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The Qur'ān and its Hypertextuality in Light of Redaction Criticism

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As John Wansbrough remarked forty years ago, in the preface of his *Quranic Studies*: “As a document susceptible of analysis by the instruments and techniques of Biblical criticism, [the case for the Qur'ān as Scripture] is virtually unknown”.¹ Indeed, if Muḥammad is the sole author of the Qur'ān, or if the Qur'ān is nothing more than the record of his *ipsissima verba*, then applying the methods of Biblical criticism to the Qur'ān is pointless.

But is this understanding of the Qur'ān warranted? After all, it is based *only* on the traditional Muslim narratives, which look extremely biased. That many historians, especially those following the “Nöldekian paradigm”,² have taken for granted the general framework induced by these narratives is one thing; that they were right to do so is another. To be sure, if some progress is to be made in the field of Qur'ānic studies, it shall be through a repudiation of this paradigm which, far from being the “rock of our church”, is certainly one of the blinkers which prevent scholars from noticing significant evidence.

A close examination of the Qur'ānic corpus provides arguments for a different view. It seems that in the decades following Muhammad's death, the work on the “Qur'ān” (as a proper name, certainly an anachronistic term before the edition of the *muṣḥaf*) did not merely consist in the rearrangement of preexistent pericopes (the “collection”),³ but included also the rewriting of prophetic *logia* and liturgical texts, and the writing of new pericopes.

¹ Wansbrough (2004:xxi).

² On this traditional paradigm (which is, roughly, a naturalization of Sunni narratives) and its limits, see Reynolds (2011), Pohmann (2012), Shoemaker (2012:136-158), Dye (2011:255-260), (forthcoming 2015a) and (forthcoming 2016a). This paradigm can be described in five theses. *Thesis 1*: The Qur'ān is only a record of Muhammad's preaching. It was virtually ready at the time of Muḥammad's death, because (according to most scholars) all the texts which, later, would form the Qur'ān, already existed and circulated, separately, on various supports. *Thesis 2*: The Qur'ān reflects the experience of the community around Muḥammad in Mecca and Medina, between 610 and 632. We should understand the Qur'ān according to its chronological order, which mirrors Muḥammad's career. *Thesis 3*: A collection/edition of the Qur'ān was made under the caliph 'Uṭmān (d. 656), roughly twenty years after Muhammad's death. This edition soundly reflects the words of Muhammad. The edition made under 'Abd al-Malik (d. 705) is nothing more than a sponsored version of 'Uṭmān's codex. *Thesis 4*: The various parts of the Qur'ān were well-known enough in the original community to make possible a reliable and uninterrupted transmission of the text, more precise than the written transmission of the oldest codices. *Thesis 5*: The Arabic of the Qur'ān is the poetical *koine*.

³ Speaking of the *collection* of the Qur'ān is an unjustified concession to religious dogma, which takes for granted the idea that the work which led to the *muṣḥaf* was nothing more than the gathering of preexistent texts, the scribes only having to put the “pieces of the jigsaw” in order. A similar problem is when an *historian* refers to the *revelation* of a surah in Mecca or Medina. Maybe it is a way of speaking, but this is unwelcome, since (among other problems) it occults everything which can amount to a process of composition.

This view is based on several arguments (some of them will be developed below), related to **a)** the dating and localization of the sources; **b)** the profile of the author(s)/editor(s); **c)** the contexts in which the Qur'ānic pericopes and suras are supposed to fit best; and **d)** the nature of the editorial and compositional work inside the Qur'ān.⁴ Hence, the Qur'ān is a text which is both *composite* and *composed* (in this regard, and also with its many parallel narratives, it is perfect stuff for *Redaktionskritik*). It is a collective and partly a *scribal* work. Therefore, even if the “Prophetic period” is anchored in the Arabian Peninsula, we should not confine our research to the Ḥiǧāz of the early decades of the 7th century in our understanding of the genesis of the Qur'ān. Moreover, we should give up the traditional model of Meccan and Medinan suras, and rather consider the Qur'ān inside a larger chronology – probably until the Marwanid era.⁵

Before going to the heart of the matter, I should say a few words about “hypertextuality”.⁶ It has become commonplace in Qur'ānic studies to speak of *intertextuality*, especially Biblical or parabiblical intertextuality. A more precise lexicon, however, is necessary.

The notion of *hypertextuality* has been introduced by Gérard Genette, who defines it as any relationship uniting a text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*, or *subtext*), upon which it grafts itself in a manner which is not that of the commentary. In contrast, *intertextuality* is defined in a more restrictive way, as a relation of copresence between two texts or among several texts (quotation, plagiarism, allusion...). There is also *metatextuality*, which refers to the relation of “commentary” – when a text comments or criticizes another one, without necessarily quoting it or naming it.⁷

These various categories are porous and blurred. For example, pure metatextuality is possible, but rare (people often quote or allude to the text they comment). In other words, these categories are tools which should guide us in highlighting various and complex textual relations, not separate boxes where every kind of textual relation should be packed. We should then speak of *hypertextuality* in a broad sense, since this category seems particularly apt for describing the reworking (particularly when it is creative) of an earlier text in a new one. Qur'ānic hypertextuality, of course, displays also most of the time intertextuality and metatextuality. The connotations of the prefix *-hyper* can also evoke the (often) extremely dense network of “texts”⁸ involved in the composition of the Qur'ān – many of them extra-Qur'ānic, but some of them belonging to the Qur'ānic corpus.⁹

⁴ A few references: de Prémare (2002:278-340), (2004:57-99) and (2005), Shoemaker (2003) and (2012:136-158), van Reeth (2006), van der Velden (2007) and (2008), Powers (2009:155-196, 227-233) and (2014:127-133), Pohlmann (2012), Dye (2011), (2012), (2014), (forthcoming 2015a), Tesi (2013-2014).

⁵ There are two independent issues here. First: did some authorial work take place after Muḥammad's death? If yes (as I think), then: *how long* did it last, namely, when did the *rasm* of the *muṣḥaf* reach closure? Sinai (2014) argues for the usual 'Uṭmānian dating; for a critique, see Dye (forthcoming 2015a).

⁶ I am indebted here to Adamczewski (2011:9-16), building on Genette (1982:7-19).

⁷ There are two other categories of *transtextuality* (“all that sets a text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts”), left aside here: *paratextuality* and *architextuality* (Genette (1982:10-11, 12)).

⁸ “Texts” should subsume written texts, orality (even if what is often written on Qur'ānic orality seems to me highly confused and confusing), and also epigraphic, numismatic and *iconographic* evidence.

⁹ A brief comment on *redaction criticism* is also appropriate here, the nature of this approach being often misunderstood. **1) Redaction criticism is necessary.** The examination of the editorial process is an unavoidable methodological step in any historical or scholarly use of the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, and the Qur'ān. Structural and synchronic approaches might reveal certain aspects of the latest versions of the texts under

Surah 19

Let's see now how an approach in terms of hypertextuality and redaction criticism can shed some light on the Qur'ān, with a specific example, beginning with surah 19.

This surah has ninety-eight verses. It can be divided into three parts (1-63, 64-74, 75-98).¹⁰ The division I am interested in occurs between v. 63 and 64.¹¹

Q 19:63: "That is the Garden which We give as an inheritance to those of Our servants who guard (themselves)"

Q 19:64: "We come only down by the command of your Lord"

The "we" in v. 63 refers to God, the "we" in v. 64 to the angels. In fact, v. 58-63 conclude a long section on prophetic stories, while v. 64 marks the beginning of a new section, even if, from a formal point of view (same rhyme, same grammatical subject), it smoothly follows the preceding verse. We can therefore focus on Q 19:1-63, which displays a thematic unity [see the plan of this section in **Annex 1**, p. 30].

It appears immediately that the Christological controversy section (34-40) raises three problems. First, it breaks the literary genre of the text: the preceding and following verses are stories related to prophetic figures, and have nothing to do with such a polemical address. Second, it breaks the "tenet" of the text, which is otherwise *definitely not anti-Christian*. Finally, it breaks the continuity of a very strict rhyme: the interlude has rhymes in *-ūn*, *-īm* and *-īm*, instead of *-iyyā* (in a few cases *-ayyā*) everywhere else until verse 74. These are three independent indices which all support the same conclusion, namely that v. 34-40 are an interpolation: without this interlude, the text is much more consistent, in terms of content and in terms of form. In short, v. 34-40 *did not belong* to the original version of Q 19:1-63.

scrutiny, but they are unable to use the text as a historical source, since they might mix (and very often do) various historical stages of textual development in their analysis. In fact, examining only its final form limits considerably the information which can be deduced – literally and historically – from a text. **2) Redaction criticism is reliable.** It does not mean it is infallible and omniscient (no method is). It has limits: it is unable to reconstruct *every* development of a text (we should therefore avoid models which are too ambitious and complex), and some of the editorial process might be untraceable (editorial work can consist in additions, omissions, rewriting, and relocations: the first category is easier to notice). But when it is practiced cautiously (when it does not use criteria too mechanically, or does not ignore larger contexts), and especially when there is cumulative evidence of editorial process, redaction criticism has very high chances to hit the mark. **3) Redaction criticism can be applied to the Qur'ān.** The genesis of the Qur'ān took place in roughly the same time as the genesis of the Gospels, which are studied – with great profit – with the tools of redaction criticism. Moreover, we know that editorial changes happen most often when there are changes of paradigm – and this happens continuously in the first decades of "Islam". **4) Redaction criticism is holistic.** Diachronic methods are not necessarily atomistic. Even when they compare variant versions of a similar pericope, they should take into account the context of the variants. And when redaction criticism attempts to identify various layers of composition in a book, a corpus or a text, it is perfectly holistic. For a good defense of redaction criticism (on the Hebrew Bible, but it works as well elsewhere), see Müller, Pakkala & ter Haar Romeny (2014) (very valuable also for the empirical evidence it brings to the fore), and Pakkala (2013).

¹⁰ There is a change of rhyme after v. 75 (rhyme in *-dā*, a few times in *-zā*, and maybe once *-rā*, since it is sensible to read *dīkrā* instead of *rikzā* in v. 98); moreover, v. 75 begins by *qul*, "Say!", a common Qur'anic editorial device to join separated pericopes.

¹¹ Translations of the Qur'ān are taken from Droge (2013), with minor modifications sometimes.

Talking about *the original version* raises some methodological problems. For example, we might not be able to reconstruct the original version in detail. Therefore, since we might not know what it exactly consisted in, the “original version” is above all a *Grenzbegriff*. Moreover, there might have been *several* editorial layers before the interpolation. What we can then assert is that there existed one or several earlier stages of the text which did not contain the controversy interlude. For the sake of convenience, I will now mean by Q 19:1-63* *any earlier version of Q 19:1-63 without verses 34-40*. However, I do not take for granted that v. 1-33 and 41-63 in Q 19:1-63* are necessarily identical with the same verses in Q 19:1-63, since there certainly have been other editorial interventions.¹² However, I won’t focus on them, except if they are relevant to my main argument.

Q 19:1-63* is a text which can be described as almost Christian, or even as Christian: in fact, it is unclear how it could be possible to be closer to Christianity, except by simply asserting some specific Christian dogmas – something the text does not do, of course. *All the details of the text* have their origins in written, liturgical or popular Christian traditions (more on this below), and can be acknowledged by Christians. It is therefore appropriate to speak here of a “text of convergence”.¹³ Moreover, with its stanzas, refrain, and alternation of narration and dialogues, this text looks like a well-known literary genre in Syriac religious literature: the *soghitha*, a dialogue poem involving Biblical or prophetic characters.¹⁴ It is therefore quite tempting to speak here of a Qur’ānic *soghitha*. This formula does not downplay the originality of the text, which adapts the Syriac literary genre to the genius of Arabic.¹⁵

¹² For example: **1**) v. 33 might have been, at first, a *He-speech*, not an *I-speech* (the modification might be concomitant to the addition of the polemical interlude). Note the special tempo of v. 15 and 33, which evoke a psalmodic response. If this hypothesis were true, then Q 19:1-63* might have been composed as a liturgical hymn (but not necessarily practiced in a concrete liturgical setting), while undergoing later some editorial changes which hid, in part, its original stylistic inspiration. **2**) V. 12-14 and 17 are in *We-speech*. This makes the whole of Q 19:1-63* a text in *We-speech* (in its narrative parts), whereas the style and genre of the piece would suggest a liturgical hymn – normally a *He-speech*. This might be the result of an editorial revision (if we follow the hypothesis above), but it could be also an initial decision of the author of Q 19:1-63* who could have in mind, *as an abstract model*, a liturgical hymn, *but* directly composed his text in *We-speech* (compare Q 18:83-102 in *We-speech* and its written Syriac source, the *Alexander Legend*, which is in *He-speech*). In this case, the remarkable tempo of v. 15 and 33 could be explained as a borrowing of a real liturgical (Arabic) formula which belonged to the verbal and stylistic repertoire of the author. **3**) V. 16, 41, 51, 54, 56 (*wa-dkur fī l-kitābi...*) look like a secondary elaboration of v. 2 (*dikru rahmati...*), which is similar to a rubric heading in a lectionary. **4**) The section on Abraham displays narration and dialogs, but from a literary and theological viewpoint, it is less impressive than the two previous sections. There are some parallels elsewhere in the Qur’ān (6:74-84; 9:114; 21:51-72; 26:69-89; 29:16-18; 37:83-101; 43:26-28). It seems probable that the *Vorlage* of this section comes from another author. But was it lightly rewritten and added by the author of 19:1-33*, or was the insertion done at a later editorial stage? **5**) There is no dialog in v. 51-57. Do these verses as such belong to the original composition? Are they only chapter heads, which the orator would have developed or improvised upon? Or were these doxologies added at a later editorial stage? Compare also Q 6:84-90, following, incidentally, a section on Abraham which is partly parallel to Q 19. **6**) The conclusion (v. 58-63) seems slightly composite. **7**) Empirical evidence of late editorial work can perhaps be drawn from the *scriptio inferior* of the Ṣan’ā palimpsest (DAM 01-27.1), which contains Q 19:1-70 *with the interpolation* (hence, it is not one of the earliest versions), but displays some differences with the ‘Uṭmānian *rasm*. For example, v. 15 reads ‘*alayhi wa-s-salāmu* instead of *wa-salāmun ‘alayhi* (same reverse order in v. 33). More examples can be found in Puin (2012:332-345, 369-399). Concerning the pitfalls of the (more scientific than scientific) overconfidence about a very early C14 dating of this manuscript, see Dye (forthcoming 2015a).

¹³ Van der Velden (2007) and (2008).

¹⁴ Brock (1983).

¹⁵ Kropp (2008:791-793), Dye (2012:64).

The main sections (2-15, 16-33, 41-50) exhibit dialogues around a parent and a child: dialogue in the Temple between Zachariah and the angels (or God?) about John's conception and birth; dialogues between Mary and the angel (Annunciation), Mary and Jesus, and finally Jesus and the priests at the Temple; dialogue between Abraham and his father (the subtexts of this last section, namely the "cycle of Abraham" as exemplified in the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, show that this dispute takes place in the temple where Abraham's father officiates). The topics of *offspring* and *Temple* are therefore crucial.

Given the central place of the section on Mary, it is sensible to suggest the following hypothesis: this Qur'ānic *soghitha* is modelled on compositions celebrating the role of Mary in the Nativity. This fits well with the literary genre and the content of the piece, and it is confirmed by an examination of v. 16-33. This passage can be divided into three parts (v. 16-22, 23-26, 27-33).

Verses 16-22

From a formal point of view, this subsection is delimited by *makānan šarqiyyan* ("eastern place") in v. 16 and *makānan qaṣiyyan* ("remote place") in v. 22. Thematically, it goes from Mary's childhood to Jesus' Nativity. From a source-critical viewpoint, it follows the *Protoevangelium of James*, even if the section on the Annunciation involves elements from Luke 1:26-38.

The *Protoevangelium of James* tells the story of Mary's childhood (Prot 7:2-8), to which the Qur'ān refers in verse 16 – when Mary (aged three) is consecrated at the Temple. The "eastern place" is the Temple (the typology Mary/Temple is central in Christian traditions). There is an interesting subtext here, from Hesychius of Jerusalem's 5th Homily:

"Another named you [Mary] "Closed door", but located in the East".¹⁶

The original context of this homily is the Feast of the Memory of Mary, the oldest Marian celebration, which commemorated the role of Mary in the Nativity. As a subtext of Hesychius' sentence, see Ezekiel 43-44 (especially 43:1-4, 10; 44:1-4).

Without the knowledge of the subtext of v. 16 (namely, the *Protoevangelium of James*), it is simply impossible to understand anything. It means that we have here, as so often in the Qur'ān, not a self-contained narrative, but a series of allusions which are supposed to be understood by the ideal readership or audience of the text – since it knows the stories which lie behind. Therefore, if the Qur'ān never speaks of Joseph, it does not entail that it denies its existence, or his presence near Mary. It only means that the character of Joseph is pointless regarding the Qur'ān's homiletic intentions, which are focused on Mary, her role in the Nativity, and the help she got from God.

The *Protoevangelium* also explains that Mary weaves the curtain of the Temple (Prot 10:1-2; 12:1, with Exodus 25-27 as a subtext; see Q 19:17);¹⁷ relying on Luke 1:26-38, it narrates the

¹⁶ Aubineau (1978:160).

¹⁷ Droge (2013:194, n. 22), while aware of Prot 10, suggests that *fa-ttaḥaḍat min dūnihim ḥiḡāban* only means that Mary hid herself, but did not weave the curtain. This is possible, but does not change anything to my

Annunciation (Prot 11:1-3; Q 19:17-21, here the Qur'ān is closer to Luke),¹⁸ and also the birth of Jesus: it locates in a desert zone, midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the place where Mary takes rest before giving birth to Jesus (Prot 17:2-18:1). There are strong reasons to connect this passage of the *Protoevangelium* to the “remote place” of Q 19:22.¹⁹ This last detail about Nativity is *specific* to the traditions of the *Protoevangelium*.

Verses 23-26

Verses 23-26 have no link with the traditions of the *Protoevangelium*. They narrate a well-known story, the palm miracle, which is related in various sources in the Christian apocryphal traditions, for example the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* 20:1-2 and several narratives of Mary's Dormition.²⁰ This episode is a consolation narrative (in the Christian traditions, and in the Qur'ān as well), with strong eschatological connotations (the symbol of the palm).²¹ However, this story is supposed to take place during the flight to Egypt, not right after Nativity. Yet what might look like a strange mistake can be explained in a different and much more fascinating way.

It is necessary here to refer to a recent archeological discovery. In 1992, 350 m north of the monastery of Mar Elias (hence between this monastery and Ramat Rahel), were discovered the remains of an important Byzantine church. This zone is located midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem – the place where, according to some Jewish traditions, Rachel gave birth to Benjamin and died, and the zone where Mary took rest on her way to Bethlehem, according to the *Protoevangelium of James*. Various ancient sources tell us that there was a church there, called the Church of the Kathisma of Mary Theotokos (Church of the Seat of Mary, the mother of God) [see **Annex 8** p. 43].

Several excavation campaigns, led by Rina Avner, have revealed an exceptional building.²² [See **Annex 9**, pp. 44-45]. The Kathisma church was an octagonal church from the Byzantine era – a well-known shape. It has two octagonal concentric belts around the central space (like a mausoleum inside another mausoleum). Its dimensions are remarkable: 41 m according to an axis east-west, 38 m north-south, but the size of the rooms outside the external octagon should also be added to these measures. Even more remarkable is the presence of a rock inside the central octagon. The shape of the rock is irregular, measuring approximately 2.5 m x 3 m (but we know that the rock was originally larger). [See **Annex 10**,

argument about the relations between the *Protoevangelium* and Q 19:16-22, since just after narrating the entry of Mary in the Temple (7:2-8), the *Protoevangelium* mentions that she stayed inside the Temple (Prot 8:1), in a place which is necessarily the “Most Holy Place”, which was located *behind a curtain* (Hebrews 9:3-4).

¹⁸ The angel tells Mary she'll beget a son (19:18), as in Luke 1:31, whereas Prot 11:2 speaks of a word (see Q 3:45). This dependence on *Luke* does not refute the decisive role of the *Protoevangelium*, since the crucial point is the sequence and the localization of the events.

¹⁹ Dye (2012:67-71), Shoemaker (2003:17). The other explanations (Mary goes to the desert after having drunk the “bitter water” (Prot 16:2), or the visit to Elisabeth (Luke 1:39-56, Prot 12)) are far less plausible.

²⁰ The narrative does not seem attested in Syriac sources. For Ethiopian, see *Māṣḥafā 'arāft* = *Liber Requiei (De transitu Mariae. Apocrypha Aethiopice 1 et 2, CSCO 343 & 351, 1973-1974, §§ 5-9)*; for Georgian, van Esbroeck (1973:67-73); for Irish (from a Latin source), Donahue (1942:28-31). Sozomen (*Ecc. Hist.* V, 21, 8-11, p. 229 Hansen) knows two different versions of the palm miracle.

²¹ Van Esbroeck (1982).

²² Avner (2003), (2006-2007), (2010) and (2011). See the summary of previous research in Dye (2012:77-81).

p. 46] The central octagon is delimited by two rings of columns. The pilgrims were traveling between them in their prayers or processions. The size and structure of the building shows that it was an important place of pilgrimage.

Thanks especially to numismatic and ceramic evidence, excavations have dated three levels of pavement. The oldest one goes back to the middle of the 5th century, when the church was built. The second is dated from the beginning of the 6th century and displays substantial renovations, probably around 531. A water pipe, made of ceramic tubes, was then fabricated. It surrounded the rock and brought water from a spring located in the northeast. This blessed water was collected by pilgrims who could bring it back with them in memory of their pilgrimage (a little bottle decorated with a palm tree was even found). The third level, from the early 8th century, is posterior to the Arab conquests. A circular niche – a *miḥrāb* –, is then built, south of the building. [See **Annex 11**, p. 47]. The Kathisma church is thus transformed into a mosque – but only in its southern part.

The floor of the latest level contains mosaics with geometric patterns; in one of the rooms, the mosaic is a large palm tree flanked by two smaller ones. [See **Annex 12** and **13**, pp. 48-50]. These mosaics are very similar to those of the Dome of the Rock. Moreover, as the Kathisma church and the Dome of the Rock are buildings of similar dimensions, following a similar plane (concentric octagons with a rock in the middle), there are strong reasons to believe that the Kathisma church is the architectural model of the Dome of the Rock.²³ [See **Annex 14**, p. 51]

But the most important point is related to the liturgical and popular traditions of the Kathisma. Indeed, it has been shown that two different traditions were associated to the Kathisma church and its rock:²⁴ first, narratives related to the *Protoevangelium of James* and the rest of Mary on her way to Bethlehem; second, narratives related to the rest of Mary and the palm tree miracle during the flight to Egypt. This is the *only known example*, outside the Qur’ān, of a connection between these two (independent) traditions.

This gives good ground for the thesis that the Qur’ān depends here on specific Palestinian traditions. But the dependence is in fact much more striking.

Verses 27-33

According to v. 27, Mary brings Jesus to her people (*qawm*, not to be confused with her family, *ahl*, in v. 16). If we rely on the previous subtexts, and also on the logic of the narrative, we should suppose that she goes back to the Temple of Jerusalem, where she meets the priests, who act as the authoritative representatives of the Jewish people.

This is confirmed by a close reading of v. 27-32, a remarkable passage which recalls the Christian apocryphal stories where Jesus speaks and does miracles from the cradle.²⁵ The Qur’ān is merging here two episodes: the trial of Mary in the Temple (which takes place, in

²³ Avner (2010).

²⁴ Dye (2012:75-77, 84-90), Shoemaker (2003). The previous pages are of course deeply indebted to Shoemaker’s seminal paper.

²⁵ Horn (2006) and (2008), Segovia (2011). Segovia speaks of “transposition” – a typical hypertextual device.

Prot 15-16, between the Annunciation and the Nativity) and the presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:22-40), which was celebrated at the Kathisma church forty days after Nativity (on 2 February). Once again, there is no confusion, but a subtle homiletic move. In the *Protoevangelium* and *Luke*, the stories of the trial in the Temple and the presentation in the Temple respectively fulfill two functions: to legitimize, against the accusations of adultery, Mary's pregnancy (and thus the birth of Jesus); to affirm the special status of Jesus (he is the Messiah). The Qur'ān is doing something similar here: by answering himself, miraculously, the adultery charges against his mother, Jesus shows the legitimacy of his birth and cleanses his mother from all suspicion; he then makes a Christological statement which asserts his prophetic status. All this is thus well known now by the "people of Mary", namely the Jews, whom the Qur'ān accuses of spreading a great slander (4:156),²⁶ and of not acknowledging that Jesus is a prophet and a messenger (61:6), even though they had learnt the truth about these matters, in the clearest possible way, from Jesus himself.

But there is a huge riddle (19:28):

"Sister of Aaron [yā-'uḥta hārūna]! Your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother a prostitute."

According to the Qur'ān, Mary is the "sister of Aaron", the "daughter of 'Imrān" (*bint 'Imrān*) (66:12), and the biological daughter of "the wife of 'Imrān" (*imra'at 'imrān*) (3:35-36). This evokes the Biblical Miryam, sister of Moses and Aaron, and daughter of 'Amran (Exodus 6:20; 15:20; 1 Chron 5:29) – but Miryam and Mary are two different characters...²⁷

Some polemicists have seen here the proof of the alleged ignorance of Muḥammad, who was so unfamiliar with Biblical culture that he managed to confuse two characters who are supposed to be separated by more than a thousand years. On the other hand, some Muslim exegetes have argued that this Aaron was not the Biblical Aaron, but someone from Mary's tribe – but when the Qur'ān speaks of Aaron, it is always of the Biblical Aaron, brother of Moses (see for example 19:53). These explanations can therefore be discarded.

Another explanation has recently been suggested.²⁸ In the Qur'ān, *ibn* and *bint* do not always mean "direct child": they can also mean "descendants, progeny" (2:246; 3:49; 5:72; 7:35; 17:70; 36:60); moreover, *aḥ* and *uḥt* do not always indicate a sibling relationship: they can refer to a tribal relationship (7:73), a religious bond (3:103), an ancestor (7:38) or a predecessor (43:48) relationship. According to this interpretation, the formula "sister of Aaron" means only that Mary is the descendent of Aaron:

"The expression *sister of Aaron*, moreover, occurs in the Qur'ānic reference to the questioning of Mary in the Temple. It is especially appropriate in this context for the questioners, the Temple's priests, to magnify Mary's moral transgression (her pregnancy) by appealing to her ancestor Aaron, whose descendants are the only

²⁶ That is to say, accusing Mary of adultery or prostitution – a common Jewish anti-Christian polemic.

²⁷ Both characters have the same name in Aramaic and Arabic (*Maryam*). In Greek, there is both *Mariam* and *Maria* for Mary, mother of Jesus, and even if *Mariam* is the usual name for Miryam, there are manuscripts where she is called *Maria* (for example in the codex Sinaiticus). The *Protoevangelium* has the form *Mariammê* at least twice (16:3; 17:2): I would explain it as a popular, affectionate denomination.

²⁸ Mourad (2008:163-166).

Israelites qualified to serve in the Temple, where Mary herself was raised. In other words, Mary as a descendent of Aaron is expected to keep the purity of the sanctuary, rather than defile it by supposedly committing the shameful act that would lead to a pregnancy. Here too, there are no grounds on which to argue that the Qur'ān is identifying Mary as literally the sister of Aaron."²⁹

This is smart: from a linguistic point of view, it is possible indeed to understand the words this way, and what it tells about the blame addressed to Mary might be true. Yet, ultimately, this explanation is not really successful, since it ignores Q 3:35-36:

“When the wife of ‘Imrān said: ‘My Lord, surely I vow to You what is in my belly, (to be) dedicated (to Your service). (...) And when she had delivered her, she said, ‘My Lord, surely I have delivered her, a female’, (...) ‘and I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge for her with You, and for her offspring [*ḍurriyyatahā*], from the accursed Satan’.”

Imra'at 'Imrān can only mean “the wife of ‘Imrān” (see also 3:40). It does not mean she is a descendent of ‘Imrān, or a member of the tribe of ‘Imrān. And there is no reason to think that ‘Imrān is the name of Mary’s biological father, called *Joachim* in Christian sources (Prot 1-5). Moreover, Mary is called “sister of Aaron” and “daughter of ‘Imrān”, and the wife of ‘Imrān is her biological mother, just as Miryam is the sister of Aaron, the daughter of ‘Amran and the daughter of ‘Amran’s wife. Besides, if Mourad’s interpretation were true, it would be necessary to subsume three different words (*uḥt*, *bint*, *imra'a*) under one meaning (“descendent”) which is the secondary meaning of the first two words, and definitely not a possible meaning for the third one.

The solution of this riddle should be found in *typology*, an approach of Scripture whose basic principle is to see former characters or events as prefiguring, announcing, later figures or events. It has deep affinities with inner-Biblical parallels, and it is certainly fair to say that typology is one of the most widespread exegetical devices in Christianity. It can easily be combined with allegoric exegesis, which considers Biblical characters, places or episodes (*i.e.* concrete, material entities) as symbols of abstract or spiritual notions.³⁰

So, when the Qur'ān states that Mary is Aaron’s sister and ‘Imrān’s daughter, it does not state that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is Aaron’s biological sister and ‘Imrān’s biological daughter, but it claims that she is prefigured, one way or another, by the “family of ‘Imrān”, especially Aaron and Miryam (obviously, the homonymy on *Maryam* plays a role, but it does not entail that the main parallel is between Mary and Miryam). In other words, it is not simply a connection to Aaron’s lineage.³¹

It might be unexpected, but the typology between Mary and Miryam is unusual in ancient Christian literature. Some parallels have been suggested,³² but they do not seem really

²⁹ Mourad (2008:165-166).

³⁰ There is no need to enter here into the debate about the relations and the (real or imaginary) differences between these two methods of exegesis.

³¹ *Contra* Neuwirth (2009). When the Qur'ān wants to speak of “descendent” or “offspring” in such contexts, it has a word for this, namely *ḍurriyya*, used 28 times in the singular, and 4 times in the plural.

³² The most interesting one is Gallez (2004).

successful for understanding this surah.³³ What we need to find out is the Christian source of the formula “Mary, sister of Aaron”, and its relation with the Qur’ān.

In fact, this is not a very difficult task, provided we look at the right place, namely at the cult of Mary as it was practiced in the Jerusalem area in the late 6th and early 7th century. For reasons of space, I shall be brief.³⁴

We know that the Kathisma church was related to the feast of the Memory of Mary, which was celebrated on 13 August (at least from the end of the 6th century: before, it was celebrated on 15 August, but its date changed when the Emperor Mauritius decided that Mary’s Dormition would be celebrated on 15 August). The topic of the celebration was the commemoration of the role of Mary in the Nativity (incidentally, the main issue in Q 19: 1-63*). If we want to understand the meaning of this celebration, we should have a brief look at the texts which were read then.³⁵

According to the *Armenian Jerusalem lectionary*, a document which describes the liturgy in Jerusalem between 417 and 439, the readings for the Memory of Mary (on 15 August, during that period) were the following:³⁶ Psalm 132(131):8; Isaiah 7:10-16; Galatians 3:29-4:7; Psalm 110(109):1-7; Luke 2:1-7. I will make only two remarks.

First, the reading which gives the ultimate meaning of the commemoration is the verse “Arise, O Lord, to your resting place, You and the Ark of Your holiness” (Psalm 132(131):8). Here the Ark is Mary. The allegory Ark of Covenant/Mary is central in Christian literature (it is already in Luke).³⁷ What is celebrated is Mary’s virginity and divine maternity. Her role is prefigured by the Ark of Covenant: Mary is the Ark, and the house of the Lord.

Second, Galatians 3:29-4:7: this text is the best example (with Romans 4) of the kind of rhetorical move which vindicated Christian supersessionism towards the Jews³⁸ – a move the Qur’ān borrows and uses against the Jews and sometimes (probably in its latest layers) against the Christians too. Moreover, both texts speak of offspring (Romans 4:9-18; Galatians 3:29) and heritage (Romans 4:13, 16; Galatians 3:29; 4:1, 7) – compare Q 19:58, 63. Therefore, the affinities between the celebration of Mary and surah 19 might be deeper than expected.

During the 6th century, the Palestinian cult of the Virgin underwent a significant evolution: the commemoration of the role of Mary in the Nativity was more and more mixed with elements belonging to traditions on Mary’s Dormition. We have some evidence of such a

³³ Dye (2012:95-98).

³⁴ More details in Shoemaker (2002:115-139) and Mimouni (1995:371-471).

³⁵ Dye (2012:98-101).

³⁶ No. 64 in Renoux (1971). The Armenian lectionary does not mention any church (the Kathisma was not built yet), but it clearly locates the celebration midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, where Mary took rest on her way to Bethlehem, and where the Kathisma church was built later.

³⁷ Laurentin (1957:148-161), van Esbroeck (2004a), Dye (2012:99-100). For example, Psalm 132(131):8 is quoted twice in Hesychius’ 5th Homily (Aubineau (1978:162, 164)); and it is also cited by Epiphanos of Cyprus to explain the leap of John the Baptist in Elizabeth’s womb when Mary visited her (Luke 1:41) (van Esbroeck (1984:42)).

³⁸ This was not, of course, the original meaning of the passage: Paul was not a Christian (it would be an anachronistic label), but a Second Temple Jewish writer, and his point was only that Jews were not the only heirs of God’s covenant – certainly not that they had been replaced by another community. On the importance of this supersessionist myth in the Qur’ān, see Segovia (forthcoming a) and (forthcoming b).

merging in various Christian texts. It is telling that there is the same phenomenon in the Qur'ān, since the palm miracle belongs, originally, to traditions on Mary's Dormition.³⁹

The Marian liturgy in Jerusalem, after the reform of the end of the 6th century, was a stational liturgy.⁴⁰ It lasted five days (13-17 August), was centered on Mary's Dormition (celebrated on 15 August), and began on 13 August at the Kathisma church, with the feast of the Memory of Mary.⁴¹ Thanks to Georgian sources (Georgian lectionaries and homiliaries count among our best evidence for reconstructing Late Antique Jerusalem's religious practices),⁴² we have some information about the content of this liturgical circle, even if the evidence is not always as limpid as we could hope.

We can safely rely on a few points. During the first decades of the 7th century, the readings for the Memory of Mary, interspersed by the recitation of a few Psalm verses (72(71):1, 6; 65(64):2), were Isaiah 7:10-17; Hebrews 9:1-10; Luke 11:27-32. Two days later, on 15 August (leaving aside the Psalm verses sung then), the readings were Proverbs 31:29; Job 28:5-11; Ezekiel 44:1-3; Galatians 3:24-4:7; Luke 1:39-56.⁴³

There are at least two very significant elements here. The first one is Ezekiel 44:1-3, which evokes (or is rather evoked by) Q 19:16. The second is Hebrews 9:1-10.⁴⁴ It is impossible to discuss at length this fascinating passage. Yet some remarks are necessary.

Hebrews 9:3-4 describes the "Most Holy Place", located behind a curtain. The place where Mary glorifies God and gets her food from an angel (Prot 8:1) can only be this "Most Holy Place", which is therefore alluded to in Q 19:17 and 3:37. It is the only appropriate place for Mary, since Hebrews 9:4 explains that in this room, there was "the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. This Ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the Covenant." This passage is a nice example of the "enrichment of the content of the Ark" in Biblical traditions.⁴⁵ The gold jar of manna refers to Exodus 16:31-34.⁴⁶ Mary was identified with the jar in Christian exegesis,⁴⁷ and Aaron's staff (see Numbers 17) refers of course to the Messiah.

Q 19:2-63* does not refer explicitly to the Ark of Covenant, but the topics of the covenant, the Temple⁴⁸ (and at the same time priesthood) are omnipresent: the insistence on God's mercy and help towards His servants, throughout the surah, presupposes the centrality of the covenant; Zachariah is priest in the Temple; Mary spends her childhood in the Temple,

³⁹ This does not lessen the significance of the points of contact, highlighted above, between the Kathisma church and the Qur'ān. What is unique before the Qur'ān (as far as we know) is this precise combination of traditions of the *Protoevangelium* and the palm miracle.

⁴⁰ A stational liturgy is a mobile form of worship: services are held at a specific shrine, on a designated feast day.

⁴¹ Shoemaker (2002:132-140).

⁴² See the recent synthesis of Frøyshov (2012) for the lectionaries; for the homiliaries, see van Esbroeck (1975).

⁴³ Nos. 1144-1147 and 1149-1155 in Tarchnischvili (1960).

⁴⁴ Hebrews 9:1-10 was also read, alongside with Psalm 132(131), for the celebration of the Ark of Covenant, every 2 July (no. 61 in Renoux (1971), nos. 1070-1074 in Tarchnischvili (1960)) – anything but a coincidence.

⁴⁵ Petit (1986). The Ark, originally, was supposed to contain the tablets of the covenant only (Exodus 25:12-16).

⁴⁶ Exodus 16:33: "So Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come.'"

⁴⁷ Van Esbroeck (2004a:63-68).

⁴⁸ Or "sanctuary", since the word *miḥrāb* remains ambiguous.

and goes back, after Nativity, with Jesus to the Temple; the argument between Abraham and his father takes place in a temple – and is related to idolatry, *i.e.* the question of the nature of the divine presence and worship. It is also very significant that the main reading at the Kathisma church, on 13 August, commemorating Mary's role in Nativity, mentioned the name of Aaron (Hebrews 9:4). But there is more.

It seems that 12 August, the day just before the Marian stationary liturgy (13-17 August), was dedicated to the commemoration of Aaron (the celebration took place in the Holy Sepulchre).⁴⁹ The text read during this celebration was Hebrews 5:1-10. This passage explains how Jesus the Son is also Jesus the High Priest; it displays a comparison between Aaron and Jesus (v. 4-5) and quotes Psalm 110(109):4 (“You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”),⁵⁰ a verse which was read for the feast of the Memory of Mary, on 15 August, in the former liturgical calendar.

This closeness between the figure of Aaron and the *Jerusalem Marian* celebrations of the early 7th century is remarkable. It is confirmed by an apocrypha on the Dormition of Mary, known only through a 10th century Georgian manuscript, the Tbilisi A-144 codex.⁵¹ This manuscript, one of the six witnesses of the ancient Mravalthavi, a homiletic collection only known in Georgian, contains the translation of a series of homilies and apocrypha (most of the time, originally in Greek), used for liturgical celebrations in Jerusalem between the 5th and 8th centuries.

For 13 August, it mentions a liturgical reading, *i.e.* a lection “from the words of the prophet Jeremiah”, which was read at the Kathisma church, in commemoration of “the gathering in Bethlehem, when the apostles led the Theotokos forth from Bethlehem to Zion”.⁵²

The *Lectio of Jeremiah* is a brief (2 pages) and composite work. Two thirds of the text is simply a quotation from the *Life of Jeremiah*, a brief apocrypha to be found in the collection of the *Lives of the Prophets*.⁵³ The last third consists in interpolations which are specific to the *Lectio*. It is also a composite work in another respect, since it contains elements related to the feast of the Memory of Mary, and others related to the Dormition (as shown by several passages and also by the superscription). It dates most probably from the first decades of the 7th century.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Nos. 1142-1143 in Tarnischvili (1960), see also Garitte (1958:84, 300).

⁵⁰ The relation between the figure of Melchizedek and Early Islam is a topic which deserves close scrutiny. Suggestive remarks in van Reeth (2012).

⁵¹ Description of the manuscript in van Esbroeck (1975:37-49, 158-180).

⁵² Introduction, edition of the Georgian text and Latin translation in van Esbroeck (1972).

⁵³ The *Lectio* follows the recension of Ps-Dorotheos of Tyre, with some passages looking like the recension of Ps-Epiphanos.

⁵⁴ It is sometimes said that the text displays several layers of composition (in addition to the *Fortschreibung* of a part of the *Life of Jeremiah*), since it mixes elements from the feast of the Memory of Mary (its supposed *Sitz im Leben*) and elements related to the Dormition (van Esbroeck (1972:364-365)). There is another possible (and I think better) explanation: the *Lectio of Jeremiah* could have been composed in a context where the feast of the Memory of Mary was already intimately connected to the feast of the Dormition, within the scope of a stationary liturgy – exactly what happens in Jerusalem at this time.

The text mentions a prophecy from Jeremiah to the Egyptians: their idols will be destroyed,⁵⁵ and salvation will come from a child who will be born from a virgin in Bethlehem and laid down in a manger (§ 2) – there is no need to be more precise about the identity of this child. This crib, into which the child is placed for one year to another until the visit of the Magi (§ 3), is (also) the symbol of the Ark of Covenant.

But Jeremiah, before the destruction of the First Temple, had saved the Ark and sealed it in a rock (§ 6).⁵⁶ Here the *Life of Jeremiah* and the *Lection of Jeremiah* rely on 2 Maccabees:

“It was also in the writing that the prophet [Jeremiah], having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense, and he sealed up the entrance. Some of those who followed him came up to mark the way, but could not find it. When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: ‘The place shall be unknown until God gathers His people together again and shows His mercy. And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated’” (2 Maccabees 2:4-8).

Then the *Lection* mentions another oracle (§§ 8-10):

“And the prophet [Jeremiah] said: ‘His coming will be a sign for you, and for other children at the end of the world.⁵⁷ And nobody will bring forth the hidden Ark from the rock, except **the priest Aaron, the brother of Mary**. And nobody will unveil the tables therein, nor be able to read them, except the lawgiver Moses, the chosen of the Lord. And at the resurrection of the dead, the Ark will be the first to rise from the rock and to be placed on Mount Sinai, so that the word of the prophet David will be fulfilled, in which he said: ‘Arise, O Lord, to your resting place, You and the Ark of Your holiness’, which is the Holy Virgin Mary who passes from this world to the presence of God, she to whom the apostles proclaimed in Zion the praise of Myrrh saying: ‘Today the Virgin is being guided from Bethlehem to Zion, and today from earth to heaven’, and all the saints are gathered together around her and wait for the Lord, putting to flight the enemy who aims to destroy them.’”⁵⁸

The *Lection of Jeremiah* is a fascinating yet much neglected text, which deserves a careful study for its own sake. Only a few remarks are possible here.

First, there is the quotation of Psalms 132(131):8, a verse which is absent from the *Life of Jeremiah*, but which is related to the feast of the Memory of Mary. This verse gets here an eschatological reading.

⁵⁵ Ps-Matthew 23-24 mentions the destruction of the idols in an Egyptian temple, a few paragraphs after the palm miracle. That the *Lection of Jeremiah*, whose §§ 2-5 are related to Egypt, was read at the Kathisma church, is certainly not fortuitous, and confirms that palm miracle traditions were connected to the Kathisma.

⁵⁶ On this story, see Petit (1985).

⁵⁷ The text is awkward here. It is probably corrupted.

⁵⁸ Van Esbroeck (1972:367 (Georgian), 369 (Latin)). Italicized passages quote the *Life of Jeremiah*. About the last sentence: Aaron was indeed celebrated on 12 August, but so was the gathering of the saints...

Second, there is the formula “the priest Aaron, the brother of Mary” (*ahron mǧdelman jmaman mariamisman*). The *Lectio of Jeremiah* always speaks of Mary, and not Miryam, and since the author is patently a (clever) monk, he would not mistake Miryam for Mary. The formula *priest brother of Mary* is an addition of the *Lectio*. Its typological and symbolic signification is obvious. Note also the mention, in addition to Aaron, of Moses, “the chosen of the Lord”. Furthermore, following the *Life of Jeremiah*, the *Lectio of Jeremiah* explains that the rock is located in the desert (exactly where the Ark was before), between two mountains, where Moses reposes (§ 13).⁵⁹ Moreover, in fulfillment of the prophecy, God granted Jeremiah a place next to Moses and Aaron (§ 14) – beside the Ark, which remains a symbol for Mary.

All this brings an exceptionally close typology between Mary and the “family of ‘Amran”. It links Mary to *Aaron and Moses, on two levels* at least: the Ark of Covenant and the Dormition. Indeed, it should be remembered that, according to Jewish traditions (of course known by Christians too), Moses, Aaron and Miryam all experienced a dormition (like Mary, and her mother Anna), dying “through a kiss of God”. There is also an interesting parallelism between Sinai and Zion. And there is a link between, on the one hand, Jesus, and on the other hand, Aaron and Moses, since Jesus is the only one who has the power to bring forth the Ark (as the “High Priest”)⁶⁰ and read the tables of the Law.

Let us now pause a bit and put things in order. Everyone will agree that the transition from “Aaron, brother of Mary” to “Mary, sister of Aaron” is rather straightforward. Moreover, it would be fanciful to suppose that the addition of “priest (...) brother of Mary” could display a Qur’ānic influence on the initial author, the Georgian translator, or a copyist. And since there is, as far as I know, no other attested example of the expression “Aaron, brother of Mary”, in this sense, the idea that the *Lectio of Jeremiah* (a text, incidentally, which was apparently not widespread at all) is the source of the Qur’ān, appears highly plausible.

To sum up, we found the following points of contact between the Kathisma church and Q 19:1-63*.

First, the Kathisma church was attached to the feast of the Memory of Mary, which commemorated the role of Mary in the Nativity – exactly what Q 19:1-63* is doing.

Second, the Kathisma church was, before the Qur’ān, the *only* attested place which connected the traditions of the *Protoevangelium of James* and the palm miracle. In fact, the Qur’ān does not only repeat the traditions of the Kathisma: it presupposes them. The traditions of the Kathisma concerned two separate episodes; they did not imply that the palm miracle took place at Nativity. The Qur’ān goes further and merges more decidedly both episodes, offering a creative homiletic variation.⁶¹

⁵⁹ The various traditions of the *Life of Jeremiah* mention here “where Moses and Aaron repose”. I see no serious motivation for the absence of Aaron in the *Lectio*, since he is mentioned before and after. A lacuna is possible.

⁶⁰ The *Lectio* does not only add “brother of Mary”: it adds also that Aaron was a priest. This entails that the topic of *priesthood* is central here, which is not surprising, since the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is clearly one of the subtexts of the *Lectio*.

⁶¹ It is also significant that Q 19:23, the verse which allows the inclusion of the palm miracle (a consolation story) in the precise context of Nativity, is probably based on the narrative of Rachel’s giving birth to

Third, in a former liturgical calendar, the most decisive reading during the feast of the Memory of Mary was Psalm 132 (131):8, where Mary is identified with the Ark. Q 19: 1-63* does not talk about the Ark, but the topics of Temple and covenant are central. And these topics are central also in Hebrews 9:1-10, which was read at the Kathisma church, on 13 August, for the feast of the Memory of Mary, in the first decades of the 7th century. More generally, many of the topics highlighted in the liturgical and homiletic readings of the Kathisma church have counterparts in Q 19:1-63*.

Fourth, the very curious Qur'ānic expression, "Mary sister of Aaron" has seemingly *only one* precedent with "Aaron brother of Mary", and this formula appears in a text which was read at the Kathisma church in the same era. More generally, such close links between Aaron and Marian liturgy are specific to the Jerusalem liturgy of the early 7th century.

Fifth, the Kathisma church is the architectural model of the Dome of the Rock.⁶² "Muslims" knew the building, and transformed a part of it into a mosque at the beginning of the 8th century (but this does not entail that they did not frequent the church previously). Iconography confirms that what was at stake was, at least in part, the palm miracle.

In short, it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the composition of Q 19:1-63* is deeply and directly related to specifically Hagiopolite Marian traditions, all the more so since there are additional arguments which corroborate this thesis [see **Annex 3**, p. 33-35].

Some profiling

The previous analyses allow us to draw some conclusions, at least provisional.⁶³

We might wonder when and where Q 19:1-63* might have been composed. According to Muslim traditions, surah 19 is Meccan. It is not impossible that traditions connected to the Kathisma church had been scattered in the Ḥiǧāz, through stories narrated by pilgrims, or monks. But knowing (maybe) various traditions is one thing; being able to compose a text like Q 19:1-63* is another.

Let us look indeed at the profile of the author of Q 19:1-63*.⁶⁴

1) He is familiar with Luke 1 and related traditions (compare Luke 1:13 and Q 19:3-4; Luke 1:13-22 and Q 19:7-11;⁶⁵ Luke 1:28-38 and Q 19:17-21).

Benjamin in Genesis 35:16-20. The *Protoevangelium of James*, with its gnostic tendencies, makes Mary only say: "Joseph, take me down from off the ass, for that which is in me presses to come forth" (Prot 17:3).

⁶² An analysis of the reasons behind the construction of the Dome of the Rock, and the significance of the monument and its inscriptions, would drive us too far. See especially Sharon (1988), van der Velden (2011) and, about the relations with the Kathisma, van Esbroeck (2004b).

⁶³ Dye (2012:109-121).

⁶⁴ It has become usual to argue from the content of the Qur'ān to the profile of its audience – "if the Qur'ān speaks so much, but so allusively, of Biblical topics, then it means that the community it was addressed to was not a "Pagan" community, but a community of "monotheists" who already knew such Biblical and parabiblical stories". For sure – but we should not stop here: we should also sketch the profile of the author(s).

⁶⁵ There is an interesting variation between the Qur'ān and Luke. According to Luke 1:20, Zachariah will stay mute until John's birth (1:64); according to the Qur'ān, he will stay mute three days (19:10, see also 3:41). Do these three days have a symbolic relation with the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple?

2) He has an intimate knowledge of the traditions related to the Kathisma church – including the *Protoevangelium of James* and the palm miracle – and he presupposes the connection between these independent traditions. He knows, one way or the other, the *Lection of Jeremiah*, a text which was clearly not widespread outside the Hagiopolite communities.

3) He is familiar with other aspects of the Jerusalem Marian liturgy and with the Dormition narratives. In fact, relying on the network of subtexts constituted by the Hagiopolite liturgy is the best explanation for most of the content of Q 19:1-33*.

4) He follows a Christian usage in composing a section on Zachariah and John the Baptist as a preparation for the section on Mary and Jesus, following a Christian usage. Besides, the striking parallels between both sections (2-15 and 16-33) [see **Annex 2**, pp. 31-32] suggest that Q 19:1-33 is not the shortcoming of a complex editorial process, but a text with a striking unity, and whose organization follows a very precise intention.

5) He practices Christian typological exegesis. If we include the section on Abraham, we shall conclude that he also knows the “cycle of Abraham”.

6) He has a remarkable homiletic talent, being able, for example, to merge episodes like the questioning and presentation of Jesus in the Temple in a unique narrative, using the literary device of Jesus speaking from the cradle. This implies that he knows at least some of such “cradle miracle” traditions, which are attested about Jesus and other prophets.

7) He certainly has some knowledge of Aramaic (at worst indirect, but more probably direct). This is confirmed by a play on words made on the name of John the Baptist (19:13). The text reads *wa-ḥanānan min ladunnā*, “and a mercy from Us”. The word *ḥanān* (an hapax in the Qur’ān) does not mean here “grace”, or “tenderness”, but “mercy”, like in Hebrew or Aramaic. And note the name of John in Hebrew: *Yoḥanān*, *i.e.* *Yo-ḥanān*, “God is mercy”. The word for “mercy” is visible also in Aramaic *Yuḥanan*, but it is of course absent in the usual reading of John’s name in the Qur’ān, *i.e.* *Yaḥyā*, and it seems a bit far-fetched to look for it in the Christian reading of the same *rasm*, *Yuḥannā*. When the Qur’ān speaks of “mercy” elsewhere, and especially in this *surah*, it uses *rahma* (Q 19:2, 21, 50, 53).

8) Since the Jerusalem liturgy was in Greek, either he has a good command of Greek, or he belongs to a multilingual circle where some people can translate or explain the Greek liturgy to non-Greek speakers. Palestinian monasteries, famous for their multilingualism at this time, seem a good place for that.⁶⁶

9) He is familiar with the literary genre of the *soghitha* (another hint to his knowledge of Aramaic), and chooses to compose a kind of “Arabic *soghitha*”: the piece is, from a literary point of view, remarkable – this implies he was an Arab, or was perfectly bilingual.

10) His knowledge of Christology is good enough to enable him to write a text of convergence which could work as a kind of biggest common Christological denominator. Were he less apt, he might have added unwelcome ideas for at least one of the parties

⁶⁶ Griffith (1997).

involved (*mu'minūn*,⁶⁷ Chalcedonians, Miaphysites, Nestorians). He is of course also familiar with some of the texts and convictions which circulated in the movement of the *mu'minūn*.

11) Nothing suggests that he relies on oracular words of Muḥammad. Thanks to his intimate knowledge of Palestinian Marian liturgical traditions, he composes a dialogue hymn, following the model of hymns which were sung or recited in a (Christian) liturgical setting.

It is highly unlikely, to say the least, that a scribe corresponding to such a profile could have belonged to the Meccan or Medinan circle of Muḥammad – or more generally to the Ḥiḡāz, except if we are ready to imagine Mecca or Medina as an Arabic Edessa, Antioch, or Jerusalem. The most likely explanation is that this author should be situated elsewhere than the Ḥiḡāz – most probably, indeed, not too far from Jerusalem, since he was extremely familiar with the Hagiopolite liturgy. Besides, such a skillful text requires various specific competencies, and we should wonder how they could have been acquired. The obvious explanation is that our author belongs to the class of the religious *literati*. In other words, he was certainly a Christian monk, who “converted” to the new faith, or put his pen at the service of the newcomers – certainly, therefore, after the conquests.⁶⁸

Q 19:1-63* is in fact a particular case of a more general question – the numerous Qur'ānic passages which are unaccountable if read with the lenses of Muslim tradition. Maybe it is time to tell now a few words about this decisive issue.

According to some scholars:

⁶⁷ A very judicious term popularized by Donner (2010), but whose origin should be sought in Sharon (1988). It refers to Arab-speaking communities, more or less related to Muḥammad's predication, until Marwanid times. It has to be used instead of *muslim*, anachronistic in this context. However, I do not share Donner's view of the *mu'minūn* as an ecumenical movement – and since I often speak of “texts of convergence”, maybe a few remarks are appropriate. The first one concerns the formation of religious identity. The making of any religious identity usually undergoes a threefold process, aptly described by Carlos Segovia: “(1) unclear dissemination of more or less vague identity markers against a brewing background of common ideas and practices, (2) re-dissemination [GD: I would add *re-semanticization*] of such markers along new ad hoc but still fuzzy lines or axes of crystallisation and (3) the final promotion and consolidation of these. In short what usually begins as a juxtaposed set of indeterminate flows, gradually transforms into an agglomeration of interdependent clusters before narrowing into a few well-defined realms, be them ideas, communities, texts or practices” (Segovia (forthcoming 2015)). Such a process is well-known in Jewish and Christian studies, and there is no reason to think it could not be relevant in Early Islamic studies, even if there is in this last case another parameter – an already implemented dichotomy between *conquistadores* and *conquistados*. However, this dichotomy does not imply that the confessional identity of the conquerors was clearly established right from the beginning. My second point is that Donner's view of the movement of the *mu'minūn* as ecumenical raises two problems. First, the notion of *ecumenism* can be misleading. It seems it presupposes religious identities which are already clear and well defined. For sure, we know that the movement of the conquerors was joined by Christians or Jews, and there are texts of convergence in the Qur'ān, with Christians, and to a much lesser extent, with Jews. But all this seems related to phase (1) or maybe (2) of a religious identity building process, whereas ecumenism might easily be understood as an attempt to overcome or allay divisions or tensions which occur in phase (3). Second, there are, in the Qur'ān, Christian and pro-Christian passages, but also anti-Christian polemics (and even more anti-Jewish polemics, which are in general pro-Christian): this does not agree either with the idea of an ecumenical community, or with the way Donner understands the genesis of the Qur'ānic corpus. Speaking of a “text of convergence” is certainly more neutral, more suitable in case of phases (1) and (2), and does not entail any general conclusion about the nature of the communities involved.

⁶⁸ I agree here with Pohlmann (2012:185), except that I prefer to put *converted* between inverted commas, the confessional borders at this time looking too fuzzy to speak of “conversion” without any precision.

“The question at stake is not so much whether the Quran contains or does not contain anachronisms in the strict sense but whether we can detect in it concerns that are best understood as those of editors active in the second half of the seventh century rather than those of the Meccan and Medinan *Urgemeinde*. If the Quranic *rasm* did not reach closure until c. 700, it does seem odd that it should nowhere engage with the major developments that defined Islamic history between 630 and 700, in particular the unprecedented speed with which an alliance of “barbarian” tribes from the fringes of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires established themselves as the masters of an immense territory, and the bitter disputes and civil wars that soon wreaked havoc on the unity of the conquerors”.⁶⁹

It would be interesting to know why the question “whether the Quran contains or does not contain anachronisms in the strict sense” is not so relevant (and what does “in the strict sense” mean?). Anyway, considering that the only significant anachronisms pertain to the history of the Muslim community and its divisions – in other words, taking the absence of explicit references to the first or the second *fitna* as the proof that the Qur’ān was compiled under ‘Uṭmān –, is a *non sequitur*, especially if one is reminded how *little* the Qur’ān directly speaks of contemporary events. And it occults the various passages which look extremely puzzling in the Meccan or Medinan contexts of the Prophet’s career. This concerns, for example: the finality of prophecy (Q 33:40), much more intelligible in a Sufyanid or Marwanid context,⁷⁰ or surah 5, where Christian allusions are so patent that the unavoidable conclusion is that the text is *addressed* to Christians⁷¹ – but in this case, should we believe that Mecca or Medina was a place full of Christians, or should we rather think that the redaction of this surah took place, at least partly, after Muḥammad’s death?

The Qur’ān also displays an equivocal attitude towards Christians: some passages appear Christian, or look for convergence or compromise with Christians (Q 2:87; 5:82-83; 19:1-33...), while others are violently polemical (Q 4:171-172; 5:17, 51; 19:34-40...). Accounting for this fact (which clearly pertains to the concrete situations which gave rise to these contradictory judgments and to the editorial work detectable inside the Qur’ān corpus), within a framework stopping at Muḥammad’s death, seems impossible, and is *at best* very acrobatic if we stop at the time of Uṭmān.

But there is more. We should mention the pericope on Dū l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83-102): its source (a Syriac text, the *Alexander Legend*) has been written, at the earliest, in 629-630, but in all likelihood, it became known to the community of the *mu’minūn* after the conquests.⁷² Moreover, we should keep in mind that other parts of this surah (Q 18:60-82) are in dialogue with another Syriac text, the *Alexander Song*, which is slightly later than the *Legend*, to which

⁶⁹ Sinai (2014:516-517).

⁷⁰ Powers (2014:117-123), Dye (forthcoming 2016b). Q 33:40 is, incidentally, a text which engages a major aspect of the history of the community between 630 and 700, since the finality of prophecy is related to the conflicts with the Alids. See Amir-Moezzi (2011) and Dye (forthcoming 2015a), who argue that the relations between the genesis of the Qur’ān and the history of the conflicts between pro- and anti-Alids should be taken seriously.

⁷¹ Cuypers (2007:396).

⁷² Dye (2011:257-259), Tesei (2013-2014). Attempts to find a common source, or to imagine an earlier version of the *Legend* which would be the source of the Qur’ān and would have been rewritten around 629-630, so as to give the *Legend* as we know it, are desperate moves.

it responds. Therefore, we are dealing with a surah which is absolutely *not* integrated in a Meccan or Medinan context, but which takes sides in debates between Christians occurring outside Arabia, in the decades following the conquests. Furthermore, in terms of theological or exegetical competence, this surah is comparable to the Syriac texts it implicitly converses with – texts which were certainly written by monks.⁷³ Similar remarks pertain to Q 19:1-63*.

Hence the following dilemma: *we cannot say that the general framework given by the Muslim tradition is right and, at the same time, take seriously the Qur'ānic text.* If we take the Qur'ān seriously (namely, if we do not bind it on the Procrustean bed that Muslim tradition prepared for it), we should indeed admit at least one of the following scenarios. *First hypothesis:* the Ḥiǧāz at the time of the Prophet had a level of Christian presence and *literary culture* which was comparable to the cities or monasteries of Syria and Palestine: there were Christians in the Ḥiǧāz, Christian ideas were known, and it was also possible to meet there the kind of scribe who was able to write such texts as (among other examples) surah 3, 5, 18 and 19 (and this pertains to the so-called Meccan and Medinan suras). *Second hypothesis:* at least in part (namely, all the time, or only before the emigration to Yaṭrib), Muḥammad's career did not take place in the Ḥiǧāz, but further north, for example in Trans-Jordan or Palestine. *Third hypothesis:* at the time of the Prophet, there was a Christian presence in the Ḥiǧāz, but the situation was not comparable to Syria or Palestine, or even to what we find further north in the Arabian Peninsula. It was, rather, the subject of a typical process of acculturation. Therefore, if some scholarly Qur'ānic passages were written at this time (or earlier?), the “scholars” who composed them were certainly people situated further north (but maybe also in al-Ḥīra?⁷⁴), with whom the Ḥiǧāzī Arabs maintained relations. *Fourth hypothesis:* we should disconnect, more decidedly, the redaction of the Qur'ān and Muḥammad's career, and acknowledge that a (more or less substantial) part of the Qur'ān was written after the death of Muḥammad (and maybe also, for a smaller part, after 'Uṭmān?). Regarding the *scholarly passages* of the Qur'ān, a model combining the last two hypotheses seems the most plausible solution.⁷⁵

More specifically, about Q 19:1-63*: as I said above, the simplest and most plausible explanation is that it was written after the conquests – and more precisely: after the conquest of Jerusalem (which took place in 635 or 638). Alternative hypotheses are maybe possible, but they all require more complicated and even far-fetched scenarios.⁷⁶ We know

⁷³ It is judicious to cite here the remarkable but largely unknown study by the French byzantinist Roger Paret (1968). There are indeed striking affinities between the way the Qur'ān describes the behavior recommended to the prophets, on one side, and monastic ethics, on the other (Q 24:37): they should practice *ṣalāt* (Q 10:87; 14 40; 20:14) and *zakāt* (Q 19:55; 21:73), persevere in prayer (Q 3:41; 20:33-34), practice fasting (Q 19:26). This type of prophetic ethics could be called the *ethics of the servants of God*.

⁷⁴ On the importance of al-Ḥīra for nascent Islam, see the recent hypothesis designed in van Reeth (2014:81-109). On al-Ḥīra more generally, see Toral-Niehoff (2014).

⁷⁵ Dye (2014:170-171) and (forthcoming 2015a). It is possible to refine the second and third hypotheses – supposing, for example, disparate communities, and so on. I leave aside these questions here.

⁷⁶ Some people could also explain Q 19:1-63* as a kind of collective work, with a Christian informant explaining the Kathisma liturgy to the Prophet or one of its scribes, who would then compose the text. This strikes me as speculative, unconvincing (given the literary and theological content of the work), complicated, and unrealistic. Moreover, it is unable to explain *why* such a text was composed.

that some Christians “converted” to the movement of the conquerors, and we also know that the esplanade of the Temple was a place with a high symbolic charge for the conquerors, since the Arabs built a place of prayer as soon as they entered Jerusalem.⁷⁷ Later testimonies confirm that there was a place of prayer on the esplanade of the Temple, even before the Dome of the Rock was built.⁷⁸ The new community certainly needed a “theology of the Temple”, which should at the same time appeal to the Christians. Q 19:1-63* would certainly be very relevant in such a context.

This chronological hypothesis about surah 19 has interesting consequences on the whole Qur’ānic corpus, provided we examine some parallel passages.

Q 3:33-63, Q 19:1-63* and Q 19:34-40

The most significant parallel to Q 19:1-63* is surah 3, v. 33-63 [see **Annex 4**, p. 36, for a plan of this section].

Like Q 19:1-63*, Q 3:33-63 is a text of convergence between *mu’minūn* and Christians.⁷⁹ It is at the same time a polemicizing address to the Jews.⁸⁰ Both texts are obviously interdependent [see the parallels in **Annex 5**, p. 37-39, for example 19:8-9 vs 3:40; 19:10-11 vs 3:41; 19:20-21 vs 3:47]. It is also clear that Q 19:1-63* is earlier than Q 3:33-63. Indeed, it is more natural to go from “Aaron, brother of Mary” in the *Lectio of Jeremiah* to “Mary, sister of Aaron” in Q 19:1-63*, and then to “Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān” (Q 66:12) and “Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān’s wife” (Q 3:35-36). The last two formulas appear as *variations* on “Mary, sister of Aaron”. Outside these two Qur’ānic passages, it is no mention of ‘Imrān – neither in the Qur’ān nor in the various subtexts possibly involved. It is really hard to imagine why the redactor of Q 3:33-63 would have coined such an unexpected formula, without any knowledge of, or allusion to, “Mary, sister of Aaron” and probably also “Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān”.

Besides, not only does the author of Q 3:33-63 know Q 19:1-63* and use it as a *Vorlage*, but he also knows some of its subtexts: several details of Q 3:33-63 rely on passages from the *Protoevangelium of James* which are *not* mentioned in Q 19:1-63*.⁸¹ Since he uses Q 19:1-63* as a *Vorlage*, knows its subtexts, practices typology, and offers almost always a similar Mariology and Christology, the author of Q 3:33-63 belongs at least to the same milieu as the author of Q 19:1-63*.⁸²

We know that Q 3:33-63 and Q 19:34-40 are both later than Q 19:1-63*. Furthermore, an analysis of Q 19:34-40 shows that this polemical interlude is in fact a patchwork of various

⁷⁷ Flusin (1992).

⁷⁸ Sebeos 102-103 (tr. Macler), Adomnan, *De locis sanctis* 1.1.14, 186.

⁷⁹ Van der Velden (2007).

⁸⁰ Reynolds (2010:53-54).

⁸¹ Q 3:35-36 and Prot 4:1 and 5:2; Q 3:37 and Prot 8 :1; Q 3:44 and Prot 8:2-3; Q 3:45 and Prot 11:2. By the way: if the author of Q 3:33-63 has such a good knowledge of the *Protoevangelium of James*, then, of course, he knows that Mary’s biological father is called Joachim, not ‘Imrān.

⁸² There is also a possible Aramaic background, with the use of *kaṭīran* in 3:41, which displays a phenomenon of *Lehnbedeutung* with Syriac (see also Q 20:33-34). The verse does not mean: “Remember your Lord often”, or “Remember your Lord a lot”, but “Invoke your Lord constantly”, “Do not cease to invoke your Lord”. See Dye (forthcoming 2015b).

Qur'ānic passages [see **Annex 6**, pp. 40-41], including some verses of Q 3:33-63. Q 19:34-40 is therefore *later* than Q 3:33-63. A tentative chronology can thus be suggested [see **Annex 7**, p. 42].

Conclusion: ambiguity and hypertextuality in Q 19:30-33

I would like to conclude with some brief remarks (some of them should be deepened in forthcoming studies) about Q 19:30-33.

1) A first issue concerns the refrain (v. 15 and 33). The same formula (*peace be upon him/me...*) is applied to John the Baptist and Jesus. The context makes clear that the Qur'ān refers here to the *real* death of Jesus. This runs counter the usual “docetic” interpretation of another Qur'ānic verse (Q 4:157), which means, according to the most widespread interpretation, that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but was assumed body and soul into heaven.

There are only three ways to overcome this discrepancy:

a) The first (which is standard in Islamic exegesis and Western studies) will interpret all the passages which seem to refer to Jesus' death (3:55; 5:17, 75, 116-118; 19:33) in light of a docetic reading of Q 4:157. In other words, it will read all these passages as not referring to Jesus' death. This seems to me a hopeless move.

b) The second will acknowledge that the Qur'ān displays an inconsistent Christology, which is sometimes docetic, and sometimes not. This is not excluded, but I think there is a more promising explanation.

c) The third explanation will agree that Q 3:55; 5:17, 75, 116-118; 19:33 refer to Jesus' death, and will suggest a *non docetic* reading of Q 4:157. Such an interpretation of the Qur'ānic narrative of Jesus' crucifixion has been offered recently,⁸³ and there are good reasons (independently of the contradiction between the usual reading of Q 4:157 and other Qur'ānic passages) to take it very seriously, even if the passage at hand is extremely opaque. But if we do this (as I think we should), we have to keep in mind that already early in the 8th century, Muslims interpreted Q 4:157 in a docetic way, according at least to the testimony of John of Damascus.⁸⁴

2) That Q 19:33 mentions Jesus' death and crucifixion brings us to Q 19:32: *wa-lam yağ'alnī ġabbāran šaqiyyan*, “He did not make violent or miserable”. I would like to focus here on *šaqiyyan*.

There are only three occurrences of *šaqiyy* in all the Qur'ān – and only in Q 19: v. 4, about Zachariah, v. 32, about Jesus, and v. 48, about Abraham. The context shows that “not being miserable” means *having one's prayers granted by God*. For example, Zachariah finally got a son. But what was asked by – and granted to – Jesus and Abraham?

⁸³ Reynolds (2009), Mourad (2011).

⁸⁴ See Le Coz (1992:212). Disagreements on this topic were maybe the case very early inside the community of the *mu'minūn*. See Q 5:75, which might be read an argument internal to the community of the Believers.

Earlier in this paper, I highlighted the importance of Hebrews 5:1-10 (a text read on 12 August at the Holy Sepulchre for the commemoration of Aaron) among the probable subtexts of Q 19:1-63*. This text provides a significant clue:

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” (Hebrews 5:7)

This brings us very close to Q 19:32. But what, according to Hebrews 5:7, did Jesus pray for, and how was he “heard? All exegetes do not agree: some believe that this verse refers to Jesus’ *Angst* at Gethsemane and others to his suffering at Golgotha (and some other scholars suggest a mix of both accounts). The most natural reading seems to me, by far, the second one – what is at stake is Jesus’ suffering at Golgotha. In short, Jesus’ prayers do not concern his preservation from an imminent death, but his resurrection out of the realm of death.⁸⁵ If this is how the passage was understood in a Late Antique Jerusalem context, as I think it was, we would have here a very plausible subtext for Q 19:32-33.

What about Abraham? Abraham’s supplication is related to his leaving his country (19:48). Here is God’s answer (19:49):

“So when he had withdrawn from them and what they were serving instead of God [GD: in short, when he had withdrawn from idolatry and chosen the good faith], We granted him Isaac and Jacob, and each one We made a prophet.”

Compare Hebrews 11:8-9:

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.”

The similarity is even more striking if we notice that Hebrews 11 works as a kind of list of prophets who were saved by faith, and were granted their prayers by God (11:4: Abel; 11:5-6: Enoch; 11:7: Noah; 11:8-10, 17-19: Abraham; 11:11-12: Sarah; 11:20: Isaac; 11:21: Jacob; 11:22: Joseph; 11:23-29: Moses). Q 19:51-57 looks like a sort of “condensate” of Hebrews 11, with, in part, some different names: in short, the redactor responsible of Q 19:51-57 might have been inspired by the literary and rhetorical device used in Hebrews 11. Maybe the similarity is fortuitous, but maybe it is not, especially if we keep in mind that Hebrews 11:1-31 was read on six different occasions during the Hagiopolite liturgical year in the early 7th century.

Among these six occasions, one is particularly noteworthy, the 18 July:⁸⁶ “*On the road to Bethlehem, at the Tomb of Rachel*, her commemoration, the deposition of Saint Stephen, *John the Baptist*, the Prophet Zechariah, the Saints Martyrs Phocas and Tarachius, Probus, and Andronicus”. This brings us very close to the Kathisma church. Besides Hebrews 11:1-31, the readings were Genesis 35:9-20 (Rachel’s death), Genesis 48:1-7 (Jacob’s offspring), Zachariah 3:7-6:15a, Matthew 2:16-18 (Rachel’s oracle).

⁸⁵ Richardson (2008).

⁸⁶ Nos. 1097-1102 in Tarnischvili (1960).

The affinities between the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and Q 19:1-63* could certainly be pushed further, but this would require a too long analysis.

3) A text of convergence is often, by nature, very ambiguous – because of what it says, and also because of what it does *not* say. If this surah is a text of convergence – between Christians and “believers” (*mu’minūn*), but also between the various Christian communities –, it is above all through a praise of Mary: her virginity, her purity and her role in the Nativity are celebrated. There is of course no mention of the title Theotokos (mother of God), but if we stick to Q 19: 1-63* (not to Q 19:1-63), there is no negation of this title either. But there is another side, namely, Christology. Jesus, of course, is not called “son of God”, but the text does not display a “low Christology” for all that – Jesus does not appear as a normal human being: his nature is exceptional and supereminent.⁸⁷

Besides, how would a Christian from 7th century Jerusalem understand this text? At first, he might be surprised and disappointed that Jesus is called only a *prophet* – he would have hoped the title “Son of God” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Yet the title “prophet” can also suit Jesus (Matthew 13:57; 21:11; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; 7:16; 13:33; 24:19; John 4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17), and the idea that it is God who appointed Jesus to the prophetic office (19:30, *ǧā’alanī nabiyyan*, “He made me a prophet”) has nothing strange for a Christian (there is a close parallel to this formula in Hebrews 5:5, except that it is about priesthood). The Christian would also recognize many traditions and miracles related to Jesus and Mary. Moreover, he would believe that, *implicitly*, Q 19:1-63* asserts Jesus’ divine sonship and divinity – and such a belief, in this context, would not be absurd.

Why is it so? The answer is rather simple. The Qur’ān explicitly affirms the virginal conception (19:17-22). Since the Qur’ānic narrative owes much to Luke 1, it is not far-fetched to remind of Luke 1:34-35: “‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. *So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*’”

In other words, there is an explicit scriptural basis which, for a Christian, warrants the inference *virginal conception > divine sonship*. For an historian, the inference *divine sonship > divine nature of Jesus* should not be ascribed to Luke, but in a Late Antique (post-Nicaean) context, most of the Christians would surely accept such an inference! In other words, for our Christian from 7th century Jerusalem, *virginal conception > divine sonship > divine nature of Jesus*. The Qur’ān is unmistakably clear about the virginal conception: it is therefore very easy to believe, for a Christian, that Jesus’ divine sonship and divine nature are not denied.

Our Christian would be probably wrong about the real convictions of the *mu’minūn*. In fact, the Christology of the *mu’minūn* agrees with our Christian on two points only: the virginal conception, and the idea that *divine sonship* entails *divine nature*. Since the Christology of the *mu’minūn* rejects the divine nature of Jesus, it must also reject the idea of divine sonship. But rejecting Jesus’ divine sonship while admitting the virginal conception requires a refutation of the following inference (based on Luke 1:34-35): *virginal conception > divine sonship*. Such a refutation can be found nowhere in Q 19:1-63*, which is completely silent on

⁸⁷ Mérad (1968:84-89).

such topics. On the other hand, it can be found in a later passage, Q 3:33-63, more precisely in 3:59. There, the comparison with Adam is *precisely* designed to refute the inference from virginal conception to divine sonship: Jesus is like Adam, who has no father, but who is not called *Son of God*. The chronology we already suggested (Q 19:1-63*, Q 3:33-63, Q 19:34-40), on a philological and literary basis, thus mirrors a more general process, which goes from a kind of indistinctness to a very clear-cut confessional frontier.

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Annex 1: Plan of Q 19:1-63

1. K H Y ‘ Ş

2-15. Story of Zacharia

2. *dikru raḥmati rabbika ‘abdahū zakariyyā* (“Remembrance of the mercy of your Lord (to) His servant Zacharia”)

3-6. Zacharia’s secret prayer (in the Temple) / 7-11. Annunciation to Zachariah / 12-14 Praise of John the Baptist

15. Refrain: *wa-salāmun ‘alayhi yawma wulida wa-yawma yamūtu wa-yawma yub‘aṭu ḥayya* (“Peace (be) upon him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive”)

16-33. Story of Mary and Jesus

16. *wa-ḍkur fī l-kitābi maryama...* (“And remember in the Scripture Mary...”)⁸⁸

16-17. Mary at the Temple / 17-21. Annunciation to Mary / 22/23-26. Nativity / 27-33. Mary and Jesus back to the Temple of Jerusalem = Questioning of Mary at the Temple; Presentation of Jesus at the Temple; (self-)Praise of Jesus

33. Refrain: *wa-s-salāmu ‘alayya yawma wulidtu wa-yawma ‘amūtu wa-yawma ‘ub‘aṭu ḥayya* (“Peace (be) upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I is raised up alive”)

34-40. Controversy section (anti-Christian)

41-50. Story of Abraham and his father

41. *wa-ḍkur fī l-kitābi ‘ibrāhīma* (“And remember in the Scripture Abraham...”)

51-53. Allusion to Moses (and Aaron)

51. *wa-ḍkur fī l-kitābi mūsā...*

54-55. Allusion to Ishmael

54. *wa-ḍkur fī l-kitābi ‘ismā‘īla...*

56-57. Allusion to Idris (Enoch?)

56. *wa-ḍkur fī l-kitābi ‘idrīsa...*

58-63. Conclusion

⁸⁸ This verse (and the others of this kind) should be understood on the model of an address to the assembly in a liturgical setting, or even better, on the model of v. 2, similar to a rubric heading in a lectionary: the root *ḍ-k-r* is associated, above all, to recalling, reminding, remembering (Reynolds (2010:235)), “Scripture” (*kitāb*) referring (as a general rule) to divine teaching, that is to say, Biblical and parabiblical narratives (and not to the Qur’ān itself). The traditional interpretation understands here an order from God to Muḥammad (in this case, the translation would be: “And mention [o Muḥammad!] Mary in the Book [the Qur’ān]”).

Annex 2: Inner parallels between Q 19:2-15 and 16-33

<i>Incipit</i>	<i>Variation on the incipit</i>
² <i>dikru</i> raḥmati rabbika ‘abdahū zakariyyā	^{16a} wa- <i>dkur</i> fī l-kitābi maryama
Remembrance of the mercy of your Lord (to) His servant Zachariah	And remember Mary, in the Scripture

3-6. Zachariah’s secret prayer in the Temple	16-17a. Mary in the Temple
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7-9. Annunciation to Zachariah	17b-21. Annunciation to Mary
⁷ yā-zakariyyā ‘innā nubašširuka bi- <i>ḡulāmin-i</i>	¹⁹ qāla ‘innamā ‘ana rasūlu rabbiki li-‘ahaba laki <i>ḡulāman</i> zakiyya ⁿ
Zachariah! Surely we [the angels? God?] give you good news of a boy	He said: “I am only [surely?] a messenger of your Lord (sent) to grant you a boy (who is) pure.”
^{8a} qāla rabbi ‘annā yakūnu lī <i>ḡulāmun</i>	^{20a} qālat ‘annā yakūnu lī <i>ḡulāmun</i>
He said: “My Lord, how can I have a boy...	She said: “How can I have a boy...
^{8b} wa-kānati mra’atī ‘āqiran wa-qad balaḡtu mina l-kibari ‘itiyya ⁿ	^{20b} wa-lam yamsasnī bašarun wa-lam ‘aku baḡiyya ⁿ
when my wife cannot conceive and I have already reached old age?”	when no human being has touched me, and I not a prostitute?”
⁹ qāla ka- <i>dālika</i> qāla rabbuka huwa ‘alayya hayyinun wa-qad ḥalaqtuka min qablu wa-lam taku šay’a ⁿ	²¹ qāla ka- <i>dāliki</i> qāla rabbuki huwa ‘alayya hayyinun wa-li-naḡ‘alahū ‘āyatan li-n-nāsi wa-raḥmatan minnā wa-kāna ‘amran maqḏiyya ⁿ
He said: “So (it will be)! Your Lord has said, “It is easy for Me – I created you before, when you were nothing.”	He said: “So (it will be)! Your Lord has said, “It is easy for Me. And (it is) to make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us. It is a thing decreed.”

10-11. Silence, signs and Temple	26b-29. Silence, fasting, signs and Temple
¹⁰ qāla rabbi ḡ‘al lī ‘āyatan qāla ‘āyatuka ‘ <i>allā tukallima</i> n-nāsa ṭalāṭa layālin sawiyya ⁿ	^{26b} fa-‘immā tarayinna mina l-bašari ‘aḥadan fa-qūlī ‘innī naḡartu li-r-raḥmāni šawman fa-lan ‘ <i>ukallima</i> l-yawma ‘insiyya ⁿ
He said: “My Lord, give me a sign.” He said: He said: “Your sign is that you will not speak to the people for three (days and) nights.”	If you see any human being, say: “Surely I have vowed a fast to the Merciful, and I shall not speak to any human today.”
¹¹ fa-ḥaraḡa ‘alā qawmihī mina l-miḥrābi fa-	^{27a} fa-‘atat bihī qawmahā taḥmiluhū (...)

'awḥā 'ilayhim 'an sabbiḥū bukratan wa- 'ašiyya ⁿ	²⁹ fa-'ašārat 'ilayhi qālū kayfa nukallimu man kāna fī l-mahdi ṣabiyya ⁿ
So he came out to his people from the sanctuary and inspired them: “Glorify (Him) morning and evening.”	They she brought him to her people, carrying him. (...) Then she referred (them) to him. They said: “How shall we speak to one who is in the cradle, a child?”

1) Zachariah is silenced by God because he asked a question he should not have asked. Mary is commanded to silence by God, but she did nothing wrong – let’s say it is partly required by the logic of the narrative. 2) Zachariah is leaving the Temple when he meets his *people*, in front of the Temple. His muteness is interpreted as the sign of a miracle, and he manages, with gestures (Luke 1:22), to make people glorify God. On the other hand, Mary is taking a reverse path. She is *coming back* to the Temple, where she meets either the whole *people*, or rather the priests at the Temple. She refers, with gestures, to Jesus – who, or whose talk, is the miracle. 3) V. 23-26 have of course no parallel in Q 19:2-15.

12-14. Praise of John the Baptist	30-32. (Self-)praise of Jesus
^{12a} yā-yaḥyā ḥuḍi l-kitāba bi-quwwatin	³⁰ qāla 'innī 'abdu llāhi 'ātāniya l-kitāba wa- ḡa'alanī nabiyya ⁿ
“John! Hold fast the Book/Scripture!”	He said: “Surely I am a servant of God. He gave me the Book and made me a prophet
^{12b} wa-'ātaynāhu l-ḥukma ṣabiyya ⁿ	See v. 30 / See v. 29 fa-'ašārat 'ilayhi qālū kayfa nukallimu man kāna fī l-mahdi ṣabiyyaⁿ
And he gave me wisdom/judgment when I was a child	They said: “How shall we speak to one who is in the cradle, a child?”
¹³ wa-ḥanānan min ladunnā wa-zakātan wa- kāna taqiyya ⁿ	³¹ wa-ḡa'alanī mubārakan 'ayna mā kuntu wa-'awṣānī bi-ṣ-ṣalāti wa-zakāti mā dumtu ḥayyan
And grace from Us, and purity. He was one who guarded himself/pious	He has made me blessed wherever I am, and He recommended me prayer and purity as long as I live,
¹⁴ wa-barran bi-wālidayhi wa-lam yakun ḡabbāran 'ašiyya ⁿ	³² wa-barran bi-wālidatī wa-lam yaḡ'alnī ḡabbāran ṣaqiyya ⁿ
and dutiful/respectful to his parents. And he was neither violent nor disobedient.”	And (to be) dutiful/respectful to my mother. He did not make me violent nor miserable.”

Refrain	Refrain
¹⁵ wa-salāmun 'alayhi yawma wulida wa- yawma yamūtu wa-yawma yub'aṭu ḥayya ⁿ	³³ wa-s-salāmu 'alayya yawma wulidtu wa- yawma 'amūtu wa-yawma 'ub'aṭu ḥayya ⁿ
“Peace (be) upon him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive”	“Peace (be) upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I is raised up alive”

Annex 3: Further points of contact between the Kathisma church and Q 19:1-63*

These points of contact (for reasons of space, my list here is not exhaustive) do not belong to the same kind of evidence highlighted in the main text. They are not *unique parallels*, but they are susceptible to confirm my general thesis in a more indirect way: in fact, if one supposes close links between the Kathisma and Q 19:1-63*, then several Qur'ānic passages, otherwise obscure, can get a convincing interpretation.

1) Q 23:50: *wa-ğa'alnā bna maryama wa-'ummahū 'āyatan wa-'āwaynāhumā 'ilā rabwatin dāti qarārīn wa-ma'īn*

Jesus and Mary found refuge on a high ground (*rabwa*, normally understood as a hill), where there is a flowing spring. The spring (*ma'īn* – this word would not fit in surah 19 because of its rhyme) refers to Q 19:24. But it is impossible that the writer of 23:50 relied only on the text of Q 19, since there is no “high ground” mentioned there. Of course, some people would explain this *high ground* as a purely literary choice, but a glance at the topography of the zone where stood the Kathisma gives another answer – this zone, indeed, was famous for its wells and its hills. [See **Annex 15**, pp. 52-53]

2) Q 19:5-6: This passage looks strange at first sight. Whereas the section on Zachariah is heavily dependent on Luke 1 (even Q 19:3-4, which builds on Luke 1:13), these two verses seem to have no relation at all with Luke. They are also very cryptic: what is Zachariah exactly afraid of, and why does he want an heir from the *house of Jacob*? There is no mention elsewhere in the Qur'ān of *āl ya'qūb* (except in Q 12:6, in a completely different context): so, why Jacob, and not, for example, Abraham, Moses, or Aaron?

Let us proceed in order. Who are the *mawāliya* whose future behavior upsets Zachariah? Since he is a priest in the Temple, they are either the priests of the Temple, who will officiate after his death, or more generally the Jews. But what might they do? I take for granted that the author has a *precise* opponent in mind, well-known enough *not* to be mentioned to the audience, who already knows what is at stake. Given the context, the best explanation lies in a very usual *topos* in Christian Dormition narratives, that is to say, the hostility of the Jews towards Mary: according to many Dormition narratives, they plan to attack the coffin where Mary's body lies, in order to take it and burn it.⁸⁹ There might be other possible explanations, but this one makes quite good sense.

For sure, Zachariah's speech works here as a *delegitimization* of the Jews, especially of the priests who will succeed him – his real and legitimate heir is John, who announces Jesus. Therefore, implicitly, it is Jesus who is the legitimate heir of the Jewish priesthood. This connects John (explicitly) and Jesus (implicitly, but unmistakably) to the topic of priesthood. Given the importance of *Epistle to the Hebrews* in the Aaronian and Marian Jerusalem liturgy, this is a very significant point.

Zachariah's delegitimization of the Jews might be a sufficient explanation of the formula *house of Jacob*. Claiming the heritage of Jacob – and not the heritage of Esau – is a standard anti-Jewish supersessionist motto in Christian literature. It is based, in particular, on

⁸⁹ On this anti-Jewish *topos*, see Shoemaker (1999).

Romans 9:6-13, an originally intra-Jewish and *not* supersessionist motif (building on Malachi 1:2-5), later reinterpreted as a supersessionist *topos*. See also Luke 1:33, which, however, refers to Jesus, not John.

There is a close connection between this *topos* and the Kathisma church. Let us have a look at a famous passage of the *Protoevangelium of James*:

“And when they had come within three miles, Joseph turned and saw her [Mary] sorrowful; and he said to himself: ‘Likely that which is in her distresses her.’ And again Joseph turned and saw her laughing. And he said to her: ‘Mary, how is it that I see in your face at one time laughter, at another sorrow?’ And Mary said to Joseph: ‘Because I see two peoples with my eyes; the one weeping and lamenting, and the other rejoicing and exulting’”.

These visions happen exactly at the place where some Jewish traditions place the death of Rachel. It is therefore not far-fetched to suppose that one of the subtexts of this passage is to be found in Matthew 2:16-18:

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more’ [Jeremiah 31:15].”

The oracle by Jeremiah is supposed to refer to the weeping of Rachel before the exile to Babylon. It is reinterpreted, in *the Gospel of Matthew*, as a reference to the massacre of the Innocents. Neither Rachel’s “original” weeping nor its evangelic reinterpretation have anything to do with Mary’s weeping and laugh. The hypertextuality lies here in the *transposition* of Rachel’s weeping to another context. So the question remains: what is Mary referring to?

We certainly have two subtexts here. The first one is from Luke 2:34-35:

“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the *falling* and *rising* of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’”

This second is Genesis 25:21-25:

“Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, ‘Why is this happening to me?’ So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her: ‘Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.’ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.”

It is very easy to understand Mary’s visions in the *Protoevangelium* along these lines: Mary weeps for the people who won’t follow Jesus (like the Jews), and is happy about his followers. If some people doubted that this idea could have been essential in the context of the Kathisma church in the first decades of the 7th century, we can add a brief reference:

“Rejoice and be glad, daughter of Edom, you who live in the land, because to you the cup of the Lord will be passed.”

This is the *first sentence* of the *Lectio of Jeremiah* (a sentence absent of the *Life of Jeremiah*, of course), and it is an adapted quotation from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* 4:21,⁹⁰ which is originally a sarcastic verse against the enemies of Israel, but which becomes here a sarcastic verse against the Jews, identified as the heirs of Esau, whose land is indeed Edom (Genesis 32:3; 36:8; Malachi 1:2-5).⁹¹

3) Q 19:32: *wa-barran bi-wālidatī*

Why this reference to Jesus who should be dutiful, or respectful, towards his mother? Q 19:14 tells the same about John the Baptist and his two parents, but this last reference is probably motivated by a parallelism with Jesus. The verse refers to Exodus 20:12 and other parallel passages (for example Matthew 15:4). There is of course nothing strange about the idea itself. What is strange is: why such a reference *here*?

According to my analyses, the author of Q 19:1-63* is familiar with the liturgical traditions of the Kathisma church, and especially the *Lectio of Jeremiah*, read on 13 August at the Kathisma for the celebration of the role of Mary in the Nativity. But since this celebration was part of a stational liturgy, we can reasonably suppose that he was also familiar with the other readings done during the Jerusalem Marian liturgy of the first decades of the 7th century – especially the readings done on 15 August for the Dormition of Mary.

Indeed, in the same manuscript as the one giving the text of the *Lectio of Jeremiah*, there is a homily attributed (wrongly) to John Chrysostom, which was read for the celebration of Mary’s Dormition on 15 August. This homily is extant only in Georgian.⁹² The text refers to some of the Biblical passages read during the celebrations of 15 August (Ezekiel 44:2) and 13 August (Isaiah 7:14, Psalm 71:6), and also to some other biblical texts. At the end of his homily, the author writes, answering real or imaginary critics of Mary:

“Could it be that one of those who hear hardly dare say: “Dear brothers, how is it possible that the Virgin reaches such glory [the Dormition]?” He has to shut his mouth, the liar! But reread the commandments of God, what the Lord teaches us: “Honor your father and your mother.” The Lord himself, above all, would he not honor his mother?”⁹³

Q 19:30-32 exhibits a Christological talk by Jesus in the cradle, which works as a legitimation, a defense, of his mother. I find extremely striking that in both passages (the “First Homily of Pseudo-Chrysostom” and surah 19), we have a reference to the same Biblical commandment, which plays, in both cases, exactly the same role. It is hardly a coincidence, especially in light of all the cumulative evidence gathered before.

⁹⁰ Is it a coincidence if we meet Jeremiah so often? Of course not, but the topic is out of place here.

⁹¹ Genesis 36:8: “So Esau (*that is, Edom*) settled in the hill country of Seir”.

⁹² See Outtier (1995:166-167, 168-172) for a description of this homily and a French translation. Contrary to the *Lectio of Jeremiah*, which is known in only one manuscript, we know the text of this homily from four different manuscripts.

⁹³ Outtier (1995:171-172).

Annex 4: Plan of Q 3:33-63

33-34. Introduction. The main prophets and the “prophetical offspring”

35-37. Nativity and childhood of Mary: *'id qālati mra'atu 'imrāna* (“When the wife of ‘Imrān said...”)]

35-37a. Nativity of Mary / 37b. Mary in the Temple

38-41. Story of Zachariah

38. The prayer of Zachariah / 39-41. Annunciation to Zachariah: *fa-nādathu l-malā'ikatu* (“Then the angels called him...”)

42-47. Annunciation to Mary: *wa-'id qālati l-malā'ikatu* (“And when the angels said...”)

42-43. First part / 44. Interlude (editorial “staging”) / 45-47. Second part: *'id qālati l-malā'ikatu...*

48-51. Praise of Jesus

52-54. Jesus and the Apostles

55-58. Death of Jesus; paraenesis

55a. Death of Jesus: *'id qāla llāhu...* (“When God said...”) / 55b-75. Paraenesis / 58. Editorial “staging”

59-64. Conclusion

59. Ante-typology Adam/Jesus / 60-62a. Editorial “staging”⁹⁴ / 62b. Doxology / 63. Divine threat

⁹⁴ Note the internal consistency of the editorial staging.

Annex 5: Parallel passages between Q 19:1-63* and Q 3:33-64

Mary in the Temple	Mary in the Temple
¹⁶ wa-ḍkur fī l-kitābi maryama 'iḍi ntabaḍat min 'ahlihā makānan šarqīyya ⁿ	³⁷ fa-taqabbalahā rabbuhā bi-qabūlin ḥasanin wa-'anbatahā nabātan ḥasanan wa-kaffalahā zakariyyā kullamā daḥala 'alayhā zakariyyā l-miḥrāba waḡada 'indahā rizqan qāla yā-maryamu 'annā laki hādā qālat huwa min 'indi llāhi 'inna llāha yarzuqu man yašā'u bi-ḡayri ḥisāb ⁱⁿ
And remember Mary in the Book, when she withdrew from her family to an eastern place.	So her Lord accepted her fully and cause her to grow up well, and Zachariah took charge of her. Whenever Zachariah entered upon her (in) the Temple, he found a provision (of food) with her. He said: "Mary! Where does this (food) come to you from?" She said: "It is from God. Surely God provides from whomever He pleases without reckoning."

3-6. Zacharia's prayer	38. Zacharia's prayer
^{4b} wa-lam'akun bi-du'ā'ika rabbi šaqīyya ⁿ	^{38b} 'innaka samī'u d-du'ā' ⁱ
I have not been disappointed (miserable) in calling You (before), my Lord	Surely You are the hearer of the call
⁵ wa-'innī ḥiftu l-mawāliya min warā'ī wa-kānati mra'atī 'āqiran fa-hab lī min ladunka waliyya ⁿ ⁶ yariṭunī wa-yariṭu min 'āli ya'qūba wa-ḡ'alhu rabbi raḍīyya ⁿ	^{38b} hunālika da'ā zakariyyā rabbahū qāla rabbi hab lī min ladunka <u>ḍurriyyatan</u> ṭayyibatan
Surely I fear (who) the successors will be/what the successors will do after me, and my wife cannot conceive. So grant me from Yourself an heir/ally, (who) will inherit from me and inherit from the House of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, pleasing."	There [in the Temple, see v. 37] Zachariah called on his Lord. He said: "O Lord, grant me a good descendant from Yourself."

7-11. Annunciation to Zachariah	39-41. Annunciation to Zachariah
⁷ yā-zakariyyā 'innā nubašširuka bi-ḡulāmin-i smuhū yaḥyā lam naḡ'al lahū min qablu samiyya ⁿ	³⁹ fa-nādathu l-malā'ikatu wa-huwa qā'imun yuṣallī fī l-miḥrābi 'anna llāha yubašširuka bi-yaḥyā muṣaddiqan bi-kalimatī mina llāhi wa-sayyidan wa-ḥašūran wa-nabiyyan mina ṣ-šāliḥīn ^a
Zachariah! Surely we [the angels? God?] give	And the angels called him while he was

you good news of a boy	standing, praying in the Temple: “God gives you good news of John, confirming a word from God. He will be a man of honor, an ascetic, and a prophet from among the righteous
⁸ <i>qāla rabbi ’annā yakūnu lī ḡulāmun wa-kānati mra’atī ’āqiran wa-qad balaḡtu mina l-kibari ’itiyyaⁿ</i>	^{40a} <i>qāla rabbi ’annā yakūnu lī ḡulāmun wa-qad balaḡaniya l-kibaru wa-mra’atī ’āqirun</i>
He said: “My Lord, how can I have a boy, when my wife cannot conceive and I have already reached old age?”	He said: “My Lord, how can I have a boy, when old age has already passed upon me and my wife cannot conceive?”
⁹ <i>qāla ka-dālika qāla rabbuka huwa ’alayya hayyinun wa-qad ḡalaqtuka min qablu walam taku šay’aⁿ</i>	^{40b} <i>qāla ka-dālika llāhu yaf’alu mā yašā^u</i>
He said: “So (it will be)! Your Lord has said, “It is easy for Me – I created you before, when you were nothing.”	He said: “So (it will be)! God does whatever He pleases.”
^{10a} <i>qāla rabbi ḡ’al lī ’āyatan</i>	^{41a} <i>qāla rabbi ḡ’al lī ’āyatan</i>
He said: “My Lord, give me a sign.”	He said: “My Lord, give me a sign.”
^{10b} <i>qāla ’āyatuka ’allā tukallima n-nāsa ṭalāṭa layālin sawiyyaⁿ</i>	^{41b} <i>qāla ’āyatuka ’allā tukallima n-nāsa ṭalāṭata ’ayyāmin ’illā ramzan</i>
He said: “Your sign is that you will not speak to the people for three (days and) nights.”	He said: “Your sign will be that you will not speak to the people for three days, except by gestures.”
¹¹ <i>fa-ḡaraḡa ’alā qawmihī mina l-miḡrābi fa-’awḡā ’ilayhim ’an sabbiḡū bukratan wa-’ašiyyaⁿ</i>	^{41c} <i>wa-dkur rabbaka kaṭīran wa-sabbiḡ bi-l-’ašiyyi wa-l-’ibkārⁱ</i>
So he came out to his people from the Temple and inspired them: “Glorify him morning and evening.”	Do not cease to remember your Lord, and glorify (Him) in the evening and the morning.”

17-21. Annunciation to Mary	42-47. Annunciation to Mary
¹⁹ <i>qāla ’innamā ’ana rasūlu rabbiki li-’ahaba laki ḡulāman zakiyyaⁿ</i>	⁴⁵ <i>’iḡ qālata l-malā’ikatu yā-maryamu ’inna llāha yubašširuki bi-kalimatin minhu smuhu l-masīḡu ’īsā bnu maryama waḡīhan fī d-dunyā wa-l-’āḡirati wa-mina l-muqarrabīn^a</i>
He said: “I am only [surely?] a messenger of your Lord (sent) to grant you a boy (who is) pure.”	When the angels said: “Mary! Surely God gives you good news of a word from Him: his name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, eminent in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near.
	⁴⁶ <i>wa-yukallimu n-nāsa fī l-mahdi wa-kahlan</i>

	wa-mina ş-şālihīn ^a
See v. 29-33.	He will speak to the people (while he is still) in the cradle and in adulthood, and (he will be) one of the righteous.”
²⁰ qālat 'annā yakūnu lī ġulāmun wa-lam yamsasnī bašarun wa-lam 'aku baġiyya ⁿ	^{47a} qālat rabbi 'annā yakūnu lī waladun wa-lam yamsasnī bašarun
She said: “How can I have a boy, when no man has touched me, nor am I a prostitute?”	She said: “My Lord, how can I have a child, when no man has touched me?”
²¹ qāla ka-dāliki qāla rabbuki huwa 'alayya hayyinun wa-li-naġ'alahū 'āyatan li-n-nāsi wa-raḥmatan minnā wa-kāna 'amran maqḍiyya ⁿ	^{47b} qāla ka-dāliki llāhu yaḥluqu mā yašā'u
He said: “So (it will be)! And (it is) to make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us.	He said: “So (it will be)! God creates whatever He pleases.
^{21b} wa-kāna 'amran maqḍiyya ⁿ	^{47c} 'idā qaḍā 'amran fa-'innamā yaqūlu lahū kun fa-yakūn ^u
It is a thing decreed.” 19:35b = 3:47c	When He decrees something, He simply says to it: ‘Be!’, and it it is.”

Annex 6: Q 19:34-40 as a Qur'ānic patchwork

v. 34: *dālika 'īsā bnu maryama qawla l-ḥaqqi llaḍī fīhi yamtarūna* (That was Jesus, son of Mary, a statement of truth, about which/whom they are in doubt/they dispute.)

Who is the “they”? The following verses suggest: the Christians. But the identity of the people involved is, at first, unclear, and does not refer to any of the characters involved in the preceding verses, and certainly not to the “natural” referent, given the previous pericope (the Jews).

v. 35a: *mā kāna li-llāhi 'an yattaḥida min waladin subḥānahū* (“It is not for God to take/to have any son. Glory to Him”)

This is a typical formula in the Qur'ān, almost always followed by a doxology (Q 2:116; 17:111; 18:4 (no doxology, but see 18:1); 19:88-92; 21:26; 23:91; 25:2; 39:4; 72:3).

v. 35b: *'idā qaḍā 'amran fa-'innamā yaqūlu lahū kun fa-yakūnu* (When He decrees something, He simply says to it: ‘Be!’, and it is.)

The same verse occurs three times in the Qur'ān: 2:117; 3:47; 40:68. Q 19:35 and 2:116-117 are particularly close, since 2:116 and 19:35a are almost identical.

19:35	2:116-117
<i>mā kāna li-llāhi 'an yattaḥida min waladin subḥānahū 'idā qaḍā 'amran fa-'innamā yaqūlu lahū kun fa-yakūn^u</i>	<i>wa-qālū ttaḥada llāhu waladan subḥānahū bal lahū mā fī s-samāwāti wa-l-'arḍi kullun lahū qānitūn^a badī'u s-samāwāti wa-l-'arḍi wa-'idā qaḍā 'amran fa-'innamā yaqūlu lahū kun fa-yakūn^u</i>
It is not for God to take/to have any son. Glory to Him. When He decrees something, He simply says to it: ‘Be!’, and it is.	They said: “God has taken/has a son.” Glory to Him! No! Whatever is in the Heavens and the earth (belongs) to Him! All are obedient before Him, originator of the heavens and earth. When He decrees something, He simply says to it: ‘Be!’, and it is.

A comparison between 19:35b and 3:47 shows that 3:47 is earlier. In 3:47, the Qur'ānic formula occurs in a very natural context (developing Q 19:21). It answers Mary's (understandable) query: “My Lord, how can I have a child, when no man has touched me?” The answer is that God is all-powerful: He gives life and death (Q 40:68), He can bring back to life, He created the heavens and the earth... But what is the role of this same formula in 19:35? The idea seems that it would be shameful for God to have a son. Why not – but how much does *'idā qaḍā 'amran fa-'innamā yaqūlu lahū kun fa-yakūnu* contribute to the argument, especially in comparison to its input in Q 3:47? The obvious conclusion is that the argument of Q 3 is the original setting of the sentence, which has been later re-used in another setting, where it is less relevant.

v. 36: *wa-'inna llāha rabbī wa-rabbukum fa-'budūhu hādā širāṭun mustaqīmun* (“Surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve/worship Him! This is a straight path.”)

This verse is identical to 3:51 and 43:64 (see also 36:61 and 43:61 for *hādā širāṭun mustaqīmun*). It is in fact a Qur'ānic *topos* (similar idea in Q 29:46; 42:15).

v. 37a: *fa-ḥtalafa l-'aḥzābu min baynihim* (“But the factions differed among themselves.”)

This verse is identical to 43:65a.

v. 37b: *fa-waylun li-llaḍīna kafarū min mašhadi yawmin 'azīmin* (“So woe to those who disbelieve on account of (their) witnessing a great Day.”)

Compare 43:65b: *fa-waylun li-llaḍīna ḡalamū min 'aḍābi yawmin 'alīmin* (“So woe to those who have done evil because of the punishment of a painful Day!”).

All this shows a remarkable closeness between Q 19:36-37 and Q 43:64-65:

19:36-37	43:64-65
³⁶ <i>wa-'inna llāha rabbī wa-rabbukum fa-'budūhu hādā širāṭun mustaqīm^{un}</i>	⁶⁴ <i>'inna llāha huwa rabbī wa-rabbukum fa-'budūhu hādā širāṭun mustaqīm^{un}</i>
And surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve/worship Him! This is a straight path.	Surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve/worship Him! This is a straight path.
^{37a} <i>fa-ḥtalafa l-'aḥzābu min baynihim</i>	^{65a} <i>fa-ḥtalafa l-'aḥzābu min baynihim</i>
But the factions differed among themselves.	But the factions differed among themselves.
^{37b} <i>fa-waylun li-llaḍīna kafarū min mašhadi yawmin 'azīminⁱⁿ</i>	^{65b} <i>fa-waylun li-llaḍīna ḡalamū min 'aḍābi yawmin 'alīminⁱⁿ</i>
So woe to those who disbelieve on account of (their) witnessing a great Day.	So woe to those who disbelieve on account of (their) witnessing a great Day.

The following verses in both suras display similar eschatological themes, but the literary dependency is less massive. It is clear, anyway, that Q 19:36-37 is a copy, and relocation, of Q 43:64-65 (and not the reverse). Q 43:65a fits its cotext much better: it refers to the fact that among the people of Israel, to whom Jesus was sent (Q 43:59ff), some people believed, and others did not (see Q 43:63, where Jesus “brings the clear signs”, and is not followed by a good part of the people of Israel – see for example Q 61:6). On the other hand, Q 19:37a occurs suddenly, and the identity of “the factions” (in fact, people who have an erroneous Christology, and people who stick to the good one) has to be guessed from the cotext and the intentions of the interpolator.

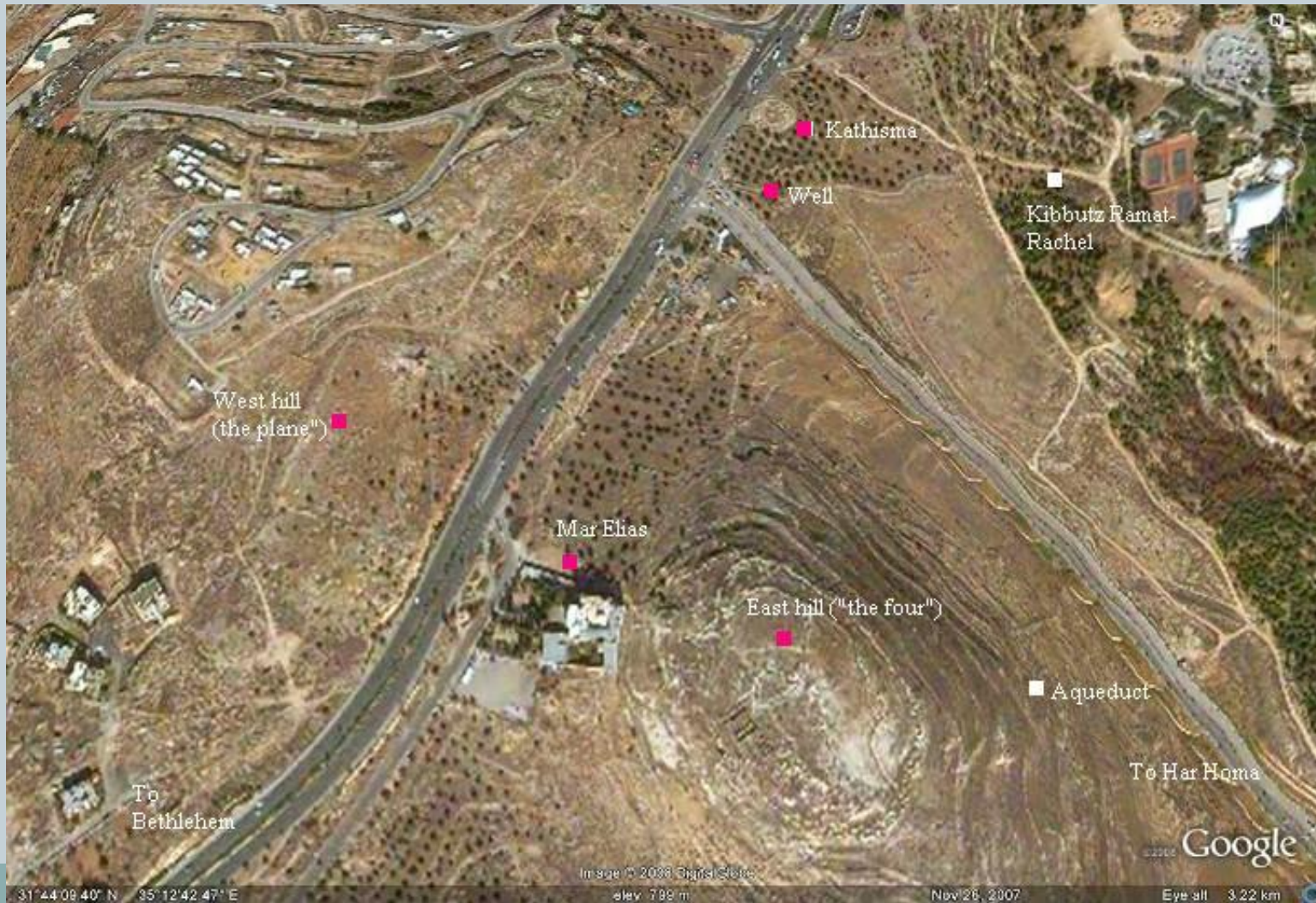
The previous analyses also confirm that v. 34-40 are an interpolation (and certainly very late in the development of the Qur'ānic corpus): not only, as we saw, do they disrupt the general flow of Q 19:1-63* (stylistically and theologically), but they resort to a completely different method of composition.

Annex 7: Chronological table

<i>Lection of Jeremiah</i>	Q 19:1-63*	Q 3:33-63	Q 19:34-40
<i>Terminus post quem:</i> Mauritius' liturgical reform (end of the 6 th century)	<i>Terminus post quem:</i> most probably 635 or 638.	<i>Terminus post quem:</i> later than Q 19:1-63*	<i>Terminus post quem:</i> later than Q 3:33-63.
<i>Probable date:</i> First decades of the 7 th century		<i>Probable date:</i> Hard to assess. Maybe in the 650s?	
<i>Terminus ante quem:</i> earlier than Q 19:1-63*	<i>Terminus ante quem:</i> earlier than Q 3:33-63	<i>Terminus ante quem:</i> earlier than Q 19:34-40	<i>Terminus ante quem:</i> earlier than the Dome of the Rock

Van der Velden (2008:164-173) considers that Q 5:116 answers a pastoral letter by the catholicos Īšō'yahb III. If true, it would situate the composition of Q 5:110-119 in the 650s. Van der Velden seems to suppose that Q 5:110-119 is later than Q 3:33-63, but Pohlmann (2012:17-178) argues that Q 3:46-51 is later than Q 5:110. More research is needed on these difficult but decisive issues.

Annex 8: site of the Kathisma



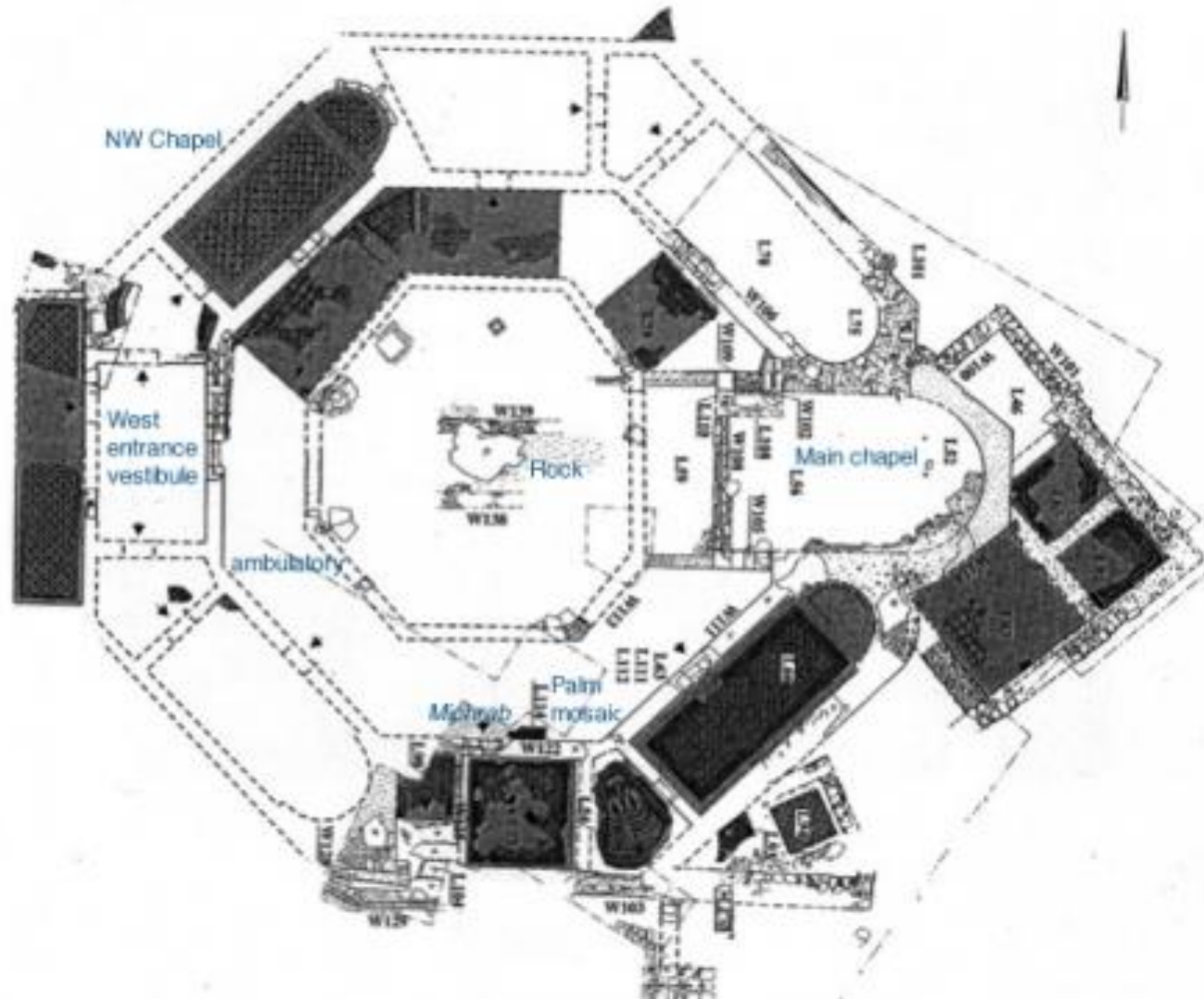
Annex 9a: the Church of the Kathisma



Annex 9b: the Church of the Kathisma



Annex 10: plan of the Kathisma



Annex 11: mihrab of the Kathisma



Annex 12: mosaics of the Kathisma



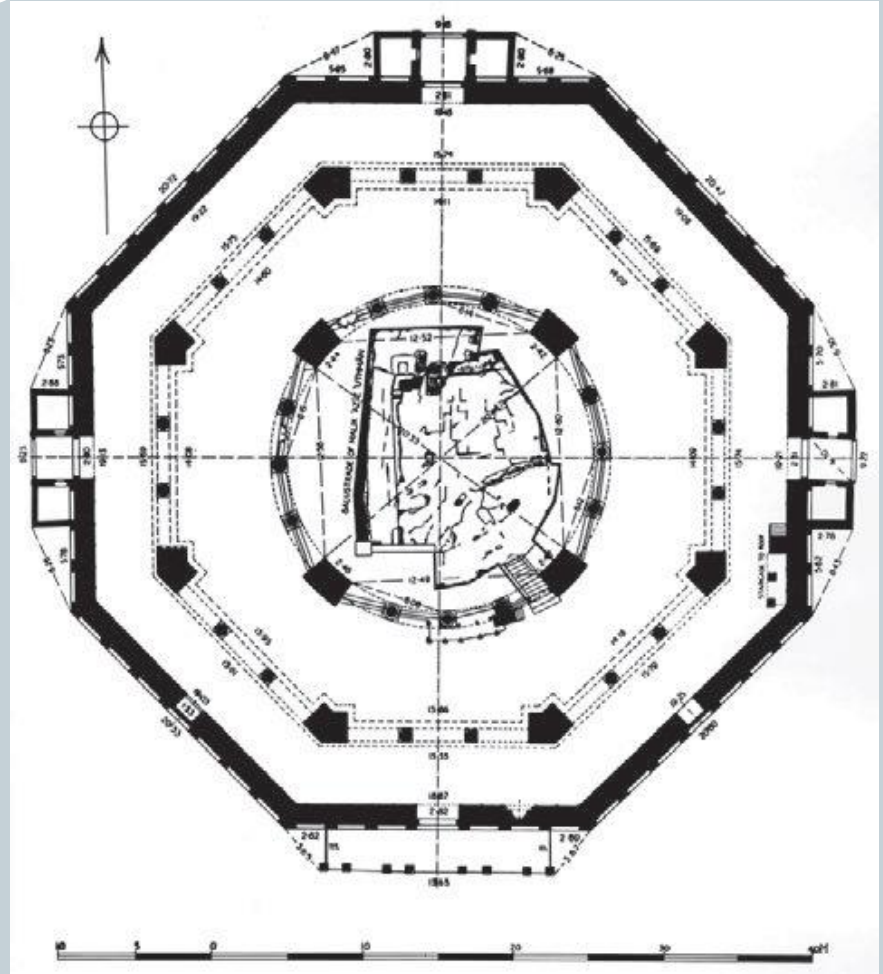
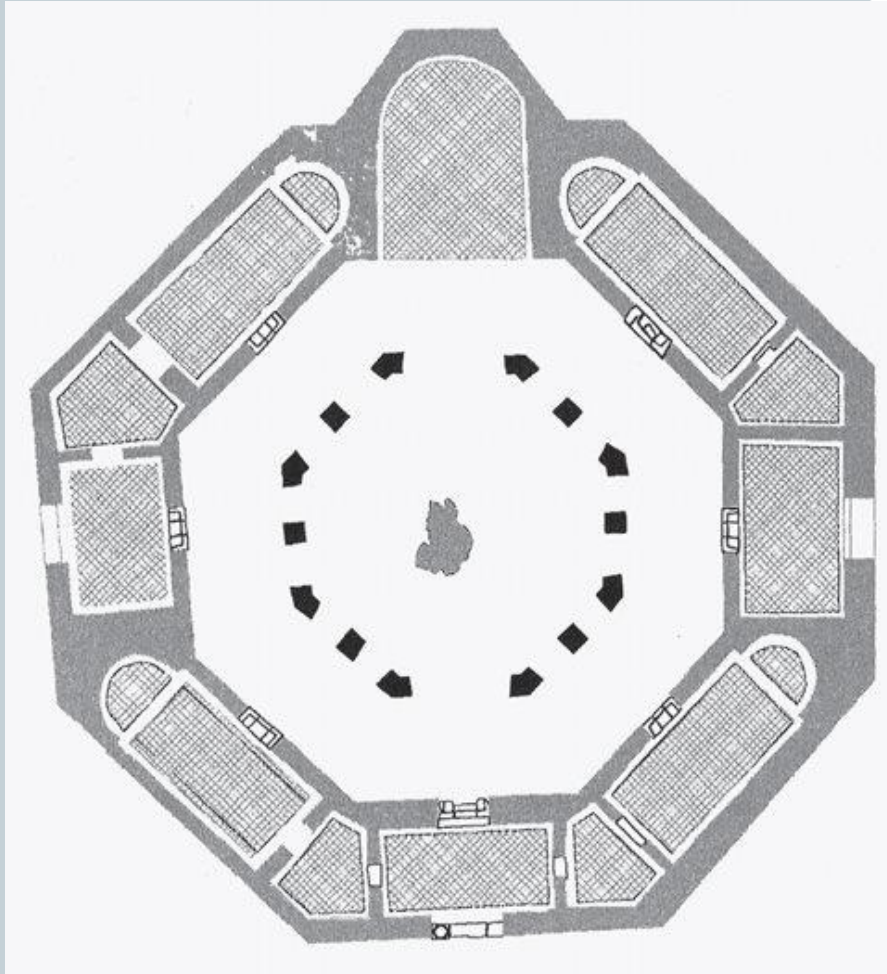
Annex 13a: the palm tree



Annex 13b: the palm tree



Annex 14: Kathisma / Dome of the Rock



Annex 15a: Pool, near the Kathisma Church



Annex 15b: Hill of the Four

