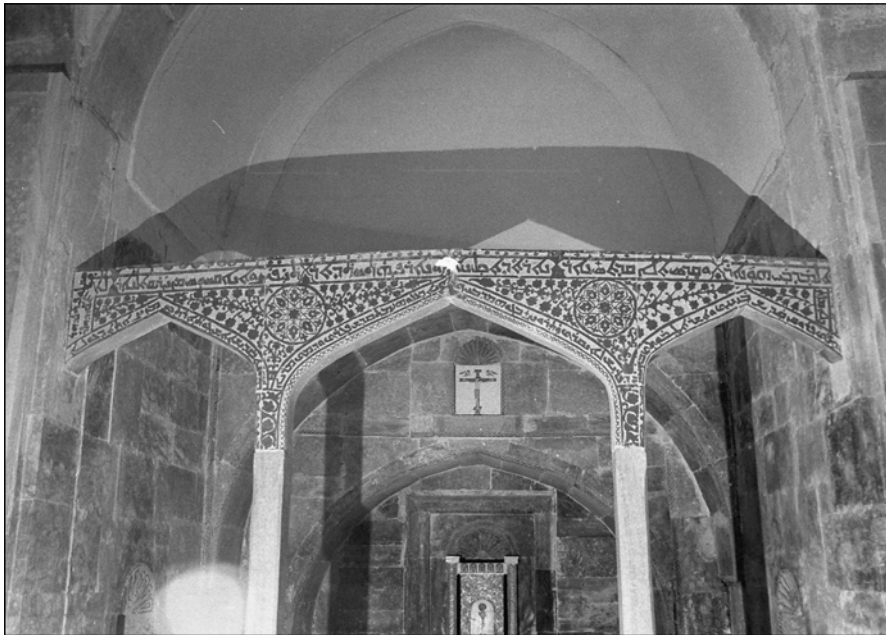


The Canadian Society for Syriac Studies

JOURNAL

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2005



- Sebastian Brock - Oxford University
- Hidemi Takahashi - Chuo University, Japan
- Jan van Ginkel - Leiden University
- NIU Ruji - Xinjiang University
- Debra Foran - University of Toronto
- Amir Harrak - University of Toronto

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de la Société Canadienne des Etudes Syriaques**

The JCSSS is a refereed journal published annually, and it contains the transcripts of public lectures presented at the Society and possibly other articles and book reviews.

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The aim of the CSSS is to promote the study of the Syriac culture which is rooted in the same soil from which the ancient Mesopotamian and biblical literatures sprung. The CSSS is purely academic, and its activities include a series of public lectures, one yearly symposium, and the publication of its Journal. The Journal is distributed free of charge to the members of the CSSS who have paid their dues, but it can be ordered by other individuals and institutions for the following fees: \$25.00 for individuals and \$50.00 for institutions. Payment must be made in US dollars for orders from outside Canada. See the address of the CSSS on the back cover.

The Canadian Society for Syriac Studies

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Cover Picture

The Sanctuary of the Church of al-Ṭahra “the Virgin” in Mosul, Iraq; Photo A. Harrak.

FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the fifth issue of the *Journal of the CSSS*, containing papers given both at CSSS events and at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto (NMC) during the past two years. I would like to thank all the members of the CSSS as well as the NMC Department for sponsoring these lectures.

The first paper, by Dr. Sebastian Brock of Oxford University, explores the image of the interior mirror exploited quite intensively by several Syriac writers, from the Odes of Solomon (2nd century) to John Dalitha (8th century). Prominent among the authors who used this image is St Ephrem (4th century) and several mostly East Syriac writers from the 7th and 8th centuries, who are extensively quoted in English translation. As the author mentions, the mirror as a metaphor is also known in Islamic Sufi literature and in some Buddhist schools, a fact that highlights its intercultural popularity.

Dr. Hidemi Takahashi, Chuo University, Tokyo, tackles a topic relevant to the theme of the CSSS Symposium II *The Role of the Syriac People in the Translation Movement during the Abbasid Period* (see the *Journal of the CSSS* 4 [2004]). His paper is on the

most famous among the translators, Ḥunain son of Ishāq, known to have produced as many as 95 Syriac translations of Galen's medical works, but little if any in other fields of knowledge. The paper points out that Ḥunain did, in fact, translate works on Aristotelian philosophy into Syriac, and taking into consideration one such work that managed to survive, it brilliantly illustrates through meticulous textual analyses how to recover lost portions of a work through the use of subsequent works dependent upon it.

Bishop John of Ephesus or of Asia, a remarkable Syriac writer of the 6th century, is the focus of a paper written by Dr. Jan van Ginkel, Leiden University, the Netherlands. John's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Lives of Eastern Saints* both written in Syriac, are testimonies of the theological strife that had stricken the various Christian peoples of his time and that confronted his Syriac Orthodox community with the Greek Chalcedonian one. Interestingly, his views also differed from later Syriac writers in that he dealt with contemporary events with no idea of how they would unfold, whereas the latter dealt with them as past history.

We continue to publish one other section of a public lecture given by Prof. Niu

Ruji, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, China, sponsored by both the CSSS and the NMC Department in 2004. Several Nestorian grave inscriptions, Uighur and Syriac, are published here, with a table elucidating the Syriac writing system, including a list of Turkic-Uighur consonants and vowels transliterated and transcribed. These inscriptions are difficult to decipher and we are very grateful to Prof. Niu for his painstaking effort and epigraphic expertise, as he presents them to the scholarly community worldwide for further research.

Dr. Debra Foran of our NMC Department discusses an ascetic tradition well-known in Syriac Christianity, stylitism. Modern studies on stylites confine themselves mostly to Syria and further west where the relevant documentation, both lit-

erary and archaeological, abounds, but they seldom expand geographically to cover Palestine. Foran fills this gap by exploiting archaeological material—namely two towers associated with a network of monasteries on Mt Nebo—to point out to a southern expansion of this peculiar ascetic practice.

The reader will find an obituary commemorating a major Syriac scholar, David J. Lane, who passed away in January 2005 while lecturing at the St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, Kerala, India. David taught Aramaic and Syriac at the University of Toronto for several years and so he will be particularly missed by his former colleagues, students and friends. This issue of the *Journal of the CSSS* is dedicated, in loving memory, to David, as an expression of appreciation and admiration for his exemplary career.

A.H.

THE IMAGERY OF THE SPIRITUAL MIRROR IN SYRIAC LITERATURE¹



SEBASTIAN BROCK
OXFORD UNIVERSITY

‘Anyone who hears the message but does not act on it is like someone who looks at his face in the mirror: he glances at himself and goes his way, forgetting what he was like’ (James 1:23-24).

A quick glance in the mirror is something everyone is likely to do at least once a day. It is not surprising that Syriac writers, who delight in employing everyday imagery such as putting on and taking off one’s clothes, as a vehicle for their spiritual teaching,² should pick up and develop this particular image. As their starting point, however, they generally prefer to take two passages in Paul’s Letters to the Corinthians, since there the mirror takes on a more positive role. In 1 Corinthians 13:12 Paul contrasts seeing in the mirror now ‘in a parable’ (thus the Peshitta) with seeing face to face ‘then’, that is, at the eschaton. Here the mirror is presented as a temporary means of spiritual vision. More positive still is 2 Corinthians 3:18, where Paul contrasts those who do not ‘turn to the Lord’ as having a veil over their face when the Old Testament is read, whereas ‘we all with uncovered faces see the glory of the Lord as in a mirror’.³ As will be

seen, the idea of the Scriptures as a ‘mirror’ was to prove particularly popular.

The mirror used as a metaphor in spiritual teaching is a feature of many different faith traditions, perhaps especially among the Sufis and in certain Buddhist schools.⁴ What all writers of the pre-modern period have in mind is not the glass mirrors with which we are familiar today, but metal mirrors which needed to be kept in a high state of polish in order to function properly. Often such mirrors in antiquity were works of art in themselves, particularly fine examples being produced by the Etruscans. The imagery of the mirror can be used in a number of different ways. Basically, Syriac writers make use of two different approaches. Earlier writers tend to use the first model, while later ones prefer the second.

(1) The mirror may be identified as anything that can reflect divine reality; the eye that beholds the mirror is not, of course, the physical eye, but the interior eye of the heart, the spiritual centre of the human being. In order to see the mirror properly, the eye has to be ‘clear’. According to an understanding of optics that was current in antiquity, in order to function properly, the physical eye needed to be filled with light; in the case of the interior eye it is faith, rather than

light, that is needed for this eye to function, and the greater the faith, the more the interior eye is enabled to see. With this model, the mirror is usually assumed to be fully polished, and any failure to see what is in it is due to inadequacy on the part of the eye that beholds it. It is this model which is implied in Wisdom 7:26, where (in the Peshitta version) 'Wisdom is a mirror of the glory (of God, available) for all the servants of God'.

(2) Instead of the mirror being external, something that a person, using their interior eye, sees *outside* themselves, the mirror is itself an *interior* mirror, being 'the mirror of the heart' or 'soul'. The intended role of this interior mirror is to reflect the image of God in which humanity is created (Genesis 1:26-7), but in order for this to happen, the mirror has to be in a high state of polish, and the emphasis is now on this aspect, rather than on the condition of the interior eye.

The earliest Syriac text to use the metaphor of the mirror is to be found in one of the Odes of Solomon. These beautiful poems perhaps belong to the second half of the second century, though their background remains very unclear. Ode 13 is very short and reads as follows:

See how our mirror is the Lord:
open your eyes and see yourselves⁵ in
Him;
learn what your face is like,
and proclaim praises to His Spirit.
Wipe the filth⁶ from your faces,
and you will be without blemish at all
times with Him.

Serving as a mirror, the Lord shows up the 'filth' on the face of the person who looks into him; this discovery of what one might look like gives rise to praise, accompanied by the action of wiping this 'filth' away,

thus making it possible to remain 'without blemish', since looking at the mirror of the Lord will immediately show up any hint of a blemish, and action can be taken to remove it at once.

It is not until well into the fourth century that we have any major Syriac authors preserved. Whereas Aphrahat shows no interest in mirror imagery, Ephrem, by contrast, rejoices in employing it.⁷ Given that one of the polarities that Ephrem employs is the contrast between beauty and ugliness as spiritual and moral qualities, his use of mirror imagery is not so surprising.

In the following passage, from the 16th Nisibene hymn, Ephrem is primarily interested in the need for the mirror to be kept polished in order for it to function properly:

1. One complains about a mirror if its
clarity is obscured
because it has become spotted, or
grime has built up,
covering it over for those who look
into it.

(Refrain) Blessed is He who has pol-
ished our mirror!

2. Beauty is no longer adorned in that
mirror,
blemishes are no longer reprov'd in
its reflection:

it is a cause of grievance as far as any-
one beautiful is concerned,
seeing that beauty gets no advantage
from it in the form of adornments
as benefit.

3. Blemishes can no longer be rooted
out with its aid,
adornments can no longer be added
with its help.

The blemish that now remains is a
cause for offence,
that no embellishment has taken place
is a further loss: offence and loss
have met together!

4. If our mirror is darkened, then it is a source of joy to those morally ugly, in that their blemishes are no longer reprov'd; whereas if our mirror is polished and shining, then it is our free will that has been adorned.

(Nisibene Hymns, 16:1-4)

Elsewhere he makes a similar point:

It is very hard for a wicked person to look at his own (moral) ugliness: Goodness comes to him like a mirror that rebukes his ugliness just when he thinks he is beautiful!

(Hymns on Virginity, 11:1).

Thus far Ephrem has just been concerned with moral issues. More frequently he employs mirror imagery to illustrate some theological point. Living at the time of the Arian controversies, Ephrem devotes many of the Hymns on Faith to the question of the relationship between Creator and creation, and which side of the 'chasm' (as he describes it) between them the Son should be located. Ephrem of course placed the Son on the side of the God the Father, as himself Creator, but this left unanswered a related question: given that the 'chasm' cannot be crossed, how could human beings have any knowledge of God prior to the Incarnation when, in standard early Syriac phraseology, God the Word 'put on the body'? Ephrem's answer is to say that, prior to the Incarnation, God 'put on human terms', that is, allowed himself to be described in human language in the biblical text, even though almost all the terms used were necessarily 'borrowed' from human experience and so by no means represented God's true nature: in modern terminology they are just anthropomorphisms. This being the case, it is manifestly

misguided to treat such language about God in the Bible in a literal way; to illustrate his point Ephrem humorously compares God teaching humanity about himself to a human being who tries to teach a parrot to talk by using a mirror:

A person who is teaching a parrot to speak

hides behind a mirror and teaches it in this way:

when the bird turns in the direction of the voice which is speaking

it finds in front of its eyes its own resemblance reflected;

it imagines that it is another parrot, conversing with itself.

The man puts the bird's image in front of it,

so that it might thereby learn to speak.

This bird is a fellow creature with the man,

but, although this relationship exists, the man beguiles and teaches

the parrot something alien to itself by means of itself;

in this way he speaks with it.

The Divine Being, who in all things is exalted above all things,

in His love bent down from on high and acquired from us what we are accustomed to:

He has laboured by every means so as to turn all to Himself.

(Hymns on Faith, 31: 6-7)

The biblical text, properly understood, itself serves as a mirror in which different aspects of divine reality ('Truth') are capable of being seen:

The Scriptures are laid out like a mirror

and the person whose eye is clear sees therein the image of Truth;

in them is placed the image of the Father,

depicted there is the image of the Son,
and that of the Holy Spirit as well.
(Hymns on Faith, 67: 8-9)

In order to see 'the image of Truth' the eye must be 'clear'; this means, on Ephrem's understanding of optics, that, just as the physical eye must be full of light in order to see clearly, so too the spiritual, or interior, eye must be full of faith if it is to function properly.

There are also places in the biblical text where the Scriptures serve as a mirror which can be used for looking at one's true self:

In the mirror of the Commandments
I will behold my interior face
so that I may wash off the dirt on my
soul
and clean away the filth from my
mind,
lest the Holy One, to whom I am be-
trothed, see me
and stand back from me in horror.
(Hymns preserved in Armenian
Hymns, 6: 42-47)

What enables the soul to see itself in this mirror is the fact that it is endowed with *melltha*, literally 'speech', but here in the sense of 'rationality', the feature which marks human beings off from other animals:

For the soul becomes visible through
melltha, which serves as its
mirror;
by this *melltha* the soul is enabled to
see itself,
for it is by *melltha* that its honour is
greater than that of dumb animals.
(Hymns on Faith, 1: 12)

While the body needs an external mirror in which to see itself, human beings are in fact provided with an inbuilt interior mirror, since they are endowed with *melltha*; but for *melltha* to function in this way,

there is one basic condition:

The mind is capable of seeing itself—
provided it is beautiful,
whereas the body cannot scrutinize its
face without an (external) mirror.
However, the mind has become like
the body,
unable of its own accord to see itself.
(Hymns on Faith, 34: 4)

Where the biblical text serves as a mirror in which various aspects of divine Reality can be seen, the mirror is important for Ephrem, not only for what is seen in it, but also because a mirror instructs through its own relationship to the image it reflects. The polished metal itself remains unchanged, reflecting the changeless Deity, but the reflections seen in the mirror are always changing, corresponding to the changing forms under which God allows himself to be described in the Bible. Ephrem brings this out as he reflects on the vision in Daniel 7 and the 'Aged of Days':

A mirror, which does not know old
age,
receives in its bosom the likeness of
old age
—a symbol (*raza*) of the (divine)
Majesty that Daniel saw...
... The King of kings clothed Himself
in old age.
The (divine) Being who never grows
old clothed Himself in old age
in order to teach through parables
concerning His beloved Son...
Do not consider the (divine) Majesty
to be like (what is seen in) the
mirror,
for the mirror is just a bridge for im-
ages and pictures,
but as for the (divine) Majesty, noth-
ing can approach It without (the
mirror's aid).
(Hymns against Heresies, 32: 4, 5, 8)

The term *raza*, which Ephrem uses in this passage, is one of Ephrem's most important terms. Starting out as a Persian loanword in the Aramaic of Daniel, where it just means 'secret', it came to acquire very rich connotations in Syriac: in the Syriac New Testament it translates Greek *mysterion*, and in a liturgical context the plural, *raze*, denote the Eucharistic Mysteries. In Ephrem's poetry the most helpful English translation is often 'symbol', though it needs to be remembered that this term is here used in a strong sense: for Ephrem, as for all the Church Fathers, there is an ontological link between the symbol and the reality it points to. Ephrem thus speaks of a *raza* as possessing a 'hidden power', or 'meaning' (*ḥayla kasya*). This understanding of 'symbol' is, of course, very different from that of standard modern usage, where 'symbol' has a very weak sense.

For Ephrem, *raze* are to be found everywhere, both in Scripture and in Nature, for 'Nature and the Book' are God's two witnesses, available everywhere. *raze* thus serve as pointers to divine Reality. But in order to perceive these *raze*, the interior eye, which functions by faith, is needed; and the more this inner eye is illumined by faith, the more *raze* it will see. In a series of poems on the symbolism of olive oil, Ephrem introduces the image of the mirror, describing how the oil itself provides a mirror in which all sorts of *raze* can be seen:

The countenance which gazes on a
vessel filled with oil
sees its reflection there, and the person
who looks hard
and sets his spiritual gaze thereon
will behold, in its symbols (*raze*),
Christ;
and as the beauty of Christ is manifold,

so too the olive's symbols are manifold.

Christ has many facets, and the oil
acts as a mirror to them all:
from whatever angle I look at the oil
Christ looks out at me from within it.
(Hymns on Virginity, 7:14)

Potentially, the spiritual mirror can be found anywhere in Scripture and in Nature, but for it to be of use, it needs to be located and, as it were, put in place, so that the interior eye can look into it:

Blessed is the person who has fixed
for himself a clear (*shphitha*) mirror
of Truth
and has beheld in its midst that Your
(sc. Christ's) Generation (sc. from
the Father) surpasses all description.
(Hymns on Faith, 2:1)

The adjective *shaphya* (fem. *shphitha*) and the noun *shaphyutha* feature frequently in Ephrem's writings. The adjective is used in the Syriac Gospels for a path that is clear of stones (thus Luke 3:5), and for the heart (thus Luke 8:15) that is pure. Ephrem employs it for both the physical eye (which needs to be 'luminous', that is, filled with light, in order to see), and for the internal eye of the heart.⁸ In the passage just quoted, where it is also used of the highly polished mirror, Ephrem has in mind the inherent quality of brightness of the 'mirror of Truth': what is required is that the luminous eye of faith should set it in front of itself and look into it: for both mirror and eye the quality of *shaphyutha*, 'clarity, luminosity' are essential if they are to function properly and in a reciprocal way. By extension, the quality of *shaphyutha* in a biblical figure can itself serve as a mirror:

Let the *shaphyutha* of Abraham serve
as a mirror for you,

(indicating) that investigation (sc. into the nature of the Godhead) is an ugly blemish on faith. (Hymns on Faith, 21:6)

Here Abraham's *shaphyutha* is the 'clarity' of his unwavering faith in God's promise of issue to him through Isaac (Gen. 21:12), even in the face of the testing he undergoes when God instructs him to sacrifice his first-born son (Gen. 22).

Ephrem's most extended use of mirror imagery is to be found in his Letter to Publius. Here it is the Gospel which acts as the polished mirror: turned at different angles, it will reflect different aspects of divine Reality. In the Hymns of Faith (41:10) Ephrem had already described the Gospel as 'a wondrous mirror' in which the Trinity could be seen reflected. In the Letter to Publius, however, the mirror of the Gospel is turned in a different direction:

1. You will do well not to let drop from your hands the polished mirror of the holy Gospel of your Lord, for it provides the likeness of everyone who looks into it, and it shows the resemblance of all who peer into it. While it preserves its own nature and undergoes no change, having no specks and being completely free from any dirt, yet when coloured objects are placed in front of it, it changes its aspect, though in itself it undergoes no change: when white objects are set before it, it turns white; when black ones, it takes on their hue; when red, it becomes red like them; with beautiful objects, it reflects their beauty; with ugly, it becomes unsightly like them. It depicts in itself every limb of the body: it rebukes the defects of the ugly, so that they may remedy themselves, and remove the dirt from their faces. To the beautiful, it declares that

they should be careful of their beauty, that it does not become spotted with dirt, but rather, they should add to their natural created beauty with adornments of their own choosing. Although dumb, the mirror speaks: in its silence it cries out; although you might think it is a dead object, it makes its proclamation. Though still, it dances about; though it has no belly, its womb is spacious, and in those hidden chambers within it every limb is depicted. All kinds of shapes are featured in a fraction of a second: they are created within it with a speed that is imperceptible.

2. For this mirror is a figure of the holy preaching of the outward Gospel. Within itself is depicted the beauty of the beautiful who look into it, and again in it the defects of the ugly who despise it are rebuked. And just as this natural mirror is but a figure of the Gospel, so too the Gospel is but a figure of the beauty that is above, which does not fade and at which all the sins of the created world are rebuked. For in it reward is given to all who have kept their beauty from being defiled with mud. For to everyone who peers into this mirror, his sins are visible, and everyone who considers it sees there the lot which is reserved for him, whether good or bad. There the Kingdom of Heaven is depicted, visible to those who have a luminous eye (*'ayna shphitha*). There the lofty ranks of the good are to be seen on high, there the raised ranks of the intermediate can be distinguished, and there, low down, the ranks of the wicked are marked out. There the fair places prepared for those who are worthy of them can be recognized; there Paradise is visible, joyous with its flowers.

3. In that mirror Gehenna too is to be seen, all fiery, ready for those who deserve to inhabit it....

5. Look carefully, and gaze with the eye of your mind on that mirror which I have been telling you about. Look at the twelve thrones (Matt. 19:38, Luke 22:30) in it, placed ready for judgement; look at the tribes standing there in terror, at the many nations standing trembling....

10. Take hold, therefore, of that bright mirror (*maḥziṯha shphitha*) of the divine Gospel in your two hands, and gaze with the pure eye that can make you see that divine mirror—for not everyone is able to see in it his soul (or: himself), only the person who has a discerning heart, a mind capable of suffering, an eye that is desirous of beholding what can help it. Look into it, then, and see all the reflections of creation, the delineation of humanity, of both the good and the wicked. Out of it peer the beautiful images of the works of the good, and the disfigured images of the actions of the wicked—for there all are conceived within it, ready to be born in the proper time, so as to sing the praises of those who have performed good works, and to rebuke⁹ those who carry out evil deeds. Look how it rebukes the ugly here (on earth): in the same way it will show up in itself there (at the Last Judgement) their ugly actions. And just as it can make the distinction and praise the good here, so it is going to delineate in itself their beautiful actions.

Towards the end of the Letter (sections 22-23) Ephrem suggests that the true meaning of Gehenna should be understood in psychological terms: the sense of separation from God is what burns like fire, and it is

the 'inner mind', or conscience, which acts as a person's own judge and law, measuring up their actions in life against the criteria for human conduct set out in the Gospel by 'the Lord of the law'. Ephrem's extended meditation ends with a description of his own experience:

24. When I saw all this in that bright mirror of the holy Gospel of my Lord, my soul grew feeble and my spirit was quenched; my stature bent down to the dust; my heart was filled with bitter groans, in the hope that somehow my stains might be washed white in my tears. I remembered the good Lord and gentle God who wipes out the bond (Col. 2:14) of the debtors' debt through tears, who accepts weeping in place of burnt sacrifices. And when I reached this point, I took refuge in penitence, and sheltered under the wings of repentance; I took cover in the shade of humility, saying 'What else do I need to offer to Him who has no need of burnt sacrifices, apart from a meek spirit' (Ps. 51:17), for this constitutes the perfect sacrifice that can make propitiation for shortcomings; and a broken heart (Ps. 51:17) in place of burnt offerings is something that God will not reject. Instead of a libation of wine, (I will offer) tears that propitiate.

25. This, then, is what I saw in that eloquent and living mirror, in which the reflections of all the actions of human beings vibrate—from Adam up to the end of the world, and from the resurrection until the day of the just judgement. And what I heard from that blessed voice which was audible from inside the mirror I have recorded in this letter, my beloved brother.

Although the great poets of the fifth

and early sixth centuries, Narsai, Jacob of Serugh and the various Isaacs, all make use of mirror imagery every now and then,¹⁰ it is not until the seventh and eighth centuries that we find the imagery taken up again in an extended way. Before turning to this, however, it is worth looking briefly at two passages in the anonymous Book of Steps, belonging probably to the late fourth century, for here the two Pauline passages are cited in a form that has subtly been associated with the Beatitude of Matt. 5:8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. In a passage where the author contrasts the lives of the Upright and the Perfect, he writes:

The Upright have one or two doors in heaven and they knock at them five times a day, but for the Perfect the entire heaven consists of doors before them and they gaze there the whole day, giving thanks and praise to our Lord as they progress in spirit 'from glory to glory', and they see our Lord 'as in a mirror' in their heart.

(*Memra* 14:2; ed. Kmosko, col. 328)¹¹

Here the wording in inverted commas is from 2 Cor. 3:18, but there it is 'the glory of the Lord', not 'the Lord' directly, which is seen, and Paul has no reference to this being 'in the heart': both these added elements are fairly certainly derived from Matt. 5:8.¹² Further on in the Book of Steps Matt. 5:8 is explicitly quoted, this time in connection with 1 Cor. 13:12; in his paraphrase of this passage, too, the anonymous author adds 'the Lord' as the direct object of 'we see': once

we are afflicted in prayer like Him (sc. Christ) and shed tears as He shed and groan out mightily as He groaned (Heb. 5:7) we shall go and see Him

face to face, as it is written, 'Blessed are those who are pure in their heart for they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8). In this world, as Paul said, 'as in a mirror' with the eyes of our hearts 'we see' our Lord, but in that world, (we will see Him) 'face to face'.

(*Memra* 18:3; col. 440).¹³

The combination of the mirror and the heart is to be found above all in certain of the East Syriac monastic authors of the later period.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, the image of the mirror is often linked with the Beatitude 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. Thus Isaac of Niniveh, speaking of St Antony, wrote that 'because his heart was pure—the sight of his soul having been purified through vigils and solitude and prayer—he saw God, who is invisible, as it were in a mirror'.¹⁵ It was not, however, St Isaac, but one of his contemporaries, Shem'on d-Taybutteh, who makes particular use of the imagery. Before turning to Shem'on, however, it is important to draw attention to a shift in emphasis that has taken place. Whereas Ephrem was more concerned with the eye of the heart seeing the divine world reflected in the mirror of Nature and of Scripture situated *outside* itself, the monastic writers of the seventh and eighth century speak of an interior mirror that is to be found *within* the human person. It would seem likely that this change of emphasis was brought about through familiarity with various influential Greek authors in Syriac translation, notably Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, 'Dionysius the Areopagite', and Abba Isaiah.

Athanasius, in his work *Contra Gentes*, introduces the simile of the mirror in order to illustrate the relationship between the image of God in which humanity is created (Gen. 1:26-7) and the Word, who is the Im-

age of the Father (2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15):

So when the soul has erased from itself every stain of sin which was spilled on it, and keeps in its purity only what is in the image so that it shines out, it contemplates as in a mirror the Word who is the Father's image. In him it considers the Father whose image the Son is.¹⁶

It was probably thanks to the Syriac translation, made around 500, of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs that imagery from the Song of Songs became associated in the later Syriac liturgical tradition with the early Syriac theme of Christ as the Bridegroom. In the course of his Commentary Gregory speaks of human nature as being endowed with an internal mirror which has the potential of reflecting the divine Beauty of God;¹⁷ to explain how this can indeed take place, Gregory introduces God as himself speaking to the soul:¹⁸

By separating yourself from any participation ... in evil, you approach Me, and in approaching the inaccessible Beauty you become beautiful yourself: like a mirror, you take on the imprint of My features. ... You become beautiful by approaching My light.

In the Syriac translation made by Sergius of Resh'aina of the Dionysian Corpus the actual phrase 'natural mirror' (*maḥzitha kyanayta*) occurs:¹⁹ innate in every human being, its intention (as in Gregory) is to reflect the divine image in which humanity is created (Gen. 1:26-7), though in order to function it needs to be kept in a high state of polish, that is, free from the rust and spots caused by sin. The concept is taken up already by Sergius himself in his preface, 'On

the Spiritual Life', where he speaks of 'the illumined intellect which receives, like a polished mirror, the imprint of the portrait of its Maker'.²⁰

Another Greek author of much the same period (turn of the fifth/sixth century), Abba Isaiah, associates this understanding with the two Pauline references to mirrors. The passage is quoted here in the form that is found in the Commentary on Isaiah's *Asceticon* by Dadisho' (late seventh century). The first paragraph is a straight quotation of Abba Isaiah's *Asceticon* VII.22:

These are the words of those who have loved Jesus and put their hope in Him as the holy Bridegroom: their souls have become brides adorned with every virtue, possessing, through the honour this gives, holy mirrors, in accordance with the words of the Apostle, 'We are all going to see, with uncovered faces, the glory of the Lord, as in a mirror, and we will become like this same image (*yuqna*, from Greek *eikon*), (passing) from glory to glory, (this coming) from the Lord, the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:18). Therefore 'let us not be sluggish, but reject the hidden things of shame' (2 Cor. 4:2) as we leave behind the things that darken our eyes and prevent us from seeing the light of the holy mirror, in order that we may look closely, by its means, at the 'Radiance of His Glory' (Heb. 1:3), so that we may be raised up to holy contemplation (*theoria*) of Him, in accordance with the Apostle's words, 'Now we see as in a mirror, in parables, but then we shall see face to face' (1 Cor. 13:12). So those who have become holy brides look closely at themselves, as in a mirror, so that they do not acquire any blemish on the image (*yuqna*) and so displease their Bridegroom'.

Dadisho' then comments:

He (Isaiah) calls 'unveiled face', 'image' and 'holy mirrors' the holy light of the mind (*re'yana*)²¹ by which the solitary sees the glorious light of Jesus Christ our Lord in the revelation he has concerning Him. He calls 'holy mirrors' the variations in the light of the mind in which the intellect (*hawna*) sees the varying revelations of our Lord. For once the solitary has completed the labours of the body and the struggles of the mind, and once his heart has been purified of the passions, he is held worthy for the first time to see the natural light of his soul, which the Creator placed in it at the origin of his (human) nature, which had previously been hidden from him by the overlay of the sinful passions.²²

Dadisho' himself does not appear to be particularly interested in the imagery of the mirror. It is to the works of another East Syriac monastic writer of the late seventh century that one needs to turn to find an extended use made of the imagery. In a short section entitled 'On the fact that the human person was created in the image of God without any deficiency' Shem'on d-Taybutheh writes:

There is within the heart an intelligible mirror, glorious and ineffable, fashioned by the Creator of (all) natures out of the might of all the visible and intelligible natures of creation, for the high honour of His image and for the Presence (*shkinta*) of His invisible essence. He made it the bond, the link (Col. 3:14) and the perfection of all natures. It is called by the Fathers: 'The beauty of our personality (*shupra da-qnoman*)', in which dwells the spirit of adoption (Eph.

1:5) which we have received from holy baptism, and on it the light of grace shines. Anyone who has purified this mirror, so abundant in beauty, from the impurity and filth of the sinful passions, and who has renewed it and returned it to the pristine condition of the nature of its creation, will see all the spiritual powers who accompany the natures and the affairs of creation, whether they be far or near, through the sublime rays that emanate from it, as if they were set in array before his eyes; and he will contemplate them without anything in the way, by means of the hidden power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells and works in it. Because the natures and affairs of creation are joined together and crowned by this mirror, when Grace tabernacles over (*maggna*)²³ the pure souls of the saints, it is on it that It alights and shines. Indeed it shines by the Grace tabernacling on it to such an extent that it surpasses a thousand times over the light of the sun on an external mirror; and the soul becomes dazzled and bewildered by its beauty, as it perceives the new light of grace through the light of its impassibility; and the mind becomes conscious of past and future mysteries, as it sees through its light, mirror-wise (cp 1 Cor. 13:12), the light of the New World, becomes conscious of the inheritance of the saints, tastes the delight of the revelations of the mysteries of God, rests in stillness incessantly, forgets its pain and tribulation, rejoices in its hope, and glorifies the Giver in hidden silence: 'He dwells in the protection of the Most High' (Ps. 91:1), and 'In Your light do we see light' (Ps. 36:9).²⁴

In the Book of Grace, which is almost certainly by Shem'on, and not Isaac of

Nineveh, the theme of the mirror of the heart appears several times. Just as Ephrem had spoken of the variety of images of divine Reality reflected in the metaphorical mirror—on his understanding, external—so too this equally applies to the internal mirror of the heart:

Just as there are many different degrees of purity in the mirrors of the hearts of the saints, so the saints likewise have many different revelations of our Lord.²⁵

In order to maintain its clarity, once it has been polished, the mirror of the heart²⁶ must be kept pure from ‘the dust of the passions’ that can come in through ‘the windows of the external senses’:

O man who takes pains to calm the motions of your soul and to cleanse the mirror of your heart from the dust of the passions: while you concern yourself with your interior affairs, also block up the windows of your external senses which import filth and make turbid your soul's limpid purity.²⁷

Stillness and tranquillity of soul are essential if the internal mirror is to function properly:

Tranquillity of soul resembles standing limpid water which has no reptiles within, nor anything without, to trouble and make turbid its limpidity, and which can serve as a mirror for the eyes by reason of its settled state. It is thus also with the soul's limpidity (*shaphyutha*). If it is not made turbid by recollections and thoughts from within, and if what is heard and seen, and so on (that is, things which the senses bring in from outside), do not cause memories, then it will be like a

polished mirror for the eyes of the soul, and the soul will be astonished and struck with awe at her own beauty.²⁸

Shem'on draws on the biblical image of the ‘tablet of the heart’ on which God's commandments should be written (Prov. 3:3, 7:2; 2 Cor. 3:3) and speaks of ‘the natural book of the heart, written by Moses and the prophets’ (5:75), and on the ‘tablets of the book of the heart’ ‘the pen of spiritual meditation engraves the simple words of spiritual prayer’ so that the intellect can read them whenever the mind wanders (5:85). At one point Shem'on combines the two images, of the book and the mirror:

Blessed is a man if, as he chants the psalms and as he prays, the eyes of his intellect are opened wide by the light of dispassion, and he noetically gazes at the words of prayer which are written down by the pen of the Spirit upon the mirror of his heart! Due to these words he will offer up praise to Him who bestows on him the gift, making him a seer of the soul.²⁹

When the mirror of the heart is in a polished state, it will reflect the divine love which embraces both the righteous and sinners:

We have learnt from experience that, when Grace visits us, the light of the love of our fellow human beings which is shed on the mirror of our heart is such that we do not see in the world any sinners or evil people. But when we accept the workings of the demons we are so much in the darkness of wrath that we do not see a single righteous and good person in the world: when we are intoxicated with suspicion, passions are aroused in us, as if from sleep, into action. But when the mind has completely shut its

eyes not to notice the weaknesses of our neighbour, the heart is renewed in God.³⁰

Shem'on makes a similar point in the Book of Grace:

O man whose conscience is polluted and wavering, and yet you are filled with zeal and demand that justice be exacted from others: when your brethren seem to you to be doing wrong, do not immediately become upset and disturbed, do not castigate them because of your foolish zeal. Rather, look within yourself and understand that the mirror of your conscience is befouled with the unseemly filth of envy and malice, and that your intellect has begun to see pure things as unclean. Understand that the bad things which you see in others are a shadow of the impure images that are imprinted inwardly on the mirror of your heart, and they become outwardly manifest as imposed on the good actions of your brethren. Thus pure things seem to you to be impure. Do not find fault with exterior things, but interior, that is, with your unstable and polluted conscience.³¹

And a little further on:

When by the gift of God's mercy the disciplines and actions of all men seem to you to be equally good and beautiful, understand that through grace the mirror of your conscience is limpid and pure of the passions of wickedness (or: malice), and that this is not a virtue of your own, but comes from divine help. Give glory to God that your soul has begun to yield the fruits of the Spirit. A man, the eye of whose conscience is pure, does not see the evil of his neighbour. A man, the eye of whose heart is impure, does not see the good of his neighbour.³²

Shem'on's teaching here is very similar to that of Isaac of Nineveh, for whom the acquisition of the gift of divine love means that one then sees fellow human beings from God's own perspective, that is, it is not their particular actions, but the potential with which they have been created, which is the starting point.

Another Syriac monastic author who makes use of the imagery of the internal mirror is John of Dalyatha, or John 'the Spiritual Sheikh', or Elder, as he is known in Arabic. John belongs to the eighth century and is the author of several discourses and some fifty spiritual letters, written with great fervour, as will become apparent from the quotations that follow. As with Shem'on, the spiritual mirror is internal, and on a couple of occasions in the Discourses he specifies that it is 'the mirror of the soul',³³ rather than of the heart, although the function is identical in both cases: it is the means by which human beings are enabled to 'see God'. In the following passage it will be noticed that John subtly alters the wording of Matt. 5:8.³⁴ The letter is addressed 'To the one who is constantly immersed in a spiritual immersion (or: baptism), away from all, in Him who is hidden in the midst of all', and continues:

He is revealed to a few through their diligence, to people who fix their eyes inside themselves, who make themselves a mirror in which the Invisible One is seen. For it is by Him that they are drawn, through ineffable radiances that are extended from His wondrous beauty to them, in themselves, in accordance with the testimony of God the Word: 'Blessed are the pure, for it is in their hearts that they will see God'.

For the rest of the short letter John bursts into prayer, 'O You who promised us a blessed state exalted above all other blessed states, hold us worthy of the blessed state that You have promised us.....'.³⁵

In his next letter John describes the internal mirror as 'a mirror of the Light of Him who sees all', whose purpose is 'so that you may see in it what belongs to Him, and examine in it all that belongs to you'.³⁶ In a striking passage from another letter John discloses that it is the Light of the Trinity which shines in this mirror:

O you who have now become weary and worn out in the service of your Lord, lay your head on your Lord's knees and rest. Lean on His breast and breathe in the fragrance of Life, so that Life may be mingled into your very being; recline on Him, for He is your table, and from it be nourished by His Father. Purify your mirror, and without doubt the single triune Light will be manifested to you in it. Place this on your heart—and you will become aware that your God is alive!³⁷

In the Pseudo-Dionysian treatise *On Divine Names* (IV.22) the angels are described

as images of God, and serving as mirrors.³⁸ Given that the monastic ideal is often described as 'the angelic life', one might perhaps have expected the Syriac mystics of the seventh and eighth century to have developed this aspect of mirror imagery as well, but this does not seem to be the case.

The polishing of the internal mirror of the soul/heart is effected through a combination of effort and ascetic labour on the part of the individual on the one hand, and the assistance of divine grace on the other. Today, when the polishing of glass mirrors does not require the same degree of labour and effort, one might adapt the imagery to another area of everyday life, the washing up of saucepans. Here a good analogy to the soiled bronze mirror would be a greasy burnt saucepan: in order to bring the saucepan back to its pristine shine, what is needed is the combination of the hard labour of scrubbing, and some detergent, the former representing the human effort required in polishing the mirror of the heart, and the latter corresponding to the working of divine grace. To put it in the words of the poet and priest George Herbert (d.1632), this is the 'tincture' that 'makes drudgery divine'.

NOTES

¹Several of the texts quoted in this article will also be found in my “Comment les coeurs purs verront Dieu. Saint Ephrem et quelques auteurs syriaques,” in *Le Visage de Dieu dans le patrimoine oriental*, Patrimoine Syriaque, Actes du colloque VII (Antélias, 2001), I, 133-43.

²For this, see my “The Robe of Glory: a biblical image in the Syriac tradition,” *Spirituality and Clothing* (= *The Way* 39; 1999), 247-259.

³For Paul's use of the metaphor, see N. Hugedé, *La métaphore du miroir dans les Épîtres de saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (Neuchâtel, 1957).

⁴See, for example, M. Ullmann, *Das Motiv des Spiegels in der arabischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Abhandlungen, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl. III.198 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Namkhai Norbu, *Crystal and the Way of Light* (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 64-5. For the Christian tradition in general, see M. Schmidt, “Miroir,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 10 (1980), cols 1290-1303.

⁵I follow M. Lattke in supposing that the Syriac ‘them’ (= your eyes) is due to a mistranslation of the Greek: see his *Oden Salomos: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Teil 1, NTOA 41/1 (1999), 2:50-1.

⁶Reading *sywt*’ for the non-sensical *sydt*’; for discussion, see Lattke, 251-4.

⁷A study of Ephrem's use of it is provided by E. Beck, “Das Bild vom Spiegel bei Ephrem,” *OCP* 19 (1953) 5-24; see also T. Bou Mansour, *La pensée symbolique de saint Ephrem le Syrien*, Bibliothèque de l'Université Saint-Esprit 16 (Kaslik: 1988), 61-71.

⁸On this inner eye, see further my *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Kalamazoo, 1992), 39-40, 71-84; M. Schmidt, “Das Auge als Symbol der Erleuchtung bei Ephrem und Parallelen in der Mystik der Mittelalter,” *OrChr* 68 (1984) 27-57.

⁹I am most grateful to Bernard Outtier for pointing out to me that it would be much preferable to read *la-mgannayu* here, rather than *la-mgahhaku*, as suggested in my edition in *Muséon* 89 (1976) 261-305; and likewise one should read *da-mgannya*, not *da-mgahhka*, in the next sentence.

¹⁰They tend to use ‘mirror’ in the sense of an example against which to match oneself; thus Narsai describes David as ‘a mirror’ (ed. Mingana I, 233), and Jacob speaks of the way of life of the saints as ‘a mirror’ (Letters, ed. Olinder, 297).

¹¹Compare also *Memra* 16:12 (col. 413), where those who are perfected and have ‘emptied themselves of this world’ are described as ‘gazing on their Lord in heaven as in a mirror in their minds, imitating Him in all His humiliations’.

¹²Neither biblical reference is given in Kmosko's edition or in the recent translation by R.A. Kitchen and M.F.G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004). In *Memra* 2:5 (col. 36) the author also uses phraseology combining elements of both the Pauline and the Gospel passage.

¹³It is striking that the Book of Steps and Clement of Alexandria both associate 1 Cor. 13:12 with Matt. 5:8. and both quote the former omitting the words ‘in a parable’: thus *Stromateis* I.94.6, V.40.1; VI.102.2; VII.57.1, on which see R. Mortley, “The mirror of 1 Cor. 13.12 and the epistemology of Clement of Alexandria,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976) 109-20, esp. 113 with note 17, and 115-6.

¹⁴See especially N. Khayyat, “Le visage du Christ resplendissant dans le Miroir du Coeur,” in *Le visage de Dieu dans le patrimoine oriental*, Patrimoine syriaque, Actes du colloque VII (Antélias, 2001), I, 77-87 (this is a shortened form of her longer article in Arabic in vol. II).

¹⁵Ed. Bedjan, 564; tr. Wensinck, 377.

¹⁶ Section 34; see A. Hamilton, "Athanasius and the simile of the mirror," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980) 14-18; it is his translation (p.15) that I use. (It should be noted, however, that no Syriac translation of the *Contra Gentes* seems to be known).

¹⁷ PG 44, col. 868C = ed. H. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VI (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 150: "The mirror of human nature only becomes beautiful when it approaches the Beautiful One, when it becomes conformed to the beauty of God." See especially G. Horn, "Le 'miroir,' la 'nuée'. Deux manières de voir Dieu d'après Grégoire de Nysse," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 8 (1927) 113-31. The Syriac translation of Gregory's Commentary is preserved in Vatican Syr. 106, for which see C. van den Eynde, *La version syriaque du Commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, Bibliothèque du Muséon 10 (Louvain: Bureau du Muséon, 1939).

¹⁸ PG 44, col. 833A = ed. Langerbeck, 103-4. The importance of Gregory of Nyssa for the later Syriac writers on this theme is well noted by P. Bruns, "Gregors sechste Rede von den Seligkeiten und das Problem der Gotteschau in der syrischen Mystik," in H.R. Drobner and A. Viciano (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes* (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2000), 293-310 (307-10 are specifically concerned with the image of the mirror).

¹⁹ Sinai Syriac 52, f. 86r.2.

²⁰ Ed. Sherwood, section 72 (in *OrSyriac* 6 [1961] 114-5).

²¹ In the next paragraph Dadisho' goes on to say that 'light of the mind' is Evagrius' terminology.

²² Ed. R. Draguet, *Commentaire du Livre d'Abba Isaïe (Logoi I-XV) par Dadisho Qatraya (VIIe s.)*, CSCO 144-145 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1972), VII.14 (pp. 125-6 of text volume).

²³ For the importance of this term (based on Luke 1:35 and John 1:14) in Syriac liturgy and spirituality, see my "From Annunciation to Pentecost: the travels of a technical term," in

Eulogema: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft, S.J., Studia Anselmiana 110 (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993), 71-91. One might also translate *aggen* by 'overshadow,' but this loses the link in Syriac with John 1:14, hence I prefer to employ the unusual term 'tabernacle,' since even in Luke 1:35 *aggen* is not a literal translation of the Greek.

²⁴ Ed. and tr. A. Mingana, *Early Christian Mystics*, Woodbrooke Studies VII (Cambridge, 1934), 60-61 (tr.), 314-5 (text). I have adapted Mingana's translation in a few places.

²⁵ 2:39, translated by [D. Miller], *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian* (Boston, 1984), Appendix B, 403.

²⁶ In passing, it is intriguing to find that the thirteenth-century Sufi Jalal al-Din Rumi likewise speaks of 'the polished mirror of the heart' in his *Masnavi* (1: 384-5; 4: 2909-10).

²⁷ 7:46, tr. Miller, 420.

²⁸ 2:97, tr. Miller, 405.

²⁹ 6:9, tr. Miller, 414-5.

³⁰ Ed. Mingana, *Early Christian Mystics*, 35 (tr.), 298 (text). Again I have slightly modified Mingana's translation in places.

³¹ 7:73, tr. Miller, 422.

³² 7:75, tr. Miller, 422.

³³ On this theme, see R. Beulay, "La vision de Dieu dans le miroir de l'âme," in his *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha*, Théologie historique 83 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), 443-7.

³⁴ In Letter 39, 1 John does much the same, though there he adds, rather than substitutes, 'in their hearts'.

³⁵ Letter 14, ed. R. Beulay, *La collection des lettres de Jean de Dalyatha*, PO 39:3 (1978). (An English translation of John's Letters, by Mary Hansbury, is forthcoming).

³⁶ Letter 15,1.

³⁷ Letter 28,2.

³⁸ For the artistic representation of this, see Z. Gavrilović, "Discs held by angels in the Anastasis at Dečani," in C. Morris and K. Kiefer (eds), *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1995), 225-30.

SYRIAC VERSION BY ḤUNAIN (?) OF NICOLAUS DAMASCENUS'
COMPENDIUM OF ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY
AND ACCOMPANYING SCHOLIA



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1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that those Christians accustomed to using Syriac as their spoken and literary medium and the translations made by them from Greek into Syriac and Arabic played an important role in the transmission of scientific knowledge from the Greek to the Arabic world. The investigation, however, of the exact manner in which this transmission took place is hampered by the loss of the great majority of the Syriac translations. This applies also to the translations made by Ḥunain b. Iṣḥāq (807-873), the most famous and arguably the most able of the translators from the Abbasid period. Although we gather from Ḥunain's letter to ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā, in which he discussed the Syriac and Arabic translations of Galen,¹ that he made as many as 95 Syriac translations of Galen's works alone, when an attempt was

made to draw up a list of the surviving Syriac translations made by Ḥunain just over a decade ago, only six pieces could be named, most of which were fragmentary and not all of which, moreover, could be attributed to Ḥunain with certainty. It was noted furthermore that outside the field of medicine there was simply no Syriac translation by Ḥunain which was known to survive.²

This last part of the statement, however, can now be corrected. The purpose of the present paper is to bring to the attention of the reader a Syriac translation of a Greek work, parts, if not the whole, of which can be attributed to Ḥunain with a high degree of certainty. An attempt will also be made in the paper to provide illustrations of how this Syriac version was later rendered into Arabic, how it directly and indirectly influenced later Syriac and Arabic works, and how these later works can then be used to reconstruct those portions which are lost in the Syriac version.

2. SYRIAC VERSION OF NICOLAUS DAMASCENUS' COMPENDIUM OF ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY AND ACCOMPANYING SCHOLIA

The work on Aristotelian philosophy by Nicolaus Damascenus, also known as a historian and adviser to Herod the Great, was believed to be lost except in a few fragments preserved in works of later authors until it was shown, largely through the work of H.J. Drossaart Lulofs, that one of the texts preserved in a manuscript now in Cambridge (University Library, Gg. 2.14) consisted of long excerpts from a Syriac version of that work.³ Although it may be gathered from these excerpts that the Syriac version, when complete, consisted of at least thirteen *mēm̄rē* and covered more or less all the known works of Aristotle relating to the natural sciences, as well as the *Metaphysica*, there is a great discrepancy in the lengths of the excerpts taken from each *mēm̄rā*, so that the part covering the *De generatione et corruptione* is reduced to a mere seven lines, while the excerpts from the sixth *mēm̄rā*, corresponding to the first three books of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, make up 45 pages out of the total of 76 pages which this text occupies in the Cambridge manuscript.⁴ Indicated below are the Aristotelian (or Pseudo-Aristotelian) works to which each of the *mēm̄rē* corresponds and the places where they begin, along with a breakdown of *mēm̄rā* VI.⁵

- I. *Auscultatio physica*: p. 1.3ff.
- II. *Metaphysica*: p. 5.18ff.
- III. (*Metaphysica*, contd.): 6.12ff.
- IV. *De caelo* I-II: p. 7.11ff.
- V. *De caelo* III-IV, *De generatione et corruptione*: p. 9.9ff.

- VI. *Meteorologica* I-III: p. 10.10ff.
 - 10.24ff.: on aether (*Mete.* I.iii)
 - 11.15ff.: on shooting stars etc. (*Mete.* I.iv-v)
 - 12.11ff.: on comets (*Mete.* I.vi-vii)
 - 13.11ff.: on the Milky Way (*Mete.* I.viii)
 - 14.26ff.: on cloud, rain etc. (*Mete.* I.ix)
 - 15.11ff.: on dew and frost (*Mete.* I.x)
 - 16.8ff.: on snow etc. (*Mete.* I.xi)
 - 16.18ff.: on hail (*Mete.* I.xii)
 - 18.1ff.: on winds, rivers and sea (*Mete.* I.xiii)
 - [between p. 18 and 19: lacuna]
 - 19.1ff.: on Tartarus (*Mete.* II.ii)
 - 19.24ff.: on sea (*Mete.* II.iii)
 - 24.20ff.: on winds (*Mete.* II.iv-vi)
 - 35.12ff.: on earthquakes (*Mete.* II.vii-viii)
 - 41.25ff.: on thunder and lightning (*Mete.* II.ix)
 - 43.20ff.: on ἐκνεφίας etc. (*Mete.* III.i.)
 - 46.18ff.: on halo etc. (*Mete.* III.ii-iii)
 - 52.13ff.: on rainbow (*Mete.* III.iv)
 - [between p. 54 and 55: lacuna]
 - 55.1ff.: on minerals (*Mete.* III.vi. fin.)
- VII. *De mineralibus*, *De plantis*: p. 55.16ff.
- VIII-IX. *De animalibus* (*Historia animalium* & *De partibus animalium*): p. 63ff.
- X. *De anima*: p. 67.31ff.
- XI. (*De sensu*, *De somno et vigilia*, *De insomniis*): 68.9ff.
- XII. (*De generatione animalium* I-IV): 69.21ff.
- XIII. (*De generatione animalium* V): 71.19ff.

Throughout the text as preserved in the Cambridge manuscript, but especially in the latter part of *mēm̄rā* VI (p. 19 onwards) the main text of the Syriac version of Nicolaus is interrupted by lengthy scholia, a number of which explicitly name "Olympiodorus" as their authority and most of which display

some resemblance, in content at least, with passages in the commentary on the *Meteorologica* by the sixth-century Alexandrian Neo-Platonist Olympiodorus (Olymp. in Mete.).⁶ At the same time, these scholia are not straightforward translations of passages out of Olympiodorus' Greek commentary as we know it, but are better regarded as summaries of what is discussed there.⁷ For reasons which will emerge it is unlikely that these scholia were already to be found in the Greek text of Nicolaus used by the Syriac translator and translated simultaneously with the main Nicolean text. The juxtaposition, in other words, of the main Nicolean text and these "Olympiodorean" scholia is likely to be the work of someone working in Syriac. It is not possible at present to decide whether there already existed a Greek abridgement of Olympiodorus' commentary which was duly used by the Syriac scholiast, or whether it was the Syriac scholiast himself who selected and summarized (and occasionally elaborated) passages out of an unabridged version of Olympiodorus' Greek commentary as we know it.

The Cambridge manuscript (probably copied in 15/16th c.) is our principal witness for the text of the Syriac version of Nicolaus' work, as well as of the "Olympiodorean" scholia. Both elements were available in the 13th century to Barhebraeus (1225/6-1286), who made extensive use of them in at least two of his works, the *Mnārat qudshē* (*Candelabrum sanctuarii*, = *Cand.*) and *Ḥēwat Ḥekmtā* (*Butyrum sapientiae*, = *But.*).⁸ Furthermore, a number of excerpts corresponding to those parts marked off as scholia in that manuscript are found together with excerpts on meteorological matters from Moses bar Kepha's *Hexaameron* and Barhebraeus' *Cand.* in ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, syr. 346 (dated 1309).

The name of the translator is not given in the Cambridge manuscript. Barhebraeus, however, attributes the translation of Nicolaus he had to Ḥunain,⁹ while two of the passages in ms. Paris syr. 346 which correspond to passages marked off as scholia in the Cambridge manuscript begin with the words "Ḥunain explains."¹⁰ If both these ascriptions are to be trusted, both the Syriac translation of Nicolaus and the accompanying scholia will be Ḥunain's work.

A certain amount of doubt, however, is cast on the identity of the translator and the scholiast by those instances where the same Greek terms are translated by different Syriac terms in the main Nicolean text and the scholia, the following being an example.

Arist. Mete. 349a 12f.:

περὶ δὲ ἀνέμων καὶ πάντων
πνευμάτων, ἔτι δὲ ποταμῶν καὶ
θαλάττης λέγωμεν

Let us speak about *anemoi* and all kinds of *pneumata*, and also about rivers and the sea.

Nic. syr. 18.1-3:

ܠܗܘܐܝܡܢܐ ܕܥܡܘܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܠܗ ܝܘܪܕ
ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ
ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ
ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ
ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ ܕܥܘܝܢ

Nic. syr. 18.1: Let us speak about *rūhē* [*anemoi*], *nshābē* [*pneumata*], rivers and the sea.

Nic. syr. 18.1-3 [scholion]: Comment: "zīqē [*anemoi*] and all *rūhē* [*pneumata*]: He rightly said "zīqē and all *rūhē*," since *rūhē* are more general than *zīqē*. Every *zīqā* is a *rūhā*, but not every *rūhā* is a *zīqā*.¹¹

In the main Nicolean text, Aristotle's

anemos is rendered by *rūḥā* and *pneuma* by *nshābā*. In the accompanying scholion, however, where an attempt is made to explain the difference between the two terms, the Syriac *rūḥā* answers to *pneuma* and *zīqā* to *anemos*. This suggests at any rate that the main Nicolean text and the scholia were first translated separately from Greek into Syriac and juxtaposed later, since if the two were being translated together the translator would surely have been more consistent in his use of the Syriac terms.

Such discrepancies, on the other hand, do not in themselves provide conclusive evidence that different translators were responsible for the main text and the scholia, since, as those of us frequently involved in making translations from one language into another well know, no translator is completely consistent in his/her use of terminology. Despite a number of instances such as the above, when we take the text preserved in the Cambridge manuscript as a whole, there is, in fact, a fairly high degree of consistency in the Syriac words used to render Greek technical terms between the main Nicolean text and the scholia. This becomes all the more evident when we compare the terms used there with those used in another Greco-Syriac text where meteorology is discussed, namely the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* ascribed to Sergius of Rēsh-ʿAinā.¹² The Syriac terms used to render Greek technical terms in the latter are often quite different from those used in the text we have in the Cambridge manuscript, while there is also an appreciable difference in the style of translation.

A closer examination than has been conducted so far of the language used will be necessary to establish the identity of both the Syriac translator of Nicolaus and the

author/translator of the accompanying scholia. In the light, however, of the quite specific attribution of the scholia in ms. Paris syr. 346, we have a reasonably solid ground for attributing the "Olympiodorean" scholia at any rate to Ḥunain. The attribution of the Syriac translation of the main Nicolean text to Ḥunain is a little less certain but cannot be ruled out and the overall similarity of the language used in the main text and the scholia suggests that the Syriac translation of the main text too dates from an age not far away from that of Ḥunain (unless, that is, these similarities result from a reworking of an earlier translation by Ḥunain or a member of his circle).

3. ARABIC VERSION OF OLYMPIODORUS' COMMENTARY

One factor which further complicates the matter and at the same time strengthens the connection of the Syriac text found in the Cambridge manuscript with Ḥunain is what has come down to us as the Arabic version of Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Meteorologica*, translated, according to the heading in the *codex unicus* now in Tashkent, by Ḥunain b. Ishāq and revised by his son Ishāq b. Ḥunain (= *Olymp. arab.*).¹³ As was noted by its editor, 'Abdurrahmān Badawī, this Arabic text is not simply a translation, or even a paraphrase, of the Greek commentary by Olympiodorus as we know it, although it does contain passages which have a certain resemblance with that Greek work. On closer examination, it turns out to a large extent to be a translation/paraphrase of the portion of the Syriac text found in the Cambridge manuscript dealing with meteorology, whereby the original Nicolean passages

and the Olympiodorean scholia, still distinguished in the Syriac version, have now been merged into one in the Arabic version.

An example of how the Arabic translator/reviser went about his work is provided by the passages in the Syriac and Arabic versions dealing with the classification of earthquakes. Aristotle had divided earthquakes into two types, the horizontal *tromoi* and the vertical *sphygmoi*. This twofold classification is retained in the main text of the Syriac version.¹⁴

Nic. syr. 41.14-17:

ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ

Earthquakes arise in different ways. For some of them occur horizontally [lit. "to the side"], with shaking and quaking [*re^lānā'ūt wa-rūtānā'ūt*], while others occur vertically [lit. "to the depth"], with knocking [*nqāshānā'ūt*]. The latter are severer than the former which usually occur, horizontally, because a large amount of exhalation rises easily from the outer face of the earth but with difficulty from the depth.

There is another passage in the Cambridge manuscript which is marked off as a scholion and which, though it actually occurs before this passage, must in fact be associated with it.

Nic. syr. [scholion] 41.8-12:

ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ

ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ

[9 ܥܘܠܡܝܢ 9 prim.: rasum ut vid. || 9
 ܥܘܠܡܝܢ: ܥܘܠܡܝܢ legendum? || 11
 prim.: rasum ut vid. || 11 ܥܘܠܡܝܢ :
 ܥܘܠܡܝܢ legendum?]

Theophrastus calls the horizontal [earthquake] "ladder"-earthquake [*sebbeltānāyā*]. The motion of one who descends on a ladder is more horizontal because (a ladder) is not erected exactly [upright], nor is the motion [vertically] downwards but aslant.¹⁵ [He calls] the vertical [earth-quake] *BR'SMTYS*,¹⁶ i.e. bubbling [*rethānāyā*], because the grounds which undergo motion bubble up. Theophrastus knows of another species of motion, which he adds, namely the "chasm"-earthquake [*pehtānāyā*]. At such a time [i.e. "when once such an earthquake occurred"?] a vent [?]¹⁷ was opened.

In the Arabic "Olympiodorus" we find the following passage on the classification of earthquakes.

Olymp. arab. [Badawi] 140.18-141.2 [cod. Tashkent 358r 9-12]:

في أصناف الزلزلة. 19/ بعض زلازل الأرض يكون عَرْضًا، ويكون في العمق، وبعضها في العَرْض/20 والعمق جميعاً. والتي تكون منها في العرض تسمى الاختلافية والمرتعشية، وتحدث/21 كثيراً. وأما التي تكون في العمق

فتسمى باسم مشتق من اسم القرعة والانتفاخ؛ 22/ وحدثها يكون في الفرض، إلا أنها إذا حدثت ارتفع مع الريح التي تخرج حجارة. 23/ وأما التي تكون في العرض فتسمى باسم مشتق من اسم السلم، بسبب انتصابه، 1/ ولأن حركتها عليه تكون في العمق. و[لا] انتصابه ليس هو استقامة، لكنه منحن/ 2/ قليلاً والحركة عليه في العرض.

[الاختلافية 20] Badawi: sine punctis diacriticis cod.: lege الاختلاجية || 1 [لا] sic Badawi: ولا cod.]

On kinds of earthquakes. Some earthquakes occur horizontally, and [others?] occur vertically, and others horizontally and vertically together. Those of them which are horizontal are called “shaking” [*ikhtilājīyah*] and “quaking” [*murtaʿshīyah*] and arise frequently. Those which are vertical are called by a name derived from the word “knocking” [*qarʿah*] and “boiling” [*intifākh*] and their occurrence is rare, except that when they do occur stones are raised together with the wind which comes out [of the ground]. Those which are horizontal are [also] called by a name derived from the word “ladder” [*sullam*] on account of its erection [i.e. on account of the way a ladder is erected?] and because its [?] motion upon it is <not> vertical. Its erection is not upright but somewhat aslant and the motion upon it is horizontal.¹⁸

Although the Arabic passage here like the Syriac scholion above presents us with some textual problems, it is clear that out of the five words used in designating different types of earthquakes “shaking” [*ikhtilājīyah*], “quaking” [*murtaʿshīyah*] and “knocking” [*qarʿah*]

answer to the adverbs *reʿlānāʿīt*, *rtītānāʿīt* and *nqāshānāʿīt* of the main Nicolean text in the Syriac, while the “names derived” from “boiling” [*intifākh*] and “ladder” [*sullam*] represent the adjectives *sebbeltānāyā* and *rethānāyā* of the Syriac scholion, so that this Arabic passage may be considered a conflation of the two Syriac passages quoted above. It will be noted at the same time that this Arabic passage itself gives us no indication that it is based on two separate source passages and it is only because we have the source passages in Syriac that we are able to decide that that is the case.

4. INFLUENCE ON LATER AUTHORS

Barhebraeus is so far the only author known for certain to have used the Syriac version of Nicolaus-Olympiodorus as a source in his works. Another who probably used the work in its Syriac version is the East Syrian physician, philosopher and translator Ibn al-Khammār (Abū al-Khair al-Ḥasan b. Suwār b. Bābā b. al-Khammār, fl. second half of 10th c.), who names Nicolaus as one of his sources in his Treatise on Meteorological Phenomena (Maqālah fī al-āthār al-mutakhayyilah fī al-jaww).¹⁹

Among those who are known to have used our Nicolaus-Olympiodorus text in its Arabic version we may count the greatest representative of Islamic philosophy (*falsafah*). Ibn Sīnā clearly had access also to other works on meteorology including, probably, the Arabic versions Aristotle's and Theophrastus' works on the subject, but, as has been noted by Lettinck,²⁰ there are numerous passages in his Kitāb al-shifā' which must be based on the Arabic Nicolaus-

Olympiodorus text. It is needless to point out here the prominent position Ibn Sīnā and his *Kitāb al-shifā'* occupy in the field of Islamic philosophy. His use of the Arabic Nicolaus-Olympiodorus as one of his main sources means that an indirect influence of that text can be sought out in various Arabic works subsequent to him.²¹

An example is given below to illustrate the kinds of alterations a particular passage underwent during the course of its transmission from the Greek to Ibn Sīnā via the Syriac and Arabic versions.

Olymp. in *Mete.* [Stüve] 177.21-27:

οὔστινας οἱ μὲν Ἀλεξανδροεῖς ῥόδωνας καλοῦσι διὰ τὸ περὶ τὸν καιρὸν τῶν ῥόδων ἄρχεσθαι πνεῖν, ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης λευκονότους τε καὶ ὄρνιθιας λευκονότους μὲν διὰ τὸ ἀτάραχον καὶ γαλήνιον τῆς πνοῆς, ὄρνιθιας δὲ διὰ τὸ ἐπιτηδεῖους αὐτοὺς εἶναι πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὄρνιθων γένεσιν· τηνικαῦτα γὰρ πνεόντων αὐτῶν ὠστοκοῦσιν οἱ ὄρνιθες ὡς καὶ χωρὶς τῆς τοῦ ἄρρητος μίξεως. καὶ ὅτι τοῦτο ἀληθὲς δῆλον ἐκ τῶν γινομένων ῥῶν ὑπηνεμίων. οὕτω ζωογόνον ἐστὶ τοῦτο τὸ πνεῦμα.

Alexandrians call them “rose-winds” because they begin to blow around the season of the roses. Aristotle [calls them] “white south winds” [*leukonotos*] and “bird winds” [*ornithias*], “white south winds” because of they blow calmly and gently, “bird winds” because they are suitable for the generation of birds. For, then, when they blow birds lay eggs as if without min-

gling with the male. That this is true is clear from those wind-eggs that occur [cf. Arist. *Hist. an.* 559b 24]. Thus animal-generating is this wind.

Nic. syr. [scholion] 30.26-28 [≈ Paris syr. 346, 70v 8-11 (= P)]:

فان ههنا ههنا ههنا
ههنا ههنا ههنا ههنا
ههنا ههنا ههنا ههنا
ههنا ههنا ههنا ههنا
ههنا ههنا ههنا ههنا

[ههنا ههنا P || ههنا P ||
ههنا ههنا P]

The poet calls these winds *'RGHST'NTW*, i.e. “white south [winds],” because they bring about clear weather. They are also called “chicken [winds],” because when they blow hens lay eggs without mingling with the males.

Olymp. arab. [Badawi] 121.16-18:

وتسمى التي تهب من هذه الناحية في هذا الوقت الريح البيضاء والدجاجية لأن الدجاج يبيض إذا هبت من غير قرع الديوك إياها.

[The wind] which blows from this direction at this time is called “white” and “chicken” wind, because the hen lays eggs when it blows without the cock knocking her.

Ibn Sīnā, *K. al-shifā'*, *al-āthār al-ʿulwīyah*, ed. Montaṣir et al. (“Cairo edition”),²² 65.8-9:

وتسمى البيضاء لإحداثها الصحو، والبيضية لأن من خاصيتها أن تحبل الدجاج بيضا من غير سفاد.

It is called “white [wind]” because it causes clear weather, and “egg [wind]” because one of its characteristics is to make hens bear eggs without copulation.

We see here how the “leukonotos” of the Greek was rendered as “white south [wind]” in the Syriac and this was then reduced to “white [wind],” with the loss of the word “south,” in the Arabic. The “bird wind” of the Greek was rendered as “chicken wind” in the Syriac and this is then followed in the Arabic version of “Olympiodorus” (*al-dujājīyah*). Ibn Sīnā’s alteration of this into “egg [wind]” (*al-baiḏīyah*) may be due either to a wish on his part to produce a pun with the word for “white [wind]” (*al-baiḏā*) or, perhaps more likely, to falsification of his memory under the influence of *al-baiḏā* and the mention of the “laying of eggs” (*yabīḏu*), given that Ibn Sīnā is reported to have composed large portions of the *Shifā*’ relying on his memory and without consulting the text of his sources.²³

The transliterated word *'RGHST'NTW* in the Syriac passage above is of interest also in connection with the attribution of the translation to Ḥunain, since these letters must represent the Homeric “ἀργεσταὶ νότοι.”²⁴ The phrase, as may be seen, is not in the Greek Olympiodorus and disappears again in the Arabic passages quoted above. Whether this is an addition that was already there in the Syriac translator/scholiast’s copy of the Greek Olympiodorus or an addition by the Syriac scholiast himself remains uncertain, but the latter of these possibilities cannot be ruled out in view of the report, preserved for us by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, that Ḥunain was able to recite Homer off by heart,²⁵ and in view of the fact that there is at least one other recognizable quotation from Homer among the Syriac scholia.

Nic. syr. [scholion] 33.5-7 [≈ Paris syr. 346, 62r 20-22 (P)]:

ܠܡܢ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ
ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ
ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

[ܥܘܠܡܐ P || ܕܥܘܠܡܐ : om. et locum vacuum reliquit P || ܕܥܘܠܡܐ : om. et locum vacuum reliquit P]

Furthermore, as the poet [says]: there blow²⁶ Eurus and the south (wind) and the west (wind), the ill-blowing, and the north (wind), the generator of clear weather,²⁷ which makes the large billows²⁸ roll about.

Cf. *Odyssey* 5.295f.: σὺν δ' Εὐρός τε Νότος τ' ἔμπροσθεν Ζέφυρός τε δυσαῆς καὶ Βορέης αἰθρηγενέτης, μέγα κῦμα κυλίνδων.

5. RECONSTRUCTION OF PORTIONS LOST IN SYRIAC

The Syriac text of Nicolaus-Olympiodorus as preserved in our Cambridge manuscript is incomplete. The relationships illustrated in the chart below, however, allow us to attempt a reconstruction of those portions which are lost there. Where passages closely resembling each other are found in the Greek Olympiodorus and in those works now known to be derived from the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus, it may be assumed that the passage was also there in the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus, which is the link between the two.

Example 1: Fossils in Egypt

Olymp. in *Mete.* [Stüve] 116.10-15:
ὅτι δὲ Αἴγυπτος πάλαι θάλαττα ἦν καὶ ὑστερον ἠπειρώθη, ...
δῆλον δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τῶν κογκυλίων καὶ τελλίνων ἐκεῖ εἶναι ὄστρακα, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἐγκαταλείμματα τῶν

ὀστρακοδέριων τῶν ἀπομεινάντων ἠπειρωθείσης τῆς θαλάττης .

[τελλίνων scripsi: χελύνων Stüve; γελλίνων codd. et editio Aldina]

That Egypt was once sea and later became land ... is clear from the fact there are the shells of *kogkulia* und *tellinai* there, which are the remains of testaceans which were left behind when the sea became land.

Olymp. arab. [Badawi] 104.7-8:

ويدل على صحة ذلك دلالة عظيمة المواضع المعروفة إلى هذا الوقت أن البحر فيما تقدم كان يغمرها بمنزلة بلاد مصر فإنه إلى هذه الغاية في مواضع عميقة منه دلائل البحر وهي أنواع من الأصداف وغيرها

Major proof that this [theory] is correct is provided by places, concerning which it is known until today that the sea used in former times to cover them, e.g. Egypt. For to this day, there are found in deep places of it evidence of the sea, i.e. species of shells etc.

Ibn Sīnā, K. al-shifā', al-Af'āl wa-l-infī'ālāt, ed. Qassem (Cairo edition),²⁹ 209.13-14:

وقد يعرف من أمر النجف الذي بالكوفة أنه بحر ناضب . قيل ان أرض مصر هذه سبيلها ويوجد فيها رميم حيوان البحر

[That the sea migrates] is known from the condition of al-Najaf by al-Kūfa, [namely] that it is dried-up land. It has been said: the land of Egypt is like this [i.e. dried-up sea] and decaying bones [*ramīm*] of sea animals are found in it.

Barhebraeus, Cand., Base II [Bakos] 152.11-153.2; [Çiçek] 110.3-13:

منذ كان بحر مصر جافاً

منذ كان بحر مصر جافاً . من ذلك ما وجدنا في مصر من الأصداف التي هي من البحر . وهذا يدل على صحة ما قلنا من أن البحر كان يغمر مصر في زمان ما .

[Bakos || Berolicensis: Bakos et Çiçek]

This [sc. that the sea migrates] is known from the fact that although Egypt was [once] sea, the Nile has buried it and raised land in it, so that the sea dried up and became dry land. That Egypt was sea in former times is proven by the depression of Arsinoitis, where to this day one can see evidences of [its having been] the seabed, namely the *QWNKWLW* and *ṬHLLYNW*, i.e. shells, which are found there.

Barhebraeus, But. Min. 5.3.2:

منذ كان بحر مصر جافاً . من ذلك ما وجدنا في مصر من الأصداف التي هي من البحر . وهذا يدل على صحة ما قلنا من أن البحر كان يغمر مصر في زمان ما .

For Egypt, as the master [Aristotle] said, was sea in former times, but [then] dried up and became dry land. For this reason bones of marine animals *QWNKWLW* and *ṬHLLYNWS* are found in the depression of Arsinoitis.

There is a long lacuna in the Cambridge manuscript of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus in the section concerning the sea. The Arabic and Syriac passages

quoted above are therefore likely to derive from a passage belonging to that lacuna.

The names of the shellfish, *kogkulia* and *tellinai*, have disappeared in the Arabic "Olympiodorus," but are preserved in the two works of Barhebraeus and must therefore have been there in the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus. The two Syriac passages of Barhebraeus here, in fact, help us not only to reconstruct the lost passage of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus, but also to correct the text of the Greek Olympiodorus, substituting for the meaningless *gellinai* of the manuscripts (and the Aldine edition) and the somewhat audacious emendation proposed by Stüve a word which, as well as being close to the manuscript reading, is known to designate "a small bivalve shell-fish" from Greek medical sources.³⁰

The place-name Arsinoitis³¹ (modern Fayyūm) is not mentioned in the Greek Olympiodorus, but since there is unlikely to be a source other than the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus where Barhebraeus could have found this word, one is led to conclude that the text of Olympiodorus available to the Syriac translator/scholiast was significantly different from the one known to us today.

The "ostrakoderma" of the Greek is rendered by "shellfish" in Olymp. arab. (*aṣḏāf*) and in Barhebraeus' Cand. (*zalpātā*). Ibn Sīnā, on the other hand, alters this to "(decaying) bones of marine animals" (*ramīm ḥayawān al-baḥr*) and Barhebraeus follows this in his later work, the Butyrum (*garmē d-ḥayyiwātā yammāyātā*). In other words, the passage in the Butyrum may be seen as an attempt to combine the contents of the lost passage of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus with those of a passage derived indirectly from there in the Shifā',

whereas the passage in the Candelabrum is likely to preserve more faithfully the wording of the lost passage of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus.

A further example is given below where our knowledge of the relationship illustrated below helps us to propose a new emendation, in this case in the Arabic treatise by Ibn al-Khammār. The passages quoted below form a part of the discussion on the various causes of optical illusion.³²

Example 2: Holes or trees?

Ibn al-Khammār [Lettinck] 356.21-358.2:

ولهذه العلة نرى الارض الكثيرة الزوايا من بعد
كانها مستوية فيضل في الخشونة لانها تخفى الثقب
الذى فى الارض للبعد

[الثقب sic Lettinck: الشر cod. Hyderabad; الشفق cod. Tehran; الشجر propono]

For this reason we see ground abounding in corners, from a distance, as if it were smooth [*mustawiyah*], so that one errs³³ concerning roughness [*khushūnah*], because it [?] obscures the holes [*al-thuqab*] on the ground because of the distance.

Olymp. arab. [Badawi] 159.17-19:

والثالث أن يظن بالأشياء الخشنة أنها ملس وذلك أن
ماينتا منها يفوته ولهذه العلة ترى الأرض المختلفة
الكثيرة الحجارة من بعد متساوية ملساء

The third [error of vision is] that it thinks that rough [*khashinah*] things are smooth [*mustawiyah*], i.e. it fails to notice what bulges out from them. For that reason, variegated ground abounding in stones appears level and smooth from a distance.

Ibn Sīnā, K. al-shifā', al-āthār al-

^culwīyah (Cairo edition) 44.14ff.:

والبصر يعرض له الغلط ... ومنها في وضع أجزائه
فإن البعيد لا يحس بخشونته

Error occurs to vision ... concerning the position of its parts, since with a distant object one cannot perceive its roughness [*khushūnah*].

Barhebraeus, But. Mete. 2.1.5:

فكأنه يرى سطحاً ... كأنه يرى سطحاً
ويعلم أنه ليس كذلك، لأن البصر لا يحس
بخشونته، لأن البصر لا يحس بخشونته
لأن البصر لا يحس بخشونته

Vision may err ... concerning the parts on its [sc. "of the object seen"] surface, because with something that is far away one cannot perceive its roughness [*hārōsūtā*], as when a mountain which is thick with trees and rocks [*īlānē w-qattārē*] appears smooth [*sha^{cc}tā*] from a distance.

The four passages above are clearly interrelated and, given what we know of the relationship between the four works, the likelihood is that they all derive from a lost passage of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus. That being the case, the mention of "trees" in Barhebraeus allows us to suggest an alternative emendation to Lettinck's "holes," an alternative which is somewhat closer to the reported manuscript readings.

In the rest of the passage at But. Mete. 2.1.5 Barhebraeus, in fact, closely follows the wording of the *Shifā'* and it is only in the part quoted above that he departs from it. Such a departure is usually an indication that he has used another source, the likely candidate in this instance being his copy of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus. In talking of "trees and rocks" Barhebraeus has probably preserved for us the wording of the

Syriac version. It appears that Ibn al-Khammār chose "trees" out of the two as his example, while the Syriac "rocks" appears in a somewhat reduced form as "stones" in the Arabic "Olympiodorus."³⁴

6. CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made above to provide a brief description of the Syriac Nicolaus-Olympiodorus text preserved in ms. Cantab. Gg 2.14, a text which one has strong reasons to associate with Ḥunain b. Ishāq, and to illustrate how this text helps us in the work of elucidating the exact manner in which the transfer of knowledge from the Greek to the Arabic world took place at the level of textual transmission. Only a small portion of this Syriac text has so far been made available to the public. It is hoped that the edition being undertaken by the present writer of the remaining portions of the text will provide more useful materials for that work.

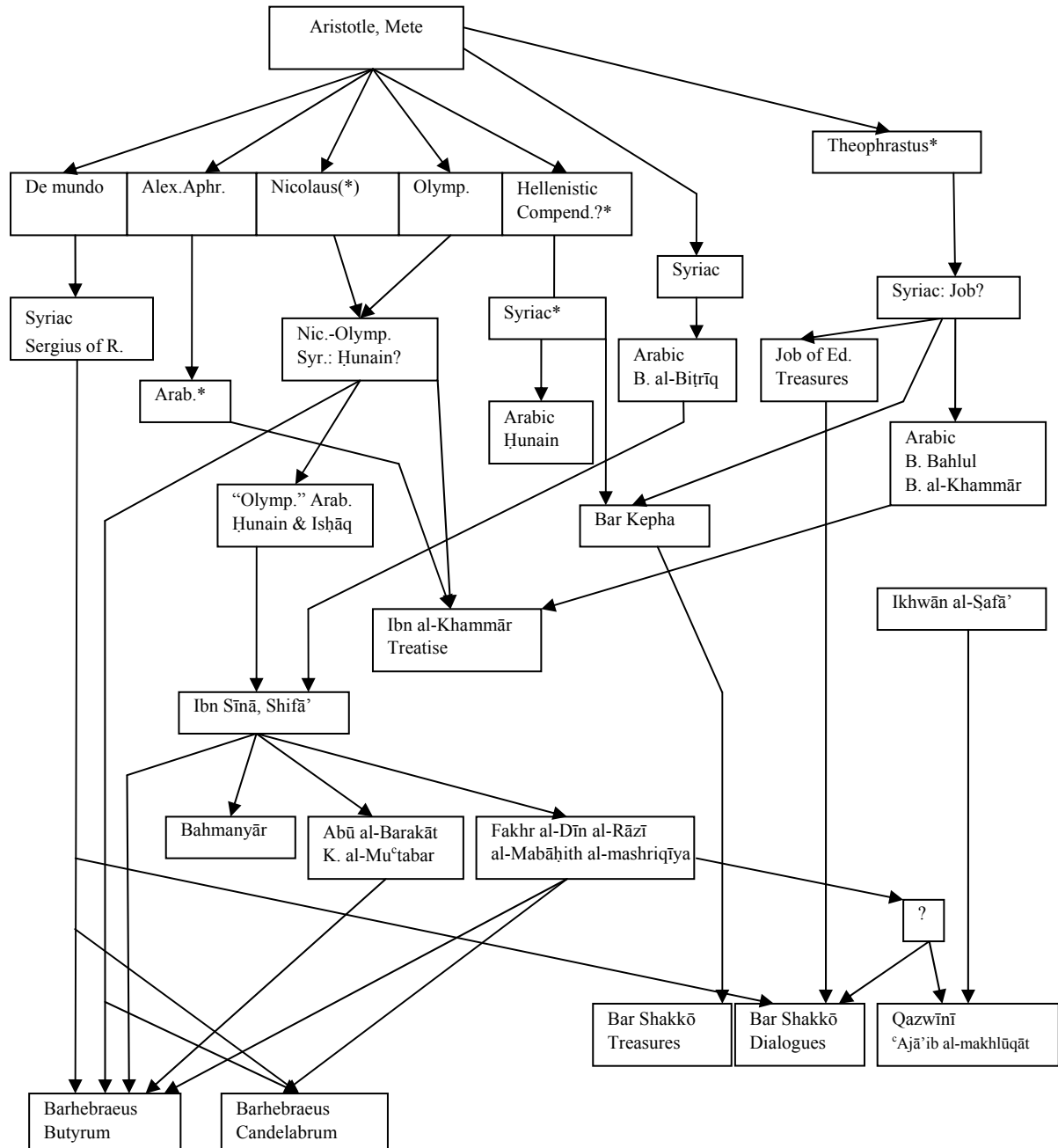
The Syriac version of Nicolaus' Compendium as preserved in the Cambridge manuscript is unfortunately far from complete. As some of the examples given above show, however, it is possible in a case like this to recover lost portions of a work through judicious use of subsequent works dependent upon it once the various lines of transmission have been established on the basis of those portions which do survive. In our case it may be hoped in particular that the work, which is under way at present, of editing those parts of Barhebraeus' *Butyrum sapientiae* dealing with the natural sciences and metaphysics will lead to the recovery of significant portions of the remaining parts of this Compendium.

Unlike the text discussed here, the majority of the Syriac translations of

Greek scientific works which subsequently became the sources of the Arabic translations and original works composed in Arabic are now lost. One hopes, in the first place, that further fragments and traces of such Syriac translations might be discovered among Syriac texts that

await closer examination. Where, however, such Syriac intermediaries are irretrievably lost, it may be hoped that analogy with those cases such as this where the Syriac survives will help cast some light on the manner in which knowledge was transmitted.

Syro-Arabic Tradition of Aristotle's Meteorologica (see Note 21)
 Asterisks (*) indicate lost works.



NOTES

¹ G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes [= AKM] XVII.2 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1925); id., *Neue Materialien zu Ḥunain ibn Ishāq's Galen-Bibliographie*, AKM XIX.2 (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1932).

² S.P. Brock, "The Syriac Background to Ḥunayn's Translation Techniques," *Aram* 3 (1991) 139-162 (rep. in id., *From Ephrem to Romanos* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999], no. XIV), here p. 153-55. – Cf. H. Takahashi, "Syriac Fragments of Theophrastean Meteorology and Mineralogy. Fragments in the Syriac Version of Nicolaus Damascenus, *Compendium of Aristotelian Philosophy* and the Accompanying Scholia," in *On the Opuscula of Theophrastus. Akten der 3. Tagung der Karl-und-Gertrud-Abel-Stiftung vom 19.-23. Juli 1999 in Trier*, ed. W. Fortenbaugh and G. Wöhrle (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 189-224, here p. 194 n. 20.

³ See H.J. Drossaart Lulofs, *Nicolaus Damascenus on the Philosophy of Aristotle. Fragments of the First Five Books Translated from the Syriac with an Introduction and Commentary*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1965) [incl. an edition of what remains of the first five *mēm̄rē*]; H.J. Drossaart Lulofs & E.L.J. Poortman, *Nicolaus Damascenus. De Plantis. Five Translations*, *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* 4 (Amsterdam-Oxford-New York: North Holland Publishing, 1989) [incl. an edition of the fragment "de plantis"]; H. Takahashi, "Syriac Fragments" (as n. 2) [incl. an edition of the part on mineralogy]; id., *Aristotelian Meteorology in Syriac. Barhebraeus, Butyrum sapientiae, Books of Mineralogy and Meteorology*, *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* 15 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004) [with numerous quotations from this work; see esp. p. 11-14, 51-53, and Index locorum, p. 706-8]; and, for those able to read Japanese, H. Takahashi, "Syriac as the 'Missing

Link' in the Transmission of Knowledge: the Case of the Syriac Version of Nicolaus Damascenus' *Compendium of Aristotelian Philosophy*" (in Japanese), *The Toyo Gakuho: The Journal of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 84:3 (2002) 370-350 [= 023-043]. – In what follows this text as found in the Cambridge manuscript will be designated, for the sake of simplicity, as "Nic. syr.," even though, as will emerge, not all of it goes back to the Greek Nicolaus.

⁴ The folios towards the end of the Cambridge manuscript have been rebound in the wrong order. In what follows, the following page numbers will be used in referring to the Nicolaus text preserved in this manuscript. – p. 1-2: fol. 328rv; 3-4: 369rv; 5-6: 329rv; 7-8: 330rv; 9-10: 331rv; 11-12: 332rv; 13-14: 333rv; 15-16: 334rv; 17-18: 370rv; 19-20: 335rv; 21-22: 336rv; 23-24: 337rv; 25-26: 338rv; 27-28: 339rv; 29-30: 340rv; 31-32: 341rv; 33-34: 343rv; 35-36: 342rv; 37-38: 367rv; 39-40: 368rv; 41-42: 344rv; 43-44: 345rv; 45-46: 346rv; 47-48: 347rv; 49-50: 348rv; 51-52: 349rv; 53-54: 365rv; 55-56: 366rv; 57-58: 371rv; 59-60: 350rv; 61-62: 383rv; 63-64: 382rv; 65-66: 378rv; 67-68: 379rv; 69-70: 380rv; 71-72: 381rv; 73-74: 384rv; 75-76: 385rv.

⁵ Due to the damage to the manuscript, the lines in which *mēm̄rē* VIII and IX began are now lost. The damage to the manuscript also makes it difficult to determine the exact contents of *mēm̄rē* XI-XIII. Two additional (and displaced) excerpts corresponding to passages in Aristotle's *De longaevitate* and *Historia animalium*, Book I, are found at the end of the manuscript.

⁶ G. [W.] Stüve, *Olympiodori in Aristotelis Meteora commentaria*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* [CAG] XII/II (Berlin: Reimer, 1900).

⁷ This applies to the bulk of the scholia found in the Cambridge manuscript. The manu-

script also contains a number of scholia/interpolations which are likely to be of a later date, such as the note on the pyramids in Egypt at 9.11-15 (= Drossaart Lulofs, *Nicolaus Damascenus on the Philosophy of Aristotle* [as n. 3], 89.4-8; cf. H. Takahashi, *Aristotelian Meteorology in Syriac* [as n. 3], 404-6) where Dionysius of Tellmahārē (Syr. Orth. Patriarch 818-845) is quoted. Given that the passage of Dionysius used there was known to Barhebraeus and used by him in another work (Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* [ed. J.B. Abbeloos & T.J. Lamy (Louvain: Peeters, 1872-77)], I.379.14ff.; cf. Michael I, *Chronicon* [ed. J.B. Chabot (Paris: Leroux, 1899-1910)], IV.526f.), the interpolator may, in fact, be none other than Barhebraeus himself and the Nicolaus text in the Cambridge manuscript may be a descendant of the very copy which was used by Barhebraeus.

⁸ In what follows “But. Min.” and. “But. Mete.” stand, respectively, for the book (*ktābā*) on mineralogy and that on meteorology in this work. The quotations below are from Takahashi, *Aristotelian Meteorology in Syriac* (as n. 3).

⁹ Barhebraeus [Ibn al-ʿIbrī], *Taʿrīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal* [recte *Mukhtaṣar taʿrīkh al-duwal*], ed. Anṭūn Ṣāḥḥānī (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlīkīya, 1958), 82.15f.

¹⁰ Paris syr. 346, fol. 69v 16: *mnaḥhar wa-mḥawwē ḤWNYN āsyā d- ...*; fol. 70v 7: *āmar gēr ḤWNYN kad mnaḥhar d-lam ...* – The passage at Paris 69v 16ff. corresponds to ms. Cantab. p. 29.18ff., that at Paris 70v 7ff. to Cantab. p. 30.26ff.

¹¹ Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, In Aristotelis Meteorologicorum libros commentaria [= Alex. in Mete.], ed. M. Hayduck, CAG III/II (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), 53.19-22; Olymp. in Mete. [Stüve], 100.11-13. The Syriac scholiast here is in agreement with the Greek commentators in telling us that *pneuma/rūḥā* is a more general term than *anemos/zīqā*, but omits to tell us that the term *anemoi* is reserved for winds with “specific names” (*ōnomasmenoi, katonomasthenta*).

¹² Published by P. de Lagarde in his *Analecta syriaca* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1858; rep. Osnabrück: Zeller, 1967), p. 134-58. – Cf. H. Takahashi, *Aristotelian Meteorology in Syriac* (as n. 3), p. 55; id., “The Greco-Syriac and Arabic Sources of Barhebraeus’ Mineralogy and Meteorology in *Candelabrum sanctuarii*, Base II,” *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 56 (2004) 191-209, here p. 203-6.

¹³ “Tafsīr Ulimfīdūrūs li-kitāb Aristāṭālīs fī al-āthār al-ʿulwīyah, naql Ḥunayn b. Ishāq wa-īslāḥ Ishāq b. Ḥunayn,” preserved in ms. Tashkent, Abu Raihan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, 2385, fol. 347r-368r, and published in A. Badawi, *Commentaires sur Aristote perdus en grec et autres épîtres*, Recherches publiées sous la direction de l’Institut de Lettres Orientales de Beyrouth, N.S. A.1 (Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq, 1971), 83-190.

¹⁴ Cf. Arist. Mete. 368b 22-32 (also 366b 18f.); Alex. in Mete. [Hayduck] 125.17-35 (the corresponding part of Olymp. in Mete. is lost). – The passage here was used by Barhebraeus in his Cand. (Base II, ed. J. Bakos, *Candélabre des sanctuaires de Grégoire Aboulfaradj dit Barhebraeus*, PO 22/4, 24/3 [Paris, 1930-33], 128.9-129.1) and But. (Min. 2.2.4). In the light of the corresponding passages of Nic. syr. and But., we should correct Bakos’ reading ܕܪܥܘܘܬܐ at Cand. II, 128.10 to ܕܪܥܘܘܬܐ, which is also the reading of the Vaticanus (syr. 168, 14th c., the oldest of the manuscripts used by Bakos) and Çiçek’s edition of Cand. (*Mnorath kudshe (Lamp of the Sanctuary) by Mor Gregorios Yohanna Bar Ebryoyo* [Holland (Glane/Losser): Bar-Hebraeus Verlag, 1997], 97.30; based on ms. Hierosolym. 135, dated 1590; vocalised *neqshānāʿit* by Çiçek).

¹⁵ The text of the sentence here presents considerable difficulties. I translate reading *āplā* (or *w-lā*) instead of *ellā* in line 9. The words “*hāwē* [erased?] *hāwē ... hāwē hwā*” is also problematic especially as the manuscript reading itself is not altogether clear. The sense may be conditional: “if someone were to descend on a

ladder, his motion *would be ...*"

¹⁶ This word, left in transliteration by the Syriac translator, allows us to identify the three types of earthquakes mentioned here with the "κλιματίας," "βρασματίας" and "χασματίας" found mentioned in a fragment of Posidonius (Frag. 12 Edelstein-Kidd, = Diogenes Laertius 7.154; cf. I.G. Kidd, *Posidonius*, Vol. 2. The Commentary (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), ii.817 [on Frag. 230]).

¹⁷ I translate reading *rwahtā* instead of *rawwih̄tā*. A possible Greek equivalent would be ἀναπνοή used of vent-holes in the earth associated with earthquakes and volcanic activity at De mundo 395b 20 and 397a 32 (cf. also Arist. Mete. 368b 9 διαπνοή). The corruption into *rawwih̄tā* may be explained partly as a result of the influence of the phrase *dukk̄tā rawwih̄tā* which occurs just a few lines earlier at 41.7 and which is therefore likely to have been in the copyist's mind.

¹⁸ The text of this last part of the passage, like the corresponding part of the Syriac scholion, presents some difficulties. I read inserting a negative in the clause beginning with "wa-li'anna" at ed. Badawi 141.1 ("wa-li'anna laisat ...", "wa-laisat ..."?). The referent of the feminine suffix in *ḥarakatu-hā* in the same clause is unclear.

¹⁹ Text in P. Lettinck, *Aristotle's Meteorology and its Reception in the Arab World. With an Edition and Translation of Ibn Suwār's Treatise on Meteorological Phenomena and Ibn Bājja's Commentary on the Meteorology*, Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus 10 (Leiden-Boston-Cologne: Brill, 1999), 313-379, where Nicolaus is mentioned at 320.4; cf. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 12 vols. (Leiden: Brill/Frankfurt: Institut für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften, 1967-2000), VII.284.

²⁰ Lettinck, *Aristotle's Meteorology* (as n. 19), 10 et passim.

²¹ A chart is given at the end of this paper showing the position of the Syriac Nicolaus-

Olympiodorus text in the Syriac and Arabic transmission of Aristotelian meteorology. The chart is intended to supplement (and partially correct) the charts given at Lettinck, *Aristotle's Meteorology* (as n. 19), viii-ix. Some of the relationships shown in this chart but not discussed in the present paper are discussed in Takahashi, "Greco-Syriac and Arabic Sources" (as n. 12); id., *Aristotelian Meteorology in Syriac* (as n. 3), esp. p. 37-59; and id., "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Qazwīnī and Bar Shakkō," to appear in *The Harp* as part of the proceedings of the Vth Syriac Conference (held at SEERI, Kottayam, Sept. 2002).

²² Abd el-Ḥalīm Montaṣir, Sa'īd Zayed, & Abdallah Ismā'īl, *Ibn Sīnā. Al-Shifā'. La Physique. V - Les Métaux et la Météorologie* (Cairo: Organisation Générale des Imprimeries Gouvernementales, 1964).

²³ Ibn Sīnā/Abū 'Ubaid al-Jūzjānī, *Sīrat al-shaikh al-ra'īs*, ed. W.E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina: a Critical Edition and Annotated Translation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 58.3f.

²⁴ Iliad, 11.306, 21.334 ("ἀργεστᾶο νότοιο" in the genitive case in both instances).

²⁵ See G. Strohmeier, "Homer in Bagdad," *Byzantinoslavica* 41 (1980) 196-200. Rep. in id., *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim-Zürich-New York: Olms, 1996), 222-226.

²⁶ The Syriac *nshab* here does not answer exactly to the Greek ἐπιπίπτω, but *nshab* is also used to render Aristotle's ἐπιπίπτω (364b 3) at Nic. syr. 33.29.

²⁷ "αἰθρηγενέτης": "aether/sky-born" according to modern scholarship, but understood to mean "making clear sky" by earlier lexicographers, as our Syriac translator/scholiasist has done here. – See Hesychius (5th c.), *Lexicon*, ed. K. Latte, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, vol. I-II (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1953-66), I.68, no. 1886: "αἰθρηγενέτην· εὐδίαν ποιοῦντα"; cf. Eustathius (12th c.), *Comm. ad Hom. Od.*, ed.

G. Stallbaum, *Eustathii archiepiscopi thessalonicensis Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam* (Leipzig, 1825; rep. Hildesheim-New York: Olms, 1970), 220.27-29 [ad. E.296]; *Etymologicon magnum*, ed. T. Gaisford, *Etymologicon magnum seu verius Lexicon saepissime vocabulorum origines indagans ex pluribus lexicis scholiasticis et grammaticis anonymi cuiusdam opera concinnatum* (Oxford, 1848; rep. Amsterdam: A.M. Hackert, 1967), s.v. “αἰθηγενέτης”.

²⁸ In the singular in Homer; *GL' RB'* written with *syāmē* in both ms. Cantab. and Paris, but the plural of *rabbā* as an adjective should strictly be *rawrbē*.

²⁹ Mahmoud Qassem & Ibrahim Madkour, Ibn Sīnā. *Al-Shifa. Physique 2-4* (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1969).

³⁰ H.G. Liddel, R. Scott, & H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon. With a Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1772b, s.v. – Had one thought of the possible confusion of

gamma and *tau* in Greek, the emendation here is admittedly one that could have been proposed even without the help of the Syriac, but it is reassuring to have the witness of the *ṭēt* in the latter.

³¹ To whom (Syriac translator/scholiast, subsequent copyist or Barhebraeus) the error of turning the word into “Arseonitis” should be ascribed is now difficult to determine.

³² Due to a lacuna in the Greek Olympiodorus, we are missing precisely those parts which are of concern to us in the probable source passage there. – Ed. Stüve 236.8: “*** δοκεῖ εἶναι, καὶ τὰ γωνιαῖα σώματα ἄγωνία ***”.

³³ Melius *naḏillu*, “we err”?

³⁴ For the liberty taken in reducing “rocks” (*qattārā*) to “stones” (*ḥajar*), see the frequent definition of *qattārā* simply as “large stone” (*al-ḥajar al-kabīr*) in the Syriac-Arabic lexica cited at Payne Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus*, col. 3777f.

MONK, MISSIONARY, AND MARTYR: JOHN OF EPHESUS,
A SYRIAC ORTHODOX HISTORIAN IN SIXTH CENTURY BYZANTIUM¹



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INTRODUCTION

Around 507,² saint Maron, a local stylite in the village and monastery of Ar'ā Rabthā, near Amida, is relatively new on the job. His brother, who had been his predecessor on the local column, had died some years previously. Maron had climbed up the ladder, handed down the corpse, and stayed on top ever since. He made certain that the tradition would be continued and took it upon himself to fulfil the role of the local ascetic for his area.³ His first test comes when the parents of a little boy, John, who is about a year or two old, ask him for help, as their son is suffering from some kind of stroke and is clearly seriously ill. All their previous children had died around that same age and from a similar cause. Maron tries to console the parents by saying: "Be quiet. John will not die before Maron." At that very instant John goes silent and his mother assumes that he has died. Maron then orders someone to get some lentils from the monastic kitchen and to let the boy eat some of them. The mother and the monks object that praying might be more useful. As one monk

goes to get the lentils he states, while laughing(!): "I am going to raise your son from the dead by letting him eat lentils." Maron orders the monk to dip his finger in the lentils and to insert it in John's mouth three times. The monk does so, while saying: "See! These things have been done to no purpose." But after the third dip John opens his eyes and gets up and is well again. This first miracle by Mar Maron is also the first information we have about our focus of attention here, John of Ephesus.⁴

John's life and career would have been forgotten had it not been for his own writings. These became an intricate part of the literary tradition of the Syriac Orthodox Church⁵ and one of the main sources for the early part of the history of this church.⁶ People like Michael the Great (d. 1199) and Bar 'Ebroyo (d. 1286) refer to his *Church History* as one of the central sources of their own historiography.⁷ The account of his personal life also provides some additional information about the proto-Syriac Orthodox Church in the Sixth century. John was one of the players in the process of the separation of the churches, in which a major issue seems to have been the ordination of a separate ecclesiastical hierarchy by Jacob Burd'ana (d. 578) from the 540's on.⁸

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The sixth century is the century of the famous emperor Justinian (527-565), when the East Roman Empire of Byzantium flourished only to suffer severe setbacks in the following centuries. The sixth century is a century of wars, first of all against the Persians in the East—in essence two superpowers locked in battle for supremacy in one long war, with at times a decade or so of “peace”—but also on the northern, southern and western fronts. On the Balkans and in Egypt the barbarians have to be kept at bay, and in the West attempts were made to restore the old empire by re-conquering Northern Africa, Italy and parts of Spain. In the end these gains could not be consolidated. In fact, due to the loss of resources in these campaigns even the old frontiers in the North and East were weakened. Enemies like Sassanian Persia took the opportunity to strike hard at the heartlands of the empire, which, in turn, weakened the empire even more. In addition, this is the century of the “Plague.” In the 640's a new form of plague struck the empire, killing large numbers of its population. It returned several times afterwards reducing the economic power of the empire even more.⁹

It is also a century of religious upheaval, the belated clash of the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonians (or Miaphysites). In 451 at the council of Chalcedon a new attempt had been made to find a formula to reunite the various groups in the doctrinal dispute of the natures of or in Christ. In addition it was also used to “punish” patriarch Dioscurus of Alexandria for his bullying of his opponents at the second council of Ephesus (449). Immediately there was great resentment against the decisions of this

council on the part of those loosely called “Miaphysites.” As a result, with the exception of the ‘Chalcedonisation’ of Palestine, the Byzantine Empire in many ways ignored the council. Emperors like Zeno—whose *Henotikon* was another attempt to bridge the gap between the Miaphysites and the Chalcedonians—and Anastasius (491-518)—who gradually even seemed to promote Miaphysitism, for example by letting Severus of Antioch become patriarch in that city—gave the impression that Chalcedon had been a “mishap” and would soon be forgotten in the East.¹⁰

JOHN'S LITERARY WORKS

Our knowledge of John's life and career is almost entirely based on his own works: a collection known as the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (published by E. W. Brooks, and studied by Ashbrook Harvey¹¹) and a *Church History* in three parts, starting in the time of Julius Caesar until more or less the death of the author (part III published by Brooks, and studied by D'yakonov and van Ginkel¹²). The collection of saints' lives and part three of the church history have been preserved more or less intact.¹³ The first part of the church history is lost—it probably contained an adapted and summarized version of the Church Histories of Eusebius of Caesarea and of Socrates the Scholastic (with elements of other church histories like those of Theodoret, and possibly Sozomen). The second part of John's *Church History*, which probably started its account with the death of Theodosius II (d. 450) or the Council of Chalcedon (451), has been used by later Syriac historiographers—most prominently the anonymous author of the *Chronicle of Zuqnān*¹⁴ and Michael the Great. On

the basis of these works and other Syriac chronicles it is possible to at least get some idea of the material that John had incorporated into his work. Most of it was “documentary” material like the *Henotikon* by Zeno or the *Letter of Simeon of Beth Arsham* on the persecution of the Christians in Najran. Parts of Chronicles were also used. Even for the period of which John had been an eyewitness, he often used the *Chronicle of Malalas*¹⁵ as his main source, to which, at times, he added some personal notes. He did, however, incorporate several works that he had written previously, on the persecution by the Chalcedonians and on the plague of the early 540’s.¹⁶

Only the third part consists almost entirely of John’s own account, although there may have been some preceding source material, probably documents and oral sources, for his war account. Part three was a kind of afterthought, after the publication of the first two parts. The religious and military politics demanded a “continuation,” on which John probably kept working until his death in or after 588 AD.¹⁷

On the basis of these works the account of John’s life can be more or less reconstructed. It can be divided into three periods: his monastic training (until about 542); his missionary exploits (until about 566); and his struggle over Church-unity with the patriarchs of Constantinople, John the Scholastic and Eutychius, and the emperors Justin II (565-578), Tiberius (578-582) and Maurice (582-602) until his death.

JOHN THE MONK

After John had been saved by Maron, his parents promised to send him to the monastery at four years of age. His entire youth

was spent in the monastery, where he was educated in reading and writing Syriac, probably by memorizing and copying the Psalter.¹⁸ All this happened during the reign of emperor Anastasius, who looked favourably to the anti-Chalcedonian movement, and when Severus was governing the Syrian diocese. In John’s description there is little information on ecclesiastical affairs, just the daily routine in a small monastery.¹⁹

In 518, however, after Anastasius’ death and after a little palace intrigue, a staunch Chalcedonian, Justin I (518-527), had come to power. Early on in his reign he ordered all bishops—with the exception of those in Egypt, it seems—to show some form of commitment to the council of Chalcedon. In Asia Minor and Syria many bishops had to leave their sees after declining to do so. John has a list of famous bishops from Asia Minor and Syria who were exiled.²⁰ Although it is presented as if all these bishops were removed from office immediately, it becomes clear from his *Lives* and the *Church History of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene*²¹—an anonymous Syriac Miaphysite historiographer and contemporary of John—that in fact the last of these bishops left their sees only in 521 or 522. In the end Egypt was the only region where Miaphysites were universally recognized as bishops of the imperial church. Although no official explanation was given by the emperor, his policy of removing anti-Chalcedonian leaders from office was never implemented there, possibly out of fear of disrupting the grain-supply for Constantinople.

The exile of the bishops was followed by a campaign against clergy and monks. They, also, were expected at least to keep quiet about their anti-Chalcedonian beliefs. Maron, for example, was still on his column

in 522. An insight into the reason why that was the case can be gained from the story of the blessed Sergius (Life 5), a more outspoken colleague, who visits Maron on his column. Sergius “was eager to contend until death with the renegades,” but the blessed Maron “tried to restrain him and said: ‘My son, you are throwing yourself into a struggle (ܩܘܠܘܢܐ) and you are about to fall into the hand of cruel and merciless men, and you have a trial to endure. Beware.’” Maron seems not to want to rock the boat. John, of course, offers another explanation. The Chalcedonians simply did not dare to molest Maron for fear of his valour.²²

After Maron’s death in or around 522 John moves to a monastic community, the monastery of Mar John Urtaya, originally from Amida, but which had been forced to leave Amida by the Chalcedonian bishop.²³ The community was living in a rural monastery. Like other communities, which had left the cities, these communities were left to fend for themselves, most of the time. One of these exiled communities even found the time to build a vineyard and become famous for its excellent wine.

In his description of this period—a small booklet he produced around 540, later embedded in his *Church History*—John stresses the brutality of the persecutors, but if read carefully—and combined with his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* from this period—the method of persecution by the Chalcedonians becomes clear. They went for the leaders—bishops, clergy, famous ascetics and monks—and tried to force them to accept Chalcedon. If not, they were removed from their lay communities in the cities and from the public sphere. If, however, they were out of sight in the territories, they were at times harassed, but in the eyes

of the Chalcedonians and early Byzantine society, they had effectively been dealt with. They were “invisible.”²⁴ As a result, the number of “martyrs” for their faith is very limited, and those who do die for the most part seem to die of anxiety rather than of real torture. The only real martyr in John’s saints’ lives is John of Tella, and in his historical fragments there is a priest who is killed in Amida at the stake.²⁵ But these two are the only ones that are actually killed by the persecutors.

In his rural setting, John continues his training and becomes a deacon.²⁶ During this period he starts visiting famous ascetics in order to learn from them. As he himself says: “My soul loved and clave to anyone in whom I saw anything of this kind [of asceticism].” He himself has a go at it, but when he tries to imitate his “idols” his seniors laugh at him and joke: “If you see a boy going up to heaven, catch hold of his foot.”²⁷ Although the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* was written explicitly to stimulate people to imitate and emulate these ascetics, it is obvious that for John asceticism is more than just “harsh treatment of the body.” An ascetic, Harfat, who had chains hanging all over his body and was clearly suffering, was chided by John and eventually advised by him “to throw off these irons which are a useless burden, and lade yourself instead of them with the burden of labours performed with knowledge; and thus you will please God. ... for now, as you said, you are a sinner; and we and others, who see you with irons hanging on you think to ourselves that you are a great and holy man, a worker of miracles. If you are so, you do well in hanging irons on yourself.”²⁸ Asceticism needs to be earned and one has to have reached a certain level of “sainthood” to make it effective

and positive. Otherwise it is detrimental.

The distances of his travels increase after emperor Justinian—emperor since 527—and his wife Theodora (d. 548)—famous for supporting the Miaphysites—lift the ban in approximately 530²⁹ and allow the monks to return to their urban monasteries. Although a monk needs the permission of his community to travel, it seems that John could always get this permission, and he travelled throughout Northern Mesopotamia. In 532 he went to Antioch, and two years later, to Egypt and Constantinople.³⁰ The monastery had “brethren” or at least “associates” throughout much of the empire and they kept in touch and were visited by monks like John.

In the winter of 536/7, however, the “thaw” between Chalcedonians and their opponents became a harsh winter again. Unification debates in the capital had been thwarted by the Pope Agapet (d. 536), and probably also by the emperor, who was not amused when his chief negotiator, patriarch Anthimus, switched sides. After being deposed, Anthimus went into hiding in one of the empress’s palaces. Severus, the ideological leader of the Miaphysites, returned to Egypt to die and patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria was kept near or in the capital for the rest of his life (until 566).³¹ The Chalcedonians threw the Miaphysites out of the cities again. And this time some very zealous types even hunted them down in the rural areas, not allowing them to live in the rural monasteries. This became known as “The descent of Ephraim,” after the name of the patriarch of Antioch, who authorized the persecution in Syria. The communities were split into small bands and John was ordered to lead one of these groups to safety across a frozen Euphrates. The monks regrouped in

the mountains, close to the Euphrates, and lived there for 12 or 13 years.³²

John’s abbot had gone to Constantinople after being maltreated by Chalcedonians, possibly about 537 or 8, and stayed there for 5 years under the protection of Theodora.³³ She acted as patron to all Miaphysite exiles in the capital, providing them with lodgings and resources. It should be noted, however, that Justinian is presented as helping her, accompanying her to these make-shift monasteries. On the other hand, Theodora’s protection of these monks and bishops did come at a price. She did not want them to go wandering off and clearly states to John of Hephæstopolis: “See that you remain within the palace (the hide out), lest trial in truth come upon you. Remain still and keep quiet like your companions and do not make priests in this city.” This John of Hephæstopolis then felt the need—after sneaking off without permission—to send a letter to the empress in which he almost blatantly lies to her saying: “Since I, my lady, have on account of ill health not been able to come in and make obeisance to you all this time, send me a letter on what you wish to say.”³⁴ In essence Theodora wanted to control their going and coming and wanted to make certain that most of them did not make a fuss. Only selected persons were allowed to go out and work on behalf of the dissident movement, like Jacob Burd’ana and Theodore of the Arabs, and only after some pressure had been used by the Ghassanid kings. We should therefore be very careful not to over-emphasize the differences in religious policy between Justinian and Theodora.³⁵

John also went up to the capital, three years after his abbot. However, he first travelled to Alexandria and visited some ascetics in the desert—among others Caesaria,

one of the correspondents of Severus.³⁶ During his travels John already saw the first stages of the plague in Palestine, which would date his visit there around 540/41. After a short stop at his monastery in Northern Mesopotamia, he moved to the capital, before or in 542.³⁷ Around this time John officially got permission to leave the monastery of John Urtaya after being a part of it for 19 years.³⁸ While on route he met and helped John of Hephastopolis, who had wandered off again and had been ordaining priests and providing pastoral care to Miaphysites in Asia Minor.³⁹ In the capital, he then personally saw the havoc that was caused by the plague among its population. His account of this tragedy is quite vivid.⁴⁰

In the capital John became the abbot of a small monastery in Sycae across the Golden Horn. It had been a villa, which had been transformed by Mare the Solitary into a monastery. After his death Mare had been buried there.⁴¹ John made this monastery the main base for his activities in the following decades.⁴²

JOHN THE MISSIONARY

Although it is not entirely certain as to how “official” his appointment was, it is certain that from around 542 John was involved with missionary activities on rather a large scale. According to a fragment of his *Church History* it was through him that “God’s grace visited the countries of Asia, Caria, Lydia and Phrygia by the zealotness of the victorious Justinian”—i.e. south-west of modern-day Turkey.⁴³ The palace and the public treasury did clearly sponsor his activities lavishly. John gathered some helpers with a Syrian background—four of his Saints lives are dedicated to his compan-

ions⁴⁴—and went to the province of Asia. He converted an old pagan temple into a monastery in a place called Dareira (?) near Tralles.⁴⁵ In the following years (until the late sixties) John claims to have converted 70000 souls, to have built 98 churches and twelve monasteries, and to have transformed seven synagogues into churches.⁴⁶

One of the problems of this account is of course that Justinian appoints a non-Chalcedonian to convert his own population. As a result, Michael the Great asserts that John converted them to the Chalcedonian doctrine.⁴⁷ However, John’s helpers are all clearly Miaphysites, several of his financial sponsors are Miaphysites, and around AD 558 John was ordained bishop for the region around Ephesus by Jacob Burd’ana for the Miaphysites there.⁴⁸ Since no other source refers to John as a Chalcedonian, it seems that Michael created his own explanation for this apparent contradiction.

John’s activities in Asia Minor are in fact an aspect of a larger campaign by Justinian to “Christianize” his empire.⁴⁹ His laws reflect this policy. According to Procopius the temple of Phylae (in southern Egypt) was closed, even for the pagans living outside the empire. To these pagans both he and his wife Theodora send missionaries to convert them.⁵⁰ Another “Christianizing” aspect of his foreign policies can be found in the *Chronicle of John Malalas* which describes how several allies are baptized in Constantinople to seal their alliance with the empire.⁵¹

Whether or not the internal missionary activities reflect a real flourishing pagan society is open to debate. In his account of the plague John states that many villages had preserved their local idols, while their cult had died out. When the plague hit the

empire some people again sought refuge in the adoration of these old statues. In Constantinople, people responded to the horror by throwing pottery out of the house to frighten off the disease or by fleeing from monks, since rumour had it that death came in the manifestation of a monk. This gives the impression of a society that had accepted Christianity, by and large, but always kept a second option open, just in case. Many old rituals and statues had been preserved, while society gradually shifted towards Christianity. Therefore it seems that many of the converts may in fact have been “waverers,” or people who did not follow the rules and regulations of the church as closely as the church would want them to. Especially in rural areas, where priests were scarce, there were many instances of syncretism. It is in this context that we should see John’s activities; he was busy eradicating pagan elements from society, rather than converting real pagans.⁵²

In the capital there may have been another form of “paganism.” In 546 John instigated an official investigation against grammatici, sophists, scholastici and physicians—people of learning, people of the old classical culture. One cannot help wonder whether this was also an aspect of “Christianization.” In other sources of this time, these well-trained professionals are also called “pagan” and the sincerity of their adherence to Christian beliefs is doubted.⁵³ John and others perceived these traces of the pagan past as real forms of paganism and were trying to root them out. In his account, John says that “they were arrested, scourged and imprisoned ... and sent into churches to learn the faith of the Christians as befitted pagans.”⁵⁴

His missionary activities had earned him

the name “converter of the pagans” and “destroyer of idols.”⁵⁵ His mission had also brought him to the attention of Jacob Burd’ana, who, in 588, made him a bishop for the Miaphysite communities in the same area where he worked as a missionary. His diocese was the province of Asia. Although nominally based in Ephesus, John really worked from his base in Mar Mama, his monastery in the capital, and from Dareira, his main monastery near Tralles. His missionary activities gave him the freedom to go wherever he wanted to go, which was also useful for his pastoral obligations.

JOHN THE MARTYR

John’s role of bishop also had implications for his position within the Miaphysite church. He was included in the circle around Patriarch Theodosius, who led the church from Constantinople. Several documents from Theodosius were co-signed by John, among others.⁵⁶ He now became a figurehead and involved in the on-going debate between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians. And it is in this role that he became “a martyr for his faith,” although probably not a martyr to the death.

Already before his ordination, according to John, Justinian had tried to use him as his messenger in order to convince Miaphysite leaders in Syria and Mesopotamia to come to the capital for “talks.”⁵⁷ John seems to have been present at these meetings, which took place in the years leading up to the Council of Constantinople (553). Although the talks did not produce a compromise acceptable to all, the decisions at Constantinople II did produce a re-interpretation of Chalcedon in a form which was supposed to be more appealing to the Miaphysites.⁵⁸

In the last years of Justinian's reign John spent his time on his mission, his community in Asia Minor, his assistance to Theodosius and the writing of his "memoirs" in the form of the lives of saints he had met throughout his life. After the death of Justinian (565) and Theodosius (566) John became the de facto leader of the Miaphysite community in the capital. The community was mostly left to its own devices and John spent some of his time writing a church history, up to the first years of the new emperor. He could end on a high note, where anti-Chalcedonian sentiments were acknowledged, and it seemed but a matter of time before both church parties would be reunited.⁵⁹

At this time the Miaphysite movement was split asunder by the Tritheite controversy.⁶⁰ John Ascotzanges had published (in 557) a confession of faith, according to which there are three natures as well as three hypostases in God. A Miaphysite minority, including several bishops, accepted his confession of faith, even trying to win John over to their cause.⁶¹ This bitter conflict was ultimately to be settled in a dispute before the Chalcedonian patriarch, John the Scholastic (565-577), in 570⁶²—again illustrating that some form of connection was still present between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians.

Justinian's successor, his nephew Justin II, also tried to find reunification through compromise. Again the new emperor may have tried unsuccessfully to involve John in a meeting in Callinicum (568).⁶³ At this meeting it seems that the theologians of both parties did hammer out a mutually acceptable compromise, but when local Miaphysite monks heard that Chalcedon had not explicitly been declared dead in this docu-

ment, they tore it to pieces.⁶⁴

Although annoyed, Justin II decided to try again, this time in Constantinople, where he could use some additional leverage, and where John could not avoid being involved this time. In 571 the local Chalcedonian patriarch, John the Scholastic, decided on a more robust approach in trying to convince the Miaphysite leaders.⁶⁵ Although dragging their heels, John and his companions accepted, on condition, according to John, that later on John the Scholastic would officially denounce Chalcedon. After celebrating the holy communion together several times, the Miaphysites withdrew again because the Chalcedonians did not live up to their promise.⁶⁶ All four delegates were arrested and imprisoned and put under severe pressure. All cracked (Paul the Black, patriarch of Antioch [577-584?], and the bishops Elisa and Stephen),⁶⁷ except for John. After being imprisoned in the hospital of Euboulus for more than a year, he was exiled to a small island in the Sea of Marmara, just outside the capital, only to be allowed back to Constantinople after Justin II had been de facto replaced by Caesar Tiberius, his regent (Justin had gone mad). Even then, John was under close guard until John the Scholastic died in 577.⁶⁸

It was these events which prompted John to write a continuation of his *Church History*, in order to give his version of the story, with a certain apologetic tone, as he had indeed been in communion with John the Scholastic.⁶⁹ His suffering and his steadfastness are one of the main features of the first part of this third part of the *Church History*. John even goes so far as to describe himself like a martyr for his faith, who due to his perseverance is rescued by divine intervention.⁷⁰

After the death of John the Scholastic, John was harassed several times by the new Chalcedonian patriarch Eutychius (552-565; 577-582),—among other things he was forced to hand over the papers of ownership of his monastery in Sycae and banished for several months.⁷¹ Nonetheless, he continued living in the capital and taking care of his Miaphysite community there. He also became involved in internal quarrels within the Miaphysite movement. Although Tritheism remained a problem, the more acute problem was that Paul the Black had been forced twice to agree to take communion with the Chalcedonians.⁷² Many leaders in the East did not want to accept him back in his old position.⁷³ John tried to be impartial, but his sympathies were clearly with Paul.⁷⁴ When al-Mundhir, king of the Ghassanids, the Arab allies of Byzantium,⁷⁵ and also staunchly Miaphysite, had brokered a deal in 580⁷⁶ and the new Patriarch of Alexandria, Damian (578-607), retracted from the deal and ordained in 581 a new patriarch of Antioch (while Paul was still alive), John flatly refused to recognise Peter of Callinicum (581-591).⁷⁷

In his *Church History* no mention is made of any further activities by John personally, although there is an event mentioned in the book on the wars, which can be dated in 588.⁷⁸ It seems that John was not involved in any further major events. According to a spurious entry in the *Chronography of Michael*, a certain “John” died in Chalcedon, after having been imprisoned for more than a year. He predicted his day of death and was buried while both Miaphysites and Chalcedonians honoured him. Whether or not this refers to John of Ephesus is unclear.⁷⁹ Without our John writing about it himself,

it is impossible to establish anything about this other figure with any certainty.

EPILOGUE

Through his works, John provides us with a window into the events of the Sixth Century from the perspective of a Miaphysite participant of these events.

First of all, John illustrates the increasing importance of monks and ascetics for daily life in society. The Miaphysite movement had to rely on these workers through their social and pastoral work to keep their communities working. As bishops and clergy gradually disappeared due to the persecution it was left to the monks to keep the parishes going. From their communities the new priests and, eventually, new bishops were drawn. Rural monasteries became the backbone of the church. The bishops started living there permanently, after having been thrown out of the cities.

John is also an example of the gradual “Christianization” of the empire, especially under Justinian. Christian leaders became ever more the representatives of society towards the state (and vice versa). This Christianization also meant a continuous eradication of traces of “non-Christianity.” John’s activities as a missionary should be seen in this context rather than as a second Paul or Addai.

John decided to preserve his perception of events in a *Church History*. In doing so he deliberately followed in the footsteps of his famous Greek predecessors, first of all Eusebius. His work, however, was intended for a Syriac-speaking audience. John did follow Eusebius in his intention to show that his community preserved orthodox Christianity. To him that also meant that the church was the imperial church. This is an aspect of

John that distinguishes him from all his Syrian Orthodox successors. To John, orthodoxy is still linked with the Roman State and the Imperial Church. John never challenges the authority of the emperor. A person may hold to a false doctrine, but the institution keeps its authority.⁸⁰

He never intended nor envisioned a separate church. To him, reunification was still possible. Even better: he hoped for a new Anastasius, who would once again swing the pendulum back to a Miaphysite doctrine for the imperial church. John also presents a united front with the Chalcedonians against any “outside” challenge, may they be Jews, heretics or pagans.⁸¹

And John was not the only one thinking like that, as can be seen in the example of the anonymous *Church History of Pseudo-Zachariah* (ca. 569). I have been talking about “anti-Chalcedonians” and “Miaphysites” rather than Syrian Orthodox and

Copts for a reason. Right up to the 580’s these dissident groups all felt themselves to be part of one Church, which in essence was waiting to return to its rightful place—like the Nicaeans had done under the Arian emperors in the fourth century. Like the Nicaeans, true believers had to endure hardship, but by writing about it John hoped to encourage his audience to keep faith and model themselves on the examples he provided, mainly in his book of *Lives*. John’s works are part of a propaganda-war.

John could not have known that a community could survive as a church without being linked to the Christian Empire of Byzantium. To his successors, the antagonistic elements against the surrounding Byzantine society had become a central and unifying element of history. To them the Byzantine state was often a military force that invaded Islamic territory and destroyed their lands. There was little love lost...

NOTES

¹This article is based on chapter 2.1 “The life of John of Ephesus” in: J.J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus. A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1995), 27-37. I would like to thank NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) for sponsoring the project leading to this dissertation.

²John of Ephesus was approximately 15 when Maro died (521/2?). See E.W. Brooks, *John of Ephesus. Lives of the Eastern Saints*, *Patrologia Orientalia* 17-19 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923-1925): Life 51 (PO XIX, 159 [505]) (references to this work from now on: Life <number> (PO <volume>, <volume page>[<running page>])).

³See e.g. Brown, P. R. L., *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁴Life 4 (PO XVII, 59-60 [59-60]); translation of quotations slightly modified by author.

⁵On John, his career and works see e.g. A. P. D'yakonov, *Ioann Efesskiy i ego cerkovno-istoričeskie trudi* (St. Petersburg: V.F. Kirschbaum, 1908); S. Ashbrook-Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the “Lives of the Eastern Saints,”* *Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 18, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Van Ginkel (1995); briefly: E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, *CSCO* 127 *Subsidia* 2, (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1951), 207-215. John was also known as John of Asia or John of Amida.

⁶For the early history of the Syriac Orthodox church see W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). For John's involvement see the index of this volume.

⁷J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche 1166-1199* (4 vol) (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899-1924), préface (translation vol. I, p. 2) (on the basis of the Armenian

text edition of 1871), book VIII 6 (text: volume IV, p. 180; translation: volume II, p. 28) (from now on: MS <book>, <chapter> (text pages from vol. IV; translation pages from vol. II); E.A.W. Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj 1225-1286, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus Being the First Part of his Political History of the World ... volume II: Syriac Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932; repr. Amsterdam 1976), preface (p. 1; 1v); John's work is also extensively used in the anonymous *Chronicle* until the year 1234 AD; J.-B. Chabot, A. Abouna, (*Anonymi auctoris*) *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, *CSCO* 81, 82, 109, 354 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1916, 1920, 1937, 1974).

⁸Jacob himself had been the first bishop (542) to be ordained outside the imperial Church hierarchy. On Jacob see D.D. Bundy, “Jacob Burd`ana . The State of Research. A Review of Sources and a New Approach,” *Muséon* 91 (1978) 45-86. On the process of separation see Frend (1972) *passim*, Honigmann (1951) *passim*.

⁹For an introduction and bibliography see Michael Maas, *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395-600*, *Routledge History of the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, 1993); also see *idem*, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, *Variorum Reprints* CS 143 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981); Otto Mazal, *Justinian I. und seine Zeit : Geschichte und Kultur des Byzantinischen Reiches im 6. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 2001); P. Allen, E. Jeffreys, *The sixth Century: End or Beginning?*, *Byzantina Australiensia* 10 (Brisbane: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1996).

¹⁰Also see Frend (1972), 143-220.

¹¹ See Brooks (1923-1925); Ashbrook-Harvey (1990).

¹² See E.W. Brooks, R. Hespel, "Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Fragmenta quae e prima et secunda part supersunt," in: J.B. Chabot, R. Hespel, (*Incerti auctoris*) *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, CSCO 104, 507 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1933 and 1989), 401-420 (104), 323-330 (507); E.W. Brooks, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia*, CSCO 105, 106, (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1935 and 1936) (cited as JE <book>, <chapter> (<text pages>; <translation pages>); A.P. D'yakonov, *Ioann Efesskiy i ego cerkovno-istoričeskie trudi* (St. Petersburg: V.F. Kirschbaum, 1908); Van Ginkel (1995); Both D'yakonov and van Ginkel have also tried to establish what remains of Parts I and II of the *Church History* in later Syriac historiography.

¹³ For a discussion of manuscripts and work, see Van Ginkel (1995), chapter 2.2 a and c, 39-44, 70-85.

¹⁴ J.-B. Chabot, R Hespel, (*Incerti auctoris*) *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, CSCO 91, 104, 121, 507 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1927, 1933, 1949, and 1989) (cited from part II as PD <SEL date> (<text pages>; <translation pages>); also see W. Witkowski, "Sources of Pseudo-Dionysius for the Third Part of his *Chronicle*," *Orientalia Suecana* 40 (1991) (252-275); for an English translation see A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnān Parts III and IV A.D. 488-775*, *Mediaeval Sources in Translation* 36 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999).

¹⁵ See J. Thurn, *Joannis Malalae Chronographia*, *Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae* 35 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000); E. Jeffreys, et. al. eds., *The Chronicle of John Malalas. A Translation*, *Byzantina Australiensia* 4 (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986); W. Witkowski, "Malalas in Syriac," in *Studies in Malalas* (E. Jeffreys et. al. (ed)), *Byzan-*

tina Australiensia 6 (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1990), 299-310.

¹⁶ For a discussion of reception and work, see Van Ginkel (1995), chapter 2.2 b, 46-68; On the "lost" works, which are probably integrated into Part II of the *Church History*, see Van Ginkel (1995), chapter 2.2 d, 87-91.

¹⁷ See Van Ginkel (1995), chapter 2.2 c, 70-85.

¹⁸ For monastic schools see Life 5 (PO XVI, 89-90 [89-90]): "to read the psalms and the Scriptures ..." ; "accordingly the boy-pupils supplied their [sc teachers] needs"; Life 16 (PO XVII, 246 [246]): boys and girls together; Life 44 (PO XVIII, 661 [459]): an Armenian "learns the psalms and Scriptures" and in addition Greek and Syriac, which was exceptional and noteworthy.

¹⁹ See Ashbrook-Harvey (1990); A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient. A Contribution to the History of Culture of the Near East. I. The Origin of Asceticism. Early Monasticism in Persia. II. Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria. III.*, CSCO Subs. 14, 17, 81 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1958, 1960, 1988).

²⁰ PD 829 (17-18; 12-13); MS IX 13 (266-267; 170-173); E.W. Brooks, J.-B. Chabot, "Chronicon anonymum ad annum Domini 846 pertinens," *Chronica minora pars secunda*, CSCO 3, 4 (Paris: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1904), 157-238 (3), 121-180 (4), list on pages 171-173, 225-228; for an analysis see Honigsmann (1951) *passim*.

²¹ See E.W. Brooks, E.W., *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, CSCO 83, 84, 87, 88 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1919, 1921, 1924, 1924) (cited as PZ <book>, <chapter> (<text pages>; <translation pages>); F.J. Hamilton, E.W. Brooks, *The Syriac Chronicle Known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene* (London: Methuen, 1899); a new translation and commentary are under preparation by G. Greatrex and C. Horn. For an example of Miaphysite bishops after 518 see PZ VIII 5 (II) 78-80; 53-54). It refers to an imperial order, dated in the year 519, for Thomas, bishop of Amida, to

accept the council of Chalcedon or leave the see. He died before having to choose. The next two successors to this see were Miaphysites, but they were not challenged by the authorities. (See Honigmann [1951], 100-101).

²² See Life 5 (PO XVII, 98-101 [98-101]).

²³ Life 4 (PO XVII, 84 [84]): after the death of Maro, to avoid the neighbourhood of bodily kin he left for the Amidenes. There is a discrepancy in John's references to the date of Maro's death. According to Life 4 (PO XVII, 83 [83]) he died after being a stylite for 29 years. In 515 he had been a stylite for 20 years (Life 4 (PO XVII, 79 [79])). Therefore his death should be dated to 524. On the other hand, according to Life 58 (PO XIX, 222 [568]) John entered Mar John Urtaya during the abbacy of Sergius (d. 522/3: his successors have tenures of three and a half and four years in exile (ended in 530)): see D'yakonov (1908) (38 n 51), Brooks (1923) (iv)). The fact that John had been a resident of the monastery of John Urtaya for 19 years (Life 13 (PO XVII, 197 [197])) does not help since the beginning of his abbacy of Mar Mama in Constantinople cannot be determined exactly.

²⁴ See J.J. van Ginkel, "Persuasion and Persecution: Establishing Church Unity in the Sixth Century," in (Vanstiphout, H. et. al. eds.) *All Those Nations ... Cultural Encounters Within And With The Near East. Studies Presented To Han Drijvers at The Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, COMERS/ICOG Communications 2 (Groningen: STYX Publications, 1999), 61-69.

²⁵ For John of Tella see Life 24 (PO XVIII, 522-525 [320-323]), *Martyrs by Bar Kaili*, bishop of Edessa see PD 837 (32-36; 24-26).

²⁶ Life 24 (PO XVII, 319 [319]).

²⁷ Life 14 (PO XVII, 217-218 [217-218]).

²⁸ Life 11 (PO XVII, 160-166 [160-166]). For John on asceticism in general see Ashbrook-Harvey (1990).

²⁹ PZ (II) VIII, 5 (82.15-17, 82.22-23; 56.29, 56.34-35): "In the year nine [indiction], in the fifth year of the reign of ... emperor Justinian."

³⁰ Life 13 (PO XVIII, 207, 209-210 [207; 209-210]).

³¹ Frend (1972), 263-276; E. Schwartz, "Collectio Sabbaitica contra Acephalos et Origenistas destinata : insunt acta synodorum Constantinopolitanae et Hierosolymitanae A. 536," *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* III, Berlin, 1940; J. Hofmann, "Der hl. Papst Agapit I. und die Kirche von Byzanz," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 40 (1991) 113-132; E. Honigmann, "Anthimus of Trebizond, Patriarch of Constantinople," *Studi e Testi* 173 (1953) 185-193.

³² See PD 837.8 (38-44; 27-31) and MS IX 19 (275-6; 187-8); also see Life 35 (PO XVIII, 619-621 [417-419]); Life 58 (PO XIX, 224-225 [570-571]).

³³ Life 58 (PO XIX, 225 [571]).

³⁴ Life 25 (PO XVIII, 534-535 [332-333]).

³⁵ See van Ginkel (1995), 152; see for example PD 865 (128-129; 96-97): Theodora trying to find Miaphysite negotiators, who are hiding from her after having left a dispute against her wishes. On Theodora in general see e.g. R. Browning, *Justinian and Theodora* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987; rev. ed.).

³⁶ Life 25 (PO XVIII, 537-538 [335-336]): John meets John of Hephastopolis while "we were going up from Alexandria to the royal city" in ca. 540, after having spent considerable time in Egypt (see Life 56 (PO XIX, 198 [544]) and n 1, Life 54 (PO XIX, 185-191 [531-7]), esp. 186 [532] n 4).

³⁷ PD 855 (87; 65).

³⁸ Life 13 (PO XVII, 197 [197]); Life 18 (PO XVII, 260-265 [260-265]) suggests one had to have some form of official release in person at the monastery.

³⁹ Life 25 (PO XVIII, 538-539 [336-337]).

⁴⁰ PD 855 (79-109; 59-82).

⁴¹ Life 36 (PO XVIII, 624-641, [422-439]).

⁴² Life 36 (PO XVIII, 643-644, [441-442]); Note that Lives 21, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47 are linked to the Monastery Mar Mama, across the water, in Sycae. Most of them are linked to John's missionary activities as well.

⁴³ PD 853 (77; 58), MS IX (287; 207): "in the fifteenth year of Justinian" (541/2): Note that there

is no clear reference to an official appointment, only to Justinian's active financial support. Note also that both PD and MS date the plague after the beginning of John's missionary task. The plague is dated in SEL 855 (543/4) or the 16th year of Justinian (542/3) (PD 855 (79.16-8; 59.22-3) and MS IX 28 (305.4; 235.3-4)).

⁴⁴Lives 39 (PO XVIII, 645-647, [443-445]), 40 (PO XVIII, 647-651, [445-449]), 43 (PO XVIII, 658-660, [456-458]), 51 (PO XIX, 159-164, [505-510]).

⁴⁵JE III, 36, 37 (169-172; 125-128): the emperor defends John's authority over the monastery against the local (Chalcedonian?) bishop; On Dareira see E. Honigmann, "L'histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d'Éphèse," *Byzantion* XIV (1939) 615-625, esp. 620-1.

⁴⁶Life 47 (PO XVIII, 681, [479]): "80.000" according to the manuscript, but all other sources indicate 70.000: Life 43 (PO XVIII, 660, [458]): 92 churches and 10 monasteries (Honigmann (1951), 208 n 6 (sic)); PD 853 (77-78; 58): 70.000 converts, 96 churches and 12 monasteries (Hespel translates: 7000 [sic]); MS IX 33 (324; 270) (closely related to Life 47): 7000 converts, 98 churches, 12 monasteries and 4 hospitals (transmission error: "in 4 hyparchias;" afterwards another 23.000 converts); see MS IX 24 (287; 207): 70.000 converts; Life 47 (PO XVIII, 681, [479]): "30 years" of mission seems very imprecise or the mission would have started in 537.

⁴⁷MS IX 24 (287; 207).

⁴⁸See note 44 and for financial support see Lives 55 and 57 (PO XIX, 191-196, [537-542] and 200-206, [546-552]); John's ordination in Life 50 (PO XIX 157, [503]). The date can be deduced from the life of Kashish (Life 51 (PO XIX 160-161, [506-508])). Kashish probably left John about 540, travelled for 13 years and lived on Chios for five years. Both were ordained on the same tour by Jacob Burd'ana (see Brooks (1923) (v)). Whether John became a priest first, and if so, when, is unknown. For Jacob's ordinations see Honigmann (1951), 168-177.

⁴⁹I. Engelhardt, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz: Ein Beitrag zur Strukturanalyse*

byzantinischer Mission zur Zeit Justins und Justinians, *Miscellanea Monacensia* 19 (München: Institut für Byzantinistik und neugriechische Philologie der Universität, 1974); F.R. Trombley, "The Justinianic Program of Christianizing the Empire," *Abstracts of Papers: Eighth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago, 1982) in <http://www.byzconf.org/1982abstracts.html>.

⁵⁰See S. G. Richter, *Studien zur Christianisierung Nubiens*, *Sprachen und Kulturen des christlichen Orients* 11 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002); J.H.F. Dijkstra, *Religious Encounters on the Southern Egyptian Frontier in Late Antiquity (AD 298-642)* (Groningen: 2005 dis.).

⁵¹L. Dindorf, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantiae* 28 (Bonn: E. Weber, 1831), 427.17-428.4.

⁵²For paganism in the Sixth century see F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370-529* (2 vol), *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 115 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993); P. Chuvin, *Chronique des derniers païens: la disparition du paganisme dans l'Empire romain du règne de Constantine à celui de Justinien* (Collection Histoire) (Paris: Belles Lettres/Fayard, 1990); K.W. Harl, "Sacrifice and Pagan Belief in Fifth and Sixth Century Byzantium," *Past and Present* 128 (1990), 7-27; I. Rochow, "Die Heidenprozesse unter den Kaisern Tiberios II Konstantinos und Maurikios," *Studien zum 7. Jahrhundert in Byzanz* (Fr. Winkelmann (ed.)) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 120-130; idem, "Zu 'heidnischen' Bräuchen bei der Bevölkerung des Byzantinischen Reiches im 7. Jahrhundert," *Klio* 60 (2) (1978) 483-497; L.M. Whitby, "John of Ephesus and the Pagans: Pagan Survivals in the Sixth Century," *Paganism in the Later Roman Empire and in Byzantium* (M. Salamon (ed.)) (Cracow: Universitas, 1991), 111-131; Also see Life 16 (PO XVII, 229-247, [229-247]) on Simeon the Mountaineer, who finds a village, who see themselves as Christians, although there is no priest and knowledge is 'limited.' PD 855 (85-86; 64): people in Palestine start worshipping statues again in response to the plague.

⁵³ See also I. Rochow, "Der Vorwurf des Heidentums als Mittel der innenpolitischen Polemik in Byzanz," *Paganism in the Later Roman Empire and in Byzantium*, 133-156.

⁵⁴ PD 852.3 (76-77; 57-58).

⁵⁵ JE II, 4 (58.5; 41.6).

⁵⁶ John signs second, when Theodosius of Alexandria is still alive (J.-B. Chabot, *Documenta ad origines Monophysitarum illustrandas*, CSCO 17, 103 Scr. Syri 17, 52 (Paris: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1908, 1933) (cited as Documenta (<text pages>; <translation pages>) Documenta (133-136; 93-95), 139-143 (1908), 96-99 (1933); and first after his death (566 AD) (Documenta (145-155; 101-108), (157-160; 109-111), (168; 117), (181; 126), (187; 130)); Only Jacob Burd'ana and Theodore, bishop of Bostra, still outrank John (Documenta (189; 131), (196; 136), (204; 142), (204-209; 142-145), (209; 145)). Also see A Van Roey, P. Allen, *Monophysite Texts of the Sixth Century*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 56 (Leuven: Peeters, 1994).

⁵⁷ PD 871 (137.12; 103.1); MS IX 30 (312; 248); the entries in PD indicate feverish negotiating between the emperor and Miaphysites (PD 865 (128-129; 96-97); PD 869 (133; 100); PD 871 (136-138; 102-103); PD 874 (139-141; 104-105)). The Miaphysite monks had been allowed to return to Amida and other cities as well.

⁵⁸ See Frend (1972), 276-282.

⁵⁹ Van Ginkel (1995) chapter 2.2 a and b, 39-44 and 46-68.

⁶⁰ See Frend (1972), 289-291. On Tritheism see A Van Roey, "La controverse trithéite depuis la condamnation de Conon et d'Eugène jusqu'à la conversion de l'évêque Elie," *Von Kanaan bis Kerala. Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg O.P.* (W.C. Delsman et. al. (eds.)), AOAT. Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des AOAT 211 (Kevelaer : Butzon & Bercker 1982), 487-497; idem, "La controverse trithéite jusqu'à l'excommunication de Conon et d'Eugène (557-569)," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 16 (1985), 141-165; R.Y. Ebied, A. Van Roey, L.R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum. Anti-*

Tritheist Dossier, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 10 (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek 1981).

⁶¹ JE III, V, 1 (253-254; 191-192). After John turned them down, they started slandering him. Athanasius, the Tritheite grandson of empress Theodora, accused John of having embezzled 70 κεντηνάρια from the treasury in the same period (MS IX 30 (315-316; 255)).

⁶² MS IX 30 (317-8; 257-260), X 3 (337; 293-294): possibly based on material from John's *Church History* Part Two.

⁶³ MS X 2 (332; 284): "during the second year of Justin." Although it is not entirely clear whether this is a second request or a reiteration of MS IX 30 (312; 248), when Justinian made the same request with the same result (see PD 874 (140; 104)).

⁶⁴ Frend (1972), 319-321.

⁶⁵ JE I, [3] (4; 2).

⁶⁶ JE I, 17-24 (18-34; 12-24).

⁶⁷ JE II, 1 (54-55; 38) II, 2, 3 (55-57; 38-41).

⁶⁸ JE II, 4-7 (58-65; 41-47); read "tres annos" for "tres menses" (translation: 47.2).

⁶⁹ The introduction to Part Three is partly missing, but in the fragmented chapter 3 of book I he states that suddenly a fierce storm had risen against the ship of the church of the orthodox (i.e. his community) which had prompted him to again put on the record his account of the events of his time. JE I, [3] (4; 2).

⁷⁰ JE II, 5 (59-60; 42-43): John, imprisoned, is beset by Satan with additional trials—all kinds of vermin pester him while he is unable to move due to gout. These trials were followed by a vision and divine intervention in JE II, 6 (61-65; 43-46). These two chapters are highly hagiographical.

⁷¹ JE II, 41 (107-108; 78-79): they also robbed him of five "politikoi artoi". For other episodes of persecution and personal affliction under Eutychius see JE II, 37 (102-3; 74-5), JE III, 15, 16 and 20 (140-3; 104-5) and (147-8; 108-9).

⁷² JE II, 8 (66-67; 47-48).

⁷³ Jacob Burd'ana first accepted Paul, only to side with the Egyptians later (JE IV, 17 (202-204;

151-153)). The Egyptians also bore a grudge against Paul for trying to become the successor of Theodosius, their patriarch, in 566, even though he was already the patriarch of Antioch. (MS X 21 (333; 285) 1234 (II) 31 (242-3; 182-3)). Originally Paul was to be barred from the Eucharist for three years (JE IV, 15 (201; 150)), which corresponds to Canon 3 of "the Canones, sent by Johannes the Egyptian bishop" (537-541 AD), which were specifically designed with persecution in mind (A. Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonesammlung. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde I West-syrische Originalurkunden I, B*, CSCO 317, Subs 35 (Louvain: Secretariat du CorpusSCO, 1970), 175-180, esp. 176 n 21).

⁷⁴ See JE IV 46 (229-231; 172-174); also see for example JE IV, 14 (198-199; 148-149).

⁷⁵ J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire III AD 527-641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 34-37; On Ghassanids in general see e.g. I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the sixth century* (2 vols)

(Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995).

⁷⁶ JE IV, 40 (220-221; 165-166).

⁷⁷ JE IV, 41-45 (221-229; 166-172).

⁷⁸ See P. Allen, "A New Date for the last recorded Events in John of Ephesus, 'Historia Ecclesiastica,'" *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 10 (1979), 251-254.

⁷⁹ MS X 15 (364; 336-337). The story is positioned several chapters before the end of the part of Michael's work based on John of Ephesus' *Church History*. On the other hand there are several biographical remarks on John in MS, which may go back to an unknown Vita of John.

⁸⁰ J.J. van Ginkel, "John of Ephesus on Emperors: The Perception of The Byzantine Empire by a Monophysite," *VI Symposium Syriacum* 1992 University of Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity 30 August - 2 September 1992 (R. Lavenant (ed.), OCA 247 (Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1994), 323-333.

⁸¹ Van Ginkel (1995).

NESTORIAN GRAVE INSCRIPTIONS FROM QUANZHOU (ZAITUN), CHINA



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INTRODUCTION¹

The city of Quanzhou 泉州 (fig. 1) whose ancient name was Citong 刺桐,² is located on the southeast shore of the sea of Fujian 福建, between Fuzhou 福州 and Xiamen 厦门. It borders the bay of Quanzhou in the southeast, near the mouth of the Jinjiang 晋江 river. This location was ideal for movement, which explains why it was a crossroad and a trade centre at the national and international levels.

Emmanuel Diaz, the 17th century Christian missionary, was the first to notice the existence of a cross at Quanzhou.³ In 1906, Serafin Moya uncovered an inscription showing another cross and an angel.⁴ Wu Wenliang 吴文良 was the first to gather and classify the Nestorian steles. Beginning in 1928, he undertook the task of gathering and classifying the Nestorian inscriptions from Quanzhou, which he published in a book entitled *Religious Inscriptions and Funerary Stones in Quanzhou*.⁵ This is an invaluable book, full of drawings, rich in records, and with enough relevant data for several gen-

erations of researchers. According to the report of Wu Wenliang, there are about one hundred Islamic inscriptions and some thirty Christian inscriptions. The latter include some Nestorian examples with at least ten in Syriac,⁶ and four in the Pag-'sba script.⁷ In the 1980s, more Nestorian inscriptions were uncovered, one of which was written in the Uighur script and language.⁸

THE GRAVES AND THEIR TYPES

The tombs uncovered in Quanzhou are of two types: The altar-type tomb, and the simple (or regular) tomb.⁹

The altar-type tomb (fig. 2) is built with a monolithic granite, blue and white in colour. The rectangular upper part, measuring 3.60 m in length and 90 cm in width, serves as a sacrifice table. The most prominent part of the tomb, located in the middle of the top part, is carved with petals of the lotus or with leaves of the *pothi* tree. The middle part of the tomb is divided into three, four or more often five sections, the joints of which are made of columns. If the tomb is made of five sections, the central section and the others to its left and right bear typically religious motifs. The first and the last pieces of

the stone show carved lotus and peony, familiar in Chinese fine art.

If this tomb were of a Muslim person, the central section would include carved depictions of clouds and the moon—two important symbols in the eyes of the Muslims. The other two pieces would also be inscribed in Arabic. Behind the stela is the real tomb, higher than the base of the monolith by 90 cm. Before the real tomb, behind the table, a pointed stela stands bearing depictions of clouds and the moon.

If the altar-type tomb were of a Christian, the middle section would be a stone panel sculptured with a cross and angels and Nestorian and Syriac texts would be inscribed on both sides. The pointed stela of the Christian tomb, similar to the one found in Islamic tombs, bears one cross and one angel—important symbols in the eyes of the Christians.

In short, the altar-type tombs of the Muslims are distinguished by the cloud, the moon, and the Arabic script, whereas the altar-type tombs of the Christians are identified by the cross, angels and the Syriac script. In every other detail, tombs of this kind are strikingly similar.

The structure of the simple or regular tomb (fig. 3) is a transformation of the altar-type tomb from which it derives. It reminds one of European tombs, though the former differs in its larger size and its finer sculpture. This kind of tomb is generally made of monolithic granite, divided into five levels. From the lowest level, which measures 9.7 m in length and 90 cm in width, the monument rises progressively narrower until it reaches the fifth level. Along the first level ornamental *ruyi* (an S-shaped symbol of happiness) are sculptured as is also the case with the six columns of the base. The sec-

ond level from the bottom is decorated with sculptured petals and leaves of trees. In the case of a Muslim tomb, this level may contain canonical texts written in Arabic, whereas a Christian tomb would rather show wavy lines. The top level is often an independent stone called the ‘tomb’s roof’, which sits on the fourth level. The front of this level depicts the moon and the clouds in the case of a Muslim tomb or a lotus and a cross in the case of a Christian tomb.

Muslim monuments are hollow on the inside, a fact which led later generations to reuse them as steles. Nowadays, most of the stone bases of governmental temples built under the Ming and the Qing dynasties were made of such hollow tombs, for they are both beautiful and practical. In 1936, during the restoration of the great judicial court of the Jinjiangxian 晋江县 district, a dozen stele were uncovered, seven of which were made out of Muslim grave monuments. Moreover, as in the stela of the divine doctrine *shendaobei* 神道碑 and the stela of the Hall of Mingluntang 明伦堂, the replacement of their bases were also made out of Arab tombs. Some of the bases still show clear Arab characters, but in some others the characters were intentionally rubbed off, though their traces are still visible. By contrast, the Christian tomb is never hollow and was therefore rarely displaced.

LOCATIONS OF THE GRAVES

The tombs discovered so far are scattered over a large region of Quanzhou: from the Gate of Tonghuaimen 通淮门, along both sides of Renfengjie 仁凤街 Street, to Xiacuoshan 夏厝山, Jincuowei 金厝尾, and Yücuowei 鱼厝尾, to the east, stretching to

the sacred tomb at the foot of the Mount of the Soul, Lingshan 灵山, as well as almost everywhere in the Garden of Pleasure to the left side of the road Fuzhou-Xiamen. The cemetery in the Garden of Pleasure 乐园区 is by far the largest compared to the other cemeteries found in Quanzhou. On the basis of Wu Wenliang's report and in light of the new discoveries made during the past two decades, one observes that the Nestorian tombs are mostly located in Jingtoupu 津头埔, East Port 东门, Secuowei 色厝尾, East Montagne 东岳山, and Houmao 后茂.

The Quarter of Jingtoupu 津头埔

The tombs may be divided into two groups. The first group, in the street, consists of four tombs uncovered in 1945 by a peasant in an abandoned house. They are buried in the ground in an orderly manner, separated from each other by an average of one metre. All four tombs bear Arabic inscriptions. The second group is located in a village in which there are four pools. When the water dries out in winter, one can see at the bottom of the pools some thirty tombs, one of which, mostly intact, lies near a large tree. In one of the pools the water is not deep and one can still see in the surrounding wall a layer of ancient bricks. A large pillar rests on the bricks and rises above the ground by about one metre. The pillar is as wide as it can be embraced by two men. It is quite possible that this whole structure was part of a Nestorian church since groups of Nestorian graves were found nearby it.

The Quarter of the East Gate, Dongmenqu 东门区

In 1939, Wu Wenliang, while digging the foundations of the city near the Quarter of the East Gate,¹⁰ uncovered a stela de-

picted with a cross. In 1987, he found the upper stone of a grave,¹¹ and according to him, to the left side of Renfen 仁凤 Street and behind an inhabited house there are also two hollow tombs that belonged to Muslims, inscribed in Arabic and covered with wild weeds. To the right side of this street, there are six Islamic tombs remarkably complete despite holes left after attempts to destroy them. Finally, in the middle of the street, to the bottom of the pool, one notices six Christian tombs that are still intact. The missionary of the Ming Dynasty, S. J. Emmanuel Diaz, published a monograph entitled *Commentary on the Christian Inscription of Si-ngan-fou under the Tang Dynasty*. Here he stated that three steles bearing crosses were uncovered in the church of Dongchan, Dongchansi 东禅寺 on the shore of Lake Donghu, Donghu 东湖, near the quarter of the East Port at Quanzhou.¹² In 1988, another cover stone of a Nestorian grave was found in this area in perfect condition and bearing the depiction of an angel and clouds.¹³ Thus, both Muslims and Christians used the clouds as a motif.

The Secuowei Quarter 色厝尾

This quarter can be divided into two zones, a south one called Secuowei 色厝尾, and a north one named Secuotou 色厝头. The northern zone contains a Christian cemetery made of four white tombs, two of which are buried in the ground to their fourth section, which are still visible. In the southern zone, there are two Islamic tombs belonging to the Se 色 family. What remain now are five hollow tombs, one of which belonged to an infant. The tombs are placed in an orderly manner but lack the upper stones and one of them consists only of the

stela showing scripts and a large lotus at the bottom. In the summer of 1948, this cemetery was destroyed, and parts of the stone were taken away. Since the 1950s only three incomplete tombs have survived.

In the quarters of the East Mountain, Dongyueshan 东岳山 and Houmao 后茂, inscriptions relevant to Nestorianism were uncovered but in small numbers.

THE FUNERARY INSCRIPTIONS

Around fifty years ago the photographs of inscriptions uncovered in Quanzhou were first published by Wu Wenliang. Since then, Nestorian inscriptions with the Syriac script began to be studied, but incompletely, by D. Segal, A. E. Goodman, and J. Foster,¹⁴ who read only the first two lines of the inscriptions ("In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,")¹⁵ while leaving the rest.

The transcription and translation of the Syriac and Uighur inscriptions of Quanzhou were published by the Japanese S. Murayama;¹⁶ they were then translated into Chinese by Xia Nai 夏鼐.¹⁷ Nonetheless, there

are problems with the transliteration and translation and especially with the identification of the owner of the tomb. According to the aforementioned scholars, the stela relates to two or even three deceased persons. Relying on Wu Wenliang's monograph, J. Foster published an article in 1954 in which he presented and analyzed the inscriptions.¹⁸ He discussed two lines of the Syriac inscriptions, but there remain other lines to analyze. In 1999, I published a Syriac inscription and identified the owner of the tomb on which it was found—a man from the city of Qoçu, Gaocang 高昌 at Turfan of Sérinde, Xiyu 西域. Nonetheless, there are still difficulties in the reading of this inscription.¹⁹ I have also edited a new Syriac inscription uncovered in May 2002.²⁰ The only inscription in Uighur from Quanzhou was published in a co-authored article by J. Hamilton and the present writer.²¹

Before discussing more Syriac-Uighur inscriptions from Quanzhou, I would like to present the Syriac alphabet in transliteration and transcription so as to facilitate the reading of the inscriptions in question.

The Syriac Writing System and the Consonants and Vowels of Turkic-Uighur in transliteration and Transcription

List of Vowels

Syriac Letter	Name	Transliteration	Transcription	Example
ܐ	Ōlaph	syri.: ' (ouï.: '')	a / ä	ܐܠܬܝ ʾlty/altī; ܩܒܪܐ qbrʾ/qabra; ܩܢܐ kʾn / qan; ܒܐܢܐ ʾbʾ; ܕܠܝܒܐ kʾlyb / kälip; ܐܬܘܘܢ ʾt-wyz / ät-öz
ܝ	Ōlaph yūdh	'y	i / ĩ	ܐܠܝܝܐ ʾylyg / ilig
ܘܐܘܘܐ	Ōlaph waw	'w	u / o / ü / ö	ܐܘܠܘܐ ʾwl/ol; ; ܐܘܘܘܐ ʾwč / üč

ܘܪ	Ōlaph waw yūdh	'wy	ü / ö	ܘܪܘܪܘܪ 'wyzwtý / özüti
ܘܪ	Waw yūdh	wy	ü / ö	ܘܪܘܪܘܪ bwyřwrđy/bütürdi
ܪ	Waw	w	u / o / ü / ö	ܪܘܪܘܪܘܪ 'rkydyqwn/arqidiyaqon; ܪܘܪܘܪ kwřlwkw / qutulq
ܝ	Yūdh	y	i / ĩ	ܝܪܘܪ pylk'/bilgä; ܝܪܘܪܘܪ z'yřwn/ zaiiton; ܝܪܘܪܘܪ y'rlyky /yarliyi

Consonants

Syriac Letter	Name	Transliteration	Transcription	Exemple
ܒ	Bēth	b	<i>b</i>	ܒܘܪܘܪ qbr'/qabrā
ܓ	Gōmal	g	<i>g</i>	ܓܘܪܘܪܘܪ gywrgys/giorgis
ܕ	Dōlath	d	<i>d</i>	ܕܘܪܘܪ 'wwd / ud
ܚ	Hē	h	<i>h</i>	ܚܘܪ hn' / hānā
ܙ	Zain	z	<i>z</i>	ܙܘܪܘܪܘܪ z'yřwn/zaiiton
ܥ	Hēth	ḥ	<i>ḥ</i>	ܥܘܪܘܪ ywḥnn/yoḥanan
ܦ	Ṭeth	ṭ	<i>ṭ</i>	ܦܘܪܘܪܘܪ ṭ'bk'č/tabyač
ܩ, ܩ	Kōph	k	<i>k, q, γ</i>	ܩܘܪܘܪ bylk'/bilgä; ܩܘܪܘܪ 'wkly/oḡli; ܩܘܪܘܪܘܪ kwřř'č/quřřač
ܠ	Lōmadh	l	<i>l</i>	ܠܘܪܘܪܘܪܘܪ 'lksndrws/alqsandros
ܡ	Mīm	m	<i>m</i>	ܡܘܪܘܪܘܪ mřmřn'/meřamřānā
ܢ	Nūn	n	<i>n</i>	ܢܘܪ 'mn / amen; ܢܘܪ k'n / qan
ܣ	Semkath	s	<i>s</i>	ܣܘܪܘܪܘܪ s'kyřy/saqiři

ܐ	‘Ē	‘	‘	ܠܡܨܘܒܐ ‘mnw’yī; ܢܘܢ ‘nd
ܦ	Pē	p	b, p	ܡܢܨܘܒܐ pylypws / pilipus
ܫ	Šōdhē	š	š	ܡܨܘܒܐ ‘wyč/üč
ܩ	Qūph	q	q	ܩܒܪܐ qbr’ / qabrā
ܪ	Rīš	r	r	ܪܐܪ ‘r/ār; ܝܪܠܝܩ y’rlyk / yarliq
ܫܝܢ	Šīn	š	š	ܘܫܛܡܩܝܩ ‘wštm’k / ušmaq
ܬܘܘܐ	Taw	t	t	ܬܠܝܬܐ tlyt’ / talitha; ܒܫܢܬܐ bšnt / bašnat

Note: The five letters ܐ, ܦ, ܫ, ܩ, and ܬ are generally used only in Syriac words

Quanzhou 1 (fig. 4)

Current Location: Quanzhou, Lapidary Museum of the History of Maritime Relations.

Provenance: Gate of Renfeng, renfengmen 任风门 of the city wall, uncovered in 1943.

Edition: Wu Wenliang, 1954 (photo); J. Foster 1954, p. 14-15 and pl. XIII (transcription and English translation of the first line in Syriac); Niu Ruji 1999, pp. 33-34 (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription).²²

Copies: Photo and rubbing by Niu Ruji, October 1999.

Description: Quadrangular Funerary stela (40 cm in length and 31 cm in width), crudely polished. The inscribed face was cut in such a way that the top would be rounded so as to protrude from the rest of the grave. On the top, a cross is carved in relief. The four arms of the cross are equal in size (6 x 6 cm), all ending with an orna-

mental threefold leaf, while a ring decorates the point where they meet. This is of the same family of crosses in the collection of the museum of Guimet 16599 (now Louvre AO 28051) and 16600, edited by F. Nau in 1913.

Text: Eleven lines, the first in Syriac and lines 2 to 10 in Uighur Garshuni. The lines 22 cm long, 25 cm wide, and the space between them being of 25 cm, module: 0.7 cm.

Copy:

1. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
2. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
3. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
4. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
5. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
6. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
7. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
8. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
9. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ
10. ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ ܩܒܪܐ

ܒܫܡ ܐܒܐ ܘܒܢܐ ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .5
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .6
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .7
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .8
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .9
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .10
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .11
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .12
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .13
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .14
 ܘܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܘܝܢܘܨܐ .15

6. oylī alaqsandros
 7. ilig qan saqīšī
 8. yīl mīng altī yūz
 9. on altī-ta
 10. tabyač saqīšī
 11. luu yīl onunč ay
 12. on altī-ta bu
 13. qabra giorgis-nīng
 14. turur aq amen ār
 15. ///// yat bolsu

Translation:

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, amen. According to the computation of the King (and) Sovereign Alexander son of the Sovereign Philip, native of the city of Macedonia, in the year one thousand six hundred and sixteen, and according to the Chinese computation the Year of the Dragon, the tenth month, the sixteenth (day), this is the grave of George. Amen ! let there be commemoration.”

Commentary :

The dates agree with each other: Seleucid 1616 corresponds exactly to AD October 16, 1304, which is also the Turkic-Chinese Year of the Dragon; see W. Klein, *Das nestorianische Christentum an den Handelswegen durch Kyrgyzstan bis zum 14. Jh.*, Silk Road Studies 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2000), p. 344.

Lines 4-7. *maqadonya baliqliq pilipus qan oylī alaqsandros ilig qan saqīšī* “The computation of King (and) Sovereign Alexander son of the sovereign Philip native of the city of Macedonia;” compare with the inscription found in Semirietchié published by P. K. Kokozoff (1909), N°2, pp. 788-96, pl. 1.

Transliteration:

1. bšm ’b’ wbr’
2. wrwh’ dqwdš’
3. l’lmyn ’myn
4. mqdwny’ p’lyk
5. lyk pylypws k’n
6. ’wkly ’lksndrws
7. ’ylyg k’n s’kyšy
8. yyl myng ’lty’ wz
9. ’wn ’lty t’
10. t’bk’č s’kyšy
11. lww yyl ’wnwnč ’y
12. ’wn ’ltyt’pw
13. qbr’ gywrks nng
14. turr ’q ’mn ’r
15. ///// y’t pwlsu

Transcription :

1. bšem ābā wabrā
2. werūhā dequḏšā
3. l’almīn amen
4. maqadonya balīq
5. -līq pilipus qan

Quanzhou 3 (fig. 6)

Current location: Lapidary Museum of the History of Maritime Relations.

Provenance: None.

Edition: None.

Copies: Photo and rubbing by Niu Ruji, October 1999.

Description: The slab measures 63.5 x 25 cm; the width of the frame is 5 cm and the size of the inscribed surface is 52.5 x 13.5 cm.

Text: The space between the lines is 3 cm in height, module 0.5 cm. The first three lines are in Syriac and lines 4-19 are in Garshuni Uighur.

Copy:

1. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
2. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
3. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
4. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
5. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
6. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
7. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
8. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
9. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
10. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
11. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
12. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
13. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
14. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
15. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ
16. ܩܘܢܝܘܢ ܩܘܢܝܘܢ

ܩܘܢܝܘܢ .17

ܩܘܢܝܘܢ .18

ܩܘܢܝܘܢ .19

Transliteration:

1. bšm 'b'
2. wbr' wrw'
3. dqdš' lylmn
4. maqdwny' p'lyq
5. -lyq pylypws
6. k'n 'wkly
7. 'lksndrws k'n
8. s'qyšy yyl
9. myng 'lty ywz
10. 'wtwz yylynt'
11. twrk s'qyšy kwy yyl
12. 'wnwnč 'y s'kyzt'
13. q'š' gywrgys
14. myšh'-nyng y'rlyk
15. -yn pwytwrdy
16. 'wyzwt'y m'ngw
17. 'wš'tym'kd'
18. 'rtwrdy y'd
19. pwlswn 'mn

Transcription:

1. bšem ābā
2. wabrā weruā (for werūhā)
3. dequḏšā lyalmin (for l'almīn)
4. maqadonya balīq
5. -līq pilipus
6. qan oyl-ī
7. alaqsandros qan
8. saqīšī yīl
9. mīng altī yūz
10. otuz yīlin-ta
11. türk saqīšī qoy yīl
12. onunčī ay sākiz-tā
13. qāšā giorgis
14. mešīḥa-ning yarlıq
15. -in bütürdi

- 16. özüť-i mängü
- 17. uštīmaq-da
- 18. ärtürdi yat
- 19. bolsun amen

Translation:

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. In the year one thousand six hundred and thirty according to the computation of Emperor Alexander son of Emperor Philip of Macedonia, in the Year of Sheep according to the Turkic computation, in the tenth month, the eighth day, the priest George fulfilled the will of the Messiah. May his soul be in Paradise. Let there be commemoration, amen.”

Commentary:

Line 7-11: The Seleucid year 1630 (=1318 A.D.) corresponds indeed to the Turkic-Chinese Year of the Sheep.

Line 12: The month and day dates are not clear in the inscription.

Line 13: ܩܩܠܘ /q’š’/qāšā = qaššīša “priest;” see also the inscriptions of Bailingmiao and Wangmuliang 11, 12, 13 et 14.

Quanzhou 4 (fig. 7)

Current location: Lapidary Museum of the History of Maritime Relations.

Provenance: Found at the North gate of the wall of the city Quanzhou in 1946.

Publication: Wu Wenliang (1958), pl. 77.1-2.

Edition: None.

Copies: Photo and rubbing by Niu Ruji, November 1999.

Description: The borders throughout are in relief. The top is filled with a cross the four arms of which are equal in size (6 x 6 cm),

all ending with an ornamental threefold leaf, while a ring decorates the point where they meet; it also surmounts a Chinese-shaped cloud. The entire depiction is in relief. The bottom section, also framed, contains the inscription.

Text: Twelve lines are inscribed vertically to be read from the top downward and from left to right. Lines 1 and 2 are in Syriac, whereas lines 3 to 12 are in Garshuni Uighour.

Copy:

- 1. ܒܫܡ ܘܒ' ܘܒܪ'
- 2. ܘܪܘܗ' ܕܩܘܘܕܫ'
- 3. ܐܠܟܫܢܬܪܝܫ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܩܩܠܘ
- 4. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 5. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 6. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 7. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 8. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 9. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 10. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 11. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ
- 12. ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ ܕܩܩܠܘ

Transliteration:

- 1. bšm 'b' wbr'
- 2. wrwh' dqwdš'
- 3. 'lksntrs k'n s'kyšy
- 4. yyl myng 'lty ywz 'wn 'lṭ
- 5. myš ṭwrg s'kyšy
- 6. 'wd yyly y'tynč
- 7. 'y 'wn ṭwrt' wz[']
- 8. y's s'ny 'ygyrmy
- 9. sirt' ṭngry yrlkn

10. pwtwrđy 'wzty 'wšt
11. m'ḥṭ' mngw 'rty
12. yytnč 'y y'dyr 'myn

Transcription:

1. bšēm ābā wabrā
2. werūḥā deqūdšā
3. alaqsantros qan saqīšī
4. yīl mīng altī yūz on alt-
5. mīš türk saqīšī
6. ud yīlī yātinč
7. ay on tört üz[ā]
8. yaš sanī yigirmi
9. sirta tāngri yarliqin
10. bütürdi özüti uštī-
11. maqta māngü ārti
12. yetinč ay yadar amen

Translation:

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the year one thousand six hundred and sixty according to the computation of Alexander the Emperor and in the Year of the Ox according to the Turkic-Chinese computation, on the fourteenth (day) of the seventh month, at the age of twenty years, Sirta fulfilled the will of God. May her soul be eternally in Paradise. Inscribed in the seventh month, amen.”

Commentary:

Lines 6-7: *yātinč ay on tort* “seventh month fourteen,” the words are unclear.

Line 9. *Sirta*, homonym.

Line 12. *yad-* “to inscribe, to inscribe in the heart;” *-ar* is the Turkic verbal suffix.

Quanzhou 5 (fig. 8)

Current location: Lapidary Museum of the History of Maritime Relations.

Provenance: Found at the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1960.

Publication: Wu Wenliang (1958), pl. 7, n° 5.

Edition: None.

Copies: Photo and rubbing by Niu Ruji, November 1999.

Description: Fragment of a funerary stela similar in type to Quanzhou 6, particularly its upper part: there the left angel and the beginning of the inscription have survived. One is also able to identify the left side of the cross and the lotus flower that supports it. The surface is carefully prepared and the cross and the angel are both in relief.

Text: Seven lines have survived completely. Lines 1 and 2 are in Syriac and lines 3 to 7 are in Garshuni Uighur.

Copy:

1. ܒܫܡ ܐܒܐ ܘܒܪܐ
2. ܘܪܫܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܠܐܠܗܐ
3. ܕܡܩܕܘܢܝ ܦܝܠܝܩܠܝܩ
4. ܕܝܠ ܡܝܢܝܐ ܐܠܬܝܢܝܘܢ
5. ܕܝܠ ܡܝܫ ܬܘܪܩ ܫܩܝܫܝܐ
6. ܕܝܠ ܡܝܫ ܫܢܝܝܝܘܢ ܝܝܓܝܪܡܝܐ
7. ܕܝܠ ܫܝܪܬܐ ܕܝܠܝܩܝܢ
8. ܕܝܠ ܫܝܒܐ ܕܝܠܝܩܝܢ

Transliteration:

1. bšm 'b' wbr'
2. rwḥ' dqwdš' l'lmyn
3. mqdwny' p'lyklyk
4. pylypws k'n 'wkly
5. 'lksndrws 'ylyg
6. k'n s'kyšy mng
7. yyl 'lty y[wz]
8. sykz 'wn /////

Transcription:

1. bšēm ābā wabrā
2. werūḥā deqūdšā l'almīn

3. maqadonya balıqlıq
4. pilipus qan oylı
5. alaqsandros ilig
6. qan saqıši ming
7. yıl altı yü[z]
8. säkiz on /////

Translation:

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit. According to the computation of the King (and) Sovereign Alexander son of the Sovereign Philip native of the city of Macedonia, the year one thousand six hundred and eighty ...”

Comment:

The Seleucid year 16[80] corresponds to AD 1368/9.

NOTES

¹ I appreciate the help and suggestions of the late Dr. James Hamilton and those of Mr. Alain Desreumaux (CNRS, France) in my reading and editing of the Nestorian inscriptions in Syriac found in China. I also thank Dr. Amir Harrak for inviting me to give a lecture in his Department, and for reading an earlier version of the present article.

² This is a phonetic transcription of Arabic زيتون *Zeytoon*, *Zaitun* or *Zayton* “olive” (< زيت *zayt* or *zeyt* “oil”, compare with the Arabic verb زَيَّت *zayyata* “to anoint”). The ancient name *Zayton* appears in the reports of Peregrino da Castello, Odoric and Marignolli, and on the map of Catalan. The form *Zāitūn* was used by Waśšāf, Abū-’al-Fidā and Rašīd, whereas the form *Zāitūn* « olive tree » is found in Arab and Persian sources. Marco Polo used the form *Zaiton*. I found the name in an inscription from Quanzhou: 𐤆𐤌𐤕𐤌𐤕 *Zaiton* ou *Zaytun*, for ancient Quanzhou; see Niu Ruji, “A New Syriac Uighur Inscription from China (Quanzhou, Fujian Province),” *Journal of the CSSS* 4 (2004) 60-65.

³ Moule, A.C., *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London, New York and Toronto, 1930; repr. New York, 1972), 78-79, fig. 9-10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 80, fig. 11.

⁵ Wu Wenliang 吴文良, *Quanzhou zongjiao shike* 泉州宗教石刻, *The Religious inscriptions religieuses on Funerary Stones of Quanzhou* (Peking: Scientific Press, 1958).

⁶ Wu Wenliang, *Ibid.*, pl. 3, 6, 7, 9, 10. Luo Xianglin 罗香林, “Nestorianism under the Tang and the Yuan” 唐元二代之景教 (Hong Kong: House of Sinology, 1966), (香港中国学社出版), 182-186.

⁷ Junastu 照那斯图, *yuandai jingjiaotu*

muzhibei basibazi kaoshi 元代景教徒墓志碑八斯巴字考释 “Study of Funerary Stele of the Nestorian faithful of the Yuan Dynasty in the Pag’sba script,” *haijiaoshi yanjiu* “海交史研究” *Studies on Maritime History* N° 2 (1994) 119-124.

⁸ Hamilton, James & Niu Ru-Ji, “Deux inscriptions funéraires turques nestoriennes de la Chine orientale,” *JA* 282 (1994) 147-164.

⁹ Wu Wenliang 吴文良, *op. cit.*, 39-40.

¹⁰ Wu Wenliang 吴文良, *op. cit.*, 40-42.

¹¹ Yang Qinzhang 杨钦章, *nan zhongguo citong shizijia de xin faxian* 南中国“刺桐十字架”的新发现 “New Discoveries of ‘the Crosses of Zaitun’ in the South of China,” in *shijie zongjiao yanjiu* “世界宗教研究” *Studies on the Religions of the World* 4 (1988) 72, 74.

¹² Wu Wenliang 吴文良, *op. cit.*, 36.

¹³ Yang Qinzhang, *op. cit.*, 71-74.

¹⁴ Foster, J., “Crosses from the Walls of Zaitun,” *JRAS* 182 (1954) 1-25, pl. I-XVII.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

¹⁶ Murayama, S., “Eine nestorianische Grabinschrift in türkischer Sprache aus Zaiton,” *UJb* 35 (1964) 394-396.

¹⁷ Xia Nai 夏鼐, 1981, 59-62.

¹⁸ Foster, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 1-25, pl. I-XVII.

¹⁹ Niu Ruji 牛汝极, “A Study on a Nestorian Inscription in Uighur and Syriac script Found in Quanzhou,” *minzu yuwen* 民族语文 (*National Philology*) No.3 (Beijing 1999), 33-34.

²⁰ Niu Ruji, “A New Syriac Uighur Inscription from China (Quanzhou, Fujian Province),” *Journal of the CSSS* 4 (2004) 60-65.

²¹ Hamilton, J. & Niu Ruji, *op. cit.*, 147-164.

²² See note 19.

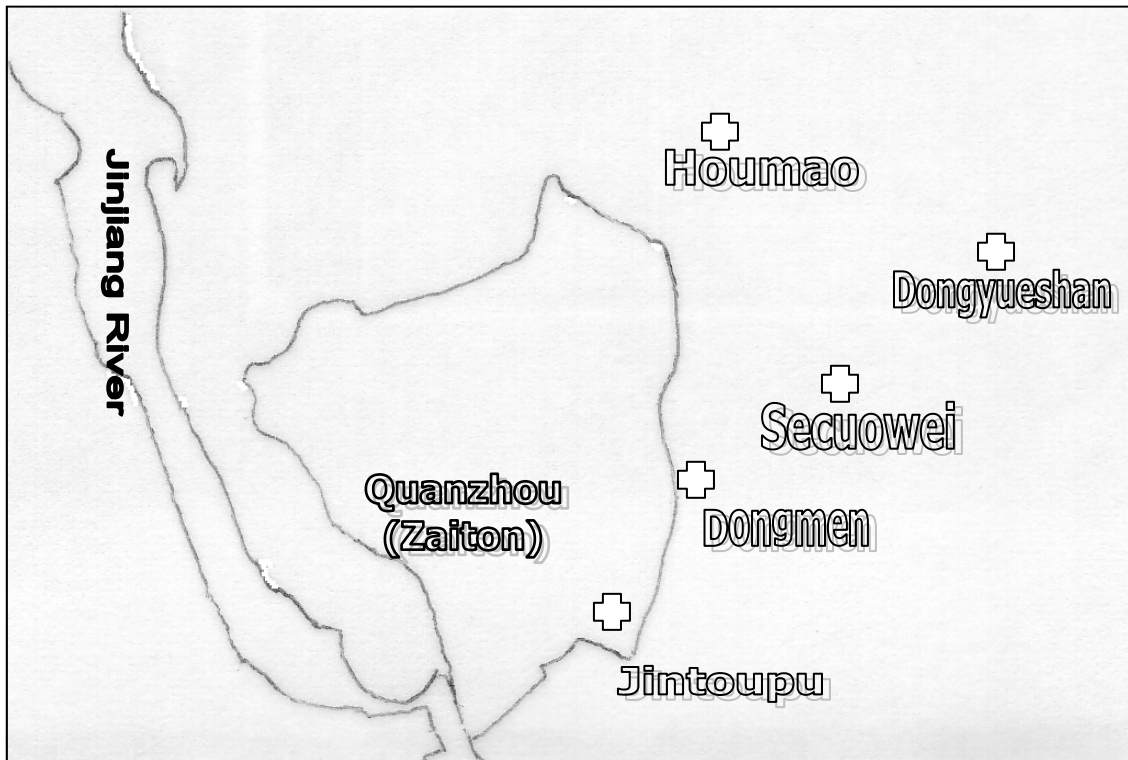


Fig. 1: Sites of the Nestorian tombstones uncovered in the city of Quanzhou

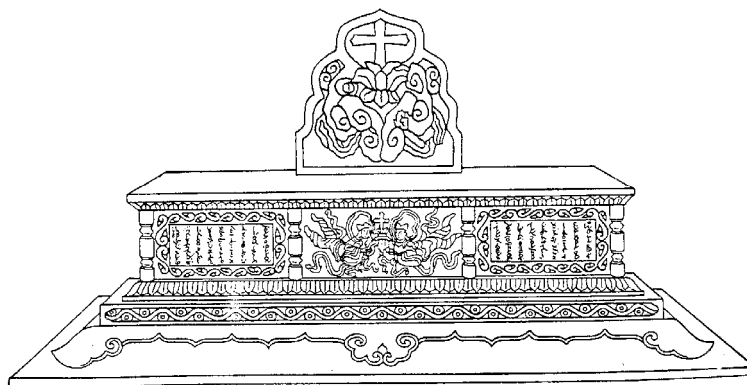


Fig. 2: The Nestorian altar-type of tomb, after Wu Wenliang (1958), pl. 100

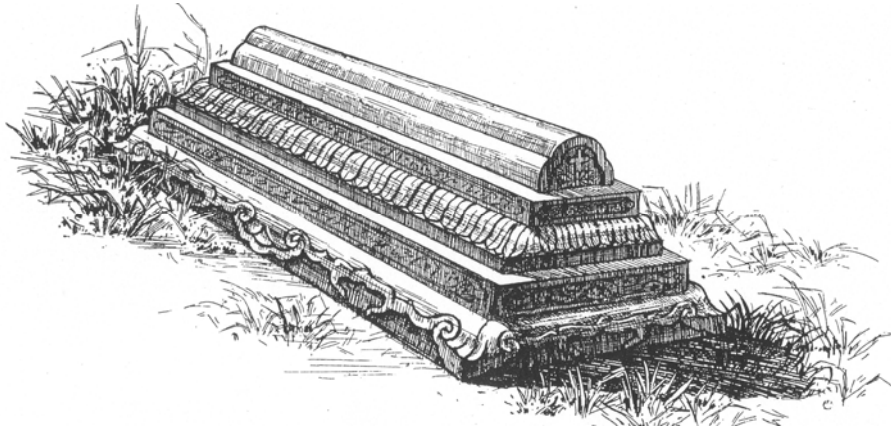


Fig. 3: The structure of the Nestorian simple tomb, after Wu Wenliang (1958), pl. 104



Fig. 4: Left: Nestorian inscription with the Syriac script found in 1943 at the Renfeng (任凤门) Gate of the city wall of Quanzhou; photo Niu Ruji, October 1999.
Right: Rubbing of the same inscription, after Wu Wenliang 1958, pl. 76.2.



Fig. 5: Funerary stone showing Syriac script found at the North Gate of the city of Quanzhou in 1951; after Wu Wenliang (1958), pl.84.

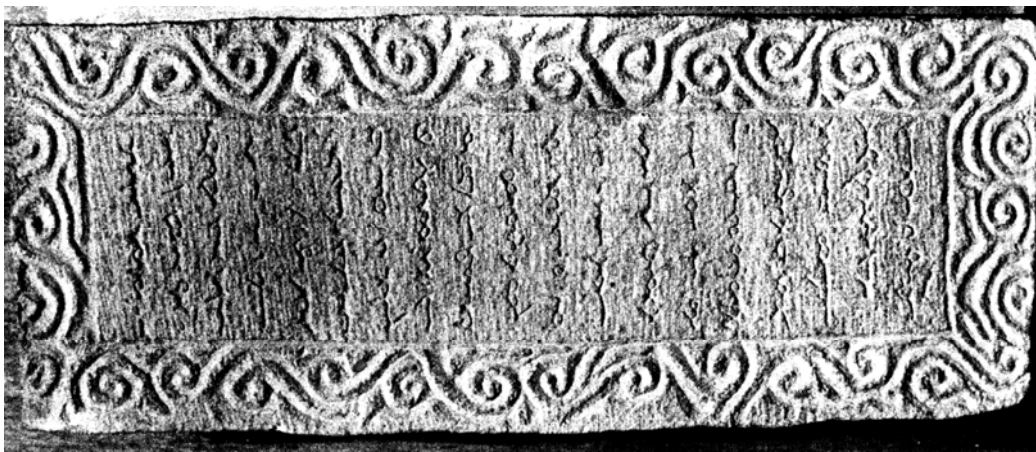


Fig. 6: Inscription in the Syriac script; photo by Yang Qinzhang



Fig. 7: To the left : Inscription in Syriac found in the North Gate of the wall of the city of Quanzhou in 1946.
To the right: one portion of the inscription; both after Wu Wenliang, pl. 77.2



Fig. 8: Inscription with the Syriac script found at the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1960.
Photo: Niu Ruji, November 1999.

THE STYLITES OF NEBO: A SYRIAN TRADITION IN THE HIGHLANDS OF CENTRAL JORDAN¹



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INTRODUCTION

A stylite is an ascetic monk who, in order to demonstrate his devotion to God, makes a vow to spend the remainder of this life atop a pillar. Stylitism emerged from the landscape of northern Syria in the early 5th century, and although this practice spread rapidly during the 5th and 6th centuries, it appears to have been largely confined to this region. There are, however, occurrences of stylitism elsewhere in the Byzantine-Christian world, more specifically in the highlands of central Jordan.

The stylite movement began in the year 422, when St. Symeon the Elder made the decision to pass the remainder of his days atop a pillar. This practice experienced a rapid rise in popularity until it reached its apex in the 6th century. At this time, stylites could be found not only in Syria, but also in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Byzantium, Russia, and even Gaul. Stylitism's popularity declined dramatically in the 7th and 8th centuries, due mainly to the Muslim con-

quest of the mid-7th century. Stylitism survived mainly in areas where the majority of the rural population remained Christian.² Research over the course of the last two decades has shown that, contrary to previous assumptions, the Christian communities around Madaba and Mount Nebo continued to prosper after the Muslim conquest,³ providing an ideal environment for the survival of existing stylite cults.

Stylitism experienced a brief resurgence in the 9th century, primarily in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Palestine. It would, however, never regain the status it experienced in the 6th century, and, from the 10th century onwards, gradually disappeared. As Fr. Ignace Peña so eloquently described it, "stylitism faded away gently like a lamp running out of oil."⁴ There are a small number of stylites known from the period between the 11th and 15th century, most of whom were based in Syria-Palestine. Despite its dramatic decline in importance, stylitism was still being practiced in the 19th century; there are records of stylites in Georgia and Romania.⁵

THE LIFE OF A STYLITE

The life a stylite was understandably quite difficult; the summit of a column offered little shelter. These holy men were exposed to the inclement weather of the summer and winter months. Their situation was further exacerbated by the common practice of standing immobile for long periods of time and occasionally chaining one of their ankles to the platform atop the pillar. In fact, St. Symeon the Elder, the first and most famous stylite, evidently spent an entire year standing on one foot, not moving at all.

They filled their days with prayer, often reciting psalms from memory late into the night, and rarely getting more than a few hours of sleep. Stylites also spent a significant portion of their day ministering to their disciples and the numerous pilgrims who visited their pillars seeking assistance and enlightenment. St. Symeon the Elder was reputed to be able to cure infertility and childless couples flocked to his column. Certain stylites spent their time copying liturgical manuscripts or composing hymns and prayers. A universal chronicle in Syriac was written by a former stylite, resident of the Monastery of Zuqnān near Amida in 774.⁶ Another stylite, John of Athareb near Aleppo, corresponded with Jacob of Edessa and produced a chronography at the beginning of the 8th century.⁷

A figure that is often overlooked when discussing the life of stylites is the column-guard. This figure, often a novice, deacon, or disciple, was charged with keeping watch at the base of the pillar and tending to the needs of the holy man. He was also required at times to manage the crowds of pilgrims who would gather around the column, requesting their silence when the stylite was

prepared to speak and preventing certain more fanatical devotees from stealing small fragments of the pillar itself.⁸

A basalt relief found near Hama depicts St. Symeon the Elder atop his pillar with only his head visible above the platform structure. A bird, representing Christ, is crowning him with a wreath. The column-guard is shown balanced on a ladder while swinging a censor,⁹ proof that this position not only involved the care of the stylite and the management of crowds, but it also required a certain level of participation in ritual activities.

One question that always arises when discussing stylites is the matter of personal hygiene. How did the stylite attend to his basic human needs? Evidence has been found that most stylite towers were equipped with a drainage system, consisting of a ceramic pipe that led from the summit of the pillar to a channel or reservoir at its base. The stylite could take care of himself, with only limited assistance from the column-guard.

The life-span of the stylite was, as a rule, quite short. The extreme conditions under which they lived often led to a premature death. Historical documents recount the details of their poor physical health, including incidences of sores that would not heal and revolting odours that emanated from the holy men, at times putting their disciples' loyalty into question. There are other stylites, however, who were always in good health and reached old age. St. Daniel the Stylite died at the age of 84, after spending 33 years on his column, while St. Alypius was 99 years old when he died. Mar Michel, a stylite established in the region of Nineveh during the 6th century, apparently died at the age of 105!¹⁰

THE STYLITE COLUMN

The columns atop which the stylites were perched were as a rule quite simple. There was no shortage of available columns in 5th century Syria; abandoned Roman monuments provided an abundant resource for the budding stylite. In addition, wealthy benefactors sometimes offered to defray the cost of a new column, the height of which depended on the donor's generosity. The column itself was divided into three components: the base, the shaft, and the platform. The shaft was secured to the base with the help of an iron bar. Several stone-carved drums placed on top of each other formed the shaft, which could range in height from only a few meters to over 15. The platform, which constituted the stylite's home, was built at the top of the shaft. The structure was large enough to allow the holy man to lie down if necessary. These constructions were seldomly made of stone, the majority being built of wood, thus explaining why so few have been recovered. In order to assemble these wooden platforms, cross-bars were inserted into the top of the shaft, and this would provide a base for the floor and balustrade that were subsequently erected. As this tradition grew and evolved, stylites began to add roofs to these structures in order to improve their living conditions, and platform size increased as well. The platform housing St. Symeon the Younger was large enough to entertain guests.¹¹

The popularity of the stylite column in early 7th century Syria suggests that these monuments may have provided inspiration for the Early Islamic minaret. Although there is no tangible evidence of a direct link between the two structures, it is not inconceivable that the numerous pillars that dot-

ted the Syrian landscape may have influenced the form and style of these Islamic monuments. At the site of Athareb, near Qal'at Sem'an—the location of Symeon the Elder's column, the minaret of the local mosque is located only a few hundred meters from the pillar of a 7th century stylite named John. The similarities between the two monuments are striking, and it is difficult to imagine that the Muslim architects did not draw any inspiration from this Christian structure.

Another connection between the minaret and the stylite tower comes from an 8th century historical account from Damascus. When the caliph al-Walid made plans to expand the Great Mosque in Damascus, by demolishing the neighbouring Church of St. John, he climbed one of the minarets in order to survey the property. At the top he found a monk who had withdrawn to this secluded place in order to pursue an ascetic life, employing the minaret as a stylite tower. Al-Walid asked him to leave, but the monk was talking incessantly and paid no attention to the caliph, who eventually had to drag the holy man out of the minaret by the scruff of his neck.¹²

FAMOUS STYLITES OF THE 5TH TO 7TH CENTURIES

There is no rule that governed the stylite's behaviour. Their unusual practices were so far removed from standard monastic life that no formalized set of regulations could be implemented. Despite this reality, the accounts of their lives are remarkably similar, and although this may have been caused by literary or religious objectives rather than actual parallel events, it speaks to the perception of how these saints led their lives.

These accounts can offer an added dimension to stylite sites that are not linked to any textual evidence, such as those of Mount Nebo.

St. Symeon the Elder¹³

Symeon was born around the year 389 in the village of Sisan, near the northern border of Syria. His parents were Christian and had him baptized. As a young boy he worked as a shepherd. After hearing the gospel during mass one day, he was inspired and decided to go and live with some of the holy men who were stationed in the neighbouring countryside. He spent two years in their company and then joined the monastic community at Teleda. The tortures he put himself through while at the monastery raised concerns among the elders. They pleaded with him to abandon these practices, but Symeon could not be swayed. He was asked to leave the monastery and withdrew into an abandoned cistern in the mountains. After only five days, the leaders of the monastery regretted their decision, went looking for him, and convinced him to return to the community. He eventually left Teleda and joined the monastery at Telanibus, near Antioch.

At the beginning of Lent, Symeon asked one of the other monks to wall him up in his cell. When the monk refused, Symeon suggested that he place ten loaves of bread and a pitcher of water inside the cell. On this condition, the monk agreed and Symeon spent the entirety of Lent enclosed in his cell. When they finally opened the cell, the food and water was untouched and, albeit weak, Symeon was still alive. He repeated this practice on several occasions. Not only would he deny himself food, but he would also spend all of his time standing and pray-

ing. When he became too exhausted to stand any longer, he would sit down, and by the last days of Lent, completely devoid of strength, Symeon would simply lie on the floor. Later on, while he was atop his pillar, he would tie himself to a post to keep from falling over. Eventually, however, he could stand for the entire 40 days without any support.

After spending three years in the monastery at Telanibus, Symeon tired of community life and set himself up on a neighbouring hill. He placed a large stone within a circular enclosure and fastened his ankle to the stone by means of a heavy chain. News of Symeon's exploits traveled across the region and soon pilgrims began to flock to his location. They brought the sick and infirm to obtain cures from him. Everyone wanted to touch the saint and take away some sort of relic, such as a piece of his tunic. Symeon grew frustrated with the constant pleading and dreamt of climbing onto a column to avoid the crowds of pilgrims. He initially commissioned a pillar of almost 2 meters, then a second of 3.6, and a third of 6.7. The tower that he occupied at the time of his death was 11 meters in height.

Symeon stood atop his column, day and night, without any shelter, exposed to the heat of summer and the cold of winter. The only covering he had was the hood of his tunic he wore over his head. He stood very straight and very still, except while praying, when he was known to bow deeply. This way of life caused the holy man to suffer from numerous sores and illnesses, yet he was unrelenting in his devotion to God.

Symeon's actions earned him international fame. Pilgrims from a variety of cultural backgrounds visited his shrine, including Arabs, Persians, Armenians, and Iberi-

ans. Western visitors, from Spain, Britain, and Gaul made the lengthy journey to the mountain northwest of Aleppo. Symeon's popularity reached epic proportions and devotees began referring to him as a saint. This honour soon attracted negative attention. The monks of Egypt, who felt they were losing control of the movement they had created, disagreed with Symeon's bizarre practice and sent him a letter of excommunication. They withdrew their decree after communicating directly with the Saint, yet they remained apprehensive of stylites.

Symeon the Elder died in the year 459, after having spent 37 years atop his pillar. His funeral was one of the greatest spectacles of the time. Seven bishops came to his shrine, accompanied by 600 soldiers who were enlisted to prevent the crowds of pilgrims from removing the body. It is said that the entire population of Antioch came out to greet the mourners. The body was first placed in the Church of Kasianus, and a month later it was transferred to the city's Cathedral.

Symeon's importance and the legacy he left behind are embodied in the grand monument that was built, after his death, atop the mountain where he spent the latter part of his life. An enormous church was built around the famous pillar, and the place was renamed Qal'at Sem'an, the castle of Symeon (Figure 1). The enormous cross-shaped martyrium, each wing measuring between 80 and 90 meters, was designed to house large crowds of pilgrims. The centre of the complex, which contained the column, was originally roofed with timber to accommodate its height. Each wing of the structure was a complete basilica, with the east wing being further embellished with three apses at its eastern end.

At the opposite end of a large open space is a monumental baptistery constructed in conjunction with the shrine of St. Symeon. The size of the building implies that large groups of pilgrims could be accommodated. The structure is hexagonal-shaped with an ambulatory around its perimeter that would have allowed the faithful to process into the building during the baptism ceremony.¹⁴

The pilgrims who visited Symeon's holy mountain often took away small souvenirs to remind them of the time they spent there and as protection against illness and misfortune. These small tokens, called eulogia, have been found all over the Roman-Byzantine world, carried to the far reaches of the empire by the faithful who traveled to Qal'at Sem'an. Certain examples were made of moulded glass and were decorated with a variety of images, including depictions of St. Symeon atop his pillar. A second type of eulogia were made out of terra cotta and formed into coin-like tokens. In an example from the early 6th century, the image shows only the upper part of the saint's body peeking out from the top of his pillar. Symeon is shown wearing a hood as he was known to have done. A ladder is propped against the column, perhaps in preparation for a visitor or to assist the column-guard. A cross appears above the stylite's head, and angels are depicted on either side of him.¹⁵

The Stylites of Syria and the Qal'at Sem'an region

St. Symeon's legendary exploits made him a model of asceticism and his popularity ensured that his memory would be honoured long after his death. He was also an inspiration to members of different monastic com-

munities, many of whom emulated the stylite's behaviour. Pillars began turning up all over Syria in the 5th century.¹⁶ Around the holy site of Qal'at Sem'an itself there are nineteen stylite sites and fifteen sites devoted to the cult of stylites. Peña has been suggested that the location of Symeon's tower near the major trade route that linked Apamea and Cyrrhus was a major factor in the widespread and rapid transmission of his teachings. In the following centuries, stylites often chose strategic locations in which to establish their pillars in order to ensure the diffusion of their message. There were also concentrations of stylites around the cities of Homs and Damascus, as well as isolated sites on the Mediterranean coast and the eastern desert.¹⁷

St. Daniel¹⁸

In addition to the numerous anonymous stylites who followed in Symeon's footsteps, he had one devotee who acquired international fame and became a central figure in the Imperial court of the 5th century. St. Daniel the Stylite was born in Syria in 409 CE. His mother was unable to have children, and it was only after dedicated prayer that she became pregnant. To thank God for her good fortune she delivered Daniel to the local monastery at the age of five. At the age of twelve, he left this monastery and joined one of the larger ones nearby. He had always wanted to visit St. Symeon on his pillar, and the opportunity presented itself when his abbot was summoned to a meeting in Antioch and he was invited to join him. On their return journey they stopped at Qal'at Sem'an and Daniel was able to climb to the top of the column and receive the saint's blessing. Shortly thereafter the abbot

died and Daniel was promoted. He promptly turned over control to the steward and left the monastery.

Daniel decided to embark on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but during his voyage he had a vision of St. Symeon who counselled him to abandon his trip and travel to Constantinople instead, which Symeon referred to as "the new Jerusalem." Daniel followed the saint's advice and turned his sights northward. As he approached Constantinople he discovered a temple inhabited by demons. After ridding the place of evil spirits, he barricaded himself inside, leaving only a small opening through which to communicate with visitors.

Daniel spent nine years in this location, at which time he had another vision of St. Symeon who told him to follow in his footsteps. A few days later, a messenger arrived with news that the saint had died. This solidified his resolve and Daniel chose to become a stylite. Once his column had been built and all the necessary preparations had been made, Daniel left the temple and took his place atop the pillar.

The stylite quickly developed a close relationship with the royal family in Constantinople. The Empress Eudocia visited Daniel and welcomed him to their land. The Emperor often asked the holy man's advice and requested his intercession on certain matters. In order to repay him, the Emperor Leo expressed the wish to have Daniel enter the priesthood. After a series of difficulties, including Daniel's own reluctance, the archbishop visited the stylite and ordained him. In September of 465, the capital suffered a terrible fire, which Daniel had predicted several months before. The imperial family expressed their deep regret for not having listened to the holy man, and to

strengthen their relationship had a palace built within the vicinity of the stylite tower. As another gesture of good will, the Emperor offered to have a monastery built near Daniel's pillar to accommodate the faithful. The stylite requested instead that he have the relics of St. Symeon brought from Antioch. The Emperor agreed and had a martyrion built especially for the relics.

This was only the beginning of Daniel's longstanding relationship with the Imperial Court. He was often called upon to assist in political matters, and his predictions were carefully considered by contemporary rulers. The stylite predicted the death of Emperor Zeno and the rise of his successor Anastasius. He even predicted his own death, which occurred in the year 493 when the stylite was 84 years old. His corpse was found curled up at the top of his pillar. A funeral procession ensued in which his numerous disciples were given a final opportunity to gaze upon him. A luxurious coffin had been commissioned by the Emperor, and Daniel was buried, as per his request, with the relics of three Babylonian saints Emperor Leo had transferred to Constantinople.

St. Symeon the Younger¹⁹

This second Symeon the stylite was born in the year 521 CE in the city of Antioch. He began experiencing visions as a child, after the death of his father. One such vision led him to a small monastery that housed a stylite named John. Symeon joined the monastery and quickly gained the respect of his brethren. At the age of seven, he requested a column be built next to that of John and took up residence upon it.

Symeon's healing powers quickly became

well-known and large groups of pilgrims began gathering at the foot of his pillar. He found these crowds distracting and commissioned a 12 meter high column. Shortly after this his master, John the stylite, died. The reports of Symeon's miracles continued to multiply, including one account of him raising the dead. By the time he reached the age of 20, the crowds at the foot of his pillar had become unmanageable and Symeon decided to withdraw to a nearby mountain, known as the Wondrous Mountain. He continued to perform miracles for those who were willing to make the climb to his new station. He also made several predictions, including the earthquake of Antioch in 557 CE.

Symeon had not yet been able to erect a pillar on the Wondrous Mountain. The pilgrims who had established themselves there joined together to construct one for the holy man. Symeon was led to the new column with a great procession. He had already spent 10 years on this mountain, and he would pass another 45 on top of the tower.

After a visit with John of Antioch, Symeon predicted John's promotion to archbishop and he also foretold the identity of Emperor Justinian's successor, Justin. The new Emperor cultivated a close relationship with the holy man. The stylite cured Justin's daughter of a grave illness. He died on the 26th of May in the year 597 at the age of 75.

The cult of St. Symeon the Younger was one of the most popular during the 6th century and continued long after his death. Numerous tokens of terra cotta and lead have been found throughout Europe and the Near East. They typically depict the saint, atop his pillar, flanked by angels and disciples making offerings at the foot of the column.

St. Alypius²⁰

St. Alypius the stylite was born in the city of Hadrianopolis in the early 7th century. At the age of three his father died, and his mother placed him in the care of the local bishop. Alypius' abilities and his piety impressed the bishop, who appointed him steward of the church and ordained him a deacon. Although he was successful in his new position, Alypius craved a life of seclusion. As a result, he gave away all of his possessions to the poor and informed his mother that he was leaving for the Holy Land and embracing the monastic life.

He had not traveled very far when the bishop caught up with him and insisted he return home. Alypius acquiesced, but began looking for a remote spot in which to establish himself. A vision brought him to a mountain with a spring. He dedicated a chapel at this location and built his cell. The local bishop however did not agree with Alypius' aspirations; he would have preferred if the holy man remained and served the community. To this end he blocked up the spring in order to force Alypius off the mountain. In response the saint established himself in an abandoned sanctuary, setting up a cross atop a column, in place of a pagan statue.

The bishop invited Alypius to join him on a trip to the capital, but once in Chalcedon, the Saint took refuge in one of the churches. In a dream, Saint Euphemia advised him as to return home. Alypius agreed and built a chapel dedicated to her once he had returned to his hermitage. This required the assistance of his friends and followers who provided the necessary materials for building the chapel. Although Alypius longed to be a stylite, he instead confined

himself to a small cell where he spent the next six years.

Alypius soon became famous for his ability to perform miracles, and large groups of pilgrims began to gather near his cell. The saint was unable to ignore these crowds and, in order to pursue his life of seclusion, took up residence at the top of a pillar. He constructed a small wooden shelter to protect him from the elements, leaving only enough room for him to stand.

The crowds continued to gather at the foot of Alypius' pillar, and a convent and monastery were soon founded on either side of the monument. Alypius stood atop his column for 53 years, at which time he became paralytic and could only lie on one side, which is how he remained for an additional 14 years, until his death at the age of 99.

These accounts provide a description, albeit embellished, of the life of a stylite. They can aid in elucidating the archaeological remains linked to these holy men. Although there is no literary evidence to support a stylite presence in the Mount Nebo region, these contemporary reports offer a reflection of the activities associated with the existing monuments.

THE STYLITES OF NEBO

The monastic presence in the Mount Nebo region stems from the early recognition of the site itself as the burial place of Moses and thus an important pilgrimage location. Egeria, writing in the late 4th or early 5th century, tells of a visit to the church and monastery at Uyun Musa, in the valley to the north of the mountain. The monk living there invited them indoors and offered to accompany them to the summit of Mount

Nebo.²¹ This text chronicles the first known encounter with a monastic community in this region, establishing the foundation date for these monasteries sometime in the mid-4th century. The rudimentary community visited by Egeria evolved and expanded into a well-organized and international monastic establishment.

The monastic population grew and spread from Mount Nebo to various sites to the south and to the east. Monasteries were built in both remote and urban areas, and some monks chose to work exclusively within the urban environment. There is also a strong ascetic tradition in the region. The presence of hermitages attests to a thriving community of holy men.

More than 10 monasteries have been identified in the Mount Nebo region. They form a network of institutions much like the monasteries of the Judean desert around Jerusalem. The largest of these establishments was of course that of Mount Nebo itself, and it formed the nucleus of this group of communities. Institutions that were too small to warrant the involvement of an abbot may have answered directly to the leader of the Mount Nebo community. Larger monasteries were also supervised by the abbot of Mount Nebo, for this individual held the office of archimandrite, the head of all of the communities east of the Jordan.

There are two stylite towers associated with the monasteries of Mount Nebo. The first, and most impressive, is located at the site of Umm al-Rasas, 30 km south-east of Madaba. The second is associated with the Monastery of the Theotokos at 'Ayn al-Kanisah, south of Mount Nebo.

Umm al-Rasas

The site of Umm al-Rasas has been identified as ancient *Kastron Mefaa*, a well-known military encampment from the Roman period. The settlement prospered during the Byzantine period as is witnessed by the numerous mosaic-paved churches that lined its streets. Considerable portions of the site have been exposed through the efforts of Italian and Swiss teams. These projects have uncovered a large Roman fort, or *castrum*, as well as a significant amount of the Byzantine city.²²

Approximately 1.5 km north of the settlement is a well-preserved tower, still standing to a height of 14 meters (Figure 2). The structure was built during the Byzantine period, and is located at the centre of a square courtyard. A channel ran from the summit of the column to its base, where a water cistern was located. The tower had a domed room at the top with no stairway leading to it. The lack of access to the summit, combined with the presence of a drainage system, has led excavators to identify this structure as a stylite tower.²³ The Umm al-Rasas column is extremely important for the study of stylitism. There are no contemporary descriptions and no complete surviving examples of these pillars. This structure can provide invaluable information about the columns on which these holy men lived.

To the south of the pillar is a small chapel referred to as the Tower Church. It was built against the perimeter wall enclosing the courtyard in which the tower was located. This small monastic complex was clearly established in conjunction with the stylite tower. The monks, including the column-guard who resided in the building, could serve the needs of the holy man living

atop the tower. The church was paved with a plaster floor. Two rooms were annexed to the north side of the church. A vertical shaft leading to a tomb was uncovered under the floor of the church.²⁴ This could very well have been the final resting place of the stylite of Umm al-Rasas.

‘Ayn al-Kanisah

The ruins of the Monastery of the Theotokos are located to the south of Mount Nebo. The small monastery was built on one of the hill-tops above the Wadi al-Kanisah. The predominant feature of the monastery is the chapel, located in the centre of the east wing with the rooms of the monastery extending to the north and south. The chapel has a simple plan, consisting of a nave with a raised chancel and apse at the east end. The original pavement dates to the latter half of the 6th century. The mosaic in front of the entrance was renovated in 762 CE, a date that is confirmed by the Greek inscription incorporated into the floor. The northern wing of the complex contained the service rooms of the monastery.

At the bottom of the valley, to the west of the monastery, are the ruins of a sizeable tower. Only the foundations and the first few wall courses have been preserved, but excavators were still able to identify a door in the southern wall of the structure. Ceramic evidence from the excavations has allowed scholars to postulate a Byzantine date for this building. It has been suggested that these are the remains of a stylite tower associated with the Monastery of the Theotokos.²⁵ Although there is little physical evidence to support this claim, epigraphical data from the monastery demonstrates that this is a viable possibility.

The Greek inscription in front of the apse of the monastery's chapel has been dated to the late 6th or early 7th century, based on the stylistic traits of the mosaic. It reads as follow, "First of all, let us give glory to God, Amen. And by the prayers of the saints, may the Lord reward the most holy Sir Abraham, the hegumen and archimandrite of the whole desert, and may He reward the most God-loving stylite, Abba Longinus, and Abba John."²⁶ It is not absurd to suggest that Longinus is the holy man who occupied the tower at the bottom of the hill. The designation Abba is further proof that this individual was revered by his contemporaries. This title was usually given to elder monks as a sign of respect.²⁷

CONCLUSION

The diocese of Madaba, which included the monasteries of Mount Nebo, had strong ties to southern and central Anatolia. A political relationship existed between the two, for the bishop of Madaba came under the purview of the Patriarch in Antioch. In addition, the first bishop of Madaba, a man named Gaianus, hailed from the city of Melitene, modern Malatya, in central Anatolia. He is not only mentioned in the Lives of the Monks of Palestine by Cyril of Scythopolis,²⁸ but his name also appears in a Palestinian Aramaic inscription from the late 5th or early 6th century, discovered in the Church of Kaianus, located in the valley of Uyun Musa to the northeast of Mount Nebo. The presence of stylite towers in the Mount Nebo region only further strengthens the existing bond between these communities and their counterparts to the north.

The monastic communities of Mount

Nebo were influenced by various forms of monasticism. The Egyptian monastic movement had a profound impact. The Life of Peter the Iberian recounts the story of a monk from one of the great monasteries of Sketis who settled here while the monastery of Mount Nebo was still in its infancy. Palestinian monasticism was also a driving force behind the development of these communities. Mount Nebo had direct ties with the great monasteries of the Judean desert, and the people of the Madaba region are known to have visited the venerable abbots resident in the desert around Jerusalem.

The stylite towers of Mount Nebo are further proof of a direct link with the Christian communities of northern Syria. This ascetic practice could only have been transmitted to Central Jordan from the region in which it originated. Mount Nebo's importance as a pilgrimage site would have brought people from all over the Christian-Byzantine world to this region. Pilgrims from northern Syria may have conveyed knowledge of stylitism to the Nebo region, and inspired local ascetics to adopt this way of life. Members of Madaba's Christian community were also known to go on pilgrimage, they may have witnessed the exploits of the stylites of Syria and brought this information back to their homeland.

The monastic communities of Nebo were not composed entirely of monks from

the local population; members came from all over the Byzantine world. It is not unreasonable to assume that certain Syrian monks traveled south and transplanted these practices into their new community. The stylite presence at Mount Nebo could also be attributed to the lay population of the region who, upon hearing of St. Symeon and his disciples, invited a stylite to join one of these monastic communities, and thus increase its prestige and popularity.

The connection between the monastic communities of central Jordan and the Syrian church was not limited to stylitism. There are also a small number of Palestinian Aramaic inscriptions that have been found in the mosaic floors of the monastic buildings of the area. Thus it appears that the Mount Nebo monasteries may have acted as a gateway for the transmission of Syriac culture in this region.

Although strange and almost incomprehensible, the life of a stylite was revered in the Near East from the 5th century onwards. Despite its humble beginnings in the hills surrounding Aleppo and many attempts to eradicate it, this practice continued to thrive and to spread as far a field as the highlands of central Jordan. Stylitism may confuse and bewilder our modern way of thinking. Yet as Father Ignace Peña has put it, "[t]he Spirit blows where and when it wants, often in a direction that upsets our human logic."²⁹

NOTES

¹ The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto and the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto for their assistance in the preparation of this paper.

² I. Peña, "Martyrs du temps de paix: les stylites," in *Les Stylites Syriens*, ed. B. Bagatti (Milan: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1975), 60-65.

³ G. Bisheh, "The Archaeology of the Late Byzantine – Early Islamic Transition in Jordan. The Evidence from the Diocese of Madaba: Decline, Change or Continuity?," in *Australians Uncovering Ancient Jordan: Fifty Years of Middle Eastern Archaeology*, ed. Alan Walmsley (Sydney: The Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sydney and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, 2001).

⁴ Peña, "Martyrs," 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 79-84.

⁶ A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnān Parts III and IV A.D. 488-775*, Mediaeval Sources in Translation 36 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 8-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, and A. Palmer, in *Abr-Nahrain* 28 (1990) 144.

⁸ Peña, "Martyrs," 52-55.

⁹ M. Fortin, *Syria: Land of Civilizations*, trans. Jane Macaulay (Quebec: Les Éditions de l'Homme and Musée de la civilisation de Québec, 1999), 292.

¹⁰ Peña, "Martyrs," 57-59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 33-42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 44-47.

¹³ H. Delehaye, *Les Saints Stylites* (Bruxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1923), XXIV-XXXIII; and Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, trans. R. Doran (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992). For a thought-provoking comparison of the Syriac and Greek vita of St. Symeon the Elder see S. Ashbrook Harvey, "The Sense of a

Stylite: Perspectives on Simeon the Elder," *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988) 376-394.

¹⁴ R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, fourth edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 143-51.

¹⁵ Fortin, *Syria*, 290. The *Mission française de Qal'at Sem'an*, under the direction of Jean-Pierre Sodini, has been working to complete investigation of the architecture and artifacts of the site. The publication of the final report will certainly provide more insight into the nature of this complex.

¹⁶ David T. M. Frankfurter provides an interesting explanation for this popularity by placing the stylite movement within the broader religious context of this region. See David T. M. Frankfurter, "Stylites and *Phallobates*: Pillar Religions in Late Antique Syria," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990) 168-198.

¹⁷ Peña, "Martyrs," 30-32, 67-76.

¹⁸ Delehaye, *Stylites*, XLV-LVII.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, LXIV-LXXI.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, CXLVIII-CXCIV.

²¹ Egeria, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, trans. John Wilkinson. (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1981).

²² M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas Mayfa'ah I: Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1994), and J. Bujard et al., "Fouilles de la mission archéologique Suisse (Foundation Max Van Berchem) à Umm al-Rasas et Umm el-Walid en 1988," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 32 (1988) 101-113.

²³ M. Piccirillo, "Les églises paléochrétiennes d'Umm er-Rasas (Jordanie): cinq campagnes de fouilles," *Comptes rendus de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (avril-juin 1991), 273-94.

²⁴ A. Michel, *Les églises d'époque byzantine et umayyade de la Jordanie, V^e-VIII^e siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2001), 417.

²⁵ M. Piccirillo, "The Monastic Presence," in

Mount Nebo New Archaeological Excavations 1967-1997, ed. M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1998), 209-17.

²⁶L. Di Segni, "The Greek Inscriptions," in *Mount Nebo New Archaeological Excavations 1967-1997*, ed. M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1998), 448-49.

²⁷Y.E. Meimaris, *Sacred Names, Saints, Martyrs and Church Officials in the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Pertaining to the Christian Church of Palestine* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1986), 235-36.

²⁸Cyril of Scythopolis, *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, Translated by R. M. Price (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991).

²⁹Peña, "Martyrs," 23.



Figure 1: Qal'at Sem'an, pillar in centre of martyrium



Figure 2: Umm al-Rasas, stylite tower

OBITUARY



PROFESSOR DAVID JOHN LANE (1935-2005)

Syrac Studies worldwide has lost an outstanding scholar, a great teacher, and a staunch supporter. David John Lane died of heart attack in January 9, 2005 in Kerala, India, and it is no coincidence that he passed away while lecturing on Syriac Studies at the St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, an academic institution which has a Masters programme in Syriac under the auspices of Mahatma Gandhi University.

David was born in 1935, in Hudders-



Photo courtesy Fr. Jacob Thekeparambil

field, Yorkshire, England, and studied in Hurstpierpoint College, a Church of England boarding school, where he took interest in theology. After two years of army service with the Royal Signals, which took him to

Egypt for a year, he studied Theology at Magdalen College, Oxford, and won a second undergraduate degree in Oriental Studies, concentrating on Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac. He then studied for priesthood at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and while there, he won the Oxford University Hall-Houghton Syriac Prize. He taught New Testament and Greek at Codrington College, Barbados, West Indies, where he was ordained priest in December 1962. After he returned to England in 1965 he became Associate Chaplain at Pembroke College Oxford and was awarded the Kennicott Hebrew Fellowship. He began working on the Peshitta of the Old Testament and associated himself with the Peshitta Institute in Leiden, The Netherlands. Between 1967 and 1971 he taught elementary Hebrew at Oxford University and was also Lecturer in Theology at Pembroke College.

In 1971 David joined the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Toronto, as assistant professor of Aramaic and Syriac. Here he proved to be very productive, editing for the Leiden Peshitta Institute several books of the Old Testament, revising others, and publishing a monograph which took Peshitta studies out of simple text criticism of the Old Testament into the wider field of Syriac church history and liturgy. In

