in Late Antiquity, partly with the use of Christian models, partly by the re-interpretation of older ones; rooted in the authority of the dynastic families- the *naxarars*- and exemplified by an élite of the saintly, the learned, and the well-born.

The eclipse of ancient Iranian society, and the early centuries of Umayyad Arab rule in Armenia, did not at first profoundly affect this pattern; but a series of Armenian revolts in the early Abbasid period, culminating- as Nina Garsoïan has stressed- in the disastrous battle of Bagrewand, led in the last quarter of the eighth century to the destruction

[8] On this text, see J.R. Russell, "A Parthian *Bhagavad Gītā* and Its Echoes," in Jean-Pierre Mahé, Robert W. Thomson (eds.), *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoian*, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996, pp. 17-35; and J.R. Russell, "An Epic for the Borderlands: Zariadris of Sophene, Aslan the Rebel, Digenes Akrites, and the Mythologem of Alcestis in Armenia," in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert* (UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series, Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces, 3) Costa Mesaimazda Publishers 2002, 147-183. It is noteworthy, also, that the Parthian term for a literary memorial, with its special reference here to the beginnings of the Mazdean religion, seems to have been the one selected to render "Gospel" in Armenian, *awetaran*, from *ayād*, "memorial", with the suffix *-aran*, "collection" (from MIr. *-dān*), if one accepts the plausible etymology offered by Prof. Charles de Lamberterie ("Le nom de l'Évangile en arménien," in *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra Culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* XLIII, Spoleto, 1996, pp. 779-823). He noted the usage of "Memorial" in Greek for Christ's life. But, more importantly for the milieu into which the Armenian text of the Gospel was introduced, *awetaran* would have a direct resonance with traditional religious literary forms, representing yet another Christian co-optation of the pre-existing spiritual culture.

of traditional, *naxarar*-based society in the country. The destruction extended, as might be expected, to the cultural institutions that had been most dependent on *naxarar* patronage. An observable effect of the weakening of institutions of learning, for instance, is the collapse around this time of Classical Armenian as a living language and the appearance of Middle Armenian, with its strongly local variants, as a literary medium in a decentralized culture whose earlier flower lay dead on the field. Byzantine encroachments and deportations, too, left Armenia increasingly vulnerable to waves of attack and migration: Kurds from the south and Turks from the north and east- and the slow migration of Armenians out of their heartland and into regions to the west and south-west: Cappadocia, then Cilicia- a process whose tempo quickened through the eleventh century, with the fall of Ani and the Seljuk victory at the battle of Manazkert in 1071.

The Armenians are generally held to have constituted the largest ethnic group in the Byzantine Empire, after the Greeks (and Hellenized Anatolians, one would add) themselves.[9] Though the number of Armenians in the world has been drastically reduced by the Genocide of 1915, the dispersal of survivors into the Diaspora, and the further diminution of the Soviet Armenian population as a result of civil war, World War II, Stalinist purges, and economic hardship, the Armenian population even before the catastrophes of the 20th century was much smaller than one might have expected it to be, given the very large number of Armenians, and the vast extent of their country, around the tenth century. Hellenization of many who migrated westwards will have been one factor in the reduction of their numbers; but conversion to Islam, probably on a larger scale than the Christian sources would be wont to admit, must have been another factor. The process is illustrated, and reflected in unschooled folk memory, in an interesting vernacular legend recorded by Abp. Garegin Yovsēp'eanc' and published in his *P'šrank'ner žołovrdakan banahiwsut'iwnic'* ("Morsels from Folk Lore", Tiflis, 1892), in which are combined a narration of the standard life of St. George and a legend on the foundation of the monastery P'utki S. Georg of Moks.[10] The word *p'utki* derives from Greek *pandokeion*, "inn, hotel" (cf. the

[9] Nina Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire," in Hélène Ahrweiler, Angeliki E. Laiou (eds.), *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998, p. 53.

[10] For a full translation of the legend, with a discussion of the monastery and its cult, which I trace back to the veneration of the Zoroastrian *yazata* Sraoša, see J.R. Russell, *An Armenian Epic: The Heroes of Kašt*, Ann Arbor: Caravan Books, Anatolian and Caucasian Studies Series, 2000.

more common Arm. form, in both mediaeval and modern texts, *pandok(i)*), *via* Aramaic:[11] the shrine, called *dīra xanī*, "monastery of the inn", by the local Kurds, was a shelter for travellers on the dangerous pass south from the Lake Van basin into the high mountains of Moks. A miraculous cock, selected by the saint in dreams communicated to farmers, lived there and crowed to inform travellers whether to carry on or to wait out a storm it could feel coming, even if the weather at the moment was fine.

In the legend, St. George dutifully fights infidels, as far west as the Frankish lands of the west, in the service of the emperor at Rūm- as Armenians often did. He dies and is resurrected several times; but when his final death comes, his head is reverently placed in a jar (Arm. *putik*- this, then, is the *Volksetymologie* of *p'utki*). The hermit who guards the sacred relic, at Ozm(i) in the Van region, becomes increasingly disturbed at the proliferation of Muslims in the vicinity, and finally goes to ask advice of the Armenian priest in a nearby village. The priest turns to him, with the startling, sinister snarl: *Here vīve, ez jī musalmanim*- "Beat it! I'm a Muslim, too!"- in Kurdish! The tale is of relatively recent date, but it does incorporate much traditional material from the saint's life- and Armenian folklore of the Van region and environs contains a great deal of material from the Apocrypha to the New Testament and from other early Christian sources- and it expresses succintly and dramatically the character of conversion from Christianity to Islam as it probably occurred centuries ago, and certainly did in more recent times. In most cases, becoming a Muslim meant the loss, within a generation or so, of the spoken Armenian language, and, always, immediate loss of the written language and literature, which are entirely Christian and thus incompatible with the culture of Islam in the Near East. The exception to the first part of this rule, as it were- the rapid loss of the spoken language- is recent, special, and isolated: the retention of a de-Christianized Pontic dialect of Armenian by the Muslim converts of the region of Hamšēn and Hopa, in the densely wooded mountains south of the Black Sea coast, just south of Poti and Batumi.[12]

[11] The Greek word is loaned into Arabic as *funduq*; and the Gk. is attested in Syria in the form *pondokhion*: see Edward Lipinski, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar*, Leuven: Peeters, 1997, p. 552 para. 63.10.

[12] This dialect is the same as the one used by Armenian Christians who fled Pontus during the 1915 Genocide and settled in Sukhumi and other coastal cities of the Soviet Caucasus. These Armenians of Hamšēn- Homšec'is, as they call themselves; and their language, *homšec'ma*- were converted to Islam under threat of force no more than three centuries ago. The word *hay*, "Armenian", is unknown to them; whilst Turkish *ermeni*,

In Cilicia and contiguous regions south of Greater Armenia, Armenian migrants forced by sundry privations- war, invasion, nomadic migration- to re-establish the essentially ecclesiastical and clan-based political and social framework of their lives, found themselves sharply challenged by the pressures of the Byzantine Church and Unitor movement, and by the militant, triumphant, successful, growing Islamic *'umma*. Before considering the career of St. Nersēs Šnorhali and his works countering these threats, there is yet another factor, or a cluster of them, to consider, which also compromised the integrity of the Christian Armenian community. This was that category of being which was outside Armenian Orthodoxy, yet not so far as to entail the radical loss of a recognizably Armenian identity altogether. Heretics- Paulicians, and, later on, their T'ondrakec'i successors, were the largest groups- retained their Armenian speech and some of their ancestral customs, yet frequently formed alliances with Muslims to resist persecution by the Armenian and Byzantine Churches. From the descriptions of heresy in the period provided by Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, it is evident that the T'ondrakites' rejection of animal sacrifice and other Armenian Orthodox rituals was not, principally, the recrudescence of Manichaeism that the cult's detractors stereotypically insisted it was: moral dualism and rejection of earthly materialism is not sufficient cause for such a label. Still less was it a justification of the licentious behavior of the "extinguishers of the lamps" (Arm. *čragamah*, Pers. *čirāgh-koš*, etc.).[13] Perhaps Soviet historians came close to a clear understanding of heresy within the Armenian Christian community as a reasoned social rebellion against ecclesiastical and secular corruption and concentration of power; except that one must also credit the religious motive to which the Soviet scholars were of

"Armenian", signifies a drunkard- perhaps because wine is allowed to Christians. The Turkish régime, not surprisingly, forces their village teachers to instruct children in the exact opposite of the truth, as is usual in Turkish treatment of any Armenian matter- to wit, that the Homšec'is are Turks who were forcibly Armenized, but now have the freedom to return to their Turanian roots. My colleague, Prof. Bert Vaux of the Dept. of Linguistics at Harvard, has studied the dialect minutely; and together we have analyzed a Homšec'i folktale that was originally Armenian Christian, but has been de-Christianized, with some loss of sense attendant on that impoverishment (see B. Vaux et al., "Ethnographic Materials from the Muslim Hemshinli," *AArmL* 17, 1996, pp. 28-9, 34). Homšec'ma retains from Christendom the verb *xač'ec'nuš* (i.e., standard Arm. *-nel*), "to make the Sign of the Cross", which is considered auspicious; of course *hač* "Cross" is a common Arm. loan into Turkish and Kurmanci.

[13] Because of the stereotypical character of this accusation in diverse countries, it is too often assumed that it never had any firm basis in reality when it was made; but there were, it seems, candle-extinguishers: see J.R. Russell, "The word *chragamah* and the rites of the Armenian goddess," *JSAS* 5 (1990-1991), pp. 157-172.

necessity oblivious, at least in writing- from which one might conclude that the T'ondrakites were a native, nascent Protestant movement analogous to those that sprung up in mediaeval Catholic Europe. To the extent that the movement found its base in the secular populace, it partook of that culture, with its pagan and Muslim undercurrents.[14]

Then there were Armenians who either had never converted to Christianity in the first place, or else had reverted to pre-Islamic Iranian beliefs current in the Kurdish milieu of northern Mesopotamia and the mountainous region south of Lake Van: the religions of the Yezidis, Yaresan, and Ahl-i Haqq exemplify the latter type, with greater or lesser departure from Islamic norms; whilst the Armenian *Arewordik'* are to be understood as the former. (The Kurdish groups are categorized often with the Alevi *ghulat* sects, within the Muslim conceptual framework; though Iranists tend to recognize them as entirely distinct from Islam.) Kirakos of Ganjak mentions, for example, that St. Nersēs Šnorhali composed hymns for his bodyguards at the fortress of Hṙomkla after he overheard them singing paganly devotional paeans to the rising Sun. His hymns, based upon the Psalms, are *Yišesc'uk' i gišeri zanun k'o, Tēr* ("Let us remember Thy name, O Lord, in the night...") and *Zarṭ'ik', p'aṙk' im* ("Wake, my heart..."). These continued to be sung down to the present century by pilgrims on their way to Šnorhali's fortress, near the city of Aintab (Tk. Gaziantep).[15] The bodyguards must have been

[14] On the Paulicians, see N.G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, The Hague: Mouton, 1967, with recent critical comments by Janet and Bernard Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650-c. 1405*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, pp. 292-3; Vrej Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, London: Kahn & Averill, 1987, is the most recent work on the later heresy. See also J.R. Russell, "The Last of the Paulicians," *Hask hayagitakan taregirk'* (*Hask* 1995-6 [1997]), Antelias, Lebanon, pp. 33-47.

[15] Arm. *p'aṙk'*, "glory", from OIr. **farnah-*, translates literally Heb. *kāvōd*, whose idiomatic meaning here is "heart". A similar mechanical translation yields Arm. *ułłap'aṙ*, "(rendering) right glory" from Gk. *orthodoxos*, "having the right opinion"- selecting the second, wrong meaning of *doxa*. It is possible, though not provable, that the Armenians' fondness for this ancient Zoroastrian image of divinely-bestowed sunlike glory (pagan Baršamin was *spitakap'aṙ*, Av. **spaētitō.xvarənah* "white-gloried"; the Christian God is *hrašap'aṙ*, i.e., **frašō.xvarənah-* "miraculous in glory"!) predisposed them to employ *p'aṙk'* in translation wherever possible. On the two hymns, see J.R. Russell, article in *Hask* 1997 cited above, and Gēorg A. Sarafean (Kevork A. Sarafian), *Patmut'iwn Ant'ēpi Hayoc'*, Vol. I, Los Angeles, CA, 1953, pp. 588-591. The two hymns by Šnorhali form a part, also, of the Night Office of the Armenian Church, which includes additional compositions of his. *Yišesc'uk' i gišeri...* ("Let us remember thy name, O Lord, at night...") is "sung only when, owing to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, vigil and night offices are required" (Bedros Norehad, tr., Malachia Ormanian, *A Dictionary of the Armenian Church*, New York: St. Vartan Press, 1984, pp. 103-5). It is followed by *Zarṭ'ik'*...

Christians; but Šnorhali was evidently worried that their faith did not extend very far into their everyday habits and amusements. Included in the text of the *T'ułt' əndhanrakan* ("Encyclical Letter") of St. Nersēs are detailed instructions that he issued for the conversion to Christianity of Armenians in Samostia- i.e., Samosata, in Commagene- who were called *Arewordik'*, "Children of the Sun": their beliefs, as he describes them, have notably Zoroastrian features; and survivors of the group are recorded down to recent times in different parts of Western Armenia. Matthew of Edessa knows *arewapaštk'*, "Sun-worshippers", who fought the Crusaders at Hierapolis/Mabbug/Mambij; if the descendants of the latter, or their co-religionists, are to be numbered amongst the Šamsīs of the present day, then they have descendants still at Mardin in southern Turkey.[16] If you are a Kurd, then you are a Muslim: the equation is as firm as that of Christian and Armenian- so the disputes of the past decade about the Kurdish identity of Yezidi sectarians may be an analogous echo of the perplexity of the men of a millennium ago about the Armenian identity of the Children of the Sun.

("Wake, O my heart..."), and the two are based upon Ps. 118.55, 54.1, 133.2, 150.6, and Ps. 56.10 and 107.2, 43.24,27. The reason for this close reliance on the text of the Psalms will have been, as elsewhere in Šnorhali's writings, primarily pedagogical: the Psalms were the first texts learnt, and were often memorized, by Armenians. But the Armenian reciter would probably have understood *p'arkʻ* literally as "glory". Etymologically, the Iranian *xvarənah-* might be connected to the word for the Sun; but its symbolic linkage is indisputable, and the term would be especially suitable for a hymn of dawn. Gabriele Winkler ("The Armenian Night Office I: The Historical Background of the Introductory Part of *Gišerayin žam*," *JSAS* 1, 1984, p. 108) finds that the two hymns of Šnorhali, which were put in the section of the night office containing the fixed introductory psalmody, between intercessions (*k'aroz*) and their respective collects (*aławt'k'*), are not "very fortunate", since they interrupt the intrinsic unity of those two parts of the liturgy. Given Nersēs' great sensitivity, as a poet and theologian, to such matters, I would wonder whether these additions, of hymns that appear to have been intended by their author for a lay audience, were not in fact inserted into the liturgy after his death, rather than in his lifetime. Šnorhali wrote also a poem on the symbols of the Armenian coat of arms, in which he summons Tigran the Great to awake (*zart'ir*) and slay the seven-headed *višap*-dragon, driving it down to hell. The Armenian king, likened by Xorenac'i to the Iranian dragon-slayer of epic, Farēdūn, here takes the place of Kərəsāspa, who will wake in the last days to kill the dragon Āžī Dahāka, bound and imprisoned ages before by Farēdūn: in this manner, Šnorhali effects the Christianization of the ancient monarch (see J.R. Russell, "The Lost Epic of Tigran: A Reconstruction based upon the Fragments," in Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Proceedings* of the UCLA Conference on Tigranakert, Nov. 1999 [forthcoming]).

[16] On the Children of the Sun, see Ch. 15 of J.R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard Iranian Series 5, Cambridge, MA, 1987. Prof. Nur Yalman of the Dept. of Anthropology at Harvard encountered Šamsīs at Mardin (oral comm., Cambridge, MA, Spring 1999).

Linguistic radar alone is inadequate to detect most of the doubtless numerous Armenians who converted to Islam. In the region of Hamšēn on the Black Sea coast there are the Homšec'is, already noted, with their de-Christianized Armenian dialect. But Armenians who became Muslim would not have given their children distinctly Armenian names, which mainly are strongly associated with Christian faith. In fact, mediaeval Armenian Christians tended often to give their children Persian, Turkish, and Arabic names of Christian or neutral content (i.e., never Muhammad). Unlike Persian or Arabic, in which texts of all three Abrahamic religions exist, written Armenian is the medium of a Christian literature alone: there is no Muslim Armenian document, and, with the possible exception of communities converted *en masse*, Armenian converts making their way alone in a new environment would most likely have seen no good reason to transmit their native language to their children, certainly not to their grandchildren. At least, in the Arabic sources that Prof. Seta Dadoyan has meticulously studied, there is no evidence of such onomastic or linguistic tradition;[17] and the folk hagiography of St. George from Moks cited above sheds perhaps an unusual and rare light on the shock of the change, the brief moment when the convert understood his old tongue, and shot back his scornful retort in the language of the new dispensation. There is another group, or, better, trend, that is by its very nature more elusive than the others defined above. For lack of a less anachronistic word, one might style it secularism or proto-ecumenism. This is a tendency to reject the particular claim of a given revealed religion to exclusive and absolute truth and authority; and the conviction- and, where it inevitably encountered opposition, the protest- may be expressed in diverse ways. The simplest, which in its ideological implications may verge upon the materialism, atheism, or fatalism of the intellectuals decried by al-Ghazālī in his *Deliverance from Error*, and expressed in the *carpe diem* verses of learned esthetes and wine drinkers, from Khayyām in the East to Arab Andalusia at the western edge of the known universe, would be the plain enjoyment of life and all its pleasures, lawful and illicit, with equal indifference to the boundaries of community and the exigencies of orthopraxy: the life of the flesh. Mediaeval Armenian songs, when they are not dedicated to specifically Christian summations, often express sentiments of this sort— fatalism,

[17] Seda Parsumean-Tatoyean (Seta Barsoumian-Dadoyan), *Hay-arabakan mšakut'ayin yaraberut'eanc' patmut'enēn, 13 dar: Yovhannēs Pluz Erznkac'ii "I Tačkac' Imastasirac'" ə ew imastasirakan arjakə islamakan aṙbiwrnerun loysin tak*, Beirut, 1991 (published by the author).

pursuit of pleasure— in language that mirrors, and frequently draws from, the type in Muslim literature. Christian Armenia did not evolve a cult of courtly love, though we may safely suppose that at the pre-Christian court of the Armenian Arsacids, no less than in Parthia proper, the minstrels called *gusans* chanted romantic lays that prefigure the troubadour's art. But some mediaeval Armenian lyrics, such as the Romeo-and-Juliet-like ballad of the love of the Christian boy Yovhannēs for the Muslim Ayša, recognize and extol love's power.[18] The Armenian Church was concerned with such hedonistic trends; and the Middle Armenian lyrics penned by some clerics attempt to guide the sentiment of love into more pious channels. But unlike Western Europe, where there were few Muslims to be encountered outside Spain and Sicily, this hedonism for Armenians was not entirely an internal matter. For secularism of necessity tended to blur the distinction between Armenian Christians and their Muslim neighbors as well.[19] The validation of pure

[18] See J.R. Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i and the Mediaeval Armenian Lyric Tradition*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Armenian Series, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. The Ph.D. thesis on the lyric poet Kostandin Erznkac'i, by Dr. Theo van Lint of Leiden University, though it presents a career and mind out of the ordinary, should nonetheless be read to correct any impression that the secular poet was generally irreligious, or inclined to the praise of pleasure because his intellect was less keen than that of a trained ecclesiastic writing in Classical Armenian. Van Lint has demonstrated that the poems of the *diwan* of Kostandin were meant be read in an order intended to parallel the scheme of the Christian cosmology. Kostandin himself experienced the ecstatic, initiatory vision of a solar angel: this event sparked his poetic gift (on earlier visions of this kind in Armenia, and their analogues and sources, see J.R. Russell, "The Dream Vision of Anania Širakac'i," *REArm*, 21 (1988-1989), pp. 159-170).

[19] In an article published some years ago which touched upon the question of Muslim-Armenian intimacies, I attempted the suggestion that the "*šaxatayi*-sayer" of the 18th-cent. Tiflis Armenian bard Sayat' Nova's poems might be a reciter of the Muslim confession, the *Shehada*, not another poet reciting the verses of the proto-*ashugh*, Shah Khatay. Part of the reason for the suggestion was precisely the ballad of Yovhannēs and Ayša mentioned above, in which the Muslim girl's mother's wails of "*Shahid Allah!*" are powerless to dampen the enamored daughter's ardor. My thesis, later a book, was written under the supervision of the late Prof. Charles Dowsett of Oxford, who, presumably, read it. Yet in the monograph on Sayat' Nova that he published only months before his death, in 1998, he subjected my suggestion to minute criticism, couched in language of extreme violence and bitter sarcasm— no surprise after the ordeal of working with him— but with evident unawareness of the reasons for my suggestion. His principal assertion was that the boundary between Christian and Muslim could not be crossed; and my suggestion that it was betrayed an ignorance of Near Eastern realia. Had Dowsett lived longer, he might have profited from the study of Rumi, with his occasional Armenian usages and the numerous Armenian devotees who walked behind Maulana's catafalque. Nor, presumably, did the irate Prof. Dowsett peruse the Christianizing translation by the 13th-century Cilician Armenian poet Frik of mystical verses of Xāqānī (see J.R. Russell, "On Armeno-Iranian Interaction in the Medieval Period," in *Au Carrefour des Religions: Mélanges*

hedonism could also, of course, express the religious conviction that one had overcome original sin and was a redeemed son or daughter of Adam, even a fulfilled Christ; or else that by exhausting the body's appetites one was freeing the soul from its earthly imprisonment. Such theories, which had been common in early Christian Anatolia amongst the Carpocratians and sundry other gnostic and ecstatic movements, persisted in both Christian Armenian and Muslim communities down to recent times, though it is admittedly difficult to distinguish genuine testimonia of this brand of heresy from the exaggerated and cliché accusations of "extinguishing the lights" that one finds in both the Near East and Western Europe.[20]

On a higher plane of reflection, those Armenians inclined towards philosophy and away from narrow dogma read in translation from Arabic the *Epistles* of a Muslim Neoplatonist conventicle, the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Safā*). Armenian young men in Erznka (modern Erzincan, Turkey) and elsewhere joined fraternities (*ełbayrut'iwnk'*) that followed a martial discipline and undertook various benevolent tasks, from community service and the provision of hospitality to strangers, to the enforcement of public safety and the provision of defense. The ancient Iranian *Männerbund* and the Irano-Anatolian precursors of the Mithraic craft will have undoubtedly been a prototype of these associations, which may perpetuate some extremely archaic traditions; but their more proximate and important source was undoubtedly the Islamic association of the same type, in the same towns, who were variously called the *akhī* (Arabic, "brotherhood") or *futūwwa* ("[association of] young men": the word comes to mean "chivalry") or *javānmardān* ("young

*offerts à Philippe Gignoux, Res Orientales* VII, 1993, pp. 237-8). But let the dead bury the dead.

[20] I have attempted to follow the threads of these accusations where reality, rather than prurient fantasy, seems to be indicated: on the "extinguishers of the lamps", see J.R. Russell, "The word *Chragamah* and the rites of the Armenian goddess," *op. cit.*; and J.R. Russell, "The Mother of All Heresies: A late mediaeval Armenian text on the *Yuška-parik*," *REArm* 24, 1993, pp. 273-93. The Adamite movement, with its sense of a redemption accomplished and sexual pleasure validated, is nearly as old as Christendom, and certainly as tenacious, finding new life in successive centuries in radical, protestant revivals. The Garden of Earthly Delights— the central painting of the famous Millennium triptych of Hieronymus Bosch, now in the Prado, Madrid, may express such a conviction about this world. Several centuries later, William Blake and his wife were wont to disport themselves unclothed in their London kitchen garden, styling themselves Adam and Eve. The movement makes a leap across the Atlantic, in the company of other dissident teachings, and shows up in organized religion amongst the teachings of Mormonism, which promises the divinization of man; and, in literature, in Walt Whitman's poems of bodily and erotic liberation.

men", in Persian: one of these would be an *'ayyār*, literally "helper", from Middle Persian *hayyār*, modern *yār*, "friend"). Yovhannēs of Erznka translated sections of the *Epistles* into Armenian, and wrote a charter for the Armenian Brotherhood at Erznka (a number of his poems also address "brothers", though this does not necessarily refer to the Fraternity), so it is at least a strong possibility that the Brothers studied Neoplatonic ideas; and Theo van Lint has suggested, quite plausibly, that Kostandin of Erznka wrote a poem on the Christian cosmology in the meter and style of Ferdōsī's *Šāh-nāme* for members of the same Brotherhood: Kostandin writes that "the Brothers" had asked him to do so. This is of interest, not only because it is testimony to Armenians' enjoyment of a Persian book that belongs in some degree to Islamic culture, but perhaps still more, because the heroes of the *Šāh-nāme* are exemplars of martial chivalry, and to this day Iranians train in the *zōr xāne*, a gymnasium devoted to a martial style of weight-training, to the rhythm of a cadenced oral recitation of Ferdōsī's epic. Mediaeval manuscript illuminations depict Armenians wrestling in the manner of the Muslims, grabbing at each other's belts (Pers. *kuštī gereftan*); and we may surmise that the Armenian Brothers might have done their physical training in a like manner, accommodating to their own religious beliefs the custom of their neighbors.[21] Yovhannēs was himself a priest; so his absorbed involvement with the Brotherhood could have been an outlet for his own cosmopolitan intellectual sentiments, or an ecclesiastical policy of co-optation of such groups, or a natural association between the Armenian Church and another community organization— or all three motivations.[22]

[21] On the Armenian translation of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, see Dadoyan, cited above. I have translated the Charter of the *Ełbayrut'iwn* of Erznka: J.R. Russell, "Medieval Armenian Fraternities," *Transactions of the American Lodge of Research of Free and Accepted Masons*, New York, Vol. XXII, 1993, pp. 28-37. On the proto-Mithraic fraternities, see J.R. Russell, "On Mithraism and Freemasonry," *Heredom: The Transactions of the Scottish Rite Research Society*, Washington, DC, Vol. 4, 1995, pp. 269-287, with refs. Three out of the five stories in modern Armenian dialect recorded by B. Xalat'eanc', *Irani herosnerə hay žołovrdi mēǰ*, Paris: Banasēr, 1901, are about Rostam, the most popular of the heroes of the Iranian national epic. In Baluchistan, almost any ruined wall in the wilderness is said to have been the stable where Rostam kept Raxš, his magic steed; the horse was known a millennium ago to Grigor Magistros as Ŗaš (evidently *via* a Kurdish form of the name, therefore an oral source). The tradition is therefore continuous.

[22] On the third, one might compare the present-day institution of the Knights of Vartan (Clas. Arm. Vardan) in Armenian-American communities. This is a men's fraternity directly sponsored by the Armenian Church. The latter does not prohibit membership in Freemasonry, at least as explicitly as the Roman Catholic Church has tended to do; so

One may mention also the challenge to Armenian identity posed by the unitor policies of the Latin and Byzantine churches— a major concern to Nersēs Šnorhali, who desired Church unity for spiritual and political reasons, but not at the cost of dissolution of Armenian autonomy and tradition. To a lesser extent, the cultural and linguistic interpenetration of Armenians and speakers of Syriac, a fact of geography more than geopolitics, contributed to the problem of unitor tendencies: Syriac could be a vector. In the 11th century, for instance, a bronze-caster left an inscription in Syriac letters on the door of San Paolo fuori le Mura, at Rome, which he had made: *k-t-š-g*, i.e., Armenian Xač'ik, "Little Cross" (in Greek, his name is recorded as Staurakios, "idem"). To some degree, then, Latin influence upon Syriac speakers found its way into Armenia, too.[23] So, in the first few centuries after the turn of the first Christian millennium, these are some of the centrifugal forces that were tugging at a centrifugal Armenian population— a nation whose population experienced dispersion to the west and south on a scale comparable to the beginnings of the Jewish diaspora.

Shortly after the beginning of the twelfth century, the Armenian nobleman Apirat Pahlawuni, a remote descendant of the royal house of the Parthian Arsacids and of St. Gregory the Illuminator, and a grandson, on his mother's side, of the Byzantine *dux* and great (and, for his race and place, unique) secular scholar Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni, was felled by an invader's arrow on the ramparts of his castle, Covk'— in Tluk' province, on a spur of the Amanus or Black Mountain northwest of Aintab (modern Gaziantep), whither his family had emigrated from Greater Armenia.[24] Apirat's sons: Grigor, and a younger boy aged seven named Nersēs, were dedicated to holy orders, at first in the care of Catholicos Gregory II Martyrophilus (*Vkayasēr*); and later, at the death of the latter, Catholicos Barseł, at Šułr monastery, took the two children under his wing. Nersēs studied with Bishop Step'anos Manuk at the Red (*Karmir*) monastery of K'esun, on the middle Euphrates: here he was given the honorific title "the Graceful" (*Šnorhali*). Nersēs' brother Grigoris was ordained Catholicos Gregory III; and when the Count of Edessa (modern Urfa, half a day's drive southeast from Gaziantep) captured

many Knights are also Masons. But the Knights of Vartan are obviously patterned upon the Catholic Knights of Columbus— and the latter was established explicitly to draw Catholics away from the Masons and to control their activities.

[23] On the inscription, see Russell in *Res Orientales*, cited above, n. 19.

[24] On Nersēs' genealogy, with a family tree, see Biwzand Eliayean, "S. Nersēs Šnorhali Hayrapeti azgatohmə," *Hask* 42, 1973. 11-12, pp. 472-8.

K'esun, the Catholicosate was transferred to Covk'. Grigor died in 1166; and Nersēs, aged 64, who had spent much of his life in the service of the Church as his brother's assistant, became Catholicos at Hṙomkla (Turkish *Rum kalesi*, "the Greek Fortress", originally a Roman foundation), which had been acquired in 1150 from a Latin prince.[25] Šnorhali's reign as Catholicos was comparatively brief— he died 13 August 1173— but Nersēs was one of the most important ecclesiastical leaders of the nation's history, and the number of hymns (*šarakan-k'*) he composed that are used in the liturgy far exceeds those of any other author. Most of this work, including the credal poem to be considered below, was accomplished whilst Nersēs was in the service of his brother; his preoccupations and style do not seem to have changed after he became Catholicos.

From the first, Nersēs in his writings was concerned to inculcate Christian learning and values amongst a largely uneducated audience thoroughly addicted to earthly enjoyments. Unlike some of his predecessors, however, who inveighed against these *ex cathedra* in learned tones, he chose deliberately to convey instruction and admonition in the faith in lucid language close to the vernacular of the day, and in genres familiar to his audience. The historian Kirakos of Ganjak reports that Nersēs wrote riddles to be recited *i ginarbus ew i harsanis*, "at wine-drinking revels and at weddings"— both occasions when lewd behavior would have been expected often to prevail.[26] And Šnorhali composed his

[25] Hṙomkla was a 12-14-hour ride on horseback, or, until the Ataturk dam changed the topography of the region, a two-hour drive by automobile west of Aintab on good metalled roads through rolling country and the pistachio groves for which the region is famous. It stands on a promontory between the Euphrates, which flows fast, wide, and strong beneath towering cliffs, and the Marzman, a shallow, gentle tributary to which one descends a very steep hill from the Aintab road (the roads to Samosata and Birecik are on the far side of the Eurphrates from the fortress). In the summer of 1997 I forded the stream on both foot and horseback. From the green banks of the Marzman, one then climbs a steep path through seven successive gate-houses. The church of the fortress, now ruined, stood once near the top of the hill, towards its point and overlooking the Marzman. On the steep hill directly opposite Hṙomkla there was once an Armenian village, now inhabited by Kurdish farmers; and there are cave-houses cut into the rock on the far side of the Euphrates, rather like the troglodyte hypogeal twin city of Ani. So it seems likely there was a very considerable settlement at the site in Šnorhali's day. There is a map of Hṙomkla in Fr. Łewond Ališan, *Šnorhali ew paragay iwr*, Venice: S. Lazzaro, 1873, reproduced by Sarafian, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 579, with additional details on the place.

[26] Armenian bride and bridegroom in some parts still carry between them at weddings an object symbolizing the Tree of Life (*caṙn kenac'*), and songs about it, attested in many MSS., go back to the mediaeval period. This tree was an important icon of potent religious content in ancient Mesopotamia and Urartu, and might have served, remotely, as the basis for the diagram of the Sephiroth in mediaeval Jewish Kabbalah. Simo Parpola,

*Lament over Edessa* (*Ołb Edesioy*), not only for *gitnoc', ayl txmarac' ew tłayoc'* "the learned, but also for simple folk and the young," adds Kirakos, using the term *txmar* "simple, foolish"— a word that, as we

"The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy," *JNES* 52, 1993, pp. 161-208, suggests this, but adds unproven claims that are hypothetical, and are not accepted by most other Assyriologists (as Prof. Parpola readily and candidly admits). But the symbol meant, surely, more than is allowed by the dismissive characterization of the abundant evidence of iconography, royal and religious, as "Assyrian drawings of a tree", *pace* Joseph Dan, "The Language of Creation and Its Grammar," *Jewish Mysticism*, Vol. I, Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1998, p. 136 n. 17. And there is every reason to suppose the Tree of Life had pre-Christian roots in Armenian folk tradition, where it is met often. The existing songs contain final stanzas that explain its branches as prophets, patriarchs, and the like, superimposing Christian allegory on the ancient emblem. A bride and groom hold a little tree between them, in a drawing based upon a manuscript illumination (for which no date is given), in Hravard Hakobyan, "Avandut'yunnern u legendnerə manrankarč'ut'yunum," *Sovetakan Hayastan* monthly, Erevan, Aug. 1974, p. 33. Such an artificial tree, used at weddings and decorated with fruits and candles (in the drawing, each holds a candle in the other hand), was called a *popuk* or *nurc'* in the dialect of Lori, northeastern Armenia (Grigoris Erznikean, "Loreac' harsanik'ə," *Azgagrakan Handēs* 3, 1898, pp. 329-37). Mr. Artašēs Petrosean of Karabagh, interviewed at Cambridge, MA, 23 April 1996, reported that the "wedding tree" (*harsanik'i caṙ*) is carried by the groom's procession to the house of the bride: it is artificial (*šincu*), and has a bird (*haw*) and letter (*namak*) on the top. The groom's friends hold it and dance till they are admitted inside for the wedding feast. St. Gregory of Narek, 10th century, wrote a number of short hymns (*tał-k'*) which are far more intricate than Šnorhali's poems, but which do employ secular language and imagery; and one of these seems to draw upon the image of the Tree of Life, possibly with the didactic intent to co-opt a popular image that was later to motivate Šnorhali: see J.R. Russell, "A Mystic's Christmas in Armenia," *Armenian Review*, Summer 1987, Vol. 40, No. 2-158, pp. 1-13. The riddles of Šnorhali are edited by A.Š. Mnac'akanyan, *Hay mijnadaryan hanelukner (V-XVIII dd.)*, Erevan: Arm. Acad. Sci., 1980. Just as Kostandin Erznkac'i after him wrote a cycle of lyrics in the order of the Christian cosmology, Šnorhali's riddles were composed in such an order; so one may suppose they would have been used effectively as a tool to inculcate Biblical learning and dogma. Indeed, previous cycles of Armenian riddles, bearing attributions to figures of the fifth century and later, also have this didactic order and pattern. Šnorhali's cycle is just fuller than any other. It has this order (eliminating occasional repetitions or interspersed riddles on topics mentioned before): God> Adam> Garden> Adam and Eve> the Tree> Heaven> Sun> Moon> Cloud> the World> Time> Man and Woman> the Mind> Spring> Wax (*Mom*: perhaps because creatures are molded from a divine prototype as wax figures are cast: David the Invincible employs this simile from his Greek source, translating Hektor as Tigran, the corresponding Arm. epic hero— a detail of translation more thoughtful than the mechanical Zeus to Aramazd, that Šnorhali would have remembered with approval and delight [see S.S. Arevšatyan, ed. and tr., Dawit' Anyałt', *Sahmank' imastasirut'ean*, Erevan: Arm. Acad. Sci., 1960, p. 130])> Summer> Autumn> Winter> Cold> the South> Abel and Cain> Enoch> Noah> the Ark> the Tower (of Babel)> Melchisedek> Lot> Abraham> Isaac> Jacob> Joseph> Job> Moses> Tamar> Pharaoh> Miriam> Aaron> Joshua> Jericho> Rahab> Bezalel> Samson> Tork' (i.e., Tarǰundas, a "native" Armenian giant of extreme antiquity in Anatolian mythology: see J.R. Russell, "Polyphemos Armenios," *REArm* 26, 1996-7, pp. 25-38)> Varazdat (the great Arsacid athlete)> Tiridates (who is to have ruled as far west as Maraš, a detail which, again, would have cheered Šnorhali in Syria/Cilicia)> David>

shall see presently, Nersēs himself was wont to employ. It is likely Kirakos here echoes Šnorhali's own language. Nersēs' first major composition, the *Vipasanut'iwn* ("Epic"), dated 1121, is a patriotic heroic poem about his own family, the illustrious Pahlawunik', which he traces back to the Arsacid and mythical Haykid dynasties. Manuk Abełean dated it the earliest rhymed historical composition in the language: the rhymed synopsis of the Bible that Nersēs' relative, Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni, wrote in record time to impress a scornful Muslim named Manuč'ē (i.e., Pers. Manūčihr), was the most likely source of inspiration for this effort, which rhymes, monotonously, in the past participial *-eal*, and is maddeningly dull as literature. Its value lies in its testimony to Nersēs' keen awareness, at the age of about twenty, of a national identity rooted in the remote past, and of his family's links to the saints who first had forged Armenia's sense of itself as a distinct nation in Christendom. Xorenac'i employed the term *vēp* to define the pre-Christian tradition that lay behind an Armenian identity he was endeavoring to define; Šnorhali's conscious use of it marks a revival and redefinition, now rooted in a Christian foundation that was now, beyond doubt, the *hayreni awrēnk'*, the ancestral custom of the country.

Nersēs' unapologetic hostility to Islam might raise the hackles of modern ecumenists, but it is typical of his time; and the *Lament over Edessa* typifies his attitude. Even by comparison to Ełišē, his militancy is striking.[27] And it was intended for a wide audience: Kirakos of Ganjak claims that Nersēs wrote it not only "for the wise, but for the simple and for the young" (*gitnoc', ayl txmarac' ew tłayoc'*: again one encounters the word *txmar*, cf. the discussion above of the mission of Maš-

Abishag the Shunnamite> Solomon> Nathan> Anna and Samuel> Hezekiah> Elijah> Joash> Jonah> Nebuchadnezzar> Daniel> Jeremiah> Simeon> Mary bears Christ> Christ and the Apostles> the Cross> Gabriel> Mary and Joseph> John and his severed head> Herodias' daughter (i.e., Salome)> Herod> Pilate> Judas> the Evangelists> Peter> Paul> Thomas> Ephrem Syrus (approvingly described as a shaggy mountain goat— an image used also in the lives of the Oskeank' and Sukiaseank', legendary hermit-martyrs of Apostolic times)> John Chrysostom> St. Gregory the Illuminator> David the Invincible> Hermits> the Grave> the Church> Writing> Books> Lamps> Flint> the Armenians> the Franks> the Romans (*Hořom*)> the Assyrians> the Hebrews> Mt. Parxar> Muhammad> and then rivers, fishes, watermills, birds, grains, animals, insects, and useful objects: a cosmogony and cosmology.

[27] The text: Manik Mkrtč'yan, ed., Nersēs Šnorhali, *Ołb Edesioy*, Erevan, 1973, with historical introduction by Połos Xač'atryan. See also Th.M. van Lint (translation and annotations) "Lament on Edessa by Nersēs Šnorhali", in Krijnie Ciggaar and Herman Teule, eds, *East and West in the Crusader States. Context — Contacts — Confrontations* II, Leuven 1999, pp. 49-105, with introductory article, "Seeking Meaning in Catastrophe. Nersēs Šnorhali's *Lament on Edessa*" in ibd., pp. 29-47.

toc').[28] On 22 December 1144, a Saturday, in the second hour, Nersēs was at Covk' when he learnt that Imad al-Dīn Zangī, Emir of Mosul, had captured the ancient city of Edessa, whose legendary palaeo-Christian king, Abgar, the Armenians had long regarded as one of their own. Nersēs' nephew, Apirat, had fought on the battlements of the doomed town, and recounted the details of the siege to his uncle. In the *Lament*, Nersēs portrays the Muslims as deceitful creatures, who, like the villains in ancient epic, are incapable of honest, face-to-face combat: they burrow beneath the walls, "as this is the custom/law of these people" (*orpēs awrēn ē ays noc'in*)[29] and then kindle a fire that is the infernal conflagration of Sodom. The latter may refer to Muslim sexual morality: mediaeval Christians regarded Islam as a heresy and homosexual intercourse as a heretical practice, so Muslims are often portrayed in Christian art as rabbits or hyenas. Since the vulva of the female hyena is large enough to be mistaken for male genitalia, it was mistakenly thought that the animals copulated *modo Socratis*. And as we shall see presently, Nersēs likened Arabs to rabbits, traditionally regarded as the most promiscuous of animals. In the *Lament*, the defenders of Edessa vow to die rather than surrender and *stel mec uxtin ew vayelel yaṙawrēin*, "betray the great covenant and enjoy the ephemeral". Nersēs then imagines a sinister and ironic chorus: the victorious Arabs "then cried out in a great voice and clamor,/ Great tidings [*awetik'*, a strongly marked Christian term, here grotesquely out of place, cf. Arm. *awetaran*, "Gospel"] to you today, O Muhammad, messenger of the heavenly one [*Mahmet, patgamd erknaworin*: a variant has *p'aylam-d*. Both forms are Old Persian in ultimate origin; but the latter, in the New Pers. *payghām-bar* translates the "message" of Arabic *rasūl*, "Messenger"]!/ We have taken back that which we had lost— your own house and place,/ From these peoples in error [*moloreal žołovrdoc'*: Šnorhali uses this term himself, as we shall see, to characterize Islam, in the prose introduction to *Hawatov xostovanim*], worshippers of an inanimate stone,/ With whose

[28] Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'*, Erevan, 1961, p. 147.

[29] On *awrēn*, see the discussion of Muhammad as lawgiver, below. This particular phrase may be culled from epic usage, cf. the elegy of Artašēs preserved by Grigor Magistros, where the royal hunt is lovingly described in detail, all of it done *orpēs awrēn ēr t'agaworac'* "as was the custom of kings" (see discussion of the text by J.R. Russell, "Some Iranian images of kingship in the Armenian Artaxiad Epic," *REArm* 20 (1986-87), pp. 253-70). If the comparison was intended, then the scornful irony is heightened: the custom of the Armenian kings was a royal hunt preceded by trumpeters and drummers in the loud and open air; the custom of the Muslim, by contrast, is despicable and silent subterfuge.

blood we have filled the land, according to the behest of your Qur'ān [*Łuran*: of course, again it is the Arabs who worship a stone, the Ka'aba— as Šnorhali will declare presently, so this speech is fraught with diabolical satire]./ Behold, the voice of glad tidings comes to you, too, great Mecca, house of Muhammad,/ In which there is hope in the Black Stone [*seaw k'arin*] and the footprint. [Perhaps Šnorhali has confused this with the footprint of the Prophet's steed Burāq on the *Even šətiyā* beneath the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.]/ For now we shall dispatch to you the worshippers of the sunrise,/ Those who err after the Cross, the minions of Jesus."[30] This reference to worshippers of the sunrise might refer obliquely also to the Iranian Mazdeans whom the Muslims had defeated centuries before; but Armenians turn to the east in worship upon rising in the morning, a custom so deeply ingrained that a folk word for the East is *ałōt(a)ran*, "the place of prayers". As to the inanimate stone Christians worship, what is meant here is perhaps the Armenian Cross-stone, *xač'k'ar*, an object of cult.[31]

Šnorhali calls Muhammad himself *sut margarē xabebay*, "the false and deceitful prophet", *č'areac' mełac' usuc'oł*, "instructor in evil sins", and *xawareloc' awrinadir* and *žandagorc awrinadir*, "lawgiver to the benighted" and "lawgiver who worked corruption". This use of the term "lawgiver" has long and ample precedent in the uniformly derisive Armenian portrayals of the Arabian faith. In the *Life* of the princely Sts. Sahak and Hamazasp Arcruni, martyred *ca.* 786, their apostate brother

[30] In Mkrtč'yan's text, p. 88, line 599 f.

[31] Armenians have a rite of consecration of Crosses that scandalized other Christian writers, who thought it (and, presumably, the other Armenian practices consequent upon it) verged on idolatry. The Syrian writer Mar Dionysius Barsalibi, who lived in Melitene and thus had ample intercourse with Armenians, condemns the latter for baptizing crosses and bells "and give names to inanimate objects as if they were animate" (A. Mingana, tr., "The Work of Dionysius Barsalibi against the Armenians," *Woodbroke Studies*, Vol. IV, Cambridge: Heffer, 1931, pp. 42-3). Armenian named-crosses are invoked serially in folk prayers. One in particular, called in dialect the *xač' patrazin*, belongs in epic to the heroes of Sasun, to whose fighting right arms it magically descends. Its prototype in reality was the *xač' paterazmi*, "Cross of war", mentioned in a colophon of 1475 from Arckē; before that it had been at Mšakavank' in Gugark'; by 1632, it had been transferred to New Julfa, Isfahan (see Abp. Norayr Bogharian [Covakan], *Haykakan xač'er*, Jerusalem: St. James', 1991, pp. 36-8, 49). In 1982, I saw a peasant at Sevan, in Soviet Armenia, slaughter a cock, dash its blood on the Cross-stone, and then make the sign of the Cross on the forehead of his sick child. On some legends about Crosses, see J.R. Russell, "Raiders of the Holy Cross: The ballad of the *Karos Xač'* (Cross of Celery) and the nexus between ecclesiastical literature and folk tradition in mediaeval Armenia," in J. Weitenberg, ed., *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Literature, Dutch Studies in Armenian Language and Literature* 3, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995, pp. 79-93.

Merhuǰan (cf. his relative and namesake, the earlier convert to Sasanian Zoroastrianism, Meružan Arcruni!) accept the *awrēnsdrut'iwn* of the Arabs; and T'ovma Arcruni (III.6) styles Muhammad the *awrēnsdir*, "lawgiver". Though Professor Thomson is certainly right in citing New Testament precedents— Gk. *nomothetēs, nomothesia* (Rom. 9.4)— for the Christian Armenian usage, which always filters contemporary events, as one would expect, through Scriptural precedents and types, writers who had an evident acquaintance with the rudiments of Islam, living as they did in close proximity to Arabs, might also have found a more proximate source in Islamic law and jurisprudence— *šari'a* and *fiqh*— and in the normative character of the Qur'ān, with its constant emphasis on customary law and the political expression of Islam: Šnorhali knew and mentioned, for instance, the office of the local judge, the *qadi* (*łazi-k'*, pl.).[32] Nersēs wrote one of his riddles about Muḥammad, too: since it comes at the end of the cycle of Biblical and early Christian history, just before the enumeration of animals and things, the Arabian prophet occupies the position of the messenger of cosmic evil whose time of tribulation precedes the Parousia: MS. variants of the riddle entitle it, variously, Mahmet, Hagarac'in ("the Hagarite"), T'ewdas ("Theudas"),[33] and *Neṙn*— the Antichrist himself,

[32] See R.W. Thomson, "Muhammad and the origin of Islam in Armenian literary tradition," in D. Kouymjian, ed., *Armenian Studies in memoriam Haig Berberian*, Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Fdn., 1986, pp. 829-58, repr. as art. X in Thomson's *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity*, London: Variorum, 1994. The Arm. usage *awrēnsdir* has a semantic depth of its own, whether or not it was originally a calque of Greek: the aorist stem used as suffix, *-dir*, from *dnem*, "I put", derives from the same PIE source as the Old Pers. base from which comes *dāta-*, "law", lit. something set down, hence the MIr. Arm. l-w *datastan*, "justice, tribunal", Heb. *dāt* "religion" (translating *Tōrā, Oraitā*, etc.). As to *awrēn-k'*, "law", a MIr. l-w, its earliest meaning was "custom". Eliše Vardapet, in his history of the war of 451 against the Sasanians, insists that the Armenians were fighting for their *hayreni awrēnk'*, "ancestral customs"— as was noted at the beginning of this study, this would have been rather a forced claim, if it meant Christianity alone, a religion that had taken root in the country scarcely a century before. But with the new faith grafted securely onto older traditions, the assertion might make more sense. And in the context of Islam, where, as in Judaism, religious law is inseparable from the custom of everyday life, *awrēnk'* fits admirably well.

[33] Theudas is mentioned in Acts 5.36 as a contemporary of Jesus who led an unsuccessful Jewish uprising against the Romans. So he is a false Messiah, offering the earthly kingdom Christ rejects. It is also noteworthy that the early ninth-cent. Byzantine chronicler Theophanes mentions that certain prominent Jews believed at first that Muhammad was the Messiah. Though disappointed, they still managed to turn him against the Christians. An eighth-century Hebrew text, "Secrets revealed to R. Simeon bar Yoḥai", reveals that Ishmael is to be Israel's savior from the "wicked power" (i.e., Edom, Christendom) (see Chaim Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957, pp. 123-4). The Arm. historian Sebēos (ch. 43: *Vasn Hrēic' ew č'ar xorhrdoc' noc'a*, "About the Jews

who was apparently thought by Nersēs to be the Mahdi expected by the Muslims: *Yiwrmē am inč' tam k'ez nšan,/ Or yišeloy č'ē ink'n aržan,/ Kaxard mi haync' ēr i lman,/ Or šatk' iwrean arar hawan.* "What hint should I offer you about him anyhow/ He's unworthy of any mention./ He was such a complete sorcerer/ That he made many agree with him."[34]

Zangi captured Edessa and executed his captives, who, says Nersēs, had fought like the Maccabees and the soldiers of Vardan Mamikonean. Thus he links them securely and explicitly to the chain of Armenian heroic tradition and the paradigm established by Ełišē. And this would accord with what I have suggested was his conscious program of revival and renewal of the national faith, following and occasionally reinterpreting paradigms set down centuries before. The souls of the slain, he writes, flew to heaven; but he declares to Zangi (who in fact died soon after this victory), *isk du kocis andr aṙət'er k'o Mahmetovn, yor yusac'er*, "but you are wailing there alongside your Muhammad, in whom you had placed your hope." Perhaps this image invites one to envisage a satanic parallel to the good thief Dismas seated at the right hand of Christ in heaven (or indeed our Lord Himself, at the right hand of the Father); but it is at any rate a standard mediaeval belief that Muhammad, as heresiarch *par excellence*, is in Hell: Dante has him cleave his own breast in twain, endlessly, in the Inferno, even as in life the Arab prophet had rent the body of the Church. And Dis- Hell's metropolis, in Dante's poem- is full of mosques. Vardan and his companions had fought in the fifth century to be allowed to practice their faith in peace— to remain Christian Armenians, not to win political independence from the Persians. Nor is there a sense in Ełišē of a desire to see Iran or its Zoroastrian faith wiped out, however diabolical the comparisons of Yazdagird II to Nebuchadnezzar. This is different, and intentionally so; for Nersēs was certainly well aware of Vardan's exam-

and their evil plans") also echoes the general Christian belief— one that was, unlike most anti-Semitic mythology, not altogether unfounded in this one instance— that the Jews planned to use the Muslims to retake Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. By the twelfth century, the Crusaders had massacred so many Jews, in the cities of Europe and in the land of Israel itself, that any Jews still left alive would have firmly supported the Muslims against the barbarians from Europe.

[34] See Mnac'akanyan, *Hay mijnadaryan hanelukner*, *op. cit.*, p. 261. A text titled "Divination and prophecy concerning the end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist, whom the Muhammadans call Mahdi," is attributed to "the pontiff Nersēs" (i.e., Šnorhali) in an Armenian MS. of 1656 (Avedis K. Sanjian, *Medieval Armenian Manuscripts at the University of California, Los Angeles*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999, p. 231, MS. 55).

ple- he composed what has become the most famous hymn of the Armenian Church for the commemoration of Vardananc', the feast in memory of the martyr and his companions, *Norahraš psakawor* ("Wondrous-newly diademmed").[35] Šnorhali's approach to Islam is militant: he predicts that the palsy of Cain will come upon the Muslims (*Kayenin hasc'ē erer*): they will be cast out from mankind and abominated. One thinks here of the archetypal Scriptural outcast, Ishmael, whom the Muslim Arabs acknowledged as their ancestor. Šnorhali writes: "God will utterly destroy you forever/ And uproot you, and take you alive out of the land." Later, we read this vengeful prophecy of national and Christian redemption: "He [i.e., God] bestirs again the Frankish race,/ Its cavalry and footsoldiers innumerable./ Like the mass of the ocean waves,/ Greatly agitated and boiling, they arrive,/ As the sands along the riverbanks/ Or the heavenly luminaries' ranks,/ They fill the whole face of the earth/ As snow blankets the mountains,/ And make a clamor like the north wind,/ Driving the clouds away before them./ They cleanse the entire world,/ Emptying it of unbelievers,/ Pillaging and plundering/ The whole Mohammedan [*mahmetakan*] race./ They take innermost Khorasan captive,/ Lay waste to Babel [i.e., Baghdad],/ And destroy Mecca to its foundations—/ That demon-haunted waste,/ Barren of every good,/ Parched for divine water,/ Where the Lord sent all the devils He expelled./ They roll away that blackish rock [*zk'arn glen zseworak*]/ And cast it to the bottom of the Red Sea./ As a lion after a hare,/ So they harry them swiftly…/ For all the Christian races/ They become saviors from the infidels [*p'rkič' linin yanawrinac'*, lit.,"from the *awrēn*-less ones"];/ And then, in the darkened churches/ The light of lamps is kindled."[36] Šnorhali's vision draws upon a variety of sources for its inspi-

[35] For a study of this and other patriotic hymns of Nersēs, see Grigor Hakobean, "Nersēs Šnorhalii hayrenasirakan šarakannerə," *Širak* 16, 1973.11-2, pp. 41-9. The hymn is an acrostic, as are many other poetic compositions of Šnorhali, spelling out the words *Nersēsi* [*sic*! not Nersisi] *erg*, "song of Nersēs". The word *norahraš* means literally "new-wonderful", with *hraš* from Oir. *fraša-* (cf. Arm. *hrašakert*< Frašegird, the Zoroastrian apocalypse, etc.), and it is clear Vardan is meant to be a new and better champion than those who preceded him; but "new" has the additional sense of an intensifier. Arm. *psak*< MIr. *pusag*, "diadem" means the martyr-victor's daphne generally, but it is also the crown of wedding: Vardan's death is marriage to the celestial Bridegroom.

[36] In Mkrtč'yan's ed., p. 128, line 958 f. If Šnorhali's hope for the physical destruction of Muslim holy places seems deficient in Christian charity, one might recall his report that Zangi had a *harč* "concubine" stand on the church altar and sing. Other churches he made into stables for his horses, camels, and asses. When I visited Urfa in the summer of 1997, I saw the Armenian churches left standing: all three had been converted into mosques long before, every sign of their Christian origins meticulously obliterated. Armenian churches of the 16th cent. and later in these southern climes were generally

ration. The various apocalypses composed around the time of the first irruption of Islam, with their subsequent echoes in Armenian literature are the plainest: the traces of Ps.-Methodius are felt in Yovhannēs Kozeṙn, for instance, but unlike the latter, who foresees only dire consequences from the Selcuk invasion, Nersēs is an optimist. Of perhaps greater interest is the image of the Ka'aba sunk in the Red Sea. This calls to mind the drowning of the Egyptians who pursued the Children of Israel at the Exodus: following the typologies set down in the fourth century, Armenians have ever since duly depicted Christ treading underfoot at His baptism in the Jordan a little black demon, sometimes complete with chariot, or grasping the Cheirograph of Adam— mixed metaphors of Satan, Leviathan, and Egyptian, but all of them, like the stone at Mecca, tenebrous.[37] And more historically, Nersēs might have known of the capture of Mecca and desecration of the Black Stone by the Carmathians. The idea that the destruction of Islam will be a process of purification, of the uprooting and disposal of that which is unclean, probably is to be traced to the *ḥannūkāt ha-bayit*, the purification and rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees after its desecration by Antiochus IV with the abominations of pagan sacrifices. Given the tendency of the Armenians to identify themselves as latter-day Maccabees, and that to a degree out of all proportion to any other Christian culture, the probability is strong.[38]

built as large, squarish halls with an inner forest of columns and an arched porch in front, facing a square enclosed by rooms— just like a mosque— and not in the traditional domed, cruciform manner, so the conversion of the buildings, following the extermination of the Armenians, was easy and cheap. The domed Armenian churches, impossible to mask as anything else, were generally razed: an aged Kurdish villager boasted to me, that same summer, of having helped to destroy the church of Šušanc', in the hills just south of Van, only forty years ago.

[37] See J.R. Russell, "Truth is what the eye can see: Armenian manuscripts and Armenian spirituality," in T.F. Mathews and R.S. Wieck, eds., *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Art, Religion, and Society, Papers delivered at the Pierpont Morgan Library at a symposium... 21-22 May 1994*, New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1998, p. 149 and refs. The demon is called in one text *sandarametakan*, preserving the Zoroastrian usage whereby that which is beneath the earth belongs to the Amәša Spәnta, Spәntā Ārmaitī. As for the Cheirograph of Adam, it is mentioned, as will be seen, in *Hawatov xostovanim*. On the spread of the legenmd in Armenia and other countries, see Michael E. Stone, *Adam's Contract with Satan. The Legend of the Cheirograph of Adam*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2002.

[38] One Zoroastrian apocalyptic poem, "The coming of Bahrām the wonder-worker", edited as an Appendix by H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971, bears a striking, but most probably fortuitous, resemblance to Šnorhali's vision, because physical purity was a particular concern of the Mazdeans also: the *roots* of the mosques will be dug up; the earth, cleansed; and fire temples, rededicated.

Several years later, in 1151, Šnorhali composed his *Ban hawatoy*, a summation of the faith in abecedarian stanzas— a pedagogical and mnemonic conceit— as a *xrat usumnakanac' mankanc'*, "counsel for studious young people".[39] He was, evidently, troubled not only by the inroads made by militant, victorious Islam, but also by internal weakness, dissension, and schism; for he writes that he wrote the work *I barkut'ean žamanaki,/ Yorum nełimk' yanawrinac',/ Ew oč' nuaz i držanac'/ I sutanun k'ristonēic'* "in an age of fury,/ When we are oppressed by infidels,/ And no less by the betrayals/ Of falsely-named Christians." After his elevation to the throne of Catholicos, Nersēs wrote his encyclical letter, *T'ułt' əndhanrakan*, in which he bewailed the degraded spiritual and moral state of the nation and its clergy, warning the latter of the "threat of the pitiless judgement of God upon the slothful [*płerg-ac'n*] and licentious [*hełgac'el-oc'*] pastors, who do not tend Christ's rational flock in His godly teachings, and who do not give them that living water, God's wisdom, to drink." In this passage, the words rendered into English as "slothful" and "licentious" form a rhetorical figure marked by powerful alliterating consonantal clusters, roughly *p-ł-g* and *h-ł-g*, that capture the reader's attention.

And in fact *płerg* is a word Šnorhali uses in the prose introduction to his credal poem, to be considered presently. The word is of uncertain etymology, though one is tempted to propose a loan from Gk. *phlegma*, originally "fire, inflammation", but borrowed with the later sense of melancholy or lassitude, with metathesis, in the Armenian loan, of the final cluster and replacement of the nasal by a liquid. St. Gregory of Narek does not use the word in his *Book of Lamentation*; but his own father, Xosrov Anjewac'i, wrote that "the cunning of the evil one is strengthened amongst the slothful."[40] It is attested elsewhere around the

[39] Amongst the works composed by the saint, his *Life* mentions that *Aṙnēr ew xostovanakan dawanut'iwns srbaban astuacabanut'eamb aṙ surb errordut'iwnn ew miasnakan astuacut'iwnn ew ordwoy tnawrēnout'iwnn əst ułłap'aṙ dawanut'ean surb harc'n: novin tałač'ap'ut'eamb, yoyž ənduneli ew hawanakan əndhanur ekełec'eac' ułłap'aṙac' ew imastaxoh k'nnołac'* "By means of theology imbued with the sacred word, he fashioned also confessional credos to the holy Trinity and united Divinity and economy of the Son according to the orthodox confession of the holy Fathers— in the same meter, very acceptable and pleasing to all the orthodox Churches and to investigators wise in thought" (*Srboyn Nersesi Šnorhalwoy patmut'iwn varuc', Sop'erk' Haykakank'* vol. XIV, Venice, 1854, pp. 39-40).

[40] *Zawranay xardaxut'iwn č'arin i płergsn*, cit. in *NBHL*, s.v., where earlier texts in which the word is found are also cited, including the Arm. translation of St. Basil of Caesarea, the *Yačaxapatum* (sermons attributed to St. Gregory the Illuminator), and the historian Movsēs Xorenac'i.

same time, notably again in the context of clerical laxity; and this suggests that the word, which would mark the seventh and final Deadly Sin, is an Armenian equivalent of Gk. *akēdia*, of which the Latin form *accidie* is a simple phonetic transcription from the *Sentences* of Evagrius Ponticus,[41] that noonday devil of weary indifference, a laziness and lassitude leading to gloom and despair, that stalks the mediaeval ascetic and contemplative, and the thirteenth rung to be overcome on the ladder of St. John Climacus. The vice is of special concern to monastics. In the 24th stanza of *Hawatov xostovanim*, Nersēs lists numerous categories of hermits and ascetics; so his stress on sloth indicates a special concern, not only for lay worship, but for the spiritual health of the Church itself.[42] So, for instance, in A.D. 1040 the Armenian *marzpan* Ablłarib erected a tomb for his clan at Ani, with an inscription ordaining chantry prayers for their souls in perpetuity, including a warning: *I 489 t'uakanis es Aplłarip haoc' marzpan, ordi Grigoro ew t'oŕn Apułłamri hayoc' išxanac', t'ēpēt ew antes ēi i hawrē yałgs krtserut'ean, ayl harkec'a i*

[41] See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1982, p. 93. Evagrius' counsels for monastics, amongst the very earliest in Christian mystical and contemplative tradition, were well known in Armenian. I did not find the word *pterg*, though, in the 14th-cent. Arm. tr. done at Naxiǰewan of Petrus Arragonensis, *Girk' Molut'eanc'* ("The Book of Vices", Venice, 1773), though in the section on Sloth (*culut'iwn*) one section deals with the postponement of confession (*yałags yapałman xostovanut'ean*, p. 236, ch. 17)—against which, as we shall see, Šnorhali specifically warns in the prose introduction to *Hawatov xostovanim*. Peter's book warns, as one would expect, against the sloth of monks (*yałags culut'ean krōnaworac'*, p. 254, ch. 28): *zi kalov i teťwoǰ ur sastkagoyn en diwakan paterazmunk', nok'a mnan t'mrealk' ew anhogagoynk': ew ayn, zi aŕawel xnday satanay i yarat hayec'manē, ew i šōšap'manē vanakanin, k'an i šnut'enē ašxarhakanin* "For by dwelling in a place where the demonic wars are fiercest, they remain stupefied and most indifferent. And that, too: Satan rejoices more over a monastic's impure glance or touch than he does over a lay person's act of adulterous copulation."

[42] Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, tr., St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, London: Faber and Faber, 1959, pp. 138-40, calls *accidie* "despondency". The vice can proceed from lazy indifference to black despair (that from which Virgil shielded Dante's eyes). In Byzantine thought, ascetics were especially vulnerable to idleness (*argia*), slackness (*blakeia, rhathymia*), and *akēdia*. The demons employ these to turn them from Christ. Climacus called *akēdia* "an all-embracing death for monks" (see Richard P.H. Greenfield, Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988, p. 103). Modern capitalist society, which is essentially nihilistic and de-Christianized, and thereby alien to courage or the other *intelligentia*, regards *acedia* as a malady called depression, to be treated with deformative and narcotizing drugs. But for Christians of the Middle Ages this affliction was a spiritual assault; its expression, a vice to which monks and hermits were particularly susceptible. As Sloth, it is the last of the seven deadly sins, the opposite of the virtue of Fortitude (see Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Mediaeval Books and Their Posterity*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966, p. 442).

*cnołakan siroyn ew šinec'i zays hangəstaran hawr imo Grigoro ew ełbawr imo Hamzē ew k'eŕ imo Sedai ew šinec'i senak 2 zsurb Step'annos ew zsurb K'ristap'or ew payman k'ahanayic'd ays ē: or zamēn urbat' i surb Sətep'annosn žamn im mawrn Šušana arasc'en ew zšabat'n im hawrn Grigoro ew i surb K'ristap'or zamēn urbat im k'eŕn Sedai ew zšabat'n im ełbawrn arnēn Hamzēi ew aŕaǰaworac'n urbat'in ew ałc'ac'n urbata noyn p'oxan yarjak awurk'n arasc'en š awr. Ard et'ē ok' i k'ahanayic' ekełec'eac'd zayd žamd xap'anē ew kam pterga ew awr anc'nē nzoveal lic'i i hawrē ew yordwo ew i surb hogwoyn ew 318 hayrapetac'n ew bažin nora and Yudai matč'in aŕc'ē: isk katarič'... awrhneal lic'i* "In this year of 489 I, Abulgharib, governor of the Armenians, son of Gregory and grandson of Abulghamr, princes of the Armenians, though I did not see my father because I was too young, obliged still by filial love I built this resting place for my father Gregory and my brother Hamza and my sister Seda, and I built two rooms, one for St. Stephen and one for St. Christopher, and the contract for the priests is as follows: Every Friday they are to chant the Hour at St. Stephen's for my mother Šušan and on Saturday for my father Gregory, and at St. Christopher's every Friday for my sister Seda and Sunday for my brother, the *manly Hamza; and on the Friday of the tenth week before Easter[43] and in the Fridays of the weeks of Lent, let them do the same every day instead, eight days. Now, if one of the priests of these churches misses the Hour or out of laziness skips a day, then let him be cursed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and by the 318 Patriarchs, and may he take his portion with Judas the betrayer. But the one who fulfills... be blessed."[44]

[43] Prayers for the dead are customary during *Aŕaǰawork'*, the first week of the ten preceding Easter, a time of preparatory abstinence: see M. Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, New York: St. Vartan Press, 1988, p. 189. Neighboring Greeks ridiculed these *Artzibour* rites peculiar to their Armenian neighbors: see J.R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia, Harvard Iranian Series* 5, Cambridge, MA, 1987, p. 419.

[44] Cited from Orbeli's *Diwan* of inscriptions, 1, 33, no. 97, by Sargis Harut'yunyan, *Aneck'i ev ōrhnank'i žanrə hay banahyusut'yan meǯ*, Erevan: Arm. Acad. Sci., 1975, p. 41. This curse of Judas is found in other texts cited, both in epigraphy and MSS., with notable additions, such as the curse of Cain: one might recall another contemporary example. In the *Epic of Sasun*, an extremely archaic oral narrative which crystallized in its present form around the anti-Arab uprising of 851, the voice of the dead David rises from his tomb, cursing his son P'ok'r Mher (i.e., Mithra the Younger) as Cain (*Kayen*). The hapless Mher fought his father— more like Oedipus (though he did not kill him) than Sohrāb (since no political intrigue is overtly present). Mher kills David's murderer, but is doomed by the curse to a childless suspended animation in the Rock of Van, behind the Urartean Gate of God that the local Kurds, following Armenian tradition, still call *Meher kapisi*.

Once enthroned as Catholicos at Hṙomkla, Šnorhali complains that he has no capital city to work in: no material resources to instruct large numbers, to disseminate teachings and exercise leadership. Since, as we have suggested above, the population of Hṙomkla was probably much larger then than it is now, Nersēs must have had a true metropolis like Ani in mind. But he attempted to address all Armenia no less eloquently in his *Encyclical Letter*, addressing its chapters to every class of society in turn, specifying their shortcomings and reminding them of their particular duties. His immediate model within Armenian tradition will have been the third chapter of the Narek, which enumerates all the classes of society— in hierarchical order— for whose use the book of contemplative prayers is meant. The Narek does not seem to limit itself to Armenia or even to mention the nation (though St. Gregory in separate orations composed for Arcrunid princely occasions does celebrate national glories). Its reach is cosmic; and this distinguishes the tenth-century mystic from Šnorhali, whose involvement with his country was complete. Each chapter of the Narek commences with the title, "Speech with God from the depths of the heart" (*I xoroc' srtic' xawsk' and Astucoy*): Šnorhali styled his own *Ban hawatoy* "The lament of the heart's sobbing, speech with God" (*Ołbumn hecut'ean srti, xawsk' and Astucoy*), combining chapter heading and overall title of the Narek (*Matean ołbergut'ean*, "Book of Lamentation"), so there can be no doubt of a consciously-felt and profound influence. St. Gregory of Narek's project should be regarded as a deliberate renewal of the practices of contemplative prayer and faith in particular, meant to radiate from the monasteries to the lay faithful. Prayers of the Narek enter the Armenian Liturgy at critical points.[45] They were endowed by the simple folk with miraculous powers, and for centuries were to be found in every Armenian home where there were books: a recent novel about the disintegration of Armenian life in the wilderness of the North American diaspora is entitled "The City Where There Was No *Narek*"![46]

Narekac'i was writing during a period of calm when the kingdoms of the Bagratids and Arcrunids faced no immediate, serious external threat, and he could, consequently, afford to look inward, in a spirit of penitence and self-mortification. Except for his panegyric on the Cross of

[45] See J.R. Russell, "Armenian spirituality: liturgical mysticism and Chapter 33 of the Book of Lamentation of St. Grigor Narekac'i," *REArm* 26 (1996-1997), pp. 427-439, with refs.

[46] Nupar Č'arxutean (Nubar Tcharkhoutian), *K'aṙak'ə ur Narek č'kar*, Los Angeles: *Nor keank' hratarakč'ut'iwn*, No. 10, 1993.

Aparan, alluded to above, which is in any case strongly pro-Byzantine, there is little that is patriotic, or even overtly Armenian, in his writings. His work, with its monastic focus, evolves parallel to that of his exact contemporary, the Byzantine St. Symeon the New Theologian. It is not known whether the two were aware of each other's existence; but later Armenian Hesychasts in the Crimea perceived their affinities and included portraits of both in a manuscript of the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*.[47] Narekac'i's language is expressive in new ways, but also exceedingly difficult: even in the shorter, lyric compositions where he introduces lexical items from a vernacular steeped in Arabic loan-words, together with allusions to folk customs, the mystical complexity of his poetics still makes tough going. Nersēs Šnorhali's project is also one of renewal, as all-embracing as that of his predecessor of a century and a

[47] See Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, *CSCO* 566, Subs 94, Leuven: Peeters, 1997. Jerusalem St. James MS. 285, 15th cent., is unusual for its plethora of illustrations, executed in a strikingly dramatic style appreciably different from that of any other Armenian school. Hesychasm was a unifying factor in the scribe's addition to his received text of stories or compositions of Armenian holy men whose ideas and concepts were like those of the Hesychasts, such as St. Gregory of Narek, whose portrait faces the text of part of a chapter of the *Book of Lamentation* (pl. 18, no. 42; and see p. 183). Symeon the New Theologian (listed as John the Theologian) is shown in fairly close proximity (pl. 18, no. 40). It is noteworthy that St. Nersēs Šnorhali appears, also. In a huge and dazzlingly sumptuous and complex painting in the MS. of the monks who travelled to the base of the mountain on which the trees of Eden's paradise are aglow with color, the four rivers sparkling, one monk is shown at lower right narrating their itinerary to Nersēs, who stands at lower right in a black, pointed cowl that contrasts with the jewel-like colors of the landscape (the cowl is the Armenian *veṙar*: its most prominent use in a MS. illumination is in a later portrait of that later scholastic *par excellence*, Gregory of Tat'ew, whose black hood is merely the largest in a sea of other, smaller ones, the overall impression being created of academic sobriety and might), at the door to a smallish church (pl. 6, no. 7). It is claimed he recorded the report in his *Commentary on Genesis*, a lost work. As Dr. Stone notes, stories of journeys to Eden are not uncommon in Arm. lore. After all, one recalls that Arm. tradition locates the Garden in the country, in the canton of Hark' (modern Tk. Hinis: see Ełišē Y. Melik'ean, *Hark' Xnus*, Antelias: Cilician Catholicossate, 1964, and my discussion of the poem *Vasn stełcmann ašxarhi*, "On the Creation of the World" in J.R. Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i and the Mediaeval Armenian Lyric Tradition*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts & Studies, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987). Dr. Stone, whose study of the manuscript encompasses a vast wealth of narrative and art, understandably does not delve further into the implications of this story, though. The journey to Eden is not to be taken literally, no matter where in Armenia the mythical garden was believed to have been; so it is more likely that, as was probably also the case for Rabbi Akiva and his companions whose "journey" to Eden is narrated in Tractate *Hagigah* of the Mishnah, this was an ecstatic vision that mystics induced in themselves. For all his immense spiritual stature, it is striking that Nersēs in the legend is *not* one of these ecstatics: he is presented as a leader and teacher, sober and anchored in the necessities of the everyday, who quite literally holds the fort.

half before. But in the circumstances of an unrelenting struggle, he is more patriotic, less retreating and monastic, and very much more encouraging: his imagery is consistently cheerful; his language, simpler and clearer, though not lacking in spiritual power or depth. Kirakos writes: "He reorganized many things in the churches, with sweet melody and the *xosrovayin* (i.e.,"regal"[48]) style: hymns, melodies, odes, and poems." Šnorhali sought not only to inculcate Armenian orthodox faith, but intelligibly, vigorously, and encouragingly to define it to a laity that was susceptible to coaxing, not to a bully pulpit— an alienated co-religionist might easily defect to Islam, or to sectarianism, with little in the way of an Armenian temporal authority to stop him by main force. Part of Šnorhali's concern in the *Encyclical Letter* is to attract into the fold, as gently as possible, fellow Armenians who seem never to have been converted to Christianity, the *Arewordik'*, or "Children of the Sun", a group preserving remnants of Zoroastrianism that existed down to this century, but about whose existence we have only scant information. Narekac'i, by contrast, had been a great deal harsher in the measures he prescribed for dealing with adherents of the T'ondrakec'i heresy— even if one allows that heresy within a religion arouses greater hostility often that an alien faith, the Arewordis were, if not Christian, still close enough to be recognized as Armenians. And Šnorhali does, in fact, attempt a revival of the Christian faith itself amongst his countrymen, stressing the need for confession of the faith: "It is needful and worthy for those who worship Christ and are baptized in the name of the

[48] Persian *xosrōvāne* (and Arabo-Pers. *kesravī*, from Kesrā, i.e., Xusrō, from the name of the Kayanian epic hero, Av. Haosravah, cognate Ved. Susravas) *xosrōvānī*, means "kingly, grand, regal", with the latter the name also of "a kind of song of rhythmical prose in honor of king Khusrau" (Steingass, *Pers.-Eng. Dict.*, *s.v.*), by whom is meant, not the Indo-Iranian figure, but the more recent Sasanian king Xusrō I, styled *Anuširvān*, "of immortal soul", in Pahlavi and subsequent Persian literary and folk tradition. He received this honorific epithet for his suppression of the Mazdakite heresy, and known still as "the Just". His successor, Xusrō II *Parvīz*, "the Victorious", built the great palace at Ctesiphon known as Tāq-e Kesrā to this day. In Armenian church music, there is a melody called *xosrovayin*, "grand"— one of 152 listed by Komitas Vardapet (see E. Gulbekian, tr., Komitas, *Armenian Sacred and Folk Music*, Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1998, p. 116). Šnorhali himself uses the term in his riddles: on King David, *Kayr pataneak mi xartešuk,/ Or hanc' p'ok'rik ēr zerd zt'zuk,/ Xosrovayin aṙnoyr t'əmbuk,/ Espan zhskayn hastabazuk*. "There was a little golden-haired youth/ Who was as small as a midget./ He took a kingly rattle/ And slew the strong-armed giant." On the fifth-century Armenian philosopher David the Invincible, *Imastasēr mi yAt'enac'/ 'W ēr i yazgēn Hayoc' Mecac',/ Xosrovayin čaṙ mi asac',/ Č'or eret šat vardapetac'* "There was a philosopher from Athens/ And he was of the nation of Greater Armenia by race./ He pronounced a kingly discourse/ Which seemed dry to many doctors" (Mnac'akanyan, *Hay miǰnadaryan hanelukner*, *op. cit.*, pp. 348 no. 23 and 247-8 no. 89).

Holy Trinity to confess (*xostovanel*) the consubstantial person of the three... as light from light, fire from fire..." with a typical emphasis on the imagery of light, not at all out of place in mainstream Christianity, especially the Armenian tradition, but which would have been calibrated by Šnorhali to attract proselytes from the ranks of the Children of the Sun.[49]

This focus on the need for an intelligible and vigorous confession of the Armenian form of Christian faith was a constant concern of Nersēs— for the maintenance of community itself, and for the clarification of Armenian belief to other Christians. The *Life* records that Nersēs' brother sent him to settle the feud between the Armenian noblemen Theodore and Awšin. On his way home he stopped at Mopsuestia, where at the request of the emissary of the Byzantine emperor Manuel, he wrote a *xostovanut'iwn hawatoy*, "confession of faith", which begins *Xostovanimk' amenasurb zerrordut'iwnn...* "We confess the most holy Trinity..."[50] He composed a short credal prayer which is still employed at the ordination of a priest, *Nersēs Klayec'woy xostovanut'iwn hawatoy*, "Confession of the faith of Nersēs of (Hṙom)kla", which begins, "I confess you in faith (*Hawatov xostovanim zk'ez*), most holy and immortal Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit." It will be noted that the

[49] See Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia, op. cit.*, Ch. 15, with Šnorhali's letter on the *Arewordik'* translated in an Appendix. Following that study, I proposed in an article, "A Credo for the Children of the Sun," *JSAS* 4 (1988-89), pp. 157-60, that several stanzas of *Hawatov xostovanim*, the great credal poem of Šnorhali to be discussed below, would have been particularly attractive to Arewordi converts: *Hur kendani K'ristos...* ("Living fire, Christ..."); *Imastut'iwn hawr Yisus...* ("Wisdom of the Father, Jesus..."); and *Loys čšmarit K'ristos...* ("True light, Christ..."). The imagery of light and fire is plain. But also, in the middle stanza invoking Wisdom (cf. Ahura Mazdā, lit., "Lord Wisdom"), Šnorhali pleads for salvation from "evil thoughts, words, and deeds" (*i č'ar xorhrdoc', i banic' ew i gorcoc'*): again, this is wholly and acceptably Christian, but to the Zoroastrian ear it echoes the core tenets of the Iranian faith, the great moral triad *humata, huxta, hvaršta* "good thoughts, good words, good deeds". The prayer *Vīspa humata* states these lead to salvation; and their mantric repetition was evidently employed by the Sasanian priest Kirdēr, and by other shaman-like divines before him, to effect the *Himmelsreise der Seele*. In keeping with the dualistic and oppositional character of the Good Religion, one finds as often the negative image of the triad, the *dušmata, dužuxta, duzvaršta* of Ahreman that one repeats as often, especially and most often in the Middle Persian prayer *Ohrmazd xwadāy* "Lord Ahura Mazdā": this is the central section in the credal series that accompanies the thrice-daily obligatory tying of the sacred girdle, Pahlavi *kustīg* (cf. Arm. l-w *k'ustik*, used once by the mediaeval poet Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i as worn by the priest during the Divine Liturgy: see J.R. Russell, "The word *k'ustik* in Armenian," in J. Greppin, ed., *Proceedings* of the 1st Intl. Conference on Arm. Linguistics, Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1981). The good triad is invoked in the Avestan *Fravarānē* prayer that immediately follows.

[50] *Srboyn Nersesi Šnorhalwoy patmut'iwn varuc', op. cit.*, pp. 49-62.

base *xostovan-* is used constantly by Nersēs, who follows what had long before become traditional Armenian usage. It is sufficiently important to warrant some etymological discussion here.

The word is an Iranian loan, most common in Manichaean, rather than in Zoroastrian, usage. The Avestan base *stu-* "praise" is productive: e.g., the text *Staota- yesnya-*, Phl. *Stōt yasn*, "Praise liturgy"; with preverb, in Yasna 12 (the Avestan Credo recited at the tying of the sacred girdle, and used originally for new converts to the faith, since it contains a pledge not to pillage Mazdean villages anymore) *āstuyē* (1st pers. mid.) *humatəm manō, āstuyē huxtəm vāčō, āstuyē hvarštəm šyaothanəm* "I profess/praise the well-considered thought, I profess the well-spoken word, I profess the well-done act" (on the moral triad and its centrality, see note *infra*). From here is Phl. *āstavānīh*, "profession (of the faith)", still used in Parsi Gujarati. The prefix *xva-* "own, self" with *stu-* produces Phl. *xustūk(-īh)*, which, in Prof. Asmussen's summation, was "sporadically... used as an ecclesiastical term in Zoroastrian literature, but never was fully naturalized as such: it is first of all a legal term" to be understood as professing on one's own behalf or for oneself, hence testifying or confessing in a court of law. The common religious term used by Zoroastrians in confession of sins is the Pahlavized Avesticism *patēt* < *paiti-ita-* "repentance"; but in Manichaean Parthian, and in the Armenian usage that probably derives therefrom, *xwastvānīft* and *xostovanut'iwn* have the double sense of confession of religious faith and repentant confession of one's sins: the Arm. Christian usage renders Gk. *exomologēsis* and Syriac *mawdyānutā* and *tawdītā*. In the New Persian commentary on the *Qur'ān*, the term *xustūn* or *xustuvān* means one who professes one God, whilst *nā-xustū(n)*, one who does not, is employed to render Arabic *kāfir*, "ingrate, infidel". If one might venture a semantic generalization, the original Iranian term enjoys the most markedly religious usage in those traditions— Manichaeism, Christianity, Islam— where an intrinsic sinfulness, universal to the human condition, is recognized and confessed as an essential part of the declaration of faith, whereas the Zoroastrians, though no less concerned with evil, sin, and repentance, do not regard man's spiritual or corporeal essence as sinful, and consequently the Mazdean creed is not inevitably bound up with the confession of sin, for which other liturgical compositions and terms are employed. By Šnorhali's time, then, Arm. *xostovan* was a well-established term, the derivative verb taking the passive *-im* to convey the reflexive sense of confessing or professing on one's own behalf; and the abstract noun, with ending in *-ut'iwn*, was possibly even marked in Arm.

usage and employed by neighboring peoples, in a manner parallel to the development of the term in early New Persian, to denote an Armenian Christian believer— for a letter of the Jacobite patriarch John X (1064-73) to the Armenian catholicos Gregory II speaks *mtl mwdynwt' dbhth' 'wkyt kwstwb'nwtyn*, "on the confession of sins or *kōstōvānūtīn*".[51] Dionysius Barsalibi, whose deprecation of the Armenian practice of baptizing and naming crosses was noted above, disapproves also of *khustuvanutin*, which he claims the Armenians make "for a consideration"- a practice whose insincerity Nersēs might have been seeking to remedy.[52] The word appears in the final line of the baptismal creed in the service book called *Maštoc'*, *xostovanimk' ew hawatamk'*, "we confess and believe"; lines 1, 31, and 37 of the Arm. version of the Nicene creed— not, of course, a native Arm. composition— contain *hawatamk'* "we believe" but no *xostovan-* form; and the Arm. Confession of the orthodox faith, beginning *Xostovanimk' ew hawatamk'*, continues with many successive lines beginning *hawatamk'*.[53]

A text attributed to the fifth-century Catholicos Yovhannēs Mandakuni, though most likely a composition of Yovhan Mayravanec'i (late 6th-early 7th century) is entitled *T'ułt' vasn xostovanut'ean varuc' yanc'anac'*, "Letter concerning confession of life's transgressions".[54] It is not a credo, but a lamentation by the author of his own sins, delivered in that style of the litany of extravagantly violent imagery and relentless repetition that characterizes the later *Matean ołbergut'ean* of St. Gre-

[51] See discussion by Jes P. Asmussen, *Xuāstvānīft: Studies in Manichaeism*, Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965, pp. 46-7, 54.

[52] Mingana, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[53] See Abp. Norayr Połarean (Bogharian), *Hay ekełec'woy hawatoy hanganaknerə*, New York: Armenian Diocese, Zohrab Center, 1991. The word figures in folk compositions, too. A prayer of Xanum marik/ Xanum Uŕumyan of Malatya, recorded by Mihran Tumačan, *Hayreni erg u ban*, II, Erevan: Arm. Acad. Sci., 1983, p. 331, reads: *Ter ołormya.// I k'en aysōr mez ōgnut'in,/ Amenasurb errordut'yun:/ Tur ašxarnus xałałut'yun,/ Ev hivandac' aŕołjut'yun.// Surb patarag hac'in kenac',/ Ołormut'yan mezi duŕ mi banas,/ Xostəvanim K'ristos asvac,/ P'rkya zašxar i p'orjanas.// Ga K'ristos, ter amenin,/ Mełavoris datołin,/ Dəžox mer ampa husyal,/ Barexosya k'o miacin.* "Lord have mercy.// From you today [we ask for] help,/ Most holy Trinity:/ Give this world peace;/ And to the sick, healing.// Holy mass of the bread of life,/ You open a door of mercy to us,/ I confess Christ God,/ Save the world from trials.// Christ is coming, Lord of all,/ To the judge of me, a sinner,/ The cloud of hell woven for us,/ Intercede, your Sole-begotten Son." The prayer compasses some of the themes of *Hawatov xostovanim*, and is based loosely upon it and sundry other prayers, whose Classical Armenian the reciter handles with awkward half-comprehension.

[54] *Teaŕn Yovhannu Mandakunwoy Hayoc' hayrapeti čaŕk'*, 2nd ed., Venice: S. Lazzaro, 1860, pp. 15-20.

gory of Narek. And, like Narekac'i's book, it focusses on the particular spiritual perils of the monastic, with special attention given to sloth. Its importance warrants this translation:

LETTER CONCERNING THE CONFESSION OF LIFE'S TRANSGRESSIONS.

Those who are desirous of the Holy Spirit, longing for Divine love, wait for the coming of the Son of God and desire immortal glory. They always ponder that which is on high, and desire daily otherworldly joy. They shun and disdain quotidian things, and day by day they ascend, not only by the truth of faith, but also by the virtues of their manner of living. They are always vigilant over the purity of the heart, and are daily prepared in unblemished spirit. They lead their lives and abide in the world, and not by the likes of this world, but as aliens and wanderers and children of *another [*ayloc'*, scil. *ayloy*] world they are straitened and worn out by many wants, but are strengthened by the words, "Where I am, there too will be my servant." Of this kind are the honors of the religious and the benefactions given to lovers of God.

But I was wounded by many of the arrows of the evil one, and was vanquished and defeated. I confess [*xostovanim*] my surrender, and make known my transgressions. I relate my innumerable sins, and beg for my frightful acts of lawlessness. For the pains of my wounds force me to speak, and the agitations of my disasters force me to plead, to find medicine for my wound, daily to seek rivulets of tears by which I may bewail my sins and cure my wounds. With much desire I wish it daily, and in every hour with ardent wish I ask for that which is a prophet's, to lament it. For, joining my voice to his, I might lament with him, and, shedding tears, I would ever give piteously supplicating voice, saying: Would only one make my head a storehouse of waters; and my eyes, an abundant fount of tears, that ever, ceaselessly, by day and night I might bitterly bewail my sins with tears, and ensnare my evils, and cry over the multitude of my lawless acts, and ever lament my sins, and wail over my infinite transgressions, and sigh at my numberless filthy actions, and howl over my awful destruction, and lament bitterly the torments of my miseries. For the consciousness of my transgressions chokes me every day, and my evils torment me hourly with gazing at the crowd of my numberless sins, at the lawlessness of my frightful vices. It ever wears out my body, and shatters my bones, and wrings my heart, and turns my stomach upside-down, and my soul trembles in terror, and daily it melts all my members. For I am trapped by the pain of my wounds, and my

stupefied thoughts stagger, since I know the good yet do what is wicked. I know righteousness, and work lawlessness. I speak aright, yet ponder injustice. I appear holy, but draw closer to abomination. I recognize truth, yet cling to error. I see the light, yet desire the darkness.

Now who will bewail me, or who will lament me, dead of sin and destroyed by lawlessness, fallen into the depths of darkness and into the abysses by reason of sinfulness. For my evils torture me, and my foulnesses slay me. And now how shall I cry, or how lament, the multitude of my numberless sins, when I am sickened by transgressions, and enfeebled by my laziness [*culut'eamb*]. For immortality was promised me, and I remain in my death. He invited me up into heaven, and I descend into the abysses of hell. He prepared the desirable paradise, and I selected ripping tares. And [he offered] life and glory everlasting, yet I slew me by my sins. And now what dirge will suffice for all this, or what lament for lamenting? What sort of crying for tears, or what kind of sighs for supplication? How many labors, how much virtuous effort might heal my wounds? For they are past numbering and enumerating. And my soul is lax [*helgay*] in its sloth. Cast out by the ferocious crowd of sins, it slackens [*t'ulanay*], and, afraid of Gehenna's inextinguishable fire, it is terrified. For remembering the great day of the terrible judgement and the horrors of the frightful tribunal, my soul quakes in fear, and my mind is amazed with terror. My heart demands lament, and my eyes long for tears. The fear of the awful court hastens me to repentance, and the wiles of the evil one daily make me slothful. And now I am pressed by both, and all crazed, for ever have I passed my days in sin, and spent my life in lawlessness, and did good to nobody, and accepted no righteousness ever. But I ruined and lost all my members in diverse transgressions. I befouled my mouth with slanders, and made my tongue filthy with empty words; my ear, with news of evil; and my eye, with filthy spectacles; and my heart, with dirty thoughts; and I guided my soul daily down immodest ways. Nor did I keep my body healthy at all; or my heart, true; but kept them in pain through sins, and in sickness with transgressions. I want to repent and confess, and the enemy makes me delay. I want to enter a life of penitence, and the enemy makes me slothful. I want to fall before God, and the enemy removes me afar. I want to plead and beg and implore, and the enemy hardens me. I want to lament and wail in tears, and the enemy makes me dry. I want to have mercy on the poor man, and the enemy reminds me of my poverty. I want to wear myself out in fasting, and the enemy reminds me of my bodily frailty. I want to be meek and submit to my brother, and my soul

persists in arrogance. For whatever I may employ to atone my sins, I find the enemy's snare of evil placed before me.

And now I am straitened in everything, and my soul moans daily. I tremble with fear, remembering the multitude of my sins, and am abashed at the foulness of my thoughts. Observing my unholiness, daily I lament; and when I ponder my acts of lawlessness the terrors of doubt collapse upon me, and the pains of fatigue assail me. For I always see the terror of the awful judgement, and the horrors of the great tribunal and the awesome one, and the mighty blast of the trumpet, and the awful voice of the archangel, and the blazing of the fire spreading wide as the sea, and its dilation over all the earth,[55] the rapture of the righteous, and the remaining of the sinners, the assembling of all the sinners, and the rendering of the account of words and deeds, the terrifying visage of the judge, and the pitiless day of the judgement, the evil disgrace of the sinners and the bitter, undying, everlasting torments. And I groan on account of all this, and cry bitterly, lamenting unceasingly my sins, for extremely affrighted do I behold the terrors of Gehenna, and the superintendance of the awful calamities, where no supplications at all aid me: neither crying nor tears are of help; neither wails nor groans are of use; neither do the righteous petition, nor do the saints intercede for those gone in sin. You are unknown to your friends and distant from your intimates. You are hateful to your loved ones, and an enemy to your comrades. You are utterly bereft, and alien from all. You cannot beg anyone, and nobody recognizes you. You lament and sob piteously, and nobody inclines towards you. Parched with thirst, you fry, and nobody pities you. You burn daily, yet cannot discover the skewer that roasts. You are enveloped by fog in the fiery furnace, by the thick gloom, unpierced by a ray of light, of Gehenna, in the tenebrous pits [*gubs*] and innermost parts of Tartarus, stinking of corruption and crawling with worms. The fire is kindled below, and fire floods[56] fright-

[55] *zCovacawal hroyn borbok'umn ew ənd amenayn erkir cawalumn*: These alliterations darkly anticipate Narekac'i's brighter use of them in the Melody of the Nativity (*Ač'k'n cov i cov cicałaxit cawalanayr...*), which was itself imitated by subsequent Armenian religious poets: see J.R. Russell, "A Poem of Grigor Narekac'i," *REArm* 19, 1985, pp. 435-9.

[56] Arm. *hrahosan*: the word reoccurs, in a positive context, in the description in the Hymn of Vesting composed several centuries later by Xač'atur Kеč'arec'i, *ca.* 1260-1331 (*Šarakan handerji*, beginning *Xorhurd xorin...*, "Profound mystery") of the divine fire that descended at Pentecost amongst the Apostles: *anjrewacin bažak hrahosan*, "rain-born chalice flowing with fire". See discussion by J.R. Russell, "Armenian spirituality: liturgical mysticism and Chapter 33 of the *Book of Lamentation* of St. Grigor Narekac'i," *REArm* 26 (1996-1997), pp. 427-439, esp. pp. 430-1.

fully from above, massing and plunging in billows into the rivers brimming with fire, where the darkness is tangible. And you cannot see anybody at all, for you are enclosed by the darkness of a black fog and thrown into bolts of lightning: you cry and lament ceaselessly, and bewail your anguish alone, since because of the frightful agonies of pain you think yourself alone in the savage torments. You wail continuously and cry bitterly, without rest or consolation. Griefs and sorrows and everlasting sufferings, endless tortures and unrelenting panic, indescribable pains and incomparable griefs, anguish of every sort and doubts of every kind. For there the only language is screams of woe. There are supplications and pleadings: you hear only sighs and groans, cries and panickings, ceaseless crying and lamenting, and no discovery of mercy. But you boil forever in grief and constantly decay in regrets,[57] with tears and entreaties that no one hears. Nor are your entreaties accepted, since the time is too late. But here is crying, and here is lamenting. Here is groaning, in this world is moaning. Here is pleading and begging and asking forgiveness. For here there is profit in tears and help from prayers, seeds of mercy and the fruit of penitence, a time for moaning and seeking mercy.

And now in this life let us exchange the slight discomfort of this body for the inexhaustible tortures of pain. For by the labor of a few fasts on the earth, we shall survive the blazing fire and the frightful lightning-bolts of Gehenna. For a modicum of vigilance at prayer, we shall survive the abundant-flowing rivers of fire. For a bit of sorrow, we shall survive the awful furnaces and cruel-fanged worms that gnaw. For some moaning and groaning here, we will survive the bitter tortures there, and the unbroken dark. For a little crying and shedding of tears here, we will survive the eternal sobbing and daily lamenting there. And in exchange for one act of repentance here, we shall survive the foggy dark there, bitter death, and eternal shame.

Now keeping all this in mind, O my soul replete with sin, do not be lax in fasting, nor slothful at prayer. Do not cease from repenting, nor delay confession [*i xostovanut'enē*], nor tire at pity, nor cease from cry-

[57] Arm. *mišt i višts xašis, ew hanapaz i karawtut'iwns mašis:* The first clause is alliterative with the second a break ending in a resumptive alliteration. The base *xaš-* is considered in *NBHL* to be an alternation of *haš-*, "waste away", and is thus a synonym of *maš-* (*h->x-* is very common, notably in the Van dialect, and is attested from the earliest-known Arm. inscriptions); but I think it is possibly to be understood as an early modern form with elision of the *-r-* of *xarš-*, even as *maš-< marš-* (an Iranian loan: cf. *maršō.kāra-*, "worker of decay", an attribute of the dropsical Time-god Zurvān).

ing, nor rest from lamenting. Do not wait for the end, nor hope in the toil of old age, nor reckon that you have many years in this world, nor think, 'I'll repent later on.' The enemy is a thief and a deceiver: he fools you and brings you to perdition, making you procrastinate that way. 'Now I'll do the deed,' you say, 'and repent it later on.' 'I'll rest in youth,' you say, 'and repent in old age. 'I'll live today and take pleasure,' you say, 'and fast tomorrow.' 'I'll be a voluptuary now,' you say, 'and be modest afterwards.' 'I'll collect now,' you say, 'and dispense to the poor later.' These kinds of things are the wiles of the enemy, by which he deceives and ruins us, acting from year to year and limiting from hour to hour the performance of good deeds.

Now let us not be deceived by such tricks: the day of death is unknown, and the departure from this world is invisible, falling upon one like labor pains, and then you do not have time to be sorry and repent. It arrives like a thief in the night, and allows no time to wail and atone. It catches suddenly, like the bird-hunters' net, and does not permit crying and weeping and allowing pity. It attacks like a lion, roars and pounces, and you have no time at all. And now what will you do, O my soul, or what will you contrive, you, who ponders the good but does not do it, who wills mercy, but delays, who professes regret, but does not wet your mattress with tears as David did. He says also, I ate ashes as bread and mixed my potation with tears. And he sobbed all night long, crying bitterly without cease. You are eager to fast, but you do not settle down in sackcloth and ashes like the Ninevites. They also turned away, it says, from all ways and paths of the iniquity they did. You find shedding tears and crying appetizing, but you do not lament affectingly in the manner of the harlot. You want to have mercy upon the needy, but not like the widow who sold all she had.

Now, such is the ardor of penitence, that it is sparing neither of things nor of bodily labor, but it vexes and wears down and afflicts, and seeks only the remission of sins and the healing of the vices of souls: by this we will atone our sins and cure the wounds of our souls. For sins are to be atoned through abstinence and the rigor of zealous fasting. Sins are to be atoned also by prayers and entreaties and heartfelt supplications. Sins are to be atoned also through sackcloth and ashes and by sleeping on the bare ground. Sins are to be atoned also by crying and lamenting and pity for the destitute. Sins are to be atoned also by moaning and groaning and ceaselessly sobbing. Sins are to be atoned also through meekness and humility and submission. Sins are to be atoned also through poverty and lack of property, and by nakedness. Sins are to be atoned for also by

good things that are good, and by beneficence towards all.[58] Sins are to be atoned also through fraternal love and the fear of God. Sins are to be atoned also through straight counsel and teaching, according to the words, 'He who turns one from the evil path rescues his soul from death, and will hide the multitude of his sins.' But also, only true turning and straight repentance are adequate for salvation and righteousness, according to the words, 'First declare your iniquities, that you be justified.'

Now what have you got to say, O my soul of multitudinous sins, if you are still not cured by this many medicines? But hasten, do not delay, wake from the bitter slumber of your sleep, turn from your path of perdition. Disspel the darkness of ignorance. Wake from your insensate error, and come to yourself. Throw the severity of sin off yourself, lighten the weight of the burdens of lawlessness, repent the multitude of your numberless transgressions. Heal the cruel lacerations of your wounds. And wash off the foul smell of the filth of your sinfulness, that with a spirit purified and cleansed, with a body adorned with light and greatly shining, with bold face and joyous countenance you may pass through the awful and innumerable armies of the universe[59] to stand before the terrible and great podium of God, and to hear from him the speech sweet to the ear, of blessing, to that assembly seen by all the world: Come, blessed ones of my Father, and enter and inherit the enjoyment of the good things of heaven, with the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, to whom glory and honor for ever and ever, Amen.

[58] Arm. *Ē ew bari bariōk' ew amenec'unc' barerarut'eamb zmełs k'awel*. The editor expresses puzzlement in a footnote at the phrase *bari bariōk'*, lit. "good goods" (inst. pl.); but perhaps it is to be understood in contrast to the *anbari barerarut'iwn*, "not-good good-doing", i.e., "evil beneficence"- the communal ownership of women and property- that Movsēs Xorenac'i attributes to Aždahak, conflating the Median king Astyages (Med. *Rištivaiga) with the monstrous paragon of evil religion and misrule Āžī Dahāka, the "Serpent-slave" of the Avesta. But in the late Sasanian period, it was the arch-heretic (Phl. *ahlōmōγ*) Mazdak ī Bāmdādān who was seen as the latest irruption of Āžī Dahāka into this world. His proto-Communist doctrines, superficially attractive and beneficent, were the same that Xorenac'i decries. Xusrō I Anōšarwān killed Mazdak and his followers and was gratefully remembered for restoring social order to Iran: see our discussion of Arm. *xosrovayin*, *supra*. Fr. Nersēs Akinean astutely recognized in Movsēs' description a memory of Mazdak. Mayragomec'i, as Mayravanec'i was depreciatingly called by his adversaries, living close to those times, may be specifying by the seemingly redundant "good goods" a beneficence that remedies the poor without seeking to level society.

[59] We have seen in Maštoc', and will observe again in *Hawatov xostovanim*, the particular concern with the afterlife- and, in this text and Šnorhali, the description of the soul's ascent through the demon-peopled air after death to heaven.

*Nersēs' Credo.*

Nersēs Šnorhali composed the credal poem and prayer *Hawatov xostovanim* whilst yet a bishop in the service of his elder brother. Though it cannot be precisely claimed that his other confessional prayers are adumbrations of it, there can be no doubt that it is the finest of his verses of the type, perhaps his greatest work overall; and the prose introduction to it, translated below, suggests he knew and meant it to be his best and most important composition. The prayer itself summarizes his sunny theological viewpoint, whilst the Introduction sounds the themes of preaching to the unlettered, affirmation of the Armenian faith against Islam or other alien creeds, and spiritual revival in the face of sacerdotal sloth, that we have noted as perennial concerns. The Illuminator, Maštoc', Šnorhali: to borrow a term from the history of Protestantism in America, the mission of Nersēs, and its impact, rank as a Second Great Awakening. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of *Hawatov xostovanim*: it crowns the Armenian book of common prayer, the *Žamagirk'* (lit. "Book of the [Five] Hours"), coming at the end of the final *Hangstean žam*, the night office. It is the first text, followed by chapters of the *Narek* and other prayers, in the very numerous Armenian manuscript and printed talismanic scrolls, the so-called *hmayils* against the *Al*, the Child-stealing Witch.[60] It is also prominent- being preceded only by the Paternoster itself- in the equally numerous Armenian talismanic prayer books called *Kiprianos* after their central text, the narrative of the conversion of the sorcerer Cyprian of Antioch to Christianity: there is connection in tradition between this book and the scrolls, for Cyprian is sometimes invoked also, with St. Sisianos and others, against the *Al*.[61] The prayer is employed as a talisman all by

[60] For a composite table of the contents of these scrolls, see J.R. Russell, "The Armenian Shrines of the Black Youth (*t'ux manuk*)," *Le Muséon* 111.3-4, 1998, pp. 329-30 n. 29.

[61] See J.R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard Iranian Series 5, Cambridge, MA, 1987, p. 447 and p. 472 n. 95. Martin Schwartz has argued recently in *BAI* 10 that the predecessor of Hellenistic magical figure Sesengen bar Pharanges is not an Iranian, but the Canaanite magical god Sasom, from whom Sisianos derives- with his two associates, making up the triad of Lilith's angelic pursuers. Schwartz argues with particular care the iconographic continuity from Sasom to Sesengen. (I had independently derived the Persian name Sāsān, which Gignoux associates with Sesengen, from an older *thrāthrān-*, "protector", which suits the context fine: if one allows for the not unprecedented alternation of short and long *a* in transmission of the name, it is possible at least that a Magian magician *Sasan, cf. Ostanes et al., was fused with the Semitic divine being who eventually turned into English Sesame, the opener of obstructions- faith the size of a mustard seed indeed!) Here is a representative table of contents of the *Kiprianos*, from the 1994

itself: Mrs. Zarman Nazaret'ean, born at Aintab in the late 19th century, carried a paper folded into a triangle, inside which was inscribed the fifteenth verse, which begins with the words *Pahapan amenayni*

edition of the Cilicia publishing house at Aleppo, Syria, 1994: 1. Paternoster. 2. *Hawatov xostovanim*. 3. *Ałōt'k' pahpanut'ean*, "Prayer for protection", with abecedarian epithets of God. There are 1001, to beat the Muslims' 99. 4. *Ałōt'k' vasn kapanac' diwac' ew kaxardac', ałandaworac' ew vasn datastani yaǰołeloy*, "Prayer for the binding of demons and witches, of heretics; and for success at litigation." (*T'agawor hzōr, apawēn carawe-loc'*... "Mighty king, refuge of them that thirst...") 5. *Awetarank' bžškut'ean*: Gospel readings for healing from Mt., Mk., Lk., Jn. 6. *Darj Kiprianosi hayrapeti*, "Conversion of Cyprian the Patriarch". 7. *Ałōt'k' eranelwoyn Yovh. Gaṙnec'woy asac'eal aṙ Surb Astua-cacinn*, "Prayer said by the blessed John of Gaṙni to the Holy Mother of God" (*Astua-cacin mayr K'ristosi ew cnoł miacni Hōr: Barjoł anicic' ew parcank' azgi mardkanc'*... "Mother of God, mother of Christ and parent of the Sole-begotten of the Father, remover of curses and pride of the race of men...") 8. *Ałōt'k' eranelwoyn Yovh. Gaṙ. vasn čana-parhi*, "Prayer of the blessed John of Gaṙni for the road" (*Aṙaǰnord kenac', čanaparh čšmartut'ean Tēr mer Yisus K'ristos*... "Guide of life, road of truth, our Lord Jesus Christ...") 9. *Ałers vasn zawak cnaneloy*, "Supplication for the begetting of a child" (*Astuac boloric', anᵉaṙ mecut'iwn*... "God of all, ineffable greatness...") 10. *Ałers aṙ surb Step'anos naxavkayn*, "Supplication to St. Stephen the Protomartyr" (*I k'ēn hayc'emk' artasuagin, naxavkay Teaṙn ararč'in*... "Tearfully we implore you, Protomartyr of our Creator, God...") 11. *Ałōt'k' zōrawor aṙ erknayin zōrs*, "Powerful prayer to the heavenly powers" (*Aneł anmah ararč'in spasawork' anmarmink'*... "Incorporeal servants of the uncreated, immortal Creator...") 12. *Ałōt'k' aṙ surb zinawors* (*sic*!) *K'ristosi*, "Prayers to the holy warriors of Christ" (*Barexōsut'eamb surb zōravarac'n*... "By the intercession of the holy commanders...") 13. *Ałōt'k' vasn akan č'ari ew lezui č'ari*, "Prayer against the evil eye and evil tongue" (*Tēr Astuac mardasēr, mardasiri Hōr ordi, du es pahapan ew ōgnakan yusac'eloc's i k'ez*... "Lord God who lovest mankind, Son of the Father who loveth mankind, you are our protector and helper of those who believe in you...") 14. *Ałōt'k' srboyn Grigori Lusaworč'i*, "Prayer of St. Gregory the Illuminator" (*Ałač'em zk'ez K'ristos p'rkič' ašxarhi: hayea yis ew ołormea ew šnorhea nerumn bazum anōrēnut'ean imoy*... "I beg you, Christ, savior of the world, look upon me and forgive, and grant pardon for my great lawlessness...") 15. *Małt'ank' aṙ surb lusaworič'n mer*, "Petition to our holy Illuminator" (*Lusaworič' hayr parcanac', ənkal zbans zays małt'anac'*... "Illuminator, father of our pride, receive these words of petition...") 16. *Ałōt'k' aṙ dran surb ekełec'woy surb Yovhannu Oskeberani*, "Prayer of St. John Chrysostom at the door of the holy Church" (*Tačar Astucoy ew bnakaran surb hogwoyn, i k'ēn surb awazanawn kоč'eac' yordegrut'iwn Hōrn erknawori*... "Temple of God and dwelling of the Holy Spirit, from you by the holy font did he call to adoption of the heavenly Father...") 17. *Narek*, Chs. 28.5, 12, 41, 94. 18. *Ałers aṙ surb Aṙak'ealsn*, "Supplication to the Holy Apostles" (*Anmahn gaṙin hzōri or mišt zeneal ew kendani*... "Immortal, of the mighty Lamb who is ever sacrificed, ever living...") 19. *Parcank' hawatac'eloc' i K'ristos ew govest surb xač'in or erewec'aw yErusałēm yawur Kiwrti hayrapetin, Mayis 7*, "Glory of believers in Christ, praise to the holy Cross that appeared at Jerusalem in the days of the patriarch Cyril, May 7th" (*Xač'n K'ristonēic' yoys: xač'n kurac' aṙaǰnord*... "The Cross, hope of Christians, the Cross, guide to the blind...") 20. *Anuank' surb nšanac'n ork' en barexōs vasn mer*, "Names of the Holy Signs that are intercessors on our behalf" (*Barexōsut'eamb Astuacayin surb nšanin ew anbarbaṙ barex-ōsin K'ristosi*... "By the intercession of the divine Holy Signs, speechless intercessors with Christ...") 21. *Hrašagorcut'iwn K'ristosi zor arar*, "Christ's thaumaturgy that He did" (*Ew K'ristos bžškeac' i žołvrdenē bazum hiwands*... "And Christ healed many of the

*K'ristos* ("Christ, protector of all"); the recipient's name was written on the outside.[62]

*Hawatov xostovanim* enjoys a unique place in the history of Armenian printing, further attesting to the special reverence in which it is held by priesthood and laity. Timothy Garnuk of Mardin published an edition in Armenian and Italian at Padua in 1690; the London edition of 1780 has Armenian, Latin, French, and English versions; the first Mxit'arist polyglot edition, printed about twenty years later, added Greek and Turkish; and the Venetian Mxit'arist edition of 1873 presents the prayer in 36 languages. The prayer is also printed at the end of the Armenian Psalter, which went through 62 editions between 1565 and 1800.[63] To my knowledge, the only scholar who commented on the prayer at length hitherto, was Patriarch Šnorhk' Galustean of Constantinople, in an article "*Hawatov xostovanim*" serialized in *Sion*, Jerusalem, over 1958-59. He divides it into thematic sections: the first five stanzas are on faith; the next twelve, on practical requests for earthly life; stanzas 20-22, on the soul's reception in the next world after death; 23, a prayer for all humanity; and 24, a plea for the intercession of the saints, both pan-Christian and Armenian, with a prayer for oneself. This final stanza borrows also from the structure of epic, in which lists of heroes are presented, often starting with the very remote, primeval personalities and ending in known time. This strategy can be transferred to hymnology. The Avesta employs the form of the list, notably in the sacrificial hymns to particular divinities- the *Yašts*- with the catalogue of adorants beginning with the *Paradhāta*- heroes of legend (the Pīšdādians of the *Šāhnāme*) and culminating in Zoroaster and the family of his patron, Vīštāspa. One of the effects of this strategy is to achieve a linear connection of the figures of literature to those of sacred history, in the elaboration of a particular theme: in this case, the worship of one particular *yazata*. In the case of Šnorhali's poem, the list begins with the intercessions of Mary, St. John the Baptist, and St. Stephen the Protomartyr: all primeval sacred figures who are objects of particular devotion in Armenian cult. Amongst them, two have heroic and martial aspects which link them to mythological themes. The beloved *Surb Karapet*, John, inherited the

sick from amongst the people...") 22. *Narek*, chs. 84, 89, 90, 95. 23. *Gohabanut'iwn ar erkins*, "Thanksgiving to Heaven" (*Gohanamk' zk'ēn, ov amenasurb errordut'iwn*... "We thank you, most holy Trinity...").

[62] Mrs. Shushan Teager- Mrs. Nazaret'ean's granddaughter- born at Beirut, now resident in Belmont, Mass., showed me the talisman on 18 March 1997 at Harvard Univ.

[63] See A. Sanjian, Catalogue of Arm. MSS. at UCLA, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

fiery tresses and martial valor of Vahagn; and it was at his great shrine near Muš that tightrope walkers learnt their perilous dangerous art. John came to minstrels in their dreams to initiate them, much as Khidr visited Muslim *'āšiqs*. As to St. Stephen, Armenian belief associates him with the martial salvation of the country from the *aylazgik'*- the alien Muslims. The list narrows to the national saint, Gregory the Illuminator, and then brings one into recent time whilst widening the scope and number as well to the vast categories of the religion, producing a crescendo effect of great emotional power. The prayer sounds various features of Armenian popular religion, particularly those having to do with death and heaven- topics that, as we have seen, Maštoc' had focussed upon in his sermons to the unlettered, centuries before. I have already alluded to the possibility that Šnorhali's constant employment of images of light and fire, and of the triad of thoughts, words, and deeds, was designed to attract Arewordik' to the fold.[64] But equally these aspects are to be expected, as the natural substrate of the principal *Chrétienté* of the Iranian cultural sphere, just as the Christianities of the other regions of the continent have co-opted and incorporated Greek and Slavic, Germanic and Celtic traditions and imagery.

Patriarch Šnorhk' translated into modern Western Arm. in his article the prose introduction to the prayer, which was generally printed in full until this century, when it is omitted from Psalters. Not even modern editions of the text of *Hawatov xostovanim* alone as a booklet contain it. A passage offensive to Islam is omitted from these printed texts, since they were either produced in the Ottoman Empire or likely to be used there. Anti-Muslim sections of Grigor Tat'ewac'i's *Girk' Harc'manc'* ("Book of Questions") were similarly left out of the 1729 edition of Constantinople, and were published by Guleserian only in the 20th century in Jerusalem, under the British Mandate. Šnorhk''s translation keeps the lacuna, indicated by an ellipsis.[65] Fr. Łewond Ališan wrote of

[64] It is striking that Nersēs praises Christ as creator of light and banisher of darkness. Deutero-Isaiah, in what has been taken by some scholars to be an implicit rejection of Zoroastrian dualism, extols the one God as creator of both light and darkness, good and evil. Armenians also thought Muslims considered God the author of both good and evil, and regarded this as another pernicious doctrine of theirs.

[65] It would seem that the omission of the offensive lines is pre-emptive self-censorship. Jews in Christian lands encountered the same problem: the credal prayer *'Alenu...* ("It is incumbent upon us [to praise the Master of all"), which most likely is to be dated within the late Second Temple period (and thus cannot possibly refer to Christianity) includes a refutation of alien worship, with the line "For they bow down to idols and vanities, and worship a god in whom there is no salvation" (*She-hem mishtakhavim le-hevel ve-riq, u-mitpalelim el el-lo-yoshi'a*. Rabbi Nosson Scherman, *Siddur Qol Ya'aqov*,

Šnorhali's prose introduction, "This introductory counsel is simpler, closer to the vernacular, differing in the style of its delivery somewhat from the author's other writings, in that it has a more imperious, accusatory aspect. We may even venture to suggest that he [Nersēs] is slightly offended at the indifference of some people, who claimed not to have the time or ability to learn prayers by heart, but 'learn satanic songs with great effort.'" And Nersēs, Ališan adds, contrasts his own countrymen to the Muslims- *mahmetakank'*, as Ališan calls them- who do not allow even war to disrupt the regular recitation of the prayers ordained for them.[66] The introduction clarifies Nersēs' motives in writing the credo: of education, of revival, of resistance, of inculcation of generally Christian and specifically Armenian Christian beliefs- which, as we have seen, have precedents through Armenian history. It also provides insight into his energetic, even impatient personality[67] and his fiery dedication

Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah, 1991, p. 159, notes that an apostate slanderer in 1400 informed the Christians that Heb. *riq* has the same *gematria*, or numerical equivalent, as *Yeshu* (Jesus), 316- the passage is an attack on Christians! Many, including Manasseh b. Israel in the seventeenth century, tried to refute the charge, but most Ashkenazic prayer-books tended to omit the line and until very recently most congregations have not restored the words to the text of the prayer. The "god who does not save" is actually a citation of Isaiah 45.20 (see W. Jac. Van Bekkum, "Anti-Christian polemics in Hebrew liturgical poetry (*piyyut*) of the sixth and seventh centuries," in J. Den Boeft and A. Hilhorst, eds., *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, Leiden: Brill, 1993, p. 303). So, for instance, in the prayer book printed in the mid-16th century by Isaac Immanuel de Lattes at Rome, we find the verse "For they bow down"- and that is all! To what? David Amram, *The Makes of Hebrew Books in Italy*, London: The Holland Press, 1963, pp. 233-234, comments, "When the censors deleted a passage of some text it was promptly memorized by all readers. If they ordered one word to be substituted for another, the original word was preserved by oral tradition, and the substituted word became a mere symbol, whereby its original was more keenly impressed on the memory." Did Armenians remember thus to read between the lines, or to decode euphemisms, where anti-Muslim passages were deleted or changed, by analogy with the Jews in Christian Europe? It is possible, though Armenians never have been a people of the book to the extent Israel is.

[66] Fr. Ɫewond M. Ališan, *Šnorhali ew paragay iwr*, Venice: S. Lazzaro, 1873, pp. 251-3.

[67] This irritation with an inattentive congregation has, as one might expect, ample precedent. In the *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* by St. Grigor Narekac'i's father Xosrov Anjewac'i (ed. and tr. by S. Peter Cowe, New York: St. Vartan Press, 1991, para. 16, p. 110), the author addresses those who do not listen to Holy Scripture. He says the problem has concerned him before. *Erkink' at'oṙ im, ew erkirs patuandan otic' imoc', ew es yo bnakec'ayc', et'ē oč' i hezs ew i xonarhs, ew oyk' dołan i banic' imoc': vasn aynorik oč' tay t'oyl lsel bansarkun, zi zays ew na gitē, t'ē axoržut'eamb lsołac' zbann Astucoy, ink'n Astuac tay noc'a zerkiwłn iwr, ew zink'n i nosa bnakec'uc'anē: ew yorum Astuac bnakē, nma amenayn džuarink' diwrink' linin, ew taržanelik' axorželik', ew k'ałc'ranay lucn K'ristosi, ew beṙn nora p'ok'rogi lini nma...* "'The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool,' and where will I dwell, if not in the meek and hum-

to his mission. There is a sense of the boisterous irreverence of the Armenian laity, too; and it accords with the picture of religious and philosophical diversity at the time that I have presented above. As for the brief lacuna, I have sought to restore the text by recourse to two families of MSS., otherwise largely in agreement with respect to the remainder of this very brief text, represented by two exemplars. Erevan MS. 8256, a commentary on the Liturgy copied by the monk Zak'aria at the village of Anapatik in 1361, contains the words *i molar žołovoyn Mahmeti*, which are most likely Šnorhali's own words: Nersēs, as we have seen, spared no niceties in his references to Islam and its Prophet. Erevan MS. 7134, a Psalter of A.D. 1661 from Constantinople, is representative of the second, later group, in that it does not mention Muhammad by name- its very circumspection suggests it is a cautious revision of the candid invective of the original.

It is at the present time regarded as a bias verging on racism to describe Arab and Turkish Muslim rule as benighted, fanatical, and backward; but to summarize the encounter in the Armenian case in any other way would distort the record by exalting pleasant exception or interlude over the grim general rule. Thus, the comparative prosperity of Armenia under Umayyad rule after the Arab conquest meant mainly that the country had ceased to be a divided, Byzantino-Persian battleground, and was left to its own devices. When the Muslims did pay more attention to the land, in the Abbasid period, the outcome was war and the massacre of the *naxarars* at Bagrewand. The later seeming-peace of Armenian subsistence in the homeland, and occasional prosperity in the coastal cities, under the Ottoman *millet* system is the false tranquillity of slavery; and is viewed with nostalgia only in retrospect, after the bloody pogroms, that culminated in a premeditated genocide. And again, that disaster happened when Armenia attracted attention, ceasing to be a neglected backwater: it swiftly followed Armenian claims to the basic human and civil rights enjoyed in Europe: when Armenians lived qui-

ble, and in those who tremble at my words. The Adversary does not let one listen because he knows God himself bestows His fear upon those who heed God's word with delight, and he causes himself to dwell within them. And all difficult things become easy for the man in whom God dwells, and distasteful things become pleasant, and Christ's yoke becomes sweet, and to such a man his burden is light..." (tr. mine) Compare Nersēs identical assertion that when we pray, God dwells within us- and this is what Satan fears and opposes the most. Xosrov's refractory lay people argue that they listen but do not act, and it would therefore be better if they did not listen, either, in order to escape the more severe judgement. Shortly after this argument, Xosrov observes that God knows our nature is *diwragayt'*, easily ensnared; and for this reason He has given us *xostovanut'iwn* (p. 116).

etly under the Turks, they did so for the most part at the price of degradation. No Armenian source speaks of Islam or the Arabs in an approving manner, nor do Armenian writers accept permanent Muslim political domination. (It is interesting to observe that, once the Armenian liberation movement was underway in the 19th century, the Armenian language, wherever literacy and education made headway, swiftly shook off the thousands of loan-words from Arabic, modern Persian, and Turkish, that had accreted over the centuries as one scratches a scab from a healing wound.) St. Nersēs Šnorhali was no exception to these attitudes: as we have seen, he regarded Islam as a dishonorable religion whose expression, in his experience, consisted in aggression against Christians. He did not regard it as a legitimate spiritual or intellectual expression, but as an evil heresy to be confronted boldly and destroyed. In the prose introduction to his credal prayer, he uses Muslim militancy, for which he shows a grudging respect, to shame the slothful amongst his own flock. In these respects his is the genuine, Maccabean voice of Armenian tradition. But his attitude is, for all its unyielding hostility towards the enemy, neither misanthropic nor clouded by wider hatred. His vision of his faith is a cheerful one, suffused with the images of Sun and fire, of the intelligible rays of wisdom and love- and these he meant to illuminate all people, all God's creation. His work endures in the context of a distinct Armenian self-definition, from which the hope of salvation and sovereignty was ever renewed and never severed: St. Nersēs contributed to its stream, becoming a defining personage of Armenian Christian identity, politically isolated, then subdued in an increasingly Islamic Near East, but never defeated.

THE PROSE INTRODUCTION BY ST. NERSHS ŠNORHALI TO *HAWATOV XOSTOVANIM*.

Admonitory preface concerning prayer, which Lord Nersēs, brother of Grigoris the Catholicos of the Armenians, made.

A prayer for Christians generally, great and small, which all are obliged to learn, and to teach each other: priests, the people; fathers, their sons; mothers, their daughters; and a companion, his companion. And let them employ this prayer five times a day, with twelve genuflections at each hour, that is: in the morning, at mealtime, in broad daylight, in the evening, and at the time of rest. Now if a person be slothful (*płerg*), and too lazy to fulfill the five hours of prayer, let him pray four times, or thrice, or twice, or once a day- this way alone is it recognized

that he is a Christian, and he himself recognize that "I am a creature of God and a worshipper of Him." But if he be too lax (*helgay*) to learn all the words of the prayer (and they learn many satanic songs with great alacrity!), let him learn half of this or even less, so that they may learn three lines of it, and pray with three genuflections in the hour: it is acceptable before God. But if one of the Christians take no care to learn this and pray, then let him be rebuked [printed eds., delete with ellipsis; Erevan Matenadaran MS. 7134 "by the congregation gone astray of the alien faithless, who (even in war do not interrupt) the prayers which their leader taught them..." *yandimanesc'i i molar žołovoyn aylazgeac' anhawatic', ork' załōt'sn zor usoyc' aṙajnordn noc'a...* Erevan Matenadaran MS. 8256 "by the congregation gone astray of Mahmet..." *i molar žołovoyn Mahmeti...*] even by the congregation of the aliens, who do not interrupt the prayers he taught them even in war, let alone in peacetime. But our people never remember the name of God outside the place of prayer, since they have no care for the order of prayer, as worshippers of God do, but love empty talk more than prayer. And if some come to the priest for prayer sometimes, either they stand there with their mouths shut, or they exchange stories with each other, since they do not know the words of the prayers, nor do they pay attention to the Psalms and the rituals of the priests. For this reason we have made this prayer with plain and clear words to be easily accessible to the simple-minded (*vasn txmarac'*): it is brief in phrasing- twenty-four stanzas according to the hours of day and night, and according to the letters of the holy Prophets; and it is powerful in its thoughts, for it contains within it very many needful things which we seek from God. And we gave it to our people to study, so that every Christian soul may learn it. And wherever they happen to be at the hour of prayer, let them by means of this speak with God, whether in church, or at home, or in the field, or at some labor, or on the road. And for those who learn this, and pray with attentiveness- with a fervent heart, and with tears- all the requests that are inscribed in this will be fulfilled, in life and after death. But those who have contempt and do not learn and will not pray will themselves behold the harm to their selves. We requited our responsibility by composing this prayer, so that people will no longer present excuses, saying "We do not know the words of the prayers, and for that reason do not pray." But let such people be aware that there is not one of our good deeds that Satan so strives to frustrate, as prayer: for he knows that only by prayer is he banished from within us, and God dwells in us. So let us beseech beneficent God to open the eyes of our minds to study this with

eagerness, and to pray, and to become beloved of God. And at prayer, remember to Christ Grigorios, Catholicos of the Armenians, and his brother Nersēs, author of this prayer. And may those who write it be inscribed in the record of eternal life. And may those who learn and pray it receive mercy from Christ; and may those who teach it to their companions receive their wages from God. And let those who write it down not add words to this text nor confuse the writing, nor abbreviate it, lest it end up in different versions, but let all [copies] be identical, wherever they are written. And those who are unskilled at writing should entrust it to accurate scribes for copying. And eternal glory to Christ, Amen.

*Hawatov xostovanim* ("I confess in faith").

1. In faith I confess and bow down to you, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, nature without origination, immortal, creator of the angels and of men, and of all beings. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, of multitudinous sins.
2. In faith I confess and bow down to you, indivisible light, united Holy Trinity and single Divinity, creator of light and banisher of darkness. Banish from my soul the darkness of sin and ignorance, and enlighten my mind in this hour to pray to you to your pleasure, and to receive from you my requests. And have…
3. Heavenly Father, true God, who sent your beloved Son in search of the lost sheep, I have sinned in heaven and before you. Receive me like the prodigal son, and clothe me in the primeval garment of which I was stripped by sin. And have…
4. Son of God, true God, who humbled yourself from the bosom of the Father and took a body from the holy Virgin Mary for our salvation: you were crucified, buried, and rose from the dead, and ascended in glory to the Father. I have sinned in heaven and before you. Remember me like the thief, when you come into your kingdom. And have…
5. Spirit of God, true God, who descended upon the Jordan and the upper room, and illuminated me by the baptism of the holy font, I have sinned in heaven and before you: cleanse me anew with your divine fire, as with tongues of flame the holy Apostles. And have…
6. Nature without origination, I have sinned against you in my mind, soul, and body: do not remember my original sins, for the sake of your holy name, and have…

7. Seer of all, I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed: erase the cheirograph of my transgressions, and inscribe my name in the record of life, and have…
8. Examiner of hidden things, I have sinned against you with and without will, in knowledge and in ignorance. Grant pardon to me, a sinner, for from birth at the holy font till this day I have sinned before your Divinity with my senses and the members of my body. And have…
9. Lord, you who care for all, place the holy fear of you as a guardian over my eyes, to stare no longer at the impure; and over my ears, not to crave hearing words of evil; and over my mouth, not to speak lies; and over my heart, not to think evil; and over my hands, not to work injustice; and over my feet, not to walk in the ways of lawlessness. But make their progress straight, to be ever according to your commandments, in every thing. And have…
10. Christ, living fire, ignite in my soul the fire of your love that you have cast upon the earth, that it may consume the vice of my soul, and purify my conscience, and cleanse my body of sins, and kindle the light of your wisdom in my heart. And have…
11. Wisdom of the Father, Jesus, grant me wisdom to think and speak and do the good before you in every hour. Save me from evil thoughts, words, and deeds, and have…
12. Lord, you who act at will, you who will the good, do not leave me to walk in the will of my soul, but lead me to be always according to your will, that loves good, and have…
13. Heavenly king, grant me your kingdom, which you promised to those you love; and strengthen my heart to hate sin and to love you only, and to do your will. And have…
14. You who care for the creations, keep my soul and body by the sign of your Cross from the snares of sin, the tests of demons, and from unjust men, and from all the perils of soul and body. And have…
15. Christ, protector of all, may your sheltering right hand be over me, by day and by night, when I sit at home, when I walk in the road, when I sleep and when I wake, that I may never be swayed. And have…
16. My God, who "openest thy hand and satisfiest all the living with favor,"[68] I consign my self to you: take care of it, and prepare that which is needful to my soul and body from now till eternity, and have…

[68] Ps. 145:16.

17. You who return those who have wandered astray,[69] turn me from my evil habits to good custom, and fix within my soul the frightful day of death and the fear of hell, and the love of the kingdom, so that I may repent my sins and work righteousness. And have…
18. Fountain of immortality, make tears of repentance spring from my heart, as for the harlot, that I may wash away the sins of my self before my departure from this world. And have…
19. Bestower of mercy, grant to me by orthodox faith and good works and the communion of your holy body and blood, to come to you, and have…
20. Beneficent Lord, ordain me to consign my soul in sweetness to an angel of good, and to pass undisturbed through the evil of the demons who are beneath heaven.[70] And have…
21. Christ, true light, make my soul worthy to behold the light of your glory in joy on the day of summoning, and to rest in the light of the good in the inns of the righteous till the day of your great coming. And have…
22. Righteous judge, when you come in the glory of the Father to judge the quick and the dead, do not enter into judgement upon your servant, but save me from the everlasting fire. And let me hear the blissful calling of the righteous into your heavenly kingdom. And have…
23. All-merciful Lord, have mercy upon all who believe in you, my own people and aliens, friends and strangers, the living and the dead. Grant to my enemies and those hateful towards me, forgiveness of their transgressions against me; and turn them from the evils they have in store for me, that they may be worthy of your mercy, and have…

[69] Arm. *moloreloc'*: this might be taken, in view of the use of *moloreal* in the prose introduction translated above, to refer, not only to errant Christians, but perhaps to the Muslims as well.

[70] This passage, though anchored in Scriptural dogma about the spirits of the air, would still have resonated with Armenian folk belief in the *grol*, "writer"- the angel of death and *psychopompos* identified with the archangel of "God's strength", Gabriel, who is shown on amulets armed with a sword and removing the baby-sized, swaddled soul from the inert body of the deceased. In folk epic that echoes the myth of Alcestis and has a close analogue (and, probably, relative) in the Akritic cycle of the Anatolian Greeks, the princely Aslan refuses to die, fights Gabriel, and is defeated- but only his wife consents to die in his place: see J.R. Russell, *op. cit.*, "An Epic for the Borderlands". In the Rohan *Book of Hours* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. Lat. 9471, fol. 135, repr. as pl. 72 by Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, ed. by H.W. Jonson, New York: Harry N. Abrams 1964, 1992; London: Phaidon 1992), an armed angel is shown rescuing the airborne soul of a dead man from a devil who has seized it.

24. Glorious Lord, accept the supplications of your servant, and fulfill my requests for good, by the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, and John the Baptist, and St. Stephen the Protomartyr, and St. Gregory our Illuminator, and the holy Apostles, Prophets, priests, martyrs, patriarchs, ascetics, celibates, hermits, and all your saints, heavenly and earthly. And glory to you, and worship to your indivisible holy Trinity, for ever and ever, Amen.

# A CASE STUDY FOR REDEFINING ARMENIAN- CHRISTIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NEAR EASTERN URBANISM – 13TH CENTURY:

## THE NĀṢIRĪ *FUTUWWA* LITERATURE AND THE BROTHERHOOD POETRY OF YOVHANNĒS AND KOSTANDIN ERZĔNKAC'I TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

SETA B. DADOYAN

One of the major theses of this and another paper on urban youth organizations in the medieval Near East[1] (on which the former is based), is that the initiative of the Armenian Church in Erzinjān (or *Erzĕnka*) to establish a Brotherhood of *Manuk*s in the year 1280 was an "Armenization" of the *futuwwa* reform program of Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir li dīn Allāh (575-622/1180-1225). Furthermore, urban youth coalitions in the medieval Near East constituted a singularity, and all data are essentially part of Near Eastern urbanism.

In view of the above, the two texts known as the "Constitution for the brotherhood of Erzĕnka" written in 1280 by Hovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i (d. 1293), other works dedicated to the brotherhood by the latter and his compatriot and contemporary Kostandin Erzĕnkac'i[2] were simultane-

[1] "The Constitution of the Brotherhood of Erzinjān (1280): An Armenization of the *Futuwwa* Reform Project and Literature of Abbasid Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh", (in press: *REArm* 29). These coalitions were known as *aḥdāth, 'ayyarūn, shuṭṭār*, in Asia Minor as *akhīs*, and generally as *fityān*. Their Armenian counterparts were the brotherhoods of *manuk*s, *manuk* is the equivalent of the Arabic *fata*.

[2] The Constitution in two parts: *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i, Sahman ew kanonk' miabanut'yean ełbarc', ork' astowacayin sirovn miabanec'an yełbayrut'iwn mimiyanc' i mayrak'ałak's, or koč'i Erzĕka, i t'ĕwis 1280* [Definitions (sahman, or rules) and canons for the coalition of the brothers united by divine love in the brotherhood of the metropolis called Erzĕnka in 1280]; *Norin Yohanēs Vardapeti Ezĕnkayec'woy krkin kanonk' ew xratk' tłayahasak mankanc' ašxarhakanac', ork' marmnavor ew erkravor xorhĕrdow varen zkeans ašxarhis, zors ew mek' yastowacayin awrinac'n ew i surb groc' owłłemk' zaynpisin i hogevorn šnorhawk'n Astucoy* [Additional canons and advice by Yohanēs Vardapet Ezĕnkayec'i for the secular *manuk*s, who conduct physical and worldly lives and whom we intend to instruct in accordance with divine commandments and the Holy Scriptures, in order to redirect them towards spiritual virtues]. Both texts are published in

ously part of Armenian and regional social history and urbanism. The same is true of Islamic texts on the *futuwwa*, of which the following are used in this study: caliph al-Nāṣir's official Decree for the *futuwwa* of Baghdad, *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya* by al-Khartabirtī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* by Ibn al-Mi'mār, an epistle on the *futuwwa* by Ibn al-Ṭūsī for the *samā'* (or audience) of the brothers in Erzinjān, selected verses from the Aya Sofia compendium of *futuwwa* texts, etc.[3]

Ē.M. Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'in ew nra xratakan arjakē* [Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'i and his Didactic Prose], Erevan, 1977, 220-239. Born in the 1230's, in Erzēnka, Yovhannēs was ordained *vardapet* (doctor of the church) around 1268. He probably was a blood relative of the Prince of the province of Ekełeac', whom he calls "homazgi", or of the same descent, family. (See "Epistle to the Prince of Ekełeac'", Bałdasaryan, Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'in, 205). Most of his works were written between 1270 and 1290. Like his teacher, Vardan Arevelc'i, Yovhannēs was a missionary and a delegate of the Armenian Church. He spent the ten years between 1270 and 1280 traveling between Jerusalem, Cilicia and Georgia, then withdrew to the Monastery of St. Minas near Erzinjān. His first work there was the Constitution for the "manuks of the Church". (Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'in*, 60). Avoiding the Mongols and conflict with his own compatriots, he made a final journey to Cilicia in 1290. In an extensive autobiographical colophon, he gives eyewitness accounts of the Mamluk invasion of Cilicia in 1292, the fall of Rumkale or Hṙomklay, the slavery of Catholicos Step'anos Hṙomklayec'i, and his own persecution by "powerful men of his own circle" in his hometown. (See T. ep. Balian, *C'uc'ak hayerēn jeṙagrac' vanuc' S. Karapeti ew S. Daniēli i Kesaria*, 1963, 56-57; Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'in*, 30). He died in the Monastery of Akneṙ in Cilicia, his remains were brought to the Church of Sourb Nēšan in Erzinjān (Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'in*, 33).

For his poems see A. Srapyan, *Hovhannes Erzēnkac'i*, Erevan 1958; A. Srapyan, *Hovhannes Erzēnkac'i. Bank' Č'ap'aw* [Poems], Erevan 1986, and A. Erzēnkac'i Srapyan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'i Pluz*, Erevan 1993; for Kostandin, A. Srapyan (ed., notes), *Kostandin Erzēnkac'i. Tałer* [Poems], Erevan 1962.

[3] The following is a list of the contents of the Aya Sofia compendium, Ms no. 2049, as presented in Franz Taeschner, "Futuwwa-Studien, die Futuwwa Bunde in der Turkei ind ihre Literatur", *Islamica*, 5 (1932), 285-333. The major *futuwwa* works in Persian and Arabic are listed on pp. 313-317:

- Nasīr ed-Dīn Ṭūsī (607-672/1210-1273), *Awṣāf al-Ashrāf* -Persian (fols 1-15)
- Treatise on Abu'l-Futūḥ al-'Ajalī (fol 16-34)
- *Kitāb Mir'āt al-Muruwwa*-Arabic (fol 35-77)
- Shaykh Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulāmī (330-412/941-1021), *Kitāb al-futuwwa* (fols 78-99)
- Akhī Aḥmad al-Muḥibb b. Shaykh Muḥammad b. Mikāil al-Ardabīlī *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* (fols 99-107)
- Aḥmad b. Ilyās al-Naqqāh al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya* (fol 108-117). This was a basic text for al-Nāṣir's official *futuwwa* and often used as a reference. The book is dedicated to the caliph's son 'Alī after the latter's death in 612/1215. Al-Khartabirtī was a member of 'Alī's *futuwwa* group.
- An anonymous Arabic treatise on *futuwwa* (fol 118-137)
- A collection of mixed literature on *futuwwa*, including the treatise by Shihāb ed-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (fol 155 ff -in Persian)

In addition to the above collection, we have the following: *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* by al-Shaykh Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Makārim, or Ibn al-Mi'mār al-Baghdādī;

As of the 10th century, these non-occupational and non-professional youth coalitions in Near Eastern cities marked the rise of new classes and in turn became vehicles for the development of urban culture in the cities.[4] In the insecure and shifting world of growing towns these coalitions became substitutes for the traditional extended family of rural societies,[5] therefore mutual assistance and helping those who suffered hardship became grounds for the formation of these organizations.

One of the most intriguing and little studied aspects of the subject is the role of these coalitions in the shaping of popular urban cultures and ideals. Identical terms and elements in the literature and folklore of different religious and ethnic groups indicate to the commonality of their conditions, hence the singularity of the subject. Travelers and goods moving through great trade routes and between cities, the need for asylum and protection generated images of true manhood or the true *fata*, and of the *manuk*. The urban ideals of manliness and more pragmatic values took shape and in turn shaped the urban environment, and the latter found its artistic expressions in folklore, chronicles, dances, sports, songs and lyrical poetry in particular. In general, urban youth seemed to have no great concern for or commitment to religious ethics or dogma. Islam was a new element in the cities which it "inherited"[6] from Roman and Byzantine civilizations. As militant and chaotic groups, the *fityān* and the *manuks* naturally sought a share in civil-political government and indeed, at times of a power vacuum, they became virtual rulers in the cities of the Abbasid world and in Asia Minor.[7]

*Nafa'is al-Funūn fi Masa"il al-'Uyūn* by Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Amūlī; Yaḥya b. Khalīl's Turkish *Futuvvetname* (second half of the fourteenth century); a complete Nāṣirī *futuvvetname* written in 1587 in T'okat'.

[4] According to Matt'ēos J̌ułayec'i (d. 1411) the following were the classes which constituted the urban population of Greater Armenia: the vagrant men with no specific employment or home city; those who lived casually; unskilled laborers (*mšak*); skilled artisans (*arowestavork'*); "messengers" like *dallak*s and the envoys (*banahogut'iwn*); thieves and brigands; men of the judicial careers; scholars and men of knowledge; monastics who lived by worship; people of authority both secular and religious. There is no mention of merchants or traders. The youth brotherhoods seem to constitute the first two classes. See L. Xač'ikyan, "Matjhos J̌ułayec'u Keank'n u Matenagrutiwnĕ" [The life and literature of Matt'ēos J̌ułayec'i], *BM* 3 (1956), 57-84, 75-76; and L. Xač'ikyan (ed.), *ŽE Dari Yišatakaranner* [Fifteenth Century Colophons], Erevan, 1955. The source is his *K'nnut'iwn gorcoc' aṙak'eloc'* [Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles], M1402.

[5] R. Holt & G. Rosser (eds), *The Medieval Town — A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540*, London 1995², 11-12.

[6] See C. Cahen, "Movements Populaires et Autonomisme Urbain dans l'Asie Musulmane du Moyen Age — I", *Arabica* 3 (1958), 225-250, 225.

[7] In al-Sham itself, militant youth organizations were active throughout the eleventh

*The Nāṣirī futuwwa reform and its diffusion in Asia Minor- the Akhīs*

As a major aspect of urban development, youth organizations existed in most medieval cities of the Near East and Armenia as early as the ninth century.[8] In Islamic history and starting from the eighth century, terms like *ahdath, fityān, 'ayyārun, awbāsh, runūd, shut'ṭ'ār,* etc., are generally taken as indications of the existence of urban youth coalitions. The *ahdāth* of the Syro-Mesopotamian world were explicitly referred to by Ibn al-'Adīm in *Zubdat al-ḥalab min Ta'rikh ḥalab* in the context of the 11th century events in al-Sham.[9] At the same time and in the same areas there were militant Armenian groups, some of which functioned as mercenaries and floating militant factions.[10]

and twelfth centuries. Coming from economically poor backgrounds and always maintaining that legacy, the *'ayyarūn* were known to stand by the needy against the wealthy, whom they robbed anyway. As self-proclaimed representatives of the underprivileged, they enjoyed some popularity among these classes. Some of them "repented" and were admitted in the police as volunteers or *shurṭa muṭṭawwi'ūn.* As far as their costume was concerned, similar to the vagrant dervishes and the Sufis, the *'ayyarūn* used to go around in ragged (*muraqqa'*) clothes. See L. Massignon, "Ayyār", *EI*[2] I, Leiden 1960, 817-818.

[8] L. Xač'ikyan, "1280 T'uakanin Erzēnkayum Kazmakerpvac Ełbayrut'iwnĕ" [The Brotherhood organized in Erzēnka in 1280], *Tełekagir of ArmSSR AS* 12 (1951), 73-84; "Erzēnka K'ałak'i 'Ełbarc' Miabanut'ean' Kanonadrut'iunĕ — 1280" [The Constitution of the 'Union of the Brothers' of the city of Erzēnka-1280], *BM* 6 (1962), 365-377. The earliest mention is a reference to "brothers' houses" during the tenth century. See A. Hovhannesian, *Dĕrvagner Hay Azatagrakan Mĕtk'i Patmut'yan* — I, [Episodes in the history of Armenian liberal thought], Erevan 1957, 372. Probably the first explicit reference to an Armenian militant youth brotherhood is found in the *Chronicle* of Matthew of Edessa or Matt'ēos Uṙhayec'i. He relates that led by their *manktawag* (elder of *manuk*s) eighty *manuk*s were the armed guard of a caravan, which brought dried fish from Lake Van to Antioch during the early twelfth century. See *Patmut'iwn Matt'ēosi Uṙhayec'woy*, [History of Matthew of Edessa], ed. M. Adamean and N. Ter-Mik'ayelean, Vagharshapat 1898, 226; translation into modern Eastern Armenian: H. Bart'ikyan, *Žamanakagrut'yun* [Chronicle], Erevan 1973, 148.

[9] In Syria, and at the time of the early years of Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir's adherence to the *futuwwa,* there was at least one youth organization with a rather peculiar social program. The main source of this information is Ibn Jubayr, who made a journey from Spain to the Near East between the years 1183 and 1185. In the summer of 1184 he was in Syria, which according to him was infested by all sorts of sects and heretics and he encountered a strange Sunni group known as the Nubuwiyyah, who he says, had adopted the Quranic *futuwwa* ethics. They formed a close group, no one was left in need or distress, friendship was valued above all and oaths kept. More importantly, the Nubuwiyyah made it their duty to eliminate the *rāfiḍī'ṭ's* or the non-orthodox dissidents wherever they were found. See *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R.J.C. Broadhurst, London, 1952, 291-292. See also C. Cahen, "Movements Populaires et Autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie Musulmane de Moyen Age"-I- *Arabica,* Vol. V.3, 1958, 225-250; II — Vol. VI.1, 1959, 25-56; III — Vol. VI.3, 1959, 233-265, part II, 25-26.

[10] The Byzantine policy of deportations of dissident sectarians and large numbers of Armenians (which started during the sixth century), the massive return of the Greeks to the east during the tenth and eleventh centuries and finally the annexation of Armenia to

The involvement of Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh[11] in the *futuwwa* marked a new phase in the history of youth organizations in the Islamic world. His reform project for the *futuwwa* and the related propaganda in Syria and Asia Minor were obviously part of the political maneuvering to regain some of the lost prestige of the caliphate. But the adoption of this primarily Islamic reform program by the Armenian Church in Erzinjān and later on in the East European Armenian diaspora to the 19th century,[12] (as the two papers by the present author show), are factors in the light of which the subject of medieval youth brotherhoods has to be reconsidered.

the Empire, drove the nation to the south and the west. Armenian communities and military colonies and principalities were formed throughout the Tigris and the Middle Euphrates, Cilicia and al-Sham. In several Arab histories of the fall of Antioch to the Franks in 1098, there is the story of a para-military group of Armenian armorers (or *zarradun*) and their chief, the Armenian Firūz *al-Zarrād*. The group was in charge of guarding one of the towers on the walls of Antioch. See for example Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tarikh Halab*, Sami al-Dahhān (ed., notes), vol. II, Damascus 1954, 134-135. Yāghī Siyān, the Seljuk ruler of Antioch at the time, was killed by Armenians from Armanāz, while trying to escape after the city fell to the Franks. (See Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab*, II, 135, n3). In the context of earlier episodes about Yāghī Siyān's military career, Ibn al-'Adīm speaks of Armenians in his troops. (Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, 127) At the same time, there were Armenians in the Frankish armies, too. There are many accounts about the activity of such groups in Artāh, Ḥarīm, Rūj, Armanāz, Kafartāb, A'zāz, etc. They were active during the early years of the Frankish expansion and during the twelfth century. See S.B. Dadoyan, "The Armenian Intermezzo in *Bilad al-Shām*: 10th to 12th Centuries", in: David Thomas, (ed.), *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First 1000 Years*, Leiden 2001, 159-183.
-See for a certain Baghash al-Amanī and his associates in Ba'albeck Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. I, 272. About some Armenian Sunworshippers in Menbij, see also Ibn al-Qalānisī, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusaders*, H. A. R. Gibb (extract, trans.) from *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Qalānisī*, London 1932), 247.

[11] Born in 553/1158 and proclaimed caliph at twenty-two, al-Nāṣir kept the throne for forty-five years (575-622/1180-1225). The death of vizier Ibn Hubayra in 1065 allowed the caliphate more significance but by the time of the young caliph it had lost most of its primacy in Iraq and territories of the empire. See C. Cahen, "Note sur les Debuts de la Futuwwa d'An-Nāṣir", *Oriens*, vol. VI, 30.6 (1953), 18-22.

[12] In 578/1182 (or 583/1188-1189) al-Nāṣir "officialized a dissident branch of a trade guild which had existed in Baghdad since the mid-tenth century and called it *Niqābat al-Futuwwa*". During the same year he was invested with the *libās al-futuwwa* by the head of this *futuwwa*, al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Yūsuf b. Ṣālih al-Baghdādī. See H. Mason, *Two Statesmen of Medieval Islam — Vizier Ibn Hubayra (499-560AH/1105-1165AD) and Caliph an-Nasir li Din Allah (553-622AH/1158-1225AD)*, The Hague 1972, 119. Based on al-Dhahabī's *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, Cahen believes that the initiation by Shaykh 'Abd al-Jabbār must have taken place in 583/1188-9. See Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms no. 1582, fol 111), and Cahen, "Note sur les Debuts de la Futuwwa d'an-Nasir", 18. The date of al-Nāṣir's reform of the *futuwwa* in Baghdad is also referred to by a contemporary of the caliph, al-Qādisī (the continuator of *al-Muntaẓam* of Ibn al-Jawzī). See Sibt ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zaman*, J.R. Jewett (ed. with introd.), Chicago 1907, 280.

In the year 604/1207 caliph al-Nāṣir issued a decree which canceled all the youth organizations and legalized only his *futuwwa*, for which he also proclaimed himself the *qibla* or the central authority and the "support".[13] The document raised al-Nāṣir personally and the institution of the caliphate to the status of a reference for the *futuwwa* and the only institution in charge of maintaining the Islamic Law or the *Sharī'a*. And since men of all layers of society could become members, "it was as if he conceived his *futuwwa* as a microcosmic Muslim community within the macrocosmic *umma*", the unity of which lay in him.[14] Basically, being a good *fata* meant being a good Muslim, consequently, although fragments of knightly *futuwwa* were maintained, on the whole, the militant and largely secular and hedonistic culture of the urban *fityān* was completely banned and was replaced by religious ethics prescribed and controlled by the Islamic establishment.

*The Akhīs of Asia Minor*

This was the conceptual and political structure of the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* when it penetrated into Asia Minor as courtly *futuwwa* and was now Anatolian *akhilik*, during the caliph's own lifetime. The pronunciation of Turkish *akki* (or *aqqi*) coincided with the Arabic *akkī* (or "my brother"). Similar to the Arabic *fata* and the Armenian *manuk* and *kětrič*, the term meant brave, magnanimous young man, and since the word "brother" was also a universally used term for colleague/friend/co-believer among religious groups, the *futuwwa*s and the Armenian *manuks*, the word *akhī* was easily adopted. Taeschner defines Anatolian Akhism as the "specific form assumed by the *futuwwa* organizations in late and post-Seljukid Anatolia",[15] where youth organizations started appearing as

[13] Following bloody conflicts between the *fityān* and the *'ayyārun* of Baghdad during 601-604/1204-1207, the caliph al-Nāṣir summoned the "heads of the parties of the *fityān*" (*ru'ūs al-aḥzāb*). The vizier Ibn Mahdī read the decree (*manshūr*) written by Mu'ayyid ed-Dīn, the *kātib diwān al-inshā'* on the ninth of ṣafar, 604. The document was signed by the leaders of the *futuwwa*. See the Introduction of M. Jawad to Ibn al-Mi'mār's *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 58-63; the decree: 64-66.

[14] H. Mason, *Two Statesmen*, 120. Al-Nāṣir encouraged everyone to adhere (*iltiḥāq*) to the *futuwwa* and take part in its rituals. These rites included the drinking of the ceremonial salt-water, the wearing of the trousers (*sharāwīl al-futuwwa*), the fastening of the belt, the reading of some texts, etc. The caliph highly valued physical fitness and promoted sports, in particular crossbow shooting and breeding pigeons, of which he was the *qibla* too.

[15] F. Taeschner and C. Cahen, "Futuwwa", *EI*$^2$, Vol. II, 966; also C. Cahen, "Sur les Traces des Premiers Akhis", *Mélanges Fuad Köprülü*, Istanbul, 1953, 81-91. However,

soon as city life was organized.[16] The urban character of Anatolian Akhism and its origination in north west Iran and further east are commonly accepted and nothing in the sources, including Ibn Baṭṭuta, alludes to their professional nature,[17] although many Armenian historians seem to grant this idea.

The *akhīs* flourished in Adalia, Angora and Kirshehir, where similar to the Armenian brotherhoods of Erzinjān, they conserved strong traits of the Nāṣirī reform program.[18] Historically courtly *futuwwa* penetrated through the initiation of Rūm Seljuk Sultan 'Izz ed-Dīn Kay-Kāwūs I. In the year 611/1214 the envoy of the latter, Shaykh Majd ed-Dīn Isḥāq arrived in Baghdad with a request to join al-Nāṣir's *futuwwa*. "Al-Nāṣir authorized the Shaykh to confer the *libās* and gave him a copy of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* (dated 608/1211) by Ibn al-Mi'mār, a Hanbalī traditionalist and jurisconsult of Baghdad (d. 646/1248).[19] Since the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* reflected the ideals of the Islamic *umma*, Kay-Kāwūs believed that his initiative would gain recognition in the Islamic world as a Muslim state.[20]

Seljuk Sultan of Rūm 'Alā' ed-Dīn Kay-Kubād I (616-634/1219-1236) and his initiation to the Nāṣirī *futuwwa*, are our lead to tracing the channels through which this Islamic program and its literature became available in Erzinjān and the region by the first quarter of the 13th century. It seems that the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* reform propaganda and literature

prior to the Nāṣirī courtly *akhilik* there, ṣūfī figures in the Persian world were referred to as *akhīs*. The ṣūfī saint Shaykh Akhī Faraj al-Zanjānī is said to have led a mystical order in the north west of Iran. The Persian poet Nizāmī (d. 1141), a spiritual disciple of al-Zanjānī (See Cahen, "Sur les Traces", 82), and Akhī Turk of the thirteenth century from Urmya, were *akhīs*. In general it is accepted that there were *akhīs* in northwestern Iran and in Urmya. (See Taeschner, "Futuwwa", 966). The cult of Abū Muslim (the propagator of the Abbasid revolt against the Umayyads) among the Anatolian *akhīs*, is also taken as another indication of the Iranian origins of the *akhīs*. (See Taeschner, "Akhī", EI² Vol. I, 322).

[16] Taeschner, "Futuwwa", 966.

[17] G. Vajda, "Les Corps de Métiers en Turquie d'après deux publications de V. Gordlevskij", *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, VIII (1934), 79-88.

[18] Ibid., 82-83. With respect to professional brotherhoods in the whole of Asia Minor and Armenia, the role of Greek and Armenian craftsmen for centuries in this region is a major factor to be considered. See C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, London 1968, 195-196.

[19] H. Mason, *Two Statesmen*, 123. The source of this information is Ibn Bībī's *Seljuk Name*. See H.W. Duda (ed. and trans.), *Die Seltschukengeschichte des Ibn Bibi*, Kopenhagen 1959, 69. The author of the poem, *Seljuk-name*, is Qād'ī Burhān ed-Dīn, who speaks about an *'ahd* or an oath between the two men the "sealing" of which was the *libās al-futuwwa*.

[20] Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 196.

must have reached Erzinjān during the reign of Kay-Kubād (as of the year 1228). Ghiāth ed-Dīn Kay-Khosrow was the ruler of the city, which Kay-Kubād visited in 1228 and 1229.[21] The other factor was the arrival in Konya in the year 618/1221 of the mystic, *futuwwa* theoretician and the caliph's advisor Abu Ḥafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardī in the court of Kay-Kubād. Amongst other duties, he performed the *futuwwa* rituals and initiation ceremonies in Konya.[22] *Akhīs* appeared after the middle of the thirteenth century in Konya, Adalia, Angora, Eskishehir, Kirshehir, Kharput, Erzinjān, and other locations.

In addition to Ibn al-Mi'mār's and al-Suhrawardī's works, another *futuwwa* guidebook by al-Khartabirtī entitled *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya* was available in these parts of Asia Minor. This book was dedicated to al-Nāṣir's favorite son 'Alī (who died prematurely in 612/1215). Al-Khartabirtī was a member of 'Alī's *futuwwa* group and as he mentions in the introduction, the ideas expounded in the book were those of his master.[23] However, the "impetus from courtly *futuwwa* does not seem to be solely responsible for the development of *Akhilik*" there.[24] After the waning of Seljukid power, there was a rapprochement between the Turkoman princes and the *akhīs*. By the middle of the 13th century, when the Rūm Seljuks had lost most of their power, some *akhī* organizations managed to form petty principalities. There are accounts of civic resistance to the Mongols by the *akhīs* of Konya, Erzinjān and other cities. In some towns like Ankara, the name of the *akhī* leader appeared in semi-official inscriptions.[25] Violence, dissidence, refusal of establishment control, hatred for the law and adherence to their own culture were characteristic of the Anatolian *akhīs*. Ibn Baṭṭuta speaks highly of the *akhīs* who were his most gracious hosts throughout the Anatolian journey, and had no objections towards their aggressive ways.

*The Armenization of the Nāṣirī reform project & literature in Erzinjan*

The urban *manuks* of Erzinjān weren't different from their colleagues in the other cities of Asia Minor and they seem to have needed some

[21] In Armenian histories he is referred to as a benevolent man. See H. K'iwrtian, *Eriza ew Ekełeac' Gavaṙ* [Erzinjān and the Province of Ekełeac'], Vol. II, Venice, 1953, 102; Henri Masse (trans), "Documents Persans" *REArm*, IX (1929), 113-119.

[22] H. Mason, *Two Statesmen*, 124.

[23] The text is published by Abdülbaki Gölpinarli, Iktisat Fakultesi Mecmusai, Istanbul University, Vol. 11 (1949/1950), 104.

[24] Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman*, 340-341.

[25] Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman*, 339.

reform. At the time, the head of the Armenian Church of the province of Ekełeac' was also its ruler, and it commissioned Yovhannēs Vardapet Erzĕnkac'i to prepare a "constitution" for a reformed brotherhood in 1280. On the Upper reaches of the western Euphrates, Erzinjān was primarily an Armenian city between the provinces of Daranałi in the west and Mananałi in the east. Situated on the great trade routes and urbanized before others, it became a cosmopolitan center and a natural channel for Islamic-Armenian contacts.[26] Indeed, it was there that Yovhannēs found copies of the esoteric encyclopedia or the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. It was the source of his *Views from the writings of Islamic Philosophers*.[27] Otherwise, Yovhannēs seems to have been familiar with Islamic scientific works and culture in general.

Except for a brief period, the city of Erzinjān and the province of Ekełeac' were part of the Seljukid Empire until 1243, when the Mongols invaded the region for the first time and entered it finally in 1256.[28] However, they made no attempt to rule the city directly and instead, used the existing apparatus. To the end of the century the province of Ekełeac' was an internally sovereign Armenian principality under Bishop Sargis and his descendents.[29] During that time, Erzinjān was one of the leading urban centers of the region and the Armenian world. Universities and learning centers opened[30] and the city was an important center for crafts and trade. Although, strictly speaking the literature of Yovhannēs and Kostandin Erzĕnkac'i's are the only direct sources about the Armenian youth organizations, indirect references testify to the existence of similar organizations in other cities as well.[31]

[26] For the city of Erzinjān see: Xač'ikyan, "The Brotherhood", 74; K'iwrtian, *Eriza ew Ekełeac' Gavaṙ*; Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *Hayoc' Patmut'iwn* [History of the Armenians], ed. K. Melik'-Ohančanyan, Erevan, 1961; Srapyan, *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i*; Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i*.

[27] This was a concise summary of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, See S.B. Dadoyan, *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i — Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers and his Philosophical Prose in the Light of Islamic Sources*, Beirut, 1991.

[28] Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *History*, 284; Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i*, 14.

[29] Srapyan, *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i*, 13-14. The Mongols controlled most of historic Armenia and up to their conversion to Islam, they maintained relatively good relations with the Armenian Church and the Cilicians. There were Armenians in the Mongol armies, and during the invasion on the city in the year 1256, they helped their compatriots. Some names: Avag, Shahanshah, Vahram, 'Abdallah, Jalal, Hasan, etc. See Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzĕnkac'i*, 11.

[30] Grigor Daranałc'i, *Žamanakagrut'iwn* [Chronicle], Jerusalem 1915, 510. Erzinjān had four important monasteries: Tirašēn, St. Kirakos, Erkayni, Kayipos.

[31] Xač'ikyan, "The Brotherhood"; Ibn Baṭṭuta mentions a certain leader of the *akhī*s in Erzinjān called Niẓām ed-Dīn.

*The dualism of the theme:* futuwwa *realities and idealizations*

Various hypotheses have been suggested to explain conspicuous contradictions in the history of the brotherhoods. M. Jawad, the editor of Ibn al-Mi'mār's *Kitāb al-Futuwwa,* divides the *futuwwa* into ascetic (*mutaṣawwifa*) and hedonistic (*lāhiya*) trends.[32] According to Ritter, the obvious dualities were inherent to the objectives of *futuwwa*, the fulfillment of physical and spiritual needs in a balanced manner. The initiation ceremonies, he observes, like drinking salt-water and putting on the *futuwwa* belt were symbolic of self-restraint.[33] Temperance was the primary virtue and true *futuwwa* could be achieved through learning (*'ilm*) and actions (*'amal*). But, the above applied only to the idealized and reformed groups, not the wider phenomenon of urban youth who were generally secular in their ethics and ideals.

This paper suggests that the contradictions and subsequent ambiguities in *futuwwa* histories were caused by the differences between the realities of the youth organizations and the idealism of the reform projects. Practical criteria of manliness or toughness in the changing urban world stood in sharp contrast with the legacy of the Prophet 'Alī as the "ideal *fata*". The more characteristic virtues (*khasa'is*) of the *fata* -secrecy, pity, violence to enemies, friendship, knightly honor, generosity and good disposition — were secular virtues and closer to their reality[34] than to religious ethics.

*The actual career and culture of the* futuwwa *as reflected in historic data as well as the reform literature.*

Militancy and random means of living in the cities typified the career of these organizations. As early as the 9th century, the *ahdath,* the *'ayyarūn* and the *fityān* in general spent their free time feasting and drinking. Songs and poetry of lyrical and secular content, constituted the entertainment at these evenings and the culture of youth in general. Their libertine lifestyle, parties, and socially objectionable values classified them as rebels. It is told that the Amīr Khālid b. 'Abdallāh al-Qusrī prohibited their songs, but eventually he allowed only one poet called Ḥunayn al-Ḥirī, a Christian from al-Hira to sing at the parties of the *fityān,* on con-

[32] M. Jawad, Introduction to Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa,* 14.

[33] H. Ritter, "Zur Futuwwa", *Der Islam, Zeitschrift fur Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients,* X (1920), 244-250; 247.

[34] Ritter, "Zur Futuwwa", 249-250.

dition that no vulgar types (*safil, mu'arbid*) be allowed to attend. In al-Isfahani's *al-Aghānī* there are several chronicles about *fityān*-poets who were hired to sing at the parties. Ḥunayn once traveled from al-Ḥira to Ḥims to sing for the *fityān*. He found a group in one of the baths where they used to congregate[35] and offered his services as singer and *'ūd* player. According to the story, after their bath, the youth were the guests at a banquet in the house of one of them. Poets were hired to entertain along with dancers and singers and it seems that the *fityān* were not an easy public to impress. A famous poet-singer known as Ma'bad b. Wahb was once dismissed with no reward for failing to please his audience.[36] Others, like Isḥāq Ibn Khalaf or Ibn al-T'ayyib al-Baḥrānī were members of organizations and poets as well.[37] This was the case of Kostandin Erzĕnkatsi, who wrote most of his poems for the brotherhood and at their request.

Most aspects of the folklore of the *fityān* became targets of very harsh criticism, but little was changed and drinking in particular was an important symbol of friendship, love, worldly pleasure, and ecstasy. The tomb of poet-singer Abu Hindī Ghālib b. al-Qaddūs, a member of the *futuwwa*, and the first Arab poet to dedicate his poetry to wine, was visited by his fellow brothers who shared their drink by pouring wine on his grave.[38] The manners and the language of the *fityān* was another element, which both distinguished them and became symbolic of their chaotic norms.[39] Al-Jāḥiẓ devotes some sections to the table manners of the urban youth. He describes some restrictions imposed on them not for public courtesy but to insure that all had an equal share of the food.[40] Homosexual practices in addition to interest in women were in turn widely ascribed to the *fityāns*' lifestyle. 'Alī b. al-Jahm, an Abbasid poet who befriended a group of them, tells that these *fityān* invited female dancers to their parties which they held in the house of one of their chiefs, a generous man called al-Mufaḍḍal al-Karkhī, the favors of whose *qayyāns* (high-class female entertainers) and *ghilmān* (singular *ghulām*, adolescent boy, servant) he praises highly.[41] Abū Ḥayyān al-

[35] Jawad, *Introduction*, 14-15. Also see Al-Iṣfahānī's *al-Aghānī*, vol. II, Cairo, 345.

[36] *Al-Aghānī*, II 347; Jawad, *Introduction*, 14-15.

[37] There are two excerpts from him dedicated to the memory of a niece whom he brought up as his daughter. See Jawad, *Introduction*, 25.

[38] Jawad, *Introduction*, 16.

[39] Jawad, *Introduction*, 16-17.

[40] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bukhalā'* , Damascus 1963, 105.

[41] Jawad, *Introduction*, 21-22. The poem: *al-Aghānī*, vol. I, 219-220. *Aghānī al-Aghānī, Muxataṣar Aghānī, al-Isfahānī* Y. 'Awn, A. al-'Alaylī (ed. notes), Beirut 1975, 325.

Tawḥīdī (a very negative yet a valuable source about the *fityān* of Baghdad during the ninth and tenth centuries), accuses them of vicious and reckless conduct, alluding to homosexual practices too.[42]

In Armenian history the career and the culture of the urban youth are not very different. "Every day, related Matt'ēos Jūłayec'i, the lewd and the arrogant men of the cities gather and commit all sorts of obscenities in their evening parties which they called *sayran*". They hired female dancers and *gusan*s (vagrant poet-singers) who sang *tał*s (song-poem) and *hayren*s (verses of secular content). Obviously the lifestyle of the young men of the cities caused the displeasure of the church, and was inevitably associated with hedonism and heresy. These "sectarians", wrote Matt'ēos, preached the primacy of eating and drinking in this world.[43] Songs, dances and banqueting were only part of the culture of urban youth. They were also entertained by comedies, which Mxit'ar Aparanec'i described as "satanic" and their audiences as "shameless". Even though, he says, no physical harm was caused, the souls of their fans were corrupted.[44] The Armenian Church took measures and according to Kirakos Ganjakec'i, in view of such practices at parties and of the nature of the entertainment, Catholicos Nersēs Šnorhali (d. 1171) replaced the "wild" and fictituous songs with verses of moral intent for people to sing at drinking and wedding parties.[45]

Hedonism was often associated with doctrinal heresy and the secular culture of youth brotherhoods. The demarcation lines between the lifestyle of urban youth, pro-Muslim religious heresies and brotherhood organizations were blurred. According to Mxit'ar Aparanec'i, during the late 13th and early 14th centuries, and during the term of Catholicos Kostandin II Kesarac'i (1307-1322) there appeared a group of heretical figures known as Shimavon, Łat, Yovan, and Vahram who rejected the sacraments, the ecclesiastic hierarchy and the role of the clergy. Persecuted by the catholicos and the political authorities, about five hundred of them were exiled to Cyprus. These "evil men converted to Islam and continued to saw the seeds of mischief there",

[42] Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī, *Al-Baṣā'ir wa'l-Dhakhā'ir*, Cairo, 165; Also Jawad, *Introduction*, 22-23.

[43] Xač'ikyan, "Matjhos Jūłayec'u", 81-82. The source is M. Jūłayec'i, *K'ĕnnut'iwn gorcoc' aṙakeloc'* [Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles], M1402, fol. 232a.

[44] *Karoz c'asman, i bann ter Astowac mer, tur mez...* [Sermon of anger...], M2229, fol. 251b. See also *K'ĕnnut'iwn gorcoc' aṙakeloc'* [Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles], M1402, fol 173a, in Xač'ikyan, *ŽE dari hišatakaranner* [Fifteenth Century Colophons], Vol I, Erevan 1955, 118-121.

[45] Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *History*, Erevan 1961, 120.

relates Aparanec'i.[46] In this respect it is worth evaluating the information we have about a certain Yakob Manktawag who was both an elder in a brotherhood and the leader of the Gorguian sect (or *Gorguec'ik'*) who were also called Arevordik'.[47] Sun worship was systematically ascribed to all the Armenian sects as an indication of pagan-Zoroastrian legacies, but during the 12th and 13th centuries in al-Sham, the *Shamsiyya al-Arman* were identified with the *tačiks* or Muslims.[48] The Gorguian/Arevordis were most probably sympathizers of Islam, because they were also described as Arians, a term used at that time to define Islam (by Matt'ēos J̌ūłayec'i and Grigor Tat'evac'i, hence the Islamic connection).[49] The case of Yakob is particularly intriguing because sect, brotherhood, hedonism and Islam came in a single context in this person.

*Reflections of Futuwwa Realities in their literature*

The realities of *futuwwa* culture found their direct and indirect reflections both in the lyrical and reform literature of the brotherhoods. It was moral license, forbidden deeds, and generally chaotic behavior that prompted the intervention of the caliph al-Nāṣir, says al-Khartabirtī by a caliphal decree.[50] The institution of the *futuwwa*, he explains, "was further corrupted by the penetration of various factions (*buyūt*) parties (*aḥzāb*)", and tribes (*qabā'il*) like al-Rahasiyya, al-Shuhayniyya, al-Khalīliyya, al-Mawludiyya, and al-Nubuwiyya alluding to the penetration of sectarian groups too.[51]

[46] Mxit'ar Aparanec'i, *Ałandavor Hayk' 10-15rd Daruc'* [Armenian Sectarians of the 10th-15th Centuries], in: Ł. Alishan, *Hayapatum*, Venice, 1901, 550-553, 552.

[47] Mxit'ar Aparanec'i, *Armenian Sectarians*.

[48] Yakob Manktavag and Gorg, his predecessor and founder of the sect, and another member of it, called Mosēs, lived in the Monastery of Armēn near the fortress of Lambrun.

[49] In M5616, XVIIth century, fol. 23a, the following is mentioned about this sect: "There was a certain Arian" — a follower of Arius, a phrase addressed to pro-Muslim heretics at the time — "heresiarch called Gorgios from Cappadocia, who came to Alexandretta; he used to confuse and agitate the people by spreading his Arian heresy in the city." See also Srapian, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'i*, 18-20, and Matt'ēos J̌ūłayec'i, *Matt'ēos Vardapeti, vasn harc'manc' anōrinaz zanazan patasxanik', zor xndreal barepaštn Abisołom mec tanūtērn Širiana*, [Questions and Answers], M969, fols. 107a-112b. See also Xač'ikyan,"Matt'ēos J̌ūłayec'u" and Matt'ēos J̌ūłayec'i, *Yarec'an sut margark'* [There arose false prophets], M2229, fols 185b-190b.

[50] Aḥmad b. Ilyās al-Naqqāsh al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat al-Waṣaya*, Aya Sofia Ms. no 2049, fols.108-109.

[51] See Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, Chapter 2, 143-148.

A long poem by Yovhannēs addressed to brotherhood leader the Gorguian Yakob Manktavag is a rare historic document in support of sectarian involvement in the brotherhoods. The ethics of the *manktawag* or the elder (*al-kabīr*) and his relationship to the junior (*al-saghīr*) as "father to son" was an important and recurring theme. Ibn al-Mi'mār devoted several sections to it,[52] the objective of the second part of the Constitution entitled *Further Canons*, was devoted to this issue. The stated aim is the "reform" and "correction" of the institution of elders and juniors. "The world is full of various customs (or traditions)", says Yovhannēs, one of which is the institution of *manktawag*s and *manuks*. "The former consider the latter their adopted sons (*ordegir*) and grant them belts. Nothing could eradicate this tradition, for it was ancient, sweet and pleasurable for those involved. [However] it was a physical (*marmnakan*) and a mundane custom, which was practiced in ignorance. Since nothing could be done to eradicate it, we took the initiative to advise and guide the public in the path of wisdom and the Holy Scriptures, and to make sure that no evil, ignorance and confusion penetrated into this relationship" [of *manktawag-manuk*].[53] Homosexuality, implied here by Yovhannēs, was an accusation explicitly addressed to the *fityān* by Abu Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī.

The evening and garden parties of the *fityān/manuks* were perhaps the most important elements in their culture, for it was during these gatherings that poets recited their verses, musicians played and at least some of the dancing girls were *qayyāns*, who also recited poetry, sang and played instruments. Female singers and tambourine (*daff*) players seem to have been accepted traditionally. In the text by Ibn al-Ṭūsī written for the *samā'* of the *fityān* of Erzinjān, there is a couplet sung by two players of the *daff*, who were singing in the presence of the Prophet addressing him as "the messenger of God" and "light within lights".[54] This semi-legendary reference to female poets-singers addressing mystical verses to the Prophet does indeed grant an official status to *futuwwa* culture of poetry and music. We find such figures in the brothers' parties in Erzinjān and elsewhere.

Fifteen of the twenty-seven poems of Kostandin were either written at the request of brothers for their parties or are the poet's meditations on the brotherhood. In these verses he has several descriptions of female

[52] Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 192-194; 203-204.

[53] Yovhannēs, "Further Canons", in Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'i*, 231.

[54] Ibn al-Ṭūsī, *Epistle for the Samā' of the Brothers of Erzinjān*, Aya Sofia Ms no. 2049, 241-245, fol. 242a.

dancers and singers along with other instrumentalists and singers whom he calls "*mtrub*" (i.e., *mutrib*). His "Song of Spring and Joy" is the most explicit and lyrical description of the brothers' *majlis* (gathering, congregation). It starts with an invitation to the *manuk*s of "all races" to walk out of the darkness of winter into the sunshine, the warmth of meadows and orchards.[55]

"Come let us enter the garden and
Let me tell you thousand tales.
Lovers, wherever there may be,
Let them all come to us".

"I will set a *mačlis* in the fields,
Where the nightingale is intoxicated
And the *sałi* of the great house [56]
Will serve us the wine.

*Sałi*, fill up the flask and pass it to me,
My heart is full of love,
Let me drink of this glass
Overflowing with wine.

*Mtrub* play your *č'ašta* and
Let the *morč* dance in the middle,[57]
O maiden slim and tall,
Your image is like the moon.

Love and its joys rule over humanity,[58] says Konstandin as he addresses a mixed audience, as he gladly responds to their request to sing of "the things of the world".[59] The spiritual and physical nature of love is a motif in brotherhood poetry. This dualism symbolizes the dualism of two worlds, two moralities, two criteria of true manliness, two levels of the *futuwwa* itself, i.e., the reality of their culture and the idealized *futuwwa* or brotherhood.

Ibn al-Mi'mār tells a *ḥikāya* (or a tale) about a certain 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who fell in love with a *qayyān* called Salāmah al-Mughanniyya, whom he had heard singing. She was offered to him, but even though she too returned his feelings, 'Abd Allah refrained from approaching her. He loved her so much, that he was afraid of God's pun-

[55] Kostandin, "Tał garnan ew uraxut'ean" [Song of love and joy], in *Tałer*, 153-157.

[56] *Sałi* or *sāqī* is the server of refreshments and wine.

[57] *Morč* is a slim, fresh tree branch metaphorically used for young girls. *č'ašta* is a six-string musical instrument.

[58] Kostandin, "Tał garnan ew uraxut'ean" [Song of love and joy], lines 29-56, in *Tałer*, 155-157.

[59] Kostandin, "Tał siroy" [Song of love], in *Tałer*, 163-165.

ishment for succumbing to a physical passion and the division this could cause between them in the after life. The girl came to be known as Salāmah al-Qas.[60] True love has "legal" status, as we read in another *ḥikāya* about a *jāriya* of 'Abd al-Malak b. Marwān and one of his men, whom he had imprisoned. Eventually, the two were allowed to get married, and were granted their freedom by the master.[61] In Kostandin's poetry the subject of love recurs in many contexts and forms only to indicate that the poet refuses to confine himself to spiritual-mystical love as the ideal bond between man and woman. In a poem dedicated to "The Gentle Spring", he says,

> "Let people rejoice today,
> All those who have a true friend, and
> All those with whom we are united with love,
> Let all enjoy the sweet wine".[62]

Kostandin's poem on "Christ through the example of the Rose"[63] is an allegorical dramatization of the position of the Rose/Love as the ultimate force. It starts by the celebration of spring, love and poetry: "Every singing bird has love and much desire in his heart, for he is made for love and sings because of it", he says. The story is that one day the sly violet gathers the other flowers of the garden and warns them of the beauty of the Rose which will steal all the attention from the other flowers. As the flowers were planning to cut down the rose tree, the nightingale overhears them and wakes up the rose, who comes out of her green tent dressed up in glorious color. Embarrassed and ashamed, some of the flowers escape to the wilderness, others wear blue in mourning while the Rose remains the centerpiece of the garden with the nightingale singing her beauty. According to the poet, love symbolized in the Rose is the meaning of existence, beauty, light, peace, friendship, and a cure for illness. But despite her victory and power, the "yellow heart" of the Rose testifies to the sorrow the envious inflicted upon her.

Obviously some people in Erzinjān and the church in particular objected to the secular content and sensuous implications of the poem. Konstandin wrote a second poem as an "interpretation" (*meknut'iwn*) or an "Explanation of the Rose, for the ignorant, who believed that the poem was dedicated to the Rose concerned physical matters". The flow-

[60] Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 275-277.

[61] Ibid., 278-279.

[62] Kostandin, "Tał garnan azniv ē", [Song to the gentle spring], in *Taťer*, 134-136.

[63] Kostandin, "Bank vardi ōrinakaw zK'ristos patmē" [Christ through the example of the Rose], in *Taťer*, 137-144.

ers, he says, are the priests (*kahanayk'*); the Rose is Christ; the Violet is Judas; the Nightingale is the trumpet of Resurrection (*p'oł yarut'ean*); the Rose that woke up and wore the scarlet gown is the resurrected Christ and His blood and His ascention to heaven; the flowers which withered are the soldiers who fell around the tomb, others are the guards who ran away, those who wore blue in shame are the Jews; the desire of the Rose to be made into rose-water for the sick and needy is the body of Christ and the bread of the Eucharist, etc. This purely Christian symbolism is concluded however by a philosophical observation that love is the force of generation and the principle by which the world evolves: "It is your duty, Kostandin, he says, to claim in great hope your share in Love, to taste and enjoy it and to be intoxicated by it". With no scruples about the doctrinal problems involved in this pantheistic celebration of love involving the universe, he concludes by glorifying God and the Trinity.[64]

While the religious criteria of true manliness invested on the contrast between the two worlds, the lower-physical and the higher-spiritual, in Kostandin's pantheistic universe ruled the principle of love, this gap was easily and conveniently bridged. And although in actual life the discrepancy between the culture of the youth and the "orthodox" standards was translated into a conflict between the establishment and the *fityān/ manuks*, its expressions in literature were the clear reflections of the Second Phase of the Armenian Renaissance.

In Arab culture, the contrast between the "two worlds" and "two natures" is highlighted in the *ḥikāya* of 'Abd Allāh. The ascetic and mystical version of the *futuwwa* promoted by leading figures like al-Suhrawardī initiated a trend which deepened the chasm between two sets of criteria for the institution. The Nāṣirī texts warned the *fityān* of the dangers of losing the other life while enjoying the pleasures of youth in this world. Causing injustice and harm will eventually find its punishment, says one poet, for nothing goes unnoticed by the ever-vigilant "eye of God".[65] In another context, the worldly life of youthful health, energy and rough conduct is put in a balance with its consequences in the other life.[66] Similarly, as a man of the church Yovhannēs gave absolute priority to the "other life", but for Kostandin this conflict was

[64] Kostandin, "Meknut'yun vardin hamaṙōt: Vasn angitac' šinec'i, zi karceyinet'ē marmnav ēr bank' vardis, es vasn ayn grec'i" [Interpretation of the Rose...], in *Taler*, 145-149.

[65] Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitab al-Futuwwa*, 180.

[66] Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitab al-Futuwwa*, 292.

the very matter of life and his poetry. The poem of the Rose and its sequel revealed the ongoing dispute and the displeasure of some reformists at Kostandin's and his friends' "corporeal" preoccupations. The allegorical interpretations of his verses did not seem to help and Kostandin wrote "Answer in return". This was a forceful response to an elder brother, and essentially described the dilemma which he and others faced:

"You gave sincere advice and Konstandin listened willingly
And replied 'understood'. Now this is my answer:
Do not scold me in public for my deeds,
Do not put a heavy burden on me, for I am frail.

My soul is too keen to hear words of wisdom,
But my body is pleasure-loving, for it is child of the world.
Like a candle I am consumed between two fires,
And stagger around trembling.

Made of four opposites [elements], my nature is suspended.
Fire draws me upward, and earth drags me downward,
As the little water [in me] puts down my soul's flames,
Wind in the air [in me] starts my fire anew.

Servant of two wills, I find it hard to please any,
I seek to shelter the fire in my bosom yet remain unharmed,
I long to cross the sea lightly on foot,
I wish to halt the racing winds with my hands.

I have often addressed myself advice and blames for all these matters,
I have been the witness yet exposed myself as example to others,
But [still] I am not allowed to talk freely to a brother like you,
I must rather put my face down on the earth that you walk over.

Many tears I have shed and complained a lot,
He who looks at me with the spirit of true brotherhood,
Will know that I have been attacked and tortured by many,
My heart is covered with wounds and embittered with suffering.

I have raised walls of sand and made myself a fortress,
But have invaded myself as a battlefield,
Yet I have no weapons and stand here bare and disarmed,
Wounded thousand times but seemingly unharmed.

Some call me the fool and the idiot that must be poisoned,
Others think that my blood and that of my likes must be spilled,
I reply that Kostandin should not listen
And should not believe what they say or fall into despair.[67]

[67] Kostandin, "Kĕrkneal patasxani ayspes i dem" [An answer in return], in: *Tałer*, 181-183.

The poem is not an apology and Kostandin finds the accusations of the elders insignificant compared to the great spiritual battle he is waging inwardly. Very much aware of the implications of his poetry on the external front, he has a genuine respect for this "elder brother" who very possibly may have been Yovhannēs, a public figure and Brotherhood spiritual leader in Erzinjān at the time. The contrast between their attitudes becomes explicit in the manner in which they understand the four opposite elements in man. The following is a *hayrēn* by Yovhannēs to be compared with Kostandin's:

> "You are a blend of four elements and a constitution weak at that:
> How can air and earth be similar, while fire and water repel each other,
> Created of opposites you are made to be a living man,
> But when air, fire and water dissipate, your body will turn into dust".[68]

With obvious irony, Yovhannēs comments on the brothers' parties on the green meadows and love-plays of nightingales and roses:

> The world is a green meadow and we are like the young dove,
> They will be picked up by angels gliding high above like eagles.
> O *manuks*, when you sit at the dinner table, invite your needy friends,
> For in the hither world, you will be given higher seats.[69]

Yovhannēs constantly accuses the *manuks* of adultery, love of women, wine and parties. In a poem entitled "Spiritual and fine advice to the wise and the virtuous", he says that "wise men" advise us to stay away from drinking, parties (*mejlis*) and the company of women (other than one's own). Even Adam's wife caused him so much grief. Strange women will only impoverish you and infect you with disease. He then concludes:

> "My Brothers requested that I write these words,
> So I dedicate this poem with love to the Brotherhood,
> The advices recorded here are useful words of wisdom
> To be remembered and turn into seeds of goodness".[70]

Attachment to the sensual world is potentially evil, according to Yovhannēs and in "Beneficial and useful words" he identifies the original sin with adultery. The five senses are the "doors of the city", he says,

[68] Yovhannēs, Hayrēn no 5, in *Bank' č'ap'aw* [Poems], 28.
[69] Yovhannēs, Hayrēn no. 55, in *Bank' č'ap'aw*, 37.
[70] Yovhannēs, "Tał ogēšah xist gełec'ik i yōgut ew i xrat imastnoc' ew katareloc'" [Poem salutory and very beautiful...], in *Bank' č'ap'aw*, 70-73.

"Close the doors of the senses and open those of the mind,
Do not allow the evil men to tempt your soul with sins, instead
Open the doors of wisdom and good deeds,
And fill yourself with the treasures of holy words".[71]

The impermanence of this world and its goods on the one hand, and the reality of the other are often the subjects of his verses dedicated to the brotherhood. In his *hayrēns* he makes the analogy of life as a journey to the other world, and man as traveler on a difficult path. The *manuk* should comprehend this predicament:

"You know that you are a traveler, but you always go astray,
You claim loving the name [of brotherhood] but you lack the virtues of the *manuk*,
Your path is strait and hard, but you stumble along with your eyes shut,
Sweet is being a *manuk*, but your life is bitter and your conduct uncomely".[72]

Kostandin's response to the above set of values and symbols is surprisingly complex. In an allegorical poem entitled "The Coming of Spring as the Coming of Christ", he defines the spring as the time for planting seeds of goodness in a pure heart, and sees no conflict between pantheistic celebrations of spring and moral goodness. These seeds "will bloom as wonderful" fruit, and concludes with the praise of the Holy Trinity.[73] The subject of the Trinity reveals the problem of the penetration of the Gorguians into the brotherhood of Erzinjān. Similar to most sects, they too rejected the Sacraments, religious hierarchy, the concept of the Trinity, etc. According to them, by the death of Christ the Trinity was annulled. Many of Kostandin's poems end with a prayer to the Trinity in an effort not to be associated with the Gorguians in the brotherhoods.

The subject of the longest and perhaps the most important poem of Yovhannēs is the famous Gorguian brotherhood leader Yakob (who is said to be thirty years old). It is entitled "Concerning the Problem of Yakob Manktawag of Erzĕnka". This dramatic piece is written in a Dantean spirit and vision, with three acts, complete with scenes, characters

[71] Yovhannēs, "Yovhannu Vardapeti Ezĕnkac'oy, makanun Pluz koč'ec'eal, asac'eal ban šahawēt ew ūgtakar" [A word profitable and useful said by Yovhannēs Wardapet Ezĕnkac'i, nicknamed Pluz], in *Bank' č'ap'aw*, 73-78.

[72] Yovhannēs, Hayrēn no. 5, in *Bank' č'ap'aw*, 25.

[73] Kostandin, "Ays garuns ĕzgalustĕn Kristosi patmē aŕakōk'", [The Coming of Spring as the Coming of Christ], in *Taler*, 150-152.

and dialogue.[74] There are no divisions in the text, but as we analyze its structure, we see that it was intended to be a dramatic dialogue to be recited. Similar verses are abundant in the Nāṣirī tradition. During brotherhood meetings, didactic sermons and poetry were read and recited in dialogue form, too. The similarity between the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* verses for the *samā'* sessions is striking in the case of this particular poem.

In the first part, rather "Act I", the elder brother calls upon the sinner, Yakob to arouse him of his "immersion" into evils deeds and sins, his condition is described and warnings listed about the consequences. The elder invites the sinner to repent and purge himself of his sins. This section starts as follows: "Yakob, wake up from your slumber in sins", the line is then repeated eight times at the end of each quatraine. Act I ends as follows:

> "Stare at the eternal flames
> Remember your sins and weep
> With bitter tears filling your eyes.
> Yakob, wake up from your slumber in sins."

In Act II it is the penitent Yakob who speaks and asks his Lord to "relieve him of his countless evil deeds". He confesses, repents and begs God's forgiveness. The confession on seven pages is very similar to the classic text used in the Church. After the 16th quatraine, and starting from the 17th to the 42nd, the last line is a direct response to the initial call by the elder, Yakob repeats "Wake me up my Lord from the slumber in sins". He cites his "evil deeds" as: intolerance and hatred towards the poor; refusal to assist them; negligence towards the church and duties of the faithful; failing to fast and not helping the orphans and widows; unjustly criticizing others while himself committing great mischief; lack of hospitality towards both guests and the needy; refusal to assist the hungry and the thirsty; not clothing the bare [i.e., the poor] and visiting the sick; wasting one's intelligence and talents; "running out of oil" like the five foolish maidens; defecting from the Lord's herd; acting like "the lost money of the woman"; being "the prodigal son".[75] In

[74] Yovhannēs, "Yohannu meci makanun Pĕluz, asac'eal i xĕndroy Yakobay Manktawagi Ezĕnkac'oy" [By the great Yovhannēs, nicknamed Pĕluz, on the request of Yakob Ezĕnkac'i, manktawag], in *Bank' č'ap'aw*, 50-58.

[75] Yovhannēs, *Bank' č'ap'aw*, 51- 56. The first parts of this section:

> "My Lord compassionate and benevolent,
> Pure of vengance and just in heart,

fact these are the contrary of the virtues that a *manuk* was supposed to have. Yakob concludes:

Coming down from Jericho,
I fell into the hands of burglars,
I was beaten, then abandoned,
Wake me up Lord from the slumber of sins.

In Act III the penitent is on the path to deliverance by the "good Samaritan", he regains some confidence and hope, and raises hymns of glory to the Lord and the Holy Trinity. Several poems are written in the same spirit but this poem is unique in brotherhood literature not only in form and content, but for the implied historic information that it suggests. Since no record has reached us of an official and reformed brotherhood in Erzinjān, the conflicts and the anarchy may have continued in more or less the same ways even after the proclamation of the official constitution of the reformed Brotherhood in Erzinjān. Towards the end of his career in the brotherhood, even Kostandin was weary of the conduct of his colleagues, some of whom were not even "believers". In a poem entitled "Concerning the Brotherhood, and good and evil" he says that his "brother is a *bevayfa* (or unbeliever) and has no faith". As an elder brother, he advises this youth to "keep the gates of evil sealed" but the latter completely misunderstood him. "I offer him priceless gems, he takes them as stones hurled at him", Kostandin complains.

With my humble heart, I beg you
To relieve me of my countless evil deeds.

I am the lamb who went astray from your herd,
I am the price of your blood, not a stranger at all,
Be my healer and consolation,
Drive away the darkness and obscurity.

Marooned and deceived,
I drowned in the abyss of sins,
I neglected my transitory state,
And lost sight of the permanent.

Deceived by Satan,
I made myself candidate for Hell
In my wretchedness I failed to comprehend,
And deprived myself of eternal life.

All powerful and all knowing God,
True and pure of all revenge,
I [now] believe in your true and holy order,
I submit to you, as primordial Reason."
Etc.

"He refuses to take advice, for he has befriended the market gangs and become the companion of the ignorant, the immature and the *murtadd* [renegade]
Without discriminating the good and bad, he enjoys the company of those Whose words are sweet as sugar but who are murderous at heart".[76]

The last poems of Kostandin reflect deep disillusionment and despair. Living in utter solitude among "false brothers" he feels thrown into a "sea of darkness".[77] In a poem dedicated to a close friend in his brotherhood called "Baron Amir" or Baron P'olin Kalaymach, he speaks of the conflicts and a schism in the organization. It seems that P'olin and Kostandin left the brotherhood, the latter withdrew to a monastery and the former went to Tawriz (where he is said to have copied the poems of Kostandin).[78] Kostandin addresses Amir P'olin as a wise man who understood him. The world is full of foul- speaking evil characters, he says, who will see the light as darkness, and the pure gold of the *Maṙrib* as fake. However, he adds, pure gold does not fear the test-stone or fire. Furthermore, "He in whose heart light has dawned will not host darkness in him, for he who is blind has no knowledge of the light". Recovering his spirit, he speaks to himself:

Why worry and feel confused and miserable,
Who has seen a boat stand still on a stormy sea.
Hold on to your wisdom and recover your peace,
And let people say that you are mad and lacking in wisdom.

In a "Poem for evil friends who are eager to seduce and those who are opposed to the good", Kostandin complains of bad leadership. "We are as at a stormy sea with no ship and captain", he says and the elders who are supposed to lead the novices are nothing but the "blind leading the blind". "Why do you torture yourself day and night", he askes himself, "Do not stay at the open seas, for you will never reach the shore".[79]

[76] Kostandin, "Yałags ełbayrut'ean, barwo ew č'ari" [About brotherhood...], in *Tałer*, 184-186.

[77] Kostandin, "Bank' xosil i žam tĕrtmut'ean, zor grec'i aṙ pahs sut ełbarc', zor viraworec'a" [Words spoken in an hour of sadness...], in *Tałer*, 192-194.

[78] Kostandin, "Ban Kostandeay aṙ mer yogewor ełbayr Amir, yogov i yogi ew sĕrtē i sirt" [A Word from Kostandin to our spiritual brother Amir, from soul to soul and heart to heart], *Tałer* 195-198. For further details see Xač'ikyan, "The Constitution", 84. This same Baron Amir, whom Kostandin praises very highly as a model for the other brothers, has copied a collection of Kostandin's poems in the year 1336 (See Mekhitarist Library, V103, fol 3-181). The manuscript, which also includes another sermon for the Brotherhood by Yovhannēs, has a very important colophon by P'olin (see also K'iwrtyan, *Eriza*, 155).

[79] Kostandin, "Ban yałagĕs č'ar ĕnkerac' ew patrast kal moloreč'uc'ič' omanc' ork' hakaṙakin barut'ean" [A word about evil brothers...], in *Tałer*, 199-203.

*The Nāṣirī idealized* futuwwa *and its Armenization*

The idealization of the *futuwwa* was a complex restructuring of an already existing institution and a culture with a single objective: to restore some of the power and the prestige of the caliphate in the cities. The literary-didactic program was its cultural counterpart and in general it was a project to replace chaotic *futuwwa* practices with religious ethics in harmony with the *Sharī'a*. The reformist texts of the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* were written as handbooks and propaganda material. Politically, the *futuwwa* was part of al-Nāṣir's politics to control the urban situation and employ the youth for the interest of the central government. Instead of annulling the institution, which was impossible, al-Nāṣir legalized and officialized a single *futuwwa* organization, which was affiliated and subordinated to him personally as the symbol of the Muslim religio-political authority.[80] The ideal *futuwwa* was defined as a "branch of the pure tree of prophethood", which on the one hand was rooted in worldly life and on the other reached the heavens, i.e., the Divine Law (as al-Khartabirtī explains in *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya*).[81] Having no independent status, the definitions (*ḥadd-ḥudūd*), rules (*qawānin*) and conditions (*shurūt*) of the *futuwwa* originated from the Qur'ān and constituted the doctrinal basis of the institution.

The Armenian establishment, at the hands of Yovhannēs, borrowed not only the policies and the system of the reform program but also its language and vocabulary. The word *sahman* is the equivalent of *had*, *kanon* is simply the Arabic *qānūn*, *payman* is the Arabic *sharṭ*, and these and many more basic terms are direct translations.[82] Following al-Nāṣir's example, the church/state of Erzinjān legalized and officialized a single brotherhood. As in the caliph's famous decree, the brotherhood was "verified by a written decree and legalized by a constitution", hence, its affiliation to the state.[83] Within the year a second text was issued this time to define rules of conduct for "junior youths and their *manktawag*s who conducted mundane and material principles". The objective was to "instruct and lead them by divine laws and the Holy Scriptures to a spiritual life and God's grace". The attributes of the true *manuks* and their true elders or *manktawags* in charge of their instruction

[80] See "Al-Nāṣir's Decree", In Jawad, Introduction, 64-66.

[81] al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya*, fol. 109a.

[82] As the title shows: "Sahman and kanonk' for the union of brothers who [are] gathered by divine love in the confraternity of the metropolis called Ezěnka in the year 1280 upon the request of its head, old *vardapet* Grigor Sanahnec'i".

[83] Yovhannēs, *Sahman ew Kanonk'*, 223.

were listed in detail. We find identical terms and sections in al-Khartabirtī's *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya* and Ibn al-Mi'mār's *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, both made available in Seljuk Rum and obviously used as models for Yovhannēs. Indeed, all three texts start in identical paragraphs which state the reason for the initiative as the decadent condition into which the *fityān* have precipitated, the distinguishing marks (*'alamāt*) of the true *fata*,[84] and the conditions they must fulfill for their status and role.[85] Ibn al-Mi'mār devoted several sections to the "*ādāb*" or ethics and conduct of the elders, as models and instruments of *futuwwa* ethics. [86]

The character, conduct and the duties of the *manktavags* are recurring themes in brotherhood literature. In addition to *Further Canons*, Yovhannēs dedicated his most elaborate poem to Yakob Manktawag. Corrupt characters, who pose as elders of unsuspecting youth, were simply the "blind leading the blind", as Kostandin put it in one of his later poems. The leadership of the youth organizations was naturally the target of the authorities in Erzinjān. In turn, the Decree of al-Nāṣir was read to the *futuwwa* leaders, who were asked to sign it. In all cases, the instructions were stated in religious terms. According to this Decree, the laws of Islam found their expression and embodiment in the *futuwwa* as an ideal institution. "Whatever the *futuwwa* prohibits is already forbidden by Islam", says Ibn al-Mi'mār.[87] The *futuwwa* is a religious virtue or *khiṣla min khiṣāl al-dīn*, but while every *fata* is a religious man, not every religious person is a *fata*. Furthermore, the *futuwwa* bond is perfectly acceptable to the religious establishment, because, as he explains, the theologians expressed no objection to the religious definition of the status of the *futuwwa* that had its roots in the *Shari'a*. The origin of the *futuwwa* is Abraham, whom he calls the "father of the *fityān*" (*abu'l-fityān*). Next in line is the Prophet 'Alī, whom the Prophet, according to tradition (Islamic *ḥadīth*), was said to have considered "the *fata*" par excellence.[88] Similarly, according to both texts and the poetry of Yovhannēs, being an ideal *manuk* meant being a good Christian. The initiational belt, or the *zunnar* (as he sometimes calls it), signified purity and implied the necessity to check the great "dragon of desire". All desire must be overcome and be transformed into the "passion of God", away from the darkness of the

[84] Al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat*, fol. 109.
[85] Al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat*, fol 114 a, b.
[86] See Ibn al Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 203-204.
[87] Ibn al Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 178.
[88] Ibn al Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 139-140.

world, says Yovhannēs.[89] Life is a war and the brotherhood virtues are the tools to achieve victory or *fawz* over desires and temptations of the world.

The political objectives of the brotherhood reform, both Islamic and Armenian, were obvious. Part of this plan was the suppression of popular culture and practices, which life in the cities generated inevitably. No margin was to be left for the cultural legacy of these urban male coalitions, which were vehicles for new forms of culture and arts in the medieval Near Eastern world. In this respect, the strategy of the Armenian authorities was more explicit. It did not simply replace an Islamic reform project by a Christian one. By controlling the brotherhoods, the authorities wanted to nationalize, i.e., to Armenize the institution of the brotherhoods, which were extra-ethnic and extra-religious. By redefining their ethics as Christian ethics, they also sought to eradicate dissident and sectarian elements, who were active in and through the youth organizations. In the third place, by prescribing an ideal culture to an ideal brotherhood of *manuks* and *manktawags,* the authorities wanted to eradicate the social context where this culture flourished as its natural soil. The poets who recited or sang there were paid for their services and there was a competitive and mixed market not for only for the poets but also for the musicians and the dancers of all races.

Here lay the importance of the *samā'* sessions which replaced the lively parties of wine and song. Since the *futuwwa* was a special *'ilm* or knowledge of good and evil, the members were given detailed instructions. The reform literature and most of the poems of Yovhannēs were written for the audience of the brothers. The case of Kostandin was different, because although he too wrote for the brothers, he remained faithful to their playful and life-loving culture, but at the same time maintaining general criteria of social values. The *samā'* sessions were a basic element in *futuwwa* culture. The instructions reached the audience directly and the style of writing the texts was fashioned accordingly. In the Aya Sofia compendium of *futuwwa* literature there is a section on the *samā'*, or the "listening" to the *'ilm* or knowledge of the *futuwwa*.[90] However, the emphasis on theory did not underestimate the importance of the deeds. The true *faqīh* (or wise person), was judged to be so by his deeds before his words, as we read in a collection of verses in the compendium.[91]

[89] "Further Canons", in Bałdasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erzēnkac'i*, 236.
[90] *Bab al-Sama'*, Aya Sofia, Ms no. 2049, fol 219a.
[91] Op. cit.

A word has to be said about mystical and Bāṭinī influences in the style, language, and the use of symbolic signs and letters in brotherhood literature. Prepared for the novices, "The Tree of Victory" of *futuwwa* virtues or *Shajarat al-Fawz*, also called *Shajarat al-Futuwwa* is a good example in this respect.[92] Mysticism typified the change of Constantin's attitudes towards the brotherhood at the end of his career. But in all cases, and in those of the Islamic *futuwwa*s, too (like such special cases as al-Suhrawardī and others), mysticism should not be ascribed to the nature of the institution as such. It was part of the evolution of a poet with clearly pantheistic tendencies, who however was misunderstood both by the religious establishment and his fellow brothers.

A vision he had at age 15 of sun-dressed Christ on the throne, was the theme of a later poem by Konstandin. Humbled but still living the ecstasy of this mystical experience, he saw himself as a chosen servant of the Divine. He said that he understood the admiration as well as the jealousy of his entourage towards his poetic genius, which was a divine gift bestowed upon him by Christ, who came to him in the vision.[93] In the last three poems there is an explicit otherworldliness. "He is only wise who opens the eyes of his soul", he advises.[94] These verses are didactic but betray a deeply disillusioned author. "The wisest man, he says, is a fool compared to God's wisdom". The world is transitory and virtues are means to deserve the eternal.[95] "Vain is the greatness of this world", "because we will all inherit death". In the style of Yovhannēs, he invites the brothers to "wake up for the other world".[96] In "Useful advice to the common brothers", pure conduct is the essence of the brotherhood, he says.[97] In the last poem (of the collection) entitled "Concerning language and judging a friend", he says,

> "You have to be patient, O Kostandin, for he who insulted you
> Is a false and unjust man who hurt you with evil words.
> If you are a free son of the Father of Christ and the Holy Spirit,
> You will have to be meek and humble, as the Lord wishes you to be".[98]

[92] There are two examples in al-Khartabirtī's *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya*, Aya Sofia Ms no. 2049, fol 112a and another on fol. 184a.

[93] Kostandin, "Omank' č'araxosen xinhn..." [Some speak ill of me...], in *Tałer*, 187-191.

[94] Kostandin, "Norin Kostandya bank'" [Words by Kostandin], in *Tałer*, 204-206, 204.

[95] Kostandin, *Tałer*, 204-206.

[96] Kostandin, "Bank' yałags anc'awor mecut'ean, zi mahvan fiaŕang en erkrawork's ew unayn ē vayelč'ut'iwn a šxarhis", [Poem on the finite glories of mortals, for they will inherit death, and vain are the luxuries of the world], *Tałer*, 209-212, 212.

[97] Kostandin, "Xrat hasarakac' pitani ew ōgtakar" [Useful advice to the brothers], in *Tałer*, 207-208.

[98] Kostandin, "Ban yałags lezowi ew č'datel zĕnkern or ē ays", 213-215, 214.

It seems that the ultimate ideal is religious ethics, both in the Armenian and the Islamic contexts. "The true initiate [into the *futuwwa*] is he who seeks his God",[99] says a poet in *Bāb al-Samā'*. Both al-Nāṣir and the Church in Erzinjān invested precisely on this point and reclaimed the right of the establishment to be the guardian of the Law and the sole reference for all values. However, after the Mongol expansion over the entire region, Armenian and Islamic establishments stood little chance, but more importantly, the process or urbanization left little margin for the idealized *futuwwa*. Still their culture assimilated differences and generated the urban arts in Near Eastern cities as the true expressions of life there.

[99] *Bāb al-Samā'*, Aya Sofia, Ms no. 2049, fol 219a.

# CULTURAL INTERACTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AS REFLECTED IN THE ANTHROPONOMY OF ARMENIAN 12TH – 14TH CENTURY COLOPHONS

J.J.S. WEITENBERG

Onomastics is one of the fields in which cultural interaction easily shows itself. Armenian onomastics is no exception to this rule. This paper will try to illustrate a few aspects of the process of cultural interaction in the 12th – 14th century on the basis of onomastic material in the Armenian colophons. The material should be viewed in connection with the conclusions which already Nina Garsoïan has reached in her fundamental study on Medieval Armenian anthroponymy up to the 14th century.[1] For the end of the period studied by her, Garsoïan concluded to the presence of a society "de plus en plus mixte en cours de transformation, et dans laquelle, à l'exception du clergé, les formes et les institutions traditionelles s'estompaient de plus en plus sous l'influence de la domination mongole et turcomane" (p. 239). Garsoïan's work above all traces the development of Armenian anthroponymy within the aristocracy and the great princely houses; she establishes the rise of a new social group by the end of the 14th century. The onomastic material of the Armenian colophons of this period may shed additional light on this aspect of Armenian social history.

As is well known, Armenian colophons are an important source for Middle Eastern history and onomastics.[2] Having finished the tedious work of copying, scribes implore the readers' indulgence; they note down what happened in the world around them while they were writing, and they ask to pray for themselves, their parents and children; they mention friends, comrades, helpers and colleages. The onomastic material thus is provided within a certain social context. This makes it emi-

[1] Nina G. Garsoïan, "Notes préliminaires sur l'anthroponymie arménienne du moyen âge", in: Monique Bourin a.o. edd., *L'Anthroponymie. Document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux. Actes du colloque international.. 'Genèse médiévale de l'anthropologie moderne'* [Collection de l'école française de Rome, 226], Rome 1996, 227–239.

[2] Avedis K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301-1480. A Source for Middle Eastern History. Selected, Translated, and Annotated by Avedis K. Sanjian* [Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 2], Cambridge Mass. (Harvard UP) 1969.

nently suited for prosopographic studies. These colophons have been edited in separate text volumes; the indices attached to these volumes are a scholarly achievement in their own right. For this paper, the personal names in the indices for the 12th – 14th century have been excerpted[3].

This is the period of Cilician Armenia and of the last independent principalities of greater Armenia; it is a period of intense international contacts and of the great invasions from the East. In what way, if any, does Armenian anthroponymy reflect these contacts?

A first pass through the material provides the following data. Over these three centuries, the colophons mention 8250 different contemporary persons (leaving out persons who are explicitly stated to be of non-Armenian origin, foreign rulers etc.), most of whom (but not all) are of Armenian ethnicity. The material is not equally distributed over the centuries: for the 12th century we have 470 individuals (= 6% of 8250), in the 13th century colophons a total of 3080 (= 37%) individuals are mentioned, in the 14th century 4700 (= 57%). It is not always clear from the text whether a person is male or female; as far as can be seen, the texts mention 6704 male individuals (12th century: 427; 13th century 2661; 14th century 3616) who carry 867 different names, and 1190 females (40; 363; 787) who share 554 names among them. In the absolute sense, the most popular names are *Yovhannēs* (638 occurrences, i.e. about 10% of the male individuals) and, for women, with quite a different rate of frequency, *Hṙip'simē* (29 occurrences = 0.4%).

We shall first give a closer look into the distribution of the names. The following table gives the ten most popular masculine names in each of the three centuries according to their ranking in each individual century. It also indicates the rates of frequency of these names in the other centuries; for each name the absolute number of occurrences within the century and its frequency percentage over the number of masculine persons in the century are indicated (for the 12th century 100% = 427; for the 13th century 100% = 2661; for the 14th century 100% = 3616).

[3] It concerns the volumes over the 5 – 12th cen., 13th cen., 14th c. (A.S. Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren jeṙagreri hišatakaranner. 13 dar* (*Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts. 13th century*), Erevan 1984; A.S. Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren jeṙagreri hišatakaranner. 5 – 12 dd.* (*Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts. 5th – 12th centuries*) Erevan 1988, L. Xač'ikyan, *XIV dari hayeren jeṙagreri hišatakaranner* (*Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 14th century*) Erevan 1950). The complete material of the colophon editions, including the indices, has been digitalized in the period 1994-1997 with the help of INTAS grant 94-2974.

| NAME | 12thc. Rank | Abs. Freq. | 13thc. Rank | Abs. Freq. | 14thc. Rank | Abs. Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Grigor* | 1 | 48=11% | 4 | 107=4% | 3 | 190=5% |
| *Yovhannēs* | 2 | 35=8% | 1 | 241=9% | 1 | 362=10% |
| *Step'anos* | 3 | 17=4% | 2 | 180=7% | 2 | 217=6% |
| *Dawit'* | 4 | 13=3% | 22 | 19 | 19 | 43=1% |
| *Xač'atowr* | 5 | 12=3% | 10 | 45=2% | 23 | 35=1% |
| *Kostandianos* | 5 | 12=3% | 3 | 115=4% | 14 | 62=2% |
| *Gēorg* | 6 | 10=2% | 18 | 27=1% | 32 | 18 |
| *T'oros* | 6 | 10=2% | 7 | 80=3% | 9 | 80=2% |
| *Karapet* | 6 | 10=2% | 10 | 45=2% | 5 | 112=3% |
| *Mxit'ar* | 6 | 10=2% | 12 | 42=2% | 15 | 59=2% |
| *Yakovb* | 7 | 9=2% | 9 | 47=2% | 6 | 101=3% |
| *Vardan* | 8 | 7=2% | 6 | 93=3% | 7 | 89=2% |
| *Sargis* | 9 | 6=1% | 5 | 105=4% | 4 | 165=5% |
| *Nersēs* | 11 | 4=1% | 8 | 49=2% | 8 | 85=2% |
| *Simēon* | 14 | 1 | 38 | 2 | 10 | 79=2% |

The most popular names are relatively constant over the centuries: *Grigor, Yovhannēs, Step'annos*. For some names the table seems to indicate a certain change in popularity over the centuries. *Davit'* is falling rather steeply, and *Simēon* seems to be a rising star. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, this set of name gives a very uniform impression. These names all safely fall within the Armenian onomastic tradition. Their character is Christian, derived from the Bible and early defenders of the faith. Regardless of their origin: whether the names are of early Iranian descent (*Nersēs*), borrowed via Syriac (*Sargis*) or via Greek (*Step'anos, Grigor*); whether the name is of a Byzantine character (*Kostantinos, Gēorg*) or whether it is an inner-Armenian formation (*Xač'atur*) — all these names refer to icons of Armenian Christianity and identify their bearers as belonging to this civilization.

For women's names the situation is quite different. A listing of the ten most popular feminine names in each century, with their respective rankings shows far greater variety of names. Given the low absolute frequencies, there is no point in calculating the percentage of occurrences for these names.

| NAME | Rank 12thc. | Freq. Abs. | | Rank 13thc. | Freq. Abs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Šušanik* | 1 | 3 | *Tiknac'* | 1 | 10 |
| *Marem* | 1 | 3 | *T'agowhi* | 2 | 8 |
| *T'amar* | 2 | 2 | *T'efano* | 3 | 7 |
| *Mart'ay* | 2 | 2 | *Mama-Xat'own* | 3 | 7 |
| *Xašowš-Tikin* | 3 | 1 | *Mariam* | 3 | 7 |
| *Aziz* | 3 | 1 | *Akanc'* | 4 | 6 |
| *Ṙit'a* | 3 | 1 | *Gohar* | 4 | 6 |
| *Libanan* | 3 | 1 | *Šowšan* | 4 | 6 |
| *Gohar* | 3 | 1 | *Minay* | 4 | 6 |
| *Xnjor* | 3 | 1 | *Aziz* | 5 | 5 |

| NAME | Rank 14thc. | Freq. Abs. |
|---|---|---|
| *Hřip'simē* | 1 | 23 |
| *Mart'ay* | 2 | 21 |
| *Šnorhawor* | 3 | 16 |
| *Mama-Xat'own* | 3 | 16 |
| *T'agowhi* | 4 | 15 |
| *Awag-Tikin* | 5 | 13 |
| *Ełisabet'* | 6 | 11 |
| *J̌awhar* | 6 | 11 |
| *Ēl-Xat'own* | 7 | 9 |
| *Mariam* | 7 | 9 |

Common most popular names over the centuries are *Šušan(ik), Marem-Mariam, Aziz, Gohar, Mart'ay, T'aguhi*. Just as with the men's names, we find names referring to the bearers' Christian background: *Mariam, Mart'ay, Ełisabet', Šušan(ik), Hřip'simē, T'amar*. But the set of most popular names is not at all a uniform set. Clearly women's names are taken from a wider range of material: fashionable Byzantine (*T'efano*), European (*Ṙit'a*), or Arabo-Persian (*J̌awhar, Minay*) names; Turco-Mongolian elements (*Mama-Xat'un, Ēl-Xat'un*). Among the traditional onomastic elements we find appellatives like *T'aguhi* "Queen", *Šnorhawor* "Grace", *Xnjor* "Apple".

It would seem then, that the naming system for women is less strictly traditional, more open to fashions and foreign influences than the names of men. Such an assumption, however, requires some further argumenta-

tion. It is possible to compare the structure of the naming systems for men and women in a more systematic way according to historical layers. In the fifth and last volume of his "Dictionary of proper Names" Ačaŕyan proposed a systematic categorization of Armenian proper names, based on their etymology.[4] This categorization follows the etymological development of Armenian and distinguishes Urartian, inherited Indo-European, Iranian etc. layers up to Russian names in Armenian. For our purposes we do not need such a precise etymological distinction. In order to assess the 12th to 14th century situation we should distinguish: traditional elements (Judeo-Christian, Greek, Syriac, Iranian, traditional names), Arabo Persian elements and Turco Mongolian elements. The Arabo Persian group is not always clearly definable in a chronological sense: Arabic elements may be expected from the 7th century onwards in Armenian anthroponymy; one expects the first Neo-Persian elements entering around the eleventh century. Next to these, there are many names which we are not able to categorize from an etymological point of view; the presence of this remaining group seriously impairs any numeric result of this study.

From this typological perspective the structure of the 6704 men's names in the 12th to 14th century colophons is approximately as follows: 5853 persons, i.e. 87% carry names which one might term as 'traditional'; the origin of these names is Iranian, Biblical, Syriac, Greek or a vernacular Armenian element. European names (including Latin) are carried by 75 persons (about 1%); Arabo-Persian names are found with 315 persons (= about 5%); Turco-Mongolian names with 48 persons (which is less than one percent); however, 413 persons carry names which are unidentified with respect to their linguistic layer — they constitute about 6% of the total of male persons in the colophons. The situation for women is complicated by the fact that here we find very many compound names; these may be homogeneous from an etymological point of view, be it Armenian (*P'ok'r-Tikin*), Arabo-Persian (*Naz-Melik'*), or Turco-Mongolian (*Xut'lu-Xat'un*); more often, however the names are of a mixed character: *Melik'-Tikin, Šak'ar-Melik', Mayr-Xat'un*. In such names, the second element could be viewed as a mere indicator of femininity or maybe social rank; to establish the linguistic layer of the name the first element is indicative[5].

[4] H. Ačaŕyan, *Hayoc' anjnanunneri baŕaran (Dictionary of Proper Names)*, vol. 5, Erevan 1962, 340-362.

[5] If one would take the second element as indicative, the number of Turco-Mongol

| LAYER: | MEN | 100% =6704 | WOMEN | 100% =1190 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-traditional | | | | |
| Unknown | 413 | 6% | 294 | 25% |
| Turco-Mongol | 48 | 1% | 64 | 5% |
| Arabic-New Persian | 315 | 5% | 140 | 12% |
| European (incl. Latin) | 75 | 1% | 33 | 3% |
| Traditional | | | | |
| Native Armenian | 1286 | 20% | 479 | 40% |
| Iranian | 501 | 7% | 13 | 1% |
| Biblical | 1962 | 29% | 106 | 9% |
| Greek | 1799 | 27% | 59 | 5% |
| Syriac | 303 | 5% | 2 | |
| Georgian | 2 | | | |
| + traditional elements: | 5853 | 87% | 659 | 55% |

For men and women alike, this table attests a decline of the Iranian names; among the traditional names these now form, together with the names taken from Syriac, the smallest group. In all other respects it seems to me that the structure of Armenian feminine names is significantly different from the structure of men's names. Within the traditional onomastic layers, men greatly prefer the Biblical and Greek names whereas for women native Armenian names are chosen. As a body, men's names are preferably selected from the traditional corpus; women's names are clearly more open to foreign influences.

The material hardly allows to trace a development in the use of names within the period envisaged in this paper. The 12th-century colophon material is rather limited and the period as a whole might be considered in many respects as a cultural and historical unity. One expects cultural breaks, and breaks in naming habits after the 15th century, i.e. after the final disappearance of Armenian independent political entities. Accord-

elements in women's names would increase at the expense of the native Armenian names; in deviation from the table below we would get the following values: Turco-Mongol 152 persons =13% of the total number of female persons in the colophons; Arabic-New Persian 120 persons =10%; native Armenian 414 persons =35%; Biblical 101 persons =8%; Greek 58 persons =5%; total of traditional elements: 573 persons =48%.

ing to J̌ahukyan this "middle period" in Armenian onomastics should even be dated to the 12 – 16th centuries[6].

Of course, the masculine names in the colophons show a social preponderance of the clergy and this is an important factor in the traditional makeup of Armenian anthroponymy[7]. Thus, there are 351 persons who are explicitly termed 'monk' (*miaban*) in the colophons treated here. From these, there are only 5 persons who carry a name which with certainty belongs to the Arabo-Persian layer (*Asad* 14c., *Hasan* 13c., *Sult'an* 13c., *T'uran* 13c., *Het'um* (13c.). For the rest they carry names belonging to the Greek (100), Armenian (94), Biblical (90), Iranian (25), Syriac (17) onomastic layers. The names in this group which I could not etymologically identify (it concerns 20 persons) rather seem to belong to the traditional layers (*Ału, Aŕamanos, Bessuba, Gugik, Šeranik, J̌awinan, Taliaw*).

A similar situation applies to the 1013 persons termed 'scribe' (*gričʻ*). In this group, too, the Arabo-Persian elements are extremely rare; it concerns ten persons (*Awšin* 13c., *Hipay* 13c., *Šahn-šah* 13c., 14c., *Širin-Šah* 13c., four persons called *Het'um* 13c.) including a female scribe *Covinar* 13c. The Arabo-Persian element approaches the amount of one percent of the scribes. One scribe has a Turkish name (*Aslan* 14c.). Again the traditional names overwhelmingly prevail: Greek (312), Armenian (186), Biblical (356), Iranian (81), Syriac (47). There remain 20 persons whose names are unidentifiable with respect to etymological layer (e.g. *Ankuk* 14c., *Bener* 14c., *Čarak* 13c., *Meltē* 13c., *Doyr* 13c., *Dop'* 13c., *Nater* 14c., *Pawlawlak* 13c., *P'ošek* 12c.).

[6] G.B. J̌ahukyan, "Bnik Hayeren armatnerov kazmvac haykakan anjnanownnerə" (Armenian Proper Names Formed from Native Roots), *Patmabanasirakan Handes* 4 (1984), 33. For further research in this matter the material of the remaining published colophon editions (15th century; 17th century) should be excerpted. The material adduced in Tigran M. Avetisyan, *Haykakan Azganun* (*Armenian Family Names*), Erevan 1987, in particular his tables on pp. 114-116 concerning the layering and procentual distribution of family names which are derived from proper names, are of great typological interest, but unfortunately they work with undated material. A rich source of typological data now is Tigran M. Avetisyan, *Hayocʻ azgananunneri baŕaran. Dictionary of Armenian Surnames*, Erevan 2000. An interesting study of the anthroponymy of the modern period is made by Anna Sirinian, "Anthroponyms: Indicators of Cultural Contacts in Armenian History", in N. Awde ed. *Armenian Perspectives. 10th Anniversay Conference of the Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes*, London 1997, 183-189, 395-396. For a useful listing of currently popular Armenian anthroponyms see Monique Ekmekdjian, *Les prénoms arméniens*, Marseille 1992.

[7] Garsoïan, "Notes préliminaires", 238.

Thus, in these groups the percentual occurrence of Arabo-Persian, let alone Turco-Mongolian elements is much lower than in the male population at large, as it is represented in the colophons.

Up to a certain degree it is possible to study the social interaction of the population groups which are the carriers of the different types of names. Let us consider the youngest etymological layer, the Turco-Mongolian names.

There are persons carrying Turco-Mongolian names which are belonging to the higher social ranks; one finds mention of persons called *išxan* "lord" (*Buxtay* 13c.), *paron* "sir" (*Aziz-Pēk, Aslan, Gurǰibēk, Ulu-Pēk* 14c.), *datawor* "judge" (*Xar-Aslan* 12c.). Other occupations mentioned in connection with Turco-Mongolian names are: *aygepan* "keeper of a vineyard" (*Turk'* 14c.), scribe, tailor (*Aslan* 14c.), *spasawor* "servant" (*Aslan-Pēk, Turk'* 14c.) or *spasuhi* "female servant" (*Xat'un* 14c.), jeweller (*Uřum-Pēki* 14c.), merchant (*Xut'lu-Pēk* 14c.). Apart from the names and occupations we mostly have no further information about their role in Armenian society. On the other hand, there are persons carrying Turco-Mongolian names who seem to be participating in Armenian social life. One of them is *uxtakic'* "companion in a vow" (Gozoy 12c.). They function as buyers (*Gurci* 12c.), and more often as *stac'oł* "commissioner" of a manuscript (*Turk'* 13c., *Aslan, Ulu-Pēk* 14c.). Here we may have to do with persons of Armenian descent, carrying Turco-Mongolian names, combinations of native and imported onomastic elements (such as *Łaray-Sargis*, 14c.) or inner-Armenian derivations from imported names (as in *Turk'ik*, 14c.).

At the level of families we often find persons with a Turco-Mongolian name next to traditionally named relatives. For example:

*Axšibē* son of *Hayrapet* 14c.
*Aslan* father of *Vardan Vardapet* 13c.
*Aslan-Xat'un* fem. relative of *Hayranun* 14c.
*Gurǰibēk*, brother of catholicos *Zak'aria* 14c.
*Gurǰibēk*, son of scribe *Karapet* 14c.
*Gurci*, son of *Vahram* 12c.
*Gurci-Xat'un*, mother of *Petros* 14c.
*T'ut'*, mother of *Mxit'ar* 13c.
*T'ut'er*, sister of *Yovhannēs* 13c.[8]
*Xat'un*, wife of scribe *Barseł* 14c.
*Xat'unik*, mother of *Xač'eres* 13c.

[8] The name T'ut'er shows the typical Armenian onomastic element *-er* which is used in the formation of feminine names.

*Łaračay*, father of *Karapet* 14c.
*Łaraman*, father of *Petros* 14c.
*Uslu*, wife of *k'ahanay Yovhannēs* 14c.
*Uslun*, niece of *Tērtēr* 14c.
*Turk'*, brother of *Vardan* 14c.

On the basis of this latter group one may conclude that there were indeed persons of Armenian ethnicity who carried Turco-Mongolian names. Most of these we find in the 14th century. This situation strongly points to the existence of a closer social interaction between the Armenians and the most recent wave of newcomers and supports Garsoïan's characterization of the period as a society in transform.

# THE USE OF *HIJRA* DATING IN SYRIAC MANUSCRIPTS: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

S. BROCK

How did the different Christian communities under the first centuries of Islamic rule locate themselves in time? A full answer to this question would require a wide-ranging study of the dating systems used in the literatures produced by these communities. Some sidelight, however, can be thrown on the subject by looking at the ways in which scribes dated their manuscripts, and in this paper the evidence of the colophons of Syriac manuscripts will be surveyed. Four different ecclesiastical communities are involved, Syrian Orthodox, Church of the East, Melkite and Maronite, but the vast preponderance of the evidence comes from the first two of these.

A few preliminary observations should be made. Several thousand dated Syriac manuscripts survive, ranging from AD 411 to the present day. The sample of some 2600 dated manuscripts upon which the present survey is based derives primarily from information made available in catalogues[1]; catalogues, however, vary greatly in the amount of information they give about the ways in which particular manuscripts are dated, and so, except in the case of the detailed catalogues such as those of Wright and Sachau, any deduction e silentio is dangerous. Nevertheless the picture that will emerge in the course of this paper seems likely to be reasonably reliable in its general outlines, even though the list of Syriac manuscripts which give a *hijra* dating

[1] For these, see A. Desreumaux and F.Briquel-Chatonnet, *Repertoire des bibliotheques et des catalogues de manuscrits syriaques*, Paris 1991. A few important catalogues have been published subsequently, in particular J.F. Coakley, "A Catalogue of the Syriac manuscripts in the John Rylands Library", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester* 75 (1993), 105-207; F.Y. Dolabany, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in St Mark's Monastery* [Jerusalem], Damascus 1994; *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in Za'faran Monastery*, Damascus 1994; *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in Syrian Churches and Monasteries*, Damascus 1994; and F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliotheque Nationale de France (no 356-435)*, Paris 1997. For the present purposes catalogues of most western collections and some oriental ones have been consulted; in a number of cases I have supplemented the available published material from my own notes. (The Catalogues by Dolabany are cited in Appendix I as D I-III).

(Appendix I)[2] will certainly need to be extended considerably once better catalogues become available.

Until fairly recently scribes of Syriac manuscripts have normally employed the Seleucid era to date their work, though Melkite scribes from the mid thirteenth century[3] onwards usually preferred to use the Byzantine era of the world, or of Adam.[4] Among the various other dating systems, usually used alongside rather than in place of the Seleucid or World eras, is the Muslim *hijra* era. Although not commonly found, there are 85 instances at present known to me of its use in colophons of Syriac manuscripts, covering every century up to and including the twentieth.[5] It is in the 13th, 16th and 19th centuries that *hijra* dates are best represented, but these also happen to be the centuries for which most dated Syriac manuscripts survive. Leaving out of consideration the 7th and 8th centuries, for which the numbers of manuscripts dated by whatever era are very low, the highest proportion in comparison with the approximate total number of dated Syriac manuscripts for any century is to be found in the 13th century (though the usage then is confined to the Church of the East and the Melkite community); here it is interesting to note that the instances are concentrated in the first half of that century, precisely the time when the Christian communities of the Mosul area were enjoying a period of comparative peace and well-being, under the rule of Badr ad-Din Lu'lu' (d. 1259).[6]

Language is certainly an important factor in the choice of dating system, and Christian scribes writing in Arabic (whether in Arabic script, or

[2] Only the colophons of the original scribes are used, and no account is taken of the quite frequent later notes of sale etc., which sometimes also have *hijra* dates.

[3] Two isolated examples of Melkite manuscripts earlier than the 13th century which use the world era are Sinai syr.20, of 1068/9 (AM 6577), and the Sammlung Adam (Goslar), S 1, of 1190 (AM 6698), both written on the Black Mountain, near Antioch (cf. my "Syriac manuscripts copied on the Black Mountain, near Antioch", in R. Schulz and M. Görg, *Lingua Restituta Orientalis: Festgabe für Julius Assfalg* (Agypten und Altes Testament, 20), Wiesbaden 1990, 59-67, esp. 63.

[4] For dating systems, see L. Bernhard, *Die Chronologie der Syrer* (SBÖstAkadWiss, 264), Wien 1969, and *Die Chronologie der syrischen Handschriften* (Verzeichnis der orientalische Handschriften in Deutschland, Suppl. 14), Wiesbaden 1971; also F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "Le temps du copiste: notations chronologiques dans les colophons de manuscrits syriaques", in F. Briquel-Chatonnet and H. Lozachmeur (eds), *Proche-Orient ancien: temps vécu, temps pensé* (Antiquités sémitiques, 3), Paris 1998, 197-210. Convenient tables can be found in V.Grumel, *La chronologie*, Paris 1958.

[5] See Appendix II for the distribution.

[6] See J.M. Fiey, *Mossoul chrétienne*, Beyrouth 1959, 39-42, and in general D. Patton, *Badr al-Din Lu'lu'*, Seattle/London 1991. During his rule, Christian artisans are known to have played a significant role in the fine metalwork produced in Mosul.

in Garshuni) are much more likely to use the Muslim era.[7] Indeed, in that part of the Melkite community which formerly spoke Christian Palestinian Aramaic but which went over to the use of Arabic at least by the second half of the eighth century, the *hijra* dating was used virtually exclusively,[8] replacing the Byzantine Indictions, which the Greek-speaking part of the community were still using as late as 762 in inscriptions.[9]

*Terms for the hijra era*

For their standard dating by the Seleucid era Syriac scribes use a number of different phrases to identify the era: most frequently it is described as that of 'the Greeks', who, however, may be qualified as either 'blessed' or 'crafty' Greeks; at certain periods and in certain communities the era is stated to be that of 'Alexander and Seleucus Nicator', or 'Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian' (with minor variations). This variety of terminology is also found in connection with *hijra* dating, for which the following terms are to be found (sometimes in combination):[10]

'the Arabs/Muslims' (*Ṭayyāyē*):[11] e.g. 699, 873/4, 894, 1213, 1218, 1537;
'the Ishmaelites': e.g. 752/3, 760, 929, 1208, 1252;
'the *mhaggrāyē*':[12] 682, 806;
'the children of Hagar': e.g. 760, 1208(b), 1213, 1231, 1252;
'the *Hijra*': e.g. 1595 [colophon in Arabic], 1701 [colophon in Garshuni].

[7] The low figure of Christian Arabic manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, with *hijra* dating (4 out of 87 dated manuscripts) is probably due to the fact that most of this collection is of Coptic, and not Syrian, Orthodox provenance; cf. G. Troupeau, "Les colophons des manuscrits arabes chrétiens", in F. Deroche and F. Richard (eds), *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, Paris 1997, 224-31, esp. 226.

[8] This is a clear indication of the rapid Arabization of this community, as is pointed out by M. Rubin, "Arabization versus Islamization in the Palestinian Melkite community during the early Muslim period", in A. Kofsky and G.G. Stroumsa (eds), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1998, 149-62. The earliest dated Christian Arabic manuscript, Sinai Arabic (New Finds) M.16 of AD 859/60, is dated by both the World Era and that of the Arabs, but the next in date (Sinai Arabic, New Finds, M.46, of 867) has only the *hijra* date (Ramadan AH 253), and this is the normal pattern of subsequent manuscripts from this region.

[9] *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 44 (1995), no. 1410 (Mount Nebo).

[10] For the sake of simplicity I simply give the date of the manuscripts; for their identity, see the chronological list in Appendix I.

[11] *Ṭayyāyē* started out as the standard Syriac term for 'Arab'; at some time in the course of the Middle Ages it took on its current meaning of 'Muslim'.

[12] This is a term frequently found in Syriac sources of the 7th and 8th century, probably representing *muhājirun*. It also features in the Syriac inscriptions dated AH 96 (AD 714/15) from Kamed el-Loz, published by P. Mouterde, "Inscriptions en syriaque dialectal à Kamed-Beqa'", *MUSJ* 22 (1939), 71-106.

Following the phraseology used in connected with 'the Greeks', the Arabs are also on occasion referred to as 'the blessed Arabs/Muslims (*Ṭayyāyē*)': this applies to an East Syriac New Testament manuscript of 1206 (Cambridge, BFBS 446), where the Greeks do not have the adjective; and to an East Syriac liturgical manuscript of 1544 (BL, Add.7178), where both Greeks and Arabs are designated 'blessed'. It is interesting to note that, whereas several instances can be found in Syrian Orthodox manuscripts of the phrase 'the crafty Greeks', there seems to be no example of what might have been its counterpart, 'the crafty Arabs'. Since, however, catalogues only rarely give details of the precise phraseology used, it is impossible at present to speak with certainty about such features, or to deduce anything much about fashions over time or space, although for the earliest examples, covering the seventh to ninth centuries inclusive, the full information can be given:

682: 'of the *mhaggrāyē*, children of Ish[mael] the son of Hagar the son of Abraham';
699: 'of the *Ṭayyāyē*, in the reign of the house of Marwan';
752/3: 'of the Ishmaelites';
759/60: 'of the Ishmaelites';
760: 'of the rule of the children of Hagar';
770: 'of the *Ṭayyāyē*';
774/5: 'of the rule of the Ishmaelites';
806: 'of the *mhaggrāyē*';
823: 'the numbering of the *Ṭayyāyē*';
873/4: 'of the *Ṭayyāyē*';
894: 'of the *Ṭayyāyē*'.

With the exception of *mhaggrāyē*, all of these terms recur in subsequent centuries.

*Syriac communities using hijra dating*

Of the 85 Syriac manuscripts at present known to me which provide a *hijra* date, usually alongside another era (above all, the Seleucid) that is customarily employed, the large preponderance (62) belong to the Church of the East, while only nine are Syrian Orthodox (and five of these are concentrated in the late 8th and the 9th century). Melkite manuscripts account for nine, and only one Maronite manuscript in Syriac has a *hijra* dating.[13] Although the paucity of Maronite examples may be

[13] *Hijra* dating, however, may be found in some Maronite Garshuni manuscripts.

due to that community's greater geographical cohesiveness and self-sufficiency, the difference between the figures for the Syrian Orthodox and the Church of the East cannot be explained on these grounds. The distribution by community over the centuries is given in Appendix II; there, by way of comparison, the total number for each century of dated Syriac manuscripts used for the present study is also indicated.

It is difficult to perceive any clear patterns in the usage, and it looks as if it was to a considerable extent a matter of whim on the part of the scribe; in this connection it is interesting to note that the scribe of Vatican syr.82 (of 1214) did not add the *hijra* date in Vatican syr. 74, which he wrote a year and a half later. Although one might have supposed that the use of the Muslim era might be more common in manuscripts written in towns,[14] as opposed to monasteries, this is clearly not the case in manuscripts up to the end of the thirteenth century, for many of those with a *hijra* date were written in monasteries, and sometimes quite remote ones. Here it would seem that the use of *hijra* dating may have been due to local scribal traditions at certain monasteries, for it is quite striking that two or more examples are known from the following monasteries:

- Elijah (south of Mosul),[15] with examples from 918, 929 and 1186 (probably the same monastery, since a historical note by the scribe indicates that it was written in the Mosul region);
- St Michael (north west of Mosul),[16] with examples from 1189 and 1206;
- Rabban Hormizd (near Alqosh),[17] examples from 1198,[18] 1207,[19] 1208(a), 1208(b), 1223, and 1679;[20]

[14] It may be significant that two out of the three fairly early manuscripts which have only a *hijra* date were written in Edessa.

[15] J.M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* II, Beirut 1965), 639-54.

[16] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* II, 662-71.

[17] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* II, 533-548.

[18] Although W.P. Hatch, *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*, Boston 1945, 219, says the place is not given, M.H. Goshen-Gottstein's Catalogue states that it was written in Alqosh; if so, it too is likely to have been written at the nearby monastery of Rabban Hormizd.

[19] The scribe of this manuscript was the deacon monk Daniel, and since he uses almost exactly the same wording as Daniel, scribe of 1208(b), written at Rabban Hormizd, the two scribes can be identified as the same person, and so the manuscript of 1207 (whose colophon is damaged) will also have been written at this monastery.

[20] 1911 was copied from a manuscript of AG 1883 (AD 1571/2) written for the monastery of Rabban Hormizd, and this was in turn copied from a manuscript of AG 1596 (AD 1284/5) written in the hand of 'Abdisho' of Nisibis; the copy of the original colophon (as given in Mingana's Catalogue) does not, however, give a *hijra* date alongside the Seleucid.

- Sabrisho',[21] examples from 1200 and 1252;
- St Christopher, Saidnaya, examples from 1206 and 1214.[22]

One might also suppose that scribes would be more likely to provide a *hijra* dating at times when the Christian community was not feeling under particular threat from its Muslim overlords, but it is not clear that this could be demonstrated on the evidence of the pattern of incidence over time, since the high figure for the thirteenth century simply reflects the rather large number of dated manuscripts that survive from that period (which was certainly one of considerable literary activity, whatever the external conditions, which varied with both time and place).

Another factor which one might think was important is the character of the text which the scribe was copying, but if one looks at the contents of Syriac manuscripts with a *hijra* dating, it at once becomes clear that content in fact plays no part in the scribe's choice whether or not to provide a Muslim dating, since a high proportion of the manuscripts in question turn out to be biblical or liturgical; furthermore, some of them are purely of monastic interest.

*Accuracy*

Where scribes use two or more different dating systems, although in a certain number of cases these provide a correct correspondence, quite often this is not so.[23] In such cases it is likely, other things being equal, that the dating system normally used in the community (i.e. Seleucid or, for Melkite manuscripts, World era) will provide the correct figure. This can be verified in the case of manuscripts where the day of the week as well as the day of the month is given; thus Paris syr.367 II, written in the monastery of Sabrisho' (Beth Qoqa), is dated Friday of the Commemoration of the Evangelists, 26th January, AG 1563, AM 6743, AH 648. AG 1563 = October 1251 — September 1252; AM 6743 (Alexandrine era)[24] = September 1250 — August 1251; AH = 5 April 1250 — 25 March 1251, but only in 1252 did 26th January fall on a Friday, thus confirming the Seleucid (AG) dating as the correct

[21] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* I, 130-57.

[22] But not 1215, written by the same scribe; does this represent the end of a tradition? One would need more examples of colophons written at this monastery to adjudicate.

[23] This aspect is not the concern of the present paper; on such problems see Bernhard, *Die Chronologie der syrischen Handschriften*.

[24] This era (as opposed to the Byzantine World era) is also found in the East Syriac manuscripts of 1186 and 1739 (for which see Appendix I).

one. Particularly relevant here is Harvard syr.4 (AG era 1511 = AD 1199/1200), where the scribe, who is also writing in the Monastery of Sabrisho', AH 594, but adds "they also say 596" (which is correct), indicating that he evidently had to get the information directly from the Muslim community.

One can suppose that in towns the information would not only be better known to the Christian scribe, but also that it would be more likely to be accurate. In some cases, at least, the scribe probably had access to comparative tables.[25] This seems particularly likely in cases where the scribe shows off by providing a whole range of eras. The most dramatic example of this is Paris syr.371.IV, an East Syriac collection of verse texts, where the following sequence of datings is provided: Seleucid, the 532-year lunar paschal cycle,[26] the birth of Christ,[27] the era of the Ascension,[28] the era of the World and, finally, the Muslim era. Somewhat less ambitious, but remarkable in another way since it was written by a woman, is a Maronite liturgical manuscript of 1701: the scribe, the nun Mariam, daughter of the priest Yuhanon from Dar'un in north Lebanon, wrote most of the manuscript in Syriac, but used Garshuni for the colophon where she dates her work by four different eras, 'the divine incarnation', 'Alexander son of Philip the Greek', 'the Muslim *hijra*', and 'our father Adam'.

Only four Syriac manuscripts are dated solely by the Muslim era: Add.17170, of 774/5, written in Edessa; Add.17109, of 873/4, also written in Edessa; Mingana syr.106G, a fragment dated 916/7, reused in the binding of a much later manuscript; and Oxford Cat. no 99, a late Melkite manuscript of 1595 (where, however, the colophon is in Arabic script).

[25] Vatican syr.96 (Catalogue, 518) of 1352/3 states that the numbering of the Muslim lunar years began in AM 6130, AG 933, and 604 "from our Saviour"(!).

[26] Known to Syriac writers under the acronym TaQLaB; on it, see Grumel, *Chronologie*, 129-34.

[27] This does not correspond exactly with AD; see Bernhard, *Chronologie der Syrer*, 120-5, and *Chronologie der syr. Handschriften*, 129-34. In Melkite manuscripts of 11th-14th centuries this era is 8 years ahead of the AD date (9 if the month is September-December): see Kh. Samir, "L'ère de l'Incarnation dans les manuscrits arabes melkites du 11e au 14e siècle", *OCP* 53 (1987), 193-201. (This era is found in a few Syriac Melkite manuscripts, as well as Arabic ones, of this period, but does not feature in any of those with AH dates; examples can be found, however, in H. Husmann, "Die syrische Handschriften des Sinai-Klosters, Herkunft und Schreiber", *Ostkirchliche Studien* 24 (1975), 281-308).

[28] For this, see I-M. Vosté, "L'ère de l'Ascension de N-S dans les manuscrits nestoriens", *OCP* 7 (1941), 232-43.

Quite a number of dated Syriac manuscripts indicate the month, sometimes along with the day of the month, and even the day of the week, but only very rarely is the corresponding Muslim month given. Thus in BL Add.7178, an East Syriac liturgical manuscript of 1544, 18 Teshri I is equated with 1 Sha'ban (which is correct), and in Cambridge Add.1981 of 1607, also an East Syriac liturgical manuscript, 17 Teshri I is equated with 9 Rabi' II (where the correspondence does not fit). Remarkably, Paris syr. 50, a West Syriac manuscript of 1187 with part of the New Testament, gives 12 Ramadan without any corresponding Syriac month name; the same thing occurs in a Gospel manuscript (Church of the East) dated 1845 (18 Shawwal).

*Summary conclusions*

It is clear that, after the Arab conquests, Syriac scribes, whatever their ecclesiastical allegiance, continued to employ the dating system their predecessors had predominantly used under the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, namely the Seleucid era. This did not prevent them, however, from also supplying on occasion an additional dating by the Muslim era as well. This was above all a feature characteristic of scribes of the Church of the East. The factors governing the choice of using the Muslim era alongside the Seleucid (or World) era remain far from clear. Language, however, certainly does make a difference, for scribes of the Syriac Churches writing in Arabic (including Garshuni) are much more likely to employ the *hijra* era than those writing in Syriac. One can perhaps deduce from this that the comparative rarity of *hijra* datings in Syriac manuscripts is due to traditionalism, rather than to any deliberate disinclination towards the use of the Muslim era.

It would be interesting to know how the practice of Syriac scribes in this matter compares with that of scribes writing in other Oriental Christian languages, but this is a question that lies outside the bounds of this paper — and indeed of my competence.

## APPENDIX I:

### SYRIAC MANUSCRIPTS EMPLOYING *HIJRA* DATING

(AA = era of the Ascension; AG = Seleucid era; AH = hijra era; AM = World era (Creation, Adam); AN = era of the Nativity (does not correspond with AD); Ind = Indiction. '!' denotes the probable place of error when the dates for the different eras do not correspond properly).

| Date (AD)[29] | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 682 | BL Add.14666 f.56 (Hatch XLIII) | New Testament E | | AG 993, AH 63. |
| 699 | BL Add.14448 | New Testament E | | AG 1012, AH 80!. |
| 753 | Vorlage of Manchester Ryl.4 | Old Testament E | Beth Sahda, near Nisibis | AG 1064, AH 134!. |
| 760 | Sinai syr.38 | Abba Isaiah | | AG 1070, AH 140!. |
| 760 | New York, Pierpont Morgan 236 | New Testament E | Beth Nuhadra | AG 1061!,[30] AH 142. |
| 770 | BL Or.8732 (Hatch LVI) | Old Testament W | Qartmin | AG 1082, AH 153!. |
| 774/5 | BL Add.17170 (Hatch LVII) | John of Apamea | Edessa W | AH 158. |
| 806 | Jerusalem, St Mark's (D I, 289-96) | Cyriacus W | Kallinikos, Monastery of Column | AG 1118, Ind. 7!, AH 192, (Teshri II). |
| 823 | BL Add.14623 (Hatch XCVIII) | John of Apamea, Ephrem etc. W | Thebaid (scribe from Dara) | AG 1134, AH 204!, (Illul). |
| 873/4 | BL Add.17109 (Hatch LXX) | Psalms, Ephrem, etc. W. | Edessa | AH 260 |

[29] Except in cases where there is only a *hijra* date, just the year AD containing the larger part of the Seleucid or World era is given.

[30] 'Sixty' (written out) must be an error for 'seventy', since mention of the catholicos Jacob (753-73) rules out AG 1061 = AD 749/50. The scribe mentions that he was writing in the time of bishop Ephrem of B. Nuhadra, whose name should be added to the list in J.M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 49), Beirut/Stuttgart 1993, 66.

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 894 | Paris syr.342 (Hatch CLXV) (olim Seert 7) | New Testament, E | Mon. of Rabban Joseph, near Balad | AG 1205, AH 281. |
| 917/8 | Mingana syr.106G | NT Lectionary | | AH 305. |
| 918 | Yale, Z.107.31 (Hatch CLXVII) | New Testament E | Mon. of Elia, near Mosul | AG 1229, AH 305. |
| 929 | Vatican syr.1 (Hatch LXXII) | Old Testament E | Mon. of Elia, near Mosul | AG 1240, AH 318!. |
| 1041 | Deir ez Za'faran (D II, 6) | Gospels W | Tagrit | AG 1353,k AH 433, (Teshri II). |
| 1186 | Vatican syr.467 | Hagiography E | Mon. of Elia | AM 6679, AN 1055!, AH 582. |
| 1187 | Paris syr.50 | New Testament W | | AG 1498, AH <5>83, (Ramadan). |
| 1189 | Mosul (Scher) 13 | Gospel Lectionary E | Mon. of Michael, near Mosul | AG 1500,[31] AH 609. |
| 1198 | Andover Newton, Theol.ZE 607-1198 (Hatch CLXVIII) | New Testament E | Alqosh | AG 1510, AH 595, (Advent IV). |
| 1200 | Harvard syr.4 | New Testament E | Mon.of Sabrisho', Qardu | AG 1511, AH 594! or 596. |
| 1203 | BL Or.2695 | New Testament E | Mon. of Isho'yahb & Jacob, B.Nuhadra | AG 1514, AH 599. |
| 1206 | Cambridge, BFBS 446 | Gospel Lectionary E | Mon. of Michael, near Mosul | AG 1517, AH 602. |
| 1206 | Vatican syr.78 (Hatch CLXXXV) | Liturgical Melkite | Mon. St Christopher Saidnaya | AM 6714, AG 1520!, AH 604!, (Teshri I). |
| 1207 | BL Egerton 681 | New Testament E | [Mon. of Rabban Hormizd, Alqosh] | AG 1[5]18, AH 603. |

[31] It is possible that, as with Sinai syr.124 of 1214, the AH date is correct and the scribe forgot to add the next two figures of the Seleucid date after 1500; in that case the manuscript will belong to 1212/3.

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1208 | Diarbekir 10 | New Testament E | Mon. of Rabban Hormizd, Alqosh | AG 1519, AH 604. |
| 1208 | Harvard syr.141 | New Testament E | Mon. of Rabban Hormizd[32] | AG 1519, AH 604, (Hziran). |
| 1211 | Diarbekir 11 | New Testament E | Mon. of Rabban Hormizd | AG 1522, AH 607. |
| 1213 | New York, Pierpont Morgan 235 | New Testament E | Mar 'Aziza, Zerini | AG 1524, AH 609. |
| 1214 | Vatican syr.82 | Liturgical Melkite | Mon. St Christopher Saidnaya | AM 6722, AH 611, (Shbat). |
| 1214 | Sinai syr.124 | Psalms Melkite | | AG 1500! AH 611 (Kanun I) |
| 1218 | Paris syr.32 (Hatch CLXX) | New Testament E | Mon. of Mar Gabrona[33] | AG 1529, AH 6[ ] |
| 1218 | Dublin, Chester Beatty syr.4 (olim Mardin 8) (Hatch CLXXI) | Gospel Lectionary E | Mon. of Mar Jacob, Beth 'Abe | AG 1529, AH 615. |
| 1223 | BL Add.17922 (Hatch CLXXII) | New Testament E | | AG 1534, AH 619. |
| 1223 | Paris syr.365 (olim Seert 14) | New Testament E | Mon. of Rabban Hormizd | AG 1534, AH 620, (Shbat). |
| 1226 | Vatican Borg. syr.9 | New Testament E | Kaboshnyam | AG 1537, AH 623. |
| 1231 | Sinai syr.143 | Psalms Melkite | | AG 1542, AM 6739, AH 628. (Kanun II). |

[32] The scribe states that he was writing in the time of bishop Sabrisho' of B. Nuhadra: this provides a terminus post quem for his accession much earlier than that given in Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus*, 66.

[33] Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* I, 149. This is probably the monastery where the so-called "Habouris" manuscript of the Peshitta NT was written; despite claims that it belongs to the early 3rd century (!), it is certain that it dates from the early 13th century: in the damaged colophon "and five hundred" is absolutely clear, which must mean "a thousand" preceded it; the following number seems to be 12, i.e. AG [1]512 = AD 1200/1. (I was able to look at the colophon briefly when it came on sale at Sotheby's, London, in 1986).

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1241 | Sinai syr.256 | Liturgical<br>E | | AG 1552, AH 638. |
| 1243 | St Petersburg, Kat. 22 | Pauline Lectionary<br>E | Urmi | AG 1554, AH 641, (Illul). |
| 1249 | BL Or.2299 | Liturgical<br>E | | AG 1560, AH 646. |
| 1252 | Paris syr.367 II (olim Seert 29) | Psalms scholia<br>E | Mon. of Sabrisho' | AG 1563, AM 6743!, AH 648!, (Kanun II). |
| 1261 | Jerusalem, Greek Patr. syr.9 | New Testament | Mon. of St George near Aleppo | AG 1572, AH 658!. |
| 1289 | Vorlage of Mingana syr.601[34] | Monastic texts<br>E | | AG 1600, AH 595!, (Iyyar). |
| 1332 | Vatican, Borg. syr.53 | Canon Law<br>E | Baghdad | AG [1]643, AH 731!, (Ab). |
| 1332 | BL Or.3335 | Grammar<br>E | Mosul | AG 1643, AH 732, (Tammuz). |
| 1395 | Diarbekir (Scher) 91 | Poetry<br>E | Mosul | AG 1706, AH 797, (Hziran). |
| 1415 | Berlin, Verz. 311 | Liturgical<br>Melkite | | AM 692[.], AH 818, (Kanun I). |
| 1479 | Berlin, Verz. 309 | Liturgical<br>Melkite | Qara | AM 6987, AH 88[.]. |
| 1484 | BL Add.7177 (Hatch CLXXVIII) | Liturgical<br>E | Mosul | AG 1795, AH 889, (Pentecost VII). |
| 1491 | Mingana syr.560 | Hagiography<br>W | Mon. of St George and St Habel | AG 1802, AH 869. |

[34] This was Baghdad, Chaldean Monastery syr.680 (olim Alqosh 237), another copy of which is Vatican syr.509. Of the catalogues, only Mingana's mentions the AH date.

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1538 | Berlin, Verz. 43 | Liturgical E | | AG 1849, AH 944. |
| 1540 | Church of St Hormizd (D III, 36) | Liturgical E | Gazarta (Cizre) | AG 1852, AH 947, (Kanun I/ Sha'ban). |
| 1543 | Ch. of St Hormizd (D III, 29) | Gospels E | Gazarta | AG 1955! (for 1855), AH 950, (Teshri I). |
| 1544 | BL Add.7178 | Liturgical E | Gazarta | AG 1856, AH 951, Teshri/ Sha'ban) |
| 1547 | Vatican syr.69 | Liturgical W | Aleppo | AG 1858, AH 953, (Tammuz). |
| 1549 | Oxford, Cat.157 | Liturgical Melkite | | AM 7057, AH 956. |
| 1555 | Berlin, Verz. 298 | Liturgical Melkite | Ma'lula | AM 7064, AH 962. |
| 1572 | Church of St Hormizd (D III, 31) | Gospels E | Gozarta | AG 1883, AA 1541, AH 980. |
| 1572 | Vatican syr.84 | Liturgical E | Jerusalem + | AG 1883, AN 1572, AH 979!, (Tammuz). |
| 1574 | BL Add.7175 | New Testament E | Magdal Deb, Gazarta | AG 1585, AM 7066, AH 981!. |
| 1577 | Vatican, Borg. 169 | New Testament E | Gazarta | AG 1888, AA 1546, AH 985. |
| 1585 | Alqosh church 96 | Gospels E | Gazarta | AG 1896, AA 1554, AD 1585, AH 993, (Tammuz/ Rajab). |

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1587 | Telkephe 6 | Gospels<br>E | Gazarta | AG 1898, AH 995, (Nisan). |
| 1587 | Telkephe 7 | Gospels<br>E | Gazarta | AG 1899, AH 996!, (Teshri I). |
| 1595 | Oxford, Cat. (Hatch CXCVII) | Liturgical<br>Melkite | Batrun, near Tripolis | AH 1004, (Illul). |
| 1605 | Paris syr.371 IV | Verse<br>E | | AG 1916, XIV: 180 lunar cycle AD 1606!, AA 1573, AM 7096, AH 1013. |
| 1606 | Cambridge Add. 1981 | Liturgical<br>E | Mon. of 'Abdisho', Dere (Sapna region) | AG 1918, 1919!, AH 1510, (Teshri I/Rabi' II). |
| 1679 | Jerusalem, Greek Patr. syr.1 | E | Mon. of Rabban Hormizd, Alqosh | AG 1990, AA 1648, AH 1086 (Ab). |
| 1680 | Paris syr.228 | Bar Hebraeus<br>W | Damascus | AG 1992, AH 1092. |
| 1685 | Cambridge Or. 1300 | Bar Hebraeus | | AG 1996, AH 1996(ie 1096), (Ab). |
| 1699 | Cambridge Add. 3287 | Liturgical<br>E | | AG 2011, AH 1111, (Fast of Nativ.). |
| 1701 | BL Sloane 3597 | Liturgical<br>Maronite | N.Lebanon | AD 1701, AG 2112, AH 1112, AM 7218 (vid)!, (Kanun II). |
| 1707 | Karamles 61 | Lexicon<br>E | Mosul | AD 1707, AH 1120! (Nisan/ Rabi' I). |

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1708 | Telkephe 83 | Bar Bahlul<br>E | | AG 2019,<br>AD 1708,<br>AH 1120. |
| 1739 | Telkephe 66 | Thomas of Marga<br>E | | AG 2050,<br>AD 1740!,<br>AM 7230!,[35]<br>AH 1148!<br>(Kanun II). |
| 1801 | Telkephe 74 | Canon Law<br>E | | AG 2112,<br>AD 1801!,<br>AH 1215! |
| 1803 | Mingana syr.94 | Grammar<br>E | Alqosh | AG 2114,<br>AD 1803,<br>AH 1215!,<br>(Illul). |
| 1818 | Telkephe 63 | Commentary on Apocalypse<br>E | | AG 2130,<br>AD 1818,<br>AH 1221!,<br>(Teshri II). |
| 1826 | Alqosh church 68 | Psalms<br>E | Alqosh | AG 2137,<br>AD 1826,<br>AH 1236! |
| 1826 | Cambridge Add. 1966 | Liturgical<br>E | Mosul | AG 2137,<br>AH 1242!,<br>(Tammuz). |
| 1844 | Alqosh church 7 | NT Epistles<br>E | Alqosh | AG 2155,<br>AD 1844,<br>AH 1260,<br>(Illul). |
| 1845 | Alqosh church 4 | Gospels<br>E | Rabban Hormizd | AG 2157,<br>AD 1845,<br>AH 1261,<br>(Shawwal). |
| 1856 | Telkephe 46 | Liturgical<br>E | Mosul | AG 2168,<br>AH 1273,<br>(Teshri II). |

[35] Evidently the Alexandrine World era is still being used (the figure should, however, be 7231).

| Date (AD) | Manuscript | Content | Place | Dating system(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1874 | Mingana syr.571 | Dictionary E | Amid | AG 2187!, AD 1874, AH 1291, (Teshri II). |
| 1875 | Alqosh church 15 | Psalms E | | AG 2186, AD 1875, AH 1291!, (Adar). |
| 1911 | Mingana syr.537 (from ms of 1285) | Gospel Lectionary E | Alqosh | AG 2222, AD 1911, AH 1327! |

## APPENDIX II:

### OCCURRENCE OF *HIJRA* DATES IN SYRIAC MANUSCRIPTS BY CENTURY

Column 1 = Syrian Orthodox, 2 = Church of the East, 3 = Melkite, 4 = Maronite, 5 = uncertain.

| Century | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | proportion of all dated mss in the sample[36] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7th | - | 2 | - | - | - | 2/10 |
| 8th | 2 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 5/18 |
| 9th | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | 4/38 |
| 10th | - | 2 | - | - | 1 | 3/16 |
| 11th | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1/23 |
| 12th | 1 | 3 | - | - | - | 4/56 |
| 13th | - | 18 | 4 | - | 1 | 23/200+ |
| 14th | - | 3 | - | - | - | 3/52 |
| 15th | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | 4/150+ |
| 16th | 1 | 11 | 3 | - | - | 15/400+ |
| 17th | 1 | 4 | - | - | 1 | 6/350+ |
| 18th | - | 3 | - | 1 | - | 4/400+ |
| 19th | - | 10 | - | - | - | 10/700+ |
| 20th | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1/200+ |
| total | 9 | 62 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 85/2600+ |

[36] It would be premature, on the basis of this present sample, to provide a graph of dated Syriac manuscripts on the lines of that given for dated Armenian manuscripts by D. Kouymjian, "Dated Armenian manuscripts as a statistical tool for Armenian history", in T.J. Samuelian and M.E. Stone (eds), *Medieval Armenian Culture* (Armenian Texts and Studies, 6), Chico 1984, 434-435. It is, however, interesting to note the low total figures for dated manuscripts of the 10th and 11th century (especially the first half), for this was a period when it seems on other grounds there was reduced literary activity in Syriac.

# VERSIONI CRISTIANE E GIUDAICHE DI UNA LEGGENDA ISLAMICA.

FABRIZIO A. PENNACCHIETTI

Čo dar rah bebini boride sar i
ke ġalṭān ravad suy e meidān e mā
az u pors az u pors asrār e mā
k az u besnavi serr e penhān e mā

*"Se una testa mozza per via tu vedessi*
*andare rotolando giù per la Mia pianura,*
*a lei domanda e chiedi intorno ai Miei arcani,*
*sicché da lei tu apprenda l'ascoso Mio segreto!"*

Ğalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī[1]

*SUMMARY*

The legend of *Jesus and the skull* is an Islamic eschatological legend which deals with an unheard-of miracle ascribed to Jesus Christ who is said to have restored to life a skull found in a desert. The first mention of the legend goes back to Isḥāq bin Bišr (d. 821 in Bukhara) who attributed it to Ka'b al-Aḥbār (7th c.). It was known by al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) and by Ğalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273); the Persian mystical poet Farīd ad-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. ca. 1220) put it into verse. Since then it was translated in almost every Muslim language, including Malay, Javanese, Sundanese and Chinese.

Though heavily islamized, the pious story keeps a definite Christian flavour so that it has been defined "a peculiar Christian-Muslim legend". The bulk of it is the description of the torments of the tomb and of hell. Probably around this core, long before Islam, have converged narrative elements freely drawn from Christian hagiography.

Cherished by sufic brotherhoods, the legend has been adopted also by Christians and by Jews, who fitted it for their culture and for their religious parameters.

[1] Cfr. Moulānā Ğalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, Kollīyāt-e šams yā Dīvān-e kabīr, ed. Badī' az-Zamān Furūzānfarr, Teheran 2535, I vol., 150. «If you should see a cut-off skull / that rolling comes upon My plain, / beware, ask it about the Arcana./ From it you'll learn My hidden secret.»

*1. La leggenda di Gesù e il teschio nel mondo islamico.*

La quartina di Ğalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273) posta in epigrafe testimonia con l'autorevolezza del suo autore di quanto credito e di quale diffusione abbia goduto nel mondo islamico medievale una "singolare leggenda cristiano-musulmana" — così l'ha definita Alessandro Bausani[2] — che intitoleremo *Gesù e il teschio*.[3] I protagonisti della leggenda sono infatti Gesù Cristo e il teschio di un antico re. Il primo ridà al teschio la facoltà di parlare e il secondo gli descrive le pene dell'inferno. Si tratta, come si vede, di un racconto ammonitorio di argomento escatologico. In esso però il motivo del teschio e dell'oltretomba si combina inaspettatamente con quello del re che si fa eremita.

Le prime notizie certe su questa leggenda risalgono all' XI sec. e provengono dai due estremi del mondo islamico, l'Iran e la Spagna: da una parte ne parlano il grande tradizionista Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (948-1038)[4] e il sommo teologo dell'Islam Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī (1056-1111) nativo di Ṭūs, nell'Iran nord-orientale; dall'altra, Abū Bakr aṭ-Ṭarṭūšī (1059-1126), un letterato arabo-spagnolo di Tortosa.[5]

Particolarmente importante è la testimonianza dell'autore che ho ricordato per primo, Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, perché, nella catena dei garanti di trasmissione del testo da lui tramandato, egli include Isḥāq bin Bišr Abū Ḥuḏayfa, un tradizionista nato a Balkh nell'Asia centrale e vissuto a Bukhara (m. 821). Di Isḥāq bin Bišr si sa che scrisse un Kitāb al-mubtada' "Libro sull'inizio del mondo", ossia una raccolta di "storie di profeti".[6] Si può quindi supporre che la leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* abbia già fatto parte di quell'opera, che è dell'inizio del IX sec. (II sec. dell'ègira).[7] D'altronde antichi autori islamici fanno risalire la leggenda fino al dotto yemenita Ka'b al-Aḥbār, del VII sec.

[2] A. Bausani, "Note sulla struttura della *hikayat* classica malese", Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, n.s. 12 (1962), 153-192, spez. 185-186.

[3] Cfr. G. Levi Della Vida, "Gesù e il teschio", *Bilychnis, Rivista mensile di studi religiosi*, 22, 2-3 (1923), 196-201 [rist. in: G.L.d.V., *Aneddoti e svaghi arabi e non arabi*, Milano-Napoli 1959, 162-169].

[4] Cfr. *E.I.*[2] (*Encyclopédie de l'Islam, nouvelle édition*, Leyde-Paris 1960-...), I, 1960, 146-147.

[5] Cfr. M. Asín Palacios, "Logia et agrapha Domini Jesu apud moslemicos scriptores, asceticos praesertim, usitata", *PO* XIII,3, n°. 64, Paris 1917 (ristampa: Turnhout 1974), 331-431, spez. 423-424.

[6] Cfr. M.Y. Najm (a cura di), *Das biographische Lexicon des Salahaddin Halil ibn Aibak as-Safadi*, Teil 8, Wiesbaden 1982 (in arabo), 405-406; R. Tottoli, *I profeti biblici nella tradizione islamica*, Brescia 1999, 170-178.

[7] Comunicazione scritta (14.10.1996) di Roberto Tottoli dell'Università di Venezia, che qui ringrazio. Tottoli ha individuato tre diverse tradizioni della leggenda nell'opera *Nuṭq al-mafhūm min aṣ-ṣamt al-ma'lūm* del poligrafo bagdadeno Ibn al-Ğawzī (1116-1200).

Essa narra di come che un re israelita, dannato all'inferno per idolatria, si sia fatto asceta dopo essere stato salvato e risuscitato da Gesù. Eccone in breve il contenuto:

> Un giorno Gesù, in cammino assieme ai suoi discepoli, notò sulle sponde del Giordano un grande teschio umano calcinato dal sole. Decise allora di ridargli la voce affinché spiegasse ai suoi discepoli che cosa avviene con la morte e come è fatto l'inferno. D'incanto, il teschio si rivestì di carne e di pelle e si presentò come un re israelita, adoratore del vitello d'oro. Quindi descrisse la vita fastosa di un tempo e l'orribile condizione in cui si trovava nell'oltretomba. Era stato un re potente ed era vissuto in un palazzo sontuoso, circondato da innumerevoli cortigiani e da un grande esercito.
> Avvenne però che, durante una partita di caccia, egli contrasse una grave malattia. Nonostante le cure dei medici e i sacrifici offerti al suo idolo, egli presto ne morì. In quel momento lo aggredì l'Angelo della morte, che lo affidò a due angeli inquisitori. Dopo un periodo trascorso in solitudine nella tomba l'anima venne gettata in un girone dell'inferno dove l'attendevano atroci tormenti. Interrogato ancora da Gesù, il teschio descrisse i sette gironi dell'inferno e il tipo di peccatori che vi sono destinati.
> Alla fine il teschio chiese a Cristo di avere pietà di lui e di salvarlo. Gesù, commosso, pregò Iddio e con il suo assenso lo risuscitò a nuova vita. Dal teschio si alzò un uomo prestante e vigoroso che professò subito la sua fede nell'unico Dio, in Abramo, Mosè e Gesù e nel futuro profeta Muḥammad. Egli si ritirò quindi su un monte dove condusse vita ascetica per espiare i propri peccati fino alla morte.

La leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* si è praticamente diffusa in ogni angolo del mondo musulmano, ovunque giungessero gli entusiasti propagatori dell'Islam nelle vesti di narratori (*quṣṣāṣ*)[8] e di predicatori più o meno ufficiali. Ma è soprattutto nei circoli mistici che la leggenda ha goduto di particolare favore ed è in quell'ambiente che essa è stata messa in versi e tradotta nelle diverse lingue della nuova religione.

Un ruolo determinante nella diffusione della leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* lo ha sostenuto il celebre poeta mistico persiano Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār (c. 1119 – c. 1220), nato e vissuto a Nishapur, nel Khorasan (Iran orientale).[9] Egli fece un primo accenno all'episodio del dannato risuscitato da Gesù nell'opera in versi Elāhī-nāmé "Il libro divino";[10] in

[8] Sul ruolo dei *quṣṣāṣ*, esegeti popolari del Corano, nella letteratura islamica e nella storia culturale dei primi secoli dell'Islam si veda la voce "Ḳāṣṣ" di Ch. Pellat in *E.I.*$^2$, IV, 1978, 763-765.

[9] Cfr. M. Bernardini, "Peregrinazioni letterarie turco-iraniche della leggenda del Sultano Jomjome", in Antonio Pioletti (a cura di), *Il viaggio dei testi* (Atti del III Colloquio Internazionale "Medioevo romanzo e orientale", Venezia 10-13.10.1996), Catanzaro 1999, 97-134.

[10] Cfr. Maria Teresa Granata (a cura di), *Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār. Il Poema Celeste*, [Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār, *Elâhî-nâmé*], Milano 1990, 352-353.

seguito egli compose sull'argomento un poemetto intitolato Ğomğoménāmé O Hekāyat-e Ğomğomé "Il libro o il racconto del teschio".[11]

Questo componimento è stato tradotto e variamente adattato in turco Čaghatay, in kazako, in turco di Anatolia, in curdo, in urdu e in pashto,[12] nonché in malese, giavanese, sundanese e achinese.[13] Ha chiaramente un'origine differente la Qaṣīdat al-ğumğuma "Il poemetto del teschio", un componimento in versi arabi magrebini sullo stesso argomento.[14]

La diffusione della leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* non ha mancato di suscitare tra le masse una certa devozione nei confronti del re divenuto asceta. Pertanto località anche lontanissime tra di loro si vantano di ospitare la sua venerata tomba.[15]

Per altro la leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* è servita da ordito per una novella arabo-islamica che verosimilmente è stata composta prima della metà del IX secolo. Si tratta della *Storia del teschio e del re*, un altro racconto parenetico di argomento escatologico. Inaspettatamente esso com-

[11] L'attribuzione del Ğomğomé-nāmé a Farīd ad-Dīn 'Aṭṭār è sostenuta da H. Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele. Mensch, Welt und Gott in den Geschichten des Farīduddīn 'Attâr*, Leiden 1955, 100. Il poemetto è stato edito e tradotto in russo da V. Žukovskij, "Legenda ob Iisuse i Čerepe v persidskom stichotvornom skaze Attara", *Zapiski Vostočnogo Otdelenija Imperatorskogo Russkogo Archeologičeskogo Obščestva*, 7 (1893), 63-72, in inglese da J.P. Asmussen, *Studies in Judeo-Persian Literature*, Leiden 1973 (*Studier i jødisk-persisk litteratur*, København 1970), 76-96 sulla base del ms. *Aziatskij Muzej Ms. or. B. 2172* di S. Pietroburgo, e in italiano da F.A. Pennacchietti, "Il racconto di Giomgiomé" di Faridoddìn Attàr e le sue fonti cristiane", *OCP*, 62/1 (1996), 89-112, + 7 tavole, sulla base del ms. *Gotha orient. P 45/7*.

[12] Cfr. F.A. Pennacchietti, "La leggenda islamica del teschio redivivo in una versione neoaramaica", in G. Goldenberg e Sh. Raz (eds.), *Semitic and Cushitic Studies*, Wiesbaden 1994, 103-132, spez. 113-114, e Asmussen, *Studies in Judeo-Persian Literature*, 105, nota 4.

[13] Cfr. Bausani, *Hikayat*, 185-186; C. Brakel-Papenhuyzen, "The Tale of the Skull: an Islamic Description of Hell in Javanese", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 158.1 (2002), 1-19.

[14] Cfr. F.A. Pennacchietti, "Gesù e Bàlwàn bin Hafs bin Daylam, il sultano risuscitato", in P. Branca e V. Brugnatelli (a cura di), *Studi Arabi e Islamici in Memoria di Matilde Gagliardi*, Milano 1995, 145-171, Istituto Italiano per il Medio e l'Estremo Oriente, Sezione Lombarda.

[15] Per quanto riguarda la venerazione della tomba del "re Teschio (Ğomğomé Soltān)" in Anatolia si veda M. Cunbur, "Cimcime Sultan destanı", *Türk Folkloru Araştırmaları Yıllığı*, 1976, 40-54. Una fotografia del suo sepolcro a Derbent in Daghestan, le *Portae Caspiae* degli antichi, si può ammirare alla tav. VIIIa di P. Cuneo, "Le mura di Derbent. Note sulla topografia e la morfologia urbana di una città-stato del *limes* islamico nell'area caucasica", in B.M. Alfieri e U. Scerrato (a cura di), *Studi in onore di Ugo Monneret de Villard (1881-1954)*, II, *Il Mondo Islamico*, Roma 1987, 57-75 (*Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 59, 1-4, 1985). Un'altra tomba del "re Teschio", mèta di pellegrinaggi, si trova a Nedroma, nell'Algeria occidentale, non lontano da Tlemcen, cfr. "Nédroma" in *E.I.*[1] (*Enzyclopaedie des Islâm*, 4 vol. Leiden-Leipzig 1913-1934), II, 1936, 968-969; e L. Massignon, *Parole donnée*, Paris 1967, 380.

prende una fantasiosa reinterpretazione della storia di *Susanna e i vecchioni* che è stata aggiunta al libro biblico di *Daniele*.[16] Anche in questo caso il re finisce i suoi giorni in un eremo per espiare i propri peccati.

## *2. La leggenda di Gesù e il teschio al di fuori del mondo islamico.*

La leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* ha avuto fortuna anche al di fuori del mondo islamico, sia in ambiente cristiano che in ambiente giudaico. Ovviamente le versioni non islamiche ne hanno rimosso i riferimenti più espliciti all'escatologia coranica.

Tutte le versioni cristiane, meno una, per via del loro carattere spiccatamente popolare, del tutto svincolato dal controllo ecclesiatico, attribuiscono candidamente a Gesù una vicenda miracolosa che nessun testo apocrifo riporta. In questo esse dipendono direttamente dal modello islamico della leggenda. Secondo la visione islamica infatti solo un profeta come Gesù, il taumaturgo per eccellenza, chiamato addirittura Rūḥ Allāh "Spirito di Dio",[17] ha il potere di risuscitare un defunto. Per altri versi le versioni cristiane di cui si è detto manifestano una certa autonomia rispetto al modello musulmano.

Per quanto riguarda infine le versioni giudaiche della leggenda, non possiamo certo aspettarci che assegnino a Cristo il ruolo che egli svolge nel modello islamico. Egli viene semplicemente cancellato e sostituito con un altro personaggio.

### 2.1. L'identità del teschio.

Nella tradizione arabo-islamica orientale l'antico re idolatra di cui non resta che il teschio rimane anonimo.[18] Di lui si sa solo che fu re "della Siria e dell'Egitto", un modo forse per alludere alla Palestina.[19] Al contrario, nella tradizione yemenitica sopravvissuta nel Maghreb e in Spagna e brevemente riportata da Abū Bakr at-Ṭarṭūšī, l'uomo risuscitato da

[16] Cfr. F.A. Pennacchietti, *Susanna nel deserto. Riflessi di un racconto biblico nella cultura arabo-islamica*, Torino 1998.

[17] Cfr. Pennacchietti, *Gesù e Bàlwàn*, 167, strofa 115: yā rūḥu rabb al-'ālamīn "O Spirito del Signore dei mondi!".

[18] Cfr. Levi Della Vida, *Gesù e il teschio*; Knappert, *Islamic legends*, 174-176. Si vedano inoltre i manoscritti 1191 e 1362 in G. Levi Della Vida, *Elenco dei Manoscritti Arabi Islamici della Biblioteca Vaticana, Vaticani, Barberiniani, Borgiani, Rossiani*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1935, e W. Pertsch, *Die arabischen Handschriften der herz. Bibliothek zu Gotha*, 4 vol., Gotha 1878-1892, I, 95; III, 1740; IV, 2736, 2737, 2757, 2760.

[19] Cfr. Asmussen, *Studies*, 78, nota 3.

Gesù sarebbe stato un re dello Yemen di nome Balwān bin Ḥafṣ. Il poemetto arabo magrebino di cui si è detto sopra ne modifica leggermente il nome e gli aggiunge il papponimo: Bālwān bin Ḥafṣ bin Daylam.[20]

Altrove, in ambiente islamico non arabo, a cominciare dal poemetto persiano attribuito a Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār, il re viene chiamato Ğumğumé o Ğomğomé (secondo la convenzione di trascrizione adottata), un nome proprio che corrisponde al sostantivo arabo *ğumğuma* "teschio". Il personaggio così nominato riceve poi l'appellativo di *sulṭān* "sultano" che gli spetta. Alla lettera *Ğumğumé Sulṭān* viene così a significare "Sultano Teschio". Inoltre vien detto che egli fu re "della Siria e dell'Egitto".

Tipica delle versioni cristiane[21] in lingua siriaca[22], neo-aramaica[23] e araba[24] è invece l'identificazione del re risuscitato con un non meglio specificato "abate Arsenio re dell'Egitto".

Potrebbe trattarsi di un riflesso folclorico della figura di S. Arsenio il Grande (c. 353 – c. 450), anacoreta del deserto egiziano e Padre della Chiesa. Di lui gli *Apophthegmata Patrum* raccontano infatti che fu "padre di re" (πατὴρ βασιλέων; in realtà egli fu l'istitutore e il padrino di battesino dei futuri imperatori Arcadio ed Onorio)[25] e che, prima di abbracciare la vita monastica in Egitto, aveva avuto al suo servizio, alla corte di Teodosio I, mille servitori con vesti di seta, monili e cinture d'oro. Ai suoi piedi venivano inoltre stesi tappeti preziosi.[26] Tutti questi dettagli ed altri ancora ricorrono anche nelle versioni più estese della leggenda islamica di *Gesù e il teschio*.

Le versioni cristiane in siriaco, in neoaramaico e in arabo potrebbero quindi serbare il ricordo di un archetipo cristiano[27] di epoca preislamica.

[20] Cfr. Pennacchietti, *Gesù e Bâlwân*, 158.

[21] Cfr. Pennacchietti, *Teschio redivivo*, 104.

[22] Cfr. I.H. Hall, "The Story of Arsanis", *Hebraica* (New Haven), 6, 2 (1890), 81-88.

[23] Cfr. F.A. Pennacchietti, "La versione neoaramaica di un poema religioso caldeo in lingua curda", in B.M. Scarcia Amoretti e L. Rostagno (a cura di), *Yâd-Nâma in memoria di Alessandro Bausani*, Roma 1991, II vol., 169-183, spez. 174-175, Pennacchietti, *Teschio redivivo*, 110.

[24] Cfr. G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 1. B.: *Die Übersetzungen*, Città del Vaticano 1944, 552.

[25] *Apophthegmata Patrum. De abbate Arsenio*, in *PG* 65, n. 29 (90), col. 97 - n. 44, col 108, spez. n. 36 (96), coll. 101-104 e nota 99, coll. 103-104; n. 42, col. 107. La famosa raccolta delle "Massime dei Padri (del deserto)" era nota tra il VII e il X sec. persino ai cristiani del Turkestan cinese in lingua sogdiana.

[26] *Apophthegmata Patrum. De abbate Arsenio*, n. 36 (96), coll. 101-104; Pennacchietti, *Teschio redivivo*, 127-128; idem, *Fonti cristiane*, 107-108.

[27] Credo invece che sia da escludere l'ipotesi Asmussen (*Studies*, 104), secondo cui questa leggenda islamica sarebbe di origine giudaica.

La vicenda di S. Arsenio, che abbandonò i fasti della corte imperiale per espiare i propri peccati nel deserto, si sarebbe combinata con altri elementi agiografici ed escatologici cristiani per dar vita a una leggenda che in seguito sarebbe stata ereditata e riadattata dalla tradizione popolare islamica.

Non mancano certo racconti agiografici che riportano il dialogo sull'oltretomba che sarebbe intercorso tra un santo eremita e un defunto dannato. Si narra, per esempio, che l'asceta egiziano S. Macario il Grande (c. 300 – c. 390) si è intrattenuto con il teschio di un sacerdote pagano e che S. Pisenzio, vescovo di Qift, in Egitto (c. 568 – c. 640), ha interrogato sull'aldilà la mummia di un faraone. Notizie sull'inferno le ottennero pure S. Macario di Antiochia e S. Giorgio "megalomartire": il primo dopo aver risuscitato e battezzato una salma accompagnata al cimitero, l'altro dopo aver ridato la vita e amministrato il battesimo a un idolatra ridotto a poche ossa.[28]

Il racconto di uno di questi favolosi incontri tra un dannato e un santo taumaturgo potrebbe essersi arricchito col tempo di due nuovi elementi: da una parte, la descrizione dell'aldilà desunta da testi apocrifi come l'*Apocalissi di Pietro* e l'*Apocalissi di Paolo*;[29] dall'altra, la vicenda personale di S. Arsenio. Quando tale racconto entrò nel repertorio delle leggende popolari islamiche, i narratori musulmani avrebbero identificato in Gesù il santo che ha resuscitato il re idolatra.

2.2. I sostituti di Gesù.

2.2.1. Le versioni giudaiche della leggenda di 'Gesù e il teschio'.

Si conoscono due versioni giudaiche della leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* ed entrambe ovviamente sostituiscono Gesù con un'altra persona. Una, in prosa, è contenuta nel commento ai *Pirqē Abōt* che David ben Joshua Maymuni (Egitto XIV-XV s.) ha scritto in giudeo-arabo.[30] Essa rispecchia fedelmente il modello arabo-islamico della leggenda, che Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār ha invece compendiato. La versione giudeo-araba presenta infatti una dettagliata descrizione della struttura dell'inferno in sette

[28] Cfr. Pennacchietti, *Fonti cristiane*, 104-107; idem, *San Giorgio*, 101-104.

[29] La prima è stata scritta in Egitto verso il 135 d.C., la seconda è stata composta pure in Egitto verso il 250 d.C.; cfr. M. Erbetta, *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento. Vol. III. Lettere e Apocalissi*, Torino 1969, 209-253; 353-386.

[30] Cfr. W. Bacher, "Zwei alte Abothkommentare", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums. Breslau*, N.F. 13 (1905), 657 sgg., citato da Asmussen, *Studies*, 104-105.

gironi[31]. Per ogni girone viene indicata la categoria di peccatori che vi è destinata. Il ruolo di Gesù è sostenuto da un anonimo viaggiatore.

Un'aggiunta tipicamente giudaica di questo testo è costituita dal viaggio compiuto dell'anima del dannato fino alle porte del paradiso dove Abramo e Mosè siedono su due troni. Di là l'anima viene respinta e precipitata nell'inferno. Peraltro il viaggiatore non ha il potere di restituirle il corpo né di salvarla, per cui al dannato non resta altro che ammonire il viaggiatore sulle fatali conseguenze del peccato.

La seconda versione giudaica è invece in versi e costituisce una fedele riproduzione giudeo-persiana del poemetto di Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār.[32] In questo caso al posto di Gesù c'è Mosè e, in luogo di espressioni tipicamente islamiche o addirittura sciite, compaiono espressioni giudaiche.

2.2.2. La versione georgiana della leggenda di 'Gesù e il teschio'.

La più singolare delle versioni non musulmane della leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* è senza dubbio quella georgiana. Essa è una composizione in versi costituita da 31 strofe.[33] La pubblicarono nel 1892 a Tbilisi D. Givisvili e D. Lazarevi assieme alla traduzione in russo.[34] Qui a posto di Gesù compare un S. Gregorio che ha tutta l'aria di essere S. Gregorio l'Illuminatore, il santo a cui si deve la cristianizzazione dell'Armenia nel 314.

Come spiegare la presenza di un tratto così specificamente armeno in un componimento poetico georgiano? Ritengo che si possa ricorrere all'ipotesi che il poemetto sia stato composto da uno dei tanti armeni calcedoniti[35] iberizzati che popolavano territori che erano sotto il regno georgiano. Tra i primi territori armeni a passare sotto il dominio della Georgia fu la regione di Tao-Klarǯeti, nella seconda metà del IX sec.[36]

[31] Cfr. C. Saccone (a cura di), *Il Libro della Scala di Maometto* (Traduzione di Roberto Rossi Testa), Milano 1991, 423-424, cap. 54-62. Nel Corano (15, 44) si parla delle sette porte della geènna.

[32] Cfr. Asmussen, *Studies*, 67. E' stata pubblicata per la prima volta a Gerusalemme nel 1902 ed è redatta in una variante giudaica del neo-persiano, ovviamente in caratteri ebraici.

[33] La maggior parte delle strofe sono di quattro versi, tranne le strofe 25 e 31, formate da due soli versi.

[34] Cfr. D. Givišvili e D. Lazarevi, Ambavi ǯumǯum xelmçipisa (legenda) da sxva leksebi, Tbilisi 1892.

[35] Cfr. B.L. Zekiyan, "La rupture entre les églises géorgienne et arménienne au début du VII[e] siècle. Essai d'une vue d'ensemble de l'arrière-plan historique", *REArm*, n.s. 16 (1982), 155-174.

[36] Comunicazione personale di Boghos Zekiyan (Venezia) del 16.06.1999. La regione di Tao-Klarǯeti (in armeno Tayk'-Ktarjk') si trova nel medio corso del fiume Çoruh a SEE di Trebisonda.

Nonostante il tributo pagato per adeguarsi alla sensibilità religiosa cristiana, il componimento georgiano è ancora abbastanza fedele all'impianto del poemetto persiano attribuito a Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār.

Il teschio in cui s'imbatte S. Gregorio si presenta come il re Ğumğum Mitaroz, un nome che tradisce l'origine persiana del racconto, forse tramite una traduzione in curdo.[37] A differenza del testo persiano il teschio riacquista il suo corpo primitivo solo alla fine dell'episodio. S. Gregorio non perde l'occasione di rivolgergli una predica e una severa reprimenda, ma alla fine lo assolve dai peccati. Nel componimento georgiano manca però l'accenno all'espiazione dei peccati mediante una vita ascetica, che è invece presente nel testo di Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār.

*3. Conclusione.*

La leggenda di *Gesù e il teschio* è il prodotto di un'osmosi culturale e di un'interazione religiosa a livello popolare che si sono protratte nei secoli. Di origine probabilmente cristiana, essa si è diffusa in tutto il mondo musulmano, dallo Yemen fino all'Andalusia e dall'Asia centrale fino all'India e alle Isole della Sonda.

Cara soprattutto alle confraternite sufiche che l'hanno tradotta nelle lingue più diverse mettendola spesso in versi, la leggenda è stata accolta anche da cristiani e da ebrei, che l'hanno adattata alla propria cultura e alla propria sensibilità religiosa.

In tutte le versioni cristiane, tranne una, quella georgiana, permane una traccia del probabile archetipo preislamico di questo racconto: il teschio a cui Gesù ridiede la vita sarebbe appartenuto ad un "abate Arsenio, re dell'Egitto", un personaggio che corrisponde alla figura storica di S. Arsenio il Grande. Si ricava quindi l'impressione che i cristiani del Vicino Oriente abbiano serbato il ricordo di una loro leggenda che col tempo avrebbe assunto lo stesso contenuto e la stessa forma dell'analoga leggenda tramandata dai loro vicini musulmani.

[37] Il nome Mitaroz sembra riflettere l'aggettivo curdo *metarêz* "messo di traverso; che ostacola" (cfr. *mo'tarež*, da arabo *mu'tariḍ*). Prima di essere stato scambiato per il nome proprio del re, Ğumğum Mitaroz forse significava semplicemente "il teschio messo di traverso". In T. Wahby e C.J. Edmonds, *A Kurdish-English Dictionary*, Oxford 1966, 90b, *metarêz*, come sostantivo, viene tradotto *trench* (milit.).

# THE CHURCH OF THE EAST IN THE SIXTEENTH TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: WORLD CHURCH OR ETHNIC COMMUNITY?[1]

H.L. MURRE-VAN DEN BERG

## *Introduction*

Today the Church of the East is perceived largely as an ethnic community, by most observers as well as by its members. The great majority of these members speak roughly the same Northeastern Neo-Aramaic language and have their origins in villages or towns in the triangle formed by Cizre (Gazarta) in southeastern Turkey, Mosul in northern Iraq, and Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran. Those of its members who do not speak Aramaic and never actually lived in the traditional homelands at least have parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents who did. Other characteristics of ethnic communities as identified by Hutchinson and Smith, are clearly present, such as the myth of common descent and a shared history, in combination with cultural markers such as food and music.[2] The fact that this community, which calls itself "Assyrian", is widely dispersed, from the United States to Europe and Australia, has increased rather than decreased this sense of belonging to a distinct ethnic group.[3]

[1] I would like to thank Luk Van Rompay, Herman Teule, Bas ter Haar Romeny, Piergiorgio Borbone, and Alessandro Mengozzi for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. The research for the present article was made possible by a subvention of the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

[2] For a discussion of the term *ethnic community* and a workable definition, see John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity*, Oxford/New York 1996, 3-14.

[3] The term "Assyrian" is generally accepted as referring to those belonging to the Church of the East, although many attempts have been made to broaden the term to include the Uniat Chaldeans and even the Syrian Orthodox. It is clear that identity-building is an ongoing process when one surveys the present-day discussions over the name "Assyrian" in connection with the American census of the year 2000. A number of organizations involved have suggested that the category "Assyrian/Chaldean/Syrian" should be used, as a kind of common denominator for all three groups. However, they were vigorously opposed by those who prefer to use only the term "Assyrian", thereby running the risk that many Chaldeans and Syrian-Orthodox will fail to include themselves in this category on the census form. For this discussion, see past issues of *Zinda* (formerly *Zenda*), www.zindamagazine.com, from June 7, 1999, onwards.

The present article seeks to explore to what extent this ethnic identification is discernible in earlier stages of the history of the community and whether there were other concepts of communal identity which played an important role. It is quite likely that such other concepts did exist, in view of the fact that we are dealing with a Christian Church, rather than with an ethnic group in a strict sense. For this reason, ecclesiological issues can be expected to interfere with ethnic discussions. The present article opens with a brief survey of the classical period of the Church of the East, when it thrived under Abbasid and Mongol rule; An early sixteenth-century text constitutes the major source for the central part of the article. Finally, several observations are made on the ways in which the relationship between Christianity and Islam influenced the formation of a new Christian identity in the Ottoman and Persian empires of the early modern period.

*Ethnic community*

There are many indications that in the sixteenth to the eighteenth century those who belonged to the Church of the East thought of themselves as a distinct community. Understandably so, since they differed clearly and visibly from the Muslims in religion, language, and social structure. These differences were deliberately maintained by the overall social structure of the Ottoman Empire, where the rights and duties of minorities in Islamic society were regulated by the *millet* system. A similar system was in place in Persia.[4] Almost as important as the general distinction between Christians and Muslims were the differences between the East Syrian and other Christian communities. East Syrian Christians often referred to themselves as *Maddenḥāyē*, or "Easterners", those belonging to the Church of the East, alongside the more general term *Suryānē*, meaning either "Syrians", or, in certain contexts, "Christians" in general. By adopting the term *Maddenḥāyē*, the Church of the East distinguished itself from the Syrian-Orthodox Church, the *Yaʿqubāyē* ('Jacobites'), and in a more general sense from Armenian, Greek, and Roman Catholic Christians as well.[5]

[4] For an introduction to the complicated issues of the position of the protected minorities with *dhimmi* status within Islamic societies, see Benjamin Braud and Bernard Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols., New York / London 1982.

[5] Cf. H.L. Murre-van den Berg, "A Syrian Awakening. Alqosh and Urmia as Centres of Neo-Syriac Writing", in René Lavenant, *Symposium Syriacum VII* [OCA 256], Rome 1998, 509, n. 33. Vice versa, these Churches, like the Western Churches, usually considered the Church of the East heretical because of its connection with Nestorius, bishop of

Moreover, the spoken language of the great majority of East-Syrian Christians was a Northeastern Neo-Aramaic language that differed not only from Armenian, but also from the Neo-Aramaic dialect spoken by a considerable part of the Syrian Orthodox community. This modern language produced its first written texts during this period.[6] Classical Syriac, the language of literature and liturgy, was part of the common heritage of the East Syrian and Syrian Orthodox Churches. In the course of time, however, the two Churches developed two distinct literary traditions, each with its own alphabet, centers of writing, and literary traditions. In the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, East Syrian scribes were particularly active, as is evident from the impressive number of manuscripts that were copied, most importantly in the so-called "School of Alqosh".[7]

A considerable proportion of the East Syrian Christians lived in the Hakkari mountains, in the center of the above mentioned triangle. They were organized in *āšīrātē*, independent tribes, in an area where Kurdish tribes formed the majority of the population. The rest of the East Syrians lived either in smaller tribal communities dependent on Kurdish tribes, or in villages and towns directly under Ottoman or Persian administration. The patriarch, whose office had become hereditary within one family (the Abuna family) and thus was no longer elected, as canonical law proscribed,[8] acted as the religious as well as the political leader of all

Constantinople. The latter was condemned by the council of Ephesus in 431 because of his Antiochene Christology. On the supposed 'Nestorianism' of the Church of the East, see Sebastian Brock, "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer", *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 78/3 (1996), 363-375. For an overview of the various names in use for this Church, see Murre-van den Berg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language. The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century* [Publication of the "De Goeje Fund", no. XXVIII], Leiden 1999, 35-38.

[6] The oldest texts in this form of Neo-Aramaic are dated to the early seventeenth century, while the oldest surviving manuscripts originated in the eighteenth century. On early Neo-Aramaic writing, see Alessandro Mengozzi, "The Neo-Aramaic manuscripts of the British Library: Notes on the Study of the *Durıkyāṯā* as a Neo-Syriac Genre", *Le Muséon* 112 (1999) 459-494, and *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe. A story in a Truthful Lanhuage, Religions Poems in vernacular Syriac (North Iraq, 17th Century*, [CSCO 589, 590, Scriptorus Syri 230, 231], Leuven 2002 (2 vols.), and Murre-van den Berg, "A Syrian Awakening", 499-515.

[7] See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinischen Texte*, Bonn 1922, 334-5 and 359, J.-M. Fiey, O.P., *Assyrie Chrétienne. Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq*, vol. II, Beirut 1965 [Recherches publiées sous la direction de l'Institut de lettres Orientales de Beyrouth 22, 34], 393-5, and R. Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur*, Berlin 1976, 35-50.

[8] According to most authors, Shimun IV Basidi (d. 1497) was the first to appoint

East Syrians. He was supported by hereditary leaders of two kinds: the metropolitans and bishops of the various provinces and dioceses, and the *mālik*-s, or heads of the principal tribes of the Hakkari mountains (Upper and Lower Tiari, Tkhuma, Diz, Tal, Baz, and Jilu).[9]

It was these three characteristics shared by most East Syrian communities in the Ottoman period, i.e., a distinctive denomination, language, and social structure, which in my opinion formed the basis of a well-defined communal identity with clear ethnic overtones.[10]

*World Church*

This overall ethnic Aramaic character of the Church of the East was decidedly different from that of the Church in earlier periods. During its heyday, in the early Abbasid period (eighth to the tenth century) and especially in the early Mongol period (thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries) the Church of the East comprised a great variety of ethnic groups, since its metropolitan provinces stretched out over a large part of Central Asia, into India and the Far East. Its members spoke many different languages, among which Arabic and Persian, as well as various Turkish, Middle Iranian (notably Sogdian), and Indian (Dravidian) lan-

his successor from his own family during his lifetime, which was contrary to canonical law. Note, however, that Joseph Habbi, "Signification de l'union chaldéenne de Mar Sulaqa avec Rome en 1553", *OS* XI (1966), 124 and n. 90, points to the fact that from the period of Timothy II (1318-32) the patriarch was usually chosen from one and the same family. From the late fifteenth century onward, the patriarch was usually succeeded by the son of one of his sisters, this child having been set apart for the patriarchate from his conception by the strictly vegetarian diet adhered to by his mother and by himself after birth ('nazirite' system). Brothers of the patriarch (provided they had followed the same dietary restrictions) were also suitable candidates. On this system, see George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals: With the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844, and of a Late Visit to Those Countries in 1850*, etc., London 1852, vol. 2, 191-2, and Paul Bedjan in Rubens Duval, *Les dialectes néo-araméens de Salamas. Textes sur l'état actuel de la Perse et contes populaires. Publiés avec une traduction française*, Paris 1883, 9-13 and 7-11 (translation). On patriarchal succession in this period, see H.L. Murre-van den Berg, "The Patriarchs of the Church of the East from the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries", *Hugoye, Journal of Syriac Studies* 2,2 (1999), http://syrcom.cua.edu /Hugoye/vol2no2Murre.html.

[9] No references to tribal organization were found in the mss of this period, but there is every reason to assume that a social structure that was firmly in place in the early nineteenth century was present in earlier centuries as well. For literature on the nineteenth-century situation, see Murre-van den Berg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 38-42.

[10] This view is shared by Wolfgang Hage, "Nestorianische Kirche", in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 24, Berlin / New York 1994, 269: "Die Kirche der Assyrer (auch "Bergnestorianer") hatte nun (seit der 1. Hälfte des 16. Jh. unter Osmanischer Oberheit) den Charakter einer Stammeskirche unter dem Patriarchen [..] als Stammesfürsten und den Metropoliten (bzw. Bischöfen) als Sippenhäuptern".

guages. Classical Syriac apparently remained the language of the liturgy in all dioceses, although in many places a Gospel reading and a variety of hymns in the local language were added. In a number of instances these other languages were used for religious and secular literature as well.[11] This is particularly true for Arabic, which was widely used by East Syrian writers until the Mongol period.[12]

This supra-ethnic and multilingual identity of the Church of the East was greatly enhanced by the political circumstances of this period. From the eighth century onwards, the patriarchs of this Church strategically placed themselves close to the current centers of power: Baghdad during the Abbasid reign and Maragha during the early Mongol period. In this period the Church of the East was the largest Church in the empire, and its patriarchs served as the representatives of the other Christian communities as well. The protection which the Church enjoyed, together with usually safe roads and frequent merchant caravans, enabled its monks to travel far and wide into Asia and spread the faith all over the continent. Both the recognition of the Church by the political powers of the day and the Asia-wide expansion that it achieved during this period increased the importance of the Church of the East in Central and East Asia, in the eyes of its members and outsiders.[13]

What do we know of the self-image of the Church of the East in this period?[14] A good place to start is a letter that was written by one of the

[11] For further literature on these communities and their literary heritage, see Wolfgang Hage, "Der Weg nach Asien: Die ostsyrische Missionskirche", in Knut Schäferdiek, *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte. Band II, Die Kirche des früheren Mittelalters*, Munich 1978, 360-93, and the classic article by Jean Devaullier, "Les Provinces Chaldéenes "de l'Extérieur" au Moyen Age", in *Histoire et institutions des églises orientales au Moyen Age*, London 1983 [originally published in *Mélanges F. Cavallera*, Toulouse 1948, 261-316].

[12] For an overview of Christian Arabic literature in this period, see the first two volumes of Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Vatican City 1944 and 1947 [Studi e testi 118 and 133]. For extensive discussion of the key texts (both Syriac and Arabic) of the East Syrians in the eighth to the fourteenth century, see Bénédicte Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak: Attitudes nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam* [Études Chrétiennes Arabes], Paris 1994.

[13] For an overview of the history of the Syriac Churches in this period, see J.M Fiey, *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Mongols (Il-Khanat de Perse, XIIIe – XIVe s.)*, Louvain 1975 [CSCO 362, Subs 44] and J.M. Fiey, *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Abbassides, surtout à Bagdad (749-1258)*, Louvain 1980 [CSCO 420, Subs 59].

[14] In this article, I confine myself to the period from the eighth century onwards. The themes of self-definition and the relationship with a non-Christian government were of particular importance in the fifth century as well, and many of the later discussions can be found here in a nutshell; see Wolfgang Hage, "Die Kirche "des Ostens": kirchliche Selbständigkeit und kirchliche Gemeinsamkeit im fünften Jahrhundert", G.J. Reinink & A.C.

great patriarchs of the Abbasid period, patriarch Timothy I (780-823). He initiated a new period of missionary zeal within the Church of the East, established a number of new metropolitan provinces, and considerably enhanced the Church's favored position at the courts of the Abbasids.[15] In a letter to bishop Maranzkha of Nineveh, Timothy devotes considerable attention to the relationship of his Church to other Churches.[16] The basis of his ecclesiology is to be found in the belief that the Church of the East forms part of universal world-wide Christianity, whose governance is subdivided over five patriarchal thrones. However, of the five thrones, Timothy mentions only Rome and Seleucia-Ctesiphon, while the remainder of the exposition is dedicated to the question which of those two should be considered the most important. In Timothy's view, this is clearly Seleucia-Ctesiphon, which he tacitly equates with the patriarchate of the East in Baghdad. In rather poetic language he extols the superiority of the East: the Lord himself, a descendant of Abraham, came from the East, Paradise is located in the East, and the people of the East, personified by the twelve Kings from the East, were the first to accept the Lord Jesus. The imagery of the four streams of Paradise that water all the earth and have their origin in one and the same source, is applied to the relationship between the five patriarchates: the East is the source from which the other four draw their water. At one point, Timothy explicitly takes issue with those who assign pride of place to Rome rather than to Seleucia-Ctesiphon. If Rome is the first because of the apostle Peter, should not the East be given the first place because of the Lord of Peter?

The latter remark suggests that Timothy's eloquent defense of the prime position of the Eastern patriarchate was aimed at persons or groups within the Church of the East who differed with him on the position of the patriarchate of Rome. Although it is not easy to point to a

Klugkist, *After Bardaisan. Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J.W. Drijvers* [OLA 89], Leuven 1999, 141-8.

[15] R.J. Bidawid, *Les Lettres du patriache nestorien Timothée I*, Vatican City 1965 [Studi et Testi 187], Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak*, 46-52.

[16] O. Braun, *Timothei patriarchae I Epistulae*, Louvain 1914-1915 [CSCO 74-75, Syr 30-31], text: 147-150, translation 100-101. Cf. also a recent French translation of this particular letter: Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, Christelle et Florence Jullien, Christine Moulin Paliard, Marwan Rashed, "Lettre du patriarche Timothée à Maranzek$^{h}$ā, évêque de Ninive", *JA 288.1* (2000), 1-13. For Timothy's role in the development of a Petrine ideology, see also Stephen Gerö, "The See of Peter in Babylon: Western Influences on the Ecclesiology of Early Persian Christianity", in Nina G. Garsoïan (et al), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, Washington D.C., 1982, 46-51. Gerö attributes supposedly earlier instances of Petrine language to redaction by Timothy.

particular individual in Timothy's time,[17] there are a number of indications that through the ages some of the theologians and clerical leaders of the Church of the East were willing to accept the first position of the patriarchate of Rome among the five patriarchates, in view of the fact that the Roman patriarchate was based on the apostolic mission of Simon Peter, whose primacy over the other apostles remained uncontested in the Church of the East.[18] This view, opposed by Timothy, but later supported by ʿAudishoʿ bar Brikha of Nisibis (d. 1318) and others,[19] might have provided a theological framework for contacts with Rome in the Mongol period, like those under the patriarchs Sabrishoʿ V (1226-1257)[20] and Yabhalaha III (1281-1317).[21] The question remains

[17] There are the Pseudo-Nicene Canons which, according to Wilhelm de Vries, "Zum Kirchenbegriff der nestorianischen Theologen", *OCP* 17 (1951), 120-5, were known to Timothy and perhaps even originated in the late eighth century. They represent the most articulate expression within East Syrian theology of the acceptation of the jurisdiction of Rome over the universal Church, but De Vries does not believe that this opinion was shared by many at the time.

[18] For these issues, see De Vries, "Zum Kirchenbegriff". For a defense of the traditional Chaldean view, see D. Emmanuel, "Doctrine de l'Église chaldéenne sur la primauté de saint Pierre", *ROC* 1 (1896) 137-148. His article seems to be based largely on a book by the then Chaldean archbishop of Amadia, Mgr. Khayyath, *Syri Orientales seu Chaldæi Nestoriani et Romanorum Pontificum primatus*, Rome 1870.

[19] ʿAudishoʿ (Ebediesu Sobensis) left us some interesting references to his ecclesiology. In the first part of Tract IX of the *Collectio Canonum Synodicorum*, on "the great ranks of the Patriarchate", he states that the five patriarchates go back to five ancient cities (Babylon, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople, in that order), which were given patriarchal sees by the apostles. ʿAudishoʿ concludes: "And because to none of these places was given the gift of the patriarchate only and solely because of its principality (*ʾarreškāyutāh*) or antiquity, but [only] because of its apostle-missionary and its king, therefore to the great Rome it was given because of two pillars that were erected in it: Peter, I say, the head of the apostles, and Paul, the teacher of the heathen. And this is the first and principal throne of the patriarchates. […] And the fifth of the patriarchates is Babylon, because of the honor of three apostles: Thomas [..], Bartholomew […], and Adday […]." For the Syriac text and Latin translation, see A. Maius, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanus codicibus edita*, vol. X, Rome 1838, 154-5 (Latin), 316-7 (Syriac).

[20] On Sabrishoʿ V and his attempts at uniatism, see Eugène Tisserant, "L'Église nestorienne", *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* XI,1 (1931), 219-20, and Paul Pelliot, "Les Mongols et la papauté", *ROC* 23 (1923) 1-30 and 24 (1924) 225-335. On the western 'orientation' of at least some of the Nestorians of the day, see also William of Rubruck's account of his mission in Mongol territory, in the years 1253-55. At least some of the Nestorian monks were quite open to Roman-Catholicism and Papacy, cf. Peter Jackson, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, London 1990, p. 213-4 (XXX, 10) and p. 218 (XXXI, 4).

[21] On Yabhalaha, see Tisserant, "L'Église nestorienne", 213-8, 221-5, and J.-M. Fiey, "Le grand catholicos Turco-Mongol Yahwalaha III (1281-1317)", *POC* 38 (1988), 209-28, on his emissary Rabban Sauma, see T. Jansma, *Oost-Westelijke verkenningen in de dertiende eeuw. De reizen van de Franciscaan Willem van Rubroek naar Mongolië in de*

whether the East Syrians involved in these unions were prepared to accept the jurisdiction of the Pope over their Church and its hierarchy, as opposed to merely acknowledging the importance of the patriarchate of Rome for the universal Church. Even if the final lines of Yabhalaha's confession of faith seems to imply a rather far-going jurisdiction of the Pope over the Church of the East, one might assume, as does Landron, that Yabhalaha was well aware that his Church's great distance from Rome would prevent actual interference from the Pope.[22]

Whatever the exact nature of the uniatism of the Middle Ages, it seems justified to assume that alongside the more 'Eastern-centered' opinion of Timothy, a more 'western-oriented' opinion also existed, certainly towards the end of the period under discussion. Church leaders like Yabhalaha III acknowledged the primacy of the patriarchate of Rome and were genuinely interested in establishing contacts with the Pope. The fact that these attempts at uniatism did not succeed should perhaps be attributed more to political and geographical circumstances than to theological conviction.

In summary, I would say that the identity of the Church of the East in this period is characterized by three distinctive elements. The first is the

*jaren 1253 -1255 en van de Nestoriaanse prelaat Barsauma naar Europa in de jaren 1287 -1288*, Leiden 1959 [Mededelingen en verhandelingen No. 13 van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux"], M. Rossabi, *Voyager from Xanandu*, Rabban Sauma and the first journey from China to the West, Tokyo — New York — London 1992 and recently, Pier Giorgio Borbone, *Storia di mar Yabhallaha e di Rabban Sauma. Un orientale in occidente ai tempi di Marco Polo*, Turin 2000.

[22] Cf. the final lines of the 1304 profession of faith by Yabhalaha III in Landron's translation of the Arabic, as preserved in the Vatican Archives: "Nous affirmons la primauté (*Imāmā*) du Père Pape (*fāfā*) et nous le plaçons avant tous les chefs de la religion chrétienne. Nou reconnaissons qui'il tient la place de Pierre le vicaire (*khalīfa*) de Notre Seigneur le Christ pour tous les enfants de l'Eglise apostolique de l'Orient à l'Occident de la terre", Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak*, 298-9 and Landron's comments on 142. Whether or not Rome and the Church of the East were actually thinking in terms of a Church union is subject to debate; cf. Habbi, "Signification de l'union chaldéene", 203, and Jean Richard, "La mission en Europe de Rabban Çauma et l'union des Églises", in *Oriente ed Occidente nel medio evo*, Convegno di scienze morali storiche e filologiche, 27 Maggio -1 Giungno 1956 [Accademia nazionale dei lincei, fondazione Alessandro Volta, Istituita dall società Edison di Milano, atti dei convegni 12], Rome 1957, 162-7 and by the same author, *La Papauté et les missions d'orient au Moyen-Age (XIIIe-XVe siècles)*, Rome 1977 [Collection de l'École Française de Rome 33] 108ff. Richard is quite outspoken in regarding Yabhalaha's profession of faith as the basis of a real union, even if the majority of his Church may not have been aware of it, whereas Habbi assumes, without providing further arguments, that no union, at least not from point of view of the Church of the East, was concluded at that time. Perhaps we should look into the differences between Rabban Sauma's contacts with the Roman papacy in 1387/8, and Yabhalaha's contacts with Rome in 1302 and 1304, which probably resulted from encounters with Dominican missionaries.

Church's multi-ethnic character. From the eighth to the thirteenth century, the Church of the East encompassed people of many different ethnic backgrounds, with many different languages and cultures. Although this diversity certainly presented problems for the leaders of the Church, during most of this period, the Church was able to unite various ethnic groups within the one Church of the East.[23] The second important element was the Church's visible and sometimes even powerful presence in the world of its day, both politically and geographically, unparalleled in the Church's earlier and later history.[24] The third element was its self-definition as a part of the universal Christian Church on the one hand, and a self-sufficient patriarchate on the other. Here I use the term 'World Church' to describe this particular combination of features characteristic of a multi-ethnic community with considerable political power and universalistic ecclesiastical claims. Within the limits of this concept, the discussion continued on what the exact relationship to the patriarchate of Rome, apparently the only other patriarchate worthy of serious reflection, should entail; the essential question being whether or not to accept primacy of the Pope.

*A World Church in a provincial town*

This 'World Church' period came to an end in the fourteenth century, after a series of disasters that struck the whole of Central Asia but the Christians in particular. These included the raids of the Mongol ruler Timur Leng (Tamerlane, 1336-1405), outbreaks of bubonic plague, as well as the numerous and sometimes forced conversions to Islam which further decimated the Christian population. In the heartland of the Church, in Mesopotamia and Persia, the number of East Syrians declined considerably, and in the outer provinces almost no communities survived. It was only in the mountainous regions of northern Mesopotamia that the Church of the East managed to retain a sizable community, consisting almost exclusively of Aramaic-speaking Christians. Not surprisingly, the political importance of the Church, rather small in the thirteenth century, was now nonexistent.

[23] Note, e.g., the tension between southern Persia, India, and Afghanistan and the Aramaic heartland in northern Mesopotamia during Timothy's time, while a tendency towards Aramaization can be observed as early as the 13th century, when an increasing number of patriarchs were of Aramaic-speaking background, cf. Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak*, 46 and 135.

[24] With the possible exception of the fifth century, under the Sasanian king Yazdgard I, see also nt. 14.

At the end of the fifteenth century, the Church slowly began to recover from these blows. The reign of the Aq Quyunlu (White Sheep), followed in the sixteenth century by the gradual incorporation into the Ottoman empire, proved beneficial for the Christians of northern Mesopotamia. Monasteries and churches were rebuilt and more and more manuscripts were being written.[25] It was during this period that the Church began to restore its earlier international contacts. In 1499/1500, two Christians from India arrived to visit the patriarch of the Church of the East in the provincial town Gazarta d-Bet Zabday, far away from the centers of power of the day.

> In the year 1811 of Alexander,[26] three faithful Christian men came from the far countries of India to Mar Shimun Qatoliqos Patriarch of the East to bring back Fathers to their countries. One of them, according to the will of the Creator, died on the way, but two arrived alive at Mar Qatoliqos. And he, Mar Qatoliqos, was in the city of Gazarta d-Bet Zabday, and he very much rejoiced in them. And one of them was named Giwargis and the other Yosep. And Mar Qatoliqos ordained the two of them as priests in the holy church of Mar Giwargis in Gazarta because they were learned. And he sent these two to the holy monastery of the blessed Mar Augin and they brought two monks from there who were both called Rabban Yosep. And Mar Qatoliqos ordained these two as bishops in the church of Mar Giwargis. And one of them he named Mar Thoma and the other Mar Yukhannan. And he wrote for them open letters of recommendation and letters that were sealed and stamped. And he provided them with prayers and blessings and he sent them with the Indians to the countries of India.[27]

[25] For this period, see David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913* [CSCO 582, Subs 104], Leuven 2000, and J.M. Fiey, "Une page oubliée de l'histoire des églises syriaques à la fin du XV$^{e}$ — début du XVI$^{e}$ siécle", *Le Muséon* 107 (1994) 124-33. The latter explicitly identifies the late fifteenth century under the Aq Quyunlu as a period of renewal for the Christian communities of northern Mesopotamia.

[26] In an earlier article (Murre-van den Berg, "The Patriarchs", #9), I proposed reading 1811 (1499/1500) instead of 1801 (1489/90), because of problems in harmonizing various sources on the patriarchal succession in this period. I assume the 'Mar Shimun' in the text to be identical to Shimun V (1497-1502), rather than to Shimun IV, who died in February 1497.

[27] This text was edited by Joseph Simonius Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*. De scriptoribus Syris Nestorianis (iii, 1.2), Rome 1725/1728, 591ff, based on MsVat 204 (pre-1532, without date or place, one wonders whether MsVat 204 is indeed the autograph). A translation of this text is given by A. Mingana, D.D., "The Early Spread of Christianity in India", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (Manchester) 10 (1926), 468ff. A Neo-Aramaic translation of this text was published in *Zahrire d-Bahra* (1849/2 14b-16b, 1849/3). The Classical Syriac text is also attested to in Berlin 59 (written in the Urmia region, c. 1700) and in Mingana 11 (1702, possibly in Alqosh). Another translation and discussion of this text can be found in Leslie Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas. An Account of the Ancient Syrian Church of Malabar*, Cambridge 1982 [second, enlarged edition], 14-18.

These are the first lines of an introduction to a letter written in 1504, five years after the first visit, from India to the patriarch of the Church of the East. In 1502, according to this introduction, the above mentioned Mar Thoma returned to his home land, just in time to witness the death of Mar Shimun [V] and his burial in the monastery of Mar Augin. Mar Shimun was succeeded by Mar Eliya [V], who, according to a note in another manuscript, [28] at Eastertime 1504 appointed three more of Mar Augin's monks to be sent to India.[29] These too were ordained as bishops, this time in the nearby monastery of Mar Yukhannan the Egyptian. In September 1504, after the company had safely arrived in India, these four bishops (Mar Thoma and the three new ones) sent a letter back to Mesopotamia to inform the patriarch about the current situation of the Indian Christians.

Somewhat unexpectedly, both the introduction and the letter itself portray the Church of the East as a multi-ethnic community rather than an ethnic one. Two "faithful Christian men" (*gaḇrīn mhaymānē krīsṭyānē*) from India, as the author of the introduction calls them, came all the way to northern Mesopotamia to re-establish links with the patriarchate of the Church of the East. The successive patriarchs are portrayed as having been eager to concur with the wishes of the Indian Christians, and five monks in all were sent to India to fill the need for bishops. These bishops were welcomed by the "thirty thousand Christians families of our faith" (*bnay taudītan*), according to the author of the letter. The first of the Mesopotamian patriarchs also acknowledged the learning of the first two Indian Christians and consecrated them as priests. This seems to indicate the willingness of Mar Shimun V to acknowledge those of a different ethnic background as members and clergy of the Church of the East, presumably on condition that they had

[28] This date appears in a colophon to Syr. Ms Paris 25 of 1504 (cf. F. Nau, "Deux notices relatives au Malabar, et trois petits calendriers, d'après les manuscrits Bodl. Or. 667, et Paris Syr. 25,195 et suppl. Grec. 292", in *ROC*, 2nd series VII/XVII (1912), 82-3, and Mingana, "The Early Spread of Christianity in India", 473-74). This note confirms the general line of the information found in the letter and the introduction: the death of Mar Shimun in 1502, the ordination of Mar Eliya, and the four bishops that were ordained by Mar Eliya for India: Mar Yabhalaha and Mar Thoma as archbishops, and Mar Denkha and Mar Ya'qub as bishops. The latter wrote the manuscript and the colophon of 1504.

[29] That is, David Arrikha, Giwargis, and Mas'ud (Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis iii,1*, 592). One is tempted to identify David Arrikha with "priest David, monk", who copied 'Audeh d-Mshiḥa's *Book of admonitions to monks* in Mar Augin in 1812 (1500/01), according to of the colophon of Ms. Diarbakir 102 (cf. Addai Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l'archevêché chaldéen de Diarbékir", *JA* X (1907), 404-5).

mastered at least some Classical Syriac.[30] Thus not only did the Christians of India acknowledge the relatively small Aramaic-speaking Church of northern Mesopotamia as the representative of the universal Church, but the hierarchy of the Church of the East accepted responsibility for the life of the Indian Church.

It is likely that the four bishops from Mesopotamia in any case were aware of the ecclesiological implications of the renewed contacts with the Indian Church, judging by the way in which they addressed the patriarch in their letter from India. They wrote:

> To the second Shimun, the Papa of our days, the Timothy of our generation, the Ishu' bar Nun of our times, and the Ishuyau of our period, to whom power is given in heaven and earth to tend the flock of Christ with the Petrine scepter *(ḥuṭrā Peṭrusāyā)* which into his hand was entrusted from time immemorial, [..], Mar Eliya Qatoliqos patriarch of the East, mother of the [other] regions [of the world].

Three of the four names mentioned, Timothy, Ishu' bar Nun, and Ishu'yau[31] refer to well-known patriarchs of the Abbasid period, no doubt mentioned in order to recall the time of the World Church.[32] The reference to the "second Shimun", followed by the explicit mention of Simon Peter's scepter, almost certainly refers to the apostle of Rome.[33] Thus, those who wrote the letter not only linked the present patriarch to the great patriarchs of the time when the Church of the East represented a strong international community, but also suggested that Simon Peter should be seen as the first patriarch of the East.[34] The authors of the let-

[30] Their learning undoubtedly consisted of a knowledge of Classical Syriac, to such an extent that the two men were able to recite the liturgy in an appropriate manner. Note, however, that these two were not consecrated bishop. It is possible that they were married or that other canonical obstacles prevented their ordination as bishops, but it seems more likely that the patriarch wanted to secure his influence in India by appointing monks from his own monasteries.

[31] That is: Timothy I (780-823), Ishu' bar Nun (823-828), and Ishu'yau III (650-660). The dates of the latter do not actually fit into the neat succession of the three earlier ones, but he is the most likely candidate among the patriarchs named Ishu'yau, not least because we know of his extensive dealings with the Indian Church, cf. Mingana "The Early Spread of Christianity", 463-6.

[32] "Papa" must be identified with patriarch Papa I bar Aggay (patriarch from 310 to 317, d. 329), who reorganized the Church of the East in the early fourth century.

[33] Note, however, that Assemani identifies the first Shimun with Shimun bar Sabba'e, who was patriarch from 329 to 341 and a well-known martyr of the Church of the East, cf. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis iii,1*, 593. One might suspect that Assemani did not want to risk a conflict with Roman Catholic ideas on the primacy of Simon Peter.

[34] This assumption seems to be based on the belief that Simon Peter was in Babylon when he wrote his first Epistle in which he sent greetings from "[the Church] who is at Babylon (1 Peter 5:13), see Emmanuel, "Doctrine de l' Église chaldéenne", 142.

ter may not have been familiar with Timothy's arguments in favor of the 'primacy' of the Eastern patriarchate, but their arguments certainly give the impression of originating in the same type of ecclesiology, in which the patriarchate of the East is ranked higher than that of Rome.

Although explicit references to the primacy of the throne of the East are sparse in the Ottoman period, I came across two other instances in which the title of the patriarch has decidedly universal characteristics. The first is in a manuscript written in Khosrowa in 1598 (L-Or 6719) where the copyist describes Shimun IX Denkha (of the Sulaqa line, 1580-1600) as "patriarch of the East and of all the earth" (*patriarḵā d-maddinḥā wā-[d]-kullāh tēyḇil*).[35] The copyist of the manuscript written in 1688 in Alqosh (Borgia 60) refers to patriarch Eliya IX in Rabban Hormizd (the other line, 1660-1700), as "universal Father" [*ābā gāwānāyā*], a designation which, while less concrete, probably points in the same direction.[36]

I conclude, therefore, that although the ethnic Aramaic character defined much of the life of the Church of the East in the period under discussion, some important characteristics of the concept of a World Church survived into this period, such as the remnants of a multi-ethnic community and the sense of being part of the universal Church, the head of which — at least in some interpretations — was the patriarch of the East.

*Uniatism*

The above references to the primacy of the Eastern patriarchate and the universality of the Church of the East may be seen as remnants of the old World Church ecclesiology propagated by Timothy I, but in the period under discussion Timothy's opponents had their followers as well. It was then that uniatism slowly but surely gained ground, a development which in the early nineteenth century led to the formation of a stable uniat patriarchate, the Chaldean patriarchate of Babylon. From the sixteenth century onwards, the acceptance of the primacy of the Patriarch of Rome was no longer a somewhat theoretical question, but began to have a profound impact on the history of this Church.

[35] For a concise description of L-Or 6719, a "burial service for all ranks" written by a copyist named "Ishu'yau, metropolitan, son of priest Petrus, son of deacon Sliba", see the typescript list in the British Library.

[36] See Joseph-Marie Sauget, *Un gazza chaldéen disparu et retrouvé: le Ms. Borgia Syriaque 60*, Vatican City 1987, 52-3.

In 1552, about fifty years after the Indian letter, opposition arose against the patriarchate of Shimun VII Ishuyau bar Mama (1538/9-1558), most likely because of his consecration of two teenage nephews as metropolitan bishops and future successors (*nāṭar kursī*-s).[37] The bishops of Salmas, Arbil, and Azerbaijan, together with a number of priests and lay persons elected the abbot of the monastery of Rabban Hormizd, Yukhannan Sulaqa, to the patriarchate. Since no metropolitan outside Shimun's family was available to confer a valid diocesan consecration, Sulaqa was sent to Rome to obtain consecration and papal recognition. This visit to Rome renewed relations between the Church of the East and the western Church after two and a half centuries of silence.[38] The union established by Sulaqa was not to survive into the next century, but both the successors of Sulaqa, who retreated into the Hakkari mountains, and the patriarchs of the Abuna family in Rabban Hormizd, the line Sulaqa had opposed to, were in regular contact with the Church of the west, even if no formal union resulted.[39] It was in 1681 that the missionary work of Franciscan Conventuals in Amida (Diarbakir) resulted in a new uniat patriarchate, whose first patriarch was known as Yosep I.[40] For the next one and a half centuries the Church of the East was divided into three patriarchates: one uniat ('Chaldean') in Diarbakir, and two traditional ('Nestorian') in Qodshanis (the successors of Sulaqa) and Alqosh (Rabban Hormizd, the patriarchs of the Abuna family). Around 1800, patriarch Yukhannan VII Hormizd of Rabban Hormizd considered himself in union with Rome, thereby becoming a rival patriarchate to the one in Diarbakir. In 1830 the two uniat patriarchates merged into a new Chaldean patriarchate.[41]

A recurring theme in the accounts of the attempts to promote uniatism is the matter of the primacy of Rome. The main reason for Sulaqa and his followers to turn to Rome is the supposition, apparently shared by

[37] On the reasons for the opposition to Shimun VII, see Habbi, "Signification de l'union chaldéenne", and Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation*, 21.

[38] Following the contacts established by Yabhalaha in the early fourteenth century, an official union between the Chaldeans of Cyprus and Rome took place in 1445, but this union seems to have had no consequences for the Church in Mesopotamia; see Tisserant, "L'Église nestorienne", 226-7 and Richard, *La Papauté et les missions d'orient*, 271-2.

[39] For an overview and further literature on the history of the uniat movement, see Tisserant, "L'Église nestorienne", 158-323, Murre-van den Berg, "The Patriarchs" and Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation*.

[40] On this episode, see primarily Albert Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom. Joseph I., 1681-1696, Patriarch der Chaldäer*, Einsiedeln 1966.

[41] This patriarchate was styled the "Patriarchate of Babylon", and is the predecessor of the present Chaldean patriarchate in Baghdad.

part of the clergy in the Church of the East, that the Pope was authorized to confer a valid consecration.[42] It cannot be assumed that Sulaqa's acceptance of Papal consecration implied that the Pope had actual authority over the Church of the East. The rather cumbersome history of the attempts at uniatism in the two centuries to follow certainly indicates otherwise.

There are indications that Sulaqa's trip to Rome was related to the letter from India referred to above. In this letter, the newly consecrated bishops tell us that on their journey home they met with the Portuguese in Cananore, a city on the west coast of the Indian subcontinent. They were most favorably impressed by the way in which the Portuguese had shown respect for their ecclesiastical dignity.[43] The fact that in Rome Sulaqa consulted the ambassador of Portugal on the subject of the Syrian Christians of Malabar[44] and that ʿAudishoʿ of Gazarta sent two bishops to India immediately after Sulaqa's death in 1556 (one of whom was a brother of Sulaqa),[45] may therefore be attributed to the renewed contacts of the Indian Christians with the Christians of Mesopotamia and the Portuguese Catholics.

[42] Cf. Habbi, "Signification de l'union chaldéene", 199-204. Important in this respect are the opinions expressed by bishop ʿAudishoʿ of Gazarta, Sulaqa's successor, according to whom the see of Peter occupied the first rather than the second place among the five patriarchates. ʿAudishoʿ reinforces his argument by referring to a number of patriarchs in the early days of the Church of the East who, in his interpretation, had also obtained consecration from Rome, cf. J.-M Vosté, O.P., "Mar Iohannan Soulaqa. Premier patriarche des chaldéens, martyr de l'union avec Rome [†1555], Trois poésies inédites de ʿAbdišoʿ de Gazerthe", *Angelicum* 8 (1931), 187-234, in particular 216-7. Not of all of the patriarchs mentioned by ʿAudishoʿ could be identified, while ʿAudishoʿ also seems to treat the patriarchates of Rome and Antioch as one and the same (cf. again Habbi, "Signification de l'union chaldéenne", 201-204). See also Emmanuel, "Doctrine de l'Église chaldéenne" for further arguments supporting the Chaldean point of view.

[43] "They [the Portuguese] were very pleased, and they gave us beautiful garments (*mā'ne*) and twenty drachmas of gold, and they greatly honored our being strangers (*aksnāyutan*) because of Christ. And we stayed with them two and a half months. And they also ordered us one day to say mass, i.e., to offer *qurbana*. And they had prepared for themselves a beautiful place to pray, like a chapel. And every day their priests say mass, as is their custom. And on the Sunday of Nusardil [..], after their priest finished mass, we also went and said mass. And they liked it very much", cf. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis iii,1*, 598.

[44] Habbi, "Signification de l'union chaldéene", 110.

[45] On Sulaqa's brother Yosep, cf. Vosté, "Mar Iohannan Soulaqa", 188 and J.P.M. van der Ploeg, "Mar Joseph, Bishop-Metropolitan of India (1556-1569)", Réne Lavenant, *III° Symposium Syriacum 1980. Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures (Goslar 7-11 Septembre 1980)*, Rome 1983 [OCA 221], 162-170. Note that Vosté, "Catholiques ou nestoriens? (Mss. Vat.Syr. 45, 63 et V.A. Borgia 21)", *Angelicum* 7 (1930), 516 interprets the journey to India as a flight of the recently converted Roman Catholics from the rage of the 'nestorian' patriarch Shimun VII.

Among the East Syrians from the western and southern dioceses, in and around the towns of Diarbakir, Mardin, and Mosul, uniatism gained considerable adherence. These Christians were largely Arabic-speaking and were therefore to some extent capable of taking part in the dominant culture of this part of the Ottoman empire. They also had more opportunities for frequent contacts with the other Christian communities, notably the Armenian and Syrian Catholic.[46] The same holds true for their contacts with Roman Catholic missionaries who began to settle in this area in larger numbers in the course of the seventeenth century, after their initial concentration in Aleppo. It was the Arabic-speaking Christians of the towns that were the first object of their attention, and these Christians were the first to profess obedience to the Pope and accept Roman Catholicism.[47]

However, despite the obvious successes of the uniat movement, at the end of the eighteenth century the Chaldeans were still far outnumbered by those that remained in the Church of the East. The majority of the East Syrians of the Hakkari mountains, as well as most of those living in Persia, under the leadership of Mar Shimun XVI Yukhannan (c. 1780-1820), had kept to their traditional ways, in terms of language and social structure, as well as of denomination. These Christians had scarcely been affected by the contacts with the west that had taken place in the towns on the outskirts of their homeland.

### *Christian identity since the coming of Islam*

In the preceding sections, we have discussed three main characteristics of the Church of the East from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century:

[46] For the interaction between the various Christian communities in cities like Mardin, Diarbakir and Mosul, see the interesting text edited by O. Scheil, "Une page de l'histoire de l'église de Mardin au commencement du XVIIIe siècle, ou, Les tribulations de Cas Elia Ibn al Qsir, racontées par lui-même. Publiées d'après le texte arabe", *ROC* 1 (1896), 43-87. On Diarbakir, see Lampart, *Ein Martyrer der Union*, 41-6.

[47] On the influence of Roman Catholicism in the western part of the Ottoman empire, see Bernard Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVII^e^-XVIII^e^ siècles)*, Rome 1994, and from the same author, "Se convertir a l'Islam chez les chrétiens de Syrie, XVII^e^-XVIII^e^ siècles", in *Le conversioni nel Mediteraneao, Dimensioni e problemi della recerca storica* n. 2, 1996, (Univ. de la Sapienza), 133-152. In northwestern Persia, the Aramaic-speaking uniat community of Khosrowa also dates back to the late seventeenth century, cf. Jean Michel Hornus, "Notes et Documents. Un rapport du consul de France à Erzéroum sur la situation des chrétiens en Perse au milieu du XIXe siècle. Texte du Comte de Challaye publié avec introduction et notes", *POC* 21 (1971), 291-2, n. 73.

the ethnic Aramaic character of the Church of the East, the universalistic and multi-ethnic trends that were brought to the fore by the renewed relationships with the Syriac Church of India, and the slow but certain growth of a Uniat — i.e., Chaldean — Church. During this period, the Church of the East displayed many of the characteristics of an ethnic community which had not been evident before, but at the same time the older ecclesiological concept of a multi-ethnic World Church was still strong. It manifested itself in renewed contacts with the Church of India and in the universalistic titles of the patriarch of the Church of the East, as well as in closer ties with the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore the question posed in the title, "World Church or ethnic community?", cannot be answered unequivocally. To a certain extent "ethnic community" is an adequate term to describe the Church of the East in the early modern period, and yet aspects of the World Church were clearly present modifying that ethnicity in many different ways.

Moreover, the concept of the World Church was interpreted in two different ways. One interpretation was largely linked to the Aramaic-speaking majority of Eastern Syriac Christians, those who lived in the mountains of Kurdistan, mainly in tribal communities. As far as we can judge, the universality of the Church was based upon the apostolic origin of the Eastern Patriarchate, in line with Timothy I's ecclesiology. However, a smaller group of mainly Arabic-speaking East Syrians, living in the towns and larger villages of northern Mesopotamia, began to interpret the concept of the World Church differently, turning their gaze to the west. Interestingly enough, our letter from the early sixteenth century, written at the very beginning of this period of change, displays signs of both interpretations. The terminology is in accordance with that of Timothy I, as we have seen, but as soon as the Mesopotamian bishops had met with the Portuguese Christians who were apparently quite influential, the importance of contacts with the West and the Western Church was immediately recognized and acted upon, both in India and in Mesopotamia.

I would like to conclude this paper by examining the extent to which the growing importance of Western-oriented uniatism was related to a changing attitude towards the Islamic environment. In other words, was the strong orientation towards the West perhaps a way of dealing with a weakened position within Islamic society?

Once again, the letter written by our four Mesopotamian bishops in India yields some interesting material. The paragraph containing the crux of their message is introduced by the following sentence: "Let it

also be known to you, our Fathers, that the king of the Christians of the West, who are the Franks our brothers, have sent powerful ships to our country of India".[48] These Franks, later identified as the Portuguese, met with strong opposition from local rulers in India, both Muslim and "pagan", but were not defeated. On the contrary, as the account continues: "Fear and dread is in the heart of all the pagans and Muslims of these countries".[49] The whole paragraph strongly suggests that the favorable impression that the Portuguese soldiers and clergy made on the East Syrian bishops had a great deal to do with the way in which they dealt with Muslim opposition.[50]

The letter from India is one of the few East Syriac texts dating from this period in which explicit mention is made of Muslims in a historical context. The majority of the Classical Syriac and Neo-Aramaic texts deal with subjects related to the internal life of the Church, as are those few Arabic texts which originated in the Chaldean milieu of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the latter apologetic literature defending Roman Catholic doctrine and countering the traditional beliefs of the Church of the East is particularly prominent.[51] Neo-Aramaic poetry is largely of a devotional nature.[52] On a linguistic and liter-

[48] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis iii,1*, 595.

[49] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis iii,1*, 598.

[50] On these early contacts, compare Michael Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar. From the time of its being first discover'd by the Portuguezes in the Year 1501 (..)*, London 1694, 3. According to Geddes, who based himself on Portuguese sources, around 1502 the Christians of Malabar approached Vasco da Gama after his arrival in Cochin: "understanding that he was a Subject of a Christian King, they beg'd the favour of him to take them under his Master's Protection, that so they might be defended against the Oppressions and Injuries which were done them daily by Infidel Princes".

[51] Important authors such as Yosep II Sliba bet Ma'ruf, the second Chaldean patriarch (1696-1712) and Kas Khidr ibn al-Maqdisi of Mosul (1679-1751) are known for their works in Arabic, alongside those in Classical Syriac. For Christian Arabic literature in this period, see Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* 4, 94-113.

[52] Both 'Chaldean' and 'Nestorian' authors were active in the field of Neo-Aramaic poetry. Two of the most important Chaldean authors were priest Yosep of Telkepe and priest Saumo of Pioz, both known solely for their Neo-Aramaic writings. Patriarch Yosep II, already mentioned in connection with writings in Arabic and Classical Syriac, also applied his talents to this new area of writing. See Murre-van den Berg, "A Syrian Awakening", 509-10, Mengozzi, "The Neo-Aramaic Manuscripts" and *A Story in a Truthful Language*. Yosep II's piece, "Lamentation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1681), has not been edited, but is mentioned in Mengozzi's description of Or. 9321, no. 21, of the British Library. For Yosep of Telkepe, see Alessandro Mengozzi "Neo-Syriac Literature in Context: A Reading of the Durekta *On Revealed Truth* by Joseph of Telkepe (17th century)", this volume, and again *A Story in a Truthful Language*.

ary level there was some interaction with the Islamic context via Arabic or Kurdish loans in Neo-Aramaic, as Mengozzi shows in his article elsewhere in this volume. He identifies at least one instance of an explicit utterance against the Muslims in this corpus, but there appear to be very few explicit references of this kind.[53] For a small number of educated Christians, such as Yosep II, knowledge of Muslim Arabic literature was part of their education, but a detailed study of the contents of their works will be needed in order to ascertain whether this left any traces beyond the use of Arabic itself.[54]

These few references to Islam and Muslim culture seem to indicate that despite a certain rapprochement towards Arabic culture on the part of the Christians of the larger towns of the region, for the most part the Church of the East displayed no great interest in relations with their Muslim neighbors, at least not on the intellectual level. This appears to hold true not only for the Aramaic-speaking Christians of the mountains, many of whom were not in daily contact with Muslims, but also for the Arabic-speaking Christians of the towns and larger villages in Arabic-speaking Mesopotamia. The latter group of East Syrians turned to the west and its representatives in the east rather than to their Muslim compatriots. It appears likely that in the eyes of the Christians of the day a strategic alliance with the Church of the west offered better opportunities for survival and growth than closer relationships with Islam.[55] It is difficult to say whether the closer relationship with the west was in part the result of the deteriorating relationship with Muslims, or whether that relationship deteriorated precisely because of the Christians' contacts with representatives of western powers. It does, however, seem likely that there was an interrelationship between the loss of status of the Church of the East in the eastern parts of the Muslim world, the diminishing numbers of Christians, and the growing ethnic character of this Church: together these developments weakened the position of Christians within a Muslim society and strengthened their inclination to look

[53] Mengozzi, "Neo-Syriac Literature in Context".

[54] For Yosep II's education, see Lampart, *Ein Martyrer der Union*, 194-5.

[55] It is interesting to compare this assumption with the views of R.M. Haddad in "Conversion of Eastern Orthodox Christians to the Unia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (eds), *Conversion and Continuity. Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, Rome 1990 [Papers in Mediaeval Studies 9], 449-459. The author proposes that conversion to the "Unia" in this period replaced earlier patterns of conversion to Islam. Heyberger, in "Se convertir a l'Islam", nuances Haddad's thesis.

elsewhere for help. Although the Church of the East had long maintained good relations with Muslims within a predominantly Muslim society, it could not continue to do so when its numbers fell and the center of political gravity shifted from Mesopotamia to the western parts of the Muslim world.

# NEO-SYRIAC LITERATURE IN CONTEXT: A READING OF THE *DUREKṬĀ ON REVEALED TRUTH* BY JOSEPH OF TELKEPE (17TH CENTURY)

ALESSANDRO MENGOZZI

The oldest dated Christian texts in Eastern Neo-Aramaic we know of are religious poems belonging to the genre called *durekṭā*. We do not know much about the actual *Sitz im Leben* of this kind of poem. A liturgical use is implied in the relationship that the copyists suggest between various *durekyāṭā* and the liturgical genres of the Classical Syriac tradition. In the manuscripts we find the word *durekṭā* used as a modern equivalent of Classical Syriac *mêmrā*, *soġītā*, or *'onītā*.[1]

A note in the margin of an important manuscript of Neo-Aramaic poems provides us with some information about the use of the *durekyāṭā On Penitence* and *On Supplication* by Thomas Tektek Sinjari (19th-century): 'It is said that he (the poet, probably) recited this poem under the lodge in a cucumber-garden and he recited the poem that begins *To you must be...* in the harvest of wheat when it has been heaped up after the labour'.[2] This profane use, outside the liturgy in church, fits well with the choice of the vernacular instead of the classical language, and is reminiscent of the public performances of bards and ballad-singers which were and are still very popular in the region where the texts originate.[3]

[1] The Neo-Aramaic term *durekṭā* (pl. *durekyāṭā*) is used for compositions in the vernacular language and seems to refer to any poem used as a religious hymn, without specific reference to one of the Classical Syriac liturgical genres: E. Sachau, *Skizze des Fellichi-Dialekts von Mosul*, Philosophische und historische Abhandlungen der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1895, 78; A. Mengozzi, "The Neo-Aramaic Manuscripts of the British Library: Notes on the Study of the *durekyāṭā* as a Neo-Syriac Genre", *Le Muséon* 112 (1999) 459-492, esp. p. 14-17.

[2] Habbi 3, in small characters at the bottom of p. 326: *māwd'ānūṭā. meṭ'amrā d-hāḏ dūrkṭā 'amr-āh b-maqṭyā ṯḥēṭ 'arzālā. w-dūrkṭā d-meštaryā: ṭāloḵ klazmā: 'amr-āh baḥṣāḏā d-ḥeṭṭē kaḏ mqabbar bātar pā'lē*. I would like to thank Prof. Pennacchietti for drawing this remark to my attention. The manuscript Habbi 3 represents one of the most complete collections of *durekyāṭā* that we have at our disposal and contains 24 poems dating from the 16th to the 20th century.

[3] On Chaldean ballad-singers, see F.A. Pennacchietti, *Il ladrone e il cherubino.*

Sachau, who spent a great deal of time in the villages and monasteries of North Iraq during the last decades of the last century and collected not only Syriac manuscripts but also texts in various Neo-Aramaic dialects,[4] describes a more domestic context for the use of the *durekyāṯā*. In what is perhaps a recollection of a personal experience, he writes of women and children gathered around the fire in a farmhouse and listening to poems composed for that domestic audience by priests and educated clergymen,[5] fathers who wanted to provide their families with the rudiments of Christian doctrine in a fresh and understandable way.

Whatever their use was or is, from the 16th century onwards the *durekyāṯā* gave rise to a Neo-Syriac literary tradition,[6] written in various Neo-Aramaic dialects of the Christians living in North Iraq and preserved among Chaldean communities, perhaps as part of the oral tradition and certainly in an uninterrupted chain of manuscript transmission.

The heritage of the East-Syriac liturgical poetry was translated in a modern literary language, close to the daily speech,[7] and in new literary conventions, stemming from the classical tradition but also sharing formal and stylistic features with the folk literatures of the neighboring cultures. From this perspective we can read the *durekṯā On Revealed Truth* by Joseph of Telkepe (17th century) as an attempt to give a new form to East-Syriac literary motifs and to suit them to the multilingual and multicultural milieu to which the author and his audience belong. The tradition of the Kurdistani folk poetry served to rewrite a Classical Syriac hymn for Christmas and to reinforce Christian identity in overt polemic with the neighboring religious communities.

*Dramma liturgico cristiano orientale in siriaco e neoaramaico*, Torino 1993, 13-14; on multilingual storytellers among Kurdistani Jews, Muslims, and Christians, M.L. Chyet, "Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish. An Interdisciplinary Consideration of their Influence on Each Other", *Israel Oriental Studies* 15 (1995) 228-229, both with bibliographical references on this subject.

[4] E. Sachau, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig 1883.

[5] E. Sachau, "Über die Poesie in der Volkssprache der Nestorianer", *Sitzungberichten der Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 11.8 (1896) 180.

[6] H.L. Murre-van den Berg, "A Syrian Awakening. Alqosh and Urmia as Centers of Neo-Syriac Writing", in R. Lavenant (ed.), *VII Symposium Syriacum (1996)*, OLA 256, Rome 1998, 499-515.

[7] On this important innovation in the linguistic policy and pastoral attitudes of the Chaldean clergymen, see F.A. Pennacchietti, "La versione neoaramaica di un poema religioso caldeo in lingua curda", in B. Scarcia Amoretti and L. Rostagno (ed.), *Yaad-Naama in memoria di Alessandro Bausani*, vol. II, Roma 1990, 170.

*Manuscript transmission of the text*

Joseph of Telkepe is known as the author of a kind of tetralogy in Neo-Aramaic, which is preserved in nine manuscripts as a complete set under the comprehensive title *'al mdabranuṭā* "On the Divine Economy". This tetralogy is composed of four different *durekyāṭā*, each of them rather lengthy, from around 100 up to 700 stanzas. In fact, Joseph of Telkepe is the first Neo-Aramaic author whose work has been transmitted as a more or less unified corpus.[8] The tetralogy *On the Divine Economy* is made up of 1) a *durekṭā On the Divine Economy*, 2) a second poem *On Revealed Truth*, and two *durekyāṭā* which are exegetical in character: 3) *On the Life-giving Words of Our Lord*, and 4) *On the Parables of the Gospel*.[9]

The text of the poem *On Revealed Truth*, as it is known from the five manuscripts I have been able to collect and collate, is preserved in two main recensions, A and B. The manuscripts preserving rec. A are: Habbi 3, Alqosh 1933, now available in a facsimile edition published by the Chaldean Parish of San Diego CA in 1977, p. 110-127; Katola, North Iraq 1889, now at the British Library in London Or. 4422, f. 73a-86a; Hyvernat, possibly 18th century, now in Washington Syr. 15, f. 66b-72b; Berlin Sachau 223, Mosul/Alqosh 1880-1883, f. 2b-16a. The manuscript preserving rec. B is the Sachau collection of Neo-Aramaic texts, now kept in London Or. 9322, p. 220-234.

Both recensions have the first 23 stanzas in common, but from the 24th stanza onwards they differ in so many ways that it is not possible to publish the text synoptically. The outline of the story is the same, but the two texts are different and rec. B contains many narrative details unknown to rec. A. However, even among the manuscripts preserving rec. A of the poem — to which the present contribution is confined — we can distinguish two different versions. Linguistic and stylistic considerations lead us to think that the manuscripts Habbi 3, Katola and Hyvernat contain a version of rec. A which is closer to the archetype,

[8] Mengozzi, "Neo-Aramaic Manuscripts", p. 33-36. On Joseph of Telkepe, who lived around 1590-1666, see also R. Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur*, Berlin/New York 1976, 99-100; Y. Habbi, "udabā' as-sūriṯ al-awā'il'", *Maǧallat al-maǧma' al-'ilmī* al-'irāqī al-hay'a as-suryānīya 4 (1978), 110-113; F.A. Pennacchietti, "Due pagine da un manoscritto inedito di una poesia religiosa neoaramaica di Yausip Gemdani (XVII sec.)", in A. Vivian (ed.), *Biblische und judaistische Studien. Festschrift für Paolo Sacchi*, Judentum und Umwelt B.29, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 691-692.

whereas the ms. Berlin Sachau 223 reflects later adjustments to a specific idiolect.

The version of rec. A preserved by the majority of the manuscripts reflects a Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect spoken in the mountain area around the Iraqi-Turkish border, where the author seems to have worked as a pastor. The version preserved by the Berlin Sachau manuscript clearly represents a later adaptation of the archetypal text to a distinct idiolect, close to the Neo-Aramaic dialect of the plain of Mosul: morphemes, lexical choices, and especially verbal forms are those well known from the more Southern group of Neo-Aramaic dialects (Mosul, Alqosh, Telkepe).[10]

The existence of different recensions and dialectal versions deserves further study. It is difficult to ascertain, for instance, to what extent oral tradition may have shaped the different recensions. But the history of the transmission and the collation of the extant versions already give by themselves a vivid picture of the literary space in which this kind of early Neo-Aramaic literature emerged and developed. The texts needed to be adapted to different dialectal varieties, being typically local in origin, bounded to one village or group of villages. The literary tradition in the vernacular arose in the dialectal diversity of the Neo-Aramaic Christian communities and clearly encountered major difficulties in attaining a cross-dialectal character, let alone a super-dialectal position.

[9] The *durekṯā* 4) *On Parables* has been published with a German translation in M. Lidzbarski, *Die neu-aramäischen Handschriften der Kgl. Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 2 vol.,Weimar 1896 (reprint Hildesheim 1973). The *durekyāṯā* 2) and 3) of the tetralogy have been translated into German by B. Vandenhoff, "Vier geistliche Gedichte in syrischer und neusyrischer Sprache aus den berliner Handschriften Sachau 188 und 223 übersetzt und mit Einleitung versehen", *OC* 8 (1908), 389-452. As far as I know, Joseph of Telkepe did not write in the classical language. Besides the tetralogy *On the Divine Economy*, one manuscript (Berlin Sachau 223, 113a) attributes to him a *durekṯā On the Childhood of Christ*, which turned out to be a Neo-Syriac adaptation of a Classical Syriac hymn attributed to Giwargis Warda (13th century), which was in turn based upon an Arabic apocryphal *Gospel on Christ's Infancy*. A German translation of both the Syriac and Neo-Syriac version of this poem has been published in Vandenhoff, "Vier geistliche Gedichte", 395-430.

[10] See Pennacchietti "Due pagine", 701 and 705; A. Mengozzi, "The mountains will be covered with snow? On the Fringes of Transitivity in the Neo-Aramaic of Alqosh (North Iraq)", in M. Lamberti and L. Tonelli (ed.), *Afroasiatica Tergestina. Papers from the 9th Italian Meeting of Afroasiatic (Hamito-Semitic) Linguistics*, Trieste April 23-24, 1998, Padova 1999, 83-99. In stanzas 31 to 57 of the Berlin Sachau version the text is considerably altered, but even there the Berlin Sachau text follows the archetypal version to such an extent that it is possible to publish the two versions synoptically.

*Structure and contents of the poem*

One of the formal characteristics of the *durekyāṭā*, possibly derived from the East-Syriac tradition,[11] is a strong presence of the author in the text, especially in prologues and/or epilogues. The poet speaks about himself, about what he is writing, and about his life. Quite commonly, he presents himself as a poor sinner, as is customary in the colophons of Syriac manuscripts. He interacts with his audience, asking his listeners to raise intercessory prayers for him to the Lord.

The author becomes a very important character who surrounds, as it were, the story he is telling. By means of apostrophes and frequent interventions, this fictional authorial character forms the frame of the story or of the stories which are told in the poem. This narrative frame suggests a vivid poet/public interaction and probably reflects within the text the situation in which the poem is performed outside the text. The author, or better, the skilled ballad-singer who plays the role of the author, sings stories to his public — gathered in a church or perhaps around the fire of a farmhouse, after the hard labour of the fields. The bard, poet and singer, speaks with the audience, tells his stories to them, tries to give them relief and to lead them to prayer. Though possibly derived from a motif in Classical Syriac literary tradition, the character of the poor sinner-poet speaking to his readers/listeners may have received a new function, vivid and to some extent dramatic, in the actual *Sitz im Leben* of the modern poems.

It is precisely the high frequency of apostrophes addressed by the author to his public that allows us to distinguish three different narrative sections in the poem *On Revealed Truth*. Apostrophes are mostly accompanied by trinitarian and/or christological doxologies. The occur-

[11] An authorial intervention, generally in the form of a request for intercession on behalf of the poet or his audience, is regularly present in the closing stanzas of Classical Syriac poems attributed to Giwargis Warda (13th century): see the texts published by I. Folkmann, *Ausgewählte nestorianische Kirchenlieder über das Martyrium des heil. Georg von Giwargis Warda*, Kirchhain 1896, and H. Hilgenfeld, *Ausgewählte Gesänge des Giwargis Warda von Arbel*, Leipzig 1904. The rhetorical structure of the first poem published by Folkmann — which is a penitential hymn and has nothing to do with St. George — is composed around the fictional character of the penitent poet, who compares his condition with Biblical sinners from Adam onwards. The occurrence of certain themes and the somewhat baroque use of anaphors and refrains recalls the style of many a penitential *durekyāṭā*, like the poem *On Completeness* or *On Penitence* by Israel of Alqosh, a Classical and Neo-Syriac author and a contemporary of Joseph of Telkepe.

rence of authorial interventions divides the 127 stanzas of the text into the following sections: [12]

1. a prologue (st. 1-25)
2. a christologic hymn *On Revealed Truth* (26-83)
3. an epilogue containing an invocation for the community and the poet (84-127).

The prologue deals with the heavenly orders (st. 1-11) and the story of Adam's creation, fall, and redemption (12-25). Heavenly orders are presented according to the standard medieval angelology, as known from the Pseudo-Dyonisius and, just to mention some works which the author might have had in his library, our text displays the same angelology as the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, the Mosul Syriac version of the *Testament of Adam*, and the popular East-Syriac *Book of the Bee*.[13]

The story of the devils' enmity toward Adam is also told according to a version known from apocryphal sources, such as the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve*, the Greek *Questions of Bartholomew* and *Revelation of Sedrach*, the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, etc. According to these various para-biblical accounts, when God established Adam as new king, viceroy, of the creation, the devils (the bad angels) refused to worship him, being a simple man made of clay, and were punished and lost their position. Their refusal became the cause of enmity between the devil (the devils) and Adam. This account of Adam's fall or some adaptation thereof enjoyed great popularity among Jews, Christians, Mandaeans, Yezidis, and we can read a similar story in the *Qur'an*.[14]

[12] This kind of composition, containing prologue, main text, and epilogue is also known from late East-Syriac liturgical tradition: see, e.g., D. Bundy, "Interpreter of the acts of God and humans: George Warda, historian and theologian of the 13th century", *The Harp* 6.1 (1993), 9. See also the structure of the *durekṯā On the Pestilence in Pioz*: B. Poizat, "La complainte sur la peste de Pioz", in W. Heinrichs (ed.), *Studies in Neo-Aramaic*, Atlanta Georgia 1990, 167-168.

[13] *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, ch. 7-9: R. Roques, G. Heil and M. de Gandillac (eds.), *Denys l'Aréopagite. La hiérarchie céleste*, Sources Chrétiennes 58, Paris 1958; *Cave of Treasures* 1,3: Su-Min Ri (ed.), *La caverne des trésors. Le deux recensions syriaques*, CSCO 486-487, Syr 207-208, Leuven 1987; *Testament of Adam* (Syriac version 2, from a Mosul ms.) 4,1-8: S.E. Robinson, *The Testament of Adam. An examination of the Syriac and Greek traditions*, Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation series 52, Chico, California 1982; *Book of the Bee*, ch. 5: E.A.W. Budge (ed.), *The Book of the Bee*, Anecdota Oxoniensa, Semitic Series 1.2, Oxford 1886.

[14] The extraordinary diffusion of this Middle Eastern myth (see the Bibliographic Appendix), which deserves a detailed comparative study, is too wide to allow one to draw conclusions about the direct source of our Neo-Syriac text, since any cross-religious oral tradition would be a possible candidate together with a Syriac written source like *Cave of Treasures*, 2-3.

The second part of the *durekṭā* is the Neo-Aramaic adaptation of a Classical Syriac hymn *On Revealed Truth*, part of the East-Syriac liturgy for Christmas.[15] In the direct intervention that marks the beginning of this hymn, the author carefully informs us about the meaning of *šrārā galyā* 'revealed, visible Truth', the title of the whole poem and the subject of this particular section: *maḥken ṭlā 'ammā mšiḥāyā. sor d-qāryā-ylē šrārā galyā. mšiḥā barnāšā-ylē w-māryā* 'Let me tell the Christian people the mystery which is called Revealed Truth: Christ is man and Lord' (26a-c).

This christological formula is the leitmotif of the section, in which various incidents from the life of Jesus are presented to demonstrate his divine or his human nature, and functions as a kind of rhythmical refrain, repeated with slight variation as the last line of each stanza: "Christ is truly God... Christ is truly man!". The Revealed Truth is the mystery of the human and divine nature of Christ and this *sor*, mystery made visible in Christ's incarnation, is what the poet sings for his public, the Christian people. The use of the word *sor*, derived from Arabic *sirr*, instead of the Classical Syriac *'rāzā*, leads us to the following remarks on the literary use and functioning of loan words in the poem *On Revealed Truth* by Joseph of Telkepe.

*Literary function of loan words*

The high frequency of loan words in the various Neo-Aramaic dialects — and therefore in the Neo-Aramaic literary texts — is a well-known fact. Many Neo-Aramaic verses are simply Arabic or Kurdish words combined together with Aramaic morphemes and even the grammar of the various Neo-Aramaic dialects shares many features with the neighboring languages. The influence of foreign elements is easily explained by the multilingual context in which the texts emerged and the social position of the Neo-Aramaic speaking communities.[16]

[15] The text of this East-Syriac liturgical hymn for the Holy Nativity is published in P. Bedjan (ed.), *Breviarium iuxta ritum Syrorum orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, Roma 1938 (reprint of 3 vol., Paris 1886-1887), vol. 1, 334-337, and attributed to Khamis bar Qardaḥe (13th century): see A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922 (reprint Berlin 1968), 321 n.5. The title *'al šrārā galyā* is also used to indicate the melody in which the modern *durekṭā* is to be performed: Berlin Sachau 223, f. 2b, and London Sachau 9322, p. 220.

[16] On the impact of neighboring languages on Eastern Neo-Aramaic, see: I. Garbell, "The Impact of Kurdish and Turkish on the Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Persian Azerbaijan and the Adjoining Regions", *JAOS* 85 (1965) 159-177; Y. Sabar, "The Arabic Elements in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic Texts of Nerwa and 'Amādīya. Iraqi Kurdistan",

In the vocabulary of Joseph of Telkepe it is not surprising to find loans from Arabic for words of every-day use: the sinner woman wiped Jesus' feet with her hair instead of her *maḥramā* 'handkerchief' (*On Revealed Truth* 54c); Jesus took a towel (58a-b *foṭā*, Berlin Sachau 57b *kafyā*) to wrap around his loins, and *glelē lay w-'anhi b-'ašāyā*[17] *bišuṭā da-yhuḏā* 'he revealed Judas' wickedness to them while they were at supper' (57a-b). The geographical proximity and the normal exchange patterns among languages which are in contact, when one of them is for some reason in a prestigious position and the other in a more receptive position, account for these every-day loans.[18]

But even a more technical domain of the vocabulary, such as theological and religious terminology, is rich in borrowed terms: God's glory, the majesty of God, is expressed with the Arabic term *'izza*;[19] the Classical Aramaic root *gālē* "to reveal" is almost completely replaced by the root *kāšef*, derived from Arabic; the same for *pāreq* "to save", which is much less common than the equivalent *mḵalleṣ*; the Savior is not *pāroqā* anymore, but *mḵalṣānā*. In the verse *mšiḥā tray 'aṣlē tray kyānē* 'Christ two hypostases (and) two natures' (78b), the author would seem to use the Arabic loan *'aṣlā* instead of the common (Neo-)Syriac term *qnomā* 'hypostasis', which is such a crucial term in the christological debate. This is at least the interpretation of the copyist of the Berlin Sachau manuscript, who preferred to normalize with the classical East-Syriac wording *mšiḥā tray qnomē tray kyānē*. More likely, the poet is here translating the Syriac *kyānā* with an Arabic equivalent, as is fairly common in the style of this kind of text.[20]

*JAOS* 104 (1984); F.A. Pennacchietti, "Verbo neo-aramaico e verbo neo-iranico", in V. Orioles (ed.), *Tipologie della convergenza linguistica. Atti del convegno della Societ Italiana di Glottologia (Bergamo, 17-19 dicembre 1987)*, Pisa 1988, 93-110; O. Kapeliuk, "Is Modern Hebrew the Only"Indo-Europeanized"Semitic Language? And what about Neo-Aramaic", *Israel Oriental Studies* 16 (1996) 59-70; Chyet, "Neo Aramaic and Kurdish", offers a broader socio-historical approach to this subject.

[17] Note the circumstantial clause introduced l'arabe by the conjunction *w-*. On the use of this construction in Modern Standard Arabic and in the dialects, see C. Holes, *Modern Arabic. Structures, Functions and Varieties*, London/New York 1995, 218-219.

[18] Arabic being the dominant culture language of the area, loans may have been borrowed directly from Arabic or through other contact languages, such as Kurdish, Persian or Turkish.

[19] This term occurs also in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic texts of the same period. See Sabar "The Arabic Elements", 208, who lists other examples of loans in three major semantic areas: a) religious, theological, and spiritual terminology; b) political, administrative, and juristic affairs; and c) material culture.

[20] In the Arabic terminology of East-Syrians a common term for 'hypostasis' is *qunūm*, *'uqnūm* (pl. *'aqānīm*), clearly derived from Syriac: see B. Landron, *Chrétiens et*

Yona Sabar, who has published and studied a number of Jewish religious texts written in Neo-Aramaic in the same period and in the same area as our text, notes that one of the typical stylistic features of the Jewish Neo-Aramaic texts is 'the large number of hendiadys, usually each word being from a different language, and occasionally none of them being used in the colloquial dialect.' Sabar observes that this kind of multilingual hendiadys is a trace of a long tradition of literary style. 'The multilingual vicinity of the speakers, with its cross-section of various ancient and new cultures — Kurdish, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Hebrew-Aramaic with its vast religious literature, has made an even stronger impact on the literary style than the colloquial jargons.'[21]

Christian poets clearly exploit the same repertoire of stylistic devices when writing in Neo-Aramaic. Loan words from neighboring languages like Arabic or Kurdish, are also used in the Neo-Syriac poems in combination with each other or with genuine Aramaic terms. Sabar correctly speaks of hendiadys, since it is often very difficult to recognize the exact semantic relationship between the two terms used in such multilingual pairs.

In *On Revealed Truth* 24b, e.g., Christ is described as *kāmel tāmam b-paġrā w-nafšā* 'perfect and complete in body and soul', with terms of similar meaning asyndetically juxtaposed,[22] both derived directly or indirectly from Arabic. In 45a *'arjē w-šellē muqimilē* 'he caused the lame and the crippled to stand up', we have two terms belonging to the same semantic field of physical handicap and both derived, again, directly or indirectly, from Arabic.

More interestingly, sometimes the poet seems to translate from one language to another. In *rā'yē w-šēfānē sgedlaylē* 'shepherds glorified

*musulmans en Irak: Attitudes nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam*, Paris 1994, 178-182 and 196. On the other hand, Arabic *'aṣl* 'root, principle, origin' seems to me a plausible rendering of *kyānā*: for Neo-Syriac *'aṣlā* 'nature, origin', see A. J. Maclean, *Dictionary of the dialects of Vernacular Syriac as spoken by the Eastern Syrians of Kurdistan, North-West Persia and the plain of Mosul*, Oxford 1901 (reprint Amsterdam 1972), 18.

[21] Y. Sabar, *Pʿšaṭ wayʿhī bʿšallaḥ A Neo-Aramaic Midrash on Beshallaḥ (Exodus)*, Wiesbaden 1976, xxx-xxxi; see also Sabar, "The Arabic Elements", 201. For a general survey of Jewish Neo-Aramaic literature, see Y. Sabar, *The Folk Literature of the Kurdistan Jews: an Anthology*, Yale Judaica Series 23, New Haven/London 1982, esp. xxxii-xl.

[22] Alternatively, one could translate 'completely perfect' with *tāmam* used as an adverb. Note the Alqosh Neo-Syriac spelling *tāmam* of Arabic *tamām*, possibly reflecting a "Chaldean" pronunciation of long *a* in open and short *a* in closed syllables; on the distribution of long and short *a*, see R. Hoberman, "The Modern Chaldean Pronunciation of Classical Syriac", in A. Afsaruddin and A.H. Mathias Zahniser (eds.), *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East: Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff*, Winona Lake Indiana 1997, 253-265.

him' (37a), the Aramaic word *rā'yē* for 'shepherds' is juxtaposed to Kurdish, Persian, or Turkish *šēfānē*.[23] In *b-ḥaylā w-ḥukmā d-'allāhuṯēh* 'with the power and the authority of his divinity' (51b), it is not clear whether Arabic *ḥukm* is a translation or a quasi-synonym of Aramaic *ḥaylā*. In *w-dinā w-šar' b-'iḏēh msupellē* 'he delivered in his hand the jurisdiction and the right' (71c), again, the Classical Syriac term *dinā* is almost translated into an Arabic equivalent. In *gunahkar hwēli w-ḥaṭṭāyā* 'I was guilty and a sinner' (115a), we find in the same verse the Kurdish (Persian) word and the Aramaic equivalent for 'guilty, sinner'. This stylistic use of hendiadys poses interesting questions about their actual literary function: why should an author juxtapose almost equivalent terms in one verse line? The abundance of multilingual hendiadys suggests a kind of cross-linguistic virtuosity of the poet. Crossing the boundaries between the linguistic codes that are either partly or well known to his audience, the author seems to display ostentatiously the lexical richness and the variety of languages at his command. This rhetorical use of hendiadys is probably what Sabar has in mind, when he singles out the distance between the vocabulary used in such pairs and the colloquial language. The multilingual Christians and Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan certainly represent a perfect audience to appreciate this interruption of the linguistic continuity, realized by means of conscious borrowings and multilingual lexical choices.

But the frequency of synonymous pairs derived from different languages may also represent a stylization of the pedagogical purposes of poets who through these rhetorical features intended to enrich the vocabulary of their simpler listeners. This pedagogic intention would make sense especially when the multilingual hendiadys are construed with equivalent terms, one of them being Classical Syriac and the other a loan, as is the case with *tray 'aṣlē tray kyānē* (?), *rā'yē w-šēfānē*, *ḥaylā w-ḥukmā*, *dinā w-šar'*, *gunahkar w-ḥaṭṭāyā* in the poem by Joseph of Telkepe. The author seems to translate the traditional term with a foreign word that may have been more familiar to the every-day vocabulary of his audience, or, alternatively, he indicates the correspondence between a familiar Syriac term and a term known from the multilingual vicinity. The hendiadys could have the function of striking a balance between the learned classical tradition and the receptiveness of the vernacular, which was exposed and open to the influence of foreign languages.

[23] *šibānē* in Sachau and Hyvernat manuscripts: see *čāwbān*, *šēbānā* in Maclean, *Dictionary of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac*, 125.

*Polemic use of Arabic loans*

In some cases, the use of Arabic words has a clear polemic function. In stanzas 84 to 87 a trinitarian doxology, followed by an apostrophe directed to the audience, marks the beginning of the epilogue which is devoted to a living invocation for the community and the poet:

> Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Spirit
> who gave us an open mouth
> and a story in a truthful language
> so that we praise and give glory to him.
>
> Come, let us glorify, oh Christians
> and let us keep on beseeching him,
> that he make for us peaceful times
> and save us from the Muslims!
>
> That he save us from the Ismaelites,
> from the gentiles and the barbarians!
> Life has been made bitter to us.
> May Our Lord establish (back) the Greeks!
>
> That he establish the Greeks in our days
> so that we can (re-)build our churches!
> That he bring peace to our countries
> and protect our priests and pastors!

What has been translated as 'a story in a truthful language' is in the original *ḥadiṯ b-lešānā ṣaḥiḥā* (84c), where both terms *ḥadiṯ* and *ṣaḥiḥā* are borrowed from Arabic. In this context, *ḥadiṯ* must be understood as 'story, narrative, message', and in our text the *ḥadiṯ* is the history of salvation, the story of the Divine Economy, the message that God handed over to mankind in general, and to poets in particular, so that they might spread it with the open mouth they have received and that they might give glory to him.[24] But of course, *ḥadiṯ* has a clear Islamic ring,[25] as a Qur'anic term indicating God's revelation[26] and as the technical term of the Islamic canonic traditions relating to the Prophet. *ṣaḥiḥ* is the Arabic

[24] The open mouth (elsewhere speech and eloquence) given by God to mankind and poets so that they may glorify him is a metaliterary theme very popular in early Neo-Syriac poetry. Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe intended their poetry as a liturgical act and explicitly described it as such.

[25] Commenting upon Arabic loans in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic literature, Sabar observes: 'It is somewhat surprising to see such emotionally loaded Islamic terms used for Jewish religious matters, instead of (or together with) Hebrew ones.' Sabar, "The Arabic Elements", 208 n. 67.

[26] See, e.g. *Qur'an* 18:6, 39:23 ('God has sent down the fairest news/revelation/discourse as a Book…').

term for 'correct, truthful, reliable' and in combination with 'language' recalls the Christian-Islamic discussion about the superiority of the one language or the other, Syriac or Arabic, as a reliable, truthful means used by God in his revelation.[27] Or, even more specifically, the whole expression seems to echo the Qur'anic motif of Arabic clearness and truthfulness.[28]

Using Arabic words, the poet affirms vigorously the superiority of the Christian revelation and of the history of salvation that God has accomplished through his son Jesus Christ, truly man and truly God. This story is told in a truthful language, which could be either the Syriac of the classical tradition or the language of a poet, who did not disregard the use of Arabic loans to reinforce his own argument.

The explicit polemic against Muslims that follows in the text demonstrates that the use of Arabisms and Islamisms such as *ḥadiṯ* and *ṣaḥiḥā* cannot be culturally neutral. The same God who gave the Christians an open mouth and a glorious story to tell, is explicitly invoked as liberator against the Muslims. The real *ḥadiṯ*, the Christian *ḥadiṯ*, may also be seen as a foreshadowing of the liberation from the Muslims and the establishment of peace.

Crossing the boundaries between the two languages, Aramaic and Arabic, a loan may serve to confront the different identities and belief systems that the two languages represent. An Arabic and Islamic term as *ḥadiṯ* is used to reverse the Islamic position in the discussion about language and revelation. A loan may become a polemic appropriation of the linguistic resources of the adversaries.

*Bibliographic Appendix on the Angels' Refusal to Worship Adam*

Various accounts of the angels' (devils') refusal to worship Adam are well attested in Greek and Latin Christian sources. Latin (and with some variation Georgian and Armenian) *Life of Adam and Eve* 11-17: G.A. Anderson and M.E Stone, *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, Early Judaism and Its Literature 5, Atlanta, Georgia 1994, 10-13. Greek *Revelation of Sedrach* 5,2-7: O. Wahl (ed.), *Apocalypsis Esdrae, Apocalypsis Sedrach, Visio Beati Esdrae*, Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece, Leiden 1977. *Questions of Bartholomew* 52-60: J.K. Elliott, *The*

[27] On the Syriac-Arabic confrontation in East-Syrian Arabic authors, see Landron, *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak*, 254-259.

[28] See, e.g., *Qur'an* 16:103, 19:97, 26:192-195, 44:58, 46:12.

*Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, Oxford 1993. *Teaching of Our Lord* 23-25: F. Nau, "Une didascalie de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ (ou: Constitutions des Saints Apôtres)", *ROC* 12 (1907), 225-254.

The story is known from an interpolation in the Russian family of manuscripts of *III Baruch* and is rejected in the Greek and Slavonic versions of *Palaea Historica*: see H.E. Gaylord, "How Satanael lost his —el", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33.1 (1982), 303-309. It is also presented as 'heretical' in a Coptic homily *On the Devil and Michael*: G. Lafontaine, "Une homélie copte sur le diable et sur Michel, attribuée à Grégoire le théologien", *Le Muséon* 92 (1979), 37-60 and is known in Gnostic and sectarian communities, like the Mandaeans (*Ginzā* 34,18 in the German translation of M. Lidzbarski (ed.), *Ginzā. Der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer*, Göttingen 1925) and the Yezidis (I. Joseph (ed.), "Yezidi Texts", *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 25 (1909), 235-236).

For the Qur'anic passages on the devil's (Iblīs') confrontation with Adam, "resulting in Iblīs condemnation, and his revenge on mankind through the seduction of Adam and Eve", see P.J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology*, Studies in the History of Religions 44, Leiden 1983, 18-23; on the peculiar Šī'ī interpretation, see M.J. Kister, "Ādam: a Study of some Legends in Tafsīr and Ḥadīṯ Literature", in J.L. Kraemer (ed.), *Israel Oriental Studies* 13, Leiden 1993, 141-142.

The motif of Satan's refusal to bow before Adam is known in Jewish sources only in a very late midrashic passage (11th century), recorded by R. Martin in his *Pugio Fidei*; according to A. Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 35 (1944-45), 383, "through the influence of the Koran, the original apocryphal motif re-enters rabbinic thought."

# THE GIFT OF POETRY:
# KHIDR AND JOHN THE BAPTIST AS PATRON SAINTS OF MUSLIM AND ARMENIAN *'ĀŠIQS — AŠUŁS*

THEO MAARTEN VAN LINT

- And who recognized that, that you are a poet?
Who reckoned you among the poets?
- No one... And who reckoned me among the human race?
- But did you learn that?
- What?
- To be a poet?
Didn't you try to finish an Institute where they prepare.
Where they teach.
- I didn't think... I didn't think... that that is given by education.
- By what, then, according to you?
- I think, that that... (forlorn) is from God.

The trial of Iosif Brodski
Leningrad, 1964[1]

## *Poetry and divine inspiration*

Where does poetry come from? How do poets succeed in composing poetry? What relationship do poetry and magic, poets and shamans have with each other? Why is it that creation through the word has been so intimately connected with religious notions? Such general questions have been asked and variously answered through the ages by different writers of varying cultural traditions. It therefore hardly seems justified to repeat them at the beginning of a brief look into the relationship of Armenian Christian and Muslim poets — mostly Turkish — with their respective patron saints from about the sixteenth century onwards. However, some of these questions have to be asked, since they bear on the legitimation of poets and poetry among the Armenian *ašułs* and their Turkish-Muslim counterparts, the *'ašıqs*.[2]

[1] From the clandestine transcript by Frida Vigdorova of the trial in which Brodsky (1940-1996) was convicted as a parasite and sentenced to five years of hard labour. See Efim Ētkind, *Process Iosifa Brodskogo* [The Trial of Iosif Brodsky], London 1988, 112.

[2] Pertev Naili Boratav, "La littérature des 'āšiq", in Pertev Naili Boratav (ed.), *Philo-*

The divine origin of poetry is a persistent aspect of its characterization, and inspiration by an element outside the poet is its manifestation. This has been a central notion of the art, in Western poetry at least, ever since the first invocation of the Muses, and has remained an element of its legitimation in an age, which no longer holds that a divine afflatus is the sole cause of the poetic urge. In the twentieth century, the Brasilian poet João Cabral de Melo Neto stated that "A poem is something which also could have been left unwritten", pointing to a deliberate act of will on the part of the poet, reducing the inspirational origin of a poem to an irrelevant accessory.[3]

The relationship between shamanism and poetry, relevant both in Greek poetry and in non-European traditions, has been studied extensively by, amongst others, orientalists, classical scholars, and anthropologists, while the role of the poet as keeper of the traditional lore and satirist has engaged students of matters Celtic and Germanic, and others.[4] In Slavic and notably Russian poetry the concept of the poet as a secular priest or prophet professing the *logos* explains to some extent the persecution poets were subjected to by the Communist regime, itself, as a builder of paradise on earth, an usurper of truth and its expression in

*logicae turcicae fundamenta* II, Wiesbaden 1965, 129. Garegin Lewonean, "Ašułneri masin, Patmakan k'nnakan hayeac'k'" [About the *ašuł*s. An Historical-Critical View], *Azgagrakan handēs* X (1903), 41, reprinted in *Erker* [Works], Yerevan 1963, 52, places the emergence of the *'āšiqs — ašuł*s at the end of the sixteenth century [Levonyan 1963]. H.S. Sahakyan, "Ašułakan poezia" in *Hay nor grakanut'an patmut'yun* [History of Modern Armenian Literature] vol. 1, Yerevan 1962, 251-272, esp. 251, accepts this dating. Haig Berberian, "La littérature arméno-turque", in Boratav, *Philologicae turcicae fundamenta* II, 811 places the beginning at the start of the seventeenth century. See also below, on the formation of *ašuł* schools.

[3] João Cabral de Melo Neto, quoted in the afterword in August Willemsen (Selection, trans., and afterword), João Cabral de Melo Neto, *Gedichten* [Poems], Leiden 1981, 30.

[4] The literature on the subject is vast. See e.g. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, Los Angeles/London 1951, which discusses both shamanism among the Greeks and the various aspects of poetic and prophetic madness or *mania*; Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic. Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition*, Oxford 1995; M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford 1997; Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer (ed.), *Shamanism. Soviet Studies of Traditional Religion in Siberia and Central Asia*, Armonk & London 1990; Morton W. Bloomfield, Charles W. Dunn, *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies*, Cambridge 1989. For a brief survey of the development of inspiration by gods and Muses, perceived as an inner inspiration abiding in the genius from the 18th century onward, to a psychological interpretation as the workings of the unconscious in the twentieth century see Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*, Stuttgart 1989[7] 413a; for a more elaborate treatment, T.V.F. Brogan, "Inspiration" in Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (co-editors), *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton 1993, 609a-610b.

language. The relationship between the creative word and its origin has moved the thoughts of philosophers and theologians, while the function of memory in the process of composition from antiquity through the early modern period is receiving the attention of a growing number of scholars.[5] The growth or making of a poem has been the subject of study by poets themselves, too.[6]

*The functions of the poets-performers in the 'āšıq — ašŭł tradition.*

A type of poets in Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Iran, known as *ašŭł* in Armenian and *âşık*[7] in Turkish (both derived from Arabic *'āšıq* "lover"[8]), appear from about the sixteenth century on. Earlier, the Armenian ones were known as *gusans* (derived from Parthian *gōsān*) whose works unfortunately have come down to us in a small number of fragments only, belying their function and popularity in pre- and early Christian Armenia.[9] The functions of the *gusans* and the *ašułs* were very much the same. Boyce writes about the Parthian *gōsāns:* "The Sasanian

[5] E.g. Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London 1966; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, Cambridge 1990; Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: the Reconstruction of the Past*, Cambridge 1992; Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge 1998.

[6] E.g. Octavio Paz, *El arco y la lira*, Mexico 1956; Beda Alleman (Hrsg.), *Ars poetica. Texte von Dichtern des 20. Jahrhunderts zur Poetik*, Darmstadt 1966; Patrick S. Diehl, *The Medieval European Religious Lyric. An ars poetica*, Berkeley etc., 1985. On late classical and medieval poets' descriptions of or comments upon their dream visions and the poems which resulted from them, see below. A central poem on initiation and divine inspiration in Russian poetry is Pushkin's 1826 work *Prorok*, which, elaborating upon Is. 6:1-7, gives expression to the theme as it was continued into our own time. Jorge Luis Borges dedicated the seventh and final essay of *Siete Noches* to blindness, one of the characteristics traditionally associated with inspired poets, whose eyes of the mind were seeing clearly while their physical ones were extinguished. Many of the Armenian *ašułs*, though not all, were blind. Blindness was no prerequisite to being an *ašuł*. See Jorge Luis Borges, "La Ceguera", in *Siete Noches*, Mexico-Madrid-Buenos Aires 1980, 141-160. A study on Ukrainian minstrels stresses blindness as a central feature of these minstrels' characterization, see Natalie Kononenko, *Ukrainian Minstrels. And the Blind Shall Sing* [Folklores and Folk Cultures of Eastern Europe], Armonk, London & New York 1998.

[7] Here the orthography adopted in Boratav, *Fundamenta* II will be followed however, with ı not ï: *'āšıq*.

[8] B. Lewis, "'āshik", *EI*, vol I, 697.

[9] On the Iranian *gōsān*, see Mary Boyce, "The Parthian *gôsan* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition" JRAS (1957), 12-45. The similarity in themes treated by the Parthian and Armenian poets is made clear by Russell when he compares the fragment known as the dying words of King Artašēs I with turns of phrase in a Pahlavi text probably translated from a Parthian original, entitled *Ayādgār ī Zārērān* "The Memorial of Zārēr", see James R. Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkūranc'i and the Medieval Armenian Lyric Tradition*, [University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 7], Atlanta, GA 1987, 2-3.

minstrel was the entertainer of king and commoner [...] present at the graveside and at the feast; eulogist, satirist, story-teller, musician; recorder of past achievements and commentator of his own times."[10] The *ašułs* played an important role in Armenian society from the sixteenth or seventeenth century until the catastrophe of the 1915 genocide. Even now some *ašułs* continue to be active, combining their poems and stories in *dastans*, another word of Iranian origin, and *hekaye*, a word derived from Arabic, as in the case of the Armenian *ašuł* known as Gusan Igit (Gełam Martirosian), who describes the recent war over Karabagh.[11] The phenomenon of a type of poet recognizable by a specific name, like the troubadours in the romance languages, calls for an explanation. The *ašułs-'āšıqs* are remarkable for being adherents of two different religions in a world which was divided to a high extent along religious lines, while at the same time belonging to a group with its own code, resembling a guild, including schooling, initiation rites and contests — elements reminiscent of the bardic schools in Ireland.[12]

[10] M. Boyce, "Middle Persian Literature", *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Leiden 1968, 55, cf. Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i*, 2.

[11] S. Peter Cowe, "The Art of Actuality: Contemporary *Dastan* of an Armenian *Ašuł*", *Edebiyât* NS 4 (1993), 267 -279. From about 1960, as part of a language reform, the title *ašuł* with its foreign connotations was often replaced with the more indigenous sounding *gusan*. (Likewise, in the designation of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Armenia the Russian loanword *Respublika* yielded to the indigenous *Hanrapetut'yun*.) Titles of collections of poems by *ašułs* also show this tendency: *Hay ašułner* (1937), *Hay gusanner* (1957), including works by Sayat'-Nova (these books were compiled by one and the same person); *Hay ašułner XVII-XVIII dd.* (1961). See also Cowe, *The Art of Actuality*, 276 n. 9; N. T'ahmizyan, "Ašuł", *Haykakan sov takan hanragitaran* [Soviet Armenian Encyclopedia], Vol 1, Yerevan 1974, 494a.

[12] A description of the schooling program, the exam, and the initiation into the Bardic Order in Ireland as it existed there into the seventeenth, and in Scotland into the eighteenth century is given in Osborn Bergin, *Bardic Poetry (A Lecture delivered before the National Literary Society, Dublin, 15th April 1912)*, in his *Irish Bardic Poetry*, Dublin 1984, 3-22. Bergin characterizes this poetry and its composer-performers as follows (3-4): "Bardic Poetry of any period is easily distinguished by its form. A great deal of it is not really what a modern critic would call poetry in the higher sense of the word. But though it may lack inspiration, it is never wanting in artistic finish. For we must remember that the Irish *file* or *bard* was not necessarily an inspired poet. That he could not help. He was, in fact, a professor of literature and a man of letters, highly trained in the use of a polished literary medium, belonging to a hereditary caste in an aristocratic society, holding an official position therein by virtue of his training, his learning, his knowledge of the history and traditions of his country and his clan. He discharged, as O'Donovan pointed out many years ago, the functions of a modern journalist. He was not a song writer. He was often a public official, a chronicler, a political essayist, a keen and satirical observer of his fellow-countrymen. At an earlier period he had been regarded as a dealer in magic, a weaver of spells and incantations, who could blast his enemies by the venom of his verse, and there are traces down to the most recent times of a lingering belief, which was not, of course, confined to Ireland, in the efficacy of a well-turned

The *ašułs* were both original poets and performers of works written by their contemporaries and their predecessors. In many respects, their world was the world of the oral tradition. They performed in public, and recited their works and those the tradition provided them with by heart, accompanied by musical instruments. They also composed the melodies for their poems, and made new poems on existing melodies. Sometimes the *ašuł* improvised. He had to when he engaged in a poetic contest, where he reacted to the words of his opponent, cunningly changing lines and altering rhyme words to outdo his rival. Not all *ašułs* were illiterate. We possess the *daftars*, the notebooks of several of them.[13]

*Ašułs* were prompted to travel by the character of their trade: once the local audience knew their repertoire, they wanted to hear something new and the *ašułs* moved elsewhere to perform for a variety of audiences, whose preferences they had to bear in mind while choosing their register and style. An exception formed those *ašułs* who were attached to people in high positions such as kings and the sultan. Often they would stay with their patrons for a protracted period, unless they fell out of grace, a situation we have a moving example of in the person and poetry of Sayat'-Nova.

A young *ašuł* learned the repertoire from an older *ašuł*, with whom he travelled. The memorization of the body of tales and poems transmitted by tradition and learning how to perform them was an important element of this apprenticeship. He also learned from his master the rules of behaviour during a contest. This process of learning would take years, and was taken very seriously, since the *ašuł* was the vessel by which the cultural heritage was transmitted.[14]

The year 1500 for the emergence of the *ašułs* is an approximation. The first mention of an *ašuł* in Armenian that I am aware of occurs in a poem ascribed to Kostandin Erznkac'i, who died no later than around 1320. However, the manuscript in which it occurs dates from the seven-

malediction. He might be a poet, too, if in addition to his training he was gifted with the indefinable power, the true magic, of poetry. But whether he was a poet in the higher sense or not, he always composed in verse." Many elements of these poets' craft coincide with the characterization given by Boyce of the Parthian *gōsān*. We will see in the course of this article to which extent this description is at variance with the situation of the Armenian and Turkish poets, and where it applies to them as well. See also Paul Gaechter, *Die Gedächtniskultur in Irland*, [Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft], Innsbruck 1970.

[13] Sayat'-Nova's *daftar*, *tetrak* in Armenian, was written in 1765, and published in facsimile, see B.L. Č'ugaszyan, P.M. Muradyan, *Sayat'-Nova. Xałer* [Poems], Yerevan 1963.

[14] For this paragraph see Boratav, *Fundamenta* II, 130.

teenth century, leaving open the possibility of an interpolation or change of text, although the word makes perfect sense in this love poem. The poet sings, complains about his unrequited love, a setting eminently suitable for a poet to designate himself as an *ašuł*. It may therefore be part of the original text after all, pointing to the poet's inner torment rather than his social position as a poet belonging to a certain school of poets, for these did not come into being until much later.[15]

*Schools of ašułs*

In an important article about Armeno-Turkish literature, Haig Berberian distinguishes three schools of *ašułs*, all evolving around the main cultural centres of the era.[16] The earliest one was the school of Persia, founded around 1640 in New Julfa, just south of Isfahan, the capital of the Safavid empire, to which Shah Abbas I in 1604 had deported the Armenians of Julfa on the river Arax. The languages used by the *ašułs* connected with it were Armenian, Persian, and what is now called Azeri. This school's most famous *ašuł* was Łul Arut'in.

The school of Turkey flourished from about 1730 to 1880, and had as its centre the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople. Philosophical and mystical tendencies can be detected in the works of this school. The possible influence of some of the most celebrated Ottoman poets should not be excluded.[17] The literary standard of the works produced in this circle is deemed considerably higher by Berberian than that of the preceding centuries. This remark not only comments on the literary

[15] A. Srapyan, *Kostandin Erznkac'i. Tałer* [Kostandin Erznkac'i. Poems], Yerevan 1962, 160; Th.M. van Lint, *Kostandin Erznkac'i. An Armenian Religious Poet*, PhD dissertation, Leiden 1996, 361-373. We find the term *ašuł* in the work of Grigoris, Catholicos of Aghtamar (died before 1542). See M. Avdalbegyan, *Grigoris Alt'amarc'i XVI dar, usumnasirut'yun, k'nnakan bnagrer ev canot'ut'yunner* [*Grigoris Alt'amarc'i*. 16th Century. Study, Critical Edition and Notes], Yerevan 1963, 133 (poem 37, l. 28). Many *hayrens* were erroneously attributed to a sixteenth-century poet called Nahapet K'uč'ak, often considered an *ašuł*. We now know that in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century an *ašuł* called Ašeł Nahapet existed. For literature on Armenian *ašułs*, see Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature 1500-1920, with an Introductory History*, Detroit 2000, 633-634.

[16] Berberian, *La littérature arméno-turque*, 811-812.

[17] Berberian, *La littérature arméno-turque*", 811 mentions Fuzūlī (d. 1555) "generally considered the greatest Turkish-Islamic poet" (Alessio Bombaci, *Histoire de la littérature turque*, Paris 1968, 203), Bāqī (1526-1600) "the greatest representative of erotic-mystical Ottoman lyrical poetry" (Bombaci, *Histoire*, 284) and Nābī (d. 1712) "the greatest representative of the Persianizing style and one of the most often imitated Ottoman poets" (Bombaci, *Histoire*, 315).

merit of the poets associated with this school, but also indicates that there had been *ašuł*s long before they were organized in schools. In the nineteenth century, the Armenian Kešiš-ołlu was *ašuł* of Sultan 'Abdülmeğīd.

The third school Berberian distinguishes is the School of Georgia, centred around the court of Erekli II, King of Georgia, and founded by Sayat'-Nova in the 1750s. This school had many other centres in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, such as Erzurum, Kars, Van, Alexandropol (Gyumri), Yerevan, Ganca, Shamakhi, and others.[18]

Each of these centres had its celebreties, and while over four hundred *ašuł*s are known by name, many others enjoyed but limited renown and toured the countryside, where they performed at village feasts, marriage parties, funerals, or baptisms and held their contests in the *chāy-khāne*, the local tea house, or in the *meydān*, the village or city square.[19] The majority of these *ašuł*s composed in Armenian and Turkish or Azeri, and some just in Turkish or Azeri.

The *ašuł*s were associated with various social groups. Those who worked in an urban setting were strongly influenced by classical Ottoman literature. These *ašuł*s had a more or less intellectual audience and were invited to the houses of the nobility, and even the court. Poets travelling around the countryside, where even the cities maintained a rural culture, were invited to the houses of the *ağas* and *beys*, and performed at local weddings and other celebrations. A third group probably did not comprise Armenians, since its representatives travelled with the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. The fourth and final group consisted of poets who were steeped in the religious-mystical teaching of one or another of the religious (sometimes sectarian) orders. It is supposed that the adoption of non-Muslim poets into an order was least fraught with difficulties in the *Bektaši* order, which was open to communion with non-Muslims, among them Armenian *ašuł*s.[20]

[18] Hasmik Sahakyan, *Hay ašułner XVII-XVIII d.d.*, Yerevan 1961 is organized according to this geographical principle.

[19] A list of *ašuł*s known by name is given in Levonyan, *Ašułneri masin*, 84-89. However, this also contains names of the *tałasac'ner* and *gusans* of the previous period, with the author claiming to provide a full list of all these poets known over the past thousand years. Berberian 1965, 811 provides the number of "over four hundred".

[20] Boratav, *Fundamenta* II, 131 and 141. On the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and its Christian subjects, see Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis (eds.) *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols, New York 1982. On the relationship between the Bektāšis and the Christians, a.o. the Armenians, cf. F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols, Oxford 1929, 564-596. On Khidr as the patron saint of the Bektāšis in Asia Minor, Hasluck *Christianity and Islam*, 570-571. On the legendary

The formalization of the *ašułs* in the various schools brought along changes in the type of poetry composed. Certain types of poems were favoured, while others, such as the *hayrēn*, were no longer used for original compositions, although they continued to be recited as part of the poetic heritage.[21]

*The position of poets prior to the establishment of the ašuł schools*

While in monastic circles the composition of poems and other works of literature may be considered within the wider framework of meditation and prayer on the one hand, and of didactic purposes on the other, for poets working outside these religious orders the legitimation to compose poems had to be more precisely defined. As long as society was predominantly religious, the art of poetry was understood as a divinely inspired profession. It seems to be a recent phenomenon, perhaps limited to the twentieth century, that the rites of initiation of an *'āšıq* become part of his *persona* as a poet rather than of his actual autobiography.[22] Such a situation is likely to continue as long as society, unlike the performing *ašuł* himself, considers poetic talent a divine gift, obtained through an act of initiation, and is only therefore legitimate.[23]

The *ašułs* emerged after the condemnation of the Church of poets as the supposed carriers of sinful pagan lore and attitudes had apparently

account of Ḥaǧǧi Bektāš's arrangements for his funeral as told to his disciple and successor, where the expected Khidr turns out to be the same person as Ḥāǧǧi Bektāš, see Altan Gökalp, "Hızır, Ilyas, Hidrellez: Les mâitres du temps, le temps des hommes", in Rémy Dor & Michèle Nicholas, *Quand le crible était dans la paille... Hommage à Pertev Naili Boratav*, Paris 1978, 211-231, esp. 225. The text also appears in Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr. Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* [Beiruter Texte und Studien, 79], Beirut/Stuttgart 2000, 529-530, §152. See below, on the identity of Elijah and Khidr.

[21] A.Š. Mnac'akanyan, *Hayrenner*, Yerevan 1995, 11. The various types of poems and the instruments used by the *ašułs* during their performances are listed in Levonyan, *Ašułneri masin*, 145-187 and 200-227; the types of poems used by Sayat'-Nova are studied in Charles Dowsett, *Sayat'-Nova. An 18-th Century Troubadour. A Biographical and Literary Study* [CSCO 561], Louvain 1997, esp. 234-364.

[22] Boratav, *Fundamenta II*, 130 is less inclined to envisage the reality of a metaphysical initiation at any period, calling it a "réalité suggestive et subjective".

[23] Erdener recorded several instances of twentieth-century *'āšıqs* who were not initiated into the craft in the traditional way, i.e. by a dream vision, but who pretended they were, for fear of losing respect in the eyes of their public. It is regrettable that this very interesting study, published in a series named after a great scholar of the oral tradition, is disfigured by pointless digressions about alleged Armenian terrorism, and is couched in a nationalistic idiom where there is no place for Armenian contributions to the field. See Yıldıray Erdener, *The Song Contests of Turkish Minstrels. Improvised Poetry Sung to Traditional Music* [Milman Parry Studies in Oral Tradition 1], New York & London 1995.

lost its strength, as a consequence of the loss of Armenian independence and the limited authority the Church wielded under Muslim domination. Their predecessors, the *gusans*, had never really disappeared, as can be concluded from invective against them in clerical literature, from the pen of the fifth-century Catholicos Yovhannēs Mandakuni up to comments by the thirteenth-century *vardapet* Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, himself an accomplished poet.[24] Moreover, one of the continuators of the tenth-century historian T'ovma Arcruni describes how King Gagik of Vaspurakan held feasts in the royal hall where *gusans* and dancing girls performed.[25] Secular authorities would have acted in much the same way as the Armenian king.

The predominant world view before and during the time in which the *ašułs* were active, was religious. The poet needed a legitimation for his work within the framework of that world view. For the man of the Church this consisted in his clerical education by a doctor of theology, but more was needed for some of the lyrical poets, the *tałasac'ner* who emerged from the margins of clerical life, especially since their subject matter was often love for a human being, depicted against a background of nature. In Armenian poetry we find such poets from the thirteenth century onward. These poets are mostly members of the clergy and write in genres that emancipated from the various poetic genres used in church, although verse forms from folk poetry had been incorporated into ecclesiastical poetry as early as the tenth century, in the work of Grigor Narekac'i. After initial publications towards the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, this group of poets became better known through the critical editions of their works published in Soviet Armenia.[26] Thus while for poets like Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, Frik, and

[24] For references, see C.J.F. Dowsett, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movsēs Dasxuranc'i* [London Oriental Series 8], 52, n. 3; Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i*, 2; Cowe, "The Art of Actuality", 267. On one occasion Yovhannēs Erznkac'i refers condemningly to *gusans'* performances combined with lewd dancing and wine drinking not, as one would expect, at gatherings of secular authorities, but of clergymen giving themselves over to them, feasting instead of fasting; see Ē.M. Bałdasaryan, *Hovhannes Erznkac'in ev nra xratakan arjakě* [Hovhannes Erznkac'i and his Didactic Prose], Yerevan 1977, 123.

[25] Robert W. Thomson (translation and commentary), *Thomas Artsruni. History of the House of the Artsrunik'*, Detroit 1985, 357 (Arm. text, 296).

[26] The first series of publications coincided with the collection of folk literature and folk songs by means of fieldwork carried out in the nineteenth century in the vein of the German national movement by Sruantjeanc', Abełyan, Komitas, and others, and by translations of their works by e.g. Archag Chopanian in *Chants populaires arméniens*, Paris, 1903; *Les trouvères arméniens*, Paris, 1906; and the three volumes of *La Roseraie d'Ar-*

Xac'atur Keč'aṙec'i (thirteenth century), Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i (fourteenth century), Grigoris Alt'amarc'i (sixteenth century), Nersēs Mokac'i (sixteenth-seventeenth century), and Petros Łap'anc'i and Bałdasar Dpir (eighteenth century) their legitimacy was vouched for by their ecclesiastical status (in some cases that of a bishop, or even of a Catholicos), this was not the case for Kostandin Erznkac'i.

His authority was challenged by his audience, who ask "How can this man recite such a poem, since he did not study much with a *vardapet*?". The poet answers in style, with a poem about his calling in a vision when he was fifteen years old, and his subsequent realization that he had become able to write poems.[27] In his vision Kostandin beholds a young man clothed in garments of light, whom he addresses as "Lord", probably indicating Christ. The young man treads on the prostrated poet-to-be, thus conferring his gift of the word upon him, to which the poet later refers as "manna", given to him by God. The vision reveals itself as an initiation. This is a happy event, bringing along a sense of intoxication with divine love, as if with wine. The poet asks for a royal gift, and afterwards for a repetition of the vision, which is not granted to him. This is in line with its initiatory character, as is its effect, which becomes clear as Kostandin realizes that he is capable of writing poems.[28]

*ménie*, Paris, I, 1918; II, 1923; III, 1929, in which he presented the poetry in conjunction with Armenian manuscript illumination, then still virtually unknown in the West.

[27] Th.M. van Lint, "The Poet's Legitimation: the Case of Kostandin Erznkac'i", in J.J.S. Weitenberg (ed.) *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Literature*, [Dutch Studies in Armenian Language and Literature 3], Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA 1995, 11-28.

[28] The description of the young man in the vision is given twice, in the title and in the text of the poem. The title reads: "Es patmem jez yałags teslean imoy, zor tesi zarmanali tesil, minč' i vank' kac'i hngetasan amac', zor tesi ayr mi aregaknazgest ew li lusoy", "I will tell you about my vision, about that wonderful vision that I saw, when I lived in the monastery as a fifteen-year-old, when I saw a man dressed in a sun robe and filled with light." In the text of the poem it is as follows (ll. 13-20):

"Es erp' hngetasan amac' manuk Hay,
I vank' yusumn ēi, ew gišer mi tesil tesay,
Manuk mi luselēn yat'oṙ nstel orpēs ark'ay,
Nman aregakan ē gełec'ik or loys ku tay.

Aynpēses yir p'aṙac'n ew i lusoyn zarfurec'ay,
Or č'karc'i es harc'anel, Tēr ov es? zanund asay,
Erkir pagi irenn i yayn pahun onc' zink' tesay.
U irek' xndruacov hołoyn hawsar xonarhec'ay.

"When I was a fifteen-year old child
I received tuition in a monastery and one night I had a vision.
A radiant boy was seated on a throne like a king
Beautiful He was like the sun, so that He shone.

This vision and its reluctant revelation as the poet's credentials to an audience doubting his legitimacy convey important elements of the system in place centuries later. Kostandin's case precedes the system of the professional *ašuł*s, who, unlike him, had no problems with their legitimacy, since they were members of what can perhaps be called a guild, a recognizable and controllable system of schooling, examination and initiation, paralleled by other crafts. Kostandin's association with a Brotherhood comparable to the *akhi*[29] or *futuwwa*[30] congregations provides him with an audience, he may even have been a member of this Brotherhood, but not with a legitimation, not with a recognized position in society.[31] While the 'vertical' element of his poethood was vouched for by his initiation by Christ himself, as a poet his 'horizontal' ties with society remained unformalized.

In the system of the *ašuł*s this formal embedding was in place, making the poet acceptable both socially and religiously. While the social position of the poet would not be questioned any longer, the emphasis on the element of craft and technique during the education of the aspiring poet could be detrimental to the inspirational character of his calling. As a consequence of this we see several developments. Among the bards of Ireland inspiration became secondary, while for the Turkish *'āšıqs* of our time it is still important to profess to have had that initiatory experience, granting divine inspiration throughout one's career, even if in reality such an experience never took place. Several *'āšıqs* have confessed in private that they had no such experience, but felt obliged to act as if they did, in order not to lose their credibility.[32] Kostandin Erznkac'i, representing the situation of an inspired poet without formal embedding in society, and these modern *'āšıqs*, who are embedded in society but

So terrified I was by his majesty and light
That I could not ask him: "Lord, who are you, tell me your name?"
I worshipped Him the moment I saw Him
And with three supplications I prostrated myself."

Text and translation as in Van Lint, *Kostandin of Erznka*, 186-190.

[29] Fr. Taeschner, "Akhī" *EI*, vol. I, 321-323.

[30] Cl. Cahen, Fr. Taeschner, "Futuwwa" *EI*, vol. II, 961-969; Rhoads Murphey, "ṣinf", in Joseph R. Strayer (ed. in chief) *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. XI, New York 1988, 307-310.

[31] On Kostandin and the Brotherhood, see the contribution by Seta B. Dadoyan in this volume, and Van Lint, *Kostandin of Erznka*, 20-28, 321-327. For a translation and commentary on the Statute of this Brotherhood, written in 1280 by Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, and related Fraternities, see James R. Russell, "Medieval Armenian Fraternities", *Transactions of the American Lodge of Research of Free and Accepted Masons*, XXII (1993), 28-37.

[32] Erdener, *The Song Contests of Turkish Minstrels*.

may lack that initiatory experience, are the two extremes between which the *ašuł* system flourished for several centuries, ideally featuring both elements.

We are now in a position to briefly sketch the initiation of an *ašuł*, which entails formal recognition by his peers and consequently by society, after which we will come to the prime subject of this paper, the meeting point between this world and the next one in the patron saint or *Pīr*.

*The initiation of 'āšıqs — ašułs*

Descriptions of the initiation of *'āšıqs — ašułs* give us a fairly precise idea of how the transition from a young person endowed with sensitivity and imagination to a poet granted grace from above took place. Boratav has given a description of the initiation and the various types of *'āšıqs* that can be discerned accordingly.[33]

The initiation young *'āšıqs* experienced in the Turkish tradition has a striking structural parallel with Kostandin Erznkac'i's visionary initiation when he was fifteen years old and being educated in a monastery. The most highly regarded group among the *'āšıqs* were the *ḥaq 'āšıqlari*, "the *'āšıq* of the truth", or *bādeli 'āšıq*, "the *'āšıq* of the cup". It is believed that, usually in their teens, in a dream, though sometimes also while awake, they would drink a special brew from a cup, handed to them by the *Pīr* or elder, the patron saint who is identified with *Khidr*, the supernatural leader of the way for Islamic mystics. Sometimes they would be handed this cup by the beloved destined for them by the *Pīr*. As this was considered a spiritual beverage with supernatural qualities, drinking it conveys the double gift of poetry and love, inseparable and indispensable qualities for an *'āšıq*. Two instances of these aspects of initiation may suffice.

A well known *'āšıq* is 'Āšıq Garīb. The Turkish *ḥikāye-i 'Āšıq Garīb* relates the dream in which the poet falls in love with the merchant's daughter Šāh Senem. After he has fallen asleep Khidr appears in his dream. He gives the boy the cup of Šāh Senem to drink of and so makes the two fall in love. While he gives one of the golden cups to the young

[33] Boratav, *Fundamenta II*, 130. For a comparable dream leading the poet on his way to his beloved, where no initiation into poethood is mentioned, see İlhan Başgöz, "Turkish Folk Stories about the Lives of Minstrels", in Kemal Silay (comp.), *Turkish Folklore and Oral Literature. Selected Essays of İlhan Başgöz* [Indiana University Turkish Studies 19], Bloomington 1998, 1-10.

man, and the other to the young woman, he says: "One of you is ʿĀšıq Garīb, the other is Šāh Senem". Then he disappears.

The second element of initiation, concerning the capacity to write poetry, is illustrated by the case of the eighteenth-century Qizilbaš poet ʿĀšıq Ibrāhīm. In a legend about him it is related how he met Khidr twice. The second time he is together with him for a long time, speaks with him and drinks the "filled cup" (*dolu*).[34]

In most of the cases it remains unspecified what kind of beverage the person being initiated drinks. It may be wine, or a *sherbet* as offered at the end of the *Mevlid*, the festival in memory of the birth of Mohammed, or a piece of fruit, or even some bread. Receiving this beverage from the *Pīr* in supernatural circumstances is the initial step onto the path of the *ʿāšıq*, it is his awakening to his vocation. The Turkish term for it is *uyanmak*, "to awake". The novice then begins a protracted period of apprenticeship under the supervision of an older *ʿāšıq*, as related above. So education comes after initiation, the supernatural conferral of the gift of poetry precedes earthly apprenticeship. The latter cannot take the place of the former, important though it be, being the heritage accumulated over the ages, itself the result of repeated initiations.

In Kostandin Erznkacʿi's case, evoked here several times because his initiation is comparable to the one experienced by *ašułs*, who, with certain modifications, continue his tradition, no apprenticeship follows upon the experience. The heritage he accepts is the teaching of the Christian life, he propounds the Christian message in didactic and wisdom poems, and in mystical ones of love and nature, stressing both the relationship with God and with fellow humankind. He belongs to the type of poets called *tałasacʿner*, poets performing *tałs*, a type of poem detached from its original use in Church, where it contrasted in lyrical fullness and emotional density with the *ganj*, a narrative chant in prose or verse added to the liturgy of a feast.[35] While no longer used in the liturgy, the *tałs* retained their lyrical character and emotional fullness, functioning in the way Kostandin used them. After his initiation, the young poet continued to study in the monastic school he attended, and to pray, and after a while marvelled at his ability to write poems. He came to understand this as the fulfilment of his wish to understand the mean-

[34] Both initiations as related in Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr. Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* [Beiruter Texte und Studien 79], Beirut/Stuttgart 2000, 286, with references.

[35] Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Grégoire de Narek, poète liturgique", (review of A. Kʿyošʿeryan, *Grigor Narekacʿi. Taler ev ganjer*, Yerevan 1981), *REArm* 16 (1982), 464.

ing of the vision. He had attained maturity as an inspired poet, initiated from on high, but without a patron saint, and without an earthly master.[36]

Dream visions or visions *tout court* occur widely in Armenian literature, while they are an integral part of Christian monastic life in and outside Armenia.[37] They were experienced by a series of well-known personalities: Khosrovidukht, sister of King Trdat, saw a vision of "a man in the likeness of light" after the monarch was struck with madness for killing Hrip'sime and her friends and for torturing and imprisoning Gregory the Illuminator.[38] After the conversion of Armenia, Gregory the Illuminator saw "a man descend[ing] in the form of light", indicating where and in what shape he had to build several of what were to become the most prominent churches in the Armenian tradition.[39] Catholicos Sahak Part'ew II (387-438) likewise was granted a vision about the building of a church, during which "the form of a man appeared [...] from heaven — a man of light, the intensity of whose light obscured and hid the light of the sun."[40] A last instance from early Armenian tradition that may be quoted here is the dream vision of Anania Širakazi, the seventh-century scholar who had a vision that may be traced back to late antique models, comprising Graeco-Roman and alchemical and possibly Mithraic elements.[41] Anania has the vision after a period of perplexity about a scholarly matter, touching upon religion, as did all matters of learning in his day. The problem whether the sun shines also on antipodeans leads Anania to ponder whether antipodeans exist at all, and despite both Biblical and patristic affirmations that there are no living

[36] In Sufi circles he would have been an *uwaysi*, an initiate without a visible master; see below.

[37] On dream visions, dreams, and visions in the early Armenian literary tradition, see Robert W. Thomson, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i*, Atlanta, GA 1991, 267-268.

[38] Robert W. Thomson (translation and commentary), *Agathangelos. History of the Armenians*, Albany 1976, 218-221, §§214, 216: "ayr mi i nmanut'iun lousoy".

[39] Thomson 1976, 272-297, §731-756: "Yankarcaki ełew jayn sastkut'ean, bombiwn orotman, ahawor t'ndiwn, ibrew zjayn ełandan kutakeloy covu aleac' xṙovut'ean: Ew bac'an xoranašēn yarkn hastatut'ean erknic'. ew ījeal ayr mi i kerparans lusoy"; on the architectural symbolism employed in it, see Robert W. Thomson, "Architectural Symbolism in Classical Armenian Literature", *JTS* 30, 1979, 102-114, reprinted in Robert W. Thomson, *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity*, Aldershot 1994, IX. On the literary character of these visions and their invalidity as architectural documents, see Christina Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture. Constructions of Race and Nation* [Hebrew University Armenian Studies 2], Louvain 2001, 105-106.

[40] Thomson, *Łaxar P'arpec'i*, 66; Arm. text p. 30, §17: "ew aha yankarcaki kerparan mardoy erewēr inj yerknic' ayr luselēn, oroy tesut'iun sastkut'ean lusoyn mṙaylec'uc'eal cackēr zaregakann zloys!"

[41] James R. Russell, "The Dream Vision of Anania Širakac'i", *REArm* 21 (1988-1989), 159-170.

creatures on the opposite side of the earth, he sticks to his conclusion that there are, and is firmly convinced that he does not contradict Scripture. Anania relates: "Once in the morning whilst I was at prayer in the martyrium of St. Eugenios, and these ideas were agitating my mind, I fell asleep. And I saw in a dream how the Sun, after rising, inclined to descend to earth. I went forward and embraced him. And he was a youth, beardless, with golden visage, and his lips seemed leafed in gold. And he was attired in white and shining raiment. Dazzling light emanated from his mouth."[42] Whatever their differences, all these visions share the feature of a man, or youth, shining with a dazzling light. This heavenly being conveys messages, provides answers, grants gifts. The closest parallel to these visions is the initiatory dream vision of Kostandin Erznkac'i, which he had eight to nine hundred years after Khsorovidukht, Gregory, and Sahak had theirs, and six hundred after Anania. I have quoted these Armenian instances of visions to point out that they are an intrinsic feature of the Armenian tradition. Although Kostandin does not receive a drink from a cup, the light-appearance steps on him, thus conferring upon him the gift of poetry. While in the *ašuł* tradition the patron saint is John the Baptist, in this vision we behold most probably Christ, addressed by the poet as *Tēr*, "Lord". Let us now take a closer look at the patron saint, this essential element of the '*āšiqs — ašułs*' organizations.

### *Surb Karapet — John the Baptist*

The Armenian *ašułs* have as their patron saint John the Baptist, in Armenian Surb Karapet, the Holy Precursor. He held this function also for weavers and dyers and, according to Armenian folk songs, was the protector of travellers. Precisely why he should be the patron saint of these groups of people it is hard to ascertain. In the following I shall try to give some arguments which provide some plausibility to the choice of Surb Karapet or John the Baptist in the case of the travelling, love-struck poets, the *ašułs*.

[42] Russell, *Dream Vision*, 160. He quotes the Armenian text from K'. Patkanean, *Ananiayi Širakunwoy mnac'ordik' banic'*, St. Petersburg 1877, 39-40: "*minč'deł ēi aŕ* awōtin yałot'sn i vkayaranin Srboyn Ewgineay, ew mitk's yays xorhurds cp'ēin, k'un ēaŕ zis, ew tesanēi orpēs t'ē aregakn i cageln xonarhēr yerkir iǰanel, ew es yaraǰs ēnt'anayi, ew i girks ēndunēi zna, ew na ēr patani anmōrus oskeditak, ew šrtunk' beranoy nora orpēs t'ē oskwoyn liner ōceal ew ink'n spitaks ew p'ayluns unēr handerjs, ew loys sastik elanēr i beranoy nora."

In the following remarks about John the Baptist I follow the line of interpretation the Armenian Church adopted as early as the fifth century in the sermon by Grigor Lusaworic or Saint Gregory the Illuminator. It forms the heart of Agathangelos' *History of the Armenians* and is known in its English translation as *The Teaching of Saint Gregory*.[43]

What does the *Teaching of Saint Gregory* say about John the Baptist? In the *Introduction* to the revised edition of his translation and commentary of this work, Thomson summarizes the position John the Baptist occupies in the history of salvation as presented in the *Teaching*. Several crucial elements are enumerated. The first element concerns the passing on of the Old Testament heritage by John to Christ.

"The focal point of history is the Incarnation of the only begotten Son of God. The historical events of the Old Testament are prefigurings of Christ, brought about by God as preparation for the fulfilment of his eternal plan."[44]

Then John's position is summed up:

> "John the Baptist is the link between the old covenant and the new. The tradition of the priesthood, kingship, and prophecy of the seed of Abraham descended to him, and he was the keeper of this tradition and its heir, at once priest, prophet, and king. He passed on this tradition [...] to Jesus Christ"[45], who took up his heritage in the baptism."The *Teaching* will later develop this theme to stress the continuity from the old covenant through John and Christ to the disciples and the church."[46]

Thomson then elaborates upon this second element of the continuity John represents:

> "In one sense the church is a new creation, begun at Pentecost when the disciples became vessels of the Holy Spirit. The life of the Spirit in the church appears as a new phenomenon in the history of mankind. [...] But the *Teaching* emphasizes the continuation of the old Israel in the new, rather than the novelty of the Christian church. The vital link in the continuation of this tradition is John the Baptist."[47]

[43] Robert W. Thomson, *The Teaching of Saint Gregory*, [revised edition], New Rochelle, NY 2001 [Cambridge, Mass. 1970]. The sections dealing with the position of John the Baptist are §§408-428 (John's baptism of Christ) and §§429-447 (his passing on to Christ of the Old Testament traditions). In his commentary on the separate paragraphs, Thomson makes it clear that the *Teaching* here follows Ephrem Syrus; see 128, n.244 to §430; 130, n.253 to §433.

[44] Thomson, *The Teaching of Saint Gregory*, 8.

[45] Thomson, *Teaching*, 9.

[46] Thomson, *Teaching*, 9.

[47] Thomson, *Teaching*, 33-34.

> John was greater than all the prophets preceding him, sent to "prepare the people for the manifestation of the Son of God"[48] by preaching and by the baptism of repentance. This functioned as a purification of the people before the coming of Christ. Christ's baptism was an example for the baptism into eternal life, and marked the decisive transition between the old and the new covenants.
>
> "Because of his role as forerunner of Christ, and because he was entrusted with the tradition of prophecy which belonged to the race of Israel, John can be called the greatest of the prophets. But he was more. For being of the tribe of Levi, he was heir to the priesthood of Israel and also to the kingship. The tradition of prophecy, priesthood, and kingship had first been given by God to Moses; Moses then made the silver horn of unction from which were anointed in succession the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel. The mystery of this unction, a type of the anointing of Christ, was preserved in the seed of Abraham until John, who thus became the keeper of the tradition handed down over successive generations from his forefathers. This tradition of prophecy, priesthood and kingship he gave to Christ at his baptism.
>
> Three factors thus combine to give Christ's baptism a very special significance. It is the first revelation to the world of Jesus as the Son of God, confirmed by the descent of the Spirit and the voice of the Father; by his own baptism Christ purified the water of Christian baptism, making it an instrument of salvation, a visible symbol of invisible rebirth; and at his baptism He received the tradition of prophecy, priesthood, and kingship, the special grace of God to the old Israel, which He then passed on to his disciples and they to the new Israel, the church. The church, therefore, is both new and old, being the heir to the ancient promises and gifts of God, and being the means whereby the Spirit now works in the world completing the work of Christ."[49]

These quotations from Thomson's *Introduction* to a core text of the Armenian Church may give an idea of how the Armenian Church interpreted the figure of John the Baptist. This official layer must certainly be borne in mind when considering his role as patron saint of the *ašułs*, but there are other factors as well. For these, we have to look at Armenian pre-Christian beliefs and their reflection in religious practise and folklore.

Apart from the firm exegetical basis for the veneration of John the Baptist, what particular aspects of him emerge from the Armenian tradition? What do the anonymous Armenian folk poetry, and poets we know by name add to this?

Until the 1915 genocide the monastery dedicated to Surb Karapet in the environment of Mush, west of Lake Van in present-day Turkey, was

[48] Thomson, *Teaching*, 34.
[49] Thomson, *Teaching*, 34-35.

a pilgrimage site surpassed in importance only by Etchmiadzin, the See of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and perhaps Jerusalem. The character of the pilgrimage differed from that to the other two venerated places. On the site once stood a pre-Christian temple dedicated to Vahagn and Astłik, two of the foremost Zoroastrian deities worshipped in pre-Christian Armenia. It was converted into a monastery in the fourth century. Underneath the monastery, folk believe held that *divs*, demons were kept, who would only be released by *Mšo Sult'an, Surb Karapet*, the Sultan of Mush, at the second coming of Christ, when also John the Baptist would return. Russell has argued that parts of Zoroastrian beliefs involving Vahagn-Gisawor's properties, like his flaming long hair, passed on to John the Baptist.[50] The connection between these two religious figures is all the more easily understood if we bear in mind that they hold a very exalted position within their respective religions. John the Baptist was the Forerunner of Christ, passing on the Old Testament traditions to him, while Vahagn was second only to Aramazd in the Armenian pantheon.[51]

The particular character of the veneration for Surb Karapet includes his perceived power to grant wishes, particularly of the humble, the poor, and the sick.[52] He restores their hope, love, and faith. Not only Christian Armenians visited the site, also Muslim Kurds and Turks did. They called the site *Ğangli kilise Surb Karap'et*, *Ğangli kilise* or simply *Ğangli*, "The Holy Precursor Church with bell-tower".[53] Mihran

[50] James R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* [Harvard Iranian Series 5], Cambridge 1987, 201-203. Cf. James R. Russell, "Carmina Vahagni", *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 32 (1989), 317-330.

[51] Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, 217.

[52] See n. 57, with the text of a variant of a song to Surb Karapet, where the fulfilment of wishes is withheld from someone making the pilgrimage on horseback, while it is granted to those who come on foot.

[53] Mihran T'umačan, *Hayreni erg u ban* [Native Folk Songs and Folk Sayings], 3 vols., Yerevan 1972, 1983, 1986; vol. 2, 260, 215. T'umačan's collection contains Armenian folk songs from various parts of the Ottoman Empire, collected between 1920 and 1965 in the Diaspora in the United States. The Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR has planned a four-volume edition of T'umačan's collection of about one thousand folk songs, edited by Ṙobert At'ayan; to my knowledge, three volumes have appeared so far.
T'umačan was born in 1890 in Kyurin (south of Sebastia) in the Ottoman Empire. In Constantinople he studied law, and became a pupil of Komitas, in whose choir *Gousan* he sang. He completed his musical education in Paris. He lived in the United States between 1923 and 1965, then moved to Soviet Armenia, where he became a member of the Institute of Arts of the Academy of Sciences. He died in 1973. (Ṙ. At'ayan, *Mihran T'umačanĕ ev nra eražštakan-azgagrakan žarangut'yunĕ* [Mihran Tumačan and his Musical-Folkloric Heritage], in T'umačan, *Hayreni erg u ban*, vol. 2, 5-10 and 17, n.1.)

T'umačan states that the feast of Surb Karapet was considered to be the continuation of the old Zoroastrian feast of *Vardavar*, which is borne out by the refrain of a song dedicated to Surb Karapet, which says:[54]

Uxtěd kugar Vardevěrin,
Losed paycaŕ, Surb Karapet!

Your feast arrived, Vardavar,
Your shining light, Holy Precursor.

This would point to another mode of continuity of *Vardavar* in Christian Armenia, for the Armenian Church adopted *Vardavar* as the feast of the Transfiguration, celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

On church festivals jugglers and musicians could be found performing outside the monastery. Poets sung songs praising Surb Karapet on behalf of "lovesick young men".[55] As was said above, songs of a pilgrimage to Surb Karapet, the *murazatur*, "granter of wishes," have come down to us. They hail from different parts of historic Armenia, and are preserved in various dialects as well as in a more elevated style, betraying influences from an educated background, such as the monasteries. After the Divinity and Mary, Mother of God, the highest veneration was preserved for the Sultan of Mush, Surb Karapet, whose power to grant wishes was especially reliable. The songs are called *destan*, *ganj*, or *tał*, the first betraying the terminology used by the *ašuł*s, the other two in use in the church and the last one specifically with the lyrical poets of the first half of the second millennium. In both melody and text T'umačan finds traces of *ašuł* poetry and performance.[56] One such *uxtagnac'ut'yan erg* or pilgrim song, given below, stems from Kyurin, south of Sebastia (Sivas). It is taken from T'umačan's collection, which contains several of them, with a number of variants according to the provenance of the person who recited or sung the poem.

Surb Karapet ert'al kuzem
Irek ōr hon kenal kuzem
Murazs aŕnel daŕnal kuzem
Murazatur Surb Karapet:

Surb Karapet em gnac'er,
Gac'er, ěnker u k'ěnac'er,
Murazs aŕer, et em daŕc'er,
Tur murazis, Surb Karapet!

[54] T'umayan, *Hayreni erg u ban*, vol. 2, 336-337.
[55] Russell, *Zoroastrianism*, 203 and 223, n. 70.
[56] T'umayan, *Hayreni erg u ban*, vol. 2, 215-216, 260-261.

Surb Karapet em gnac'er,
Gac'er u bakn em mnac'er
Muraz tĕver, č'em imac'er,
Muratĕm ver, Surb Karapet:

Surb Karapet barsĕ teł ē,
Č'ors k'enerĕ caŕ u čeł ē,
Amen pĕtuł derti deł ē,
Menc ĕnk'apap, Surb Karapet:

Surb Karapet xoran xoran,
Mejĕ kĕrvi oski oran,
Yot'ĕ gĕlux surb avtĕran,
Murazis tur, Surb Karapet:

Surb Karapet kaynec'uc'in,
Lĕsełen šĕřjaln haguc'in:
K'ristos girke mĕkĕrtec'in,
Mĕkrtatur Surb Karapet:

Surb Karapet kenenč' dašt ē,
Hon gac'ołĕ ardar mard ē,
.....
Derten derman, Surb Karapet:[57]

I want to go to the Holy Precursor,
I want to stay there for three days,
I want to see my wish fulfilled and to return
Fulfiller of desire, Holy Precursor.

I have gone to the Holy Precursor,
Stayed, bowed and have gone,
Uttered my desire, have turned back,
Fulfil my desire, Holy Precursor.

[57] T'umačan, *Hayreni erg u ban*, vol. 2, 43, comm. 214-216. This text from T'umačan's native area was sung by Sirward T'orosyan. A shorter version of this song was sung by Ervand Čłyan and runs as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Surb Karapet bars ē bolor | The Holy Precursor is all on high, |
| Čamba uni ōlor, molor | Its road is curves and curves, |
| Kert'a kuga šat ĕxtavor | Many pilgrims come and go, |
| T'e ōtavor, t'e jiavor, | Both on foot and on horseback, |
| Serĕ kuta ōtavorin, | He bestows love on the one who walks, |
| J̌ułab kuta jiavorin, | Declines the one on horseback; |
| muratatur Mĕšu sult'an | Granter of wishes, Sultan of Mush, |
| Surb Karapet: | Surb Karapet. |

In the commentaries on the poems information is given about the site and function of Surb Karapet, and on the types of songs sung for him. Variants of the song, as sung in the Erznka area, are printed in vol. 2, 190-192, with commentary, 260-261, and variants from Kharberd, also in vol. 2, 336-337, commentary, 404. Another song dedicated to the *muratatur*, 'granter of wishes', also sings of the difficult road leading towards Surb Karapet, the heartbreaking desire to see one's wish fulfilled, and the hope that is placed in Surb Karapet for this to happen. (Balu area, vol. 3, 17; commentary, 152).

I have gone to the Holy Precursor,
Stayed and remained in the courtyard
Spoken of my desire, I do not know,
Fulfil my desire, Holy Precursor.

The Holy Precursor is a high place,
Everywhere there are trees and branches,
All fruits are medicine against pain,
Great……..,[58] Holy Precursor.

Church, church of the Holy Precursor,
In it is rocking a gold cradle,
Seven chapters of the holy Gospel,
Fulfil my desire, Holy Precursor.

They set up the Holy Precursor,
Clothed him in a chasuble of light,
They baptized Christ in his embrace,
Provider of baptism, Holy Precursor.

The Holy Precursor is a green plain,
Whoever goes there is a righteous person,
……
Medicine of ailments, Holy Precursor.

While in this poem we find Surb Karapet invoked as the hope of a pilgrim, in a fourteenth-century poem by Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i Surb Karapet is asked for the protection of the performers of his poetry and of those who hear it recited. The invocation occurs in the final quatrain of a love poem and runs as follows:[59]

Asa zband, Yovhannēs, yēr kuxnayes?
Du surb Karapeti čortn u cařanes,
Surb Karapet šat ku xndrem ězk'ez
Zasōłk's ew zlsołk's i č'arēn p'rkes.

Speak your piece, Yovhannes. Why do you hold back?
You are slave and servant of Saint Karapet.
Saint Karapet, I beseech you
To save my reciters and listeners from evil.

Some four centuries later, when the *ašuł* tradition was firmly established and flourished in various schools, we find evidence of the importance of Surb Karapet as patron saint of Armenian *ašułs* in an annotation in

[58] The meaning of *ěnk'apap* is unclear to me.

[59] Russell, *Yovhannes T'lkuranc'i*, 67; commentary, 70; the translation is Russell's. Armenian text: E. Pivazyan, *Yovhannes T'lkuranc'i, Tałer* [*Yovhannes T'lkuranc'i*, Poems], Yerevan 1960, 152, ll. 33-36.

Armenian, possibly dating to 1747, made by Sayat'-Nova, at the end of one of his Armenian poems:

> "Now I want to say something in Armenian. Amen, God, I, Arut'in, son of a *mahdesi*, from when I was little until my thirtieth year I applied myself to all kinds of poems[60], after that through the power of Surb Karapet I learned to play the *k'amanč'a*, *č'ongur* and the *t'ambura*."[61]

We see that the poet explicitly connects his apprenticeship with John the Baptist, at least for his accomplishments as a performer of music, indispensable for an *ašuł*.

Sayat'-Nova devoted another poem to Surb Karapet, written half in Azeri and half in Armenian. The poem is a *mukhammaz*, composed of stanzas of five verses. In the first stanza each first half-line is in Azeri, each second one in Armenian, while in the following four stanzas only the fifth verse starts with a half-verse in Azeri, the four others starting in Armenian. It relates the facts about John the Baptist, well known from the gospel, in accordance with Sayat'-Nova's habit, it would seem, of dealing with Christian topics in his Azeri poems. What follows is a mere literal translation:[62]

> Sultan of Mush, Holy Precursor, your praise has reached the heavens,
> Main *vardapet* of the truth, there was no one equal to you.
> Your words are priceless jewels, your mouth scatters rubies.
> In the womb you worshipped, your parents were amazed,
> You spoke from out of the desert, your lips are speaking miracles.
>
> You went to the river Jordan, you baptized the Lord Himself
> You presented the Lord to mankind, you revealed the Trinity.
> Because of this I am exceedingly glad, that you destroyed evil Satan.
> Thirty years in the desert you prayed for this world.
> You deemed wild honey fitting for yourself, very sweet are your sermons.
>
> It is written in the Bible, John is great among mortals.
> With your blood you saved souls, you are the crown and pride of virgins.
> The angels descend from heaven, you received an everlasting crown of light.
> You became the foundation of the worshippers of the cross, you are the candlestick of the monks.
> Your sacrifice encompasses the whole world, everywhere your radiant light shines.

[60] *xał*, meaning 'poem' (see the title in the next note), also 'play', but in all likelihood not here.

[61] Morus Hasrat'yan, *Sayat' Nova. Hayeren, Vrac'eren, Adrbeǰaneren xałeri žołovac'u* [Sayat'-Nova. Collection of Poems in Armenian, Georgian and Azeri] Yerevan 1963, 10 (poem no. 4).

[62] Hasrat'yan, *Sayat' Nova*, 80-81.

The unbeliever invited you as his guest, he gathered all around him.
The partakers of the banquet were sad, the daughters of his brothers did not dance.
He made a vow upon his throne, he said: "Whatever you want I will give".
She wanted the head of the prophet, and the henchmen promptly executed him.
They remembered you with seven names, when they cut your neck.

What a miraculous form did you have, you frightened hell with your powers.
You proclaimed the good news to all in Tartarus.
You are the angel from paradise, your holy heart has purified the saints.
Sayat-Nova greatly laments, supplicates with his face bent down.
Let the sins of the sinners melt away, full of light is your tomb.

This is a *mukhammaz*, Arutin has made it.

This is Sayat'-Nova's dedicatory poem to his patron saint, in which he avoids any specific supplication for interference in the way Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i did: no poetry is mentioned, no listeners or performers. It is not clear which of the two extant manuscript versions of the opening half-line reflect the poet's final redaction. In Azeri, the opening reads: "Reach out to us, Surb Karapet", a general call for protection and favour, absent from the manuscript which begins in Armenian, as translated above.[63] The poet concentrates on the Biblical role of the Holy Precursor, giving a slightly different account of the banquet in Herod's palace and additions about his descent into the netherworld to preach the gospel, and about his existence as an angel in paradise. John the Baptist was executed before Christ was crucified, which enabled him to continue his function as the one who clears the way for the Lord (Mal. 3:1), who breakes the gates of hell and frees those held captive in it. The reference to the angel of paradise may be to the watcher with the fiery sword at the entrance, keeping it closed until Christ opened it again through his death for the sins of mankind.

John the Baptist's function in the New Testament as the Forerunner of Christ, one who announces and prepares the way for the Messiah, puts emphasis on the divine character of the poet's gift of the word, follow-

[63] I was able to consult only Hasrat'yan's rendering into Armenian of the poem's Azeri lines, Hasrat'yan, *Sayat' Nova*, 80-81. He chooses for the Armenian opening *Mšu Sultan, Surb Karapet*, ("Sultan Of Mush, Surb Karapet"), while the Azeri one, which is given in the notes, with translation, reads: *Ēt'ur gilan Surb Karapet* "Reach out to us, Holy Precursor", i.e. "remember us"; Hasrat'yan 1963, 254-255. See also Varag Nersisyan, *Sayat'-Nova. Hayeren xałer* [Sayat'-Nova. Armenian Poems], Yerevan 1984, 88, 204-206.

ing this unique prophet's use of it. At the same time John's function as protector of travellers makes him indispensable to the wandering *ašułs*. His further qualities as Sultan of Mush and *murazatur*, or *muratatur*, "granter of wishes", point to his power of intercession with God, which is a power of speech based on his holiness. The fact that he is invoked as one who cures lovesick young men makes him the appropriate protector for the *ašuł* from yet another point of view: that of the poet's office of love for God and for his beloved.

*Elijah*

John the Baptist, a pivotal Biblical figure, is the patron saint of the *ašułs*. We have seen that the Armenian Church emphasized various aspects of this important person. In the New Testament the equation of his identity with that of Elijah is perceived or stated several times. Jesus holds John to be Elijah (Mark 9: 11-13). In Matt. 3:3 the prophecy in Is. 40:3 is quoted in connection with John: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'. In Matt. 11:7-10 he had quoted Mal. 3:1 about John:"Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me", adding that John is Elijah (11:14). Still further on (Matt. 17:9-13) Jesus confirms that John the Baptist is Elijah. In Luke 1:17 the angel, when addressing Zechariah about John, his future son, quotes from Mal. 4:5-6, which concerns Elijah:[64]"And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

From Luke John the Baptist emerges in a variety of ways as a transition between "the law and the prophets" and Jesus the Christ, the Son of God; a position confirmed in all seven references to John in Luke's second work, the book of Acts.[65] In the gospel of John this picture is confirmed further, while John the Baptist lays no claims to being the Messiah, or even Elijah; he rather points to Jesus as one who is greater than

[64] Mal. 4:5-6 reads: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. [6] And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." All citations are from the Revised Standard Version.

[65] Paul W. Hollenbach, "John the Baptist", in David Noel Freedman (ed. in chief), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. III, New York 1992, 890.

himself. He is prominently present in the opening chapter of the gospel, where his role as precursor is stressed, so in John 1:8: "He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light". For the purposes of this paper, it is important to bear in mind the connection between John the Baptist and Elijah.

The characteristics of Elijah bearing upon the ability to compose poetry are several, evolving around his prophethood. Here follows a brief outline of this prophet's works.

Elijah occurs in I Kings 17-19 and 21 and in 2 Kings 1-2. He "displays many of the traits characteristic of prophetic figures throughout Israel's history. He is a miracle worker whose word of power can produce weal or woe (1 Kings 17:1, 16; 2 Kings 1:10, 12; 2:8). He is a powerful intercessor for individuals or the whole people (1 Kings 17:20-22; 18: 42-45). He confronts the king with condemnation for religious infidelity and social injustice (1 Kings 17:1; 18:18; 21:20-22; 2 Kings 1:16) The prophet's role in chapter 21 in particular seems modelled on that of later classical prophets."[66]

The power of Elijah's word merits our attention. Walsh comments on it with the following remarks: "The motif of 'word' in chap. 17 reveals a well-developed theology of prophecy. The prophet is one who speaks an authoritative word of power (17:1), obeys Yahweh's word (vv 5, 10), commands human obedience and conveys divine promise (vv 13, 15), speaks a word of miraculous intercession that Yahweh heeds (v 22) and is ultimately acknowledged as chosen bearer of Yahweh's own word (v 24)"[67].

Elijah is associated with Moses through structural similarities with the book of Exodus in 1 Kings 17-19. Moreover, in 2 Kings 2, "Elijah's mysterious disappearance in Trans-Jordan and the disciples' inability to recover his body parallel the death and divinely hidden burial of Moses (Deut 34:1-6). The cumulative impact of these extensive Mosaic allusions is to present Elijah as a *Moses redivivus*. Both appear at crucial moments in the religious and political history of the people. Through Moses, Yahweh rescued Israel from Egyptian oppression and formed it as his people; through Elijah, Yahweh preserves the faithful members of his people amid paganism and persecution. Both are significant figures in the history of prophecy as well. With Moses began the long line of Yahweh's intermediaries in Israel; in Elijah that line

[66] Jerome T. Walsh, "Elijah", in David Noel Freedman (ed. in chief), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. II, New York 1992, 464.

[67] Walsh, *Elijah*, 464.

produces its quintessential hero."[68] As we have seen above, this line ends with John the Baptist, dissolving the law and the prophets into the ministry of the Messiah.

A further relevant aspect of Elijah is his assumption and the prophetic succession (2 Kings 2:1-15). Its positioning within the book "removes it from the ordinary flow of history and places it, so to speak, outside time. Its locale, too, is symbolically removed from the ordinary world: the heroes' journey is a pilgrimage that miraculously crosses a boundary (the Jordan) to a place of power. Ordinary mortals, represented by the Jericho prophets, do not follow. Elijah's mysterious assumption to heaven in a whirlwind occurs once the Jordan has been crossed."[69] Elisha accompanies Elijah to the place of power, where he assumes the task as Elijah's successor: he is granted to see Elijah disappear to heaven and receives his mantle, which he puts on as an outward sign of his succession. "This is the moment of supernatural encounter from which Elisha returns transformed and empowered."[70]

In the Judaic tradition Elijah was often considered to be the precursor of the Messiah, an aspect of him that was taken over by Christianity. In Islam he is counted among the "righteous ones" (*Sura* 8:85). Below, the connection between Elijah and Khidr in Islam will be explored. In the New Testament both Jesus (by the people around him) and John the Baptist (amongst others by Jesus) are considered to be Elijah. In one pre-Christian apocryphal tradition two messianic precursors were present, which may explain Elijah's presence at the Transfiguration. Here Elijah is taken together with Enoch, who, like Elijah, was taken up to heaven while still alive.[71]

The power of the word, which Elijah received from God on his prophetic mission, puts him in a position comparable to that of the inspired poet. Although no patron saint of the poets, we will see that he is in some ways associated with them, not only because among the Christians he is identified with John the Baptist, but because among Muslims he is identified with Khidr or al-Khādir, "the verdant one", the *Pīr* of Muslim poets, who drank from the water of life.

[68] Walsh, *Elijah*, 464-465.
[69] Walsh, *Elijah*, 465.
[70] Walsh, *Elijah*, 465.
[71] Walsh, *Elijah*, 465. For more traditions about Elijah, see Michael E. Stone, John Strugnell, (coll. and trans.) *The Books of Elijah. Parts 1 & 2*, [Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations 18/Pseudepigrapha 8], Missoula, Montana 1979.

*Khidr*

One of the persons who may be present during the visionary initiation of an *ʿāšıq* is Khidr, as his name may be most conveniently spelled.[72] Sometimes he appears as the poet's *Pīr*, sometimes he appears undisguised. Khidr is known, among his many other functions, as the spiritual guide of Sufis and the initiant of the *ʿāšıq*. The latter role is central to this paper. Who is Khidr? A comprehensive answer to this question is not easy to give, since Khidr is many things to many people. In a recent investigation, Patrick Franke gathered one hundred and fifty-five encounters with Khidr from all areas of the Islamic world and from all periods, including four presumed ones, like that of the person seen at the death of Ḥāğğı Bektāš mentioned earlier in this paper.[73] Apart from stories of encounters with Khidr, the book provides texts about encounters with Elijah, as well as the Koranic account of Moses with the Friend of God and some commentaries on this passage, which is generally believed to relate an encounter of Moses with Khidr. Finally, the textual part of Franke's book contains several aetiological legends about Khidr's continued existence, completed by four miscellaneous texts in which Khidr, or Khidr and Elijah, are the protagonists.

In the critical study preceding the presentation of the texts, a detailed account of the figure of Khidr and his role in Islam is given. The author's systematic approach facilitates a succinct survey of Khidr's manifold functions. The critical study is divided into five parts, which each consist of several chapters, divided into sections. The opening part describes the literary motif of the encounter with Khidr, and the guise in which he may be encountered.

In the second part basic elements of the veneration of Khidr are studied. Its opening chapter considers the mythical dimension of the Khidr-figure. The aetiological stories pertaining to Khidr's continuous exitence are the subject of its first section: the Melkhisedek legend, the story of Khidr and the source of the water of life, which is well known from the various Islamic Alexander romances, and the Arabic Jeremiah legend including Khidr's prenatal election. In the second section Franke consid-

[72] Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr*, 2, n. 3, n. 4; 3, n. 6. For a choice for *Khādir* "the verdant one" on semantic grounds, cf. Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, [Bollingen Series XCI], Princeton, 1969, reprinted as *Alone with the Alone. Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ʿArabī* (with a new preface by Harold Bloom), Princeton 1998, 56. References are from this reprint. The original edition is Henry Corbin, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'ibn ʿArabi*, Paris 1958.

[73] Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr*; cf. n. 20.

ers the Koranic narrative in *Sura* 18, referred to above.[74] The second chapter of this part is dedicated to Khidr, Elijah, and the cosmos, in which Khidr's relation to nature is explored, his position within the Islamic reference system, followed by a section of special interest for this paper: Elijah as Khidr's double. The final chapter of this part deals with cultic aspects of the veneration of Khidr.

The third part bears the title "Khidr and the World of the Friends of God". It surveys the role Khidr assumes in Sufism. In the first chapter Khidr's relevance for the ideals of Sufism are discussed, in which friendship with God, and trust in God as well as *ilhām*, inspiration, are central elements. Its second chapter is dedicated to mystical speculations about Khidr; here the relationship between Elijah and Khidr is discussed. The final chapter of this part deals with Khidr and the institutions of Sufism as well as *Mahdī* movements, with attention for Sufic initiation rites and the institution of the spiritual leader.

In the fourth part the matter of Khidr and divine legitimation is taken up; within this framework poetic initiation rites are discussed as well.[75] Moreover, the position of Khidr in Sunnism and Shiism is elaborated upon.

In the fifth and final part of the critical presentation Franke dicusses the so-called "Khidr controversy", that is, the question whether Khidr should be considered a friend of God or a prophet; debates about his continued existence, and his role in modern Islam and modern Koranic exegesis, where one current sees Khidr as an angel, while another proposes the elimination of Khidr from the koranic narrative.

This survey of the contents of Franke's study may give an idea of the complexity of the figure of Khidr in Islam, and provide several points of intersection with the subject of this paper.

What, exactly, are Khidr's characteristics? Several of these turn out to be identical with or to overlap with those of Surb Karapet and Elijah. An enumeration of the widely varying characteristics of Khidr will help to show how the aspect of poetic initiation with which he is associated relates to his multifarious other functions.

[74] Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr*, 4 and in more detail, 62-65, points out that the survey article by A.J. Wensink, *al-Khaḍir (al-Khiḍr)*, *EI*, vol III, Leiden 1977, 902-905, (an unaltered reprint of the article which appeared in the first edition of *EI*) and the theories proposed in it are outdated. This concerns two elements of his article: the Koranic narrative in *Sura* 18:60-82 is no longer considered a partial adaptation of the Jewish legend about Elijah and rabbi Joshua ben Levi; also, the various aspects of the veneration of Khidr in Islam are only partially covered.

[75] Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr*, 280-291.

Khidr appears and disappears suddenly and unexpectedly. This may take the form of his becoming invisible, or running away, fading into the distance. Both his coming and going may cause fear in the witness of the act. After the initial greeting a conversation ensues sometimes, but not always. Neither is it always clear that the person in question is Khidr; often this becomes evident only during the encounter, or even afterwards. Sometimes a possible encouter with Khidr does not occur in the end, because the person approached did not expect Khidr to be behind the guise he chose to cloak himself in. The functions Khidr has are several. He can be a bringer of luck, health, and happiness, which is the reason why he often has epithets like *mubārak-pay, farruḫ-pay* or *ḫuğasta-qadam* ("the one with the blessed feet"). He is the bringer of good tidings and conveys heavenly messages. An encounter with Khidr means a blessing. Anatolian folkbelief holds that a person who touches Khidr's hand is freed from pain, unhappiness, and illness and will attain enduring prosperity.[76] Food touched by Khidr is likewise blessed. This has even led to the institution of a Khidr Meal.[77] Khidr is a helper in distress, as a Turkish saying makes clear: *Hizir gibi yetişti* (he came to one's help like Khidr).[78] Khidr is a miraculous healer and consoler. He sets people free from captivity. Finally, he allows people to utter their wishes and he promises that they will be granted. Many of these aspects we have already encountered in the Sultan of Mush, Surb Karapet, and some of them are characteristic of Elijah, as well.[79] But there is more.

Khidr lives in eternity, he is not confined to space and time and his angelic being is closer to the realm of the divine than to that of humankind. Khidr inherited his longevity as the one who buried Adam, or so the reworked legend of Melkhisedek's burial of Adam would have us believe. Another aetiological story is the one about Khidr who finds the source of the water of life, which has entered many of the Islamic Alexander stories, for example Nizami's *Iskandar nāma*. A third aetio-

[76] Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr*, 24-25.

[77] For a description of this institution, counted among the cultic aspects of Khidr's veneration, see Franke, *Begegnung*, 165-167.

[78] Franke, *Begegnung*, 25 "er kam wie Khidr zu hilfe". Cf. Bedriye Atsiz & Hans Joachim Kissling, *Sammlung Türkischer Redensarten*, Wiesbaden 1974, 93: "*Hizir gibi yetişmek* 'Als rettender Engel (deus ex machina) erscheinen. [Wörtlich: Wie Hizir herbeikommen]'. *Ahmet, Hizir gibi yetiştin. Çabuk hesabi öde! Bizde beş para yok.* - 'Ahmet, du kommst wie ein rettender Engel. Zahle rasch für uns, wir haben kein Geld dabei'." I would like to thank Dr. Uwe Bläsing, reader in Altaic Languages at Leiden University, for drawing my attention to this work.

[79] Franke, *Begegnung*, 24-28.

logical story identifies Khidr with Jeremiah.[80] The strongest legitimation of Khidr, however, is connected with *Sura* 18:60-82 of the Koran, in which Moses is accompanied by an unnamed friend of God, who in the eyes of Moses commits reprehensible acts, which turn out to be great acts of wisdom. Subsequent Koran commentaries have identified this friend of God with Khidr, attributing to him wisdom, and a special closeness to God.[81]

Khidr has a special relationship with nature. He makes vegetation grow, hence his epithet "the verdant one". He can be found at the conjunction of waters, at sea, rivers and lakes and on their shores, as well as in the vicinity of sources. He saves seafarers in distress. Apart from this, he is sometimes found as a traveller in the desert. In general he can be active all over the earth. Another of his special qualities is his capacity to cover enormous distances in the blink of an eye. In Sufi circles this is explained as a contraction of the earth (*ṭayy al-arḍ*).[82]

Khidr is a person of prayer. Besides praying the *ṣalāt*, the ritual prayer, he will pray for others (*du'ā'*), and his prayers may count as incantations, containing magic powers. Sometimes it is said that through his prayers he makes vegetation grow. Moreover, Khidr knows the secret of the most exalted name of God, stated in technical terms: he is in possession of *ladunic* knowledge. Furthermore, Khidr is closely related to cultic places in Islam. This is true for mosques in general, but more particularly for the holy places in Jerusalem. He regularly visits the holy places in Mecca and Medina, both places of encounters with him. Khidr also plays an eschatological role, concerning both primordial and apocalyptic times. He opposes the Adversary, the *Daǧǧāl*. The eternal presence of Khidr opens up questions about his relationship with Muhammad. He is sometimes explained as Muhammad's light, and more generally as his helper, and of the whole community of Muslims. This covers also the battlefield. It is interesting to remember Surb Karapet in this respect, who having taken over Vahagn-Gisavor's qualities, appeared as a helper in battles.[83] Khidr tests the good and punishes the

[80] Franke, *Begegnung*, 41-60. Sometimes Khidr is identified with Phinehas, son of Eleazar, which has its source in Jewish legend, cf. A. Augustinovic, OFM, *"El-Khadr" and the Prophet Elijah*, Jerusalem 1972, 61; "Elijah", in Isaac K. Funk (ed. in chief). *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York and London, vol. 5, 1903, 122.

[81] Franke, *Begegnung*, 60-80.

[82] Franke, *Begegnung*, 81-107.

[83] See Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, 202-203 adducing the example of Yovhannēs Mamikonean's *History*, where Surb Karapet is invoked to help fight against the Sasanians who attack Glakay Vank', the monastery of Surb Karapet. See also Levon

evil ones. He becomes a means of testing the believer's morals.[84] Khidr assumes elements of the pre-Islamic religion wherever he is venerated throughout the Muslim world. Just as Surb Karapet assumes features of the Armenian Zoroastrian Vahagn, so does Khidr, in Iran, assume features of the Zoroastrian angel Sorūš.[85]

Further elements of Franke's book relevant to the subject of this paper are the relationship between Khidr and Elijah, Khidr's role in Islamic mysticism, and the rites of poetic initiation.[86] Each of these will be briefly looked into before conclusions about the relationship of the patron saints of the *'āšıqs* and *ašułs* will be drawn.

*The Relationship between Khidr and Elijah*

The relationship between these two figures is characterized by a series of elements.[87] Not only Khidr, but also Elijah plays a role in Islamic narrative and theological conceptions. Elijah, Ilyās in Arabic, is seen as Khidr's double. In a tradition that dates back to the eighth century, it is stated that: "Khidr and Elijah will remain alive on earth, as long as the Koran is on earth. When the Koran is taken away from it, they will die".[88] Elijah is mentioned in the Koran, *Sura* 37:123-132, which incorporates a lot of material from the Biblical narrative about him (1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 1-2). Elijah wields power over rainfall and causes draught by his prayers when the Israelites refuse to desist from their worship of Baal. In the Biblical narrative, Elijah is carried into heaven

Avdoyan, *Pseudo' Yovhannes Mamikonean*, [Columbia University, Program in Armenian Studies. Suren D. Fesjian Academic Publications 6], Atlanta, GA 1996, 150 (Arm. text 264).

[84] For the various elements touched upon in this paragraph, see Franke, *Begegnung*, 107-136.

[85] Franke, *Begegnung*, 373, cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam*, München 1992² (1985), 286. This is a revised and amplified version of the English original, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, NC 1975. Page numbers refer to the German edition.

[86] Franke, *Begegnung*, 136-161; 211-214; 243-250 and 280-288.

[87] Besides the relevant sections in Franke, *Begegnung* (cf. n.82), see A.J. Wensinck-[G. Vajda], "Ilyās", *EI*, vol. III, 1156; Y. Moubarac, "Le prophète Élie dans le Coran" in Gustave Bardy (ed.), *Élie le prophète*, vol. II. *Au Carmel dans le Judaïsme et l'Islam*, Bruges 1956, 256-268; Louis Massignon, "Élie et son rôle transhistorique, *Khadiriya*, en Islam", in *Élie le prophète*, vol. II, 269-290; Hartmut Bobzin, "Elija VI. Islam", in Walter Kasper (Hrsg.), *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. 3, Freiburg im Breisgau 1995, 598; "Elijah" *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, 121-128, esp. 127; Clemens Kopp, *Elias und Christentum auf dem Karmel*, Paderborn 1929, 68-83; Augustinovic, *"El-Khadr" and the Prophet Elijah*; Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 319-336.

[88] Translated from the German. According to aṭṭ-pa'labī this tradition stems from the Persian 'Amr b. Dīnār (d. 743), see Franke, *Begegnung*, 136, and n. 420.

on a chariot. The narratives about him in the Islamic tradition tell of a fiery horse, on which Elijah sat himself and rode off, leaving Elisha behind: "God covered him with feathers, clothed him in fire, and stopped for him the pleasure of food and drink. He flew with the angels, becoming human-angelic, earthly-heavenly."[89] Islamic tradition also mentions encounters with Elijah, which have much the same character as those with Khidr: he is capable of covering great distances in a very short time, he prays and teaches others prayer formulas, and his sudden disappearance marks the end of an encounter. These narratives have Jewish origins. The Islamic traditions all stem from an early period, and they are far less in number than the encounters with Khidr. In an interesting conclusion, which I mention here without assessing its validity, Franke holds that the topos of the "Encounter with Khidr" replaced an earlier "Revelation through Elijah".[90]

Augustinovic's study of Elijah and Khidr identifies elements common to both persons as they are venerated in popular religion at shrines mostly in Israel and its neighbouring countries. He explores parallels with Christian traditions: "[T]his mystical being of Islam has also taken on diverse Judaeo-Christian forms, and in particular that of the prophet Elijah and that of St. George, the two saints most venerated in Palestine and in the neighbouring lands from ancient times. This association has gone to the point of complete fusion so that today one cannot be distinguished from the other."[91] The identification with St. George will not be explored further here.[92] Augustinovic, like others, surmises that the identification of the two may have come about because Khidr's immortality and eternal youth could be perceived as a form of Elijah's disappearance.[93] In the course of his investigation he mentions a series of correspondences and parallels between Khidr and Elijah: the absence of tombs, veneration for the places where Khidr appeared, and the capacity of both to appear and disappear as they please. A further correspondence is their association with water. Khidr's shrines are usually found beside springs and amidst rich vegetation, while Elijah had the power to bring

[89] Franke, *Begegnung*, 137, for the quotation —slightly different from Franke's German rendering— see Ehsan Yar-Shater (gen. ed.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. III, William Brinner (trans. and ann.), "The Children of Israel", Albany 1991, 125.

[90] Franke, *Begegnung*, 140.

[91] Augustinovic, *"El-Khadr" and the Prophet Elijah*, 10.

[92] Cf. Augustinovic, *"El-Khadr" and the Prophet Elijah*, 64-67, giving also some further identifications in popular belief. Cf. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 570-571 for instances of Armenians identifying Khidr and St. Sarkis.

[93] Augustinovic, *"El-Khadr" and the Prophet Elijah*, 10.

rain.[94] These results of research in a restricted geographical area tally with the larger picture.[95]

While Khidr is mostly associated with water, and sometimes with travel in the desert, the usual division is for Elijah to be traveller on land, with Khidr roaming the waters. Widespread beliefs divide the earth between these two, while two other prophets, Idris and Jesus, are still alive in heaven. The division between Khidr and Elijah often works the other way round, too. Franke concludes that this is a case in which Khidr is perceived to have a double function — we are not really talking about two separate personalities with their own individual characteristics here. Khidr is usually allotted the element that is most important for the people among whom the narrative circulates: for example in central Iran he is associated with land, while in coastal areas of the Persian Gulf he rules the waters.

Sometimes the division is given up. This happens at cyclic intervals, when Khidr and Elijah go on pilgrimage together — to Mecca;[96] or to share the fast of Ramadan — in Jerusalem. Another instance is the Turkish *Hidrellez* feast (see below). A further function of their meeting in cyclic intervals is their task to ward off the last days of the world. They meet each other at the wall of the *ḏu l-Qarnayn*, the Two-Horned One, who is identified with Alexander in the Islamic Alexander stories.[97] This wall was built between the eschatological peoples of Gog and Magog and humankind, in order to prevent the Last Judgement from taking place. In several traditions they meet each other there each night. Some traditions also provide the *Hidrellez* feast with this function.[98]

According to many accounts of encounters with Khidr, Khidr and Elijah appear as a pair that belong together, sometimes as brothers.[99] When

[94] Augustinovic, *"El-Khadr" and the Prophet Elijah*, 48-60.

[95] Augustinovic provides plans and photos of many of these shrines, as does Franke, *Begegnung*, 619 ff. for the wider area.

[96] See e.g. Franke, *Begegnung*, 471-472 (§44).

[97] For other identifications see Franke, *Begegnung*, 50 e.g. Yar-Shater, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. III, 1-2, with n.7.

[98] In modern Turkish literature an instance is Yaşar Kemal, *Bin Boğalar Efsanesi*, (1971), translated into German by H. Dağyeli-Bohne and Y. Dağyeli as *Das Lied der tausend Stiere*, Zürich 1997; the passage concerning *Hidrellez* is quoted in Franke, *Begegnung*, 148.

[99] On the relationship between Khidr and Elijah in Shiite mysticism, where the latter is associated with the hidden Imām, see Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, 55-58; For Khidr and Elijah in Rūzbihān Baqlī of Shīraz's work, see Henry Corbin, *L'homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*, Chambéry 1971, 83; Carl W. Ernst (trans.), *Ruzbihan Baqli. The Unveiling of Secrets. Diary of a Sufi Master*, Chapel Hill, NC 1997, 115 (§173) and 121 (§181). On the philological situation of this work, see Carl W. Ernst, *Ruzbihan Baqli. Mysticism*

someone sees one of them, he or she expects to meet the other, too. In some cases, Elijah is also present when Khidr drinks the water from the source of life, and thus makes his appearance in several Alexander stories. One source relates that Alexander, Khidr, and Elijah were all born at the same time, 710 years before Muhammad was born.

Finally, Khidr is sometimes found in the role of Elisha, Elijah's disciple and successor. This makes a straight identification of Khidr with Elijah problematic. While earlier Islamic sources keep the two apart, from the fourteenth century onward they are increasingly identified as the same person, mostly in Persian speaking areas. In modern Shiism, both in Iran and in Lebanon, Franke states, the identification of Khidr with Elijah seems to be very popular.

A complete merger of the two into one Khidr-Elijah is found occasionally from the late fourteenth century onward, but this does not provide enough ground to assume a fully merged personality.[100]

Elijah and Khidr do indeed merge in the name of a popular Turkish festival of spring, *Hidrellez*, a composite of Khidr-Ilyās. The festival is celebrated at 5-6 May, considered to mark the beginning of summer. The summer lasts until 7 November (*Kasim*). These dates roughly correspond with the feasts of St George (23 April) and St Demetrius (26 October).[101] The calendric, cosmic, and temporal aspects, and the role in the provision of food of these immortals, as well as of Enoch and Elisha, were studied by Altan Gökalp in relation, amongst others, with *hekayes* about Köroğlu recited by Turkish *'āšıqs*.[102] He quotes the *'āšıq's* proof of modesty at the end of each poem just recited: *Üstadimiz Hizir, elimizden gelen budur*, "Our Master is Khidr, and this is what my art allows me."

### *Khidr in Islamic mysticism*

Given his various supernatural functions and capacities, it is not surprising that Khidr plays an important role in Islamic mysticism. Given the

*and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*, Richmond 1996, 19. For more elements of the relationship between Khidr and Elijah as perceived in Sufi mysticism, e.g. Khidr as the expression of a mystical state of being called *basp*, "looseness", and Elijah for one called *qab*, "dejection", see Franke, *Begegnung*, 211-214. Cf. the paragraphs on Khidr and Rūzbihān Baqlī in the next section of this paper, *Khidr in Islamic mysticism*.

[100] Franke, *Begegnung*, 136-161.

[101] P.N. Boratav, "Khidr-Ilyās", *EI*, vol. V, 5. On Khidr-Ilyās as the one handing the drink to the poet in his dream, see Başgöz, "Turkish Folk Stories about the Lives of Minstrels", 2 (cf. n. 33).

[102] Gökalp, "Hızır, Ilyas, Hidrellez", 211-231 (cf. n. 20). See also Franke, *Begegnung*, 83-88, 147-149, 160-161, and esp. 167-173, with literature and description.

fact that Persian and to a great extent also Turkish poetry are deeply influenced by mystic conceptions, it is only to be expected that he should appear in poetry well before the establishment of the *'āšıq* schools. A brief remark about Khidr's role in Islamic mysticism may precede a look into his presence as an inspiration in Islamic poetry.[103]

Sufis saw in Khidr the ideal of a spiritual personality, worthy to be followed and closely related to the concept of the friendship of God. Khidr is the example of such a *walī Allāh*, a "friend of God", and his deeds as told in *Sura* 18 are examples to be followed. The person who meets Khidr becomes a friend of God himself. In the early period, for example in the case of Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 777-778), the withdrawal from the world that can sometimes be observed after a meeting with Khidr may be ascribed to one of the aetiological legends in which Khidr is a prince who had forsaken the world. Later on, with Sufism influenced by the theories of Ibn 'Arabī (1165-1240) speculations about the essence of Khidr arose: was he a symbol, or a human being that really exists?[104] One of the mystics from the school of Ibn 'Arabī, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ǧīlī (d. 1428) would have it that Khidr was the king of the *riǧāl al-ġayb*, the "Men of Concealment", who have their imaginary realm at the cosmic Northpole. This forms the starting point for visions in which Khidr leads the beholder through the heavenly regions. Moreover, Khidr is an example for Sufi Masters. Sufi initiatory rites like the handshake (*muṣāfaḥa*), the conferring of the mantle (*libs al-ḫirqa*), and the conveying of the formula of the *dhikr* were often introduced into narrations of encounters with Khidr. He played an important role in the tradition of many Sufi orders and Mahdi movements.

Khidr is in possession of *ladunic* knowledge. As Friend of God he was granted uncoverings (*mukāšafāt*)[105] of the hidden (*al-ġayb*), so that also the term 'secret knowledge' is used for it, *al-'ilm al-ġaybī*. About Khidr's knowledge al-Ġazālī writes in his *ar-Risāla al-laduniyya*, "Letter on *ladunic* knowledge", that human knowledge stems either from human, or from divine instruction. The latter can be divided into two types, *waḥy*, "revelation", which is restricted to prophets and which since the end of the prophetic era no longer exists, and *ilhām*, "inspira-

[103] The following paragraph closely follows Franke, *Begegnung*, 373-374.

[104] For Corbin's conviction that asking the either-or question means missing the whole point, namely that Khidr is both archetype and real person, see Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, 59-61.

[105] "Unveilings, uncoverings", cf. Rūzbihān Baqlī's *Kašf al-sarār*, [The Unveiling of Secrets], on which more in the following paragraphs of this section.

tion", which is accessible also to non-prophets. The knowledge imparted through *ilhām*, by which *ladunic* knowledge is meant, was given to Khidr, as written in *Sura* 18:65 "And they found one of our servants,... to whom we had granted the knowledge from with us (*min ladunnā*)".[106] Whoever wants to be a Friend of God, should get his knowledge directly from Khidr. This has on numerous occasions led to criticism of the tradition.[107]

In the cosmological theory of Ibn 'Arabī Khidr is one of the four main figures, who occupy an exalted position in a hierarchy of saints in this world. The other three are Idrīs, Elijah, and Jesus: they are all still alive in this world, albeit in a different mode than ordinary mortals, until the day of the Resurrection. They are the four tent pegs, or *awtād*. They keep alive the faith, the friendship of God, the prophethood and the envoyship, and so all together the religion, Islam. The hierarchy has a subtle stratification, in which the representatives of each layer fulfil specific functions. These four main saints each have a substitute, who represents him because he has the same disposition of heart. In this way the four exist in a double way: as themselves, and in their substitutes. At a lower station the level of innumerable friends of God is located, who usually do not know the four *awtād*, but only their substitutes.[108]

Also, Corbin considered the question who Khidr is, and what a disciple of Khidr is in connection with the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī.[109] "[In *Sura* 18:59-81] Khidr is represented as Moses' guide, who initiates him 'into the science of predestination'. He is the depository of an inspired divine science, superior to the law (*šarī'a*). Khidr reveals the secret, mystic truth to Moses (*haqiqā*) that transcends the *šarī'a* and this explains why the spirituality inaugurated by Khidr is free from the servitude of literal religion."[110] Corbin stresses the importance for Ibn 'Arabī of the investiture with the *libs al-ḫirqa*, Khidr's mantle.[111] Ibn 'Arabī was an *uwaysī*, a Sufi who has no visible, earthly master, but was taught directly by Khidr, who belongs to the hidden world. In this way the disciple of Khidr assimilates to Khidr.[112]

[106] This summary of al-Ġazālī's work (360-366) is taken from Franke, *Begegnung*, 199. Cf. the translation by Margaret Smith in *JRAS* (1938), 177-200 and 353-374.

[107] Franke, *Begegnung*, 200.

[108] I follow Franke, *Begegnung*, 201-203, in his exposition of chapter 73 of Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. O. Yahya, Cairo 1972 ff, vol. XI, 265-271 (non vidi).

[109] Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, 53-67.

[110] Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, 55.

[111] On the *ḫirqa*, see also Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam*, 153-154.

[112] Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, 60.

Likewise, Rūzbihān Baqlī of Shiraz (1128-1209) had an encounter with Khidr during which he was initiated into mysticism. He was given mystical knowledge by eating an apple, the literal fruit of gnosis, from which Khidr had already eaten himself:[113]

> "At that time I was ignorant of the sciences of realities. I saw Khidr (peace be upon him), and he gave me an apple, and I ate a piece of it. Then he said, '[Eat] all of it, for that is how much of it I ate.' I saw as it were an ocean from the throne to the earth, and I saw nothing but this. It was like the radiance of the sun, and my mouth opened involuntarily, and all of it entered into my mouth. Not a drop remained but I drank it."[114]

Here we see how an aspect of the initiation of *'āšıq* poets, the eating of an apple presented to the initiand by his initiator, already exists centuries before these poets appear on the scene as an organized guild. The imagery and its meaning are significant. The connection between the apple as the fruit that, when eaten, confers knowledge is a positive variant of the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden. It also shows that poetic inspiration and mystic initiation into divine knowledge were perceived as closely related aspects of divine revelation.

More parallels can be drawn between this Sufi's state of mind and the initiatory experiences of poets, both before the development of the *'āšıq* system and when it is in place. When Rūzbihān is fifteen years old, he has an audition in which he hears a voice explaining to him that he is "surely a prophet". Years later, when his meetings with Khidr are becoming regular, Rūzbihān understands that this was the voice of Khidr. The result of this initiatory call is a state of inebriation with a mystic love, reminding strongly of the state of mind Kostandin Erznkac'i found himself in after he had his visionary initiation about a century later.[115]

> Today my soul is joyful, I saw a deep wish fulfilled:
> I am drinking without lips a glass of that wine,
> I am drunk with that love and my thoughts are there, where He is.

[113] Paul Ballanfat, *Quatre traités inédits de Ruzbehān Baqlī Shirāzī* [Bibliothèque iranienne 51], Téhéran 1998, 50. Cf. Ernst, *Ruzbihan Baqli. The Unveiling of Secrets*, 14 (§16).

[114] Quoted from Ernst, *Ruzbihan Baqli. Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood*, 52-53. See also Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*. Tome III. *Les Fidèles d'amour; Shī'isme et soufisme, Paris 1972*, 22-27, esp. 24-26.

[115] Paul Ballanfat, *Quatre traités inédits*, 60; Van Lint, "The Poet's Legitimation", 28 (ll. 53-55). For a study of this phenomenon, see Hans Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen 1929.

This state of rapturous love does not last with either initiate, but leads them on a road of various instructions in a more sober mood, taking the form of poems in Kostandin's case, and that of a deeper exploration of divine knowledge in the case of Rūzbihān.

It is not out of context here to briefly engage in a flight of the imagination. What role would Rūzbihān have played in Islamic poetry had he chosen Persian poetry as his main vehicle of expression? Would the younger Rūzbihān have become the master of the *'āšıqs*? The answer is not really important, and yet it is an interesting issue when dealing with poets whose designation associates them with divine inspiration and human and divine love. At the beginning of the *'Abhar al-'āšiqīn*, "The Jasmin of the Lovers"[116], Rūzbihān tells how a female interlocutor "demands that he explain how God may be described in terms of passionate love (*'išq*)".[117] This touches on the double layer of meaning that characterizes Armenian as well as Muslim mystical poetry, the imagery of which, if not the content, was taken over into *'āšıq — ašuł* poetry.

More examples of Khidr's role in mysticism could easily be adduced, such as those set out in *L'archange empourpré*, the choice from works by Suhrawardī brought together by Corbin. The aspiring mystic, on his ascent of Mount Qaf at the summit of which the source of the water of life will be found, is ordered by the angel to "put on the sandals of Khidr".[118] However, the instances given so far from the life and work of Ibn 'Arabī and Rūzbihān Baqlī will suffice. Before drawing some conclusions a closer look into Khidr's career in Persian and Turkish poetry from the period preceding that of the *'āšıq — ašuł* schools will round off the survey of this phenomenon of the poet's initiation in Armenian Christian and in Islamic poetry.

[116] H. Corbin (trans.), *Rūzbihān Baqlī. Le Jasmin des fidèles d'amour*, Paris 1993, partial translation.

[117] For this citation and Rūzbihān's ecstatic love for a female singer in Mecca that, according to Corbin, may have inspired this dialogue see Ernst, *Ruzbihan Baqli. Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood*, 3-4. Also in this instance Kostandin Erznkac'i comes to mind, who is enthralled by a beautiful young woman, the dancer Morǰ, see Van Lint, *Kostandin of Erznka*, 334-342 and 350-360.

[118] As quoted in Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, 59-60. Cf. As-Suhrawardī, *L'archange empourpré. Quinze Traités et récits mystiques, traduits du persan et de l'arabe par Henry Corbin*, Paris 1976. Suhrwardī lived from 1153 to 1991.

*Khidr as inspirer of poetry and as initiator of poets*

The Persian poets Niẓāmī Ganǧawī (1140-1209) and Ǧalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273) give Khidr an important place in their work or in their spiritual biographies.

In Niẓāmī's *Iskandar nāma* (Alexander Book) Khidr appears twice in the first part entitled the *Šafar-nāma* (Book of Nobility), once in the preamble and once almost at the end, when Alexander departs for the land of darkness in which he hopes to find the source of life. Khidr's role is to enable the poet to be original. Since Firdawsī in his *Šāh-nāma* (The Book of Kings) had already treated the subject in a masterful way, Niẓāmī is advised not to repeat what he had said, but to follow Khidr, the *pīšwā-yi naw*, his new leader. Khidr's inspiration provides a parallel between the poet and the ancient conquerer. He who had been Alexander's *pīš-raw*, his guide, now reveals a secret to the poet which no one heard before and which will enable him to break free from servitude, which would be his fate if he were to follow the example set by Firdawsī. The poet becomes the servant of Khidr instead, the taster from the cup of the word (*Ǧām-i suḫan*). Now that the water from the source of life has moistened the poet, Khidr promises that Niẓāmī will speak like flowing water.[119]

As is well known, for Ǧalāl al-Dīn Rūmī the turning point of his life was his meeting with the dervish Šams-i Tabrīzī. In his *Dīwān* he calls him "Khidr of the time, who is alive from the beginning into eternity", "Second Khidr", and "Real Khidr". He justifies this by exclaiming: "How shall I not call you Khidr, since you have drunk from the source of life?" One of the consequences of the profound mystical influence this encounter had on Rūmī was that it turned him into a passionate poet. In this respect Khidr may be held responsible for his change and his choice for poetry.[120]

A work which *expressis verbis* claims to be inspired by Khidr is the Turkish *ḫiẓir-name*, more generally known as *Dīwān-i Muḫyī d-Dīn*, after the nom de plume of Meḥmed Čelebī Sulpān (d. 1494) from Eğirdir in southern Anatolia. According to Franke it constitutes the summit of Khidr veneration in Turkish, and given its period of composition, which is close to the beginning of the era of the *'āšıq — ašuł* schools, it may be

[119] Franke, *Begegnung*, 282-283. Cf. J. Christoph Bürgel, *Nizami. Das Alexanderbuch. Iskandarname*, Zürich, 1991.

[120] The examples from Rūmī's *Dīwān* are taken from Franke, *Begegnung*, 224.

worthwhile to take a look at it.[121] The work presents a veritable catalogue of Khidr's attributes and of the possible types of contact human beings can have with him, absorbing many of the elements present in works by Sufis from previous centuries. Khidr appears as king, who reigns over the *riğāl al-ġayb* while the poet often designates himself Khidr's servant (*qul*), a role taken upon themselves by the pole (*quṭb*, a very elevated rank of sainthood in Sufi mysticism) and the substitutes in Sufi mystical theories. Meḥmed uses the vocabulary of Ğalāl al-Dīn Rūmī when he speaks of his passionate love (*'išq*) for Khidr, who reigns over the Kingdom of Love (*'išq mülkü*). His address of Khidr as Khan, ruler of the world, also stems from earlier sources. Unique, however, is the intensity of this tribute to Khidr. One turn of phrase brings to mind the way John the Baptist is adressed in pilgrims' songs and other poems, as Surb Karapet, Sultan of Mush:

> Dieser, der meinen Herz gewann, war jener Sultan Khidr-Khan
> (*ol ḫıẓır ḫān sulṭānmiş*)
> über das Reich der Liebe erstreckt sich die Herrschaft jenes Sultan Khidr-Khan.[122]

Various forms of poetic initiation by Khidr are known, some of which were touched upon earlier. One of these is the name the newly initiated poet receives from Khidr in his dream. Of particular interest for this paper is the case of 'Āšıq Paša (died 1333), who, according to his son Elvān Čelebī, was the first to be addressed by Khidr as *'āšıq*.[123] This conferring by Khidr of a *mahlas* has continued into the twentieth century among Turkish *'āšıqs*.[124]

A form of initiation that reminds one of the initiations of the Old Testament prophets Isaiah (Isa. 6:6-8), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:1-3) is the touching of the mouth. The former two are touched by God or by an angel, the latter is ordered to eat a scroll with writing on it, which tastes as sweet as honey. In the case of Khidr the initiation takes place by moistening the mouth, as with Niẓāmī, who drank the words Khidr gave him. Likewise Sa'dī (died 1292) is said by Ğāmī (d. 1492) to have drunk from Khidr's "cool source of his favor and benefaction" (*az zulāl-i in'ām u ifẓāl-i ḫud sīrāb gardānīd*).[125]

[121] Franke, *Begegnung*, 225-230 gives a detailed account of the work.

[122] Franke, *Begegnung*, 286, 229; the quotation from Dolu's poem, 228.

[123] This poet was a contemporary of Kostandin Erznkac'i, who may also have used the word in one of his poems, see above.

[124] Franke, *Begegnung*, 287.

[125] Franke, *Begegnung*, 284-285.

Meḥmed Čelebī Sulpān alias Muḥyī d-Dīn, was also known under the name of Dolu, "the one filled (with love)". The same word is used in Turkish, alongside the Persian *bād*, as in the already familiar *'ašq bādesi*, the "cup of love" of the *'āšıqs*, to designate the cup from which the initiate drinks. Meḥmed describes such an initiation in terms known from Persian mystical love poetry: Khidr becomes his cupbearer (*sāqī*) and hands him the cup of the Encounter (with God), the *Ǧām-i liqā*.

This form of initiation has a long history, which reaches back at least to the Jewish-Hellenistic world of the intertestamentary apocryphal literature. It is attested in 4 Ezra 14:38-41, dating from the end of the first century AD.[126] These verses relate how after the destruction of Jerusalem and the disappearance of the Scriptures the priest Ezra is inspired by God to rewrite the Hebrew Bible as well as seventy other books containing knowledge only to be distributed among wise people. The text reads:

> "[38] And it came to pass, on the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, 'Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink.' [39] Then I opened my mouth, and behold, a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire. [40] And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, and my spirit retained its memory; [41] and my mouth was opened, and was no longer closed."

Stone comments that Ezra's reception of the Holy Spirit by drinking from the cup is reminiscent firstly of Ezekiel eating the scroll, secondly of the Hellenistic theme of "divine drunkenness" as described in Philo's *De Ebrietate* and thirdly of the "cups of poison" of the Old Testament which God gives his enemies to drink.[127]

As a last example of an image of initiation a poem ascribed to the Turkish Bektāšī poet Pīr Sulṭān Abdāl (16th century) may be mentioned, where Khidr appears as Pīr who presents the filled cup (*dolu*) with green hands. Pīr Sulṭān Abdāl is contemporary to the earliest representatives of

[126] Franke, *Begegnung*, 287 makes the connection between the poet's initiation and 4 Ezra. On Ezra's vision and its background, see Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra*. A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra [Hermeneia — A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible], Minneapolis 1990, 8-11 (dating); 119-120 (on inspiration); 436-442 (text with commentary). A succinct view of 4 Ezra and its scholarship is given by Albert-Marie Denis OP, "L'Apocalypse 4 Esdras ou Quatrième livre d'Esdras" in his *Introduction à la littérature religieuse judéo-hellénistique*, Tome I, Turnhout 2000, 815-853.

[127] Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 119-120, who adduces other instances and further literature. Cf. also Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas*, for a detailed treatment of the issue.

the *'āšıq — ašuł* poetry. He uses the imagery and the vocabulary these poets also use. Having thus placed the *'āšıq — ašuł* poetry in a wider perspective it is now time to draw some conclusions.

*Conclusions: Structure and parallels in the person and function of the Pīr and patron saint, Surb Karapet and Khidr.*

It is remarkable that Jews, Christians, and Muslims have, in Elijah, John the Baptist, and Khidr persons who share part of their characteristics, and in the case of the latter two also important functions for poets, as their initiators and protectors. We have seen in the course of this paper that these shared characteristics are part of a far wider set of functions they have in their respective religions, some of which also overlap.

It becomes clear that the roles Khidr and Surb Karapet fulfil as patron saints reach back into the period before the establishment of the *ašuł* schools, as does the type of initiation through the cup, the fruit, or another token in a dream or vision.

We have seen that John the Baptist is invoked by poets as their protector, before the *ašuł* schools came into existence. The appearance of a being of light who initiates the poet into poetry cannot unequivocally be interpreted as John the Baptist (Surb Karapet), at least not in the case of Kostandin Erznkac'i in the second half of the thirteenth century, although some of the terms used recur later with respect to Surb Karapet, as in the case of the word *muratov* and *i murat hasay*. Kostandin possibly was the first poet not only to introduce the theme of the rose and the nightingale into Armenian poetry, but also the first to use the word *ašuł* to describe himself as the lover of an earthly beloved, who in his mystical poetry may be the vehicle for his veneration of the divine Beloved. The ingredients of poetic initiation through an encounter with a heavenly being in a vision or visionary dream, of a concept of mystical love expressed by means of a no less real love for a woman of flesh and blood, and of the designation of the love-struck poet as *ašuł* were ready to be used when the schools of the *'āšıqs — ašułs* came into being.

They fitted the concepts of the Islamic poetic tradition, where comparable ingredients were at hand. For Khidr as the inspirer of poets the same holds true. He gave them the power of the word as he granted them his divine knowledge and kindled divine love in them. The particular role of Surb Karapet and Khidr as patron saints was made possible by the common ground they shared as initiators, protectors and granters of

wishes for the poets of the two different religions. While the Armenian *ašułs* often had Muslim masters, their initiation took place through the offices of their Christian patron saint, so that no compromise of conscience was necessary.

Now that we have established the similarity of functions of Surb Karapet and Khidr for the *'ašıqs* and *ašułs* and their close affinity with Elijah, we are in a better position to understand why these particular two religious figures should be chosen as the patron saints of poets. Elijah to some extent plays the role of their common ancestor — in Khidr's case sometimes explicitly that of his brother, double, or complementary being.

It has become clear that the formal organization of the schools of the *'ašıqs* and *ašułs* was built on an established tradition of poetic initiation by figures of great religious importance. The parallelism observed between the Christian and Muslim poetic worlds is in itself striking and betrays similarities in the approach of the relationship between poetry and the divine. Further research into the backgrounds of these poetic traditions may help to explain more precisely why this interaction was possible and to what extent it involves not only the divine sanction and initiation of poets, but also the wider system of poetic language and metaphor. A historical dimension has proved to be of importance for our understanding of the way in which the *'ašıqs* and *ašuł* system functioned.

Further research must trace the development that led to the eventual choice of John the Baptist as the patron saint of Armenian poets, after a period in which other heavenly beings could function as poets' initiators. In the course of time, Christ-God was perhaps considered too exalted to execute this function; a further consideration may be that in this way a parallel with the situation in the Islamic world was established, where Khidr, and not God performed the initiation rites.

Moreover, further research is needed in order to precisely establish the way in which Armenian poets became associated with the *'ašıqs*. Often the Armenian *ašułs* had a muslim *Pīr*. Did accomplished Armenian poets have the right to become a *Pīr* for others? Further study on the way in which the *'ašıqs* and *ašułs* were organized may clarify matters in this respect.

A subject that has been kept outside the scope of this article is the possible similarities that may be detected in initiation ceremonies between novices in *futtuwa* associations of professionals in the Ottoman Empire and the initiation of poets. This demands further investigation if

we are to establish more precisely the position of the poet in that particular society.

Study of the way in which *ašıq* and *ašuł* poets were organized and thus formally embedded in Ottoman, Georgian (eventually Russian) and Iranian society will shed further light on the poet's place and esteem in society, and thus on the ways in which the concept of divine, sometimes unruly inspiration with its various ramifications was considered in a strict social hierarchy.

# THE POLITICS OF POETICS: ISLAMIC INFLUENCE ON ARMENIAN VERSE

S. PETER COWE

Armeno-Muslim literary interchange developed organically in the course of over a millennium of cultural interaction between the two constituencies from their first historic encounter at the capitulation of the Sasanian empire in the 640s until the threshold of modernity when both at their own pace began a parallel path of influence from western Europe.[1] Granted the prominent public role accorded to art in both societies, it is self evident that these cultural contacts did not take place in a vacuum, but formed, rather, a central dimension of the broader commerce both in commodities and ideas which marked their relations throughout this period. Consequently, one may observe a significant correlation between the form, intensity, and diffusion of such literary connections and other levels of reciprocation. The main goal of this paper is therefore to attempt to construct a politics of poetics, coordinating the development of Armenian poetry with the growth of state and community relations with Arab, Persian, and Turkic societies in this timeframe.

*Pre-Islamic Armenian Society and Culture*

As the conference organizers have well underlined in their preparatory brief, it is impossible to evaluate the pattern of Christian-Muslim interface in concrete instances without regard to the pre-Islamic era. When we consider questions of identity and self-image, we note that the Armenian experience differed in certain important respects from that of their Syrian co-religionists. Whereas the latter are administered as religious communities by the Sasanians after the fashion of the Jews and represented before the King of Kings by their hierarchs, the Armenians' autonomous ethnic and territorial status was acknowledged through the

[1] For an account of the immediate impact of the Arab invasion, see the record of the seventh century historian Sebēos, in G.V. Abgarian, *Patmut'iwm Sebēosi*, Yerevan 1979, 19 and, for a recent English translation R.W. Thomson (trans. with notes), J. Howard-Johnston (historical commentary; assistance from Tim Greenwood), *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, Liverpool 1999.

maintenance of their monarchy until 428, after which they were ruled by a succession of governors (*marzpan*), most of whom were Armenian nobles.[2] Moreover, the mode of land tenure, relative local autonomy, ability to mobilize troops, etc., all of which is generally subsumed under what is termed the *naxarar* system, continued in an attenuated form into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[3] Christianity received official acceptance by the court in the early part of the fourth century while Greater Armenia was still under Roman suzerainty. Hence the religious connection with Byzantium was formalized by the consecration of St. Gregory the Illuminator by the metropolitan of Caesarea and by his son and successor Aristakēs' presence at the Council of Nicaea a few years later.[4] This link with the West was further expanded upon in the narrative of Armenia's Christianization attributed to Agathangelos, plausibly writing in the 460s, who inserts the tradition of a journey by the Armenian king Trdat along with Gregory to visit the Emperor Constantine, which resulted in the signing of a significant alliance between the two Christian monarchs.[5] The Sasanian goal of recreating the palmy days of Achaemenian power through strict adherence to Zoroastrian practice gave rise to a series of campaigns to reintroduce Mazdaeic worship in Armenia from the fourth to the sixth centuries, out of which emerged a set of aristocratic warrior icons of armed resistance to religious syncretism, in addition to the more common forms of martyr model.[6] The

[2] See W. Stewart McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, Chico 1982, 95-97 and N.G. Garsoïan (trans./comm.), N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, Lisbon 1970.

[3] For an overview of this period, which treats the situation of noble families of the era such as the Zak'ariads, Ōrpēleans, Prošeans, etc., see D. Kouymjian, "Armenia from the Fall of the Cilician Kingdom (1375) to the Forced Emigration under Shah Abbas (1604)", in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, Vol. 2, New York 1997, 1-50. For a more detailed consideration, see Garegin Yovsep'ean, *Xałbakeank' kam Přošeank' Hayoc' patmut'ean mēǰ* [The Xałbakeans or Přoščans in Armenian History] vol.1, Vałaršapat 1928; vol. 2, Jerusalem 1944.

[4] See R.W. Thomson (trans.), *Agathangelos. History of the Armenians*, Albany 1976, 414-417.

[5] For the literary and political importance of this tradition see Robert W. Thomson, "Constantine and Trdat in Armenian Tradition", *AO* 50 (1997), 277-289.

[6] This type was exemplified primarily by the *sparapet* (general) Vardan Mamikonian as presented in the second book of Łazar's history, written in c. 500. Not to be outdone, we observe the respect accorded by their aristocratic rivals, the Arcrunis of Vaspurakan, to two of their warrior saints, Sahak and Hamazasp, by depicting them in medallions on the walls of the church at Alt'amar, for which see Lynn A. Jones, *Between Byzantium and Islam: Royal Iconography and the Church of the Holy Cross at Aghtamar* [Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign], 126, and Patrick Donabédian and Jean-Michel Thierry, *Armenian Art*, New York 1987, fig. 254.

glorification of these figures and vilification of their collaborationist counterparts in the literature of the time provided a powerful reaffirmation of socio-cultural boundaries, which continued to resonate throughout the following period.[7]

*Interchange with Arab Culture Under the Caliphate*

During the first phase of Arab rule in Anatolia geography isolated Armenia as a buffer zone with Byzantium under an agreement brokered by T'ēodoros Ŕštuni (652/3), which secured a significant measure of local autonomy and religious freedom.[8] It was under the 'Abbasids that the local demography was transformed by the settlement of various Arab tribes in the center and south of the Armenian plateau to divide the three major Armenian aristocratic families, the Bagratids, Arcrunids, Siwnis, who had supported the Umayyads in the dynastic power struggle and had participated in a revolt of 774/5.[9] However, as the central power of the caliphate weakened in the ninth century we note a number of marriage alliances being formed, particularly with the Arcrunids of Vaspurakan in the south, as a result of which a few of the Arab lords converted to Christianity.[10] In order to counterbalance the centrifugal forces of the local Muslims, the Caliphate agreed to the reestablishment of the Armenian kingdom under the Bagratid dynasty in 884, while Yusuf, the Sajid ruler of Atrpatakan countered this move by conferring royal status on his candidate Prince Gagik of Vaspurakan in 908.[11] The external trappings of the authority of these monarchs into the third quarter of the

[7] This rhetoric often impacts the presentation of pro-Persian and pro-Greek factionalism among the nobility and the church. Moreover, as Armenians began increasingly to be defined by their particular form of Christian orthodoxy, this led to the marginalization of sectarians like Paulicians and Tondrakites, who therefore sought refuge in the Byzantine-Armenian marchlands under the protection of the Arabs. See Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East*, Leiden 1997, 54-80.

[8] For the terms, see Nina G. Garsoïan (trans.), Aram Ter-Ghewondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia*, Lisbon 1976, 20.

[9] Ibid., 21-22. This revolt led to the demise of the important aristocratic house of Mamikonian on account of their pro-Byzantine orientation and insurgency against the caliphate. In addition to Arab tribes, Kurdish and Turkish elements also settled in Armenia as a result of these developments, see Ibid., 24, 110, 185.

[10] Ibid., 48.

[11] For an account of the event, see T'ovma Arcruni, *T'ovma Arcruni ev Ananun Patmut'iwn tann Arcruneac'* [T'ovma Arcruni and Anonymous (Continuator): History of the Arcrunid House] Erevan 1985, 442 and Robert W. Thomson (trans.), *Thomas Artsruni. History of the House of the Artsrunik'*, Detroit 1985, 347.

eleventh century are manifested in a series of sculptural donor busts on churches (e.g. at Hałbat, and Sanahin), in a singular statue in the round of King Gagik I Bagratuni at Ani, and in manuscript illuminations.[12] There they are seen wearing a kaftan and large turban, or are depicted sitting cross-legged at the feast in a Sasanian royal pose also adopted by the 'Abbasids.[13] The description of the palace constructed by Gagik on the island of Ałt'amar, its great hall embellished with frescoes depicting the king at a feast, wrestling matches, wild beasts and flocks of birds, can also be paralleled by those of Arab palaces and lodges.[14] These images are, of course, counterbalanced by the large crosses emblazoned on the exterior walls of the Bagratid capital of Ani, proclaiming to all comers the Christian character of the city and state, and the reliefs of Old Testament warriors like King David and Samson on the palatine church at Ałt'amar.[15]

At the same time, the apocryphal tale of an Arcrunid prince Grigor Derēn from this period highlights a greater rapprochement in values and lifestyle between Armenians and Arabs in the southern region.[16] The

[12] For a discussion of the symbolism of these depictions and a comparison with that of the succeeding Armenian kingdom in Cilicia and those of neighboring states, see Levon Č'ugaszyan, "Remarks on the Portrait of Prince Lewon (Ms Erevan 8321)", *REArm* 25 (1994-95), 299-336; Levon Č'ugaszyan, "On the Portrait of Prince Levon and Princess Keran", *JAS* 6/2 (2000-2001), 73-88; Jones, *Between Byzantium and Islam*, 157-220; Helen Evans, "Kings and Power Bases. Sources for Royal Portraits in Armenian Cilicia", in J.-P. Mahé and R. W. Thomson (eds.), *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, Atlanta 1997, 485-507 and Thomas F. Mathews & Anna C. Daskalakis, "The Portrait of Princess Marem of Kars, Jerusalem 2556, fol.135b", in Mahé and Thomson, *From Byzantium to Iran*, 475-484. For a reproduction of some of the images in question, see Donabédian and Thierry, *Armenian Art*, figs. 51, 52, 125, 347. Long thought to have been lost in 1918, according to recent reports it is suggested that the partial remains of Gagik's unique statue are to be found in the museum at Erzurum.

[13] See Mathews and Daskalakis, "The Portrait", 477. The king of Nineveh from the Jonah cycle of reliefs at Ałt'amar is similarly portrayed cross-legged, as is a figure in a medalion on one of the other walls of the church, who is sometimes identified as the commissioner, Gagik Arcruni, himself. See Donabédian and Thierry, *Armenian Art*, fig. 252, p. 379. In contrast, the Virgin is portrayed on the same church in a more Western pose, seated on a high-backed chair.

[14] See Jones, *Between Byzantium and Islam*, 221-256.

[15] On the former capital, see Alice Taylor, "The Walls of Ani: Sign as Function", in S. Peter Cowe (ed.), *Ani: World Architectural Heritage of a Medieval Armenian Capital*, [University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 16], Leuven 2001, 69-76 and Jones, *Between Byzantium and Islam*, 297-322 on the latter. See also Donabédian and Thierry, *Armenian Art*, fig. 250, p. 379.

[16] For the Armenian text, see M. Darbinyan-Melik'yan (ed.), *[Ps.] Šapuh Bagratuni. Patmut'iwn ananun zruc'agir karcec'yal Šapuh Bagratuni* [History of the Anonymous Story-Teller Ps. Šapuh Bagratuni], Erevan 1971 and, for an English translation, Robert

prince's rescue of the caliph who had come to Van in defeat, his own discomfiture and subsequent reinstatement by none other than the caliph he had assisted, is a vivid protreptic to the practice of hospitality. Although the latter is also a Christian virtue, the tone and Arab ambience of the story suggest the impact of Islam, which itself had developed the trait from Beduin custom.

Part of the prince's hospitality to the caliph is to entertain him with song as he dies, a part of festal etiquette also portrayed on the walls of Gagik's palace.[17] Armenians like the Arabs and Iranians, had enjoyed a vibrant tradition of oral poetry before the invention of an alphabet introduced in large measure for the propagation of religion.[18] Early Armenian liturgical verse seems to maintain a certain continuity with the pagan stress meters, but like Byzantium gradually adopts the isosyllabic principle of Syriac verse which is perfected by the twelfth century.[19] In contrast, it is likely that the first impact of Arabic verse on Armenian derives from the court of the Curopalate David of Tayq/Tao (d. 1000). Data from a fourteenth century manuscript indicate David commissioned a translation of The City of Bronze, a tale of Iranian origin, which later entered the 1001 Nights collection. In surviving copies the prose narrative is punctuated by a series of verses commenting on crucial scenes and heightening their pathos.[20] These interludes are composed in monorhymed stanzas of four lines known as *kafa*, from the Arabic *qafiya*.[21] From musical notation preserved for some, and other types of later evidence, it emerges that the poems were meant to be sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument such as the *saz*.[22] This verse type was applied to enliven a number of other prose narratives of similar prove-

W. Thomson, "The Anonymous Story-Teller (Also Known as "Pseudo-Šapuh")", *REArm* 21 (1988-89), 171-232.

[17] See T'ovma Arcruni, *Patmut'iwn tann Arcruneac'*, 458 and Thomson, *Thomas Artsruni. History of the House of the Artsrunik'*, 357.

[18] On this see Mary Boyce, "The Parthian *gosan* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition", *JRAS* (1957), 12-45.

[19] See S. Peter Cowe, "Medieval Armenian Literary and Cultural Trends (Twelfth-Seventeenth Centuries)", in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol.1 New York 293-325, esp. 295.

[20] See H. Nersēs Akinean, "Zroyc' Płnjē k'ałak'i", [The Tale of the City of Bronze], *HA* 72 (1958), 21-48.

[21] For a study of the genre see Hasmik A. Simonyan, *Hay mijnadaryan kafaner (X-XVI dd.)* [Medieval Armenian Kafa Verses (10th-16th Centuries)], Erevan 1975.

[22] For details, see S. Peter Cowe, "Models for the Interpretation of Medieval Armenian Poetry", in J.J.S. Weitenberg (ed.), *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Literature*, [Dutch Studies in Armenian Language and Literature 3], Amsterdam 1995, 29-45 esp. 35-44.

nance like *The Questions of the Maiden*, and subsequently the *Alexander Romance*.[23] The latter example well illustrates the general pattern of such borrowings, whereby after the initial stage of contact with Islamic tradition, the verse type, literary or artistic motif, etc., becomes indigenized in its new setting and then begins to be employed creatively in the desire to explore further aspects of its expressive potential untapped in its culture of origin.

*Impact on Armenian Verse of the Arabic Qasida*

The resurgent Byzantine requirement to repopulate Cappadocia, previously a buffer region between its own lands and those of the caliphate, in the tenth century, followed by the Seljuq incursions into eastern Anatolia in the following conspired to bring this period of Armenian independence to a close and move their center of gravity south and west.[24] Consequently, a number of Armenian nobles entered into the ranks of the Byzantine administration as *strategoi*, e.g. Apłarip Arcruni in Tarsus.[25] Another of these important dynasts was the eccentric Hellenophile Grigor Magistros who attained the office of dux Mesopotamiae. In that capacity he took up the study of Arabic and remarks in his learned commentary on Dionysius Thrax's grammatical primer on his particular regard for the verbal virtuosity of al-Mutanabbi.[26] The latter's *qasidas*

[23] For the former work, see Armenuhi Srapyan, *Patmut'iwn vasn mankann ew ałjhann patmut'iwn yałags P'ahlul t'agaworin* [History of the Boy and the Girl — History about King P'ahlul], Erevan 1983, 49-160, and, for the latter, Hasmik A. Simonyan, *Patmut'iwn Ałek'sandri Makedonac'woy* [History of Alexander of Macedon] Erevan 1989, which presents three different versions with sets of *kafa* verses by the fourteenth century poet Xač'atur Kеč'ařec'i and his sixteenth century counterparts Grigoris Alt'amarc'i and his pupil Zak'aria Gnunec'i.

[24] On the transfer of Armenian population see Gérard Dédéyan, "L'immigration arménienne en Cappadoce au XIe siècle", *Byzantion* 45/1 (1975), 41-117 and S. Peter Cowe, "Patterns of Armenian Immigration to the Sebastia Region in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", in R.G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Sebastia*, [UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series] Costa Mesa, CA 2004, 111-136.

[25] See Aleksandr Kazhdan, *Armjane v sostave gospodstvujushchego klassa Vizantijskoj imperii v XI-XII vv.* [Armenians in the Structure of the Ruling Class of the Byzantine Empire in the 11th-12th centuries], Erevan 1975, 33-36.

[26] On Grigor's wide-ranging intellectual pursuits see Avedis K. Sanjian, "Gregory Magistros: An Armenian Hellenist", in John S. Allen et al. (eds.), *TO ELLHNIKON: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, vol. 2, New Rochelle, NY 1993, 111-130. For his study of Arabic, see Nicholas Adontz, *Denys de Thrace et les commentateurs arméniens*, Louvain 1970, 232, and, for the translation of this passage in the later commentary on the grammar of Dionysius Thrax by Yovhannēs Erznkazi, who is dependent on his predecessor at this point, see Roberta S. Ervine, *Yovhannēs Erznkac'i Pluz's*

may have served Grigor as an inimitable model for emulatation during a visit to Constantinople in 1045. His apparently chance encounter with the Muslim Manuch there had far-ranging repercussions for the development of Armenian verse. His interlocutor disdained the Judaeo-Christian scriptures as written in prose, and therefore obviously on a much lower level of inspiration than the Qur'an, whose highly poetic qualities reinforced the claim to represent the uncreated word of God. Grigor's reaction was to produce a versified abridgement of the Bible extending to over a thousand lines in four days employing mono-rhyme in -i throughout.[27] Although of uneven standard, his experiment largely fixed the form of long, serious poems in elevated diction for the next five centuries.[28]

Much more important for our purpose than such formal niceties, however, is the gradual inauguration of a new Armenian aesthetic, similarly granting priority to poetic expression over prose and therefore significantly enlarging the compass of subjects appropriate for treatment in verse. Thus at around the turn of the twelfth century we find its first use in philosophy. Developing the thought of Philo's prose dialogue *De animalibus* on the relation between human and animal creation, Yovhannēs Sarkawag constructs his discourse as a humorous contention poem between the scholar and a blackbird, which challenges him on the superior quality of knowledge attained by divine illumination over book learning.[29] Later two short treatments of astronomy are produced in

*"Compilation of Commentary on Grammar"*, [Ph.D. Columbia University, New York], 1988, 262-263. On the impact in Armenia of Avicenna, one of the Islamic luminaries of the next generation, see A. Šahsuvaryan, *Avisennan ew hay matenagrut'yunĕ*, [Avicenna and Medieval Armenian Literature], Erevan 1960.

[27] See Grigor Magistros, *Tałasac'ut'iwnk'* [Poetry], Venice 1868. The vowel -i became extremely popular for long poems in mono-rhyme since it has most morphological versatility in Armenian, functioning as a case termination for various nominal and adjectival declensions as well as for a variety of personal suffixes for different categories and tenses of verb.

[28] These include a series of laments in the high style on the fall of various cities of the Near East, usually to Muslim forces, and later epics like those of Aṙak'el Siwnec'i (c. 1356-c. 1422).

[29] For the text, see A. Abrahamyan, *Hovhannes Imastaseri Matenagrut'yun*, Erevan 1956, 319-324, for the poem's dependency on Philo see A. Mnac'akanyan, "Hovhannes Sarkavagi 'Ban imastut'yan' poemĕ ev nra gnahatut'yunn ĕst ōgtagorcvac aṙbyuneri" [Yovhannēs the Deacon's Poem 'Discourse on Wisdom' and its Evaluation According to the Sources Utilized], *BM* 14, (1984), 9-45 and, for a study and English translation, S. Peter Cowe, "Armenological Paradigms and Yovhannēs Sarkawag's Discourse on Wisdom: Philosophical Underpinning of an Armenian Renaissance?", *REArm* 25 (1994-95), 125-156.

verse, one the epitome of a longer prose treatise.[30] For the first time since the oral pre-Christian lays we find two versified histories and a series of verse abbreviations of prose tales which were themselves translations, sometimes existing in several versions, e.g. the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph.[31] From the introduction to a poem by the thirteenth century mystic Kostandin Erznkac'i we can deduce that poetic composition was also studied as part of the curriculum in the monastic academies.[32] Certainly by the mid-thirteenth century it becomes well nigh de rigueur for copyists to display their poetic talents in at least part of their final colophons, though most scarcely rise above the level of doggerel.[33]

The long, elevated poem in mono-rhyme introduced by Grigor Magistros was developed by two of his descendants, Nersēs Šnorhali and Grigor Tłay, both of whom occupied the position of Armenian catholicos in the second half of the twelfth century. The former employed the verse form extremely effectively in a moving lament on the fall of Edessa to Zengi's forces in 1144.[34] As in the case of his nephew's lament on the fall of Jerusalem to Salladin in 1187, the tone and imagery invoked, as one might expect, is thoroughly biblical and Christian.[35]

[30] Of these the earlier belongs to Šnorhali (Nersēs Šnorhali, *Bank' č'ap'aw* [Verses], Venice 1928, 301-317), while the other is traditionally attributed to Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, though its authorship is contested. See Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, *Vipasanut'iwn zerknayin marmnoc' šaržmanē* [Narrative on the Movement of the Heavenly Bodies], Nor Naxiǰewan1792, and L. Step'anyan (ed.), A. T'op'chyan (trans.), *Yovhannēs Erznkac', On the movements of the Celestial Bodies* (Bilingual Classical Armenian-English Edition), Yerevan 2001.

[31] For editions and studies of this tale see the literature cited in Robert W. Thomson, *A Bibliography of Classical Armenian Literature to 1500 AD*, Turnhout 1995, 37-38, to which might be added P'. Ant'apean (ed.), *Yovasap' ew Barałam: Patmut'iwn ew xratk' Xikaray imastnoy* [Ioasaph and Barlaam: The Tale and Counsel of Xikar the Wise], Jerusalem 1980. The earlier of the verse histories was a youthful work composed by an illustrious catholicos in 1121, which focuses on the honorable role his aristocratic family had played (M. Mkrtč'yan (ed.), *Nersēs Šnorhali, Vipasanut'iwn* [Romance], Erevan 1981). The second by the chancellor of King Levon II traces the exploits of the Cilician royal family (Vahram Rabuni, *Otanawor patmut'iwn Ṙubeneac'* [Verse History of the Rubenids], Madras 1810).

[32] See A. Srapyan, *Kostandin Erznkac'i. Tałer*, Erevan 1962, 187; Theo M. van Lint, *Kostandin of Erznka: An Armenian Religious Poet of the XIIIth-XIVth Century* [Ph.D. Leiden 1996], 189-197, and Cowe, "Models", 39.

[33] See Cowe, "Medieval Armenian", 310.

[34] For the former text see M. Mkrtč'yan (ed.), *Nersēs Šnorhali, Oł̇b Edesioy* [Lament on Edessa], Erevan 1973 and, for a recent study and English translation, Theo M. van Lint, "Seeking Meaning in Catastrophe: Nersēs Šnorhali's 'Lament on Edessa'", in K. Ciggaar and H. Teule (eds), *East and West in the Crusader States: Context-Contacts-Confrontations* II [OLA 92], Louvain 1999, 29-105.

[35] For the latter text, see A. Mnac'akanyan (ed), *Grigor Tłay, Banastełcut'yunner ew poemner* [Grigor Tłay Verses and Poems], Erevan 1972, 244-333.

This is also true of Šnorhali's magnum opus of 1152 in 4,000 lines, which represents an overview of salvation history from the Old Testament to the Second Coming, combining the narrative aspect of Grigor Magistros' work with the introspective hermeneutic of Grigor Narekac'i's ground breaking *Book of Lamentation*.[36] Although imitated by a succession of later poets, Šnorhali's collective oeuvre marks the high-point of Arabic inspired verse in Armenian. This in turn broadly coincides with Arabic's gradual demise as a medium for great poetry.[37]

In his colophon to the poem Šnorhali craves the reader's indulgence for employing a form they might rather associate with the 'song of Aphrodite,' i.e. secular love poetry. The reference may be to a by-form of the *kafa-qafiya* alluded to earlier, a free standing four line mono-rhymed epigram, which is generally a vehicle for variegated handlings of the theme of love, though several other topics are found, such as social criticism, and the exile's yearning for home. Later collections of these poems known as *hayrēns* attribute them to a rather nebulous sixteenth century figure Nahapet K'uč'ak, but it seems likely that the genre is much older.[38] In function, if not in form, they resemble the Persian *roba'i*.[39] Persian poetic influence rose to even greater prominence in Armenian during the second phase from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, entering beyond purely external factors to impinge upon the elements of tone and motif.

### *Persian Cultural Contacts in Anatolia Mediated by Turkish*

As one might expect, the Armeno-Persian interchange this development implies, is not primarily associated with the state the Armenians created in the hill country of the Taurus range of Cilicia in the late eleventh century that subsequently expanded along the coastal plain in the course of the following century, was raised to the status of kingdom and then

[36] See Šnorhali, *Bank' cap'aw*, 9-177, for the Armenian text and, for an English verse translation, Jane S. Wingate, *Nerses Shnorhali. Jesus, son, only-begotten of the Father*, New York 1947.

[37] While maintaining its general status as the language of law and religion long after the collapse of the caliphate, Arabic gradually ceded its place to Persian in lyric poetry. The latter gained in prestige and circulation through its adoption by the Seljuqs, on which see Jan Rypka (et al), *Iranische Literaturgeschichte*, Leipzig 1959, 180.

[38] For a study of the question see M. Abełyan, *Hayoc' hin grakanut'ean patmut'iwn* [History of Ancient Armenian Literature] vol. 2, Beirut 1959, 417-425.

[39] One of the major differences in rhyme between the two traditions is that whereas in Persian quatrains the third line tends to diverge from the pattern of the others, the Armenian norm is mono-rhyme.

gradually shrank in the fourteenth century until its total incorporation into the Mamluk domain in 1375. The polity's very creation parallels that of the states carved out by the barons of the First Crusade, whose anti-Byzantine policies the Armenian Rubenid princes shared and with whom they gradually established bonds of intermarriage and intrigue.[40] The Armenian kings did commission certain translations from Arabic and Persian, but these were medical and pseudo-scientific, not poetic.[41] Similarly, the state's primary religious concerns focused on the papacy's increasingly forthright demands for theological and liturgical conformity, rather than relations with Islam, outside the brief interlude of Prince Mleh who became Muslim and seized power in 1170 with the backing of the Zangid Nur al-Din.[42] The royal court's fundamentally western orientation is probably a major factor in explaining the dearth of elaborate Persianate *masnavi* romances in Armenian, while their Georgian counterpart boasted several translations and indigenous works, the most celebrated of which is Rustaveli's "Man in the Panther Skin."[43]

Instead of the Cilician state, it was rather the thriving Armenian artisan and merchant city of Erznka (Erzincan) in the traditional province of Barjr Hayk' (Upper Armenia) on the northern Anatolian route favored by the Mongols for trade between Tabriz and Konya, which offered the first significant experiments with Persian verse in the second half of the thirteenth century.[44] Continued Armenian autonomy there was ensured by the bishop who was likely of aristocratic status and could call on the services of several hundred horsemen for defense when necessary. The district surrounding the city had been appropriated by the Turkmen

[40] On these policies see especially W.H. Rudt de Collenberg, *The Rupenides, Hethumides and Lusignan, the structure of the Armeno-Cilician Dynasties*, Paris 1963.

[41] For an overview of this activity see Cowe, "Medieval Armenian", 301-303, 318-319. One might also note the treatise on equine veterinary science translated from Persian in the thirteenth century, for which see Babgen L. Č'ugaszyan. *Bžškasaran jioc' ew aṙhasarak grasnoc' 13 dar* [A Veterinary Treatise for Horses and Beasts of Burden in General: 13th Century], Erevan 1980. It is significant that one of the verses of the contemporary Armenian poet Frik seems to preserve the translation of an original Persian quatrain. See Babgen L. Č'ugaszyan, "Frik parskeren k'aṙyaki t'argmanič'" [Frik as Translator of a Persian Quatrain], *BM* 4 (1958), 111-120.

[42] For a reconsideration of the significance and number of Muslim Armenian leaders in different part of the Near East in this period, see Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*.

[43] For a recent review of medieval Georgian romance literature see Donald Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia: A History*, Oxford 1994, 73-86.

[44] In this connection, see the comparative study of A.K. Kozmoyan, "Haykakan ev Parskakan mijnadaryan sirayin k'narergut'yan tipabanakan aṙanjnahatkut'yunneri masin" [On the Typological Characteristics of Medieval Armenian and Persian Love Lyric], *Patmabanasirakan Handes* (1987) no.3, 153-160.

Mengujakid family, whose civic munificence seems to have mirrored that of the sultans of Rum in miniature. Their patronage of Persian letters is well illustrated by the dedication of Nizami's Makhzan al-Asrar to the ruler Bahramšah in 1176. Nevertheless, Turkish was spoken by the majority of the population.[45] This element is exploited in the dialogue of a brief, humorous, and ironic romance plausibly attributed to the *vardapet* Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, which also manifests a stanzaic rhyme pattern characteristic of Turkish folk poetry (abab cccb).[46] The crux of the work is a liaison between the monk and Asha, an obstreperous mullah's daughter. She has other aristocratic Muslim suitors and so Yovhannēs must convert without delay if they are to be united, since as a woman she may not marry outside the faith. However, when he suddenly baulks at this, she finally capitulates and agrees to be married in a Christian church. Clearly one facet of the poem's moral purview appears to be the avoidance of syncretism and community attrition through exogamous marriage. The provisions of Yovhannēs' canons for the confraternity of 1280 promote the same goal, as for example, in observing Sunday by closing one's place of business in the market.[47] The closeness of Armenian-Muslim family relations is observable from one of his canonical writings where he warns against selecting a non-Christian as godfather, a practice still referred to in the novels of Raffi in the later nineteenth century.[48] Similarly, in the area of Ganja we learn from a twelfth century

[45] This is affirmed by Ibn Battuta who visited the region in c. 1333. A further reflection of this fact is the finding that Arabic and Persian borrowings in Kostandin's works have entered the Armenian lexicon through the mediation of Turkish (Andrzej Pisowicz, "How did New Persian and Arabic Words Penetrate the Middle Armenian Vocabulary? Remarks on the Material of Kostandin Erznkac'i's Poetry", in J.J.S. Weitenberg (ed.), *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Literature*, [Dutch Studies in Armenian Language and Literature 3], Amsterdam 1995, 95-109). The importance of the currency of Turkish and Greek in Anatolia at the time is also reflected in Rumi's son, Sultan Veled's employment of both media to disseminate sufi thought and piety in the region.

[46] For the text, see A. Srapyan (ed.), *Hovhannes Erznkac'in: Usumnasirut'yun ev bnagrer* [Yovhannēs Erznkac'i: Study and Texts], Erevan 1958, 163-171. Because of the work's intrinsic socio-religious and poetic importance an English rendering has been appended to the present paper. In some manuscripts the piece is ascribed, arguably with less probability, to the somewhat later poet Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i, on which see James R. Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i and the Medieval Armenian Lyric Tradition* [University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 7], Atlanta 1987, 105-116 and especially the rendering, 112-115.

[47] For the Armenian text of the injunctions see H.M. Bałdasaryan (ed.), *Hovhannes Erznkac'in ev nra xratakan arjake* [Yovhannēs Erznkac'i and His Paraenetic Prose], Erevan 1977, 225.

[48] For the Armenian text see Raffi, *Xent'ë* [The Fool], Beirut 1981, and, for an English translation, J.S. Wingate (trans.), *The Fool: A Novel by Raffi*, Boston 1950.
A significant factor in the maintainance of this practice is undoubtedly the protection this

penitential manual of different forms of symbiosis between Armenian women and Kurdish men, indicating that despite the attempts of community leaders, ethno-religious boundaries remained somewhat porous.[49]

*Impact of the Persian Ghazal on Armenian Lyric*

Whereas Yovhannēs Erznkazi's response to exchange with Islam was rather conservative, the reaction of his younger colleague Kostandin seems much more open.[50] The latter is familiar with recitations of the Šāh Nāma and at the request probably of some of the confraternity members, composes a poem in imitation of the *masnavi* meter with rhyming couplets.[51] However, most of his lyrical outpourings more closely resemble the *ghazal* with mono-rhyme and self-reference (*takhallus*)

affiliation afforded, when we bear in mind the traditional social role of the *k'avor* (Godfather).

[49] For the Armenian text see Charles J.F. Dowsett, *The Penitential of David of Ganjak* [CSCO 216: Armenian text], Louvain 1961, 19-21, and for the English translation, Charles J.F. Dowsett, *The Penitential of David of Ganjak* [CSCO 217: English translation], Louvain 1961, 16-17. Armeno-Kurdish relations have been extremely fruitful in the realm of folklore. See Frédéric Macler, "Une forme arménienne du thème des 'amants malheureux'", *REArm* 11 (1922), 91-116 for the Armenian translation of the Kurdish romance of Mamo and Zine, and Michael Chyet, "Is Mem a Hero? An Analytical Consideration of Oral Versions of 'Mem u Zin'", *AK* 1 (1994), 155-176 for a discussion of the role of the Armenian within the broader cycle. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Armenians made a series of important contributions to the advancement of Kurdology. For a study and reprint of Xacatur Abovean's groundbreaking ethnographic report, see Karlen Chachani, "The Kurdological Heritage of Khachatur Abovian", *AK* 1 (1994), 179-180, and for K'rder-ezdiner [Kurds and Yezidis] a black and white silent film of 1932 documenting the collectivization of a Kurdish village see S. Gulyan et al, *Haykakan kino liakatar katalog 1924-1999* [A Complete Catalog of Armenian Film: 1924-1999], Erevan 2000, 13. In addition, the musicologist Komitas selected Kurdish music as the topic of his diploma dissertation for the Berlin conservatory, which now seems to be lost.

[50] At the same time it is worth noting his acquaintance with the thought of various Muslim philosophers, for which see S. Arevšatyan (ed.), "Hovhannes Erznkac'u imastasirakan anhayt ašxatut'yun: I Tačkac' imastasirac' groc' k'aɫeal bank'" [An Unknown Work of Yovhannēs Erznkac'i: Discourses Exerpted from the Writings of Arab Philosophers], *BM* 4 (1958), 297-315 and Seta B. Dadoyan, *John of Erzenka's "Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers" and Other Treatises in the Light of Islamic Sources*, Beirut 1991.

[51] For the Armenian original see Srapyan, *Kostandin Erznkac'i*, 209-212, and, for an English translation and interpretation, van Lint, *Kostandin of Erznka*, 257-269. For a discussion of the wider impact of Firdawsi's epic in Armenia see Frédéric Macler, "Arménie et Chah-Nameh", *JA* 228 (1936), 549-559, and Šahsuvaryan, *Avisennan*. Although Armenian possessed the capacity to create quantative verse like the Arabo-Persian *'aruz*, this potential facility was never exploited by Armenian poets. See Charles Dowsett, "A Metrical Experiment", *Raft* 3 (1989), 37-58.

near the conclusion.[52] The thirteenth century is generally regarded as the apex of Persian mystic poetry of sufi inspiration, and Anatolia was clearly a major center. Rumi had recently died in Konya in 1273, after making a number of Christian disciples, and had various Armenian contacts, according to his biographer.[53] Moreover, Yunus Emre, the Turkish poet (d. c. 1320) was Kostandin's contemporary.[54] If eastern monasticism had exercised a seminal influence on the origins of sufism, it's cross-fertilization by its Islamic counterpart is now manifest in various ways.[55] Although Kostandin is faithful to the Judaeo-Christian distinction between Creator and created in his imagery of the love union between the human and divine and hence lacks any sense of *fana'*, or the obliteration of the individual within the divine presence (such as is conveyed by the motif of the candle and the moth), he frequently utilizes the motif of inebriation to indicate the self-oblivious rapture he experiences at such times.[56]

### *The Indigenization of the Rose and Nightingale Motif in Armenian Verse*

Kostandin is the first Armenian poet to apply the trope of the Rose and the Nightingale in his works, the loanword *bulbul* for the latter pointing to the motif's Persian origin.[57] Developed from references in the Qur'an

[52] For the characteristics of the genre see Walter G. Andrews, *Poetry's Voice, Society's Song*, Seattle 1985, 3-18.

[53] For his encounter with a band of forty monks near Sis, see J.W. Redhouse (trans.), *Šams al-Din Ahmad Aflaki. Legends of the Sufis: Selected Anecdotes from the Work entitled The Acts of the Adepts*, London 1976, 19, and, for his meeting with an Armenian butcher, 51.

[54] For an introduction to the poet's oeuvre with select English translations, see Talat S. Halman, *Yunus Emre and His Mystical Poetry*, [Indiana University Turkish Studies 2], Elletsville, 1981.

[55] The Armenian and Georgian poetic traditions were not the only Christian cultures of the Near East to come under the influence on sufi models. For an interesting case of a Christian Arab reworking of an earlier Islamic piece as a panegyric to the Virgin, now preserved in a manuscript of 1584, see Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* [Studi e Testi 146] vol. 3, Vatican City 1944, 116. One might also note the reverse influence in the Islamo-Christian religious syncretism of sufi groups like the Bektashis in Anatolia.

[56] For examples see Srapyan, *Kostandin Erznkac'i*, 132, 155-157, 210. Compare a Christian Arab wine song in Graf, *Geschichte*, 21. In contrast to Armenian tradition, the theme of the candle and the moth appears in Georgian in a seventeenth century adaptation of a Persian work by King T'eymuraz I of Kakheti, on which see Heinz Fähnrich, *Georgische Literatur*, Aachen 1993, 67.

[57] For the most elaborate allegoric treatment of the theme, see Srapyan, *Kostandin Erznkac'i*, 137-149, and for an English translation and interpretation, Theo M. van Lint, "The Poet's Legitimation: the Case of Kostandin Erznkazi", in J.J.S. Weitenberg (ed.),

and *hadith* literature, the theme was expounded by figures like Baqli in the twelfth century as a means of referring to his mystical visions of divine beauty.[58] His search for the divine beloved who would reveal himself as he chose is thus manifested in the nightingale's entering the garden at the beginning of spring, looking and waiting for the rose to blossom. This love also had a human dimension, and so in 'Attar's *Mantiq at-tayr* (Colloquy of the Birds) it is the nightingale's this worldly attraction for the rose, which prevents it from joining the other birds in their spiritual quest for the *simurgh*.[59] Both of these facets are represented in Armenian verse, though the spiritual predominates in the early period. For Kostandin the rose represents Christ, of whom the poet had a dazzling vision at the age of fifteen.[60] Like 'Attar, Kostandin sometimes composes programmatic narratives featuring birds and flowers, in which the natural ciphers function symbolically, pointing beyond themselves to a deeper reading of the text.[61]

Here one notes the appropriation of the form into the rich indigenous tradition of folk wisdom in proverbs and riddles.[62] This trend is even more in evidence among Kostandin's successors down to the sixteenth century, many of whom lived and worked in the area south and west of

*New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Literature*, [Dutch Studies in Armenian Language and Literature 3], Amsterdam 1995, 224-241.

[58] On this fascinating poet see Carl W. Ernst, *Ruzbihan Baqli: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*, Richmond, Surrey 1996.

[59] See A. Darbandi and D. Davis (trans.), *Farid al-Din 'Attar. The Conference of Birds*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1984.

[60] For the Armenian text of the vision see Srapyan, *Kostandin Erznkac'i*, 187 and, for an interpretation, van Lint, "Legitimation", and Cowe, "Armenological Paradigms", 143. The attitudes of the prostrate poet and his commissioner Christ seated on a throne above him closely resemble those of the tenth century poet Grigor Narekac'i in a suppliant pose before Christ in one of the four illuminations comprising the earliest extant set accompanying Grigor's Book of Lamentation (Erevan, Matenadaran 1568, f.178v.) in the exemplar of 1173 from the monastery of Skewřay, which had been commissioned by the scholar and churchman Nersēs Lambronac'i. For an illustration of the image and further background information see Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck, *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, New York 1994, 70-71, and, in more detail L. Azaryan, "1173 t'vakanin ĕndōrinakvac Narekĕ ev Skevřayi manrankarakan dproc'ĕ" [The Narek copied in 1173 and the Skewřay School of Manuscript Illumination], *BM* 4 (1958), 83-110.

[61] See n. 64 for details.

[62] For the two main medieval collections of this type see H. Pivazyan (ed.), *Mxit'ar Goš, Ařakner* [Mxit'ar Goš, Proverbs], Erevan 1958, Nikolai Marr, *Sborniki Pritch Vardana* [Collections of Vardan's Proverbs] 3 vols., St. Petersburg 1894-1899, and Cowe, "Medieval Armenian", 318. Armenian fascination with and appreciation of this sort of gnomic literature is well illustrated by Abovean's contribution to the genre in his *Parap vaxti xałalik'ner* [Leisure Time Amusements].

Lake Van (e.g. T'lkuran, Amida, Bitlis, and Ałt'amar), where, despite the periodic feuds between the Timurids, Turkmen, and local Kurdish emirs, Armenian life continued to flourish.[63] Thus poetic composition paralleled manuscript copying and illumination as indicators of cultural continuity, until the protracted border disputes between the Safavid and Ottoman realms bring the period to an end.[64] In this way the Persian literary motifs employed and the striking use of the Persian language, such as in Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i's macaronic verses where couplets of Armenian and Persian alternate, parallel the artistic influences observable on the contemporary schools of Van and Xizan with their predilection for vivid floral backgrounds.[65]

Most of the poets developing Kostandin's lead in this period are learned monks, abbots and hierarchs, and hence tend to adapt the Rose and Nightingale motif to religious contexts. Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i highlights its connection to spring, which he associates with the Christ's Second Coming and therefore with paraenesis about how to gain entry to that spring which will not pass away.[66] The dialogue between the protagonists, which is a characteristic feature of the Armenian tradition, is cultivated by Mkrtič' Nałaš in a way reminiscent of 'Attar. The rose's exquisite beauty is also delicately fragile, as is love of this world. The lovers' hyperbole that parting is death itself skillfully prepares us for the

[63] See the overview of the period provided by Dickran Kouymjian, "Van under Mongol, Turkmen, Persian, and Ottoman Domination", in R.G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan*, [UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series] Costa Mesa 2001, 117-131.

[64] On the periodicity of Armenian culture in the region, see Dickran Kouymjian, "Dated Armenian Manuscripts as a Statistical Tool for Armenian History", in T. J. Samuelian and M.E. Stone (eds.), *Medieval Armenian Culture* [University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 6] Chico 1984, 425-438, esp. 428-432.

[65] For an example of macaronic verse see M. Avdalbegyan (ed.), *Grigoris Ałt'amarzi XVI d.* [Grigoris Ałt'amarzi 16th Century], Erevan 1963, 199-205. Similarly, Armenian and Persian stichs alternate in a poem of Nałaš, Yovnat'an, see A. Mnac'akanyan (ed.), *Nałaš Hovnat'an, Tałer* [Nałaš Yovnat'an. Poems], Erevan 1983, 69-70. Sometimes, poets might create complete Armenian and Turkish texts of the same song in the identical meter, as in the case of an anonymous variant of the rose and nightingale motif on pp. 437-442 and 598-600 of Armenian MS 4 of the Union Theological Seminary collection, New York, of which an edition and translation are currently in preparation (see Avedis K. Sanjian, *A Catalogue of Medieval Armenian Manuscripts in the United States*, Berkeley 1976, 638). For the Vaspurakan school of manuscript illumination see Alice Taylor, "Armenian illumination under Georgian, Turkish, and Mongol Rule: The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries", in T. F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck (eds.), *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, New York 1994, 84-103.

[66] See Norayr Połarean (ed.), *(Xew) Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i Tałagirk'* [(Mad) Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i Book of Tał Poems], Jerusalem 1958, 17 and Russell, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i*, 56. At the same time, Jlkuranzi also utilized the motif in a more secular vein.

didactic epilogue on the transience of life.[67] Exploring another aspect of the dialogue's potential, Ařak'el Bałišec'i hones it as a vehicle for presenting the Angel Gabriel's annunciation to the Virgin Mary who, as the rose, is initially concerned about being overshadowed by a rain cloud and lightning bolt, before acquiescing to bear the new life.[68] A later attempt at the same theme by Pałtasar Dpir is even more successful in maintaining the integrity of the natural imagery, which is then invested with a wholly allegorical dimension.[69] I have argued elsewhere for the plausibility of viewing some of Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i's love allegories as directed towards his mentor, the *vardapet* Grigor.[70]

As we have noted, the nightingale's yearning for union with the rose and search for his beloved are conventional facets of the trope. A new application for the scenario was created by Xač'atur (d. 1341), abbot of the monastery of Keč'ařis in the north east of Armenia. Unable to find the rose in the garden, and to gain information from the gardener, the nightingale sends the rose a letter indicating it will die if the rose does not return quickly. The rose's reply hints at the circumstances, which occasioned the separation:

> Alas that I was deprived of your sweet sight,
> And am estranged in this province...
>
> Fury from the Creator fell upon us,
> The north wind struck us,
> The severity of winter befell us,
> My beautiful leaves were shed from me.[71]

What seems to be described here is the Seljuq invasion we alluded to above, which caused the westward exodus of many of the nobility who became established in the Cilician state. Xač'atur also wrote a moving lament on the princes who had fallen in defense of their country and in 1299 asked his friend Step'annos, bishop of Siwnik' to compose

[67] See E. Xondkaryan (ed.), *Mkrtič' Nałaš*, Erevan 1965, 127-128.

[68] See A. Łazinyan (ed.), *Ařak'el Bałišec'i XV d.* [Ařak'el Bałišec'i 15th Century], Erevan 1971, 212-221.

[69] See Pałtasar Dpir, *Tałaran* [Book of Tał Songs], Constantinople 1723 and S. Peter Cowe, "The Genesis of Regeneration: Renewal Themes in a Vernal Ode by Pałtasar Dpir", *Raft* 3 (1989), 59-64.

[70] See S. Peter Cowe, "The Object of Grigoris Ałjamarc'i's Affections", in H. M. Ĵrbašyan et al (eds.), *International Conference of Armenian Medieval Literature: Theses of Reports*, Erevan 1986, 233-235.

[71] M. Avdalbegyan (ed.), *Xač'atur Keč'ařec'i XIII-XIV dareri* [Xač'atur Kečařec'i 13th-14th Centuries], Erevan 1958, 136-137.

another, in which a similar thought is expressed.[72] There, the mother church of Ējmiacin is represented as a widow calling out:

> Where are you, my precious children?
> Return to me, your erstwhile mother.
> And, as it behooves all children,
> Look after your aged parent.[73]

Although there was no major return of Armenian nobles to Greater Armenia, the catholicosal see was transferred to Ējmiacin in 1441.[74]

The more overtly political overtones of the above approach are understandably more pronounced in the oeuvre of Xač'atur's eighteenth century follower Petros Łap'anc'i (d. 1784).[75] Not only does the poet in the persona of the nightingale lament the gales which have laid waste the rose, but states his readiness to contend against them in lines suggesting his approval of contemporary efforts towards national liberation. Recalling the iniquities the rose has suffered at the hands of her foes, he wishes to protect her and establish himself by her. Seeing her thriving would rejuvenate him: "I would become sleek from you, I would become mighty and rule."[76]

Unlike Petros, however, most later exponents of the motif of the rose and the nightingale are either minor clerics or laymen, and hence are less prone to indulge in complex allegory but employ the conceit as one of their figures in praise of female beauty. Their approach is also generally more allusive and there are signs that the conventions are breaking down. Emblematic of this trend is Nałaš Hovnat'an (d. 1722). In one of his compositions he likens the beloved to a rose blossom, while he is a mad nightingale longing to see her.[77] Another case sees both similes applied to the beloved: her face shines and glistens like the rose, while her mouth speaks like a nightingale and sweetly laughs.[78] The transfor-

[72] For his lament, see ibid., pp. 129-133 and, for the genre's later development, see Xač'atryan, *Hay miǰnadaryan patmakan oṙber žd-žē dd.* [Medieval Armenian Historical Laments 14th-17th centuries], Erevan 1969.

[73] See Avedis K. Sanjian, "Step'anos Orbelian's 'Elegy on the Holy Cathedral of Etchmiadzin': Critical Text and Translation", in M.E. Stone (ed.), *Armenian and Biblical Studies*, Jerusalem 1976, 275, ll. 321-324.

[74] For the origins of this move see S. Peter Cowe, "Catholicos Grigor Anavarzetsi (1289-1307) and Metropolitan Ste'anos Orpelian in Dialogue", in R.G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Cilicia*, [UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series], Costa Mesa (forthcoming).

[75] See Šušanik Nazaryan (ed.), *Petros Łap'anc'i*, Erevan 1969.

[76] Ibid., p. 235.

[77] See A. Mnac'akanyan (ed.), *Nałaš Hovnat'an Tałer* [Nałaš Yovnat'an. Poems], Erevan 1983, 16.

[78] See ibid., p. 20.

mation is complete in a third where the beloved is the nightingale with tongue like sherbet. She is the adornment of roses, with her dark tresses and deep eyes piercing him like a knife. Can she not take pity on him?[79] The motif continued to enjoy popularity in modern Armenian literature at this level until the First World War. A good example is provided by Gabriēl Sundukian's classic play Pepo of 1871, in which the dramatist pokes fun at the human frailties of the villain of the piece, the fraudulent moneylender Zimzimov, by portraying him as an incongruous beau, his gray hair dyed black, playing the nightingale opposite his social climbing young wife's rose.[80]

*Armenian Literature and its Turkic Affinities*

Although we have noted the employment of Turkish language and folk meters in thirteenth century Armenian verse from Erznka, the most significant impact from this culture occurs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries after the incorporation of the western Armenian lands into the established structure of the Ottoman Empire and the development of the ašık/ašuł type of bardic literature primarily in eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia.[81] By this time Armenians were formally recognized as an ethno-religious millet with a corresponding transformation in their self-understanding which emerges from the following vignette from the autobiography of the cultured soldier adventurer Joseph Emin.[82] Enquiring of a village headman, he was told, "Our liberty is in the next world; our king is Jesus Christ." When Emin asked the source of this information the man replied: "The Holy Fathers of the Church, who say, the Armenian nation has been subject to the Mahometans from

[79] Ibid., p. 26.

[80] For the original see A. Petrosyan (ed.), *Gabriēl Sundukean, Erker* [Gabriēl Sundukean Works], Erevan 1984, 268 and, for an English translation, Nishan Parlakian and S. Peter Cowe, *Modern Armenian Drama: An Anthology*, New York 2001, 30.

[81] For a detailed overview of this literary phenomenon, see Boratav, "La litterature des 'ašıq", in Jean Deny et al (eds.), *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 2, Wiesbaden 1965, 122-133.

[82] For the evolution of the term in the technical sense of an administrative unit see Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System", in B. Braude and B. Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, New York 1982, 69-88, and, for the development of its application to the Armenian populace of the Ottoman Empire, see K.B. Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople", idem 89-100. For the later regulations of the Armenian millet and its gradual transformation into a more national framework, see M. Ashjian, "The Millet System", *Armenian Church Patristic and Other Essays*, New York 1994, 227-251.

the creation of the world, and must remain so till the day of resurrection; otherwise we could soon drive the Othmans out of our country."[83] At that Emin pulled out his copy of the compilation of ancient Armenian history by Movsēs Xorenac'i and had the priest read portions from it to confirm that Armenians had been independent long before the creation of the Ottoman state.[84] As a minority, Armenians were more integrated into the state, the number of works in Armeno-Turkish expanded, some artisans accepted Islam as part of the initiation into professional guilds, artistically Armenians contributed to Ottoman architecture, music, and shadow theater (*karagöz*), and some became palace singers.[85] Many more became ašıks, often apprenticing themselves to Turkish masters. Thus Ašık Širin (alias Yovhannēs Karapetean) studied with Espi Efendi in Erzurum.[86] Moreover, because many of them (not unlike modern pop stars) traveled a circuit of the major cities of the region where Turkish was the lingua franca, the Armenian ašıks tended to compose more

[83] Amy Apcar (ed.), *Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin 1726-1809 Written by Himself*, Calcutta 1918, 141-142, as cited in Ronald G. Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, Bloomington, IN 1993, 55-56.

[84] In so doing, Emin was not only exploiting the importance of print capitalism (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London 1991, 37-46) but pursuing the novel approach to Armenian national identity and the recreation of Armenian statehood characteristic of the Madras cell with which he was in close collaboration. This more modern perspective on history is well illustrated by the survey of the various periods of the Armenian past which provides the main focus for the cell's first major publication (Mowsēs Baḷramean, *Nor Tetrak or koč'i yordorak* [New Pamphlet called Protreptic], Madras 1772-73). On the broader significance of this new movement see Vazken Ghougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century* [University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts ad Studies 14], Atlanta, GA 1999.

[85] Several Armeno-Turkish manuscripts are extant from the seventeenth century. An impression of the volume of material being published in that medium can be gleaned from H.A. Step'anyan, *Hayataṙ t'urk'eren grk'eri matenagitut'yun 1727-1968* [Bibliography of Books in Turkish written in Armenian Script], Erevan 1985 and Hakob P'ap'azyan, "Mesropataṙ aylalezu grakanut'yan masin" [Concerning Foreign Literature Written in Mesropian Letters], *BM* 7 (1964), 209-224. On Armenian architects in the Ottoman Empire see Pars Tuglaci, *The Role of the Balian Family in Ottoman Architecture*, Istanbul 1990, on Armenian participation in *karagöz* performances see L.S. Myrsiades, *The Karagiozis Heroic Performance in Greek Shadow Theater*, Hanover, NH 1988, 3, 7-8, and, on Armenian singers at court, see S. Peter Cowe, "The Art of Actuality: Contemporary Dastan of an Armenian Ašuł", *Edebiyat* NS 4 (1993), 267-279, esp. 276, n. 6. One of the most important Armenian musicians who was active in Armenian and Ottoman circles and whose new and simplified notation was employed by both was Hambarjum Limonǰean (1768-1839). For a discussion of the contribution of the musicologist Hakobos Ayvazean (1869-1918) to the investigation and classification of this type of urban professional style, see Nikołos T'ahmizyan, "Hakobos Ayvazyane ev nra 'Arevelyan eražštut'yan ǰeṙnarke'" [Hakobos Ayvazyan and His Manual of Eastern Music], *BM* 16 (1994), 120-130.

[86] See H.S. Sahakyan, "Ašułakan poezia" [Ašik Poetry], *Hay nor grakanujyan patmut'yun*, [History of Modern Armenian Literature] vol. 1, Erevan 1962, 251-289, esp. 274.

songs in Turkish than in Armenian, and all these would be in the established meters of *geaf, łošmay, muxēnmēz, t'ečnis*, etc.[87] One bardic cycle (*hēk'iat'/hikaye*) which made a particularly significant impression on the subsequent Armenian literary tradition was that of the early seventeenth century picaresque Robin Hood type figure Köroglu.[88] An Armenian version of this existed which arguably exerted an impact on the origins of the Armenian novel.[89] Moreover, in the final scene of the first Armenian talkie film of 1935 by the renowned director Hamo Beknazaryan, based on the play Pepo discussed above but significantly accommodated to the freshly promulgated dictates of Socialist Realism, the bazaar workers of Tiflis march in locked step as a proto-proletariat to the prison where Zimzimov has had one of their number incarcerated, singing of Köroglu in a context redolent of impending class warfare.[90]

*Globalization and Middle Eastern Culture*

As indicated at the outset, the Islamic impact on Armenian culture gradually wanes as the whole region of the Near East and Transcaucasia becomes increasingly influenced by the penetration of West European culture in an incipient phase within the longer process of globalization, the manifestations of which are much more pronounced at present. This interchange is first to be observed primarily in political, mercantile, and religious contacts with Armenian communities of the dispersion such as Lvov, Constantinople, and New Julfa in the seventeenth century.[91] Its early literary repercussion was the inauguration of a neo-classical aesthetic in drama, poetry, and criticism, which appears to be unparalleled in Near Eastern Cultures, most of which first register a notable Western

[87] On the various *ašık* meters see Garegin Lewonean, *Hay ašułner* [Armenian Ašiks], Alexandrapol 1892, 8-16.

[88] For an Armenian edition of one of the variants of the cycle see Mkrtič' Talēanc', *Kołołlu hēk'iat'ě* [TheTale of Köroglu], Tiflis 1897.

[89] This point applies particularly to Xač'atur Abovean's seminal work *Vērk' Hayastani* [Wounds of Armenia] published posthumously in 1858, which exhibits much continuity with *ašık* narrative practice.

[90] For a description of the film see Hakob T'ahmizyan, *Hamašxarhayin kinoyi hanragitaran* [Encyclopaedia of World Cinema], Los Angeles 1999, 129-130. Virginia Gulbenkian, a researcher associated with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oxford, has produced a video highlighting the currency of romances like that of Köroglu and Keren and Asli in Armenia during the 1920s.

[91] For a recent evaluation of Western contacts at the third locality see Ghougassian, *The Emergence* and Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver: The Eurasian Trade of Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1530-1750)* [University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 15], Atlanta, GA 1999.

influence under the effect of Romantic nationalism.[92] This then percolates back from the Diaspora to the Armenian homeland and from the intellectual elite to the bulk of the populace in the course of the next two centuries.[93] A significant aspect of this process is the undermining of Armenian socio-political identity in terms of the confessional millet, which had defined the people in the Ottoman Empire, and its reinterpretation in terms of the division between the ecclesiastical and the civil and the aspiration toward the creation of an Armenian nation state.[94]

*Conclusions*

A number of conclusions may be proposed from this survey. The expanding role of verse as a literary medium in medieval Armenia owed something to the culture's encounter with Islam. As Armenians lost their autonomous state and were increasingly integrated within Muslim administrative structures, there was a tendency for the corresponding influences on Armenian poetry to penetrate from the formal levels of rhyme and meter to those of semantics and emotional reference. Many of the exchanges were aesthetic rather than narrowly religious, and clearly follow the pattern of cultural dominance in the region successively of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.[95] Some of the themes were not of specifically Muslim origin, but adopted from various pre-Islamic cultures. Moreover, after the immediate point of contact, the borrowed motif becomes indigenized in its new setting, homogenized with Armenian genres and styles and thereby opens up new possibilities for creative

[92] For a well-documented overview of Armenian classicism see T'adevosyan, *Haykakan Klasic'izmi tesut'yunĕ* [The Theory of Armenian Classicism], Erevan 1977.

[93] We have seen this at work in the encounter between Joseph Emin and the Anatolian village headman referred to earlier.

[94] Catholic missionary activity among Armenians tended to uncouple religious affiliation from ethnic identity, particularly after the creation of the Mxit'arist Brotherhood and subsequently an Armenian catholic patriarchate in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The distinction was palpably advanced theoretically in the draft constitution for a liberated Armenian republic (Hakob Šahamirean, *Girk' anuaneal orogayt' p'aṙac'* [Book entitled Snare of Glory], Madras: 1773 [actually it seems rather to have been printed sometime in the 1780s]) and thereafter afforded a limited practical application in the constitution promulgated for the Armenian millet in 1863, which then came to fruition in the platforms of the various socialist revolutionary political parties which came into being in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. See Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, Berkeley, CA 1963.

[95] For an overview of some of the central religious questions at issue and their treatment in Armenian literature, see Robert W. Thomson, "Muhammad and the Origin of Islam in Armenian Literary Tradition", in D. Kouymjian (ed.), *Armenian Studies in Memoriam Haig Berbérian*, Lisbon 1986, 829-858.

expression. Rejecting the external piety of the lawyers for an interiority akin to the East Christian monastic tradition, sufi spirituality uncovered a more fertile area of interchange which inspired on both sides some of the most elevated and moving poetry of the whole period under review.

*Appendix*

Yovhannēs and Aša[96]

What fire was this that burned me,
Or darkness that beset me?
I was an immovable stone. She moved me.
I was firm as iron. She had me melt like water.

She came, passed by, and swanked around,
She swayed and swung her waist provocatively.
She turned and looked back saucily.
My soul saw and was terror struck.

The day was Saturday, dawning on Sunday.
I was coming down from the monastery above,
A censer in my hand full of incense,
I had a psalter with me.

I both walked and read aloud
Until I should reach the hour of bread.
I came on such a fire,
I neither wrote, not read.[97]

Suddenly she got on an Arab steed,
She rode up and passed extremely beautiful.
She had the eyes of Tabrizstan.[98]
Her eyebrows carried off my wits.

She dropped an apple, I took no notice.
She dropped another: I bent and picked it up.
"You're a Muslim, a mullah's girl.
I'm Yovhannēs, a priest's son.
What's the point of your apple to me?"[99]

[96] The romance is composed of four line stanzas of octosyllabic lines, a typical narrative meter in Armenian poetry, with stanzaic rhyme, in an extremely colloquial register with many local dialectal features, implying that the work was intended for wide dissemination among the secular Armenian community. The translation base is provided by Srapyan, *Hovhannēs Erznkac'i*, 163-171.

[97] The hero is portrayed as a celibate monk-priest making his way to church early on a Sunday morning, reciting psalms as he goes, in order to participate in the first part of the liturgy, the *času žam* or Liturgy of the Word, when, accosted by Aša, he totally forgets his typical monastic pursuits of reading and copying manuscripts.

[98] Likeness to prominent cities and distant lands was a cliché of medieval lyric. Clearly, at the time of writing, Tabriz was extremely important as the center of the Il-Khans, whose suzerainty the Armenians had acknowledged.

[99] The apple is an obvious love token, the significance of which is queried on this

"Come, come, infidel boy,
Make beautiful speech arise from us.
You Yovhannēs, the priest's son,
And me a Muslim, a mullah's girl.
Let's love one another. It'll be fun."

It's Yovhannēs's mother, boy,
She's donned her togs and fur on top,
She comes round the upper monastery
And promises incense and candles.

"Monks, say, "I have sinned,"
Deacons, "Lord, have mercy."
Maybe his wits will return to him,
If my Yovhannēs comes back home."

Not a one did he say, "Lord, I have sinned."
It was all, "Allah" and "Sheydullah."[100]
Then they gave this reply:
"There's no more hope for Yovhannēs."

"Fool Yovhannēs, fool of a boy.
Come home, say, "I have sinned."
There your priest is shouting,
"Aša is chasing after him."

"Hey, Mom, I'm your servant,
If my priest is shouting at me,
Then I'll show him Aša
And he'll be even crazier than me."[101]

"Fool Yovhannēs, my fool of a boy,
Come home, say, "I have sinned."
You are my only one. There's no more chance
Of there being another."

"Hey, Mom, I'm your servant.
Drop your claim to the milk I drank.
They took my wits and I became mad.
There's no more support for you from me."

occasion, as the religious difference between them seems to preclude such a liaison. It was extremely common for the priesthood, as indeed many other trades or professions, to run in families. Hence we note later that the hero's mother tries to dissuade him from his course of action by suggesting a compromise that if he feels he can no longer honor his vow of celibacy and remain in the monastery, it may be possible for him to serve in a parish as a married priest.

[100] Literally, 'God's witness.' The reference appears to be to the Prophet Muhammad.

[101] The term employed (*xew*) is a hallmark of Erznkac'i's later namesake T'lkuranc'i and is one of the factors, which has prompted the poem's ascription to the latter. Nevertheless, as we shall see, there is other circumstantial evidence, which may be adduced in support of Erznkac'i's authorship, in addition to the reference to the city of Erzincan in l.78, which is not uniformly attested in the manuscript tradition, and the work's attribution to Erznkac'i in the earliest extant manuscript.

"Fool Yovhannēs, my fool of a boy,
Come home, say "I have sinned."
Let me get you an Armenian's young daughter
And have you ordained a married priest.

Fool Yovhannēs, my fool of a boy,
Come home, say, "I have sinned."
Aša is an infidel Turk.
She's tampering with your faith."

"Hey, Mom, don't be silly.
There's no one the like of Aša.
Her tongue's a nightingale, her voice's a dove.
Her waist is as slender as a Frank's."

Aša was seated at the window,
Her face in her hands, she was sobbing profusely
That "Today my father the kadi beat me"
Over "Why do you love an Armenian's son?"
Just see whether it carries and reaches
Yovhannēs's deaf ear.

When mad Yovhannēs heard this
He took the road to Erzincan,
His head bare, cap in hand,
He went and stood before the khan.

He gave greeting to the king.
They quickly accepted the greeting.
He grasped the gray horse's tail.
He said a quatrain to its every hair.[102]

Aša was standing on the fortress,
Watching out for Yovhannēs,
Next to her stood one dressed in yellow,
She was in green and purple.

"Fool Yovhannēs, pay heed
To what's happening on the fort.
To the one in yellow [say] "I'm your servant."
To the one in green say her name.

Otherwise I'll be the shah's hawk
And fly and sit on his arm.
My grandfather's name they call mullah,
My brother they call the city's Shahnah.

And my name they call Aša,
My sister too they call Zulut'ah,
My mother's name they call Fat'mah,
And my father they call kadi mullah."

[102] The term in the original is *kafa*, which we have already encountered.

"Mad Yovhannēs is your servant.
Quickly find a cure for my pain,
Otherwise I'm mad, I've hit the hills,[103]
I've melted on the spot like a candle."

"Fool Yovhannēs, you must enter the mosque.
You must hold your finger up.
You must go round with the mullahs,
Then you will be lord of my bosom."[104]

"Aša, your love will be wrong for me,
If what you say turns out like that.
Aša, may you find your day of death!
How you've tampered with my faith.

I studied eight canons of psalms
That too I forgot for love of you.[105]
Not a day did I say, "Lord, I have sinned."
It's been all, "Allah" and "Sheydullah."

"Fool Yovhannēs, small in stature,
Small in stature, heavy in wit.[106]
You're not renouncing your God
And you're not listening to a thing I've said.

Go, build a church
For me to come and enter the door with shoes on.
Let them set a crown on us and bless us.
Let your heart's desire come true."

[103] The allusion is to the lover's unfulfilled passion driving him to wander in the hills or desert places in emulation of Majnun, mourning for his beloved Leyl.

[104] By this rite Yovhannēs would proclaim his status as a convert. Under Islam, women are forbidden to marry outside the faith.

[105] The liturgical psalter is divided into eight major portions, each punctuated by a grouping of a biblical canticle, prayer, and litany.

[106] The repeated phrase *p'ok'r i pōyac'* applied to the hero's diminutive stature exactly matches the epithet *pluz* 'short' (though sometimes interpreted as blue-eyed) which was commonly applied to Erznkac'i and helped distinguish him from his younger contemporary Yovhannēs Erznkac'i Corcorec'i, who, though initially from the region of Erzincan, later settled at the Monastery of Corcor in the district of Maku, where he founded an important school. The phrase's significance in relating to Yovhannēs is heightened in what appears to be a deliberate allusion to it in a poem of Kostandin Erznkac'i, who, as seems likely, assisted Yovhannēs in some of his social and pedagogical functions. The latter poet makes a pointed self-reference toward the end of one of his works as 'Kostandin, barjr poyov' (Kostandin, tall in stature), see Kostandin Erznkac'i, 1962, p. 165. Moreover, the present poem's warnings against syncretism cohere well with Yovhannēs' focus in several other writings, though here he has chosen to convey the message in a lighter, more humorous vein.

# GENERAL INDEX

In the arrangement adopted here, the Arabic definite article (al-) at the beginning of an entry and the transliteration symbols are ignored for purposes of alphabetization (except Š). Some variant readings of names are mentioned, but with limited cross references. For well-known figures the standard English orthography has been used.


Abba Isaiah, 283
'Abbas (brother of al-Mansur), 50-1, 62
Abbas (Shah), 340
Abbasid (rule, period), 47-9, 52-3, 60, 62, 64, 94-5, 106-7, 111, 125, 127-49, 153, 190, 230, 237, 239, 241, 243 n.15, 247, 302, 304-6, 312, 381-2
'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥman, 251-3
'Abd al-Jabbar, 119 n.91, 131 n.17, 139
'Abd al-Karim al-Ǧili, 369
'Abd al-Malak b. Marwan, 252
'Abd al-Malik/Abdul-Malik (caliph), 1, 8, 18, 49, 73, 89 n.73, 93
'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī, 100
'Abdullah (brother of Marwan II), 27
'Abdülmeğid (Sultan), 341
'Abd-Allah, son of Muhammad (cf. also al-Mansur), 50-1
'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, 81
'Abdisho' ('Audisho') bar Brikha of Nisibis, 279 n.19, 307
Abdun, 20
Abgar, 58, 204
Abiram, 24
Abllarib, 211
Abraham, 37-8, 99, 123, 261, 293, 298, 306, 351
Abraham Echellensis, 175
Abraham of Tiberias (monk), 100, 123
Abu 'Abd Allah al-Ḥumaydi, 122
Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, 135 n.33
Abu 'Ali al-Jubba, 131 n.17
Abu 'Ali Ḥusayn Bukaraya, 172
Abu Bakr, 21, 56
Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, 131 n.17
Abu Bakr aṭ-Ṭarṭuši, 292, 295
Abu Bishr Matta, 152, 157, 159, 160 n.30, 164-5
Abu Ghalib, 59
Abu Hatim ar-Razi, 162 n.42
Abu Ḥayyan al-Tawhidi, 247-8, 250
Abu Hindi Ghalib b. al-Qaddus, 247
Abu Hudhayl al-'Allaf, 119, 132 n.22
Abu Hurayra, 171
Abu 'Isa Muḥammad b. Harun al-Warraq, 130, 131 n.17, 134, 136-7, 139, 147-9
Abulgharib, son of Gregory, 212
Abu l-Qasem al-Maghribi, 167
Abu Muslim, 243 n.15
Abu Nu'aym al-Iṣfahani, 292
Abu Ra'ita (Ḥabib ibn Khidmah), xi, 110, 130-1, 133-5, 143-6
Abu Sa'd Manṣur, 170
Abu Umar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ia'di, 122
Abu 'Uthman al-Jahiz, 133
Abu Yusuf, 23
Abuna family, 303, 314
Abyssinian(s), 3-4, 108
*Account of the Generations*, 21
Achaemenian, 380
Adalia, 243-4
Adam, 91, 141, 209, 255, 325 n.11, 326, 332-3, 363
  *Life of Adam and Eve*, 326, 332
  *Testament of*, 326, 333
Adam, era of, 276, 281
Afghanistan, 309 n.23

Africa, 51
Agat'angelos (*History of Armenia's conversion*), 36, 43, 185, 350, 380
Ahl-i Haqq, 194
Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (Mar Ya'qub), 171
Aintab (Gaziantep), 194, 200
*akhīs*, 240-4, 345
Akhi Turk, 243 n.15
'Akki, governor of Jazira, 60, 62
Aleppo, 9, 19, 100, 287, 316
Alevi, 194
Alexander and Seleucus Nicator, 277
Alexander the Great (son of Philip the Macedonian), 35, 42, 84, 277, 281, 310
Alexander Romance(s), 361, 362, 367-8, 373, 384
Alexandria(n), 2, 17, 68, 154-5, 157, 159-60, 307 n.19
Alexandrian world era, 109 n.58, 280, 289
Alexandropol (Gyumri), 341
'Ali ibn Abi Talib, 24-5
'Ali b. al-Jahm, 247
'Ali b. Yaḥya al-Munajjim, 168
'Ali (prophet), 261
'Ali (son of al-Naṣir), 244
Alqosh, 284, 289-90, 303, 324
Alt'amar (church of), 380 n.6, 382, 393
Amid(a) (Diyarbakir), 7, 24, 52, 169, 290, 314, 316, 393
'Ammar al-Basri, 104-5, 110-1, 115 n.80, 117, 119, 129, 131-3, 140-3, 146
'Amr, 10 n.67
Anak Suren Pahlaw, 185
Anapatik, 230
Anastasius (Byzantine emperor), 13 n.80, 26
Anastasius the Sinaite, 5, 93
Andalusia, 196, 299
Angora, 243-4
Ani, 44, 191, 211, 213, 382
Ankara, 244
anthroponomy (Armenian), 265-73
Antioch, 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 20, 28, 31, 68, 240 n.8, 241 n.10, 276 n.3, 307 n.19
Antiochus IV, 209
Antonius Qoraishiya, 31
Antony of Tagrit, 162 n.44, 165
Aphrahat, 4
Apirat Pahlawuni, 200, 204
Apłirat Arcruni, 384
*Apocalyps of Henoch*, 15
*Apocalyps of Paul*, 297
*Apocalyps of Peter*, 297
apocalyptic, ix, x, 3, 4, 7n.44, 14-15, 41, 44, 46, 53, 64, 69, 82-3, 88, 89 n.73
apologetic(s), xi, 59, 91-126
*Apophthegmata Patrum*, 296
Aṙak'el Bališec'i, 394
*Arewordik'* (Children of the Sun), 194-5, 215, 228, 249
Aq Quyunlu, 310
'Aqula, 57
Arab conquests/invasions (cf. also 'rise of Islam'), ix, ix, 6, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 21-2, 32, 40, 45-6, 78, 87, 92, 282
Arab Civil War(s), 78, 87-8
Arabia, 92
Aramazd, 352
Arbil, 314
Arcrunid(s), 213, 380 n.6, 381
Arians, 249
Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, 40-1, 193, 380
Aristotle, x, 127, 151-2, 155, 157, 159-64
*Organon*, 154-65
Aristotelian (logic, philosophy), 110, 129, 149, 151-65
Arsenius, King of Egypt, 296-9
Arshak (King), 42
Arrajan (Fars), 29
Arsacid(s), 38, 43, 185, 187, 189, 197, 200, 203
Artašes, 189, 204 n.29
Arutin, 357
Ascension (era of), 281
*'ašiq/asuł*, 228, 335-78
'Ašik Širin (Yovhannes Karapetean), 397
'Ašiq Garib, 346-7
'Ašiq Ibrahim, 347

'Ašiq Paša, 374
Asia Minor, 239, 241, 244
Assyria/Assyrians, x, 6, 45-65, 301
Astłik, 352
Astrakhan, 189 n.6
astrologers/astronomers/astronomy, 13, 385
Athanasius Bar Gumaye, 1, 18
Athanasius Sandalaya, 27
Aṯir al-Din al-Abhari, 172
Athor/Athur, 53
'Attar (*Mantiq at-tayr*), 392-3
'Audisho' of Gazarta (patriarch), 315
Australia, 301
Avesta, 216 n.49, 217, 227
Avicenna, see Ibn Sina
Awšin, 216
*Aya Sofia (Compendium of futuwwa texts)*, 238
*aylazgi*, 38-9
Avarayr (battle of), 38, 187
'Ayn Galuth, 63
Ayyubid, 112
Azerbaijan, 314
Azeri, 340-1, 356-7

Ba'albek, 11, 241 n.10
Babai, 4
Babylon (patriarchate of), 307 n.19, 312 n.34, 313
Babylonian, 59
Badr ad-Din Lu'lu', 276
Baghash al-Amani, 241 n.10
Baghdad, 20, 24-5, 27-8, 31, 106, 122, 153-4, 168, 208, 238, 241 n.12, 243, 248, 286, 305-6
Baghdad Philosophers/School of Baghdad, xi, 94, 151-65
Bagratuni (patrons)/Bagrutids, 37, 213, 381-2
Bagrawand, 230
Bahira (legend of), 49, 64, 100-1
Bahramšah, 389
Baishan, 51
Bałdasa/Paltasar Dpir, 344, 394
Balwan bin Ḥafs (king of Yemen, bin Daylam), 296
baptism, 102, 114, 218, 351, 356
Bar Andras, 59
Bar Bahlul, 289
Bar Salta of Resh'aina, 15
Bar Sawma, 4
bard (ballad singer), bardic, 321, 325, 338, 345, 396, 398
Barjr Hayk', 388
Barlaam and Iosaph (Story of), 386
Baron Amir (P'olin Kalaymach), 259
Barsauma (brother of Barhebraeus), 172
Barseł (Catholicos), 200
Bartelli, 173-4
Basil bar Shumana, 57 n.52, 58 n.55
Basil, bishop of Edessa, 62
Basil of Caesarea, 210 n.40
Basilius (metropolitan of Tagrit), 20
Baṭini, 263
Batrum (near Tripolis), 288
Batumi, 192
Baz, 304
Beduin, 383
Bektaš (Ḥağği), 342 n.20, 361
*Bektaši* order, 341, 375
Benjamin (patriarch), 17
Beth Nuhadra, 283-4
Beth Sahda (near Nisibis), 283
Bible/Scripture(s), 5, 47, 68 n.3, 85, 94, 96, 105, 114-5, 162, 171, 185, 203, 206, 250, 260, 267, 385
biblical (paradigm, history, themes, view, figures), x, 1, 4, 5, 7, 30, 32, 40, 48-9, 51, 54, 58-9, 64-5, 85, 92, 112, 136, 141, 269-71, 280, 358-60, 386
Bilatos b. Miḫtar, 175
Bitlis, 393
*Book of the Bee*, 326
Bukhara, 291-2
*Buzandaran*, 42, 189
Brodsky, 335
brotherhoods (*futūwwa*), 198-99, 237-64, 345, 377
Bryson, 171
Byzantine(s), xii, 8, 8 n.52, 17, 21, 24, 31, 44, 50-3, 62, 65, 87 n.67, 107, 154, 156, 186, 189, 193, 200, 211 n.42, 214, 240 n.10, 267-8, 384, 388

Byzantium/Byzantine Empire, 41, 45-6, 69, 74, 82-3, 87 n.65, 89 n.73, 95, 191, 282, 380-3

Cain, 208, 212 n.44
Cananore (India), 315
candle extinguishers (*chragamah*), 193-4, 198
canons/canonical, 70
Cappadocia, 191, 384
Cappadocian Fathers, 162 n.44
Caramathians, 209
Caucasus, 337, 341
*Cave of Treasures*, 326
Chalcedon (Council/Synod of), 2, 9-10, 12, 16, 26, 137
Chalcedonian(s) (Church), x, 1-4, 6, 14-9, 25, 31, 33, 47, 58, 62, 71, 74, 87, 136
Chaldean(s) (Church), 313-20, 322
Chinese, 291, 294
Christ (Jesus), 32, 61-2, 69, 72, 87, 91, 93, 103, 116, 128, 139, 143, 146, 161, 190, 207, 228, 252-3, 256, 263, 306, 344, 350-1, 357, 367, 370, 377, 396
  Anti-, 44, 46, 82, 84-6, 206
  Era of the Birth of, 281
  false, 14 n.89
  *Legend of the scull (Gesù e il teschio)*, 291-99
  *Life of*, 327
Christopher (Saint), 212
*Chronicle*
  *Edessene*, 52
  *Maronite* (664 CE), 2, 26
  *of AD 819*, 1
  *of Sirt*, 7, 10 n.67, 11, 21, 22-3
  *of the Disasters* (716), 8
  *of Zuqnin*, x, 2, 5, 6, 8, 21, 47-58, 60-2, 64-5
chroniclers, chronicles (cf. also historiography), ix, 7, 10 n.67, 11, 15, 21, 29-30, 77, 176
Cilicia, 17, 44, 191, 193, 238 n.2, 241 n.10, 266, 382 n.12, 387-8, 394
colophons, xii, 265-73, 275-90, 311-13, 387
comet, 13
Commagene, 195
commissioner(s), 272
Constantine, 36, 43-4, 63, 380
Constantinople, 2, 8 n.52, 42, 230, 340, 385, 398
  naval attack on, 10 n.67
  patriarchate of, 307 n.19
  Second Arab siege of, 2
  siege of, 18
Constans (II), 10 n.67,
conversion, 19, 23, 32, 36, 56, 60-1, 94, 185, 187, 191-6, 225, 245 n.29, 309, 319 n.55, 400-3
Coptic (language), 1, 92, 96, 125
Coptic Church, Coptic community, Copts (Egyptians), viii, 2, 3, 4, 17, 94, 111-2, 277 n.7
Covk', 201, 204
Crimea, 214
cross (veneration of), 18, 99, 102, 114, 200, 205, 218, 234, 356
Crusaders, 43-4, 125, 195, 207 n.33, 388
Cyprian of Antioch, 225
Cyprus, 248, 314 n.38
Cyriacus, 283
Cyriacus (patriarch), 19, 27
Cyriacus (bishop of Sijistan), 15
Cyrus of Harran, 62

Damascus, 26, 288
Daniel (biblical book of), 11 n.69, 38, 46-7, 92, 185-6, 295
Daniel (deacon, monk), 279 n.19
Dar Qunni, 23
Dara (sack of), 53, 283
Daranałi, 245
David (king), 382
David (patriarch), 27
David ben Joshua Maymuni (Egypt), 297
David of Tayq/Tao, 383
David the Invincible, 215
Demetrius (Saint), 368
Denahisho' (of Hananiah, bishop of Marde and Kephar Touta), 3, 27
Denha (metropolitan of Tagrit), 26
Dialogue poems, 64
Dis, 207

Dismas (Good Thief), 207
Dionysius bar Ṣalibi, 58, 68, 72, 169, 179, 218
Dionysius of Amida (chronicler), 6, 59
Dionysius of Tell Mahre, 1-3, 5-6, 8-9, 11, 15-8, 21, 24-5, 27-9, 56, 58, 62, 71
Dionysius Thrax, 384
Dioscorus of Gazarta, 172
Diz, 304
Dokuz-khatun, 62-3
Dome of the Rock, 93-4
Dominicans (missionaries), 308
Dravidian, 304
*durekṭa, durekyaṭa*, 321-33
Dyophysites/dyophysitism ('heresy of two natures') 2, 3, 4, 13, 21, 328

ecclesiology, 301-20
Eden, 214 n.47
Edessa (Urfa), 6-7, 11-2, 15, 24, 29, 31, 55-8, 62, 68, 88
  fall of (1144), xii, 53, 58-9, 200, 204, 207-8, 279 n.14, 281, 283, 386
Edessene Apocalyptic Fragment/Apocalypse, 9, 14, 88
Eğirdir, 373
Egypt(ian), viii, 2, 17, 18, 31, 49, 51, 112, 209, 296
Ekeɫeac', 245
Elias/Elijah/Iliyya of Nisibis (*Chronography, Kitāb al-majālis*), 77, 111, 167-9
Elias bar Shinaya, 100
Elijah/Elijah (the Tishbite), xiii, 10, 32, 61, 358-63, 365-70, 376-7
Elias Mušeɫean, 189 n.6
Eliše (*History of Vardan and the Armenian War*), 36-40, 187-8, 203, 207
Elisha, 368
Elvan Čelebi, 374
English, 107
Enoch, 360, 368
Ephrem Barsaum (Severus, patriarch), 175
Ephrem Syrus, 7, 52-3, 283
Epiphanius (bishop), 17
Epiphanius of Salamis, 44
epistolary exchange (genre), 106-8
Erekli II, 341
Erzerum, 341, 382 n.12, 396
Erznka (Erzincan), 198-9, 237-64, 388, 396, 402, 403 n.106
eschatological, 294-9
Eskishehir, 244
Espi Efendi, 397
Etchmiadzin, 352, 395
Ethiopic (language), 1
ethnic/ethnicity, 301-20, 399 n.94
eucharist, 102, 114, 253
Eugenius, deacon, 174
Euphrates, 201 n.25, 241 n.10, 245
Eupraxia, 31 n.167
Europe(an), 269-70, 301
Eusebius
  *Ecclesiastical History*, 36
  *Chronicle*, 36, 38, 71, 72 n.18
Eusebius of Rome, 43
Evagrius Ponticus, 211
Ezekiel (Catholicos), 10 n.67,
Ezekiel (biblical book of), 49, 375
Eznik, 38
Ezra, 375

Faḫr ad-Din ar-Razi, 176
(al-)Farabi, xi, 152, 154-65
Farid ad-Din Aṭṭar (*Ǧomǧomé nāmé*), 291-9
Ferdosi/Firdawsi (*Šāh-nāme*), 199, 373
*Fi tathlith Allah al-wahid*, 132 n.19
Firuz al-Zarrad, 241 n.10
florilegia, 74
Forty martyrs of Sebaste, 32
Franciscan(s), 314
Frank(s), 4, 20, 43, 59, 192, 207, 241 n.10, 318, 402
French, 107
Frik, 343
Fuzuli, 340 n.17

Gabriel (Angel), 394
Gabriel (bishop of Mayshan), 22
Gabriel of Qartmin, 24
Gabriël Sundukian (*Pepo*), 396, 398
Gagik I Bagratuni, 382-3
Gagik of Vaspurakan (King), 343, 381

Galen(ic), 153-4, 156, 168
Ğami, 374
Ganca, 341, 389
Garegin Yovsep'eanc', 191
Gazarta d-Bet Zabday (Cizre), 287-8, 301, 310
Genesis (biblical book of), 49, 214 n.47
George (Saint), 191-2, 298-9, 325 n.11, 366, 368
George as-Sim'ani (monk), 100
George of the Arabs, 68
Georgia, 238 n.2, 341
Georgian (language), 1, 270, 298-9, 378, 388, 391 n.55-6
Georgius/Gregorius (patriarch), 27-9, 31
(al-)Ghazali (Abu Ḥamid), 170, 176, 196, 291-2, 369
Giwargis Warda, 324 n.9, 325 n.11, 326 n.12
Gog and Magog, 6, 42, 367
Gołt'n (*Naxijewan*), 186
Gorguian sect, 249-50, 256
Gospel(s), 161
*Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, 3, 14, 88
Greek Orthodox Church, Greek(s), viii, 4, 6, 20, 38, 43, 46, 62, 71, 240 n.10, 243 n.17, 277-8, 331, 381
Gregorius (Roman general), 17
Gregory (Giwargis) Barhebreaus, xi, xii, 22, 26 n.146, 63, 167-84, 288
*Book of the Ascent of the Intellect*, 177
*Book of the Dove*, 170, 182
*Candelabra of the Sanctuary*, 176
*Civil Chronicle*, 168, 172
*Cream of Wisdom*, 169, 171, 181
*Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, 177
*Ethicon*, 170-1, 182
*Laughable Stories*, 170
*Swād Sufya*, 170
Gregory II Martyrophilus, 200, 218
Gregory (Grigor) III (Catholicos), 200-1, 233
Gregory of Narek, 202, n.26, 210, 213-4, 218-9, 343, 387, 392
Gregory of Nyssa, 162
Gregory of Tat'ew, 214, 228, 249
Gregory, son of Abulghamr, 212
Gregory the Illuminator (Saint), 36, 38, 43-4, 185-6, 200, 210 n.40, 225, 228, 236, 298-9, 350, 380
Grigor Deren, 382
Grigor Tłay, 386
Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni, 200, 203-4, 384-5, 387
Grigoris Ałi'amarc'i, 344, 393, 394
Gundešabur, 168
*gusan/gōsān* (minstrel), 337-8, 343, 383
Gusan Igit (Gełam Martirosian), 338

Habbakuk (biblical book of), 49
Ḥabib the monk, 23
*hadith* (literature), 115, 123, 331-2, 392
Hagarenes (*mhaggrāyē*), Hagar, 8 n.52, 37, 49, 55, 69, 206, 277-8
hagiography, hagiographical, ix, 11, 31, 39
*hajj*, 171
Hakabos Ayvazean, 397 n.85
Hakkari (mountains), 303-4, 314, 316
Hałbat, 382
Hamazasp Acruni (Saint, Life of), 205, 380 n.6
Hambarjum Limonǰean, 397 n.85
Hamo Benazaryan, 398
Hamšen, 192, 196
Hamza (son of Gregory), 221
Hanbali, 243
Harran, 5, 19, 24, 27, 31, 48, 134
Harun al-Rashid, 19, 28, 127
(al-)Hashimi ('Abd Allah ibn Ismail), 106-7, 117
Hebrew-Aramaic, 329
Helena, 63
Hellenistic (culture) (Graeco-Roman), 35, 67, 74, 375
Henania, bishop of the Severians, 3
hendiadys (multilingual), 329-30
Heraclius, 7, 8 n.52, 15, 21
Heraclius the Younger, 4
hesychasism/hesychasts, 214
Het'um (King), 39
Hezekiah, 51, 64

Hidrellez feast, 367-8
*hijra* (dating), xii, 21, 275-90
Ḥims, 16, 247
(al-)Ḥira, 247
historiography, historiographical, historical writings, ix, 1-33, 35-44, 45-65, 71-3, 77-89
*History of*
*Ahudemmeh and Marouta*, 76
*History of Philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad*, 154, 156-7
*Sindhban and his Philosophers*, 168
*the monastery of Beth Qoqa*, 10
Homer, 162, 179-80
Homšesc'i, 193 n.12, 196
Hopa, 192
Hřomkla, 194, 201, 213, 216, 238 n.2
Ḥubayš, 168 n.6
Hulego/Hulagu, 62-3, 177
Ḥunayn al-Ḥira, 246-7
Ḥunayn ibn Isḥaq, 106-7, 111, 168, 180

Ibn Abi Usaibi'a, 154
Ibn al-'Adim, 240
Ibn al-Mi'mar (*Kitāb al-Futuwwa*), 238, 243-4, 246, 250-1, 261
Ibn al-Nadim, 157
Ibn al-Samh, 157
Ibn al-T'ayyib al-Baḥrani, 247
Ibn al-Tusi, 238, 250
Ibn al-Qalanisi, 241 n.10
Ibn 'Arabi, 369-70, 372
Ibn Baṭṭuta, 243-4, 245 n.31, 389 n.45
Ibn Bibi, 243 n.19
Ibn Hawqal, 22 n.125
Ibn Hisham ('Abd al-Malik), 112
Ibn Hubayra, 241 n.11
Ibn Isḥaq (Muhammad), 112
Ibn Jubayr, 240 n.9
Ibn Mahdi, 242 n.13
Ibn Qutayba, 153
Ibn Rushd, xi
Ibn Sina (Avicenna), xi, 152, 167-84,
*Book of Remarks and Admonitions*, 167-84
*Qānūn at-Tibb*, 172, 176 n.47
Ibn Taymiyyah, 119
Ibn Zu'ra, 160, 164
Ibrahim, amir of Harran, 3
Ibrahim b. al-Ashtar, 81 n.25
Ibrahim b. 'Abdallah, 157
Ibrahim b. Adham, 369
icons (veneration of), 99, 114
Idris, 367, 370
Ignatius of Militene, 8 n.52
Imru l-Qays, 179-80
Incarnation, 99, 102-3, 109-10, 113-4, 127-49
inculturation, x, xi, xiii
India, 51, 174, 299, 304, 309 n.23, 310-5, 317-8
Indo-European, 269
Iraq, 78, 81, 241 n.11, 301, 322
Ireland (bardic schools), 338, 345
'Isa ibn Subayh, 132 n.22
Isaiah of Aleppo, 31
Isaiah (biblical book of) 47-51
Isfahan, 340
Isḥaq Eshbadnaya, 78
Isḥaq b. Bišr (Abu Ḥudayfa), 291-2
Isḥaq b. Ḥunayn, 157
Isḥaq ibn Khalaf, 247
Isho'dad of Merv, 85 n.55
Isho'yahbh II, 22-3
Isho'yahb III (d. 659, correspondence of, of Adiabene), 45-6, 60, 312
Ishu' bar Nun, 312
Ishu'yau (metropolitan, scribe, son of priest Petrus), 313 n.35
Islamic brotherhoods, xi
Is(h)mael(ites), 6, 7 n.42, 8, 16, 32, 37, 38, 42, 46, 82 n.31, 123, 208, 277-8
Isma'il ibn Salih, 28
Isma'ili, 162
Israel, Israelite(s), 4, 5, 9, 32, 37, 41, 47, 64, 209, 29, 366
Israel of Alqosh, 325 n.11, 331 n.24
*On Completeness*, 325 n.11
*On Penitence*, 325 n.11
Israel of Kashkar, 111
Iwannes of Kayshum, 59

Jacob bar Shakko, 161 n.36
Jacob of Edessa, x, 15, 29-30, 31 n.167, 58 n.55, 67-75, 93, 153

*Chronicle*, 71, 72
*Encheiridion*, 71, 73
*Hexahemeron*, 71
*Letter on the Divine Economy*, 72, 74
*Letter on the Genealogy of the Virgin*, 68
*Letters on the Predestination*, 70
Ja'far, son of al-Mansur, of Mosul, 50 n.22
(al-)Jaḥiẓ, 154, 247
Javanese, 291, 294
Jazira, 12, 24, 29, 49, 60, 62
Jeremiah (Arabic legend of), 361, 364
Jeremiah, Lamentations of, 5
Jerusalem, 4, 5, 17, 20-1, 43-4, 51, 60, 65, 93-4, 100, 103, 123, 171, 205, 207 n.33, 227-8, 238 n.2, 287, 364, 386
pilgrimage, 171, 352, 367
Jews/Jewish, 1, 2, 3, 9, 17-8, 22, 32, 37, 40, 54-5, 69, 72-4, 84, 91, 101, 206-7 n.33, 291, 297-8, 326, 333, 366, 375-6, 379
of Iraqi Kurdistan, 328-30
Jilu, 304
*jizya*, 21-2, 62, 92
Job of Edessa, 163 n.45
Joel (biblical book of), 49
John I (patriarch, *The interrogation of*), 61 n.70, 97-8
John III, 120
John X (patriarch), 218
John bar Penkaye (of Phenek), x, 5, 6, 8-9, 12-4, 16, 20-2, 45-7, 58, 77-89
John, bishop of Karma, 26
John, bishop of Mardin, 59-60
John Chrysostom, 31 n.167
John Climacus, 211
John of Antioch, 4, 27
John of Apamea, 283
John of Dailam, 28-9, 31
John of Damascus, 132
*The Fount of Knowledge*, 95
John of Ephesus, 5, 7, 29, 51 n.25, 53
John of Litharba, 71, 72 n.18
John Rufus, 4, 9, 14
John, son of Bacchus from Bartelli, 173
John, son of Daddi, 62
John the Baptist, xiii, 227-8, 236, 335-78
Sultan of Mush, 353, 358, 363, 374
John the Evangelist, 31 n.167
John the Little (*Apocalypse of*), 14
John the Stylite, 68
Jonah, 382 n.13
Joseph Emin, 396-7
Joseph of Gubba Barraya, 28
Joseph of the Taghlib, 26
Josephus, 37
*Jewish Wars*, 36
Joshua the Stylite, 7, 52
Judaism, 112-3
Judas, 212, 253, 328
Judean desert, 103 n.41
Julian (SO patriarch), 68
Julianus of Antioch, 26
Julfa (New), 340, 398
Justin I, 13
Justinian, 51 n.25
Juvenal, 4

Ka'aba, 141, 205, 209
Ka'b al-Aḥbar, 291-2
Kaboshnyam, 285
*kafa (qafīya)*, 383, 387, 402 n.102
*kalām/mutakallim*, 101, 104-5, 108, 110, 113-6, 119, 122, 132, 139, 143, 156
Kalibin, 174
Kamakhon (Arab siege of), 50-1, 60, 62
Karabagh, 338
Karin (plain of), 40
Kars, 341
*karshuni (garshuni)*, 173-6, 178, 183 n.64, 277, 281-2
(al-)Khartabirti (*Tuḥfat al-Waṣāya*), 238, 244, 249, 260-1
Kas Khidr ibn al-Maqdisi of Mosul, 318 n.51
Kay-Kawus I ('Izz ed-din), 243
Kay-Kubad I ('Ala' ed-din), 243-4
Kay-Khosrow (Ghiath ed-din), 244
K'esun, 201
Kešiš-oḷlu, 341

Khalid b. 'Abdallah al-Qusri (Amir), 246
Kharput, 244
Khayyam, 196
Khazir (battle of), 9
Khidr, xiii, 228, 335-78
Khinis, 54
Khorasan, 208
Khosrow/Xosrov Anjewac'i, 210, 229-30 n.67
Khosrowa, 316
Khusraw (Khosraw/Xusro) I, 6, 26 n.146, 53, 187, 224 n.58
Khusraw II, 11 n.69
Kilij-Arslan (sultan of Iconium), 5
(al-)Kindi ('Abd al-Masiḥ ibn Isḥaq), 106-7, 117, 153
*Kiprianos*, 225
Kirakos of Ganjak, 194, 201-3, 215, 248
Kirshehir, 243-4
Konya, 244, 388, 391
Koriwn, 186
Köroğlu, 368, 398
Kostandin II Kesarac'i, 248
Kostandin Erznkac'i, 197 n.18, 199, 237-64, 339, 344-9, 371-2, 376, 386, 389 n.45, 390-3, 403 n.106
Kufa, 81
Kurdistan, 317, 322, 330
Kurds/Kurdish, 191-2, 194-5, 294, 299, 303, 327, 329-30, 252, 381 n.9, 390, 393
Kushan (Armenian general), 60, 62
Kyurin, 353

Łat, 248
Latin, 96, 107, 200-1, 211, 269-70, 332
Layth, 19
Łazar P'arp'ec'i, 37, 40, 187, 380 n.6
Lebanon, 281, 288, 368
Leo III, 106-7, 134 n.27
Łewond, 39-40
*Liber Graduum*, 51
Łul Arut'in, 340
Lvov, 398

Ma'arret-Sednaya, 174 n.32
Ma'bad b. Wahb, 247
Mabbugh (Hierapolis), 16, 195
Macarius (Saint, of Antioch), 297
Macarius (Saint, of Egypt), 297
Maccabean martyrs, 30 n.162, 32
Maccabees, 36, 39, 84, 187, 207, 209, 231
Mada'in (fall of), 21-2
Madras, 397 n.84
Magdal Deb (Gazarta), 287
Magians/Magi, 5, 16, 19, 188 n.6
(al-)Mahdi (caliph), 19, 28, 56, 61 n.70, 97, 99-100, 124, 127, 129, 149
Mahdi ('the'), 207
*Mahdi* movements, 362, 369
Maipharqat, 62
Majd ed-Din Isḥaq, 243
*majlis*, 97, 99-101, 117-8, 121-4
Malabar, 174, 315, 318 n.50
Malay, 291, 294
Ma'lula, 287
Mamluk, 238 n.2, 388
*Mamo and Zine (Romance of)*, 390 n.49
(al-)Ma'mun (caliph), 20, 25, 28, 106-7, 119, 127, 151-4
Mananali, 245
Manazkert/Manzikert, 191
Mandaeans, 326, 333
Mani/Manichean(s), 54, 185, 193, 217
(al-)Mansur, 27, 50, 57-8, 65
Manuel (Byzantine), 216
*manuk*s, 237-64, 385
Mar Aba the catholicos, 32
Mar Ahoudemmeh, 26 n.146
Mar Ammeh, 23-4
Mar Awgen (Eugene), 31-2, 54
Mar 'Aziza (Zerini), 285
Mar Bar Sawma, 12
Mar Behnam, 53
Mar Elias (patriarch), 18
Mar Eliya V (patriarch), 311-2
Mar Eliya IX (patriarch), 313
Mar Euthalius of al-Mawsil, 31 n.173
Mar Giwargis (church of, Gazarta), 310
Mar Ḥabib, bishop of Edessa, 55
Mar Isho'yahbh, 32

Mar John, 12
Mar Mattai, 30
Mar Mari (disciple of Addai), 32
Mar Melke of Clysma, 31
Mar Sabhrisho' of Beth Garme, 11, 32
Mar Sargis, 32
Mar Shallita, 31-3
Mar Shimun bar Saba'i, 32, 312 n.33
Mar Shimun IV Basidi, 303 n.8, 310 n.26
Mar Shimun V, 310-11
Mar Shimun VII Ishuyau bar Mama, 314
Mar Shimun IX Denha, 313
Mar Shimun XVI Yukhannan, 316
Mar Thoma (bishop), 310-1
Mar Yaqu (James) of Suwa, 32
Mar Yosep I, 314
Mar Yosep II Sliba d-bet Ma'ruf, 318 n.51, 319
Mar Yuhannan (bishop), 310
Mar Yukhannan VII Hormizd, 314
Mar Zayna, 30
Maragha, 176-7, 305
Marcion, 13
Mari, 22, 24
Maronite(s), xii, 3, 19, 26, 173, 175, 275, 278-9, 281, 288, 290
Marouta, 4
Mars, 13
Mardin, 175, 195, 316
Mariam (nun, daughter of priest Yuhanon from Dar'un, Lebanon), 281
Mart Shmuni (church of, Bartelli), 174
Mary (the Virgin, Mother of God), 68-9, 91, 103, 137, 142, 148, 227, 233, 236, 353, 382 n.13, 391 n.55, 394
Marwan II, 3, 11, 15, 19, 27, 51
Marwani restoriation, 13
Maštoc', 36, 185-7, 203-4, 225, 228
(al-)Mas'udi, 58, 154
Matt'eos J̌ułayec'i, 239, 248-9
Matthew of Edessa, 43-4, 195, 240 n.8
(al-)Maturidi (Abu Mansur), 131 n.17
Maurice, 11 n.69, 15
Maximus, 19
*Life of*, 54
Maximus the Confessor, 47 n.8
Maximinites, 2
Mazdean(s), 186, 217, 380
Mecca, 81, 179, 205, 207, 364, 367
Media, 51
Medina, 56, 179, 364
Meḥmed Čelebi Sulpan (Muḥyi d-Din), 373, 375
Melkhisedek, 361, 363
Melkite Church, Melkite, viii, xii, 94-5, 98, 107, 110-1, 130, 133-4, 147, 275-90
Menbij, 241 n.10
Mengujakid, 389
Merhujan, 206
Meružan Arcruni, 206
Mesopotamia, xi, xii, xiii, 31-2, 38, 45-6, 52-3, 64, 68, 73, 78-9, 82, 84 n.42, 88, 189, 201 n.26, 240, 301-20, 384
Mesrop (from Vayoc' Jor in Siwnik), 43
Michael, son of George b. Ja', 175
Michael the Syrian, 2, 4-7, 9, 11-2, 14-7, 20, 21-2, 25-6, 29, 53, 57 n.52, 62, 64, 68, 71-2
Mihran T'umačan, 352-5
Mihrnarseh, 187 n.5
Militene (Malatya), 6, 12, 59, 175
*millet* system, 230, 302, 396, 399
missionaries, 107, 238 n.2, 314, 316, 399 n.94
Mithraic, 198
Mkrtič' Nałaš, 393
Mleh (prince), 388
monasticism, monastic, monks, ix, x, 1, 8, 11, 21, 29, 31, 75, 88, 91, 98, 271, 279-80, 391
monastery/monks of
'Abdisho' (Dere, Sapna), 288
Armen, 249 n.48
Beit Maron, 2, 16
Beth Ḥale, 97-8, 118
Column (Kallinikos), 283
Corcor (in Maku), 403 n.106
Deir az-Za'faran, 174-5

Egypt, 30, 54
Elijah (south of Mosul), 279, 284
Gubba Barraya, 19-20, 24, 29
Jerusalem, 94
John of Kamul, 79
Karmir of K'esun, 200
Keč'aṙis, 394
Khinis, 54
Mar Abel, 55
Mar Augin, 310-11
Mar Chariton, 103 n.41
Mar Gabriel (Qartmin), 30 n.162, 31
Mar Gabrona, 285
Mar Jacob (Beth 'Abe), 285
Mar Mattai, 50 n.22, 55
Mar Simeon the Stylite, 8
Mar Yukhannan the Egyptian, 311
Michael (near Mosul), 284
Nisibis, 24
Qennešre, 68
P'utki S. Georg of Moks (of the inn), 191-2, 196
Rabban Hormizd (Alqosh), 279, 284-5, 288-9, 313-4
Rabban Joseph (Balad), 284
Sabrisho' (Beth Qoqa), 280-1, 286
Sabrisho' (Qardu), 284
Saint Christopher (Saidnaya), 280, 284-5
Saint George (Aleppo), 286
Saint George and Saint Habel, 296
Saint Michael, 279 (north west of Mosul), 279
Saint Minas, 238 n.2
Šułr, 200
Surb Karapet (John the Baptist, Glakay Vank') near Mush, 351-3, 364 n.83
Mongol(s), 43-4, 62-3, 244-5, 264, 302, 304-5, 307, 309, 388
Monophysitism/Monophysite(s), 3, 4, 13, 47, 87 n.67, 144-5
Monothelite(s), 54
Mopsuestia, 216
Mount Judi, 79
Mount of Olives, 18
Moses, 61, 141, 293, 298, 351, 359, 361, 364, 370
Moses bar Kepha, 68
Mosul (Mawsil), 5, 6, 24-5, 28, 30, 50 n.22, 53, 58, 81, 204, 276, 286, 288-9, 301, 316, 324
Movsēs Xorenac'i, 35, 37, 40, 187. 195 n.15, 203, 210 n.40, 224 n.58, 396
Mozarab Christians, 107
Mu'adh, 18
Mu'taman ibn al-'Assal, 112
Mu'awiya (I), 8-9, 20, 22 n.125, 26, 28, 87
(al-)Mufaḍḍal al-Karkhi, 247
(al-)Mughira ibn Shu'ba, 22
Muhammad, 21-3, 26, 3, 37, 39, 55-7, 61, 95, 99-101, 106-8, 112, 115-7, 121, 123-4, 143, 179, 204-7, 230, 232, 250, 261, 293, 347, 364, 368, 401 n.100
Mukhtar b. Abi 'Ubayd, 81
(al-)Munajjim (Abu 'Isa Yaḥya), 106-7
(al-)Murdar ('Asa ibn Ṣabiḥ), 119
Musa, son of Muṣ'ab, 49-50
Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr, 81
Muš, 228
Mušeł Mamikonean, 189-90
(al-)Mutanabbi, 384
(al-)Mutawakkil (Jafar, caliph), 39, 168
Mu'tazili, 119, 131 n.17
Mxit'ar Aparanec'i, 248-9
Mxit'ar Goš (Lawcode of), 39
Mxit'arist, 227, 399 n.94

Nabi, 340 n.17
Nahapet K'uč'ak, 387
Nahum (biblical book of), 48
Najran (convention of), 22-3
Nałaš Hovnat'an, 395
Naṣir ad-Din al-Ṭusi, 169-70, 176, 180, 182
(al-)Naṣir li-din Allah (caliph), 237-64
Nazarenes, 91
Nebuchadnezzar, 207
Neoplatonist, 159, 198-9
neo-Pythagorean, 171

Nero, 43
Nerses I (patriarch, 4th c), 42, 44
*Life of*, 43
Nerses Moakc'i, 344
Nerses Šnorhali (Armenian Catholicos, 12th c.), xii, 185-236, 248, 386-7
*Ban hawatoy*, 210
*Credal poem (Hawatov xostavanim)*, 185-236,
*Encyclical Letter*, 213, 215
*Epic (Vipasanut'iwn)*, 203
*Lament over Edessa*, 202-4, 386
*Norahraš psakawor*, 208
*T'ułt' endhanrakan*, 210
*naxarar*, 190-1, 380
Nestorius (bishop of Constantinople), 4, 303 n.5
Nicaea (Council of), 380
Nimrod, 54
Nineveh, 10 n.67, 54, 382 n.13
Nishapur, 293
Nisibis, 24-5, 52, 79, 81-2, 283
church of, 1
School of, 85, 87 n.62
Nizam ed-din, 245 n.31
Nizami (Ganǧawi), 243 n.15, 363, 373-4, 389
Noah, 141
nominalism, 129
Nubians, 4, 51
Nubuwiyyah, 240 n.9, 249
Nur al-Din, 388

Olympia, 31 n.167
onomastics (Armenian), 265-73
Origen, 162
orthography, 68 n.3
Ottoman (Empire), 302-3, 316, 340, 377-8, 393, 396-9

Palestine, 22, 95, 366
Papa I bar Aggay, 312 n.33
Parthian(s), 186, 190, 197, 337
Pashto, 294
Paul the Persian, 155, 157, 160
Paul of Antioch, 111, 119
Paulician(s), 193, 381 n.7
P'awstos, 42, 189
persecution (religious), 15, 17, 19-20, 25, 32
Persia/Iran, 10, 19, 41 n.21, 51, 53, 60, 87 n.65, 170, 243 n.15, 291, 301-2, 309, 337, 340, 365, 368
Persian/Iranian (language), 73, 155, 169, 183, 185-236, 267, 269-70, 299, 304, 329-30, 340, 369, 372-5, 387-91, 393, 399
Persian(s), 3, 6, 7, 8, 8 n.52, 14 n.89, 15-7, 21, 27, 30, 38-9, 43, 45, 52-3, 108, 185-236, 303, 378, 379, 381, 383
Persian confessors, 32
Peshitta, 51
Peter (Simon, apostle), 306-7, 312
Peter of Bayt Ra's (*Kītāb al-burhān*), 110
Peter the Venerable, 107
Petros Ła'anzi/Łap'anc'i, 344, 395
Philistines, 28
Philo
*De Ebrietate*, 375
*De Animalibus*, 385
Photius, 53
*Pīr* (patron saint), 346-9, 355, 361, 375-7
Pir Sulṭan Abdal, 375
Pisentius (bishop of Qift, Egypt), 297
Plato/Platonic/Platonists, 158-9, 162, 164
polemics/polemical, 95-6, 107, 120, 149, 322, 332
Pontus/Pontic, 192
Porphyry (*Isagoge*), 152
Portugal/Portuguese, 315, 317-8
Poti, 192
primacy ('papal'), 306-9
Psalter (Armenian), 227-9
Pseudo-Dionysius/Dionysian, 42, 326
Pseudo-Ephrem, 53
Pseudo-Methodius (*Apocalypse of*), 4, 6, 8, 10, 14-5, 41-2, 44, 46-7, 82 n.31, 83, 84 n.42, 88, 209
Ptolemy, 177
Ptolemies, 84
punishment (for sins, chastisement), ix, 7, 8, 9, 14, 17, 25, 40-1, 47-50, 57-60, 62-4, 82, 87, 115

Qad'i Burhan ed-Din, 243 n.19
(al-)Qadisi, 241 n.12
Qadisiyya (battle of), 21
Qal'ah Romayta, 177
*Qalilah and Dimna*, 168
Qandanat (Malabar), 174-5
Qara, 286
Qardag, 53
Qartmin, 27, 30 n.162, 283
*qasida*, 384
(al-)Qasim al-Balkhi, 139
(al-)Qasim ibn Ibrahim, 132 n.19, 138 n.44, 140 n.52, 146
Qastra d-Kalibin, 174
Qastra 'Orbiš, 175
Qasṭa ibn Luqa, 106-7
Qizilbaš, 347
Qodshanis, 314
Qubadh I, 7
Queen of Sheba, 180-1
Questions and answers (genre), 70, 101-2, 104
*Questions and Answers, Rational and Divine*, 103
*Questions of Bartholomew*, 326
*Questions of the Maiden*, 384
Qur'an (Koran), 25, 61, 91-3, 95-6, 99-101, 106-7, 109, 111-6, 119, 121, 123-5, 131-2, 134-5, 138, 143, 161, 163 n.45, 165, 169, 171, 179, 205-6, 217, 260, 295, 326, 331-3, 361-5, 385, 391
Qurashi, 19
Qutb ad-Din al-Shirazi, 176

Rabban Hormizd the Persian (of Shiraz?), 28, 30 n.162
Rabban Sauma, 307 n.21, 308 n.22
Rabban Sliba *(Martyrology of)*, 27, 31
Raffi, 389
Rafiqa, 19
Ramadan, 367
Rehoboam, 60
realism, 129
relics, 12
repentance, 9, 10, 10 n.67, 11, 32, 47, 217-24, 257-8, 325
*Revelation of Sedrach*, 326
Revelations, 50
Rew-Ardashir (metropolitan of), 60
rise of Islam (cf. also Arab conquest), 35, 37, 44, 45-6, 60, 65, 67, 79, 108
*roba'i*, 387
Rogation of the Ninevites, 10 n.67,
Rome, 2, 44
  patriarchate of, 306-9, 313-5
Roman(s), xii, 3, 14 n.89, 15-7, 19, 21, 25, 42-4, 58, 63, 87 n.67, 108, 380
Roman Catholic (Church), 302, 307, 312 n.33, 316-7
Roman Empire (Christian), 1, 86 n.55
Rose and Nightingale motive, 252-5, 391-6
Rostam, 199 n.21
Rubenid, 388
Rum (Sultans of), 389
Rumi (Ğalal ad-Din), 197 n.19, 291-2, 373-4, 391
Russian(s), 189 n.6, 269, 378
Rustaveli, 388
Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz, 371-2, 392

(al-)Suhrawardi (Abu Ḥafs 'Umar), 244, 253, 263, 372
Sabrisho' (abbot of John of Kamul), 79-80, 82, 88
Sabhrisho' (metropolitan of Beth Garme), 10 n.67
Sabrisho' V (patriarch), 307
Sa'di, 374
Safavid (empire), 340, 393
(al-)Ṣafi (brother of Barhebreaus), 63
(as-)Ṣafi ibn al-'Assal, 112
(as-)Šafi'i (imam), 171
Sahak (grandson of Nerses), 44
Sahak (Saint, Life of), 205, 380 n.6
Sa'id (of Najran), 23
Salamah al Mughanniyya (al-Qas), 251-2
*Salamān wa-Absāl (Solomun and Basiliya)*, 180-1
Saliba (monk), 59
Salladin, 386
Salmas, 314
Samosata, 195

Samson, 382
Sanahin, 382
Sarah (sister of Mar Zayna), 30
Sargis (bishop), 245
Sarguga, 54
Sarmada, 1
Sasanian (empire/period), 11 n.69, 16, 19, 21, 36, 39, 41, 44, 52-3, 187, 206, 282, 337, 364 n.83, 379-80, 382
Saturn, 13
Saumo (priest) of Pioz, 318 n.52
Sayat' Nova, 197 n.19, 339, 341, 356-7
Sayf ad-Din, 25
*saz*, 383
scribe(s)/copyists, 265, 271-2, 279-83, 303, 313
Sebastia (Sivas), 353
Sebēos, 6, 8 n.52, 11 n.69, 22 n.125, 37-40
Seda, 212
Seleucia-Ctesiphon, 306
Seleucid(s), 84
Seleucid era, 275-90
Seljuk(s), 4, 43, 191, 209, 241 n.10, 242-5, 261, 384, 387, 394
Semitic, 59, 67, 74
Sennacherib, 51, 53-4, 65
Sergius of Resh'aina, 153-4
Sergius (priest Sarjis > metropolitan of Elam), 99, 110, 127
Sergius, son of Mansur, 1, 50-1, 62, 65
Sesengen bar Pharanges, 225 n.61
Sevan, 205 n.31
Severus bar Mashqa, 26
Severus ibn al-Muqaffa', 111
Severus of Antioch, 15, 72, 110
*shahādah*, 106, 197
*Šāh-Nāma*, 390
Šah Senem, 346-7
(al-)Sham, 240, 241 n.10, 249
Sham'alla, 18
Shamakhi, 341
shamanism, 336
Šams-i Tabrizi, 373
Šamsis, 195
Shapur II, 32
*shari'a*, 165, 242, 260, 370
Šar-uṣur (son of Sennacherib), 54
(al-)Shaykh 'Abd al-Jabbar b. Yusuf b. Ṣalih al-Baghdadi, 241 n.12
Shi'ite/Shi'ism, 134, 159, 362, 367 n.99, 368
Shimavon, 248
Šnorhk' Galustean (Armenian patriarch of Constantinople), 227-8
Šušan, 212
Šušanc, 209 n.36
Sidon, 119
Silvester (Pope), 43
Simeon of the Olives (bishop of Harran), 1 n.2, 24
Simeon, son of priest Yešu, 177
Simon, bishop of Rew-Ardashir, 46
Sinai, 103
Sind, 51
Sinjar, 84 n.42
*sīrah* literature, 112-3, 115
Sisianos (Saint), 225
Smbat the Constable, 39
Socrates Scholasticus (*Ecclesiastical History*), 36
Solomon, 180-1
Sophronius (bishop of Jerusalem), 22, 92 n.5
Soruš, 365
Spain, 107, 240 n.9, 292
Spanish Arabs, 122
Step'annos, 42
Step'anos Hṙomklayec'i, 238 n.2
Step'annos, bishop of Siunik (History of), 42, 394
Step'anos Manuk, 200
Stephen ar-Ramli (*Summa Theologiae Arabica*), 102-3, 110
Stephen (Saint), 212, 227-8, 236
Stoics, 162
*Story of the Ten Wazirs and the Son of King Azadbokt*, 168
Sufis/Sufism, 171, 180-1, 243 n.15, 291, 361-2, 364, 369-70, 374, 391, 400
Sundanese, Sunda, 291, 294, 299
Sunni/Sunnism, 122, 240 n.9, 362
Surb Karapet (cf. also John the Baptist), 227, 349-58, 362-5, 374, 376-7

Susanna, 295
sword, 13
Symeon the New Theologian, 214
Synesius of Cyrene, 163-5
Syria, xi, 2, 8, 11, 17, 21, 32, 45, 61, 68, 73, 95, 240 n.9, 241
Syrian Doctors, 32

(al-)Ṭabari, 57
Tabriz (Tawriz), 259, 388, 400 n.98
Tačiks, 38
Tagra, 20
Tagrit, 20, 111, 284
Tahir, 28
Tal, 304
talisman, 225-7
Tanukaye Arabs, 9
Tanukaye, Christians, 19
Tarsus, 384
*TaQLaB*, 281 n.26
Telkepe, 324
Tell-Arsenius, 59
T'eodoros Ršṭuni, 381
*Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, 69
T'eymuraz I of Kakheti, 391 n.55
Thebaid, 283
Themistus, 164
Theodore (Armenian), 216
Theodore Abu Qurra, xi, 100, 110, 116 n.82, 119, 132-40, 143, 146
Theodore bar Koni (*Scholion*), 97, 101-2
Theodore lord of Rshtunik', 22 n.125
Theodore of Mopsuestia, 85, 86 n.55, 87 n.62
*Theodore of Edessa, Life of*, 53
Theodosius I, 296
Theodosius II, 26
Theodosius (SO bishop), 28
theopaschites(s), 2, 8
Theophilactus bar Qanbara (Chalc.), 3, 19
Theophilus of Edessa, 2
Theotokos, 31 n.167
Theudas (T'ewdas), 206
Thomas of Marga, 54, 289
Thomas, son of Deacon Murad, 174
Thomas Tektek Sinjari, 321
Thousand-and-One Nights, 383
Tiari, 304
Tiberias, 21
Tiflis, 398
Tigris, 241 n.10
Timothy I, 8, 56, 61 n.70, 62, 97, 99, 110-1, 123-4, 127-9, 131, 149, 306-8, 309 n.23, 312-3, 317
Timothy II, 304 n.8
Timothy, bishop of Gargar, 59
Timur Leng (Tamerlane), 309
Timurid(s), 393
Tkhuma, 304
T'ondrakites, 193, 215, 381 n.7
Tortosa, 292
T'ovma Arcruni, 37, 39-40, 343
translation(s), xi, 68, 73-4, 85, 94, 96, 99, 101, 107, 111, 114-5, 153-5, 157, 164, 167-84, 386, 388
Trdat (Tiridatus), 36, 43-4, 185, 380
Tree of Life, 201-3 n.26
Tree of Victory, 263
Trinity, 99, 102-3, 109-10, 113-5, 127-49, 210, 233, 236, 256, 258, 325, 331
*Triune Nature of God, Treatise on the*, 109
Tur 'Abdin, 30 n.162, 31
Turco-Mongolian, 268-70, 272-3
Turkey, 301, 340, 351
Turkish (language), Turks, xiii, 4, 6, 20, 40, 43-4, 59, 64, 191, 196, 227, 242, 271, 294, 304, 329-30, 335, 337, 341, 345-6, 352, 363, 367-9, 372-5, 379, 381, 387-91, 393 n.65, 396-9, 402
Turkoman/Turkmen, 244, 388, 393

'Umar I, 22, 31,56
'Umar II, 18, 19, 94, 106-7, 134 n.27
covenant of, 18 n.108, 23
'Umayr ibn Sa'id al-Anṣārī, 98, 120
Umayyad(s), 48, 52, 78, 89 n.73, 153, 190, 230, 243 n.15, 381
uniatism, 307 n.20, 308, 313-7, 399 n.94
Unitor movement, 193

Urdu, 294
Urmya/Urmia (also, Lake), 243 n.15, 286, 301
'Uthman, 17
'Uthman ibn 'Affan, 22

Vahagn, 228, 352, 365
Vahagn-Gisawor, 252 Vahram, 248, 364
Van (town, Lake), 192, 194, 209 n.36, 240 n.8, 341, 351, 383, 393
Vardan (Saint), 38, 187, 189-90, 207
Knights of, 199 n.22
Vardan Arevelc'i, 238 n.2
Vardan Mamikonian, 380 n.6
Vardavar (Feast of), 353
Vasak Siwni, 188 n.6
Vasco da Gama, 318 n.50
Vaspurakan, 40
vocalisation signs (cf. also orthography), 73

(al-)Walid, 18
Western Church (cf. also 'Franks'), ix, xi, xiii, 19, 43, 200, 314, 317-20, 380, 388
western Christendom, 125
West European, 398
William of Rubruck, 307
World era (Byzantine), 276-7, 280

Xač'atur Abovean, 398 n.89
Xacatur Keč'aṙec'i, 344, 394-5
Xizan, 393

Yabhalaha III, 307-8
Yačaxapatum Čaṙk' (Armenian Homilies), 38
Yaḥya, 25
Yaḥya ibn 'Adi, 111, 151-2, 155 n.8, 157, 160, 165
Yaḥya ibn Sa'id, 11
Yakob Manktawag, 249-50, 256-8, 261
Ya'qub b. Petrus from Bartelli, 174
Yathrib, 56, 179
Yazdagird II, 187 n.5, 207
Yazdagerd III, 21
Yazid II, 50 n.22
Yazkert II, 39
Yemen, 299
Yerevan, 341
Yezidi(s), 194-5, 326
Yosep/Joseph (priest) of Telkepe, 318 n.52, 321-33
*On the Divine Economy*, 323
*On the Divine Economy, 323*
*On Revealed Truth*, 322-5, 329-32
*On the Life-giving Words of our Lord*, 323
*On the Parables of the Gospel*, 323
*On the Childhood of Christ*, 324 n.9
Yovan, 248
Yovhan Mayravanec'i, 218-24
Yovhannes Erznkac'i, 199, 237-64, 343, 384 n.26, 389-90, 400-3
Yovhannes Erznkac'i Corcorec'i, 403 n.106
Yovhannes Kozer.n, 109
Yovhannes Mamilonean, 364 n.83
Yovhannes Mandakuni, 218, 343
Yovhannes Sarkawag, 385
Yovhannes T'lkuranc'i, 344, 355, 357, 389 n.46, 393, 401 n.101
Yuḥanna b. Hailan, 156
Yuḥanna b. Masawayh, 168
Yukhannan Sulaqa, 313-5
Yunus Emre, 391
Yusuf (Sajid ruler of Atrpatakan), 381

Zab river, 9
Zachariah Rhetor, 7
(al-)Zanjani (Shayk Akhi Faraj), 243 n.15
Zarer (*Memorial of*) 190
Zak'aria, 230
Zangi ('Imad ad-Din), 6, 53, 58-9, 204, 207, 386
Žamagirk' (Armenian book of common prayer), 225
Zoroastrian(s), 54, 185, 187-8, 191 n.10, 194-5, 206-7, 209, 215-7, 227, 249, 352-3, 380