

The Late Antique World
of Early Islam

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Note:
Volume nos 9, 12, 16 and 18 were never published.
Vol 13 was reissued by Gorgias Press.

www.gerlach-press.de

Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 25

Robert G. Hoyland (ed.)

**The Late Antique World
of Early Islam**

**Muslims among Christians and Jews
in the East Mediterranean**

This edition first published in 2021
by Gerlach Press, Berlin
www.gerlach-press.de
Cover Design: Frauke Schön, Hamburg
Printed and bound in Germany

First published in 2015
by Darwin Press Inc, Princeton NJ

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data.

A catalogue record for this book has been requested.

Bibliographic data available from German National Library:

<https://portal.dnb.de/opac.htm>

ISBN: 978-3-95994-128-0 (hardcover)

ISBN: 978-3-95994-129-7 (eBook)

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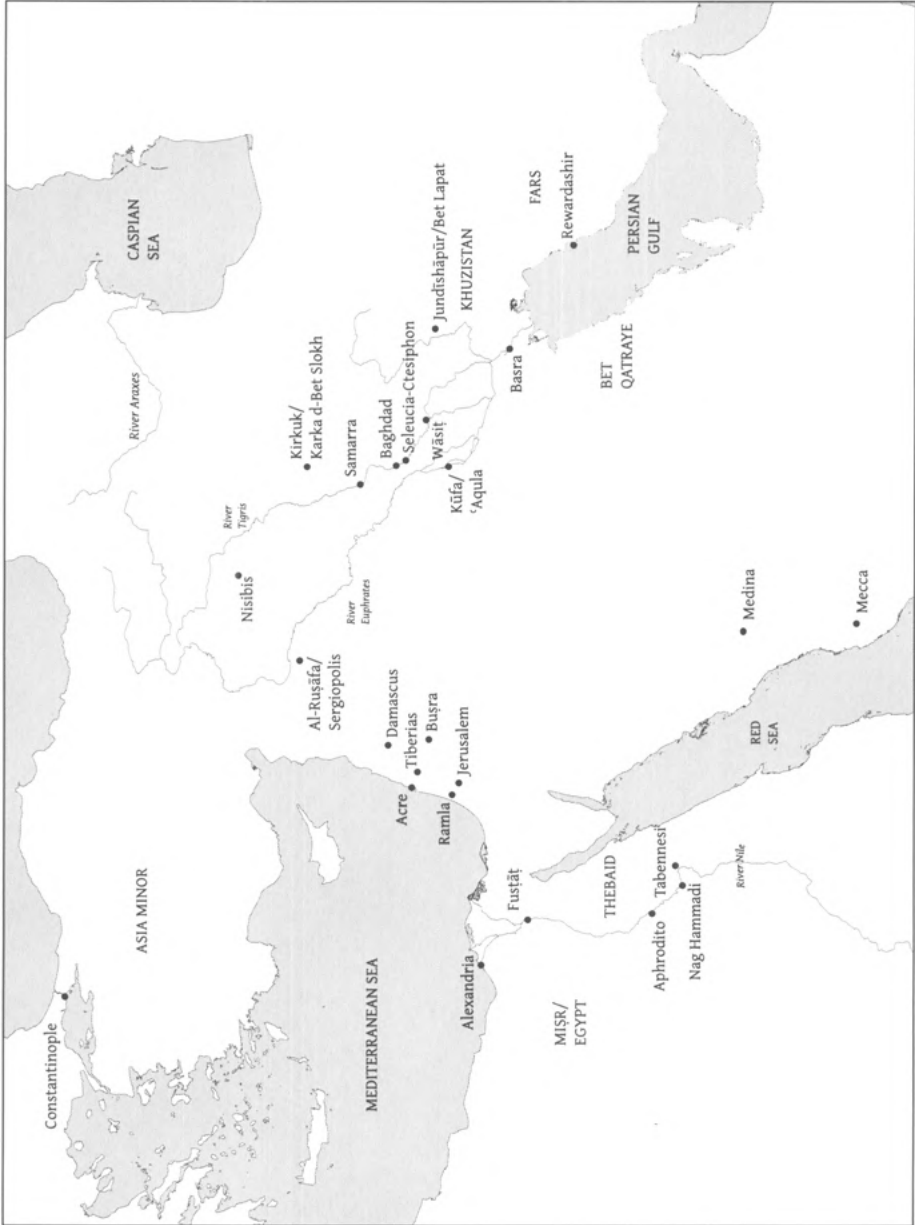
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Map 1: General map of the region

Introduction*

Robert G. Hoyland
(New York University)

There is no doubt that the Arab Islamic conquests of the seventh century led, over time, to a substantial transformation of the political, social and cultural makeup of the Middle East. Although the conquerors initially left in place much of the state apparatus of the Byzantine and Persian Empires, they inevitably made changes that would benefit them, in particular redirecting the tax revenue to their own coffers. Some aspects of the transformation were a direct result of Arab Muslim policies. For example, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685-705) decreed that Arabic should be made the official language of government, and although the order took time to implement fully, its impact upon the status of Greek was quickly felt and by AD 800 the writing of documents in Greek had all but ceased (see ch. 2 below). Some developments were, by contrast, indirectly caused by the actions of the new elite. Thus restrictions on the movements of Christian men would appear to have had the unintended consequence of increasing somewhat the role of their womenfolk, who were exempt from these restrictions, or at least this is a plausible explanation for the rise in female economic activity evident in documents from early Islamic Egypt (ch. 3). This reordering of Middle East society was for the most part slow and gradual, measured in centuries rather than decades, and the new configuration grew out of and in dialogue with the late antique world that preceded it and so should not be viewed as deriving from the

* This volume constitutes the proceedings of a workshop held at Oxford in 2011, the second in a series of such events on the history of the early medieval Mediterranean world convened by the universities of Leiden, Oxford, Paris and Princeton. My friend and colleague Professor Petra Sijpesteijn initiated this co-operative venture and I am grateful to her for her advice and support. I owe a particular debt to Dr. Marie Legendre who helped me greatly in the organization of the event at Oxford and who has given much of her time in ensuring the smooth running of the overall project.

imposition of ideas and values from outside that world.¹ Thus the late Roman system of rescripts was continued and adapted by Muslim judges dispensing justice in Egypt (ch. 6) and when Muslim exegetes sought to explain certain Qur'anic passages on monasticism it was to late antique Christian legends on this topic that they turned for inspiration (ch. 14). This point is taken up in many of the articles below and because I consider it crucial to a proper understanding of the emergence of Islamic civilization I have enshrined it in the first part of the title of this book: "The Late Antique World of Early Islam".

The most visible and immediate consequence of the Arab Islamic conquests was the rise of a relatively small group, the Muslim Arabs, to a position of power over the Christian and Jewish populations of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea in the course of about a century or so (630-740).² This change in the political-demographic situation is reflected in the second part of the title of this book: "Muslims among Christians and Jews in the East Mediterranean". It is a complex change with many winners and losers. The Jews, who were found in the remaining Byzantine lands (ch. 4) as well as in the new Islamic empire, are often thought to be among the winners, since they went from being a persecuted minority under Christian rule to a protected community under Muslim rule.³ Christians, on the other hand, though they remained a numerical majority throughout the region until at least the ninth century (with the possible exception of northwest Africa), had to cope with a diminution of their political power (in the non-Iberian northern Mediterranean) or a total loss of it (in the southern and eastern Mediterranean). Those living in lands still governed by the Byzantine emperors became

¹ For a recent and well-informed example of this argument see Walmsley, Alan. "Economic Developments and the Nature of Settlement in the Towns and Countryside of Syria -Palestine, ca. 565-800," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 61 (2007), 319-52. See also now Sijpesteijn, Petra. *Shaping a Muslim State: the world of a mid-eighth-century Egyptian Official*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 49-113.

² What it meant to be Muslim and to be Arab changed over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries, especially as ever greater numbers sought to join the ranks of the conquerors. For discussion see my *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

³ David Wasserstein has even argued that Islam saved the Jews from extinction (argued in a lecture given at SOAS, London, in May 2012, the text of which is available at <http://www.soas.ac.uk/religions/events/jordan-lectures-in-comparative-religion/14may2012-opening-lecture-how-islam-saved-the-jews.html>).

increasingly identified by loyalty to the council of Chalcedon and, with their former opponents now languishing in the ex-Byzantine provinces, their church became intimately linked to the Byzantine state and its leadership. There were also many in Muslim-ruled territories, especially in Palestine and Sinai, who maintained their adherence to the Chalcedonian position, but they were now cut off from the patronage and protection of the Byzantine Empire and had to compete on an equal footing with those who had formerly been persecuted as heretics. This, plus the simple fact that they now lived under Muslim rule and gradually came to adopt Arabic as their principal language, meant that they formed a community (labelled Melkite 'royalist' by their opponents) distinct from the Chalcedonians living under Byzantine rule (ch. 11). The anti-Chalcedonians of Syria and Egypt (commonly referred to as Jacobites and Copts respectively) went from being viewed with suspicion or outright hostility by the Byzantine authorities to being on a par with all other Christians in these regions. Though a political role was now excluded, they were at least relatively free to develop their own social and religious life. Over time the two communities drifted apart, especially once the Muslim Arab Empire began to fragment into different polities after the mid-ninth century, and each went on to forge their own distinctive identities as the Syrian Orthodox and Coptic churches (ch. 1).

The anti-Chalcedonian Christians of the Sasanian Persian realm had already become used to the idea of living under non-Christian rule. The Arab Islamic conquests did not, therefore, bring about any immediate change in conditions for them. Indeed, whereas the Persian emperors instigated occasional bouts of persecution, the Muslims mostly adhered to the Qur'anic injunction to respect those who possessed a scripture and certainly embarked upon no large-scale persecution. Moreover, one particular faction, labelled Nestorians by their enemies and the Church of the East in modern times, took advantage of the creation of a single unified realm and sent out missionaries, spreading their version of Christianity as far as Mongolia and China. When the Arab Muslims made it clear that they expected all non-Muslim groups to manage their own affairs in conformity with their own religious laws, the Church of the East was well placed to accede to this demand as it already had a distinct legal tradition, which it went on to develop further (ch. 7). In many respects these various Christian communities were hard to tell apart (ch. 10) and yet ecumenical sentiments were rare. By and large, community leaders

never ceased warning of the dangers of fraternisation with “heretics” and erecting legal and institutional barriers to inter-confessional interaction.

Although modern scholars commonly apply the term “Muslim” to the new conquest elite, it was actually quite a diverse body in the early decades.⁴ The agreement that Muhammad drafted on his arrival in Medina suggests that the majority of his followers were Muslim, whether emigrants (*muhajirun*) from Mecca or converts from Medina, but it also makes clear that the Jews participated without converting (“the Muslims have their religion and the Jews theirs”) and that for the purposes of the war effort all acted as “a single community”.⁵ Very early on Muhammad’s west Arabian coalition encountered the Arab Christian tribes of the Syrian steppe and desert, a number of whom were allied to the Byzantine and Persian empires. They are often presented as having divided loyalties: some fought on the side of the empires and some on the side of the conquerors. Some of the latter party may have converted to Islam, but it is sometimes stated explicitly that they had not done so. In an early battle in southern Iraq, for example, the chiefs of Namir and Taghlib came to the support of a Muslim general with men from their respective tribes “who were Christian”; they fought hard, though the battle was severe and prolonged, and the Muslim general encouraged the two men, saying to them: “You are Arab even if you do not follow our religion”.⁶

⁴ There is also a lively debate about the degree to which Islam had broken out of its Judeo-Christian nexus in the period before the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik. Nevo, Yehuda. “Towards a Prehistory of Islam,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (1994), 110, uses the term “indeterminate monotheism” and Donner, Fred. “From Believers to Muslims,” *al-Abhath* 50-1 (2002-3), 26, speaks of “non-confessional monotheism”.

⁵ Modern scholars usually call this foundation agreement the “Constitution of Medina”. For a recent translation of it and references to earlier studies see Arjomand, S.A. “The Constitution of Medina,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009), 555-75.

⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Ja‘r. *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*. Ed. M.J. de Goeje et al. Leiden: Brill 1879-1901, 1.2184-98. The significance of the term “Arab” in the early seventh century is unclear; for discussion see my “Arab kings, Arab tribes and the beginnings of Arab historical memory in Late Roman Epigraphy” in H. Cotton et al eds., *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 374-400. Khalidi, Tarif. “Poetry and Identity in the Umayyad Age,” *al-Abhath* 50-1 (2002-3), 72-3, observes that “Arab” becomes increasingly common in poetry in the course of the Umayyad period (661-750). Note also that certain inscriptions (e.g. Hammat Gader bath restoration text of AD 662) and papyri (e.g. some tax demands from the 670s found at Nessana in south Palestine) are dated to the years “according to the Arabs” (*kata arabas*).

As the conquests progressed and more victories were achieved, many groups who were neither Arab nor Muslim sought to join the conquerors. Examples are the Daylam of the Caspian region, and the Zutt, Sayabija and Andaghar, who were said to hail originally from India, but who had served in the Persian armies before Islam. Some were on bad terms with their former masters and so jumped at the opportunity to better their lot. In this category are the Luwata Berbers, who had suffered in the course of the Byzantine recapture of North Africa in the 540s and had to some extent been excluded from Byzantine society, and so not surprisingly they were quick to join the invading Arabs in the 640s. Others simply did not want to be on the losing side. For instance, units of the Persian elite cavalry (*asāwira*) offered their skills in the aftermath of the disastrous Persian defeat in southern Iraq in 638 on the condition that they were given the top rate of stipends, and a contingent of Slavs defected from the Byzantines when promised resettlement in Syria, wives and “payments in money and kind”.⁷ In addition, as a late seventh-century Mesopotamian monk tells us, the conquerors “brought back captives from all the peoples under the heavens”⁸, many of whom were employed as domestic servants in the households of the conquerors and as scribes and administrators in the burgeoning bureaucracy. All of these groups became Muslim over time and Islam thus served an important integrative function, uniting people of different origins and backgrounds into a new society defined primarily along religious lines.

In the first two or three centuries of Islamic rule this new society, though politically dominant, remained numerically a minority, especially in the Mediterranean lands, where Christianity continued to be the majority faith. In the face of this majority the conquest elite instituted measures to erect boundaries between themselves and the conquered peoples in order to maintain their distinctiveness and their privileges. They did this conceptually, creating a religious identity that marked them out as different from those whom they ruled (ch. 12) and highlighting how the latter had strayed from the true faith (ch. 14). And they did it socially, placing a number of legal restrictions on the public deportment of their non-Muslim subjects. Some, such as regulations about

⁷ Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, 1.2497, 2562-3 (*asāwira*); Hoyland, Robert. *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012, 185-6 (Slavs).

⁸ John of Fenek in Mingana, Alphonse. *Sources Syriques*. Mosul: Dominican Press, 1908, 147/175.

dress and behaviour in public, served simply to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims, though making clear that the latter were inferior to the former. But others, such as not proselytizing and not building new places of worship (ch. 5), were intended to contain and limit the non-Muslim faiths.⁹ Secondary literature often points out that this restrictive legislation reduced the freedom of action of these communities and contributed to their gradual and inexorable decline. However, closer examination of almost any issue reveals that such generalising statements do not do justice to the complexities of the realities on the ground, whether one takes church-building (ch. 8), the status of women (ch. 3), the use of Greek (ch. 2), the role of monasteries (ch. 9) or the fate of monasticism (ch. 13). It is also important to bear in mind that the boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims were never unbridgeable, indeed they were often quite porous, and sharing across community divides never ceased to take place, often in ways that might seem to us surprising (ch. 15).

Robert G. Hoyland.
Axum, December 2013.

⁹ On this topic see the recent insightful study of Levy-Rubin, Milka. *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Part I

Social Groups

1

Minority Representation in the *Futūḥ Miṣr* of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam: Origins and Role*

Edward P. Z. Coghill
(Worcester College, Oxford)

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s¹ *Futūḥ Miṣr* (“The Conquest of Egypt”, henceforth *FM*), probably completed at some point in the 860s, begins with a series of reports from Muḥammad (*ḥadīths*) which foresee the conquest of Egypt and charge the Muslims to treat the Coptic population well, referring to their protected status and genealogical kinship with the Arabs. This paper will seek to understand how the Muslim historical traditions collated by the author combine to construct an identity for the Copts, and through that construction assert and justify their minority status in Muslim Egypt. While most secondary literature follows later practice in using the term Copts to describe either the population of Egypt at the time of the conquest or the members of the anti-Chalcedonian church, it is important to note that, to my knowledge, there is no use of the term *qibṭ* in Arabic documentary or literary sources before the eighth century, with terms such as the ‘people of the land’ (*ahl al-ard*) or the ‘people of the *dhimma*’ (*ahl al-dhimma*) more generally being used. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam is one of the earliest literary sources through which we may explore the parameters defining this relatively novel Arabic usage, which was perhaps still being negotiated, from the Arab-Muslim side.

* My foremost thanks go to James Howard-Johnston, Robert Hoyland, and Mark Whit-tow, for their help over the course of my writing this piece. Nicola Clarke and Phil Booth introduced me to Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam and I am grateful to them both.

¹ For ease of recognition, in this paper I follow scholarly convention, both modern and medieval, in calling the author Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam. It should be noted that I am actually referring to Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, not his father or brother Muḥammad, all confusingly known to scholarship by the same name.

1.1 The *Futūḥ Miṣr* and its author

FM itself is a fairly typical example of early Islamic historical writing, being a collection of usually short historical eyewitness accounts (*khābars*), each affirmed by a chain of authorities professing to describe the transmission of the account from the eyewitness to the author (*isnād*). As suggested by its title, the focus is regional: the first forty-five pages are concerned with the status and merits of the Copts and the pre-Islamic history of Egypt; about one-hundred-and-forty pages are then devoted to the Arab conquest of Egypt and the concurrent settlement and administrative arrangements; roughly twenty pages apiece document the conquest of North Africa and then Spain; twenty pages recount the history of the Islamic judges (*qādīs*) of Egypt up to the author's time; and a final seventy pages recount *ḥadīths* transmitted on the authority of companions who settled in Egypt. The *isnāds* used for the historical section, as well as the *ḥadīths*, privilege Egyptian scholars and lines of transmission, thus the work gives us a non-metropolitan perspective on the history of Egypt. This may explain its more expansive treatment of the relationship between the Arabs and the Copts than histories compiled in Baghdad, where this relationship was not a particularly pressing concern.

The conquest of Egypt by the Arabs in c. 639-41 did not initiate a history of unceasing antagonism between the Arab-Muslims and the Christian population. As elsewhere, Christians continued to serve in the administration, particularly the financial administration, with the *History of the Patriarchs* mentioning a certain Theodore in charge of the administration of Alexandria in the early eighth century, and a Christian, Ishāq b. Andūna al-Sayyid, serving as master of the treasury registers (*ṣāḥib dīwān al-sultān*) under al-Ma'mūn. The language of the administration was only changed from Greek to Arabic c. 706 during al-Walīd's caliphate.² A study of those sources which appear to date from the first eighty years of Muslim rule suggests generally reasonable relations between Christians and their Muslim rulers, with reports of only sporadic

² Kennedy, Hugh. "Egypt as a Province in the Islamic Caliphate, 641-868," in M.W. Daly, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 72. For more information on the transition from Greek to Arabic see the chapter of Janneke de Jong and Alain Delattre in this volume.

conflict or persecution.³ Relations appear to have soured around the 720s, leading to a series of “Coptic” revolts suppressed by the Arab army (*jund*), perhaps in response to tax increases, perhaps to growing Muslim presence in the tax-gathering system at lower levels which disrupted local power structures and reduced opportunities for Christians to play a role in the state.⁴ Papyrological evidence also suggests that from roughly this period Muslim land-ownership became more normal, and it is likely that, as elsewhere in the Caliphate, conversion to Islam became increasingly common throughout the eighth and ninth centuries. Greater contact, debate, and movement between different communities may well have developed more self-conscious definitions and delineations of these communities, perhaps significant in the emergence of the term Copt.

Our author, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, was born at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries into a significant family of Egyptian legal scholars, whose history is well collected in Jonathan E. Brockopp’s *Early Mālikī Law*.⁵ Closely connected to key ‘proto-Sunnī’ figures such as Mālik b. Anas and al-Shāfi‘ī, during the *mihna* they would side with the ‘*ulamā*’ against caliphal attempts to determine religious doctrine. Inspection of the historical context of the author’s life alongside *FM* reveals that the text was shaped in important ways by the author’s response to contemporary events.⁶ Though exploration of this is not the subject of the current paper, it is worth noting that he seems to have shared certain affinities with the traditional Arab elite of Egypt, the *wujūh* who traced their

³ Suermann, Harold. “Copts and the Islam of the Seventh Century,” in Emmanouela Grypeou et. al., eds., *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 95-109.

⁴ Kennedy, “Egypt as a Province,” 74; Noth, Albrecht. “On the Relationship in the Caliphate Between Central Power and the Provinces. The ‘*Ṣulḥ*’-‘*Anwa*’ Traditions for Egypt and Iraq,” in Fred M. Donner, ed., *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2008), 181; Frantz-Murphy, Gladys. “Conversion in Early Islamic Egypt. The Economic Factor,” in Robert G. Hoyland, ed., *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2004). Dunn, Michael. “The Struggle for ‘Abbāsīd Egypt” (Georgetown University Ph.D. thesis, 1975), 163-73.

⁵ Brockopp, Jonathan E. *Early Mālikī Law. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam and His Major Compendium of Jurisprudence*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000, 1-48; note that this study is not focused on our author but his father.

⁶ Trying to understand the interplay between this text and the context of its compilation is a main concern of my master’s dissertation, “Conquests of Egypt: Making history in ‘Abbāsīd Egypt” (University of Oxford M.Phil. thesis, 2012), see particularly pages 12-28, 71-8.

descent back to the *futūh* which his text celebrates.⁷ Their power was broken by the civil wars (c.809-26) of his youth, and then swept aside by the caliphal re-imposition of central authority on the province through Khurāsānī and Turkic military power under al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim, culminating in the reported withdrawal of state stipends from all Arabs in 833. The traditional elite did not go down without a fight, and in the revolts against this re-imposition of central power Arabs and 'Copts' made common cause in fighting the incomers, described by Hugh Kennedy as an "unprecedented alliance of local interests".⁸ Al-Ma'mūn's suppression of these revolts culminated in a brutal campaign against the Christians of Bashmūr after which captured rebels were executed, their families sold into slavery, and large numbers of people deported.⁹ It was during these upheavals that the author's father, then Chief Witness-Inspector for the *qādī*, was imprisoned in connection with local protest against al-Mu'taṣim's government in Egypt, dying in jail soon after.¹⁰ This event suggests that the Banū 'Abd al-Ḥakam were part of an Egyptian-Muslim interest-group dissatisfied with the way in which caliphal power was being exerted in Egypt by al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim. The attention paid to the 'Copts' in this text may reflect this group's localism and willingness to see the Christians of Egypt as potential allies against the incoming Khurāsānī and Turkic agents of Baghdād.

1.2 The *Futūh Miṣr* and the Copts

This context noted, we shall return to Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's opening chapter, titled "The Will of the Prophet of God, May God Bless Him and Grant Him Salvation, Towards Copts".¹¹ For three pages, successive *ḥadīths*, referencing in their *isnāds* scholars of high standing in Egypt such as Ashhab b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, Mālik b. Anas, or the author's father

⁷ Kennedy, "Egypt as a Province" is a good introduction to Egyptian politics and the *wujūh*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 79-84; Dunn, "Struggle," 77-85.

¹⁰ Al-Kindī, *Kitāb Quḍāt Miṣr* and *Kitāb Umarā' Miṣr*. Ed. Rhuvon Guest as: *The Governors and Judges of Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1912, 440-1.

¹¹ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūh Miṣr*. Ed., Charles Cuttler Torrey as: *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain Known as the Futūh Miṣr of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922, 2. Henceforth this reference will be abbreviated to *FM*.

himself, report an imperative from Muḥammad to “treat the Copts well, for they have a protection and a kinship” (*istawṣū bi-l-qibṭi khayran fa-inna la-hum dhimmatan wa raḥiman*).¹² Further reports gloss the kinship as referring to Ishmael’s Coptic mother Hagar, from whom the line of the Arabs was supposed to descend, and have Muḥammad prophecy that the Copts would be helpers of the Muslims and their religion against their enemies. Given its leading position in the text, this *ḥadīth* warrants a close inspection. The presence of prophetic *ḥadīth* in conquest history writing is far from irregular. *FM*, in accordance with the combining of genres found in much early Islamic history-writing, includes a significant section of prophetic *ḥadīths* reported on the authority of companions associated with Egypt. However, that section is contained at the very end of the book whereas this *ḥadīth* is placed alone, with a few accompanying *ḥadīths* on the same theme, at the opening of the book.¹³ Though the reports of both the pre-Islamic history and Muslim conquest of Egypt which follow this section are presented with *isnāds*, their inclusion is governed by a continuous chronological scheme to which this extended *ḥadīth*-report at the opening of the book does not comply. Therefore, while the report is not generically unique within the text, its positioning is anomalous, suggesting a distinct function from both the later *ḥadīth*-section and the coming chronological narrative. I would suggest that this opening section of *ḥadīth* about the virtues of the Copts is a conscious prefatory device intended to flag an issue of central importance to the text and its author, as well as to shape the reader’s approach to the coming narrative.

What is apparent is that this *ḥadīth* defines the conduct of a majority power-group towards a minority power-group. We are given two reasons why the Copts should be treated well: their possession of “a protection” (*dhimma*) and “a kinship” (*raḥim*). Those who should be treating the Copts well are obliquely identified as those who follow the instructions of Muḥammad, i.e. the Muslims. The very notion that the Muslims must be instructed to treat the Copts well implies that they have the option to do otherwise, and therefore that the power in this relationship resides with them. Given the normative force increasingly ascribed to the actions and proclamations of Muḥammad by traditionalist scholars such as Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam in this period, this *ḥadīth* claims to recount a correct Muslim

¹² *FM*, 1-4.

¹³ The final section of *ḥadīth* is *FM*, 248-319

understanding of the relationship between communities in Egypt, and the correct conduct of Muslims within that relationship. That it reflects badly on the manner in which caliphal power was reasserted over Egypt in the author's prime, in the punitive treatment of the Copts of Bashmūr, may be a further marker indicating that *FM* articulates the ideological claims of the traditional Arab-Muslim Egyptian elite which had been displaced by the agents of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim.¹⁴

The constituent parts of the *ḥadīth* beg several questions for the uninitiated. Who are the Copts? How did they come to have *dhimma*? What is the nature of this *raḥim* and its significance? And why does a particular, religiously-defined community have power over them? Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's history answers these questions, justifying the relationship of power which the *ḥadīth* encapsulates by its explanations of the origins of the Copts' *dhimma* and *raḥim* in both the events of the *futūḥ* and the pre-Islamic history of Egypt. Given the foregrounding of *dhimma*, *raḥim*, and the relationship between Muslims and Copts in a prefatory section, I would suggest that the historical exegesis of this *ḥadīth* is one of the intended functions of the text. Unpicking the logic of this exegesis will be the subject of this paper. First we will look at the polemical presentation of the Egyptians as Christians who fail to accept revelation and obey proper authority, which is contrasted to the obedience of Muḥammad's followers, explaining the supremacy of the latter as a community of God and justifying their conquest of the former. We will then see how the Copts are schematically defined in the text by their *dhimmi* acceptance of submission by treaty to and subsequent aid of the Arabs in the *futūḥ*. We will note that the 'Roman' community is contrarily defined by resistance to and forceful defeat by the Arabs, and represented as an alien ruling group whose dominance over Egypt is much like that of the Arabs. Thus the Copts are dissociated from the Roman foe still harrying the coast of Muslim Egypt in the mid-ninth century, and are given a history of co-operation with the Muslims which affords them a positive role in the foundation of Islamic Egypt, thereby constructing a workable past for the Muslims and the 'indigenous' population of Egypt. Finally we shall see how biblical-era history is deployed by the text to establish,

¹⁴ Other elements within the text suggest the text responds to the Egyptian rebellions against al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim, particularly its glorification of the ancestors of the leaders of these rebellions, Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj and 'Uqba b. Nāfi', explored in Zychowicz – Coghill, "Conquests of Egypt", 24-8.

on a universal scale, these paradigms presented in the *futūh*-narrative, particularly this indigenous status of the Copts, and a concrete, quasi-tribal, genealogical distinction between ‘Copts’ and ‘Romans’. Through the analysis of the representation of Coptic identity within these sections various polemical mechanisms will be exposed by which narratives of the past were deployed by a ninth century Arab Muslim author to argue a favoured yet flawed identity for the Copts which ultimately asserted their subservient, minority position.

1.3 The role of al-Muqawqis

Of particular importance for the representation of the Copts in the conquest narrative is the character of al-Muqawqis, who is presented as the leader of the Romans and Copts in many Arabic texts, including *FM*. His institutional role is unclear and al-Muqawqis is not easily read as a transliteration of the name or title of any of the major Roman officials in Egypt at the time of the conquest. Alfred Butler suggested the widely accepted solution that we regard al-Muqawqis as Cyrus, the Chaldeonian Patriarch appointed by Heraclius in 631, suggesting that the name was some Arabic referent to his origin in the Caucasus.¹⁵ A recent dissertation by Christopher Wright has pointed out that the picture of al-Muqawqis in *FM* is difficult to square with the Cyrus of other texts, such the seventh-century *Chronicle* of John of Nikiou, which present him as a ruthless persecutor of the Copts.¹⁶ In *FM* al-Muqawqis negotiates on behalf of the Copts; is described as the “great one of the Copts” (*‘azīm al-qibt*); and, when the emperor refuses to accept his peace-making with the Arabs, approaches ‘Amr asking to make a separate peace for himself and the Copts, one of the conditions of which is that ‘Amr not reconcile with the Romans until they are totally defeated.¹⁷ It is suggested that these things would have been unthinkable for Cyrus, that al-Muqawqis was rather an Arabic term for Patriarch, and that Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam uses the term indiscriminately to describe different holders of that of-

¹⁵ Butler, Alfred. *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 508-26.

¹⁶ Wright, Christopher Jones. “Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Futuh misr*. An Analysis of the Text and New Insights into the Islamic Conquest of Egypt” (University of California Santa Barbara Ph.D. Thesis, 2006), 67-92.

¹⁷ *FM.*, 45-6; 72-3.

fice. The apparent incongruity of al-Muqawqis' behaviour in *FM* with that of the 'historical' Cyrus is thus explained by saying that whenever al-Muqawqis appears negotiating on behalf of the Copts, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam is actually relating a tradition about the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch Benjamin, and has fudged both patriarchs into one character who incoherently performs mutually antagonistic actions.

This seems a rational solution at first glance, but fails on three counts. Firstly, Wright assumes without comment, as much secondary literature of this period does, that the labels 'Copt' and 'Roman' are used in the text synonymously with anti-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian respectively. While from the early Islamic period the anti-Chalcedonian hierarchy increasingly portrayed itself as a native, 'Coptic' church, whether and how their attempts to conflate Egyptian ethnicity with their sectarian identity were taken up by Muslim writers such as Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam requires further study, not blanket assumption.¹⁸ In *FM* there is no hint of religious difference between Romans and Copts. Secondly, Wright assumes inherent hostility between 'Copts' and 'Romans'. However, the cultural *romanitas* of anti-Chalcedonian elites well into the early Islamic period has recently been demonstrated from papyrological evidence, showing that there was not necessarily a clear-cut cultural divide between anti-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians.¹⁹ Even if we were to believe that these terms are used in *FM* as sectarian labels, we should be wary of accepting uncritically later Coptic-church and Melkite narratives that stress sectarian antagonism for their own reasons. In 633 Cyrus had presided over an ecclesiastical union between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians using formulae with notable avoidance of Chalcedon, and even after the Arab conquests formerly anti-Chalcedonian bishops remained in communion with Constantinople.²⁰ Later Christian

¹⁸ Papaconstantinou, Arietta. "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic 'Church of the Martyrs' in Early Islamic Egypt," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006), 68-81.

¹⁹ Papaconstantinou, Arietta. "'What Remains Behind': Hellenism and Romanitas in Christian Egypt After the Arab Conquest," in Hannah M. Cotton *et al.*, eds., *From Hellenism to Islam. Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 463.

²⁰ Allen, Pauline. *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy. The Synodical Letter and Other Documents. Introduction, Texts, Translations, and Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 161-3. I have Marek Jankowiak to thank for pointing me towards this episode of seventh-century Christological debate.

authors writing about Egypt in this period were ideologically and institutionally invested in a firmly demarcated sectarian divide, across which they could deliver polemic which defined the boundaries of their communities and gave these ecclesiastical figures authority within them. Cyrus' very success in unifying pro- and anti-Chalcedonians (an ambition in the tradition of late antique Roman imperial universalism, but a tradition increasingly obsolete in the Islamic period) would have threatened this polarised structure of Christian authority, which may be the cause of the near-universal denigration of his memory in later Christian sources. Thus the anti-Chalcedonian *History of the Patriarchs* frames a large-scale reconciliation between al-Muḡawqis and anti-Chalcedonians as the result of persecution, but also recognises less antagonistic processes of accommodation which are presented as corruption of the faithful:

On account of the greatness of the trials and the straits and the affliction which the Colchian [al-Muḡawqis/Cyrus] brought down upon the orthodox [anti-Chalcedonians], in order that they might enter into the Chalcedonian faith, a countless number of them went astray, some of them through persecution, and some by bribes and honours, and some by persuasion and deceit.²¹

In contrast, in the *Annals* of Eutychius, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria from 933-40, al-Muḡawqis is remembered not as a persecutor of the anti-Chalcedonians but as a crypto-anti-Chalcedonian himself, "a Jacobite who hated the Romans but was not prepared to reveal his doctrine lest they kill him."²² It would be easy to imagine this as a Chalcedonian smear of a figure engaged in compromise with anti-Chalcedonians which was later condemned. If this interpretation has traction we might ask whether Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's inclusive al-Muḡawqis is closer to the 'historical' Cyrus than the demonised al-Muḡawqis of sectarian Christian Arabic historiography.²³ Finally, and more importantly when consider-

²¹ Sāwīrus b. al-Muḡaffa'. *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*. Ed. and tr. Basil Evetts *et al.* Paris, 1904-, 492

²² Eutychius. *Nazm al-jawhar*. Ed. Michael Breydy as: *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien : ausgewählte Geschichten und Legenden kompiliert von Sa'id ibn Baṭrīq um 935 A.D.* Lovanii, 1985, 143. My thanks to Harry Munt for his assistance with this reference.

²³ Phil Booth included a far more thorough presentation of the evidence surrounding this question in a paper entitled 'John of Nikiou and the Politics of the Past', at the

ing the internal arguments of *FM*, there is no suggestion within the text that al-Muqawqis represents more than one person. At certain points when Wright wishes to make a distinction between al-Muqawqis/Cyrus and al-Muqawqis/Benjamin they are clearly one character in narrative terms. The most explicit is when al-Muqawqis is ordered by Heraclius to renege on the peace which he had made at Babylon and then reported to the emperor, after which he instead immediately goes to ‘Amr to ask him to maintain the peace with himself and the Copts.²⁴ To claim that ‘Abd al-Rahmān is consciously talking about two different people here would be perverse. Muslim historians were unusually willing to point out inconsistencies they noted in the narratives they reported, and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam makes a point of doing so at various points in his text. Thus we must assume that he saw nothing incongruous here in the actions of al-Muqawqis. Furthermore, the argument that he is conflating Cyrus and Benjamin is weakened by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s inclusion of Benjamin in the text, describing him as a ‘bishop of the Copts at Alexandria’.²⁵ Rather than carving up al-Muqawqis’ character to suit our interpretation of conquest-era politics, it is worth inspecting him as he appears, and as we must assume Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam thought about him.

Al-Muqawqis’ main role is to provide a mouthpiece for the arguments of the Christian population of Egypt as the Muslim traditions which Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam records wished to present them. Islamic historical writing did not allow for much editorial comment, therefore ideas about historical events described are presented through reported speech. Therefore, envoys between the Muslims and their antagonists become the prime method of commenting on differences between communities, a feature shared with much Muslim historiography such as al-Azdī’s *Futūh al-Shām*.²⁶ In *FM* al-Muqawqis always negotiates on behalf of the Christians, and as such features in several episodes in which the terse, disjointed *ḥadīth*-style gives way to long discourses between two

Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies in Rome, 17-22 September 2012, in which he suggested similar conclusions.

²⁴ *FM.*, 71-2.

²⁵ *FM.*, 58.

²⁶ Khalek, Nancy. “‘He Was Tall and Slender, and His Virtues Were Numerous.’ Byzantine Hagiographical *topoi* and the Companions of Muhammad in al-Azdī’s *Futūh al-shām*,” in Arietta Papaconstantinou, ed., *Writing ‘True Stories’. Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 120-2.

main characters. With his undefined role as leader of both Romans and Copts, al-Muqawqis' legitimacy in the text is explicitly rooted in his being "the best among the Romans;" that is, by his virtue rather than institutional status in the infidel empire.²⁷ Therefore al-Muqawqis' status is not tainted for the Muslims by particular association with the Roman Empire, and he can represent all Christians in these debates, no matter what sectarian or ethnic stripe. Thus, as the rightful ruler of his community, the concessions he makes, political and religious, would appear from the text to stand for all Egyptians. This allows the traditions recounted by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam to make particular arguments through al-Muqawqis confirming Muḥammad's prophethood, justifying the invasion of Egypt, and explaining why Christians should but fail to recognise Islam as the true faith, amongst various other things.

A brief inspection of al-Muqawqis' first appearance in the text should serve to illustrate some of these points. In the sixth year after the *hijra*, Muḥammad sends al-Muqawqis an envoy summoning him to Islam. He challenges this Muslim envoy, and asks him about Islam and the practices of Muḥammad. The envoy leaves out certain elements of Muḥammad's appearance, which al-Muqawqis then correctly completes for him before saying, "I knew already that a prophet remained, and assumed that he would come from Syria, for the prophets before him came from there, but I see that he has emerged amongst the Arabs".²⁸ Al-Muqawqis then declares that "the Copts will not obey me in following him, and I do not want them to be told of my conversing with you," but prophesies that "his companions after him will be victorious over the countries and take up quarters in our unoccupied area".²⁹ He then sends Muḥammad gifts, including two maids of "great standing amongst the Copts", one of whom, Māriya, Muḥammad marries.³⁰ The recognition of Islam by the leader of the Egyptian Christians through gift-giving, while foretelling the future rule of the Muslims, is a clear inter-confessional polemical point, whereby Christian refusal to accept the truth of Islam justifies their subjugation by force, one which perhaps models a Muslim understanding of *dhimmī* recognition of Islam through payment of the *jizya*. This episode also firmly integrates Egypt into the prophetic age of Islam, with Muḥam-

²⁷ *FM.*, 71.

²⁸ *FM.*, 47.

²⁹ *FM.*, 47.

³⁰ *FM.*, 48.

mad's envoy becoming the opening act of the Muslim conquest of Egypt, perhaps smoothing over the infamously deceitful way in which 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ is supposed to have begun the invasion against the will of the caliph 'Umar, which Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam later records.³¹ On Muḥammad's death, Abū Bakr dispatches the same envoy to al-Muqawqis and a treaty is apparently made.³² Muslim historiography presents Abū Bakr at this time as renewing the alliances and clientages Muḥammad had established, and thereby the appearance of Egypt here could be an attempt to suggest that Egypt was already in some state of submission to the *umma* in the time of the Prophet.

Al-Muqawqis' most obvious function here is to play the Baḥīrā-role of the Christian religious figure and visionary who recognises Muḥammad's prophethood, thereby demonstrating the truth of Islam through figures which Christian discourse had long established as being able to, as Thomas Sizgorich puts it, "discern more profound realities."³³ Al-Muqawqis recognises the description of Muḥammad given by the Muslim envoy as matching that of a final prophet yet to come "whose description and distinguishing mark we [al-Muqawqis] found in the book of God." The envoy's replies to al-Muqawqis' questions about Muḥammad and Muḥammad's responses to al-Muqawqis' gifts match this divinely-inspired description and therefore further confirm Muḥammad's identity as the final prophet.³⁴ Muḥammad's position as culmination of the succession of monotheistic prophets is a continual theme in the exchange. His envoy asks al-Muqawqis, "What is Moses' prophecy of Jesus but the like of Jesus' prophecy of Muḥammad? And what is our calling you to the Qur'ān but the like of your calling the people of the Torah to the Gospel?"³⁵ The dispatch of the envoy, one of four sent to Constantinople, Persia, Oman, and Egypt, is compared explicitly by Muḥammad to Jesus dispatching his disciples to evangelise the earth.³⁶

Finally, al-Muqawqis recognises Muḥammad's prophethood by sending him the gift of a Coptic maid, Māriya, by whom Muḥammad has a child. This episode echoes the 'biblical' story of Pharaoh's gift of Hagar to

³¹ *FM.*, 55-58.

³² *FM.*, 53.

³³ Sizgorich, Thomas. "Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity," *Past and Present* 185 (2004), 27.

³⁴ *FM.*, 48.

³⁵ *FM.*, 46.

³⁶ *FM.*, 45.

Abraham and the subsequent birth of Ishmael, and therefore further affirms Muḥammad's prophetic status by narratively casting him as a new Abraham. Just as in the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, Egyptian non-Muslim authority (embodied by Pharaoh/al-Muqawqis) enacts its submission to prophetic truth through the gift of a Coptic woman which results in a sexual relationship between the prophet and the gifted woman. The parallelism is neatly rounded off by the name of Muḥammad and Māriya's son: Abraham. In Islamic tradition Pharaoh's gifting of Hagar was a result of Pharaoh's recognition of the power which Abraham and Sarah's God held over him, a tale which would be fresh in the reader's mind from Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's inclusion of it in the section of *FM* recounting pre-Islamic history.³⁷ Therefore the text emphasises that the birth of Ishmael, the progenitor of the Arabs, was a result of God's intervention against Pharaoh, and the *rahim* between the Arabs and Copts becomes an emblem of the triumph of Muslim over non-Muslim authority. Therefore the narratological argument for Muḥammad's prophethood, made through his re-enacting and reaffirming the genealogical link between Copts and Arabs established by Abraham and Hagar, functions also to re-emphasise that Egypt, the Copts, and the Arabs are providentially bound together. By choosing to include these elements of prophetic history in *FM* and referring back to them in the exchange between al-Muqawqis and Muḥammad's envoy, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam both justifies the conquest through assertion of the prophethood of Muḥammad and integrates his story of the Muslim conquest of Egypt into a universal scheme of sacred history and the bearers of revelation acting upon Egypt.

Muḥammad's prophethood is thus established and the Christian leader, the best of his people, accepts it. A reason why the Romans and Copts do not flock to Islam is thus required. Al-Muqawqis tersely states, "the Copts will not obey me in following him [Muḥammad]", but a fuller explanation can be gleaned from the context of the exchange.³⁸ When Muḥammad dispatches his envoys he tells the story of Jesus dispatching his disciples to evangelise the earth, when apparently the disciples resisted his command because they couldn't speak foreign languages. Jesus despairs and God has to intervene, granting the disciples the gift of tongues. Thus a Christian miracle-story is reinterpreted as a tale of Christian disobedience, a strategy surely echoing contemporary inter-

³⁷ *FM.*, 10-12.

³⁸ *FM.*, 47.

confessional polemic and debate, and the Muslims are warned not to follow this example. The *muhājirūn* prove their superiority as a community of God through their contrasting response to his commands as mediated through their prophet, crying, "Oh Messenger of God, by God we will never dispute with you about anything. Command us! Send us!"³⁹ We have already noted how Muḥammad's actions are integrated into a Judaeo-Christian prophetic scheme, and that Muḥammad is said to be the fulfilment of biblical prophecies. The unity of the religion of the monotheistic prophets is now unambiguously stated by the envoy to al-Muqawqis: "We do not forbid the religion of Christ, rather we order you to it".⁴⁰ Thus the difference between the Arabs and their Christian and Jewish predecessors is not necessarily in the virtue of their prophets, but in their community's receptivity to revealed truth. The Christians are categorised as a community which does not properly accept this truth, and are thus integrated into Judaeo-Christian narratives of chosen communities falling from the right path, also a particular Qur'ānic obsession.⁴¹

This theme of Christian waywardness, established at the very beginning of the conquest narrative, from the mouth of the Prophet himself, is consolidated throughout the narration of the conquest of Egypt. Al-Muqawqis, having foreseen the inevitability of the Muslim conquest, privately urges the Copts and Romans to submit to the Arabs even while negotiating on their behalf: "If you do not accept it [that is, 'Amr's call for them to either convert, accept *dhimmi* status and pay *jizya*, or fight] submissively then you will [ultimately] accept of them that which is more detestable to you."⁴² Though apparently leader of the Copts and the Romans, his power to command them is presented as limited: they refuse to heed his advice, fight and are massacred. As al-Muqawqis tells 'Amr, "those Romans and Copts who were in my presence disobeyed me so that I was not able to make a decision about them concerning their wealth [i.e. payment of *jizya*]."⁴³ In the disastrous results of the Christians' refusal to follow the commands of al-Muqawqis, presented in the text as their rightful leader, the critique of Christian disobedience in contrast

³⁹ *FM.*, 45.

⁴⁰ *FM.*, 46.

⁴¹ Humphreys, R. Stephen. "Qur'ānic Myth and Narrative Structure in Early Islamic Historiography," in Frank M. Clover and R. Stephen Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 277-8.

⁴² *FM.*, 69.

⁴³ *FM.*, 69.

to Muslim acceptance of right guidance is reinforced through association with the contrasting, providentially-directed, fates of the Christians and Muslims during the *futūḥ*.⁴⁴

Thus far, both Romans and Copts have been treated identically, commonly criticised for their Christian failure to rightly receive revelation. However, at this point in the narrative their conduct becomes distinct. Al-Muqawqis points out to the survivors the result of their failure to heed his warning and tells them to “obey me before you regret it”, which they do, agreeing to pay the *jizya*.⁴⁵ However, while it was clearly stated before Babylon that both Romans and Copts were involved in the negotiations, in the treaties Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam recounts the identifying term used is Copt – “all of this was stipulated on the Copts especially” – though the usual conquest-treaty clause is added that those Romans who wish to make peace and stay may do so on the same terms.⁴⁶ Al-Muqawqis then writes to Heraclius informing him of these developments and trying to gain his acceptance of the treaty. Heraclius, however, is outraged and, as al-Muqawqis then reports to ‘Amr, orders the Romans to reject ‘Amr’s peace-terms and “fight . . . until they vanquish you or you vanquish them”.⁴⁷

At this point al-Muqawqis refuses to renege on the peace he has made with ‘Amr. The narrative once again takes up the theme of the failure of the Christians to accept al-Muqawqis’ knowledge of the Muslims’ inevitable victory, and concludes with him telling the Romans, “tomorrow, you will revert to my way of thinking and you will wish that you had obeyed me, and that is because I have seen and beheld and known that which the king [Heraclius] has not seen, or beheld or known”.⁴⁸ It is at this point that he goes to ‘Amr and the break between Copts and Romans occurs, al-Muqawqis telling ‘Amr:

I did not leave from what I entered and made treaty with you about, but my authority is only over myself and whoever obeys me. The treaty of the Copts is carried out, according to what is between you and them, and no breach has come by their power. I carry it out towards you for myself, and the Copts carry it out

⁴⁴ *FM.*, 65-72.

⁴⁵ *FM.*, 69-70.

⁴⁶ *FM.*, 70.

⁴⁷ *FM.*, 72.

⁴⁸ *FM.*, 71.

to you according to the terms by which you made peace and covenant with them. As for the Romans, I am quit (*barī'*) of them, and I request that you grant me three conditions." 'Amr said to him, "Go on." He said, "Do not break covenant with the Copts. Incorporate me with them and obligate me with what is required of them. Already, my word and their word concur on that by which I made covenant with you, and they carry it out towards you according to your desire."⁴⁹

Thus al-Muqawqis makes a separate peace for the 'Copts' while the 'Romans' continue to fight. Furthermore, his second request of 'Amr is that he not make treaty with the Romans, rather make them slaves and common property (*fay'*) for the Muslims, both conditions which 'Amr agrees to. A shorter, alternative account places these events at Alexandria, but relays the negotiations similarly, down to the three conditions which al-Muqawqis requests.⁵⁰ The remainder of the conquest-history narrates a drive to Alexandria, with the Romans now exclusively the enemies, and with Copts present amongst the Muslim forces, aiding the Muslims by working on roads and bridges, and supplying the invaders with food and fodder. Thus, "the Copts became helpers to them in whatever they desired in fighting the Romans", fulfilling the prophetic *ḥadīth* at the beginning of the book that the Muslims would "find them excellent helpers in fighting your enemies" as part of the reasoning behind treating the Copts well.⁵¹

1.4 The Copts and the Arab Conquests

This kind of narration has historically been read to suggest that the anti-Chalcedonians of the Roman Empire welcomed the invaders with open arms, throwing off the oppression of their Chalcedonian Roman (often anachronistically glossed as Melkite) persecutors. Thus we learn in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* that "the Copts wanted a change of masters at any cost."⁵² However, we have already noted that it is not obvious that 'Copt' signifies anti-Chalcedonian in this text. Furthermore, as A.H.M.

⁴⁹ *FM.*, 72

⁵⁰ *FM.*, 72.

⁵¹ *FM.*, 3; 73-4.

⁵² Atiya, Azis S. "Ḳibṭ". In *EI*².

Jones pointed out in 1959, the earliest narrative we have of the conquest, by the anti-Chalcedonian John of Nikiou who was writing at the end of the seventh century, presents a confused and uncertain response to the invaders on behalf of the Egyptians, rather than a general welcome, and is certainly not a history of a Coptic/anti-Chalcedonian regionalist movement throwing off their Roman oppressor.⁵³ While the ‘heresy’ of the emperor provides John’s providential causation for the success of the Muslims, it does not lead the anti-Chalcedonians to aid the invader. Rather, those who join the Muslim army are identified as “the Egyptians who had apostatized from the Christian faith and embraced the faith of the beast.”⁵⁴ If there had been a particular association in John’s time between collaboration and ‘Copts’ – understood either ethnically as ‘native’ Egyptians or religiously as anti-Chalcedonians – it would be strange for him to condemn it so harshly.

Despite its problematic transmission and defective current translation, an inspection of John’s *Chronicle* is useful in determining the aims of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s narration.⁵⁵ John recounts a campaign which involves various expeditions to named cities, with different groups of Muslim forces attacking targets successfully and unsuccessfully, and strategic difficulties for the Muslims in linking up these various forces. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s account, in contrast, depicts a unitary Muslim force, with occasional reference to groups of outriders, advancing through a few, often unnamed villages until it reaches Babylon, gains victory, and then continues to Alexandria in the same manner, which then falls. John’s account, difficult as it may be to piece together, clearly attempts to realistically describe the confused and contingent expediencies of a campaign on several fronts, the key features of which were remembered. Providential causation underpins but does not obliterate details of the conquest.

⁵³ Jones, A.H.M. “Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?” *Journal of Theological Studies* X (1959), 289.

⁵⁴ John of Nikiou. *Chronicle*. Ed. R.H. Charles as: *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiou. Translated from Zotenberg’s Ethiopic Text*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1916, cxiv.1, 182.

⁵⁵ Phil Booth is engaged in re-fitting the *Chronicle* for scholarly use, see his “Shades of Blue and Green in the Chronicle of John of Nikiou”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 104 (2011), 555-601. Also, idem. “The Muslim Conquest of Egypt Reconsidered,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 17 (2013), 639-70. A new translation of the *Chronicle* is being prepared by Marcin Krawczuk of the University of Warsaw, to appear in the CSCO series *Aethiopia*.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s account does not appear to be able to recover these ‘realistic’ details, or is uninterested in doing so. The treatment is far more polemical, with more focus on the conquest as an opportunity to characterise particular individuals or communities through their conduct in the campaign. The contrasting treatment of infrastructural work done by Egyptians in aid of the Muslims should illustrate this. John tells us:

‘Amr sent Abākīrī of the city of Dalās requesting him to bring the ships of Rīf in order to transport to the east bank of the river the Ishmaelites who were upon the west . . . And he sent orders to the prefect George to construct for him a bridge on the river of the city Qaljūb with a view to the capture of all the cities of Misr . . . And he had moreover a great bridge constructed over the river near Babylon in Egypt to prevent the passage of ships to Nakius, Alexandria, and Upper Egypt, and to make it possible for horses to cross from the western to the eastern bank of the river.⁵⁶

‘Amr requisitions particular cities or officials to undertake these works, and an explanation of their strategic significance is included. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam simply reports, “they [the leaders of the Copts] repaired the roads and [possibly: re-]erected the bridges and markets for them [the Muslims]”.⁵⁷ In Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s time Muslim tradition had obviously retained memories of Egyptian infrastructural co-operation (or perhaps, co-optation), but remembering its particular strategic context was no longer useful and therefore these had been discarded. Its significance now lay in its demonstration of the pro-Muslim conduct of the ‘Copts’ as opposed to the Romans. Ultimately, the presentation of Copts versus Romans in the conquest must be regarded as schematic, rather than descriptive: the Copts are those who submit to the Muslims by treaty and subsequently aid them, whereas the Romans are those who fight and have to be conquered by force (*‘anwatan*).

This is most plainly shown by the general refusal of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam to use the term Copt to describe any population subjugated by force. We have noted that after the surrender at Babylon, those who enter *dhimmī* status are repeatedly described as Copts.⁵⁸ After Alexandria

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, cviii.1-3, 181-2.

⁵⁷ *FM.*, 73.

⁵⁸ *FM.*, 70.

is taken by force, however, in the recounting of the captured population those who are not classed as Romans or Jews are numbered but given no signifier beyond ‘captives’ (*asārā*).⁵⁹ During the conquest the people of three ‘villages’ are said to have fought in a troop in support of the Romans against the Muslims and been conquered by force. When ‘Umar makes a decision that they should not be considered as booty but left to pay the *kharāj*, despite the fact that they are clearly non-Roman they are classified as distinct from the ‘Copts’: “their *kharāj* and that which the Copts settled for are a force for the Muslims against their enemies” (*yakūnu kharājuhūm wa mā ṣālahā ‘alayhi -l-qibṭu quwwatan lil-muslimīna*).⁶⁰ At this point we might also return to the passage quoted above, in which al-Muqawqis asks for a separate peace for the Copts. In this, having declared himself ‘quit’ (*barī*) of the Romans, his first condition is that ‘Amr maintain the peace with the Copts and “incorporate me with them and obligate me with what is required of them” (*adkhlīnī mā‘ahum wa alzimnī mā lazimahum*).⁶¹ Peace with the Muslims is synonymous with ‘incorporation’ with the ‘Copts’ and disassociation from the Romans. Later on the same page (though not, it must be said, in the same *khābar*) al-Muqawqis is described as ‘the Roman’ (*al-rūmī*). It almost appears as if al-Muqawqis’ request models the process in the text whereby a Muslim authority defines the identity, presented in ethnic terms, of conquest-era Egyptians by their political response to the invading Muslims. Identification with the ‘Copts’ becomes a means by which perhaps even ‘Romans’, such as those choosing to stay and accept the terms imposed on the Copts as allowed in the described peace treaty, could attain non-Roman, and thus non-hostile status. This is how the question of who is a Copt and who a Roman is answered by the conquest narrative, thus developing the association of the Copts with *dhimma* in the opening *ḥadīth* to become an intrinsic basis for an ‘ethnic’ community.⁶²

It should be noted that an exception to the usages described above is the short section entitled “Those Who Said Egypt Was Conquered by Force”, in which several *ḥadīths* are recounted which imply that there was

⁵⁹ *FM.*, 82.

⁶⁰ *FM.*, 83; 88. The villages are Balhīb, al-Khays, and Sulṭays.

⁶¹ *FM.*, 72.

⁶² I do not suggest that this is a realistic description of how ethnic identities developed in the conquest period, merely that this is the internal logic of the representation of non-Muslim Egyptian ethnicity in *FM.*

no treaty with the Copts, and they therefore did not have *dhimma*.⁶³ However, given that Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam includes a longer section devoted to “Those Who Said Egypt Was Conquered by Treaty,” and his historical/chronologically-ordered narrative never reports a scenario in which the Copts are conquered by force, it would seem that his presentation is weighted to support the view that Egypt was conquered by treaty except for Alexandria and the three villages.⁶⁴ In fact, the restriction of these comments to a separate section with no parallel elsewhere in the text suggests that the views presented in it are considered anomalous, particularly in light of the prefatory three pages of *ḥadīths* asserting the Copts’ *dhimma* which was the starting-point of this study.

While we have seen that, practically, Coptic identity in the conquest narrative is indistinguishable from political accommodation with the Muslims, acceptance of *dhimma* status and payment of the *jizya*, the text does not explicitly define the Coptic community as originating from that political moment. To understand how the text presents the origins of the Copts we must investigate the second arm of the opening *ḥadīth*, the Copts’ *rahīm*, or kinship.

1.5 The elaboration of Coptic identity

As with most early Islamic conceptions of ethnicity, the Copts are said to have descended from a common ancestor. Often eponymous with the community they are supposed to have spawned, the status and relations of these ancestors were both “Islam’s traditional way of sketching interdependence between the different ethnicities of the faith along the lines of family relations,” and also a means of making arguments of superiority or inferiority about different races.⁶⁵ Thus, Persian claims of descent from Isaac gave them an Abrahamic descent with a link to the Arabs’ supposed common ancestor Ishmael, but also led to *shu‘ūbī* Persian assertions of superiority for being descended from the wife rather than the concubine. In similar vein, pro-Arab authors claimed that Ishmael not Isaac was the son selected for the sacrifice, thereby making the Arabs de-

⁶³ *FM.*, 88-90.

⁶⁴ *FM.*, 84-8.

⁶⁵ Bashear, Sulayman. *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997, 67-8.

scended from the more significant brother.⁶⁶ We have already seen how the Copts' *raḥim* fits into this particular episode, with Hagar presented as a Copt and mother of the Arabs, and how this episode is explored by the text and paralleled by Muḥammad's marriage to Māriya the Copt. This is obviously a means of giving the Copts a privileged relationship with the Arabs, a theme taken up in the second non-narrative, introductory section of the book, "Some of the Merits of Egypt", which is largely concerned with the virtues of the Copts:

The Copts of Egypt are the noblest of all the foreigners, the most generous of them by hand, the best of them in terms of race, and the closest of them in terms of kinship to the Arabs in general and to the Quraysh in particular.⁶⁷

This, however, is not the only exploration of the Copts' *raḥim* in the pre-Islamic section. To discover the original genealogical divergence between the Copts, Romans and Arabs, we must delve deeper into biblical-era history, to the sons of Noah. This is recounted in the first narrative chapter of the book, entitled "The Copts' Arrival in Egypt and Residence Therein".⁶⁸ This section establishes that the father of all the Copts is Bayṣar son of Ḥām, thus making the Copts, along with the Sudanese, Ethiopians, Sindīs, Indians and Berbers, of the line of Ḥām, son of Noah. The different fates of the lineages of the sons of Noah are explained in this account not as a result of Noah's drunkenness, but the sons' differing responses when Noah, having asked God to bless his progeny, calls his sons to receive their blessing. First he calls Sām, who comes with one of his sons, I-r-f-kh-sh-dh (=Arpachshad). They are given "the best blessing", and kingship and prophethood are invested in I-r-f-kh-sh-dh's progeny by God (*an yaǰ'ala -l-mulka wa-l-nubūwata fī wuldi i-r-f-kh-sh-dh* (=Arpachshad)). We are told that Sām's descendents are the Arabs, Persians, and Romans. When Ḥām is called, however, neither he nor his progeny respond, leading Noah to invoke God to curse them that Ḥām's progeny be made submissive, and slaves of the progeny of Sām (*an yaǰ'ala adhillā'an wa-an yaǰ'alahum 'ubaydan li-wuldi sāma*) (=Arpachshad's). Again, the logic of the historical events reported in *FM* links the Copts'

⁶⁶ Shboul, Ahmad. *Al-Mastūdī & His World. A Muslim Humanist and His Interest in Non-Muslims*. London: Ithaca Press, 108-9.

⁶⁷ *FM.*, 5.

⁶⁸ *FM.*, 7-10.

inferior status to failure to obey the call to participate in God's blessing. The Copts, however, just as in the narrative of the Arab conquest, manage to gain some reprieve despite their error. Miṣr (i.e. 'Egypt'), grandson of Ḥām, does hear the call and goes to Noah, asking him to make a request for him in his prayer, and Noah invokes God to:

Bless him [Miṣr] and his descendants, and settle him in the blessed land that is the mother of lands and the succour of humanity, whose river is the best of the world's rivers. Create in it the best blessings, make the land serviceable for him and his progeny, subdue it for them, and consolidate them in it.⁶⁹

Thus Miṣr brings his father and his brothers to Egypt, settles it, and divides the land amongst his four sons, one of whom is Qibt (i.e. Copt), who along with their progeny succeed Miṣr as possessors of Egypt. Through the actions of Miṣr, the curse of Ḥām is ameliorated and Miṣr's descendants, the Copts, are blessed with possession of Egypt. Kingship and prophethood, however, remain in the genealogy of Sām, whose descendants, we are told, are the Arabs, the Persians and the Romans.

This is borne out in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's section on Roman rule in Egypt, where the people of Egypt are said to have made peace with the Romans on the condition that they pay tribute, in return for which the Romans grant them *dhimma*.⁷⁰ Thus in *FM* Roman rule is presented in the same terms as Arab-Muslim rule, and the Muslim conquests are woven into another universal scheme, that of the rule of the Copts by the children of Sām, the races with inherent power-majority status: Arabs, Persians, and Romans. This genealogical/historical scheme further benefits Arab-Muslim justification of their majority status over the Copts by asserting the absolute distinction between Copts and Romans, and presenting the Romans as alien incomers who ruled over the Copts in the same way the Arab-Muslims do. In this version of history there can be no Egyptian nostalgia for the Roman Empire. Between Late Antiquity and early Islam there is only the continuity of Copts ruled, as a result of divine providence, by foreign races.

Effectively, this biblico-mythological section prepares the ground for later sections of the book by establishing the essential paradigms by

⁶⁹ *FM.*, 8

⁷⁰ *FM.*, 33-5.

which Coptic identity will be defined in the conquest narrative. The Copts, as part of the genealogy of Ḥām, are excluded from the full favour of God through an act of disobedience on the part of their progenitor in the face of revelation. Bayṣar fails to respond to a prophet's call to receive the blessing of God in the same way that al-Muqawqis will later tell us the Copts will not accept Muḥammad as the last prophet on his authority. However, despite this failure, the actions of Miṣr salvage a place for the Copts in God's benediction, much as the Copts' acceptance of Muslim rule after the siege of Babylon gains them a protected, *dhimmī* status in Islamic Egypt, despite their earlier resistance. Further, the divine decree allotting the land of Egypt to Miṣr's descendents gives broader justification to the notion that the Copts have the right of security in their property, as asserted by those *ḥadīths* and *akhbār* which say that they have *dhimma*. Yet ultimately all these features of *dhimma* and *raḥim* which give the Copts a secure position in Egypt fuse Coptic identity with subservient, minority status. The conquest-narrative totally aligns Coptic identity with acceptance of Muslim rule and *dhimmī* status, while the genealogical origins of the Copts are with the progeny of Ḥām, who are made submissive (*adhillā'*) by divine decree. While their possession of Egypt is protected, the sin of disobedience justifies the rule over them by other peoples who responded to the call of revelation. Thus the status of the Copts as presented by the events of the conquest is integrated into a divinely-ordained, universal scheme, whereby the Muslim conquests reaffirm and in turn have their righteousness confirmed by, Biblical-era prophetic history.

1.6 Conclusion

This study has attempted to explore the way that a ninth-century Egyptian Muslim thought about the history and origins of non-Muslim Egyptians, and to show that the stories about the 'Copts' which Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam preserved in *FM* are not a mere inchoate collection of historical anecdotes. Rather, this author used different types of material (prophetic *ḥadīth*, biblical-era mythology, accounts of the Muslim conquest) to present a set of coherent ideas about the characteristics of the non-Muslim population of Egypt which justify their inferior status in Islamic Egypt. Further, the work seems structured – with Muḥammad's *ḥadīth* about the Copts prefacing the text, and the debate with al-

Muqawqis prefacing the conquest-narrative – to draw attention to these arguments about the status of the Copts within Egypt. Given the inadmissibility of editorial commentary within the rhetoric of early Islamic history-writing, we must pay close attention to such structuring elements in early Arabic historical texts if we are to understand their arguments, develop our awareness of the uses of the past in the early Islamic period, and thereby understand more about the criteria which determined the survival of historical information about earlier periods.

In practical terms, we have seen that the contrasting responses of *al-qibṭ* and *al-rūm* to the Muslim invasion in *FM* do not accord with more contemporary accounts of the conquest. Nor is there any indication that Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam sees the Coptic-Roman distinction in religious terms. Rather, *al-qibṭ* is used as an ethnic term to define an indigenous Egyptian population contrasted to *al-rūm*, who are constructed as an essentially military and alien force of occupation. This would seem to be a strategy designed to create a non-hostile place for the non-Muslim population of Egypt in the foundation-moment of Islamic Egypt, which would serve as a useable past for both Muslim converts of Egyptian-Christian origin and a Muslim regime which long continued to rely on the administrative expertise and co-operation of Christian elites. This idea of the ‘indigenous’ Egyptians welcoming the Muslim invasion may well have become a useful conceit for the anti-Chalcedonian church to capitalise on in its self-definition as a nativist church, particularly in its relations with Muslim authorities. However, I would suggest that to read *FM* to argue for anti-Chalcedonian rejection of Roman rule would be to buy into a schematic conquest narrative which originally had little to do with ‘Copts’ and ‘Melkites’ as we now understand them.

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2

Greek as a Minority Language in Early Islamic Egypt*

Janneke de Jong

(Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), Universiteit Leiden)

Alain Delattre

(Université libre de Bruxelles)

The preservation of documents written in a variety of different languages leaves no doubt that early Islamic Egypt was a multilingual society. Nevertheless, to establish what this “multilingualism” exactly means is a more difficult enterprise¹. Since we only have the documentary (written) record, we can only speculate about the linguistic situation in general. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the position of the written Greek language within the documentary Greek-Coptic-Arabic linguistic landscape in eighth century Egypt, based on a quantification and qualification of the evidence, and to look for the problems and possibilities that will show up.

2.1 The Linguistic Landscape in Egypt before Islam

With the invasion by Alexander the Great, speakers of Greek came to live in Egypt². Greek became the administrative language in Egypt, which it

* This contribution is a revised version of a paper given at the second roundtable on “Late Antiquity and Early Islam: Continuity and Change in the Mediterranean 6th-10th Century AD,” and is carried out within the ERC-funded research project *The Formation of Islam. The View From Below*. We would like to thank Klaas A. Worp, Federico Morelli and Jennifer Cromwell for their critical readings, comments and suggestions.

¹ On the problems relating to the study of bilingualism in antiquity, see for instance the introduction by James N. Adams and S. Swain in: Adams, James N., Mark Janse and Simon Swain, eds., *Bilingualism in Ancient Society. Language Contact and Written Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-20.

² Of course, in the period before the Macedonian-Greek invasion, there had been some speakers of Greek in Egypt, for example merchants. There even was a Greek *polis*, Naukratis, founded in the 7th century BC.

would remain for a thousand years or so: this situation was maintained under Roman and Byzantine rule, while the majority of native Egyptians, especially those living in the countryside, continued to speak Egyptian. Some of them learned Greek, which became the language of the educated elite³. In Ptolemaic and Roman times, only a small group, which scholars usually identify with the priestly class, was able to write Egyptian (in a script called demotic, that is attested in the period between the seventh century B.C. and the fifth century A.D.). As a result, documents were mainly written in Greek. As a spoken language, however, Egyptian continued to be used and it reappeared in a new written form, Coptic⁴. Initially, its use was restricted to religious texts, whereas Greek remained the usual language of administration. Therefore Greek documents constituted a numerical majority⁵. Hence, it is justified to characterise Greek as the dominant language in administration during Greek and Roman rule. How did the coming of the Arabs affect this situation?

³ For this linguistic situation in the Ptolemaic period, see Thompson, Dorothy J. "The Multilingual Environment of Persian and Ptolemaic Egypt: Egyptian, Aramaic, and Greek Documentation," in Roger S. Bagnall, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 395-417. On Demotic-Greek bilingualism in Roman Egypt, see Fewster, Penelope. "Bilingualism in Roman Egypt," in James N. Adams, Mark Janse and Simon Swain, eds., *Bilingualism in Ancient Society. Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 220-45. For the situation in late antiquity, on demotic see Depauw, Mark. *A Companion to Demotic Studies*. Papyrologica Bruxellensia 28 (Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1997); on Coptic see Fournet, Jean-Luc. "The Multilingual Environment of Late Antique Egypt. Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Persian Documentation," in Roger S. Bagnall, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 418-51, and Bagnall, Roger S. *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 75-94.

⁴ Fournet, "The Multilingual Environment," 430-45. The relationship between Demotic and Coptic is still much debated. Papaconstantinou, Arietta. "'What Remains Behind.' Hellenism and Romanitas in Christian Egypt after the Arab Conquest," in Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland et al., eds., *From Hellenism to Islam. Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 447-63, argues that in the sixth century, regional languages were increasingly becoming used at the cost of Greek.

⁵ However, see the remarks by Bagnall, *Everyday Writing*, 75-76.

2.2 Islam and the Decrease of Greek Documents in Egypt

It is generally agreed that immediately after the Arab conquest there was a considerable degree of continuity in administration and presumably also in people's daily lives⁶. The most radical change at this time was that the top layer of administration was now occupied by Arabs. However, whether a dramatic reorganization of Egypt's administration was planned by the Arab invaders, or was perceived by the inhabitants of Egypt, is doubtful. The documentary evidence we have from the first decades of Arab rule in Egypt does not validate such an assumption⁷. It rather seems that only in time did the Arab presence become Arab rule in terms of state organization⁸. One of the most obvious examples of continuity is the use of Greek as the language of administration. Whereas earlier accounts suggested the decay of Greek culture with the advent of the Arabs, recent contributions have emphasized that Hellenism was not just wiped out⁹. Indeed, Greek documents continue to have been written until well into the eighth century at least. Nevertheless, the number of Greek documents decreases after the conquest, while the number of documents written in Coptic and Arabic increases. This raises the question of how the use of Greek developed and should be understood. Even if Greek was in use throughout the eighth century, it appears that we do not have unambiguous evidence for its use in Egypt after that¹⁰. Is it

⁶ Grohmann, Adolf. "Der Beamtenstab der arabischen Finanzverwaltung in Ägypten in früh-arabischer Zeit," in Horst Braunert, ed., *Studien zur Papyrologie und antiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Friedrich Oertel zum achtzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1964), 120-34.

⁷ See Morelli, Federico. "Amr e Martina. La reggenza di un'imperatrice o l'amministrazione araba d'Egitto," *ZPE*. 173 (2010), 136-57, arguing on the basis of *P.Paramone* 18 that from Byzantine point of view, the Arab general 'Amr was installed as *dioiketes* in Egypt.

⁸ Cf. Donner, Fred. "The Formation of the Islamic State," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106.2 (1986), 283-96, arguing that an Islamic state was absent in the first decades after the Arab conquest.

⁹ Morelli, Federico. *CPR XXII* introduction and *CPR XXX* introduction. Cf. also Papaconstantinou, "What Remains Behind."

¹⁰ *CPR XXII* 21 (796/797) is the latest securely dated document in Greek so far. Morelli notes: "...il 21 sarà da considerare l'ultimo documento sicuramente datato, non certo l'ultimo documento in assoluto." There are some documents of later date that use or may be written in Greek. However, as the date and language cannot be established with certainty, or the written Greek seems to be fossilized, we do not consider these as evidence for the use of Greek outside these functional contexts. One document is

possible, therefore, to gain further insight into its disappearance? In an attempt to do so, let us first consider the question of how many documents were written in Greek and what information may be derived from them.

2.3 Greek Documents from the Eighth Century

In 1998, Wolfgang Habermann published an article in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (ZPE)* in which he visualized the chronological division of Greek papyri from Egypt¹¹. The graphs presented there show a decreasing line for the number of Greek documents in the seventh and eighth centuries. Since Habermann focused on the whole era of Greek papyrology, he did not consider in any depth the situation of early Islamic Egypt, nor did he discuss the contents of the documents. His remark that, "...[eine] durch die arabische Eroberung 641 n.Chr. begünstigter Rückgang der griechischsprachigen Dokumentation bis zum Ende unseres Betrachtungsraumes in 8. Jahrhundert folgt" certainly holds, but the question is how this should be understood and how Greek related to Coptic and Arabic¹². In what follows, this decline of Greek papyri will be considered more closely, focusing on the eighth century. This will be done by presenting a quantification of a selection of the material, which will be linked to a discussion of the problems and possibilities of such an approach. Attention will also be paid to a qualification of the documents, that is, focusing on their nature and contents.

Thanks to electronic databases such as the *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis (HGV)* and the *Papyrological Navigator (PN)* all kinds of queries can be carried out easily and quickly¹³. They facilitate, for in-

P.Oxy. LXXV 5071, dated to the ninth century. However, as the editor remarks, the text may be written in Coptic or in Greek, and it may be a religious text, but it could also be a school text. Furthermore, five Coptic documents, dated to the ninth century, have a fossilized Greek invocation and dating formula: see MacCoull, Leslie S.B. "The Bawit Contracts. Texts and Translations," *BASP* 31 (1994), 141-58. Two other documents from the Hermopolites, *P.Stras.* 397 (835) and *P.Sipp.* 52 (840-841), exemplify this use of Greek. In these documents, however, the Coptic parts are lost.

¹¹ Habermann, Wolfgang. "Zur chronologischen Verteilung der papyrologischen Zeugnisse," *ZPE* 122 (1998), 144-60. Table 9 on p. 155 shows the chronological division of Greek papyri from the 3rd c. BC- 8th c. AD.

¹² *Ibid.*, 150. Fournet, "The Multilingual Environment," 435-41 points out that Coptic took over some of the official uses of Greek already in the seventh century.

¹³ For the *HGV*, see <http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~gv0/> (25.10.2012). For the *PN*, see <http://www.papyri.info/> (25.10.2012).

stance, quantitative searches. This would suggest that the decrease of Greek documents in the eighth century can easily be quantified. Unfortunately, this is not a matter of just filling out the relevant fields and getting the results due to problems in the dating of documents, a bias (resulting from quantitative searches) towards presenting multilingual documents as Greek, and biases caused by preservation circumstances. Nevertheless, if these points are heeded, it constitutes a good point of departure.

2.4 Dating the Documents

Most of the documents cannot be dated precisely. Many documents are assigned a broad date range on palaeographical grounds. Attributed to the seventh, seventh-eighth, or even sixth-eighth centuries, they can either date to the period before or after the Arab invasion. Occasionally more precision is obtained on the basis of contents¹⁴. Relatively few texts can be dated more or less exactly: the number of texts that are in the *HGV* dated to a specific year in the eighth century amounts to some 345¹⁵. This sample shall be the subject of analysis in the second part of this paper.

2.5 The Difficulty in Distinguishing between Greek and Coptic

Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between Greek and Coptic documents. Coptic texts that contain Greek are not included in the Greek

¹⁴ For instance, if explicit reference is made to Arabs or Arabic institutions or practices (officials, taxes, buildings, names of months etc.), names, words (e.g. γαῖδάριον, cf. *CPR* XXX, 20, commentary to line 5), Coptic or Arabic script, or through the context of the find (e.g. they are part of an archive).

¹⁵ Sometimes problems also arise when looking for specific years. For example, of the 68 entries resulting from a query for the year 643, 15 are dated 643-725. These texts are part of the Paternmouthios archive that is dated by the editors between 643 and 725. Their ascription by the *HGV* to the year 643 is understandable from a database-constructing point of view, but distorts historical reality. For the Paternmouthios archive, see Hickey, Todd M. and Klaas A. Worp. "The Dossier of Paternmouthios," *BASP* 34 (1997), 79-109. Another problem is caused by double entries, for instance *SPPVIII* 1199 and 1200 are dated to the year 744 or 759 and have a double entry in the *HGV*. In these cases of double entries, we have chosen to count the text only once and to take the later date.

heuristic tools¹⁶ or, conversely, the suggestion is raised that Coptic documents that contain Greek elements are Greek documents: the quantitative data resulting from a database search suggest that the documents are Greek, whereas when looking at the contents they appear to be not so Greek at all. Some examples, such as the Theban legal documents and the Wadi Sarga ostraca discussed in the Appendix, demonstrate that the number of Greek-Coptic documents is strongly underestimated:¹⁷ first, because bilingual texts are sometimes considered as purely Greek; second, because there are also many bilingual documents published as purely Coptic, and hence never mentioned in Greek literature (whereas some of them are Greek documents, with a short Coptic subscription); and third, even if the text is correctly published, the *HGV* does not include all Coptic documents with a Greek date or Greek accounts¹⁸. This inconveniency, however, is going to be settled by the integration of Coptic documents in the *PN*, which has been started.

With these caveats in mind, let us now return to the sample of some 345 dated documents and examine how Greek these are.

A Survey of the Dated Documents: Chronological and Geographical Biases and Multilingualism¹⁹.

Figure 2.1 shows the number of Greek papyri between 600 and 800 in twenty year intervals²⁰. Two points stand out. First, the downward trend

¹⁶ Cf. the discussion “Language of the Coptic Texts” in Cromwell, Jennifer. “The Coptic Texts in the Archive of Flavius Arias,” *ZPE* 184 (2013), 280-288. Cromwell demonstrates that *CPR* IV 3, *CPR* IV 4 and *CPR* IV 6, texts that were edited as entirely Coptic, should rather be considered (and edited) as bilingual Coptic-Greek texts on lexical and paleographical grounds.

¹⁷ The same goes for some of the bilingual Greek-Arabic (protocols) published in *CPR* III: only re-editions of these are found in the *HGV*. Also *CPR* XXI 1 is not (yet) found in the *HGV*, probably because this Greek document was edited among otherwise Arabic texts.

¹⁸ As a result of the fact that the *SB* sometimes includes them, but at other times not.

¹⁹ For this paper only the dated documents have been considered, which represent only a small part of the total corpus. This results in a bias in the types of documents, as not all documents will have been dated, such as letters, of which (at present) only a few are dated to the eighth century. More undated Greek documents may in fact perhaps be dated to the eighth century. Cf. Morelli, Federico. *CPR* XXII, introduction, 12-13. The number of texts dated globally (seventh to eighth or eighth centuries) amounts to some thousands. We have left these out of consideration for this paper on the assumption that they do not distort radically the results from our survey (statistically). In future studies, we intend to explore the topic further and to take the whole corpus into account.

²⁰ Due to the difficulties in exact dating, we have chosen to use twenty-year intervals. However, the general curve remains the same if the number of papyri per year is given.

is interrupted by several peaks. These can be explained by coincidental collective finds, such as the archives of Senouthios and from Aphrodito²¹. Related to this is the geographical bias of the finds: the documents are from a restricted number of places, mostly in Middle Egypt or the south. Second, the majority (261 texts, approximately 76%) of the dated Greek papyri are from the first quarter of the eighth century. Thus, only 84 texts (24%) are dated to one of the years between 726 and 800. In fact, only 44 documents (about 13%) are dated in the years 750 to 800, and 10 documents (3%) to the last quarter of the eighth century.

Another point to be observed is the use of languages in the documents. First, although in the early eighth century the Arab government decreed that official documents needed to be written in Arabic, Greek continued to be used for another century or so²². Second, apart from Greek, in quite a few cases another language appears, be it Coptic or Arabic or both (Figure 2.2). How should these documents be considered? When is a text “Greek”, “Coptic” or “Arabic” or should we rather speak of, for instance, Graeco-Arabic, Graeco-Coptic or Copto-Arabic? These questions are relevant, as they touch not only upon the relation between different languages in documentary practices, but may also be revealing for the linguistic landscape in early Islamic Egypt. However, these big questions cannot be answered within the scope of this paper. The following discussion, therefore, will be severely restricted and focus mainly on the latest monolingual Greek texts²³.

²¹ For the Senouthios archive, see Morelli, Federico. *CPR XXX*. Most of the Greek papyri from Aphrodito have been published in *P.Lond.* IV. Others were published in *P.Ross. Georg.* IV and *CPR XXII*. Most of the Arabic papyri from Aphrodito were published by C.H. Becker. See Cadell, Hélène. “Nouveaux Fragments de la correspondance de Kurrah ben Sharik,” *Recherches de Papyrologie* 4 (1967), 107-60; Richter, Tonio S. “Language Choice in the Qurra Dossier,” in Arietta Papaconstantinou, ed., *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the Abbāsids* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 189-220.

²² Literary accounts state that the use of Arabic in official documents was imposed in Egypt by the governor ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik in 706. However, this can hardly have been a measure aimed at a total switch of languages in all documents written in Egypt, as is demonstrated by the continued use of Coptic and Greek in the eighth century. Indeed, as not all Greek correspondence would have been relevant for the Arab government, it is not surprising that it would continue to be used in other contexts. Cf. Sijpesteijn, Petra M. “Arabic Papyri and Islamic Egypt,” in Roger S. Bagnall, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 459. On the Arabic assent to continue the use of Greek for administrative purposes as pragmatic, cf. Morelli, Federico. *CPR XXX*, introduction, 42-43.

²³ In this paper, by “multilingual texts” we mean documents in which more than one language appears. This definition is rather strict, but will do for our present purpose.

2.6 Further Specification of Documents

Within the sample of Greek documents two large groups stand out: the Aphrodito papyri and the Theban legal documents (Figure 2.3). The group of Theban legal documents should be considered as Coptic, as is argued in the appendices. At least, the Greek in these documents had a very restricted and specific function.

The Aphrodito papyri (the number of editions of “Greek” documents from this archive presently amounts to more than 200 documents) not only preserve Greek, but also Coptic and Arabic texts. These documents are famous for the light they shed on the workings of the administration of a pagarchy in the first quarter of the eighth century. According to Tonio Sebastian Richter, the languages attested in the dossier represent the different political-social groups. This does not, however, imply a neatly separated use of languages by the different groups. On the contrary, in quite a few documents the use of more than one language is attested. In his analysis of the dossier, Richter argued that the various languages served different functions, Greek being the *lingua franca* and taking, as it were, a mediatory position between Arabic and Coptic²⁴.

The question is whether this model also works for the later part of the century and for other areas. As comparable dossiers are lacking for later times and other places, it will be impossible to obtain definite answers. However, there are some other groups of papyri, of which some documents feature in the sample. Two of these groups will suffice as further examples for the importance of studying the wider context of a document (if this can be known).

In the dataset found by the *HGV* are featured five documents from Balaizah. Again, this result needs to be considered with caution. Viewing these documents as isolated finds in a dataset does not reveal the Egyptian context that becomes apparent when the rest of the documents are included. On closer inspection, the texts are part of a considerable find

However, better understanding of the use of multiple languages can only be achieved if the relations between the various languages used are also taken into account and are explored more systematically.

²⁴ Richter, “Language Choice,” 189-220. However, cf. Morelli, *CPR XXX*, introduction, 42-43, for a more pragmatic explanation for the administrative use of Greek. For what the Aphrodito papyri can tell us about the early Islamic justice system see the chapter of Matthieu Tillier in this volume.

from a monastery, which vary in genre and languages²⁵. The majority of documents are written in Coptic, but the collection also contains documents in Greek and Arabic. As Nikolaos Gonis has pointed out, these cases are informative on the linguistic situation: private correspondence was in Coptic, whereas the administrative documents used Greek²⁶. Noticeable too is the use of Greek dating formulas in some Coptic documents that have been classified as “legal documents”²⁷. This use may be compared to that in the Theban legal documents. Again, the Balaizah documents illustrate the separate domains in which the Coptic and Greek languages were used.

Another example is the dossier of the Arab pagarch Iaeie son of Hilal. Documents relating to him in Greek, Coptic and Arabic were first collected by K. A. Worp²⁸. The use of Greek is remarkable, as was adequately expressed by Gonis: “More than a century after the end of Byzantine rule, and half a century after the governor ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-Malik imposed the use of Arabic in the *diwans* of the capital Fustāṭ (in 87/706), it was Greek, not Arabic, nor Coptic, that was routinely used in the communications sent by the office of the pagarch to the rural population of Middle Egypt.”²⁹ This use of Greek is striking indeed, especially as the context of this little dossier seems to be not so Greek: apart from the tax demands (*entagia*), the documents mentioning Iaeie son of Hilal were associated with scribal exercises, perhaps indicating that the scribe had to practise the writing of Greek³⁰. In three documents, Coptic is also

²⁵ Kahle, Paul E. *Bala'izah. Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954, contains 412 editions (out of a find of some 3000). These documents date between ca. 675 and 775.

²⁶ Gonis, Nikolaos. “Arabs, Monks, and Taxes. Notes on Documents from Deir el-Bala'izah,” *ZPE* 148 (2004), 213-24. The documents relevant for our purpose, *P.Bal.* II 130; 180; 181; 182; 287, are discussed on 213-18.

²⁷ See e.g. *P.Bal.* II 100 (late 7th-8th century), an appointment of a superior. The docket on the *verso* is in Greek; *P.Bal.* II 103, a repayment of a debt, has a date in Greek in l.13 and in the subscription in l.19; *P.Bal.* II 142, a tax receipt with date and amount in Greek in ll.2-3.

²⁸ Worp, K.A. “Studien zu spätgriechischen, koptischen und arabischen Papyri,” *BSAC* 26 (1984), 99-108.

²⁹ Gonis, Nikolaos. “Another Look at Some Officials in Early ‘Abbāsid Egypt,” *ZPE* 149 (2004), 189-95, quote from 192.

³⁰ They were interpreted as scribal exercises themselves: *SPP* VIII 1333; *SB* XVIII 13247; 13248 (perhaps); *P.Rain.Unterricht* 106; 106a; *CPR* XXII 18; or contain a scribal exercise elsewhere on the document: *SPP* X 172. Cf. Gonis, “Another Look,” 189-95. Morelli, *CPR* XXII 18.

encountered.³¹ In these cases it seems arguable that the scribe was perhaps more familiar in writing Coptic than Greek, but that the context in which he would write Greek was clear. In fact, the Greek and Coptic documents only refer to Iaeie in a pragmatic and businesslike manner, mentioning him as the pagarch of the Arsinoites. Only two documents have a more personal connection to Iaeie and these were written in Arabic³². This suggests that Iaeie's personal sphere was Arabic, and that this world was separate from the administrative sphere, for which his name and office were mechanically used by scribes.

Before we turn to a discussion of the latest dated monolingual Greek documents, some other observations can be made about the sample in general. If the Aphrodito and Theban legal documents are left out, only some 80 texts remain. We encounter familiar types of documents, such as tax receipts and demands, administrative and fiscal registers, and scribal exercises. These types of documents are encountered throughout the whole of the eighth century. It will not come as a surprise that the majority of the documents (about two thirds) are dated to the years 700 to 740. It is also noticeable that there are only a few other Greek documents that represent a more lively private use of Greek, such as contracts, and that they all date to the early eighth century³³. In about two thirds of the cases Greek is not the only language used on the papyrus: in these

³¹ *P.Rain. Unterricht* 106; 106a; *SPP* X 172.

³² *PERF* 608 (a letter by Iaeie); *CPR* XXI 1 (a private lease for crops, related to a client of Iaeie, but 36 years after his term of office).

³³ *CPR* VIII 82 (699 or 700, fragment of a *paramone* contract); *CPR* XIX 17 (700, beginning of a contract); *CPR* X 136 (702, fragment of a deed of surety); *P.Ross. Georg.* III 56 (707, contract for rent of two rooms); *P.Rain. Cent.* 121 (719-720, a compromise), written by the same scribe as *SPP* III 46 (eighth century, declaration under oath for money received) and *SPP* III 343 (eighth century, with oath). Greek documents issued by authorities are the numerous letters by the governor Qurra ibn Sharik. There are also two travel permits, *P.Lond.* I 32 and *P.Sijp.* 25, which were issued by (representatives of) the Arab authorities. These are written in Greek, and one of them also mentions that a copy was issued in Arabic. The documents are dated to 713 in the sample, but an alternative date is the year 698. Perhaps the earlier option is more likely: given the historical circumstances, it would be telling if these documents were written in Greek, just when the Arab language decree had been proclaimed. On the other hand, the decree did not immediately end the use of Greek as our sample shows. For the problems pertaining to unequivocal dating of documents by editors (that is, only a few documents have a date, whereas many are dated paleographically), cf. Morelli, *CPR* XXII 12-13, especially note 27.

documents also Coptic or Arabic is found. In the documents which also have Arabic writing, the Arabic is mostly used in the (bilingual) protocols³⁴ There are also some bilingual *entagia*³⁵ and tax receipts.³⁶ Some Greek *entagia* documents have an Arabic or bilingual seal³⁷. Even if the Arabic context is unmistakably clear, Greek prevails as the administrative language³⁸.

In the documents where Coptic is also used, the administrative text is in Greek, but a Coptic text is found elsewhere on the document³⁹. In other documents the context is one of scribal exercising⁴⁰. The exception to this is *SPP* III 338, the end of a contract in Greek, which is concluded by a subscription in Coptic (which is not indicated in *HGV* or *PN*)⁴¹. In these cases too, the Greek administrative function is clear. At the same time, also the Egyptian context can be made out.

In conclusion to this overview, it is worthwhile to look into the dated monolingual Greek documents dated after 740 and to examine how Greek they are⁴².

2.7 The Latest Greek Documents

A survey of the texts - the majority of which were found in the Arsinoites - shows that they all are administrative, and more specifically tax related:

³⁴ *SB* I 5180; 5182; 5185; 5186; 5187; 5643; *SB* XX 14441; 14435.

³⁵ *SPP* VIII 1198; *SB* VI 9296; *P. Grenf.* II 105; 106.

³⁶ *SB* XVI 13018; XVIII 13771; *SB* XX 14444.

³⁷ *CPR* XIX 26; *CPR* XXII 9.

³⁸ The relationship between Greek and Arabic depends on the type of document. In bilingual protocols, the Greek text is a literal translation of the Arabic. In bilingual *entagia* and tax receipts the subject of the texts is the same, but due to differences in scribal culture they are not literal translations. In the case of the seals, the Arabic seals serve to authenticate the documents.

³⁹ *SB* XXVI 16646; *P. Bal.* II 180; 287.

⁴⁰ *P. Bal.* II 181; *P. Rain. Unterricht* 106; 106a; *SPP* X 172; *CPR* XXII 20; *CPR* XXII 17.

⁴¹ Wessely left out the name of the subscriber. The subscription reads: anak piakou basili pshê[. . .] "I, the deacon Basili, the son of..."

⁴² The documents discussed here were, for practical purposes, very strictly defined as "Greek only" when no other language is attested on the document.

the documents dated after 740 include a tax receipt⁴³, tax demands⁴⁴, fiscal registers⁴⁵, scribal exercises⁴⁶, and a list of fugitives⁴⁷.

The fiscal registers often feature Arabic elements. Take, for instance, the latest dated document, *CPR XXII 21*, a fiscal register, dated to the 4th indiction, *hijra* year 180 (796-97)⁴⁸. It is part of a daily account, denoted as *hemerologion*, registering payments by various individuals with Arabic names transcribed in Greek⁴⁹. Only one of the four individuals named has a patronymic. Federico Morelli suggests that these persons are not tax payers but official fiscal agents, although it is not clear on which level they operated⁵⁰. A further Arabic element is the reference to the *hijra* year, the dating system practised by the rulers. The practice of inserting the *hijra* date next to the indiction years is also encountered in other documents from the later eighth century⁵¹. Apart from these references to the Muslim context, *CPR XXII 21* is at the same time unmistakably Greek in its administrative layout.

CPR XXII 22 and *23* also have a Greek layout, referring to the *hijra* dating. Moreover, *CPR XXII 23* gives the Arabic month of Rajab as the equivalent of the Egyptian Tybi. These documents constitute impressively late examples of both the use of Greek as an administrative language and the impact of Byzantine scribal culture, even if they are (at present) isolated documents and may only have been used by a very restricted group.

⁴³ *P. Clackson* 48.

⁴⁴ *CPR XXII 7*; *SPP III* 260; *SPP VIII* 1199; 1200.

⁴⁵ *P. Prag.* I 27; *CPR XXII 21*; 22; 23; 25; *SPP VIII* 1333 (or a scribal exercise?); *SPP X* 65.

⁴⁶ *P. Rain. Unterricht* 92; *SPP X* 11; 169; *CPR XXII 20*; *SB XVIII* 13248 (?).

⁴⁷ *CPR XXII 35*.

⁴⁸ See Appendix, text 1.

⁴⁹ The word only occurs in documents *contabili* from the Arabic period: *CPR XXII 17*, 11 note.

⁵⁰ *CPR XXII 21*, 111.

⁵¹ Most notably in fiscal registers (*CPR XXII 21*; 22; 23; 25; *SPP X* 65) but also in *entagia* and scribal exercises (also in Coptic): see the list in Gonis, Nikolaos. "Reconsidering Some Fiscal Documents from Early Islamic Egypt III," *ZPE* 169 (2009), 197-208, on 203.

2.8 Conclusion

It was our purpose to examine the position of Greek in eighth century Egypt. In order to do so, we focused on dated Greek documents, trying to put them within a wider multilingual context. As a result we have come to the following conclusions.

The quantification of Greek documents is difficult as an exact chronology of documents is hard to establish. Moreover, in some cases it is even difficult to establish whether the language of a document was Coptic or Greek. Electronic databases and printed collections such as the *Sammelbuch* are invaluable tools to find texts. However, it is always important, even if quantitative data are searched for, to pay attention to the contents of the documents, especially in the case of multilingual documents. Based on the dated documents, there is no doubt that in time the position of Greek was fading. This is demonstrated by the decline in monolingual Greek documents. Greek lost its numerical dominance.

Furthermore, as the evidence is scattered over Egypt and over time, one has to be cautious of the resulting biases. For eighth century Egypt, the Aphrodito and Theban finds dominate the view, and they may be only locally or regionally representative. Nevertheless, even if this is the case, both dossiers are illustrative of the complex linguistic landscape in early Islamic Egypt and both inform us on language choices in specific political and social contexts⁵². Hence, they constitute important frameworks within which other documents can be compared. They also underline the necessity of an integrated, multilingual approach in order to get a better understanding of documentary, and probably social and political practices.

Last, but certainly not least, continued use of Greek demonstrates that scribes were still learning Greek. The question is who and why? As we have seen, Greek appears especially in specific types or parts of documents: as part of protocols, in tax related documents (fiscal registers and accounts), and as authenticating parts in Coptic documents⁵³. However, orthographical and especially grammatical mistakes in the Greek parts raise the question of how profound the knowledge of Greek was.

⁵² Administrative documents tending to Greek or Greek-Arabic; private documents to Coptic or Coptic-Greek (occasionally Greek-Coptic-Arabic).

⁵³ Bilingual protocols suggest that the Arab rulers also accepted Greek as a legitimate language, at least in specific types or parts of documents.

Whether the scribes were also able to write Greek texts other than headings and subscriptions remains an open question. In documents Coptic became more prominent, while Greek fell into disuse. In the Theban legal documents the parties probably were Egyptian speaking, but they were holding on to the traditional formats of contracts by using Greek authentication elements⁵⁴.

Does the documentary record reflect the situation of the spoken languages? In other words, would this imply that speakers of Greek disappeared, while Egyptian continued to be spoken? We know that eventually Egypt would become Arabic speaking (for the greatest part). The question why Greek disappeared is important⁵⁵. As the most important administrative language it had served Egypt and its rulers for more than a thousand years⁵⁶. According to sociolinguists, the disappearance of languages, or – the opposite – the taking over of a foreign language by others, needs to be explained by extra-linguistic factors⁵⁷. Resulting from the continued use of Greek in the eighth century it is only fair to assume that the Greek language still had some status. At least, this is what we conclude from the fact that it seems to remain recognised as a legitimate language by the Arabs and from the formulaic, authenticating parts in Coptic documents. In other cases, of which the contexts are un-

⁵⁴ That is, date, invocation, and subscriptions. These parts rendered the documents legal and legitimate. Cf. Boud'hors, Anne. "Toujours honneur au grec? À propos d'un papyrus gréco-copte de la région thébaine," in Arietta Papaconstantinou, *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the 'Abbāsids* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 179-88.

⁵⁵ In order to answer this, it is also relevant to recognize *how* Greek disappeared. In this paper, only a fraction of the available documents has been used, as these were the only ones dated. However, we intend to explore in more detail the undated documents and the relationship between Greek and other languages in the seventh and eighth century in other contributions.

⁵⁶ One explanation, that seems to be the most obvious one, is the political change: Arabic rule brought Arabic language. However, in the previous centuries Greek was accepted by the Latin speaking Romans, so political dominance alone is not a sufficient explanation.

⁵⁷ Thomason, Sarah G. *Language Contact*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 10-12 describes as three main outcomes of language contact "a contact-induced language change, extreme language mixture, and language death." On the latter, see chapter 9, 222-39. Van Uytanghe, Marc. *Rome, Romania, Germania. Recente inzichten in de genese van het Europa der talen* (Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 2000), 6, mentions the importance of political, military, economic or cultural pressures for linguistic developments.

known, Greek may have been used for practical reasons (perhaps due to scribal traditions), still being used by some scribes on a local level and for purposes we can only speculate about. That Greek became superfluous, however, also seems to be clear from the disappearance and the (apparent) declining mastering of Greek⁵⁸. To put it differently, the model for the socio-political and linguistic situation for Egypt in the later eighth century had changed from the one in the early eighth century.

The Greek and Egyptian speaking groups gradually became increasingly merged into one group of subjects, dominated by the new Arab rulers. Greek culture, expressed for instance by language, did not suffice anymore as a means of self-presentation as it had been for elites since the Ptolemaic period. Greek had become a minority language, both in a numerical sense as well as in a socio-political sense. It would be more fruitful to adapt to the norms and values, and to the language of the new rulers. The resulting socio-political contrast between Arabs and Egyptians would become the basis of other social developments for the centuries to come.

⁵⁸ Social developments were probably an important factor: as the Arabs constituted the new ruling elite, expressing one's Greekness was not anymore the sign of status as it had been in the centuries of Greek and Roman rule. As a result, the new regional administrators adapted to their rulers and the subjects remained Egyptian, until Arabization also started there. This goes beyond the scope of this paper, but we intend to explore this further. Greekness/Hellenicity are here expressed in language. It may be worthwhile to consider Hellenicity on other points. Cf. Papaconstantinou, "What Remains Behind," who argues *in favour* of lingering Hellenism.

2.9 Graphs and Appendices

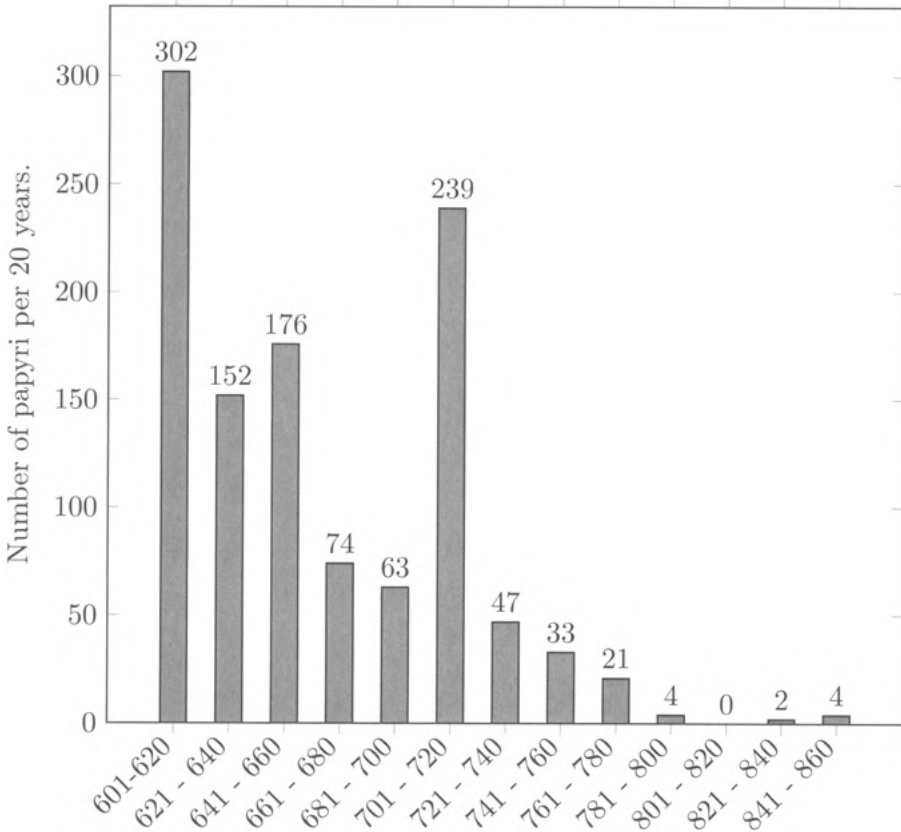


Fig. 2.1: Chronological division of dated Greek papyri, shown in 20 year intervals, 600-800⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Based on data found by searching the *HGV*. For an overview of the documents dated to a specific year in the eighth century, see the pdf document “Greek Papyri from Early Islamic Egypt. Dated Documents from AD 700-800,” website of the ERC project *The Formation of Islam. The View from Below*: <http://hum.leiden.edu/lias/formation-of-islam>. Found under the heading “On Papyri” within “Topics”.

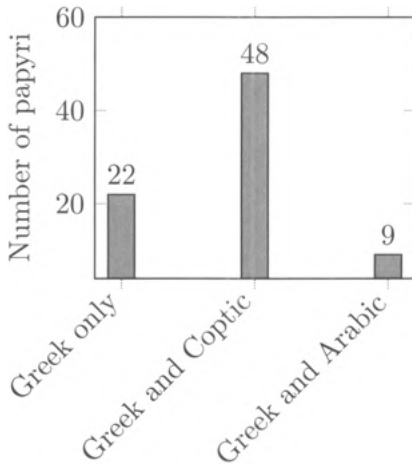


Fig. 2.2: Greek and other languages in dated “Greek” papyri, 730-800

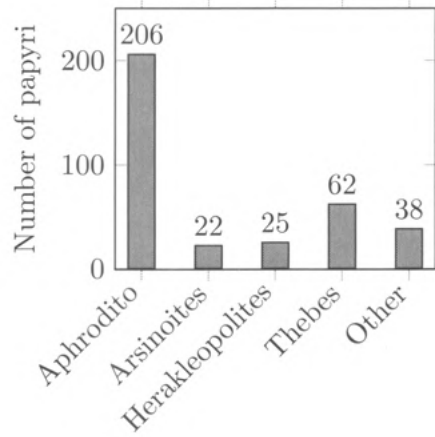


Fig. 2.3: Provenance of Greek papyri, 700-800

Appendix 1. Greek or Coptic I: Theban Legal Documents

Multilingual documents containing at least one word in Greek are sometimes presented in the *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (*SB*) and, as a result of that, in other electronic databases as Greek. But if some Coptic legal documents contain Greek elements, this does not make them Greek. This is exemplified by a group of mainly bilingual (Coptic-Greek) documents from Thebes (*P.KRU*)⁶⁰. These legal documents, ranging in date from 713 to 781, concern private matters (wills, sales, donations). The actual subject matters, constituting the body of the text, are in Coptic. The parts that complete the documents as legal texts, the date, invocation, and subscriptions, are mostly in Greek. So, we see that the languages are used for separate functions: the part that

⁶⁰ Published in Crum, Walter E. and Georg Steindorff. *Koptische Rechtsurkunden des achten Jahrhunderts aus Djême (Theben)*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912. The Greek parts of these documents have been published in *SB* I 5555-5613. Cf. Papaconstantinou, “What Remains Behind,” 449-50, 451ff., presenting an insightful discussion of many forms of adherence to Hellenism in these documents. However, for all the interesting observations made, one important point remains undiscussed: the employment and function of the languages used. Note too that some documents preserve parts of a protocol, in Arabic or Arabic and Greek. Hence, some documents *in a written sense* are trilingual.

was most relevant to the parties was written in Coptic; the part that gave official flavour to the document was written in Greek. Greek was thus used as an authentication, giving legitimacy to the document. Again, we are not informed about popular knowledge of or fluency in Greek beyond the ability of the scribes of these texts⁶¹. The Greek used in the invocation and in the subscription frequently contains orthographical and grammatical mistakes, betraying the Coptic background of this Greek-writing scribe⁶². At the same time, we may assume that at least some people esteemed the Greek language, and were aware of its power, otherwise the scribes could just have written the whole document in Coptic. Also the summaries on the *verso* of some of the documents suggest that the Greek was functional for registration purposes. Minimal knowledge of Greek sufficed to employ specific formulae, but nothing more than that. It is necessary to include these instances of fossilised Greek in the *SB* and the Greek papyrological databases as they present Greek, but at the same time it is important to note the meaning of “Greek” in these cases and to admit that their value for establishing the degree of ability and practice of using Greek is difficult to estimate. A possibility is that this fossilised Greek was used as Latin is in some official contexts nowadays, for instance in documents conferring academic degrees. Latin nowadays, however, has no native speakers. Does the same apply to Greek in the (later) eighth century? How would the Theban legal documents be helpful in this? The practice of these Greek insertions is attested throughout the whole period of their appearance (from the early to the late eighth

⁶¹ Even the scribe’s knowledge of Greek is difficult to evaluate beyond his ability to use Greek-style script. Cf. Cromwell, Jennifer. “Aristophanes Son of Johannes. An Eighth-Century Bilingual Scribe? A Study of Graphic Bilingualism,” in Arietta Papaconstantinou, ed., *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the ‘Abbasids* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 221-32, especially 231-32.

⁶² E.g. *SB* I 5557 and 5585: ἐγὼ Χιτσνην ἔγραψας. The use of *ego* here is a Copticism (i.e. a literal translation of the formula ANOK ... AISHAI); ἔγραψας is a confusion of γράψας and ἔγραψα, the latter form intended here. The absence of vowels in the name Chemtesneus might be another indication that this scribe had Egyptian as his first language. The formula has been spelled correctly in *SB* I 5556. Cf. also *SB* I 5588: αἰγράψε (for ἐγράφη); *SB* I 5590: εζωπειω ὠμουσιού τριάδ[ος] [πατρ]ῶς καὶ αἰος καὶ ἁγίω πνύματος (for ζωποιοῦ ὀμουσιού τριάδ[ος] [πατρ]ῶς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος); *SB* I 5593: ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ π(ατ)ρ(ῶ)ς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (for τοῦ παντοκράτορος); *SB* I 5599: ἐν ὀνόματι δῆς ἁγίας ζωσ<πο>(ιού) ὠμουσιού δριάτος πα<τ>ρὸς γαὶ τῶ ὠῶ γαὶ δοῦ ἁγίον πν(εῦμ)α(τος) (for ἐν ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγίας ζωπο(ιού) ὀμουσιού τριάδος πα<τ>ρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πν(εῦμ)α(τος)), etc.

century), so it can be stated that the written practice remained the same. However, they do not reveal how the oral situation developed throughout this period.

Appendix 2. Greek or Coptic II: The Wadi Sarga ostraca

The documents from Wadi Sarga, published in 1922 by Walter Crum, present another example of the difficulty to distinguish between Greek and Coptic. All texts were edited in Coptic script, even if the editor knew that many were Greek⁶³. The Greek texts were reprinted later in the Greek alphabet in the *Sammelbuch XVIII*. But things are more complicated. The edition contains a long series of waybills (*O.Sarga* 213-340 = *SB XVIII* 13406-13525). These documents are formulaic and include five points of information : 1. the date; 2. the toponym from which wine had to be taken; 3. the quantity of wine; 4. the name of the camel driver; 5. and his title. In the *Sammelbuch* (and hence in other resources, as the *PN*), all the texts are written in Greek, except for the words with special Coptic letters: in this case, the entire word is written in Coptic. The Coptic letters appear mainly in the toponyms, the names, and the titles (which is sometimes a Coptic word). The toponyms attested are considered as Greek (Ταχουουτς, Θαλλου, Τιμουσιμ, Τχεμαν, Τισυμουλοτ, Κουλην, Φουην) or Coptic (TJITS, TAHROUJ, TSUNHOR, TOUHO, HELEHELE, NEMHATE), but one should note that the “Greek” toponyms would have exactly the same form in Coptic, since there is no Coptic special letter in it. Moreover, it is always the Coptic form of the toponyms which is used (for example TAHROUJ and not Ταρρουθις). The same phenomenon appears with the names: the Greek names (Λουκᾶς, Μακάρε, Κόλθε, Ἰωσήφ, Ἐνῶχ, Παμοῦν, Μαθίας, Παῆσε, Πματοι) would be written exactly the same way in Coptic. Two names are identified as Coptic by the Coptic *hori* (H): HÔR and IÔHANNHS, which are never written in these texts Ὠρ or Ἰωάννης (but it is the case in other Wadi Sarga texts, as *O.Sarga* 205 = *SB XVIII* 13388). Moreover, the form of the “Greek” names, i.e. no case endings, is unusual in Greek documentation, but very common in Coptic. For example, the form Μακάρε for Μακάριος is attested only five times in Greek documentation (excluding

⁶³ Cf. *O.Sarga*, xv.

the Sarga texts)⁶⁴, but almost a hundred times in Coptic documentation; Κόλθε for Κολλοῦθος occurs only once in Greek texts⁶⁵, and more than fifty in Coptic documents. For the titles, the use varies: usually it is written in Greek καμαλ, the abbreviation of καμαλίτης (i.e. καμηλίτης, “camel driver”), but one finds also twice the Greco-Coptic PKAMALITHS (i.e. the Greek καμηλίτης with a Coptic article⁶⁶), and the Coptic PMANG-AMOUL, “camel driver” (three times⁶⁷), or PA POUOOTE, “the one of the greens”, which means probably “gardener” (seven times⁶⁸). In conclusion, we think that all these documents should be considered as bilingual and should accordingly be edited: partly in Greek (the date, the quantity, and the title when it is καμαλ(ίτης)) and partly in Coptic (the toponym and the name), even if paleographically there is no switch between Greek and Coptic parts. The Greek elements, then, are related to dating and accounting⁶⁹, which represent not really spoken language, but rather conventions used by the scribes. The titles are also usually fixed elements, in which the abbreviation of a Greek word is used; but for the gardeners, who are mentioned in five texts only, the scribe used the Coptic expression. On the other hand, toponyms and names were written as they were said, i.e. in Coptic. Some exceptions can be explained according to this interpretation: one finds in *O.Sarga* 303 (= *SB XVIII* 13491) a Coptic expression to designate the wine (there is no other example in the *corpus*): this is used not to express simply that it is wine (the Greek abbreviation of οἶνος is used in this case), but to indicate that it is RP AS, “old wine”. The scribe could have used a Greek expression, οἶ(νου) παλ(αίου), but he did not. Such a specification was not made in Greek, which was restricted for delimited conventions⁷⁰.

The Wadi Sarga waybills ostraca of course offers a good opportunity for making such linguistic observations, since we have a corpus of 128

⁶⁴ *O.Bawit Ifao* 25, 1; *P.Lugd.-Bat.* XXV 78, 5; *P.Lond.* IV 1419, 708; 984; *SB XXII* 15322, 7; 13.

⁶⁵ *P.Amh.* II 155, 8.

⁶⁶ *O.Sarga* 252-253 (= *SB XVIII* 13441-13442).

⁶⁷ *O.Sarga* 248-249 (= *SB XVIII* 13437-13438), *O.Sarga* 319 (= *SB XVIII* 13505).

⁶⁸ *O.Sarga* 278-282 (= *SB XVIII* 13467-13470), *O.Sarga* 284 (= *SB XVIII* 13472), *O.Sarga* 287 (= *SB XVIII* 13475), *O.Sarga* 289 (= *SB XVIII* 13477).

⁶⁹ However in *O.Sarga* 262-264 (= *SB XVIII* 13451-13453) and *O.Sarga* 323 (= *SB XVIII* 13509), one finds PAOPE/Πάοπε, which is the Coptic form of the month.

⁷⁰ One can also imagine that the scribe did not know the expression, or that the addressee of the document would not know it. In any case, this would imply an even more restricted use of Greek.

texts⁷¹. However, in the case of isolated documents, it is much more complicated to determine in which language they are.

Appendix 3. *P. Lond. Copt. I 1130: A Bilingual Coptic-Greek Document*

As far as Coptic and Greek documents are concerned, there is no document in which a text written in one language is translated in the other (except for educational texts). Arabic documents, however, are more often translated in Greek (as some Qurrah ben Sharrik texts and also the Greek-Arabic protocols) or in Coptic (as for example the tax demand *P. Clackson* 45)⁷². There is, however, a papyrus of special interest with a Coptic text which is in some way translated in Greek. *P. Lond. Copt. I 1130* is a sheet of papyrus with a Coptic letter on the *recto* and, on the *verso*, the continuation of the letter and the address. Between these two elements on the *verso*, a Greek text was written at a later time⁷³. The text can be assigned to the eighth century on paleographical grounds. Its exact provenance is unknown, but toponyms of Middle Egypt are mentioned and other indications allow the hypothesis that the document is related to the monastery of Wadi Sarga and perhaps also to the monastery of Bawit. The Coptic letters begins with “I want you to draw now (from the vat) and deliver wine to the persons I wrote to you, that is...” followed by a list of persons, with the quantities of wine to be given. The Greek text is an account, presumably made later on the same papyrus, recording the effective distribution of the wine. The differences between the two texts are noteworthy. We give here a few examples.

⁷¹ Even if these texts are not precisely dated (they should probably date from the sixth or the first part of the seventh century according to Jennifer Cromwell), and therefore are not in the direct scope of our research, we think this example corroborates our point.

⁷² Documents sometimes also have a summary in another language: see for example *P. Cair. Arab.* III 167, a Coptic document with two summaries, in Greek and Arabic.

⁷³ The Greek part of the document is not in *SB*, nor in *PN*. The text was mentioned in Clackson, Sarah J. “Coptic or Greek? Bilingualism in the Papyri,” in Arietta Papanconstantinou, ed., *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the ‘Abbasids* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 101-2. A study of the text will appear in Delattre, Alain. “La traduction des institutions administratives dans les monastères égyptiens (VII^e-VIII^e siècles),” (forthcoming).

The first three beneficiaries are Apollo, Ruth and Pamoun⁷⁴. They appear in the same order in the two texts, but Apollo is called *papa* in Coptic and *presbuteros* in Greek (the two terms are equivalent, but *presbuteros* is more official); Pamoun is described as “man from Simou” in Coptic and as “deacon” in Greek. One should conclude that he was a deacon from Simou and that the Greek account described him in a more official way, or perhaps that Pamoun presented himself as a deacon when he received the wine.

After these three persons, the order of the Greek account diverges from that of the Coptic text, probably simply because the different persons came in a different order. Often the Greek account is much more precise than the Coptic letter⁷⁵. For example the letter says “and the man who will bring you the letter, give him one *kados*,” whereas the Greek account specifies his name and title: “Victor, the *symmachos* (letter-carrier)”. In the same way, the Coptic letter includes two payments to be made to toponyms, Pshenberre and Pg’alashire, not recognized by the editor. In the Greek part, it becomes a payment made to “Anouphios (from) Neulak(,)”, which is probably a translation of Pshenberre, and to “Kuriakos, the priest.” The Greek scribe wrote the name of the persons who effectively came to pick up the wine for the aforesaid toponyms. All these differences can be easily explained: the letter was written in some place, perhaps Bawit, and then sent to another monastery, maybe Wadi Sarga. The scribe of the letter didn’t know who would pick up the wine for the toponyms and he didn’t know yet who would bring the letter to the other monastery.

More interesting from a linguistic point of view are the following two items⁷⁶. The Coptic letter asked the recipient to deliver two *kadoi* of wine to the refectory and thirty *kadoi* to “apa Iouste, the one of the saqiah.” The first entry was translated in the Greek account as τόπ(ο)υ φαί(ου): this is a literal translation of the Coptic PMA “the place” NOUOM “of eating.” The second is not an exact translation: where the Coptic has PA PHOI, “the one of the *saqiah*,” the Greek has πατρ(ός) ὀργ(άνου), “the

⁷⁴ Coptic: Papa Apollo; Greek: Apollo the priest. Coptic and Greek: Routh, the nun. Coptic : Pamoun from Simou; Greek: Pamoun the deacon.

⁷⁵ Coptic: and the man who will bring you the letter; Greek: Victor the *symmachos*. Coptic: Pshnberre; Greek: Anouphios, Neulak(.). Coptic: Pg’alashire; Greek: Kyriakos, the priest.

⁷⁶ Coptic: The refectory; Greek: the place of eating. Coptic: apa Iouste, the one of the saqiah; Greek: abba Iouste, father of the saqiah.

father of the *saqiah*.” This expression “father of” is not Greek, but Coptic. In fact, the title of πατήρ ὀργάνου is the translation of the Coptic title PIOT MPHOI “the father of the *saqiah*,” attested in *P.Köln IX 386*, 3-4.

This interesting text is another example of the specialisation of Greek for the accounting and financial administration. It also shows us a scribe “writing Greek”, quite fluently, but “thinking Coptic”.

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3

Christian Women in Muslim Egypt: a Public Minority*

Gesa Schenke

(Leiden / Oxford)

3.1 Introduction

Since the transition from Christian to Islamic rule in Egypt is by no means an insignificant one, numerous efforts have been made in trying to trace and examine it. One such attempt will be made here, as this paper intends to inquire into the implications this change of rule held for the female part of the local population. Under the new Muslim rule, the public status of leading Christian men in Egypt was gradually reduced, as and when the higher strata of the local administration, such as the office of the *pagarch*, were taken over by Muslim administrators and the lower levels of administrative offices became increasingly scrutinized by the Arab administration. One might expect the public position of woman to be equally reduced, at least in so far as they were connected to formerly high ranking and largely autarchic Christian officials, though such an assumption might not leave sufficient room for particular circumstances.

Although Egyptian women in Byzantine Egypt and the early Islamic period were almost certainly not a numerical minority, they appear in Greek and Coptic texts much more rarely than their male counterparts. We have far fewer letters composed or written by women, noticeably fewer contracts and leases involving women on either side, only a small number of tax documents for women, and hardly any travel documents issued in a woman's name, not to mention the lack of evidence for women in any

* Research for this contribution was conducted as part of the project *The Formation of Islam. The View From Below* founded by the European Research Council.

kind of public office.¹ Even in literary sources, such as the extremely popular Coptic martyr legends, as well as in Coptic *miracula* and *encomia*, women feature far less often as heroes and role models suffering martyrdom for their Christian faith. Of about 320 Coptic martyrs, only 46 are women; that is, roughly fifteen per cent.² When it comes to Coptic saints, Christian role models in life rather than death,³ the percentage of women is even lower. Of about 265 celebrated Coptic saints only 20 are women, which equates to less than ten per cent. Moreover, most of them were leading a Christian existence in the guise of monks. With this data in mind, one can safely call women a minority with respect to their public presence, but that seems to be less of a new development than an aspect of continuity. In an attempt to bypass the predominance of Egyptian men in all types of written records, this paper will explore a few glimpses into Egyptian public life granted through either documentary or literary sources of the late Byzantine and early Islamic period with the aim of determining whether and to what degree Coptic women took part in it, and whether any differences in the extent of participation can be observed as a result of the new Muslim rule. In doing so, it will focus on women's public appearance and mobility, as well as on women's economic independence and their opportunities for obtaining public distinction.

3.2 Public Appearance – Dress Code

Any form of cultural segregation begins with dress. Regarding Christian women in Egypt we hear from Pistentius, the famous seventh century bishop of Koptos,⁴ that it was proper for them to cover their heads in public and keep their eyes to the ground, in order not to look into any

¹ P.Giss.Univ. 96 as evidence for a female village scribe in the eighth century has been refuted by Delattre, Alain. "Une femme scribe de village à l'époque copte?" *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 15 (2001), 119–22.

² For a list of their names, feast days, and short description see O'Leary, De Lacy. *The Saints of Egypt in the Coptic Calendar*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan, 1937; as well as Atiya, Aziz S. "Martyrs, Coptic". In *The Coptic Encyclopedia*.

³ Cf. Atiya, Aziz S. "Saints, Coptic". In *The Coptic Encyclopedia*.

⁴ Excerpts from Pistentius' *Encomium on St. Onnophrios*, as well as from *The Life of Pistentius*, have been discussed by Wilfong, Terry G. *Women of Jeme. Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002, 23–39. Generally for Pistentius see Gabra, Gawdat Abdel Sayed. *Untersuchungen*

man's face.⁵ The headdress for Coptic women⁶ remained in use after the Arab conquest,⁷ which initially seems not to have had any direct impact on the habits of Egyptian Christians.⁸ For Christian men no particular dress code seems to have been required until the middle of the ninth century when, as the *History of the Patriarchs* reports, a new governor of Egypt, al-Ghayr 'Abd al-Masih ibn Ishāq, was appointed who was soon as despised as the Roman emperor Diocletian had been.⁹ Under his rule the Copts were ordered to wear dyed black clothes and to refrain from riding horses so that they could be easily distinguished from Muslims,¹⁰ a degrading measure reinforced in the early fourteenth century when Copts were allegedly ordered again to put on blue turbans and girdles, and instead of horses to ride on donkeys, while Jews in turn had to wear yellow turbans.¹¹ Whether such new rules and restrictions were directed towards Christian men as well as women, however, is not entirely clear. If so, then both would have been somewhat equal due to the same degradation at the hands of the Muslim government.

3.3 Women Hidden in Marriage

For Christian authorities, such as the Coptic bishop Pistentius, marriage seemed to be the ideal state of being for the laity to avoid sinful casual sexual encounters.¹² Pistentius' guidelines for daily behaviour laid out

zu den Texten über Pesyntheus, Bischof von Koptos (569-632). Bonn: Habelt, 1984; as well as van Lent, A. M., and van der Vliet, Jacques. "De vele levens von Pistentius van Koptos. Een Egyptische heilige aan de vooravond van de Arabische verovering," *Het Christelijk Oosten* 48 (1996), 195-213.

⁵ See the edition by Crum, Walter E. "Discours de Pistentius sur Saint Onnophrius," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 20 (1916), 1-30, 6-20 (text), 20-30 (transl.); cf. also Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 26 (16).

⁶ For early Byzantine headdress generally see now the exhaustive work by Linscheid, Petra. *Frühbyzantinische textile Kopfbedeckungen*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2011.

⁷ See Pfister, Dominique and Dominique Flamm. "Costume, Civil". In *The Coptic Encyclopedia*.

⁸ See *ibid.*

⁹ 'Abd al-Masih, Y., and Burmester, O.H.E., ed./tr. *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. Cairo: Société d'archéologie copte, 1943, 2.1.7.

¹⁰ For all this see the summary of Labib, Subhi Y. "Cosmas II". In *The Coptic Encyclopedia*.

¹¹ Labib, Subhi Y. "John VIII". In *The Coptic Encyclopedia*.

¹² Crum, "Discours de Pistentius sur Saint Onnophrius," 6-20; Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 25 (28).

in his *Encomium on St. Onnophrios*, with its emphasis on marriage, are also a recurring theme in the Coptic *Life of Pistentius*, where he seems to have acted not only as a marriage councillor but also as a warner against such casual sexual encounters. In the story of *Pistentius and the Jealous Husband*, Pistentius obliges the husband to reconcile with his pregnant wife accused of adultery on the grounds that if she bears a boy rather than a girl, no adultery would have taken place. Eventually the couple is blessed with a son and all quarrelling is laid aside.¹³

In the story of Pistentius being visited by a man and his grown up son, Pistentius informs the father of his son's secret affair with a local girl who became pregnant as a result. To lessen the surprised father's disbelief, Pistentius gives her address and points to the expected offspring as proof of his errant son's misconduct (ΔΥΟΥΨΩΒ̄ Ν̄ΔΙ ΠΕΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ ΕΤΟΥΔΑΒ ΧΕ ΕΚΨΑΝΒΩΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΕΚΤΜΕ ΚΝΑΑΠΑΝΤΑ ΕΥΟΖΙΜΕ Ζ̄Μ ΠΨΟΡΠ̄ Ν̄ΖΟΥΤ̄Ν̄ Μ̄ΠΕΚΤΜΕ · ΕΤΨΕΡΕ ΤΕ Ν̄ΝΙΜ̄ Ν̄ΡΩΜΕ ΤΕ · ΠΕΤ̄Ν̄ΖΗΤ̄Σ ΝΑΡ̄ Μ̄ΝΤΡΕ ΝΑΚ ΧΕ ΠΕΚΩΗΡΕ ΠΕΝΤΑΥ Ν̄ΚΟΤΚ Ν̄Μ̄ΜΑΣ "The holy Prophet (Pistentius) answered: 'When you go back to your village, you will come upon a woman on the first street of your village, being the daughter of such and such a one. That which is inside her will bear witness for you that it was your son who has been sleeping with her.'"). Pistentius insists on the boy taking responsibility and marrying the girl, with the threat that otherwise he will be excluded from church (ΔΥΩ ΝΑΜΕ ΜΕΙΑΝΕΧΕ ΕΚΑΔΥ ΕΣΥΝΑΓΕ ΨΑΝΤΕΥΧΙΤΣ "And certainly I am unable to let him come to church, until he marries her.").¹⁴

Punishment is also at hand for a shepherd who, after raping a young woman, went to see Pistentius to get his blessing. The latter is appalled and throws him out. In an attempt to make up for his misconduct, the shepherd sends Pistentius some cheeses, which are promptly rejected.¹⁵ Clearly, personal lives are frequently lived far removed from any ideal and documentary evidence occasionally lets us directly take part in the anger and despair of marital disappointment, in hardships, and emotional

¹³ See Gunn, Battiscomb. "Christian Egypt. Saint Pistentius and the Jealous Man," in Bernard Lewis, ed., *Land of Enchanters. Egyptian Short Stories from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Harvill Press, 1948), 89–92.

¹⁴ Budge, Ernest Alfred Wallis. *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*. London: British Museum, 1913, 111–12 (text), fol. 64a–64b, 304–6 (transl.); cf. also Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 38–39.

¹⁵ Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha*, 106–9 (text), fol. 57b–61b, 298–302 (transl.); mentioned in Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 38.

disaster. Letters pleading for help or official contracts settling a dispute display a range of lamentable circumstance.

In a will of the early eighth century from the town of Jeme in southern Egypt, a monk named Paham makes a reference to his deceased son Pappute whose marital troubles were caused by the lack of his bride's virginity. The father and later monk Paham writes: "I was informed of the cause: Her virginity is not intact." (*KRU* 67, l. 21–22: ΔΥΤΑΥΕ ΤΙΤΙΑ ΕΡΟΙ ΧΕ ΤΕΣΠΑΡΘΕΝΕΙΑ ΟΥΟΧ ΔΗ). Nevertheless, his son married the girl and the father writes: "He produced children with her, while his heart was aching. He used to come many times and tell me of his heart ache and cause my heart to suffer greatly." (*KRU* 67, l. 25–26: ΔΥΧΠΟ ΝΖΕΝΨΗΡΕ ΝΜΜΔC ΕΡΕΠΕCΩΖΗΤ ΜΟΚΖ ΕΡΟC ΔΥΩ ΨΑCΕΙ ΝCΤΑΥΟ ΠΕCΜΚΑΖ ΝΖΗΤ ΕΡΟΙ ΝΖΑΖ ΝCΟΠ ΝCΤΡΕΠΑΖΗΤ ΝΜΚΑΖ ΝΖΟΥΟ).¹⁶ More often, however, we find husbands quickly exchanging one wife for another. The back of a fragmentary papyrus letter from the Theban monastery of Epiphanius, P.Mon.Epiph. 270, seems to offer a short summary of such events: "Shenetom, the fisherman, the son of Pgaele in Pashme, threw out his wife Tegoshe and took Teret, the daughter of Komes of Pare (for a wife)." (l. 12–21: ΨΕΝΕΤΩΜ ΠΟΥΩΖΕ ΠΨΕ ΜΠΑΛΛΕ ΖΜ ΠΑΨΜΕ ΔCΙΝΕΧ ΤΕCΩΖ [] ΜΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΤΕ ΤΕΔΩΨΕ ΤΕ ΔCΙ ΤΕΡΗΤ ΤΨΕ ΝΚΟΜΕC ΜΠΑΡΗ).¹⁷

Adultery was a perfectly legitimate reason for divorce for either party, though marriages seem to have ended for various other reasons as well,¹⁸ one of them clearly being the death of a spouse. A petition of a widow from Jeme addressed to a Pisentius, possibly the famous bishop himself, written on limestone, describes her situation as being destitute. Having been left with debts by her deceased husband, her son has fled

¹⁶ Crum, Walter E. and Georg Steindorff. *Koptische Rechtsurkunden des Achten Jahrhunderts aus Djeme (Theben)*. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1971; and Till, Walter C. *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der koptischen Urkunden*. Wien: Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1954, 169–77; also included in Rowlandson, Jane. *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt. A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: University Press, 1998, 214–15; discussed also in Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 78–79.

¹⁷ Crum, Walter E. "Coptic Ostraca and Papyri," in Herbert E. Winlock *et al.*, eds., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*. Vol. 2 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926) (= P.Epiph.), 70; see also Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, 216–17.

¹⁸ See for example the collected documentary evidence in Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, 206–14, as well as the general remarks by Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 80–81.

his responsibilities as the authorities have taken virtually all they owned, land as well as animals, and are now threatening to take her house on top of everything else. Thus she is begging for Pisentius' intervention to at least let her stay in her own home.¹⁹ For the most part, however, we do not hear anything at all from women and we have to assume that normally women were simply lost in marriage, resurfacing to the public eye only at religious festivities, village gatherings, weddings or burials, and at most when sending a letter of greeting to a relative.

3.4 Out and About – Women on the Road

Particularly interesting in this context is the possibility for women to travel in the early Islamic period.²⁰ Currently the scarce documentary evidence for women's travel documents raises a number of questions. As women did not have to pay poll tax, did it matter to the authorities whether they left their hometown? And were there female fugitives? Along the same lines one could also ask whether children needed travel documents. As future taxpayers, invaluable manpower, or potential and indispensable carriers of future offspring, children of a certain age could surely not have been ignored by the new Muslim authorities.

Recent studies, such as Maribel Dietz's *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, paint a picture of numerous religious travellers in late antiquity, many of them female, commonly taking to the roads in ascetic devotion.²¹ Although this study focuses on Western monastic travellers,²² what seems worth noting is that the phenomenon of religiously motivated travel seems to have still been common in the early Islamic period.²³ Jerusalem was the favourite religious destination for devoted monastic

¹⁹ See Drescher, James. "A Widow's Petition," *BSAC* 10 (1944), 91–96.

²⁰ A preliminary look at this has been taken in a paper entitled "Women on the Move. Christian Women Travelling Under Early Muslim Rule", presented at the Leiden meeting of the *ERC* project on *Social and Economic Dependency in Late Antiquity and Early Islam. Women and Children, Clients, Slaves, Fugitives and Prisoners*, in March, 2011.

²¹ Dietz, Maribel. *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims. Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World. A.D. 300–800*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005, 108.

²² For religiously motivated travel within Egypt see the articles in Frankfurter, David, ed. *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 134. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

²³ See Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, 189.

travellers, many of whom – male and female – spent a lifetime wandering about as a form of escape from society.²⁴ According to Dietz, it was not the Islamic conquest but the increasingly dominant Benedictine rule favouring *stabilitas* that eventually led to the demise of monastic travel as a legitimate form of religious existence.²⁵

The need for valid travel documents, however, is not an issue touched upon in Dietz's work. Neither is it discussed in Bruria Bitton-Ashkelony's study *Encountering the Sacred*, published in the same year, which discusses among other things the description in the Arabic *Life of Shenoute* of his attempt to prevent monks from travelling all the way to Jerusalem by promoting the White Monastery as a good substitute.²⁶ Generally this seems to have been common practice all over the Christian world resulting in the rise of a sacred geography, as local holy places defined by the presence of martyrs and saints were promoted as rewarding religious destinations.²⁷

Yet the frequently cited passage from the *History of the Patriarchs* concerning the rules for punishment when found travelling without a proper document paints a very grim picture.²⁸ Immediate arrest as well as confiscation of the man's possessions was the prescribed action in the early eighth century. Even very short-distance travel seems to have necessitated a travel document. Apparently, it was expensive to obtain and could involve a long waiting period during which the reason for travel, such as work in the fields, often became obsolete.²⁹ However, the passages in the *History of the Patriarchs* only seem to refer to male travellers. So the question arises: what were the rules or what was the legality of women's travel? As it is the fear of possible tax evasion that is generally believed to be at the core of a strict system of mobility supervision in

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 109 and 219ff.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, 213 and 220.

²⁶ Bitton-Ashkelony, Bruria. *Encountering the Sacred. The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, 202f.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁸ See Evetts, Basil, ed./tr. "History of the Patriarchs", *Patrologia Orientalis* 5.1 (Paris, 1910), 69-70: "Wherever a man is found walking, or passing from one place to another, or disembarking from a boat, or embarking, without a passport, he shall be arrested, and the contents of the boat confiscated, and the boat burnt."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 69: "The fruits of the vineyards were wasted, and there was no one to buy them for a single *dirham*, because their owners remained within their houses for two months, awaiting the passport to release them thence."

early Islamic Egypt,³⁰ one might wonder whether women, who did not have to pay the poll tax, were therefore allowed to travel freely without a document and whether they were ever travelling alone. Sofia Schaten, in an article of 1998 on "Reiseformalitäten im frühislamischen Ägypten," raised the question of whether religious travel and private pilgrimage met with obstacles to movement.³¹

Numerous travel documents are known for non-Muslim males desiring to leave their hometown for business or family matters, or as a means of breaking free from social and economic pressures. At a conference in Leiden in 2010, Alain Delattre offered an overview of the three types of travel documents known to us,³² ranking them as follows: 1. The *sigillion* as the highest level of official document, obtainable only from the Arab administration and needed for long-distance travel;³³ 2. The *logos mpnoute* documents, obtainable from the local administration, village officials or religious authorities, and valid for short-distance travel; and 3. The Theban one-day "passes" for very short-distance travel, valid only for a particular checkpoint or gate. In all three of these document types, however, women are scarcely to be found.

The known examples of the documents issued only by the Arab administration, the *sigillion*, show no female recipients at all. Most of these documents seem to grant absence from home for a period of a few months. It is noteworthy that none give a religious or personal reason for travel, like a pilgrimage or a family visit, but rather concentrate on business affairs.

³⁰ See also this premise with literature in Schaten, Sofia. "Reiseformalitäten im frühislamischen Ägypten," *BSAC* 37 (1998), 91–100, esp. 91.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 98f. More recent work on the subject of travel, making use of the papyrological and hagiographical evidence, has been undertaken by Anna Selander in an unpublished paper of 2006, "Travel in Coptic Documentary Texts," as well as by Kotsifou, Chrysi. *Travelling To and Within Egypt from the Fourth to the Seventh Centuries. The Evidence from Hagiography*. Ph.D. thesis: King's College London, 2002.

³² Delattre, Alain. "Checkpoints, sauf-conduits et contrôle de la population en Égypte au début de l'époque arabe," paper given at the 1st round table meeting *Authority and Control in the Countryside* of the conference series *Late Antiquity and Early Islam. Continuity and Change in the Mediterranean*. Leiden, September 2010.

³³ 13 Arabic examples survive dating from the Umayyad and Abbasid periods (720 for the older, 750/751 for the most recent): see Ragib, Yusuf. "Sauf-conduits d'Égypte omeyyade et Abbasside," *Annales Islamologiques* 31 (1997), 143–68, esp. 146–47; as well as Diem, Werner. "Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden aus der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer (Wien)," *Le Muséon* 97 (1984), 109–58, esp. 136–51.

The less official but still functional travel document could be obtained from local village officials or religious authorities, such as the *lashane* or the head of a monastery. More than a hundred such documents are known from the seventh to the ninth century and are referred to as “Schutzbriefe”, “letters of protection”, or simply as *logos mpnoute*, named after their most prominent feature, a “vow by God”.³⁴ These documents are far more numerous compared to the known examples of *sigillia* and seem to be designed for shorter-distance travel, placing the financial responsibility for the traveller onto the local authority issuing such a document. Many of these texts indicate that a certain amount of money had been paid by the travellers for taxes and that therefore, *by God*, nothing else will be asked of them, which in turn allows them to move about freely. In effect, these documents often serve as tax receipts with a vow that no more is to be paid. We may think that simple tax receipts, signed by an official tax collector, might have functioned in a similar way, but there is no evidence to support or refute this hypothesis. Due to the mention of taxes paid, these documents seem to be primarily tailored to male travellers. The lack of tax payments, tax evasion or more likely the financial inability to pay taxes, however, seems to have equally often prompted such a document, guaranteeing the delinquents that they will not be punished and thus allowing them to remain in their hometown without fear, or to return to it without facing the consequences. For such tax fugitives these *logos mpnoute* or *Schutzbriefe* thus functioned as a return travel document; that is, a one-way *safe conduct* document.

A look at *P.Schutzbriefe*, a rather diverse corpus, reveals only four women mentioned by name. *P.Schutzbriefe* 56 features Kyra Marou, the lessor of a property to be cultivated by a peasant named Moeses for a period of three years. She gives her *logos mpnoute* that the conditions agreed to in the land lease (μίσθωσις) preceding this security statement are indeed going to be observed. The *logos mpnoute* formula here seems to function like “a word of honour” given from landlord to tenant in the form of what Till called a “Zusatzurkunde”. *P.Schutzbriefe* 65, listed

³⁴ A systematic study of this category of texts has been published by Till, Walter C. “Koptische Schutzbriefe,” *MDAIK* 8 (1938), 71–146 (= *P.Schutzbriefe*). See also the discussion by Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 147–48. In addition see a summary and list of texts published after Till’s study by Delattre, Alain. “Les «letters de protection» coptes,” in Bernhard Palme, ed., *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses. Wien, 22.-28. Juli 2001* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 173–78. He also offers a re-edition of three recently published examples.

by Till under “Unklare Fälle”, guarantees a woman named Kyra with a *logos mpnoute* that from now on she will not be found committing another transgression (παράπτωμα) living in the house of her son Mena “in a settled condition (κατάστασις)”. The text is fragmentary, but sureties (ἐγγυητής) are mentioned, which seems to suggest that the former transgressions were of a financial nature. But whether Kyra had sought refuge in the house of her son, or was fighting over its ownership, remains unknown. Both of these documents seem to have nothing to do with travelling.

Only one such document has undoubtedly been written for a woman directly in order to travel, or rather to return home safely. In *P.Schutzbrieife* 21³⁵ neither the name of the person issuing the document nor the name of the female recipient is preserved, but the second person singular feminine employed in the text leaves no doubt as to the gender of the addressee. It reads “[See the *logos*] *mpnoute* in your hand and come home, for we shall not ask anything of you, nor of your daughter, except for her land tax (*demosion*).” Here we are clearly dealing with a return travel document for two female fugitives. This may shed new light on a document from the Fayum (P.Horak 65) with lists of wives and daughters possibly imprisoned for their own sake, having been caught as fugitives (ll. 11–16 →). Since the state of preservation of this document is rather poor, they may, however, also have been held hostage for their runaway husbands, as is the case with female prisoners mentioned on the *verso* of this papyrus (P.Horak 66, ll. 1–7 ↓).

P.Schutzbrieife 88³⁶ is a letter of an imprisoned father named Isak to his sister Tdschasr, in which he refers to a *logos mpnoute* for his daughter Thabaeis. It reads: “I, Isak, am writing to my sister Tdschasr. Be so kind and help me before³⁷ they kill me, and bring Samuel and go to the great man. Perhaps you (pl.) can free me, because I have been arrested and my camel has been seized. Have mercy and ... (imperative) ... See the

³⁵ Also briefly mentioned in Biedenkopf-Ziehner, Anneliese. “Christen und Muslime im Spiegel Thebanischer Urkunden des 7.–9. Jh.,” in Walter Beltz, ed., *Die koptische Kirche in den ersten drei islamischen Jahrhunderten*. Halesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft 36 (Halle [Saale]: Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2003), 41–70, at 52 n. 52; as well as in Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 147.

³⁶ BKU I 38. *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin. Koptische Urkunden I*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904. The text has also been briefly discussed in Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 148.

³⁷ Probably ΜΠΑΤΕΥ- for (Ε)ΜΠΑΤΟΥ-.

logos mpnoute in your hand for Thabaeis (give it to her) and she comes out because of you (fem.)³⁸ and takes care (προσέχω) of her father.”³⁹

Whether the *logos mpnoute* mentioned here is just an inner family (or perhaps only inner religious family) “word of honour” or indeed a travel document for the daughter Thabaeis is unclear. Since we only possess the letter from Isak to his sister mentioning the *logos mpnoute* rather than the *logos mpnoute* itself, we cannot be sure who issued the latter document and what exactly the conditions were. Therefore, contrary to Till’s understanding, one cannot look at this example as a *logos mpnoute* given by a prisoner.⁴⁰ Isaak might have organised the issue of such a document for his daughter prior to his arrest, and now needs someone to deliver it to her. Whether the sister addressed in this letter has permission to “go to the place of the great man,” or whether this place is somewhere very near, remains unknown. A situation similar to *P.Schutzbriefe* 70 might be the case here, where a certain Samuel is to be given a *logos mpnoute* to enable him to come forward and deal with the matter of his imprisoned son. In this case Samuel himself is the writer of a letter asking Apa Pesnte, a man of higher authority, to arrange for a *logos mpnoute* for him, so that he can take care of this son. Similarly, in *P.Schutzbriefe* 88, a daughter (Thabaeis) might need the *logos mpnoute* to deal with the affairs of her imprisoned father. Perhaps family members needed a letter of protection to avoid being mistreated for their imprisoned relatives’ (mis-)behaviour.⁴¹

³⁸ Possibly read ΘΧΦ.

³⁹ Till understands the Coptic ΠΡΟCΥΧΗ as the verb προσεύχομαι which leads to an odd interpretation of Thabaeis possibly not being the imprisoned man’s daughter. But ΠΡΟCΥΧΗ seems to resemble some of the numerous Coptic spellings for the verb προσέχω and would match the context perfectly. If so, the entry for προσεύχομαι in Förster, Hans. *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten*. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2002, 689, consisting only of this text could be deleted. Either way, the translation would not be “greet her father” as printed in Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 148. Also the interpretation given there by Wilfong that Thabaeis is a very young girl living with the sister of her imprisoned father and now needing parental permission to move about is more than doubtful.

⁴⁰ Cf. Till, “Koptische Schutzbriefe,” 119, where he notes that the *logos mpnoute* has accidentally not been signed; cf. also the discussion by H. Liebesny in *ibid.*, 127–40.

⁴¹ Another questionable case of a letter of protection for a woman might be *P.Schutzbriefe* 13, which due to its bad preservation leaves much room for speculation. The recipient of the document, issued by representatives of the community (κοινότης) of Tbahe, seems to be the wife of Abraham, perhaps a widow who has fallen into debts, but we are in the dark about the circumstances.

The least official travel documents are the simple *passes* known from Frange's Theban cell, the burial *TT 29*.⁴² These documents on papyrus start with an imperative, lacking any form of heading or introduction, addressing officials on duty at a particular checkpoint north of the town of Jeme, asking to let the document holder "pass".⁴³ The formula "Be pleased to let through" or "to let pass" using the verb ΚΩ (ΕΞΟΥΝ) "to permit, set free" a named person, is addressed 30 times to a certain Halakotse and three times to a John, who both seem to have been officials on duty at a particular checkpoint north of the town of Jeme. *Papyrus 295028* asks to let a certain Shenute "pass" in order to go south, back to his hometown Hermonthis.⁴⁴ These documents end with a date, providing the addressee, i.e. the official at the checkpoint, and the sender, often Frange, on the reverse. *Papyrus 291972* asks not to hinder (ΜΠΡΚΩΛΥ) two men named Papas and Theodorake as they go to Jeme for reasons of work.⁴⁵

In these documents women are mentioned at best in the company of men, as for example in *Papyrus 295511*, which asks to let Petros, Mathias and his wife pass so that they can sell their goods.⁴⁶ So far they have not been found alone as recipients of such a "pass". The question therefore remains: how did women travel? Apart from the one *logos mpnoute* document issued for two female fugitives to return home (*P.Schutzbrieife* 21) and the letter mentioning a *logos mpnoute* for a daughter to deal with her imprisoned father's affairs (*P.Schutzbrieife* 88), we seem to have no documentary evidence for women's travel permissions. One seems forced to conclude either that they a) never travelled; b) never travelled

⁴² For an overview over this material see Aït-Kaci, Liliane, Anne Boud'hors and Chantal Heurtel. "Aller au nord, aller au sud, traverser le fleuve. Circulation et échanges au VIIIe siècle dans la région thébaine," in Eugène Warmenbol and Valérie Angenot, eds., *Thèbes aux 101 portes. Mélanges à la mémoire de Roland Tefnin*. Monumenta Aegyptiaca 12 (Turnhout, Brussels: Brepols, 2010), 1-9.

⁴³ Anne Boud'hors, working on the material from the *TT 29* burial, believes that because these "passes" are written on papyrus and addressed to checkpoint officials they were a more official travel document than the *logos mpnoute* texts mostly written on ostraca and addressed only to the travellers themselves: cf. Boud'hors, Anne. "L'apport de papyrus postérieurs à la conquête arabe pour la datation des ostraca coptes de la tombe TT29," in Petra M. Sijpesteijn et al., eds., *From al-Andalus to Khurasan. Documents from the Medieval Muslim World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 115-29, esp. 123.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

alone (i.e. without a male escort); or c) did not need a travel document. Conclusions a) and b) seem highly unlikely, not least in view of the hagiographical evidence. Conclusion c) in turn would be a tremendous surprise. Might the new Muslim authorities be granting women complete freedom of movement because they were fiscally and financially less important than men? In that case, women might then have been used to run all sorts of “long-distance” errands for their male relatives.

Occasionally one does find women delivering things such as letters, as is recorded in *ST 201*, and possibly in *P.Epiph.* 177.⁴⁷ In *ST 201* the female letter bearer seems to deliver a financial document in addition to the note, and in return she is to bring back a *solidus* from the female addressee to the sender. But such deliveries might well not have involved long distance travel to make any permission document necessary.

Coptic martyr legends known from manuscripts of the ninth century, such as, for example, the martyrdom of St Paese (from Pousire in the Hermopolite nome) and his sister Thecla,⁴⁸ talk about women on the move, indicating no particular difficulty for them, though never mentioning necessary documents for male travellers either. Thecla is said to have travelled by boat from Antinopolis all the way to Alexandria to see her brother.⁴⁹ To the audience of these legends there must have been a certain degree of everyday reality reflected to make them plausible. So while hagiographical and historiographical evidence seems to suggest that women travelled around not infrequently, documentary evidence for women’s travel permits is largely lacking, causing problems in interpreting this seemingly conflicting evidence.

⁴⁷ *P.Epiph.* I, 182. *P.Epiph.* II, 177, letter from prisoners complaining of neglect by their friends; 163, a letter asking to release prisoners.

⁴⁸ From the Pierpont Morgan Codex M 591, see Reymond, Eve A. E. and John W.B. Barns. *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, 31–79 (text) and 151–84 (transl.). The colophon gives the date 15 February, 861; for a description of the codex see Depuydt, Leo and David A. Loggie. *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpoint Morgan Library*. Leuven: Peeters, 1993, No. 157, 301–5.

⁴⁹ Reymond and Barns, *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices*, 68 R i – 72 R ii.

3.5 Women of Financial Power – Resources and Public Distinction

Among the great number of letters on ostraca from the aforementioned burial *TT*29, written by Frange's sister Tsie and other women living in Petemout,⁵⁰ some do suggest, albeit rather vaguely, that these women were able to act and move about independently. The main concern in the messages sent from Tsie to Frange, however, seems to be the dispatch of goods, mainly food and clothing, and prayers for each other's health and wellbeing. Occasionally, as in the case of *O. 255*, planned visits to see each other are mentioned or cancelled. Tsie says that she cannot come to meet (ἀπαντάω) him. The reason she gives is sadly lost as the text breaks off. Whether some sort of travel document was needed for such movement, we do not know. The distance between the village of Petemout and Frange's dwelling in *TT* 29 is not so short and it would certainly have required passing through a checkpoint for which one might need permission; indeed, it would involve crossing the Nile.

In *O. 258* Tsie explains that she has prepared a basket for Frange, which has been packed and ready for three days. She bemoans the fact that if she finds a boat, she cannot find a person to bring it to him, a situation that seems to frustrate her and makes her write: "Moreover, you know that I am a woman and it is impossible for me." Whether this is intended to mean that she is physically unable to carry it herself, or that she has no authority to order someone to do the job, or that indeed it means that as a woman she is not allowed to go herself, is unclear.

O. 259 by contrast has Tsie writing to Frange that she has promised him a *keration* as a gift, but due to the bad roads she has not found a way to get it to him. Since she presumably managed to send him the message on the ostrakon, one can only assume that what she was referring to was that the roads were unsafe for the transport of money. What becomes very clear through these letters, however, is that a woman like Tsie had the financial means to support her brother's life as a monk in *TT* 29 across the Nile. So, the question arises, what role did women generally play? Could they be made responsible for certain compulsory services or at least for financing such services? If they had property, women had to pay land taxes. So one inevitably returns to the former question, that

⁵⁰ Published recently by Boud'hors, Anne and Chantal Heurtel. *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29 Autour du moine Frangé*. 2 vols. Bruxelles: CReA-Patrimoine, 2010.

is, if women were fiscally and financially not of minor importance, where are their travel documents?

In the small town of Jeme, in the Theban area, one also finds women interacting with monks much like the sister of Frange. Female relatives are seen to provide financial and material support for the monks of the monastery of Epiphanius.⁵¹ A small ostrakon from that monastery, *O.Mon. Epiph.* 352, preserves a fragmentary letter from a woman named Mariam to a man named Moses in which she mentions that she will bring a loom loaded on two camels. Jeme women are generally found buying and selling goods and property for the monks, running errands like duplicating a key (*O.Mon.Epiph.* 397) or delivering letters (*O.Mon.Epiph.* 343).⁵²

Women are asked to supply agricultural products such as wine also to monasteries of other regions, like the Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit (*P.Mon.Apollo* 49). As Terry Wilfong, who studied the women of Jeme, argues, by facilitating male monasticism women have a chance to participate in it.⁵³ In *KRU* 35,⁵⁴ a document from Jeme, dated to 6 October 719, we see something rather remarkable. Two women, Abigaia and her aunt Elisabeth, draw up an agreement between themselves over property that they had jointly inherited from their mother and grandmother respectively. Both women are identified first and foremost by their deceased parents' names and not by the name of their husbands. Even though they are both properly married and their husbands are mentioned later in the document, the latter are only mentioned as agreeing with their wives in everything. Likewise in *KRU* 68, which is Elisabeth's will dating from May or June 723, she is identified by her deceased parents and addresses her husband directly, to whom she is entrusting all her property.⁵⁵ In a settlement between herself and her eldest son from her first marriage, *KRU* 37, Elisabeth's son addresses her, identifying her first by her deceased parents, and only afterwards by her current husband.⁵⁶

Women acting quite independently can also be seen elsewhere, such as in the already mentioned "Zusatzurkunde", *P.Schutzbrieife* 56, where

⁵¹ Cf. Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 110.

⁵² See more examples in *ibid.*, 111.

⁵³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁴ See Till, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 111–14, and Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 47–58.

⁵⁵ See Till, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 177–83, and Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 58–62.

⁵⁶ See Till, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 118–21, and Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 64ff.

Kyra Marou acts as the lessor of a property to be cultivated by a peasant for a period of three years. She gives him her *logos mpnoute* as security, in her role as a landlord, in this case the landlord being a woman acting entirely by herself. Thus, women, even if married, could act legally independently, administering their own property in their own name. But even though they could act as a party to a legal agreement, they never appear as scribes, witnesses, or in any official position of authority. Access to such public roles in the administration of their community was entirely blocked.⁵⁷

As a financial source, however, women were quite acceptable within their local community. They paid land taxes, if they owned land, and are occasionally found to pay other taxes as well, mainly by taking over financial responsibility for some of their male relatives.⁵⁸ In a possible list of guarantors from eighth century Jeme, *KRU* 119, women also occur alongside men standing surety for another person, which shows a semi-official inclusion into public life within their community.⁵⁹ A very well documented example of the importance of women's public role in an economic capacity stems from a lucky discovery made in Jeme where 30 ostraca were unearthed in a private house (No. 34), all documenting the activities of a family around a woman named Koloje, who acted as moneylenders.⁶⁰ This family "business" started with a woman named Katharon, Koloje's grandmother, and seems to have passed down through the generations, as even Koloje's son and grandson were involved in the money lending business. Most documents, however, deal with Koloje's legal and economic activities, a woman whose basic trade was the lending of money or agricultural products at interest.⁶¹

In *O.Medin.HabuCopt* 50 a man acknowledges that he owes to Koloje a large amount of wheat that he will repay with interest. *O.Medin.HabuCopt* 51 is similar only in that the borrower is a woman who owes her one gold *tremis* to be paid with interest in wheat. The witnesses are two men. Here we see that even when a woman borrows from a woman, the witnesses are male. In *O.Medin.HabuCopt* 72 Mariam, a

⁵⁷ See for example *ibid.*, 88–90.

⁵⁸ For evidence from Jeme see *ibid.*, 91–92.

⁵⁹ See Till, Walter C. *Die koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Theben*. Wien: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1964, 196–97. For discussion of this document see Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 90 and 92–93.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 117.

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 120–21.

woman from Petemout, across the Nile from Jeme, has left a necklace with Koloje as security for 2 *solidi* she borrowed, but she cannot pay back the money and attests that the necklace is now the possession of Koloje. *O.Medin.HabuCopt* 73 documents a man from Jeme leaving jewelry with Koloje as security for 4 *solidi*. He also cannot pay the money and renounces ownership of the objects.⁶²

The items lent were either agricultural products, such as wheat, or money. On these items interest was collected either in kind (wheat, dates, sesame, or lentils) or in money. Objects, such as clothing, household items, or jewelry were deposited as securities for these loans.⁶³ While women in these documents seem to mostly borrow money, men borrowed grain just as often as money.⁶⁴ Women like Koloje or her grandmother made loans in money or kind to male and female costumers independent of any husbands and entirely without reference to male relatives.⁶⁵ And they were not an exception. About ten different female moneylenders are known from the small town Jeme alone. In about a third of the Jeme loans the lenders are women.⁶⁶ According to Wilfong, about a third of the borrowers in Jeme are also female, and women clearly preferred to borrow from women, while men preferred to borrow from men, even though they are found to turn to female moneylenders as well.⁶⁷

Women seem to have been well accepted as business partners within their local community. Depending on their financial means they were able to acquire local public standing in their own name. Not only are they able to rent or sell property by themselves, they also have the possibility to gain an income through interest rates by way of lending out money or grain. That is to say, a woman of comfortable means was able to leave the private sphere of her family home and gain a certain degree of public distinction or recognition.

To a certain extent social recognition could also be achieved by more "traditional" means, such as through generous donations. As in the Roman and Byzantine periods, women could become donors of a public building, a bath, a church, a fountain, or parts thereof, like a mosaic or a mural painting. Similarly, smaller donations, such as furnishings to a

⁶² See *ibid.*, 122.

⁶³ See *ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

church or a monastery, as well as the donation of private property, animals, land, houses, or children to a local monastery, were popular ways of showing religious devotion and gaining social distinction. Less comfortable but perhaps even more effective was the choice to become an ascetic or a nun, a path unmarried women chose occasionally, especially those lacking financial means.⁶⁸

3.6 Conclusion

The public presence of women in the early Islamic period was no doubt physical through their attendance of festivals, secular as well as religious. Through commissioning buildings, paintings or burial monuments they could have a more visible and lasting impact. By way of religious donations, money lending, or the selling and buying of property and goods their financial public role could become more prominent. It would appear that the onset of Muslim rule did not bring any dramatic changes to women directly, but rather did so indirectly via new conditions, restrictions, and demands on the men in their lives, whether fathers, brothers or husbands. It is even possible that a publicly weakened Christian male population had the unintended consequence of a certain rise in female activity. Christian women remain a public minority in early Islamic Egypt, but now, it would seem, for different reasons. Under the new Muslim rule they are repressed not so much by themselves but alongside their Christian brothers.

In the early Islamic period there seems to be not only a sudden increase of Coptic documents, but also of Coptic documents showing women acting entirely independently in various capacities. In many cases Christian women took over their male relatives' occupation as landlords, property sellers, or moneylenders. This seems to indicate that the early Arab rule did not prohibit Christian women to pursue an occupation or to take an active part in the business of a local community. If Christian husbands, brothers and fathers did not exclude their female relatives from local public life then neither did the Muslim authorities. This may have been the result of a temporary power vacuum as Byzantine rule ceased before the new Islamic rule was firmly established.

⁶⁸ For a short overview of the possibilities at Jeme see *ibid.*, 95–116.

Even though women in the Roman and Byzantine periods had been known to handle their own property with various degrees of independence,⁶⁹ the large amount of evidence for female economic activity in the early Islamic period showing a complete lack of male guardians is surprising. Perhaps due to the financial hardships and restricted upward mobility for Christian men under Muslim rule the opportunity, or even the need, might have arisen for Christian women to occasionally step outside their domestic sphere and participate in local community affairs. If that is the case, then the very fact that, contrary to the treatment of Christian men, no particular restrictions seem to have been put on Christian women in the early stages of Muslim rule may be quite a significant one.

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⁶⁹ See for example the documentary evidence gathered in Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, 195–206; as well as Hobson, Deborah W. “Women as Property Owners in Roman Egypt,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113 (1983), 311–21.

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Part II

Law

4

The Scholiasts Speak: How Middle Byzantine Jurists Construed the Legal Status of Jews

Zachary Chitwood
(Humboldt University of Berlin)

4.1 Introduction

This paper will explore how a clearly hegemonic culture, that of the Middle Byzantine Empire, construed the legal status of its only officially sanctioned ethno-religious minority, the Jews. Among religious and ethnic minorities, Jews were unique in having an official, albeit restricted, legal status in Middle Byzantine law.¹ To the extent to which the relatively meager surviving sources allow such a generalisation, Jews were

¹ A very good overview of the legal status of Jews in the Byzantine Empire has just recently appeared: see Linder, Amnon. "The Legal Status of Jews in the Byzantine Empire," in Robert Bonfil *et al.*, eds., *Jews in Byzantium. Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*. Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture, vol. 14 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 149-218. Encompassing more than a thousand pages, *Jews in Byzantium* is a gold-mine of information on numerous aspects of the Jewish community in Byzantium. Although old, Joshua Starr's history of the Jews during this period is still extremely useful and serves as a good introduction to the subject: Starr, Joshua. *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641-1204*. Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie Nr. 30. Athens: Verlag der "byzantinisch-neugriechischen Jahrbücher," 1939. On their legal status in particular, see *ibid.*, 18-26. Useful as well is Scharf, Andrew. "Jews in Byzantium," in *The World History of the Jewish People* (Tel-Aviv: Jewish History Publications Ltd.; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964-), Second Series, Medieval Period, vol. 2, Tel-Aviv (1966), 49-68; 393-98; 455-56 [reprinted in *idem. Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1995), 52-77]. Lastly, the various publications of Nicholas de Lange deal extensively with the Jewish community in Byzantium. His inventory of documents in the Cairo Genizah which are of interest to Byzantinists present a fascinating picture of the daily life of Jews in Byzantium: see de Lange, Nicholas. "Byzantium in the Cairo Genizah," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 16 (1992), 34-47.

the only minority in the Middle Byzantine Empire who were allowed to live according to their own laws. Moreover, the separate legal status of Jews was unique. Other non-Romans (*barbaroi*) living in the Byzantine Empire were expected to follow Roman law; 'ethnic' customs which contradicted Roman law were not legally valid. Those designated as 'heretics' or 'pagans', on the other hand, had extremely restricted legal status or none at all. A case from the eleventh-century compilation of the jurist Eustathios Rhomaios, the so-called *Peira*, demonstrates this nicely.² In it a high-ranking official of foreign origin makes a will using so-called 'ethnic' inheritance customs. In examining the will, Eustathios notes that even for high-ranking officials of foreign origin it is necessary to follow Roman law in inheritance practices. Even if foreigners are ignorant of Roman law, they have access to legal experts who can aid them, Eustathios concludes.

As with other facets of Byzantine society, at first glance the legal status of Jews remained practically unchanged from the time of Justinian's

² *Peira = Jus graeco-romanum*. Ed. Karl Edward Zachariä von Lingenthal. 4 vols. Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1856-65, vol. 1 (1856). *Peira*, 14.16: "A certain *patrikios* made a will, and wrote that the wife of his second marriage should be the possessor of all his fortune. But he had a daughter from his first marriage, who was found to have taken much less from [her father's estate] than from her mother's estate. And the *magistros* [i.e. Eustathios Rhomaios] ruled thus: 'For someone who makes a will, even if he is from a foreign people, but has come to the Roman Empire and been honored with a great rank and showered with many gifts, it is necessary that he follow the laws of the Romans and [therefore] not make a testament according to ethnic customs. For although he does not know the truth of the laws, however he is able to ask those who ought to teach him what is necessary.' And on account of this, in regard to its legal accuracy and [his] decision the provisions of the testament were corrected. ("Οτι ο δεῖνα ο πατρικιος διέθετο, και ἔγραψε τὴν δευτέραν αὐτοῦ γαμετὴν κυρίαν και ἐξουσίαστριαν τῆς πάσης αὐτοῦ περιουσίας. εἶχε δὲ οὗτος ἐκ πρώτου γάμου θυγατέρα, ἥτις εὕρισκεται πολλῶ ἐλάττονα λαβούσα τῆς μητρῶας. και ἐσημειώσατο ὁ μάγιστρος οὕτως· ὅτι ὁ διαθέμενος, εἰ και βαρβαρικῶ γένους ἦν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ῥωμαϊκῇ βασιλείᾳ προσεληλυθὼς και ἀξιώματι μεγάλῳ τιμηθεὶς και πολλῶν δωρεῶν ἀξιωθεὶς, ἀνάγκην εἶχε τοῖς ῥωμαίων ἔπεσθαι νόμοις και μὴ ἐθνικῶς διατίθεσθαι. εἰ γὰρ και μὴ ἤδει τὴν τῶν νόμων ἀκρίβειαν, ὅμως εἶχε τοὺς ὀφείλοντας ἐρωτᾶσθαι και διδάσκειν τὸ δέον αὐτόν. και διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς τὴν νομικὴν ἀκρίβειαν και γνώμην τὰ τῆς διαθήκης ἰθύνθη).” On the other hand another case, *Peira*, 54.6, finds Eustathios Rhomaios allowing unusual provisions in a will to stand because a potential heir was a foreigner (*ethnikos*). Both of the aforementioned *Peira* cases are analyzed in Laiou, Angeliki E. "L'étranger de passage de l'étranger privilégié à Byzance, XI^e-XII^e siècles," in Laurent Mayali, ed., *Identité et droit de l'autre* (Berkeley, CA: University of California at Berkeley, 1994), 69-88.

codification of Roman law.³ The *Basilika*⁴, a recapitulation of Justinianic law completed in the eleventh century, transmitted sixth-century regulations with very few changes. Yet while the normative law codes tended to present a relatively unchanging façade of continuity, imperial legislation, namely that of Justinian I (r. 527-65) and Leo VI (r. 886-912), placed ever more restrictions on the legal rights of Jews living in the Byzantine Empire. These imperial novels took place against a backdrop of occasional attempts at forced conversion. Thus Byzantine law, as the direct heir of the Roman legal tradition, contained something of a dichotomy regarding the legal status of Jews: a pre-Justinianic body of imperial constitutions which granted them various legal rights and which gave them the most protected legal status of any ethnic-religious minority, as opposed to Justinianic and post-Justinianic constitutions and novels which, sometimes in direct conflict with older laws, imposed increased restrictions on their legal status. As we shall see, this dichotomy of legal status did not go

³ On the problem of Byzantine law as an unchanging system, see Kazhdan, Alexander. "Do We Need a New History of Byzantine Law?" *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 39 (1989), 1-29; Oikonomides, Nicholas. "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Rhomaïos. An Abortive Attempt to Innovate in Byzantine Law," *Fontes Minores* 7 (1986), 169-92.

⁴ Scholars traditionally dated the *Basilika* to the reign of Leo VI, but Andreas Schminck has convincingly proved that we should distinguish between Leo VI's recapitulation of Justinianic law (the so-called *Sixty Books*, promulgated during the Christmas of 888) and the later *Basilika*, the text of which was, according to Schminck, somewhat different from the *Sixty Books* and to which a catena-style scholia apparatus was attached. The *Basilika* underwent the last of its revisions in the middle of the eleventh century, possibly during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-55); for all of this, see Schminck, Andreas. "Basilika". In Kazhdan, Alexander *et al.*, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium (ODB)*. 3 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; *idem*. "Frömmigkeit ziere das Werk," *Subseciva Groningana* 3 (1989), 79-114; *idem*. *Studien zu mittelbyzantinischen Rechtsbüchern*. Frankfurt: Löwenklau, 1986, 24ff. Although Thomas van Bochove disputes many of Schminck's conclusions, rejecting for instance that there was any substantive difference between the *Sixty Books* and the *Basilika*, he does not contest Schminck's distinction between the *Sixty Books* and the *Basilika*: see van Bochove, Th. E. *To Date and Not To Date. On the Date and Status of Byzantine Law Books*. Groningen: Egbert Forstein, 1996, 107-39. For a newer chronology of the redactions of Roman law which stem from the beginning of the Macedonian dynasty, including a discussion of Schminck and van Bochove's chronologies, see Signes Codoñer, Juan and Francisco Javier Andrés Santos. *La introducción al derecho (eisagoge) del patriarca Focio*. Nueva Roma 28. Madrid: Consejo Superior des Investigaciones Científicas, 2007. For an overview of all these dating issues, see van Bochove, Thomas E. "Some Byzantine Law Books. Introducing the Continuous Debate Concerning Their Status and Their Date," in Jan H.A. Lokin and Bernard H. Stolte, eds., *Introduzione al diritto bizantino. Da Giustiniano ai Basilici* (Pavia: IUSS Press, 2011), 239-66.

unnoticed by Middle Byzantine jurists. This paper proposes to examine how the Middle Byzantine jurists who created and commented upon the *Basilika* resolved these two differing approaches to the legal status of Jews—specifically, does the commentary tradition as well as the process of translation from Latin to Greek (*exhellenismos*) offer clues as to how jurists negotiated the legal status of the Jewish community in the Byzantine Empire?⁵ The answer to the question, as we shall see, is a definite yes: there is strong evidence that Middle Byzantine jurists ignored or selectively interpreted Justinianic and post-Justinianic legislation which added further restrictions to Jewish legal status.

4.2 The Status of Jews in the *Corpus Juris Civilis* (CJC) and the *Basilika*⁶

The Republican and early Imperial Roman state had little difficulty assimilating non-Roman peoples and cultures within its legal framework, and the Jews were no exception to this truism.⁷ Excepting the periods of persecution and curtailment of the influence of Jewish law, *Halakhah*, which took place against the backdrop of the Judaeo-Roman wars of 66-73 and 132-5, Roman law largely accepted Jewish participation in all

⁵ Although it is no doubt obvious from what has already been stated, this paper shall restrict itself to the limited question of the legal status of Jews in the normative legal sources. The question as to the extent to which this legal status was actually enforced or not, while a fascinating question in its own right, lies outside the scope of this paper and is in any case more comprehensively treated elsewhere.

⁶ References in this article to the Justinianic redaction of Roman law are from the standard Krueger, Mommsen and Schoell edition: *Corpus iuris civilis*. Ed. Paul Krueger, Theodore Mommsen, and Rudolf Schoell. 3 vols. Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1900-5. References to the *Basilika* are from the Groningen edition: *Basilicorum libri LX*. Ed. H.J. Scheltema and N. van der Wal. Scripta Universitatis Groninganae. 17 vols. (Series A = Text, 8 vols.; Series B = Scholia, 9 vols.). Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1953-88. For these texts the following abbreviations are employed in this article: *Dig.* = *Digest*, *Cod.* = *Codex Justinianus*, *Nov.* = *Novels of Justinian*, *Bas.* = *Basilika* and *Bas. Schol.* = *Scholia to the Basilika*. A comprehensive collection of Byzantine, Roman and Early Medieval legislation concerning Jews can be found in the various works of Amnon Linder: *idem*, ed. and trans. *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press; Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997; *idem*, ed. and trans. *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press; Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1987.

⁷ Linder, "Legal Status," 150ff.

economic, political and social facets. In general, the Jewish community in the Roman Empire was granted exceptions from duties or requirements which conflicted with their religious beliefs. For instance, even given the increasing importance of the Imperial Cult in the second century, Jews were exempted from worshipping the imperial person.⁸

As the imperial administration and state apparatus came to be increasingly Christianized from the fourth century onward, the legal regime began to reflect this process of Christianisation. Heretics and non-Christians had their rights restricted, a development which affected the Jewish community in the later Roman Empire as well. Nonetheless, within the *CJC*, the Jewish community enjoyed more and better protections than other non-Christians or heretics. Jews could bring suits and have them judged according to Jewish law, and the verdicts were to be treated as the sentence of a lawful judge (ὡς ἡ τοῦ νομίμου δικαστοῦ φήφορος) and enforced by the magistrates.⁹ Jews could also marry according to their own laws, but of course marriage between Christians and Jews was forbidden.¹⁰ Christians who seized Jewish property without provocation were to render double the amount of the theft as a penalty¹¹; their synagogues were likewise protected (although no new synagogues could be constructed)¹². Public exactions could not be imposed during the Sabbath or religious holidays.¹³ In addition to protections, there also existed a number of prohibitions: Jews could not circumcise Christians¹⁴ or hold public office¹⁵. These aforementioned regulations, as found in the *Codex Justinianus* and later incorporated into the *Basilika*, were all drawn from pre-Justinianic constitutions. The novels and constitutions of Justinian added considerable legal restrictions to Jews and other religious minorities. Jews were forbidden from owning Christian slaves,¹⁶

⁸ *Dig.* 50.2.3.3.

⁹ *Bas.* 1.1.38 = *Cod.* 1.9.8.

¹⁰ *Bas.* 1.1.34-5.

¹¹ *Bas.* 1.1.11 = *Cod.* 1.11.6.

¹² *Bas.* 1.1.33 = *Cod.* 1.9.4; *Bas.* 1.1.40 = *Cod.* 1.9.14. For a comparison with the situation on the building of synagogues and churches in Fustât see the chapter of Audrey Dridi in this volume (p. 107ff.)

¹³ *Bas.* 1.1.39 = *Cod.* 1.9.13.

¹⁴ *Bas.* 1.1.42 (= 60.54.27) = *Cod.* 1.9.16. In fact, the ban on circumcision was, in its original (probably second century C.E.) form a prohibition on proselytizing: see Linder, "Legal Status," 168.

¹⁵ *Bas.* 1.1.43 = *Cod.* 1.9.18.

¹⁶ *Bas.* 1.1.47 = *Nov.* 37, §7.

and they were forced to read their sacred texts in Greek, Latin or other predominant local languages.¹⁷

4.3 Jewish Legal Status as Interpreted by the Scholiasts to the *Basilika*

Unfortunately, since Book 1 of the *Basilika*, in which most of the regulations concerning Jews are found, is one of the non-extant or so-called *restituti* books of the *Basilika*, the part of the scholia apparatus which would have commented upon these passages has likewise not survived.¹⁸ Therefore in order to analyze the reactions of Byzantine jurists to these passages one is forced to rely on the far fewer number of regulations concerning Jews elsewhere in the *Basilika*.¹⁹ Nonetheless, these scholia do allow for some fascinating glimpses of how Byzantine jurists interpreted Roman law with regard to Jews.²⁰ One of Justinian's constitutions in particular, which was later incorporated into the *Basilika* (*Cod.*1.5.21 = *Bas.* 21.1.45), caused considerable consternation among Byzantine jurists. The original constitution, issued in the year 531, prohibited heretics from testifying in court against an orthodox party, regardless of whether the orthodox party was the plaintiff or defendant.²¹ The constitution

¹⁷ *Bas.* 1.1.53 = *Nov.* 146.

¹⁸ On the *restituti* books of the *Basilika*, see van der Wal, Nicholaas. "Probleme bei der Restitution verlorengegangener Basilikenbücher," *Subseciva Groningana* 3 (1989), 143-54.

¹⁹ Note that Linder's analysis of the Byzantine legislation concerning Jews in the *Basilika* (Linder, "Legal Status," 186-191) is based on the understanding that the three editions of the *Basilika* (that of Farbot, the Heimbach brothers and the most recent Groningen edition) represent three separate recensions of the text along with three separate dates of composition. In fact, these are simply three successive editions of the same *Basilika* text, but any analysis of the *Basilika* should employ the Groningen edition exclusively; even the nineteenth-century Heimbach edition is full of errors, although its wide availability in a digital format as well as its Latin translation of the *Basilika* still makes it useful in certain respects. The different datings in the three editions reflect the constantly shifting opinion as to when exactly the *Basilika* was written and in what respects the first version of the *Basilika* differed from the version that has survived.

²⁰ Linder, "Legal Status," 192-3.

²¹ *Cod.* 1.5.21: "Imperator Justinianus. Quoniam multi iudices in dirimendis litigiis nos interpellaverunt, indigentes nostro oraculo, ut eis reseretur, quid de testibus haereticis statuendum sit, utrumne accipiantur eorum testimonia an respuantur, sancimus contra orthodoxos quidem litigantes nemini haeretico vel etiam his qui iudaicam su-

apparently applied to Jews as well, although at first in the text somewhat ambiguously (“qui Iudaicam supersitionem colunt”—a phrase that, as shall be shown below, was also applied to heretics and particularly Nestorians) and then less so later in the text (“inter se autem haereticis vel Iudaeis”). The constitution did however, allow certain heretics to testify in cases contested amongst themselves, as well as the ability to testify in cases involving testaments and contracts. By way of its translation from Latin to Greek, Middle Byzantine jurists simplified the constitution considerably, and rendered the references to Jews in the original as “those honoring the Judaic religion” (οἱ τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴν θρησκείαν σέβοντες)—thus in the *Basilika*, unlike the original Justinianic constitution, there is no unambiguous mention of Jews.²² While it is possible that Jews could have been implied under the general designation of ‘heretics’, this is usually not the case in civil and canon texts from the Middle Byzantine period. It is interesting to note that roughly the same time as

perstitionem colunt esse in testimonia communionem, sive utraque pars orthodoxa sit sive altera.

1. Inter se autem haereticis vel iudaeis, ubi litigandum existimaverint, concedimus foedus permixtum et dignos litigatoribus etiam testes introduci, exceptis scilicet his, quos vel manichaeus furor (cuius partem et borboritas esse manifestissimum est) vel pagana superstitio detinet, samaritis nihilo minus et qui illis non absimiles sunt, id est montanistis et tascodrogis et ophitis, quibus pro reatus similitudine omnis legitimus actus interdictus est.

2. Sed et his quidem, id est manichaeis et borboritis et paganis nec non samaritis et montanistis et tascodrogis et ophitis, omne testimonium sicut et alias legitimas conversationes sancimus esse interdictum: aliis vero haereticis tantummodo iudicialia testimonia contra orthodoxos, secundum quod constitutum est, volumus esse inhibita. 3. Ceterum testamentaria testimonia eorum et quae in ultimis elogiis vel in contractibus consistunt, propter utilitatem necessarii usus sine ulla distinctione permittimus, ne probationum facultas angustetur. * IUST. A. IOHANNI PP. * <A 531 D. V K. AUG. CONSTANTINOPOLI POST CONSULATUM LAMPADII ET ORESTIS VV. CC.>”.

²² *Bas.* 21.1.45: “Among heretics neither Manichaeans nor Vorboritai nor pagans nor Samaritans nor Montanistai nor Taskodrougitai nor Ophitai nor those honoring the Judaic religion shall give testimony in any [court]. And all the other [heretics] shall not be received in a court having an orthodox person as the defendant, but in all other transactions or wills or legal matters having heretics as litigants they shall witness unimpeded on account of the magnitude of the evidence. (Τῶν αἰρετικῶν οἱ μὲν Μανιχαῖοι καὶ οἱ Βορβορίται ἢ Ἕλληνες ἢ Σαμαρεῖται ἢ Μοντανισταὶ ἢ Τασκοδρουγῖται ἢ Ὀφῖται ἢ οἱ τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴν θρησκείαν σέβοντες ἐν μηδενὶ μαρτυρεῖτωσαν. Οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ πάντες ἐν δικαστηρίῳ μὲν ὀρθόδοξον ἔχοντι ἀντίδικον μὴ δεχέσθωσαν, ἐν δὲ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσι συναλλάγμασιν ἢ διαθήκαις ἢ δικαστηρίοις αἰρετικοὺς ἔχουσιν ἀντίδικους ἀδιαστίτως μαρτυρεῖτωσαν τοῦ πλάτους χάριν τῶν ἀποδείξεων).”

the completion of the *Basilika* the use of the so-called ‘Jewish Oath’—a formula by which Jews could swear in court—began to appear.²³

The fact that this constitution, if Jews are included among the heretics forbidden to testify in court when an orthodox party is present, appears to contradict other laws which allow suits between Christians and Jews to take place, was not lost on the scholiasts who latter commented upon the passage.²⁴ As a starting point for how Middle Byzantine jurists interpreted this passage it is useful to refer to the text in the form in which they would have read it, which probably would not have been in the original Latin. For the *Codex Justinianus*, one of the most frequently-consulted texts was the *antecessor* Thalelaios’ commentary on the *Codex Justinianus*, to which an *ad verbum* Greek translation called a *kata podas* was affixed.²⁵ The *Codex Justinianus*, written as it was in the highly verbose and flowery Latin of the imperial court, presented a great challenge even for Latin-speaking law students in the context of the still bilingual empire of the sixth century; by the time of the Middle Byzantine period, there were exceptionally few jurists with the capability to read these imperial constitutions in the original Latin, so the various didactic materials of the so-called *antecessores*, which were written in Greek, were the means by which Middle Byzantine jurists consulted Roman law. In Thalelaios’ commentary on the passage,²⁶ which is included in the scholia apparatus, he sticks closely to the original Latin and renders “those honoring the [Judaic] religion” as “τῶν τὴν θρησκείαν σεβομένων” and “Jews” is rendered of course as “Ἰουδαῖοι”. However, it is the commentary of another *antecessor*, Theodore, which places the passage in a really interesting light.²⁷ He notes that a heretic senator, for example, is still able to give testimony in court in a case involving an orthodox party, because he is subject to the senate. Moreover, he writes, “note that Jews are not in-

²³ Patlagean, Évelyne. “Contribution juridique à l’histoire des Juifs dans la Méditerranée médiévale. Les formules grecques de serment,” *Revue des études juives* 124 (1965), 137-56.

²⁴ *Bas.* 1.1.41 = *Cod.* 1.9.15: “Si qua inter christianos et iudaeos sit contentio, non a senioribus iudaeorum, sed ab ordinariis iudicibus dirimatur.”

²⁵ See Schminck, Andreas. “Thalelaios.” In *ODB*. On his commentaries and the *kata podas* translation affixed to his *Codex* commentary, see van der Wal, Nicholaas. *Les commentaires grecs du code de Justinien* (Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Excelsior, 1953), 64-104. For the date that the *kata podas* translation was affixed to Thalelaios’ commentary (probably the seventh century), see van der Wal, *Les commentaires*, 103.

²⁶ *Bas. Schol.* 21.1.45.2.

²⁷ *Bas. Schol.* 21.1.45.1.

cluded among the miserable [sects] enumerated here.” As justification for this interpretation, Theodore continues by saying, “For my own teacher, Stephan, was of this opinion.” Thus although another *antecessor* read the passage as referring to Jews as well, Theodore, probably realizing that such an interpretation would contradict other laws concerning the legal status of Jews, chose to read the passage in such a way so that Jews were not prohibited from giving testimony in court when an orthodox party was present.

Theodore’s line of interpretation was expanded by other scholiasts—an anonymous scholiast noted that, “The constitution does not say Jews (for these ones, when there is no Orthodox opposing party, are able to render testimony legitimately, as the laws say so about them), but rather Nestorians, for like the Jews they think that Christ was a mere man, believing that Christ and the divine *logos* were separated in his *hypostaseis*. That it refers to the madness of Nestorios as the ‘Judaic superstition’ is clear from chapter 40, book 1 (*Bas.* 1.1.40).”²⁸ Another anonymous scholiast helpfully adds that “Nestorians reverence the [beliefs] of the Jews.”²⁹ Two other scholia likewise underline that the constitution refers to heretics alone.³⁰

As is clear from the way the Justinianic constitution was eventually rendered into Greek, the compilers of the *Basilika* adopted the interpretation that this passage did not in fact refer to Jews, even though Jews are clearly meant in the original Justinianic constitution. Although one could attribute this interpretation to a misreading of the original text, in this case this is highly unlikely, as Middle Byzantine jurists possessed an accurate paraphrase of the original constitution, which unambiguously rendered Jews as “Ἰουδαῖοι”. Almost certainly, the partial nullification of the original Justinianic constitution was intentional. From a purely theoretical standpoint, such an act should have been impossible, as Byzan-

²⁸ *Bas. Schol.* 21.1.45.7: “Ἰουδαϊκὴν θρησκείαν σέβοντες—Ἡ διάταξις οὐ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους φησὶν (οὗτοι γάρ, ἔνθα μὴ ἔστιν ὀρθόδοξος ἀντίδικος, ὀρθῶς μαρτυροῦσιν, ὡς οἱ περὶ αὐτῶν νόμοι φασὶν), ἀλλὰ τοὺς Νεστοριανούς, καθὼς καὶ οὗτοι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἐπίσης ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον οἶονται τὸν Χριστὸν ἄλλον τοῦτον εἶναι καὶ ἄλλον τὸν θεῖον λόγον ἐν διηρημέναις ταῖς ὑποστάσεσι δοξάζοντες. Ὅτι δὲ τὴν τοῦ Νεστορίου παραπληξίαν Ἰουδαϊκὴν θρησκείαν ἀποκαλεῖ, δῆλον ἀπὸ τοῦ μ'. κεφ. τοῦ α'. βιβ.” It should be noted that the reference provided by the scholiast, so far as I can tell, does not provide support for the interpretation that this passage refers to Nestorians rather than Jews.

²⁹ *Bas. Schol.* 21.1.45.15: “Οἱ Νεστοριανοὶ οἱ σέβοντες τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.”

³⁰ *Bas. Schol.* 21.1.45.16-7.

tine law, unlike Roman law for most of its existence, was in principal a codified system—all imperial legislation was legitimate law unless specifically revoked.³¹ The judge or jurist had no power to create or change law. The phenomenon at work here, I would suggest, is one proposed by Marie Theres Fögen, namely that the Byzantine jurists who created the *Basilika*, when confronted with contradictory laws, were free to choose among them according to their merits.³² Although Fögen restricted her analysis to novels of Leo VI which abrogated older laws, mainly of the emperor Justinian, in this instance we see that the opinion of prominent jurists—Theodore and Stephan via Theodore—could circumvent imperial opinion. The importance of the writings of the *antecessores* in the Middle Byzantine period was immense; Stephan, for instance, was regarded as one of the foremost legal scholars and his writings were, at least in one eleventh-century legal treatise, the *Meditatio de nudis pactis*, championed against the authority of the *Basilika*.³³ Therefore in this case the opinion of Stephan that the prohibition against heretics giving testimony in court did not in fact refer to Jews carried the day, and the relevant *Basilika* passage reflects this.

4.4 The Jews in the Legislation of Leo VI

After Justinian, the second emperor who made the greatest efforts to restrict the legal status of Jews was the emperor Leo VI. Leo VI's legislative efforts against the Jews can be seen as the culmination of a trend towards increasing imperial hostility and legislative restrictions against Jews during the Middle Byzantine period, which in turn can be juxtaposed with the restricted, albeit protected legal status of Jews before the reign of Justinian. The former period is also marked by periodic attempts at forced conversion. The first, effected by the emperor Heraclius (r. 610-41) in 632, marked a major turning point in the status of Jews under Roman and Byzantine law; to that point, despite persecution and various legal restrictions, the right of the Jewish community to exist had

³¹ Stolte, Bernard H. "Not New but Novel. Notes on the Historiography of Byzantine law," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 22 (1998), 270-1.

³² Fögen, Marie Theres. "Legislation und Kodifikation des Kaisers Leon VI," *Subseciva Groningana* 3 (1989), 33-5.

³³ *Meditatio de nudis pactis*. Ed. Monnier, Henry and G. Platon, in Henry Monnier ed., *Études de droit byzantin* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974), pt. 3, 2-246.

been taken for granted.³⁴ Forced conversions of Jews are mentioned in contemporary sources during the reigns of Leo III (r. 717-41), Basil I (r. 867-886) and Romanos I (r. 920-44). Against this background of forced conversion, the official legal status of Jews remained unchanged during this epoch. References to Jews are rare in other law codes from this period: they are not found in the *Ecloga*, and laws regulating the legal status of Jews in the *Procheiron* as well as the *Eisagoge* contain no innovations.³⁵ Novel 55 of Leo VI, therefore, represents the first legislation which has survived since the time of Justinian concerning the Jews.³⁶

Novel 55, like most of Leo's *Novels*, begins by describing an older canon or civil law regulation. In this instance Leo refers to the contents of Justinian's Novel 146 concerning the liturgical language which Jews were to use. Rather than interpreting this novel as interfering with the liturgy of the Jewish community, Leo reads the novel as a confirmation of the rights of Jews to live according to their own laws. Leo then recounts that his father, Basil I, was not content that Jews in the Byzantine Empire continued to live according to their ancient customs.³⁷ Basil therefore forcibly baptized the Jews and banned their ancient customs, including circumcision and observance of the Sabbath.³⁸ Leo then mentions that while his father had forced the Jews to convert, he had neglected to invalidate laws granting Jews special legal status.³⁹ Leo corrected this omission by abrogating all earlier laws which regulated the Jewish community and compelled them to live as Christians, threatening those who

³⁴ On the forced conversions of Jews in the Middle Byzantine Empire, see Scharf, "Jews in Byzantium," 57-65.

³⁵ Linder plausibly suggests that the absence of Jews in the *Ecloga* perhaps reflects the forced conversion of Jews undertaken by Leo III in 721/2: see Linder, "Legal Status," 183. Alternatively, given that the *Ecloga* is concerned almost exclusively with private law, perhaps the jurists who composed it considered the legal status of Jews outside the remit of the text.

³⁶ Leo VI. *Novels of Leo VI*. Ed. Spyros Tröianos as: *Hoi Neares Leontos 6. tou Sophou* (Thessalonike, Hērodotos, 2007). Hereafter abbreviated as *Nov. Leo*.

³⁷ *Nov. Leo*. 55, lines 5-6. The account of Basil's forced conversion of the Jews is in the *Vita Basilii*, §95, pp. 341-2 (*Vita Basilii*. Ed. Immanuelis Bekkerus. *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus. CSHB* 33 [Bonn: Impensis Ed. Weberi, 1838], 211-353). Note that Ihor Sevcenko's new edition and translation of the *Vita Basilii* was not available at the time of the writing of this article.

³⁸ *Nov. Leo*. 55, lines 7-13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 13-5.

returned to Jewish customs and dogmas with the penalties meted out to apostates.⁴⁰

Although this is not the place to delve into the question of whether or not Leo's *Novels* were ever actually promulgated or enforced, his *Novels* in many cases did have an effect on the *Basilika*; Fögen found twenty instances where Leo's *Novels* led to interpolations in the *Basilika*.⁴¹ In this case, however, Leo's regulations led to no change in the relevant passages in the *Basilika*. On the contrary, Jews retained their Late Antique legal status under Roman law.

4.5 Canon Law Considerations

As the legal status of Jews within Byzantine civil law has been explored above, it is worth briefly summarizing how Middle Byzantine canon law construed the legal status of the Jewish community. Unlike post-Justinianic imperial legislation, canon law consistently affirmed the right of the Jewish community to exist and was primarily concerned with preventing the comingling of Christians and Jews on certain occasions (such as religious holidays) and preventing disingenuous conversion to Christianity. Middle Byzantine canon law collections also quite consistently condemned forced conversion. Thus, much like the scholiasts to the *Basilika* discussed above, Middle Byzantine canonists were acting against the grain of contemporaneous imperial novels.

Canon 11 of the Council in Trullo (691-2) forbid laity and clergy from eating the unleavened bread of Jews, as well as having contact with them, bathing with them, and calling upon them when sick and receiving medicine from them.⁴² Canon 8 of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) addressed the problem of Jews who pretended conversion yet maintained Jewish customs.⁴³ Both canons take for granted the right of Jews to

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, lines 16-22.

⁴¹ Fögen, "Legislation und Kodifikation des Kaisers Leon VI," 28-9.

⁴² *Council in Trullo*, Canon 11, 945-6 (*Council in Trullo*. Ed. Giovan Domenico Mansi as: *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* [Repr. Paris: H. Welter, 1901-27], vol. 11, 929-1006): "Μηδεὶς τῶν ἐν ἱερατικῷ σχήματι ἢ λαϊκὸς τὰ παρὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἄζυμα ἐσθιέτω, ἢ τοιοῦτους προσοικειούσθω, καὶ ἰαξείας παρ' αὐτῶν λαμβανέτω, ἢ ἐν βαλανείῳ παντελῶς τούτοις συλλουέσθω, εἰ δὲ τις τοῦτο πράξῃ ἐπιχειροίη, εἰ μὲν κληρικὸς εἶη, καθαιρεῖσθω. εἰ δὲ λαϊκός, ἀφορίζεσθω."

⁴³ *Council of Nicaea II*, Canon 8, 427-30 (*Council of Nicaea II*. Ed. Mansi as: *Sacrorum conciliorum*, vol. 12, 951-1154 and vol. 13, 759-820): "Ἐπειδὴ πλανώμενοί τινες

live as a separate community. In criticizing Jews who fake conversion, Canon 8 of the Council of Nicaea II states: “But clearly let the Jews live according to their religion; do not baptize their children, nor purchase or possess one as a slave.”

The most popular collection of canon law regulations was the so-called *Nomokanon of Fourteen Titles*, a work of uncertain but probably late sixth-century origin as well as two major reworkings in the ninth and eleventh centuries.⁴⁴ In its section on Jews and heretics (Chapter 12), the author notes that heretics are not allowed to testify in court against an orthodox party.⁴⁵ This restriction is not however extended to Jews: the author merely recounts the restrictions found against them in Book 1, Title 9 of the *Codex Justinianus*.⁴⁶ The edition here cited represents the state of the text at the end of the eleventh century, and it is interesting to note that the canonist who wrote this section, probably the Theodore Vestēs mentioned in the third version of the prologue, had adopted the same view regarding Jews testifying in court as the majority of the *Basilika* scholiasts: clearly, Jews were not to be lumped together with the heretics who were not allowed to testify in court against an orthodox party.⁴⁷

ἐκ τῆς τῶν Ἑβραίων θρησκείας, μυχτηρίζειν ἔδοξαν Χριστὸν τὸν θεὸν, προσποιούμενοι χριστιανίζειν, αὐτὸν δὲ ἀροῦνται, κρύβδην καὶ λαθραίως σαββατίζοντες, καὶ ἕτερα Ἰουδαϊκά ποιοῦντες· ὀρίζομεν τούτους μῆτε εἰς κοινωνίαν, μῆτε εἰς εὐχὴν, μῆτε εἰς ἐκκλησίαν δέχεσθαι· ἀλλὰ φανερώς ἔσωσαν κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν θρησκείαν Ἑβραῖοι· μῆτε τοὺς παῖδας αὐτῶν βαπτίζειν, μῆτε δοῦλον ὠνήσασθαι ἢ κτᾶσθαι· εἰ δὲ ἐξ εἰλικρινοῦς καρδίας καὶ πίστεως ἐπιστρέψει τις αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁμολογήσει ἐξ ὅλης καρδίας, θριαμεύων τὰ κατ’ αὐτῶν ἔθη καὶ πράγματα, πρὸς τὸ ἄλλους ἐλεγχθῆναι καὶ διορθώσασθαι, τοῦτον προσδέχεσθαι καὶ βαπτίζειν, καὶ τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἀσφαλίζεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἀποστήναι τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων, εἰ δὲ μὴ οὕτως ἔχοιεν, μηδαμῶς αὐτοὺς προσδέχεσθαι.”

⁴⁴ See Schminck, Andreas. “Nomokanon of Fourteen Titles”. In *ODB*, with further references there. Edition and Latin translation in: *Nomokanon of Fourteen Titles*. Ed. J.B. Pitra as: *Iuris ecclesiastici Graecorum historia et monumenta iussu Pii IX. Pont. Max.* 2 vols. (1st. vol., Rome: Typis Collegi urbani; 2nd vol., Rome: Typis S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1864-8), vol. 2, 433-640.

⁴⁵ *Nomokanon of Fourteen Titles*, 12.2.

⁴⁶ “...it says that their synagogues are not to be seized, they can neither be goaded nor threatened by Christians, they cannot marry Christians, they can regulate their own prices, concerning marriage they do not have to follow the [civil] law, and they can select their own judges regarding their own money matters, and their exarchs may introduce a regulatory tax at their discretion on their transactions, and they must not dare anything against Christians.”

⁴⁷ *Nov.* 146, which orders the reading of their sacred texts in Greek as well as other languages, is cited in the next section: *Nomokanon of Fourteen Titles*, 12.3.

In summation, post sixth-century canons and canon law collections tend to both reflect the opinions of the *Basilika* scholiasts and diverge from post-Justinianic imperial legislation regarding Jews. Canons from the Council in Trullo and Nicaea II, while reinforcing the separation of Christians and Jews, did not call into question the right of the Jewish community in the Byzantine Empire to exist. On the contrary, the aforementioned Canon 8 of Nicaea II discouraged insincere conversion to Christianity. Additionally, canon law regulations in the end reflected the interpretation of the *Basilika*'s scholiasts regarding the ability of Jews to testify in court; a fact which is unsurprising, given that the editors of canon law collections and scholiasts of the *Basilika* were often one and the same.

4.6 Conclusions

The results of this paper highlight some important features of the legal status of Jews in the Byzantine Empire. First of all, it is possible to discern an underlying tension between the privileges which the Jewish community held under Roman law and the efforts of Byzantine emperors to roll back those privileges, presumably as part of the continuing Christianisation of the empire and imperial ideology. Middle Byzantine jurists thus found themselves, as it were, between a rock and a hard place. They were obliged on the one hand to maintain the Late Roman legal order, but they had to acknowledge newer legislation which occasionally, and in the case of the legal status of the Jewish community substantially, undercut the former. Jurists negotiated this tension, as has been shown above, more conservatively than might have been expected; even Justinianic constitutions and novels which contradicted the privileges of Jews under Late Roman law were blunted through the act of *exhellēnismos*. A second observation that can be tendered is the degree to which the translation and redaction of legal texts for their incorporation into the *Basilika* was an interpretive act. What is presented in contemporary sources as a mere recapitulation of Late Roman law was in fact the implementation of a new legal order.⁴⁸ In the case of the Jews the *Basilika* in effect reset their legal status to what it had been at the start of the sixth century, before the reign of Justinian. Although some Justinianic

⁴⁸ Pieler, Peter. "Ανομάθαρσις τῶν παλαιῶν νόμων und makedonische Renaissance," *Subseciva Groningana* 3 (1989), 61-77.

legislation concerning Jews, such as Novel 146, was incorporated into the *Basilika* without any change, other legislation, like his constitution prohibiting Jews and heretics from rendering testimony in cases against Christians, was selectively reworked so that it did not contradict other laws regarding the legal status of Jews.

As to the larger implications of this analysis, what does the example of the legal status of Jews within Byzantine law tell us about the status of minorities in general within Byzantine society? As stated at the beginning of this paper, Jews were unique among ethnic-religious minorities in that they possessed legal status: there were no analogous legal privileges for heretics or pagans. At the end of the day, Jews perhaps owed much of their exceptional legal status under Byzantine law to institutional inertia. Put simply, the legal status of Jews was so ingrained within the Roman legal tradition that it could not be overturned by an individual emperor. In the instance where an individual emperor attempted to curtail some of their rights, like Justinian, or to take them away entirely, like Leo, Byzantine jurists were forced to circumvent (in the case of the former) or ignore completely (in the case of the latter) imperial legislation which would upset the logic of the Roman legal system.

Extending this line of reasoning, it is important to note with regard to legal questions that the official legal regime, given as it contained laws drawn from the sixth-century *Corpus Juris Civilis*, reflected a period when the Empire had been much larger and more diverse. The ideological transformation of the seventh century, with its attendant trend towards greater religious cohesion, did not result in a corresponding transformation of the official legal regime. Thus while the ideological trends toward greater religious cohesion resulted in perhaps greater persecution of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire, as indicated by the periodic attempts at forced conversion, the laws regarding Jews remained either Justinianic or in some cases pre-Justinianic. The decision of the redactors of the *Basilika* to include almost no post-Justinianic legislation or laws in the Empire's official legal collection meant that even when emperors periodically issued novels which reflected increasing ideological hostility towards Jews, as in the case of Leo VI, the only way such a drastic change could find its way into the normative legal regime was through the relatively uncommon phenomenon of interpolation. And as noted above, the jurists who decided whether or not to implement these interpolations appear to have largely ignored post-Justinianic or even Justinianic legislation re-

garding the increasing prohibitions and restrictions enacted against the Jewish community.

Overall, Byzantine attitudes towards minority communities, in this case the Jews, was characterized in the legal sources by a desire to preserve their Justinianic or in some cases pre-Justinianic legal status. I would suggest here that this tendency of Middle Byzantine jurists to preserve the Late Antique legal status of Jews was most likely not motivated by sympathy or toleration, but rather the desire of these jurists to preserve as accurately as possible the Late Roman legal regime. Thus later attempts to overturn the system of privileges granted to Jews under Roman law were blunted through selective interpretation or, in the case of Leo VI's legislation, completely ignored.

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5

Christian and Jewish Communities in Fustāṭ: Non-Muslim Topography and Legal Controversies in the Pre-Fatimid Period

Audrey Dridi

(University of Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne)

At the time of the Muslim conquest in 21/642, the great majority of Egyptians were Christians, living alongside a significant community of Jews.¹ The site of Babylon – chosen by the Muslim conquerors to build their new capital – was apparently unoccupied.² However, the adjoining area was inhabited by a large, native, non-Muslim population living on the right bank of the Nile, though they were possibly not strongly urbanised.³ Moreover, several churches and monasteries were located in the surroundings of the so-called Qaṣr al-Shamʿ, the Roman fortress of

¹ Wilfong, Terry G. "The Non-Muslim Communities. Christian Communities," in Carl F. Petry, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 175.

² This is the opinion of the archeologists of Fustāṭ, talking about the plateau of Iṣṭabl ʿAntar. See Gayraud, Roland-Pierre *et al.*, eds. "Iṣṭabl ʿAntar (Fostat) 1985. Rapports de Fouilles," *Annales islamologiques* 25 (1991), 63; *ibid.* "Fostat. Évolution d'une capitale arabe du VII^e au XII^e siècle d'après les fouilles d'Iṣṭabl ʿAntar," in Roland-Pierre Gayraud, ed., *Colloque international d'archéologie islamique* (Cairo: IFAO, 1998), 437. A passage in Abū al-Makārim is very interesting as it talks about monasteries and churches standing in the neighbourhood of Babylon before Fustāṭ's foundation: Abū Ṣāliḥ. *Tārīkh al-kanāʿ is wa-al-adyira*. Ed. B.T.A. Evetts as: *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895, 133, fol. 42a: "There were many monks here in hermitages (*ṣawāmiʿ*) and monasteries, and many churches, which the Muslims destroyed when they came with ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAsʿ, in the month of Muḥarram of the year 20 (A.D. 641)."

³ Kubiak, Wladyslaw B. *Al-Fustāṭ. Its Foundation and Early Urban Development*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987, 56. W. Kubiak assumes the presence of farms in the neighbourhood of the Roman fortress. Indeed, the soil was particularly fertile. Besides, he asserts: "the low alluvial land, especially immediately north of the fortress, was fertile and cultivated."

Babylon. The new capital, Fustāt, became somewhat different from the other *amṣār* of the Arab world in that from very early on in its life groups from different religions – Muslims, Christians and Jews – lived side by side in the same space. The emerging need for all three groups to co-exist was the cause of specific problems which the conquerors had to manage. They achieved this by erecting spatial and legal boundaries between themselves and the conquered peoples, which served not only to organise the society of Fustāt, but also to prevent any risk of assimilation.⁴

These measures were all the more necessary as the conquering Arabs were a minority in comparison to the Christian population which was numerically superior, including in urban areas.⁵ However, the Muslim community required the services of the Christian and Jewish populations and had therefore to find a way to deal with them. The first issue was spatial: where would the non-Muslim communities live? Where would that be in relation to the Muslim population? Not too close to the Muslim people but also not too far from the administrative capital. It seems that this was not a straightforward question of spatial separation. No deliberate policies to segregate non-Muslim and Muslim groups have been identified during the medieval period.⁶ It seems more likely that the Christians had their own areas, centred on their religious buildings.⁷

⁴ Noth, Albrecht. "Problems of Differentiation between Muslims and Non-Muslims. Re-Reading the 'Ordinances of 'Umar' (*al-šurūṭ al-'umariyya*)", in Robert Hoyland, ed., *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 103-24.

⁵ Becker, Carl Heinrich *et al.*, "Miṣr". In *EI*², 163; Brett, Michael. "Population and Conversion to Islam in Egypt in the Mediaeval Period," in Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel De Smet, eds., *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras. Proceedings of the 9th and 10th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 2000 and 2001* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 15.

⁶ Garcin, Jean-Claude. "Toponymie et topographie urbaines médiévales à Fostat et au Caire," *JESHO* 27 (1984), 113-55; Sylvie Denoix talks about "specific groupings" in her PhD thesis, *Décrire Le Caire-Fustāt Miṣr d'après Ibn Duqmāq et Maqrīzī*. Cairo: IFAO, 1992, 91.

⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, Doris. "Locations of Non-Muslim Quarters in Medieval Cairo," *Annales islamologiques* 22 (1986), 117; Wilfong, Terry G. "The Non-Muslim Communities. Christian Communities," in Carl F. Petry, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 188; Dridi, Audrey. *Églises et synagogues de Fustāt-Le Caire des Fatimides aux Mamelouks (358/969-923/1517). Contribution à l'étude de la topographie culturelle de la capitale égyptienne*. Master's degree thesis, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2009, 7-12.

History provides us with countless examples, such as that given by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam concerning the first church built in Fustāṭ:

أول كنيسة بنيت بفسطاط مصر...الكنيسة التي خلف القنطرة أيام مسلمة بن مخلد فأنكر الجند ذلك وقالوا له اتقرّ لهم أن ويبنوا الكنيسة؟ حتى كان يقع بينهم وبينه فاحتجّ شرّ عليهم مسلمة يومئذ فقال: أنهم ليست في قيروانكم وإنما هي خارجة في ارضهم فسكتوا عند ذلك⁸

The first church which was built in Fustāṭ ... is the one located behind the bridge, [founded] in the days of Maslama b. Mukhallad, [which made the members of] the *jund* (army) become indignant and say to him, “Do you allow them to build churches?” and they protested vigorously against him. Then Maslama said, “It [the church] is not situated in your settlement (*qayrawān*) but outside of it, in their lands,” whereupon they fell silent.

I shall return to this example later, but here I wish to emphasise that, soon after the city of Fustāṭ was founded, the establishment of new churches had already become a widely-discussed problem within the Muslim community. The fundamental reason for these arguments was the lack of a fixed, normative framework relating to non-Muslim groups at the time. The legal status of the People of the Book, as described in the juridical literature and notably in the “Covenant of ‘Umar” (*Shurūṭ ‘umarīya*), was probably only formulated under the Abbasid caliphs.⁹ According to Clifford E. Bosworth, “this so-called ‘Covenant of ‘Umar’ cannot date from only a decade or so after the Prophet’s death, but must be a later rationalization and systematization of piecemeal measures which grew up over the course of centuries and which were applied at various periods

⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam. *Futūḥ miṣr wa-akhbāruhā*. Ed. C. Torrey. New Haven: Yale Oriental Series – Researches III, 1922, 132. This information is also found in Abū al-Makārim: Abū Ṣāliḥ, *Tārīkh al-kanā’is*, 86, fol. 23b, and Suyūṭī. *Husn al-muḥādāra fī akhbār miṣr wa-l-qāhira*. vol. 2. Cairo: Maṭba‘at Bashārī, 1903, 6. For further information on Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam and his representation of minorities see the chapter of Edward Coghill in this volume.

⁹ Papaconstantinou, Arietta. “Between *umma* and *dhimma*. The Christians of the Middle East Under the Umayyads,” *Annales islamologiques* 42 (2008), 18; Levy-Rubin, Milka. *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, esp. ch. 2.

with differing degrees of severity and zeal."¹⁰ It was only in the eighth century that the first discussions arose between Muslims and Christians in order to determine the limits of their practice and beliefs.¹¹ By the end of the century the foundations of ideas such as jurisprudence and *ḥadīth* had been established. Up until this time the Egyptian people had continuously questioned the status of Christians and Jews in Islam. These controversies are fundamental to an understanding of the physical location of non-Muslims in the city of Fuṣṭāṭ and more generally in Egyptian society as a whole. Indeed, an examination of such controversies provides a demonstration of the evolution of juridical norms during this period of history.

5.1 Christians and Jews in the Islamic Courts

The legal status of Christians and Jews was the fruit of extensive discussion between Muslim jurists, many different decisions by the *qāḍīs* (judges) and governors, and sometimes the result of unrest within society.¹² All of these developments created the foundations for the juridical norms which followed. This paper describes some significant examples. The aim is to show how Christians and Jews were able to inhabit a Muslim area at a time when their rights in Arab-ruled lands had not yet been established. A particular issue raised by this research is the gap between historical fact and the clauses of the "Covenant of 'Umar", which were stricter in theory than in reality. Indeed, the political elite of the city had to maintain public order and avoid an increase in social tension. They had to carefully organise contact between the different communities, not only to preserve order in urban areas but also to keep the non-Muslim groups under a certain degree of control. In the course of the integration of Christians and Jews into the Muslim judicial system another problems arose, of which we see numerous examples in our sources.

¹⁰ Bosworth, Clifford E. "The Protected Peoples, Christians and Jews, in Medieval Egypt and Syria," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 62 (1979), 11-36. Reprinted as: C.E. Bosworth. *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran. Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1996, 18.

¹¹ Butler, Alfred J. *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion. Containing Also the Treaty of Misr in Tabari, 1913 and Babylon of Egypt, 1914*. Ed. P.M. Fraser. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 13-14.

¹² Papaconstantinou, "Between *umma* and *dhimma*," 18.

5.1.1 Outside the Mosque

The first point to note is that non-Muslim communities used the Islamic courts.¹³ This is especially significant given the fact that they were in possession of the legal wherewithal to exercise autonomy. An important article by Gladys Frantz-Murphy highlights this phenomenon. She demonstrates that during the Early Middle Ages Christians chose to have their legal documents recorded in Arabic, “despite the fact that they were free to have them recorded in Coptic.”¹⁴ That they did so attests to their confidence in the courts and shows that the courts met the needs of the non-Muslim communities. The existing Christian legal system did not disappear when the Muslims conquered Egypt. Members of the Christian and Jewish clergy continued to arbitrate on lawsuits concerning their communities, but they were quickly integrated into the *qāḍī*s’ judicial system. According to al-Kindī, the *qāḍī* Khayr b. Nu‘aym al-Ḥaḍramī (120/737 - 127/744) heard testimony from Christians wishing to take action against other Christians, Jews against other Jews, and held inquiries into their worthiness (*‘adāla*). However, at this time, non-Muslims were not allowed to enter the mosque, as it was a place where only Muslims could be judged.¹⁵

كان خير بن نعيم يقضي في المسجد بين المسلمين، ثم يجلس على باب المسجد بعد العصر
على المعارج فيقضي بين النصارى¹⁶

Khayr b. Nu‘aym judged the Muslims inside the mosque, and then he sat down in front of the mosque entrance, on the stairs, after afternoon prayers to judge the Christians.

Thus the Muslim *qāḍī*s did not hesitate to judge Christians and Jews, but only outside the sacred area of the mosque which formed part of a strictly Muslim area.

¹³ About this question, see Simonsohn, Uriel. *A Common Justice. The Legal Allegiances of Christians and Jews Under Early Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, 147-205. U. Simonsohn shows that both Christians and Jews were taking legal cases outside the community for the litigation in Muslim courts.

¹⁴ Cited by Simonsohn, *A Common Justice*, 147ff.

¹⁵ Al-Kindī. *Kitāb al-wulāt wa-kitāb al-quḍāt*. Ed. R. Guest. Leiden: Brill, 1912, 351; 390.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 351.

While the physical Muslim area was clearly delimited, other boundaries (particularly linguistic) were vanishing. As an example, one *qādī*, only a century after the foundation of Fustāṭ, was listening to the complaints of Christians, and talking to them in their own language, Coptic:

وقال يحيى بن بكير : كان يرد على من يخاطبه بالقبطية بها ويسمع شهادة الشهود بها
ويحكم¹⁷

Yaḥyā ibn Bukayr said, “He answered in Coptic to the one he talked with and listened to the testimonies [in this language], and gave his sentence.”

This shows that the Muslim *qādī* was able to speak both Arabic and Coptic and was able to address the community in either language. A question that appears in the sixth-century Babylonian Talmud suggests that the Jewish people were also able to understand Coptic. Specifically, the question asked if it was permitted to read the Coptic translation of the Book of Esther.¹⁸ In return, non-Muslims demonstrated their willingness to speak Arabic in the Islamic courts and in legal documents, in order to broadcast their confidence in the Muslim legal system.¹⁹ In doing so, they chose to make use of a newly instituted and effective judicial system.²⁰

5.1.2 Inside the Mosque

Linguistic boundaries appear to have dissolved not in favour of a common law, but of a law in common. Some years later, around 790/800, Muḥammad b. Masrūq became the first *qādī* to allow Christians and Jews to enter the mosque for judgment:

أول من ادخل النصارى المسجد الجامع في خصوصاتهم محمد بن مسروق²¹

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥajar. *Raf al-iṣr ‘an quḍāt miṣr*. Ed. ‘Alaa Muhammad ‘Umar. Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥanaja, 1998, 154.

¹⁸ Sijpesteijn, Petra M. “Multilingual Archives and Documents in Post-Conquest Egypt,” in Arietta Papaconstantinou, ed., *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the ‘Abbāsids* (Farnham-Surrey: Burlington-Ashgate, 2010), 105. This idea is based on the *Tractate Megila*, 18a of the Babylonian Talmud.

¹⁹ Frantz-Murphy, Gladys. “The Reinstitution of Courts in Early Islamic Egypt,” *Société archéologique d’Alexandrie* 47 (2003), 71.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

²¹ Al-Kindī, *Quḍāt*, 391.

The first one who allowed the Christians (*naṣārā*) to enter the Great Mosque [to resolve] their lawsuits was Muḥammad ibn Masrūq.

This decision by the *qāḍī* was highly symbolic. In entering the mosque, Christians and Jews entered a judicial space which was also a sacred space. This spatial issue associates a group of non-Muslim people with a Muslim element of the topography, namely the mosque. It highlights the fact that, in this particular situation, the mosque was not only considered as a place of worship, but also as the seat of juridical authority. The question arises of why the *qāḍī* agreed to judge non-Muslims and allowed them to enter the mosque, while at the same time being aware of the fact that non-Muslims had their own legal system. It must have provided a way for the Muslim authorities to have overall control of *dhimmī* affairs and to weaken the influence of churchmen and laymen within society. Although there is no evidence, it seems that by taking charge of the affairs of non-Muslims, Muslims could keep an eye on the Christian and Jewish communities and position themselves as an important intermediary. We must also ask what impelled Christians and Jews to turn to the Muslim judicial system. According to Simonsohn there were a variety of reasons. A possible decline of the ecclesiastical judicial administration and of the reputation of the clergy could have encouraged *dhimmīs* to go to Muslim courts. Furthermore, Muslim judicial administration possessed crucial advantages: it was an attractive alternative to the Christian legal system as it was sanctioned by the ruling authorities. Another advantage mentioned by Simonsohn was the role played by the Christian officials working in Muslim administration, able to intervene in favour of their coreligionists.²²

Ibn Masrūq's decision did not give rise to Muslim discontent or anger and my research has not uncovered any explicit mention of a controversy on this matter. However, it was slow to be made, not appearing until the end of the eighth century, which strongly suggests that it must have created heated debate among the *qāḍīs* of Fustāṭ. Another striking example of controversy, which provoked far more tension in the city and which is directly linked with the issue of space, is the sale of alcohol and pork in the capital.

²² Simonsohn, *A Common Justice*, 147-73.

5.2 The sale of alcohol and pork in Fuṣṭāṭ

In the eighth century the Medinan jurist Mālik b. Anās (d. 179/795) asserted in one of his *masā'il*:

قلت : أريت إن اكرتيت داري من رجل من النصارى أو من اليهود أو من المجوس
أيجوز ذلك في قول مالك؟ قال : نعم على ما لم يكرها على أن يبيع فيها الخمر والخنزير²³

I said,²⁴ “What do you think if I rent out my house to a Christian or a Jew, or a Zoroastrian: is it lawful according to Mālik?” He said, “Yes, so long as [the Christian, the Jew or the Zoroastrian] does not rent it out to sell alcohol or pork.”

Mālik's opinion was not original and was consistent with the point of view of many other jurists at the time: commercial deals concerning alcohol or pork were allowed among *dhimmī* people, but forbidden among Muslims or between a Muslim and a *dhimmī*.²⁵ Nonetheless, such an opinion was dramatically different from those that had prevailed in the Egyptian legal system during the eighth century, according to which selling alcohol and pork was allowed regardless of the identity of the sellers and the buyers. An illustration of such an Egyptian opinion is given by the Muslim traditionalist 'Abd Allāh b. Lahī'a (d. 174/790), who lived in Fuṣṭāṭ and declared in his collection of *ḥadīths*:

ابن طبيعة عن عمارة بن غزوية عن ربيعة بن ابي عبد الرحمن انه قال لا باس ان يكرى
المسلم حانوته ممن يجعل فيه الخمر من النبط²⁶

Ibn Lahī'a according to Ibn Ghazya, according to Rabī'a ibn Abī 'Abd al-Raḥmān who said, “A Muslim is allowed to rent out his shop to a Christian for the sale of wine.”

²³ Mālik b. Anas. *Al-Mudawwana, Recension of Saḥnūn*. Vol.3. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiya, 1994, 522.

²⁴ 'I said' refers to Suḥnūn and 'He said' refers to the answer of Ibn al-Qāsim according to Mālik b. Anās' opinions.

²⁵ Fattal, Antoine. *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam*. Beirut: Dar el Machreq, 1995, 151.

²⁶ Khoury, Raif Georges. 'Abd Allah ibn Lahī 'a (97-174/715-790), juge et grand maître de l'école égyptienne. *Avec édition critique de l'unique rouleau de papyrus arabe conservé à Heidelberg*. Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz, 1986, 248.

It is very likely that this *ḥadīth* reflected the reality faced by Ibn Lahī'a in Fustāṭ at the time. Allowing a Muslim to rent out their store to a Christian implied that wine could be sold in areas where Muslim people formed the majority. Thus, the spatial and religious boundaries between religious groups became somewhat blurred. This implies that non-Muslim people could be found in all areas of the city, without any separation or segregation.

What conclusions can be drawn from the position of Ibn Lahī'a? Was he particularly liberal or merely pragmatic? The second possibility is the more likely one. Indeed, from the reign of 'Umar II (99/717-102/720) onwards many edicts against the sale of wine were published, which suggests that they were not being respected.²⁷ For example, the Egyptian governor Ayyūb b. Shurāḥbīl (99/717-101/719) forbade the sale of wine and made it illegal to open taverns.²⁸ Later, at the time of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (233/847-247/861), the production and sale of wine was forbidden in the whole of Egypt, particularly in Fustāṭ.²⁹ It seems that these bans were regularly ignored. Thus, it is probable that Ibn Lahī'a thought it ineffective to prohibit the sale of alcohol and pork because these products would be sold anyway. The historical facts had set a precedent. Unlike Mālik, Ibn Lahī'a's idea of the law was very practical. His ruling shows not only that the Muslim and non-Muslim communities were in continuous contact in Fustāṭ but also that there were no specific areas reserved for a given community: a Christian tavern could very well be found in a Muslim area³⁰ without creating discontent between the residents. Although that may have been the case, Muslims must have been much more aware of the construction and restoration of churches.

²⁷ Fattal, *Statut légal*, 153.

²⁸ Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 68.

²⁹ Severus ibn al-Muqaffa'. *Kitāb siyar al-bī'a al-muqaddasa*. Eds. Y. 'Abd al-Masīḥ, O.H.E. Burmester as: *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, Known as the History of the Holy Church*. Vol. 2. Cairo: IFAO, 1943-1948, 7.

³⁰ I have not found, in the sources, any mention of Muslims opposed to the opening of a tavern or a shop where pork and wine were sold.

5.3 The Construction or Restoration of Non-Muslim Places of Worship

At the time Fustāṭ was founded several non-Muslim religious buildings had been constructed in various locations in the Egyptian capital. Some of them existed before Islam; others were built with the consent of the Muslim authorities. This paper is largely confined to a discussion of the construction and restoration of those places of worship which caused problems and tensions within the society of Fustāṭ. It also aims to demonstrate that, in the pre-Fatimid period (a time when the legal status of churches and synagogues was not clearly defined), the construction, maintenance and destruction of non-Muslim places of worship typically depended upon the governors' good will. For example, when a church leader was on good terms with a governor, the former could request the construction or restoration of a place of worship. The literature provides many examples of this, most of which can be found in the *History of Patriarchs of Alexandria*. The story of the Patriarch Mark II (183/799-203/819) is an illustration of this reality. At a time when Mark was in favour with the governor of Egypt, the latter wanted to thank him for his friendship:

قلت لك بالامس اني اقضى جميع حوائجك ولم تطلب مني حاجة والآن فهما كان لك من حاجة فاذا ذكرها فانهم مقضية عندي لحيبتى لك فقال له البطرك بكلام لىن الرب يحفظ ايامك ويزيد في رفعتك وسلطانك تعلم ان لم يولوا عندك على مال ولا خراج بل على الانفس والبيع. وارغب الى جلالتك ان لنا هنا بيعاً قد هدم الظالم بعضها قبل وصولك الى مصر [...] فان رأي رأيتك فيها ان يتقدم لنا بعمارتها لنصلي فيها وندعى لجلالتك فالامر لك فجعل الله في قلبه عاجلاً ان يأمر بعمارتها فبنيت جميع بيع فسطاط مصر³¹

"I told you yesterday that I would grant all your wishes but you did not ask anything. Now, tell me whatever you need and I will give it to you, on account of the affection I feel for you." Then the Patriarch said to him these sweet words: "God keep your days, exalt you and increase your status and power! You

³¹ Severus ibn al-Muqaffa'. *Wa-āb siyar al-bī'a al-muqaddasa*. Ed. B.T.A. Evetts as: *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*. Patrologia Orientalis X. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1915, 406. This information is also found in Abū Ṣāliḥ, *Tārīkh al-kanā'is*, 85-86, fol. 23b.

know that I don't rule over money and *kharāj* but over souls and churches. And I entreat Your Majesty, as we have here churches, some of which have been destroyed by the unfair [ruler] before your coming to Egypt [...], if your wisdom accepts to give us the order to [re]build them, so that we can pray and intercede for the sake of Your Majesty, then this order is yours." So, very quickly, God put in his heart [of the governor] [the thought] that he give the order for the [re]building of the churches; and, consequently, all the churches in Fustāt-Miṣr were [re]built.

It would be naïve to read this text literally and it is clearly necessary to separate the historical reality from the commonplace. However, two points deserve attention: first, the restoration of the churches of Fustāt is attested historically. Second, as the governor's predecessor had ordered those same places of worship to be destroyed a few years earlier, it demonstrates that there were no clearly-defined policies related to non-Muslim religious buildings. Again, the historical facts are not consistent with the legal status of churches and synagogues as described in Muslim legislative texts. An examination of the "Covenant of 'Umar"³² demonstrates particularly clearly this gap between theory and practice:

We will not build in our cities and in their surroundings, neither monastery, nor church, nor monks' cell, nor hermitage," and, "We will not repair, night and day, the ruined buildings."³³

I will now proceed to demonstrate that the situation was much more complex.

5.3.1 Construction of the First Church in Fustāt

The first period of urbanisation began under the governorate of Maslama b. Mukhallad (47/667-62/682). At that time, several churches were built in Fustāt, notably in the outlying areas of the city, but also in more

³² About the doctrines of the legists, see Fattal, *Statut légal*, 174: "The imams are unanimous in proclaiming that the synagogues and churches do not have to be built in cities and sizeable towns of the Muslim world."

³³ Quoted in Eddé, Anne-Marie, Françoise Micheau and Christophe Picard. *Communautés chrétiennes en pays d'Islam du début du VII^e au milieu du X^e siècle*. Paris: Sedes, 1997, 188.

central areas, such as the Qaṣr al-Sham'.³⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam gives an interesting account of the construction of the first church in Fustāṭ. In his description he says that governor Maslama granted the Christians the right to build their first new church in the northern area of the city known as al-Ḥamrā', beyond the bridge³⁵ (*al-qanṭara*). The construction of the church provoked tension and anger within the Muslim community. To calm the population, the governor was obliged to make it clear that the building was located outside the city. This point is very important for understanding how opinions in Fustāṭ about non-Muslim places of worship developed during the first century.

Indeed, about thirty years after the foundation of the new church, members of the army declared the new building to have no legal status. Maslama himself, as we said above, seemed to share this point of view. In response, he did not say that the construction of the church was lawful, but instead asserted that the place of worship was not within the city, rather that it was outside its limits. Once again, it can be seen that the topographical issue is at the root of the controversy: the church could be built, but only because it was not officially situated in Fustāṭ. It could even have been claimed that the Christian church was not situated within the geographical limits of the Muslim city. In this sense, the topography of places of worship and urban development – which included the integration of the first non-Muslim areas into the Muslim urban fabric – were closely interlinked. Contact between non-Muslim and Muslim groups was a central issue.

Christians and Jews tended to live close to their places of worship, so the building of a church or synagogue implied the formation of a Christian or Jewish area.³⁶ At a time when the Christian community outnumbered the Muslim community, it is clear that contact between the groups was not really to be desired and is probably the reason why the first new churches in Fustāṭ were built far from the heart of the

³⁴ Sayyid, Ayman-Fu'ad. *La capitale de l'Égypte jusqu'à l'époque fatimide, al-Qāhira et Fustāṭ. Essai de reconstitution topographique*. Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Wissenschaft, 1998, 27.

³⁵ This bridge is probably the one which was built in 69/688 by 'Abd al-Azīz b. Marwān, in the northern area of the city. See Ibn Duqmāq. *Kitāb al-intiṣār li wāsiṭat 'iqd al-amṣar*. Vol. 4. Cairo: Bibliothèque Khédivale, 1893, 120; Al-Maqrīzī. *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khūṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*. Vol. 3. Ed. A.F. Sayyid, London: Dār al-Furqān, 2002-2004, 485.

³⁶ Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities," 188; Dridi, *Églises et synagogues*, 8-9.

town. Maslama's decision is an example of this and does not indicate a particularly tolerant attitude towards these religious buildings. However, he was the first to forbid Christians to beat wooden clappers (*nāqūs*) during the Islamic call to prayer (*adhān*).³⁷

In summary, churches could be built, so long as they were far enough away from the Islamic city that they did not compete with the mosques. Although *dhimmīs* were allowed to perform their religious rituals, they were obliged to do so in a manner that was not visible to Muslims. This was a reality, not just a literary theme in the "Covenant of 'Umar".

5.3.2 The Coptic Church of St. Menas (Abū Mīnā)

Other churches were built during the pre-Fatimid period and another example will help to understand the issues surrounding the construction of non-Muslim sacred buildings. The Coptic Church of St. Menas, whose foundation date is unknown,³⁸ was probably rebuilt or restored in 117/735, with the permission of the governor al-Walīd b. Rifā'a (109/729-117/736). Opinions differ on the history of this church. For example, according to al-Kindī the church was built in 117/735. Indeed, he uses the verb *'ibtanā*, 'to build', to refer to the operation the governor allowed:

الوليد بن رفاعه أذن للنصارى في إبتناء كنيسة بالحمراء تعرف اليوم بأبي مينا فخرج وهيب غضباً فأتى الى إثر [ابن] رفاعه ليفتك به فأخذ وقتل وهو الذي يقال له " ابن صلاتك يا وهيب" وكان وهيب مدرّياً من اليمن قدم الى مصر ثم خرج القراء على الوليد بن رفاعه غضباً لوهيب فقاتلوا الوليد بن رفاعه بجزيرة الفسطاط³⁹

Al-Walīd ibn Rifā'a allowed the Christians (*naṣārā*) to build a church, known as the Church of St. Menas, in the Ḥamrā' area, which provoked Wuhayb's anger. He went to [Ibn] Rifā'a's house in order to kill him but he was captured and put to death. The

³⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭāṭ*, vol. 4, part. 1, 234.

³⁸ I have not found a precise date for the first construction of the church. Some researchers tried to give an estimation of the primitive church's date of construction: according to Butler, Alfred J. *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884, 73, the first building dates from the 6th century. This is also the opinion of Alexandre Badawy, "Les premières églises d'Égypte jusqu'au siècle de St Cyrille," in *Kyrialliana, spicilegia edita S. Cyrilli Alexandrini XV recurrente saeculo* (Cairo: Édition du Scribe Egyptien, 1947), 324, 376-78.

³⁹ Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 77-78. This text is also found in al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭāṭ*, vol. 2, 52.

one to whom it was said, "What about your prayer, O Wuhayb?" was born in Yemen and came to live in Egypt. Then the *qurrā'* (Qur'ān reciters) were angry because of [what happened to] Wuhayb and they confronted al-Walīd ibn Rifā'a's guard on the island of [al-Rawḍa in] Fustāṭ.

At the same time Wuhayb's wife, Ma'ūna, suddenly went mad. She shaved off her hair and went to the *qurrā'*'s house to incite them to take revenge for her husband's death.⁴⁰

While this text is particularly important as it describes the construction of the St. Menas church, it is unlikely that this was in fact when the church was first constructed. It is more likely that it was a reconstruction or restoration. A text from Abū al-Makārim strongly suggests that this is the case. It describes the destruction of the church and then its restoration in 106/725, under the caliphate of Ḥishām b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (105/724-125/743):

The monastery named after the martyr Menas, the owner of the three crowns [...] was restored in the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik, when al-Walīd ibn Rifā'a was governor, at the expense of all the Christians who lived in that quarter, in 106 (725). This was after the conflict with the Arabs, when the Christians complained to the governor that their women and children were not secure from molestation while going to and returning from the churches in Miṣr [*sic*].⁴¹

Furthermore, Abū al-Makārim gives specific reasons why the church had been destroyed. Inside the building, a door opened onto a room devoted to the making of the Eucharistic bread. The Christians of the area had converted this room into a chapel dedicated to St. George. The Muslim population rebelled against this change, as they considered the reallocation to be a new construction. The Christians of al-Ḥamrā' explained that the bakery legally belonged to the main building and was not a new construction,⁴² but an angry mob destroyed the church. It was immediately reconstructed by the Christians who paid for it themselves.⁴³ Whether

⁴⁰ Badawy, "Les premières églises d'Égypte," 195-96.

⁴¹ Abū Ṣāliḥ, *Tārīkh al-kanā'is*, 1895, 102-103, fol. 29 b.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 104, fol. 30a.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 104, fol. 29b.

the date of reconstruction is 106/725 or 117/735, Abū al-Makārim's text shows that the governor allowed a restoration of the church and sheds light on the real issues behind the restoration.

Wuhayb al-Yaḥsūbī was probably one of the leaders of the *qurrā'* and embodied opposition to the restoration of non-Muslim places of worship in Islamic countries. His radical position was shared by very few other Muslim jurists. According to Mālik, Shāfi'ī and Abū Ḥanīfa, *dhimmīs* were allowed to restore their ruined churches and synagogues.⁴⁴ Only Ibn Ḥanbal and a small number of Shāfi'ītes were against any kind of restoration,⁴⁵ and they were overruled by the opinion of the governor al-Walīd, which prevailed in Egypt during the pre-Fatimid period. Following the death of Wuhayb al-Yaḥsūbī, positions became more liberal and ruined buildings were restored. Nevertheless, these decisions were not backed by the force of law, and governors were not always ready to defend Christian and Jewish places of worship.

This antagonism between political authority and religious scholars is reminiscent of the opposition between *fuqahā'* and sultans over the legal status of non-Muslim religious buildings at the time of the Mamluks.⁴⁶ These religious groupings, which were inactive during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, were very influential under the Mamluk sultans.⁴⁷ Similarly, they were sufficiently influential during the Umayyad period to be able to attempt to kill the governor and provoke a riot against his forces. Evidently, the 2nd/8th century witnessed the crystallization of various positions towards the legal status of churches and synagogues.

5.3.3 Destruction of the Church of the Virgin Mary

At this time, when the legal status of non-Muslims had not yet been established, many contradictory opinions were expressed, issuing from different milieux. Another example dates from 169/785-6, when the Church of the Virgin Mary (also called al-Damshīriya) was destroyed by order

⁴⁴ Fattal, *Statut légal*, 174.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴⁶ Dridi, *Églises et synagogues*, 150-51. On that subject, see Ibn al-'Imad. *Sadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*. Vol. 7. Beirut: Dar al-Massirah Edition, 1967, 131-32. The text deals with a *shaykh* named Salīm who destroyed a recently rebuilt church with other *fuqahā'*. Salīm, who did not inform the sultan, was arrested and punished.

⁴⁷ Lev, Yaakov. "Persecution and Conversion to Islam in Eleventh-Century Egypt," *Asian African Studies* 22 (1988), 90.

of the Abbasid governor, ‘Alī b. Sulaymān al-‘Abbāsī (169/786-171/788). The church was situated near the *dayr* (monastery) of Abū Ṣayfayn and the Church of Abū Shanūda, in the area known as al-Ḥamrā’ al-Dunyā.⁴⁸ This building, located south of the Church of St. Menas in al-Ḥamrā’ al-Wuṣṭā⁴⁹ (described in the previous section), was very close to the heart of the Muslim city:

هدم الكائس المحدث بمصر فهدم كنيسة مريم الملاصقة لكنيسة ابي شنودة وهدم كائس
محرس قسطنطين وبذل له خمسون ألف دينار في تركها فامتنح⁵⁰

‘Alī b. Sulaymān al-‘Abbāsī gave the order to destroy the churches recently built in Fustāṭ. He destroyed the Church of Mary, which was near to the Church of Abū Shanūda, and the churches of the *maḥras* of Constantine. They (the Christians) gave him fifty thousand dinars to spare it but he refused.

This indicates that several churches were destroyed which had only recently been built. It is difficult to know exactly which churches were destroyed and we have not been able to identify the toponym “*maḥras* of Constantine.” This decision by the governor coincided with a religious campaign against alcohol and gambling,⁵¹ which is reminiscent of the “moral regulation”⁵² of the Mamluk sultans seven centuries later. This text is extremely interesting as it indicates that, from this time, the date of the church’s construction, or the supposed date of its building,⁵³ was adduced by those who were against the building of new churches. Such an action taken against newly built edifices is described in many legal texts,⁵⁴ notably in the treatise of the Abbasid chief judge Abū Yūsuf,

⁴⁸ Coquin, Charalambia. *Les édifices chrétiens du Vieux-Caire*. Cairo: IFAO, 1974, 49-50.

⁴⁹ Dridi, *Églises et synagogues*, 58.

⁵⁰ Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 131.

⁵¹ Abū al-Maḥāsīn. *Al-nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa-l-qāhira*. Vol. 2. Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1929-1972, 62-66.

⁵² El-Leithy, Tamer. “Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety. Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt,” in Richard McGregor and Adam Sabra, eds., *Le développement du soufisme en Égypte à l’époque mamelouke* (Cairo: IFAO, 2006), 75-120.

⁵³ According to Kubiak, *Al-Fustāt*, 45, the St. Mary church would have been built in the first or second generation after the Prophet.

⁵⁴ Fattal, *Statut légal*, 174.

which states that, “concerning the synagogues and churches [built] after [the conquest], they will be destroyed”.⁵⁵

‘Alī b. Sulaymān al-‘Abbāsī’s successor, Mūsā b. ‘Isā (171/787-172/789), allowed Christians to rebuild the destroyed edifices. Two well-known ‘ulamā’ (religious scholars), ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī’a (97/715-174/790) and his friend and patron, al-Layth b. Sa’d (94/713-175/791),⁵⁶ gave their support to this decision:

أذن موسى بن عيسى للنصارى في بنيان الكنائس التي هدمها علي بن سليمان فبنيت كلها
بمشورة الليث بن سعد وعبد الله بن لبيعة وقالوا: هو من عمارة البلاد واحتجا أن عامة
الكنائس التي بمصر لم تبني إلا في الإسلام في زمن الصحابة والتابعين⁵⁷

Mūsā b. ‘Isā allowed the Christians to rebuild the churches destroyed by [the order of] ‘Alī b. Sulaymān. They were all rebuilt on the advice of al-Layth b. Sa’d and ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī’a, who claimed, “They belong to the country’s architecture.” They gave as an argument that most of the churches in Miṣr were [re]built under Islam, at the time of the Companions [of Muḥammad] and their Successors.

These arguments are very important for understanding the legal status of churches. The first argument concerns the fact that these buildings were considered to belong to the monumental landscape of the country. Thus, churches and synagogues, in the same way as mosques, had become part of the city’s cultural heritage. Only a century after the foundation of the Muslim capital, some jurists agreed that churches were an integral part of the town and its general architecture. Furthermore, these two scholars considered that most of the non-Muslim religious buildings of the city had been built at the time of the prophet Muḥammad and the succeeding generation. In this respect al-Layth and Ibn Lahī’a disagreed with Mālik b. Anās and differentiated themselves from the Medinan school, which

⁵⁵ Abū Yūsuf Yaqūb. *Kitāb al-kharāj*. Ed. E. Fagnan as: *Le livre de l’impôt foncier*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1921, 228.

⁵⁶ About these two jurists, see Khoury, Raif Georges. “Al-Layth Ibn Sa’d (93/713-175/791), grand maitre et mécène de l’Égypte, vu à travers quelques documents islamiques anciens,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40 (1941), 182-202, and by the same author, “L’importance d’Ibn Lahī’a et de son papyrus conservé à Heidelberg dans la tradition musulmane du deuxième siècle de l’hégire,” *Arabica* 22 (1975), 6-14.

⁵⁷ Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 132.

prevailed in Egypt at the end of the 2nd/8th century and considered the construction of new churches and synagogues to be illegal in Islamic countries.

5.3.4 Restoration of the Abū Shanūda Church

This issue of the construction of non-Muslim religious buildings is seen again at the end of the pre-Fatimid period, and concerns the Abū Shanūda church located in the Ḥamrā' al-Dunyā area, to the north of the city. A text by the Mamluk historian, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, describes the debate between the various jurists of Fuṣṭāṭ in the year 318/930 on the restoration of this church which had fallen into ruin:

قال ابن زولاق : اتفق ان كنيسة ابي شنودة انهدم جانبها، وبذل النصارى مالا كثيرا ليطلق لهم عمارتها فاستفتوا الفقهاء. فأفتى ابن الحداد بهدم عمارتها ووافق أصحاب مالك وأفتى محمد بن علي بأن لهم أن يرموها ويعمروها. فثارت العامة به وهموا بإحراق داره فاستتر، واحاطوا الكنيسة. فبلغ ذلك الأمير فاغتنظ فأرسل وجوه علمانه في جمع كثير، فاجتمع عليهم العوام ورموها بالحجارة فراسلوه، فأرس إلى ابن الحداد فقال اركب إلى الكنيسة فإن كانت قائمة فتركها على حالها، وإن كانت دائرة فاهدمها. فتوجه ابن الحداد وصحبه علي بن عبد الله بن النواس المهندس وكثر الزحام، فلم يزل يرفق بهم باللفظ ويلين لهم القول ويعلمهم أنه معهم حتى فتحوا الدروب. ودخل الكنيسة فأخرج جميع من فيها النصارى واغلق الباب ودفع المهندس شمعة. ودخل المذبح وكشفه وقال يبقى خمس عشرة سنة ثم يسقط منها موضع ثم يبقى الى تمام اربعين سنة ويسقط جميعها. فأعاد الجواب فتركها ولم يعمرها، فلما كانت سنة ست وستين عمرت كلها ولو تركت لسقطت⁵⁸

Ibn Zūlāq says: It happened that an aisle of the Abū Shanūda church collapsed and the Christians spent a large amount of money to get authorisation for the building's reconstruction. The jurists were consulted; Ibn al-Ḥaddād ruled that the structure should be destroyed, which the Mālikīs approved. However, Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-'Askarī ruled that they (the Christians) should be allowed to restore and rebuild it. The mob (*al-'amma*)

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥajar. *Raf al-iṣr 'an quḍāt miṣr*. Ed. 'Alaa Muhammad 'Umar. Vol. 2. Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥanaḥa, 1998, 334-35.

rose up against him (Muḥammad b. ‘Alī) and was about to set fire to his house. He hid, while the mob besieged the church. When he found out about it, the governor became angry and sent his guard officers (*wujūh ghilmāni-hi*) at the head of a large number of troops. But the mob turned against them and threw stones at them. The (the soldiers) sent for him (the governor), who said to Ibn al-Ḥaddād, ‘Go to the church! If it is standing, leave it as it is, if it is falling into ruins, destroy it.’ Ibn al-Ḥaddād left with the architect (*muhandis*) ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Nawwās, and the crowd grew. He talked to the people with kindness and gentleness, telling them that he was on their side, until that they opened the streets. He went into the church, brought all the Christians who were inside out of the building and closed the door. He held a candle out to the architect, who entered the sanctuary (*madhbaḥi*) and inspected it. “It will stand for fifteen more years,” he said, “and then a part of it will collapse. It will stand for forty more years, and totally fall down.” He (Ibn al-Ḥaddād) reported the answer (to the governor), who left the church as it was, without rebuilding it. In [3]66 (976-77), it was entirely rebuilt. If it had been deserted, it would have collapsed.”⁵⁹

This text provides a vast amount of information. It highlights the juridical opinion of the various recently-formed Egyptian law schools concerning the legal status of non-Muslim buildings in the city. The Shāfi‘ī school, represented by the famous jurist Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥaddād, and the Mālikī school decided in favour of the building’s destruction. Other jurists, such as Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-‘Askarī, were able to express an opinion in their own name, without necessarily being attached to one of these schools.

The opinion of the Shāfi‘ī and Mālikī schools is surprising as Mālik, Shāfi‘ī and even Abū Ḥanīfa were in favour of the restoration of ruined buildings in Islamic countries.⁶⁰ While some distinguished Shāfi‘ī legislators condemned the rebuilding of churches and synagogues, they were in

⁵⁹ This translation is from Mathieu Tillier’s French one in *Vies des cadis de Miṣr 237/851 – 366/976. Extrait du Raf‘ al-iṣr‘an quḍāt Miṣr d’Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī*. Ed. M. Tillier, Cairo: IFAO, 2002, 131.

⁶⁰ Fattal, *Statut légal*, 174.

the minority.⁶¹ This clearly shows that the juridical schools were still in their infancy and that opinions were not yet fixed. The attitude of the mob, galvanized by the more radical *muftī*, must have had an influence upon the juridical position taken by these two Egyptian schools. The mob, all the more dangerous because it was anonymous, posed a real problem for Muslim rulers who tried to maintain a safe social order.⁶² A juridical opinion against non-Muslim places of worship would only have aroused popular discontent. Indeed, the mob used these normative opinions as an argument in support of their actions.

We must surmise that the opinions of the prevailing schools were overruled in favour of the maintenance and rebuilding of the ruined churches and synagogues. Political authority, represented by the governor, was opposed to the mob's attacks, but did not declare itself in favour of one or other of the juridical positions. Contrary to the events of the Mamluk period, the governor left such questions in the hands of the jurists.

One further point should be highlighted: the jurist made his final decision only after asking the architect's opinion on the state of the building. Such a procedure, while only sketchily described, is reminiscent of the legal protocols dating from the Mamluk period: the market-inspector (*muhtasib*), with an architect and, sometimes, the *qāḍī* in person, would investigate a building in order to assess its state and decide if it should be destroyed or maintained.⁶³ Here, the procedure is not formulated or codified as such, but we can suppose that this pre-Fatimid practice influenced later legal procedures. Finally, in order to satisfy both parties, the Abū Shanūda church was neither restored nor destroyed. The architect's prediction was not fulfilled: according to Ibn Sa'īd (d. 611/1214), the church was entirely rebuilt in 366/976-7.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁶² This text is reminiscent of the numerous popular riots of the Mamluk period, directed against the churches and synagogues of the city: see El-Leithy, "Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety," 79; Dridi, *Églises et synagogues*, 152.

⁶³ For a detailed description of this procedure, see Dridi, *Églises et synagogues*, 134-35. A document published by R.J.H. Gottheil in "A Document of the Fifteenth Century Concerning Two Synagogues of the Jews in Old Cairo," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 18 (1927-1928), 131-52, gives a good example of this legal procedure.

⁶⁴ Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī. *Kitāb al-mughrib fī ḥulā al-maghrib*. Ed. K.L. Tallqvist. Leiden: Dār al-kutub al-miṣrīya, 1899, 32-33.

5.4 Conclusion

What can we conclude from this discussion? What contribution do these controversies make to our research? At a time when the status of Christian and Jewish communities was not yet codified, these controversies gave jurists food for thought as they were forced to take a stand on each situation as it arose. They also demonstrate the lack of laws relating to the Christian or Jewish communities at the time of the Muslim conquest, and, of course, the apocryphal nature of treaties such as the “Covenant of ‘Umar” or other so-called peace treaties signed by the conquerors.

Many legal texts are available which indicate the theoretical legal status of non-Muslims. However, controversies such as those described in this paper demonstrate the jurists’ work in codifying practice. In other words, they show the law as it is developed and applied at some point. Moreover, they help to avoid the creation of an abstract link between an attitude or opinion and a specific group. The examples used in this paper underline the fact that governors both encouraged the maintenance of churches and synagogues built in Fustāt and ordered their destruction. In the same way, Muslim religious scholars and leaders were not unanimously against the construction or restoration of non-Muslim places of worship.

Furthermore, these early juridical opinions cannot be dissociated from spatial or topographical issues. All of the controversies described in this paper focus on the place Christians and Jews had to occupy in the newly-built capital, whether in the legal or urban space. They show both the perceived need to control contact between Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities and also the concessions made to the non-Muslim populations who played an essential part in the society of Fustāt.

This discussion could have been extended to the role played by the Christian elite of Fustāt, which was very influential during this period. For example, the question arises of how the Muslim authorities could have forbidden the building of churches, or the sale of wine, when the new administration was almost entirely run by Christians. It is no accident that the first distinctive indications of early Islam only became clearly apparent in the 2nd/8th century and after, when Muslims themselves were more fully able to take charge of their future.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ We have many examples of Christian civil-servants who were dismissed from the Muslim administration. For instance, in the years of ‘Umar II (99/117-102/720), Chris-

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tian local employees from the countryside (*mawāzīt*) were dismissed and replaced by Muslim civil-servants: see al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 69. Later, at the time of al-Mutawakkil (233/847-247/861), the caliph declared that only Muslims could be employed in the administration of the country: see Staffa, Susane J. *Conquest and Fusion. The Social Evolution of Cairo, A.D. 642-1850*. Leiden: Brill, 1977, 35. At the same time, in 247/861, the Christian employee who was in charge of the nilometer was dismissed and replaced by a Muslim, 'Abd Allāh Abū al-Raddād al-Mu'allim: see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a' sā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā*. Vol. 2. Cairo: Bibliothèque Sultanienne, 1913-1919, 86, and Suyūṭī, *Ḥuṣn al-Muḥādāra*, vol. 2, 221.

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6

Dispensing Justice in a Minority Context: the Judicial Administration of Upper Egypt under Muslim Rule in the Early Eighth Century

Mathieu Tillier

(Institut français du Proche-Orient, Beirut)

The early Islamic judicial system can be reconstructed from narrative texts that were definitively fixed either during the last quarter of the ninth century or the tenth century. Literature specialising in judicial history such as the semi-biographical genre of *akhbār al-qūḍāt* assumed its definitive shape during the post-*mihna* period, when the victory of Sunnism progressively imposed new political and institutional order. In this literature, judges/*qāḍīs* appear as the main representatives of Islamic law in a Muslim context while other religious groups remain underrepresented.¹ However, documentary sources dating from earlier periods challenge this picture. Administrative papyri, originating mostly from Upper Egypt, describe judicial instances where provincial governors play a major role. Although these papyri paint an inconclusive picture of the early Islamic judicial system, they nevertheless offer illuminating insights about the actual judicial practice.

In what follows, I shall examine excerpts from judicial letters of Qurra b. Sharīk, Umayyad governor of Egypt from 90/709 to 96/714. Although most of these letters were published decades ago, I believe they still merit a detailed contextual study within the historical framework of the Umayyad legal administration. The letters concern correspondence between Qurra and Basilios, pagarch of Aphroditō. Only letters addressed by Qurra to Basilios survive. Amongst the numerous papyri

¹ There are however some exceptions. See Tillier, Mathieu. "La société abbasside au miroir du tribunal," *Annales Islamologiques* 42 (2008), 166-68.

discovered in the early twentieth century,² ten or so were of a “judiciary” nature, dealing with instructions from the governor to Basilios regarding lawsuits.

Qurra’s letters date from the middle of the Umayyad period when Muslim people remained a numerical minority in the predominantly Christian Egyptian province. In Egypt, Umayyad governors relied on an administrative structure which can loosely be described as an extension of the Byzantine system. Egyptian territory was divided into eparchies and pagarchies. Each of the five eparchies was ruled by a *dux* (Arabic: *amīr*), whose main remit was fiscal administration. These *duces* presided over the pagarchs (Arabic: *ṣāhib*), who numbered between 50 and 60 within the Egyptian province. Pagarchs ruled towns and the surrounding territory.³ Although Muslims represented only a small minority of the population, they occupied dominant positions within society. The ruling classes were not assimilated into the previous local political and social order. The Muslims in fact succeeded in forming a new social structure whereby the numerical majority – the conquered Christian population – was eventually reduced to that of a minority. Even though Christians represented a large majority of the Egyptian population for many centuries, they soon became a political minority, marginalised by their status of “protected people”, or what classical *fiqh* eventually defined as the status of *dhimma*.⁴

In this paper, I will draw on Qurra’s judicial letters to examine the judicial role played by Muslim authorities amongst the conquered Egyptian population. I will attempt to demonstrate how the numerical

² On the discovery of this collection of papyri, see Bell, Harold Idris. “The Aphrodito Papyri,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 28 (1908), 97-98; Abbott, Nabia. *The Qurrah Papyri from Aphrodito in the Oriental Institute*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938, 6. Although Qurra’s judicial papyri have been known for many decades, they have never been the subject of any significant, detailed study. See for example Tyan, Émile. *Histoire de l’organisation judiciaire en pays d’Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1938-43), I, 133, who dedicates only a few lines to these letters. They are used to shed light on the status of Greek in the early Islamic period in the chapter of Janneke de Jong and Alain Delattre in this volume.

³ Foss, Clive. “Egypt Under Mu’āwiya. Part I. Flavius Papas and Upper Egypt,” *BSOAS* 72 (2009), 2-3; Morimoto, Kosei. *The Fiscal Administration of Egypt in the Early Islamic Period*. Kyoto: Dohosha, 1981, 195-96; Sijpesteijn, Petra. “Landholding Patterns in Early Islamic Egypt,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9 (2009), 121.

⁴ For some comments on *dhimma* with particular reference to the Copts of Egypt see the chapter of Edward Coghill in this volume.

Christian majority was reduced to a political minority through judicial interventions described in documentation from the early eighth century. I shall present a hypothetical reconstruction of the judicial procedure described in these letters and propose provisional conclusions about the influence of early Islamic concepts on the development of the judiciary within a Christian environment.

6.1 Why did a Muslim governor write letters to a Christian pagarch? Preliminary indications about early Islamic judicial procedure

6.1.1 Typology of legal cases

Qurra b. Sharīk's letters concern complaints brought before him by litigants. I will first examine cases by type before examining the litigants' position within the procedure. Qurra's correspondence to Basilios reveals two types of cases:

(1) Debts. Certain letters deal with complaints about the non-payment of debts. As in other civilisations, this situation was commonplace in early Islam to the extent that debt cases became paradigmatic examples of lawsuits in Islamic law. The most interesting aspect is the sums involved in these debt cases. The sums range from between $10\frac{1}{2}$ dinars⁵ and 18 dinars claimed from a priest⁶ to $23\frac{1}{3}$ dinars owed by a peasant.⁷ For comparative purposes, marriage contracts written in Egypt between the second/eighth and the fifth/eleventh centuries mention dowries (*ṣadāqs*) ranging between 2 and 10 dinars. In al-Ushmūnayn, a small house for a couple cost 4 or 5 dinars.⁸ These debts were thus exceptionally high amounts, particularly given the rural or semi-rural environment.

(2) Usurpation or misappropriation, usually by powerful people – what classical *fiqh* called *ghaṣb*.⁹ In one letter a man complains about

⁵ P.Heid.Arab. I n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°29.

⁶ P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32.

⁷ P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129 = Abū Ṣafya n° 28. See also P.Qurra n° 3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31, where more than 10 dinars are mentioned (units have disappeared from the papyrus).

⁸ Rapoport, Yossef. "Matrimonial Gifts in Early Islamic Egypt," *Islamic Law and Society* 7 (2000), 14-15.

⁹ See Spies, O. "Ghaṣb". In *EI*².

“unfair” (*zulman*) appropriation of an unknown amount of money (in dinars) by someone, possibly the head of a village.¹⁰ In another papyrus, the plaintiff denounces the *māzūt* (leader) of his village, who occupies the former’s house through unlawful entry.¹¹ As in the above, these disputes concern expensive goods or significant sums of money.

6.1.2 The litigants

As in conventional accusatory procedure, Qurra b. Sharīk’s letters mention two categories of litigants: plaintiffs and defendants. There is, however, a clear distinction in the way these two categories are mentioned. Plaintiffs are always nominally identified by their name (*ism*) and by the first generation of their genealogy (*nasab*): Ibshādah b. Abnīla,¹² Marqus b. Jurayj,¹³ Baqṭar b. Jamūl,¹⁴ Yuḥannis b. Shanūda,¹⁵ and Dāwūd b. Baddās.¹⁶ They are all Christians and sons of Christians. The only exception is papyrus P.Heid.Arab. I n°11, in which the plaintiff is identified by the pronoun “*man*” (someone). As the papyrus did not survive intact and the preserved fragment begins precisely at this point, it is possible that the plaintiff was identified by name in the preceding sections.¹⁷

On the other hand, names of defendants do not appear systematically. Most often, the defendant is only identified as “a peasant/peasants (*nabaṭī/ anbāṭ*) of such a district (*kūra*).”¹⁸ Seven papyri mention litigants, but only two cite the names of defendants: Anbā Ṣalm, a priest,¹⁹ and M[īnā], who is most likely to be the head of a village according

¹⁰ P.Heid.Arab. I n°11 = Abū Ṣafya n°33.

¹¹ Becker, Carl H. “Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 20 (1906), 74-75 = Abū Ṣafya n°34.

¹² P.Qurra n° 3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31.

¹³ P.Heid.Arab. I n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°29; P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129 = Abū Ṣafya n° 28. However, “Jurayj” disappeared from this last papyrus, and it could be a reference to someone else. If it is indeed the same person, this means that he brought a complaint twice in the same month, each time to ask for the repayment of a peasant’s debt.

¹⁴ P.Cair.Arab. III n°155 = Abū Ṣafya n°30.

¹⁵ P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32.

¹⁶ Becker, “Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes,” 74-75 = Abū Ṣafya n°34.

¹⁷ P.Heid.Arab. I n°11 = Abū Ṣafya n°33.

¹⁸ P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Abū Ṣafya n°28 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129; P.Heid.Arab. I n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°29; P.Cair.Arab. III n°155 = Abū Ṣafya n°30; P.Qurra n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31.

¹⁹ P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32.

to Becker and Abū Ṣafya's interpretation.²⁰ We may therefore conclude that these defendants were named only when they were high-ranking people or notables. This does not, however, guarantee that they would be named, for in another papyrus a defendant who may well be the head of a village (*/māzū*/t, read */marū*/t by Abū Ṣafya) is mentioned without being identified.²¹

The apparent difference in the way plaintiffs and defendants were treated may offer a clue regarding Islamic judicial procedures in Qurra's time. The rarity of identification of defendants could mean either that the governor did not regularly know their names or that their precise identity was of secondary importance. If both the plaintiff and the defendant had appeared at the governor's court, this difference in identification would not have occurred. We may thus conclude that the defendant rarely made an appearance before Qurra. The governor was presumably more in direct contact with only the plaintiff, who was often a notable with sufficient material means to refer his complaint to Fustāṭ.²² If this hypothesis is correct, it provides us with an insight into the judicial procedure predating the governor's correspondence with the pagarch. Absence of the defendant's identity in the papyri and his presumed absence at the governor's court indicate that the actual lawsuit did not take place. What is likely is that the written instructions of Qurra b. Sharīk did not concern lawsuits that he had already presided over but dealt with future proceedings. The governor identified the plaintiff to the pagarch solely for administrative reasons. The address preserved on the back of one of his letters (P.Qurra n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31) serves to confirm this hypothesis. On the second line, after the name of the sender and the addressee, the scribe has added the following: "with regard to Ibshādah b. Abnīla [and his complaint against] a peasant (*/fī*) *Ibshādah b. Abnīla fī nabaṭ[ī]*)." This suggests that the plaintiff's name served as reference for the dispute, possibly for registration purposes of the administration.

If these correspondences do not describe judgements of actual lawsuits but concern instructions of judicial proceedings, it is understandable why there was no importance attached to the identification of defendants. The plaintiff would conventionally be required to mention the identity

²⁰ P.Heid.Arab. I n°11 = Abū Ṣafya n°33.

²¹ Becker, "Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes," 74-75 = Abū Ṣafya n°34.

²² See Sijpesteijn, *Petra. Shaping a Muslim State. The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 156.

of his adversary in lawsuits in front of the pagarch. The exception, however, was where the defendant was a high-ranking person not likely to be summoned to court. We may surmise that the identification of the defendant to the governor and the pagarch would have given more authority to the latter in summoning that defendant. In instances where the defendant was an ordinary peasant, oral identification by the plaintiff before the pagarch would have been sufficient.²³ The conclusion therefore is that Qurra b. Sharīk's judicial letters were most likely written to initiate proceedings that were presided over by a pagarch. This hypothesis is confirmed by some details of the procedure as reflected by Qurra's letters.

6.2 Judicial procedure in the presence of Qurra b. Sharīk

6.2.1 An "appeal" to the governor?

Qurra's letters indicate that he had been in prior contact with the plaintiff. The nature of this contact remains uncertain, as the governor's letters only make a standard mention of it with the expression such and such a plaintiff "informed me that..." (*akhbara-nī anna*).²⁴ The verb "*akhbara*", which was later used in religious, historical and *adab* literature to indicate the transmission of a narrative, suggests that the plaintiff made the complaint orally, for example during an audience with the governor. However, Nabia Abbott has highlighted ambiguities concerning the usage of this verb, particularly in the context of an *isnād*. Although the expression denotes oral transmission, it can also refer to written communication within a literate society.²⁵ Since written petitions to governors began to appear in papyri documents from the third/ninth century onwards, we cannot rule out the hypothesis that plaintiffs from the early

²³ Regarding the identification of litigants in later periods, see Tillier, Mathieu. "L'identification en justice à l'époque abbasside," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 127 (2010), 99-101.

²⁴ P.Qurra n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31; P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Abū Ṣafya n°28 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129; P.Heid.Arab. I n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°29; P.Cair.Arab. III n°155 = Abū Ṣafya n°30; P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32.

²⁵ Abbott, Nabia. *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, II. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, II, 63.

eighth century may have submitted their complaints to Qurra b. Sharīk in a written form.

The main question, however, is not how the plaintiff submitted his complaint, but rather the significance of this complaint to the governor and its function within the judicial process. I have argued in the preceding paragraphs that an encounter between the plaintiff and the governor may not have occurred during a lawsuit presided over by the governor. The lawsuit may well have taken place *after* the dispatch of the letter to the pagarch, which explains the prescriptive nature of the correspondence. What then was the course of events *before* the encounter? Had a lawsuit been raised? In other words, had the governor been solicited for proceedings that had already been initiated? Or did the claimant “appeal” against a decision that had already been issued?

Qurra b. Sharīk’s letters do not refer to a previous lawsuit. In identifying the plaintiff, a recurring expression appears in the correspondence: “the [plaintiff] claims (*yaz’amu*) that [his adversary] deprived him of his right/due (*anna-hu/hum ghalaba-hu/ghalabū-hu ‘alā ḥaqqi-hi*).”²⁶ The verb “*ghalaba*”, which carries the meaning “to overcome”,²⁷ could initially be understood as referring to a previous lawsuit in which the plaintiff had been “overcome” by his adversary who had unlawfully appropriated his right. This interpretation is however difficult to prove; it is more likely that the expression *ghalaba ‘alā ḥaqqi-hi* simply refers to the fact that a debtor illegally appropriated the money borrowed from the plaintiff (i.e. his due). Two extracts from Qurra’s letters seem to confirm this second hypothesis:

(1) “As to the matter in hand. Marqus b. [Jurayj] has informed me that he has to demand of a peasant (*nabaṭī*) from among the people of thy district (*kūra*) twenty-three dinars and a third of a dinar. He says that the peasant has died and that [another] peasant from among the people of his village has appropriated

²⁶ P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Abū Ṣafya n° 28 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129; P.Heid.Arab. I n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°29; P.Cair.Arab. III n°155 = Abū Ṣafya n°30; P.Qurra n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31; P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32.

²⁷ See Kazimirski, Albin de Biberstein. *Dictionnaire arabe-français*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, s.d. (1st edition Paris: Maisonneuve, 1860), II, “*gh.l.b*”.

his money (i.e. that of the dead peasant?²⁸), thus *depriving him of his due...*²⁹

(2) “As to the matter in hand. Marqus b. Jurayj has informed me that a peasant from among the people of thy district owes him ten dinars and a half, and he claims that *he deprived him of his due...*”³⁰

In the first excerpt, the plaintiff’s adversary has appropriated the debt of the dead debtor, possibly through inheritance, and refused to give back the money to the creditor. Likewise, in the second excerpt, the expression *ghalaba ‘alā ḥaqqi-hi* seems to refer to the refusal by the debtor to repay his debt rather than referring to a previous infringement. The expression could therefore be an emphatic allusion to the harm suffered by the plaintiff who had been “overcome” by his adversary.

It must be stressed that the expression “*ghalaba ‘alā ḥaqqi-hi*” only appears in cases involving debt. In cases of usurpation or misappropriation, a different expression is employed: *zulman bi-ghayri ḥaqq*.

(3) “Someone [came] and informed me that M[inā, the head of his village, took from him the sum of ... (number below 10)] dinars (*dan[ā/nīr*) in an unjust manner and without any right (*zulman bi-ghayri [ḥaqq]*).”³¹

(4) “Dāwūd b. Baddās has informed me [that the *māzū*]t of his village settled in his house with members of his family and some of his belongings, in an unjust manner [and without any rig]ht (*zulman [bi-ghayri ḥa]qq*).”³²

This expression undoubtedly describes the wrongs committed by the defendant. It cannot allude to the outcome of a previous lawsuit. We can

²⁸ The ambiguity arises from the possessive pronoun “-*hu*”, which could also refer to the creditor in “*akhadha māla-hu*”.

²⁹ P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Abū Šafya n° 28 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129. Translation by Grohmann, Adolf. *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library, Vol. III. Administrative Texts*. Cairo: Egyptian Library Press, 1938, III, 31-32, with revisions.

³⁰ P.Heid.Arab. I n°3 = Abū Šafya n°29. Cf. P.Qurra n°3 = Abū Šafya n°31; P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Šafya n°32.

³¹ P.Heid.Arab. I n°11 = Abū Šafya n°33.

³² Becker, “Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes,” 74-75 = Abū Šafya n°34.

safely conclude that in cases of usurpation, letters to the pagarch do not contain allusions to a lawsuit that could have occurred in the pagarch's court before the complaint was raised with the governor. It seems therefore reasonable to suppose that there were no previous lawsuits concerning usurpations, and likewise concerning debts. At this point, we can exclude the hypothesis that the plaintiff lodged an appeal before the governor of Fustāṭ against a judgment previously passed by the pagarch. The plaintiff certainly "appealed" to the governor (in a non-technical sense), perhaps by way of petition, but this appeal was probably part of the original trial or proceedings in the first instance.

6.3 The subject of the letters

Production of proof

If the governor did not preside over an appeal court, we still have to determine his role within the procedure. When Qurra b. Sharik was called on by plaintiffs, he always sent the same type of instructions to the pagarch. According to the letters, it was incumbent on the pagarch to pass judgement on cases submitted by the plaintiff. The pagarch was sometimes ordered to summon both the plaintiff and the defendant (literally: "bring together [the plaintiff] and his companion"; *ijma' bayna-hu wa-bayna šāhibi-hi*) and examine their claims.³³ The principal subject of the letter appearing time and again concerns instances where the plaintiff is required to produce proof (*bayyina*) of the legitimacy of his claim. The exact timing of the presentation of this evidence within a proceeding is not always mentioned.³⁴ When it is mentioned, the presentation of proof seems to vary from one letter to another. In certain papyri, recovery of the truth (*ḥaqq*) by means of evidence is supposed to occur during a confrontation between the plaintiff and the defendant:

"Dāwūd b. Baddās has informed me [that the *māzū*]t of his village settled in his house with members of his family and some of his belongings, in an unjust manner [and without any right]. When the present letter reaches you, bring them together. If

³³ P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32; Becker, "Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes," 74-75 = Abū Ṣafya n°34.

³⁴ See, for example, P.Cair.Arab. III n°154 = Abū Ṣafya n°28 = Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 129; P.Qurra n°3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31.

what [Dāwūd b. Baddās] told me is true (*ḥaqqan*), have [his adversary] give him back what he owes him."³⁵

In this excerpt, the procedure conforms to the classical *fiqh* model where the confrontation between litigants before a judge precedes the exposition of proofs.³⁶ In other letters, however, the gathering of litigants follows the exposition of proofs:

"As to the matter in hand: Yuḥannis b. Shanūda has informed me that Anbā Ṣalm, belonging to his district (*kūra*), has a debt of eighteen dinars toward him, and that he deprived him of his due. If what he told me is true (*ḥaqqan*) and if he produces a proof (*bayyina*) of it, summon him together with his adversary and have him give back what he owes him."³⁷

In this type of instruction, the pagarch is ordered to preside over the production of proofs by the plaintiff. Only when the plaintiff's right has been established would the defendant be summoned and condemned.

The interpretation of this procedure depends on the way we consider these instructions. Two hypotheses may be proposed:

(1) These letters contain clear, succinct instructions containing sentences that correspond to the successive steps to be implemented. The assumption is that these instructions were to be complied with in literal terms. In certain cases, the production of the proof by the plaintiff preceded his confrontation with the defendant. If the plaintiff could not prove his right before the pagarch, the defendant would not be summoned to court. In other cases, the pagarch is asked to summon the two litigants first and the plaintiff is required to produce his proof during this confrontation. The number of surviving judiciary papyri is too few, however, to expound further on this hypothesis. Could these procedures have been changed to suit the nature of the dispute or the litigants' identity (especially that of the defendant)? The evidence is too scant to allow

³⁵ Becker, "Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes," 74-75 = Abū Ṣafya n°34.

³⁶ On the necessary presence of the two litigants before the judge in classical Islamic law, see Schacht, Joseph. *An Introduction to Islamic Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. Tr. P. Kempf and A.M. Turki as: *Introduction au droit musulman*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983, 157; Tyan, Émile. "La procédure du 'défaut' en droit musulman," *Studia Islamica* 7 (1957), 119.

³⁷ P.Heid.Arab. I n°10 = Abū Ṣafya n°32. See also P.Heid.Arab. I n°11 = Abū Ṣafya n°33.

for a satisfactory answer. The only available consideration, therefore, is to allow for certain variability within a procedure so that the summoning of litigants before a judge is not regarded as a precondition to the production of the proof thereof, as in classical *fiqh*.³⁸

(2) The order of the procedure (appearance of both litigants → proof; or proof → appearance of the defendant) is not the main preoccupation of the governor. The assumption here is that the order of sentences in Qurra b. Sharīk's letters do not reflect the precise steps to be followed by the pagarch. What then is the principal object? With only a few exceptions, the most commonly recurring topic of Qurra's judicial letters is the production of proof, called "*bayyina*". This word (pl. *bayyināt*) occurs 71 times in the Qur'ān – 19 times in the singular, and 52 times in the plural.³⁹ It always designates the "manifest proof",⁴⁰ the "irrefutable proof"⁴¹ or the archetypal "proof"⁴² produced by God of His existence and of the veracity of His prophets – e.g. the scriptural proof of the Qur'ān and its verses.⁴³ In pre-classical and classical *fiqh*, "*bayyina*" came to designate the principal type of judicial proof – the testimonial evidence of two (or four in the case of fornication) reliable witnesses.⁴⁴ However, although the Qur'ān mentions statements by two witnesses,⁴⁵ it never

³⁸ There were, however, exceptions to this rule in classical *fiqh*. For the Shāfi'is, the defendant's appearance at court is not required (Tyan, "La procédure du 'défaut'," 118-19). Moreover, in Ḥanafī law, the plaintiff must produce witnesses and begin to prove his claim before the summoning of the defendant if the latter lives at a distance superior to half a day's journey from the court: al-Khaṣṣāf. *Kitāb adab al-qāḍī*. Ed. Farḥāt Ziyāda. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1978, 250. Cf. Ibn al-Qāṣṣ. *Adab al-qāḍī*. Ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2007, 110. On this procedure, see Tillier, Mathieu. *Les cadis d'Iraq et l'État abbasside (132/750-334/945)*. Damascus: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2009, 297-98. Could this procedure be a relic from the previous Umayyad procedure?

³⁹ 'Abd al-Bāqī, Muḥammad Fu'ād. *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-qur'ān al-karīm*. Damascus: Maktabat al-Ghazālī; Beirut: Mu'assasat manāhil al-'irfān, s.d., 142-43.

⁴⁰ Brunshvig, Robert. "Le système de la preuve en droit musulman," in *Études d'islamologie* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1976), II, 202; *idem*, "Bayyina". In *EI*².

⁴¹ Cf. the French translation by Masson, Denise. *Essai d'interprétation du Coran inimitable*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, s.d., 78.

⁴² Cf. the French translation by Blachère, Régis. *Le Coran*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005, 87.

⁴³ See al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*. Ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2000, 10.242.

⁴⁴ Brunshvig, "Le système de la preuve," 201-2.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Q. 5:106-7.

refers to their testimony as “*bayyina*”. The word “*bayyina*” appears to signify “evidence” without referring to any specific procedure.

Between the revelation or the collection of the Qur’ān around the middle of the seventh century and the composition of the first *fiqh* books a century later, an apparent terminological transformation occurred. At some point during this century, the word *bayyina* came to mean a double reliable testimony regarded as evidence. Qurra b. Sharīk’s letters, which were written halfway through this particular period, do not state the governor’s precise intention for employing this word. He only asks that the plaintiff “produces the proof of [his claim]” (*aqāma l-bayyina ‘alā mā akhbara-nī / aqāma ‘alā dhālika l-bayyina*). Was he referring to the testimony of two reliable witnesses? Or was he demanding for “irrefutable proofs”, irrespective of the precise nature of these proofs?

A definitive answer to these questions cannot be supplied.⁴⁶ Evidence found in papyri cannot be sufficiently substantiated, and later narrative sources are no better at elucidating the intentions of a governor of Egypt or what he expected from a Coptic pagarch. We can however formulate three premises:

(1) Qurra b. Sharīk’s letters are the oldest documents using the word “*bayyina*” in a judicial sense. Whatever its precise meaning, the repetition of this word in the governor’s letters suggests that the “classical” judicial terminology was in the process of becoming fixed in the early eighth century, especially vocabulary pertaining to evidence.

(2) The word “*bayyina*” clearly belongs to rhetoric based on the Qur’ān. Although “*bayyina*” may have been terminology used to designate judicial proofs before Islam, I have been unable to find any epigraphic or literary (i.e. poetical) evidence of such terminological use.⁴⁷ Even if this were the case, the high number of occurrences of this word in the Qur’ān

⁴⁶ We must remark that in P.Qurra n° 3 = Abū Ṣafya n°31, “*bayyina*” is used once in the singular and another time in the plural (*bayyināt*). The plural form of the word would not make sense if *bayyina* meant double (or multiple) testimony. We could therefore conclude that this plural simply means “evidence” in general. However, Abū Ṣafya prefers to read “*sha’ na-hu*” in lieu of “*bayyināti-hi*” (this reading is mentioned by Nabia Abbott in her edition of the papyrus); in such a case the plural form would hold no significance.

⁴⁷ The term *bayyina* is absent from the vocabulary of the *Mu’allaqāt* compared to other terms relating to the law of evidence (*shāhid*, *yamīn*, *ḥakam*, *‘adl*, *khaṣm*, *qaḍā*, *ḥalāfa*, etc.). See Arazi, Albert, and Salman Masalha. *Six Early Arab Poets. New Edition and Concordance*. Jerusalem: The Max Schloessinger Memorial Series, 1999, index.

undoubtedly gave it a religious connotation. Other Arabic words could have been used to refer to “proof”, like *ḥujja*, *dalīl*, or *burhān*.⁴⁸ These appear also in the Qur’ān (*ḥujja* is mentioned four times, *dalīl* once and *burhān* eight times⁴⁹), but to a much lesser extent than the word *bayyina*. Furthermore, they connote inferior types of proof relating to human reasoning or to bare arguments that can be refuted.⁵⁰ In choosing the word *bayyina*, which occupied a prominent position within the Qur’ān over other synonymous terminology, the governor was decidedly prescribing judicial procedures within a Qur’ānic frame of reference.⁵¹

(3) Given the central character of the word “*bayyina*” in Qurra b. Sharīk’s letters and its near-systematic appearance replete with religious connotations, the production of proofs could be one of the main reasons for the writing of these letters. In other words, the governor of Fustāṭ may have required pagarchs to implement a procedure relying on a specific mode of evidence, the *bayyina*, presumably as a kind of testimonial proof produced by a certain number of witnesses.

Conditional judgement

There is more to Qurra b. Sharīk’s letters than instructions concerning the appearance of litigants or prescribing judicial procedure such as the *bayyina*. The correspondence contains detailed instructions about verdicts. If the plaintiff succeeds in substantiating his claim by means of a *bayyina*, the pagarch is ordered to condemn the defendant. The verdict is a rational outcome in that the production of a proof leads to the sentencing. Despite their apparent banality, instructions regarding verdicts carry great significance. First, the existence of a verdict implies that the pagarch’s judgment is based on the *bayyina*. This is an indication that

⁴⁸ Brunschvig, “Bayyina.”

⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu’jam al-mufahras*, 118, 194, 261.

⁵⁰ The word *ḥujja* is associated with God in the Qur’ān (6:149), but the adjective *bāliḡha* (decisive) is required to instil the sense of “absolute proof”: see Gardet, L. “Ḥudjdja.” In *EI*². The word “*dalīl*” appears in the Qur’ān (25:45) meaning “guide”. As for *burhān*, it is a more ambiguous word which can designate in the Qur’ān both decisive proof revealed by God and evidence men are asked to produce regarding the truthfulness of their beliefs: Gardet, L. “Burhān.” In *EI*².

⁵¹ On similar examples of Qur’ānicization of the discourse which occurred under the Umayyads, see F.M. Donner, “Qur’ānicization of Religio-Political Discourse in the Umayyad Period,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 129 (2011), 79-92.

the *bayyina* prescribed by the governor was binding and that the pagarch would only have issued a judgement on the basis of this proof. Second, the entire proceeding is executed as if the governor was himself issuing a conditional judgment. He did not receive the litigants, nor record any proofs thereof, so could not have acted as a judge himself. Nevertheless, he dictated his verdict to the pagarch who fulfils this role on his behalf.

That the governor is an important judicial authority is indicated in several of the letters, in sentences immediately preceding the final salutation. If the plaintiff cannot prove his claim, the governor orders the pagarch to inform this fact to him in writing (*illā an yakūna sha'nu-hu ghayra dhālika fa-taktubu ilayya bi-hi*).⁵² At first glance, Qurra b. Sharīk appears to be requesting to be kept abreast of a certain case,⁵³ but this is not at all so. These instructions can only be understood if taken as part of a binary construction. If the plaintiff produces a *bayyina*, the pagarch must issue a judgment. On the other hand, if the plaintiff fails to prove his claim, the pagarch is required to write to the governor. In other words, the pagarch *must not issue any judgment* without the *bayyina*; he only has to consult the governor. What next? Will the governor issue new instructions on the basis of the pagarch's report? Or will he impose another mode of proof (e.g. an oath, if we assume *bayyina* to be a double testimony)? Will he ask the defendant to produce evidence? Will he send new instructions to the pagarch regarding the verdict? There is nothing in the Egyptian documents that definitively answers these questions. What is clear, however, is that the governor of Fustāṭ constituted a significant part of the judicial authority delegated to the pagarch.

6.4 Islamic referent in a Christian context: the role of the governor in a “provincial” procedure

These pieces of information offer clues about the role of the governor and his administration within “provincial” legal proceedings – a procedure implemented outside Fustāṭ – and the judicial relationship between governors and Coptic authorities. Let us summarise the general flow of these proceedings. Individuals residing outside Fustāṭ raise their cases

⁵² See references *supra*.

⁵³ This is, for instance, Steinwenter's interpretation of the sentences ; Steinwenter, Arthur. *Studien zu den koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Oberägypten*. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967 (First ed. Leipzig, 1920), 15.

with the governor either by means of a direct petition or by seeking an audience with him. The governor writes to the pagarch of the plaintiff's *kūra* a letter informing him of the plaintiff's identity and the basis of the complaint, and orders him to judge the case. He prescribes a procedure that includes at one stage a confrontation between the litigants in addition to the production of specific evidence, called the *bayyina*, by the plaintiff. If the plaintiff produces a *bayyina*, the pagarch must issue a judgement restoring the disputed item to the plaintiff.⁵⁴ Where such proof is not produced, the pagarch is obliged to write to the governor, possibly to seek new instructions.

These letters suggest that governors had taken steps to centralise the Egyptian judiciary. In Qurra's case, he wished to appear as guarantor of justice, as is suggested by the recurring formula *fa-lā yuzlamanna 'indaka* ("Do not let [the plaintiff] be unjustly treated before you").⁵⁵ His role was not merely symbolic, however. Qurra also imposed procedures which, by their Qur'ānic vocabulary, may have been identified as "Islamic". Furthermore, he dictated his verdict to the pagarch or, at least, claimed higher judicial authority to whom the pagarch was accountable. In early eighth-century Upper Egypt, justice was still dispensed by Christian pagarchs. However, Qurra b. Sharik's letters indicate that these proceedings had been integrated into a newly emerging Islamic framework.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The governor's instructions occasionally exceeded the level of bare restitution. In Becker, "Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes," 74-75 = Abū Šafya n°34, Qurra b. Sharik orders the pagarch to chase away "by force" (*daḥran šadīdan*) an illegal occupier of a house. Here restitution is associated with a kind of physical punishment of the defendant.

⁵⁵ See references above.

⁵⁶ The implementation of this procedure, implicating both a Muslim governor and Christian pagarchs, makes it necessary to review some of Gladys Frantz-Murphy's interpretations that rely on the hypothesis that courts disappeared in late Byzantine Egypt. Frantz-Murphy considers the Muslim authorities as being responsible for the restoration of an efficient judicial system in Islamic Egypt (Frantz-Murphy, Gladys. "Settlement of Property Disputes in Provincial Egypt. The Reinstitution of Courts in the Early Islamic Period," *al-Masāq* 6 (1993), 101; she contradicts herself a few lines later, however, in 102, by suggesting that Coptic judges still existed in the second/eighth century). The hypothesis of an extinction of courts in Byzantine Egypt before the Arab conquest has since then been refuted by D. Simon, cited by Gagos, Traianos and Peter van Minnen. *Settling a Dispute. Toward a Legal Anthropology of Late Antique Egypt*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994, 42.

It is not yet clear why Christian litigants referred their matters to the Muslim governor. Does this mean that these litigants did not refer them directly to their pagarch? Three hypotheses may be considered:

(1) The plaintiff had already referred the matter to the pagarch. The pagarch issued a judgment but the plaintiff, unhappy with the outcome, chose to appeal the case with the governor. In Byzantine Egypt, appealing to the governor about decisions issued by local judges was a widespread practice.⁵⁷ In her study of some Qurra papyri, Nabia Abbott seems to adhere to this interpretation of the procedure.⁵⁸ However, Abbott's hypothesis – that the governor acted as genuine appeal court against the pagarch's decision – contradicts my previous assertion regarding the meaning of the expression *ghalaba 'alā ḥaqqi-hi* (see *supra*). For the sake of discussion, let us consider nevertheless that my previous demonstration failed to prove that no lawsuit had previously been brought before the pagarch and that in reality the plaintiff appealed to the governor. This in no way implies that the governor *presided* over appeal proceedings; he did not personally receive the defendant but ordered the pagarch to conduct the trial and issue a judgment. Moreover, Qurra b. Sharik's letters mention neither any injustices committed by the pagarch nor any judgments quashed by the governor. What would the appeal be about, then? The centrality of the *bayyina* in these letters may offer a clue. One possibility may be that the plaintiff complained before the governor about a procedure implemented by the pagarch, in particular about certain proofs being used as a basis for his judgment. This could explain why the governor ordered the pagarch to rely on specific proof, the *bayyina*. However, this explanation does not fit with the minority of judicial papyri that do not include the word *bayyina*.⁵⁹ Here, the hypothesis that the governor-pagarch communications related to an appeal to the governor against a previous judgment falls short.

(2) The plaintiff filed a complaint against his adversary before the pagarch of his district, but the pagarch failed to take up the case and the plaintiff decided to petition the matter directly with the governor. This implies that the plaintiff appealed to the governor against what he

⁵⁷ See Rouillard, Germaine. *L'administration civile de l'Égypte byzantine*. Paris: Geuthner, 1928, 60.

⁵⁸ Abbott, *The Qurrah Papyri from Aphrodito in the Oriental Institute*, 74, 99.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Becker, "Arabische Papyri des Aphroditofundes," 74-75 = Abū Ṣafya n°34.

regarded as an abuse of power, as suggested by Steinwenter's interpretation.⁶⁰ However Qurra b. Sharik's judicial letters do not refer to the pagarch's rejection of a previously filed complaint. In one Greek letter to Basilios, Qurra reproaches him for his lack of attention to the needs of the people and he enjoins him to be more just.⁶¹ According to J. Abū Şafya, this letter rebukes the pagarch's judicial practice, stating that Basilios neither heard the complaints of his people nor judged them accordingly.⁶² Abū Şafya's interpretation is questionable, however, since the letter in question concerns mainly taxes and fiscal abuses committed by tax collectors. It is true that Qurra b. Sharik urges Basilios to be more "just" and listen carefully to the complaints of his people, but the justice at stake here is a fiscal one, not one between private litigants. Appeals to the *dux* of the province of the Thebaid – or even to the Byzantine emperor himself – against judicial abuses committed by the pagarch of Aphroditō or his employees were commonplace during the sixth century.⁶³ Under the Umayyads, however, no serious evidence allows us to conclude that appeals to governors arose from the denial of justice. Furthermore, the standardised form of judicial letters and their frequency – Qurra b. Sharik's letters were written during a period of a little more than one year – do not suggest that they were related to occasional abuses, but written as part of a more standard procedure.

(3) Either the plaintiff had not filed a complaint with the pagarch, or the claim was filed and the pagarch immediately dispatched him to the governor of Fustāṭ. This means that the complaint before the governor was part of the first instance procedure. According to this procedure, a plaintiff living far from Fustāṭ referred his case to the governor or his administration. The case was then referred to the pagarch in a letter prescribing the judicial procedure including conditional judgment. If this scenario is true, the governor's letter was a precondition to the examination of a dispute by the pagarch. This hypothesis, which appears as the most plausible, suggests that the governor not only was informed of the pagarchies' legal matters but also exercised actual authority over them.

⁶⁰ Steinwenter, *Studien zu den koptischen Rechtsurkunden*, 15.

⁶¹ Papyrus n°1356, translated into English by Bell, Harold Idris. "Translations of the Greek Aphrodito Papyri in the British Museum, Part 1," *Der Islam* 2 (1911), 281-82; Arabic translation by Abū Şafya, *Bardīyyāt Qurra*, 229-30.

⁶² Abū Şafya, *Bardīyyāt Qurra*, 109.

⁶³ Bell, Harold Idris. "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 64 (1944), 31, 33, 35.

This scenario is strongly comparable to certain procedures dating from late antiquity. From the fourth century onwards, local judges of the Roman Empire could only adjudicate minor litigations concerning small amounts of money; major cases had to be referred to the governor.⁶⁴ Moreover, Constantin Zuckerman has highlighted the importance of a procedure by rescripts in sixth-century Egypt. A plaintiff sent a petition to the Emperor in the first instance, in which he explained his case. The Emperor – or rather his administration – sent a rescript to the *dux* of the Thebaid, in which he ordered him to hear the complaint and to dispense a judgment in favour of the plaintiff. These rescripts were enforceable only after the *dux* had conducted a proper trial, in the presence of both litigants, and after the facts mentioned by the plaintiff in his petition had been verified.⁶⁵ Finally, Jill Harries notes that from the fifth century onwards a specific procedure developed in which a petitioner addressed the office of the governor through a *libellus* in which the plaintiff described his adversary and the dispute.⁶⁶ The rescript issued by the governor did not judge the truthfulness of the facts, but rather exposed a rule pertinent to the case and authorised the plaintiff to refer his dispute before a judge (*iudex*).⁶⁷ The governor could send the rescript to the claimant or directly to the local officer in charge of adjudicating similar disputes.⁶⁸

The similarity between the procedure by rescript in Byzantine Egypt and the procedure revealed by Qurra b. Sharik's letters is striking. It is thus tempting to conclude that early eighth-century Egyptian judicial administration originated in part from late Roman/Byzantine procedures. It appears as if the *libelli* previously sent to Constantinople, or increas-

⁶⁴ Harries, Jill. *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 54.

⁶⁵ Zuckerman, Constantin. "Les deux Dioscure d'Aphrodité ou les limites de la pétition," in Denis Feissel and Jean Gascoü, eds., *La pétition à Byzance* (Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2004), 83-84. Cf. Bell, "An Egyptian Village," 26. See also Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*, 184; Gagos and van Minnen, *Settling a Dispute*, 10-15 (although this last example of a petition is not judicial in nature).

⁶⁶ About the Roman concept of *libellus*, see Berger, Adolf. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1954, 561.

⁶⁷ Harries, *Law and Empire*, 27, 104-5.

⁶⁸ Humfress, Caroline. *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 42. However, Arthur Schiller questions the classification of "rescript" by which most Egyptian Roman papyri are usually identified: Schiller, A. Arthur. "The Courts are No More," in *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1971), 1: 477-82.

ingly to the *dux*, were still in use at Aphroditō under early Islamic rule. Like the Emperor or the *dux*, the governor of Fustāt sent rescripts – i.e. judicial letters – to pagarchs whenever he received a complaint. These rescripts prescribed the procedure to be followed and issued conditional judgments.

Does this indicate that the procedure was complied with systematically and that the proceedings could only be opened once the plaintiff had sent a petition to the governor? This is certainly not the case. The people of Aphroditō could still go directly to the pagarch's court, as had been the case in the late seventh century.⁶⁹ The high sums mentioned in Qurra's letters suggest that only the most expensive disputes were referred to the governor, and that cases involving small sums were referred to pagarchs without the matter being raised before the governor. Does this mean that litigations about large sums of money *had* to be referred to the governor's administration and that judgements could only be issued subsequent to the governor's authorisations and instructions? In other words, did the governors of Fustāt impose such procedure by rescripts? It is possible that at first the Copts simply kept their former habit of sending petitions to their rulers – the *dux* or the governor, whatever his religion – to ensure their disputes would benefit from more scrutiny by the pagarch,⁷⁰ especially in the case of high-value disputes. If this last hypothesis is true, the governors of Fustāt adopted this procedure as a way of dealing with the constant inflow of new petitions. Even if they did not impose it – or not at first – this procedure allowed the governors to establish control over a provincial, Christian judicial institution and to develop or promote “Islamic” procedures that eventually evolved into the classical model theorised by *fiqh* works a century later.

6.5 Conclusion

The exact nature of judicial procedures implemented by the governor of Fustāt will remain uncertain until more evidence is discovered. Among the various hypotheses described above, some seem more consistent than others. It is likely that raising the case first and foremost with the gover-

⁶⁹ See, for example, Rémondon, Roger. *Papyrus grecs d'Apollōnos Anō*. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1953, n°37.

⁷⁰ See Frantz-Murphy, “Settlement of Property Disputes in Provincial Egypt,” 103.

nor was a normal judicial procedure in the Christian landscape, one that adhered to the format of previous Byzantine procedures.

This by no means undermines the originality of the process which led to the development of classical Islamic procedures. By adopting a judicial procedure in which Christian litigants referred to him as the first port of call (probably by way of petitions), Egyptian governors like Qurra b. Sharik could gain control over local judicial practices. Although he did not dispense justice himself amongst the Christian people of Upper Egypt, the governor could also impose the rules of such procedures, or at least reinterpret them within an “Islamic” framework characterised by the use of Qur’ānic terminology.

This suggests that the judicial system served to increase the Muslims’ authority within the Egyptian landscape. Earlier documentary evidence demonstrates that the Christian *dux* was still regarded as the superior judicial authority under the Sufyānids (that is, in the second half of the seventh century)⁷¹ and that he could send his judicial instructions to the pagarch. Institutionally speaking, the Egyptian landscape therefore remained only loosely connected to the Muslim rule. In the early eighth century, however, the governor of Fustāṭ emerged as the highest legal authority within the province. Even though disputes were still being adjudicated by Christian pagarchs, the development of a judicial hierarchy presided over by the Muslim governor integrated the traditional institutions of conflict resolution into a more structured state. The emergence of a new judicial order appears to have undermined the rule of Christian authorities and eventually led to their disappearance. By regularly submitting their complaints to the governor of Fustāṭ, Christians became accustomed to the main principles of an “Islamic” justice as guaranteed by Muslim authorities. Once this process was achieved one or two decades later, the governor of Fustāṭ successfully replaced traditional pagarchs with Muslim sub-governors.⁷² Christian judicial institutions became marginalised and mainly survived within episcopal courts. Thus, despite being a majority for centuries, the Christian populace became a submissive minority at least on an institutional level.

⁷¹ Rémondon, *Papyrus grecs d’Apollônios Anô*, 24.

⁷² Cf. Sijpesteijn, “Landholding Patterns in Early Islamic Egypt,” 127.

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7

Polygyny and East Syrian Law: Local Practices and Ecclesiastical Tradition*

Lev Weitz

(The Catholic University of America)

7.1 Introduction

Recent research on the early centuries of Muslim rule of the Near East has begun to greatly change our understanding of non-Muslim religious communities in that milieu. The standard view of much previous scholarship had been a general acceptance of the image, suggested by the normative legal sources of the period, of fully separate religious communities that manage their internal affairs with their own legal traditions and judicial institutions.¹ Recent studies, however, have emphasized a converse perspective: the very creation of those (imperfectly functioning) institutions and traditions was an attempt on the part of religious elites to impress their vision of discrete, bounded religious communities on a much more intertwining and overlapping social world.² That world was one in which individuals were embedded in networks of affiliation, obligation, and common interest that were not perfectly congruent with confessional community.³

* I would like to thank the participants of the 2011 University of Oxford workshop “Minorities: Legal, Cultural and Economic Perspectives” and Professor Michael Cook for their comments and criticism. All errors remain my own.

¹ The most sophisticated statement of this position is the classic and still standard Morony, Michael G. *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

² See Simonsohn, Uriel I. *A Common Justice. The Legal Allegiances of Christians and Jews under Early Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011; and Payne, Richard. *Christianity and Iranian Society in Late Antiquity, ca. 500-700 CE*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: Princeton University, 2010. Also relevant are the chapters of Edward Coghill, Zachary Chitwood, Audrey Dridi and David Taylor in this volume.

³ Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 6-10.

These insights encourage us to be wary of too easily regarding the religious communities of late antiquity and early Islam as self-evident, internally coherent and consistent cultural formations. At the same time, however, proceeding too far down the road of deconstructing communal boundaries produces a clearly mistaken impression that no one other than elites understood, observed, or enacted communal difference. Over time, distinct patterns of social organisation, styles of intellectual discourse, and constructions of religious identity came to predominate in the areas under Muslim rule as certainly as individuals and communities came to distinguish between one another. With these observations in mind, an instructive approach for scholars studying these dynamics is to examine the contentious, back-and-forth processes through which religious elites and a variety of other actors sought to mark particular social practices, rituals, texts, etc. as constitutive of communal belonging, and to have those markers of difference accepted by the many elements of the communities to which they appealed.

This chapter examines East Syrian Christian discourses on polygyny as just such a process, one through which ecclesiastical elites sought to assert religious distinctiveness in the regulation of particular marital practices while lay parties variously accepted and contested the ecclesiastical vision. The chapter has three main purposes: to document the presence of polygynous practices among Christian communities in Iraq and Iran; to examine the development of ecclesiastical strategies to mark such practices as specifically un-Christian in the context of the socio-political transformations of the late antique and early Islamic Near East; and, where possible, to bring to light lay reception and responses to the ecclesiastical position. By the chapter's end, we will see that various forms of polygynous household organisation were customary in certain sections of Near Eastern societies, especially elite ones, and that many lay Christians engaged in them just as did their non-Christian neighbours. From an early date, however, East Syrian bishops set a standard defining polygyny as outside the bounds of the marital practices that denoted membership in their vision of Christian community. Furthermore, the ecclesiastical hierarchy's increased efforts to formalise a comprehensive communal legal tradition after the Muslim conquests resulted in new strategies to combat lay polygyny, particularly through attempts to regulate the inheritance practices of Christians ever more closely.

7.2 Polygyny in Comparative Perspective

We are confronted at the outset with a certain terminological problem. Polygyny, in its strictest sense, refers to the practice of a man having multiple wives simultaneously, and more loosely to men cohabiting with multiple wives and/or concubines. However, the different forms of such household formations attested in Eurasian and African history, all of which we might conveniently label “polygynous,” often represent different cultural values, are regulated differently through custom and law, and function differently as strategies of household reproduction in their respective societies. So, for example, a medieval Irish chief who takes multiple wives and concubines as a prerogative of his elite status and a Sasanian Zoroastrian who enters into a second marriage with the widow of a childless kinsman for the sole purpose of producing a proxy heir for the deceased are doing very different things in the context of their respective religious and social economies.⁴ Our single English word “polygyny” elides such distinctions.

At the same time, however, the Christian discourse we will examine makes effectively the same elision and includes all polygynous practices under a single category of activity. Our main textual sources were written by Christian ecclesiasts who espoused the view that any sexual activity outside of monogamous marriage threatened salvation; polygynous union could thus never be more than wilful, ongoing adultery, and the differences between its forms were not meaningful. Therefore, treating our subject as “polygyny” broadly conceived is a reasonable approach insofar as the discourse we will be examining defines it in largely the same way. In light of these observations, I will use the terms “polygyny” or “polygynous practices” throughout this chapter as a category, more or less congruent with that used by the Christian writers under consideration, to cover the whole range of household formations in which men cohabit with multiple women (wives and/or concubines). At the same time, however, we will have to keep in mind that the practices addressed by our sources may in fact be quite distinct from one another even when their differences

⁴ On Irish chieftains, see Herlihy, David. *Medieval Households*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, 38-43; and on the Zoroastrian case, Macuch, Maria. “Zoroastrian Principles and the Structure of Kinship in Sasanian Iran,” in Carlo G. Cereti *et al.*, eds., *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 235-36.

remain obscure to us. When the sources permit specification or invite speculation, I will offer comments on their particularities.

To set our subject in a broader perspective, it is also worth noting that polygynous practices are attested among many cultures of the Mediterranean basin and Near East over a wide range of time; they have been neither confined to the regions of this study's focus nor to non-Christian groups.⁵ In the rough time frame of our general interest, it is well known that Islamic law permitted a man to marry up to four women and take concubines,⁶ and that such practices were found throughout the Islamic Near East and North Africa. But they were characteristic as well of various social groupings in the Christian Roman Empire and its successor states in medieval Europe. Though the lettered traditions of early and late antique Christianity drew from Gospel and Pauline teachings a general understanding of monogamy (excluding sequential as well as simultaneous spouses) as the only acceptable kind of marriage,⁷ polygynous practices in no way disappeared overnight as communities were Christianised. The early medieval sources for Ireland and continental Germanic societies, for example, attest that polygyny and concubinage remained common at least among social and political elites until the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁸ In the Latin heartlands of the Roman Empire, outright polygynous households with multiple wives, which Roman law prohibited, were not customary; but to the East, "Greek tradition had been more flexible than Roman... on whether it was possible to have a concubine at the same time as a wife."⁹

Shifting yet further east, the social history and institutions of the Sasanian Empire are much less documented than those of Rome. However, Iranian marital practices have received a good deal of attention

⁵ We should note here that calling a society polygynous should not be taken to imply that a majority of its male members is presumed to cohabit with multiple women. By all accounts, most ostensibly polygynous societies actually see very low rates of polygyny, since usually only a small social stratum has the resources to afford it.

⁶ Hallaq, Wael B. *Shari'a. Theory, Practice, Transformations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 277-78.

⁷ Some early Christian movements rejected worldly marriage of any kind; see Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society. Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, 83-102.

⁸ Goody, Jack. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 41-43; and Herlihy, *Households*, 38-49.

⁹ Clark, Gillian. *Women in Late Antiquity. Pagan and Christian Lifestyles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 32.

from scholars for over a century, largely because of Zoroastrian predilections for forms of close-kin marriage that defy anthropological notions of a universal incest taboo.¹⁰ Both indigenous Iranian sources and Greek observers tell us that polygyny and concubinage were “an ancient privilege of the [Iranian] aristocracy and spiritual dignitaries”;¹¹ much in line with the pattern throughout the Mediterranean basin, polygynous households were characteristic of at least some elite strata in Sasanian Iran. Additionally, the complex Zoroastrian legal institutions of intermediary and substitute successorship – which allowed for the relatives of a man who had died without sons to enter into temporary marital unions for the purpose of producing male progeny who would be considered the deceased’s lawful heirs – could result in polygynous arrangements if an already married man was called on to carry them out.¹²

7.3 Christians and Polygyny in the Sasanian Empire

7.3.1 Reform and Regional Practice

If polygynous practices were thus widespread among the societies of the late antique Near East and eastern Mediterranean, including some Christian ones, we should not be overly surprised to find that they similarly persisted among the Aramaic, Arabic, and Persian-speaking communities in Sasanian lands that fell under the umbrella of the Church of the East. Our first hints of polygynous practices among Sasanian Christians come from the few extant canons of the ecclesiastical synod of Bēt Lāp-pāṭ (Jundīshābūr in the province of Khūzistān) of 484. This synod was convened by a group of bishops (led by Baršawmā, metropolitan of Nisi-

¹⁰ Studies abound; see Macuch, Maria. “Incestuous Marriage in the Context of Sasanian Family Law,” in Maria Macuch *et al.*, eds., *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies: Proceedings of the 6th European Conference of Iranian Studies* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 133-48.

¹¹ Shaki, Mansour. “Family Law I. In Zoroastrianism.” In *Encyclopædia Iranica*. See also de Jong, Albert. *Traditions of the Magi. Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*. Leiden: Brill, 1997, 426.

¹² For overviews of the complex rules of intermediary and substitute successorship and further bibliography, see most recently Macuch, Maria. “The Function of Temporary Marriage in the Context of Sasanian Family Law,” in Antonio Panaino and Andrea Piras, eds., *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europæa* (Milan: Mimesis, 2006), 585-97. For the point that men could enter into multiple substitute successor marriages simultaneously, see *idem*, “Incestuous Marriage,” 144.

bis) in opposition to Bābawayh, the *catholicos* of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and chief bishop of the Church of the East.¹³ The chronicles tell us that the synod's goal was to bring order to a prevailing climate of disciplinary confusion among the clergy and general moral laxity;¹⁴ whatever historical conclusions we draw from such rhetoric, three of the synod's eight extant canons do treat questions of improper marital practices. Among them, one affirms that "it is not right (*lā zādeq*) for a believing man to take two wives or a concubine (*druktā*) in addition to his wife." Even if divine teaching did not foist this stricture upon the forebears, it has been established "by the law of Christ and the teaching of the apostles" (*b-nāmōsā da-mshihā wa-b-yulpānā da-shlihē*).¹⁵ This canon is thus our first indication in East Syrian legal sources of lay people engaging in polygynous practices. And, in a pattern that will become familiar, the synod's response was to claim the authority of apostolic and Christian tradition to label such practices as transgressive of that tradition's rules for social and spiritual conduct (although the synod of Bēt Lāppāt did not prescribe any penitential punishment for their infraction).

While the canons of the synod of 484 constitute the first East Syrian source to explicitly broach the subject, the synodal letters of the sixth-century *catholicos* Mār Abā (r. 540-52) treat polygyny in the context of a wider, more comprehensive attempt to mark off the Christians of the Sasanian Empire from other religious groups.¹⁶ Chief among Mār Abā's activities in this regard was reforming the marital practices of Sasanian Christians, which the *catholicos* addresses in an epistle accorded canonical status by the Church of the East. These practices include divorce, marriage to non-Christians, typically Zoroastrian forms of close-kin marriage, and polygyny. Regarding the last point, Mār Abā condemns those

¹³ See Gero, Stephen. *Barṣauma of Nisibis and Persian Christianity in the Fifth Century*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 426. Louvain: Peeters, 1981, 38-57. Because the synod's decisions were later annulled in an effort to mend the ecclesiastical schism between Barṣawmā's faction and the catholicate, they have not been preserved in the manuscript tradition that contains the other known East Syrian synods. Several of the synod's canons, however, are cited in the *Order of Ecclesiastical Judgments* of 'Abdishō' bar Brikā (d. 1318) and in a letter of the eleventh-century bishop Elias of Nisibis. These excerpts are published in Chabot, J. B., ed. and tr. *Synodicon orientale ou recueil de synods nestoriens*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902, 621-25.

¹⁴ See Scher, Addai, ed. and tr. *Histoire nestorienne inédite (Chronique de Séert)*. *Patrologia Orientalis*, 4.3, 5.2, 7.2, and 13.4. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1908-19, 3:99-100.

¹⁵ Chabot, *Synodicon*, 623.

¹⁶ See Payne, *Christianity*, 145-90.

“beastly ones (*b'irāyē*), each of whom, being unsatisfied with a single woman like Adam with the first woman Eve, dares during the life of his lawful wife to take another in addition to her in transgression of the canons (*'bar qānōnā'īt*), and becomes husband to two women.” The *catholicos* decrees that anyone in such a polygynous marriage shall be given a limited amount of time in which to dissolve the union; whoever fails to do so will be banned from the Eucharist.¹⁷

Notably, neither Mār Abā's letter nor the synod of Bēt Lāppāt presents polygyny as specifically characteristic of non-Christian religious commitments, as they do some of the other practices they rebuke. To Mār Abā, for example, levirate marriage (to a deceased brother's wife) is done “like the Jews” (*ak yehūdāyē*), while close-kin unions typical of Zoroastrian substitute successorship (to an uncle's wife, son's wife, sister, daughter, etc.) are done “like the Magians” (*ak megūšē*).¹⁸ Polygyny (as well as divorce), however, is presented as transgressive of the Church's canons but is not overtly associated with another specific community. In similar terms, among the synodal canons of Bēt Lāppāt is one that prescribes anathema for all Christians who “imitate the Magians in impure marriage (*zwwāgā tanpā*).”¹⁹ Though the canon does not specify exactly what impure Magian marriage is (we should infer substitute successorship/close-kin marriages), polygyny receives a separate canon and is thus not labelled as explicitly Magian.

Though the distinction is fine, Mār Abā's letter and the synod of Bēt Lāppāt thus present polygyny as a generalised category lacking the particular cultic overtones of the levirate or Zoroastrian close-kin marriages in late Sasanian society. This is particularly notable given the fact mentioned above that a temporary union between an already married man and the widow of a kinsman would have been a likely possible polygynous arrangement in the Zoroastrian system of substitute successorship. We know that some Christians availed themselves of this institution and that

¹⁷ For the Syriac text see Chabot, *Synodicon*, 80-85. The quotation and passages relevant to polygyny are found on pp. 82-83.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 82-83. Marriages for the purpose of substitute successorship were often contracted between a deceased man's relatives; Christian bishops like Mār Abā opposed these marriages because they united kin related by unlawful degrees. Though in theory Sasanian judicial institutions could administer substitute successorship only to Zoroastrians, Payne has shown that Sasanian Christians availed themselves of these strategies for lineage reproduction as well; see *Christianity*, 217-22.

¹⁹ Chabot, *Synodicon*, 623.

Mār Abā and the synod decried it, but the fact that neither associates it with polygyny suggests that other polygynous household arrangements were general customary practice among the broader population, at least some Christians included, in Sasanian Iraq and Iran. For Mār Abā and the synod, polygyny was not Zoroastrian or Jewish, but it was still certainly un-Christian.

7.3.2 Implementing Reform: Ecclesiasts vs. Lay Elites

Mār Abā's reforms (as well as the synod of Bēt Lāppāṭ, in a less comprehensive fashion) sought to affirm that affiliation to the Church, realised through right practice in accordance with its regulations, necessitated the abandonment of social practices and commitments deemed outside its bounds. Polygyny was one such practice that structured households in particular customary ways but would have to be rejected by those desirous of Christianity's central mystery and membership in the body of Christ. How were such reform efforts received by lay communities in Sasanian lands, and how could ecclesiastical elites ensure that their regulations were observed?

Evidence for continued polygynous practices throughout the following centuries suggests, unsurprisingly, that not all Christians in Iraq and Iran were eager to give up accustomed modes of familial association.²⁰ And though we do not have the sources to discern a complete picture of the practical reception of the ecclesiastical ban on polygyny, a few high profile cases stand out in the chronicles during the reign of Shah Khusraw II Parvīz (r. 590-628) that show us how lay polygyny could emerge as a contentious issue in the context of factional strife between ecclesiastical and lay elites.²¹

The relevant late Sasanian cases revolve around anathemas pronounced by the *catholicos* Sabrīshō' I (r. 596-604) and his contemporary, Gregory metropolitan of Nisibis (d. 611/2), against several prominent Christians who took multiple wives. Gregory, originally from Kashkar in lower Mesopotamia, is remembered in the sources for having tried

²⁰ Some forty years after Mār Abā, for example, the synod of *catholicos* Īshō'yahb I (r. 582-96) of 586/7 issued an admonitory canon reaffirming the previous *catholicos*' marital regulations, and devoted more than half of its text to adducing arguments against polygyny: see §13, Chabot, *Synodicon*, 148-50.

²¹ For an overview of East Syrian factional conflict in late antiquity, see Morony, *Iraq*, 346-54.

zealously to reform the deviant practices of Christian clergy and laity in his see. As part of this project, he banned polygyny and anathematised several Nisibene physicians in Khusraw's service for persisting in keeping multiple wives. The Nisibenes, however, appear not to have been particularly happy with an outsider coming in and attempting to change their ways; they denounced Gregory to Khusraw, who subsequently forced him to leave his diocese and retire to a monastery.²² Later, at Sabrīshō's death in 604, we are told that the bishops of the Sasanian Empire supported Gregory to succeed to the catholicate. Several of Gregory's old physician opponents from Nisibis, however, were not interested in seeing him take the Church of the East's highest office; so they obtained the support of Khusraw's Christian wife Shīrēn for an alternate candidate who was ultimately consecrated catholicos.²³

Though the chronicles do not make an explicit connection, Sabrīshō's activities against lay polygyny appear to have been related to the factional conflict between Gregory and the Nisibene lay elite. Sabrīshō is said to have anathematised Gabriel of Sinjār, Khusraw's chief physician, for taking two wives in addition to his first (Gabriel responded by switching his allegiance to the Miaphysites, who were becoming prominent in Sasanian lands at the time).²⁴ Now, Gabriel's hometown of Sinjār (Syriac: Shiggār) was near Nisibis, certainly fell in the cultural orbit of that major regional city and was most likely under the jurisdiction of its metropolitan.²⁵ From this angle, Gabriel appears to have been another

²² See the accounts in the *Chronicle of Khuzistan*: Guidi, Ignatius, ed. and tr. *Chronica minora* 1. CSCO Scriptorum Syri 3.4. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1903, 17-19 (text); and Scher, *Chronique de Séert* 4:509-510. Only the latter discusses the polygynous physicians and Gregory's pronouncement of anathema. Other than lay polygyny, the other main issue in the conflict was Gregory's opposition to Ḥnānā, the head of the school of Nisibis, for his alleged Miaphysite leanings.

²³ Guidi, *Chronica minora*, 21-22 (text) and Scher, *Chronique de Séert* 4:521-25. The latter names two of the Nisibene physicians who opposed Gregory, but does not state explicitly that these were the individuals against whom Gregory levelled anathemas in his time as metropolitan. This, however, seems a fair inference.

²⁴ Guidi, *Chronica minora*, 19 (text) and Scher, *Chronique de Séert* 4:498. The latter mentions only one additional wife. On the development of the Miaphysite clerical and monastic population of Sasanian Iraq, see Morony, *Iraq*, 372-80.

²⁵ According to the medieval Arabic geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Sinjār was three days travel from Nisibis: see *Mu'jam al-buldān*. 5 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir 1977 [= 1397], 3:262. Though we do not find an explicit statement that Sinjār was a suffragan bishopric of Nisibis until the eleventh century, there is no reason to doubt that the same would have been true in the late sixth: see Fiey, Jean Maurice. *Pour un oriens*

Nisibene layman who achieved prominence in the shah's service. Furthermore, he was a close confidant of Shīrēn, the queen with whose backing the Nisibene physicians succeeded in preventing Gregory from winning the catholicate.²⁶ Though the chronicles do not explicitly mention him as one of their number, it is likely that he was. Sabrīshō', like Gregory, is thus remembered for having issued an anathema in an attempt to end the polygynous practices of the Nisibene elite associated with the shah's court.

Read together, Sabrīshō' and Gregory's conflict with the Nisibene physicians exemplifies how ecclesiastical attempts to regulate polygyny could be complicated by competing interests and wider factional strife between bishops and lay elites. Ecclesiasts sought the disciplinary reform (and ultimate salvation) of their lay flocks, but also required recognition by those lay people of their authority to direct the patterns of lay life. The lay elite, on the other hand, was interested in maintaining its influence over local affairs (hence the Nisibenes' rejection of the outsider Gregory), a say in electing ecclesiasts favourable to its interests, and the accustomed social practices of elite life, like polygyny, that reformer ecclesiasts sought to ban. In these conditions, Sabrīshō' and Gregory appear to have overplayed their hands. Though the bishops could deploy the anathema as a kind of spiritual and social pressure to coerce lay people to change their ways and acknowledge their authority, their physician opponents could draw on their own reserves of social capital, that is, their influence at court. This the Nisibenes used to remove Gregory from his position as metropolitan, prevent him from becoming *catholicos* after Sabrīshō's death, and further influence ecclesiastical politics for the following years.²⁷ Enforcing ecclesiastical rules like the ban on polygyny in practice was thus much more complex than simply issuing and circulating a canon. In this case, at least, the Nisibene physicians were able to muster the resources necessary to depose their ecclesiastical opponents and presumably retain their polygynous ways.²⁸

christianus novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux. Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993, 134.

²⁶ Guidi, *Chronica minora*, 19 (text).

²⁷ On Gabriel's continued activity at court to the benefit of Miaphysites in this period, see Morony, *Iraq*, 350-51.

²⁸ It is worth noting that my reading of this conflict has been a "generous" one insofar as I take the chronicles more or less at face value in presenting the bishops as sincerely interested in the disciplinary reform of lay people. A more sceptical reading might

If the obstinate laymen of Gregory and Sabrīshō's day refused to admit of any discord between their polygynous marital practices and their Christian affiliation, however, Richard Payne has noted that a unique document dated to the late sixth or early seventh century attests that some lay East Syrians took the marital reforms initiated by the synod of Bēt Lāppāṭ and Mār Abā to heart. The document in question is a collection of statutes for an artisans' association from an unknown city. Besides various stipulations on sharing expenses and other practical matters, the pact asserts that the members "shall obey without dispute all the holy laws laid down by the leaders of the Church." Among these are specified Mār Abā's marital prohibitions, including "the foul practice of having two wives."²⁹ As Payne points out, this document provides evidence of at least some lay Christians acknowledging Mār Abā's vision of Christian community as authoritative and attempting to implement its strictures in practice.³⁰ These anonymous town artisans were presumably outside the Nisibene physicians' world of elite power and privilege, and, in contrast to those elites, pledged to order their social affiliations in accordance with the notion of community propagated by the Church.

7.4 The Transitional Seventh Century

Much recent scholarship has emphasized the permeability of religious boundaries in the Near East during the first century of Muslim rule.³¹ In light of these observations, it is perhaps unsurprising to find a widening body of evidence in seventh-century East Syrian sources for lay Christian

wonder whether polygyny was just an excuse for issuing anathemas as an offensive in the context of a longstanding factional conflict. In either case, however, the point that the enforcement of the ecclesiastical ban on polygyny depended on the balance of various social forces still stands.

²⁹ Brock, Sebastian. "Regulations for an Association of Artisans from the Late Sasanian or Early Arab Period," in Philip Rousseau and Manoli Papoutsakis, eds., *Transformations of Late Antiquity. Essays for Peter Brown* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 58. For the Syriac text see Kaufhold, Hubert, ed. and tr. *Die Rechtssammlung des Gabriel von Bagra und ihr Verhältnis zu den anderen juristischen Sammelwerken der Nestorianer*. Berlin: J. Schweitzer Verlag, 1976, 177.

³⁰ Payne, *Christianity*, 189-90.

³¹ See, for example, Papaconstantinou, Arietta. "Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*. The Christians of the Near East under the Umayyads," *Annales islamologiques* 42 (2008), 127-56; and Donner, Fred M. *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2010.

polygyny and further contestation with religious elites over what exactly one could do in conjugal life and still be a Christian. We have first of all the synod of 676, which the *catholicos* George I (r. 661-80) convened on an island in the Persian Gulf to mend an ecclesiastical schism between the East Syrian catholicate and the local Christians of the Arabian coastline and nearby islands (a region known to the East Syrians as Bēt Qaṭrāyē, Arabic Qaṭar).³² The synod includes a canon devoted entirely to the condemnation of “the heathen customs (*‘yādē ḥanpāyē*) of taking two wives.”³³

Further suggestive of the continued vitality of polygynous practices among Christians in Qaṭar is a hagiography of the Qaṭarī monk Mār Yōnān composed in the late seventh or early eighth century.³⁴ At one point in the story, a rich man named Zarqōn brings his demon-possessed son to be healed by the holy man. Before he heals the child, Mār Yōnān replies that Zarqōn must expel his concubine (*druktā*) from his home, because “it is not right for you... to behave like the godless heathens” (*lā zādeq lāk... l-mes’ar ak ḥanpē d-lā allāh*).³⁵ Whatever the specific historicity of this anecdote, Mār Yōnān’s hagiography thus offers additional evidence that polygynous practices (in this case concubinage) were known among Christians in Qaṭar, and that the spiritual custodians of the community were particularly interested in reining them in.

7.4.1 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, Inheritance, and Polygyny

More significant for polygyny in East Syrian discourse and practice, however, is Richard Payne’s recent argument for the expanded jurisdiction over lay life claimed by seventh-century bishops. Payne contends that Christians had routinely availed themselves of Sasanian judicial institutions before the Muslim conquests, but that the defeat of the Sasanian dynasty and the concomitant loss of authority on the part of the em-

³² See Healey, John F. “The Christians of Qatar in the 7th Century A.D.,” in Ian Richard Netton, ed., *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth Volume I* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 222-37.

³³ Canon §16, Chabot, *Synodicon*, 224.

³⁴ See Payne, Richard. “Monks, Dinars and Date Palms. Hagiographical Production and the Expansion of Monastic Institutions in the Early Islamic Persian Gulf,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 22 (2011), 99-105.

³⁵ Bedjan, Paul, ed. *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*. 7 vols. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890-97, 1:494-95. This anecdote is cited and discussed in Payne, “Monks, Dinars and Date Palms,” 105-6.

pire's judicial apparatus allowed the East Syrian ecclesiastical hierarchy to claim jurisdiction over a wider range of lay people's civil affairs.³⁶ Payne's analysis of the contemporary sources shows bishops seeking to extend ecclesiastical jurisdiction in matters of family law in two major respects. First, George's synod includes the first canon in East Syrian tradition to decree that only marriages contracted through the mediation and blessing of a priest can be considered lawful.³⁷ Contemporary references to marriage contracts confirmed with the seals of clergymen suggest that in at least some areas ecclesiastical officials did indeed carry out this function;³⁸ and while this may simply represent a continuation of previous administrative practice, the assertion that *only* church-administered marriages were valid was certainly new.

The second aspect of the bishops' expanding jurisdiction highlighted by Payne is a greater focus on regulating succession in Christian communities. Of the two major East Syrian legal works of the period, one is an extensive treatise on the law of succession by Simeon, bishop of Rēwardashīr in Fārs province (fl. second half of the seventh century).³⁹ The other is a collection of the judicial decisions of the *catholicos* Ḥnānīshō' I (r. 686-700). Most of these decisions are *responsa* to inheritance disputes, many of which lay people brought directly to the *catholicos*. According to Payne, they exemplify how high church officials like Ḥnānīshō' could play more prominent judicial roles in lay life after the Muslim conquests

³⁶ See Payne, *Christianity*, 191-240. Simonsohn also charts greater ecclesiastical claims to exclusive jurisdiction after the Muslim conquests; see *Common Justice*, 147-73.

³⁷ Payne, *Christianity*, 199-200. The canon in question is §13, Chabot, *Synodicon*, 223.

³⁸ Among the judicial decisions of the *catholicos* Ḥnānīshō' I (r. 686-700) are two that respond to marital property disputes in which the marriage contracts in question have been confirmed with the seal (Syriac: *ṭab'ā*) of a church official: one by Sargīs the bishop of Zābē (Arabic: al-Zawābī, a diocese in lower Iraq), the other by Ḥshō'zkā the *periodeutes* (Syriac: *sā' ōrā*, a kind of travelling priest not tied to a specific parish who presumably served mainly rural areas): see *Richterliche Urteile des Patriarchen Chenānīschō* §11 and §14 in Sachau, Eduard, ed. and tr. *Syrische Rechtsbücher* 2. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1908, 20-22 and 26 (Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* will be referred to hereafter as *SR*). On sealing in Sasanian judicial practice, see Macuch, Maria. "The Use of Seals in Sasanian Jurisprudence," in Rika Gyselen, ed., *Sceaux d'orient et leur emploi* (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1997), 79-87. On the duties of the *periodeutes*, see Madey, John. "Chorepiscopi and Periodeutes in the Light of the Canonical Sources of the Syro-Antiochene Church," *Christian Orient* 5 (1984), 167-83.

³⁹ Published as *Erbrecht oder Canones des persischen Erzbischofs Simeon* in *SR* 3. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1914.

by directing the intergenerational transfer of property and, as a result, the constitution of Christian households.⁴⁰ It remains possible, of course, that earlier *catholicoi* and bishops whose decisions have not survived also arbitrated inheritance disputes in similar manners; in fact, it would be surprising if they had not. However, the level of detail in Ḥnānīshō's decisions and Simeon's law book, and the fact that these texts were preserved, signals a burgeoning interest on the part of the ecclesiastical elites to formalise their rulings as a tradition of specifically Christian civil law more comprehensive than past synodal legislation (an interest that would continue into the Abbasid period, as we will see).⁴¹ This development is corollary to and supportive of the bishops' claims to greater and more exclusive judicial authority (whether realized in practice or not), as suggested by Payne.

How might these apparent shifts in East Syrian legal culture analyzed by Payne have informed the Church's approach to polygyny, as well as polygynous practice among lay people? Whether or not Ḥnānīshō's involvement in regulating the devolution of inheritance was entirely novel, one of his decisions shows us a strategy for combating lay polygyny that is not apparent in earlier sources and would have been available only to more judicially involved bishops. The circumstances of the case and the decision, as described in Ḥnānīshō's epistle to a local unnamed priest charged with carrying out the ruling, can be summarized as follows.⁴² The recently deceased layman Aḥōnā had a number of sons by his wife in Karkā d-Bēt Slōk (modern Kirkuk) while also maintaining a second wife and at least one child on his properties in Kūfa (Syriac: ʿĀqūlā) in lower Iraq.⁴³ At his death, Aḥōnā's Kūfan wife apparently attempted to secure a share of the patrimony for herself and her unwed daughter (we do not know whether she had other children by Aḥōnā) that would be proportionate, in some respect, to that of the wife and sons in Karkā, who contested her claim. How this dispute reached the *catholicoi* is not specified, but it seems likely that Aḥōnā's deacon son Daniel, whom Ḥnānīshō singles out by name, brought it to his attention. In any case,

⁴⁰ See Payne, *Christianity*, 201-25.

⁴¹ On this development see Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 99-119.

⁴² The case in question is Ḥnānīshō' §15, *SR* 2:26-28.

⁴³ The scribe who copied this decision sought to remove the precise name of Aḥōnā's lawful family's town of residence, calling it "Karkā d-Bēt so-and-so (*Karkā d-Bēt pulān*)." However, Payne points out that there is only one known Karkā d-Bēt so-and-so, and that is Karkā d-Bēt Slōk: see *Christianity*, 209, note 552.

Ḥnānīshōʿ rules that only Aḥōnā's first wife and sons can be considered his legitimate heirs; the Kūfan wife, having been married unlawfully (*lā nāmōsā' īt*), has no rightful claim on Aḥōnā's estate. Ḥnānīshōʿ does allow the Kūfan wife and her daughter to remain on one of Aḥōnā's properties in Kūfa and to receive a minimal amount of maintenance and clothing. However, even this will be cut off if and when the wife chooses to remarry and the daughter is old enough to earn her keep "by the labour of her own hands" (*men pulḥānā d-īdēyh*). If the Kūfan wife further contests Ḥnānīshōʿ' s ruling, he tells the unnamed priest to bar her from "mixing with Christians in all of the churches" (*ḥulṭānā d-ʿam krēstyānē b-ʿēdātā kulhēn*) in Kūfa and nearby Ḥīra.

The case of Aḥōnā's multiple households is particularly revealing of both a particular style of lay polygyny and techniques for regulating it available to judicially active bishops like Ḥnānīshōʿ. To note first are the details of Aḥōnā's polygynous households. This layman, whose multiple properties show him to have been wealthy, maintained two separate households in Karkā and Kūfa. We hear of similar arrangements elsewhere in East Syrian sources, which suggests that this kind of polygynous conjugal setup was possible for men who travelled frequently (merchants come to mind) and had the resources to support multiple households.⁴⁴ Without overestimating the impact of George's canon enjoining clerical oversight of marriage, it is also worth raising the possibility that such arrangements might have been easier for Christians to maintain than multiple wives in a single location. Separate households might be better kept away from the prying eyes of local clergies and other concerned parties – at least until someone died and estates came into the picture, as Aḥōnā's case demonstrates.

Ḥnānīshōʿ' s determination of inheritance allotments in the Aḥōnā case also exemplifies a different strategy for polygyny regulation on the part of the bishops. By all accounts, the Church of the East's well-established canons banning polygyny were not enough to prevent Aḥōnā from marrying multiple women. However, Ḥnānīshōʿ saw to it that Christian law would order Aḥōnā's household affairs after his death by ex-

⁴⁴ George's canon §16 discussed above makes a reference to men keeping multiple wives "far" (*b-ruhqā*) from one another. A question and response in the law book of *catholicos* Timothy I (r. 780-823) discusses a man who "went to a distant village and sought a wife while already having one in his own village." *Gesetzbuch des Patriarchen Timotheos* §71, *SR* 2:104.

cluding his second family from any real share of inheritance. In doing so, Ḥnānīshōʿ achieved a kind of social stigmatization and economic marginalization of that second, unlawful family. If Ḥnānīshōʿ could not punish the deceased for his polygynous practices, he could make an example out of his (unwitting?) abettors and progeny in an attempt to discourage other Christians from such practices. Cutting polygynous families out of the inheritance stream would both sideline them symbolically and divest them of any crucial economic role in the intergenerational transfer of property and, therefore, the reproduction of a man's lineage.⁴⁵ If elite laymen might not always listen to ecclesiastical bans on polygyny, inheritance regulation could encourage a certain pruning of Christian family trees after their death.

7.5 East Syrians and Polygyny in the Abbasid Period

Together, the seventh century East Syrian legal sources provide evidence for continued polygynous practices among East Syrian Christians as well as previously unseen modes of ecclesiastical regulation of those practices. George's canon against polygyny, on the one hand, continues much in the vein of Mār Abā: it declares polygyny characteristic of that mass of non-Christians outside the bounds of the community of the saved, affiliation to which is assured by adherence to the ecclesiastical hierarchy's regulations. The decisions of Ḥnānīshōʿ, on the other hand, give some hints of alternative strategies that bishops might use in overseeing the conduct of Christian family life and discouraging polygynous practices. We will now examine how these trends developed further into the Abbasid period.

The shift from broader synodal legislation toward the composition of more focused and detailed juridical works like Simeon's law book accel-

⁴⁵ We should note that in Aḥōnā's case the perpetuation of his male line was not really at stake because he already had lawful sons and, as far as we know, only a daughter by his Kūfan wife. It might therefore be argued that Ḥnānīshōʿ was less concerned to give Aḥōnā's second family a share of inheritance because it included no male heirs, whatever its legal status might have been. However, Ḥnānīshōʿ includes daughters as heirs in other decisions (see Payne, *Christianity*, 215-16), and he is very explicit in the Aḥōnā case that the unlawfulness of the marriage to the second wife is the reason for her and her daughter's exclusion.

ated after the seventh century.⁴⁶ As non-Muslim religious elites throughout the Near East sought to institute the communal boundaries often considered characteristic of medieval Islamic societies, there emerged among the East Syrian ecclesiastical hierarchy a focus on communal judicial institutions and an effort to develop Christian legal traditions more extensive and systematic than those of centuries past.⁴⁷ The result is a relative abundance of Syriac legal works from the eighth and ninth centuries that treat ever more minute aspects of marriage and divorce (and expand beyond the focus on inheritance characteristic of the seventh century sources like Simeon and Ḥnānīshō⁴⁸). These sources attest again to contestation between lay people and the high clergy over whether one could be a Christian and still engage in the polygynous practices customary in various regions and social classes in the Near East; and they demonstrate the further development of ecclesiastical strategies for combating these practices. They also give us a glimpse of how burgeoning Muslim society gave renewed prominence to certain types of polygynous household formations, and new import to polygynous practice as a marker of cultural difference.

7.5.1 Slaves and Concubines

Among the East Syrians, three texts that treat family law more extensively than any had done previously stand out in the eighth and ninth centuries. These are the law books of metropolitan Ḫshō⁴⁹ bōkt of Fārs (fl. late eighth century), *catholicos* Timothy I (r. 780-823), and *catholicos* Ḫshō⁴⁹ bar Nūn (r. 823-28).⁴⁸ These works are compilations of general laws and individual rulings, many apparently redacted from the ecclesiasts' *responsa* to clerical or lay petitioners.⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, we find in

⁴⁶ This trend has been noted in Selb, Walter. *Orientalisches Kirchenrecht 1. Die Geschichte des Kirchenrechts der Nestorianer von den Anfängen bis zur Mongolenzeit*. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981, 176-79.

⁴⁷ Communal boundary maintenance in this period had much to do with discouraging lay people from frequenting Muslim courts; see Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 91-204.

⁴⁸ Ḫshō⁴⁹ bar Nūn and Ḫshō⁴⁹ bōkt's law books have been published as *Gesetzbuch des Patriarchen Jesubarnun* and *Corpus juris des persischen Erzbischofs Jesubocht* in *SR* 2 and 3, respectively.

⁴⁹ Timothy's law book contains a variety of case-specific decisions and Ḫshō⁴⁹ bar Nūn's makes reference to some "local statutes"; see Partsch, Josef. "Neue Rechtsquellen der nestorianischen Kirche," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*. Romanistische Abteilung 30 (1909), 359-60. Timothy also states that he compiled his law

these law books reaffirmations of the traditional prohibition of polygyny. Both *Īshō' bar Nūn* and *Īshō'bōkt* give general rules to this effect.⁵⁰ The latter details an extended justification for the Christian position in which the metropolitan musters some standard biblical citations and attempts to explain away the multiple wives and concubines of various Old Testament figures, which suggests that many Christians in Fārs were still opposed to the ban on polygyny in *Īshō'bōkt's* day. Unfortunately, we have no other information on social conditions in that province with which to contextualize this ruling.

More notable in the Abbasid sources is a relatively greater focus on sexual relationships between married Christian men and their female slaves than any in past centuries. Between them, the law books of Timothy, *Īshō' bar Nūn*, and *Īshō'bōkt* include four rulings that tackle the status of children born of such arrangements, while another is found in an epistle of the slightly later *catholicos* Yōhannān bar Abgārē (known in Arabic as Yūhannā ibn al-A'raj, r. 900-905).⁵¹ How should we interpret the bishops' concern for this particular aspect of polygynous practice? Slave concubinage was certainly not new to the Christian males of Iraq and Iran; we have already seen examples of Christian men taking slave concubines in the seventh-century Qaṭarī sources. And in more general terms, it was a basic reality of institutionalized household slavery in the hierarchical societies of the Near East and eastern Mediterranean that masters often freely exercised sexual dominion over (male and female)

book after receiving requests from the metropolitans of Baṣra and Rayy and "many lay believers, far and near"; *SR* 2:56. I plan to publish a more extensive study on the sources, including patriarchal letters, out of which the law books were redacted.

⁵⁰ *Īshō' bar Nūn* §3 (not published in Sachau's edition), Sauget, Joseph-Marie. "Décisions canoniques du Patriarche Isho' barnūn encore inédites," *Apollinaris* 35 (1962), facsimile folio 1; *Īshō'bōkt* §II.xi, *SR* 3:56-58.

⁵¹ Timothy §70, *Īshō' bar Nūn* §§100-101, and *Īshō'bōkt* §IV.iv.6, *SR* 2:104, 160-62, and 3:114-16. For *catholicos* Yōhannān, see §16 in *Nuskhat kitāb nufidha min abīnā Yūhannā ibn 'Isā al-jāthalīq ḥafīẓanā Allāh bi-ṣalawātihi ilā rajul min ahl al-yaman* (*Copy of a letter of Yūhannā ibn 'Isā the Catholicos to a Man from Yemen*), MS Vatican Arabic 157, folios 88b-89a; and Assemani, Giuseppe Simone. *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*. New edition. 4 vols. Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2002, 3.1:252 (the texts of the responses, though not the questions, in Yōhannān's epistle are published on pp. 249-53). On the legal status of children born to *unmarried* men and their slaves, see Simeon §22 and *Īshō'bōkt* §IV.iv.4 and §IV.iv.7, *SR* 2:251-53 and 3:114-16.

slaves' bodies; sex was tacitly recognized as a prerogative of any male with the resources and power to own slaves.⁵²

From another perspective, however, certain developments of Abbasid society likely contributed to the growing prominence of concubinage in the perception of the East Syrian bishops (and perhaps in practice as well, though we do not have the sources to know with certainty). First is the aforementioned unfeasibility of polygynous marital arrangements in light of the continued emphasis on clerical overseeing of the contracting of marriages. The Abbasid-era law books (as well as Yōḥannān's letter) all reaffirm the principle first laid down by George's canon that Church officials' presence or blessing is required for a marriage to be recognized as legitimate.⁵³ Of course, there were no doubt many locales in which this canon went ignored, whether because they were underserved by priests, other marriage customs prevailed, or Muslim courts had begun to offer alternative venues.⁵⁴ But in urban areas with ecclesiastical infrastructures that could at least attempt to extend the Church's regulatory power further into lay life as the *catholicoi* envisioned, it would likely have been difficult for a man to walk into his local church and get a polygynous marriage blessed by a priest. Slave concubinage (much like Aḥōnā's multiple households in different cities), however, remained a certain kind of alternative: a more discreet form of polygyny through which men with means might evade clerical scrutiny.

Second, the early Abbasid period witnessed the development of Islamic legal traditions that regulated master-slave sexuality as a particular style of concubinage.⁵⁵ This was a reality that, if in no way introducing the subject to Christians, offered particular models of polygynous house-

⁵² See Brown, *Body and Society*, 23-24. We should note that women slave owners' rights to male slaves' bodies was a much more contentious issue in most societies.

⁵³ Īshō' bar Nūn §29 and Īshō' bōkt §III.i.1, *SR* 2:128 and 3:74; Timothy §28 (not published in Sachau's edition) in Timothy I, *Catholicos. Psāq dīnē d-mār(y) Ṭimata' os patriyarkā d-madnhā* (*Rulings of Mār Timothy, Patriarch of the East*). MS Cambridge Additional 2023, folios 25b-34a, folios 29a-b; and Yōḥannān bar Abgārē §16, Vatican Arabic 157, 88b and Assemani, *Bibliotheca* 3.1:252.

⁵⁴ On "alternative matrimonial arrangements" lacking the clerical involvement prescribed by the Syriac law books, see Simonsohn, *Common Justice*, 150-53.

⁵⁵ On concubinage in classical Islamic law, see Spector, Susan A. *Women in Classical Islamic Law. A Survey of the Sources*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 30 and 95-97.

hold arrangements to elite non-Muslims with polygynous proclivities and the resources to sustain them.⁵⁶ And this was particularly significant now that the imperial capital had returned to lower Iraq: in a scene reminiscent of the Nisibene physicians at the Sasanian shah's court, East Syrian physicians, scribes, and other laymen moved prominently in the elite circles of the Abbasid capitals at Baghdad and Sāmarrā'. Wealthy and intimately enmeshed in the capitals' goings on and politics, these Christian men were nothing if not participants in the elite culture of the Muslim caliphal court and, often, the sexual household patterns of elite males – for whom keeping concubines was often a mark of status.⁵⁷

The most prominent lay elites from this period were individuals from a number of lineages of East Syrian physicians ministering to caliphs, viziers, and other members of caliphal entourages. The major figures came from the families of Bukhtīshū', Māsawayh, and al-Ṭayfūrī; most hailed originally from Khūzistān, where Bēt Lāppāt/Jundīsābūr had a long history of instruction in Greek medicine.⁵⁸ A number of later biographical dictionaries and chronicles preserve information on the lives and careers of these figures; from these, we will examine a few anecdotes for insight into the dynamics of ecclesiastical-lay contestation over concubinage in Abbasid Baghdad.

⁵⁶ The same development has been noted by Tamer el-Leithy for the better-documented milieu of Mamlūk Egypt, in which Coptic lay elites began to take concubines in emulation of the privileges enjoyed by their Muslim neighbours: see *Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293-1524 A.D.* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: Princeton University, 2005.

⁵⁷ On the world of the wives and concubines of the Abbasid court, see al-Heitty, Abd al-Kareem. "The Contrasting Spheres of Free Women and *jawārī* in the Literary Life of the Early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate," *al-Masāq* 3 (1990), 31-51.

⁵⁸ The exact nature of this culture of medical instruction, and whether it included some kind of official school, is disputed; see Dols, Michael W. "The Origins of the Islamic Hospital. Myth and Reality," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 61.3 (1987), 367-90. For studies of the physician clans, see Abele, Silke. *Der politisch-gesellschaftliche Einfluss der nestorianischen Ärzte am Hofe der Abbasidenkalifen von al-Manṣūr bis al-Mutawakkil*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2008; and Ullmann, Manfred. *Die Medizin im Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1970, 108-84.

7.5.2 Stories about Doctors

Our first narrative comes from 'Amr ibn Mattā's eleventh-century Arabic chronicle of the East Syrian *catholicoi* in the *Kitāb al-majdal*.⁵⁹ The tale begins with *catholicos* Timothy I scolding Jibrīl ibn Bukhtīshū' (d. 828), the richest and most prominent physician in the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's service, for taking slave concubines. Jibrīl does not mend his ways, so Timothy anathematizes him. Jibrīl confronts Timothy, who says simply, "I fear Christ's anger for you." Jibrīl responds angrily and calls the *catholicos* a pederast (*lūṭī*), outraging Timothy and his entourage. Not long afterward, Jibrīl receives divine retribution for the insult when he is trampled in the street by a horse. Timothy keeps away from the offender for two days even after his mother's pleadings, but then gives Jibrīl communion and anoints him before the altar; Jibrīl heals. The narrative ends there, but the implication is that Jibrīl subsequently gave up his errant ways.⁶⁰

A second anecdote concerns Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh (d. 857), another physician in the service of Hārūn al-Rashīd and several of his successors. The biographical sources tell us that Yūḥannā was known for keeping slave concubines and was often upbraided for it. The situation was further complicated because the physician served in church as a deacon. At one point, a group of Christians tells him that he has to either restrict himself to one woman or leave the deaconate. Yūḥannā responds defiantly, "We are commanded [by scripture] to take neither two women nor two garments. So who gave the motherf***** *catholicos* more of a right to have twenty garments than wretched Yūḥannā to take four concubines? Go tell your *catholicos* to adhere to the laws of his religion (*qawānīn dīnīh*) in order for us to do so with him; if he transgresses them, we will too."⁶¹

⁵⁹ On the correct attribution of the two Arabic chronicles of East Syrian *catholicoi*, see Holmberg, Bo. "A Reconsideration of the Kitāb al-Maḡdal," *Parole de l'Orient* 18 (1993), 255-73.

⁶⁰ Gismondi, Enrico, ed. *Akhbār faṭārikat kursī l-mashriq min kitāb al-majdal*. 2 vols. Rome: C. de Luigi, 1896-99 1:74. The source for this anecdote is uncertain but is likely to have been a now lost section of the *Chronicle of Seert*, on which 'Amr ibn Mattā's chronicle depends heavily; Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997, 452.

⁶¹ al-Qiftī, 'Alī ibn Yūsuf. *Kitāb ikhbār al-'ulamā' bi-akhbār al-ḥukamā'*. Ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Khānjī. Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1326 [=1908], 253; and Ibn Abī

If Jibrīl and Yūḥannā prove themselves to be less than model Christians, Jūrjīyūs ibn Bukhtīshūʿ (d. 769), Jibrīl’s grandfather and the first member of the Bukhtīshūʿ family to enter the caliphal service, projects a different image. In this narrative, the caliph al-Mansūr becomes concerned for Jūrjīyūs, having heard that he has no wife. Jūrjīyūs informs the caliph, “I have an old, weak wife (*zawja kabīra ḍaʿīfa*) who is unable to move from her spot.” In consideration of his favoured physician’s no doubt difficult sex life, the caliph sends him a gift of three Byzantine slave women. When Jūrjīyūs returns home, he is incensed to find that his Christian pupil ʿĪsā ibn Shahlāfā has allowed the women into his house. The physician returns them to the caliph and explains that “we, the community (*maʿshar*) of Christians, do not marry more than one woman, and as long as she lives we do not take any other than her.”⁶²

7.5.3 *Catholicoi* and Lay Elites Negotiating Christian Polygyny

Setting aside the question of whether the specific courses of events in these narratives are properly historical, the anecdotes themselves remain valuable sources for cultural history: their subtexts and literary tropes portray general social perspectives and betray cultural assumptions of Abbasid society. In this regard, they demonstrate the perceived normality of polygynous concubinage as an elite male privilege in Abbasid court circles, regardless of religious affiliation. In the Jūrjīyūs story, a gift of slave women is a simple caliphal gesture to a favoured member of his entourage. The caliph shows no hesitancy in giving such a gift to a Christian, and has to be told afterward that it is religiously inappropriate; the presumption going into the events of the narrative is that any nor-

Uṣaybiʿa. *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*. Ed. Nizār Riḍā. Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965, 248. What I translate idiomatically as “mother*****” is *ʿāqḍ baṣr ummih*. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa relates this anecdote from Abū l-Ḥasan Yūsuf ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Dāya (d. 265/875), a mover in Abbasid court circles and composer of a now-lost biographical dictionary of physicians. For this identification, see Ullmann, *Medizin*, 228.

⁶² Qiftī, *Ikhbār*, 110 and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 184-85. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa attributes this anecdote to Fathyūn (Syriac: Petyōn) al-Turjumān, frequently cited in the *ʿUyūn* as an authority on the East Syrian physicians. This figure has been identified as Fathyūn ibn Ayyūb, a translator of several biblical books into Arabic who flourished in the second half of the ninth century: see Graf, Georg. *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. 5 vols. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-53, 2:120-21; and Vaccari, Alberto. “Le versioni arabe dei Profeti,” *Biblica* 3 (1922), 413-16.

mal male would welcome adding concubines to his household. In Jibrīl's anecdote, the physician is so incensed that anyone would claim to deny him the polygynous privileges of his social position that he calls the chief bishop of his church a pederast for trying to do so. The Yūḥannā story intimates that concubinage might have been common enough among the Christian elite of Baghdad that it was tacitly accepted at times, since the physician's Christian opponents say he can keep his concubines as long as he steps down from the deaconate. The text implies that it is too much of an affront to have a known polygynist/adulterer aiding in the administration of church vessels and services; but otherwise it leaves the elite layman to his ways.

Additionally, the stories of Yūḥannā and Jibrīl are notable for their depiction of elite laymen fighting back against the *catholicoi's* claim of sole authority to mark those marital practices that precluded communion with the Christian social and theological body, and for the fact that they do so in the very language of their shared religious tradition (or at least a flippant version thereof). Yūḥannā's retort references Luke 3:11 (that anyone with two tunics should give one away) in order to assert that the *catholicos* has ignored the Christian ethic of compassion for the poor by comporting himself extravagantly. Jibrīl's use of the *lūṭī* insult against Timothy evokes the Arabic literary trope that celibate Christian monks often indulge in pederasty; he thus implies that if the Church's spiritual custodians transgress its canons on sexual conduct, the *catholicos* is in no place to call a layman un-Christian.⁶³ Together, the narratives suggest that powerful laymen (like the Nisibene physicians before them) might contest the *catholicoi's* authority to declare that the privileges customary to their social networks were incompatible with their identity as Christians. In Yūḥannā's allusion to scripture, especially, we see a layman claiming a bit of interpretive authority himself to assert that he can live as both a Christian and an elite functionary of the caliphal court.

From another angle, however, the narratives (excluding Yūḥannā's) lend support to the ecclesiastical hierarchy's normative prohibition of polygyny. The story of Jibrīl and Timothy, for example, depicts an er-

⁶³ On the association between monks and pederasty in medieval Arabic literature, see Rowson, Everett K. "The Categorization of Gender and Sexual Irregularity in Medieval Arabic Vice Lists," in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, eds., *Body Guards. The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 76, note 27.

rant and arrogant layman incurring divine punishment and physical harm for engaging in polygynous practices in defiance of ecclesiastical law. He is saved only by the *catholicos*' indulgence and special ability to channel the healing powers of the Christian mysteries. The anecdote thus functions as a warning to the faithful to adhere to the ecclesiasts' Christian laws and set aside the customs and prerogatives of other social networks. The Jūrjiyūs anecdote is edifying in a different respect, because Jūrjiyūs explicitly turns down the polygynous privilege of his court position. The narrative allows Jūrjiyūs an opportunity to perform Christian difference: he affirms the monogamy expected by ecclesiastical elites and inscribes in his conduct a social ethics distinct from that of the Muslim caliphal court. He is, in this sense, operating much like the artisans or the rich layman Zarqōn we met earlier: by giving priority to ecclesiastical law over the customs of his social world, Jūrjiyūs affirms the primacy of his affiliation to the Church in the terms defined by the clergy.

7.5.4 Trimming Christian Family Trees: Inheritance and Illegitimacy

The anecdotes discussed above give us an evocative picture of the practice of concubinage among elite Christians in Abbasid Iraq, and, like the conflict between the bishops and Nisibene physicians of late Sasanian times, demonstrate how lay people might contest (or sometimes endorse) the ecclesiastical definition of right marital practice. How might the bishops have responded to this situation? The Jibrīl story features an example of a surprisingly (perhaps dubiously) effective deployment of anathema by Timothy to curb concubinage, but we have no way to extrapolate from this one instance any broader picture of the use of the ban. We can, however, consider other ecclesiastical strategies for dissociating concubinage from the practices of Christian marital life by returning to the Abbasid legal sources. In doing so, we will see that chief among those strategies was to prescribe the exclusion of children born to married men and their slaves from inheritance, following on Ḥnānīshō's precedent, and to thereby marginalize economically the unlawful (from the ecclesiasts' point of view) branches of Christian family trees.

As mentioned earlier, the law books of Timothy, ʾIshō' bar Nūn, and ʾIshō' bōkt all include rulings that address the status of children born of relationships between married men and their slaves. According to

Īshō‘bōkt’s ruling, the father of such a child should “raise him” and “give him something from his property in a just manner (*zādqā’it*)”; but “he cannot make heirs of unlawful (*d-lā nāmōs*) [children].”⁶⁴ Timothy’s legal language is less precise, but his ruling is also instructive in this regard:

“[What is the ruling concerning] a man who falls upon his female slave, she bears a son, and [the man] does not acknowledge [the son] during his life; but [then] stipulates at the time of his death that inheritance be given to him like one of his [legitimate] sons, and acknowledges that he is his own son?

He is considered [one] of the [man’s] sons. But not like freeborn sons (*bnay hērūtā*); rather, as the son of a slave woman he shall be given a 1/20 share by way of adoption (*b-taybū*), as a warning that no one should be defiled (*netṭannap*) [and] that no offspring should be excluded from inheritance.”⁶⁵

Though Timothy still calls the portion of the father’s estate going to the slave’s son inheritance, it is again a small sum meant only for his maintenance; the child has no right to a share equal to that of his legitimate brothers. And though Timothy presents the granting of even that small share as merciful, it in fact carries the stigma of “defilement”.

Īshō‘ bar Nūn’s ruling on the illegitimate sons of slaves echoes the other bishops’ position that “inheritance should not be given to [the son of a man and his slave] alongside the sons of the free wife”; the legitimate sons, however, “should have mercy on him” (*ne’bdūn ‘law(hy) raḥmē*) and give him “some portion as a blessing” (*mnātā meddem ak burktā*).⁶⁶ Īshō‘

⁶⁴ §IV.iv.6, *SR* 3:116. Īshō‘bōkt is known to have drawn much from Sasanian legal tradition in composing his law book, and that is almost certainly what he was doing in this instance: Sasanian law gave inheritance only to the children of a “marriage with full matrimonial rights” (*pādīxshāy-zanīh* in Middle Persian): see Macuch, Maria. “Inheritance I. Sasanian Period”. In *Encyclopædia Iranica*. On Īshō‘bōkt and Sasanian law, see Pigulevskaia, Nina V. “Die Sammlung der syrischen Rechtsurkunden des Ischobocht und des Matikan.” in Herbert Franke, ed., *Akten des vierundzwanzigsten Internationalen Orientalisten-Kongresses* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1959), 219-21.

⁶⁵ §70, *SR* 2:104.

⁶⁶ §100, *SR* 2:160. We should note that all three of the law books’ rulings on slaves’ children and inheritance seem to be addressed to cases of intestate succession. It is fair to infer, however, that the bishops would have similarly restricted testamentary bequests to slaves’ children insofar as such bequests would have been attempts to circumvent their rules of intestacy. Īshō‘bōkt’s ruling hints at this when it states that a man can give a piece of his property to his child by a slave “as long as he does not treat unjustly [his] lawful wife and her children.”

bar Nūn adds another ruling on the sons of married men and slaves which, though not addressed to successory status, promotes their further social marginalization. It specifies that the son of a married man and his slave “should be raised as a slave for the shame of his adulterer father” (*netrbē ‘abdā’rīt l-behttā d-abū(hy) d-zannī*), and that the slave mother should be sold off and sent out of the household.⁶⁷

The treatment of illegitimacy evident in the East Syrian law books is largely comparable to and familiar from the history of medieval Europe, where clerical reformers put a good deal of effort over the course of centuries into admonishing and convincing lay people that only the progeny of monogamous marriages could be considered legitimate.⁶⁸ Late Roman law, too, put varying restrictions on the devolution of property to children not born of marital unions.⁶⁹ In the context of the Islamic Near East, however, it is worth stepping back to consider the shape of the Christian household that the East Syrian rulings promote in comparison to Islamic law and Muslim social mores. The rulings detailed above exclude children who are born of slave women, but whose paternity is acknowledged, from any meaningful share in their fathers’ patrimonies; Iṣhō’ bar Nūn, additionally, maintains that such children should be raised as slaves. The difference between this stance and Islamic norms could not be more striking. In the Sunnī legal traditions, men may legally keep as many slave concubines as they can support. Moreover, any children born to concubines are considered free and legitimate (as long as their paternity is acknowledged) and are therefore entitled to normal shares in their fathers’ estates.⁷⁰

In the face of these norms, the East Syrian bishops’ rulings on the inheritance of slaves’ children emerge as an attempt to sculpt Christian lineages in a manner radically distinct from other household patterns in

⁶⁷ §101, *SR* 2:160-62.

⁶⁸ The literature is extensive. For studies and bibliography, see Wertheimer, Laura. “Children of Disorder. Clerical Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15.3 (2006), 382-407; and Ross, Margaret Clunies. “Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Past & Present* 108 (1985), 3-34.

⁶⁹ Constantine banned the bequeathing of property to the children of concubines; later emperors alternately loosened and tightened this stricture. For the developments see Arjava, Antti. *Women and Law in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, 211-17.

⁷⁰ See Brockopp, Jonathan E. *Early Mālikī Law. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam and his Major Compendium of Jurisprudence*. Leiden: Brill, 2000, 192-203.

Abbasid society. As we have seen, concubinage was fairly standard practice in certain elite Muslim echelons, and some Christians partook of it too. But Muslim sons of concubines were theoretically not disadvantaged in comparison to the sons of free women in terms of inheriting from their fathers and, therefore, participating in the reproduction of patrilineages. Now, this may well not have been the case in practice at times, especially when fathers, for a variety of reasons, declined to acknowledge the paternity of their slaves' children. But Islamic history is full of prominent men born of concubines; and it is particularly noteworthy that by the time of ʾIshōʿ bar Nūn's death in 828, four Abbasid caliphs (al-Manṣūr, al-Hādī, Hārūn al-Rashīd, and al-Maʿmūn) had been sons of concubines.⁷¹ The East Syrian ecclesiasts' rulings on the inheritance of the children of married men and their slaves, on the other hand, socially and economically marginalise such children by divesting them of a meaningful role in the intergenerational transfer of wealth and, therefore, the reproduction of lineages and households.⁷² As the stories of Jibrīl and Yūḥannā demonstrate, the bishops may not always have been able to convince powerful laymen to abandon the polygynous practices, especially concubinage, that were characteristic of the elite social circles of the Muslim caliphate. But through a Christian inheritance law starkly distinct from that of Islam, they could seek to mark certain offspring as unlawful and thereby curtail the effectiveness of concubinage as a strategy for lineage reproduction.⁷³ This, in turn, would encourage the longer-term shape of Christian households to conform to the monogamous ecclesiastical ideal.

As we have noted throughout this chapter, however, the bishops' vision would be realized only where their regulations were acknowledged and administered in practice. In the absence of any comprehensive evidence, our best guess is that this happened in some areas of the caliphate and not in others; it must have depended on whether local clergy actually played significant judicial roles in the civil affairs of Christian families and were able to mediate the bishops' rulings to local communities. In

⁷¹ On the parentage of these caliphs see Hitti, Philip K. *History of the Arabs*. Sixth edition. London: Macmillan & Co., 1956, 332; and Abbott, Nabia. *Two Queens of Baghdad*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946, 24-38.

⁷² We have noted above that the law books' rulings, especially ʾIshōʿbökt's, on the inheritance of slaves' children may be drawn partly from earlier legal traditions. This does not mean, however, that their reaffirmation in the Abbasid period did not serve the particular purposes discussed here.

⁷³ On concubinage as a strategy for lineage reproduction, see Goody, *Development*, 75-78.

this respect, the letter of the early tenth-century *catholicos* Yōḥannān bar Abgārē (mentioned above) offers some instructive evidence.

This epistle was a response to a certain Yemeni priest named al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf who had previously sent the *catholicos* a number of questions related to ritual and family law. One described a case that had arisen concerning a slave woman's child: "A man had a wife and a slave woman (*jāriya*). When the slave died, he acknowledged her son and said that he was his. But when this man died, his cousin (*ibn 'ammih*) came and also declared that the son was his. Should [the boy] receive inheritance (*hal yajib lahu l-mārāth*)?"⁷⁴

Here again we see the problem of the successory status of children born to married men and slaves, but this time from the perspective of a local clergyman who actually had to mediate the messy inheritance dispute that unfolded after the father's death. Notably, al-Ḥasan turned to the *catholicos* for advice on this quandary, which indicates an interest in balancing the interests of local parties and the principles of the Church.

The issue at stake for al-Ḥasan was in part the confused paternity of the slave woman's child. *Catholicos* Yōḥannān's response, however, does not concern itself with the paternity issue or the cousin's counterclaim; instead, it goes about upholding the positions of East Syrian legal tradition. First, the *catholicos* states unequivocally to al-Ḥasan that no Christians should be getting themselves into this position in the first place: "No one is allowed to take (sexually, *ittikhādh*) a slave woman unless he frees her and marries her by means of a marriage payment and a blessing (*bi-l-mahr wa-l-baraka*) in the presence of priests and the community. Also, she must be one [i.e., one wife], taking the place of a free woman."

If, however, reliable witnesses in the community (*jamā'a maqbūla*) affirm that the deceased indeed fathered the child, there are two possibilities. If the man has no legitimate son, half of his estate goes to the slave's son and the other half to the rest of his relatives. If the man did bear sons by his lawful wife, the slave's son gets 1/20 of the estate (*nisf al-'ushr*) and the rest goes to the lawful sons.⁷⁵

Yōḥannān's allowance of inheritance to the slave's son if he is an only child is an interesting exception to the bishops' general aversion to assigning property to unlawful sons; it is probably best explained

⁷⁴ Yōḥannān bar Abgārē §16, Vatican Arabic 157, 88b.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 88b-89a, and Assemani, *Bibliotheca* 3.1:252.

as stemming from the general principle that property descends more or less naturally through patrilineages, even an illegitimate one if no others are available.⁷⁶ But more significantly, Yōḥannān's ruling of the 1/20 share is a reaffirmation of Timothy's position, and an example of the *catholicos* communicating the ecclesiastical concern to trim the polygynous branches of Christian family trees directly to a local community (by way of its priest). Though we do not know the ultimate fate of the slave woman or her child, the fact that al-Ḥasan recognized the *catholicos* as an authoritative source from whom to seek a judgment on this local instance of the married man/concubine issue demonstrates that the bishops' rulings were more than literary exercises; they might even have been instantiated in practice at times, though this would always require committed local agents.

7.6 Conclusions

The development of East Syrian discourses on and practices of polygyny is one strand of the formation of distinctively Christian cultural traditions in the late antique and early Islamic Near East. In examining this process, we have seen that various forms of polygyny and concubinage were, in many respects, time-worn styles of household organisation in the largely patriarchal and patrilineal societies of the Near East, including Christians as well as their non-Christian neighbours. From the perspective of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, however, polygyny (among other marital practices) was incompatible with the Gospel and Pauline teachings from which Christian tradition was built. East Syrian bishops thus sought to formulate communal laws that insisted that all who kept to marital practices like polygyny would be excluded from membership in the body of Christ. Polygynous practice might have structured households in particular, traditional ways, but Christians would have to eschew it; affiliation to the Church had to be privileged above all other social commitments.

Ecclesiastical strategies for propagating this notion and encouraging lay practice to conform to the Church's strictures developed with the socio-political transformations of the late antique/early Islamic world.

⁷⁶ I have not found an exact precedent in East Syrian legal tradition for Yōḥannān's ruling on the case of a man whose only children have issued from an unlawful polygynous union with a slave.

The broad canonical legislation characteristic of the late Sasanian period threatened polygynous lay people with exclusion from the salvific Christian mysteries, the standard tool of persuasion available to ecclesiasts with no real coercive powers. But the conflict between the Nisibene physicians and the bishops Sabrīshō^c and Gregory demonstrated that the effectiveness of this persuasion depended greatly on the relative social power of the parties involved; proclaiming canons and issuing anathemas might simply not be enough to stop prominent lay people from availing themselves of the polygynous prerogatives customary in their social environments.

After the Muslim conquests, however, the sources show the ecclesiastical hierarchy claiming expanded judicial authority and exhibiting an interest in regulating ever more minute matters of lay conjugal life. In this context, the East Syrian bishops formalized in the texts of their legal tradition techniques for reining in lay polygyny different from the mere threat of anathema. Beginning in the seventh century and continuing into the Abbasid period, the sources show bishops seeking to order the intergenerational transfer of wealth in Christian lineages in a manner that excluded the children of polygynous arrangements from any meaningful share in their fathers' patrimonies. Where these rules were put into practice, the resulting social and economic marginalization of unlawful progeny would sculpt Christian households in the monogamous image of the ecclesiastical ideal and discourage other Christians from polygyny as a strategy for household reproduction. The East Syrian ecclesiasts thus used inheritance law to promote a notion of the Christian household radically different from household patterns at elite levels of Islamic society, where polygyny and concubinage were standard techniques for the perpetuation of lineages.

The bishops' voices, however, were not the only ones raised in the course of their ongoing attempt to curb polygyny in the service of a broader vision of Christian community. We have seen some lay people (like the artisans, Zarqōn, and Jūrjiyūs ibn Bukhtīshū^c) endorse the ecclesiastical understanding of Christian commitment as primary and operative to the exclusion of social practices, like polygyny, deemed outside its bounds. Others (like the Nisibene physicians and Yūḥannā ibn Māsayḥ) contested the *catholicoi*'s authority to declare their customary polygynous practices un-Christian, and sought to maintain these aspects of their social lives as elite males while still claiming association with the

Christian church. But these obstinate laymen notwithstanding, the ecclesiasts, as custodians and authoritative interpreters of Christian tradition, largely set the terms of the debate. Mār Abā's letter in the mid-sixth century appears to have been the first concerted effort to cast in stark relief the idea that certain marital practices contradicted the church's teachings; in this respect its assertion that true Christians could not engage in polygynous relationships was perhaps a bit novel. But by the ninth century, a layman like Yūḥannā knew well that he was transgressing the Church's canons by taking concubines, no matter how much he tried to justify himself by pointing to ecclesiastical hypocrisy. Though their laws might not always be obeyed, the East Syrian ecclesiasts had seen to it that the prohibition of polygynous practices would be a marker of Christian difference in the societies of late antiquity and early Islam.

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Part III

Material Culture

Tracing Influences in Mozarabic Material Culture: Building Technology in 8–10th century Hispanic Churches*

Isaac Sastre de Diego

(Fundación Española de Ciencia y Tecnología (FECYT), University of Oxford, History Faculty)

María Ángeles Utrero

(Instituto de Historia, Centro de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas, CSIC, Madrid)

For more than fifteen years, archaeological projects have been carried out in several late antique and early medieval Hispanic churches.¹ These projects have been based, above all, upon an analysis of production cycles and a chronological revision of buildings traditionally considered to have been Visigothic (sixth-seventh century), but which have now been dated to the eighth-tenth century.² As has already been argued in previously published academic papers,³ this re-dating does not merely represent a

* This work is partially the result of the research project, “Análisis Arqueológico de la Arquitectura Altomedieval en Asturias: prospección, estratigrafía y cronotipología. HUM2007-61417/HIST,” led by the scientific researcher L. Caballero Zoreda (Instituto de Historia, CCHS-CSIC) and funded by the Ministerio de Educación y Cultura. Authors are highly grateful to Rob Portass (University of Oxford) for his patience and assistance with the translation of the present text.

¹ Utrero, M. Ángeles. “Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispanic Churches and the Archaeology of Architecture. Revisions and Reinterpretation of Constructions, Chronologies and Contexts,” *Journal of Medieval Archaeology* 54 (2010), 1-33.

² Caballero, Luis. “Un canal de transmisión de lo clásico en la Alta Edad Media española. Arquitectura y escultura de influjo omeya en la península Ibérica entre mediados del siglo VIII e inicios del siglo X,” *Al-Qantara* 15.2 (1994), 321-48 and 16.1 (1995), 107-24.

³ Caballero, Luis and Francisco J. Moreno. “Sobre la dimensión epistemológica e histórica de una propuesta historiográfica. El modelo explicativo mozarabista,” in

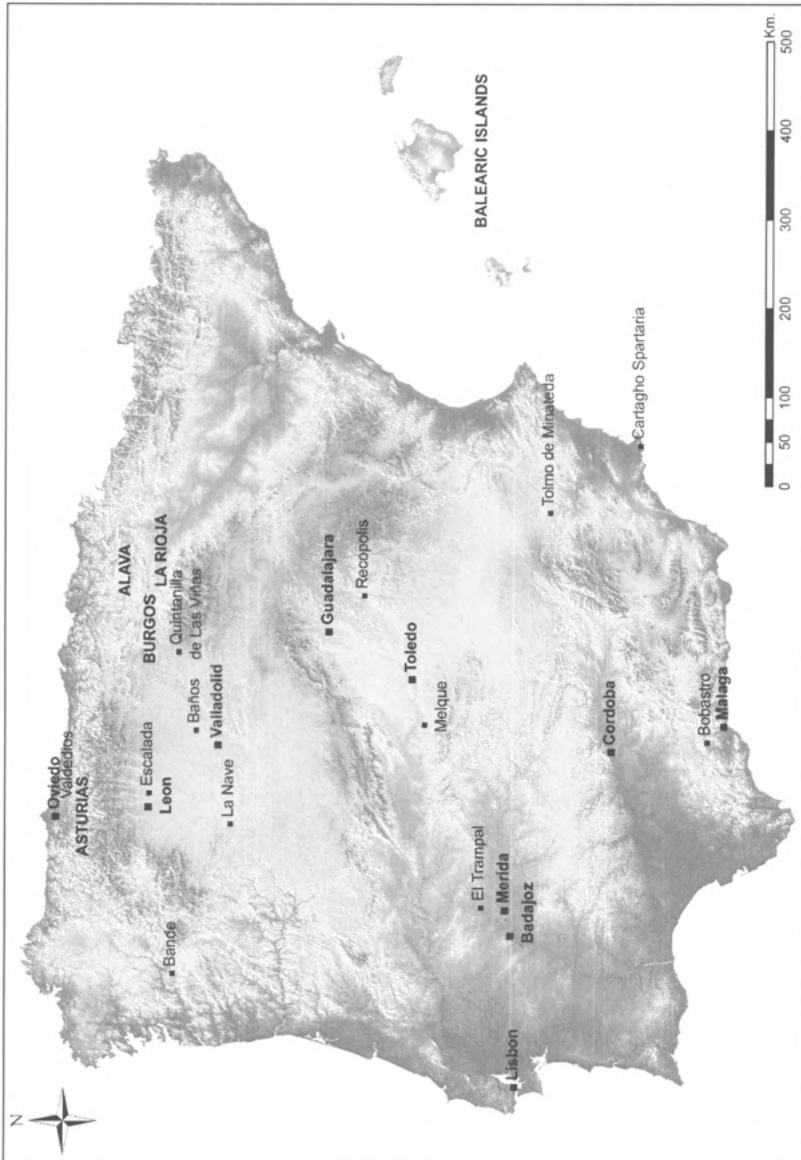
change of chronology, but a new comprehension of the building technology, its transmission within those periods and the context in which it emerged. With this in mind, our paper seeks to show how building technology in eighth-to-tenth-century Hispanic churches is the reflection of a new architectural culture that can only be understood by considering external factors (most notably, the Islamic conquest in 711) as its driving force and, thus, the factor responsible for innovation. In order to show this, we will first present a brief history of scholarship of the period, understood through the lens of technology including its transmission, identification and context.

8.1 A Brief Survey of Scholarship

Until recently, prevailing opinion has favoured the idea of continuity between the architecture and the decorative art of Hispania during the late antique and early medieval ages. This much suggests that a cultural evolution took place without interruption from Late Roman Hispania (fourth to fifth centuries) through to the Visigothic period (sixth to seventh centuries) and on to the subsequent Asturian (late eighth to early tenth centuries) and Mozarabic⁴ (tenth century) eras. This “continuity” model defended the existence of a Visigothic architecture created in an environment owing much to Roman traditions and subject to strong Byzantine influence. After Roman decay and a short period of technological decline in the sixth century, characterized by the use of rough stone masonry, reused material, basilical plans and timber roofs, there was, it is argued, a “revival” in the second half of the seventh century, involving the recovery of previous “Roman” techniques, such as ashlar stone masonry and vaulted roofs. According to this model, external influences are seen as particular inputs quickly learned and assimilated by the local

Matthias Untermann and Joachim Staebel, Hsg., *Cruce de Culturas - Im Schnittpunkt der Kulturen* (Heidelberg, 2014), forthcoming; Arce, Fernando and Francisco J. Moreno. “La construcción de iglesias como herramienta para el conocimiento del territorio tardantiguo y altomedieval en la Meseta Norte,” in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *El territorio. Visigodos y Omeyyas V*. Anejos de AEspA 61 (Madrid-Mérida: CSIC, 2012), 97-122.

⁴ Using this term as per Gómez-Moreno, Manuel. *Iglesias mozárabes. Arte español de los siglos IX al XI*. Madrid: CSIC, 1919, who defines Mozarabs as the Christians who lived under Islamic rule.



Map 2: Map of the Iberian Peninsula with the towns and buildings mentioned in the text.

craftsmen, who incorporated new styles, forms and features into their own knowledge and put them into practice.

Although probably an unconscious reflex, this model necessarily accepts that technology is able to survive and reinvent itself within an internal feedback process.⁵ In this case the Islamic conquest and the consequent changes it implied for social and productive systems would not have modified technological knowledge, which would have been transferred from the sixth to tenth centuries without interruption. In this context technology would have been able to survive thanks to the three following main routes of transmission.⁶ Firstly, the “revival” of the second half of the seventh century was thought to have been helped by Byzantine occupation of the southeast of the Iberian Peninsula in the second half of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century.⁷ Secondly, the emigration of the Visigothic population (mainly clerics) northwards in the early eighth century, after the Islamic conquest of the principal southern cities, involved the preservation and transmission of their art and techniques. Thirdly, the rebuilding in the ninth and tenth centuries of the previously abandoned Visigothic buildings by emigrants employing Visigothic techniques, together with the reusing of Roman ashlar stones⁸ and Visigothic sculptural elements⁹, had made it possible to maintain and improve them.

⁵ Bango, Isidro G. “El neovisigotismo artístico de los siglos IX y X. La restauración de ciudades y templos,” *Revista de ideas estéticas* 37/148 (1979), 319-38; Arbeiter, Achim. “Die Anfänge der Quaderarchitektur im westgotenzeitlichen Hispanien,” in Beat Brenk, ed., *Innovation in der Spätantike. Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz, Kunst im ersten Jahrtausend* (Wiesbaden: Propyläen-Verlag, 1996), 11-52.

⁶ Utrero, M. Ángeles. “Producción arquitectónica y decorativa cristiana en la península Ibérica, siglos VI-X. Cambio tecnológico y canales de transmisión,” in Matthias Untermann and Joachim Staebel, Hsg., *Cruce de Culturas - Im Schnittpunkt der Kulturen* (Heidelberg, 2014), forthcoming.

⁷ Hauschild, Theodor. “Técnicas y maneras de construir en la arquitectura paleocristiana hispánica,” in *II Reunió d'arqueologia cristiana hispànica* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1982), 84. Regarding the problematic definition of the chronology and geographical limits of the Byzantine occupation: Ramallo, Sebastián F. and Jaime Vizcaíno. “Bizantinos en Hispania. Un problema recurrente en la arqueología española,” *Archivo español de arqueología* 75 (2002), 315-16.

⁸ Arbeiter, Achim. “Construcciones con sillares. El paulatino surgimiento de una técnica edilicia en la Lusitania visigoda,” in *IV Reunió d'arqueologia cristiana hispànica* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1995), 220; Arbeiter, “Die Anfänge der Quaderarchitektur,” 38.

⁹ Mainly capitals: see Noack-Haley, Sabine. “Westgotenzeitliche Kapitelle im Duero-Gebiet und in Asturien,” *Madrider Mitteilungen* 27 (1986), 389-409.

With regard to the Byzantine role within this model, the two principal impulses thought to play a part in this process are associated with the Mediterranean world: the first is located in the context of the Golden Age of Justinian (r. 527-565) and the second, and definitive one, in the second half of the seventh century.¹⁰ While the first influence would have had fundamental material consequences for sculpture and its iconography, the consequences of the latter would have been felt on architecture. The chronological gulf between these two factors notwithstanding, they are considered parts of the same process: the architectural renovation in the second half of the seventh century would depend on earlier Byzantine influence, which had occurred almost one century before and had already determined styles of sculpture.¹¹ How are both influences thought to have penetrated the Iberian Peninsula? According to this model, the first influence would have been motivated by specific activities and personal contacts: merchants from the East who set up in some cities of the coast and in the wealthy city of Merida, the old Roman Lusitanian capital, where two Greeks (Paulus and Fidelis) became bishops; Hispanic priests journeying to Byzantium (such as John Biclár and Leandro of Seville, the latter being San Isidoro's brother); and, finally, the aforementioned presence of the Byzantine army, which lasted until the rise of the kingdom of Suintila (621-630) in the southeast of the Iberian Peninsula. The second moment would be the consequence of the consolidation of the first, now reinforced by the arrival of Ardabastus, a noble exiled from the Byzantine court and father of the future Visigothic king Ervigius (680-687).¹²

¹⁰ Arbeiter, Achim. "Alegato por la riqueza del inventario monumental hispanovisigodo," in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 249-63; Barroso, Rafael and Jorge Morín. "Fórmulas y temas iconográficos en la plástica hispanovisigoda (siglos VI-VIII). El problema de la influencia oriental en la cultura material de la España tardoantigua y altomedieval," in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 279-306.

¹¹ Harris, Anthea. *Byzantium, Britain & the West. The Archaeology of Cultural Identity AD 400-650*. Stroud: Tempus, 2003, mainly 121-30, intends to minimize the temporal gap between the supposedly precedent Byzantine models (precisely from Ravenna) and the Hispanic cruciform churches under discussion by proposing a common chronology of the 6th century for the latter.

¹² Barroso and Morín, "Fórmulas y temas iconográficos," 290.

However, this model does not seem to be supported by the archaeological evidence, nor by our material and technological knowledge. Firstly, this model does not take into account the social and cultural impact of a newly imported technology, the necessary effort required to learn it, and the economic endeavours necessary to apply it in order to modify the technology, style, and taste of a community and their people. Secondly, this model is based on an aprioristic methodology that considers the material evidence of those five centuries as a large cultural whole without undertaking a critical analysis of new evidence or applying consistent questions, and instead attempts to fit the evidence into the traditional scheme.

Lastly, an important contradiction must be highlighted within this explanation: how is it possible to explain the existence of a direct relationship between the two periods of the Byzantine influence with a hundred year gap between them? Why does the first influence affect only the sculpture and not the architecture? Why is the “classical” building technology and type (that is, the basilica) maintained in the sixth century and changed only one century later? Which one reflects the true magnitude of the relationship and trade between Byzantium and Hispania in late antiquity? Is such a process sufficient to transform the technological capacity of a community? Trade is attested only in particular elements, such as pottery, marble sculpture (*mensae*, basis, chancel screens, maybe some small columns: see Fig. 8.1), and some glass and metal during the sixth century,¹³ but it hardly continues into the seventh century, when there is a long gap in Mediterranean trade.¹⁴ On the contrary, it is crucial to underline that no Byzantine architecture has been recorded in the southeast Byzantine area, the so-called *Carthago Spartaria*,¹⁵ and that found in the Balearic Islands, a territory strongly related to Byzantine

¹³ Ramallo, Sebastián F. *et al.* “La decoración arquitectónica en el Sureste Hispano durante la Antigüedad Tardía. La basílica de Algezares (Murcia),” in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *Escultura decorativa tardorromana y altomedieval en la península Ibérica* (Madrid: CSIC, 2007), 367-90; Vizcaíno, Jaime. *La presencia bizantina en Hispania (siglos VI-VII). La documentación arqueológica*. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2009, 480-506.

¹⁴ Reynolds, Paul. *Settlement and Pottery in the Vinalopó (Alicante, Spain). A.D. 400-700*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 1993, 41; Arena, Maria S. dir., *Roma, dall'Antichità al Medioevo. Archeologia e Storia nel Museo Nazionale Romano Cripta Balbi*. Milano: Electa, 2001.

¹⁵ Ramallo and Vizcaíno, “Bizantinos en Hispania”; Utrero, M. Ángeles. “Late Antique Churches in the South-Eastern Iberian Peninsula. The Problem of Byzantine Influence,”



Fig. 8.1: Fragment of imported Byzantine mensae from La Alcudia (Elche, Alicante)

and Mediterranean environments, corresponds to late antique basilican models, with timber roofs and pavements belonging to the late Roman mosaic tradition.¹⁶

There is another important and related question: is it helpful to describe every external cultural influence that we find in the Iberian Peninsula as Byzantine? In our opinion, it is better to call them “Oriental” or “Eastern Mediterranean”, because they include iconographic programs, styles and typologies that belong to other regions and other cultures (Northern Africa, Egypt, Palestine, etc). Here we are following J. M. Hoppe, who, more than ten years ago, criticised the abstract use of the word “Byzantine” when used to designate a reality as complex as the Mediterranean in late antiquity, with cultural and artistic diversity in every province.¹⁷

In direct contrast to the explanation just discussed, a new “discontinuity” model proposed by Luis Caballero,¹⁸ strongly based on a renewed archaeological methodology, has started to promote the notion

Millennium. Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr. 5 (2008), 191-211.

¹⁶ Utrero, M. Ángeles. *Iglesias tardoantiguas y altomedievales en la península Ibérica. Análisis arqueológico y sistemas de abovedamiento*. Madrid: CSIC, 2006, 479-85; Vizcaino, *La presencia bizantina en Hispania*.

¹⁷ Hoppe, Jean M. “Le corpus de la sculpture visigothique. Libre parcours et essai d’interprétation,” in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 307-55.

¹⁸ Caballero, “Un canal de transmisión.”

that technology is not only subject to change and external factors, but also reflects the production systems where it emerged. This position is defended by archaeological studies and ethnographical reflections on the transmission of craft techniques.¹⁹ On this view, late antique and early medieval Hispanic architecture must contain distinctive elements showing that different productive and social systems supported it. Muslim populations arrived in the early eighth century and imported their own artistic technological traditions into the Iberian Peninsula, causing both an introduction of new elements and a change of the coetaneous material culture.

Although this model is still open to discussion and subject to modifications in accordance with new evidence, it seems to be more responsive to the presence in the Iberian Peninsula of new leaders and people with their own culture (even if it drew on several Eastern traditions, including the Byzantine one), than the previous model with its concentration on specific influence and contacts. Indeed, the Islamic presence helps to understand the technological changes in Iberian material culture. The arrival of a new elite and administration in the Iberian Peninsula after the conquest of 711 demanded certain products, above all buildings, and this inevitably had consequences for the old Christian elites, creating relationships and avenues of cultural transmission which previously did not exist.

Building innovations, such as the aforementioned ashlar stone masonry and vaulted roofs, may then be attributed to this new scenario, where the relationships between the traditional craft techniques and the imported ones, together with the artisans who knew and practised them, are clues to understanding this period. The ruins of previous buildings cannot have worked as a blackboard from which early medieval church builders learnt how to build only by observation,²⁰ as other authors in

¹⁹ Bianchi, Giovanna. "Trasmissione dei saperi tecnici e analisi dei procedimenti costruttivi di età medievale." *Archeologia dell'Architettura* I (1996), 53-64; Mannoni, Tiziano and Enrico Giannichedda. *Archeologia della Produzione*. Torino: Einaudi, 1996; Mannoni, Tiziano. "The Transmission of Craft Techniques According to the Principles of Material Culture. Continuity and Rupture," in Luke Lavan, *et al.*, eds., *Technology in Transition. A.D. 300-650* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), xli-lx.

²⁰ Defended by Bango, "El neovisigotismo artístico," 321, 337; Bango, Isidro G. "Los expolios del paisaje monumental y la arquitectura hispana de los siglos VII al XI. Reflexiones sobre el proceso constructivo de San Miguel de Escalada," *De Arte* 7 (2008), 7-50; León, Alberto. "Pervivencias de elementos clásicos en la *Qurtuba* islámica," in

similar chronological frames have already pointed out.²¹ Architectural knowledge entails, like any other type of knowledge, its own mechanisms of learning, and observation is not valid on its own. The preservation of ancient buildings (Roman or Visigothic) does not, therefore, justify the introduction of these technological changes which, besides, do not necessarily mean a process of revival, but perhaps also/rather of innovation.

Analysing building techniques allows us to recreate the building process and thus recognise the technological, social and economical context behind it. But the technological consequences of the Islamic conquest did not only obviously affect architectural culture. Changes occurred also in other production cycles, such as those related to pottery,²² coinage²³ or agricultural techniques,²⁴ all of them pertaining in some way to the fuller comprehension of this context. In order to analyse continuity and discontinuity, considering similar production cycles within the same period is

Desiderio Vaquerizo and Francisco J. Murillo, eds., *El Concepto de lo provincial en el mundo antiguo. Homenaje a la profesora Pilar León Alonso* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2006), vol. 2, 417.

²¹ Cagnana, Aurora. "L'introduzione dell'opera quadrata medievale a Genova. Aspetti tecnologici e contesto sociale," *Arqueología de la arquitectura* 4 (2005), 24.

²² Different studies gathered in Caballero, Luis *et al.*, eds. *Cerámicas tardorromanas y altomedievales en la península Ibérica. Ruptura y continuidad*. Madrid: CSIC, 2003. After Alba, Miguel and Santiago Feijoo. "Cerámica emiral de Mérida," in *GARB. Sitios islámicos del sur peninsular* (Lisboa: Ministério da Cultura, 2001), 328-75. After a first moment when a technical continuity seems to prevail, the diversity of forms is the most surprising characteristic of the eighth to ninth centuries, so different from the later uniform pottery dating to the Caliphate (tenth century). Several excavations carried out in Mérida, one of most important capitals during the Emirate, show that pottery production increased in the eighth century. Such diversity of types was due to the fact that it was a period of transition, in which several traditions and influences converged, introducing technical and formal variables in the local manufactures.

²³ As in other Muslim conquered regions, recent coin discoveries seem to show an initial process of cultural continuity. The earliest Umayyad coins, dated to 712-713, were coined in gold, like the previous Visigothic ones, even retaining Latin to render the Islamic formula, "There is only one god." The same continuity can be seen in the first pottery typologies. However, material culture started to change shortly after. Arabic formulae appeared in Umayyad coinage dating to 716-717, and the silver dinar substituted definitively the golden *solidus* in 724-725. There is a complete catalogue of these coins at www.andalustonegawa.50g.com.

²⁴ Glick, Thomas F. *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

fundamental to advance our knowledge.²⁵ In other words, no innovation can be judged without reference to its context.²⁶

8.2 Technology and technology transference in the 8th–10th centuries

Following Kevin Greene's words, "Technology, like style, is easy to recognise but difficult to define,"²⁷ technology is here considered as a practical knowledge encompassing artefacts and techniques employed by artisans to develop their work. This knowledge is based on a trial-and-error process and is passed on within communities of master craftsmen and apprentices.²⁸ But like any other manufacturing process, architectural development depends not only on the technological level, but also on the social and economic context, which will determine demand, circulation of models and funding.²⁹

Regarding this attempt to define the concept of technology, the term "technical environment", coined by Giovanna Bianchi, may be crucial.³⁰ This means the knowledge owned by a group, passed on across generations and enriched by foreign relationships. Only historical events can completely change this environment, thus removing the possibility of change by mere internal evolution. This means, then, that only products manufactured within the same environment may be equal or similar. As explained above, perceived similarities have been fundamental to attempts to defend continuity between the Roman and Visigothic periods, and between these and later periods. The accurate analysis of architectural products allows the identification of peculiarities which contradict those supposed similarities and actually reflect different technical environments.

²⁵ Mannoni, "The Transmission of Craft Techniques," lviii-lix.

²⁶ Greene, Kevin. "Technology and Innovation in Context. The Roman Background to Mediaeval and Later Developments," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994), 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁸ Mannoni, "The Transmission of Craft Techniques," xli-xlii.

²⁹ Mannoni, Tiziano. "L'analisi delle tecniche murarie medievali in Liguria," *Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Archeologia Medievale* (Palermo: Università di Palermo, 1976), vol. 1, 297.

³⁰ Bianchi, "Trasmissione dei saperi tecnici," 53-64.

Unlike movable pieces of art, architecture does not move, which makes it possible to distinguish its mechanisms of transmission. Within this frame, the concept of technological transmission among different technical environments may be fundamental to clarifying issues such as influence, revival or imitation,³¹ terms precisely based on similarity. The archaeological evidence shows that these relationships have become a simplification of a more complex problem. All these relationships may only be exercised by the artisans, among them the architects and builders; that is, those who actually experiment with building solutions, discarding some and improving others. Patronage, too, with the help of the artisans, may be responsible for the selection of architectural and decorative models, thus allowing for innovation or reaction within a precise social context. Artisans and patrons, together with the use and circulation of graphic and written sources, were already presented as the main vehicle of transmission by Oleg Grabar when studying the relationship between Islamic architecture and the West.³²

Coming back to the Iberian context and leaving aside the likely “channels of transmission”,³³ be they Islamic or Byzantine, chosen to explain the innovation which occurred in Hispanic architecture, three phenomena deserve to be explored in order to go deeper into the issues of technological transmission and influence.³⁴ It should be noted that these are not exclusive, but usually work together. Firstly, migration of *artisans* from place to place, taking with them knowledge, experience and ideas, is common to all Mediterranean areas³⁵ and is recorded for the Islamic period, albeit sporadically, in the Iberian Peninsula at the command of rulers or

³¹ Grabar, Oleg. “Between Connoisseurship and Technology. A Review,” *Muqarnas* 5 (1998), 6.

³² Grabar, Oleg. “Islamic Architecture and the West. Influences and Parallels,” in Stanley Ferber, ed., *Islam and the Medieval West* (Binghamton-New York: State University of New York Press, 1975), 60-66.

³³ Terminology after Caballero, “Un canal de transmisión.”

³⁴ Initially explored in the Iberian context by Utrero, M. Ángeles. “A finales del siglo IX e inicios del X. Entre Asturianos y Mozárabes,” in Luis Caballero *et al.*, *Asturias entre Visigodos y Mozárabes. Visigodos y Omeyas VI* (Madrid: CSIC, 2012), 125-45; Utrero. “Producción arquitectónica y decorativa,” this one for Asturias.

³⁵ Ettinghausen, Richard. “Interaction and Integration in Islamic Art,” in Gustave E. Grunbaum, ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 107-31.

powerful persons.³⁶ The modest size of the early medieval buildings, a world away from awe-inspiring late medieval constructions (such as the later Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals, for instance), must have made the mason's craft necessarily itinerant.³⁷ Builders and sculptors had to seek work wherever buildings were under way. Demand for particular skills, such as sculpting or ashlar stone-cutting, would have benefited from migration, this being the main way to obtain qualified artisans and the desired product. Only the occurrence of successive building projects in a particular town (like Oviedo, the Asturian "capital", for instance) or in a relatively small geographical area (such as churches in the Burgos-La Rioja-Álava regions³⁸) would allow artisans to remain in place once their work on a particular project had come to an end. As explained below in respect of the archaeological evidence of building technology, the mobility of artisans is fundamental to understanding how workshops operated and how they may be identified by archaeological analysis of the architecture.

A second important phenomenon is the response of these artisans to the demands of patrons, whose economic assets determined the material and human resources to be employed. But the demands of patrons did not necessitate the introduction of technological and stylistic innovations. Qualified artists may have participated in a particular building project without leaving further traces of their work, that is, without training other people in that precise technique. In order for innovation to happen, there must be not only invention but also the transmission of technology;³⁹ otherwise, techniques would have been lost as soon as the artisans who knew and practised them stopped teaching them and/or moved away. Taking this into account, the context of market demand

³⁶ Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain*, 221-22. For written references on the coming from east to west of artisans under the Umayyad dynasty's demand, see Cómez, Rafael. *Los constructores de la España medieval*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2001, 31-48; Arnold, Felix. "Wege der Rezeption römischer Architektur im Islam am Beispiel der Empfangssäle von Madinat az-Zahra," in *Diskussionen zur archäologischen Bau-forschung 9. Austausch und Inspiration. Kulturkontakt als Impuls architektonischer Innovation* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2008), 267.

³⁷ Shelby, Lonnie R. "Masons and Builders," in Strayer, Joseph R., ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York: Scribner, 1987), vol. 8, 173.

³⁸ See below.

³⁹ Lavan, Luke. "Explaining Technological Change. Innovation, Stagnation, Recession and Replacement," in Luke Lavan *et al.*, eds., *Technology in Transition. A. D. 300-650* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), xxi.

will be another factor in furthering or hindering the transmission of technology. Building activity will permit not only transmission but also continuous use, which argues against the role of isolated artistic pieces or of specific Byzantine contacts (see above) in this process. As mentioned previously, early medieval epigraphic and written sources do inform us about some patrons. Indeed, these records are mainly devoted to patrons, artisans always being ignored, which may indicate the prominent role of the patrons in selecting artistic models and thus playing a major part with regard to the transfer of technology.⁴⁰ What we cannot actually know is if those patrons were responsible only for funding it or also for procuring it.

Abbatial⁴¹, royal⁴² and private (aristocratic)⁴³ intervention are known to us by means of these sources, although sound interpretations must take into account their problematic character, as many such sources seem to have been self-conscious demonstrations of elite identity. On the other hand, patronage (royal or aristocratic, lay or ecclesiastical) is quite difficult to identify in archaeology, and archaeologists ought to put great effort into the analysis of evidence related to construction in order to recognise its economic context. However, most of the buildings are absent from these sources, maybe because another sort of patronage net-

⁴⁰ Pagella, Enrica. "Ver, copiar, interpretar. Artistas y circulación de modelos en el ámbito eclesiástico," in Enrico Castelnuovo and Giuseppe Sergi, eds., *Arte e historia en la Edad Media. Vol. 1. Tiempos, espacios, instituciones* (Madrid: Akal, 2009), 469.

⁴¹ Some examples recorded in the region of Asturias include the priests *Gagius* in San Vicente de Serrapio (894) and *Johannes* in San Juan de Llamas (940). Within the 'Mozarabic' group: Abbot *Alphonsus* in San Miguel de Escalada (León), lost inscription (ca. 912); Abbot *Johannes* in San Martín de Castañeda (Valladolid, ca. 916). On the problematic interpretation and relationship of these epigraphs, see Utrero, "A finales del siglo IX." Also San Román de Tobillas (Álava), built by Abbot Abito (aq 822) and restored by the priest Vigila (939), after Azkarate, Agustín. "Aportaciones al debate sobre la arquitectura prerrománica peninsular. La iglesia de San Román de Tobillas (Álava)," *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 68 (1995), 189-214.

⁴² Some examples known in the Asturias region: inscriptions from Santa Eulalia del Valle (951, Prince *Alphonsus*) and Santa Eulalia de Baones (993, Prince *Bermudus*). These epigraphs are recorded by Diego, Francisco. *Inscripciones medievales de Asturias*. Oviedo: Principado de Asturias, 1993.

⁴³ Within the 'Mozarabic' group: Santa María de Lebeña (Santander), thought to have been built by the Count Alfonso (ca. 930), after Gómez-Moreno, *Iglesias mozárabes*, 281. Relating to Asturian churches: García, Alejandro. *et al.* "Arquitectura religiosa del siglo X. San Salvador de Priesca (Villaviciosa, Asturias). De la iglesia monástica a la parroquia," in *La península Ibérica en torno al año 1000. VII congreso de estudios medievales* (León: Fundación Sánchez Albornoz, 2001), 293.

work, such as a community, was involved. With this in mind, it must be conceded that it is style, or the obtainment of a desired form, and not technology, that was first and foremost demanded by patrons. Style also depended on the catalogue of possibilities offered by the artisans, provided that patrons had enough resources.

The third phenomenon concerns graphic (plans, for instance) and written sources recording architectural designs and knowledge, which are likely to have been used and circulated within this period, though our information about them is scarce.⁴⁴ Their deployment is inevitably tied to the existence of architects and builders capable of understanding, interpreting and translating them into reality. Recent studies on Asturian architecture identify a common pattern in building plans, which shows that architects were thus able to apply them to different constructions (Fig. 8.2).⁴⁵

8.3 Building Technology and Innovation

It is within this “discontinuity” model and the related concept of technology that this paper must be understood. As mentioned above, sixth to seventh century ecclesiastical Hispanic architecture is mainly characterised by the use of rough stone masonry, reused material, basilical plans and timber roofs. This is similar to contemporary architecture right across the Mediterranean area, including Byzantine churches.⁴⁶ Yet architecture dating from the late eighth to the early tenth centuries, identified both in the northern part of the peninsula and in al-Andalus, is completely different from earlier architecture, encompassing a wide range of typologies, using both common building elements and resources. This variety of architectural solutions belies a narrow model of evolutionary linearity from earlier to later periods, which was once commonly accepted,

⁴⁴ Some references can be found in Utrero, “Producción arquitectónica y decorativa.” Also Utrero, “A finales del siglo IX”, 141.

⁴⁵ Arias, Lorenzo. *Geometría y proporción en la arquitectura prerrománica asturiana*. Madrid: CSIC, 2008.

⁴⁶ Mango, Cyril. *Byzantine Architecture*. London: Academy Editions, 1979; Rodley, Lyn. *Byzantine Art and Architecture. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Ousterhout, Robert. *Master Builders of Byzantium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. All of them also make reference to the problems of chronology and characterisation of Byzantine churches.

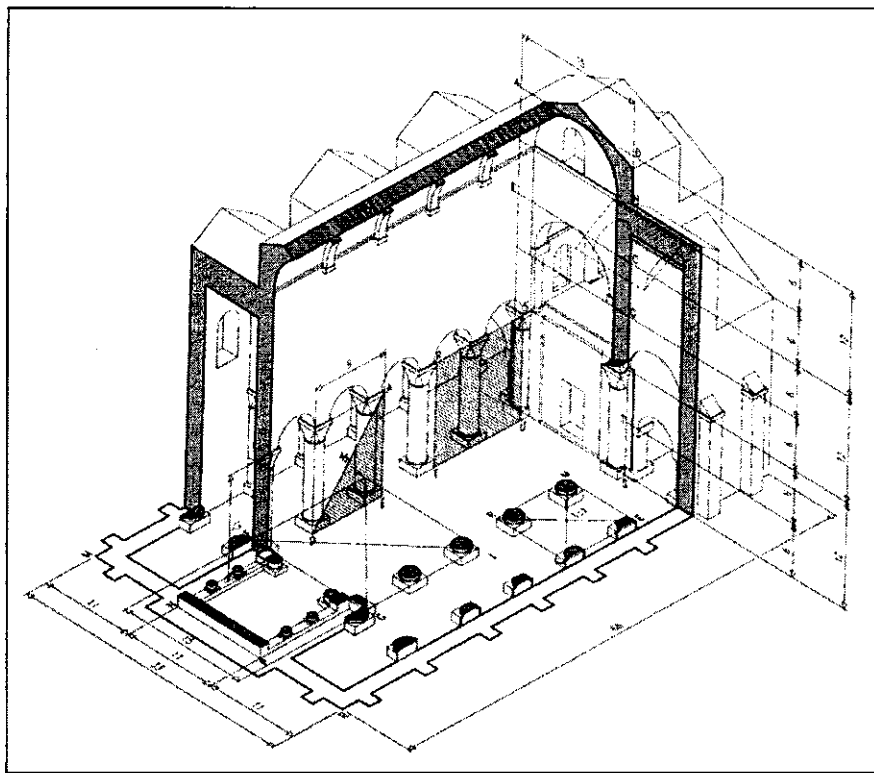


Fig. 8.2: Geometric reconstruction of the church of San Miguel de Lillo, after Arias, *Geometría y proporción en la Arquitectura Prerrománica Asturiana*

and, at the same time, highlights the relevance of context,⁴⁷ which will be discussed at the end of this paper. Thus, a key question emerges: are we in a position to identify architectural groups of constructions dating to the eighth to tenth centuries? Archaeological evidence shows how understanding buildings as a set of architectural elements placed coherently in order to work structurally may help to recognise those groups as a result of their common building technology, even though they may show different features depending on the workshops responsible for them.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Greene, "Technology and Innovation," 30.

⁴⁸ Caballero, Luis and Utrero, M. Ángeles. "Cómo funcionaban los talleres constructivos en la Alta Edad Media hispánica," in *Homenaje a José Ángel García de Cortázar* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 2012), 427-40.

Firstly, although different building techniques are recorded, all of them imply that quarries were in use.⁴⁹ Stonemasons were working to adapt reused building material and to cut new stone, both at the quarry and the building site. Furthermore, in order for quarries to exist, there must not only have been building activity, but also trained stonemasons, because it was they who exploited the quarries. The selection of material, which was related to its function (hard stones for structural points, soft ones for walls and decoration), shows as well that a variety of quarries were in use.⁵⁰ Moreover, some of the extant buildings show an additional innovation regarding stone-cutting. The introduction of the set square makes it possible to design and cut rectangular ashlar stones, which were different from slightly trapezoidal ashlar stones designed by using a ruler alone. This change of technique may be observed in the southern porches (Fig. 8.3) of San Miguel de Escalada (León) and San Salvador de Valdediós (Asturias), for instance, where sculptural elements (capitals and windows in the former, capitals and window screens in the latter) have been qualified as “Mozarabic”. This innovation seems to occur, as in other western areas,⁵¹ in the early tenth century.

Secondly, although the reuse of material is also practised in this period, it does not negate the existence of quarries and stonemasons. New and old elements are combined in the same building, the latter being used both to make the building project more dynamic and to compensate for those skills lacked by the artisans. For example, analysis so far indicates that there were no new columns in the churches of this

⁴⁹ On the contrary, there is only evidence of one open quarry, with some kind of specialized work, in the Visigothic period, which was used for the construction of the city of Recopolis under Leovigild's rule (568-586): Olmo, Lauro. “Ciudad y procesos de transformación social entre los siglos VI y IX. De Recópolis a Racupel,” in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 387.

⁵⁰ Utrero, “A finales del siglo IX”, 139.

⁵¹ Parenti, Roberto. “Le tecniche costruttive fra VI e X secolo. Le evidenze materiali,” in Riccardo Francovich e Ghislaine Noyé, eds., *La storia dell'Alto Medioevo italiano (VI-X secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia* (Firenze: All'insegna del Giulio, 1994), 479-96; Cagnana, Aurora. “Archeologia della produzione fra tardo - antico e altomedioevo. Le tecniche murarie e l'organizzazione dei canteri,” in Gian P. Brogiolo, ed., *Edilizia residenziale tra V e VIII secolo* (Mantova: Società Archeologica Padana, 1994), 39-52; Quirós, Juan A. “La sillería en la arquitectura altomedieval en el Mediterráneo occidental,” in *V congreso de arqueología medieval española* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001), vol. 1, 281-91; Mannoni, “The Transmission of Craft Techniques.” These authors make no reference, however, to the changes brought about by the set square.

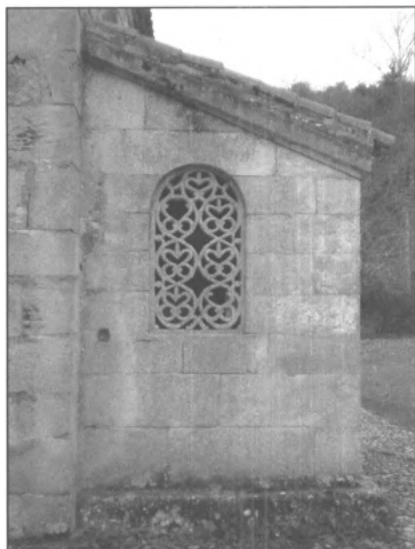


Fig. 8.3: Southern porch of San Salvador de Valdediós (Asturias), western wall

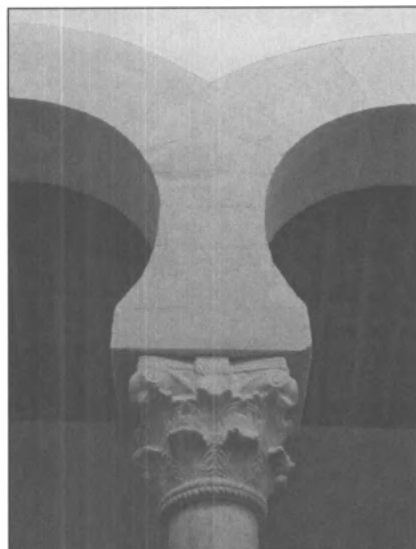


Fig. 8.4: Reused capitals and shafts in San Cebrián de Mazote (Valladolid) supporting horse-shoe arches

period.⁵² All of them were provided with reused shafts and bases, and sometimes capitals too, although these are frequently new (Fig. 8.4). This means that masons possessed some skills (stone-cutting), but lacked others (shaft-cutting; along with marble quarries), or else the tools required to manufacture some elements (shafts and other cylindrical elements, for instance).

These characteristics demonstrate an economical approach (economy of efforts) to the building process, which utilises available materials,⁵³ though that does not mean that an entire cultural tradition was maintained. Whereas a building constructed in new ashlar stone masonry depended on a single quarry, projects employing different materials may have been supplied by several sources (such as quarries and old buildings). A multiplicity of suppliers may also have reduced construction

⁵² Utrero, "A finales del siglo IX", 138; Utrero, M. Ángeles and Isaac Sastre. "Reutilizando materiales en las construcciones de los siglos VII-X. ¿Una posibilidad o una necesidad?" *Anales de historia del arte* (2012), 309-23.

⁵³ Utrero, "A finales del siglo IX", 138.

time and, therefore, cost. Reuse, then, has nothing to do with continuity or scarcity, but with a process that made use of the previous building as a store of materials to be used anew. This practice of reusing material suggests a plurality of solutions and manufacturing techniques with remarkable individual characteristics,⁵⁴ all of which belonged to the same technical environment.

Thirdly, the introduction of vaulted roofs represents not only an innovation but also a challenge that completely modifies a building's conception, because its architectural elements had to be carefully placed in order to serve the vaults and work as a balanced system.⁵⁵ For the same reasons, vaulting also became a prestige element. Structural systems based on a succession (parallel or perpendicular) of barrel vaults and arches encompassed a portfolio of related architectural elements. Buttresses reinforcing walls against lateral strains, cruciform pillars distributing and supporting vaults with different axes, diaphragm arches linking walls and supports and transverse arches dividing long barrel vaults into bays are among those elements frequently employed to provide additional structural support. The technique of vaulting was completely lost in the West,⁵⁶ although not in the East, where the transfer of practical expertise through the production of buildings in Byzantine and Islamic environments preserved it. Its introduction in the Iberian Peninsula can only be explained by allowing for the presence of experienced builders who were familiar with structural work. Architectural errors obviously happened, as the recorded ruins of the churches of San Pedro de La Nave⁵⁷ (Zamora, Fig. 8.5) and Santa Comba de Bande⁵⁸ (Orense) and their immediate restorations show, but vaulted roofs became common for this period.

Evidently, the use of ashlar stone masonry is not the sole indicator of technological change; rather there existed a group of elements and resources all of which were interrelated. Stonemasons, builders, sculptors and other artisans collaborated in organised and different ways with the

⁵⁴ Pagella, "Ver, copiar, interpretar," 454-55.

⁵⁵ Utrero, *Iglesias tardoantiguas y altomedievales*.

⁵⁶ Mannoni, "The Transmission of Craft Techniques," xlv.

⁵⁷ Caballero, Luis and Fernando Arce. "La iglesia de San Pedro de la Nave (Zamora). Arqueología y arquitectura," *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 70 (1997), 221-74.

⁵⁸ Caballero, Luis *et al.* "La iglesia de San Torcuato de Santa Comba de Bande (Orense). Arqueología de la arquitectura," *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 77 (2004), 273-318.

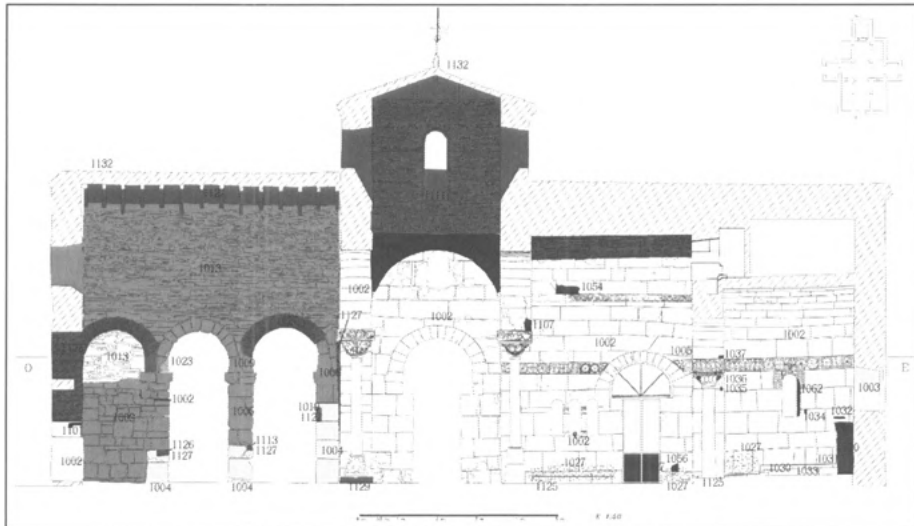


Fig. 8.5: Longitudinal section with stratigraphy of San Pedro de La Nave (Zamora), looking north and showing the deformation of the arcade, after Caballero and Arce, “La iglesia de San Pedro de la Nave”

aim of obtaining the architectural product⁵⁹ demanded by a patron, who is likely to have been responsible for the selection of the model. Desired form and expected use would also have been determining factors.⁶⁰

Fourth, these groups of churches seem to be related not only chronologically but also geographically. There are no precedents in their corresponding areas that present a persuasive case for continuity from previous examples. They constitute groups apart, which may only be understood as the product of the arrival of people, introducing these innovations, and patrons with enough resources to demand such constructions. For instance, the group of churches identified in the area encompassing the current provinces of Burgos-La Rioja-Álava⁶¹ is distinctive for their

⁵⁹ Caballero and Utrero, “Cómo funcionaban los talleres.”

⁶⁰ A monastic church, for instance, must have access and architectural elements (chancel screens, for example) providing privacy to the community, whereas a private one need not, and may attach great importance to a space with a designated funerary function.

⁶¹ Caballero, Luis. “Aportación a la arquitectura altomedieval española. Definición de un grupo de iglesias castellanas, riojanas y vascas,” in *V congreso de arqueología medieval española* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001), vol. 1, 221-33; Sánchez Zufiaurre, Leandro. “Metodología. Las iglesias de Álava de los siglos IX-XI y las consideradas

tuff pendentive vaults (mainly in apses, but sometimes also in the nave and aisles) and reused ashlar stone masonry, which shows different plans. Probably built at the end of the ninth century, they represent a coherent programme of building and, likely, were the product of a single workshop working in a concentrated geographical area probably for no longer than eighty years. The availability of tuff stone quarries in the area is its most distinctive feature and a main factor affecting the vaulting construction (Fig. 8.6). This material, easier to cut than normal limestone and lighter, is ideal to build a roof of this kind, an advantage clearly known and made use of by the builders. The selection of material is clear: light material is employed to build vaults and reused material to raise walls.

Another group is composed of the churches located in Asturias, dated to the late eighth to early tenth centuries. These examples are built in rough stone masonry, but stonemasons are responsible for cutting the quoins and those ashlar stones employed in singular and structural points (buttresses, jambs: see Fig. 8.8). Vaulting becomes predominant, although mixed roofing (vaulted apses and timber-roofed halls) is also to be found. Its manufacture is dependent upon the existence of a workshop charged with the task of defining both the quantity and the quality of stone in relation to the dimensions of the building.⁶² The homogeneity and selection of the building material shows that a variety of quarries were in use, and also that material was chosen according to its position in the building.

A third group corresponds to the churches sited in the Valladolid-León area. These buildings are made by combining rough (walls) and ashlar stone masonry (arches and vaults), which clearly reflects builders and stonemasons working together. Quarries are open and different skills were employed. The reuse of both Roman columns (capitals, shafts and bases: see Fig. 8.4) and fragments of sculptures together with new pieces (Fig. 8.7) characterise this project, making it clear that the former were used to fill the gaps left by the workshops, but not because of a lack of stone-cutting skill. This group belongs partially to that labelled by Manuel Gómez-Moreno almost a century ago as “Mozarabic”,⁶³ and char-

iglesias del siglo VII,” in Luis Caballero *et al.*, eds., *El siglo VII frente al siglo VII. Arquitectura* (Madrid: CSIC, 2009), 231-39.

⁶² Arias, *Geometría y proporción*, 335-47.

⁶³ Gómez-Moreno, *Iglesias mozárabes*.



Fig. 8.6: Vaulted apse of San Pedro de Arlanza (Burgos)

acterised by way of reference to the employment of horseshoe arches and the “Andalusian” style of sculpture.

Apart from these groups, there are still other isolated buildings, most of them belonging to the main chronological group discussed here (Santa María de Melque, Toledo [Fig. 8.9];⁶⁴ Santa Lucía del Trampal, Cáceres; San Juan de Baños, Palencia; Santa Comba de Bande, Orense; and San Pedro de La Nave, Zamora), which share common features with those mentioned above, but also show peculiarities, probably reflecting those

⁶⁴ Melque stands out among the others by illustrating both the change of archaeological methodology and of chronology. Radiocarbon, thermo-luminescence and stratigraphic sequence support a late eighth and early ninth century date, making it one of the earliest known Mozarab churches: Utrero, “Late Antique and Early Medieval,” 6-7.



Fig. 8.7: Chancel screens of San Miguel de Escalada (León)



Fig. 8.8: Santa Cristina de Lena (Asturias) with ashlar stone masonry in quoins and buttresses

working as a group but about which we still know very little. However, another possibility must be taken into account here: are they isolated because they reflect a workshop which, because of a crisis of demand, subsequently vanished?

8.4 The Historical Context of the Churches: Mozarabs and Northern Christians

Two main factors explain the Mozarab ascription of the productions mentioned above: the technology and the historico-political context of the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth to tenth centuries. With the arrival of the Islamic conquerors, the ancient Hispanic map of power changed, becoming more fragmented, with several new power groups emerging. The new elites needed to make visible their status and to differentiate themselves. They had enough economic resources to afford craftsmen with the requisite skills and thus introduce new styles and technologies, which did not simply follow or imitate those that preceded them.

For the old Christian elites, the city remained an administrative centre; bishops were the crucial element in the upkeep of this system in the Visigothic kingdom. With the advent of Islamic rule, some cities lost



Fig. 8.9: Stone pendentive dome and vaults of Santa María de Melque (Toledo), with remains of stuccos

their control over their territory in al-Andalus in the face of the consolidation of the caliphate (like Merida, Eio, current Tolmo de Minateda, Albacete; and Recopolis, Guadalajara, in the second half of the ninth century⁶⁵). Yet other cities, such as Lisbon and Málaga, of minor importance during the Visigothic period, attained greater significance. There were even foundations of new cities that replaced the old capitals (Badajoz and Guadalajara, for instance). The lords of some rural regions became as important as the ancient urban leaders, showing and defending their strategic interests through pacts with the Muslim rulers (such as that between the *dux* Cassius and the *Banū Qasī* in the north eastern area of the Iberian Peninsula,⁶⁶ or between Teodomirus and the *kura* of Tudmir, in the southeast⁶⁷).

In comparison to al-Andalus, northern Christian lords grew in strength and showed their prominent position by looking for innovative cultural features and building models. Mozarab and northern Christian churches together constituted the best media to demonstrate this, becoming the architecture of prestige for the uppermost elements of the social

⁶⁵ Cressier, Patrice and Mercedes García Arenal, eds. *Genèse de la ville islamique en al-Andalus et au Maghreb occidental*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez-CSIC, 1998.

⁶⁶ Lorenzo, Jesús. *La dawla de los Banū Qasī. Origen, auge y caída de una dinastía muladí en la frontera superior de al-Andalus*. Madrid: CSIC, 2010.

⁶⁷ Gutiérrez, Sonia. *La Cora de Tudmir. De la Antigüedad tardía al mundo islámico*. Madrid-Alicante: Ecole des Hautes Etudes Hispaniques, 1996.

hierarchy. The Christian aristocracy used this medium to express social distinction. These churches were often founded as donations to a prestigious religious community, usually a monastery. Moreover, this type of foundation ensured exemption from taxes and, at the same time, control of the wealth of the territory. In other words, early medieval churches and the technology employed to build them are an expression of the society and its interests, but they are also proof of the culture available, and a reference of the economic possibilities of each community.⁶⁸

It is in this context that we should understand the monumental architecture of the churches currently considered Mozarab, both situated in al-Andalus (Santa María de Melque and Santa Lucía del Trampal) and in northern areas (San Pedro de La Nave, San Miguel de Escalada or Santa María de Quintanilla de las Viñas, among others). All of them introduce technological and stylistic innovations which cannot be explained by evolution, as the old interpretative model argued. On the contrary, the migration of qualified craftsmen, genuine specialists that moved from one building site to another through different regions, where their services were required and could be paid for, created the conditions in which these innovations were able to take place. Besides donations, written sources mention the foundation, construction and reconstruction of churches and monasteries between the ninth and tenth centuries in that area of the Iberian Peninsula,⁶⁹ showing a highly dynamic material and economic context, into which these churches fit very easily.

⁶⁸ Sánchez Zufiaurre, Leandro. *Técnicas constructivas medievales. Nuevos documentos arqueológicos para el conocimiento de la Alta Edad Media en Álava*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Universidad del País Vasco, 2007; Quirós, Juan A. "Las aldeas de los historiadores y de los arqueólogos en la Alta Edad Media del norte peninsular," *Territorio, sociedad y poder* 2 (2007), 65-86; Arce and Moreno, "La construcción de iglesias". Caballero and Moreno, "Sobre la dimensión epistemológica," note: "Tanto en el sur andalusí como en el norte cristiano, hasta la consolidación de las estructuras supra-regionales, la pugna por alcanzar la supremacía política cristalizó en la aparición de grupos de poder locales que contaron con las empresas edilicias de carácter simbólico entre sus mecanismos de auto-legitimación."

⁶⁹ According to Peña, Esther. *La atribución social del espacio en la Castilla altomedieval. Una nueva aproximación al feudalismo peninsular*. Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 1995. These texts contain almost two thousand mentions of churches and monasteries founded in the area of Castilla from the ninth to twelfth centuries.

8.5 Conclusion

Like any other historical model, this discontinuity model also leaves many questions unresolved. Most importantly, southern sites, where we might expect to find examples of the aforementioned innovations, have as yet yielded little in the way of eighth-century Islamic architecture.⁷⁰ Thanks to the written sources it is known that in the Cordovan capital the old Christian aristocracy, who owned substantial amounts of rural property, were responsible for the foundation of monasteries in the middle of the ninth century.⁷¹ However, there is no evidence of building either in the city or in the surrounding territory until the tenth century, apart from the first phase of the city's main mosque. Fortunately, projects already underway are now filling that gap. In Mérida (Arabic: *Marida*), another important city of al-Andalus under Umayyad rule, new buildings dating to the eighth century, built over Roman and Visigothic remains, have recently been found. They share similar technical characteristics with those early medieval churches and are thought to be palaces or administrative buildings belonging to the first Islamic rulers.⁷²

Finally, it has to be emphasized that this model highlights a major problem: what material culture can be classified as "Mozarab"? Although this question requires much reflection, some points can be considered here. This material culture does not correspond to those monolithic groups created by the "classical" scholars, above all Gómez-Moreno.⁷³ According to him, the Mozarab group of buildings was mainly to be found in the northern area and had been built by Christians emigrants, with the exception

⁷⁰ Although the lack of archaeological evidence for the eighth century has been used to argue against the discontinuity model, the same could be said about the lack of Byzantine forms to support the Visigothic model. Furthermore, this absence also obviously affects the continuity proposal, being a gap in the supposed lineal evolution.

⁷¹ Manuel Acién considers this movement in connection with the fiscal reform of the caliph Abd al-Rahman II and the unrest of the 'martyrs' of Cordoba: see Acién, Manuel. "La herencia del protofeudalismo visigodo frente a la imposición del estado islámico," in Luis Caballero and Pedro Mateos, eds., *Visigodos y Omeyas. Un debate entre la Antigüedad tardía y la Alta Edad Media* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 435.

⁷² Alba, Miguel. "Diacronía de la vivienda señorial de Emerita (*Lusitania, Hispania*). Desde la *domus* altoimperiales y tardorromanas a las residencias palaciegas omeyas (siglos I-IX)," in Gian P. Brogiolo and Alexandra Chavarría, eds., *Archeologia e Società tra tardo antico e alto Medioevo* (Mantova: Società Archeologica Padana, 2007), 163-92; Sánchez, G. "Un nuevo edificio emiral en el centro de la ciudad," *Foro* 52 (July, 2008), 4-5.

⁷³ Gómez-Moreno, *Iglesias mozárabes*.

of Melque (Toledo), and almost entirely dated to the late ninth century and beyond. It does not correspond either to the proposal of José Camón, who distinguished two groups, the “Mozarab” one placed in al-Andalus and the “Reconquest” one in the northern area.⁷⁴ On the contrary, this new proposal identifies several groups, sited both in al-Andalus (Melque, Trampal, Bobastro) and in the northern area (including the Duero valley and Asturias), which show common technological innovations. Such architectural evidence thus spans a previously “empty” century, with the exception of the long known Asturian examples, which run from the late eighth century to the late ninth century. But it is also the case that al-Andalus begins to find itself home to ecclesiastical buildings, which makes it necessary to revise the general assumption about the prohibition of building under Islamic rule.⁷⁵ On the other hand, these groups demonstrate that eighth to tenth century architectural production cannot be treated as a single and homogeneous phenomenon; far from it, such production was actually the reflection of Christian groups with different resources and needs.

Although the debate highlighted in this paper seems, at first sight, to be of local dimensions, affecting only Hispanic material culture, it could be said to be of relevance to the whole Mediterranean area. The Near East requires similar exploration in order to identify coetaneous material culture there, which must bear in mind the Hispanic dimension. The Muslims who arrived in Iberia in the early eighth century, seventy-five years later than in Syria and Egypt, might have imported their own artistic and technological traditions, and they very likely also brought trained artisans. It is probable that some time was needed to introduce and spread those innovations, perhaps taking two or three generations to ensure their consolidation, depending on the resistance or permeability

⁷⁴ Camón, José. “Arquitectura española del siglo X. Mozárabe y de la repoblación,” *Goya* 52 (1963), 206-19.

⁷⁵ Arce, Fernando. “Propuesta para el estudio de la arquitectura cultural cristiana en al-Andalus,” in Inés Monteiro *et al.*, eds., *Relegados al margen. Marginalidad y espacios marginales en la cultura medieval* (Madrid: CSIC, 2009), 31-39; Moreno, Francisco J. “Amenaza exterior y respuesta constructiva en el seno de una comunidad protegida. El caso de Santa María de Melque en el siglo IX,” in Inés Monteiro *et al.*, eds., *Relegados al margen. Marginalidad y espacios marginales en la cultura medieval* (Madrid: CSIC, 2009), 41-53, this one specifically for Melque. Both of these opinions are opposed to the traditional one: see, for example, Dodds, Jerrilynn D. *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990.

of the local traditions. It seems therefore, that historical facts and archaeological evidence are key to learning how to identify those transitional processes, and to reviewing traditional interpretations. New material evidence, as has been shown here, starts to appear in the eighth and ninth centuries, breaking down chronological and historical boundaries and also requiring a coherent explanation.

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9

The Monasteries of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn between Alexandria and Fuṣṭāṭ: A Long Transition Viewed from the Pottery (Sixth to Tenth Centuries)

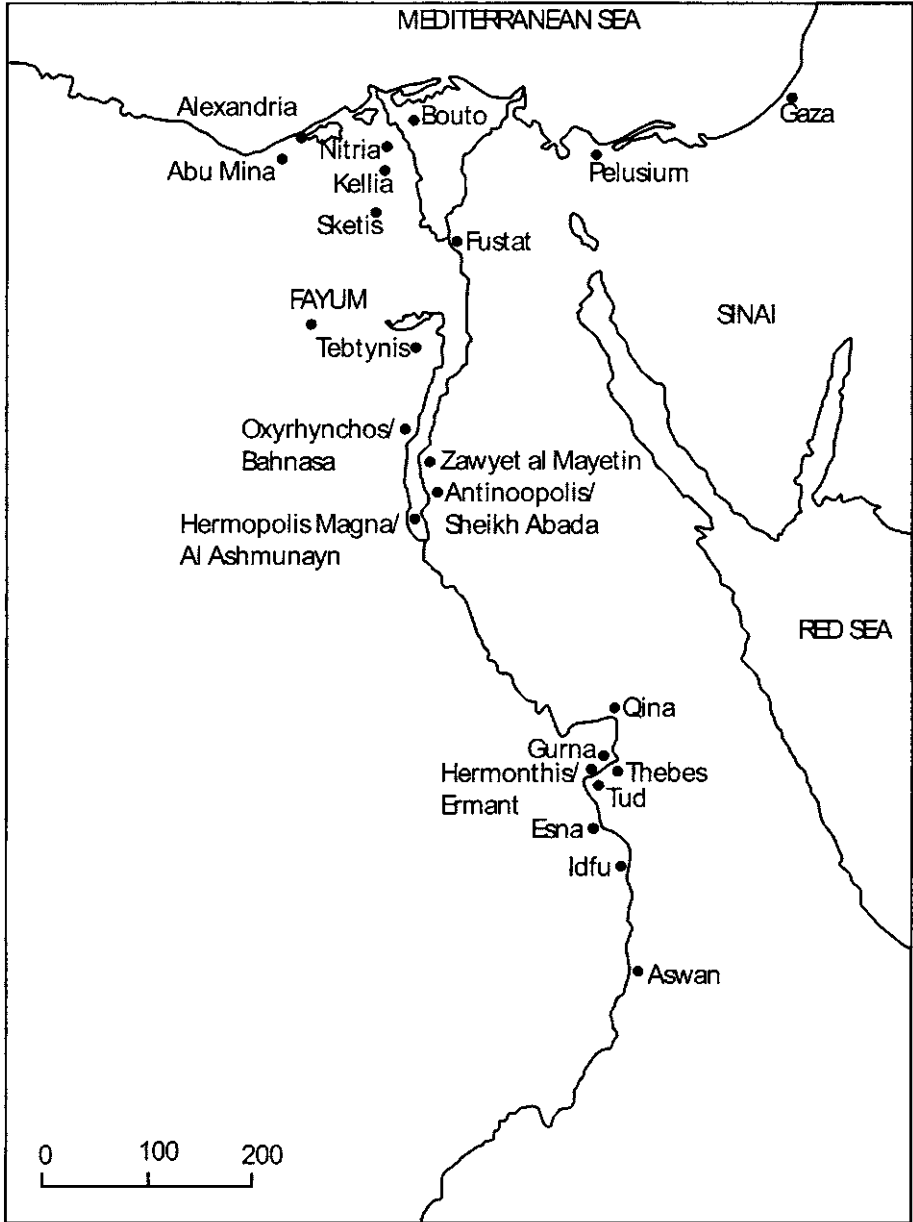
Alexandra Konstantinidou

(Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Athens)

9.1 Introduction

Wādī al-Naṭrūn, the ancient desert of Sketis,¹ next to the Mount of Ni-

¹ The importance of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, its monuments and the monasteries' manuscript collections were recognised in the early twentieth century by Hugh Evelyn-White, who undertook an expedition there in 1926. The results were published posthumously by W. Hauser as: Evelyn-White, Hugh. *The Monasteries of the Wādī 'n Natrun. Part I. New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926; *Part II. The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, 1932; *Part III. The Architecture and Archaeology*, 1933. This invaluable and monumental work is hardly surpassed, and remains the key reference for anyone interested in the long history and tradition of Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Other publications concerning the region are: Toussoun, Omar. *Études sur le Wadi Natroun, ses moines et ses couvents*. Alexandria: Société de Publications Égyptiennes, 1931; Fakhry, Ahmed. "Wadi el Natroun," *ASAE* 40 (1940), 837-53; Mikhail, Maged S. A., and Mark Moussa, eds. *Christianity and Monasticism in Wadi al-Natrun*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009; Cappozzo, Mario. *I monasteri del deserto di Scete*. Perugia: Tau, 2009. See also: Capuani, Massimo. *Christian Egypt. Coptic Art and Monuments Through Two Millennia*. Cairo: Liturgical Press, 2002, 83-104; Meinardus, Otto. *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*. Cairo; New York: The American University at Cairo Press, 1961, 48-143; Gabra, Gawdat. *Coptic Monasteries. Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture*. Cairo; New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002, 35-63; Wipszycka, Ewa. *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe - VIIIe*



Map 3: Map of Egypt

tria² and Kellia³ is well-known as a cradle of Egyptian monasticism in Lower Egypt, It is one of the depressions formed in the Western Desert of Egypt,⁴ lying between Alexandria and Cairo, almost at an equal distance from both cities (Map 3). The title of this article pays respect to the significance of these two cities during different time periods and to the symbolic position of Wādī al-Naṭrūn between them and between the two worlds that they represent: the ancient Graeco-Roman/Byzantine world, with its capital in Alexandria,⁵ and the medieval Arab world, with its capital in Fuṣṭāṭ.⁶ In light of this, it is interesting to investigate how the transition from the first world to the second is manifested in the region.

Pottery unearthed during excavations at a site situated north of the present monastery of the Virgin Mary of Baramūs, known as Dayr Abū Mūsā al-'Aswad (the monastery of Saint Moses the Black)⁷ serves

siècles). *Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements*. Volume XI. Warsaw: Warsaw University, 2009, 214-17.

² Evelyn-White, *History*, 17-24; Chitty, Derwas J. *The Desert a City*. Oxford: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966, 29; Harmless, William S. J. *Desert Christians. An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 279-81.

³ Evelyn-White, *History*, 24-27; Chitty, *Desert*, 29; Daumas, François, and Antoine Guillaumont, dir. *Kellia I. Kôm 219. Fouilles exécutées en 1964 et 1965*. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1969; Kasser, Rodolphe, dir. *EK 8184. Tome I. Survey archéologique des Kellia (Basse Égypte). Rapport de la campagne 1981*. Mission Suisse d'archéologie copte de l'université de Genève. Leuven: Peeters, 1983; Bridel, Philippe, ed., *Le site monastique copte des Kellia. Sources historiques et explorations archéologiques. Actes du colloque de Genève (13-15 août 1984)*. Geneva: Mission suisse d'archéologie copte de l'Université de Genève, 1986; Kasser, Rodolphe, dir. *EK 8184. Tome II. Explorations au Qouçoûr er-Roubâ'yat. Rapport des campagnes 1982 et 1983*. Leuven: Peeters, 1994; Capuani, *Christian Egypt*, 55-82; Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 281-82; Wipszycka, *Moines*, 206-12.

⁴ Vivian, Cassandra. *The Western Desert of Egypt. An Explorer's Handbook*. Cairo; New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002.

⁵ Capital of Egypt from its foundation by Alexander the Great in 331 BC until the Arab conquest in 641: see Breccia, Evaristo. *Alexandrea ad Aegyptum. A Guide to the Ancient and Modern Town and to its Graeco-Roman Museum*. Bergamo: Istituto Italiano di Arte Grafiche, 1922; Haas, Christopher. *Alexandria in Late Antiquity. Topography and Social Conflict*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

⁶ The new capital of Egypt, established by the Arab conqueror 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. It is located in what is called today 'Old Cairo': see Kubiak Władysław. *Al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Its Foundation and Early Urban Development*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987; Raymond, André. *Le Caire*. Paris: Fayard, 1993. On early relations between Christians and Muslims in Fuṣṭāṭ see the chapter of Audrey Dridi in this volume.

⁷ The director was Dr. Karel C. Innemée of Leiden University. The results are published

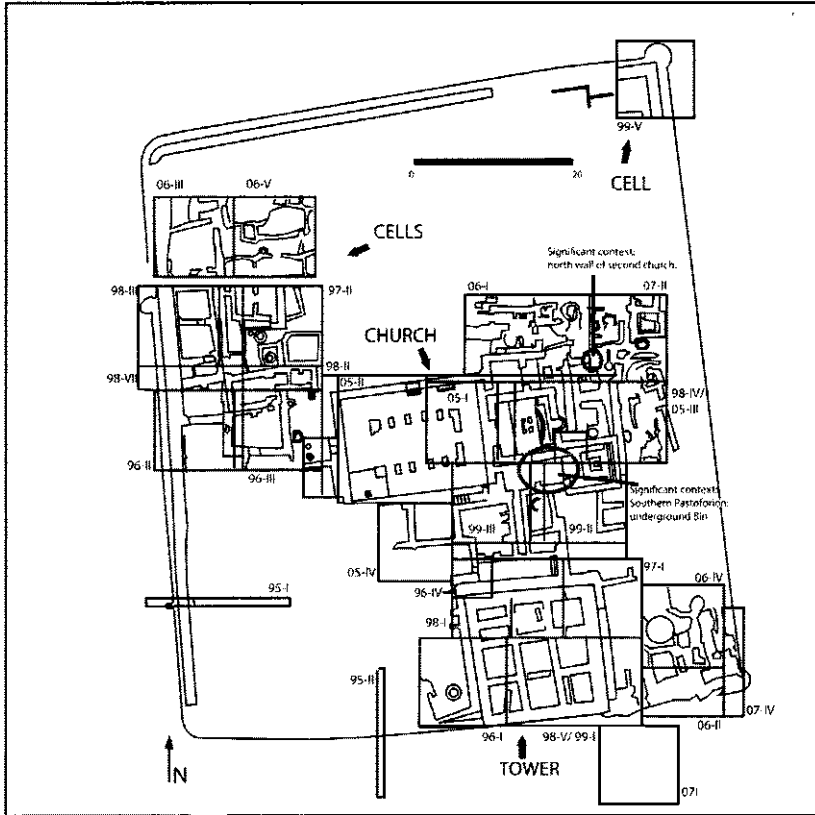


Fig. 9.1: Plan of the Old Monastery of Baramūs

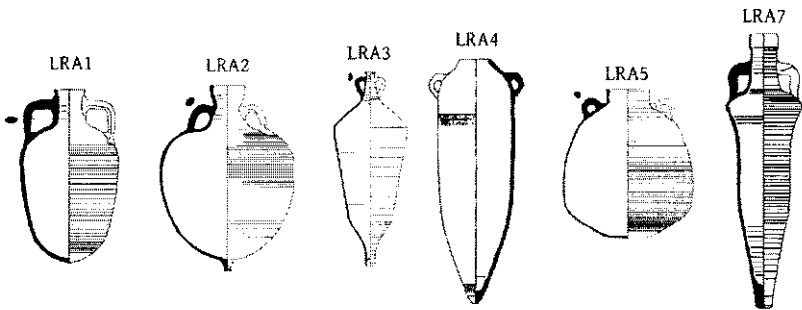


Fig. 9.2: Late Roman Amphorae

as the main object of this brief inquiry. The archaeological fieldwork has brought to light a twin monastic compound (Fig. 9.1) and there is reason to believe that the site in question can be identified with the old monastery of Baramūs.⁸ According to the hagiographical tradition, this is the earliest settlement in the desert of Sketis, founded in the late fourth century (c. 384-385) by Abba Macarius the Egyptian.⁹ It is related to the “two young strangers” who arrived in Sketis to visit Abba Macarius and become his followers.¹⁰ The information drawn from the study of the ceramic assemblage discovered in the old Baramūs monastery (hereafter “Old Baramūs”) is cross-examined with pottery finds collected during a survey carried out in the surrounds of the monastery of Saint Macarius¹¹ and some interesting amphora types kept in a glass display case in the same monastery.

9.2 The Pottery

9.2.1 General Considerations

It is worth citing here some information about the classes and types to be discussed. A general classification of the wares is often based on their function; thus, they are divided into table wares, cooking wares, other utilitarian wares, transport amphorae and miscellaneous vessels (including lamps, censers, lids and re-used objects). In one way or another all categories may reflect continuities and discontinuities in technological and morphological aspects, but it seems that some of them are more sensitive to changes, especially the group of table wares referred to as red slip wares and the transport amphorae.

in: Innemée, Karel C. “Deir al-Baramus, Excavations at the so-called site of Moses the Black. 1994-1999,” *BSAC* 39 (2000), 123-35; *idem*, “Excavations at the site of Deir al-Baramus 2002-2005,” *BSAC* 44 (2005), 55-68.

⁸ Grossmann, Peter. “Zur Identifizierung des Dair al-Baramūs im Wadi Natrun,” *BSAC* 32 (1993), 85-88; Gabra, Gawdat. “Dair Anba Musa al-Aswad,” *BSAC* 36 (1997), 71-74.

⁹ Toda, Satoshi. *Vie de Saint Macaire l'Égyptien. Édition et Traduction des Textes Copte et Syriaque*. Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 31. New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2012.

¹⁰ “Apothegmata Patrum”. Ed. J-P. Migne. *PG* 65 (Paris, 1864), col. 76-440 Macarius Aegyptius, 33.

¹¹ The director was Dr. Karel C. Innemée of Leiden University.

Red slip wares were the fine table wares par excellence in late Roman times.¹² These wares, which seem to continue a long tradition that goes back to Hellenistic times, owe their name to the substantial glossy or matt red slip applied on their surfaces. They are the descendants of the Roman red-gloss wares and their finest variants, known as terra sigillata, a term that can be translated as “stamped earth”.¹³ The Tunisian territory (Roman Africa Proconsularis/Byzacena and adjoining regions) is recognised as the most prominent pottery manufacturing area of the Roman Mediterranean. The so-called “African Red Slip Wares” wares produced in the region were widely dispersed in the Mediterranean from the end of the first until the seventh century. From the fourth century, two other major red slip table wares were produced in the Eastern Mediterranean, chiefly in the regions of Asia Minor and presumably on Cyprus: the Phocaeian red slip ware¹⁴ and the Late Roman D ware.¹⁵ Finally, one should not ignore the local productions, such as those developed in Egypt (Aswan red slip and white slip wares¹⁶ and Nile fabric red slip

¹² By the term “late Roman” we mean here the period from the fourth to the seventh century.

¹³ *Terra sigillata* derives from the Latin term “sigillatus”; that is, the one that is decorated with “sigilla”, stamped or relief/appliqué motifs: Glare, Peter G. W., ed. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, 1757.

¹⁴ Hayes John W. *Late Roman Pottery*. London: The British School at Rome, 1972, 323-70; *idem*. *A Supplement to Late Roman Pottery*. London: The British School at Rome, 1980, 525-27.

¹⁵ Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, 371-86. The discussion concerning the origins and nomenclature of this ware has been rekindled for several reasons: see Poblome, Jeroen, and Firat Nalan. “Late Roman D. A Matter of Open(ing) or Closed Horizons?” in Michel Bonifay *et al.*, eds., *LRFW 1. Late Roman Fine Wares. Solving Problems of Typology and Chronology. A Review of the Evidence, Debate and New Contexts*. Roman and Late Antique Mediterranean Pottery 1. London: Archaeopress, 2011, 49-55; Jackson, Mark, *et al.*, “Primary Evidence for Late Roman D Ware Production in southern Asia Minor: a Challenge to ‘Cypriot Red Slip Ware’”, *Anatolian Studies* 62 (2012), 89-114.

¹⁶ Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, 387-97, Figs. 85-87, Egyptian red slip ‘A’; *idem*, *Supplement*, 531-32, Coptic red slip ware and Egyptian red ‘A’ ware with cream yellow slip; Rodziewicz, Mieczysław. *Alexandrie I. La céramique romaine tardive d’Alexandrie*. Warsaw: Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1976, 54-60, Figs. 23-31, ‘Group O’; *ibid.*, 61-62, Pls. 32-33, ‘Group W’; Adams, Williams Y. *Ceramic Industries of Medieval Nubia*. 2 vols. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986, II. 525-60, Family A; Kubiak, Władysław. “Roman-type Pottery in Medieval Egypt,” in Włodzimierz Godlewski, ed., *Coptic and Nubian Pottery*. Parts 1-2. International Workshop, Nieborów (August 29-31, 1988). Occasional Paper, National Museum in Warsaw n°1 (Warsaw: Muzeum narodowe, Zakład archeologii śródziemnomorskiej, PAN, 1990), 71-82; Bailey, Donald M. *British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt. Excavations at El-Ashmunein V. Pottery, Lamps and Glass of the Late Roman and Early Arab Peri-*

wares¹⁷), Jordan (Jerash bowls¹⁸), Asia Minor (Sagalassos red slip ware¹⁹) and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, a series of late Roman amphora types²⁰ (Fig. 9.2), which were largely diffused in the Mediterranean, were manufactured in various centres to carry wine, oil, fish sauce, grains, seeds and other products, many of which are mentioned in papyri. Some of them existed since the first century and remained in circulation even until the eighth century or later.²¹ Others were introduced in the first century, but did not survive longer than the seventh,²² while others first appeared in the fourth and continued in existence until the seventh century²³ or later.²⁴ It

ods. London: British Museum Press, 1998, 8-38, Aswān red slip ware and Aswān fine ware.

¹⁷ Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, 397-99, Fig. 88, Egyptian red slip 'B'; Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie I*, 50-53, Figs. 17-22, 'Group K'.

¹⁸ Watson, Pamela. "Jerash Bowls. Study of a Provincial Group of Byzantine Decorated Fine Ware," *Syria* 66 (1989), 223-61.

¹⁹ Poblome, Jeroen. *Sagalassos Red Slip Ware. Typology and Chronology*. Studies in Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology 2. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999.

²⁰ Owing their classification and widely accepted terminology to John Riley: see Riley, John A. "The Coarse Pottery from Berenice," in John A. Lloyd, ed., *Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi (Berenice)*. Supplement to *Libya Antiqua* 5, vol. 2 (Tripoli: Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Teaching and Education, 1979), 91-467, and *idem*, "The Pottery from the Cisterns 1977.1, 1977.2, 1977.3," in John H. Humphrey, ed., *Excavations at Carthage 1977 Conducted by the University of Michigan*, vol. 6 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 85-124.

²¹ Such as the Palestinian bag-shaped amphorae, also known as Late Roman 5: Riley, "The Coarse Pottery from Berenice"; Pieri, Dominique. *Le commerce du vin oriental à l'époque Byzantine Ve - VIIe siècles. Le témoignage des amphores en Gaule*. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 174. Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2005, 114-27.

²² Such as the spindle-shaped amphorae known as Late Roman 3, and their later evolution, known as Late Roman 10; Riley, "The Coarse Pottery from Berenice"; Pieri, *Le commerce*, 95-97.

²³ Such as the amphorae known as Late Roman 1: Riley, "The Coarse Pottery from Berenice"; Pieri, *Le commerce*, 69-85.

²⁴ Striking examples of this long survival of types are the Egyptian amphorae, known as Late Roman 7 (according to Riley, "The Coarse Pottery from Berenice") or Egyptian Amphorae 7 (according to Dixneuf, Delphine. *Amphores égyptiennes. Productions, typologie, contenu et diffusion (III^e siècle avant J.-C. - IX^e siècle après J.-C.)*. Études Alexandrines 22. Alexandria: Centre d'Études Alexandrines, 2011, 154-73) and the bag-shaped Egyptian Amphorae 5, especially those produced in the site of Kūm Abū Billū, in the Delta (Ballet, Pascale. "Un atelier d'amphores LRA 5/6 à Kōm Abou Billou (Égypte)," *Chronique d'Égypte* 69/138 (1994), 353-65; *idem*. "Un atelier d'amphores LRA 5/6 à pâte alluviale dans le Delta occidental (Kōm Abou Billou/Terenouthis)," in Sylvie Marchand and Antigone Marangou, eds., *Amphores d'Égypte de la basse époque*

is therefore obvious that amphorae are typologically sensitive to changes that various historical conditions may bring.

9.2.2 The Old Baramūs Assemblage: A Quantitative Approach

Tracing elements of continuity and change in ceramic types necessitates chronological study of their development. Focusing on the period from the fifth to the ninth century, the situation in Old Baramūs may be sketched as follows. The very first centuries of the site's occupation are marked by the striking presence of non-Egyptian wares, which in fact seem to be more numerous than those produced in Egypt. In the late fourth and early fifth century, most of the red slip table wares arrived from Africa, the dishes with a two-part flaring rim being the most commonly occurring form (Fig. 9.3).²⁵ However, African amphorae are not as numerous as one might think, since it is a container produced in various sites located in the Gulf of Alexandretta and Cyprus, the Late Roman Amphora 1 (Fig. 9.4),²⁶ and it is its content, probably olive oil, that was imported.

In the sixth century Egyptian products gain ground, although there are still some Mediterranean wares that exceed them. The prevalence of African red slip wares is now replaced by the Late Roman D²⁷/ wares (Fig. 9.5). As for amphorae, the Late Roman 1 jars are still the majority, while the significant appearance of the "bag-shaped" Egyptian Amphorae 5²⁸ for the first time prefigures the future popularity of that form. Inter-

à l'époque arabe. CCE 8/1 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2007), 157-160; Dixneuf, *Amphores égyptiennes*, 145), which persisted until the tenth/eleventh centuries or even later, until the twelfth century (Mouny, Sandrine. "Note préliminaire sur les amphores et première approche typologique et morphologique des conteneurs trouvés sur la forteresse de Qal'at al-Guindi (Sadr, Sinaï central)," in Sylvie Marchand and Antigone Marangou, eds., *Amphores d'Égypte de la Basse Époque à l'époque arabe. CCE 8/2* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2007), 627-633).

²⁵ Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, 112-16, Fig 19, form 67.

²⁶ Riley, "The Coarse Pottery from Berenice"; Pieri, *Le commerce*, 69-85, Pl. 1-22.

²⁷ Especially the series of dishes that Hayes (in *Late Roman Pottery*, 373-76, Fig. 80) generally classified as form 2, and which Meyza further elaborated in his study (see Meyza, Henryk. *Nea Paphos V. Cypriot Red Slip Ware. Studies on a Late Roman Levantine Fine Ware*. Warsaw: Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences; Centre Kazimierz Michałowski d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Université de Varsovie, 2007).

²⁸ Egloff, Michel. *Kellia III. La poterie copte. Quatre siècles d'artisanat et d'échanges en Basse-Égypte*. Geneva: Georg, Librairie de l'Université, 1977, 117-18, types 186-

5TH CENTURY

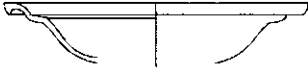


Fig. 9.3: African RSW found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs: dishes with two-part flaring rim

7TH CENTURY



Fig. 9.7: Aswan RSW found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

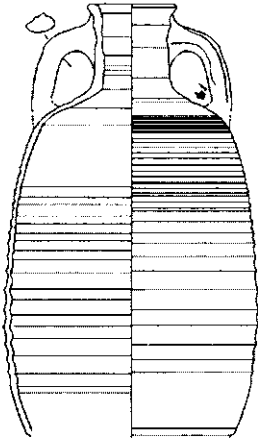


Fig. 9.4: LRA 1 found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

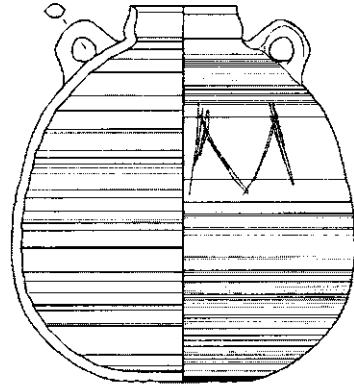


Fig. 9.8: Nile fabric Egyptian Amphora 5 (*bag-shaped*) found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

6TH CENTURY



Fig. 9.5: 'Cyriot' RSW/Late Roman 'D' found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

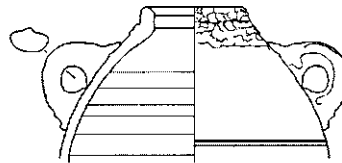


Fig. 9.9: LRA 4 found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs



Fig. 9.6: Phocaean RSW found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs



estingly, the sixth century is marked by the occasional presence of classes and types that did not exist previously and that do not appear again in the future. In this respect, this is the only period where we see the sporadic occurrence of Phocaeen red slip dishes with a thickened rim that forms a concave outer face (Fig. 9.6),²⁹ as well as some Aegean amphora types, such as Late Roman 2³⁰ and 3.³¹

Profound changes are manifested in the seventh century, with the eventual preponderance of Egyptian ceramics against those imported from overseas. Aswan red and white slip wares, especially knobbed-rim bowls and dishes (Fig. 9.7) and the bag-shaped Egyptian Amphorae 5 (Fig. 9.8), surpass the once prevailing non-Egyptian types. Further alterations concern the ratios of non-Egyptian wares, especially amphorae. Late Roman 1 used to be the leading type, but now it is overshadowed by the

Palestinian late Roman 4 (Fig. 9.9).³² In addition, some African amphorae³³ are present, their number surpassing that of the African red slip wares.

The changes that came about in the seventh century were completed and crystallised in the eighth and ninth centuries. Apart from a very restricted number of amphorae from Palestine, all the ceramics are of Egyptian manufacture. Most of the table wares are red and white slip wares made of Aswan fabric. At the same time, some early glazed bowls³⁴

190; Engemann, Joseph. "À propos des amphores d'Abou Mina," *CCE* 3 (1992), 153-59; Ballet, Pascale, "Kôm Abou Billou," 353-65; *idem*, "Un atelier," 157-60; Dixneuf, *Amphores égyptiennes*, 142-53. See also Pieri, *Le commerce*, 114-27.

²⁹ Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, 329-38, Fig. 69, form 3F.

³⁰ Pieri, *Le commerce*, 86-93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 94-101.

³² Majcherek, Grzegorz. "Gazan amphorae. Typology reconsidered," in Henryk Meyza and Jolanta Młynarczyk, eds., *Hellenistic and Roman Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean. Advances in Scientific Studies. Acts of the 2nd Nieborów Pottery Workshop* (Warsaw: Muzeum narodowe, Zakład archeologii śródziemnomorskiej, PAN, 1995), 163-78; Pieri, *Le commerce*, 101-14.

³³ Key, Simon J. *Late Roman Amphorae in the Western Mediterranean. A Typology and Economic Study. The Catalan Evidence*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, International Series 196, 1984, types 61-62; Bonifay, Michel. *Études sur la céramique romaine tardive d'Afrique*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, International Series 1301, 2004, types 46-49, 140, Figs. 74-75.

³⁴ Rodziewicz, Mieczysław. "La céramique émaillée copte de Kôm el-Dikka," *Études et Travaux* 20 (1978), 338-45; *idem*, "Egyptian Glazed Pottery of the Eighth to Ninth Centuries," *BSAC* 25 (1983), 73-75; Scanlon, George T. "Moulded Early Lead Glazed

8TH-9TH CENTURIES

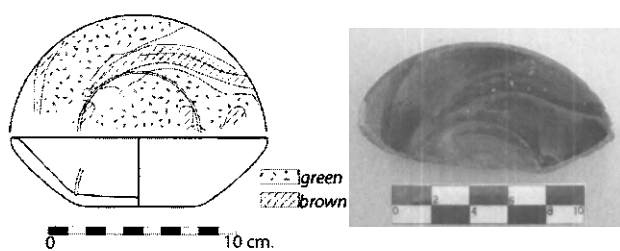


Fig. 9.10: Early glazed bowl found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

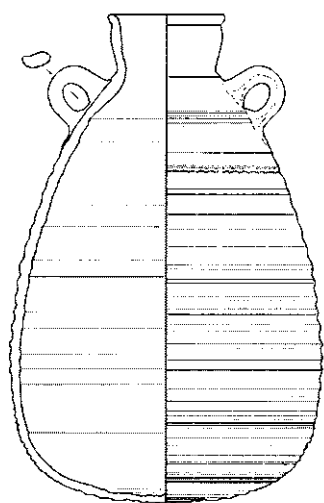


Fig. 9.11: Nile fabric Egyptian Amphora 5 (bag-shaped) found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs



Fig. 9.12: Frying pan found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

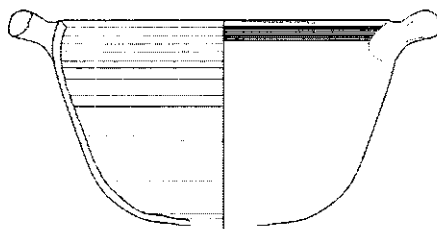


Fig. 9.13: Hemispherical casserole found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

0 10 cm.

(Fig. 9.10) appear, many of them also made of Aswan fabric. The Nile fabric bag-shaped Egyptian Amphorae 5 (Fig. 9.11) are far more numerous than any other type found in these centuries. Finally, among the cooking wares that now appear more abundant, the frying pans with knobbed rim and carinated body (Fig. 9.12),³⁵ the hemispherical casseroles with horizontal handles³⁶ and their lids³⁷ (Fig. 9.13) are the most common types.

The above scheme clearly shows how, during the first three centuries of its existence,³⁸ Old Baramūs participated in the Mediterranean networks, probably through Alexandria, “Egypt’s window to the world” and “the world’s biggest emporium”.³⁹ But in the late seventh century a number of incidents caused a sharp fall in interregional exchange in the Mediterranean, which subsequently marked the collapse of the major pottery production centres.⁴⁰ These new conditions that affected the Mediterranean world certainly had an impact on Egypt, and inevitably Old Baramūs could not remain unaffected. After the Arab conquest (641), and especially during the reign of the Umayyad dynasty (661 – 750),

Wares from Fustat. Imported or Indigeneous?” in Arnold H. Green, ed., *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism. Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of Mohamed al-Nowaihi* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1984), 65-96; *idem*, “Early Lead-Glazed Wares in Egypt. An Imported Wrinkle,” in Samir Seikaly *et al.*, eds., *Quest for Understanding. Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of Malcolm H. Kerr* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1991), 21-53; Gayraud, Roland-Pierre. “La réapparition des céramiques à glaçure en Égypte,” in Bernard Matthieu, *et al.*, eds., *L’apport de l’Égypte à l’histoire des techniques*, Bibliothèque d’étude 142 (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2006), 105-6.

³⁵ Egloff, *Kellia III*, 95-96, types 90-91.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 100-1, types 114-116.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 179, types 347-349.

³⁸ Late fourth to the first half of the seventh century.

³⁹ Haas, *Alexandria*, 33; Majcherek, Gregorz. “Alexandria’s Long Distance Trade in Late Antiquity. The Amphora Evidence,” in Jonas Eiring and John Lund, eds., *Transport Amphorae in the Eastern Mediterranean. Acts of the International Colloquium at the Danish Institute of Athens* (September 26-29, 2002), Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens (Athens: The Danish Institute at Athens, 2004), 229.

⁴⁰ Wickham, Chris. *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 709; Sodini, Jean-Pierre, and Villeneuve, Estelle. “Le passage de la céramique Byzantine à la céramique Omeyyade en Syrie du nord, en Palestine et en Transjordanie,” in Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais eds., *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam VIIe - VIIIe siècles. Actes du Colloque International, Lyon; Maison de l’Orient Méditerranéen, Paris; Institut du Monde Arabe. 11-15 Septembre 1990* (Damas: Institut Français de Damas), 1992, 211-12.

“Egypt would consume the great part of its surplus inside the region.”⁴¹ This was due to the fact that the different provinces of the caliphate would keep most of the tax revenues for themselves to maintain local Arab armies.⁴² The shift to local resources and production is clearly reflected in the pottery by the gradual predominance of Egyptian ceramic types.

Inertia in Egyptian material culture is often stressed as a phenomenon characterising the Umayyad period. Thus Paul Arthur observed that “the Arabic Umayyad dynasty had guaranteed technological continuity and development from late antiquity in the Levant and in Egypt.”⁴³ Chris Wickham noted that since the last quarter of the seventh century changes in taste were manifested in the Mediterranean world, save Egypt.⁴⁴ He considered that “Egyptian ceramic tastes changed less than those anywhere else in the post-Roman world, without question; and, at least as important, so did the scale of Egyptian productions. In economic terms, this is as close to full continuity across our whole period as we are likely to get.”⁴⁵

9.2.3 Continuity, Transition and Change in Types

The ceramic finds from Old Baramūs and the Monastery of Saint Macarius in Wādī al-Naṭrūn add interesting evidence concerning the above remarks. Numerous wares support the views of Arthur and Wickham, revealing uninterrupted continuity. These are: Aswan red slip, white slip, and white painted wares surviving from the sixth until the tenth century⁴⁶ and later, reaching even the twelfth century,⁴⁷ Nile fabric red slip wares (Fig. 9.14) from the sixth until presumably the ninth century;⁴⁸ cooking wares, such as the carinated frying pansfrying pans, as

⁴¹ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 24.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴³ Arthur, Paul. “Form, Function and Technology in Pottery Production from Late Antiquity to Early Middle Ages,” in Luke Lavan *et al.*, eds., *Technology in Transition A.D. 300-650*. Late Antique Archaeology 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), 173.

⁴⁴ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 717.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 762.

⁴⁶ Vogt, Christine. “Les céramiques Ommeyyades et Abbassides d’Istabl’Antar-Fostat. Traditions Méditerranéennes et influences orientales,” in Gabrielle Démians d’Archimbaud, ed., *La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée. Actes du VI^e congrès de l’AIECM 2 (Aix-en-Provence, 13-18 novembre 1995)* (Aix-en-Provence: Narration, 1997), 243-60.

⁴⁷ Adams, *Ceramic Industries*, 552-53.

⁴⁸ A personal observation, based on the Old Baramūs assemblage.

CONTINUITY

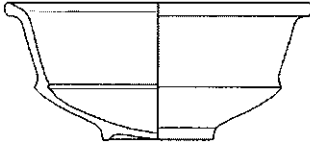


Fig. 9.14: Nile fabric RSW found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

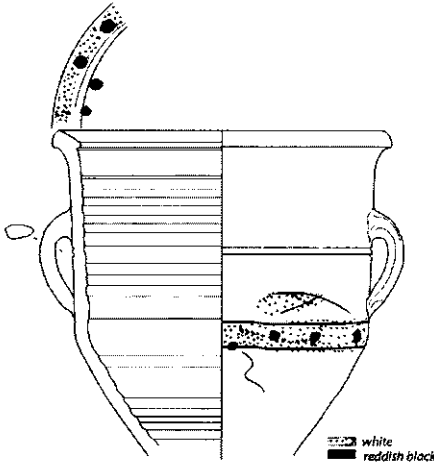


Fig. 9.15: Trough found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

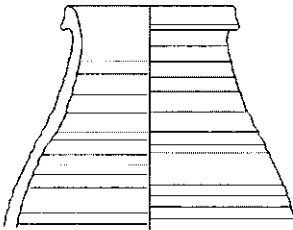


Fig. 9.16: Saqiya-pot found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs

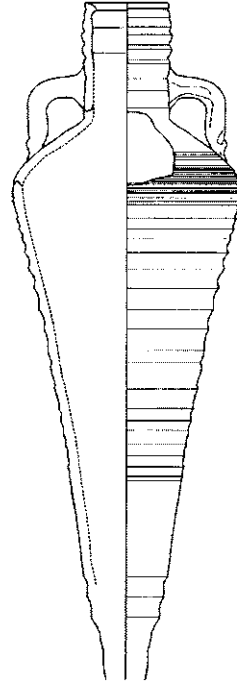


Fig. 9.17: Egyptian Amphora 7 found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs



Fig. 9.18: Wheel-made bowl-lamps found in the Old Monastery of Baramūs



well as the hemispherical casseroles and their lids from the fifth until the ninth/tenth century,⁴⁹ or even later; certain troughs or medium-sized bowls (Fig. 9.15) from the seventh until the ninth/tenth century,⁵⁰ the sāqiya jars (Fig. 9.16) until the modern period;⁵¹ the Egyptian Amphorae 7 (Fig. 9.17)⁵² from the fifth until the tenth/eleventh century;⁵³ the bag-shaped Egyptian Amphorae 5 from the fifth/sixth until the twelfth century;⁵⁴ and wheel-made bowl-lamps (Fig. 9.18) until at least the eighth century.⁵⁵

At first glance, a further manifestation of the persistence of “old” types is a group of Egyptian amphorae (Fig. 9.19) that first appeared in the late seventh century and continued in existence throughout the eighth century,⁵⁶ but not later, according to the evidence published so far. Two of these Egyptian, early Arab amphorae were inspired from two widespread Mediterranean types respectively, the Late Roman Amphorae 1 and 2,⁵⁷ as well as a third one derived from the fusion of two Egyptian amphorae, the late Egyptian 3 (bitroncoconical)⁵⁸ and the Egyptian 7 (carrot shaped). It is as if the Egyptian potters tried to create a group of jars, following certain late Roman prototypes, as soon as the late Roman amphorae series started to wind down. The jars in particular, deriving from the fusion of two different Egyptian types, show that next to the continuation of old types, an effort was made to compose new forms that would incorporate numerous old elements. These vessels stand as important witnesses of early morphological experimentation.

⁴⁹ Vogt, “Les céramiques,” 252-56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁵¹ Menassa, Leila, and Pierre Laferrière. *La saqiya. Technique et vocabulaire de la roue à eau égyptienne*. Bibliothèque d'Étude 67. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1974, 18-23.

⁵² Dixneuf, *Amphores égyptiennes*, 154-73.

⁵³ Vogt, “Les céramiques,” 258-59.

⁵⁴ Mouny, Sandrine. “Note préliminaire”, 627-33.

⁵⁵ Egloff, *Kellia III*, 162.

⁵⁶ The only known complete examples of these types are kept in a glass display case in the monastery of Saint Macarius.

⁵⁷ Dixneuf (*Amphores égyptiennes*, 174-79) grouped these two types under the term Egyptian Amphorae 8 and discerned two main variants. Her Egyptian Amphorae 8.1 correspond to the Late Roman Amphora 2 derivatives, while her Egyptian Amphorae 8.2 corresponds to the Late Roman 1 derivatives.

⁵⁸ Dixneuf, *Amphores égyptiennes*, “AE 3T,” 138-42.

INNOVATION

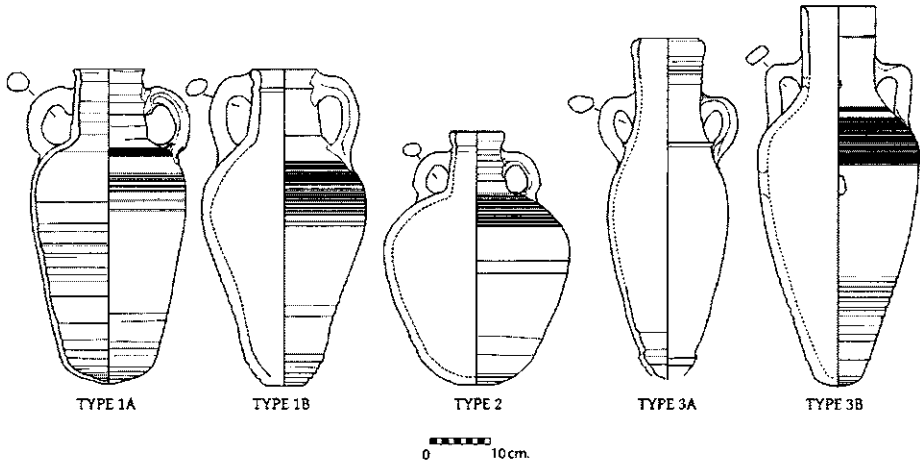


Fig. 9.19: Egyptian Early Arab amphorae

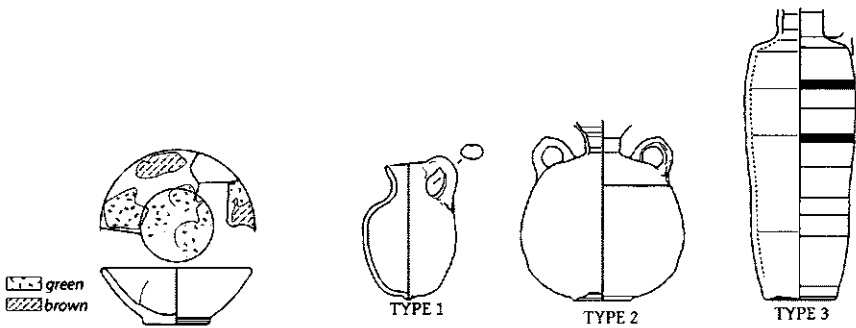


Fig. 9.20: "Fayyūmī" bowl found in Old Monastery of Baramūs

Fig. 9.21: Flagons produced in the environs of the Monastery of Saint Macarius



In Egypt, the actual innovation in ceramic technology came with the (re-)apparition of glazed table wares around or shortly after 800.⁵⁹ Glazed objects were initially produced by workshops and potters that were well trained in the manufacture of red slip wares.⁶⁰ This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the first glazed ceramics in Egypt were made of the Aswan fabric, while the repertory of forms included vessels that existed in the red slip tradition as well. Furthermore, a transparent glaze would often cover the surface of red or white slip wares. A major production centre of such Aswan fabric glazed ceramics was Fustāṭ, as indicated by the strong presence of “biscuits”, that is, ceramics that have been fired once and then discarded before the application of glaze.⁶¹ George Scanlon noted that the re-appearance of glazing in Egypt came about as a response to glazed imported vessels, which were manufactured in areas of the Middle East (Iraq and Iran) and Far East (China) that had never lost their glazing traditions.⁶² The category known as “Fayyūmī” ware (Fig. 9.20)⁶³ supports the above remark as it follows and reflects a common tradition of polychrome glazed wares. In the sites of Wādī al-Naṭrūn that we have examined, monochrome and polychrome glazed wares have been unearthed, showing that they were not cut-off from the new ninth-century trends.

Not much is known about Egyptian pottery production in the ninth century. So far, only the excavations in Fustāṭ have released a ninth cen-

⁵⁹ “Glaze is a glassy coating melted onto the surface of a ceramic article, applied as a liquid suspension to a ware that has usually been fired once (biscuit) and is subsequently refired (glost)”: Rice, Prudence. *Pottery Analysis. A Sourcebook*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 476.

⁶⁰ Rodziewicz, “La céramique émaillée,” 338.

⁶¹ Rice, *Pottery Analysis*, 473.

⁶² Scanlon, “Early Lead-Glazed Wares,” 256.

⁶³ Ballet, P., “Céramique tardive des Kellia et présence islamique,” in Philippe Bridel, ed., *Le site monastique copte des Kellia. Sources historiques et explorations archéologiques, Actes du colloque de Genève (13-15 août 1984)* (Geneva: Mission suisse d’archéologie copte de l’Université de Genève, 1986), 303; Engemann, Joseph. “Early Islamic Pottery of the Eighth Century A.D. from the Excavations at Abu Mina,” in Włodzimierz Godlewski, ed., *Coptic and Nubian Pottery. Parts 1-2*. International Workshop, Nieborów (August 29-31, 1988). Occasional Paper, National Museum in Warsaw n°1 (Warsaw: Muzeum narodowe, Zakład archeologii śródziemnomorskiej, PAN, 1990), 63-70; Bailey, *Ashmunein V*, 113; François, Veronique. *Céramiques médiévales à Alexandrie. Contribution à l’histoire économique de la ville. Études alexandrines 2*. Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1999, 22.

tury pottery kiln and its waster.⁶⁴ To this evidence, one should now add a waster situated outside the monastery of Saint Macarius, where three different types of flagons (Fig. 9.21) were discarded.⁶⁵ Their dating to the ninth century is inferred from the fact that they were found next to sherds of early glazed wares.⁶⁶ Furthermore, such flagons are mainly found in ninth-century layers on the site of Old Baramūs. The kiln site itself has not been located, but it must have functioned as part of wider industrial activity developed on the site. This assumption is based on the fact that a number of other kilns were mapped during the survey, but further research is necessary. According to the History of the Patriarchs, during the Patriarchate of Joseph (830-849), Sinuthius, the active oeconomus of the Saint Macarius monastery, “raised monuments in honour of Saint Macarius, vineyards and gardens and cattle and mills and oil presses, and many useful things that cannot be numbered.”⁶⁷ It is very tempting to suppose that some of the kilns lying in the environs of Saint Macarius’ monastery were among those “useful things”, but this would require further investigation, since the History of the Patriarchs is not one of the most reliable texts.⁶⁸

The newly discovered production place at Wādī al-Naṭrūn is an appropriate place to close because it shows that there are still things to be learnt regarding pottery production in Egypt during early Arab times. Even if the evidence from our two monasteries does not preclude the aforementioned inertia in the material culture, it is obvious that some

⁶⁴ Gayraud Roland-Pierre *et al.* “Assemblages de céramiques égyptiennes et témoins de production, datés par les fouilles d’Istabl Antar (IXe - Xe s.),” in Juan Zozaya *et al.*, eds., *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Cerámica Medieval en el Mediterráneo*. Vol.1 (Ciudad Real, Almagro: Asociación Española de Arqueología Medieval, 2009), 171-92, Figs. 2.1-2.3.

⁶⁵ Konstantinidou, Alexandra. “A Group of 9th-century Ceramic Vessels Produced in the Monastery of Saint Macarius (Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Egypt),” in Vassiliki Foskolou and Platon Petridis, eds., *ΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑ. Studies in Honour of Professor Mary Panayotidi*. Athens (in press).

⁶⁶ Among these sherds are a ninth-century glazed polychrome “Fayyūmi” bowl. For an exact parallel, see Bailey D. M., “Islamic Glazed Pottery from Ashmunein. A Preliminary Note,” *CCE* 2 (1991), 206, no.1, Fig. 1; *idem*, *Ashmunein V*, 113, Pls. 74, 103, 109.

⁶⁷ Evetts, Basil T. A. “History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria,” *PO* 10 (1910), 538.

⁶⁸ On this text see Den Heijer, Johannes. “Coptic Historiography in the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and Early Mamlūk Periods,” *Medieval Encounters* 2/1 (1996), 70. See also: Van der Vliet, Jacques, “The Copts. ‘Modern Sons of the Pharaohs?’” *CHRC* 89 (2009), 279-90.

efforts to create new types were made. These efforts would bear fruit in the tenth century after a long process, in the course of which several late antique and Mediterranean elements were skilfully incorporated into the evolving norms. It is very tempting to conclude that this happened as part of the complex processes of Arabisation and “orientalisation” of the people and culture of Egypt that occurred in the wake of Abbasid revolution.

9.3 Conclusions

The ceramics found in the monasteries of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, especially the rare and the unknown types discovered in the monastery of Saint Macarius, shed light on the way that certain historical conditions may reflect material culture. The studied assemblages incorporate all the Egyptian types that survived from late Roman until early Arab times, and they prove that continuity in technology and shapes was a reality. Next to these forms, however, some transitional types emerged already in the late seventh century. Even if these transitional types reproduced late Roman models, they seem to serve as a base for the changes to come. Eventually, the ninth century would bring about more definite developments in technology and taste, marking the orientation towards new and exotic styles of pottery, an orientation which meant the acceptance of new cultural attitudes by the artisans.⁶⁹ It seems reasonable to connect these two developments with the changes in material culture that accompanied the building program inaugurated by the caliphs ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705) and Walid (705-715) and the huge expansion of state power and patronage by the Abbasids in the late eighth/early ninth century. However, the specific ways in which these developments occurred and their link to elite activities still requires further investigation.

⁶⁹ Walmsley, Alan. “Production, Exchange and Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean. Old Structures, New Systems?” in Inge L. Hansen and Chris Wickham, eds., *The Long Eighth Century. Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000), 329-30.

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Paris Syr. 341 and its Illustrations

Maja Kominko
(Arcadia Fund, London)

The crystallisation of the East Syrian (Dyophysite) and West Syrian (Miaphysite) identities in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, amply attested to in Syriac religious literature and canons of law, inevitably resulted in growing boundaries between these two communities.¹ What follows is a very preliminary attempt at exploring whether this process is in any way reflected in contemporary art using as a test case a late antique illustrated Syriac Bible. The question will be posed whether it is possible – through analysis of its text, liturgical apparatus and illustrations – to attribute this codex to either the West or the East Syrian milieu.

¹ Reinink, Gerrit J. "Tradition and the Formation of the 'Nestorian' Identity in Sixth- to Seventh-Century Iraq," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89.1:3 (2009), 217-50; Taylor, David G.K. "The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Salah and the Formation of Sixth-Century Syrian Orthodox Identity," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89.1:3 (2009), 65-67; Morony, Michael G. "History and Identity in the Syrian Churches," in J.J. van Ginkel, H.L. Murre-van den Berg and T.M. van Lint, eds., *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East Since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 1-33; Morony, Michael G. *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 114-15. The formation and evolution of Western Syrian identity has been explored in an interdisciplinary project at Leiden University, see Ter Haar Romeny, Bas, et al. "The Formation of a Communal Identity Among West Syrian Christians. Results and Conclusions of the Leiden Project," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89.1:3 (2009), 1-52. Initially the West Syrian Miaphysites were found primarily within the borders of the Byzantine Empire, and the East Syrian Dyophysites predominantly in the Sasanian territory, but from the sixth century Miaphysites gradually infiltrated to the East. At the end of the Byzantine war with Persia in 629 they established formal ties with the Miaphysite Church in the West (Morony, *Iraq*, 124-25). Already in 585 marriages between Eastern and Western Syrians were forbidden (*ibid.*, 116; Chabot, Jean Baptiste, ed. *Synodicon orientale, ou, recueil de synodes nestoriens*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902, 102, 158, 360 and 418.

10.1 Codex Paris Syr. 341

The codex Paris Syr. 341 is a Peshitta Bible of the Old and New Testament, though the latter part is now almost entirely lost.² The manuscript was intended to be read out in public, as is attested by titles of liturgical readings written out in red ink in the column of text. Most of these titles were deliberately erased at a later date.³ The codex underwent several revisions by a series of later hands. The most recent of these date to the time of the fourteenth-century conservation, when missing pages were substituted by paper folios written in an East Syrian hand emulating the presentation of the original.⁴ The fourteenth-century conservation affected miniatures only in the effort to protect those placed on damaged folios. Of the twenty-seven illustrations in the codex, each marking the beginning of a Biblical book, seven are pasted onto paper pages inserted in the fourteenth century. The pictures at the beginning of *Genesis*, *Leviticus*, *Isaiah*, *Amos*, *Malachi*, *Psalms*, *Esther*, and all the books of the New Testament, with the exception of the *Epistle of James*, must have been lost before this conservation and no effort was made to replace them.

² Codex ca. 31x23cm consists of 246 folios, written in estrangelo, in three columns of 58 to 60 lines.

³ The readings that remain visible are extensively discussed by Jenner, Konrad D. *De perikopentitels van de geïllustreerde Syrische kanselbijbel van Parijs (MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Syriacque 341)*. Leiden: Universitaire Drukkerij, 1993).

⁴ All designated as 8a1 in the Leiden Peshitta. On the dating of the corrections to the ninth to twelfth centuries, see Jenner, Konrad D. "Introductory Remarks Concerning the Study of 8a1," in P.B. Dirksen and M.J. Mulder, eds., *The Peshitta. Its Early Text and History. Papers Read at the Peshitta Symposium held in Leiden, 30-31 August, 1985* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 206. On the renovation see Lane, David J. "A Turtle Dove or Two Young Priests. A Note on the Peshitta Text of Leviticus," in F. Graffin and A. Guillaumont, eds., *Symposium Syriacum, 1976*. (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1978), 126; Troupeau, Gérard. "Note sur les manuscrits de Séert conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris," in *École des langues orientales anciennes de l'Institut catholique de Paris. Mémorial du cinquantenaire, 1916-1964* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1964), 208; Sörries, Reiner. *Die Syrische Bibel von Paris. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, syr. 341. Eine frühchristliche Bilderhandschrift aus dem 6. Jahrhundert*. Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1991, 23; Leroy, Jules. *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient. Contribution à l'étude de l'iconographie des églises de langue syriaque*. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1964, 213; Omont, Henri. "Peintures de l'Ancien Testament dans un manuscrit syriaque de VIIe ou XVIIIe siècle," *Monuments et mémoires publiés par l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 17 (1909), 87.

The codex, brought to Paris in 1909 by Addaï Scher, is probably identical with the one he described in the catalogue of the episcopal library in Seert in Northern Mesopotamia.⁵ An Arabic note on fol. 54v, dated on palaeographical grounds to the twelfth or thirteenth century, states that the manuscript then belonged to the Monastery of Baquqa.⁶ Its earlier history is unknown. Although on palaeographical grounds it has sometimes been dated to the seventh or eighth century,⁷ the majority of scholars place it in the late sixth or early seventh.⁸ There seems to be a

⁵ Scher, Addaï. *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan)*. Mossoul: Impr. Des Pères Dominicains, 1905, 5, no. 2. There are discrepancies between Scher's description and Paris Syr. 341 (the size 31cm on 33 cm; the number of miniatures: 28 instead of 23), but Scher was not given to precision, as is obvious from his account of Paris Syr. 355 (see Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques*, 212 and 268 n.1). Codex 2 from Seert and Paris Syr. 341 are listed separately in Buchthal, Hugo and Otto Kurtz. *A Hand List of Illuminated Oriental Christian Manuscripts*. London: The Warburg Institute, 1942, 21ff, nos. 65 and 60, but there is consensus that they should be identified: Vosté, Jacques-Marie. "Sur les titres des Psaumes dans la Pešitta surtout d'après la recension orientale," *Biblica* 25 (1944), 345-51; Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques*, 212, n.3; Troupeau, "Note sur les manuscrits de Séert," 207-8; van Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd. "The Monastery of Bâquqâ in Iraq and an Old Owner's Entry in Ms Syr. 341 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris," *Vetus Testamentum* 36.2 (1986), 238; Jenner, "Introductory Remarks," 201; Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 9-10.

⁶ It was probably transferred to Seert in the sixteenth century, when the Baquqa Monastery declined and the importance of Seert grew. The formation of a library of ancient Syriac manuscripts in Seert may explain why Mar Elia, archbishop of Seert, had more than 200 Syriac manuscripts bound in 1609: Scher, *Catalogue*, 3; van Koningsveld, "The Monastery of Bâquqâ," 237-38.

⁷ Omont, "Peintures de l'Ancien Testament," 85-87; Wulff, Oskar. *Altchristliche und byzantinische Kunst*. Berlin: Akad. Verl.-Ges. Athenaion, 1914, 292; Briquel-Chatonnet, "Note sur l'origine," 119-20; Der Nersessian, Sirarpie. "The Date of the Initial Miniatures of the Etchmiadzin Gospel," *The Art Bulletin* 15.4 (1933), 328.

⁸ Nordenfalk, Carl. *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln*. Göteborg: Isacson, 1938, 257; Monneret de Villard, Ugo. "Note sulle piu antiche miniature abissine," *Orientalia* 8 (1939), 8; Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques*, 212; Hawkins, Ernest J. W., Maria C. Mundell and Cyril. A. Mango. "The Mosaics of the Monastery of Mār Samuel, Mār Simeon, and Mār Gabriel, near Kartmin. With A Note on the Greek Inscription," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), 285; Weitzmann, Kurt. *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*. New York: G. Braziller, 1977, 110; Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 10; Lowden, John. "The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration," in J. Williams, ed., *Imagining the Early Medieval Bible* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 37; Brock, Sebastian P. and David G.K. Taylor, eds. *The Hidden Pearl. The Syrian Orthodox Church and Its Ancient Aramaic Heritage*. Rome: Trans World Film Italia, 2000, 232; Papadaki-Oekland, Stella. *Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*

consensus that the manuscript was made in Northern Mesopotamia, yet two of the suggestions of a more specific attribution to Seert or Baquqa can probably be discounted. The first thesis, largely based on the fact that this is where the codex was kept before its arrival in Paris, neglects the Arabic note attesting to the ownership of Baquqa.⁹ The latter suggestion seems dubious, considering that Baquqa, or Beth Quqa (the Monastery of Rabban Mar Sabar Yeshua), in the region of Adiabene, founded only in the first half of the seventh century, was not likely to have had a scriptorium with a miniaturist at the time when Paris Syr. 341 was made.¹⁰ The third hypothetical attribution, to Nisibis, seems more plausible, but cannot be conclusively verified.¹¹

10.2 The confessional attribution of Paris Syr. 341: text and liturgy

In the past the text of Paris Syr. 341 (8a1 in the Leiden Peshitta edition) was sometimes identified as representing the West Syrian tradition.¹² Nevertheless, the notion that the manuscripts of the Peshitta Old Testament can be divided into two families, corresponding to the confessional

of the Book of Job. A Preliminary Study of the Miniature Illustrations, Its Origin and Development. Athens: Astrid-Zoé Økland; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, 314.

⁹ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 10. Arguing for the upper Mesopotamian origin of the codex on the grounds of similarity with the Rabbula Gospels, “whose origin is indeed secured in Zagba,” Sörries fails to note that the precise location of Beth Zagba is unknown, but that it has been convincingly argued that it was located in the hinterland of Antioch: Mundell Mango, Marlia. “Where was Beth Zagba?” in C.A. Mango, O. Pritsak and U.M. Pasicznyk, eds., *Okeanos. Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 1983), 405-30; Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques*, 156.

¹⁰ Briquel-Chatonnet, Françoise. “Note sur l’origine du manuscrit syriaque 366 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris,” *Vetus Testamentum* 41.1 (1991), 119-20; Fiey, Jean-Maurice. *Assyrie chrétienne. Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l’Iraq*. Beirut: Impr. Catholique, 1965-8, 130-56.

¹¹ Mundell Mango, Marlia. “The Continuity of the Classical Tradition in the Art and Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia,” in N. Garsoian, T.F. Matthews, R.W. Thomson, eds., *East of Byzantium. Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 126.

¹² Koster, Mannes D. *The Peshitta of Exodus. The Development of its Text in the Course of Fifteen Centuries*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977, 547; Lane, “A Turtle Dove or Two Young Priests.”

criteria of the East and West Syrian Churches, has now been largely abandoned.¹³ Although initially the paradigm of confessional division was still seen as valid in the text of *Psalms*, ultimately this too has been rejected. Indeed, the text of *Psalms* in Paris Syr. 341 is a case in point: it contains as many readings recognized as West Syrian as those identified as East Syrian.¹⁴

While identification of textual readings as specifically Eastern or Western is debatable, one element which, at least in theory, should make the confessional attribution clear is the Psalm headings. In the East Syrian tradition they tend to be uniform and derive from the exegetical works of Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁵ By contrast, the West Syrian Psalm headings are diverse and often composite.¹⁶ In Paris Syr. 341, the Psalm

¹³ Berasategui, Placide. "Les versions de la Bible en usage dans les églises de langue syriaque." *L'Orient Syrien* 1 (1956), 44-65; Metzger, Bruce M. *The Early Versions of the New Testament. Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, 3-98. The notion, introduced by Alfred Rahlf in 1889, has been challenged by Peter Dirksen, who noted that no manuscript evidence attested to efforts to standardize biblical text in the East or West in late antiquity. See Dirksen, Peter B. "East and West, Old and Young, in the Text Tradition of the Old Testament Peshitta," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985), 476-78; Weitzman, Michael P. "The Originality of Unique Readings in Peshitta Ms 9a1," in P.B. Dirksen and M.J. Mulder, eds., *The Peshitta. Its Early Text and History. Papers Read at the First Peshitta Symposium* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 247. Dirksen suggested a division between the "older" and "younger" manuscripts, assigning the text of Paris Syr. 341 (8a1) to the first group. See Dirksen, "East and West," 468-84.

¹⁴ Carbajosa, Ignacio. "The Division Between Western and Eastern Manuscripts in the Peshitta Psalter. An Insurmountable Obstacle for a Critical Edition?" *Aramaic Studies* 6.2 (2008), 148-49, inc. n. 10, 151, 168; van Rooy, Harry F. "The Psalms in Early Syriac Tradition," in P.W. Flint and P.D. Miller *et al.*, eds., *The Book of Psalms. Composition and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 542-46.

¹⁵ Vosté, Jacques-Marie. "Sur les titres des Psaumes dans la Peshitta surtout d'après la recension orientale," *Biblica* 25 (1944), 210-35; Bloemendaal, Willem. *The Headings of the Psalms in the East Syrian Church*. Leiden: Brill, 1960. For the headings of the ten initial Psalms according to the East Syrian manuscript Add 17 110, which is not later than 600, see Wright, William. *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired Since the Year 1838*. London: British Museum, 1870-2, 116-19.

¹⁶ Because of the great diversity of the formulae, in the West Syrian recension, Barnes omitted Psalm headings in the *apparatus criticus* of his edition of Psalms. On the West Syrian recension see Vosté, Jacques-Marie. *Biblia sacra juxta versionem simplicem quae dicitur Peshitta*. Beryti: Typis Typographiae Catholicae, 1951; Taylor, David G.K. "The Psalm Headings in the West Syrian Tradition," in Bas ter Haar Romeny, ed., *The Peshitta. Its Use in Literature and Liturgy. Papers Read at the Third Peshitta Symposium* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 365-78.

headings are minimal, providing only Psalm numbers. Considering the importance of Theodore of Mopsuestia for East Syrians, it may suggest that the manuscript was not produced in the East Syrian milieu, but this argument is far from conclusive.

The indications extrapolated from liturgical elements in the manuscript seem equally confusing. On one hand the codex has been attributed to the East Syrian milieu on the basis of the Nestorian Morning Prayer following *Odes* on fol. 205.¹⁷ At the same time, however, it has been noted that there is hardly any agreement between the liturgical pericopae of Paris Syr. 341 and the other known East Syrian lectionary systems.¹⁸ The great variety and frequent inconsistencies of the formulae used in liturgical entries in the manuscripts suggest heterogeneous origins of the liturgical apparatus in the codex.¹⁹ Consequently, it has been argued that the manuscript was copied from a set of volumes, with each biblical book based on a different single volume exemplar.²⁰ On the other hand,

¹⁷ Schneider, "Introduction to Odes," in *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version IV/6* (Leiden: Peshitta Institute, 1972), 4. See also Leiden University Peshitta Institute, ed. *List of Peshitta Old Testament Manuscripts*. Leiden: Brill, 1961, 37; Jenner, "Introductory Remarks," 206-7; Jenner, *De perikopentitels*, 353-54.

¹⁸ The East Syrian lectionaries fall into two groups, which differ in lessons but not in liturgical calendar: 1) lectionaries of the Upper Monastery of Mosul and of the Monastery of Beth-Abhe. The oldest codex documenting this system is B.L. Add 14 492, dated to 862. On the codex, see Wright, *Catalogue*, 178-79. Because colophons of two manuscripts attribute the authorship of this lectionary system to Mar Ya'qob, the founder of Beth-Abhe, it has been suggested that this system was introduced into the diocese of Nineveh-Mosoul by a famous monk of this monastery, the great liturgical reformer Isoyahb III, Bishop of Nineveh, who transferred the see to Mosoul: Macomber, W.F. "The Chaldean Lectionary System of the Cathedral Church of Kokhe," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 33 (1967), 485-86; Kannookadan, Pauly. *The East Syrian Lectionary. An Historico-Liturgical Study*. Rome: Mar Thoma Yogam, 1991, 12, 23-62. 2) The lectionary of the Church of Kokhe, the cathedral of the Chaldean Patriarchs at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The oldest codex with this lectionary is the eleventh-century century B.L. Ms Add 14 705: Wright, *Catalogue*, 181-82; Macomber, "The Chaldean Lectionary System," 486-88; Kannookadan, *The East Syrian Lectionary*, 18, 65.

¹⁹ The particular biblical books present a great variety of terminology with which the same festival day or commemoration day is referred. See Jenner, *De perikopentitels*, 350-51.

²⁰ Jenner, *De perikopentitels*, 350. Such a thesis reconciles to an extent the views of scholars who see the codex as Nestorian, such as Baars, Willem. "Prayer of Manasseh," in *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, IV/6* (Leiden: Peshitta Institute, 1972), 260, and those who, like Koster, *The Peshitta of Exodus*, 547, n. 48, think it is a Jacobite Bible.

it has also been questioned whether, at the time when the manuscript was produced, the differences between the Eastern and Western Syrian liturgy were sufficient to enable us to tell them apart.²¹ Consequently, another hypothesis is to see codex Paris Syr. 341 as a testimony of a common ground from which later distinct West and East Syrian systems of liturgy developed.²²

Finally, the corrections made to the manuscript in later East Syrian hands do not necessarily imply that the character of the text was changed from West Syrian into East Syrian, as has sometimes been argued.²³ More likely these alterations reflect efforts to bring the manuscript into a standardized medieval version of the text.²⁴ Because we know that many late antique manuscripts changed hands between East and West Syrian communities with very little changes made to the text, Psalm headings included, it seems unlikely that any aspect of the text will allow a secure attribution.²⁵ Likewise, although the script of the codex has been sometimes recognized as Nestorian, the criteria of such identification in early manuscripts have been questioned.²⁶

²¹ Jenner, *De perikopentitels*, 351; Burkitt, Francis Crawford. "The Early Syriac Lectionary System," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 11 (1921-23), 301-38; Kan-nookadan, *The East Syrian Lectionary*, 129-31.

²² Jenner, *De perikopentitels*, 352-53. Another early lectionary potentially documenting such common ground is the fifth or sixth-century Syriac lectionary B.L. Add 14 528, which is dated to the fourth century by Merras, Merja. "The Date of the Earliest Syriac Lectionary Br. M. Add. 14528," in R. Lavenant, ed., *Symposium Syriacum 1996* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1998), 575-85.

²³ Koster, Mrinus D. "A New Introduction to the Peshitta of the Old Testament," *Aramaic Studies* 1.2 (2003), 230, n.31.

²⁴ Jenner, "Introductory Remarks," 209-11.

²⁵ A good example is codex B.L. Add. 17 110 with the Eastern Psalm titles but with a colophon on fol. 76r (fols. 73-76 have been appended to the manuscript at a later stage) attesting that the manuscript was in Western Syrian possession. See Wright, *Catalogue*, 116-19.

²⁶ Jenner, "Introductory Remarks," 200 and 205 for the criticism of this hypothesis. For criticism of the arbitrariness with which the script is often recognized as "Nestorian", see Wright, *Catalogue*, 30. But see also Carbajosa, "Division," 146. For a discussion of scribes, scriptoria and patronage in the Syriac milieu in late antiquity see Mundell Mango, Marlia. "Patrons and Scribes Indicated in Syriac Manuscripts, 411 to 800 AD," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 32.4 (1983), 3-12.

10.3 The miniatures

This leaves us with the question of whether the miniatures can be attributed to a specific religious milieu. Unlike the only other two contemporary Syriac codices with figural illustrations, the Rabbula Gospels and the Gospel Paris Syr. 33, the illustrations in Paris Syr. 341 do not appear as a separate assemblage, but rather are distributed throughout the codex. Consequently, it seems likely that they were executed at the same time, and probably at the same place as the rest of the codex.²⁷

Neither the illustrations of the Rabbula Gospels, dense and crammed with figures, nor the simple, single-figure compositions which accompany the canon tables in Paris Syr. 33 resemble the style of the miniatures in Paris Syr. 341, which are often described as more classicising.²⁸ This characterisation has led several scholars to suggest that the images derive from a Greek archetype, but there is no evidence to support such a thesis.²⁹ It is also important to note that the fluency of style and execution of miniatures differ throughout the codex. While some (for example the dramatic composition at the beginning of *Exodus*) are indeed classicising in style and expertly drawn, others, like the miniature opening the *Book of Job*, seem awkwardly put together. Similar differences occur in the quality and style of single-figure representations accompanying prophetic books. Consequently it is difficult to treat the style as consistent and consistently classicising throughout all miniatures. The classical ornaments which occur in the codex, for example in vignettes at the end of *Leviticus* and *Isaiah*, have been seen as a part of popular ornamen-

²⁷ For the dating of miniatures in the Rabbula Gospels, which appear in a separate quire, see Mundell Mango, Marlia. "The Rabbula Gospels and Other Manuscripts Produced in the Late Antique Levant," in M. Bernabò, ed., *Il Tetravangelo di Rabbula. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1,56* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008), 121-26.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119-21. There are also a few early Syriac manuscripts with aniconic illustrations, for example the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea, Petersburg, Public Library, Syr.1, fol. 2, dated to 462, attributed to Edessa or Mardin, adorned with a cross on the last page: Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques*, 113. More interesting and more beautiful is a cross on fol. 151v of B.L. Add. 14 591, at the end of the metrical homilies of Isaac of Antioch and Balai, written in a sixth-century estrangelo, at the expense of a priest Bassus, for the great convent of Tel'Ade: *ibid.*, 114.

²⁹ Huber, Paul. *Bild und Botschaft. Byzantinische Miniaturen zum Alten und Neuen Testament*. Zurich: Atlantis, 1973, 89; Kondakov, Nikodim P. *Histoire de l'art byzantin. Considéré principalement dans les miniatures. Vol. 1*. Paris: Librairie de l'Art, 1886; Der Nersessian, "Date," 353; Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 51-55.

tal vocabulary, employed in other manuscripts but also in contemporary mosaics and architectural sculpture.³⁰ Such ornaments were connected with a classical revival in the arts of the area of Nisibis, to which the codex has been consequently attributed.³¹ Nevertheless, drawing stylistic and iconographic parallels in such diverse media is not without problems and one should perhaps be cautious in assuming that the occurrence of similar motifs in monumental art and in book illustrations necessarily indicates that they have been created in the same milieu.

The first preserved miniature, at the beginning of *Exodus*, shows Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, a scene illustrating *Exodus* 5:1-5 (Figure 10.1).³² The vivid contrast between the agitated figures of Moses and Pharaoh, and the passive representations of Aaron and the three guards surrounding the ruler, allows the viewer's attention to focus on the main *dramatis personae*. Pharaoh, depicted in the garments of a Byzantine emperor, has sometimes been compared to the figure of an equally agitated Herod accompanying canon tables in the Rabbula Gospels.³³ Otherwise, iconographic analogies suggested for the entire scene range wildly in technique and geographic location: from frescoes decorating the nave of the old St. Peter's church in Rome and the scene which originally appeared in an extensive cycle of mosaics in the nave of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (known only through drawings),³⁴ through late antique sar-

³⁰ Bernabó, Massimo and Franca Arduini, eds. *Il Tetraevangelo di Rabbula*. Firenze, biblioteca medicea laurenziana, Plut.1.56. *L'illustrazione del Nuovo Testamento nella Siria del VI secolo*. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008, tav. VI, XII, XIII; Hawkins, Mundell and Mango, "The Mosaics of the Monastery of Mār Samuel, Mār Simeon, and Mār Gabriel, near Kartmin," 285; Piccirillo, Michele. *The Mosaics of Jordan*. Amman: American Center of Oriental Research, 1993, ills. 18, 24, 29; Ulbert, Thilo. "Resafa – Pilgerzentrum und Grenzbefestigung," in M. Fansa and B. Bollman, eds., *Die Kunst der frühen Christen in Syrien. Zeichen, Bilder und Symbole vom 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert* (Meinz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 2008), Abb. 6.

³¹ Mundell Mango, "Continuity," 126-27.

³² Fol. 8r. The miniature is pasted onto a paper folio added during the fourteenth-century conservation.

³³ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 25. Laur.Plut.I.56, fol. 4v, Bernabó and Arduini, *Il Tetraevangelo di Rabbula*, tav. VIII.

³⁴ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 26; Waetzoldt, Stephan. *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom*. Vienna and Munich: Schroll, 1964, cat.no.931. The scene originally represented in the mosaics of the nave of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, has been destroyed by the construction of a chapel adjacent to the church. From preserved drawings it appears that the scene, divided into two registers, bore no similarity to the miniature in Syr. 341: Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 25; Deck-



Fig. 10.1: Exodus, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 8r.



Fig. 10.2: Job, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 46r.



Fig. 10.3: Wisdom Books, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 118r.



Fig. 10.4: Ezekiel, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 162r.

cophagi,³⁵ to the Byzantine illustrated Octateuchs.³⁶ Closer in time and medium is the miniature of the Ashburnham Pentateuch, a roughly contemporary Latin illustrated Bible where, nevertheless, the scene of Moses before Pharaoh is not nearly as dramatic.³⁷ While analogies are numerous, it would be difficult to postulate any relationship between them beyond the fact that they are inspired by the same textual passage. In Paris Syr. 341 no liturgical or other markings single out the passage of *Exodus* illustrated in the miniature.

The next preserved miniature, at the beginning of *Numbers*, is divided into two superimposed registers.³⁸ In the upper, Aaron clad in priestly garments stands in the centre of a group of Israelites. Each man holds a staff, but only Aaron's is flowering (*Numbers* 17:1-9). In the lower register, four Israelites, one of whom sits on the ground clutching his leg, face a chest-like structure under a ciborium from which a brazen snake is suspended (*Numbers* 21:6-9). The closest parallel to the scene above is Aaron with the flowering rod in the margin of a canon table in the Rabbula Codex.³⁹ The unusual association of the brazen serpent with the ciborium and the altar-like Ark of the Covenant, in the lower register, may have been designed to emphasise a Christian reading of the story, with the brazen serpent seen as a figure of Christ (*John* 4:13).⁴⁰

ers, Johannes Georg. *Der alttestamentliche Zyklus von Santa Maria Maggiore in Rom. Studien zur Bildgeschichte*. Bonn: Habelt, 1976, 146; Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien des 17*, cat.no. 459.

³⁵ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 25; Rizzardi, Clementina. *I sarcofagi paleocristiani con rappresentazione del passaggio del Mar Rosso*. Faenza: Fratelli Lega, 1970; Wilpert, Joseph. *I sarcofagi cristiani antichi*. Vol.1. Roma: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia Cristiana, 1929, tav. 97, 2-4; Lassus, Jean. "Representations du 'Passage de la mer Rouge' dans l'art chrétien d'Orient et d'Occident," *Melanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 46 (1929), 159-81.

³⁶ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 26 quotes only Smyrna, fol. 70r, though the same composition appears in Vat.Gr.746, fol. 166v and Vat.Gr.747, fol. 78r as well. In the Octateuchs, this scene is very different, sedate and lacking the emotional tension of the miniature in Paris Syr. 341. Weitzmann, Kurt, Massimo Bernabó and Rita Tarasconi. *The Byzantine Octateuchs*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, ills. 628-31.

³⁷ It appears on fol. 58r, among the series of other illustrations for *Exodus* 7:6; *Exodus* 5:22-23; *Exodus* 5:10-14.

³⁸ The text of *Numbers* on fols. 25r-36v.

³⁹ Laur.Plut.I.56, fol. 3v, Bernabó and Arduini, *Il Tetravangelo di Rabbula*, tav. VI.

⁴⁰ The brazen serpent was later worshipped in the Temple (4 *Kings* 18:4-5), but it is associated with the Ark and the Tabernacle only in two eleventh-century manuscripts of the *Christian Topography*, Sin.Gr.1186, fol. 77v and Laur.Plut.IX.28, fol. 107r.

It has also been suggested that the choice of the iconography of both scenes was dictated by an exegesis which stressed the incarnation and the role of the Virgin, whose epithets in Syriac poetry included “rod of Aaron”, “the Ark” and “the snake of bronze”.⁴¹ While this cannot be excluded, none of the liturgical pericopae in *Leviticus* in Paris Syr. 341 has a Marian significance.⁴²

The *Book of Deuteronomy*, preserved in its entirety, opens with a representation of a standing figure of Moses.⁴³ In his right hand he holds a staff – possibly the one which performed miracles before Pharaoh (*Exodus* 4:7), in his left two stone tablets (*Deuteronomy* 9:15) or, less likely, two scrolls. This representation of Moses is akin to depictions of portraits of prophets, in Paris Syr. 341, each of them standing and holding a book, scroll or a characteristic attribute. If this depiction was meant as a portrait of the author, it is interesting that it appears at the beginning of the last book of the Pentateuch.⁴⁴

The placement of *Job* after the Pentateuch in the Peshitta probably results from the tradition that this book too was written by Moses.⁴⁵ The focus of the opening miniature (Figure 10.2) is the large figure of leprous

⁴¹ Cantone, Valentina. “Iconografia mariana e culto popolare nel codice siriano 341 di Parigi,” *Rivista di storia della miniatura* 15 (2011), 20; Ephrem the Syrian. *Hymns*. Tr. Kathleen E. McVey as: *Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns*. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.

⁴² It is perhaps interesting to notice, however, that out of five identifiable readings in this book, four are intended for the Holy Week.

⁴³ Text of *Deuteronomy* on fols. 36v-46r.

⁴⁴ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 28.

⁴⁵ According to the Septuagint Appendix to the Book of Job “he (Job) was the fifth from Abraham,” a remark which intends to place him in Moses’ time. See Papadaki-Oekland, *Job*, 21. On the other hand, in the Syriac environment Job was identified with Jobab mentioned in *Genesis* 10:29: see Brock and Taylor, *The Hidden Pearl*, 230. In the context of the attribution of Paris Syr. 341, it is worth noting that the issue of the authorship of Job was a part of the Henana controversy that shook the School of Nisibis at the end of the sixth, beginning of the seventh century. Henana argued that *Book of Job* was written by Moses, against Theodore of Mopsuestia, who believed it was written by a Hellenising Jew. See Reinink, “Tradition and the Formation of the ‘Nestorian’ Identity,” 236; Vööbus, Arthur. *History of the School of Nisibis*. Louvain: CSCO 266 Subsidia 26, 1965, 245. In Paris Syr. 341 the text of *Job* appears on fols. 46r-52r. The text is the same as 7a1 (Milan, Ambrosiana, Ms B.21, Inferiore, dated to the sixth or seventh centuries). Several rubrics have been erased: before 1:1 (still slightly legible), 23:1; 29:1; 32:6; 38:1; 40:6 and 42:7. Rubrics that have been retained are found before 11:1, 16:1 and 19:1: see Rignell, L.G. “Introduction, Job” in *The Old Testament in Syriac According to Peshitta Version, II/1a* (Leiden, Peshitta Institute, 1972).

Job, reclining on the dung heap. Behind him, a small figure of his wife is represented sitting in the corner. To the left, sitting below a white, red-roofed building, three men face Job with their garments torn open at their chests. On the basis of *Job* 2:11-13 they can be identified as Job's friends: Eliphaz, Baldad and Sophar. Although it has been suggested that the miniature is inspired by the passage from the apocryphal *Testament of Job*, where such a scene is described, it seems more likely that the painter collated several elements of the story of Job in one composition.⁴⁶ In the Rabbula Gospels Job is depicted as a standing figure holding a scroll,⁴⁷ but representations of Job on the dunghill, an exemplum of patience and faith, are far more common in early Christian monuments.⁴⁸ Later, a very similar composition – with Job and his friends, but without his wife – appears in Byzantine illustrated codices of the *Book of Job*,⁴⁹ where, in agreement with the Septuagint's text, Job's friends are represented as kings.⁵⁰

The miniature at the beginning of the *Book of Joshua*⁵¹ shows Joshua clad in armour with a sword in his left hand and pointing with his right to the Sun and Moon in the segment of sky above (*Joshua* 10:12-14). This scene, here abbreviated to little more than a portrait, is frequently pictured in illustrative Biblical cycles, such as the mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore, as well as in the miniatures of the Octateuchs and in the Joshua Roll.⁵² In Paris Syr. 341 the choice of the representation of Joshua compares well with the illustration of Job, in that here too the most characteristic elements of the narrative are selected, and also with miniatures opening the books of *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel* (Figure 10.4) which similarly combine a portrait with a visual reference to a characteristic motif of their story.

⁴⁶ Papadaki-Oekland, *Job*, 313 suggested that the scene illustrates the *Testament of Job* 29, when Job's wife implores his friends for a burial of her children.

⁴⁷ Fol. 7r., Bernabó and Arduini, *Il Tetravangelo di Rabbula*, tav. XIII.

⁴⁸ Gerke, Friedrich. *Der Sarkophag des Iunius Bassus*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1936, 18-19, pls. 2, 3, and 10.

⁴⁹ Vat. Gr. 749, fol. 29v and Vat. Reg. Gr. 1, fol. 461v: see Papadaki-Oakland, *Job*, 136-45.

⁵⁰ *Job* 2:11: "Ελιφας ὁ Θαυμαίων βασιλεύς, Βαλδαδ ὁ Σαυχαίων τύραννος, Σωφορ ὁ Μιναίων βασιλεύς."

⁵¹ Text of *Joshua* on fols. 52v-59v.

⁵² Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 31.

The miniature at the beginning of *Proverbs* was clearly designed as a frontispiece to all Wisdom Books (Figure 10.3), as neither *Ecclesiastes* nor *Song of Songs*, or the *Wisdom of Solomon* are accompanied by an image.⁵³ In the centre of the illustration, Mary, in a long purple cloak and a robe decorated with gold clavi, stands holding a blue mandorla enclosing the infant Christ clad in a golden garment. To her left, a youth in Byzantine imperial garment, holding a book is most likely to be identified with Solomon, the purported author of the books that follow.⁵⁴ The female figure to the right, in a white robe and a red cloak, holding a golden cross in her right hand and a golden book with a jewelled cross in her left hand, has been interpreted as a personification of the Church,⁵⁵ but also as the Divine Wisdom.⁵⁶

Unlike all other authors of the Old Testament books portrayed in Paris Syr. 341, who hold scrolls, the two authors of Wisdom Books, Solomon and Bar Sira (Figure 10.7), are depicted holding a codex, sometimes interpreted as a symbol of the Gospels, reflecting the notion that the pre-existing logos is present in the Wisdom Books.⁵⁷ It has also been suggested that the exegesis of *Proverbs* 9:1 ("Wisdom built herself a house"), as pertaining to the incarnation of the Logos, inspired the depiction of Mary holding the mandorla.⁵⁸ Consequently, the three

⁵³ The text of the *Proverbs*, fols. 118r-124r; *Qoheleth*, fol. 124r-126r; *Song of Songs*, fol. 126 r-v; *Wisdom of Solomon*, 126v-131r, but fol. 131 is a fourteenth century paper addition.

⁵⁴ Of the three figures in the miniature only Solomon is nimbed, but the nimbus has been identified as belonging to the iconography of the emperor: Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 33. He very much resembles David in the seventh century Syriac manuscript containing the books of *Kings* in the library of St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai: see Brock and Taylor, *The Hidden Pearl*, 174.

⁵⁵ Huber, *Bild und Botschaft*, 93-94; Weis, Adolf and Elisabeth Weis. *Die Madonna Platytora. Entwurf für ein Christentum als Bildoffenbarung anhand der Geschichte eines Madonnen-themas*. Königstein im Taunus: Langewiesche, 1985, 20; Brock and Taylor, *The Hidden Pearl*, 232-33.

⁵⁶ Meyendorff, John. "L'iconographie de la Sagesse divine dans la tradition byzantine," *Cahiers Archeologiques* 10 (1959), 263; Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 34, n.3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁵⁸ Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata*. Tr. C. Mondésert et al. as: *Les Stromates*. Vol. 1. Sources Chrétiennes 30, 38. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1951, 1:17; Huber, *Bild und Botschaft*, 94; Cantone, "Iconografia mariana," 20-22; Hannick, Christian. "The Theotokos in Byzantine Hymnography. Typology and Allegory," in Maria Vassilaki, ed., *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 69-76; Ortiz de Urbina, Ignacio. "La Vergine Maria

figures were understood as three representations of Wisdom: once in its Old-Testament aspect as the author of *Proverbs*, the second time as the Divine Wisdom personified, and the third under the guise of Emmanuel, in the womb of the Virgin, the last of these reflecting the Miaphysite theology of the incarnation.⁵⁹ Such an interpretation, while certainly interesting, is nevertheless impossible to verify. It is also debatable whether the mandorla should be understood as the womb of the Virgin. A very similar representation of Mary holding an infant Christ enclosed in a mandorla appears in the Armenian Etschmiadzin Gospels, in the scene of the Adoration of the Magi, which certainly excludes identification with pregnancy.⁶⁰ Such iconography is also present in several other depictions dated to the seventh century, but it is not at all clear what the meaning of such iconography was, or indeed whether the same significance was intended in all depictions.⁶¹

The beginning of the *Book of Isaiah* which follows has been lost and the original folio has been replaced with a paper one.⁶² The next book, *Jeremiah*, opens with a representation of a young, beardless prophet. To the right a vertical rod is most likely "a staff of nut wood," suggesting that the illustration shows the moment of the calling of Jeremiah (*Jeremiah* 1:11). Such identification is corroborated by the appearance of the hand of God emerging from the segment of heaven in the upper right corner of the miniature.⁶³ Though Jeremiah is depicted in the Rabbula Gospels⁶⁴ and in the mosaics in San Vitale in

nella teologia di S. Efrem," in I. Ortiz de Urbina, ed., *Symposium Syriacum 1972* (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1974), 65-103.

⁵⁹ Meyendorff, "L'iconographie de la Sagesse divine," 264.

⁶⁰ Etschmiadzin Gospels, fol. 229r, Sörries, Reiner. *Christlich-antike Buchmalerei im Überblick*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1993, ill. 32. For the identification with pregnancy, see Lucquet, G.H. "Représentation par transparence de la grossesse dans l'art chrétien," *Revue Archeologique* 19 (1924), 137-52; hypothesis already rejected by Weis and Weis, *Die Madonna Platytera*, 22.

⁶¹ It has been argued that similar representations derive from the secular depictions of Victorias presenting portraits of emperors or consuls on a shield, in the form of a "visual proclamation": Elderkin, George Wicker. "Shield and Mandorla," *American Journal of Archaeology* 42 (1938), 233; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 114.

⁶² The text of *Isaiah*: 131r-143r. The original folio 131 (*Isaiah* 1:1-3:24) is missing, substituted in the fourteenth century with a paper folio.

⁶³ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 38.

⁶⁴ Though Sörries, *ibid.*, 38, undermines such identification of this figure on fol. 8r, next to the canon tables, facing Zachariah

Ravenna,⁶⁵ he is nowhere accompanied by the attribute given to him in the Paris Syr. 341. It has been suggested that the image represents a very early form of iconography, otherwise lost.⁶⁶ More likely, however, the painter of Paris Syr. 341 simply added a visual feature relating to the story and facilitating identification – a mechanism which, as has been already noted, seems to be behind the creation of several other miniatures in this codex. A similar hypothesis seems likely for the representation at the beginning of *Ezekiel* (Figure 10.4),⁶⁷ showing the prophet in the valley of dry bones (*Ezekiel* 37). Thus, rather than simply representing him as an author, as in the Rabbula Gospels,⁶⁸ the miniature shows a recognizable scene from the life of a prophet, as illustrated in many antique representations, particularly in funerary contexts.⁶⁹

Each of the books of the twelve prophets is preceded by a representation of the standing author.⁷⁰ Throughout the Dodekapropheton an easy key seems to apply to the choice of representation: youthful, black-haired figures alternate with representations of elderly, grey-haired men. Thus Hosea (fol. 174r) is depicted with dark hair; Joel (fol. 175r), with short grey hair and a beard. A representation of Amos is missing, but we may speculate that he was depicted with dark hair; Abdias (fol. 178r) is represented as a grey-haired elder and Jonas (178v), with dark hair. The

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 38, where he appears as an older, bearded and white haired man holding an open scroll.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁷ Text of *Ezekiel* on fols. 162r-173v with fol. 167 (*Ezekiel* 20:29-23:28) is inserted later on paper. There is a lacuna of *Ezekiel* 23:28-27:28.

⁶⁸ Laur.Plut.I.58, fol. 8v, Bernabó and Arduini, *Il Tetravangelo di Rabbula*, tav. 16.

⁶⁹ The scene appears in Dura Europos synagogue: Weitzmann, Kurt and Herbert L. Kessler. *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*. Dumbarton Oaks Studies 28. Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1990, 130-32, figs. 177-79. It features on late antique golden glass fragments and understandably it is very popular on early Christian sarcophagi: see Mundell Mango, Marlia. "A Sixth-Century Funerary Relief at Dara in Mesopotamia," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 24 (1975), 214. Interestingly, a depiction of this scene on the sixth century funerary relief at Dara has been interpreted as a reflection of the Byzantine-Sasanian struggle for control over this territory in the context of Zoroastrian funerary practices: *ibid.*, 209; Nicholson, Oliver. "Shall These Bones Live? A Dakhma at Dara?" *American Journal of Archaeology* 89 (1985), 669-70. Scholars who overlooked the eastern representations of this scene argued for a Roman connection of this iconography; Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 39.

⁷⁰ 174r-185r. As mentioned above, the original folios with the beginning of *Amos* and *Malachi* are lost. Folios 176 (*Joel* 2:1-*Amos* 2:9) and 184 (*Zachariah* 11:6-*Malachia* 2:8) are the fourteenth century paper additions.

rhythm changes with the following four prophets, two of which, Micah (fol. 179r) and Nahum (fol. 180r), are represented with dark hair, and the following two, Habakkuk (fol. 180v) and Zephaniah (fol. 181r), with grey. It seems, however, that the faces of the first three of this group, particularly Nahum, were repainted. Haggai (fol. 181v) is represented with dark hair. Finally, grey-haired Zachariah (fol. 182r), the only one of the Minor Prophets with an attribute, is depicted with a sickle (*Zachariah* 5:1).⁷¹ Comparable cycles of the Minor Prophets appear fairly often in late antique manuscript illustrations. The Minor Prophets are represented in the margins of the canons in the Rabbula Gospels, on a fragmentarily preserved folio in the seventh century Alexandrian World Chronicle, as well as in the ninth-century illustrated codex of Kosmas Indikopleustes, Vat.gr.699, which goes back to the sixth century original. One discrepancy with Paris Syr. 341 is that in all these manuscripts Jonas is represented in a narrative scene.⁷² The figure of Zachariah is not preserved in the Alexandrian World Chronicle, but in both the Rabbula Gospels and the ninth century manuscript of Kosmas he is depicted holding a sickle.⁷³ This suggests that the miniaturist simply followed a common iconography, possibly even simplifying it, as in the case of Jonah.

Similar modifications of the miniature could have been simply dictated by the shape of the pictorial space left for this illustration. This is strongly suggested by another depiction in the codex where an ingenious solution has been applied to resolve the problem of a limited space. The miniature at the beginning of the *Book of Daniel* (Figure 10.5), shows the youthful beardless prophet, in Persian costume, standing over a cir-

⁷¹ Friend, Albert Mathias. "The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts," *Art Studies* 5 (1927), 129-30.

⁷² For the Rabbula Gospels see *Hosea* and *Joel*, fol. 5r; *Amos* and *Abdias*, fol. 5v; *Jonas* and *Micah*, fol. 6r; *Nahum* and *Sofonias*, fol. 6v; *Habakkuk* and *Hagias*, fol. 7v; *Zachariah*, fol. 8r; *Malachi*, fol. 9r. For the Alexandrian World Chronicle see Bauer, Adolf, and Strzygowski, Josef. *Eine alexandrinische weltchronik*. Wien: Gerold, 1905, 30-31. Kosmas Indikopleustes' *Christian Topography*, Vat.gr.699; *Hosea*, fol. 67r; *Amos*, fol. 67v; *Micah*, fol. 68r; *Joel*, fol. 68v; *Abdias* and *Jonas*, fol. 69r; *Nahum* and *Habakkuk*, fol. 69v; *Haggai*, fol. 70v; *Zachariah* and *Malachi*, fol. 71r.

⁷³ Hosea is represented in the Rabbula Gospels, fol 5r, next to the cannon tables, across from Joel. In the Buchanan Bible he is represented in fol. 174r. Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 21 compares this series of representations with a series of similar representations of Biblical figures in San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.



Fig. 10.5: Daniel, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 186r



Fig. 10.6: Ezra, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 212r.



Fig. 10.7: Bar Sira, Paris Syr. 341, fol. 218v.

cular opening of a pit (*Daniel* 6:17-24).⁷⁴ Daniel is depicted in the series of prophets in the margins of canons in the Rabbula Gospels, but not in the orant pose, as in Paris Syr. 341.⁷⁵ Such a gesture is more typical of representations of Daniel between lions, a popular image of salvation, common already in the art of the catacombs.⁷⁶ A good analogy for the absence of lions in Paris Syr. 341 is the representation of the orant Daniel on a sixth-century marble slab from Antioch.⁷⁷ In both cases the absence of lions seems simply due to the limited space available. In the case of Paris Syr. 341 the depiction of the circular opening of the pit in front of Daniel is a clever visual reference to the story (and one can imagine that the lions are in a pit, like a sheep-in-a-box in Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*).

The only other figure in Paris Syr. 341 depicted in an orant pose is Ezra in the next miniature (Figure 10.6).⁷⁸ Ezra stands in the central opening of a structure which resembles the ciborium in the illustrations at the beginning of *Numbers* and the structure enclosing Bar Sira in the miniature that follows (Figure 10.7). Here the structure is enlivened by representation of two small birds (possibly partridges) on the top, similar to those in the vignette at the end of *Leviticus*.

Ezra the priest and lawgiver is represented in another late antique pandect, the Latin Codex Amiatinus, where he is depicted clad in priestly garments, positioned in front of a cupboard with books, and writing in a codex.⁷⁹ This picture has been seen as illustrating the significance of Ezra as a lawgiver, a priest and the leader of Israel's religious renewal after the return from Babylonian exile.⁸⁰ Though it cannot be excluded that this was the intended significance of the miniature in Paris Syr. 341 and that

⁷⁴ The text of Daniel appears on fols. 186r-190v. The second occasion on which the prophet was thrown into a pit is *Daniel* 14:31-41 (in Theodotion Greek Bible and in the Vulgata). Bel and the Dragon, 31-32 in the Peshitto.

⁷⁵ Laur.Plut.I.56, fol. 8v, Bernabé and Arduini, *Il Tetraevangelo di Rabbula*, tav. 16.

⁷⁶ Schrenk, Sabine. *Typos und Antitypos in der frühchristlichen Kunst*. Aschendorff, Münster: Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, 1995. , 9-34.

⁷⁷ Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 45, abb. 61.

⁷⁸ The text of *Ezra* (and *Nehemia*) on fols. 212r-281r.

⁷⁹ Laur.Amiat.1, fol. 5r, Sörries, *Christlich-antike Buchmalerei*, pl. 25.

⁸⁰ Meyvaert, Paul. "The Date of Bede's *In Ezram* and His Image of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus," *Speculum* 80 (2005), 1087-133. An earlier representation of Ezra as a lawgiver appears in the frescos of Dura Europos synagogue, where he is represented with an open scroll: Weitzmann and Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue*, fig. 180.

the structure enclosing Ezra was meant to represent the Temple, such an interpretation is undermined by the fact that he is not represented in priestly garments. There are no liturgical readings marked in this book.

An interesting hypothesis contrasts the structure surrounding Ezra, interpreted as the Temple, with the one enclosing Bar Sira, understood as a church (Figure 10.7).⁸¹ Such identification was prompted by the presence of the crosses, which surmount the cupola and decorate the capitals, and by the fact that the cupola is adorned with the motif of vine scroll.⁸² Like Solomon in the miniature at the beginning of *Proverbs* (Figure 10.3), but unlike other Old Testament authors, Bar Sira is represented holding a codex, not a scroll. Moreover, his codex is decorated with a cross, which further suggests an emphasis on the Christian significance of this author, whose writings were often read in the church, as reflected in the "Ecclesiasticus" used by many Church Fathers.⁸³ Particularly in this context the absence of liturgical readings in this book is puzzling.

The illustration at the beginning of the *Epistle of James* (fol. 248r), the only remaining image in the New Testament, is not very well preserved. The contours have been re-inked in thick black lines and it is difficult to ascertain how faithfully they follow the original. Unlike in the case of the Old Testament figures, James's head is surrounded by a halo, though admittedly we cannot be certain that it is not a later addition. Similarly, the scroll that James holds, while most likely a symbol of his *Epistle*, may also result from a later repainting of this picture which could have originally shown a codex. The preserved late antique illustrated manuscripts, Greek, Latin and Syriac, are not numerous, but they are remarkable for the diversity of the text-image relationship. The pattern employed in Paris Syr. 341, with miniatures placed at the beginnings of Biblical books and effectively serving as frontispieces, is rare, but not without parallels.⁸⁴ It would seem natural to assume that such

⁸¹ The text of Bar Sira on fols. 218r-227v.

⁸² Sörries, *Die Syrische Bibel*, 48-9.

⁸³ It is also interesting to note that the book was excluded from the Hebrew canon of the Bible, but included in the Alexandrian canon.

⁸⁴ In the Codex Amiatinus, a copy of the Codex Grandior of Cassiodorus, miniatures appear at the beginning of the Old and of the New Testament: see Meyvaert, Paul. "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 827-83. Such an arrangement is also attested in the tenth century Leo Bible (Vat. Reg.1), which is likely based on a late antique archetype, Cod. Reg. 1; see Lowden, John. *The Octateuchs. A*

placement of miniatures could reflect a liturgical function of this codex, where they may have served as markers for particular books, for ease of use in the liturgy.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, not all books have liturgical readings and not all books were designed to have miniatures and therefore the correlation between these two aspects is not straightforward. The incipits of *Judges*, *Ruth*, 1-2 *Samuel*, 1-2 *Kings* and 1-2 *Chronicles*, *Susana*, *Judith* and 1-3 *Maccabees* survive, but never had any provisions made for images.⁸⁶ Although there are no liturgical readings in *Ruth*, *Chronicles*, *Susana*, *Judith* and *Maccabees*, and only very few appear in 2 *Samuel*, there are a large number of pericopae in *Judges* as well as in 1 *Samuel* and 1-2 *Kings*.⁸⁷ At the same time two books which open with illustrations – *Ezra* and *Ben Sirach* – contain no original liturgical readings. Clearly, therefore, the liturgical significance of a book was not the sole factor in its illustration, which undermines the notion that the miniatures were designed to serve as markers.

Paris Syr. 341 is the only late antique illustrated pandect that includes such a large number of illustrations. The only other illustrated late antique complete codex of the complete Bible, the Codex Amiatinus, contains miniatures only at the beginning of the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New.⁸⁸ Because several of the Biblical books were rarely, if ever, illustrated in late antiquity, whether in manuscripts or in other media,⁸⁹ it cannot be excluded that the makers of Paris Syr. 341 were simply unable to find images sufficiently characteristic and recognisable to serve as a frontispieces to these books. This seems particularly plausible in light of the hypothesis that large prefatory miniatures were made for viewers or readers who were already familiar with biblical im-

Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992, 96. For frontispieces in Carolingian Bibles see Kessler, Herbert L. "Hic homo formatur. The Genesis Frontispieces of the Carolingian Bibles," *Art Bulletin* 53 (1971), 143-60; St Clair, Archer. "A New Moses. Typological Iconography in the Moutier-Grandval Bible Illustrations of Exodus," *Gesta* 26.1 (1987), 19-23.

⁸⁵ As already suggested by Verkerk, Dorothy. *Early Medieval Illumination and the Ashburnham Pentateuch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 31.

⁸⁶ The text of *Judges*, on fols. 59v-66r (with fol. 66 being a later, paper addition); *Samuel*, on fols. 66v-83v with folios 66 (1 *Samuel* 1:7) and 83 (2 *Samuel* 22:13-25:25) being later paper additions. The text of *Kings* appears on fols. 84r-101r and that of *Chronicles* on fols. 101r-118r.

⁸⁷ Jenner, *De perikopentitels*, 50-53.

⁸⁸ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 828.

⁸⁹ Lowden, "The Beginnings of Biblical illustration," 50-59.

ages because they saw them constantly on the walls of churches. This is not to imply that images in manuscripts are to be understood merely as “copies” of images in other media, but rather that the preference was for the compositions that were already sanctioned by usage.⁹⁰

10.4 Conclusion

Scholars have often noted that visual imagery is sometimes employed to affirm the religious and communal identity of a group either by explicitly rejecting other religious groups and denominations, or by using elements that are different from those used in other religions or communities.⁹¹ One might, therefore, expect that dissenting Christian groups would use different visual symbols in order to promote their own particular orthodoxy. Yet tracing a particular Christian theology in art is difficult, if possible at all. A very good example is the case of the Arians. Not only does the iconography of existing Arian and Orthodox monuments reveal no distinctiveness, but also textual sources attest to churches passing from Arian to Orthodox hands without any alterations being made.⁹² If

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54. Contrast the remarks of Loerke, William C. “The Monumental Miniature,” in K. Weitzmann *et al.*, eds., *The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 61-97.

⁹¹ Snelders, Bas. *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*. Leuven: Peeters, 2010, 22; Elsner, Jaś. “Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image. The Case of Dura Europos,” *Classical Philology* 96.3 (2001), 274-75. A good example can be found in the extensive cycle of frescoes in the Dura Europos synagogue dated to the 240s -260s. It contains, among various biblical subjects chosen for the decoration, a strong emphasis on what might be called actively anti-pagan imagery, thus actively promulgating Judaism by denigrating other religions. It has been suggested that the fallen statues of Dagon resemble some of the pagan paintings of deities from Dura itself: Elsner, “Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image,” 67.

⁹² Ward-Perkins, Bryan. “Where is the Archaeology of Arianism?” in D. Gwynn & S. Bangert, eds., *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 265-75. In Procopius, *Wars* 3.21.25, in the account the Byzantine defeat of the Vandals in Carthage in 533, we read that the Arian Vandals, who had earlier taken over the church of the local martyr Cyprian, had prepared it for the feast of the saint. But when the Vandal army was defeated on that same day, the Catholics resumed possession of the church. To celebrate the festival, they simply lit all the lamps, which stood ready, and proceeded with the Mass. For a discussion of the impossibility of distinguishing Arian churches among Christian buildings excavated in Africa see Modéran Yves. “Une guerre de religion. Les deux églises d’Afrique à l’époque vandale,” *Antiquité Tardive* 11 (2003) 36-39.

the conflict is visible at all in art, it is not through the use of iconography reflecting any particular theology, but rather through the employment of the entirely conventional, well-established iconography that both rival Churches claim as their own.⁹³ In the few cases where art does appear to employ special iconography to engage in theological debates, the point is made through an internal affirmation of orthodoxy rather than a condemnation of the views of the other. A good example is the case of the mosaics in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (432-444). In view of the iconographic emphasis on the Virgin and on the divinity of the Christ child it is often thought that these mosaics were designed as a visual affirmation of the doctrinal decisions of the Ephesian Council of 431.⁹⁴ It is debatable, however, whether such a reading would be equally commonly accepted if we did not know the historical circumstances in which these mosaics were commissioned.

A fundamental problem when discussing visual polemics or images as expressions of identity is that pictures have the capacity to convey multiple meanings at the same time.⁹⁵ It is possible to read polemical intent into virtually every image.⁹⁶ Consequently, although we cannot disprove the Miaphysite reading focussing on Mary and the Incarnation suggested for some miniatures, we should be very cautious when making an argument for such an interpretation, particularly as it does not seem possible to apply it to all the illustrations in the codex. Moreover, if we assume that the codex was indeed originally made for the West Syrians, the East Syrians, in whose possession it later was found, did not find the images sufficiently disturbing to alter them in any visible way. Both East Syrian Dyophysites as well as West Syrian Miaphysites saw themselves

⁹³ Ward-Perkins, "Where is the Archaeology of Arianism?", notes that numerous representations of God the Son were set up in the churches of Ravenna during, and just after, the period of Arian rule, and it has been noted that there was something of a battle going on for the possession of Christ and Christ's image in Ravenna, between the rival "orthodox" Churches of the city – a battle that was fought with entirely conventional, sometimes identical, iconography.

⁹⁴ Brenk, Beat. *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1975, 47-49; Ouspensky, Leonid. *The Meaning of Icons*. Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1982 (rev. ed.), 29 n.1. Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction*, 24. Ward-Perkins, "Where is the Archaeology of Arianism?"

⁹⁵ Womack, Mari. *Symbols and Meaning: A Concise Introduction*. Walnut Creek CA: Altamira, 2005, 3, 77-78; Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction*, 24.

⁹⁶ For a succinct discussion of this problem in art-historical research see Lowden, *The Octateuchs*, 39-40.

as the true orthodox. Consequently, it seems more likely that to express this identity they chose the iconography already sanctioned by popular use rather than introduce one that could be seen as new, unorthodox and possibly controversial.

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Part IV

Theology and Practice

11

Anastasius of Sinai and Chalcedonian Christian Lay Piety in the Early Islamic Near East

Nicholas Marinides
(Princeton University)

Twenty years ago, for an earlier conference volume on late antiquity and early Islam, John Haldon contributed an essay entitled “The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: A Key Source for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief”.¹ He took advantage of the recent labors of philologists on the corpus of Anastasius of Sinai and, as a cultural historian, used this corpus to sketch some of the great changes undergone by all levels of society during the turbulent seventh century. He saw Anastasius as a theologian upholding the venerable tradition of Byzantine Chalcedonian Orthodoxy in an area where this confession was a minority even among Christians, and was now challenged by the rise of Arab Islamic power. Anastasius was depicted as a kind of Chalcedonian circuit preacher travelling from one isolated Orthodox community to another, exhorting them to maintain their faith and attempting to answer their perplexities and anxieties about a world in upheaval. I wish to pick up where Haldon left off, benefiting also from more recent critical editions, and also from some subsequent work in the same historical vein. The focus of my research is on lay piety, and Anastasius is a gold mine of information on this topic. As Haldon wrote:

He represented ... the ordinary people ... he demonstrates a sympathy and understanding for the humdrum, day-to-day existence of ordinary folk which was no doubt common to many holy

¹ Haldon, John. “The Works of Anastasius of Sinai. A Key Source for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief,” in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I. Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1992), 107–47.

men and churchmen but which is—as one might expect—not so readily found in the theological works of a Maximus or the polemical writings of a Sophronius.²

While Anastasius was Cypriot in origin and had spent time as a monk in Jerusalem, he is remembered as Anastasius of Sinai, and Sinai is an important anchor for his thought.³ It was a bastion of the old imperial church structure that was being swept away throughout much of the rest of the former Roman Near East. Its isolation in turn allowed it to resist the new imperial doctrine of Monotheletism being promoted from Constantinople.⁴ In addition to adhering to strict dyothelete theology, the Sinai monks produced a mature ascetical synthesis to express their experience of the spiritual life. This doctrine was crystallized in the *Ladder* of John Climacus, the Abbot of Sinai around the turn of the seventh century. The *Ladder* is uncompromising in setting high the goal of the spiritual striving of monks, and has little to say directly to laypeople. John goes as far as to make a place for them in the spiritual universe as proper Christians, and does not admit excuses for bad behaviour. In one brief aside early in the text, John replies to those who “live carelessly in the world” and who ask: “We have wives and are beset by social cares, and so how can we lead the solitary life?”:

² *Ibid.*, 116. Incidentally, however, Maximus and Sophronius have much more to say about lay piety than one would assume based on familiarity with their dogmatic writings alone.

³ For the biography of Anastasius, see Flusin, Bernard. “Démons et Sarrasins. L’auteur et le propos des *Diègèmata stèriktika* d’Anastase le Sinaïte,” *TM* 11 (1991), 390–400. He mentions the town of Amathous in Cyprus as his homeland, and a stay on the outskirts of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives is mentioned: see Anastasius of Sinai. *Narrationes*. Ed. and tr. André Binggeli as: “Récits sur le Sinaï et récits utiles à l’âme. Édition, traduction, commentaire” (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: Sorbonne, 2001), 2.28 and 2.27 respectively. Also translated by Daniel Caner in: Caner, Daniel *et. al.* eds., *History and Hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 172–95.

⁴ For an overview of the history and spiritual significance of Sinai in Late Antiquity, see the Introduction in Caner, *History and Hagiography*, 1–16. See also Mouton, Jean-Michel. *Le Sinaï médiéval. Un espace stratégique de l’Islam* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 47–71. For the light that the monastery’s epigraphy can shed on “the everyday cultural horizon of sixth- and seventh-century Sinai,” see Ševčenko, Ihor. “The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in the Light of its Inscriptions,” *DOP* 20 (1966), 257–58.

Do all the good you can; do not speak evil of anyone; do not steal from anyone; do not lie to anyone; do not be arrogant towards anyone; do not hate anyone; do not be absent from the divine services; be compassionate to the needy; do not offend anyone; do not wreck another man's domestic happiness and be content with what your own wives can give you. If you behave in this way, you will not be far from the Kingdom of Heaven.⁵

Here John sets a baseline for being a Christian. But his book is also full of keen insights into the faults and foibles of human nature and the long hard struggle necessary to cultivate the virtues, and could thus provide a ready reserve of sage counsel for any Christian, despite its apparent neglect of lay piety as such.

In addition, the rarified world of monks found in the pages of the text can be somewhat misleading; Sinai was in fact an important place of pilgrimage for Christians from all over the *oikoumene*. It was thus a frequent point of contact between monks and laypeople, and a space where laypeople could benefit from monastic wisdom. Both the recording of this reality of pilgrimage and the interpretation of monastic lore for laypeople is the work of Anastasius.⁶ Whereas the figure of Moses is invoked by John Climacus as the model of a monastic abbot leading his disciples to the promised land of dispassion and contemplation, it is perhaps Anastasius who fulfils this type more closely by descending to the level of the layfolk and guiding them too through the turbulence of the world to the righteousness of God.⁷ The changes wrought by the advent of Islam made his task all the more difficult. Chalcedonian Christians suffered as others did under the difficulties of rule by an alien religion, but their difficulties were compounded by the fact that they fell from a higher position of political dominance to the same level as the rest under Islam. Thus Anastasius' writings can be seen as a window into the interpretation of a small group (monks), who were nevertheless spiritually dominant, and of their flock (lay Chalcedonians), who were but one of the divided

⁵ John Climacus. "Scala paradisi." *Patrologia Graeca* 88 (1860): 631-1161. Tr. as: *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Revised ed. Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2001, 1.21.

⁶ The entire first book of Anastasius *Narrations*, and two chapters in the second book, recount stories of Sinai monks and pilgrims. For reflections on pilgrimage to Palestine and Sinai in the early Islamic period see the chapter by Daniel Reynolds in this volume.

⁷ Cf. John Climacus, "Scala paradisi," *Patrologia Graeca* 88 (1860): 633d-636a, 1.11.

Christian confessional groups of the Near East. Overall, Christians still made up the vast majority of the population, but they were now ruled by a politically dominant but numerically small Arab elite, who were in the process of formulating their own religious discourse.

The corpus of Anastasius is relatively large and quite varied.⁸ It is difficult to date the individual works, except for the *Narrations*, which refer to the building of the Dome of the Rock (691) as a contemporary event.⁹ Anastasius himself seems to have lived a long life, stretching from the 630s to the early 700s.¹⁰ Haldon's essay focused on the *Questions and Answers* because of the information it provides about the concerns of common Christians in the seventh century and I will also analyze that collection in some detail.¹¹ But there is almost as much to be found in the *Narrations*, a collection of edifying tales in the tradition of the *Lausiaca History* of Palladius/Palladius!Lausiaca History and the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus. The first book of the *Narrations* relates tales of Sinai monks and pilgrims and the second moves farther afield into Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Cyprus, and even Constantinople, and mainly portrays lay people. It reveals important elements of lay-monastic interaction, of pilgrimage and liturgical practices, popular beliefs about the Eucharist and demonology, and more. Above all, it is an apologetic work conveying the moral that Christians should not be taken in by Islam, but see it for

⁸ For an overview of the history of scholarship on Anastasius, and a comprehensive bibliography, see the Introduction in Anastasius of Sinai. *Hexaemeron*. Ed. John D. Baggarly and Clement A. Kuehn. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 278. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 2007, xiii-lxxxii. See also Kuehn, Clement A. "Works by Anastasius Sinaita – Anastasius of Sinai." <http://www.anastasiosofsinai.org/list-of-works.html> (6.10.2012).

⁹ See n. 39 below.

¹⁰ Munitiz, Joseph. "Anastasios of Sinai. Speaking and Writing to the People of God," in Mary B. Cunningham and Pauline Allen, eds., *Preacher and Audience. Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 227–28.

¹¹ Anastasius of Sinai. *Quaestiones et responsiones*. Ed. Marcel Richard and Joseph A. Munitiz. *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 59. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006. Tr. Joseph A. Munitiz as: *Questions and Answers*. *Corpus Christianorum in Translation* 7. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011 (I was unable to obtain a copy of Fr. Munitiz's new translation in time for this study, so all translations of the text are my own). For a discussion of the genre of Questions and Answers and the state of the text of Anastasius' collection, see Haldon, "Works of Anastasius," 116–25; Yannis Papadopyannakis. "Instruction by Question and Answer. The Case of the Late Antique and Byzantine Erotapokriseis," in *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity. Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism.*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 91–106.

the demonic apostasy that it is.¹² Anastasius' *Discourse on the Holy Synaxis* is a treasure trove of information on lay participation (or lack thereof) in the liturgy.¹³ Several other sermons on various themes provide some information about lay piety.¹⁴ Anastasius' other works are heavier exegetical and dogmatic tomes. These offer less information of direct interest to the social and cultural historian of religion, but in addition to some useful nuggets here and there, they help to fill out the picture of Anastasius' thought-world.¹⁵

This knowledge of Anastasius' entire philosophy is important for understanding his instructions to laypeople because his theological vision is all encompassing. This is not to say that he is a systematic theologian, but rather that his dogmatic and exegetical theology fully informs his pastoral and ascetical writing. In this he is securely in the tradition of the early Christian fathers, for whom all theology is soteriological in essence. We can see this immediately in the *Questions and Answers*. Anastasius starts from the "first things" of spiritual life. Thus the first question is, "What is the indication of a true and perfect Christian?" Anastasius replies:

Some say that it is correct faith and works of piety, but Christ for his part does not define the really true Christian by these things; for one can have both faith and good works and be proud about them and not be a perfect Christian. So the Lord says that, "He who loves me will keep my commandments, and I will love him and reveal myself to him, and I and my Father will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (*John* 14:21-23).

¹² For the present essay I was able to consult the text, translation and notes of Binggeli's unpublished edition of the *Narrations*, but not the introduction, where he may have advanced the arguments for their attribution to Anastasius of Sinai found in Flusin, "Démon et Sarrasin."

¹³ Still not in a modern critical edition: Anastasius of Sinai. "Oratio de sacra synaxi," *Patrologia Graeca* 89 (1860): 826-850.

¹⁴ These are considered at some length in Munitiz, "Anastasios of Sinai."

¹⁵ Anastasius of Sinai. *Viae dux*. Ed. Karl-Heinz Uthemann. Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 8. Turnhout: Brepols, 1981; *Sermones duo*. Ed. Karl-Heinz Uthemann. Corpus Christianorum 12. Turnhout: Brepols, 1985. The attribution of a *Hexaemeron* to Anastasius was long considered dubious, but more recent work on his other writings has tended to support his authorship; see the comments by Uthemann in the introduction to *Sermones duo*, cxxxix-cl, and by Baggary and Kuehn in the introduction to *Hexaemeron*, xiii-xxiii.

Therefore through these things we learn that it is through faith and good works that the house of our soul is built by our mind; but if Christ, the master of the house does not come and dwell in us, it is obvious that the house that we made for him did not please him.¹⁶

The next question follows up on this answer by asking how a man is to know if Christ has come to dwell in him. There follow questions on the eternal good things, true worship, the fate of unbelievers, remission of different kinds of sins, the terms of life, the nature of the soul, the manner of the resurrection of the dead, and more. In other words, the text addresses the questions that might be asked by Christians who know the basics of dogma but need guidance on concerns of a practical nature, or on speculative concerns to which the naturally inquisitive human mind demands some kind of answer.¹⁷

In general, as shown by his answer to the first question, quoted above, Anastasius' vision of the Christian life is a lofty one, involving not simply the confession of a specific creed or the keeping of certain commandments, but an actual indwelling of God in the believer. He is not afraid to teach his audience about the gift of tears of compunction or the practice of unceasing prayer.¹⁸ But at the same time he is attuned to the needs and difficulties of life in the world and suitably adapts his teaching. For example, with regard to unceasing prayer, he writes:

Q. What does "Pray unceasingly" (1 *Thessalonians* 5:17) mean? – for it is not possible for a man who is taking care of house and children and living in the world to pray unceasingly.

A. The Apostle did not at all say this about prayer which is through the tongue, as Christ also said that, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but rather he who does the will of him who sent me" (*Matthew* 7:21). Hence he who constantly works good, whether in alms, or in other ministries in accordance with God, he prays unceasingly; for even in bed, too, and on the road and at table

¹⁶ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 1.1–2.

¹⁷ For an overview of these concerns, more broad than my inquiry here, see Haldon, "Works of Anastasius," 129–47.

¹⁸ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 49 and 24. With reference to tears, he shows parallels with Climacus; see especially John Climacus, "Scala paradisi," 804a, 8.3.

and in the marketplace and in every place he is able to pray in the heart.¹⁹

The questioner expresses an explicitly lay perspective on this question, mentioning particularly the obligations of home and family, and Anastasius obliges with a suitable answer, even emphasizing the lay aspect by mentioning the road and marketplace, locations more customary for the layperson than the monk. Another passage shows directly the same kind of concern. Question 88 asks:

How can a person who is in a position of authority and has many blessings from God, who administers affairs and cannot be outside worldly life, who enjoys a rich table and varied foods and baths: how can he remain un-condemned in the midst of these, and obtain remission of sins?²⁰

Anastasius' response is multi-faceted. He begins by reminding the inquirer that most of the saints were wealthy (although it is noteworthy that he only mentions Old Testament saints). He continues by mentioning that the devil tricks people into thinking that they need to be monks in order to be saved; they put off the time of renunciation, sin without restraint in the meanwhile and, eventually being unable to renounce the world, they go to eternal fire in their sins. Even the unrighteous rulers of the Old Testament had a chance, for the wicked king Manasses was saved by confession while Nebuchadnezzar was counselled by Daniel to give alms. The mention of alms leads Anastasius to draw attention to the spectacle of Christians suffering under the present regime. He describes their plight as worse than that of the Jewish exiles of old, since today's Christian captives dwell in the desert. Anastasius continues, "If you do not have money, at least make it a habit that, whenever you enjoy earthly goods, you mentally condemn yourself before God and ask him to free you from condemnation in their enjoyment." Finally, he has no time for those who would selfishly keep their material blessings to themselves by arguing that God only wanted to bestow wealth on them and not on the poor.

The response contains many classic elements of lay piety: affirmation that it is not only monks who need to practice virtue, citation of saints

¹⁹ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

as exemplars, emphasis on the possibility of repentance for even the most wicked, and above all, alms. Alms-giving was the great equalizer, since laypeople had at their disposal the wealth that monks were supposed to have renounced, and thus they were in a better position to be wise stewards of that wealth for good causes.

The great preachers of early Christianity had used their rhetorical skills to depict the desperate plight of the poor, in order to move grudging laypeople to actually turn their wealth into alms.²¹ Anastasius follows that tradition in this passage, but in a way that evinces the changed religious context. He refers to “the present generation, seeing our brethren and co-religionists and children in such straits and misfortune, in deserts and untrodden places and in torments and hunger and thirst and nakedness and hard labour and toil.”²² The plight of these captives is depicted in another question, expressed in their voice²³:

Q. If I am subject to servitude, or in captivity, and I am not able to spend time in church as I wish or when I wish, or to fast or to keep vigil, how can I be saved and obtain remission of sins?

A. It is clear that captivity and servitude and suffering have happened to you for remission of sins. Therefore, if you keep your faith and give thanks to God for your servitude and consider it in humility saying, “You are just, Lord, in all that you have done (*Deuteronomy* 3:27 LXX) to me, and I have not suffered anything in proportion to my sins,” this humility and gratitude will be reckoned to you as fasting and liturgy. Not only that, but if a man loves God, he is able, wherever he may be, to remember God in his heart.²⁴

²¹ See Holman, Susan R. *The Hungry Are Dying. Beggars and Bishops in Roman Capadocia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

²² Many such captives came from Anastasius’ native Cyprus. The island’s losses are recorded by local inscriptions: see Browning, Robert. “Byzantium and Islam in Cyprus in the Early Middle Ages,” *Epeteris tou Kentrou Epistemonikon Spoudon* 9 (1977-79), 101-16; Cameron, Averil. “Cyprus at the Time of the Arab Conquests,” *Cyprus Historical Review* 1 (1992), 27-49. Anastasius mentions Cypriot prisoners in Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 28.16.

²³ The specific question may never have been phrased this way by a real questioner, but it is assumed that Anastasius may have formulated it for didactic purposes, based on his experience of people’s real queries.

²⁴ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 87.

The questioner considers such practices necessary for forgiveness and salvation, part and parcel as they were of Christian preaching and teaching. But Anastasius, in line with his theological and ascetical principles, turns the answer to the essence of the matter, to the disposition of the heart and its activity. The difficulties of conditions actually serve to bring together monk and the layman; Anastasius implies by following up with an old story from the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, where Anthony the Great was informed by God that there was a doctor in Alexandria who was his equal through his alms-giving and constant prayer.²⁵ Here we see a classic apophthegm, a piece of the wisdom of the desert that had served to emphasize the unity of both monasticism and lay life in the one Christian body, taking on a new poignancy and relevance through its application to the contemporary dislocation.²⁶

This question addressed one set of hardships suffered by captive Christians who had become slaves, and thus no longer had control over their own bodies and physical lives. A more desperate situation was that of enslaved Christian women who were forced into sex by their masters.²⁷ Anastasius distinguishes between those women who submit to the situation out of love of pleasure, and thus receive a heavier judgment, and those who do so out of necessity. The question leads him to address a related issue, which pertains to communal solidarity among Christians: he attacks those women who, in the midst of these circumstances, flaunt luxury right in front of their sisters who are in chains. It is unclear whether he is referring specifically to the concubines already mentioned, or generally inveighing against those Christians who would enjoy wealth while others are in want. This latter category was not limited to slaves who prostituted themselves in order to obtain a measure of physical ease. The aforementioned Question 88 was posed by someone who was apparently

²⁵ "Apophthegmata patrum collectio alphabetica," *Patrologia Graeca* 65 (1857): 84b, Anthony 24.

²⁶ Incidentally, the mention of almsgiving in the apophthegm would be more relevant to the case of the questioner in Question 88 than to the destitute slave of the desert addressed here. The monks of Sinai practised what Anastasius preached, bringing communion to Christian captives in the desert when possible (Anastasius, *Narrationes*, 1.33). In Anastasius, *Narrationes*, 2.19, Anastasius describes a man who is so full of Christian love that he sells himself temporarily into slavery to ransom a prisoner. Flusin argues that Anastasius is the man in question, speaking in the third person out of modesty: see Flusin, "Démon et Sarrasins," 400–4.

²⁷ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 76.

not a slave, but who was rather “in a position of authority and has many blessings from God, who administers affairs...”²⁸ The questioner would presumably have been one of the many Christians who still held a post in the civil bureaucracy, a necessary cog in the machinery of tax gathering and governance that the Arab conquerors inherited from the Roman state, and largely maintained for their own benefit.²⁹ Whether those who stood to gain by Arab rule were slaves or secretaries, the dichotomy of oppression and opportunity was, in fact, one of the greatest challenges facing Anastasius and his fellow Christian leaders and teachers at this time.

The advent of Islamic rule brought with it not a fully-fledged persecution, which might have strengthened and purified the Church through adversity. Instead it imposed a long-term, continuous burden of subjugation and taxation, a situation in which some of the Christians were able to benefit by serving as middlemen or providers of goods and services to the ruling Muslim elites. The resultant tensions threatened to fracture the Christian community along lines of wealth and privilege. The danger was, of course, not completely new; class differences had always been seen by conscientious pastors as obstacles to unity within the body of the Church. In fact, some of the same remedies were supplied by Anastasius, notably almsgiving and the simple empathy and compassion that came from considering the sufferings of one’s brethren, rather than ignoring them. In this way he mobilised age-old virtues and long-held Christian practices in a creative way under the new circumstances.

This is not say that Anastasius only reserved his criticisms for the conduct of the overweening among his Christian flock. He engaged in a sustained and harsh polemic against the religion of the conquerors. This is not so apparent in the *Questions and Answers*, although it shows through in some passages where he refers to the savagery and destruction they wrought on both the persons and the churches of Christian believers.³⁰ While maintaining, in accordance with New Testament teaching, that the authorities ought to be obeyed and even that prayers should

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁹ Cf. Kennedy, Hugh. “Syrian Elites from Byzantium to Islam. Survival or Extinction?” in *Money, Power, and Politics in Early Islamic Syria*, ed. John Haldon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 181–200, and esp. 284–86.

³⁰ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 101.1. He also refers to the pollution of Sinai itself by the Muslims in Anastasius, *Narrationes*, 1.5, and to the forced conversion of the Christian Arabs of Sinai to Islam in a lurid tale: *ibid.*, 2.8.

be said on their behalf, he sees the Arabs as a punishment sent by God, like the Assyrians to Israel, who have, however, gone far beyond their duties because of their own savagery, and will hopefully suffer their own punishment in due time.³¹ As for doctrinal polemic, this takes two forms in Anastasius' writings. Firstly, there are the specific points of intellectual theological disagreement, which are addressed occasionally in the *Hodegos*.³² But Anastasius did not expect everyone to be able to dispute the finer points of theology with heretics. Indeed, he cautions even the more learned against doing so.

Q. If I am asked about religion by heretics, and I do not know how to argue about dogmatics, what should I do?

A. It is dangerous to speak about religion, not only for you who do not know, but also for those who seem to know. Say therefore to him who asks you that "I am a person of private station, but if perhaps you are in truth seeking the truth, come to the church, and there you will learn pious religion."³³

In the follow-up question, when pressed by his questioner to supply some kind of rebuttal to such challenges, he recommends the following argument: if one likens the holy sites of the Old and New Testament to the treasures of a king, one notes that they have been entrusted by the heavenly King only to the catholic (Chalcedonian) church, and have always been possessed by it, even under unbelieving rulers such as the Arabs. The proof is rather simplistic but has the advantage of dealing in striking metaphors and concrete facts. This particular case primarily answers Christian heretics, but presumably a similar method would be proper in dealing with Muslims.³⁴

³¹ On prayer for non-Christian rulers: Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 60 and 65. On their impending punishment: *ibid.*, 101.3-5.

³² For details, see Griffith, Sidney H. "Anastasios of Sinai, the Hodegos, and the Muslims," *GOTR* 32.4 (1987), 341-58.

³³ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 68.

³⁴ Compare Anastasius' response to the reticence (regarding Origenist disputes) of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza. *Quaestiones et responsiones*. Ed. François Neyt and Paula de Angelis-Noah and tr. Lucien Regnault as: *Correspondance*. Sources Chrétiennes 426-27, 450-51, 468. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1997, 600-7. Obviously such caution on Anastasius' part did not stem from any polemical incapacity, as demonstrated by the exhaustive arguments against heresy laid out in the *Viae dux*.

Thus the second form of doctrinal polemic emphasizes specific tangible differences in religious practice. For instance, two questions in the collection address polygamy, an issue which could tempt Christians to blur the lines of moral conduct due to Muslim influence, even if it did not involve actual conversion to Islam. I will quote here only the second question:

Q. Many of the unbelievers – nay, not only, but also of the believers – being attached to the polygamy of the Law, bring forward against us the word of the Lord which says that “I did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it” (*Matthew* 5:17). What then should we reply concerning this?³⁵

Anastasius’ answers here and in response to the other question on the same topic rely on supersessionism, emphasizing that Christianity is a higher calling than the carnal ways permitted under the old dispensation: “Desiring different women happens among us due to wantonness and lack of fear of God.”³⁶ This emphasis on high moral standards is of a piece with Anastasius’ general ascetic vision, and would also have an important continuing role in Christian polemics against Islam.

A more passionate and sustained polemic in the *Narrations* focuses on difference in practices that are primarily related to ritual and worship. Specific stories serve to demonstrate the contempt of the Arabs for such venerable Christian symbols as icons, crosses, the Eucharist, church buildings, and the relics of the saints. The moral usually drawn from these accounts is that the Arabs are worse than demons: the latter fear these holy objects and are regularly exorcized through them, whereas the former trample them underfoot sacrilegiously.³⁷ This line of argumentation would have probably been more effective for the vast majority of Anastasius’ flock than detailed doctrinal discussions. Such things were more immediate and more understandable to the average believer. The issue of sacred space was particularly salient. We have seen that it was raised in Anastasius’ recommended proof against heretics, in arguing from Orthodox ownership of the holy sites. With regard to the Muslims, it is the

³⁵ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 100.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.2.

³⁷ See especially Anastasius, *Narrationes*, 2.2,14,20. On Saracens in league with demons, and even worse than demons, see Flusin, “Démons et Sarrasins,” 404–9.

theme of a story in the second book of the *Narrations*. Anastasius describes his own perception, confirmed by that of other monks, of demonic activity during the preparatory work for Muslim building on the Temple Mount. The conclusion of the account is particularly revealing about the problems that Anastasius faced in trying to hold his people to strict Orthodoxy: "I considered it necessary to include this on account of those who think and say that the temple being built right now in Jerusalem is a temple of God."³⁸ As with the issue of polygamy discussed above, this seems to indicate that there were Christians of a syncretistic bent who were willing to consider Islam as a legitimate religion, and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem a restoration of the Old Testament Temple. Anastasius is opposed to any such syncretism. His views call for a minimum of civil obedience and cooperation with the dominant Islamic power, while maintaining a resolute face against the theological tenets of the opposing faith.

This is consistent with his overall theological vision, which is concerned with Christian heresy as well as with the religion of the conquerors.³⁹ It is important that we remember this when trying to understand Anastasius and his Chalcedonian flock in context. He hoped for a relatively swift abolition of Arab overlordship.⁴⁰ Thus, although his polemic against Islam was strong and articulate, it may not have been his primary concern. The longer-term and more intractable challenge (at least in his eyes) was the Monophysite Christian church that claimed the allegiance of much of the population in Egypt and Syria. Accordingly, Anastasius dedicates most of the *Hodegos* to disputation with Monophysite theologians of various stripes, and some of the pages of the *Questions and Answers* also deal with this perceived threat. The *Narrations*, however, have nothing to say about Monophysites. This may be due to the difficulties involved in differentiating them from the Orthodox on the level of tangible practices, which, as discussed, are the primary focus of that text. Such silence stands in marked contrast to the work's immediate predecessor in the genre of "edifying tales", the *Spiri-*

³⁸ Anastasius, *Narrationes*, 2.7. Anastasius connects the work being done thirty years before with contemporary work on the Dome of the Rock, built under 'Abd al-Malik largely as a claim of Islamic domination over the Holy City: see Binggeli, "Réçits," 538, n. 54.

³⁹ Though he may have considered Islam an outlandish Christian heresy, as did many other Christian apologists.

⁴⁰ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 101.

tual Meadow of John Moschos.⁴¹ The latter work is full of anecdotes of miraculous proof of Orthodoxy against the heretics. We can, in fact, learn the reason for Anastasius' reticence from the *Questions and Answers*. In response to a request for exegesis of *Matthew 7:22-23*, Anastasius replies:

Signs and miracles and foretelling often happen even through unworthy people because of some need or dispensation, as in the case of Balaam and of the ventriloquist bringing up Samuel from the earth (*Numbers 22-23*; *1 Kings 28:11-12*) ... It is necessary to know these things so that when you see some sign done even through heretics or even through unbelievers, according to some judgment of God, you be not shaken from the Orthodox faith due to signs and prodigies; for perhaps God is even testing you by working the sign and the prodigy.⁴²

Anastasius was probably aware that the Monophysites themselves had books full of their own miracles disproving the Chalcedonian faith.⁴³ His concern was to keep the focus on proper obedience to constituted Orthodox authorities, using some basic arguments to provide a first line of defence, but leaving the intricacies of the debate to qualified theologians (such as himself), who, he was confident, could prove the credentials of the creed of Chalcedon as the true interpretation of Christianity.

But, as with Islam, the temptation to syncretism was an ever-present reality. In the case of Monophysitism, we can see this clearly in a question concerning the practice of Communion:

Q. Is it good to carry Holy Communion in a vessel when traveling abroad, or to commune wherever we may find a church?

A. Firstly, the all-holy body of Christ is not insulted by being carried and borne about. For Christ himself was in the habit of traveling about to visit everyone and, as I have said, he is

⁴¹ There is as yet no modern critical edition of this text; see instead John Moschos, "Pratum spirituale," *Patrologia Graeca* 87 (1860): 2851-3116. Tr. John Wortley as: *The Spiritual Meadow*. Cistercian Studies 139. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992.

⁴² Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 62.

⁴³ Such as John Rufus. *Plerophories*. Ed. François Nau in *Patrologia Orientalis* 8 (1912), 1-161. See the study by Steppa, Jan-Eric. *John Rufus and the World Vision of Anti-Chalcedonian Culture*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2005.

not insulted by a place, unless it be a polluted heart. Secondly, that nobody has any authority to commune outside of the holy catholic Church, the Apostle teaches us saying: "One Lord (that is, the true one), one faith (that is, the pious right-believing one; the rest are not faiths, but deaths)" (*Ephesians* 4:5). So then, as when we travel from our own wife, if we come together with another, it is not marriage but fornication, much more should we guard the chastity also of our holy Church, the spotless spouse of Christ.⁴⁴

The questioner demonstrates a very strong, even superstitious reverence for the Eucharist paired with an assumption that any Christian church offers a valid Eucharist. Anastasius deals with the first by instructing his audience in a more spiritual interpretation of communion, and with the second by a powerful metaphor for fidelity to the Orthodox church.⁴⁵ In line with Anastasius' preference for simple rebuttals of heresy, his argument is more memorable than any intricate explanation of proper apostolic succession, Eucharistic ecclesiology, or the like. In any case, the question gives a strong hint of the kind of situation in which his flock found itself. Once separated by distance from their familiar local church they could not be certain of the Orthodoxy of just any place of worship and any liturgy. This would be particularly relevant in areas where Chalcedonian congregations were few and far between. It should also be remembered that at this time, reception of Monophysites into the Orthodox Church was a simple affair, usually achieved simply by the choice to receive communion from an Orthodox priest. The simplicity was designed to make it easier for conciliation and conversion of repentant heretics, but it could also lend itself to ambiguity and equivocation, with someone receiving either Eucharist according to their convenience.⁴⁶ Such

⁴⁴ Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 64.

⁴⁵ The same metaphor is used by the sainted patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almsgiver, in a portion of a festal letter incorporated into the *Vita Joannis Eleemosynarii episcopi Alexandrini* by his biographer Leontius of Neapolis. Ed. and tr. André-Jean Festugière as: *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1974, 398–399. A story based on the analogy is found at John Moschus, "Pratum Spirituale," *Patrologia Graeca* 87 (1860): 3056–3068; *The Spiritual Meadow*, 160–62.

⁴⁶ For the easy access to communion afforded repenting heretics, see Anastasius, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, 13. For the inconstancy this could engender, see Sophronius the Sophist. *Narratio miraculorum sanctorum Cyri et Joannis*. Ed. Natalio Fernán-

vacillation could actually be a sign of piety, not indifference, since it indicated a strongly felt need for communion on the part of the laity. Anastasius' response thus seeks to minister to that need in a practical way, promoting properly spiritual participation in the Eucharist, while still maintaining strict boundaries of Orthodoxy.⁴⁷

Many more examples of Anastasius' instruction in lay piety could be adduced, but let this suffice to indicate the typical concerns of his flock and the general lines of his thought. A broadly erudite and competent theologian, his true genius lay in interpreting doctrines for his Chalcedonian brethren and laying down clear guidelines of belief and conduct, along with sufficient basic reasoning to make these rules convincing and broadly applicable. The picture of his audience that can be gleaned from his writings is of a pious people who knew the general requirements of belief and practice, and were intelligent enough to ask for the deeper meaning, but needed further guidance on details. Such instruction was always necessary for the laity, especially in a climate of Christological competition, but the political dominance of Islam changed many of the circumstances of Christian life and debate. In response, Anastasius emphasized a strong commitment to the holy pilgrimage sites of Sinai and Jerusalem (crucially, still in Chalcedonian custody), a sensitive application of monastic ascetical principles to life in the world, and a fervent defense of Christian relics, images, and sacraments in the context of a strict Chalcedonian Orthodox theology. In this way, he was able to produce an articulate expression of lay culture to sustain the Chalcedonian ecclesiastical community as it faced the theological and political challenges of living under Muslim rulers and on an equal footing with Monophysite neighbours.

dez Marcos as: *Los Thaumata de Sofronio. Contribución al estudio de la incubatio Cristiana*. Madrid: Instituto Antonio de Nebrija, 1975, 37.6-7 and 38.6.

⁴⁷ His own theology sometimes borders on the allegorical when it comes to the Eucharist and church community (as in Anastasius, *Hexaemeron*, 12.4.2-6), or to the superstitious (as in Anastasius, *Narrationes*, 2.4), but in general he is a staunch promoter of Eucharistic piety.

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Portraying Early Islam as the *milla* of Abraham - A Look at the *tafsīr* Evidence*

Jacob Ollidort

(Princeton University, Department of Near Eastern Studies)

Abraham holds a special place in the Islamic scholarly tradition as the prototypical Islamic prophet whose example Muḥammad and the Muslims are instructed to follow. Described in the Qur'ān as both a *ḥanīf* ("inclining [towards a correct way]") and a *ḥanīf muslim* ("inclining correctly [as a] Muslim" or "inclining correctly in submission"), Abraham acquired the reputation of having been the first prophet to embrace the "original and true (monotheistic) religion" and the original version of Islam.¹ Indeed, his importance in Judaism, Christianity and Islam has

* I am grateful to the organizers and participants of the Second Roundtable on "Late Antiquity and Early Islam" for their help and comments on this paper, as well as for their hospitality during a stimulating conference at the Oriental Institute at Oxford University. A special thanks goes to Professors John Haldon of the History Department at Princeton and Robery Hoyland at Oxford for inviting me. I would like to acknowledge Professor David Powers for his time and care in reading drafts of this paper and for his critical feedback, without which the final product would have undoubtedly been incomplete. Similarly I am grateful to Professors Michael Cook and Bernard Haykel for their invaluable guidance, particularly at several challenging junctures, as well as to Professor Hossein Modarressi in whose seminar this paper originated. Finally, I am grateful for the comments of an anonymous reader. Needless to say, responsibility for any errors lies solely with me.

¹ Watt, W. Montgomery. "Ḥanīf". In *EI*². Cf. Lane, Edward W. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969, s.v. "ḥanīf". Both authors note the change in meaning of *ḥanīf* to "pagan" when used outside of its Qur'ānic context. Charles Lyall, who studied other references to the term *ḥanīf* in early Muslim historical texts, suggests that the name had religious and geographical connotations. Those to whom the epithet was applied, he writes, seemed to originate from the Ḥijāz and West Arabia and "their doctrine was distinct from Christianity, although several of those who professed the Ḥanīfite faith adopted that religion, and [that religion] was also distinct from Islām." Among its salient features, he writes, were its "rejection of idolatry, abstinence from certain kinds of food and the worship of 'the God of Abraham.'" Watt

inspired a rich body of scholarship on Abraham and his place in the Qur'ān.² Nonetheless, Abraham's reputation as a model for Islamic ritual and piety has not hitherto been fully considered.³

argues that the change in terminology from *ḥanīf* to *ḥanīf muslim* suggests that the Muḥammad's community at Medina understood that *ḥanīf* signified "pagan" and was not comfortable with this understanding. Thus they called Abraham a *ḥanīf muslim* to separate him entirely from the pagan variety of *ḥanīf*. Watt also argues, based on the association of Muḥammad's message with the *millat* of Abraham through the term *ḥanīf muslim*, that "Islam" may not have actually been adopted as the religion's name until late in the Medinan period. According to Emran El-Badawi, in late antiquity Arabian tribes abandoned paganism and, in an effort to resemble and Christians, associated more strongly with Abraham and Ishmael. El-Badawi writes: "According to the Qur'an, the *ḥunafā'* of the Hijāz came to view Abraham as the earliest *ḥanīf* since he came before both Hebrew and Christian scripture – vindicating him from the heretical stain latent of the *ḥanpē* in the Aramaic sphere." The contrast between "Abraham the *ḥanīf*" and the polytheists, according to El-Badawi, is "an emendation to the views espoused in Paul's Letters where Abraham is portrayed as the paragon of faith": see El-Badawi, Emran. "Sectarian Scripture. The Qur'ān's Dogmatic Re-Articulation of the Aramaic Gospel Traditions in the Late Antique Near East" (University of Chicago Ph.D. Thesis, 2011), 81ff; Lyall, Charles J. "The Words 'Ḥanīf' and 'Muslim,'" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Oct., 1903), 773; cf. Gibb, H.A.R. "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia," *The Harvard Theological Review* 55.4 (Oct., 1962), 269-80; and Watt W. Montgomery. *Muhammad. Prophet and Statesman*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961, 114-18. *Millat Ibrāhīm* has proved an especially important concept in modern polemics on the proper way to understand what constitutes the Islamic community: see especially *Millat Ibrāhīm (The Religion of Ibrāhīm) and the Calling of the Prophets and Messengers*. Vol.1. Al-Tibyān Publications, 1984 [=1405], written by the Jordanian Salafī-Jihādī Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī, in which *millat Ibrāhīm* is presented as the pure and original form of Islam, especially in its exaltation of *tawḥīd* and Abraham's "enmity towards the people of *shirk* (polytheism) and *kufr* (unbelief) and his taking them and that which they worshipped as enemies." (al-Maqdisī, *Millat Ibrāhīm*, 5-6.) For one response to such interpretations of *millat Ibrāhīm*, see Fūda, Sa'īd. *Al-naqd wa-l-taqwīm*. Amman: Dār al-Rāzī, 2004, 17-18.

² The foundational western studies on the subject include: Geiger, Abraham. *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (Leipzig 1902) Tr. F.M. Young as: *Judaism and Islam*. MDCSPCK Press: Madras: 1898; Hurgonje, C. Snouck. *Het Mekkaansche Feest*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1880; Bousquet, G.H. "La légende d'Abraham et la politique religieuse du Prophète Mohammad par Snouck Hurgonje," *Revue Africaine* 95 (1951), 273-88; Beck, Edmund. "Die Gestalt des Abraham am Wendepunkt der Entwicklung Muhammads," *Le Muséon* 65 (1952), 73-94; Moubarac, Youakim. *Abraham dans le Coran*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1958; Wensinck, A.J. "Ibrāhīm". In *EI*¹; Paret, Rudi. "Ibrāhīm". In *EI*².

³ I am not aware of any studies on the subject of how Abraham exemplified true Islam and how his actions are meant to be followed by the Muslim community, but see now Hawting, Gerald. "The Religion of Abraham," in Martin Goodman, George van Kooten and Jacques van Ruiten, eds., *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites* (Leiden: Brill,

The Qur'ān uses the word *milla* (translated variably as “religion”, “community”, and “law”) in describing Abraham’s life and on six occasions instructs the Muslim community to “follow the *milla* of Abraham” (*ittabi millat Ibrāhīm*).⁴ The six Qur'ānic verses⁵ that use this expression, and which will be referenced here, read as follows:

Q. 2:130: “And who loathes the *milla* of Abraham except he who makes a fool of himself? Indeed, We chose him in the present world, and in the world to come he shall be among the righteous.”

Q. 2:135: “And they say, ‘Be Jews or Christians and you shall be guided.’ Say, rather the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, he was not of the polytheists.”

Q. 3:95: “Say, ‘God has spoken the truth, so follow the *milla* of Abraham, the *ḥanīf*, he was not of the polytheists.”

Q. 4:125: “Who is he who is better in religion than he who submits (*aslama*) his will to God being a good-doer, and who follows the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*. And God took Abraham for a friend.”

Q. 6:161: “Say, ‘As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path – a right religion – the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, and he was not of the polytheists.”

Q. 16:123: “Then We have inspired you to follow the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, he was not of the polytheists.”

The multiple appearances of the phrase *millat Ibrāhīm* in the Qur'ān, particularly with the command *ittabi* (“follow”), attest to its status as a central concept. The cryptic nature of the word *milla*⁶ and the example

2010) 477-502. Although the subject is the same, the reader will notice that our objectives and approaches differ significantly: whereas Hawting examines Abraham and his *milla* historically, with reference to his relationship to Ishmael and Arab identity, I investigate the ritualistic and doctrinal legacy of Abraham’s *milla* on the way in which Muslims are expected to practice their faith. Other studies that explore the *Ḥanīfī* religion include: Rubin, Uri. “*Ḥanīfiyya* and *Ka’ba*. An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *dīn Ibrāhīm*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 85-112; Lyall, “The Words ‘*Ḥanīf*’ and ‘*Muslim*’”; Gibb, “Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia.”

⁴ The *milla* of Abraham is an important motif in *ḥadīth*, particularly as a parallel to the *milla* of Muḥammad. Cf. Wensinck, A.J. *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane. Les six livres, le Musnad d’al-Dārimī, le Muwatta’ de Mālik, le Musnad de Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1936-1988, Vols. 3-4: 248-49.

⁵ The translations here are based on those of Arberry, A.J. *The Koran Interpreted*. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

⁶ Other terms attached to Abraham are perhaps clearer in their connotations, such as *dīn* (“religion”) and *āl* (“the house/people of”), which, I argue, are distinct. Cf.

of Abraham raise several questions regarding the place of his life and practice in the formation of Muslim historical, theological and legal discourse. What precisely does the word *milla* mean, or rather how was it understood? What is being commanded in the phrase “follow the *milla* of Abraham”? Who is being commanded?

I will examine the concept of the *milla* of Abraham in two parts. In the first section I present a range of definitions of the word *milla* in the classical lexicons. In the second section I survey exegeses of the verses containing the phrase *millat Ibrāhīm* in several *tafsīr* works. This section will be subdivided according to how these exegetes discuss three themes: the *Hanīfī* religion (*al-ḥanīfīya*) and who qualifies as a *hanīf*, which appears in five of the six verses; the nature of *millat Ibrāhīm*; and what Muslims are expected to follow from *millat Ibrāhīm*.⁷ It has become popular of late to turn to late antique Christian and Jewish religious texts to explicate the Qur’an rather than to Muslim lexical and exegetical texts.⁸ This makes good sense for those seeking to uncover the “original” meaning of Qur’anic words, phrases and concepts, but my aim here is to discern the significance of the notion of *millat Ibrāhīm* to the

Q. 3:33: “For God has chosen Adam, Noah and the House of Abraham” (*in allāha iṣṭafā ādama wa-nūḥa wa-āl-ibrāhīm*). Some jurists use the expression *sharī‘at Ibrāhīm* interchangeably with *millat Ibrāhīm*. Cf. “Aqīl, ‘Aqīl Ḥusayn. *Ibrāhīm ‘alayhi al-salām min waḥy al-Qur’ān*. Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr li-l-Ṭibā‘a wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī’, 2010, 40-41, 185. ‘Aqīl explains that there is a further distinction between *ahl* and *āl*, the latter referring to the offspring or kin while the former is a much broader group, as in the phrase *ahl al-janna*. In his section on *millat Ibrāhīm* he explains that *milla* refers to the whole of the revealed law (*jumlat al-sharī‘a*) while *dīn* is that version of it to which a community belongs. Cf. Rubin, “*Hanīfīyya* and *Ka’ba*,” 101. Without mentioning the phrase *millat Ibrāhīm*, Rubin explains that the *dīn Ibrāhīm* to which Muḥammad was introduced was represented by a “monotheistic idea” centered on the *Ka’ba*.

⁷ Of course, one important issue closely related to the subject of this paper is the origin and early usages of the title “*muslim*.” This is itself a subject for a comprehensive examination and several good studies have been written on the subject. See, most recently, Fred Donner. *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origins of Islam*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010, who argues that it was a community of believers (including Christians and Jews) who characterised the early community and that a distinct Muslim identity emerged only a century after Muḥammad’s lifetime. While the subject is not addressed directly here, it is hoped that this paper will contribute to discussions on how similar labels, namely *hanīf* and *hanīf-muslim*, were variously understood.

⁸ An excellent example of this is Reynolds, Gabriel. *The Qur’ān and its Biblical Subtext*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.

post-Muhammad Muslim community and the change in its significance over time, for which the Muslim literature is indispensable.

12.1 Definitions

The debate in the classical lexicons centres on whether *milla* connotes a concrete command or a more abstract sense of submission. Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 170/787) renders the *milla* of the Prophet as “the command (*al-amr*) that he has expounded to the people.”⁹ Al-Azharī (d. 370/981) glosses the word *mamlūl*, a passive participle from the same root as *milla*, as “a representative example (*mithāl mumaththal*) of that which is performed in the *milla* of the polytheists.”¹⁰ Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) defines *milla* as “revealed law and religion” (*al-sharīʿa wa-l-dīn*). As examples, he mentions Islam, Judaism and Christianity. He then cites an opinion that *milla* refers to “their living tradition and way” (*sunnatahum wa-ṭarīqatahum*).¹¹

Writing several centuries later, Muḥammad Aʿlā b. ʿAlī al-Ṭahānawī (fl. 1158/1745) explains *milla* as the nominal form of *imlāʾ* (“dictation” or “transmission”).¹² Alternatively, according to al-Ṭahānawī, *mamlūl* (“trodden”), as in *ṭarīq mamlūl*, is synonymous with *maslūk* (“walked upon”).¹³ He adds that the word *milla* as used in the context of the fundamentals (*uṣūl*) of different revealed legal systems (*sharāʿi*) refers to the tenets that Muḥammad explained and upon which there is no disagreement among the other prophets. *Milla*, according to al-Ṭahānawī, is an expression of obedience (*al-ṭāʿa*) and it is this fundamental submission (*inqiyād*) that is signified by phrases such as *millat Ibrāhīm*, rather than positive laws (*furūʿ*). Al-Ṭahānawī also provides a useful distinc-

⁹ Text: *wa-millat rasūl allāh al-amr alladhī awḍahahu li-l-nās*. al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-ʿayn*. Ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003, 4:167.

¹⁰ al-Azharī, Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. *Tahdhīb al-luġha*. Ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ābyārī. Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1967, 15:353. Text: *arāda ka-annahu mithāl mumaththal mimma yuʿbad fi-milal al-mushrikīn*.

¹¹ Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad b. Mukarram. *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Ed. ʿAlī Shīrī. 18 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1988, 13:188-89.

¹² Al-Ṭahānawī, Muḥammad Aʿlā b. ʿAlī. *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn*. Eds. Muḥammad Wajīh, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, Ghulām Qādir. 2 vols. Tehran: Maktabat Khayyām, 1967, 2:1349. He credits Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) with this analogy.

¹³ Al-Ṭahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 2:1349.

tion between *milla* and *sharīʿa*. *Sharīʿa* refers to the particular rulings (*al-ahkām al-juzʿiyya*) associated with the present world and the world to come. *Milal*, the plural of *milla*, refers to “the numerous religions that correspond to the number of law givers (*aṣḥāb al-sharāʿi*”, viz. Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad).”¹⁴

The lexical debate centres on several definitions. Al-Azharī’s gloss of “representative example” recalls the notion of *sunna*. Ibn Manẓūr, similarly, defines *milla* as a combination of *sharīʿa* and *dīn*. Al-Ṭahānawī and his sources, on the other hand, distinguish *milla* from *sharīʿa*, the former signifying a broader and more abstract category of religious affiliation, perhaps akin to faith. The laws, which he terms *sharīʿa*, do stem from the *milla* but are nonetheless independent of it.¹⁵ There is, then, a disagreement not only about what *milla* means but also about its connection to the fundamental concept of *sharīʿa*. This tension seems to be based on how to define the relationship between beliefs and the practices that signify allegiance to them. This tension is paralleled in the exegetical explication of Abraham’s dual legacy as both the first prophet to have accepted the unique message of God’s oneness (symbolized by his shattering of the idols in his father’s house), as well as the first to have actually performed what later came to be recognized as “Islamic” rituals and obligations. It is with the aim of understanding the relationship between these two dimensions of Abraham — pure faith and exemplary ritual observance — that we turn to the exegetical discussion.

12.2 Millat Ibrāhīm in *tafsīr*

12.2.1 Defining *ḥanīf*

One way to begin our investigation of the meaning of *millat Ibrāhīm* is to consider the meaning of the word *ḥanīf*, which appears in five of the six Qurʾānic verses discussed here. One of the earliest opinions on the matter appears in the *tafsīr* of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), who offers several definitions of the word, each specific to a different context. In Q. 2:135, in which Jews and Christians summon Muslims to join their ranks, the Muslims are commanded to respond with, “Nay, rather (*bal*) the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*.” Here the word *ḥanīf* serves as a contrast to “Jew” and “Christian”, and Muqātil thus glosses it as

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

mukhlis (loyal, righteous). *Mukhlis* also conveys the sense of *ḥanīf* in Q. 4:125 (“Who is he who is better in religion than he who submits his will to God being a good-doer, and who follows the *milla* of Abraham, the *ḥanīf*”).¹⁶ According to Muqātil, in Q. 3:95 the phrase “God has spoken the truth” affirms what is stated in Q. 3:67 (“Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian but was rather a *ḥanīf muslim*”), and Abraham’s pilgrimage to the Ka‘ba is offered as proof of his being a *ḥanīf muslim*.¹⁷ In Q. 3:67, Muqātil translates *ḥanīf* as *ḥājj* (“pilgrim”). In his exegesis of these verses, Muqātil provides several definitions and usages for the word *ḥanīf*, which he renders variably as *mukhlis* and *ḥājj*, each used in different contexts, with the latter marking a distinct practice seen as fundamental to both Ḥanīfism and Islam. In addition to signifying performance of rituals, in Q. 3:67 the word *ḥanīf* serves to differentiate “true religion” from Judaism and Christianity.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/939) presents seven opinions on the translation of *ḥanīf* in Q. 2:135:

1. A *ḥanīf* is a pilgrim (*ḥājj*), according to Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 70/690).
2. A *ḥanīf* is one who is followed (*muttaba‘*), according to Mujāhid (d. 103/721).
3. A *ḥanīf* is one who is upright (*mustaqīm*), according to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b (d. 20/641).
4. A *ḥanīf* is one who believes in all of the prophets from the first of them to the last of them, according to Abū Qilāba (d. 107/726).
5. A *ḥanīf* is one who is righteous (*mukhlis*), according to Khaṣīf (d. 139/757).
6. A *ḥanīf* is one who faces the Ka‘ba during his prayers and tries to perform pilgrimage to it if he is able, according to Abū l-‘Āliyya (d. 90/709).
7. Ḥanīfism is testifying that “there is no God but God.” Included in [the definition of Ḥanīfism] is the prohibition of [relations with] mothers, daughters, maternal aunts and paternal aunts, and what

¹⁶ al-Balkhī, Muqātil b. Sulaymān. *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*. Ed. ‘Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shihāta. 4 vols. Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Ḥalabī, 1969, 1:70, 271, 410; 2:492, 493.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:184.

God Almighty forbade [of relations], as well as [the obligation of] circumcision. And [the tribe of] Ḥanīfa were in polytheism (*wa-kānat ḥanīfa fī-l-shirk*). They were polytheists (*ahl al-shirk*) and they would in their polytheism forbid [relations with] mothers, daughters, maternal aunts and paternal aunts, would perform pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, and would perform the ceremonies [of the pilgrimage], according to Qatāda (d. 118/798).¹⁸

Although the pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba* is mentioned in three of the reports — no doubt because of its importance for both Islamic and pre-Islamic communities — certain other practices, such as the first part of the *shahāda* and the acceptance of all of the prophets, seem to reflect what would become uniquely “Islamic” doctrines. While the practice of circumcision (found in report 7) is taken up by later writers such as al-Ṭabarī, the more clearly “Islamic” features of the report (such as the recitation of the first part of the *shahāda*) do not in fact reappear in later commentaries, with the exception of that of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373).

Qatāda's report provides an important clarification: Abraham's description as a *ḥanīf* does not refer to his being a member of the tribe of B. Ḥanīfa but rather of Ḥanīfism.¹⁹ The words “he was not of the polytheists” in Q. 2:135 clarify that Abraham's *ḥanīf* status excludes the possibility that he belonged to any polytheistic religion, including the B.

¹⁸ al-Rāzī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim. *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm. Musnad al-rasūl allāh wa-l-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābī’īn*. Ed. As‘ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib. 10 vols. Mecca; Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997, 1:241-42. Ibn Abī Ḥātim relates the same sequence of opinions elsewhere. In reference to Q. 4:125, he omits reports 5, 6 and 7 but includes an additional report which states that *ḥanīf* means *mukhlis*: cf. *ibid.*, 4:1074. For Q. 6:161 he retains the same sequence of reports, with the exception of reports 6 and 7: cf. *ibid.*, 5:1433-34.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the theories of paganism associated with *ḥanīf*, see Lyall, “The Words ‘Ḥanīf’ and ‘Muslim.’” The translation of *ḥanīf* as “heathen” is Nöldeke's, according to Lyall. Alternatively, it may refer to the veneration of the prophet Musaylima among the Banū Ḥanīfa. According to Lyall, “its origin must be left unexplained...we know approximately its meaning as a term of religion, but nothing certain as to its source.” The most convincing argument, in his view, is that it is a cognate of the Hebrew word *ḥanef* (heretic: Lyall, “The Words ‘Ḥanīf’ and ‘Muslim,’” 781ff. According to El-Badawi, *ḥunafā'* (Syr. *ḥanpē*) “had a wide range of meaning including heathens, pagans, godless ones, hypocrites, profane ones, impious ones, apostates, gentiles/Greeks and Sabians.” In the late antique Near East, the Syriac *ḥanpā* was a derogatory term given by Christians to those who engaged in “religious dissociation”—“who wanted no part in organized religion, especially Judaism and Christianity. They sought rather to worship the one God freely”: El-Badawi, “Sectarian Scripture,” 78-79. See also de Blois, “*Naṣrānī* (Nazōraios) and *ḥanīf* (ethnikos).”

Ḥanīfa. Based on these reports, it is evident not only that the Ḥanīfism included particular rituals and doctrines, but also that these were very similar, if not identical, to what would later become “Islamic” rituals and doctrines. Abraham, as both the representative *hanīf* and the pure example that Muḥammad is ordered to follow, is the link between what historically preceded the revelation of the Qur’ān and the eternal nature of Islam.

Regarding Q. 2:135, Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/945) mentions only two opinions on the definition of *hanīf*: (1) *muslim*; and (2) pilgrims (*al-ḥujjāj*).²⁰ He adds that *hanīf muslim* may refer to a pilgrim and that *hanīf* by itself may mean *muslim*. Therefore, while both *hanīf muslim* and *hanīf* refer to *muslim*, the former refers to ritual practice while the latter refers to faith commitments. Al-Māturīdī’s distinction between a practice-oriented *hanīf* and a belief-oriented *hanīf* is indicated by the two etymological definitions he offers for *hanīf*: (1) “one who turns towards (*al-mā’il*) the truth/God (*al-ḥaqq*) and to Islam”; and (2) “one who inclines (*aḥnafa*) towards one [route] over another.”²¹ Albeit brief, al-Māturīdī’s definition of *hanīf* indicates that he understood both *hanīf* and *hanīf muslim* to refer to *muslim* — a monotheist who observes pilgrimage — and that the two phrases are both needed because each emphasizes a different aspect of *muslim*.

²⁰ al-Māturīdī al-Samarqandī, Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm al-musammā. Ta’wīlāt ahl al-sunna*. Ed. Fāṭima Yūsuf al-Khaymī. 5 vols. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla Nāshirūn, 2004, 1:98-99. Cf. *ibid.*, 2:200, where, regarding Q. 6:161, al-Māturīdī more explicitly endorses the definition of *hanīf* as *muslim*. In this context he notes that *hanīf* refers to *muslim*, since it implies the inclination towards the religion of God (*dīn allāh*), which is marked by being devoted entirely to Him (*khāliṣan li-allāh mukhlīṣan*) and in which “no one assigns partners to God in either His Lordship or in worship of him.” This equation of *hanīf* with *tawḥīd* (although al-Māturīdī does not use this term), occurs infrequently in the exegetical literature surveyed here, the exceptions being ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī in the fifth/eleventh century and Ibn Kathīr in the eighth/fourteenth century (both use the word *tawḥīd*).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1:506. This definition of *hanīf* is also cited by al-Māwardī: cf. al-Māwardī, Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad. *Al-nukat wa-l-‘uyūn*. Ed. al-Sayyid b. ‘Abd al-Maḥsūd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm. 6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1992, 1:194. Cf. al-Zamakhsharī, Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar. *Al-kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa-‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*. Ed. ‘Adīl Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu’awwad. 6 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat al-‘Ubaykān, 1998, 1:334. Similarly, al-Zamakhsharī translates *hanīf* as “one who turns away from all false religions (*al-mā’il ‘an kullī dīn bāṭil*) towards the religion of truth/God (*ilā dīni l-ḥaqq*).”

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) mentions four opinions on the meaning of *ḥanīf*: (1) a pilgrim (*ḥājj*); (2) one who is followed (*muttabaʿ*), and thus is upright — *mustaqīm*; (3) one who is loyal or righteous (*mukhlis*); and (4) one who is circumcised.²² Explaining the meaning of *ḥājj*, he writes that “whoever performs pilgrimage to the Kaʿba and performs the ceremonies [of the pilgrimage] of Abraham according to his *milla* is a *ḥanīf muslim* according to the religion (*dīn*) of Abraham.”²³ From this explanation he infers that the *dīn* of Abraham is in fact *Ḥanīfī* Islam since “he was the first leader to require the worshippers of his time as well as those who came after him until the Day of Judgment to perform the ceremonies of the pilgrimage.”²⁴ Al-Ṭabarī glosses *muttabaʿ* as “whoever follows Abraham in his *milla* and seeks to become upright according to it is a *ḥanīf*.”²⁵ He glosses *mukhlis* as someone “whose religion is God’s alone.”²⁶ Al-Ṭabarī explains the fourth opinion as referring to Abraham being the first who instructed (*sanna*) others in the practice of circumcision.²⁷ He adds that here *ḥanīf* refers to “one who is circumcised in the manner of Abraham’s circumcision, and one who is a follower of that which Abraham followed of Islam.”²⁸ Although al-Ṭabarī does not explain what he means by “Islam”, his use of the word to refer to the religion that Abraham followed and his citation of practices that would assume importance after the revelation of the Qurʾān (pilgrimage, circumcision) suggest that it was possible to practice Islam during the *Jāhiliyya* by adhering to the Ḥanīfism.

²² al-Ṭabarī, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī. Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*. Ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī. 26 vols. Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Kutub li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 2003, 2:591-93. He cites Mujāhid’s opinion that in Q. 22:31 the word *ḥunafāʾ* in “*ḥunafāʾ li-allāh*” means “performing pilgrimage.” Comparing this with the report cited by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, it would seem that Mujāhid holds at least two distinct views on the meaning of *ḥanīf*. al-Ṭabarī also cites the other Mujāhid report in which *ḥanīf* is rendered “one who is followed” (*muttabaʿ*) as well as that of Ibn ʿAbbās that a *ḥanīf* is a pilgrim (*ḥājj*).

²³ Text: *fa-kullu man ḥajja l-bayt fa-nasaka manāsika Ibrāhīm ʿalā millatihi fa-huwa ḥanīfun muslimun ʿalā dīn Ibrāhīm*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:591.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:594. Text: *fa-kullu man iʿtamma bi-Ibrāhīm fī millatihi fa-ʿstaqāma ʿalayhā fa-huwa ḥanīfun*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*. Text: *al-mukhlis dīnuhu li-allāhi waḥdahū*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:593.

²⁸ *Ibid.* Text: *fa-kullu man ikhtatana ʿalā sabīli ikhtitān Ibrāhīm wa-huwa ʿalā mā kāna ʿalayhi Ibrāhīm min al-islām fa-huwa ḥanīfun ʿalā millati Ibrāhīm*.

Al-Ṭabarī himself seems to be of the opinion that a *ḥanīf* is one who possesses uprightness (*al-istiqāma*) according to the religion (*dīn*) of Abraham and who follows him according to his *milla*.²⁹ As al-Ṭabarī goes on to explain, if *ḥanīf* status consisted only of performing the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, then all the polytheists of pre-Islamic times who performed the pilgrimage should be called *ḥanīfs*. This cannot be, however, since, according to Q. 3:67, "He [Abraham] was a *ḥanīf muslim* and was not from among the polytheists." Similarly, as regards circumcision, if *ḥanīf* status was determined only by circumcision, then the Jews should also be called *ḥanīfs*. This too cannot be, because according to Q. 3:67, "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but was a *ḥanīf muslim*." Al-Ṭabarī concludes that *ḥanīfiyya* is neither circumcision nor performing pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, but consists rather of being upright according to *millat Ibrāhīm* and following him.³⁰ In other words, while *ḥanīf* may refer to anyone—including a polytheist—who either performs the pilgrimage or performs circumcision, a *ḥanīf muslim* is a monotheist who performs both of these rituals.

Regarding Q. 16:123, where Muḥammad is commanded to follow *millat Ibrāhīm*, al-Ṭabarī offers a grammatical explanation of *ḥanīf*. word *ḥanīf* functions as an adverb (namely: *thumma awḥaynā ilayka an it-tabi millata ibrahīma ḥanīfan*)—Muḥammad is to follow *millat Ibrāhīm* as a *ḥanīf*/in a *ḥanīfi* manner.³¹ Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī glosses *ḥanīf* as *muslim*. The use of the word *muslim* as an explanation of *ḥanīf* raises the important question of when precisely the word was first used to describe a member of the Islamic faith. Unfortunately, this question is beyond the scope of our discussion. Be that as it may, al-Ṭabarī seems to imply that the word *muslim* continued to be used with a "lowercase *mim*", as it were: "one who submits according to the religion that Abraham followed (*musliman 'alā l-dīn alladhī kāna 'alayhi Ibrāhīm*)."³²

Al-Ṭabarī, much like al-Māturīdī, regards *ḥanīf* and *ḥanīf muslim* as closely related terms that are characterized by the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and the performance of Abraham's ceremonies there. While pilgrimage or circumcision alone do not characterise a *ḥanīf* (since non-

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 14:398, 10:44. Regarding Q. 4:125, al-Ṭabarī renders *ḥanīf* as "one who is upright according to his method and path" (*mustaqīmman 'alā minhājihī wa-sabilihī*). In Q. 6:161, he uses *ḥanīf* interchangeably with *mustaqīm*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:594.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14:398.

³² *Ibid.*

hanīfs are known to have performed them), the two practices together might be part of a larger set of practices that distinguish the *hanīf*. Perhaps taking his cue from the qualities of *hanīf* cited in Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī's *tafsīr* (reports 2, 3, 5), al-Ṭabarī settles on "the uprightness" of those who follow Abraham. At the same time, following Abraham also means following Islam, as al-Ṭabarī explains. This is because following Abraham means following his particular practices (circumcision, pilgrimage) in addition to adhering to his principles of faith (that God alone must be worshipped), both of which, al-Ṭabarī explains, are central to Islam.

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) notes that Q. 2:135 was revealed in response to Jews and Christians who invited Muslims to follow their ways. In explaining the meaning of *hanīf*, he cites the opinions of Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Qurazī (*mustaqīm*), the two opinions of Mujāhid (*mutabbā'* and *mukhliṣ*, the latter ascribed to Khaṣīf by Ibn Abī Ḥātim), Ibn 'Abbās (*ḥājj*), as well as that of Abū Qilāba, who defines a *hanīf* as "one who believes in all of the prophets from the first of them to the last of them." These opinions are identical to those recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim. In addition, he cites Qatāda's opinion that a *hanīf* is "[one who testifies that] 'there is no God but God' [and who observes] the prohibition of [relations with] mothers, daughters, maternal aunts and paternal aunts, and what God Almighty forbade [of relations], as well as [the obligation of] circumcision."³³

Ibn Kathīr's report is identical to that of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, with the exception of his citation of Qatāda's opinion and his omission of both the Khaṣīf version of *mukhliṣ* and the opinion of Abū l-'Āliyya (a *hanīf* is one who faces the Ka'ba during his prayers and tries to perform pilgrimage to it if he is able). His citation of Qatāda does not include the clarification found in the Ibn Abī Ḥātim version cited above concerning the polytheism of the tribe of Ḥanīfa. How are we to explain the omission in Ibn Kathīr? It is likely that Ibn Kathīr did not see a cause for confusion between Ḥanīfa and the Hanīfiyya. In light of the fact that al-Ṭabarī and al-Māturidī had previously interpreted *hanīf muslim* as *muslim* and the Ḥanīfī religion as essentially identical to Islam, Ibn Kathīr may have considered Qatāda's explanation - that, despite similar practices, Ḥanīfa were polytheists - to be redundant.

³³ Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl b. 'Umar. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*. Ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad al-Salāma. 8 vols. Riyadh: Dār Ṭība, 1997, 1:448.

These discussions of *ḥanīf* indicate (1) that the label was assigned consistently to both practices and beliefs, and (2) that there was a growing tendency to conflate these practices and beliefs with Islamic ones. It appears from Muqātil b. Sulaymān's discussion that the idea had become fixed that *ḥanīf* should be contrasted with Judaism and Christianity. This is reinforced by his unqualified definition of *mushrikūn* as Jews and Christians. As a part of the effort to define a distinct Islamic identity apart from the other Abrahamic religions, the exegetes equate the *Hanīfī* religion with Islam. Al-Ṭabarī dismisses characterisations of the *Hanīfī* religion as including either circumcision or pilgrimage, since both of these practices were performed by the pagans. Rather, al-Ṭabarī suggests that a *ḥanīf muslim* practised both circumcision *and* pilgrimage as a demonstration of his *ikhlaṣ* (loyalty) to God alone. Thus not only was Ḥanīfism distinct from paganism, but it was the sole version of monotheism that existed in the Jāhiliyya and was therefore the direct predecessor of Islam.

12.3 Contexts and Connotations of *millat Ibrāhīm*

Muqātil b. Sulaymān links the revelation of Q. 2:135 to an occasion on which the believers were invited to join the ranks of Jews and Christians. In his view, *millat Ibrāhīm* in this verse means the exact opposite of Judaism and Christianity, to wit, "Islam".³⁴ To support this view, he glosses the word *mushrikūn* in the phrase "he was not of the polytheists" (*wa-mā kāna min al-mushrikīn*) as "the Jews and Christians."³⁵ According to Muqātil, the Muslims were instructed to resist the Jews and the Christians, who might attempt to convince them to follow their faith. As with his treatment of *ḥanīf*, Muqātil understands *millat Ibrāhīm* as marking a break with Judaism and Christianity. That he calls this break "Islam" without further explanation is interesting. The fact that he does not provide any discussion of the unique features of *millat Ibrāhīm* suggests that it is identical with Islam.

³⁴ Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, 1:70. He also translates *millat Ibrāhīm* in Q. 16:123 as "Islam."

³⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. *ibid.*, 410, both regarding Q. 3:95 and Q. 6:161, where *wa-mā kāna min al-mushrikīn* is again rendered "he was not of the Jews and Christians." Muqātil b. Sulaymān consistently translates *mushrikūn* as "Jews and Christians."

Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī also understands *millat Ibrāhīm* as a contrast to Judaism and Christianity. He presents the following report as a setting for Q. 2:130:

Abū l-ʿĀliyya (d. 90/709): “And who rejects *millat Ibrāhīm*”: the Jews and Christians rejected *millat Ibrāhīm* and innovated [regarding] Judaism and Christianity, which are not from God, and they discarded the religion (*dīn*) of Abraham.³⁶

Like Muqātil, Ibn Abī Ḥātim understands the occasion of Q. 2:130 as a distinction between what Abraham followed and Judaism/Christianity. Although he does not explicitly equate *millat Ibrāhīm* with Islam, he does accept the definition of *milla* as *dīn*, religion. Thus, by abandoning the religion of Abraham — a precursor to Islam — Jews and Christians have created their own religions “which are not from God.”

Al-Māturīdī presents two definitions of the word *milla*: (1) religion (*dīn*); and (2) an example/model [to be imitated] (*sunna*).³⁷ He explains that *milla* refers to Islam, since “the religions of all the prophets are all the same and so Abraham’s religion (*dīn*) does not differ from those of any of the other prophets.”³⁸ Like Muqātil and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Māturīdī understands the contrast between *millat Ibrāhīm* and Judaism/Christianity as suggesting that Abraham’s was the correct interpretation of God’s religion and that what Jews and Christians practised were innovations. Moving beyond Muqātil and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, he identifies explicitly Abraham’s religion as Islam and suggests that, prior to Muḥammad, the *sunna* of Abraham may have been the normative guide that believers followed.³⁹

Al-Ṭabarī explains that in Q. 2:130 the phrase “And who loathes *millat Ibrāhīm*” refers to whoever “abstains from (*man yazhadu*) and discards (*yatrūkuhā*) it, disliking it [in favour] of another (*raghbatan ʿanhā ilā ghayrihā*).⁴⁰ He then identifies the Jews and Christians as those who “loathe” *millat Ibrāhīm* by “choosing what they chose, namely, Judaism and Christianity.”⁴¹ The “loathing” of the Jews and Christians is all the more egregious, according to al-Ṭabarī, because “*millat Ibrāhīm* is *Ḥanifī*

³⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, 238. Text: *raghbat al-yahūd wa-l-naṣarā ʿan millati Ibrāhīm wa-ibtidaʿū l-yahūdiyya wa-l-naṣrāniyya wa-laysat min allāh wa-tarakū dīn Ibrāhīm*.

³⁷ al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt ahl al-sunna*, 1:97.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Cf. *ibid.*, 1:506, 2:200.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:506.

⁴⁰ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 2:578.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Islam (*al-ḥanīfiya al-muslima*).⁴² He reinforces his definition of *milla* *Ibrāhīm* as *Ḥanīfī* Islam by equating *milla* with *dīn* in the context of Q. 6:161.⁴³

In his exegesis of Q. 3:95 al-Ṭabarī offers a different definition for *milla* *Ibrāhīm*. As the context for “God spoke the truth” (*ṣadaqa allāhu*), al-Ṭabarī cites Q. 3:93 (“All food was lawful unto the Children of Israel”) rather than Q. 3:67.⁴⁴ Al-Ṭabarī explains that the Children of Israel voluntarily refrained from eating the meat and milk of camels despite their not being forbidden by God to do so in the Torah (*bi-ghayr taḥrīm allāh iyyāhu ‘alayhim fī l-tawrā*).⁴⁵ Thus, it is in connection with this innovation by the Jews that God revealed to Muḥammad the command, “Follow the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, he was not of the polytheists.” In this setting, then, the prophets were sent to bring the *ḥanīfiya* as the “setting aright (*istiḳāma*) of Islam excluding (*dūna*) Judaism, Christianity and polytheism.”⁴⁶

Like Muqātil, al-Ṭabarī sees *milla* *Ibrāhīm* as functioning solely to distinguish the *Ḥanīfī* religion (which he defines as Islam) from Judaism and Christianity. Unlike Muqātil, who explains *milla* *Ibrāhīm* as a way of distinguishing the Muslims from the Jews and Christians on the ba-

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10:44. al-Māwardī also renders *milla* in Q. 2:135 as *dīn*: al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa-l-uyūn*, 1:194. Cf. al-Maḥallī, Jalāl al-Dīn, and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. *Al-Qurʾān al-karīm bi-l-rasm al-uthmānī wa-bi-ḥāmishihī tafsīr al-īmāmayn al-jalālayn*. Ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūt. Dār Ibn Kathīr, [n.d.], 2:98, regarding Q. 4:125, where al-Maḥallī glosses *milla* *Ibrāhīm* as *milla* *al-Islām*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5:588.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* al-Ṭabarī refers specifically to the camel (*al-ibl*) as well as to a particular kind of red and plump camel known as an *ʿirq* (pl. *ʿurūq*), which takes its name from the “long, red penetrating roots” of the *arṭā* plant, said to be “succulent, compact and dripping with water”: Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. *ʿirq*. This view seems to have been accepted by others: see al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:324, 334, 584-85. Regarding Q. 3:95 (“God spoke the truth” [*ṣaddaqa allāhu*]), al-Zamakhsharī equates *milla* *Ibrāhīm* with Islam, stating further that this was the religion to which Muḥammad and his followers adhered. The significance of making this direct connection in this context seems to be to distance Islam from Judaism rather than to delineate specific obligations of the *milla* of Abraham. He adds that the Muslims are commanded to follow the *milla* of Abraham “so that you purify yourselves of Judaism, which has involved you in the ruin of your faith and your world (*tatakhallaṣū min al-yahūdīya allatī warīṭatakum fī-fasād dīnikum wa-dunyākum*), to the point that they have forced you to corrupt the book of God and have made you forbid the good things that God made lawful unto Abraham and unto those who followed him.”

⁴⁶ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 5:588.

sis of faith, al-Ṭabarī seems to distinguish between them on the basis of practice — namely, by demonstrating that the Jews incorrectly observed God’s laws. Rather than follow what God commanded in the Torah regarding the permissibility of the meat and milk of camels, the Jews decided on their own to abstain from eating them.

Similarly, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076) explains that the words “And who loathes *millat Ibrāhīm* except he who makes a fool of himself” emphasize that the Jews and Christians strayed from *millat Ibrāhīm* by accepting upon themselves a religion that was “a [heretical] innovation that was not God’s, while discarding *millat Ibrāhīm*.”⁴⁷ He explains that “*millat Ibrāhīm*” in this context is *Ḥanīfī* Islam (*al-islām al-ḥanīfī ya*), so called because it “turns away from (*mālat*) Judaism and Christianity.”⁴⁸ His understanding of *millat Ibrāhīm*/*Ḥanīfī* Islam has two basic features: (1) avoiding anything practiced by Jews and Christians (thus, al-Wāḥidī quotes Ibn ‘Abbās as saying that a *ḥanīfī* is one who turns away from — *mā’il* — other religions)⁴⁹; and (2) one who follows Abraham in circumcision (*al-khitān*) and in performing the pilgrimage to the Ka‘ba (*ḥajj al-bayt*). According to al-Wāḥidī, Q. 16:123 (“So We have inspired you to follow *millat Ibrāhīm*”) comes to affirm to Muḥammad, who is addressed here, that his *milla* is the *milla* of Abraham.⁵⁰

Like Muqātil and al-Ṭabarī before him, al-Wāḥidī equates the *Ḥanīfī* religion (*al-ḥanīfī ya*) with Islam. Following al-Ṭabarī, he understands the distinction between *millat Ibrāhīm* and Judaism/Christianity as being chiefly one of practice. However, whereas for al-Ṭabarī the practices concerned are dietary laws, for al-Wāḥidī they are circumcision and pilgrimage. Thus far, then, the exegetes understood the contrast between *millat Ibrāhīm* and Judaism/Christianity as either a matter of faith (Muqātil, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Māturidī) or one of practice (al-Ṭabarī, al-Wāḥidī).

Ibn Kathīr returns to the trend of defining *millat Ibrāhīm* as a matter of faith. In his view, *millat Ibrāhīm* represents an early stage in the development of a unique Islamic theological orientation. He understands Q. 2:130 as a response to the unbelievers (*kuffār*) who innovated by asso-

⁴⁷ al-Wāḥidī, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Aḥmad. *Al-wasīf fī-tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-majīd*. Ed. ‘Adīl Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīya, 1994, 1:215.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:218.

⁴⁹ Cf. al-Maḥallī, al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, 2:62, where al-Maḥallī renders *ḥanīfan* adverbially as “turning away (*mā’ilan*) from other religions and [turning instead towards] Islam.” Cf. *ibid.*, 2:98, where *ḥanīfan* is also rendered as *mā’ilan*.

⁵⁰ al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīf*, 3:90-91.

ciating [other gods] with God (*ibtad' ū wa-aḥdathū min al-shirk bi-allāh*). This, Ibn Kathīr writes, stands in opposition to the *milla* of Abraham, the leader of the *ḥanīf*s, who “‘made bare’ the oneness of God and did not proclaim [the association of] anyone with Him” (*fa-innahu jarrada tawḥīd rabbihī fa-lam yad' a mā'ahu ghayrahu*).⁵¹ The phrase “who loathes *millat Ibrāhīm*” refers, according to Ibn Kathīr, to whomever turns away from Abraham’s custom and way (*min hājahu wa-ṭarīqatahu*). Citing Abū l-‘Āliyya and Qatāda, he notes that the verse was revealed as a response to the Jews, who “created a way other than God’s and opposed *millat Ibrāhīm* regarding what they accepted” (*aḥdathū ṭarīqan laysat min 'ind allāh wa-khālafū millata ibrahīma fī-mā akhadhū*).⁵²

However, in his discussion of *millat Ibrāhīm*, Ibn Kathīr avoids assigning normative legal practices to Abraham. He also accepts the traditional contrast between *millat Ibrāhīm* and Judaism/Christianity. Citing Muqātil, he refers to the Jews and Christians as polytheists (*mushrikūn*) and, for the first time, as unbelievers (*kuffār*). It is interesting to note that Ibn Kathīr is the first to use the word *tawḥīd* (monotheism) in reference to Abraham. Al-Māturīdī does not use the word *tawḥīd*, although monotheism is implied in his explanation of *ḥanīf* in Q. 6:161 as *muslim* due to Abraham’s being “devoted entirely to God” (*khālīṣan li-allāh mukhlīṣan*).

In exegetical discussions of Abraham as a *ḥanīf*, he is described as having performed certain specific rituals that later become central in the Islamic tradition, reflecting the notion that the religion to which he belonged — Ḥanīfism — was a primitive form of Islam or, according to some exegetes, that it was identical to Islam. However, when confronted with the concept of *milla* as a contrast to Judaism/Christianity, exegetes are divided, some defining it as a set of beliefs and others as a set of practices. Ibn Kathīr, following the trajectory of the lexicographers, categorically separates *milla* from practices and understands it as a term signifying Islamic beliefs. Because *millat Ibrāhīm*, in contrast to Judaism/Christianity, is “from God”, as Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Māturīdī explain it, Ibn Kathīr also finds justification in referring to Jews and Christians as *kuffār* (unbelievers) who reject the basic *tawḥīd* of God by innovating their own religions.

⁵¹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1:445.

⁵² *Ibid.*

12.4 “Following” the *millat Ibrāhīm*

After establishing Abraham’s place as the prototypical *ḥanīf* (*muslim*) prophet who observed “Islamic” rituals and whose religion was different from Judaism and Christianity, the exegetes had one final issue to address: what does it mean to “follow” *millat Ibrāhīm*? This prescription, which is found in Q. 16:123 (“Then We have inspired you to follow the *milla* of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, he was not of the polytheists”), is important to understand not only because it is an explicit command, but also because it seems to challenge the authority of Muḥammad’s *sunna*. While earlier exegetes describe rituals that Abraham practised, they agree that what must be “followed” are his beliefs and that the only person instructed to follow Abraham is Muḥammad. This interpretation of the command to “follow *millat Ibrāhīm*” establishes both Muḥammad’s prophetic genealogy as Abrahamic and Muḥammad’s practices as the final and perfect version of what constitute “Islamic” practices.

The most detailed description of what must be “followed” of *millat Ibrāhīm* can be found in Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *tafsīr*. Regarding Q. 3:95, he cites the following report:

The angel Gabriel reported extensively [to Muḥammad] about (*afāda bi*) Abraham that he prayed *al-zuhr*, *al-‘aṣr*, *al-maghrib*, *al-‘ishā*’ and *al-fajr* in Minā and then he returned from Minā to ‘Arafa, where he prayed two prayers: *al-zuhr* and *al-‘aṣr*. Then he stopped until the sun set, whereupon he commenced the journey (*dafa’*) until he came to Muzdalifa and spent the night there. Then he prayed like the fastest one from among the Muslims could pray (*ka-ā’jal mā yuṣallī aḥadu min al-muslimīn*), then held back like the slowest that one from among the Muslims could pray (*thumma waqafa bihi ka-abṭa’ mā yuṣallī aḥadu min al-muslimīn*), then he commenced from there (*dafa’ min*) to Minā and cast stones and slaughtered. Then God revealed to Muḥammad, “Follow the *milla* of Abraham, the *ḥanīf*, he was not of the polytheists.”⁵³

⁵³ Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*, 3:707. Regarding Q. 16:123, al-Māturīdī cites an abridged version of this report. In his version, Gabriel came to Abraham and accompanied him to Minā, where he taught him all of the appropriate ceremonies (*al-manāsik*) and showed them to him. Subsequently, God revealed Q. 16:123 to Muḥammad. As a result, al-Māturīdī concludes, Muslims are instructed to follow Abraham’s *milla* as regards the *ḥajj* and “in other matters.” Cf. al-Māturīdī, *Ta’wīlāt ahl al-sunna*, 3:129.

The report demonstrates how Abraham knew and performed the Muslim prayers, suggesting that he had complete knowledge of the law prior to its revelation. The times of the prayers, moreover, seem to have been fixed well before Muḥammad's time and his performance of the prayers is connected directly to Abraham's practice.⁵⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, too, understands Q. 16:123 as commanding Muḥammad to follow Abraham in a specific practice: "his banishment of idols and the like, which his people followed."⁵⁵ In the 4th/10th century, the command of following *millat Ibrāhīm* seems to have been tied closely to Abraham's rituals and practices.

From the 5th/11th century, the exegetes understand the command to "follow *millat Ibrāhīm*" as a way to establish the place of Muḥammad as the final Islamic prophet and to set Islam completely apart from Judaism and Christianity, especially in its core doctrines. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1024) sees the command in Q. 16:123 as a reference to the fact that Muḥammad followed what he knew of Abraham's laws (*sharā'ī hi*) only after waiting to be inspired and then being compelled (*awḥā bi-hi ilayhi thumma awjaba*) to proclaim God's oneness and justice (*tawḥīd allāh wa-'adlihi*). 'Abd al-Jabbār understands these *sharā'ī* as *tawḥīd* (God's oneness) and *'adl* (justice).⁵⁶ Al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058),

⁵⁴ The anachronistic explanations offered here are akin to those mentioned by Rabbinic authorities in reference to Abraham's having "observed the whole law" and his having established the Jewish morning prayer: see Genesis 26:5: "Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge (*mishmartī*), my commandments (*mizvothai*), my statutes (*khukothai*) and my laws (*torothai*)." Cf. *Babylonian Talmud*, Yoma 28b. Abraham Geiger also made the connection between the *milla* of Abraham, which he translates as "Glaube" (religion), and Gen. 26:5, citing Yoma 28b as proof that Abraham "observed the whole Law": Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 95. The parallel becomes clearer when reading the Judeo-Arabic translation of the verse by Sa'adia b. Yosef (d. 942). In his *Tafsīr*, he renders Gen. 26:5 as "*wa-ḥafīza mā istaḥfaẓtuhu min rusūmi wa-waṣā'ī wa-sharā'ī*". al-Fayyūmī, Sa'adia b. Yosef. *Œuvres complètes de r. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyūmī*. Ed. Joseph Derenbourg and Mayer Lambert. 5 vols. Paris: E. Leroux, 1893-1899), 1:39.

⁵⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:398.

⁵⁶ al-Hamadhānī, 'Abd al-Jabbār. *Mutashābih al-Qurān*. Ed. 'Adnān Muḥammad Zarzūr. 2 vols. Cairo: Dar al-Turath, 1969, 1:272. Idem, *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-matā'in*. Ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih and Tawfiq 'Alī. Wahbah, Giza: Maktabat al-Nāfidha, 2006, 1:249. Here, 'Abd al-Jabbār refutes the notion that the Prophet observed the laws of those who came before him, on the grounds that such a theory would imply that he knew all of their laws and observed them *without* the divine injunction to do so.

who cites al-Ṭabarī's view, offers an additional position (which he introduces as the one held by most Shāfi'īs): that Muḥammad should follow Abraham in his entire *millat* except for that which he was ordered to discard (*fī jamī' millatihi illā mā umira bi-tarkihī*).⁵⁷ However, by identifying what must be followed as "[Abraham's] banishment of idols," an expression of faith, al-Māwardī stresses both that Abraham alone exemplified true commitment to God and that Muḥammad's being ordered to follow the faith of Abraham is the logical extension of Abraham's prophetic line, whose message is perfected in Muḥammad's version of Islam. Ibn Kathīr notes that Muḥammad's being instructed to follow *millat Ibrāhīm* in Q. 6:161 does not imply that Abraham was more complete in his religious observance. Rather, there was nobody prior to Muḥammad who achieved such complete perfection (*lam yasbiquhu aḥadun ilā hadhā l-kamāl*).⁵⁸ He comments that in Q. 16:123 the command to "follow *millat Ibrāhīm*" refers to Muḥammad's "being free of the polytheists and from Judaism and Christianity."⁵⁹

The idea of *tawḥīd* seems to have taken center stage as the fundamental distinction between Islam, on the one hand, and Judaism and Christianity on the other. *Millat Ibrāhīm*, then, represents an ancient version of Islam that Jews and Christians knew of but ignored. As John Burton writes, "Judaism and Christianity are the departures and one may circumvent the errors of the schismatics only by returning to the primitive Abrahamism."⁶⁰ This strategy takes different forms in the ideas of the exegetes examined here. For al-Ṭabarī and al-Māwardī *tawḥīd* is reflected in Abraham's banishment of idols, while for Ibn Kathīr it is reflected in Abraham's departure from polytheists, Jews, and Christians. Ibn Kathīr mentions that the command to follow Abraham did not reflect his perfection in religion, thereby validating Muḥammad's unique position as the most perfect of the prophets. 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Māwardī explain how following *millat Ibrāhīm* might be reconciled with following Islamic law and with what Muḥammad might have followed prior to his prophetic career. For 'Abd al-Jabbār, Abraham's was the same *tawḥīd*

⁵⁷ al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa-l-'uyūn*, 3:219.

⁵⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3:381. Text: *wa-laysa yulzam min kawmihi 'alayhi al-salām umira bi-ittibā' millata Ibrāhīm al-ḥanāfiya an yakūna akmal minhu fihā.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:610.

⁶⁰ Burton, John. *The Sources of Islamic Law. Islamic Theories of Abrogation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990, 169.

that Muḥammad knew prior to becoming prophet but was *instructed* to pronounce it with Q. 16:123.

12.5 Concluding Observations

It is hoped that this brief discussion has contributed to explaining a complex thought-process underlying the seemingly simple issue of “following” *millat Ibrāhīm*. In the context of the “descriptive” verses (those that address the historical record of what Abraham did as a *ḥanīf*), ritualistic details regarding Abraham’s life, such as pilgrimage and circumcision, dominate the discussion. However, in the context of the Qur’ānic injunction to “follow” *millat Ibrāhīm* (Q. 16:123), the exegetes seem to emphasize progressively the more abstract notion of monotheism.

This development may reflect a psychological shift in the perspective of Muslim scholarship. On the one hand, as with all the Abrahamic faiths, there existed an innate need to describe Abraham as having lived according to the principles of that faith. To establish that he was indeed a pious and exemplary figure for a particular religion-based community, it was important to demonstrate that his actions and rituals were a part of that same tradition. However, once the focus shifts from historicising the figure of Abraham to historicising the religion, that religion must be characterised by certain unique features in order to distinguish it from other Abrahamic religions. In the case of Islam, the historicisation of Abraham as an Islamic prophet who followed Islamic laws naturally came into direct tension with the historicisation of Islam as an Abrahamic faith. What is it that distinguished pre-Qur’ānic Islam from “post-Qur’ānic” Islam, if one may call it such? Although the answer to this question lies beyond the scope of the present study, it is important to mention that this tension appears in all the Abrahamic faiths. In Judaism, for example, the historicisation of Abraham, indeed that of all pre-Mosaic prophets, as Jewish is difficult to reconcile with the Law as revealed to the Children of Israel at Sinai. Judaism has addressed this paradox by developing the distinction between Oral and Written Law, the former having existed among pre-Sinaitic Jews. According to the views presented here, Muslim scholars used two methods to reconcile the paradox of pre-Qur’ānic prophet and post-Qur’ānic Islam: (1) Exegetes consistently seem to define Ḥanīfism as Islam; and (2) in the context of those verses that command Muslims to “follow *millat Ibrāhīm*” there is

a near-consensus among exegetes that what is to be followed is Abraham's interpretation of monotheism rather than any of the rituals he performed. This interpretation facilitates the establishment of a unique "Islamic" identity, one based on the normative example of Muḥammad rather than that of Abraham.

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Monasticism in Early Islamic Palestine: Contours of Debate*

Daniel Reynolds

(Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, University
of Birmingham, UK)

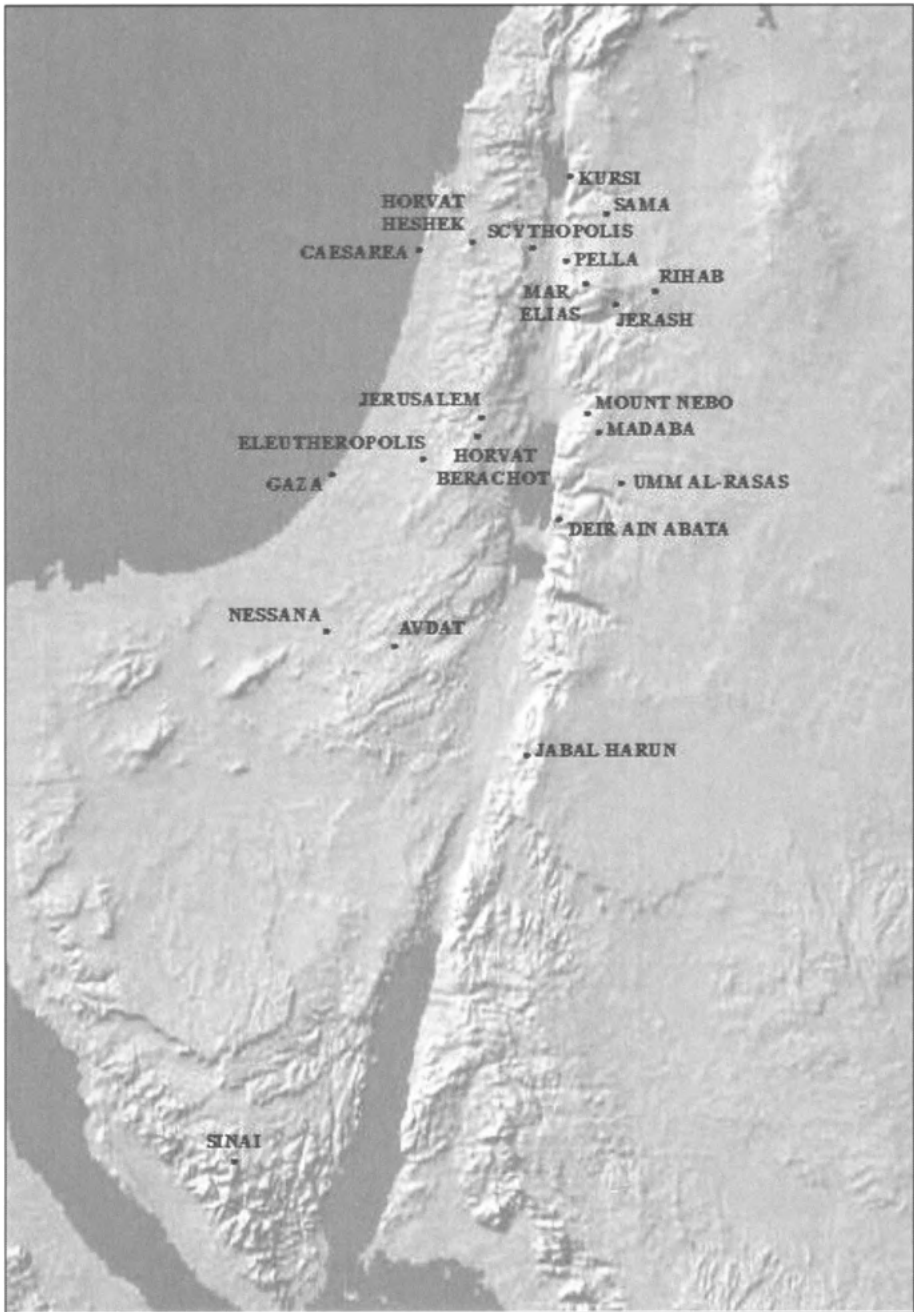
13.1 Context and Critique

The trajectory of Palestinian Christian communities following the Arab conquest remains a predominant theme in debates about early Islamic Palestine.¹ This focus is partially indebted to the continuing appeal of Christian cult buildings to archaeologists and architectural historians since the first preliminary surveys in the region in the late nineteenth century.² Indeed, consistent emphasis on the excavation of church basil-

* I would first and foremost like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their generous support of my doctoral research from which this discussion partly derives. My gratitude goes to Prof. Robert Hoyland and Dr Marie Legendre for allowing me to participate in the roundtable where these ideas were first presented. Prof. Leslie Brubaker's support and comments throughout my research have proved invaluable. All faults are naturally my own, but this article owes its existence to her constant encouragement and guidance. My friend and colleague Rebecca Darley also valiantly read the entire article to ensure its clarity. Lastly, I would like to thank Robert Hoyland for his comments on an earlier (and much cruder) version of this article. His comments and suggestions enabled me to achieve a sense of clarity and have been instrumental in producing a much more coherent article.

¹ For the purposes of this discussion analysis will be limited primarily to sites in the region which formerly comprised the Byzantine provinces of Palestina Prima, Secunda, Tertia and Arabia, the area now comprising modern Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, southern Lebanon and the Sinai Peninsula.

² Vailhé, Simeon. "Les monastères de la Palestine," *Bessarione* 3 (1897-98), 39-58, 209-25, 334-56 ; *Bessarione* 4 (1898-99), 193-210; *idem*. "Répertoire alphabétique des monastères de Palestine [1]," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 4(1899), 512-42; *idem*. "Répertoire alphabétique des monastères de Palestine [2 and 3]," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 5(1900), 19-48, 272-92.



Map 4: Map of Palaestina and Arabia

icas and, occasionally (though less systematically), their auxiliary structures, has facilitated the accumulation of a substantial material corpus, which yields evidence for Christian life in the region over the course of the first millennium. A series of well published mosaic schemes commissioned after the Arab conquest at Umm al-Rasas, Madaba, Ramot and Dayr 'Ayn 'Abata, has further stimulated this interest and proved intrinsic to the more recent recognition of Christian continuities throughout the duration of Umayyad rule.³

Monasticism has received less attention as a component of this broader post-Byzantine environment, despite a parallel interest in the excavation and survey of sites as an established academic field in Byzantine studies which has produced several widely circulated monographs.⁴ Moreover, our present understanding of the physical characteristics of the monastic landscape is inadequately defined in terms of the number and relative wealth of sites extant by 638. The spectral presence of the Sasanian occupation (ca. 614-28), in particular, looms large over interpretations of the monasticism in this period. It is used to assert a narrative of drastic social and economic dislocation, despite more revisionist approaches to the period in connection with urban and economic infrastructures.⁵

³ See Piccirillo, Michele. "Il Complesso di Santo Stefano a Umm al Rasas – Kastron Mefaa in Giordania (1986-1991)," *Liber Annuus* 41 (1991), 327-64; *idem*. "I Mosaici Del Complesso Di Santo Stefano," in Michele Piccirillo and Eugenio Alliata, eds., *Umm al-Rasas Mayfa'ah I. Gli Scavi del Complesso Di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscum, 1994), 121-64; Di Segni, Leah. "The Date of the Church of the Virgin at Madaba," *Liber Annuus* 42 (1992), 251-57; Arav, Rami, Leah Di Segni and Amos Kloner. "An Eighth-Century Monastery Near Jerusalem," *Liber Annuus* 40 (1990), 313-20. For Deir 'Ain 'Abata, see Politis, Konstantinos D. "Excavations at Deir 'Ain 'Abata 1991," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 36 (1992), 283, and *idem*. "The Monastery of Aghios Lot at Deir 'Ain 'Abata in Jordan," in Daim Falko and Joerg Drauschke, eds., *Byzanz - Das Römerreich im Mittelalter* (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2011), 160-161.

⁴ See for example Chitty, Derwas. *The Desert a City. An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism Under the Christian Empire*. Oxford: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966; Binns, John. *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ. The Monasteries of Palestine 314-631*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994; Hirschfeld, Yizhar. *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992.

⁵ For examples of this emergent trend of addressing the chronological flaws of earlier excavations see Magness, Jodi. "A Re-examination of the Archaeological Evidence for the Sasanian Persian Destruction of the Tyropoeon Valley," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 297 (1992), 67-74; Magness, Jodi. *The Archaeology*

Equally challenging are more central questions of established monastic social roles by the seventh century: the origins and identities of primary monastic patrons, and the association of monasteries with institutional structures and the local social networks in which they functioned. cursory observations of the core studies which underpin assessments of regional monastic developments in the Byzantine period (ca. 330-638) reveal heavy reliance on a repertoire of hagiographical materials which have proved formative to subsequent assessments of monastic life in the pre-Islamic period. The diversity and extent of the archaeological material has yet to prompt more energetic questioning of the use and value of the literary corpus as an adequate reflection of monastic social convention in Palestine, or its association with broader socio-economic frameworks, at the close of the Byzantine period (ca. 638).

This distinctive characteristic separates critical approaches to Palestinian monasticism from counterparts in Egypt and Syria. Here, more integrated approaches to the archaeological, literary and papyrological material have contributed to the systematic dismantling of the monastic image projected through hagiographical models and have generated further awareness of a more complex social integration of monastic figures and communities by the mid-sixth century.⁶ Students of Byzantine Egypt are more fortunate than those who work on Palestinian equivalents in this respect: fortunate in terms of the quantity of material which counters hagiographical projections and fortunate in terms of its diversity, which enables fuller recognition of the complexity of monastic social transactions. Palestine lacks a similarly sizeable body of papyrological material which would easily facilitate a comparative critical revolution.

Nonetheless, Palestine is not lacking material reflective of a similar complexity to that so well illuminated in contemporaneous Egypt. The

of Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003; Avni, Gideon. "The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 C.E) - An Archaeological Assessment," *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 357 (2010), 35-48.

⁶ Goehring, James. *Ascetics, Society and the Desert. Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism*. Harrisburg, PA: T&T Clark, 1999, 39-52; Bagnall, Roger. "Monks and Property. Rhetoric, Law and Patronage in the Apophthegmata Patrum and the Papyri," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001), 7-24; Richter, Tonio Sebastian. "The Cultivation of Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt. Some Evidence from Coptic Land Leases and Related Documents," in Anne Boud'hors, James Clackson, Catherine Louis and Petra Sijpesteijn, eds., *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt. Ostraca, Papyri and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson* (Cincinnati, OH: The American Society of Papylogists, 2009), 201-15.

clerical archives of Petra and Nessana, well published, but by no means fully exploited, are two such dossiers which evoke the fluid interplay between monasteries and local socio-economic frameworks: fluidities which continued beyond the Arab conquest and which provide the key to understanding the survival of monastic communities beyond 700.⁷ What distinguishes approaches to Palestinian monasticism from those towards Egypt is the lack of integration of this wider material repertoire of epigraphy and papyri into synthetic regional surveys, a repertoire that may challenge or modify existing interpretive approaches to pre-conquest Palestinian monastic life. This has led to a somewhat abrasive co-existence between the monastic image projected through hagiography (which informs the most accessible studies) and that which emerges from sources external to the hagiographical vision, which provide alternative, but consistently overlooked, perspectives on this environment.

These divisions have undoubtedly been fostered by the current lack of an integrated regional synthesis of archaeological material which would make such contradictions more acutely apparent and would expose their antagonism to prevailing analytical models. Two distinct and visibly segregated groups of primary material have thus emerged: the first comprised of material relating to the hagiographical corpus of the Judean Desert and its associated topography, and another, which incorporates the broad spectrum of archaeological, epigraphic and literary material relating to sites in the remaining regions of Byzantine Palaestina and Arabia.

In a recent analysis of Christian communities around the ninth century, Michael McCormick's study, based on the *Commematorium de Casis Dei*, illustrates the problems of not addressing such discrepancies.⁸ Notably, McCormick's acceptance that Palestinian monasticism was characterised by its overtly extra-regional character ensured that his subsequent explanations for a post-Byzantine decline reiterated the – largely unsubstantiated – notion that such processes may be correlated with the geo-political shifts of the seventh century and the diminishing

⁷ Frösén, Jaakko, Antti Arjava and Marjo Lehtinen, eds. *Petra Papyri I*. American Centre of Oriental Research Publications, No. 4. Amman: American Centre of Oriental Research, 2002 (P. Petra); Kraemer, Casper J. *Excavations at Nessana 3. Non-Literary Papyri*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, 7 (P. Colt).

⁸ McCormick, Michael. *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land. Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church Between Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011, 44, n. 62.

level of patron exchange from the Mediterranean which (ostensibly) ensued.⁹ Such a model cannot, however, incorporate sites which do not appear to have maintained such extensive patron connections, of which there are several and which are often invisible within the textual scope of sources such as the *Commemoratorium*. The Monastery of Aaron located on Jabal Hārūn, or the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery of Nessana, are two such communities invisible in the hagiographical material but where a more complex interlinking of localised rural patronage and elite groups may nonetheless be observed.¹⁰

Admittedly, McCormick's study subsequently acknowledges the potential role of localised change.¹¹ Yet the fact that these issues remain unexplored within the study is significant, not least because it demonstrates how little is currently known about these localised discourses and their overall role in both the development, and eventual deterioration of, the Christian topography known to have existed in Palestine by 600. The relative paucity of studies dedicated to tracing the complexity of localised developments has thus ensured the primacy of the "extra-regional" explanation in popular academic consensus to explain post-Byzantine developments.

Nonetheless, it can be shown that repeated stress on the importance of these links is, in part, a modern construct and one which has emerged from the simple availability of material. The corpus of hagiography and "pilgrim accounts" – an erroneous genre tag which homogenises a repertoire of very different literary creations – surviving in Latin and Greek has enjoyed relatively unbroken interest since the late nineteenth century, interest which has accordingly facilitated their publication (and in several examples, compilation) and increasing accessibility to scholars in the field.¹² In contrast, the lack of an integrated archaeological syn-

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ For Nessana, see the discussion in Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana* 3, 6-7. For Petra, Koenen, Ludwig *et al.* "The Decipherment and Edition of the Petra Papyri," in Lawrence H. Schiffman, ed., *Semitic Papyrology in Context. A Climate of Creativity. Papers from a New York University Conference Marking the Retirement of Baruch A. Levine* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 201-26.

¹¹ McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land*, 45.

¹² Characterised by the well circulated collection of Wilkinson, John. *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2002, following an approach established earlier by the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society: *Of the Places Visited by Antoninus Martyr (Circa 510-530)*. Tr. Aubrey Stewart with annotations by Charles William Wilson. London: Palestine Pilgrims' Texts Society, 1887; *Itinerary from Bor-*

thesis, where material illustrating localised associations would be more explicit, has fostered an imbalance in terms of analysing the significance of local, regional and extra-regional exchange in the Palestinian monastic landscape and the manner in which these connections co-existed.

It should be stated that McCormick's aim was not a review of monastic life in the Byzantine period but rather an attempt to trace the trajectory of these communities beyond the 630s. Even so, his approach, like those of earlier studies, was constrained by the problematic legacy of established approaches to Byzantine monasticism in the region which provided the basis for his subsequent analysis. The bibliography which supports this central pillar of his argument yields a fairly familiar repertoire of studies widely credited for substantiating the "extra-regional" hypothesis. Closer inspection of this secondary literature, however, reveals serious flaws in the material which underpinned their interpretation of Byzantine monastic developments.

Of the three major studies cited by McCormick – Yizhar Hirschfeld, John Binns and Claudine Dauphin – all three are notable for their deference to hagiography in their conception of monasticism prior to the seventh century, where patron identities, economic connections and monastic social integration are routinely extracted from saints' lives and broadly extrapolated to explain region-wide trends.¹³ Based on this approach, the accepted image of Palestinian monastic communities is, therefore, one of regional cohesion and homogeneity: a cultural network coloured by dogmatic distinction, but where essential relationships between monastic and other groups in Palestinian society were universally coherent across the period ca. 300-950 and thus uniformly susceptible to trends which emerged following the Arab conquest. In this regard the image of the Palestinian monastic milieu as one characterised by an intrinsically diasporal nature and a superficial association with indigenous populations has proved particularly resilient.

The dependency upon hagiographical constructs by the authors of the key synthetic works listed above has generated this basic perception, underpinned by a seamless succession of colourful ascetic migrants and

deaux to Jerusalem. Tr. Aubrey Stewart with annotations by Charles William Wilson. London: Palestine Pilgrims' Texts Society, 1887; *The Letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella about the Holy Places (386. A.D.)*. Tr. Aubrey Stewart with annotations by Charles William Wilson. London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1889.

¹³ See for example Chitty, *The Desert a City*; Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*; Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries*, 69-111.

patrons who feature heavily in the hagiographical sources and whose interventions are widely credited for the foundation and maintenance of the monastic network extant by 600. Dauphin's study wields this to full effect, introducing an array of founders and protagonists drawn principally from the standard corpus of hagiographies composed by Cyril of Scythopolis – often known by their modern, but not unproblematic title, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* – or the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos; protagonists whose ethnic or geographical origins (the majority from Anatolia or the Aegean) are intrinsic to the extra-regional model.¹⁴

Though subsequent research may indeed sustain the historical role of the celebrated hagiographical founders, Dauphin's arguments, like those of Hirschfeld and Binns, are precariously reductive in their portrayal of monastic social integration in the region by the year 600. Such individuals need to be understood as components of a more densely painted social canvas which included the concurrent activities of groups visible beyond the hagiographical prism such as the Sergios-Patrikos or Obodianos families of Nessana and Petra who appear as patrons or members of monastic communities. Essential to future studies of Palestinian monasticism (whether Byzantine or Umayyad) is the recognition of these families and networks as equally legitimate contributors to the monastic landscape of Palestine.¹⁵

Studies of monasticism in the early Islamic period have generally disregarded evidence for local complexities on the understanding that established interpretations of monastic life which preceded the Arab conquest are methodologically dependable and grounded in a foundation of securely dated archaeological and textual research. In what follows I wish to reconsider a series of difficulties with current evidence and its interpretation, in the interests of determining their formative impact on our understanding of the trajectories of monastic communities beyond the mid-seventh century.

¹⁴ Dauphin, Claudine. *La Palestine byzantine. Peuplement et populations*. British Archaeological Reports International Series 716. Oxford: Archaeopress, 1998, 158-65.

¹⁵ P. Colt 56 details the involvement of monastic officials in issues of labour. The involvement of the community in divorce proceedings appears in P. Colt 57, 58 and with concerns of taxation in 76 and 77.; Koenen, "The Decipherment and Edition of the Petra Papyri," 202-8.

13.2 Theological entities

Critical analyses of monastic communities in early Islamic Palestine remain weighted towards their legacy of apologetic writing. This is known to have gained increasing prominence in the ninth century as Christian writers actively engaged in debate with increasingly formalised, articulate and often antagonistic Islamic arguments which challenged the core components of Christian orthodox belief.¹⁶ The focus on theological confrontation has accordingly generated energetic debates in recent decades, elucidating the response of Christian – often monastic – writers to the progressive tension between orthodox Christian doctrine and the counter-perception of salvation articulated by Muslim contemporaries between the eighth and tenth centuries.¹⁷ Accompanying this development have been more general examinations of the linguistic shift from Greek to Arabic as the primary vehicle of Christian literary expression in the region following the mid-eighth century – a trend facilitated by the accessibility of relevant material preserved in monastic libraries, such as St Katherine's at Mount Sinai, where co-operation between monastic archivists and textual scholars since the late nineteenth century has permitted the systematic cataloguing and eventual publication of a series of key works.¹⁸

Successive studies of this material have ensured a more nuanced appreciation of the sophistication of the theological and intellectual mechanisms employed by Palestinian Christian communities to uphold the primacy of Christian orthodox beliefs. These are welcome developments but cannot stand in place of the comparatively underdeveloped conception of the broader social or economic context of these works and the monastic communities whose ideological realms are so well explored.

¹⁶ The bibliography for this topic is vast and continues to grow. I therefore direct the reader to the recent overview by Griffith, Sidney H. *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque. Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008, for a discussion of the key themes and extensive bibliography.

¹⁷ For a summary of recent scholarship see Thomas, David and Barbara Roggema, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History, Volume 1 (600-900)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

¹⁸ The standard discussion of the subject, which has generated a wealth of subsequent debate, is Griffith, Sidney H. "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), 117-38; see also *idem*. "From Aramaic to Arabic. The Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 11-31.

The recent predominance of theological scholarship in approaches to Byzantine and post-Byzantine monasticism is, in one sense, unsurprising. The image of monastic life as one exclusively engaged in theological dialogue, isolated from temporal concerns and characterised by perpetual socio-economic *stasis*, was an image cultivated by monastic writers and actively projected by their own literary constructs. In the case of Palestine, this modern-day perception of monastic life is reinforced by the resilience of this ‘theological material’ (in contrast to other documentary sources) to centuries of filtration and literary transmission. Legal or commercial documents, which detail the engagement of monastic communities with “temporal affairs”, have not survived in the monastic archives of the region although clearly, as in the case of Nessana, Petra and Khirbet Mird, such documents were once relatively common.¹⁹

Overall, these processes of filtration, combined with scholarly emphasis on hagiography, have ensured the predominance of a theological construct in contemporary analyses of Palestinian monastic life (preceding and following the Arab conquest) to the virtual exclusion of other material (including papyri and archaeology) which offer less holistic, and often contradictory, visions of this environment.

13.3 Homogeneity

One of the effects of this overtly theological tone is the fairly homogeneous impression it generates of monastic communities at an individual and micro-regional level. Approaches to understanding monasticism in the Byzantine and early Islamic period have seldom observed potential distinctions in the social, political or economic status of these communities which emerge from closer scrutiny of their patrons, their communities and the material environments they inhabited. This is partly a reflection of compartmentalised approaches to the analysis of monastic communities and associated source material. Texts, inscriptions and archaeology generate rigorous debate among scholars within their own respective disciplines but have generally evaded more cross disciplinary analysis which

¹⁹ For Petra and Nessana see note 7. The hoard of Khirbet Mird has yet to be fully published. Short entries are, however, available in Grohmann, Adolf. *Arabic Papyri from Hīrbet el-Mird*. Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1963; Milik, Józef. “Une inscription et une lettre en Arameen Christo-Palestinien,” *Revue Biblique* 60 (1953), 526-39.

would seek to examine the discrepancies inherent when the ideological and physical worlds of the monastic milieu are fully confronted.

Archaeologists have been notably slow to respond to the more energetic activities of literary scholars in recent decades with respect to analysing the complexity of monastic life after the seventh century. Acknowledgement of the continued function of monastic communities following the Arab conquest is fully established, but has not truly evolved beyond the identification of post-Byzantine structural embellishments known from the well-traversed corpus of mosaic schemes commissioned in churches after the 690s in the Transjordan and the environs of Jerusalem, several of which have been known for decades.²⁰

A focus on cases of micro-regional variation or internal reorganisation within monastic sites is also substantially lacking in contemporary archaeological investigation. This is regrettable, as closer inspection of changing uses of these spaces may provide the key to understanding how monastic communities responded to the transformative economic and political shifts of the mid-seventh century.

Furthermore, in a number of examples, excavations carried out prior to the 1980s either systematically disregarded post-Byzantine layers or attributed all evidence of later spatial reorganisation or functional change to post-cultic squatter occupation. Hence at the monastic site of Kursi, east of the Galilee, the blocking of atrium entrance ways, emergence of domestic activity and conversion of the northern wing for oil production, was viewed by the excavator as indicative of post-Sasanian rebuilding and a later squatter occupation phase, which subsequent analysis has since disproven.²¹

²⁰ See note 3. Di Segni, Leah. "Christian Epigraphy in the Holy Land. New Discoveries," *ARAM* 15 (2003), 247–67.

²¹ Tzaferis, Vassilios. "The Excavations of Kursi-Gergesa," *Atiqot* 16 (1983), 14–18. The confused chronology in Tzaferis' report originates in his analysis of pottery by typology rather than stratigraphy, thus seriously hampering a refined analysis of the church's occupational history in the early Islamic period. A recent study by David Stacey has proposed a new phasing for the church, with the first destruction phase probably dating to the mid-eighth century (likely a result of the earthquake of 749 as Kursi is situated directly above the fault line connecting the Arabian and African plates) and the second dated to the ninth century. For discussion see Stacey, David. *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974: The Early Islamic Periods*. Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2004, 15–16. The survival of the monastery into the ninth century is also suggested in the *Kitāb al-burhān* of Pseudo-Eutychius of Alexandria. Tr. Pierre Cachia and W. Montgomery Watt as: *Eutychius of Alexandria. The Book of the Demonstration*. Corpus

Sensitive analytical approaches to early Islamic diagnostic material (notably ceramics) have since emerged to facilitate nuanced readings of occupational chronologies at monastic sites beyond their Byzantine phases. Nonetheless, observations of this material in monastic contexts remain driven by chronology rather than the related concerns of production, distribution and access to resources which would provide a more coherent perspective of monastic sites within the context of their economic landscape.

Parallel observations of architectural features are also broadly treated in terms of stylistic form but seldom with regard to their status as aggregate products of technical investment and networks which involved complex networks of exploitation and acquisition of material and human resources which could vary according to patron capacity. The available published material for discerning potential cases of variation between monastic communities – whether social or economic – is thus often insufficient to challenge their perceived homogeneity and determine distinctions between Palestinian monastic sites (whether in the Byzantine or early Islamic period) which, unlike Egypt, lack a literary corpus sufficient to convey these distinctions by textual means.

Discrepancies in the social and economic infrastructure of the Palestinian Christian landscape had, nonetheless, been a feature of this milieu since its inception and remained so throughout the duration of the first millennium. As a product of imperial intervention, the Justinianic programmes at Mount Sinai exemplify the extent to which institutional and imperial sponsorship facilitated monastic access to a more extensive array of social and economic networks. By the seventh century, Sinai's base of social support and patronage existed on both local and extra-regional levels. It is among a handful of sites which appear consistently within the corpus of "pilgrim writings" from the Latin West and the liturgical commemorations of the Church calendar. Such mentions, though not explicitly useful in quantifying economic/patron transactions, do attest to

Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 193 (Scriptores Arabici 20). Louvain: Peeters, 1961, 354. For the discussion of the text's author, erroneously believed to be the Patriarch of Alexandria, Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, see Swanson, Mark. "Ibn Taymiyya and the *Kitāb al-burhān*. A Muslim Controversialist Responds to a Ninth-Century Arabic Christian Apology," in Yvonne Haddad and Wadi Haddad, eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995), 95-107. See also Samir, Samir Khalil, "La littérature melkite sous les premiers abbassides," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 56 (1990), 483-84. The consensus of both scholars attributes the work to the Melkite writer Peter of Bayt Ra's, active in the ninth century.

the growing importance of the site in the devotional concerns of the wider Chalcedonian *oikoumene* outside of its immediate region.²² The donation of a gift from the Nessana community to the monastery in 689 does, however, further indicate that the community's geography of patronage was also fully integrated into local networks of exchange.²³ Whilst evidently not dependent upon them, the patron economy of Sinai was seemingly more associated with local social practice than current studies recognise.

One means of observing both the complexity and variance within this milieu is demonstrated by the recent emphasis in analytical approaches on the concept of architectural energetics – essentially an analysis of the material and human energy required to produce such features – in the examination of Byzantine monumental structures. This has been achieved to better effect in Anatolia, but has direct application to a number of Palestinian monastic sites which lack a literary dossier sufficient to illuminate the nature and extent of the networks which sponsored their creation.²⁴ Such an approach, when applied to archaeological sites, illustrates these discrepancies in investment and patronage to best effect. The material employed in the construction of the imperial programmes of Mount Sinai indicates its exceptional credentials and connections. Decorated with a wealth of imported materials – including Proconnesian marble – and highly skilled decorative schemes, the Justinianic programmes are a testament to the revenue base which enabled their realisation and complements the impression garnered from the written sources of a site of extra-regional significance.

Comparative observations of contemporary sixth-century constructions at sites such as Umm al-Rasas or Umm al-Jimāl, where higher proportions of localised fabrics and less labour intensive construction techniques characterise the patterns of church building, throw these dis-

²² The Georgian calendar, which survives in Mount Sinai, has an entry for the 3rd October noting that the church functioned as a destination in the stationary liturgy. For commentary and further discussion see *Le Calendrier Palestino-Géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (Xe siècle)*. Ed. Gerard Garitte. Subsidia Hagiographica 30. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1958.

²³ P. Colt 89, line 24.

²⁴ Pickett, Jordan. "Energetics and Construction in the Byzantine World," in K. Koureliis and W. Caraher, eds., *Byzantine Archaeology in Method and Theory* (Forthcoming). I am grateful to Jordan Pickett for allowing me to see a copy of this article prior to publication.

tinctions into sharp relief.²⁵ Lack of widespread and systematic analysis of sites in terms of architectural energetics makes a quantitative comparison between their respective economic outlays with those of Sinai presently unfeasible. We do not know, for instance, the provenance of construction materials or the location of many stone quarries that facilitated the expansion of the Christian cult landscape in the Levant between the fourth and seventh centuries. Nevertheless, even with the available data, it is evident that the sites of Sinai and those of Umm al-Jimāl/Umm al-Rasas, though broadly contemporaneous, existed as a result of distinct patron transactions and capacities.

Such comparisons will require further refinement in coming years with a view to creating a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of these contemporary, but distinct, patron landscapes. One contribution such evidence can make in the present context, once correctly observed, is to offer a direct contradiction to the perspective of monasticism as a homogenous social category characterised by uniform socio-economic relationships. Hierarchy, competition and economic distinction co-existed in this monastic landscape albeit with no indication that these inequalities were the result of a formulated theological ideal. These distinctions were an established social convention at the close of the Byzantine period but would be amplified over the succeeding four centuries of Islamic rule. Monasteries that retained more diverse patron bases and social connections, which included Sinai and the Judean Desert circuit, were evidently more resilient to the impact of localised shifts in the ninth and tenth centuries where a clear weakening of local Christian patronage may be observed.²⁶

²⁵ Preliminary observations of this nature were made at Umm al-Jimāl in DeVries, Bert. "Urbanization in the Basalt Region of North Jordan in Late Antiquity. The Case of Umm el-Jimal," in Adnan Hadidi, ed., *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan II* (London: Routledge, 1988), 252-54.

²⁶ Colophons of a number of manuscripts which now reside at St Katherine's, Mount Sinai, testify to the continued contact of the communities of Mar Chariton, Mar Sabas and Sinai to Christian groups in other urban centres in the Caliphate. The monk Stephen, a native of Ramlā, is attested at the Monastery of Chariton in the 870s, British Library Oriental MS4950, f.197v and Sinai Arabic MS 72. On Stephen of Ramla, Griffith, Sidney H. "Stephen of Ramlah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic in 9th Century Palestine," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39 (1985), 23-45. The activity of the monk David Antony of Baghdad at both Mar Sabas and Sinai has been documented by Griffith, Sidney H. "Anthony of David, scribe and monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the monasteries of Palestine", *Church History* 58 (1989) 7-19. The archive

Recent emphasis on the issue of chronology (whether broadly related to individual diagnostic materials or occupational histories) has proved vital, not least because it has contributed to a successful dismantling of traditional perceptions of the Arab conquest as an instigator of monastic decline. Few studies could now comfortably advocate the traditionally held view of the 630s as one which ushered in waves of deliberate site destruction or abandonment. Yet the focus on monastic site chronologies, without further consideration of their social or economic context and activity, has not cultivated more detailed observations of post-Byzantine continuities among contemporary scholars. This has accordingly hindered the emergence of a distinct disciplinary identity for the study of the material and economic components of Christian life in the region following the 630s and has meant that approaches to monastic communities are (unintentionally) framed by the concept of *stasis* in terms of their social and economic function.

Broadly observed, when combined with the predominantly theological tone of recent studies, this adoption of pre-existing models of static monastic communal life has reduced perceptions of monasticism to one of a residual Byzantine legacy whose socio-economic role became increasingly redundant following the Arab conquest and the ensuing effects of "Islam", a perception not assisted by the contemporary academic terminologies "early Islamic" or "early Muslim", which automatically generate a conception of Palestinian society which appears antithetical to monasticism as a social convention.

This consensus remains a product of modern analytical approaches to the period. Publications on Byzantine monasticism habitually terminate analysis in the 630s (although few offer detailed treatments beyond the Sasanian interim ca. 614-28) following the advent of the first Arab armies in the region around ca. 632.²⁷ Discussions of Christian communities in the early Islamic period adhere to a similarly politicised template of chronological analysis and thus (often unintentionally) perpetuate an

of Bishop Solomon of Mount Sinai has been surveyed in Swanson, Mark. "Solomon, Bishop of Mount Sinai (Late Tenth Century AD)," in Herman Teule and Rifaat Ebeid, eds., *Studies into the Christian Arabic Heritage: In Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Eastern Christian Studies, 5 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 91-111.

²⁷ See for example Chitty, *The Desert a City*, 143-63; Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, 245-56; Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries*, 236-37.

impression of monastic communities as entities interwoven with the cultural processes of "Byzantium" rather than those of Syria-Palestine.

13.4 The Judean Desert construct

Of central importance to this prevailing consensus is the imbalanced integration of textual sources related to the Judean Desert with the total archaeological corpus that has been emerging from excavation in the region since the late nineteenth century. Despite the broad analytical scope proposed by the core synthesis works on Palestinian monasticism, such studies seldom offer a collective survey of evidence beyond Jerusalem and the Judean Desert. Archaeological research in this region has also deviated little from discussions of architectural form, which, when accompanied by the pre-conceived understanding of monastic life generated through hagiography, reduces its contribution to an essentially illustrative role.

The developing history of Palestinian monasticism is thus often indistinguishable from the linear sequence of ascetic protagonists of Judean Desert hagiography, whose actions and careers are routinely negotiated around the idealised architectural theatres provided by archaeological research. A comparative review of the main synthetic works yields precisely this picture: a succession of familiar monastic figures (Sabas, Euthymios, Theodosios) whose ascetical achievements and theological confrontations are embellished by an archaeological corpus which grounds these figures in a tangible and widely accepted physical reality, albeit one which from the point of excavation was moulded and refashioned by the preconceptions of hagiography.²⁸

The literary and archaeological data relating to "Judean Desert" monastic communities is thus contorted and over-extended so as to become synonymous with "Palestinian" monasticism.²⁹ This approach has

²⁸ Thus at Ma'ale Adummim the archaeological phases are closely correlated with episodes in Cyril of Schythopolis' Lives: see Magen, Yitzhak. "The Monastery of St Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim," in Yoram Tsafir, ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 170-96. A similar approach is replicated in Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, 12-17, and in *idem*. "Euthymius and His Monastery in the Judean Desert," *Liber Annuus* 43 (1993), 339-71.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Central to the arguments of both works are the hagiographies of Cyril of Scythopolis whose narrative details provide the basis for the discussion of social and

remained essentially unquestioned since the emergence of the key synthetic studies nearly twenty years ago and forms the foundation from which all discussions of monasticism under Umayyad and Abbasid rule proceed.³⁰

This has produced two essential outcomes. First, as outlined previously, the model effectively marginalises a vast quantity of archaeological material and epigraphic documentation – much of it known since the 1990s – within the major surveys of monasticism in the region. Sites such as Mount Nebo, Dayr ‘Ayn ‘Abata or Jabal Hārūn are well studied (though unevenly published), but their collective results remain isolated from broader regional surveys of monasticism and are often employed simply to supplement, rather than critically evaluate, existing interpretations based upon an essentially Judean-centric model. Second, deference to hagiographical models in the interpretation of archaeological material has hindered more forensic observation of inter-site variation, not least because such excavations were guided by the tacit assumption that such texts offered an unfringeable perspective on monastic spatial organisation and social relationships.

Definitive to contemporary interpretative models are the two most prominent sources which survive from the Byzantine period, Cyril of Scythopolis' *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*³¹ and the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos, two sixth-century compositions whose internal details and descriptions provide the basis for modern evaluations of life within the “Palestinian monastery” and, more importantly, its relationship to external avenues of patronage, administrative/economic networks and local populations.³² The pre-eminence afforded to the traditions of Cyril and

economic roles of monasteries. A further example of this trend is encapsulated in the title of a study by Patrich, Joseph: *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995.

³⁰ McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land*, 39-44; Schick, Robert. *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule. A Historical and Archaeological Study*. Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995, 96-98.

³¹ I have used the term by which these lives are collectively known. I am, however, aware that such texts do not appear to have circulated as a complete or linear composition in the early phases of their transmission.

³² For the use of John Moschos or Cyril of Scythopolis in this regard see Penkett, Pachomius. “Palestinian Monasticism in the Spiritual Meadow of John Moschos,” *Aram* 15 (2007), 173-84; Barr, Doron. “Rural Monasticism as a Key Element in the Christianization of Byzantine Palestine,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005), 57-65.

John within current interpretation has underpinned the extra-regional model of patronage and monastic development outlined earlier.³³

A resulting feature of this reliance upon hagiography to establish the chronology and characteristics of monastic developments is that patterns of monastic foundation and expansion are often perceived to be characterised by “boom periods”. Commonly, phases of regional monastic foundation are credited to the intervention of individual hagiographical protagonists, rather than an on-going process of localised patron activity and devotional preference. This has reinforced the current reluctance to correlate the development of monastic communities with localised patterns of social or economic change. Monasteries and pilgrim sites are thus often viewed as institutions particularly susceptible to institutional regime change, notably the supposed fractures to the “international” pil-

³³ Compare for example the origins of Cyril of Scythopolis’ protagonists Euthymios (*Life of Euthymios* 8.20; Sabas, *Life of Sabas* 86.25-87.15) and John the Hesychast (*Life of John Hesychast* 201.5-201.15). Cyril of Scythopolis. *Lives*. Ed. E. Schwartz as: *Kyrillos von Skythopolis. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur Kyrillos von Skythopolis*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1939. Tr. R.M. Price as: *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991. See the comments of Hirschfeld, Yizhar. “Monasteries and Churches in the Judean Desert in the Byzantine Period,” in Yoram Tsafrir, ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 149-52. For a further example of the perception of Palestinian monasticism as “international” see Hunt, Edward D. *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, 244. This has been more recently repeated in McCormick, *Charlemagne’s Survey of the Holy Land*, 44, n. 62, following the precedent established by Hirschfeld and Binns, as well as Dauphin, *La Palestine byzantine*, 158-65. See for example, Kuelzer, Andreas. “Byzantine and Early Post-Byzantine Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Mount Sinai,” in Ruth Macrides, ed., *Travel in the Byzantine World. Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 149-61. A more comprehensive study is available in Kuelzer, Andreas. *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam. Studien zu Pilgerführern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994; Kislinger, Ewald. “Making for the Holy Places (7th-10th centuries). The Sea Routes,” in Euangelia Chatzetryphōnos, ed., *Routes of Faith in the Medieval Mediterranean. History, Monuments, People, Pilgrimage Perspectives. International Symposium, Thessaloniki 7-10.11.2007* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2008), 119-24. See also Christodoulou, Georgios. “The Contribution of the Roman Empire to the Growth of the Ancient Monasticism of the East,” in Euangelia Chatzetryphōnos, ed., *Routes of Faith in the Medieval Mediterranean. History, Monuments, People, Pilgrimage Perspectives. International Symposium, Thessaloniki 7-10.11.2007* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2008), 49-64.

grimage network, purportedly instigated by the Sasanian and subsequent Arab conquests.³⁴

Understanding the nature and quality of the primary source material upon which this supposition, and the arguments of the major synthetic works, are built is crucial to further discussion. Most importantly, the core synthetic studies have overlooked the lack of adequate critical editions of the two core sources (John Moschos and Cyril of Scythopolis) which are foundational to current understandings of the social and economic contours of Byzantine monastic life. When considered more critically, neither are yet sufficiently well understood to provide the definitive conclusions about sixth-century monasticism which are often drawn from them. The diffuse manuscript traditions of John Moschos' *Spiritual Meadow*, surviving in a multitude of forms and linguistic variants, may always elude a secure critical edition.³⁵ For one, it appears to have been interpolated relatively early. Already by the ninth century the Patriarch Photios was aware of two variant versions of the text – an observation which neatly encapsulates the relative popularity of the work beyond its original Palestinian context and the ease with which the agenda and perceptions of later redactors could be intertwined among its pages.³⁶ The role of the *Spiritual Meadow* in Byzantine debates surrounding icon veneration is a case in point.³⁷ In view of these qualifications we might concede that the structure and content of the original sixth-century composition may never be established conclusively. Such an issue is not the main concern here, but nonetheless is crucial in its implications for current research approaches to Palestinian monasticism in the Byzantine and early Islamic period given the text's central role in generating monastic socio-economic models.

³⁴ McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land*, 48; Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, 236.

³⁵ John Moschos. *Ioannis Moschi Pratum Spirituale*. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. *Patrologia Graeca* 87, 2352-3112. Paris. Tr. John Wortley as: *The Spiritual Meadow*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992.

³⁶ Photius. *Bibliothèque*. Tr. René Henry. Tome III, Codices 186-222. Paris: Société d'Édition les Belles-Lettres, 1962, 199; Tr. N.G. Wilson as: *The Bibliotheca. Selection and Translation with notes*. London: Duckworth, 1994, 182-83.

³⁷ Brubaker, Leslie and John Haldon. *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era. A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 200. See also the earlier study in Brubaker, Leslie. "Icons before Iconoclasm?" *Morfologie Sociali e Culturali in Europa Fra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo* (1998), 1239-1244.

Current uses of the *Spiritual Meadow* in discussions of Palestinian monasticism have largely overlooked this key qualification and it is still common to encounter analyses of Palestinian monastic life based upon modern editions of the text as if all discussions of the monastic topographies, characters and cults which emerge from its anecdotes are entirely without concern. Indeed, the identification of archaeological sites with communities mentioned in the modern edition remains a standard approach of archaeological research and has resulted in several dubious correlations.³⁸ Monastic possession of miraculous icons is another motif commonly accepted by scholars (especially when reconstructing pilgrimages) without due recognition of the concerns about the interpolation of the text articulated in the Iconomachy debates of the eighth century.³⁹ Yet the text's mention in the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) suggests that its application to discussions of the sixth century cannot be undertaken without due reflection on the issues surrounding its later transmission as a text through which subsequent social and theological conventions were legitimised and projected.⁴⁰ The matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved here, but it does at least highlight the relative difficulty of viewing the development of the Byzantine Palestinian monastic environment through the lens of a solitary academic discipline. In this respect, the tendency to compartmentalise approaches to Palestinian monasticism, either in terms of chronology, discipline or region, has failed to raise key methodological issues which, in other sub-disciplines of Byzantine Studies, have been known for decades.

The *Spiritual Meadow* is perhaps the most explicit example of this concern, but it is not an isolated one. The modern edition of monastic lives composed by Cyril of Scythopolis is also not without its limitations. The version edited by Eduard Schwatrz, which forms the basis for the English translation by Richard Price widely utilised by archaeologists,

³⁸ Thus the supposed monastery at "Iraq Isma" was identified as the 'Monastery of Samson' based on a brief description in the *Spiritual Meadow*: see Gass, Erasmus and Boaz Zissu. "The Monastery of Samson up the Rock of Etham in the Byzantine Period," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 121 (2005), 168-83. This identification was criticised in Taxel, Itamar. "Rural Monasticism at the Foothills of Southern Samaria and Judea in the Byzantine Period. Asceticism, Agriculture and Pilgrimage," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 26 (2008), 61-62.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁰ Discussion and related bibliography in Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 200-1.

was ruthlessly selective in its engagement with the available manuscript corpus. The current edition employed by scholars is largely a composite product of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts and, most importantly, the unique tenth- or eleventh-century Paris Coislin 303.⁴¹ The edition's limited engagement with the surviving Greek dossier has already been astutely noted by Daniel Hombergen in the last systematic survey of the work.⁴² Yet an equally problematic issue is that the potential discrepancies presented by the earlier Arabic recensions – notably those preserved in the ninth-century Vatican Arabic MS 71 – have yet to be fully acknowledged or introduced to the wider debate.⁴³ In the case of other texts compiled in Paris Coislin 303, such as the *History of the Exploits of Bishop Paul of Qanetos and Priest John of Edessa*, comparative observations with earlier Syriac recensions have yielded some cases of re-working during the process of transmission pertinent to the current discussion. In the *History of the Exploits*, both the social and geographical origins of the saint were recast in the Greek Paris Coislin 303 to meet the demands of the changing contexts in which such narratives circulated.⁴⁴

The manipulation of ethnic or social origins is a feature also known within manuscript traditions of other texts relating to Syro-Palestinian figures where the Greek copies post-date Arabic or Syriac versions – often by several centuries.⁴⁵ The relative fluidity of biographical construction

⁴¹ Cyril of Scythopolis. *Lives*. Ed. E. Schwartz as: *Kyrillos von Skythopolis. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur Kyrillos von Skythopolis*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1939. Tr. R.M. Price as: *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991.

⁴² Hombergen, Daniel. *The Second Origenist Controversy. A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2001), 58-65.

⁴³ The last systematic survey of Vatican Arabic MS 71 is Leeming, Kate. "Byzantine Hagiographies in Arabic. Three Translations from a Ninth-Century Manuscript Copied at the Monastery of Mar Saba in Palestine (Vaticanus Arabicus 71)." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: University of Oxford, 1997. In this example Leeming noted the complete absence of the Byzantine dating system: *ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁴ Smith, Kyle. "Dendrites and Other Standers in the History of the Exploits of Bishop Paul of Qanetos and Priest John of Edessa" *Hugoye. Journal of Syriac Studies* 12.1 (2009), 121-23.

⁴⁵ Brock, Sebastian P. "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor," *Annalecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973), 299-346. For a discussion of the two traditions see Boudignon, Christian. "Maxime le Confesseur était-il constantinopolitain?" in Jacques Noret, Bart Janssens and Bram Roosen, eds., *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek and Byzantine*

in the transmission of such works has obvious implications for the current interpretive models of Palestinian Byzantine monasticism where the biographical details of saints remain intrinsic to an image of an externally driven and elite (essentially non-Palestinian) social movement. Further exploration of the corpus is necessary before the extent of the issue can be fully appraised and understood. But, for the purposes of the present discussion, these examples are sufficient to call into question the assumption that these biographical motifs – in terms of the ethnic or social origin of monks – were neutral at the point of their authorship and remained so throughout subsequent stages of transmission. The point has been well observed in terms of Syrian and Egyptian monastic literary endeavours.⁴⁶ It is therefore vital, in view of the potent ideological associations with the Palestinian landscape, that the literature of its own monastic milieu and the construction of its key figures be subjected to a comparative critical review.

13.5 Archaeology

It is impossible to overlook the formative role archaeological research has played in supporting the prevailing view of Palestinian monasticism articulated from the surviving hagiographical narratives. A brief inspection of the excavated corpus of sites in the Judean Desert appears to confirm just this: a surge in foundations in the mid-fifth and mid-sixth centuries (coinciding with the careers of Euthymios and Sabas or the Justinianic expansion) with an apparent decline in activity either side of this period (particularly after 550).⁴⁷ The interpretation endorsed by this archaeological material is unambiguous – not only were the major periods of monastic foundation inter-linked with Byzantine political control, but the foundation of monastic sites was similarly dependent upon

Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for His 65th Birthday (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2004), 11-43.

⁴⁶ Mayerson, Phillip. "Anti-Black Sentiment in the *Vitae Patrum*," *Harvard Theological Review* (1979), 304-11. See also Wood, Phillip. 'We have no King but Christ': Christian political thought in Greater Syria on the eve of the Arab conquest (c. 400-585) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 67-81.

⁴⁷ Thus at Ma'ale Adummim the archaeological phases are closely correlated with episodes in the Cyrillic Lives: see Magen, "The Monastery of St Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim," 171-74. A similar approach is replicated in Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, 12-17.

the external links with the Aegean and Anatolia that this geo-political environment fostered. Cyril of Scythopolis' status as a faultless authority on the history of Palestinian monasticism is thus ostensibly confirmed by this body of supporting archaeological material – an assumption which remains implicit in all of the available synthetic studies.⁴⁸

This reading of the archaeological evidence has wider implications. For one, it has encouraged a static assessment of the stratigraphic phasing of monastic sites, determining all constructional phases to belong to a regionally uniform (and somewhat crudely defined) phase of fifth- or sixth-century “expansion”. This has accordingly inhibited our ability to identify cases of subsequent development, investment or change in spatial usage within these complexes after the mid-sixth century. Further still, it has consigned any identified cases of post-Byzantine structural change or activity, especially those which do not fit with pre-conceived ideals of monastic social norms (such as oil presses in atrium spaces), to an ill-defined phase of post-monastic “squatter” occupation.⁴⁹

Regrettably, the irregular quality of publication of these sites – often bereft of discussions of stratigraphy or diagnostic material – does not permit a fuller clarification of these restrictions here. However, these difficulties with the archaeological record have facilitated a perception of decline in the patronal support for monastic/cult sites after ca. 600 which conveniently fits into predetermined ideas of a fracture in patron networks instigated by the establishment of Sasanian or Arab hegemony. This is notably the case at several monastic sites where the absence of dated epigraphic formulae is unable to remedy the confused – often incorrect – phasing frequently presented in the excavation reports.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ A survey of the status afforded to Cyril by modern historians, which has its origins in the seventeenth century, is offered in Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy*, 41-49. See also Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, 3.

⁴⁹ Thus the presence of Arabic graffito inscriptions in churches at Rehovot in the Negev was considered a feature indicative of a post-Christian phase: see Tsafirir, Yoram. “An Introduction to Rehovot-in-the-Negev,” in Yoram Tsafirir, Joseph Patrich, Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, Israel Hershkovitz and Yehuda D. Nevo, eds., *Excavations at the Rehovot-in-the Negev. Volume One, The Northern Church* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1988), 8.

⁵⁰ Thus at the monastery of Kursi the last inscription dates to ca. 582-87. However, all subsequent renovations or changes to the spatial use of the site were attributed to a post ca. 614 rebuilding and early-eighth-century post-monastic squatter occupation:

Our present inability to identify later phases of patron intervention, or architectural embellishment, at these sites thus perpetuates the prevailing interpretive perception of “monasticism” as intertwined with the stability of Byzantine rule and the impetus of external protagonists to maintain its patronage networks or social role. Equally, because current synthesising approaches have concentrated on such a limited repertoire of material, primarily that concerning the Judean Desert, they have not integrated more recent evidence from sites such as Mar Elyas, Dayr ‘Ayn ‘Abata or ‘Ayn al-Kanisah, where continued interventions beyond ca. 600 – in these cases ca. 622, ca. 691 and 762 respectively – contradict the basic premises of the traditional argument.⁵¹

The current standard narrative is difficult to deconstruct as, on all levels, it appears self-endorsing. In light of material that has appeared in recent decades from other regions in Palestine (which contradicts the chronological pattern of this argument), it would, however, appear that the conclusions drawn from research in the Judean Desert will require more considered renegotiation. More sensitive readings of epigraphic formulae, which confirm cases of investment throughout the later sixth and early seventh centuries, have stood at the forefront of this recent wave; here we may observe on-going patterns of church building and embellishment, beyond the so-called Justinianic expansion, in the Galilee, the Negev and the Transjordan in the later sixth and early seventh centuries.⁵² Equally, the publication of the papyri of the Church of Hagia Maria in Petra in recent years and the more systematic utilisation of the

see Tzaferis, Vassilios. “The Excavations of Kursi-Gergesa,” *‘Atiqot* 16 (1983), 5-18, 28-9.

⁵¹ For Mar Elyas see Macdonald, Burton. *Pilgrimage in Early Christian Jordan* (Oxford; Oakville, CT: Oxbow Books, 2010), 78, and Piccirillo, Michele. “The Province of Arabia during the Persian Invasion (613-629/30),” in Kenneth Holm and Hayim Lapin, eds., *Shaping the Middle East. Jews Christians and Muslims in an Age of Transition 400-800 C.E.* (Bethesda, MI: University Press of Maryland, 2011), 106-11; for Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata, Politis, Konstantinos D. “Excavations at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata 1991,” 283, and Politis, Konstantinos D. “The Monastery of Aghios Lot at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata in Jordan,” 160-161. For ‘Ayn al-Kanisah see Piccirillo, Michele. “La Chapelle de la Theotokos dans le Wadi ‘Ayn al-Kanisah au Mont Nébo en Jordanien,” *Annual of the Department of Antiquities* 39 (1995), 417-18.

⁵² Di Segni, Leah. “Epigraphic Documentation on Building in the Provinces of Palaestina and Arabia, 4th-7th c.,” in John Humphrey, ed., *The Roman and Byzantine Near East. Vol. 2. Some Recent Archaeological Research* (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1999), 149-78.

surviving corpus from the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery of Nessana (where the importance of local donors and social networks is explicit) suggest that analytical approaches to the factors surrounding the foundation (or abandonment) of monastic and cult centres must be undertaken with a more detailed inspection of the immediate social and economic context of these sites.⁵³

Although the interpretations advocated by the main studies of Palestinian monasticism present a convincing façade, apparently supported by both textual and archaeological evidence, they are not impermeable to critique. This is notably the case when we consider how the excavated material for Judean Desert monasticism was interpreted in its initial stages. Since the publication of the first systematic studies of the region, the vast majority of monastic sites in the Judean Desert have been “identified” – and to an extent “hunted out” – through the use of Cyril of Scythopolis’ hagiographical construct. In turn, Cyril’s *Lives* provided the basic chronological framework within which the architectural phasing and material assemblages of these monasteries was interpreted and subsequently presented.⁵⁴

13.6 Patronage

A further problem with current interpretations derives from the integration of material from other regions where several examples allude to the structuring influence of monasteries as venues for localised social and economic life and as places interwoven with local elite networks. Similar patterns are increasingly identifiable in Palestinian contexts. In Nessana, this is confirmed by the activities of the prominent local family of Sergios-Patrikos, where burial dedications and papyri attest to a hereditary succession of *hegoumenoi* at the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery over four generations between the 590s and the 680s.⁵⁵ This image of elite-monastic integration is further supplemented by the papyri, where

⁵³ Frösén *et al.*, eds. *Petra Papyri I*.

⁵⁴ For examples of this approach, which is replicated in other contexts, see the discussion of the Monastery of Ma’ale Adummim by Magen, “The Monastery of St Martyrius at Ma’ale Adummim,” 170-96.

⁵⁵ Kirk, George E. and Bradford Welles, C. “The Inscriptions,” in Harris Dunscombe Colt, ed., *Excavations at Nessana (Auja Hafir, Palestine) 1* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), Inscr. 12-14. See also Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana 3*, 7.

records list the involvement of monastic figures in money-lending, judicial affairs and tax collection into the 680s.⁵⁶

Of equal importance is the status of such institutions as recipients of patronage from networks of local donors, of which the survival of two donation registers from the hoard of the Sergios-Bakkhos Monastery, dated to the early and later seventh centuries respectively, is one such example. Closer inspection of the individual donors, whose names are often accompanied by their toponymic, reveals the strikingly localised character of the monastery's patronage base, with the monastery being supported by the collective donations of individuals from Nessana or Elusa and their satellite settlements.⁵⁷ The pattern is also known from the earlier Petra Papyri dated to the 570s, where a will, produced by the clergy of the Church of the Hagia Maria, lists two monastic institutions – one of which we may plausibly identify with the site on Jabal Hārūn – as benefactors to the property and land held by a local notable Obo-dianos, son of Theodoros.⁵⁸ In both the examples of Nessana and Petra, the evident integration of monastic clergy and local elite figures – often linked through familial connections – has important implications for our understanding of the primary social and financial stimuli which sparked the waves of monastic foundation in the fifth and sixth centuries.

In social terms, the trend represents a culmination of the growing role of Christianity and Christian cult buildings as the primary means through which elite devotional sentiment was commonly articulated. Debates regarding its origin aside, the wealth of epigraphic material provides a fairly compelling portrait of the increasing importance of monasteries as recipients to which patronage was steadily directed by the sixth century. The development of smaller cult centres in rural settlements, involving the reuse of natural caves or early Roman tombs, as at Horvat Qasra, or the construction of reliquary crypts, such as Horvat Berachot and the North Church of Rehovot-in-the-Negev, adds weight to this broader impression.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ For money lending see P. Colt 44, 46; for judicial affairs P. Colt 57; and for tax collection P. Colt 58, 59.

⁵⁷ P. Colt 79, P. Colt 80.

⁵⁸ Frösén *et al.*, eds, *The Petra Papyri I*, 9-10.

⁵⁹ Di Segni, Leah. "On the Development of Christian Cult Sites on Tombs of the Second Temple Period," *ARAM* 19 (2007), 381-401. See also Tsafrir, Yoram. "The Northern Church," in Yoram Tsafrir, Joseph Patrich, Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, Israel Hershkovitz and Yehuda D. Nevo, eds., *Excavations at the Rehovot-in-the-Negev. Volume One, The Northern Church*. (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1988), 50-58, and

We know less about the communities or families which contributed to the construction of these local monuments than is desirable and still less about the holy protagonists whose memories were commemorated at these sites. Still, in examples such as Horvat Heshek and the North Church of Rehovot-in-the Negev, the hereditary connections explicit in the churches' epigraphic corpora imply a similar integration of these sites with the affairs of locally based families.⁶⁰ The relative anonymity of such sites in the textual tradition transmitted in Byzantium and the West in Greek and Latin, may, therefore, suggest that they were entirely integrated into localised devotional life and religious memory, to the exclusion of the extra-regional networks so often privileged in explanations of Palestinian monasticism. This is at present an impressionistic perspective but would benefit from further investigation in additional regional contexts.

Turning to discussions of the economic networks which facilitated such extensive programmes of construction, we are inevitably presented with questions concerning the sources whence such elite wealth derived. There is little indication in any of the documents related to the Nessana and Petra corpora that the primary revenue base for these individuals and families extended beyond the Syro-Palestinian sphere. At Nessana, the concerns of the Sergios-Patrikos family appear predominantly local and do not imply an extensive pattern of property or land holding beyond the confines of the settlement and its environs. In Petra, the outlook is a little broader. We are aware that Obodianos also owned property in Gaza and Eleutheropolis.⁶¹ Nevertheless, these patterns of landowning and property, from which these family units appear to have derived their wealth, do not demonstrate connections beyond the urban and rural centres of the Palestinian region – a pattern which may have been fairly commonplace among Palestinian elites by the sixth century. If we accept that the wealth of many of the patron-families of monasteries such as Jabal Hārūn and Sergios-Bakkhos at Nessana was primarily localised, it follows that any attempt to understand the trajectory of monastic communities in the early Islamic period must be considered in view of potential fluctuations in these circumstances; that is, changes in where elite

Tsafrir, Yoram and Yizhar Hirschfeld. "The Church and Mosaics at Horvat Berachot, Israel," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979).

⁶⁰ Di Segni, Leah. "The Greek Inscriptions at Horvat Heshek," in Yoram Tsafrir, ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 66-70.

⁶¹ P. Petra 1, 2. Further discussion of the family and property ownership is offered in Koenen, Ludwig *et al.*, "The Decipherment and Edition of the Petra Papyri," 201-26.

patronage priorities were directed after ca. 638 and, most importantly, whether or not the revenue base of such families remained sufficient to perpetuate these existing relationships of patronage.

We must be cautious in imposing this interpretation too broadly. Existing networks of patronage and elite intervention connecting the “Byzantine Aegean” and Palestine, which resulted in the foundation of several high-status monasteries or churches, is confirmed in several instances. Justinian’s interventions at Mount Sinai and the Nea in Jerusalem provide two examples.⁶² However, there is continued evidence of local patronal endowment at monastic sites such as Mount Nebo or Dayr ‘Ayn ‘Abata into the late seventh and eighth century.⁶³ Moreover, the presence of monastic figures in urban churches (such as Abba Kaioum of Mount Nebo in Hagios Stephanos Umm al-Rasas) or the donors listed within the Nessana papyri contradict the hypothesis that this Aegean-Palestine relationship can be considered to reflect the sole, or even primary means, through which all monasteries or pilgrimage sites were founded and continued to be supported.⁶⁴ The papyri record listing a collective donation on behalf of the Nessana community to the monastery of Mount Sinai provides an important case study in this regard – reflecting both the extent and complexity of Palestinian monastic patronage systems (beyond a local-regional divide) and equally, the inadequacy of epigraphic inscriptions (the predominant focus of patron identification) as the primary means by which such systems can be reconstructed.⁶⁵ This is most evident in consideration of the relative ambiguity of the terms *προσφορά* and *εὐλογία* where papyri and epigraphic inscriptions demonstrate their application to a variety of forms of donation which comprised a monastery’s complete repertoire of offerings, including money, goods in kind, programmes of construction and liturgical furnishings.⁶⁶

⁶² Procopius. *De Aedificiis*. Tr. H. B. Dewing as: *Procopius*. Loeb Classical Library 343. Vol. 7, *Buildings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940, 5.6 and 5.8; Avigad, Nahman. “A Building Inscription of the Emperor Justinian and the Nea in Jerusalem (Preliminary Note),” *Israel Exploration Journal* 27 (1997), 145-51.

⁶³ Politis, “Excavations at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata 1991”, 282; Piccirillo, Michele. “The Monastic Presence,” in Michele Piccirillo and Eugenios Alliata, eds., *Mount Nebo. New Archaeological Excavations 1967-1997* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1998), 197.

⁶⁴ P. Colt 79 and P. Colt 80.

⁶⁵ P. Colt 89, lines 23-25.

⁶⁶ Compare, for example, P. Colt 80 with P. Colt 79 and P. Colt 50. Further examples of patronage from Nessana emerge from Kirk and Welles, “The Inscriptions,” inscriptions 30 and 31, where collective groups appear to have paid for the renovation

Given the paucity of available evidence, it is not always possible to reconstruct the patronage arrangements for a single Palestinian monastery in its entirety, or determine whether or not both regional and local systems of patronage co-existed within one monastic context. This is particularly the case for monasteries where epigraphic dedications provide the only indication of patron identities. Nevertheless, dedicatory inscriptions, such as those endowed by the monk Sergios, ex-assessor of Emesa, his sister Pallut and her son John, a member of the metropolitan council of Emesa, in Church No. 3 of Nessana in the Negev, at least partially reflect the complexity of these arrangements beyond a simplistic "local" or "trans-regional" relationship and require that we renegotiate the perception of exchange between patrons and monasteries as being part of either exclusively "urban-elite" or "rural-notable" relationships.⁶⁷

The complexity suggested by the co-existence of localised Christian cult sites, and sites connected with the devotions of the wider Christian *oikoumene*, requires an additional acknowledgement that these relationships of patronage were unlikely to have been uniform across the region prior to the seventh century. A simple comparison of the monasteries of Sinai, whose devotional significance extended beyond localised and regional contexts by the late sixth century, of Jabal Hārūn, which maintained strong links to notable families in Petra and possibly other regional elites,⁶⁸ and of smaller foundations such as Horvat Heshek, whose

or expansion of the church complex. The use of this term is widespread in mosaic dedicatory inscriptions and some stone liturgical furnishing. Examples of the use of προσφορά in mosaic inscriptions are known from the Churches of Nazareth, Khirbet-el-Maqati' and Hagios Paulos and Hagios Menas in Rihab. For the church of Nazareth, see Bagatti, Bellarmino. *Excavations in Nazareth, Vol. 1. From the Beginning Till the XII Century*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1969, 100. For the inscriptions relating to the churches of Khirbet-el-Maqati' and Rihab see Piccirillo, Michele. *Chiese e mosaici della Giordania settentrionale*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1981, 23-24, 76-79. Examples of the term appearing in mosaic dedications and liturgical furnishing in monastic contexts is known from the main basilica on Mount Nebo, see Di Segni, Leah. "The Greek Inscriptions," in Michele Piccirillo and Eugenios Alliata, eds., *Mount Nebo. New Archaeological Excavations 1967-1997* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1998), 429, 435.

⁶⁷ Kirk and Welles, "The Inscriptions," 173.

⁶⁸ For example, see Petra papyrus inv. 6a. A partial translation of the papyrus is offered in Gagóg, Traianos and Jaakko Frösén. "Petra Papyri," *Annual for the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 42 (1998), 477. For a discussion of this monastery, see Frösén, Jaakko and Päivi Miettunen. "Aaron in Religious Literature, Myth and Legend," in Jaakko Frösén and Zbigniew T. Fiema, eds., *Petra - The Mountain of Aaron. The*

devotional significance appears interlinked with a single family, highlight the need to consider these existing inequalities and complexities prior to the Arab conquest.⁶⁹

In order to understand and contextualise subsequent patterns of continuity, survival and abandonment (notwithstanding the potential factors of causation) it is important to consider the possibility that not all monasteries or pilgrimage sites entered the early Islamic period on the same patronal, economic or social basis. This point is central to acknowledging the potential effects that a breakdown in localised elite wealth had on the trajectory of monastic communities in the early Islamic period. For a monastery such as Sinai, connected with elite and clerical communities throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, the Levant and Egypt, where localised revenues and devotions were a component – but not the sum – of their patronage base, a collapse in local relationships could feasibly have been endured by relying on the income generated through these wider networks. For sites such as Jabal Hārūn and Horvat Heshek, more integrated into and dependent upon these immediate networks for social and financial support (particularly as many of their clergy were drawn from local settlements or a single family), any shifts in the investment preference or economic stability of local patrons would have had far greater implications for their ability to survive.

13.7 The 614 question

Any potential recognition of the continuity of Byzantine monastic convention in the early Islamic period necessitates further discussion of the impact of the Sasanian occupation ca. 614–628 and its position in broader debate. Monasticism is problematic to integrate into this overall dialogue primarily due to the nature of the published archaeological data sets presently available. A habitual tendency by excavators – predominantly, though by no means exclusively, active prior to the 1980s – to date abandonment or “destruction” phases at monastic complexes to ca. 614 (often with minimal acknowledgement of diagnostic material),⁷⁰ has fostered a

Finnish Archaeological Project in Jordan (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 2008), 10–11.

⁶⁹ Di Segni, Leah. “The Greek Inscriptions at Horvat Heshek,” 66–70.

⁷⁰ For Kursi, see Tzaferis, Vassilios. “The Excavations of Kursi-Gergesa,” 15–17, and a shorter appraisal in Tzaferis, Vassilios. “The Early Christian Monastery at Kursi,” in

substantial over-estimation of the archaeologically visible impact of the Sasanian presence in Palestine upon its monastic topography. Again, the image of prevalent devastation articulated by the surviving texts – few of which have been subjected to individual critical appraisal and not all of which are securely dated – has proved formative in determining the interpretive agenda of contemporary archaeological research.

This trend has led to an assessment of the Sasanian period as a catastrophic episode which, aside from its devastating physical impact, instigated an immediate rupture to existing relationships of patronage between monasteries and patrons and dealt a critical blow to their established social roles. The sentiment is succinctly encapsulated by Robert Schick in his widely referenced synthesis:

The conquest of Palestine by the Sasanian Persians in 614 and their subsequent occupation up to 628 proved to be the first major blow that the Christians of that region were to suffer, a blow from which they never fully recovered.⁷¹

Perplexingly, this interpretation is routinely duplicated in studies, most recently that of Michael McCormick, despite being contradicted by more recent critical reassessments directed at Palestinian urban and rural settlement.⁷² Here, a series of excavations, conducted over the past twenty years at several major urban centres, have identified no cases of permanent socio-economic dislocation in the early seventh century. In a corresponding fashion, renegotiations of the chronologies of older excavations by Jodi Magness and Gideon Avni have continued to augment the impressions of seventh-century continuity given by newer material.⁷³

Yoram Tsafrir, ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 77-79. For the Martyrios monastery at Ma'ale Adummim, see Magen, "The Monastery of St. Martyrios at Ma'ale Adummim," 173-74. The site of Shepherd's Fields is discussed in Tzaferis, Vassilios. "The Archaeological Excavations at Shepherds Fields," *Liber Annuus* 25 (1975), 5-52, with a shorter review in Tzaferis, Vassilios. "The Early Christian Holy Site at Shepherd's Field," in Yoram Tsafrir, ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 204-6.

⁷¹ Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule*, 20.

⁷² McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land*, 40-42.

⁷³ Avni, Gideon. "The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem," 35-48. This followed an earlier study by Magness, Jodi. "A Re-examination of the Archaeological Evidence for the Sasanian Persian Destruction," 67-74. I would disagree with Gideon Avni on only one point, namely his acceptance that the Mamilla Grave can be conclusively attributed

A lack of critical engagement with the interpretations proposed by many older published excavation reports has nurtured an essentially artificial chronology for patterns of monastic and pilgrimage development; one characterised by an immediate fracture in their occupational histories around ca. 614, followed by abandonment or limited and impoverished reconstruction. This continues to generate a wealth of challenges related to assessments of monasticism and pilgrimage in the early Islamic period. In terms of observing fluctuations in the population or wealth of monasteries, the sizeable body of excavation reports which endorse this problematic dating (and still represent a sizeable proportion of the overall corpus) continues to impede a general assessment of the number of active monasteries and pilgrimage sites at the time of the Arab conquest in the 630s. Equally, such attention to occupational chronologies, rather than other questions such as changes in spatial use or function, has stood in the way of a much more complete understanding of trends which may have emerged in response to the breakdown of Byzantine political control in the region. Focus on the issue of chronology has, in many respects, reduced current debate to a simple dialogue of “crisis” or “continuity”: terms which often exclude the possibility of changes to monastic social roles after ca. 614, albeit within a context of substantial occupational stability.

to the Sasanian siege: Avni, “The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem,” 36-37. This disagreement stems from the following points. Firstly, this interpretation is based on an erroneous transliteration in Gerard Garitte’s editions of the Capture of Jerusalem narratives attributed to the monk Strategios/Eustratios. Michel Breydy has demonstrated the problematic tradition of the identification of the site of Mamilla pointing to Sa’id ibn Batrîq’s use of the word “*mqla*”: Breydy, Michel. “Mamila ou Maqella? La prise de Jérusalem et ses conséquences (614 A.D.) selon la recension alexandrine des Annales d’Eutychès,” *Oriens Christianus* 65 (1981), 62-86. “*Mqla*” could, however, equally be a corruption of “makellum”. Secondly, the publication of the grave by Nagar, Yossi. “Human Skeletal Remains from the Mamilla Cave, Jerusalem,” *Atiqot* 43 (2002), 141-48, provides no convincing evidence that it should be attributed to the Sasanian siege beyond the discovery of coins dated to ca. 610. The identification of the interred remains as Christian, based on the presence of tuberculosis victims, is also suspect. Nagar’s study was reliant on the early-twentieth-century epidemiological work of Maurice Fishberg published in 1916, which utilised case studies of Jewish communities from New York: Fishberg, Maurice. “Consumption (Tuberculosis),” in I. Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1916), 245-48. Its relevance to studies of late antique Jewish communities is precarious, as are the results of Fishberg’s study (which did not include communities of Eastern European migrant Jews), which must be read in the broader context of Fishberg’s attempts to counter prevalent anti-Semitism.

Whilst the archaeological data amassed by the recent excavations of Dayr 'Ayn Abata,⁷⁴ Jabal Hārūn⁷⁵ and the Kathisma⁷⁶ have provided a vital counter-narrative to the predominant "614" dating, on a collective level the pattern of monastic abandonment or continuity, as it emerges from available publications, is still punctuated by contradictions between "existing" excavation reports and those "emerging" from recent research. There still remains a significant body of archaeological material in need of reappraisal which continues to sanction the interpretation that by the time of the transition to Arab rule in the 630s, monasticism, as a religious and social expression, was already in terminal decline. The irregular quality of older published reports, which are not always detailed enough to allow critical reappraisal of the published stratigraphic phasing of individual sites, continues to compound the issue.

To some extent, the problematic chronologies of monastic sites have been nurtured by the adoption of value-laden terms such as "early Islamic" or "Arab" in the analysis of post-Byzantine material culture in Palestine. The strong association of these chronological definitions with an alternative – Islamic – religious and political system has served to reinforce a perception of monastic communities as social groups which appear antithetical to and, therefore, incompatible with the period (how are we to interpret an "early Islamic Church"?). The problem is not universal, but in several cases a literal reading of these terms has had the undesired effect of leading excavators to identify subsequent phases of occupation, or incidental evidence of later activity at monastic sites, as features conclusive of "squatter occupation" (which, in many cases, are also misdated to the late seventh century).⁷⁷ Consequently, at sites such

⁷⁴ Politis, Konstantinos. "Excavations at Deir 'Ain 'Abata 1991," 281-90. A preliminary discussion of the chronology of the site is also presented in Politis, Konstantinos. "Excavations and Restorations at Dayr 'Ayn 'Abātā 1994," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 39 (1995), 477-91.

⁷⁵ Mikkola, Erko, Antti Lahelma, Zbigniew T. Fiema and Richard Holmgren. "The Church and the Chapel. Data and Phasing," in Zbigniew T. Fiema and Jaakko Frösén, eds., *Petra - The Mountain of Aaron, Vol. I. The Church and the Chapel* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 2008), 99-176.

⁷⁶ Avner, Rina. "The Kathisma. A Christian and Muslim Pilgrimage Site," *ARAM* 19 (2007), 541-57; *idem*. "The Recovery of the Kathisma Church and Its Influence on Octagonal Buildings," in Giovanni Claudio Bottini, Leah Di Segni and Leslaw Daniel Chrupcala, eds., *One Land-Many Cultures. Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanisław Loffreda OFM* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2003), 173-86.

⁷⁷ These include the late-seventh- or early -eighth-century inscriptions of Horvat Berahot reproduced in Drori, Rina and Joseph Drory. "The Arabic Inscription at Horvat

as the Martyrios Monastery at Ma'ale Adummim or Horvat Berachot, it has undermined the potential recognition of prolonged occupation and the continued significance of monastic communities in post-Byzantine social frameworks. These issues, although fully acknowledged in more recent debates regarding settlement profiles, have yet to be fully embraced in a study dedicated to monasticism.

Individual types of archaeological material are not isolated from the effects of this trend but often provide explicit examples of how such chronological frameworks reinforce traditional interpretations of post-Byzantine monastic and pilgrim practice. Eulogia tokens, which provide some nominal indication of continuing pilgrim activity in Palestine, are among the most affected of this material. Although studies of the social function and iconographic formulae of eulogia tokens and *ampullae* are numerous, attempts to analyse the material from an archaeological perspective have proved far more limited.⁷⁸ Chronology is still a core issue; the majority of pilgrim tokens and *ampullae* are routinely assigned a *terminus ante quem* of 614 – a trend which both replicates and reinforces the perception of a hiatus in the frequency of pilgrim activity in the early seventh century.

This assessment is, I believe, related to the current inclination to examine monastic and pilgrim activity in Palestine predominantly in terms of its relationship with Byzantium – in its Aegean sense – or the former Roman west: an interaction which is widely considered to have become less fluid as a result of the geo-political transformations of the early seventh century.⁷⁹ Informed by this idea, assessments of Christian pilgrimage in the early Islamic period have assumed a corresponding

Berachot." Appendix to: Tsafir, Yoram and Yizhar Hirschfeld. "The Church and Mosaics at Horvat Berachot, Israel," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979), 324-26. A similar interpretation is also applied to the "Arab farmhouse" and small chapel at Ma'ale Adummim which incorporates a basilica structure: see Magen, "The Monastery of St Martyrios at Ma'ale Adummim," 188.

⁷⁸ For the most comprehensive study of iconography and the social role of such material see Vikan, Gary. *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art. Revised Edition* (Washington D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010).

⁷⁹ This opinion has most recently been voiced in McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land*, 48. Earlier examples of this approach may be found in Kislinger, Ewald. "Making for the holy places (7th -10th centuries): the sea routes", in Eyaggelias Chatzetryphonos. ed., *Routes of faith in the medieval Mediterranean: history, monuments, people, pilgrimage perspectives: proceedings: International Symposium, Thessalonike, 7-10.11.2007* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2008), 120.

approach, focusing on figures such as Arculf,⁸⁰ Willibald⁸¹ and the enigmatic Epiphanius Hagiopolites to the exclusion of continuities in localised practices.⁸² A limited range of material has consequently reinforced a perception of Palestinian pilgrimage as an expression principally determined by external social developments.

The dating of eulogia tokens provides one example of the influence of this model. Although a pre-614 dating is generally accepted for the corpus of Palestinian tokens currently identified, no major study has yet emerged to substantiate this claim through closer correlation with other archaeological material. The attractiveness of such pieces to museum collectors, or their survival in monastic treasuries, offers a partial explanation for this situation: such items are often poorly provenanced and long removed from their original archaeological context. Equally, their predominance in European monastic treasuries serves to project an image of such material as the product of export and as objects which enjoyed limited popularity in the devotions of more localised communities and networks.

Determining the movement of individual tokens from their place of manufacture to their eventual destination (notwithstanding how long such transactions took) is beyond the purpose and capability of the present article. Such discussions are, however, needed. Whilst the strong emphasis in recent scholarship on iconography and references within texts has developed useful perspectives on the social function of such objects, more basic questions regarding their manufacture, chronology and distribution within Palestine still remain largely un-answered. Consequently, the accepted ca. 614 *terminus ante quem* for such material remains fairly enshrined and is still routinely applied to tokens which originate from more secure, even post-Byzantine archaeological sequences.

⁸⁰ Adomnán. *De Locis Sanctis*. Ed. Denis Meehan. *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 3. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958, 167-206.

⁸¹ Hugeburc. *Vita Willibaldi*. Ed. Oswald Holder Egger. *MGH Scriptores* 15.1. [BHL 8931]. Hanover: Hahn, 1887. Tr. John Wilkinson in: *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002, 233-51.

⁸² Epiphanius Hagiopolites. Ed. Herbert Donner. "Die Palästinabeschreibung des Epiphanius Monachus Hagiopolita," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 87 (1971), 45-92. Tr. John Wilkinson in: *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002, 207-15. Thus Dietz, Maribel. *Wandering monks, virgins, and pilgrims: ascetic travel in the Mediterranean world, A.D. 300-800* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2005), 189-212, demonstrates a strong emphasis on western sources in discussions of pilgrimage in the region following the Arab conquest.

A series of eulogia tokens discovered during excavations at Scythopolis/Beth She'an serve to illustrate this point.⁸³ Based on Levi Y. Rahmani's acceptance of a pilgrimage fracture instigated by the Sassanid conquest, all eight tokens were assigned a pre-614 date and published without additional explanation of the vast chronological discrepancies between the tokens and their stratigraphic contexts (Token G, possibly the adoration of the Magi, was found in an Abbasid context and Token H, a scene of the Dormition, was found in a Mamluk deposit).⁸⁴ Whilst a firm date for these tokens remains elusive, their impulsive attribution to a pre-614 date (based on a problematic ca. 614 destruction phase) underscores how traditional assessments of the Sasanian period – which persist alongside more progressive re-assessments of seventh-century diagnostic material such as ceramics – and conventional perceptions of “Holy Land” pilgrimage as something characterised by non-Palestinian transactions, circumscribe our ability to observe continuities in localised pilgrim practice beyond the seventh century.⁸⁵

Taking, for example, the token depicting the Dormition, the evidence to propose a post-Byzantine date is no less credible than that for the late-sixth- or early-seventh-century date commonly ascribed to such tokens. Although interest in the death of the Theotokos probably has its origins in the later fifth century, it is not until the seventh century that we observe substantial attention given to the details and theological importance of her death among Chalcedonian writers. The eighth and ninth centuries in particular generated a wealth of homilies and associated writings about the event which was closely linked to the traditional site of the tomb in Gethsemane.⁸⁶ The continued production and demand for eulogia tokens associated with the cult into the early Islamic period, in view of what is known about the chronology of the site⁸⁷

⁸³ These were collectively published in Rahmani, Levi Y. “Eulogia Tokens from Byzantine Bet She'an,” *Atiqot* 22 (1993), 109-19.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 112-14.

⁸⁵ Further discussion of the token and the cult, albeit one which accepts the dating of the token and the stratigraphic phasing of the report, in Shoemaker, Stephen J. *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 107-41.

⁸⁶ These are the homilies of John of Damascus, Andrew of Crete, Germanos of Constantinople and the Pseudo Modestos: see, Daley, Brian E. *On the Dormition of Mary. Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998).

⁸⁷ The occupation of the site appears to have continued through the Abbasid period. The reliance of Bagatti's survey on the textual dossier and the subsequent redevelopment of

and its importance to the Melkite stational liturgy, remains a possibility that warrants more considered reflection.⁸⁸ Although the opportunity for archaeological research has been limited, the church appears to have continued in use, without interruption, into the twelfth century. Furthermore, its description as a major site in the ninth-century *Kitāb al-burhān* (erroneously attributed to Euthychios of Alexandria) and its status as the centre for several liturgical feasts, associated with the Theotokos, in the *Sinai Georgian Lectionary* supports the impression that the site remained significant to Christian communities within Palestine beyond the Arab conquest.⁸⁹ Similar approaches to other tokens encountered in early Islamic stratigraphic contexts may suggest longer chronologies of production and circulation than previously recognised. Most importantly, re-examination of this material may require a systematic redrawing of the basic chronology of Christian pilgrimage and monastic cult sites in the region in the early Middle Ages.

My own reading of the collective evidence from the sites mentioned above, and several others, suggests much longer phases of occupation and activity than currently accepted. In many cases such interpretations are by necessity reserved and possible only by situating this fragmentary material in the context of data from other sites where the material demonstrates more substantial early Islamic occupation and no suggestion of functional change. Whilst the identification of later structural intervention at these sites – commonly in the form of dated inscriptions but increasingly through the re-examination of ceramic chronologies – may support a potential shift in the span of their occupational history

the site in the 12th century, limits a fuller understanding of the Umayyad and Abbasid phases of this site. See Bagatti, Bellarmino, Michele Piccirillo and Alberto Prodomo. *New Discoveries at the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Gethsemane*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975. The appearance of the church in the *Commematorium de Casis Dei*, lines 13-15, suggests that the site remained in use at least until the early ninth century: see McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land*, 202-3

⁸⁸ For a discussion of the cult of the Virgin and related discussion of the surviving Palestinian lectionaries see Baldwin, John. "The Urban Character of Christian Worship in Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople from the Fourth to the Tenth Centuries. The Origin, Development, and Meaning of the Stational Liturgy," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: University of Yale, 1982, 92. The entry in the Georgian calendar is for the 14th July. For commentary and further discussion see *Le Calendrier Palestino-Géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (X^e siècle)*, 278-79.

⁸⁹ Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 90-91, with further bibliography; Pseudo-Euthychios of Alexandria, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 354.

(at least beyond the seventh century), this approach is admittedly restricted in its capacity to present a full reappraisal of their subsequent occupational sequences. For sites such as the Martyrios Monastery at Ma'ale Adummim and Kaniset er' Rawat' (often known as Shepherd's Fields), the discussion remains primarily one of identifying flaws in the present chronologies rather than a comprehensive archaeological reappraisal.⁹⁰ In this respect, these restrictions limit us to a rather simple dialogue of chronological parameters: whilst we can identify an approximate foundation and abandonment date for a particular monastery, we are currently unable to say much about the nature of many sites at any given point between ca. 600 and ca. 1000. This limitation is of principal concern to any investigation of how later patterns of continuity and survival among Palestine's monastic network following the seventh century may be interpreted.

For the purpose of the present discussion, focused on regional patterns rather than individual case studies, the evidence is presently sufficient to question critically the devastating impact of the Sasanian occupation. In archaeological terms, a growing corpus of other monastic sites, which exhibit no comparative rupture in their occupational histories, present the overall impression that the Sasanian presence in Palestine resulted in no substantial damage to the physical monastic environment and did not instigate a lengthened process of monastic decline. Essential to this overall discussion, however, is the need to define more fully what is understood by "impact" in reference to monasticism and the Sasanian occupation. The emphasis on identifying long-term archaeological patterns of "continuity" or "abandonment", though integral to the current debate, often obscures our capacity to detect temporary responses to the uncertainty generated by military confrontation or changes in the way in which monastic communities functioned in administrative and social terms, trends which often leave ephemeral archaeological signatures and for which Palestine, unlike Egypt, lacks a comparative body of textual material to compensate for the limitations of the archaeology.

A feature which appears to emerge from this setting in archaeological terms is that evidence for patronal activity or structural investment in monastic complexes and pilgrim shrines is less explicit for the period 614-28. Some minor examples in the Negev punctuate an otherwise regional hiatus. These are on the whole rather piecemeal, such as burials in

⁹⁰ See note 70 for references to the excavations conducted at both sites.

the churches of Sergios-Bakkhos at Nessana (dated 615) and the South Church of Avdat/Oboda (dated 617) which provide evidence of ongoing epigraphic activity.⁹¹ The northern Transjordan presents the strongest evidence for the continuation of patterns of church building and embellishment consistent with those of the late sixth century. Several examples of church construction are attested at Rihab by the 620s, as well as at Sama (although a monastic connection is indeterminable), and more recently excavations of a church complex, today known as Mar Elyas, which incorporated a subterranean crypt (and was possibly a monastery) have produced a further example of mosaic renovation in ca. 622.⁹² It remains difficult to determine how representative the patterns exhibited at Rihab and Mar Elyas are on a regional level. But when these Transjordanian examples are placed in the context of their contemporary economic environment, the continuation of church embellishment is unsurprising. All three sites are in close proximity to one another (it is less than 70 km from Mar Elyas to Sama) in the environs of Jerash at the core of the Decapolis network. The relative internalisation and autonomy of the economic network of the Decapolis, which has been repeatedly stressed over the past decade,⁹³ offers a useful framework to explain these continued examples of church building. Churches such as Mar Elyas were essentially products of an economic network sufficiently independent of developments further west to ensure that patrons remained economically stable and prosperous throughout the seventh century. The isolation of the Decapolis urban network from the political focus of the Sasanian armies (probably centred around Caesarea and Jerusalem) and the emerging strains in the Mediterranean exchange networks, which were to have considerable effects on the settlements in the Negev and on the Gaza coastline, arguably shielded the Transjordan from the more negative, though still largely undefined, effects of developments in the early seventh century. Such obvious re-

⁹¹ See Figueras, Pau. "Monks and Monasteries in the Negev Desert," *Liber Annuus* 45 (1995), 431.

⁹² For Rihab see Piccirillo, Michele. *Chiese e mosaici della Giordania settentrionale*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1981, 51, 73-80, and for Mar Elyas see Macdonald, *Pilgrimage in Early Christian Jordan*, 78.

⁹³ The evidence is synthesised in Wickham, Chris. *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 770-80. See also Walmsley, Alan. "Production, Exchange and Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean. Old Structures, New Systems?" in Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham, eds., *The Long Eighth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 305-31.

gional disparities in the continuation of patronage in Palestine serve to caution against sweeping assessments of the Sasanian impact without regard for localised political, economic and social variation.⁹⁴

Thus, the apparent hiatus in investment in monastic communities or pilgrimage shrines may prove to be a matter of interpretation rather than data. Only a detailed survey of the evidence, which observes archaeological and epigraphic trends between the Byzantine, Sassanid and early Islamic periods – as opposed to the traditional studies which adhere to political timeframes, and thereby identify a “614” hiatus that may not have occurred – will be able to verify this explanation and place the apparent 614-28 hiatus in the context of long-term, but locally determined patronal trends and fluctuations.

Whilst this may require continued research to enlist further examples, the evidence is sufficient to support the points made earlier in this study which cautioned against the tendency to homogenise monasteries and pilgrimage centres as entities which were effected uniformly by the impact of Muslim rule over the period covered by this study. This necessitates a reappraisal of the processes and relationships which defined monasticism during the sixth and early seventh centuries and which continued to be influential in framing later developments in the early Islamic period.

Such reappraisal can only be achieved through recognition of the limitations of contemporary approaches. Chronologies need to be redrawn: the question of the impact of the Sasanian occupation in ca. 614 still remains fundamental to understanding the origins of these later trajectories. They also require substantial refinement. Discussions need to mature beyond the juxtaposition of crisis and continuity and towards a more developed understanding of how Palestinian monastic landscapes and communities functioned beyond the seventh century – in essence, to strive towards the emergence of “Melkite” archaeology as a discipline related, but not subsidiary to, that of Byzantine predecessor communities.

The centrality of hagiography to approaches to Palestinian monasticism needs to be re-evaluated both from the perspective of its increasingly apparent incompatibility with much material evidence, and also in terms of the issues presented by the sources themselves. Questions of authorship, context and transmission are crucial, but have yet to be routinely

⁹⁴ A collective survey of the epigraphic evidence is offered in Di Segni, Leah. “Epigraphic Documentation,” 149-78.

asked of this material. The current role of hagiographical texts in defining how monasteries were founded and their relationships with wider society or administrative structures operated needs to be systematically dismantled and reviewed. Only greater acknowledgement of the entirety of the available literary, epigraphic and archaeological material – local, regional and intra-regional – and its limitations, will provide an adequate basis from which to commence investigation into post-Byzantine monasticism in Palestine and define its core developments.

Essential to our understanding of what enabled sites to endure the transformative trends of the seventh to tenth centuries, or conversely to falter under them, is the need to consider such sites in the context of shifting priorities and perceptions: how resident Christian communities continued to prioritise and invest in specific elements of that landscape and general trends in their economic capabilities to realise such monumental ambitions. This can only be achieved once we have determined what these priorities were and whence this wealth was derived.

Monasteries and pilgrim sites, although perhaps founded for similar range of reasons, were not disconnected from existing discourses regarding the sacrality of space, which often perceived and organised space in terms of hierarchy. One need only consider the agenda of the sixth-century Madaba map, or the surviving pilgrims' accounts of the sixth to ninth centuries to understand the multitude of ways in which the Palestinian sacro-scape was both conceptualised and physically negotiated. Our understanding of the subsequent trajectories of monastic communities and pilgrim sites needs to be viewed from the perspective of these inequalities and the collective impact of these distinctions upon monasteries in terms of their devotional and patronal support networks. These individual issues are complex and warrant separate critical study. Nonetheless, the points they raise are important for understanding the essential factors which shaped the physical and social world of monastic communities in the early Islamic period. In particular, they have direct bearing on which survived and remained connected to wider political and economic avenues and which did not. If we are to define the basic contours of how, why and when monastic communities emerged as a minority in Palestine, we must determine the essential characteristics of their role by the early seventh century, when monasticism comprised a substantial component of the social world of Palestine's Christian majority.

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Islamic Legends about the Birth of Monasticism: A Case Study on the Late Antique Milieu of the Qur'ān and Tafsīr*

Christian C. Sahner
(Princeton University)

14.1 Introduction

Thanks to recent research, we have come to see narratives of Islamic origins as a palimpsest of literary and historiographical layers from late antiquity.¹ Whether in the life of the Prophet, accounts of the Arab conquests, or biographies of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), we can detect the watermark of Christian and Jewish traditions in the earliest drafts of Muslim history.² This applies not only to the content of these drafts, but also to their style and manner of depiction.

* I would like to thank Peter Brown and Michael Cook for their helpful comments in preparing this article.

¹ For various efforts to tie together the worlds of late antiquity and early Islam, see Brown, Peter. *The World of Late Antiquity*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1971, 189-203; idem. "Late Antiquity and Islam. Parallels and Contrasts," in Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority. The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 23-37; idem. *The Rise of Western Christendom*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2003, 295-320; on the problem of periodization, cf. Glover, Frank M. & Humphreys, R. Stephen. "Toward a Definition of Late Antiquity," in Frank M. Clover & Stephen Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, 3-20. See now Fowden, Garth. *Before and After Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

² The study of Islamic historiography has blossomed in recent years, with special reference to late antique literary and historical *topoi*. For a sampling, see Rubin, Uri. *The Eye of the Beholder. The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995; Donner, Fred. *Narratives of Islamic Origins*. Prince-

Demonstrating concrete relationships between these traditions, however, can prove tricky. The sources connecting late antiquity and early Islam lie scattered across a vast geographic and chronological field. Moreover, impressions of similarity often reflect the shared literary and cultural heritage of Christian and Muslim authors, but not necessarily direct contact between them.³ That said, parallelism between certain stories can sometimes be too striking to ignore. One such case is the similarity between early Islamic and late antique Christian legends about the origins of monasticism. Tracking their connections will take us from southern Gaul in the fifth century to Baghdad in the tenth. Along the way, we will examine the wider process of exchange between late antique and early Islamic sources, in particular how Muslim authors adapted existing Christian material to tell new origin legends. This will provide a vantage for unwinding the complicated views of early Muslims towards monasticism specifically, as well as towards Christianity more generally.

14.2 Views of Monasticism in Early Islamic Culture

The Qur'ān mentions monks (*rāhib*, pl. *ruhbān*) and monasticism (*rahbānīya*) several times,⁴ though its message is not always clear.⁵ With the help of medieval *tafsīr* (scriptural exegesis), we see the Qur'ānic monk as both a hero and a villain: a loyal follower of Jesus and Muḥammad,

ton: The Darwin Press, 1998; Robinson, Chase F. *Islamic Historiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Sizgorich, Thomas. *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity. Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 144-67. For one example of this connection, see the relationship between the biography of the Prophet and King David: Jensen, P. "Das Leben Muhammeds und die David-Sage," *Der Islam* 12 (1922), 84-93; Horovitz, Josef. "Biblische Nachwirkungen in der Sira," *Der Islam* 12 (1922), 184-89; Maghen, Ze'ev. "Intertwined Triangles. Remarks on the Relationship between two Prophetic Scandals," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33 (2007), 17-92.

³ This late antique "zeitgeist" is the central theme in Fowden, Garth. *Empire to Commonwealth. Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, esp. 138-68.

⁴ Wensinck, A.J. "Rahbāniyya." In *EI*²; *idem*. "Rāhib." In *EI*².

⁵ For *rahbānīya*, see Qur'ān 57:27; for *ruhbān* and variants, see Qur'ān 5:82 (*qissīsīn*); 9:31; 9:34; cf. Beck, Edmund. "Das Christliche Mönchtum im Koran," *Studia Orientalia* XIII 3 (1946), 1-29.

but also a perverter of “true Christianity”.⁶ Monks play a prominent role in the biography of the Prophet. In a famous scene from the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767), Muḥammad is said to have met a monk named Baḥīrā during a childhood visit to Busrā in southern Syria.⁷ The monk predicted the boy would one day become a great prophet, an act which was later interpreted as placing a Christian imprimatur on the new Muslim faith.

Much as in late antiquity, Muslims continued to circulate versions of the *apophthegmata patrum* – pithy pearls of wisdom from Christian monks that summarized spiritual truths.⁸ Furthermore, medieval sources describe whimsical encounters between Muslims and Christian monks: we see ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz (r. 99-101/717-720) debating with monks,⁹

⁶ Sviri, Sara. “*Wa-rahbānīyatan ibtada‘ūhā*. An Analysis of Traditions Concerning the Origin and Evaluation of Christian Monasticism,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 195-208.

⁷ Ibn Hishām, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik. *Sīra al-nabawīya*. Beirut: s.n., 1970, Vol. 1, 191-94; in Muslim literature, the monk Baḥīrā is said to have looked upon the “seal of the Prophet” – a birthmark on Muhammad’s back – and foretold his destiny, thereby predicting the eclipse of Christianity. In Christian legends, Baḥīrā is called “Sergius,” an exile from his monastic community, who wanders to Arabia, helping Muhammad compose the Qur’ān and nearly succeeding in converting him to Christianity; cf. Nöldeke, Theodor. “Hatte Muḥammad christliche Lehrer?” *Zeitschrift für Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 12 (1858), 699-708; Carra de Vaux, Baron. “La légende de Bahira,” *Revue de l’orient chrétien* 2 (1897), 439-54; Gero, Stephen. “The Legend of the Monk Baḥīrā, the Cult of the Cross and Iconoclasm,” in Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, eds. *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam*. Damascus: Institut Français, 1992, 47-57; Szilágyi, Krisztina. “Muḥammad and the Monk. The Making of the Baḥīrā Legend,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), 169-214; Roggema, Barbara. *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā. Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

⁸ Mourad, Suleiman. “Christian Monks in Islamic Literature. A Preliminary Report on Some Arabic Apophthegmata Patrum,” *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 6.2 (2004), 81-98; Fowden, Elizabeth Key. “The Lamp and the Wine Flask. Early Muslim Interest in Christian Monks,” in Anna Akasoy, James Montgomery and Peter Pormann, eds. *Islamic Cross Pollinations. Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*. Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007, 1-28; eadem. “Monks, Monasteries, and Early Islam,” in Garth Fowden and Elizabeth Key Fowden, eds. *Studies on Christianity, Hellenism, and the Umayyads*. Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity, 2004, 149-91.

⁹ Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī. *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1932-1938, Vol. 4, 91. Cited in: Ofer Livne-Kafri. “Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), 105-29, here, 108 (and note below).

Muslims consulting monastic libraries,¹⁰ and monks sending money to the emperor in Constantinople drawn from donations made by Muslim pilgrims,¹¹ to name but a few examples. Some of the most vivid accounts come from the “books of monasteries” (*kutub al-diyārāt*), a literary genre which flourished in the 3rd-4th/9th-10th centuries. These sources describe amusing and occasionally racy gatherings in which wealthy Muslims would enjoy song, drink, and the company of handsome Christian boys in monastic surroundings.¹² The *diyārāt* books developed alongside a related genre known as *khamriyyāt*, drinking odes which were sometimes set inside Christian monasteries. One such poem, ascribed to the Umayyad caliph Walīd II (r. 125-6/743-4), allegedly took place in a monastery in the Ghūṭa oasis outside Damascus, where the caliph led a pantomime Eucharist as he and his guests enjoyed a bibulous feast.¹³

These encounters – both sacred and profane – left a deep impression on early Islamic culture. The monk became an icon of the pious life in Muslim literature, so much so that Muslims renowned for their piety were sometimes given the moniker *al-rāhib*, as with Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman who was called the “*rāhib* of Madīna and Quraysh.”¹⁴ Else-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 375.

¹¹ Mourad, “Christian Monks in Islamic Literature,” 84, n.16; cf. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. *Muʿjam al-buldān*. 5 vols. Beirut: s.n., Vol. 2, 500.

¹² While many such works once existed, the only one that survives was written by al-Shābushtī (d. 388), who profiles a large number of monasteries in Iraq, along with smaller numbers in Syria, Egypt, and the Jazīra. Other authors whose works do not survive include the Khālidiyyān brothers, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī and al-Sarī al-Raffā; cf. al-Shābushtī, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-diyārāt*. Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1966; Bosworth, C.E. “Al-Shābushtī”. In *EI*²; Fowden. “The Lamp and the Wine Flask,” 13-18; Kilpatrick, Hilary. “Monasteries Through Muslim Eyes. The Diyarāt Books,” in David Thomas, ed., *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule. Church Life and Scholarship in ‘Abbāsīd Iraq*. Leiden: Brill, 19-37; and most recently: Campbell, Elizabeth. “A Heaven of Wine. Muslim-Christian Encounters at Monasteries in the Early Islamic Middle East,” Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: University of Washington, 2009. For discussion of the material evidence, with special emphasis on monasteries and their proximity to Muslim palaces, see Fowden, Elizabeth Key. “Christian Monasteries and Umayyad Residences in Late Antique Syria,” in Garth Fowden and Elizabeth Key Fowden, eds., *Studies on Christianity, Hellenism, and the Umayyads*. Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity, 2004, 175-92. Some of the famed desert palaces of the Umayyad period were built on the site of former monasteries, such as the residence of al-Fudayn northeast of Amman, near the modern Syrian border; cf. Humbert, Jean-Baptiste. “El-Fedein –Maфраq,” *Liber Annus* 36 (1986), 354-56.

¹³ Fowden, “The Lamp and the Wine Flask,” 15.

¹⁴ Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilyat al-awliyāʾ*, Vol. 2, 187. Cf. also: Abū ‘Amr al-Rāhib: see Lecker,

where, we see monks providing spiritual succour to Muslim disciples, as with Ibrāhīm b. Adham, one of the most prominent Sufis of the 2nd/8th century, who realised his spiritual calling through conversations with a monk named Abba Simeon.¹⁵ For the historian, these legends provide a tantalising context for understanding the rise of asceticism in medieval Islamic culture, especially practices such as *zuhd* and Sufism.¹⁶

14.3 *Rahbānīya* in the Qur'ān: Sūra 57:27

Much of the scholarly debate over early Muslim views of monasticism hinges on a knotty verse in the Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* (57), 27. The verse appears at the end of a discussion on the prophets God dispatched before the coming of Islam, including Noah, Abraham, and Jesus. The Qur'ān states that some individuals heeded these messengers, while others ignored them. Because the meaning of the verse is rather opaque, I will include two possible interpretations based on the Arabic text:

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَىٰ ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ. [وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ]. فَأَرْعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ.

Michael. *Muslims, Jews, and Pagans. Studies on Early Islamic Medina*. Leiden: Brill, 1995, Ch. 4.

¹⁵ Cited in Andrae, Tor. *In the Garden of Myrtles. Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism*. Tr. Birgitta Sharpe. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987, 12-13; Jones, Russell. "Ibrāhīm b. Adham". In *EI*².

¹⁶ Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles*, 7-32; *idem*. "Zuhd und Mönchtum," *Le Monde Oriental* 25 (1931), 296-327. The scholarly literature on Sufism often notes the connection to Christian practices, but does not explore it deeply. For more, see Goldziher, Ignaz. "De l'ascétisme aux premiers temps de l'Islam," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 37 (1898), 314-24; *idem*. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*. Tr. Andras Hamori and Ruth Hamori. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, ch. 4; Baldick, Julian. *Mystical Islam*. New York: New York University Press, 1989; on the history of the movement, cf. Melchert, Christopher. "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the 9th Century CE," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996), 51-70. A particularly striking example is that of pious crying, which earned the attention of Christian and Muslim ascetic writers. For more, see Meier, F. "Bakkā". In *EI*²; for a fascinating seventh-century commentary on Christian, Jewish, and Arab expressions of pious crying, cf. Anastasius of Sinai. *Quaestiones et responsiones*. Eds. Marcel Richard and Joseph Munitiz. Turnholt: Brepols, 2006, 102-3; I thank Nicholas Marinides for this reference.

Then We caused Our messengers to follow in their footsteps; and We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow, and gave him the Gospel. [1. And We put in the hearts of those who followed him (Jesus) compassion, mercy, and the monastic state; they invented them – We did not prescribe them to them – only out of a desire to please God¹⁷ / 2. And We put in the hearts of those who followed him (Jesus) compassion and mercy; and the monastic state they invented – We did not prescribe it to them – only out of a desire to please God]. Yet they observed them/it not as they/it ought truly to have been observed. And We gave unto such of them as believed their reward; but many of them are evil-doers.¹⁸

The syntax of the verse is unclear, which has led to divergent interpretations over the centuries.¹⁹ The most straightforward way to read Q. 57:27 treats *raʿfa*, *rahma*, and *rahbānīya* as direct objects of the verb *jaʿalnā* – thus: “And We put in the hearts of those who followed Jesus compassion and mercy and the monastic state.” It follows that God inspired “the monastic state”/*rahbānīya*. If this reading is correct, however, two incompatible statements follow: first, “They invented them (*ibtadaʿūhā*) – We did not prescribe them – only out of a desire to please God,” in which the pronoun *hā* that follows *ibtadaʿū* refers to all three “R’s”; and second, “They (the Christians) observed them not as they truly ought to have been observed.” In other words, God did not prescribe *rahbānīya*, along with *raʿfa* and *rahma*, and the Christians did not perform them properly.

Another reading copes with this conundrum by decoupling *raʿfa* and *rahma* from *rahbānīya*: *raʿfa* and *rahma* become objects of *jaʿalnā*, while *rahbānīya* is linked with the second verb, *ibtadaʿūhā* – thus, “And We

¹⁷ This translation follows that of Wensinck, “Rahbāniyya”.

¹⁸ Henceforth, all translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ For more on the different exegetical approaches, see McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. *Qurʾānic Christians. An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 260-84; also: Beck, “Christliche Mönchtum im Qurʾān,” 18; Wensinck, “Rahbāniyya,” 396-97; Fowden, “The Lamp and the Wine Flask,” 7. I thank Prof. Michael Cook for his comments on this matter. See now El-Badawi, Emran. “From ‘Clergy’ to ‘Celibacy’: The Development of Rahbāniyyah between the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth and Church Canon.” *Al-Bayān* 11, 1 (2013), 1-14; I thank Prof. El-Badawi for sharing this article with me, though I regret I was not able to incorporate its conclusions in time for this article.

put in the hearts of those who followed Jesus compassion and mercy; and the monastic state they invented". Here, God institutes "compassion and mercy", while man creates "monasticism". This interpretation has a certain interpretive appeal: *ra'fa* and *rahma* form a more natural pair, unlike *ra'fa*, *rahma*, and *rahbānīya* together, which make strange bedfellows.²⁰

Scholars have spilled much ink in trying to clarify the correct interpretation of Q. 57:27. Though tedious, unwinding the grammar is important for understanding the wider question of how early Muslims viewed the origins and value of monasticism. Based on the syntax, Edmund Beck and Louis Massignon regarded *ra'fa*, *rahma*, and *rahbānīya* as a triplet. Massignon also contended that this was the older, more historically accurate reading.²¹ Meanwhile, as we will see below, Paul Nwiya and Sara Svirī preferred to see *rahbānīya* as independent of the other two "Rs". I prefer a middle ground, by which we see *rahbānīya* as a divine institution corrupted later by those who practised it improperly – a view based on a separate analysis of *ḥadīth* on *rahbānīya*.²² Therefore, in my judgment, verses 57:26-27 treat *ra'fa*, *rahma*, and *rahbānīya* as God-given pillars of Christianity.²³ We find in the text a distinction between "good and bad" forms of monasticism, between pre- and postlapsarian versions of the ascetical life – indicated by the contrast between the phrases *ja'alnā fī qulūb* ("We placed in their hearts"), *ibtada'ūhā* ("they invented it"), and *mā katabnāhā 'alayhim* ("We did not prescribe it for them"). The following sections attempt to unpack this distinction.

²⁰ Wensinck, "Rahbāniyya," 396; the odd yoking of *ra'fa*, *rahma*, and *rahbānīya* leads one to speculate whether the connection between *rahbānīya* and monasticism was assured from the beginning. The general meaning of *rahbānīya* is "living in the fear of God." From a very early date, however, this noun was synonymous with Christian monasticism. Yet in the case of Q. 57:27, *rahbānīya* in the sense of "pious fear" fits more naturally in the sequence of *ra'fa* and *rahma* (compassion and mercy). Perhaps the Qur'ānic usage follows this more general sense of the term; cf. Lane, E.W. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. 2 vols. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1984; here, Vol. 1, 1168.

²¹ Beck, "Das Christliche Mönchtum im Koran," 17-25; Massignon, Louis. *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*. Tr. Benjamin Clark. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997, 100-4.

²² I am preparing an article on the *rahbānīya-jihād* traditions, tentatively titled: "The Monasticism of My Community is *Jihād*. Islam, Christianity, and the Anxiety of Influence."

²³ For concurring opinion, cf. Fowden, "Monks, Monasteries, and Early Islam," 167-68; *eadem*, "The Lamp and the Wine Flask," 7-8.

14.4 Origins of *rahbānīya* in the *tafsīr* Tradition

In an article published in 1990, Sara Sviri explored a number of the oldest interpretations of Q. 57:27. The most important evidence she found came from the *tafsīr* of Muqātil b. Sulaymān, an early exegete from Khurāsān, who died in Baṣra around 150/767.²⁴ In his gloss on Q. 57:27, Muqātil included the following story:²⁵

3. “And We caused Jesus son of Mary to follow,” which is to say, We made a follower of Jesus son of Mary, “and We gave them,” meaning We granted to them, “the Gospel” in the bosom of their community (*umma*), and “We placed in the hearts of those who followed,” meaning they followed Jesus, “mercy and compassion,” meaning love, as it is said: “... they are merciful toward one another....”²⁶ It is said those who love one another, God placed that (feeling) in the hearts of the believers towards each other.

Then He resumed speaking (*thumma ista'nafa al-kalām*),²⁷ saying, “And *rahbānīya* they invented,” and that is when the idolaters increased in number, and put the believers to flight, and humiliated them after Jesus son of Mary. So they withdrew into seclusion (*wa-i'tazalū*) and occupied hermitages (*al-ṣawāmi'*), and that dragged on for a long time. Then some of them turned against the religion of Jesus, and they invented *Naṣrānīya* (*wa-*

²⁴ Plessner, M. and A. Rippon. “Muqātil b. Sulaymān”. In *EI*². There is considerable scholarly dispute surrounding the date of Muqātil's *tafsīr*. For a less sanguine take on his historical credibility cf. Robinson, Chase. “The Ideological Uses of Early Islam,” *Past and Present* 203 (2009), 214-15.

²⁵ Muqātil b. Sulaymān. *Tafsīr*. 5 vols. Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1979-1989; here: Vol. 4, 246-47.

²⁶ Q. 48:29: “Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves.”

²⁷ Muqātil offers a possible clarification for the syntax of Q. 57:27. According to Nwiya and Sviri's favored reading, the *tafsīr* draws a distinction between the “three Rs” by emphasising a break between *ra'fa-rahma* and *rahbānīya* with the expression, *thumma ista'nafa al-kalām*. *Rahbānīya* *ibtada'uhā* stands as a separate predicate, implying that *rahbānīya* was a man-made institution, while *ra'fa* and *rahma* were ordained by God (*ja'alnā fi qulūbihim*). If we accept Nwiya and Sviri's argument, it would seem that many early Muslims regarded *rahbānīya* as a deviation from the divine will, invented by the Christians rather than God Himself. Of course, this raises the question of how to interpret Muqātil's phrase *thumma ista'nafa al-kalām*. Does the *tafsīr* include this

ibtada'ū Naṣrānīya). So God said, "And *rahbānīya* they invented," and they became celibates out of worship of God,²⁸ as it is said, "We did not prescribe it to them," meaning We did not command them to undertake it; "Except out of a desire to please God, yet they observed not the same as it ought truly to have been observed," meaning they did not observe what they were commanded to do, that is to say, they did not obey Me with respect to it.

And they did wrong when they became Jews and Christians (*tahawwadū wa-tanaṣṣarū*). Some of them, however, stayed true to the religion of Jesus (*dīn 'Isā*) until they reached the time of Muhammad, and they believed in him, and they consisted of forty men: thirty-two of whom came from Ethiopia and eight from Syria. They were the ones whom God alluded to when He said, "And We gave unto such of them as believed," meaning We gave to those who believed; "Their reward," meaning they turned out to be right, referring to their reward and this is heaven. And He said, "But many of them are evildoers," meaning those who became Jews and Christians. God granted to anyone from the people of the Gospel who believed in Muḥammad twice his reward, (in recognition of) their faith in the first book as well as their faith in the book of Muḥammad.

phrase to indicate that the speech (*kalām*) of the Qur'ān is resuming after a break? Or does it mean that Muqātil's analysis (*kalām*) of the verse is resuming after a break? Put differently, is Muqātil signalling a break in the *aya* itself, or merely signalling a break in his *tafsīr*? In my judgment, it seems likely that *ista'nafa* does not refer to the Qur'ān (in which case it would indicate a distinction between the three Rs) but rather to the *tafsīr*, where Muqātil is simply "resuming" (*ista'nafa*) his exegesis. After all, the preceding sentence of the *tafsīr* departs briefly from *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* by quoting from Q. 48:29, which Muqātil uses to define the terms *ra'fa* and *rahma*. Therefore, we should interpret Muqātil's phrase *thumma ista'nafa al-kalām* to signal that he is returning to *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* and not that he perceived a break between the three Rs. Therefore, in my judgment, he did not see *rahbānīya* as an innovation, as Nwiya and Sviri argued, but as a divine institution (like *ra'fa* and *rahma*) corrupted later by improper practice. For further discussion, cf. Nwiya, Paul. *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*. Beirut: Dar al-Machreq/Imprimerie Catholique, 1970, 52-56; Sviri, "Origin and Evaluation," 197-99.

²⁸ *Tabattalū fihā li-'ibāda*. A more general reading of *tabattalū* is also possible: "They retired from the world out of worship of God."

To summarise: the followers of Jesus began as a community bound by love for one another – a point Muqātil reiterates twice – practising what he (later) calls *dīn* ‘*Īsā*. After an indeterminate period, the community created a new practice known as *rahbānīya*, defined by a celibate lifestyle. Around the same time, idolaters began their persecutions, forcing the believers to flee underground. This spiritual vanguard later retreated to hermitages where they lived as monks.²⁹ After a long time, the community splintered again, this time in response to the emergence of a new religion known as *Naṣrānīya* – the common Islamic term for Christianity, referring to one of several undifferentiated “mainstream” Christian sects, such as the Melkites, Nestorians, and Jacobites.³⁰ A further group broke off and became Jews. Amidst these schisms, a faithful remnant held fast to *dīn* ‘*Īsā*, preserving it until a time when Muḥammad restored the true religion. According to Muqātil, this group included forty monks from Ethiopia and Syria. Thus, by the end of the passage, the original Christian community has splintered into four sects: (i) adherents of *dīn* ‘*Īsā*; (ii) innovators practicing *rahbānīya* (a benign innovation); (iii) innovators practicing *Naṣrānīya*, (a malevolent innovation); and (iv) followers of *Yahūdīya*.

The story is far from clear, and as Sviri notes, there remain several unanswered questions. Specifically, does Muqātil condemn *rahbānīya* as an innovation (*ibtada’ūhā*) or praise it as a divine blessing (*riḍwān Al-lāh*)? And who is responsible for creating *Naṣrānīya* – the idolaters or another group? Despite murkiness on these issues, we can draw a few conclusions by way of consultation with related texts. The first comes from Muqātil’s *tafsīr* of Q. 5:82.³¹ Here he identifies the forty followers of

²⁹ *Ṣawāmī* (s. *ṣawma’ā*) is one of many terms used to describe the dwelling places of monks. Specifically, it refers to the tapered, conical cells that a desert hermit might have inhabited; for more, see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol. 1, 1728.

³⁰ Sviri suggests that *rahbānīya* and *Naṣrānīya* are meant to be one and the same, given that Muqātil uses the same verb (*ibtada’ūhā*) to describe them both. This seems unlikely to me. Why suddenly give *rahbānīya* a new name when the term *Naṣrānīya* had rather general connotations of Christianity, while *rahbānīya* meant specifically monasticism? For more on the etymology and use of *naṣrānīya* see Fiey, J.-M. “Naṣārā”. In *EI*²; for an interesting study of the etymology of the term see de Blois, François. “*Naṣrānī* (Ναζωραῖος) and *ḥanīf* (ἔθνοκός). Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65 (2002), 1-30.

³¹ Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, Vol. 1, 498-500; for analysis, see Sviri, “Origin and Evaluation,” 204.

dīn 'Īsā as "priests and monks" (*qissīsīn wa-ruhbān*). Thirty-two of them, dwelling in cells (*aṣḥāb al-ṣawāmi'*), came from Ethiopia with Ja'far b. Abī Ṭālib and another eight came from Syria, among them, the famous monk Baḥīrā. The passage clarifies Muqātil's exegesis of Q. 57:27, explaining that the guardians of the true "Jesus religion" were monks. A second text is provided by Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923; Baghdad), who includes it as part of his commentary on Q. 57:27. It comes in two versions – one on the authority of Muḥammad b. Sa'd and one from a certain Ḥusayn; the two are nearly identical, so I will quote from Ibn Sa'd, who narrates first, and note discrepancies as they arise:³²

4. Muḥammad b. Sa'd recounted to us...³³ on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, the saying, "And We placed in the hearts of those who followed us compassion and mercy," until the phrase, "as it ought truly to have been observed."³⁴ It is said: They did not obey Me, and they spoke of it out of disobedience towards God, and that is why God ordered strife upon them before He sent Muḥammad. For when the people of faith (*ahl al-īmān*) withdrew, there remained but a few of them. Meanwhile, the idolaters (*ahl al-shirk*) increased in number, and they swept away the messengers, and the messengers were vanquished. And the people of faith withdrew into caves (*i'tazalū fī al-ghīrān*),³⁵ and they carried on in this way until a group of them apostatized (*ḥattā kafarat ṭā'ifa minhum*)³⁶ and abandoned the commandment(s) of God and His religion.³⁷ They seized upon innovation (*bid'a*), *Naṣrānīya* and Judaism, and "they observed not the same as it ought truly to be observed." And still another group

³² Ṭabarī, 'Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*. 7 vols. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1994; here, Vol. 7, 233-35; Svirī, "Origin and Evaluation," 202.

³³ The *isnād* reads as follows: "Muḥammad b. Sa'd – my father – my uncle – his father – his father – Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687-8)." Ibn 'Abbās is also the transmitter of a related report below; for more, cf. Veccia Vaglieri, L. "'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās". In *EI*². The *isnād* of the second report reads as follows: "Ḥusayn – Abū Mu'ādh – 'Ubayd – al-Ḍaḥḥāk."

³⁴ Ḥusayn quotes only the *raḥbānīya* verse: "And *raḥbānīya* they invented, We did not prescribe the same for them."

³⁵ Ḥusayn reports: "And the people withdrew, going into caves" (*i'tazalū al-nās fa-ṣārū fī al-ghīrān*).

³⁶ Ḥusayn reports: "And they carried on in this way until a group of them changed over" (*ḥattā ḡhayyarat ṭā'ifa minhum*). The judgment is not necessarily negative.

³⁷ Ḥusayn adds: "And the covenant ('*ahd*) God entrusted them with."

preserved the religion of Jesus son of Mary, when God brought forth miracles to them, and God dispatched Muḥammad as a messenger, and they were thus. As it says: “Oh you who believe! Fear God and believe in His messenger, and He shall bestow on you a double portion of his mercy,” until the phrase, “For God is all forgiving and merciful.”³⁸

The traditions of Ṭabarī and Muqātil follow roughly the same outline: The early followers of Jesus (*ahl al-īmān*) experienced persecution at the hands of idolaters (*ahl al-shirk*) who infiltrated the community. They then went into hiding, only to splinter into new groups practising innovation (*bid'a*), Christianity (*Naṣrānīya*), and Judaism (*Yahūdīya*). A faithful remnant preserved *dīn 'Isā* until the coming of the Prophet, who rescued them from obscurity. It is worth noting a few differences between the stories as well. For example, Ṭabarī's report does not dwell much on *rahbānīya*. In fact, Ibn Sa'd's narration does not mention it at all, and Ḥusayn's alludes to it only in passing. As a result, *rahbānīya* is not listed among the menagerie of divergent Christianities that existed between the coming of Jesus and the birth of Muḥammad. The only sects which Ibn Sa'd does include are *dīn 'Isā*, *bid'a* (an unspecified kind of innovation), *Naṣrānīya*, and *Yahūdīya*. Judging from the text, *rahbānīya* may be understood to “infect” all four, but neither narrator states this explicitly. Sviri sees *bid'a* as a reference to *rahbānīya* (which the Qur'ān claims was “innovated”, *ibtada'u*) – and I am inclined to agree – but the text is not clear on this point.

Furthermore, the traditions swap the term *ṣawām'i*, meaning “hermitages” or “cells”, for *ghīrān*, meaning “caves”. The distinction is important, as the former emphasizes how the faithful practiced monasticism, specifically while the latter emphasizes their general isolation from the world. Of course, the term *ghīrān* calls to mind the Qur'ānic legend of the *Aṣḥāb al-kaḥf*, pre-Islamic monotheists who resisted persecution by hiding in a cave, where they awaited the restoration of true religion with Muḥammad (based on the Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus).³⁹ The traditions in Ṭabarī conflate these themes.

³⁸ Q. 57:28. Ḥusayn omits this final quotation.

³⁹ For more on *Sūrat al-Kaḥf* and the *Aṣḥāb al-Kaḥf*, cf. Massignon, Louis. “Les Sept Dormants d'Ephèse en Islam et en Chrétienté,” *Revue des études islamiques* 23 (1954), 59-112; Paret, R. “Aṣḥāb al-kaḥf”. In *EI*²; Griffith, Sidney H. “Christian Lore and

Sviri also points our attention to a series of rather different anecdotes in the *tafsīr* tradition. These fill the gaps in Muqātil's story, explaining the nature of the conflict between the idolaters and the followers of *dīn* 'Īsā that led to their exile. The new stories also explain the splintering of the faithful after their exile in the desert, especially the influence of pagan "double agents" who corrupted *dīn* 'Īsā from within. Ṭabarī and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 318/936 or 320/938) reproduce almost identical accounts. Since Sviri has already translated Tirmidhī's version, I shall translate Ṭabarī's, noting discrepancies as they arise:⁴⁰

the Arabic Qur'ān. The 'Companions of the Cave' in *Sūrat al-kaḥf* and Syriac Christian Tradition," in Gabriel Said Reynolds, ed., *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*. London; New York: Routledge, 2008, 109-138.

⁴⁰ Ṭabarī, 'Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*. 26 vols. Riyādh: s.n., 2003; here, Vol. 22, 429-30; al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī. *Nawādir al-uṣūl*. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Nawādir, 2010; here, Vol. 1, 53-55; cf. Sviri, "Origins and Evaluation," 205-6. For the same account in later works, cf. Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl b. 'Umar (d. 774/1373). *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*. 15 vols. Jiza: Mu'assasat Qurṭuba, 2000; here, Vol. 13, 435-36. In a much more attenuated form, still attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, cf. al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 607/1210). *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*. 32 vols. Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Bahīya al-Miṣriya, 1934; here, Vol. 29, 245. Perhaps the most interesting variation comes from *Majma' al-bayān* of the Imāmī scholar Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1154). He traces the anecdote through a different line than that of Ibn 'Abbās: "(...) And this helps (explain) what is mentioned in the account of Ibn Mas'ūd, who said: I was serving as an auxiliary for the Messenger of God, who was riding on a donkey, and he said: My cousin, 'Abd, do you know where the children of Israel created *rahbāniya*? And I said: God and His Messenger know best! Then he said in reply: They came to know it when the tyrants (*jabābira*) after Jesus contrived to rebel against God. As a result, the people of faith grew vexed, and (the tyrants) attacked them, and the people of faith were vanquished three times. And there remained but a few of them. And they said: We have appeared to those who persecuted us, and there does not remain among them a single one we called to it. So they came (and said): We shall separate across the earth, until the time when God sends the Prophet whom Jesus promised to us, and they meant Muḥammad, so they separated into caves (beneath) the mountains (*ghārān al-jibāl*), and they created *rahbāniya* (*aḥdathū rahbāniya*), and among them were those who stuck to their religion"; cf. al-Ṭabarsī, al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan. *Majma' al-bayān*. 30 parts in 6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fīkr, 1954-1957, Vol. 27, 160-61.

5. Ḥusayn b. Ḥarīth, alias Abū ‘Ammār al-Marwazī...⁴¹ on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās,⁴² who said: There were kings after Jesus son of Mary who distorted (*baddalū*) the Torah and the Gospel. Among them there were also believers who read the Torah and the Gospel, and they spoke to their king:⁴³ “We have not experienced more wicked abuse than that which they heaped upon us, so they read, ‘Whoever does not judge by what God revealed, for such are the unbelievers,’⁴⁴ despite what they accuse us of in their reading. So summon them, so they may read in the way we read, and they may believe in what we believe.”

So he summoned and gathered them. And he proposed to them either to die or to abandon their reading of the Torah and the Gospel, except for what (the kings) had distorted in them. So they said in reply, “What do you want with this? Let us go.” Then he spoke, and then a group of them (*tā’ifa minhum*) said, “Build for us columns (*uṣṭuwāna*), and lift us upon them, then give us something with which we can lift up our food and drink, and we will not come back to you.” And another group of them said, “Let us go, and we shall wander the earth (*nasīhu fī al-ārd*)⁴⁵ and roam around, and we shall drink just as the wild

⁴¹ The *isnād* of Ṭabarī’s report reads as follows: Ḥusayn b. Ḥarīth, alias Abū ‘Ammār al-Marwazī – al-Faḍl b. Mūsā – Sufyān – ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib – Sa’īd b. Jubayr – Ibn ‘Abbās. The *isnād* of Tirmidhī’s reads as follows: ‘Amr b. Abī ‘Amr – Ibrāhīm b. Abī al-Layth – al-Ashja’ī – Sufyān al-Thawrī – ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib – Sa’īd b. Jubayr – Ibn ‘Abbās. It is worth noting that Ibn ‘Abbās is the principal transmitter for several *raḥbānīya ḥadīth* in Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr*.

⁴² Tirmidhī’s account quotes the *raḥbānīya* phrase here; Ṭabarī’s does not.

⁴³ Tirmidhī reads: “The people spoke to their kings: We find no more wicked abuse.”

⁴⁴ Q. 5:44.

⁴⁵ The use of the root *s-y-h* is significant. In traditions equating *raḥbānīya* and *jihād*, we find the following interesting variant, located in an early collection by Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), among others: “Oh Messenger of God, is *siyāḥa* permitted for us? So he replied: Indeed, the *siyāḥa* of my *umma* is *jihād* in the path of God! Then he said: Oh messenger of God, is the monastic life (*tarahhub*) permitted for us? And he answered: Indeed, the *tarahhub* of my *umma* is the practice of sitting in the mosques and waiting for the prayers”; ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak. *Kitāb al-zuhd wa-l-raqā’iq*. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1971, #845, 290. For a parallel usage of the phrase in Ṭabarī, *yasīḥa fī al-ard*, applied to the ascetical companion ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ’ūn, who desired to castrate himself, cf. Ibn Sa’d, Muḥammad. *Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*. 11 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001; here, Vol. 3, 366. *Siyāḥa* (related to the modern Arabic usage, “tourism”) refers to the wandering of itinerant monks. In many *ḥadīth*,

beasts drink. And since you have power over us in your land, then kill us (if we wander there).” Then the (final)⁴⁶ group said, “Build us abodes in the desert (*dūran fī al-fayāfī*),⁴⁷ and we shall dig wells and plant gardens, and we shall not return to you, nor shall we pass by you. And there was none among these who did not have a close friend in these groups.”⁴⁸

And he said: They did this, and God revealed the following verse: “And *rahbānīya* they invented – We did not prescribe it to them – only out of a desire to please God. Yet they observed not the same as it ought truly to have been observed.” And others (the idolaters who became worshippers outwardly)⁴⁹ said, “We worship just as so and so did, and we wandered just as so and so did, and we occupied abodes just as so and so did,” and they held onto their idolatry inwardly (*wa-hum fī shirkihim*; i.e., they continued to practice *shirk* in their hearts). And they have no (real) understanding of the faith in whose path they followed.

And when the Prophet was sent, only a few of them remained. At that time men descended from their cells, and wanderers came in from their wanderings (*wa-jā’ sā’ih min siyāḥatihī*),⁵⁰ and the inhabitants of the abodes came in from their abodes, and they believed in (Muḥammad), and trusted him. Thus spoke God: “Oh you who believe! Fear God and believe in His messenger, and He shall bestow on you a double portion of his

rahbānīya and *siyāḥa* seem to be identical, but none of the traditions treat it as the same troubled Qur’ānic institution as *rahbānīya* (said to have been given by God, then corrupted by man). Still, *siyāḥa* has Qur’ānic echoes – pious wanderers show up in Q. 9:112 and 66:5 (where they are women). Itinerant ascetics were common in late antique monasticism, and were often singled out for their loose and unpredictable ways. For more, see below (fn. 81) for Jerome and Benedict’s sharp words for the wanderers.

⁴⁶ Author interpolation.

⁴⁷ Tirmidhī’s account identifies these structures explicitly as monasteries (*dayr*; pl. *duyūr*), while Ṭabarī calls them abodes (*dār*; pl. *dūr*). In this instance, the distinction between *dār* and *dayr* is probably insignificant. Still, to preserve the Arabic distinction, I have translated the term *dār* as “abode” rather than “monastery”.

⁴⁸ Tirmidhī’s account reads: “And there was none among the tribes (*min al-qabā’il*) who did not have a close friend among these groups.”

⁴⁹ Ṭabarī excludes this crucial piece of information from Tirmidhī’s account. It complements the rather ambiguous end of the following line (*wa-hum fī shirkihim*), explaining that the idolaters had merely taken on the semblance of the believers.

⁵⁰ For more on *siyāḥa*, see above, fn. 45; the diction directly mirrors that of Q. 9:112.

mercy.”⁵¹ Still others said, “(They received this reward) for their faith in Jesus son of Mary, and for their trust in the Torah and the Gospel, and their faith in Muḥammad and their trust in him.”

To summarize: some time after Jesus, kings corrupted the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians. They forced the believers to accept these distortions and persecuted those who did not. After negotiations among the king(s) and the believers, the parties settled on *rahbānīya* as a compromise position. In exchange for leaving the king(s)’s domains, the believers could practise *dīn ‘Īsā* in the desert, filling their days with monkish pastimes, such as sitting atop columns, wandering the earth, and living in desert cells. Although this community succeeded in preserving the true religion for a period, they were soon infiltrated by polytheistic Christians who appeared to convert to *rahbānīya* outwardly, but this was a ruse. The converts knew little of the religion they were joining. Under their influence, the heresy metastasised, leading many monks away from *dīn ‘Īsā*. A faithful remnant clung to the original faith, and these were rewarded two-fold when Muḥammad arrived preaching Islam and rescuing them from obscurity.

The role of pagan kings in the rise of monasticism is a theme that surfaces elsewhere in Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr*, especially in a passage connected with Q. 57:27.⁵²

6. Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭālib on the authority of ... ‘Abdallah b. Mas‘ūd⁵³ said: The Messenger of God said: “Those who came before us were broken up into seventy-one sects (*firqā*). Three of them survived, and the rest of them perished. One sect of the three opposed the kings and battled them for the sake of the religion of God and the religion of Jesus son of Mary, but the kings

⁵¹ Q. 57:28.

⁵² Ṭabarī, ‘Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*. Beirut: s.n., 1972, Vol. 36, 239; I have consulted the translation of: Anthony, Sean W. “The Composition of Sayf b. ‘Umar’s Account of King Paul and His Corruption of Ancient Christianity,” *Der Islam* 85 (2010), 192, but have modified it in the light of corrections pointed out to me by Robert Hoyland.

⁵³ The *isnād* of Ṭabarī’s report reads as follows: Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭālib – Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir – al-Ṣa‘q b. Ḥazn – ‘Uqayl al-Ja‘dī – Abū Ishāq al-Hamdānī – Suwayd b. Ghafala – ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd.

killed them. (The second) sect did not have the power to oppose the kings, so they lived among their people calling them to the religion of God and the religion of Jesus son of Mary, but the kings killed them too and dispersed them by means of official edicts (*wa-nasharathum bi-l-manāshīr*). (The third) sect did not have the power to oppose the kings nor to live among their people calling them to the religion of God and the religion of Jesus son of Mary, so they entered the deserts and the mountains, and they became monks there. For this is the saying of God the Most High: “And the monastic state they invented – We did not prescribe it to them”.

Like the previous account, we learn that wicked kings forced a small vanguard of believers into the wilds where they preserved the religion of Jesus until Muḥammad. For the first time we also learn that persecution led to the creation of two sects: a militant group of Christians who fought the kings, but who ultimately died, and a quietist group of Christians who shrank from persecution, but were killed all the same. The account mirrors a much longer legend from the *Kitāb al-riḍḍa wa-l-futūḥ* of the second/eighth-century historian Sayf b. ‘Umar, who alleges that a Jewish king known as “Paul” persecuted the followers of Jesus by forcing them to adopt a corrupt version of the faith known as “Christianity”. A faithful remnant (*baqīya*) fled to Syria, where they preserved the religion of Jesus in hermitages (*al-ṣawāmi‘*) and by wandering the earth. In Sayf b. ‘Umar’s story, we find a conflation of themes observed elsewhere: the motifs of the desert remnant and the persecution of pagan kings.⁵⁴

14.5 Analysis: The Origins and Taxonomy of Monasticism in Early Islam

So far, we have assembled several texts that gloss the controversial Qur’ānic verse on the origins of monasticism. In broad stroke, early Muslims regarded monasticism as an expression of true Christianity. Specifically, they saw “good monasticism” as the repository of the teachings of Jesus, and “bad monasticism” as the embodiment of the innovations that corrupted the community after he left this world. As the mainstream

⁵⁴ Anthony, “Sayf b. ‘Umar’s Account of King Paul,” 179 (text), 191-92 (analysis).

church withered under schism, idolatry, and persecution, a vanguard kept Jesus' teachings alive, awaiting their fulfilment in the coming of Islam.

These legends mix several eclectic ingredients. The first is a tendency in early Islamic culture to look upon monks as guardians of *ḥanīfiyya*.⁵⁵ Baḥīrā, the hermit who identified the child Muḥammad as a prophet, is the most famous example of this. There is also Zayd b. 'Amr, another character from the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq, who left Mecca in order to find "the religion of Abraham". He eventually encountered a monk who told him that true monotheism would soon re-emerge in Arabia.⁵⁶ There is also the story of Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh, who stumbled across "cryogenically frozen" true Christians on a journey to the lost desert city of 'Ād. The man he met told Sahl that he had worn his woollen mantle since the time of Jesus!⁵⁷ In Islamic folklore we find stories of monks acting as sources of spiritual support for Muslim disciples – whether imagined as characters in the stories, or as Muslim audiences who would have read these accounts.⁵⁸ In this context, the monks emerge as Muslims *avant*

⁵⁵ I define *Ḥanīfiyya* as the pre-Islamic monotheism of Abraham. For efforts to understand its origins, cf. Lyall, Charles J. "The Words Ḥanīf and Muslim," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Oct., 1903), 771-84; Gibb, H.A.R. "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia," *The Harvard Theological Review* 55.4 (1962), 269-80; Watt, W. M. "Ḥanīf". In *EI*²; Rubin, Uri. "*Ḥanīfiyya* and *Ka'ba*. An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of dīn Ibrāhīm," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 85-112. And for early Muslim understanding of the term see the chapter of Jacob Ollidort in this volume.

⁵⁶ For more on Zayd b. 'Amr and his encounter with the monk in Balqā', in modern-day Jordan, cf. Ibn Ishāq, Muḥammad. *Sīrat al-nabī*. 4 vols. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥijāzī, 1937; here, Vol. 1, 249-50; Lecker, Michael. "Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl". In *EI*². There is the related story of Salmān al-Fārisī a Persian convert to Christianity, who is said to have wandered through the Middle East in search of the last representatives of *ḥanīfiyya*. His peregrinations took him through the traditional heartlands of Middle Eastern Christianity, including Mosul, Nisibis, and Amorium. In each place, he was told that the *ḥunafā'* had either died or abandoned the faith. None of the Christians he met along the way, however, were called monks, at least explicitly. For more, cf. Ibn Ishāq, *Sīrat al-nabī*, Vol. 1, 233-37; Levi Della Vida, G. "Salmān al-Fārisī, or Salmān Pāk". In *EI*².

⁵⁷ This anecdote comes from the *Lawāqih al-anwār* of al-Sha'rānī; cited in: Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles*, 14. 'Ād was a tribe that existed after the time of Noah, but which disappeared into the wastes because of its haughtiness. It is often conflated with the lost city of Iram. For more, cf. Buhl, F. "'Ād". In *EI*²; Watt, W. M., "Iram". In *EI*².

⁵⁸ For more on the monastic aphorisms, cf. al-Munajjed, Ṣalāhuddīn. "Morceaux choisis du livre des moines," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'études orientales de Caire*

*la lettre*⁵⁹ – especially the black-clad, wraith-like hermits who peppered the desolate corners of the early Islamic world.⁶⁰ They were witnesses of God’s timeless message and proof of its fulfilment in Islam.

Our stories also draw a distinction between *dīn* ‘*Īsā* and Christianity. This was a basic precept of the development of doctrine in Islam from early times. According to the Qur’ān and early traditions, Jesus preached *hanīfīya*, the pure monotheism of Abraham, but later generations tampered with it, concocting the ersatz faith known as Christianity (*Naṣrānīya*). They did this by introducing falsehoods into the Gospels – a process of textual corruption known as *tahrīf* – and along the way, transformed Jesus from a prophet into a god.⁶¹ We see echoes of this in the stories of Ṭabarī, Tirmidhī, and Sayf b. ‘Umar about pagan kings who tampered with (*baddalū*) the scriptures (Texts 5 and 6).

Finally, the “dawn to decline” motif finds wider echoes in early Muslim accounts of the seventy-three sects which appeared after the Prophet’s death – only one of which stayed true to his teachings. Later *tafsīr* make this connection explicitly, mentioning seventy-three sects in the same breath as our exegesis on the origins and splintering of Christianity.⁶² Some Muslim writers, as we saw in Ṭabarī’s gloss of Q. 57:27 (Text 6), alleged that Christianity underwent a similar process of division into sects soon after its birth.⁶³ Finally, the motif of fleeing persecution

3 (1956), 349-58; more recently, Mourad, “Christian Monks in Islamic Literature.”

⁵⁹ I adapt this phrase from Elizabeth Key Fowden, who describes the good monks as “Muslims before Muḥammad”: see “The Lamp and the Wine Flask,” 9.

⁶⁰ The emphasis on “certain monks” is intentional; compare several passages of the Qur’ān, where we read about “good monks” who “do not puff themselves up” (Q. 5:82) versus “bad monks” who “devour the wealth of men and debar them from the way of God” (Q. 9:34). The distinction is between the true desert monks, who practice self-abnegation, and the worldly monks who crave wealth and status.

⁶¹ For more on *tahrīf*, cf. Lazarus Yafeh, Hava. “Tahrīf”. In *EI*². For a Christian response to the charges of scriptural corruption, cf. ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī. *Kitāb al-burhān wa-kitāb al-masā’il wa-l-ajwibah*. Ed. Michel Hayek as: *Kitāb al-burhān wa-kitāb al-masā’il wa-l-ajwibah. Apologies et controverses*. Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1977; Griffith, Sidney H. “‘Ammār al-Baṣrī’s *Kitāb al-burhān*. Christian *kalām* in the first Abbasid century,” *Le Muséon* 46 (1983), 165-68. For general remarks on Muslim views on Christian history, cf. Reynolds, Gabriel Said. *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

⁶² We find the connection in Ṭabarī’s above-mentioned *tafsīr*; he also uses the verb *tafarraqū* to describe the separation of the Christian believers after the persecution of the pagan kings: see al-Ṭabarī, *Majma’ al-bayān*, Vol. 27, 161.

⁶³ For another example, see Shahrestānī, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm. *Kitāb al-milal*

into the desert has obvious parallels to the Prophet's *hijra*, as well as established exodus motifs from the Hebrew Bible.

14.6 Christian Sources

These explanations account for our legends only in part. For alternatives, we have to look farther afield – outside the Islamic tradition altogether – to Christian stories about the origins of monasticism. To do so, I would like to focus on one text in particular: chapter 18.5 of John Cassian's *Conferences* (ca. 420s), which shows surprising similarities to the Qur'ānic material. Before doing so, it is worth recapping the actual – as opposed to legendary – history of the origins of monasticism.

According to the standard account, Christian monasticism burst into the late Roman world in 285 when Antony (251-356), the son of well-to-do landowners in the Nile Delta, decided to answer Christ's call to "sell what you have and give to the poor...and come, follow me" (Mt. 19:21). He fled into the desert, becoming the first anchoritic monk according to tradition.⁶⁴ Later, Pachomius (292-348), another young Egyptian and a former conscript in the Roman army, decided to take Antony's model in a new direction, establishing the first coenobitic community on the edge of the desert in Tabennesi in Upper Egypt.⁶⁵ These men are considered the founders of the main branches of Christian monasticism: the anchoritic and coenobitic.⁶⁶ Of course, the conventional story represents a careful weaving of historical fact and hagiographic fiction. Specifically,

wa-l-niḥāl. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1993; here, Vol. 1, 265ff; for commentary, cf. Rubin, Uri. *Between Bible and Qur'ān. The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self Image*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1999, 117-67.

⁶⁴ For more on Antony's life, and the political and religious currents underlying his earliest hagiography, see Brakke, David. *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1995.

⁶⁵ Rousseau, Philip. *Pachomius. The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

⁶⁶ For general introductions to the rise of monasticism in late antiquity, see the classic but now outdated, Chitty, Derwas. *The Desert a City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966; Dunn, Marilyn. *The Emergence of Monasticism. From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; Rousseau, Philip. "Monasticism," in Averil Cameron, Brian Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. XIV. Late Antiquity. Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 745-81. For an especially interesting effort to reinterpret early Egyptian monasticism, see Moschos, Dimitrios. *Eschatologie im ägyptischen Mönchtum*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

it ignores the history of ascetic practice long before the revolution of the late-third century.⁶⁷ We can detect signs of a "proto-monastic movement" in Gospel descriptions of Jesus' retreats and fasting, accounts of virgins and continent men in the apostolic period, and allusions in to ascetics living in places like Egypt, Palestine, and Syria before Antony and Pachomius braved the sandy wastes.⁶⁸

Monastic authors in late antiquity had various ways of explaining this pre-history. One of the most common was to claim that coenobitic monasticism followed the traditions of the primitive church, as expressed in accounts of Pentecost from the book of *Acts*, chapters 2 and 4.⁶⁹ According to these passages, the apostolic community held everything in common, sharing its property and food according to each one's need. In its egalitarianism, the Jerusalem church was a template for the first *coenobia*. More importantly, the Jerusalem church became an important prologue in the monks' self-constructed narrative of monastic origins: apostolic Christianity *was* monastic Christianity, and monastic Christianity *was* apostolic Christianity. At a time when the mainstream church was flourishing in the shade of empire and metropolis, the monks' alleged connection to the Apostles became a backbone of their ideology.

We find the first whispers of this tradition in the Pachomian corpus and in the writings of Basil of Caesarea,⁷⁰ though it expressed itself robustly for the first time in the thought of Augustine of Hippo (354-430).⁷¹ In these texts, the Jerusalem church was a model of the perfect

⁶⁷ O'Neill, J.C. "The Origins of Monasticism," in Rowan Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy. Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 270-87. For further thoughts on the study of monasticism in Palestine see the chapter of Daniel Reynolds in this volume.

⁶⁸ Although the monastic sources often willfully ignore this pre-history, it sometimes surfaces between the cracks. For example, Athanasius' *Life of Antony* mentions how Antony proposed living with an old monk who had lived as an anchorite for his entire life (Ch. 11). Later, Antony moved his sister into a convent – which must have been an established home for ascetical Christian women before Antony took to the desert (Ch. 3); for more, see O'Neill, "Origins," 273.

⁶⁹ For a summary of these traditions, cf. Bori, Pier Cesare. *Chiesa primitiva. Immagine della comunità delle origini (Atti 2, 42-47; 4, 32-37) nella storia della chiesa antica*. Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1974, 145-78.

⁷⁰ *The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples. Pachomian Koinonia*. Vol. 1. Tr. Armand Veilleux. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980, xiv (for comment); for allusions to Acts 2 and 4, see §23, §142, *inter alia*. The Jerusalem Church was central to the concept of Pachomius' desert community.

⁷¹ Augustine developed this theme in his *De morbis* and *Praeceptum*, a monastic rule he

Christian community – devoid of hierarchy and distinction. The most famous exponent of this idea was John Cassian (360-435), a monk from modern-day Romania, who travelled throughout Egypt collecting the wisdom of the Desert Fathers.⁷² He eventually decamped to southern Gaul, where he founded the abbey of St. Victor in the marshy coastlands near Marseille. There he composed his most famous works, the *Institutes* and *Conferences*, two sprawling guides to the monastic life, synthesizing the wisdom he had collected during his peregrinations in the east. The *Institutes* and *Conferences* are fascinating and complicated texts, alleging to serve as a “physician’s desk reference” for the soul.⁷³ Indeed, they were the basis of even more famous monastic works in later periods, such as the rule of St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547).

One of the most striking anecdotes in Cassian’s writing is the narrative of monastic origins in *Conferences* 18.5. The broader chapter is based on Cassian’s alleged visit to Abba Piamun, the abbot of a monastery near Dioclos in Lower Egypt.⁷⁴ At the beginning of the chapter, Piamun explained the importance of adhering to the wisdom of one’s elders,

composed around 391. It is interesting to note differences in the exegesis of Acts 2 and 4 among the Egyptians (Athanasius, *et. al.*) and for Augustine. For the Egyptians, membership of the Jerusalem Church was an invitation to give up private property – to abandon the world for the sake of poverty and love of God. For Augustine, Acts 2 and 4 were an invitation to hold everything in common, for souls to speak heart to heart (*cor ad cor loquitur*). Interestingly, the motif of the Jerusalem Church was much more popular in the West than in the East, although its origins are undoubtedly Eastern. For more on Augustine’s *Praeceptum* and Acts 2 and 4, cf. De Vogüé, Adalbert. *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité. Pt. 1, Vol. 3. Jérôme, Augustin, et Rufin au tourant du siècle (391-405)*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996.

⁷² For a sampling of important studies on Cassian’s life, see Chadwick, Owen. *Cassian*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1968; Stewart, Columba. *Cassian the Monk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; for Cassian’s role in the wider evolution of western monasticism, see Rousseau, Philip. *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978; Leyser, Conrad. *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, Ch. 2.

⁷³ For an alternative to this view, cf. Goodrich, Richard J. *Contextualizing Cassian. Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Goodrich attempts to situate Cassian in his immediate historical, social, and political context. Goodrich shows Cassian deeply enmeshed in the debates of his day – mostly revolving around the collapse of the Gallic aristocracy, the rise of undisciplined monastic institutions and communities, and the emergence of rival ascetic theoreticians. His research is focused principally on the *Institutes*, especially the first four chapters.

⁷⁴ For more information on Dioclos, cf. Cassian, *Conferences*, 18.1; *idem*, *Institutes*, 5.36; and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.29.

particularly for younger monks seeking to advance in the spiritual life. He then outlined three kinds of monks in Egypt: the coenobites, the anchorites, and the Sarabites – a deviant sect, possibly corresponding to dissident groups profiled in other monastic sources from the time.⁷⁵ Having identified the three splinters, Piamun proceeded to describe the founders of the monastic movement, the coenobites:⁷⁶

7. And so the system of coenobites (*disciplina coenobitarum*) arose in the days of the preaching of the Apostles. For such was all that multitude of believers in Jerusalem, which is thus written in the *Acts of the Apostles*: “But the multitude of believers was of one heart and one soul, none claimed any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they held all things common. They sold their possessions and property and divided them to all, as any man had need” (*Acts* 4:32, 2:45); and again: “For neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as possessed fields or houses, sold them and brought the price of the things that they sold and laid them before the feet of the Apostles: and distribution was made to every man as he had need” (*Acts* 4:34-35). In such a way, I say, was the entire church living, whereas today it is difficult to find but a few living as coenobites. But when at the death of the Apostles the multitude of believers began to turn tepid (towards their faith), and especially that multitude which had come to the faith of Christ from diverse Gentile nations, from whom the Apostles out of consideration for the infancy of their faith and their ingrained heathen habits (*inveterata gentilitatis consuetudine*) required nothing more than that they should “abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (*Acts* 15:29), that liberty which was conceded to the Gentiles because of the weakness of their newly-born faith had gradually begun to mar the perfection of that Church

⁷⁵ See below, n.81; also Choat, Malcolm. “Philological and Historical Approaches to the Search for the ‘Third Type’ of Egyptian Monk,” in M. Immerzeel and J. Van Der Vliet, eds., *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of the New Millennium II. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies*. Vol. 2. Leuven-Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters en Dep. Oosterse Studies, 2004, 857-65.

⁷⁶ Cassian, *Conferences*, 18.5. Ed. J.-P. Migne as: *Joannis Cassiani opera omnia*. Patrologiae Latinae, Vol. 49, Cols. 1094b-1100a. Tr. Edgar C.S. Gibbon as: *The Conferences of John Cassian*. Available online: <http://www.osb.org/lectio/cassian/conf/index.html> (19.8.2011).

which existed at Jerusalem. With the number of both insiders and outsiders increasing daily, the fervour of that early faith cooled down, and not only those who had turned their sight to the faith of Christ, but even those who were the leaders of the Church relaxed that strictness somewhat. For some, fancying that what they saw allowed to the Gentiles because of their weakness was also permissible for themselves, they believed that they would suffer no loss if they followed the faith and confession of Christ while still keeping their property and possessions.

But the apostolic fervour survived among those who, mindful of its former perfection, departing their cities, as well as their intercourse with those who believed that a laxer life and carelessness were allowable to themselves and to the Church of God, (they began to) live in rural and more isolated areas (*in locis suburbanis ac secretioribus*), and there they recalled the institutes (*instituta*) which came from the apostles and spread through the universal body of the Church, and they began practicing them in private as well as in public. And so that whole system (*disciplina*; cenobitic monasticism) of which we have spoken grew up from those disciples who had sequestered themselves from the contagion that was spreading. And gradually as time passed, separating from the great mass of believers, and abstaining from marriage and cutting themselves off from intercourse with parents and with this world, they were called monks or *Monazontes* out of the strictness of their lonely and solitary life. Whence it followed that from their common life they were called “coenobites” and their cells and lodgings *coenobia*. That then alone was the most ancient kind of monks, which is first not only in time but also in grace, and which remained unbroken for a very long period up to the time of the abbots Paul and Antony⁷⁷; and even to this day we see traces of it surviving in strict *coenobia*.

The passage is remarkable for many reasons.⁷⁸ To reiterate Cassian’s basic points: after Pentecost, Christianity became a monastic movement

⁷⁷ Referring to Antony of the Desert and Paul of Thebes (d. ca. 341), the two founders of anchoritic monasticism.

⁷⁸ Notably, *Conferences* 18.5 ignores the historical genesis of the monastic movement, in which anchoritic monasticism gave rise to coenobitic monasticism, not the other way

whose followers shared property and expressed love for one another. As the ranks of the Church swelled, the community slipped into moral and spiritual decadence. In particular, leaders of the Church eased the disciplines to make room for pagans wishing to join the flock. The presence of pagans led to the erosion of the communitarian values of the Jerusalem Church. For the first time, Christians started holding private property. Soon after, the Church splintered, with a loyal remnant fleeing into the desert to preserve the true teachings of Jesus – forming the first generation of monks. As mainstream Christianity grew worldly and corrupt, these monks carried on practising the faith of the apostles on the margin of the world. There, the text suggests, they waited for a time when Christians would flock back to the traditions of the founders – thus Cassian’s mention of Antony and Paul, the fourth-century “founders” of the monastic movement, who were thought to revive the traditions of the apostles.

Cassian alludes to this story elsewhere. In *Institutes* 2.5, for example, he provides an abridged version of 18.5, adding that the earliest Christians learned about monasticism in Alexandria at the feet of the apostle Mark, as opposed to in Jerusalem after Pentecost.⁷⁹ Another crucial part of Cassian’s story is the splintering of the monastic Church after its arrival in the desert. In *Conferences* 18.6, for example, we learn that the first anchorites sprang up from coenobitic communities in the

around. For commentary on this verse, with special emphasis on the notion of the Apostolic Church, see De Vogüé, Adalbert. “Monachisme et église dans la pensée de Cassien,” *Théologie* 49 (1965), 213-40 (reprinted in: *idem. De Saint Pachôme à Jean Cassien*. Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1996, 271-301); Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 45ff; Choat, Malcolm. “The Development and Usage of Terms for ‘Monk’ in Late Antique Egypt,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 45 (2002), 5-23; Sheridan, Mark. “John Cassian and the Formation of Authoritative Tradition,” in Alberto Camplani and Giovanni Filoramo, eds., *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism*. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2007, 165-69. One article came to my attention as I was finishing this piece, and did not get the opportunity to consult it: Pricoco, Salvatore. “Tepidum monachorum genus (Cassian., *conl.* 18.4.2),” *Scritti classici e cristiani offerta a Francesco Corsaro*. Catania: Università degli studi di Catania, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia, 1994, 563-73.

⁷⁹ Cassian, *Institutes*, 2.5; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.24. Ed./trans. Kirsopp Lake as: *The Ecclesiastical History*. Loeb Classical Library. 2 Vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980; here, Vol. 1, 178-79. For commentary on this passage in the *Institutes*, cf. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian*, 129-35. This passing mention underlines the connection in Cassian’s thought between “Ur Christianity” and monasticism, and also helps explain the genesis of monasticism in Egypt, as opposed to a different part of the early Christian world (like Syria, which Cassian also visited).

desert. Cassian looked favourably upon this splinter, though he left no doubt as to which kind of monasticism came first, and therefore, which was superior. The mysterious Sarabites reappear in *Conferences* 18.7, where we learn that they descended from Ananias and Sapphira – two members of the Jerusalem Church who decided to sell their property for the common purse, but eventually withheld a portion for themselves, violating the golden rule of Pentecost (*Acts* 5:1-11). From these inauspicious beginnings, the Sarabites were constant rivals to the real monks – dressing and behaving the same way, but rejecting the discipline of superiors, among other sins. In *Conferences* 18.8, Cassian mentions a fourth splinter, monks who began their lives in *coenobia*, but who eventually seceded, seeking the freedom of the anchoritic life. Taken as a whole, these passages explain the origins of monasticism, as well as the subsequent division of the movement due to moral laxity and pagan influence.

It is unclear where Cassian's story came from. Richard Goodrich argues that the legend – especially the brief version contained in *Institutes* 2.5 – recalls a passage in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* about the Therapeutoi, a group of ascetical, philosophically-minded Jews who lived in the vicinity of Alexandria around the time of Christ. They first appeared in Philo's *De vita contemplativa*, and Eusebius reworked the information, transforming the Therapeutoi into early Christian ascetics who followed the proscriptions of *Acts* 2 and 4. In doing so, Eusebius traced the origins of Egyptian monasticism to early Jewish converts to Christianity. Cassian made this connection explicit by calling Eusebius' desert believers "monks".⁸⁰

Cassian's monastic taxonomy also recalls a passage in Jerome's *Epistle 22* to Eustochium, written in 384 while Jerome was in the Holy Land. In it, Jerome identified the three main monastic cleavages as coenobites, anchorites, and *Remoboth* – essentially "bad monks", resembling the Sarabites of Conference 18.7.⁸¹ Likewise, Pier Cesare Bori identifies a possi-

⁸⁰ The Philo-Eusebius legend confirms only part of the story: it explains the apostolic origins of monasticism, but does not discuss the pagan influences or the movement's splintering, which interest us in light of the Islamic material. For more, see Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian*, 132-35; Bori, *Chiesa primitiva*, 145-49.

⁸¹ Jerome, Saint. *Select Letters of St. Jerome*. Ed./trans. F.A. Wright. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933, §22 and §34, 134-37; for commentary, see De Vogüé, Adalbert. *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité. Pt. 1: De la mort d'Antoine à la fin du séjour de Jérôme à Rome*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1991, 288-326. The material was reworked by Sulpicius Severus and

ble parallelism between Cassian's legend and the writings of Cyprian of Carthage, the third-century church father, who expressed concern for the decline and decadence of the Church after its foundation.⁸² But these similarities may be more thematic than textual. In my judgment, the story in *Conferences* 18.5 is unique.

So where did it come from? It is possible that Cassian composed the legend himself, combining strands of monastic mythology he found in the works of authors such as Eusebius, Jerome or Cyprian. More plausibly, the story came from an older Eastern source. Cassian informs us that he learned it from the Egyptian monk Piamun on his visit to Dioclos, and I do not see why this cannot be true. Of course, the stories in the *Conferences* are highly stylized, perhaps even fabricated, as many scholars have pointed out. Still, even if Piamun was not the direct source for the legend, it may have come from the general milieu of Egyptian monasticism. This is hard to prove, and to my knowledge no Egyptian sources contain direct parallels. Still, despite its survival in a Latin source, I prefer to see the legend as essentially Eastern, using established *topoi* circulating in Egypt (and perhaps also Palestine and Syria) in the fourth and fifth centuries before making their way west to the *Conferences*.

14.7 Legends of Monastic Origins Compared

There is a striking similarity between Cassian's report and early Islamic exegetical material. This final section provides a comparison of the principal elements in the two traditions. I do so in the hope of determining whether they share a common source or draw on similar historical tropes circulating in the late antique Middle East.

the author of the *Consultationes* of Zacchaeus (see Sheridan, "Authoritative Tradition," 168). It was disseminated widely thanks to the *Rule of the Master* and the *Rule of Benedict* (sixth century), which reproduce Cassian's taxonomy exactly, adding a fourth group known as *girovagi*, who "spend their whole lives wandering through various provinces" (like the practitioners of *siyāḥa*: see n.45 above). For *RB* 1, see De Vogüé, Adalbert. *La règle de Saint Benoît*. Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972, Vol. 1, 436-40.

⁸² Bori, *Chiesa primitiva*, 151.

14.7.1 The Genesis of the Christian Community

What was the nature of the Church at its foundation? On this count, Cassian and the Muslim exegetes provide similar answers. In the *Conferences*, the essence of “Ur Christianity” is the communitarian spirit of the Apostles. As Cassian puts it, quoting *Acts* 4:32 and 2:45: “The multitude of believers was of one heart and one soul: none claimed any of the things which he possessed was his own; rather they held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and divided them to all, as any man had need.” Muqātil (Text 3) describes the original community in much the same way: “As it is said: ‘... they are merciful toward one another ...’ (Q. 48:29). It is said those who love one another, God placed that (feeling) in the hearts of the believers towards each other.” In both instances, the essence of “Ur Christianity” is egalitarianism and care for one’s neighbours.

That said, the accounts differ in their emphasis on the importance of property. For Cassian, communal ownership was the *sine qua non* of Christian life after Pentecost, while for Muqātil it seems to have been a more general sense of communal affection. Similarly, Cassian associates “Ur Christianity” with the Apostles, while the Muslim authors identify “Ur Christianity” with Jesus directly, calling it *dīn ʿĪsā*, or *dīn ʿĪsa b. Maryam*. This is understandable, as the Islamic tradition was sceptical of the role of the apostles in the spread of Christianity, especially given their perceived duplicity in *tahṛīf* (none more so than St. Paul). For a Muslim exegete, authentic Christianity could not be apostolic Christianity, as it was for Cassian, but rather, “Jesus Christianity”.

14.7.2 The Corruption of the Christian Community

Both the late antique and early Islamic traditions focus on the decline of “Ur Christianity” within a short period of its advent. In both instances, the culprits are said to be pagans who joined the Church and corrupted its teachings from within. Cassian provides a detailed description of this process: after the death of the Apostles, the fervour of the early Christians “began to turn tepid.” This was because the “multitude...from diverse gentile nations” – whom the Apostles had permitted to enter the Church without having to abandon their “ingrained heathen habits” – influenced Christians of non-pagan (perhaps Jewish) origin. Thus, “the liberty which was conceded to the Gentiles because of the weakness of

their newly-born faith (gradually began) to mar the perfection of that Church.” With time, the ranks of the pagans swelled, and “the fervour of that early faith cooled down” – even among the leaders of the Church. Finally, these pagans persuaded the faithful to give up the egalitarian principles of Apostolic Christianity, “believ(ing) that they would suffer no loss if they followed the faith and confession of Christ while still keeping their property and possessions.”

The Islamic sources are not as detailed as the *Conferences*, but they tell a similar story of pagan infiltration. According to Muqātil (Text 3), “the idolaters increased in number (*kathura al-mushrikūn*)”; according to Ṭabarī (Text 4), “the idolaters (*ahl al-shirk*) increased in number, and they swept away the messengers, and the messengers were vanquished.” The shared report of Ṭabarī and Tirmidhī (Text 5) describes pagan infiltration too, but one which took place after the believers had already fled to the desert and started practicing monasticism. It describes these double agents as “idolaters who became worshippers outwardly,” but who “held onto their idolatry inwardly.” The Islamic sources do not explain the reasons for the sudden pagan surge, as Cassian does. The closest we come is the allusion in Texts 5 and 6 to pagan kings who tampered with the Holy Scriptures, thereby introducing falsehoods to *dīn* ‘*Isā*. But at no point are these kings explicitly called *mushrikūn*. Conversely, there is no mention of pagan persecution in Cassian’s account. It is spiritual decadence and not political violence that causes Christianity’s decline. Still, the similarity is undeniable.

14.7.3 Flight into the Desert: The Creation of Monasticism

Both Cassian’s account and the Muslim narratives hinge on the same event: the flight of the believers into the desert. According to the *Conferences*, “the apostolic fervour survived” among a small vanguard that had rejected the “laxer life and carelessness” of the paganised Christians. Moving to “rural and more isolated areas,” they preserved “the institutes which came from the apostles,” resisting “the contagion that was spreading.” They “abstained from marriage and cut themselves off from intercourse with parents and with this world.” They came to be known as “monks or *Monazontes*”, living “in *coenobia*.”

The Islamic sources tell a simplified version of the same story. Muqātil (Text 3) and Ṭabarī (Text 4) state that the followers of Jesus “went

into seclusion” (*wa-i'tazalū*) because of new pagan elements in the church. They began living in hermitages (3), caves (4), and desert abodes (5), as well as sitting atop columns and wandering the earth (5). In Ṭabarī's exegesis of Q. 57:27 (6), the believers are said to “stick to the deserts and the mountains, and there they became monks.” The arc of these stories is essentially similar: the followers of “Ur Christianity” preserved the faith by fleeing into the desert. This primitive Christianity took the form of what we would call “monasticism”. At the same time, the motives for the exile are different in the Christian and Muslim sources. Islamic sources associate the move with pagan persecution, though Cassian does not. Furthermore, whereas Cassian states that the true believers lived in *coenobia*, the Islamic sources state that the believers lived as anchorites, wandering the earth, sitting atop columns, and inhabiting cells. Clearly, Cassian and the Muslims disagreed about which form of monasticism best preserved the faith of the early Christians. But as we have seen, this also raged among Christians in late antiquity, who hotly debated the merits of coenobitic versus anchoritic life.

14.7.4 The Splintering of the Monastic Community

Once the true believers arrived in the desert, they became victims of schism yet again. According to Cassian's account (*Conferences* 18.4-8) apostolic Christianity split into four separate sects. The first were the coenobitic monks (18.5), who preserved the teachings of Jesus' followers. Next were the anchoritic monks (18.6), who “frequented the recesses of the desert,” imitating John the Baptist and Elijah.⁸³ The third were the Sarabites (18.7) who pretended to live as coenobitic monks, but, in reality, rejected the rule of a master and instead carried on with their own pursuits. Cassian did not assign a name to the fourth variety of monk (18.8), who began their careers in *coenobia* but who sought the freedom of the solitary life once their faith cooled. All alone in the desert, they saw their vices multiply.

Islamic sources also state that the Christians splintered into four sects after they arrived in the desert. In Muqātil's rendition (Text 3), the sects include *dīn 'Īsā* (the original Jesus religion), *Naṣrānīya* (“some of them turned against the religion of Jesus, and they invented *Naṣrānīya*”),

⁸³ Interestingly, Cassian states that the anchorites fled to the desert to avoid the persecution of their neighbours.

and Judaism (“they did wrong when they became Jews”). It is unclear from his narration whether he regards *rahbānīya* as a separate sect. Ṭabarī seems to clarify the point (Text 4), stating that “a group (of the followers of *dīn ‘Isā*) apostatised,” and they “seized upon *bid’a*, *Naṣrānīya*, and Judaism.” As Sviri argued, there is good reason to believe that what Ṭabarī calls *bid’a* is in fact a reference to *rahbānīya*, bringing the total number to four.⁸⁴

The division of the monks into four groups appears in both late antique and early Islamic legends. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be much of a correspondence among the four sects listed in Cassian and the four sects listed in the *tafsīr*. For example, Cassian is concerned primarily with distinctions among coenobitic and anchoritic monks, while the Muslim authors mention Jews and quasi-pagan offshoots. Still, the shared scheme of a four-way schism is significant.

14.7.5 The Restoration of True Christianity

In both traditions, our authors suggest that a small vanguard held fast to the true faith until the present day, when founder figures rescued them from the margins. In the final paragraph of *Conferences* 18.5, Cassian states that the tradition of the apostles – embodied in the coenobitic monasticism of the Egyptian desert – “remained unbroken for a very long period up to the time of the abbots Paul and Antony.” The sentence explains that apostolic Christianity survived intact until the foundation of the monastic movement in the third/fourth century, when trailblazers like Paul and Antony (along with Pachomius, the other founder figure who is not mentioned here) brought the faith of the early Christians to the attention of the mainstream church. Cassian imagined himself participating in this process as well. His goal in writing was, after all, to preserve and promote the teachings of the desert, thereby reviving the spirituality of Jesus’ disciples in the Latin West.

By contrast, according to Muqātil (Text 3), “some of them stayed true to the religion of Jesus until they reached the time of Muḥammad.” This vanguard consisted of forty monks from Ethiopia and Syria (cf. Muqātil on Q. 5:82). Meanwhile, Ṭabarī (Text 4) states that “another group of (the believers) preserved the religion of Jesus son of Mary, (at which point) God brought forth clarifications to them, and God dis-

⁸⁴ Sviri, “Origin and Evaluation,” 202.

patched Muḥammad as messenger.” Finally, the Ṭabarī/Tirmidhī tradition states that “when the Prophet was dispatched, only a few (of the believers) remained.” But upon his arrival, “men descended from their cells, and wanderers came in from their wanderings, and the inhabitants of the abodes came in from their abodes, and they believed in (Muḥammad), and trusted him.”

Despite the strong similarities between in the Christian and Islamic traditions, the nature of this “restoration” is different. For Cassian, the restoration of primitive Christianity came about through the widespread practice of monasticism in the Roman world. Meanwhile, for the Muslim authors, it was the coming of Islam – a different religion altogether – that reinvented the forgotten teachings of Jesus. Nonetheless, there are basic similarities in this scheme of decline and renewal: the survival of true religion among a tiny vanguard; its renewal thanks to the advent of a charismatic leader; and its diffusion thanks to the missionary efforts of a vast community of “new believers”.

14.8 Conclusion

To sum up, I would argue that the Christian and Islamic legends rely on similar late antique genes, though re-sequenced to serve different ends. It is impossible to know the precise nature of this common source, but we can posit a general outline based on the comparison above: Christianity began as an ascetic movement defined by its radical egalitarianism and love of neighbour. The original faith lost its purity as pagans streamed into the church, prompting a vanguard to flee the decadence of the mainstream and seek solitude in the desert. There, the authentic faith of Jesus and his apostles took the shape of monasticism. With time, however, the remnant splintered again, this time into four sects which corrupted the religion of the founders. Still, an ever smaller vanguard remained faithful to the true religion, guarding it for a time when a new founder would restore them to the mainstream.

That the Christian and Islamic legends rely on similar motifs is beyond doubt. What remains to be seen is whether these similarities also indicate the existence of a shared source. There is no evidence that the *Conferences* circulated among Muslim authors, so we can rule out the possibility of direct transmission. Furthermore, we are hard-pressed to find intermediaries in later eastern sources from between Cassian’s time

and the Islamic conquests. That leaves one possibility: that a version of the legend Cassian heard in Egypt continued to circulate orally among the Christians of the Middle East. Through them, it came to the attention of Muslim exegetes, who found it useful in interpreting the complicated Qur'ānic verse on *rahbānīya*. In my opinion, this is the most likely scenario.

It should come as no surprise that Christian stories found their way into the annals of early Muslim literature. We can imagine a ready context for transmission in the many whimsical encounters between monks and Muslims in the early sources, especially those in which monks are shown dispensing wisdom to Muslim disciples. We can also imagine the many converts to Islam who continued to narrate the legends of their Christian ancestors, albeit in altered form to suit the tastes of their new co-religionists. Our story is a clear example of what Ṣalāḥud-dīn al-Munajjed called the *Masīḥīyāt*, the sayings and legends of the Christians.⁸⁵ Along with their better-researched Jewish counterpart, the *Isrā'īlīyāt*, they helped Muslim authors understand the murky pre-Islamic past, placing the new religion in the slipstream of an established *Heilsgeschichte*.⁸⁶

As I noted in the introduction, we have come to see narratives of Islamic origins as a palimpsest of literary and historiographical layers from late antiquity. Scholars have attempted to excavate these layers by tracking connections among far-flung texts by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, to which the present study is a modest contribution. While difficult and often inconclusive, this approach can also be quite successful, as recent research on the Syriac milieu of the Qur'ān has shown.⁸⁷ But at

⁸⁵ al-Munajjed, "Morceaux choisis," 349-50.

⁸⁶ Allegedly, much of the *Isrā'īlīyāt* were introduced to the Islamic tradition by Ka'b al-Aḥbār, a Jewish convert from Yemen. For more on him, see Perlmann, Moshe. "A Legendary Story About Ka'b al-Aḥbār's Conversion to Islam," *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume*. New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, 1953, 85-99; *idem*. "Another Ka'b al-Aḥbār Story," *Jewish Quarterly Review (New series)* 45.1 (1954), 48-58; Schmitz, M. "Ka'b al-Aḥbār". In *EI*²; Halperin, David J. and Newby, Gordon D. "Two Castrated Bulls. A Study in the Haggadah of Ka'b al-Aḥbār," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102.4 (1982), 631-38; for the *Isrā'īlīyāt*: Tottoli, Roberto. "Origin and Use of the Term *Isrā'īlīyāt* in Muslim Literature," *Arabica* 46.2 (1999), 193-210.

⁸⁷ For new research on the presence of Syriac Christian material in the Qur'ān, Witztum, Joseph. "The Qur'an and the Syriac Milieu. The Recasting of Biblical Narratives," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: Princeton University, 2011.

the same time, the impulse to track connections among texts may blind us to the real mechanics of historical exchange in late antiquity. Specifically, the existence of shared motifs may not point to the existence of common sources; after all, Muslim authors tapped a wellspring of images and stories that had been circulating in the Middle East for centuries. They encountered these through everyday life, as part of that immeasurable and vast cultural patrimony that survives historical change in most cultures of the world – whether the change is political, religious, or social. As historians, we sometimes imagine this cultural substrate as a body of texts available for quotation and amendment, like the tomes of a good university library. But this is mistaken. Instead, we should see connections among far-flung texts as traces of a low-level “background noise” that continued to hum across the frontier between late antiquity and early Islam. Indeed, it is probably more accurate to see the transmission of stories like ours in passive terms, not as examples of sampling and editing old texts, but rather, as reflecting a deep cultural consensus among Christians and Muslims on how to represent and narrate salvation history – a consensus achieved through conversion and constant social contact between communities.

Given this, why did early Muslims narrate this particular legend that also attracted a Latin-speaking monk centuries before? Strangely, it served Cassian and the Muslims in similar ways. For Cassian, the legend recognised coenobitic monasticism as the purest, most faithful expression of Christian life. At a time when Church and monastery competed for the mantle of “Apostolic Christianity”, the story rooted the innovations of the desert in the rich soil of Biblical history. For the early Muslims, the legend offered an alternative account of Christian origins – positing a similar distinction between authentic and ersatz forms of Christian life, as it had for Cassian. Islam thereby positioned itself as the heir to “true Christianity” – the faith of those impressive and angelic monks – while condemning “mainstream” Christianity as the heir to vanity and falsehood. In both instances the legend attempted to answer one of the defining questions of religious life in late antiquity: who fell short of perfection?

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The Syriac Baptism of St John: A Christian Ritual of Protection for Muslim Children*

David G. K. Taylor

(The Oriental Institute, Oxford University)

In this short article I would like to draw attention to a published but neglected Syriac text that provides unambiguous evidence of the existence of a Christian baptismal rite in the twelfth-century Jazirah (upper Mesopotamia), put under the patronage of John the Baptist, which allowed for the baptism of Muslim children as a means of affording them spiritual protection, but without effecting their conversion to Christianity.

The very idea of such a rite may sound strange to modern ears, especially to those of us who live outside the Middle East, and who have mostly come to regard Christianity and Islam as quite distinct, and often hostile, entities, with little overlap of belief and worship. For many centuries after the Arab conquest of Syria and Iraq, however, there was continuous interaction between the two communities at every social level. Many families included converts to the new religion, villages and towns contained adherents to both faiths, and there was frequent intermarriage.¹ While some scholarly converts to Islam received a thoroughgoing Islamic education and used their knowledge of the texts and doctrines of their former religion to compose refutations of it, numerous other converts continued to live much as before and carried many of their old beliefs and practices with them. So whilst Muslim and Christian theologians debated the philosophical and theological niceties of their faith, and expounded orthodox religious practice, a large proportion of their

* An earlier version of this paper was first delivered at a workshop on St John the Baptist organised by Georges Kazan, Liz Carmichael, and Marlia Mango at St Johns College, Oxford, on the feast day of the college patron, Friday 24th June 2011.

¹ For a detailed study of the social history of the Late Antique and early medieval Middle East, drawing on a wide range of sources, see Jack Tannous, *Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak* (PhD thesis. Princeton University, 2010).

followers were far more concerned with older religious priorities, such as the health and prosperity of family, livestock, and crops, and warding themselves against the unwanted attention of evil powers, whether demons, jinns, or the evil eye. Many Muslims continued to use the sign of the cross on bread and buildings, or even as a tattoo on women's foreheads, as a means of protection, and as early as the eleventh century, as attested by the Church of the East writer Elijah of Nisibis (975-1046), some Christian men of his community had adopted the Muslim practice of circumcision, although he put it rather differently: 'We follow the custom of our Lord and of his holy disciples in practising circumcision'.² Popular religion was no respecter of theological doctrine and law, Muslim or Christian.

Given this religious and social context, it should come as no great surprise to discover that in many Muslim communities parents continued to ask Christian priests to baptize their children. Substantial evidence for this has already been collected by Hasluck in his two volume work on Turkish folklore and its relations to Christian belief,³ and by Vryonis in his classic study of the Islamization of Turkey.⁴ They both cite the writings of the twelfth-century Byzantine Greek canon lawyer Theodore Balsamon (d. post 1195),⁵ who was born in Constantinople, rose to be head of the Law School,⁶ and was eventually elected as the Chalcedonian (Byzantine Orthodox) Patriarch of Antioch. In his commentary on the eighty-fourth canon of the Council in Trullo,⁷ which requires the rebap-

² *K. al-Burhân fi taṣḥīḥ al-imân* (Vatican arabic 180, f.192v), cited from Bénédicte Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestorienne vis-à-vis de l'Islam* (Paris: Cariscript, 1994), 227. For the full context see Ludwig Horst, *Des Metropolitén Elias von Nisibis Buch vom Beweis der Wahrheit des Glaubens* (Colmar: Verlag von Eugen Barth, 1886), 88.

³ Frederick W. Hasluck, (ed. Margaret M. Hasluck), *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 31-34.

⁴ Speros Vryonis, Jr, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

⁵ See Spyros Troianos, "Byzantine Canon Law from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries," in W. Hartmann and K. Pennington, eds., *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 180-183.

⁶ That is, *Nomophylax*, Νομοφύλαξ, 'Guardian of the Laws'.

⁷ Held in Constantinople, in the Trullo palace, in 692.

tism of infants who lack trustworthy witnesses to their original baptism, Balsamon makes the following intriguing comment:⁸

Ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ ἁγιοτάτου πατριάρχου κυροῦ Λουκά, παρέστησαν Ἀγαρηνοὶ συνοδικῶς, καὶ, ἀπαιτούμενοι βαπτισθῆναι, εἶπον, ὡς ἔφθασαν εἰς τὰς χώρας αὐτῶν βαπτισθῆναι· καὶ ἐρωτώμενοι ὅπως, ἀπελογήσαντο, ὅτι συνήθειά ἐστι πάντα τὰ νήπια τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν βαπτίζεσθαι παρὰ ὀρθοδόξων ἱερέων· ἀλλ' οὐ παρεδέχθησαν· ἤκουσαν γὰρ, ὡς τὸ παρὰ τῶν ἀπίστων ζητούμενον ἀπὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν βάπτισμα, οὐ κατὰ διάθεσιν ἀγαθὴν καὶ πρόθεσιν ὀρθόδοξον ζητεῖται, ἀλλὰ διὰ θεραπείαν σωματικὴν. Δέδοκται γὰρ παρὰ τοῖς Ἀγαρηνοῖς τὰ τέχνα τούτων δαιμονῶν, καὶ κατὰ κύνας ὄζειν, εἰ μὴ βαπτίσματος τύχωσι χριστιανικοῦ·

κάντεῦθεν, οὐχ ὡς καθαρτήριο παντὸς ῥύπου ψυχικοῦ, καὶ φωτὸς θείου καὶ ἁγιασμοῦ παροχοῦ ἀνακαλοῦνται τὸ βάπτισμα, ἀλλ' ὡς φαρμακείαν, ἧ ἐπωδήν. Τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν εἶπον, μητέρας ἔχειν ὀρθοδόξους, καὶ ἀπὸ σπουδῆς τούτων βαπτισθῆναι αὐτοὺς παρὰ ὀρθοδόξων·

In the days of the most holy patriarch, lord Loukas,⁹ Agarenes [i.e. Muslims] appeared before the synod. Upon being requested to receive baptism they replied that they had already been baptized in their own lands. On their being asked how, they answered that it is the custom for all the infants of the Agarenes to be baptized by Orthodox priests. But they [and their explanation] were not accepted. For they heard that the baptism which the unbelievers demanded from the Christians was not demanded by reason of good disposition and Orthodox purpose but for healing of the body. For the Agarenes suppose that their children will be possessed of demons and will smell like dogs if they do not receive Christian baptism.

Accordingly they do not invoke baptism as a cathartic of all spiritual sordidness and as the provider of holy light and sanctification, but rather as a remedy or magical charm. Some of these [Agarenes] said they had Orthodox mothers and it was as a result of their [mothers'] care that they were baptized by Orthodox priests.

⁸ Georgios A. Rhalles, and Michael Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, vol. II (Athens: Ex τῆς τυπογραφίας Γ. Χαρτοφύλακος, 1852), 498. A translation is given by Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 487-488.

⁹ Patriarch Loukas Chrysoberges (1156-1169).

As Vryonis notes, Balsamon's claim that Muslims had their children baptized for therapeutic reasons was repeated by later Greek canon lawyers, such as the fourteenth-century Constantine Harmenopoulos,¹⁰ and it was even found in seventeenth-century codes of canon law, where it was also stipulated that priests would be dismissed for baptizing the children of Turks.¹¹

European travellers too mention the phenomenon, such as the Burgundian pilgrim Bertrandon de la Brocquière (c.1400-1459) who described his travels to the Middle East in 1432-1433 in his book *Le voyage d'outre-mer*,¹² and says of a Turkoman prince:

Ramadan ... avoit esté filz d'une femme crestienne laquelle l'avoit fait baptisier à la loy gregiesque pour luy enlever le flair et le senteur qu'ont ceulx qui ne sont point baptisiez. Il n'estoit ni bon crestien ni bon sarazin.

Ramadan ... was the son of a Christian woman who had had him baptized according to the Greek rule in order to remove from him the odour and smell which is possessed by those who have not been baptized. He was neither a good Christian nor a good Saracen.

And the sixteenth century Flemish diplomat Augier Ghislain de Busbecq (1522-1592), who was sent as ambassador to the Ottoman court by Ferdinand I of Austria, mentions Turks known to him who had had their children baptized in secret because they thought the ceremony, being so old and widely practised, must be of some benefit.¹³

So what are we to make of these accounts? It seems certain that they are good evidence of Muslim children, and especially Turkish Mus-

¹⁰ In his epitome of canon law, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia graeca* 150 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1865), 125. The Greek of this scholia is reprinted by Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 488, n.166.

¹¹ Phaidon Koukoules, *Βυζαντινὸν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς*, vol. IV (Athens: Institut Français d'Athènes, 1951), 54-55; Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 488-489.

¹² Charles Schefer, ed., *Le voyage d'outremer de Bertrandon de la Brocquière, premier écuyer tranchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892), 90.

¹³ "Some Turks have even wished to have their sons secretly baptized, because they declare that they have a suspicion that this rite must have some good effect, and cannot have been instituted without due reason": translation from the original Latin of letter 3 by Edward Forster, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554-1562* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 136-137.

lim children, being baptized by their parents in order to afford them protection, of one kind or another. Another common feature appears to be that these children often come from families with Christian origins, or to have a Christian mother. But we need not, perhaps, take too seriously the claims found in some of these sources that Muslim parents thought that baptism would stop their children 'smelling like dogs'. It is an old topos in Christian polemical literature that the blood or bodies of the unbaptized, still tainted by original sin, gave off a foul stench.¹⁴ It can be found applied in very early texts to Jews and heretics,¹⁵ and so was easily reused in anti-Muslim polemic. Conceivably such polemic would be remembered by converts to Islam, but it seems more likely that in the case of Balsamon and his successors among the Greek canon lawyers this theme is due to their own theological world-view, and in the case of de la Brocquière it stemmed either from his native Latin Christian traditions, or possibly from the influence of a Greek translator or guide.

In earlier discussions of this question scholars have overlooked, or simply did not have access to, a fascinating Syriac text that was published by Arthur Vööbus in 1976 in his edition and translation of the Synodicon in the West Syrian tradition.¹⁶ In this collection of disparate Syrian Orthodox legal codes and canons there are to be found forty canons¹⁷ drawn

¹⁴ See Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 63, 70-73, 206-210; Jean-Pierre Albert, *Odeurs de sainteté: la mythologie chrétienne des aromates*, (2nd ed. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1996), 145-146; Beatrice Caseau, *Ἐὴωδία. The Use and Meaning of Fragrances in the Ancient World and their Christianization (100-900 AD)*, (PhD thesis. Princeton University, 1994), 232-236.

¹⁵ The concept of the 'foetor Judaicus', which could only be removed through baptism, has a particularly long and grim history; see Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 49-54; Israel Lévi, "Le Juif de la légende," *Revue des études juives* 20 (1890), 249-252; Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews. The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 47-49; Martha Bayless, "The Story of the Fallen Jew and the Iconography of Jewish Unbelief," *Viator* 34 (2003), 153-154; John Efron, "Der reine und der schmutzige Jude," in S.L. Gilman, R. Jütte, and G. Kohlbauer-Fritz, eds., *»Der schejne Jid«: Das Bild des »jüdischen Körpers« in Mythos und Ritual* (Vienna: Picus, 1998), 75-85.

¹⁶ Arthur Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition II* (CSCO 375, 376. Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1976).

¹⁷ Vööbus, *Synodicon II*, Syriac text (CSCO 375), 233-256; English translation (CSCO 376), 247-269. The edition is based on a single manuscript, Damascus Syrian Ortho-

up by a synod that met at the monastery of Mar Ḥananya, that is Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, the ‘saffron monastery’, outside the south-east Turkish town of Mardin.¹⁸ This synod is said to have been held in 1153, and it was convened by Mar Yoḥannan (d. 1165), who was a native of Edessa, and the Bishop of Mardin and Dara. Yoḥannan, or John, was a great builder and restorer of churches and monasteries, including Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, and he is also credited with the local revival of classical Syriac, as well as being famed as a scribe who produced luxury manuscripts with golden and coloured inks.¹⁹ Perhaps surprisingly, then, he was rather a controversial figure in his own day. Whilst the anonymous lives of the bishop are highly complimentary,²⁰ as also was his contemporary, the historian (and from 1166 patriarch) Michael the Great (d. 1199),²¹ others were less positive. The thirteenth century polymath Bar Hebraeus (1225-1286) was scathing about his intellectual abilities, although full of praise for his

dox Patriarchate 8/11 of AD 1204, although numerous damaged or lost sections were replaced at a later date. These canons are also found in several other manuscripts known to Vööbus but not employed in his edition: see Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonesammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde. I. Westsyrische Originaturkunden*, I, A (CSCO 307. Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO), 104-121.

¹⁸ See Aphram Barsoum, *History of the Zaʿfaran Monastery* (Piscataway, 2008). The monastery is still functioning today.

¹⁹ For Syriac accounts of his life and achievements see: Vööbus, *Synodicon* II, Syriac text (CSCO 375). 201-210, English translation (CSCO 376), 212-222; Joseph S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, vol. II (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1721), 216-230 (Syriac text and Latin trans.). For studies of these, and of his other legal canons, see Vööbus, “Neues Licht über das Restaurationswerk des Jōḥannān von Mardē,” *Oriens Christianus* 47 (1963), 129-139; Vööbus, “Eine wichtige Urkunde über die Geschichte des Mār Ḥananjā Klosters. Die von Jōḥannān von Mardē gegebenen Klosterregel[n],” *Oriens Christianus* 53 (1969), 246-252; Vööbus, “Die Entdeckung einer neuen Klosterregel. Über die Zusammenwirkung der mönchischen Gesellschaften verfaßt von Jōḥannān von Mardē,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 88 (1977), 330-332; Barsoum, *History of the Zaʿfaran Monastery*, 25-34.

²⁰ See the lives listed in n. 19.

²¹ Jean-Baptiste Chabot, ed., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien: Patriarche Jacobite d’Antioche (1166-1199)* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899-1910), XVII.2, Syriac text, vol. IV, 630-631; French trans., vol. III, 263-264. Michael also wrote a panegyric on Yoḥannan which survives in several manuscripts, including Damascus Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate 12/15 of AD 1167, although it remains unpublished. See Vööbus, “Die Entdeckung des Panegyrikus des Patriarchen Mīkaʿēl über Jōḥannān von Mardē,” *Oriens Christianus* 55 (1971), 204-209, where there is a brief summary of the life. Barsoum, *History of the Zaʿfaran Monastery*, 25-34, also draws upon it.

generosity.²² The cause of this disagreement was the conquest of the crusader County of Edessa in 1144 by 'Imad ad-Dīn Zengī (c.1085-1146),²³ an event that led to the Second Crusade. Mar Yoḥannan spent a large amount of money liberating Edessan captives, and then wrote a treatise arguing that such terrible events were not due to divine punishment of Edessa, but were the consequence of straightforward secular causality. If, he argued, there had been a strong army of Franks in Edessa, then Zengī would not have been able to conquer it. Such a secular point of view enraged some of his contemporaries, and most notably Dionysius bar Ṣalibi (d. 1171) who, whilst still a monk,²⁴ wrote a counter treatise against him and so first drew himself to the attention of his superiors.²⁵

It is tempting to suggest that the same theological pragmatism, rooted in the real world, and combined with a commitment to providing practical aid to those in need, underpins the last of Yoḥannan's baptismal canons. Canon 23 discusses the preparation of the holy myron, the specially prepared aromatic oil used for anointing in baptism and other contexts.²⁶ Canon 24 addresses the conduct of the baptismal service. But it is canon 25 that is of particular interest, and it reads as follows:²⁷

²² Jean-Baptiste Abbeloos and Thomas J. Lamy, eds., *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, vol. II (Louvain: Peeters, 1874), 499-503.

²³ On the County of Edessa, and its fall, see Monique Amouroux-Mourad, *Le Comté d'Edesse, 1098-1150* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 128. Paris: Geuthner, 1988).

²⁴ Bar Ṣalibi later became a famous Syrian Orthodox scholar and bishop, who wrote commentaries on both Old and New Testaments, as well as on Porphyry, Aristotle, and Evagrius, and theological and polemical treatises, plus a chronicle (now lost).

²⁵ Michael the Great provides an account of this debate, plus a long extract from the discourse of Bar Ṣalibi (here given his episcopal title of Dionysios of Amid): Chabot, ed., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, XVII.3, Syriac text, vol. IV, 630-633; French trans.: vol. III, 265-267. For studies of this debate see Dorothea Weltecke, *Die 'Beschreibung der Zeiten' von Mor Michael dem Grossen (1126-1199)*, (CSCO 594. Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 238-246; Jan van Ginkel, "A Man is not an Island. Reflections of the Historiography of the Early Syriac Renaissance in Michael the Great," in Herman Teule *et al.*, eds., *The Syriac Renaissance* (Eastern Christian Studies 9; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 119-121.

²⁶ For the preparation of myron in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, which before the thirteenth century was composed simply of a mixture of balsom and olive oil, see Sebastian Brock, "Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron," *Oriens Christianus* 63 (1979), 20-36; Baby Varghese, *Dionysius bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism* (*Moran Etho* 29; Kottayam, 2006).

²⁷ Vööbus, *Synodicon* II, Syriac text (CSCO 375) 246, English translation (CSCO 376)

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Canon 25. However, regarding the children of the Muslims (*mašlmānē*) we issue instructions with caution, and we tell you, by apostolic commandment, that the priests are not allowed by God to baptize them together with the children of the believers (*mhaymnē*) in our holy font. But there shall be another baptism for them, apart, on another day, whether before or after, with plain water (*mayā šhīmē*). Let only the service of penance be [said] for them. That is, the *quqlion*-psalm, and the anthem (*sedrā*), and the hymn (*qālā*) of penance, etc. And let the priest baptize the children of the Muslims (*ṭayāyē*), as he, the priest, says thus: "This N.N. is baptized in the name of the Lord (*Māryā*) in this baptism of John for the remission of debts and for the forgiveness of sins. Amen". And they shall anoint him with plain oil (*mešhā šhīmā*).

Whereas the Greek texts cited earlier bore witness to claims that Muslims were being baptized by orthodox priests, whilst unanimously condemning the practice, here we have clear rules setting out the conditions under which, and the means by which such baptism might indeed be carried out with the consent of the Syrian Orthodox authorities.

It is less clear from Yoḥannan's text who the Muslims were who were requesting this baptism for their children. The first term, *mašlmānē*,²⁸ might imply converts to Islam from Christianity, and *ṭayāyē* might imply

259. I have modified Vööbus' translation at numerous points. Canon 25 goes on to instruct that a non-believer (*nāš lā mhaymnā*) may not be appointed as a godparent / sponsor under any circumstances.

²⁸ A nominal formation from the causative Aph'el stem of the root ŠLM, 'to surrender, hand over, betray'. The noun usually means 'betrayal, traitor' in Syriac. It is uncertain whether its secondary meaning, 'Muslim', derives from the first through a pejorative etymology, or whether it is simply a neutral calque of the Arabic noun *muslim*, plural *muslimūn*.

Arabs,²⁹ as it originally did in Syriac, but just as plausibly both terms might simply have been used as un-nuanced synonyms for 'Muslims'. The Mardin area did have a significant Arab population, as it still does today, and so if *ṭayyāyē* were to be understood with this ethnic sense then this would provide us with some preliminary evidence that it was not just Turks, after the eleventh-century Seljuq conquest, who were interested in baptizing their children, as the Greek sources might be thought to imply. But until further evidence is unearthed there can be no certainty about this.

Yohannan is keen to avoid any confusion between the baptism of Christian children, which is into the body of Christ, and that of the Muslim children, which is for the remission of sins, and so he decrees that the two ceremonies must always be kept separate, on different days. The water is not to be consecrated for the Muslim children by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the addition of myron, and the naming over it of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, as would normally be the case, but instead they are to be baptized in 'plain water'. They are also to be anointed with 'plain oil', that is with the ordinary oil of anointing, and not with the special myron that was originally consecrated by all bishops, and later only by the Patriarch himself. In Syrian Orthodox liturgical symbolism myron represents Christ himself,³⁰ and so it would be inappropriate to employ it in baptizing those who were not becoming followers of Christ. The ordinary oil provided continuity with the Old Testament, and so was less theologically problematic. When the children are anointed this is not to be done, as for Christian children, in the name of the Holy Trinity,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,—but simply 'in the name of the Lord' (*ba-šmeh d-Māryā*). The word used here for 'Lord', *Māryā*, is the standard Syriac translation of the Hebrew divine name of God in the Old Testament, and it is often reserved in later Syriac texts as a title for God as distinct from Christ, who is usually referred to as *Māran*, 'our Lord'. Such a usage avoided any Trinitarian or Christological confession, and as such would presumably have been less objectionable for Muslims.

The baptism is also explicitly declared not to be the 'baptism of Christ', but the 'baptism of John', that is, of course, John the Baptist.

²⁹ An ethnonym derived from the Arab Ṭayy tribe and then applied to all Arabs. See Irfan Shahīd, "Ṭayyi' or Ṭayy," in *EI*².

³⁰ See Varghese, *Dionysius bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, 20-21, 64.

This is a nice touch, since not only does it associate the baptism with a prophet of Islam, Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā', who is mentioned in the Qur'ān,³¹ but it also provides a perfect Gospel justification for the church's practice. John's baptism predated Christ's ministry, and is explicitly said by the Gospels to have been performed in ordinary water for the cleansing of sins, and so to have been different from that of Christ, which would be in fire and spirit,³² and which would transform those baptized into disciples of Christ,³³ and make them partakers of his death and resurrection.³⁴ The path towards the creation of a baptismal rite of John the Baptist was also prepared by Gregory Nazianzen, who in his oration 39,³⁵ delivered on the Festival of the Epiphany in 381,³⁶ identified five different kinds of baptism, one of which was that of John. The early Syriac translation of this oration³⁷ was highly influential within the Syriac churches, where the tradition developed that these earlier forms of baptism were all incorporated within the Christian baptismal service.³⁸ As such, the extraction of one of these elements, the baptism of John, may have seemed liturgically justifiable.

The canon is rather vague about the exact prayers to be used in this baptismal rite, although no doubt Yoḥannan's instructions would have been clear to contemporary priests in Mardin. Their identification

³¹ Although John / Yaḥyā is rarely associated with baptism in the Islamic tradition. See Andrew Rippin, "Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā'," in *EI*²; John C.L. Gibson, "John the Baptist in Muslim writings," *The Muslim World* 45 (1955), 334-345.

³² See Mt 3.1-6, 11; Mk 1.4-8; Lk 3.2-4, 16-17; Jn 1.24-27.

³³ Mt 28.19, 1 Cor 12.13.

³⁴ See Rom 6.4-5, Col 2.11-12.

³⁵ CPG 3010. See Claudio Moreschini and Paul Gallay (ed. and trans.), *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 38-41* (Sources chrétiennes 358. Paris: Cerf, 1990).

³⁶ Epiphany is when the eastern church commemorates Christ's baptism by John.

³⁷ For the Syriac text see Jean-Claude Haelewyck, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni opera. Versio Syriaca, III. Orationes XXVII, XXXVIII et XXXIX* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 53. Corpus Nazianzenum 18. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

³⁸ By the time of Bar Ṣalibi (d.1171), the Syrian Orthodox had expanded Gregory's enumeration of five kinds of baptism to eight; see Varghese, *Dionysius bar Salibi: Commentaries on Myron and Baptism*, 78-81. This was repeated by Bar Hebraeus in his theological compendium the *Mnārat Qudšē*, 'Candelabrum of the Sanctuary', VI.2.3.4: see Radbert Kohlhaas, ed. and trans., *Jakobitische Sakramententheologie im 13. Jahrhundert. Der Liturgiekommentar des Gregorius Barhebraeus*, (Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 36. Münster: Aschendorff, 1959), 34-35, 98; Yulius Y. Çiçek, ed., *Mnorath Kudshe (Lamp of the Sanctuary)*, (Glane / Losser: Bar Hebraeus Verlag, 1997), 541-542.

is also made more difficult by the fact that Syrian Orthodox liturgical manuscripts contain numerous variations and forms of the baptismal rite, and there is as yet no critical edition of these texts.³⁹ However, it is possible to add some tentative annotation to the liturgical instructions of the canon. The Syrian Orthodox baptismal rite is structurally divided into two sections that were originally two separate rites, that of the catechumens, and that of the baptized.⁴⁰ The 'service of penance' (*tešmeštā da-tyābūtā*) mentioned in the canon is the very first part of the first section. The statement that this service 'only' is to be performed indicates that the baptismal rite for Muslims did not include the other usual constituents of the first section, namely: the readings from the New Testament, the first consignation of the child without oil, the exorcism, the denunciation of Satan, the confession of Christ, the Nicene Creed, and the prayer of Thanksgiving. All of the second section is omitted, except for the modified form of the baptismal formula already mentioned.

A 'service' (*tešmeštā*) in Syrian Orthodox liturgical usage usually indicates a unit of prayers that is composed of: (1) a psalm and/or a *quqliōn*⁴¹ (from the Greek χούλιον), which is a short hymn formed of pairs of phrases taken from the psalms, with 'hallelujah' inserted in the middle of each pair; (2) an introductory prayer (*frumiyōn*, from the Greek προοίμιον) spoken by the priest; (3) an anthem or *sedrā*;⁴² (4) a short

³⁹ For a convenient bilingual Syriac-English text of the current Syrian Orthodox baptismal rite, based on a 1950 edition published in Homs by Patriarch Mor Ignatios Aphram Barsoum, see Murad S. Barsoum, *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch* (Hackensack: Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, 1974). Barsoum's edition was based on eleven manuscripts, the oldest of which he dated to the tenth century. These manuscripts are not further identified, and there was of course no critical apparatus or notes. A number of other Syrian Orthodox baptismal texts were published with Latin translations by Joseph A. Assemani, *Codex liturgicus ecclesiae universae in quo continentur libri rituales, missales, pontificales, officia, dypticha etc. ecclesiarum Occidentis et Orientis* (3 vols. Rome: Ex typographia Komarek, 1749-1750). Unfortunately, he rarely identifies the manuscripts from which he took his texts, and he also inconveniently divided up each baptismal rite and printed them in two or three separate volumes. A key to these rites, together with bibliographical and historical annotation, is to be found in Sebastian P. Brock, "Studies in the early history of the Syrian Orthodox baptismal liturgy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 23 (1972), 16-64, and esp. 18.

⁴⁰ Brock, "Studies in the early history of the Syrian Orthodox baptismal liturgy," 23.

⁴¹ Often now pronounced *quqalyōn*.

⁴² The *frumiyōn* and *sedrā* are considered to form a pair, which is called a *husāyā*, '(prayer of) pardon'.

hymn or *qālā*—these *qālē* may have very different metres and tunes, but are of four types, one of which is ‘of penitence’;⁴³ (5) a *bā’utā*, a liturgical poem, or some other prayer. Turning to the published texts of the baptismal rite, we can see that after opening sentences by the priest, the deacons often sing Psalm 51, a penitential psalm that begins ‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness...’. It is possible that this would have been sung, although the first prayer mentioned explicitly by the canon is the *quqliōn*. In several different versions of the medieval Syrian Orthodox baptismal rite⁴⁴ one such *quqliōn* is included very near the beginning of the service of penitence, and it reworks Psalm 29.1-4.⁴⁵

Bring unto the Lord the offspring of rams,
 Hallelujah, bring unto the Lord glory and honour.
 Bring unto the Lord honour for his name,
 Hallelujah, worship the Lord in his holy court.
 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters,
 Hallelujah, the God of glory thunders.
 The Lord is upon many waters,
 Hallelujah, the voice of the Lord in glory.

Normally this would be followed by the *frumiyōn*, which forms a pair with the *sedrā*, and so its omission here in the canon would have been remarkable to its priestly readers. These introductory prayers frequently invoke Christ and the Trinity, which would have been inappropriate for this ritual, and so the service jumped over this and moved straight on to the anthem known as a *sedrā*. Different *sedrē* appear at this point of

⁴³ In the liturgical book known as the *Bēt Gazā*, or ‘Treasury’, the *qālē* are listed by tune title in groups of eight. The first two are always ‘of the Mother of God’ (*d-yāldat alāhā*); the third and fourth are ‘of the saints’ or ‘an individual (saint)’ (*d-qadīšē*, or *d-ḥad qnōmā*); the fifth and sixth are ‘of penitence’ (*da-tyābūtā*); the seventh and eighth are ‘of the deceased’ (*d-anīdē*).

⁴⁴ It is found, using Brock’s sigla, in SA I (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 266-267), SA II (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 266, lower text), SA III (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 221), SA IV (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 243), SA VI (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 246), and also in Barsoum’s edition (Barsoum, *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, 17, where the second line is omitted).

⁴⁵ Verses 3 and 4 were understood by Syriac exegetes such as Bar Šalibi and Bar Hebraeus as being a reference to the voice of God the Father heard at the moment of Christ’s baptism by John.

the rite in the various editions available to me, and it is quite possible that yet others are to be found in unpublished manuscripts. Presumably, the *sedrā* used would have been taken from the standard baptismal rite, and used in its entirety without any impromptu or *ad hoc* editing. Thus whilst it might well have contained Christian confessional elements, it presumably did not speak of the baptized becoming members of the church, or include other Christological elements that would have been contextually problematic. This would seem to exclude the *sedrā* found in what Brock labels the fourth and sixth rites in Assemani's edition, since this is addressed throughout to Christ, and is highly Christological.⁴⁶ Two other rites in Assemani contain a *sedrā* that seems more suitable because, despite strong Christian elements such as the opening confession of the divine incarnation, it also narrates Christ's baptism at the hands of John the Baptist in the Jordan, and requests divine sanctification, cleansing, and purification of those being baptized.⁴⁷ Clearly, this would not be acceptable for a moment to any Islamic theologian, but it might have been sufficiently inoffensive for those seeking baptism for their children, especially since—although declaring that the baptized become spiritual sons of the Father—it does not explicitly state that they become Christians. The third and final *sedrā* to be found in the printed texts, in just one of the rites,⁴⁸ is also potentially a candidate, since it focuses on requesting that God cleanse the baptized of all sin, and protect them against the Accuser and all his demons, and clothe them in the robe that is renewed in the likeness of the Creator, 'where there is neither Jew nor Hellene,⁴⁹ nor circumcision nor uncircumcision, but your dwelling place shall be in every person'. Without detailed study of manuscripts of the baptismal liturgy contemporary with Yoḥannan further precision is not possible.

⁴⁶ SA IV (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 244-245), SA VI (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 247). It begins ܟܠܟܪ ܟܠܒܐ ܟܠܢܝ ܟܠܡܫܘܚܐ ܟܠܒܐ ܟܝܡܘܐ, 'O begotten light and fount of life, God the Word...'

⁴⁷ SA I (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 267-269), SA V (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 262-264). It is also found, with minor variations, and an English translation in, Barsoum's edition (Barsoum, *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, 21-22). It begins ܟܠܟܪ ܟܠܒܐ ܟܠܡܫܘܚܐ ܟܠܡܫܘܚܐ, 'O God, who did through his love become human...'

⁴⁸ SA III (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 221-225). It begins ܟܠܘܝ ܝܫܘܥ ܟܠܡܫܘܚܐ ܐܘܪ ܟܠܟܪ, 'O merciful and patient God...'

⁴⁹ Literally, as in the Syriac Peshitta New Testament (Gal 3.28), 'Aramaean'.

The last prayer mentioned in the canon, prior to the words of baptism, is ‘the hymn (*qālā*) of penance’. In each of the printed texts a *qālā* follows immediately after the *sedrā*, and it is presumably to this that the canon refers. Unfortunately, here again there is some variation, with four alternative hymns being found at this point.⁵⁰ All four focus on John the Baptist and his baptism of Christ, but again it is not yet possible to decide which of these Yoḥannan had in mind. Normally, the *qālē* of penance that are recited during the daily offices are less christological than the other types of *qālē*, due to their obvious focus on sin and the need for penitence, and so it is also possible that one of these would have been recited here.

The ‘etc.’ which follows the mention of the *qālā*, and implies the addition of further customary prayers, is a further reminder to us that the original priestly audience of the canons would almost certainly have had a much clearer idea than we of what was to be included in this shortened ceremony for Muslim children. What is clear is that the canons intended for the priests to provide a real liturgical ceremony for these children, using existing elements of the ceremony for Christian children—many of which drew on neutral Old Testament passages, or seem to have focussed on John the Baptist—, a ceremony which was genuinely intended to be effective in bringing about the promised removal of sin and in providing protection against the Accuser (Satan) and his demonic powers. Most ancient Christian churches, including the Syrian Orthodox, had produced short forms of the baptismal service to be used when those to be baptized were in danger of dying, and which were held to be as effective as the

⁵⁰ The first is found in SA I (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 269-272), SA IV (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 246), and, abridged, in Barsoum (Barsoum, *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, 23). It begins ܩܠܐ ܕܩܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ‘I heard the voice of John say to the Jordan...’. The second is found in SA II (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 270-271, lower text), and SA III (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 226-227). It is also found in other texts in a much later position in the rite: SA I (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 286), SA IV (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 257), and Barsoum (Barsoum, *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, 54). It begins ܩܠܐ ܕܩܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ, ‘John mixed the waters of baptism...’. The third (which contains some elements similar to the first) is found in SA V (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, I, 264-265). It begins ܩܠܐ ܕܩܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ, ‘The Church saw Christ in the river Jordan...’. The fourth is found in SA VI (Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 247-248). It begins ܩܠܐ ܕܩܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ ܕܝܘܗܢܢ, ‘Tell us John about the terrifying vision you saw...’.

usual long form of the service.⁵¹ In some respects this short service intended for Muslim children is a continuation of this approach, but some additional contextualisation for this claim will be added below.

First, it should be noticed that there may be a further indirect piece of Syriac evidence for the baptism of Muslims.⁵² Yoḥannan’s contemporary, Michael the Great (d. 1199), who has already been mentioned, drew upon the life of Mar Yoḥannan Bar ‘Abdun to describe the persecution of the Syrian Orthodox by the Byzantine Chalcedonians in the reign of the emperor Romanos III Argyros (1028-1034). He reports that at this time three Syrian Orthodox bishops—Ignatios bar Atounos of Melitene, Moses of Ḥesna d-Ziad, and Isaac of ‘Arqa—were imprisoned in Constantinople by the Chalcedonians and were treated outrageously in various ways, culminating in their being forcibly rebaptized on Wednesday of Passion week:⁵³

ܠܗܘܢ ܐܘܠܐ ܝܗܘܐ ܡܘܨܝܐ
 ܠܘܨܘܢ ܡܘܨܘܢ ܠܘܨܘܢ ܡܘܨܘܢ
 ܠܘܨܘܢ ܡܘܨܘܢ ... ܠܘܨܘܢ ܡܘܨܘܢ
 ܠܘܨܘܢ ܡܘܨܘܢ ܠܘܨܘܢ ܡܘܨܘܢ
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Then [the Patriarch] said to them, “Now you will be baptized and you will become Christians” ... And they baptized them in the water [with which] they had baptized Muslims (*ṭayāyē*), because they kept it for some days. And when they emerged [from the water] they were ashamed [for they had been treated] like Jews.

Chabot adds a note⁵⁴ to the word *ṭayāyē* (ܠܘܨܘܢ, ‘Muslims’) in his translation, which reads: “*Sic ms.* Peut-être faudrait-il lire ܠܘܨܘܢ [*tlāyē*] « les enfants »”. It is obvious why Chabot would have been confused by the reading of his text, and his proposed emendation is minimal and quite reasonable given the graphic similarity of the two Syriac words. However, in the light of the canon produced by Yoḥannan concerning the baptism

⁵¹ See Assemani, *Codex liturgicus*, II, 300-306, and, for an even shorter form, 307-309; and Barsom, *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, 86-92.

⁵² I am very grateful to Muriel Debié for bringing this reference to my attention.

⁵³ Chabot, ed., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, XIII.6, Syriac text, vol. IV, 565; French trans., vol. III, 144.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 144, n.3.

of Muslims, it now seems likely that Michael's text should be left without emendation.⁵⁵ In the context of the story this would also heighten the insult done to the bishops, who would thus not only have been rebaptized, but rebaptized in unsanctified water previously used for baptizing Muslims. This is not to say, of course, that this episode can be taken uncritically as evidence that Greek Chalcedonians in Constantinople were baptizing Muslims in the early eleventh century, but rather that such baptism was credible to twelfth-century Syrian Orthodox readers.

Now, if we can easily understand the motivation of Muslims to have their children baptized, what was the motivation for the church to carry it out? Surely not a desire to curry favour with Zengī and the new Muslim rulers of the region, who were hardly likely to have encouraged such practices. It seems far more probable that it arose from simple compassion for their Muslim neighbours, and from an understanding of their genuine and real fears for the health and well-being of their children. As such it was a natural continuation of a canonical principle laid down several centuries earlier by the influential Syrian Orthodox scholar Jacob of Edessa (c.640-708). In a response to a question sent to him by a stylite named Yoḥannan, and preserved in the same manuscripts of the Synodicon in which Yoḥannan of Mardin's canons were recorded, Jacob laid down the ruling that Muslims in spiritual danger should be accorded the same priestly aid as was given to Christians. Yoḥannan asked him the following question:⁵⁶

ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ
 ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ
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Is it right that a priest should give from the blessed [elements] (*burkāta*) of the holy [mysteries] to the Muslims (*mhagrāyē*) or to the pagans (*ḥanpē*) who are tempted by evil spirits, in order to calm them and heal them, or *ḥnānā* in the same manner?

⁵⁵ The episode is repeated by Bar Hebraeus in his later Ecclesiastical History, but unfortunately he reports only that the bishops were baptised anew (ܩܘܠܘܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ), without mentioning the water used: Abbeloos and Lamy, eds., *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, vol. I (Louvain: Peeters, 1872), 431.

⁵⁶ Arthur Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1975), Syriac text (CSCO 367) 249; English translation (CSCO 368) 228. I have heavily emended the published translation.

Jacob replied:

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It is right by all means, very right, that no one should hold back anything from them in such a case. Rather, I permit myself to say, that it should be given them on account of any sickness, whatever it may be. For the fact that God grants them healing when you give them of the blessed [eucharistic elements] is a clear proof that it is right for you to give [this] to them without restraint.

Here the specific issue is whether a priest can give a non-Christian pieces of consecrated eucharistic bread (*burkātā*),⁵⁷ or a consumable form of holy relics (*ḥnānā*),⁵⁸ both of which were considered to be effective against evil spirits, and Jacob is unequivocal in his positive reply. The same generous spirit can be seen in Syrian Orthodox monasteries and churches today, where welcome is still given to Muslims who are sick or bereaved, or who have been unable to have children, and seek the intervention of Christ, or Mary, or the Christian saints on their behalf.

It is not possible at present to say how long the special baptismal rite of John the Baptist was used within the Syrian Orthodox church. There are no extant manuscript copies of this liturgy known to me, and

⁵⁷ The Syriac term literally means ‘blessings’, and is here a calque of the Greek εὐλογία, which in ecclesiastical Greek was used of the eucharistic elements, the consecrated eucharistic bread, and also of the ordinary blessed bread distributed in church. Jacob again uses the term in this sense, and again in the context of temptation by demons, in a canon addressed to Addai: see Thomas J. Lamy, *Dissertatio de syrorum fide et disciplina in re eucharistica* (Louvain: Vanlinthout, 1859), 138.

⁵⁸ *Ḥnānā*, literally ‘mercy’, ‘grace’, here refers to powdered bones or dust which is taken from the graves of saints, and is mixed either with oil for anointing, or with liquids such as water or wine for consumption, as a means of conferring grace, blessing, or healing on the recipients. For a useful overview, mostly taken from Church of the East texts, see Christelle Jullien and Florence Jullien, “Du *ḥnana* ou la bénédiction contestée,” in F. Briquel Chatonnet and M. Debié, eds., *Sur les pas des Araméens chrétiens. Mélanges offerts à Alain Desreumaux* (Cahiers d’Études Syriaques 1. Paris: Geuthner, 2010), 333-348.

nor indeed would I expect to find a written copy of it, since it seems simply to have been an adaptation of the existing rite. Yoḥannan of Mardin's canons concerning it continued to be copied in Mardin until the twentieth century,⁵⁹ although this of course cannot be taken to imply that it was actually still performed. Bar Hebraeus, in the baptismal section of his thirteenth-century codification of Syrian Orthodox canon law, the *Nomocanon*, only touches on this subject when he cites the eighth-century canon of George of Antioch which starkly states: 'A priest who baptizes a pagan (*hanpā*) or heretic shall be suspended', to which he adds his own gloss, 'as also those who do not affirm that they believe'.⁶⁰ However, a much later source makes it clear that Muslims continued to seek spiritual protection for their children from Christian priests right on into the nineteenth century (and possibly beyond), although in this case the evidence relates to the Assyrian Church of the East. Maclean and Browne, in their account of this church, describe the signing of Muslim babies with the cross a few days after birth, and then add:⁶¹

This signing is thought to have great efficacy; not, indeed, like baptism, but still as a *quasi*-sacramental rite. The Mussulmans of the Urmi plain, who greatly reverence and often covet the old Christian churches, occasionally bring their children to be signed on a feast day; not with the idea that they may become Christians, but because they look on the signing as a sort of charm which will probably be useful to the child.

This sounds very similar to the testimony of western travellers from earlier centuries cited at the beginning of this article, with a similar western disparagement of Muslim motivations, and although the practice described is evidently no longer a case of formal baptism, it does come close to the signing with the cross found in the abbreviated forms of the baptismal rite, for use *in extremis*.

The evidence of Theodore Balsamon and the canons of Yoḥannan of Mardin suggest, then, that by the mid-twelfth century it had become

⁵⁹ Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen* I, A (CSCO 307. Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO), 104-121.

⁶⁰ Paul Bedjan, ed., *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei* (Paris / Leipzig, 1898), 22; Yulius Y. Çiçek, ed., *Nomocanon of Bar-Hebraeus* (Glane / Lossier, 1986), 14.

⁶¹ Arthur J. Maclean, and William H. Browne, *The Catholicos of the East and his People* (London: SPCK, 1892), 275-6, 333.

common for both Greek and Syrian priests to provide a form of baptism for Muslim children that would offer them spiritual protection, but not effect their conversion to Christianity. It is possible that such baptisms had been taking place for centuries, but it is noteworthy that our first evidence for them comes from the century following the Seljuq conquest of much of Asia Minor, and immediately following the Zengid conquest of the Jazirah, when the zones of contact between Muslims and Christians had greatly expanded. Higher church authorities, whether the Byzantine Orthodox patriarch and his senior clergy in Constantinople, or the thirteenth-century Syrian Orthodox Maphrian of the East, Bar Hebraeus, were opposed to such practices, which contravened the traditional Christian understanding of baptism. Yet subsequent canon law and anecdotal accounts of western travellers bear witness to the fact that such or similar baptisms continued for many centuries to come. However difficult intra-communal relations could be, between Muslim and Christian members of the same families and villages, it appears that they were brought together by a humane desire to protect their children. In the canons of Yoḥannan of Mardin, and his baptismal rite of John the Baptist, we have finally gained an outline of how some Christian clergy sought to make this possible, with prayers that were sensitive to Islamic beliefs, whilst remaining true to their own theological and liturgical traditions.

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