Manuscript Treasures from Afro-Eurasia

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Manuscript Treasures from Afro-Eurasia

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Scribes, Patrons, Collectors, and Readers

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Contents

Jacopo Gnisci
Preface

The papers gathered in this book were first presented and discussed at a confer-ence organized in cooperation with the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cul-tures at Universität Hamburg (CSMC) and within the framework of an AHRC-DFG project focusing on the illumination of early Solomonic Ethiopic manuscripts which I co-directed with Alessandro Bausi.[1] The aim of the conference was to bring together scholars working on textual and visual features of manuscript cultures with a strong connection to the Mediterranean area to bridge disciplinary barriers and promote method sharing. With this goal in mind, even if our core focus was on oriental Christian traditions, in view of our own research back-ground, we sought to dialogue with scholars working on Western Europe and other religious traditions.[2]

In employing this approach, we aligned ourselves with some of the research objectives pursued by the Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies (COMSt) pro-ject which culminated in 2015 with the publication of the volume *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction.*[3] As the general editor of this volume wrote in the first editorial to the *COMSt Bulletin*, it will take time to evaluate the scholarly response to this landmark publication.[4] Nevertheless, the impact of COMSt is already evident in many of the volumes published within the Studies in Manuscript Cultures series which share an aspiration to bridge across disciplinary boundaries.[5]

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1 The project was 'Demarginalizing medieval Africa: Images, texts, and identity in early Solo-monic Ethiopia (1270–1527)', AHRC-DFG grant (ref. no. AH/V002910/1). The conference, entitled 'Illuminating the Eastern Christian World', was held on 30 June–1 July 2022: <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/ethiostudies/research/demargin/news/20220630.html> (accessed on 20 July 2024). A review of the conference is available in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin*, 8/1 (2022): 287–289, <https://doi.org/10.25592/uhhfdm.11558>.
2 Only one of the two papers that dealt with Latin manuscripts has been included here. Oriental traditions for purposes of this volume are, as defined in Bausi 2015a, 2, those 'non-Occidental (non-Latin based) manuscript cultures which have an immediate historical ("genetic") relation-ship with the Mediterranean codex area'.
3 Bausi et al. (eds) 2015.
4 Bausi 2015b, 5.
5 See Bausi, Friedrich and Maniaci (eds) (2020) as well as Bausi and Friedrich (eds) (2023) to mention just two recent examples where COMSt is directly cited.

Twelve of the seventeen papers given at the original conference have been included here. The result is a volume that focuses on manuscripts and is broad in scope, covering artefacts produced during a period that stretches from Late Antiquity to the fifteenth century, and presenting case studies that range from the British Isles to East Africa and from Spain and the Maghreb to Armenia. The papers conceptualise manuscripts as complex portable historical artefacts that are best approached through a multidisciplinary lens, drawing from disciplines such as palaeography, art history, codicology, and text criticism. It is worth noting that, while not all of the manuscripts discussed in what follows were religious in content, they were produced by and/or for people or communities who adhered to a monotheistic religion (Judaism, Islam, and Christianity).

The work of the authors – who recurringly draw on the information provided by colophons and notes as well as on visual and literary cues – sheds light on the impact of patrons and makers on the visual, textual, or material features of manuscripts as well as on their circulation. For instance, Umberto Bongianino shows that an Arabic star atlas (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rossiano 1033) was made in Ceuta in 1224 CE alongside other manuscripts destined for the library of a *madrasa* founded by the local scholar and philanthropist Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī. This was not the only library in town, but, based on a report by historian Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Anṣārī, was part of a constellation of book collections assembled by local notables and scholars in their own homes. Certain visual features of the manuscript, according to Bongianino reflect the 'personal style and preferences' of its artist as well as his wider surroundings. The image of the Virgo, for example, may have been inspired by a female statue locally identified as Virgo. Bongianino informs us that one such statue was placed above a gate of Córdoba. Nevertheless, for Bongianino these collections of manuscripts, and manuscript Rossiano 1033 in particular, should be considered 'primarily against the background of Andalusī manuscript culture', which was shaped by the bibliophile activities of individuals such as al-Shārrī.

Another individual responsible for founding a library was ʾIyasus Moʾa, the prominent Ethiopian abbot of the monastery of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos. In his analysis of the portrait of this abbot that prefaces a gospel book he commissioned in 1280/1281 CE Jacopo Gnisci draws attention to a clear link between his ambitions and the miniature's visual features. The miniature's caption uncharacteristically labels ʾIyasus Moʾa as a 'saint' and deliberately blurs the distinction between him and the other saintly figures in the volume to legitimise his newly acquired position as a close ally to the new emperor of Ethiopia, which made him one of the most powerful individuals of his time. The abbot grasps a book that likely represents the gospel manuscript within which his portrait is found. He holds it up as

an offering to the sacred figures that follow, but also to the viewers of the image, namely the monks of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, who would have had to collectively participated in the manuscript's production under ʾIyasus Moʾa's leadership. Viewing this image, Gnisci argues, would have reminded the monks of the spiritual and material relationships that bound them together and are embodied in the manuscript held by the abbot.

Libraries and patrons are also a major concern of Philip Michael Forness's study, where the author shows that Syriac translators could go to great lengths, travel great distances, and even transcend confessional boundaries to consult a particular collection of manuscripts. However, copies of particular works could just as easily travel to a translator, as evidenced by the preface of Sergius of Reshʿayna to his Syriac translation of the Aristotelian treatise *On the World*. Forness's contribution shows that internal Miaphysite debates could provide the impetus for the translation of certain books from Greek into Syriac, such as John Chrysostom's *Commentary on First Corinthians*. To support his argument, Forness has edited, translated, and analysed a group of seven short texts appended to a sixth-century manuscript that contains a portion of this translation (London, British Library, Add. 12160). These paratexts provide information on the circumstances of its production and give us the name of the manuscript's scribe, Thomas deacon of Edessa, and of its homonymous patron, abbot of the monastery of Gubba Barraya.

Several centuries after Thomas commissioned a manuscript for Gubba Barraya, a scribe called Mūbārak finished copying an illustrated Syriac gospel lectionary (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. sir. 559). This, and other codices are the focus of François Pacha Miran, who discusses the workshops, makers, and patrons involved in the production and illumination of Syriac lectionaries between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. By drawing on the material features of the manuscripts as well as on the evidence of notes and colophons, Pacha Miran sheds light on the developments that gradually saw copies of the Four Gospels being replaced by gospel lectionaries in the liturgy. The newfound importance of these manuscripts led to greater investment in their making and materials.

The surviving evidence analysed by Pacha Miran indicates that while monks were often involved in these processes the task could also be fulfilled by secular clergymen or by families of craftsmen. To explore such familial ties, Pacha Miran looks closely at the activities of a group of three men who were related to Yūḥanon of Qarṭmin, bishop of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn and who produced at least three lectionaries including London, British Library, Or. 3372. This family of manuscript workers included ʿAmanūʾil, the bishop's nephew, who worked with the assistance

of his brothers Peṭros and Niḥē. By drawing on the evidence of colophons found in a wide body of illustrated and non-illustrated volumes Pacha Miran's paper also maps out a large network of institutions where manuscripts were produced and shows that some of these institutions could collaborate in the production of a manuscript. Interestingly, several such institutions were located in the environs of Edessa, which, as Forness's paper shows, emerged as an important centre of manuscript production already in Late Antiquity. Taken together, the evidence discussed in these two studies calls for further research on the continuity of manuscript practices around Edessa.

Matthew R. Crawford contribution considers the decoration of the Eusebian Canon Tables in the Middle Ages and looks comparatively at how two separate communities came to interpret them. For the Anglo-Saxon tradition, he considers the visual evidence provided by the Canon Tables of the Lindisfarne Gospels and the symbolism of their numeric forms. For the Armenian tradition, he focuses on written commentaries on the Canon Tables attributed to Stepʻanos Siwnecʻi and Nersēs Šnorhali, which interpret the accompanying illuminations in symbolic terms. Despite the geographic divide, Crawford shows that both traditions came to view and interpret the Canon Tables in remarkably similar ways, associating them with the Christian community of worshipers united, despite their diversity, through the figure of Christ. In his opinion, such shared interpretations stem from a new mode of viewing art that emerged among Christians in Late Antiquity.

Crawford papers shows that interconnected traditions need not necessarily be prompted by shared spaces. Indeed, most of the manuscripts considered in this volume draw on visual, material, or textual traditions that have their roots in the late antique Mediterranean world. This 'common patrimony', as Crawford calls it, can be mobilized to explain some of the iconographic affinities between classical Roman globes, medieval Aratean manuscripts, and the Arabic star atlas discussed by Bongianino. Likewise, the illuminated frame that surmounts the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa, discussed in Gnisci's paper, recalls the arches that decorate the Canon Tables from the same manuscript, which, in turn, evidently have their roots in late antique visual culture.

As portable as manuscripts might sometimes be, their decorations may call forth notions of monumentality and immobility. In this respect, movement comes into play in a very different manner in Katrin Kogman-Appel's discussion of a Hebrew Bible produced in 1299 by the scribe Solomon ben Raphael (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 7) – a work that features pages with architectural frames that were intended to evoke the urban space in which its anonymous patron lived. In this respect, the images may be seen as an index of the movement of their maker across the multifaith networks and entangled spaces of medieval

Iberia. In this regard, the arches in the Hebrew Bible may have led their first viewers to think as much about their permeable physical surroundings as about the cultural networks they were part of.

For Kogman-Appel, the shared material and visual features of certain Hebrew Bibles might have contributed to a 'sense of belonging that must have transcended cultural and/or religious divides'. Contiguity, the author notes, could aid acculturation and the diffusion of material practices, techniques, and visual motifs, but ideas could also travel across longer distances. In this regard, by looking at the micrographic designs of manuscript hébreu 7, Kogman-Appel also draws the reader's attention to the existence of strong links between North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula – ties which are also explored in Bongianino's contribution where the visual conventions of the Arabic star atlas are compared to contemporary Maghribī codices. Ultimately, for Kogman-Appel, the 1299 Bible can be read as a work that responded to local scholarship while simultaneously tapped into a wider Jewish network of bibliophiles. The latter connection is evidenced by the similarities in how the Temple vessels are represented in the hébreu 7 codex and in a manuscript now in Parma (Biblioteca Palatina, Parm. 2668) that was probably illustrated in Toledo.

The possible transmission of visual ideas between manuscripts and monumental art comes into play also in Mat Immerzeel's paper which focuses on the Christian arts of medieval Egypt. The author carefully weaves the thread of his argument acknowledging the limitations of the available evidence and focusing on a group of manuscripts linked to monastic sites in the Fayyum and Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Among the works considered by Immerzeel is a manuscript (New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, M.613) that includes a copy of the martyrdom of St Theodore the Oriental and a note indicating that the volume was copied by Mōusēs, a deacon of Tebtunis, with the assistance of the subdeacon Khaēl and then given to the nearby monastery of Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl. The book is prefaced by a miniature of Theodore slaying an androcephalous dragon. Immerzeel notes that the only other representation of this motif was found in a now-lost wall painting from Tebtunis and points out that there *may* have been an indirect link between the two. Building upon this and other carefully collected observations Immerzeel concludes that it is difficult to definitively locate 'direct connections between specific miniatures and works of monumental art', but that continued research into this topic could further our knowledge of the activities of monastic workshops in medieval Egypt.

Patrons, familial ties, networks, and manuscript making emerge as a key concern also in Gohar Grigoryan's study of the decorations of an Armenian ritual book (London, British Library, Add. 19548) whose miniatures were hitherto un-

published. The colophon in the manuscript identifies its maker as an individual called Kostandin, whereas its miniatures showcase a resemblance to works produced at Cilician scriptoria around the last quarter of the twelfth century. This evidence leads Grigoryan to associate the British Library manuscript with the network of Grigor Mličecʻi and Kostandin Skewṙacʻi, accomplished scribes and miniaturists with strong ties to the Lambron family.

Elite patronage is the focus also of Sophia Dege-Müller's paper, which looks at a group of illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts produced between the late fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth centuries and analyses their links with the imperial court of Ethiopia. In particular, Dege-Müller draws a connection between the illustrations found in a fragmentary fifteenth-century copy of the *Miracles of Mary* (Munich, Museum Fünf Kontinente, MfVK 86-307647) with the illustrations found in six other Ethiopic manuscripts from this period which have imperial provenance. A supplication note in the Munich *Miracles of Mary* discussed by the author shows that the manuscript was commissioned by Emperor Zarʾa Yāʿqob alongside Habta Māryām and ʾAmata Māryām. The latter is known from other sources as a sister of the emperor. By drawing on the evidence provided by this and other manuscripts, Dege-Müller turns the spotlight on the role of women linked to the Solomonic dynasty of Ethiopia, such as Emperor Zarʾa Yāʿqob's wife ʾƎleni, in the commissioning of manuscripts in fifteenth-century Ethiopia, a topic that had received only marginal attention up to this point.

Ethiopian imperial patronage comes into focus also in a paper by Vitagrazia Pisani that looks at the movement of Ethiopic manuscripts to and from Jerusalem starting from a volume (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Borg. et. 3) that was donated by Emperor ʿAmda Ṣəyon to the Church of St Mary of Golgotha in Jerusalem and that was likely taken to the Vatican by Māḥṣanta Māryām in the first half of the seventeenth century. Some of the notes in the manuscripts discussed by Pisani document the movement of manuscripts, but also provide insight into the rationale for commissioning a particular group of texts and the religious motivations of a patron. For example, a note from a fifteenth-century Octateuch (Cambridge, University Library, BFBS 169) tells us that a certain Yəsḥaq brought this and several other manuscripts with him on his way to Jerusalem to enhance his chances of salvation. Among them was a version of the *Book of Hours* that had only recently been written in Ethiopia. Yəsḥaq commissioned this manuscript because he believed the work would have been unknown to the members of the Ethiopian diaspora present in the city of Jerusalem. The remarkable journeys made by some of these manuscripts did not always end in Jerusalem; a considerable number would subsequently reach other destinations, such as Rome, in the hands of pilgrims and travellers, a topic addressed also in Alin Suciu's paper.

A very different and more personal network of relations contributed to the production of an Armenian manuscript (Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 103) copied in 1336 and discussed by Theo Maarten van Lint. The manuscript, occasionally decorated with headpieces, contains a homily by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi Pluz and a group of twenty-two poems by Kostandin Erznkacʻi. Remarkably, one of the poems is devoted to the copyist and owner of the manuscript Amir Pʻōlin, who may even have had an autograph copy of the poems at hand when copying them in the Sanjarān gate of Tabriz. Intimate intellectual and emotional relationships are at play in this manuscript, so much so that Amir often adds his name next to that of Kostandin when the latter addresses himself in one of his poems. According to van Lint, the choice to juxtapose the homily and poems, which tackle similar topics, such as love and knowledge, is also clearly Amir's, who must have perceived the texts as closely related. The S. Lazzaro degli Armeni manuscript thus reveals much about Amir's spiritual and religious world-view.

The pentaglot psalter (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. or. 2) written in Ethiopic, Syriac, Bohairic Coptic, Arabic, and Armenian considered by Alin Suciu attest to a much wider web of relationships that stretched across the Eastern Christian world. The mirror-like arrangement of the five columns on the verso and recto of each opening confers 'orderliness' to the manuscript but also ensures that Coptic 'entertains the place of honour' within the overall design of the volume. Suciu shows that the manuscript, as its companion volumes (e.g. Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B 20/A inf. and B 20/B inf.), were likely all commissioned for the monastic settlements of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn by a Syrian priest called Ṣalīb or Ṣalībā towards the mid thirteenth century. Changes of hand in the manuscripts indicate that they were produced by multiple scribes working in each language. Thus, for Suciu, the pentaglot manuscripts point to the 'fact that the Wādī Naṭrūn was a space of entangled communities' with a shared non-Chalcedonian identity.

In addition to considering the circumstances that led to the production of the polyglot manuscripts considered in his study, Suciu takes us beyond the Middle Ages by exploring their subsequent biography. He notes that the books he discusses continued to attract interest from readers after the sixteenth century. The pentaglot psalter, for instance, was repaired in 1626 at the behest of Anba Yūnis, abbot of the monastery of St Macarius in Wādī al-Naṭrūn where the book was kept. Shortly after, the volume aroused the interest of the French Capuchin missionary Agathange de Vendôme who purchased it in 1635 to send it to France to the antiquarian Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc. The manuscript was, however, seized by pirates and ended up in the hands of the pasha of Tripoli. Peiresc mobilized his

overseas contacts and eventually managed to track down the manuscript and ransom it, only to later discover that he had been sent a dud. Peiresc would die before ever seeing the manuscript which would eventually find its way into the collection of Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Suciu shows that, as an object of the burgeoning European interests in Oriental manuscripts, the pentaglot psalter was entangled in a network of ties that criss-crossed the Mediterranean world. In Europe, the interests in such works were spurred by men of letters who contributed to the development of research on the Oriental manuscript traditions. Suciu's contribution thus provides a fitting conclusion to the essays collected in this volume.

The case studies in this volume provide a multifaceted view of the relationship between manuscripts and their scribes, collectors, patrons, and readers during the Middle Ages. Taken as a whole, the papers provided readers with a glimpse of the dynamics affecting book production and circulation across the wider Mediterranean region. The papers bring out a rich range of evidence and methods that can be deployed for understanding such dynamics and some remarkable similarities. One may mention, as an example, the key role played by wealthy and powerful patrons in shaping the production and movement of material culture (e.g. in the papers by Bongianino, Gnisci, Grigoryan, Pisani, Dege-Müller) or the ongoing engagement with the heritage of Late Antiquity and early Christianity (e.g. Pacha Miran, Crawford, Kogman-Appel, Immerzeel). In all of these traditions, however, the engagement with tradition and the past is never a static exercise of repetition, but rather an evolving and ever-changing dialogue that results in the creation of remarkable and unprecedented written artefacts (e.g. van Lint, Suciu). The manuscript traditions considered here were extraordinarily dynamic each in their own unique way, and this is a point that still needs to be underscored when focusing on contexts outside of the Latin West.

Thus, providing this platform for comparative dialogue between scholars working on different traditions does not imply a call for methodological uniformity on our part. Indeed, while the studies in this volume provide a basis for developing shared perspectives and for locating instances of cross-Mediterranean exchange during the Middle Ages, it is equally clear that the written artefacts considered here require that equal attention is paid to the local and the particular. The contributors have achieved this objective by destabilising notions of cultural uniformity and national or religious identity and by locating instances of heterodoxy, idiosyncrasy, cultural mixing, acculturation, and pluralism.

Acknowledgements

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Philip Michael Forness

Translations and the Exchange of Manuscripts among Eastern Christian Communities: Textual and Material Evidence from Anti-Chalcedonian Syriac Communities in Late Antiquity

Abstract: The spread of Christianity resulted in the emergence of literary cultures in different languages that were connected through the translation of common works. The translation process naturally involved the exchange of manuscripts with the works in the original language and the production of new manuscripts with the translations. This article focuses on the Syriac evidence, analysing both literary sources and manuscript evidence. The first case study examines the movement of manuscripts and libraries as described in the sixth-century *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene (*fl.* 568/569). The *Chronicle* highlights the relocation of Greek libraries – especially from Alexandria – to Upper Mesopotamia due to the oppression of anti-Chalcedonian communities. The second case study focuses on the manuscript London, British Library, Add. 12160 (fols 1–108) which contains a Syriac translation of John Chrysostom's *Homilies on First Corinthians*. Marginalia in this manuscript indicate how the translation was used during the Julianist debate, while the manuscript's end matter offers a window into the network involved in the translation process. As a whole, this article contributes to the study of processes of exchange among Eastern Christian communities in the late antique eastern Mediterranean.

1 Introduction

Between the years 405 and 406, Rufinus of Aquileia (*c*. 345–*c*. 410) carried out the immense task of translating the *Commentary on Romans* by Origen of Alexandria (184/185–253/255) into Latin. He undertook the translation at the request of a certain Eraclius,[1] perhaps beginning the translation in Aquileia and completing it in

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1 Rufinus calls Eraclius 'brother' (*frater*): Rufinus of Aquileia, *Preface* to Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on Romans* (Hammond Bammel (ed.) 1990, vol. 1, 35, l. 3; Scheck (tr.) 2001–2002, vol. 1,

south-western Italy.[2] Rufinus had to consult various libraries in search of the whole text of the commentary in Greek, as he writes in a preface:

> Super omnes autem difficultates est quod interpolati sunt ipsi libri. Desunt enim fere apud omnium bibliothecas – incertum sane quo casu – aliquanta ex ipso corpore uolumina; et haec adimplere atque in Latino opere integram consequentiam dare non est mei ingenii sed ut tu credis qui haec exigis muneris fortasse diuini. Addis autem ne quid laboribus meis desit ut omne hoc quindecim uoluminum corpus quod Graecus sermo ad quadraginta fere aut eo amplius milia uersuum produxit adbreuiem et ad media si fieri potest spatia coartem.

> But beyond all these difficulties is the fact that the books themselves have been tampered with.[3] For some volumes of this work are lacking in almost everyone's library – it is not known, however, how this came about. To supply these and restore continuity to the Latin work is not within my power but, as you who ask for these things know, [would be] a gift from God. So that nothing is lacking from my labours, you add that I should abbreviate this whole work of fifteen volumes whose Greek text has reached perhaps forty or more thousand lines and reduce it, if possible, to half the space.[4]

In addition to the different manuscripts of the commentary Rufinus used, studies on the biblical text in the translation suggest that he also had recourse to a biblical manuscript while undertaking the translation.[5] The Latin translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* offers a glimpse into the logistics of producing a translation in Late Antiquity, where one had to search for codices of the text in the original language and even consult additional manuscripts as needed.

Translations also formed a major conduit for the exchange of ideas across cultures in the premodern Eastern Christian world.[6] This is exemplified by the letter that

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51); *Epilogue* to Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on Romans* (Hammond Bammel (ed.) 1990, vol. 3, 860, l. 3; Scheck (tr.) 2001–2002, vol. 2, 311). On Eraclius, see Hammond Bammel 1977, 403; Charles Pietri and Luce Pietri 1999, 657–658 (Eraclius 1); Scheck (tr.) 2001–2002, vol. 1, 12–13.

2 On the context of the translation, see Hammond Bammel 1977, 399–406; Hammond Bammel 1985, 144.

3 I follow Scheck (tr.) 2001–2002, vol. 1, 51, in translating *interpolati* as 'tampered with'. On the meaning of this term here, see Scheck (tr.) 2001–2002, vol. 1, 12–13; Brésard (tr.) 2009–2012, vol. 1, 38–40. I have translated all citations from original sources in this article to achieve a certain degree of uniformity. In many cases, I have drawn on existing modern translations and cited these in the footnotes.

4 Rufinus, *Preface* to Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on Romans* (Hammond Bammel (ed.) 1990, vol. 1, 35–36, ll. 11–19; Brésard (tr.) 2009–2012, vol. 1, 135–137; Scheck (tr.) 2001–2002, vol. 1, 51–52).

5 See Kreinecker 2016, 233–235, who draws on the extended study of the biblical text in this work by Hammond Bammel 1985.

6 For example, see McCollum 2015; Toca and Batovici (eds) 2020; Papaioannou (ed.) 2021, 180–237, 559–681.

the East Syriac polymath Ḥunayn ibn Isḥaq (d. 873 CE) wrote to the caliphal scribe ʿAli ibn Yaḥya in 848 CE in which he enumerates 129 works by Galen (129–216 CE), describes their contents, and notes whether the Greek originals had been translated into Arabic or Syriac.[7] Ḥunayn details his own translation activities, including hunting down manuscripts for works such as Galen's *Posterior Analytics*:[8]

وجولت في طلبه بلاد الجزيرة والشام كلها وفلسطين ومصر الى ان بلغت الاسكندرية فلم اجد منه
شيئاً، الا بدمشق نحواً من نصفه، الا انها مقالات غير متوالية ولا تامة.[9]

> I travelled around in search of [this work] throughout the regions of al-Jazira, all of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt until I reached Alexandria. I did not find anything of it except about half of it in Damascus, but the volumes were neither sequential nor complete.

This brief example from Ḥunayn's letter exhibits the networks necessary to procure manuscripts for translations that facilitated the transmission of texts across linguistic communities.

Syriac sources offer important insight into the role of manuscripts in the production and circulation of translations in the late antique eastern Mediterranean.[10] Material evidence from Syriac manuscripts complements the numerous literary sources on translations in Syriac. This article seeks to shed light on the intersection of manuscripts and translation activities in the late antique Mediterranean world by focusing on the Syriac evidence. After taking a broader view of Syriac translation culture, I will narrow in on two episodes from the anti-Chalcedonian, Miaphysite Syriac community for which exceptional literary and material evidence survives. An investigation of these sources shows that theological conflicts could affect the movement and exchange of codices which in turn influenced which works saw translation. The late antique Syriac evidence offers the chance to understand in a highly contextualised way how the movement of books affected the exchange of ideas across linguistic communities.

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7 For the text of the letter, see Bergsträßer 1925; Bergsträßer 1932; Lamoureaux (ed. and tr.) 2016. On the letter, see Tannous 2010, 31–52.

8 In the Arabic, the text is referred to as the 'book of demonstration' (كتاب البرهان). Lamoureaux (ed. and tr.) 2016, 116, n. to §126, identifies this as the *Posterior Analytics*.

9 Ḥunayn ibn Isḥaq, *Letter on the Translation of Galen's Books* 126 (Lamoureaux (ed. and tr.) 2016, 117, ll. 15–16 [edition]; 116 [translation]; cf. §115 in Bergsträßer 1925, 46 [edition], ll. 15–17; Bergsträßer 1925, 39 [translation]). Tannous 2010, 36, pointed me to this passage.

10 These sources are scattered throughout various publications, many of which are discussed below. For a helpful collection related to the translation of works of philosophy and science in Syriac, see King 2022, 224–246 (edition); 189–223 (translation).

2 Syriac translations and manuscript culture

Translations played a vital role in the emergence and flourishing of Syriac literature. Some of the earliest known literary texts in Syriac are translations of the Bible from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek dating to the second and third centuries.[11] Numerous Greek texts were translated in the fourth and fifth centuries. The earliest dated Syriac manuscript, produced in Edessa and dating to 411 CE, consists entirely of translations: the Pseudo-Clementines, an anti-Manichaean treatise of Titus of Bosra (d. *c.* 378), three works by Eusebius of Caesarea (*c.* 260–*c.* 339), and a translation of a Greek martyrology.[12] In addition to theological texts, philosophical writings of a popular nature and much of the Aristotelian corpus of the Alexandrian Neoplatonic curriculum had been translated into Syriac by the end of the sixth century.[13] Syriac communities also produced translations of select Greek medicinal and legal works.[14] The experience of translating Greek works of different genres subsequently made Syriac translators important actors in the Greco-Arabic translation movement that took place under the Abbasids.[15] This section offers a broad orientation to the intersection of manuscripts and translations in Syriac sources by looking at the production, use, and circulation of translations.

The translated texts themselves shed light on the use of manuscripts during the translation process. Both the Syriac Old and New Testaments underwent regular revision throughout Late Antiquity.[16] The Harklean translation produced around 615/616 CE represents a literal mirror translation of the Greek.[17] The translator, Thomas of Ḥarkel (*c.* 570–after 631), added marginal notes that indicate where the Greek manuscripts he consulted differed from the main Greek *Vorlage* for his translation.[18] A colophon to this work indicates that he not only consulted Greek manuscripts but also an earlier Syriac translation of the New Testament,

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11 For brief overviews, see Brock 2006; Loopstra 2019.

12 The manuscript is London, British Library, Add. 12150. For a description, see William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 631–633. On the evidence for the translation of the martyrology, see Nau (ed. and tr.) 1912, 7–9.

13 On the translation of popular philosophical texts, see Rigolio 2016; Rigolio 2019. On the translation of Aristotelian philosophical works, see Hugonnard-Roche 2004; Hugonnard-Roche 2019; Watt 2019, 422–427. For a recent analysis of the selection of philosophical and scientific works translated into Syriac, see King 2022, 170–188.

14 On medicinal works, see Kessel 2019. On the translation of legal works, see Van Rompay 2011a.

15 Brock 1991; Gutas 1998, 13–16; Daiber 2007, 1207–1208.

16 Loopstra 2019, 293–296.

17 For an orientation to the Harklean version, see Juckel 2011a; Juckel 2017.

18 A few examples are described in Juckel 2017, 154–155.

known as the Philoxenian version.[19] Notably, Thomas of Ḥarkel completed this translation in the monastery of the Antonians located in the district of monastic settlements known as the Enaton, 9 Roman miles west of Alexandria.[20] This was the very same monastery in which Paul of Tella (*fl.* early seventh century) translated Origen's Hexapla into Syriac.[21] The Enaton had welcomed anti-Chalcedonian bishops forced into exile in the early sixth century and became the unofficial headquarters of the Egyptian anti-Chalcedonian patriarchate from the sixth to seventh centuries.[22] The monastery's prominence must have led to the influx of manuscripts which translators like Thomas of Ḥarkel and Paul of Tella used for their translations.

Syriac translators also consulted Greek and Syriac manuscripts when revising earlier translations of theological and philosophical works. For example, the Syriac translations of the discourses of Gregory of Nazianzus (*c.* 329–*c.* 390) underwent continual revision, where the older versions were updated to reflect the Greek text more faithfully.[23] Further, the intellectual community associated with the monastery of Qenneshre located on the Euphrates River in Upper Mesopotamia carried out revisions or new translations of patristic and philosophical works in the late seventh and early eighth centuries to meet their curricular needs.[24] Just as the example of Rufinus's translation of Origen discussed above, such revisions demonstrate that the production of translations could involve gathering and consulting a small collection of manuscripts.

A more detailed look into the use of manuscripts in the production of translations can be found in the letters prefaced to the Syriac translation of Athanasius of Alexandria's (*c.* 295/299–373) *Commentary on the Psalms*.[25] A certain monk named Barlaha wrote a letter to Symeon, abbot of the monastery of Beth Licinius on the Black Mountain near Antioch, asking him to translate the proem to the commen-

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19 Zuntz 1951, Table: Gegenüberstellung der Kolophone E und P. This unnumbered table is found between pages 176 and 177 in Zuntz's article. On the relationship of the Philoxenian and Harklean versions, see Brock 1981; Aland and Juckel (eds) 1986, 7–12.

20 On the Enaton in general, see Gascou 1991; Juckel 2011b; Ghattas 2017.

21 On the production of the Syrohexapla, see Vööbus 1971, 33–44; Liljeström 2021, 658–661; Marsh 2024, 5–14. The production of the Syrohexapla is largely based on the colophons. For a list see, Gentry 2021, 558. For the text and translation of the colophons and a detailed analysis of select colophons, see Marsh 2024, 113–132, 267–277, 427–429, 665–676.

22 See Gascou 1991, 956–957; Davis 2004, 100, 108.

23 Haelewyck 2017.

24 The evidence is summarised in Tannous 2018, 189–191.

25 Athanasius did not write a *Commentary on the Psalms* as such. This is likely a reference to his *Letter to Marcellinus* (*Patrologia Graeca* 27, cols 12–45): see Guidi 1886, 552–553.

tary by Athanasius.[26] Barlaha sent a deacon to Symeon with a copy of the work to be translated:

ܗܟܢܐ ܗܟܝܠ ܡܚܘܝܢܢ ܠܚܘܒܟܘܢ܂ ܕܟܘܪܣܐ ܕܥܣܪܐ ܦܠܓܝ̈ܢ ܐܝܬ ܗܘܐ ܠܗ ܡܢ ܡ̈ܠܐ ܕܦܪܘܡܝܘܢ ܩܕܡܝ̈ܬܐ ܕܦܘܫ̈ܩܐ ܕܥܠ ܡܙܡܘܪ̈ܐ ܕܛܘܒܢܐ ܐܬܢܐܣܝܘܣ ܦܐܛܪܝܐܪܟܐ ܕܐܠܟܣܢܕܪܝܐ ܪܒܬܐ܂ ܘܐܦܩܢܢ ܫܚܝܡܗ ܘܡܟܝܠ ܨܒܝܢܢ ܒܦܘܫܩܐ ܕܦܬ̈ܓܡܘܗܝ܂ ܐܠܐ ܡܛܠ ܡܪܢ܂ ܐܢ ܡܨܝܢ ܐܢܬ ܘܐܢ ܦܣܘܩܐ ܚܕ ܐܘ ܬܪܝܢ ܐܝܬ ܗܘܐ ܣܒ ܘܦܫܩܝܗܝ܂܂

> So then, we are informing Your Love that [the deacon] had a quire of ten leaves from the words of the proem preceding the commentary on the Psalms of the blessed Athanasius, patriarch of the great Alexandria. We have taken a copy of it [*šḥāḥēh* ܫܚܝܡܗ] and now desire a translation of his words.[27] But for the sake of Our Lord, if you are able and there is only a section[28] or two, take up this task and translate it.[29]

This passage shows that the one commissioning the translation furnished the translator with a copy of the work to be translated. It interestingly also provides rare information about the makeup of this manuscript: that it took the form of a quinion. It seems that Barlaha had the proem copied onto this quinion so that he could send the work to Symeon while keeping the original in his monastery. The term 'copy' (*šḥāḥā* ܫܚܝܡܐ) found in the quote surfaces in many of the quotations examined in this paper. The Syriac word can mean 'manuscript' or 'codex' and in some contexts even 'section'. While I have stuck to the translation of 'copy' throughout the article, the other possible translations should be taken into consideration.

Symeon's response to Barlaha offers insight into the use of manuscripts in the production of translations. After defending his translation choices, he writes,

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26 According to the letter, Barlaha came from the monastery of Elisha of Markaba, but this site is not otherwise known: Carlson 2016.

27 The Syriac term 'words' (*peṯgāmē* ܦܬ̈ܓܡܐ) here is different from 'words' (*mellē* ܡ̈ܠܐ) earlier in this quote. The text under examination seems too limited to determine whether the scribe wishes to make a distinction between them here. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing attention to this potential ambiguity.

28 The term 'prophet' (ܦܣܘܩܐ) was used as a term for sections of texts in the sixth century. See Baumstark 1922, 110, n. 5; Brockelmann 1928, 411; Becker (tr.) 2008, 59, n. 162.

29 Barlaha, *Letter to Symeon*, abbot of the monastery of Beth Licinius (Guidi 1886, 549, ll. 4–9). The beginning of the manuscript in which the correspondence between Barlaha and Symeon appears contains three distinct, but incomplete texts related to the interpretation of the Psalms. This has led to confusion regarding the authorship of these texts: Joseph Simonius Assemani 1719–1728, vol. 1, 612; Joseph Simonius Assemani 1719–1728, vol. 2, 83; Stephen Evodius Assemani and Joseph Simonius Assemani 1758, vol. 2, 213–214; Baumstark 1922, 164. For a resolution of this problem, see Guidi 1886, 547–554.

ܗܘܐ ܕܝܢ ܡܘܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܠܚܘܒܟ. ܕܒܚܕ ܡܢ ܝ ܫܚܐ ܕܗܢ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܗܟܢܐ ܗܘ: ܐܫܟܚܬ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܠܥܠ ܡܢܗ. ܣܟܘܠܝܘܢ ܕܛܘܒܢܐ ܕܐܬܐܢܐܣܝܘܣ.

> Now I am informing Your Love that in one of the copies [ṣḥāḥē ܫܚܐ ‏ܝ] of this same book I have found written above [the text]: 'Scholion of the blessed Athanasius'.[30]

The one manuscript witness to Symeon's letter ends here, cutting the text off abruptly. But even Symeon's short statement highlights two aspects of his translation activities. First, he consulted other manuscripts that contained the same work sent to him by Barlaha. Copies of the same Greek work may have been present in his own monastery, or perhaps he like Rufinus had to search for these copies himself. Second, Symeon attended to paratextual materials in the Greek manuscripts of this work, drawing Barlaha's attention to what seems to be a title or a running title for the work. The correspondence of Barlaha and Symeon thus offers precious details about the book culture surrounding translations and the production of translations using multiple manuscripts.

Another epistolary exchange offers a complementary perspective on the use of manuscripts and translation literature. Sergius of Reshʿayna (d. 536) undertook translations of theological, philosophical, and medical works, commenting in prefaces or introductory works on his aims and translation practices.[31] Among the philosophical texts he worked on is the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On the World*. His translation is prefaced with a letter to the unknown individual who commissioned him to undertake this work,[32] beginning as follows:

ܐ ܐܓܪܬܐ ܕܝܢ ܗܝ ܕܫܕܪܬ ܠܝ ܓܒܝܘܬܟ ܐܝܕܐ ܕܐܬܬܣܝܡܬ ܡܢ ܐܪܝܣܛܘܛܠܝܣ ܦܝܠܘܣܘܦܐ ܠܘܬ ܐܠܟܣܢܕܪܘܣ ܡܠܟܐ: ܥܠ ܝܕܥܬܐ ܕܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܝܬܝܗܘܢ: ܗܝ ܕܫܕܪܬ ܠܝ ܠܡܬܪܓܡܘ ܐܝܟ ܡܐ ܕܡܨܝܐ ܡܢ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܠܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܕܡܕܝܢ̈ܬܐ.[33] ܡܛܠܬܐ ܡܢ ܗܟܝܠ ܗܝ ܕܒܐܝܕܐܝܕܐ.

> As for the letter which Your Election sent me, which was composed by the philosopher Aristotle for King Alexander about the knowledge of the things that exist, which [Your Election]

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30 Symeon, abbot of the monastery of Beth Licinius, *Letter to Barlaha* (Guidi 1886, 552, ll. 6–8).
31 On Sergius and for further bibliography, see Watt 2018. For a selection of his reflections on translation, see King 2022, 189–201, 224–233. For his comments on translation technique, see McCollum 2009, 143–145.
32 While some have suggested one of Sergius's other correspondents as the addressee of this letter, nothing can be known for certain: McCollum 2016, 168.
33 De Lagarde 1858, 134, l. 16 has ܕܡܕܝ̈ܢܐ. For the sake of consistency, I have changed the punctuation from ‏.ܐ to ‏ܐ. throughout the article for consistency, including similar instances.

commanded me to transfer according to [my] ability from the Greek speech to the language of the Syrians, I have received it from where you sent it.[34]

The preface thus makes it clear that Sergius's anonymous correspondent requested a translation of the treatise *On the World* and sent him a manuscript containing the Greek text. This mirrors the type of exchange described in the correspondence between Barlaha and Symeon.

But Sergius's letter adds to this picture by considering the use of manuscripts after the completion of the translation. Sergius explains his approach to translation as follows:

ܚܣܝܐ ܐܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܠܚܘܒܟ܂ ܕܐܢ ܟܝ ܗܘ ܘܠܡܬܚܕܬܐ ܝ ܣܘܟ ܐܗܢܘܟ ܚܠܗ ܕܐ ܐܢܐ ܗܐ ܚܝ ܝ.
ܠܐ ܗܘܝܬ ܟܠܗܢܐܡ ܟܠܗ ܚܠܗ ܚܠܗܘܠܗ܂ ܐܢܐ ܟܠ ܗܘ ܗܐܡ ܕܐܟܟܬܐ ܚ ܣܘܟ ܕܐܝܗܕܐ ܚ ܠܗܠ ܣܘܟ܂ ܠܐ
ܡܢ ܗܐ ܠܚܝܠܐ ܟܠܚܠܐ ܚܕܚܠܐ܂ ܚ ܠܐ ܚܘܗܘ ܐܢܗ ܚܝܗ ܚܠ ܡܠܝ ܕܚܟܬܝ ܠܐ ܠܗܠܚܠܟ ܐܗ. ܐܠܐ ܗܘܐ
ܚܝ ܐ ܐܗ ܚܘܗܒ ܐܗܐ ܚܒ ܚܠܐ ✥

But I am asking Your Love, that if another copy [*ṣḥāḥā* ܝ ܣܘܟ] of this same letter is found in which there is something more or less, let Your Election not put the blame on our weakness, for I have taken care to keep in all fullness that which I found in the copy [*ṣḥāḥā* ܝ ܣܘܟ] sent from Your Love, not adding anything to those things that were written by the philosopher here and not subtracting from them, according to my ability.[35]

Daniel King has suggested that Sergius is defending himself here against criticisms of his translation programme, pointing out that others may tamper with his translations.[36] Be that as it may, Sergius assumes that his addressee could access another 'copy' or 'manuscript' (*ṣḥāḥā* ܝ ܣܘܟ) of the same work, presumably also in Greek, with which to compare his translation. He also assumes the potential that multiple versions of the same work or at least copies with divergent readings could be in circulation. Indeed, two notes found in Syriac manuscripts of the sixth century, which contain a translation of the Bible and the works of John Chrysos-

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34 Sergius of Reshʿayna, *Preface* to Pseudo-Aristotle, *On the World* (de Lagarde 1858, 134, ll. 14–17; King 2022, 195). McCollum 2016, 166, n. 4, notes that the Syriac text edited by Paul de Lagarde does not accurately reproduce the Syriac text in the sole surviving manuscript. I have nevertheless reproduced the Syriac text from de Lagarde here, as I do not have direct access to the Syriac manuscript nor is it printed in Adam Carter McCollum's article. It is substantially the same text as that printed in King 2022.

35 Sergius of Reshʿayna, *Preface* to Pseudo-Aristotle, *On the World* (de Lagarde 1858, 134, ll. 22–27; King 2022, 196).

36 King 2022, 196.

tom (*c*. 350–407), refer to the 'collation' (from the root *p-ḥ-m* ܦܚܡ) of manuscripts.[37] The Syriac root *p-ḥ-m*, translated here as 'collate', has a somewhat different range of meaning than the English term, stretching from a simple comparison to the more specific activity of vocalising or punctuating a manuscript.[38] Sergius assumes that readers of his translations may continue to consult other manuscripts of the same work in the original language.

A different episode draws attention to the formation of a library and demonstrates how the manuscript culture surrounding translations crossed ecclesiastical boundaries. The text in question comes from the pen of Timothy I, catholicos of the Church of the East (r. 780–823). Early in Timothy's catholicate, the caliph al-Mahdi (r. 775–785) commissioned Timothy and his fellow ecclesiastic Abu Nuḥ to produce an Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Topics*.[39] Having accomplished this task, Timothy wrote to the leader of a monastic school of the Church of the East in search of books related to Aristotle as well as other texts. He seeks out further texts, whether in Syriac or Greek, related to Aristotle:

> ܒܥܝܐ ܗܟܝܠ ܒܚܦܝܛܘܬܐ ܡܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܬܟ ܘܡܬܒܩܝܐ: ܐܢ ܐܝܬ ܗܘ ܠܗܠܝܢ ܟܬܒܐ ܗ̄ ܠܛܘܦܝܩܐ: ܐܘ ܠܗܢܐ ܐܘ ܐܣܘ̈ܦܣܛܐ: ܐܘ ܠܗܘ ܕܪܗܛܘܪܝܩܐ: ܐܘ ܠܗܘ ܕܦܘܐܝܛܝܩܐ: ܡܦܫܩܢܘܬܐ ܐܘ ܣܘܢܛܐܓܡܐ ܡܕܡ ܐܘ ܣܟܘܠܝܘܢ ܕܥܒܝܕ ܡܢ ܐܢܫ ܐܘ ܒܠܫܢܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܐܘ ܠܐ. ܘܐܢ ܐܝܬ ܢܬܒܩܐ ܡܢ ܡܢܘ ܘܠܡܢܘ ܘܐܝܟܐ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ. ܘܒܗܕܐ ܢܫܬܐܠܢ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܕܬܐ ܕܡܪܝ ܡܬܝ. ܒܪܡ ܠܐ ܒܝܬܝܪܘܬܐ ܕܐܫ݊ܬܐܠܐ ܕܐܡܬܝ ܕܐܬܪܓܫ ܢܬܛܫܐ ܩܢܝܢܐ ܘܠܐ ܢܬܓܠܐ.

> So, let Your Holiness skillfully ask and investigate whether there is for this book, the *Topics*, for the *Refutation of the Sophists*, for the *Rhetoric*, or for the *Poetics* some sort of commentary or scholia by anyone, whether in Syriac or not? If there is, investigate by whom and for whom and where it is. Questions in this matter should be made to the monastery of Mar Mattai, but the questions should not be too insistent lest, when it has been perceived, the property be hidden and not revealed.[40]

The end of this request shows Timothy's hesitancy to write directly to the monastery of Mar Mattai, located some 38 km north of modern-day Mosul, Iraq. Since this monastery belonged to the anti-Chalcedonian Syriac tradition, it may have been difficult for the leader of the rival Church of the East to contact it directly.[41]

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37 London, British Library, Add. 14431, fol. 157ʳ (as recorded in William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 14); London, British Library, Add. 12160, fol. 107ʳᵇ (see Appendix 2, Text 7 below).

38 See Jesse Payne Smith 1903, 441. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for encouraging precision on this point.

39 On the context of this letter, see Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 2, l–li.

40 Timothy I, *Letter* 43.5–6 (Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 1, 66, l. 12–67, l. 23; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 2, 49–50; Brock 1999, 236 [§3]).

41 Brock 1999, 242.

Timothy made requests to seek books from the same monastic library on several occasions in his letters.[42]

Indeed, the confessional identity of the owners of manuscripts seemed to have played little role in his attempt to build up his Greek philosophical library. The works of authors who were not tied to particular confessions formed points of connection between competing traditions, and their circulation across ecclesiastical divides was not as problematic as that of Christian authors who had to take a side in theological debates. Directly after the request to search the library of the monastery of Mar Mattai, Timothy writes,

ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܐܝܘܒ ܗܘ ܟܠܩܝܕܘܢܝܐ. ܕܚܙܐ ܡܕܡ ܘܚܘܪ ܡܢ ܡܘܬܒܐ ܕܛܘܦܝܩܐ. ܥܕܟܝܠ ܠܡ ܒܝܪ ܚܙܐ ܡܕܡ. ܐܠܐ ܢܬܒܛܠ
ܗܟܝܠ ܠܢܟܦܘܬܟ ܕܥܠ ܡܘܬܒܐ ܐܘ ܦܘܫܩܐ ܕܗܠܝܢ ܟܬܒܐ.

> Job the Chalcedonian told me that he has seen a small amount of scholia on the *Topics*, but apparently [only] some remnants of it. But let Your Chastity carefully investigate about scholia or a commentary on these books.[43]

Here a third confessional identity comes into view. Timothy evidently had contact with a certain Job who came from the Chalcedonian community.[44] Their common interest in Aristotle's *Topics* helped bridge the different viewpoints of their communities in this situation.

The letter continues with a request for a manuscript containing the translation of Gregory of Nazianzus's *Orations*. Timothy had evidently already accessed the first volume of the *Orations* translated by the Syriac Orthodox ecclesiastical figure Paul of Edessa (early seventh century) and revised by Athanasius II of Balad (d. 687). But he still needed the second volume to complete his library:

ܥܠ ܠܝ ܩܢܘܡܐ ܕܐܝܬܘ ܐܚܘ ܕܝܠܝ ܒܚܘܒܐ ܕܒܝ̈ܚܬܐ. ܡܪܚܡ ܐܢܐ ܚܢܢ ܠܝ ܐܝܬ ܠܝ. ܡܕܘܚܬܐ ܠܝ ܕܬܚܫܘܒ ܐ ܢ ܕܚܦܛܬܐ ܐ ܡ ܡܗܘ
ܐܢ ܘܐܘ ܚܦܛܬܐ ܓ ܕܝܠܝ ܘܚܝܬܐ ܡܪܚܡ ܐ ܢ ܕܝܪܝ ܡܪܚܡ ܠܡ ܡܪܚܡܐ ܚܠܦܐ ܘܠܡ ܐܠܚܐ ܓܫܢܝܢ ܚܫܘܪܘܣ
ܘܦܠܘܐ ܗܘ. ܘܕܗܘܢ ܚܫܘܪܐ ܡܢ ܡܢܐ ܠܗܡܝܪܐ. ܘܡܘܣ ܗܝ. ܦܠܐ ܚܫܘܒ ܚܫܘܪܘܣ ܐܠܦܐ.ܐܝ ܘ ܩܝ ܗܘ ܕ ܝܘ ܝܦܟܬܐ
ܘܗܕ ܐܝܬܘ̈ܗܝ.

42 As noted by Brock 1999, 242. See Timothy I, *Letter* 16.12 (Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2021, vol. 1, 85, l. 5; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2021, vol. 2, 68); 33.5 (Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2016, vol. 1, 11, l. 12–12, l. 2; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2016, vol. 2, 9); 39.50–52 (Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2016, vol. 1, 183, ll. 5–11; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2016, vol. 2, 159).

43 Timothy I, *Letter* 43.7 (Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 1, 67, ll. 23–27; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 2, 50; Brock 1999, 236 [§4]).

44 Despite various proposals, the identity of the Job mentioned here remains unclear: Berti 2009, 187–189, n. 566; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 2, 50, n. 229.

> Send us the latter volume of Athanasius so that we can copy it, for we have the first one. I think the translation is by Paul, for on the title of the same book the following is inscribed: 'The first volume of the holy and God-clothed Gregory the Theologian, which Abba Mar Paul translated from Greek to Syriac on the island of Cyprus.' The revision[45] is by Athanasius, according to what it says.[46]

The catholicos Timothy I went to great lengths to form a library of both early Christian and philosophical works translated from Greek. In this way, the letter is reminiscent of the manuscript hunting of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥaq explored in the introduction. But it also serves as a helpful counter-example to the focus of the following two sections on a single ecclesiastical tradition. When works common to several traditions – such as Gregory of Nazianzus's *Orations* – underwent translation into Syriac, the ecclesial background of the translator does not seem to have been important. Such translations became the common heritage of Syriac Christian communities across ecclesiastical divisions.

This brief survey has highlighted the use and circulation of manuscripts in the production of translations as evidenced by Syriac textual sources from Late Antiquity. First, translators not only made use of the manuscripts they received but also sought out additional witnesses to a text – therefore, the production of a translation could involve the consultation of several manuscripts. Second, the translation of a work might not deter readers from going back to the original text or comparing copies of its translation. Indeed, readers could actively seek out other copies of the same work in order to check the translation. Third, Syriac communities throughout Late Antiquity sought to form libraries which housed translations of Greek works alongside literature composed in Syriac. The translations of works of common interest that did not contain material objectionable to one theological confession could form a bridge between competing ecclesiastical communities.

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45 The term 'revision' (*turrāṣā* ܬܘܪܨܐ) also has the sense of 'emended' or 'corrected version'. See Jesse Payne Smith 1903, 609. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing attention to the broader range of meaning of this word.

46 Timothy I, *Letter* 43.8 (Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 1, 67, ll. 27–35; Heimgartner (ed. and tr.) 2012, vol. 2, 50–51; Brock 1999, 237 [§5]).

3 Imperial opposition to anti-Chalcedonians and the circulation of Greek manuscripts

The short anecdotes in the previous section exhibited general trends in Syriac manuscript culture related to the production of translations. This and the following section turn to specific case studies that shed light on trends in the manuscript culture of the anti-Chalcedonian or Miaphysite Syriac community. The first episode comes from an extensive Syriac historiographical work known as the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene (*fl. c.* 568/569). The composition of this work and an epistolary exchange found within it relate crucial information about the movement of manuscripts in anti-Chalcedonian circles.

The *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Zacharias forms a compilation of historiographical and other texts shaped loosely into the form of a universal history consisting of twelve books.[47] The first two books (Books 1–2) consist of eclectic materials arranged roughly in chronological order up to the mid fifth century. The remaining ten books (Books 3–12) narrate the history of the reigns of the Roman emperors from Marcian (r. 450–457) through the early years of Justin II (r. 565–578), drawing primarily on the *Ecclesiastical History* of Zacharias of Mytilene (*c.* 465–after 536) for the period up to 491 (Books 3–6) and two otherwise unknown sources for the reigns of Anastasius I (r. 491–518), Justin I (r. 518–527), and Justinian I (r. 527–565) (Books 7–12).[48] Pseudo-Zacharias himself describes his plan to cover history up to the year 568/569.[49] The use of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Zacharias of Mytilene betrays the *Chronicle*'s Miaphysite perspective: Zacharias was an anti-Chalcedonian leader who studied with and became a major supporter of Severus of Antioch (d. 538), writing a favourable life of the bishop shortly after his death.[50] The prominent role of the *Ecclesiastical History* as a source for the *Chronicle* must have led to the false attribution of the *Chronicle* to Zacharias, hence the name assigned to the anonymous compiler.

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47 On the genre of the work, see Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 33–37. For an edition and full Latin translation, see Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vols 1–2 [edition]; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vols 3–4 [translation]). The German and two English translations only include partial translations of Books 1–2: Ahrens and Krüger (tr.) 1899; Hamilton and Brooks (tr.) 1899; Greatrex (ed.) 2011.

48 On the sources, see Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 2, 39–57; Debié 2015, 532.

49 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.1 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 6, ll. 13–17; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 4; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 79 [§1.1k]).

50 Zacharias of Mytilene, *Life of Severus of Antioch* (Kugener (ed. and tr.) 1907, 7–115; Brock and Fitzgerald (tr.) 2013, 33–100). On Zacharias and his works, see Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 3–31.

Pseudo-Zacharias himself seems to have come out of a monastic milieu. He refers to the one who encouraged his work on the *Chronicle* as 'our holy father' (ܐܒܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ) in one place and 'our brother' (ܐܚܘܢ) in another,[51] stating that he did it 'for the instruction of the brotherhood, the delight of the lovers of learning, and the edification of the faithful' (ܠܝܘܠܦܢܐ ܕܐܚܘܬܐ ܘܠܒܘܣܡܐ ܕܪܚܡܝ ܝܘܠܦܢܐ. ܘܠܒܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܗܝܡܢܐ).[52] He may well have been a monk in a monastery in Amida (modern-day Diyarbakır, Türkiye) based on shared materials with the contemporaneous Syriac historiographer John of Ephesus (*c.* 507–589) and his discussion of the library in Amida, which is explored below.[53]

The growing imperial opposition to the Miaphysite movement in the early sixth century shaped the composition of this work. Anti-Chalcedonian parties enjoyed relative stability during the reign of Anastasius I, exemplified by the tenure of the anti-Chalcedonian Severus (d. 538) as patriarch of Antioch from 512 to 518. This changed when Justin I rose to the throne and initiated various measures to undermine the anti-Chalcedonian movement,[54] which included deposing bishops such as Severus who fled to Egypt.[55] The *Chronicle* lists the bishops expelled from their thrones[56] and the anti-Chalcedonian monasteries forced to relocate in the wake of persecutions.[57]

The forced exile of clerics and the relocation of monastic communities intersect the compositional history of the *Chronicle*. Pseudo-Zacharias informs us that many bishops forced into exile took refuge in Alexandria, including Nonnus who had a short tenure as bishop of Amida after his appointment in 519.[58] Nonnus was

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51 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.7; 2.0 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 56, l. 17 and 104, l. 7; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 40, 72; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 49, 82 [§§1.7 and 2.0b]).

52 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 2.0 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 104, ll. 4–5; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 72; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 82 [§2.0b]).

53 On Pseudo-Zacharias, see Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 32–33. A recent article suggests that Pseudo-Zacharias was a doctor who became a monk later in life: Prostko-Prostyński 2018. On Amida as a centre for the composition of Syriac historiographies, see Debié 2015, 156–165.

54 The change in policy is depicted as abrupt and as emerging from the populace (see Forness 2020), but it was complex and had many factors: Vasiliev 1950, 132–160; Grillmeier 1987, 318–322; Anastos 1985, 128–134; Greatrex 2007, 99–105; Menze 2008, 22–30.

55 On Severus's flight, see Brock 2017.

56 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 78, ll. 5–17; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 53; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 298–300 [§§8.5a–b]).

57 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 80, l. 11–81, l. 7; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 55; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 303–305 [§8.5c]).

58 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 78, l. 21–79, l. 9; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 53–54; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 300–301 [§8.5b]). On Nonnus, see Honigmann 1951, 100.

succeeded by Mara who belonged to the nobility of Amida, being the son of the governor, and had been a 'steward' (*rabbaytā* ܪܒܰܝܬܐ) of the church.[59] The *Chronicle* highlights Mara's Greek learning through his studies at the monastery of Thomas in Seleucia Pieria which around 530 'moved out of zealous faith and was rebuilt, resettling in Qenneshre on the Euphrates River' (ܗܝ, ܕܕܝܪܐ ܕܡܘܣܛܐ ܕܒܣܠܘܩܝܐ, ܕܐܬܬܥܝܪ ܗܘܐ ܒܛܢܢܐ ܕܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܘܐܬܒܢܝ ܥܠ ܢܗܪ ܦܪܬ).[60] As noted above, the monastery of Qenneshre became one of the leading centres for the production of Syriac translations of Greek works, and here we must imagine that the library brought from Seleucia Pieria played no small part in its access to manuscripts for translation.[61] The *Chronicle* emphasises that Mara himself acquired a wide range of books:

> ܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܩܠܝܠ ܙܒܢܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܒܟܘܪܣܝܗ. ܐܫܬܕܝ ܠܦܛܪܐ, ܘܡܢ ܦܛܪܐ ܗܘܐ ܥܕܡܐ ܐܠܟܣܢܕܪܝܐ. ܘܗܘܐ ܬܡܢ ܟܡܐ ܙܒܢ ܘܐܩܢܝ ܬܡܢ ܒܝܬ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܘܐ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܣܓܝܐܐ ܘܬܗܝܪܐ. [...] ܗܠܝܢ ܐܬܩܪܒܘ ܠܓܙܐ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܕܐܡܝܕ ܒܬܪ ܥܘܢܕܢܗ ܕܗܢܐ ܓܒܪܐ.

> After he remained in his see for a short period of time, he was banished to Petra and from Petra to Alexandria. He was there for some time and formed there a library of many wonderful books. [...] They were transferred to the treasury of the church of Amida after this man's death.[62]

Based on this passage and the content of the *Chronicle*, prior scholarship has concluded that Mara's library in Amida granted the chronicler access to many sources used in compiling the *Chronicle*.[63] Pseudo-Zacharias's personal knowledge of the library helps link him to Amida. For our purposes, this passage demon-

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59 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 79, l. 13; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 54; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 301 [§8.5b]). On Mara, see Honigmann 1951, 101. Other accounts of Mara's exile and return to Amida can be found in John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 13 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1923–1925, vol. 1, 188, l. 2–197, l. 2 [*passim*]), *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot (ed. and tr.) 1927–1949, vol. 2, 30, l. 21–32, l. 16; Hespel (tr.) 1989, 21–23; Harrak (tr.) 1999, 59–60), Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* (Chabot (ed. and tr.) 1889–1910, vol. 4, 268, col. 1, ll. 8–14; Chabot (ed. and tr.) 1889–1910, vol. 2, 174). A letter congratulating him on his accession to the episcopacy also survives: Jacob of Serugh, *Letter* 26 (Olinder (ed.) 1937, 223, l. 1–224, l. 31; Albert (tr.) 2004, 286–288).

60 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 79, ll. 16–18; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 54; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 301 [§8.5b]). The educational curriculum of the monastery of Thomas can be gleaned from a sixth-century source on John bar Aphthonia who guided the monastery through its move to Qenneshre: *History of John bar Aphthonia* 4–6 (Nau 1902, 115, l. 13–118, l. 31 and 124–130; on this text, see Watt 1999).

61 On the monastery in Qenneshre, see Tannous 2018, 169–176.

62 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 79, ll. 22–25, 27–28; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 54; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 302 [§8.5b]).

63 Allen 1980, 472; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 38, n. 17, with further bibliography.

strates the flow of Greek books from Alexandria to the anti-Chalcedonian communities in Upper Mesopotamia.[64]

The movement of books occasioned by imperial opposition to the anti-Chalcedonian movement also surfaces in relation to the translation of the story of *Joseph and Aseneth*. The first book of the *Chronicle* begins with a general plan for the work[65] and then features two epistolary exchanges: one on the chronology of the Bible;[66] the other regarding the translation of *Joseph and Aseneth*,[67] which forms a chapter by itself.[68] The unnamed author of the request for a Syriac translation of *Joseph and Aseneth* may well be Pseudo-Zacharias himself.[69] This request was sent to Moses of Aggel (sixth century) who is also known to have translated Cyril of Alexandria's *Glaphyra*.[70] The letter written to Moses highlights again the movement of Greek manuscripts in the early Syriac movement this time in relation to a translation:

> ܒܒܝܬ ܓܦܐ ܓܝܪ ܕ[ܐܦ]ܝ̈ ܠܕܘܟܪܢܐ ܐ̈ܦܣܩܦܐ ܗܘܘ ܡܬܩܪܝܢ. ܝܚܘܣܦܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܒܪܘܐ ܡܢ ܪܝܫ ܥܝܢܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ. ܠܘܬ
> ܛܠܝܐ ܚܕ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܟܚܝܡܐ. ܢܨܚܡ ܕܒܗܘܢ ܕܚܕܬܐ. ܘܐܫܟܚ ܠܝ ܚܕܐ ܡ ܡܨܚܦܐ ܕܠܥܘܒܕܐ ܡܢ ܝܘܢܝܐ, ܡܛܠܗܢܐ ܠܝ. ܚܦܩܐ ܕܘ
> ܐܒܪܐ ܕܚܦܩܐ ܡܢ. ܘܐܬܟܚܝ ܠܝ. ܘܡܛܠ ܗܕܐ ܚܦܩ ܚܫܒܬ ܕܚܕܬ [ܕܠܘܬ] ܝܚܘܣܦܐ. ܗܢܐ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܘܠܡܐ ܢܨܚܝ̈ܦܐ ܕܥܘܒܕ ܐ̈ܦܣܩܦܐ ܡܢ.
> ܠܐ ܐܫܬܟܚܬ. ܡܛܠܠ ܕܚܦܩ ܡܢܗܘܢ, ܠܝ ܢܨܚ ܗܕܐ. ܡܢ ܗܝܕܐ ܗܕܐ ܕܚܕ ܐܢ̈ܬ ܢܨܚܦ ܠܥܘܒܕܐ, ܠܝ ܠܟܬܒܐ ܝܘܢܝܐ.
> ܟܥܘܒܕܐܝܬ ܕܢܝܚܐ ܠܡܐ ܚܠܝܡ. ܡܨܚܝ̈ ܗܕ ܡܢ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܕ̈ ܟܢܝ̈ ܠܘܒܕܘ.

> For in the library of the bishops, who are worthy of memory, who were called the family of
> the house of Beroea[71] from the city of Rēšʿaynā, [in the possession of] a certain boy, their

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64 Greatrex (ed.) 2011, p. 302, n. 92, points to one parallel case. A certain Thomas from Armenia acquired a large library of books while in Alexandria and brought them back on his return. See John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1923–1925, vol. 1, 293, ll. 5–8).

65 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.1 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 2, l. 18–6, l. 27; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 1–4; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 76–79.

66 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.2–3 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 7, l. 1–17, l. 17; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 4–12).

67 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.4–5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 17, l. 18–21, l. 12; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 12–15).

68 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.6 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 21, l. 13–55, l. 29; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 15–39). For a summary of the various proposals for the rationale behind the inclusion of *Joseph and Aseneth* in the *Chronicle*, see Jonathan Wright 2018, vol. 1, 69.

69 Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 46. But Debié 2015, 163, 351, suggests that the author may be either Pseudo-Zacharias or the Paphnutius who wrote a letter asking Moses to translate Cyril of Alexandria's *Glaphyra*.

70 On Moses, see Baumstark 1922, 160–161; Brock 2011.

71 Ahrens and Krüger (tr.) 1899, 17*; Brooks (tr.) 1918, xvii; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 12, n. 8; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 46 and 75, n. 1; and Debié 2015, 351, show a certain hesitancy in trans-

kinsman, whose name was Marʿabda, who was dear to me in Our Lord and to whom I was bound since my youth in study, I found a small, very old book that was called 'Aseneth',[72] written in the Greek language. I only read the *historia* of it, but I could not understand the *theoria*. Because this language is difficult and foreign to me, I have for this reason sent it to Your Love so that you can translate it for me into the Syriac language, so that you can help me understand everything in the *historia* and something from its *theoria*.[73]

The letter writer asks for Moses to translate this work because he cannot understand the *theoria* of the text. The precise meaning of the term *theoria* in this context has proven elusive but must refer to a higher meaning of the text.[74]

More important for our discussion is the allusion to a library associated with a family from Beroea (that is, Aleppo) which at the time had been relocated eastward to Rēšʿaynā (modern-day Ra's al-ʿAyn, Syria and Ceylanpınar, Türkiye). Ernest Walter Brooks makes the following suggestion regarding the library:

we may perhaps conjecture that on the expulsion of the Monophysites in 519 the bishop of [Beroea] (Antoninus)[75] took his books or those of his see with him, and that in the writer's time they were in the possession of a young kinsman of his at [Reshʿayna].[76]

The *Chronicle* specifies that Antoninus was one of the bishops sent into exile early in Justin I's reign.[77] He corresponded with the Syriac author Jacob of Serugh (d. 520/521)[78] as well as Severus before his exile under Justin I.[79] A letter by Severus of Antioch written to a group of bishops confirms that Antoninus spent part of his

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lating ܒܪܘܐܐ as 'Beroea'. This seems unwarranted, as this is a widely attested spelling of this city: Robert Payne Smith 1879, vol. 1, col. 605.

72 The Syriac has ܐܣܢܝܬ, where the *nun* has been corrupted into a *yuḏ*.

73 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 1.4 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 1, 18, ll. 10–21; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 3, 12–13).

74 See the recent discussion in Jonathan Wright 2018, vol. 1, 66–69.

75 On Antoninus, see Honigmann 1951, 25–27, which pointed me to most of the sources on Antoninus.

76 Brooks (tr.) 1918, xvii. I have modified the spelling of the cities to match that elsewhere in the article.

77 Pseudo-Zacharias of Mytilene, *Chronicle* 8.5 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 78, l. 13; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 53; Greatrex (ed.) 2011, 299 [§8.5b]).

78 Jacob of Serugh, *Letters* 4 (Olinder (ed.) 1937, 21, l. 15–24, l. 17; Albert (tr.) 2004, 40–42).

79 Severus of Antioch, *Letters* 29 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1920, vol. 1, 88, l. 6–90, l. 2); *Select Letters* 1.14–16 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1902–1904, vol. 1.1, 63, l. 4–66, l. 8; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1902–1904, vol. 1.1, 66, l. 9–67, l. 22; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1902–1904, vol. 1.1, 68, l. 1–70, l. 14; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1902–1904, vol. 2.1, 57–59, 60–61, 61–63).

exile in Alexandria.[80] He helped draw up a list of canons in 535 by several anti-Chalcedonian bishops in exile,[81] and Pope Vigilius (r. 537–555) mentions him in a letter dating to 540.[82] According to a later Syriac chronicle, Antoninus spent his exile in different places and ended up dying in Constantinople.[83]

How Antoninus's books ended up in Reshʿayna is difficult to reconstruct. There does not appear to be any evidence that Antoninus returned to Aleppo. He may have transferred his library before he went into exile, or he may have done so after going into exile in Egypt and embarking on further travels. While the narrative remains difficult to reconstruct, the example of Antoninus taken together with that of Mara suggest that the forced exile of anti-Chalcedonian bishops led to the relocation of books and libraries. This development affected the sources available to Syriac communities later in the sixth century when authors like Pseudo-Zacharias were creating new historiographies for the Miaphysite movement.

The *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Zacharias adds significantly to the picture of the role of manuscripts in the production and circulation of translations. While complementing broader themes, such as the exchange of manuscripts between patrons and translators, it offers contextual details about the libraries in which the original works circulated and the movement of manuscripts across regions. Alexandria, in particular, also emerges as an important repository of Greek codices brought to Syria and Upper Mesopotamia and used by Syriac translators. The deposition of bishops and imperial opposition to anti-Chalcedonians at the beginning of Justin I's reign had consequences for book culture and thereby the availability of manuscripts. We will encounter this final theme in the next section as we turn from literary to material sources.

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80 Severus of Antioch, *Select Letters* 1.53 (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1902–1904, vol. 1.1, 167, l. 8–180, l. 2; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1902–1904, vol. 2.1, 151–162).

81 *Ecclesiastical Canons of the Holy Fathers in the Time of the Persecution* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syriaque 62, fol. 223ʳ, l. 27; Nau 1909, 113 [translation]). I am not aware of any Syriac edition of this work. In addition to the Parisian manuscript, I have consulted the catalogue entry on London, British Library, Add. 12155, fols 225ʳ–226ʳ (William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 950). On the dating of the canons, see Nau 1909, 8; Honigmann 1951, 36–37. Antoninus also co-authored a letter with one of the signatories of the canons: Constantine of Laodicea and Antoninus of Aleppo, *Letter to Thomas of Germanica* (London, British Library, Add. 14532, fol. 145ʳ⁻ᵛ), as noted in William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 962; Menze 2008, 157. I have not been able to examine this text.

82 *Collectio Avellana* 92.9 (Günther (ed.) 1895–1898, vol. 1, 349, ll. 18–19).

83 *Chronicle of 846* (Brooks (ed.) 1904, vol. 1, 226, ll. 7–11; Brooks (ed.) 1904, vol. 2, 172).

4 Internal Miaphysite theological debates and the translation of Greek commentaries

The selection of books that were translated from Greek to Syriac in the sixth century was not merely a matter of chance. Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 523), for example, defended his decision to commission a new translation of the Bible by pointing to the imprecision and attendant inadequacy of the common Peshitta translation for the debates of his day.[84] Further, the close parallels between the selection of philosophical works translated into Armenian and Syriac reflect the fact that the neo-Platonic curriculum of Alexandria circulated in two Eastern Christian traditions outside of Egypt.[85] This section will focus on the connection between theological controversies internal to the Miaphysite movement and the production and use of translations. Translations proved especially necessary for these internal debates, as authors on different sides of the debate wrote in both Greek and Syriac. Below, I will discuss this phenomenon with reference to a translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on First Corinthians* produced in Callinicum (modern-day al-Raqqa, Syria). This commentary appears in a manuscript dating to 584 whose final folios contain no fewer than seven short texts that shed light on the context of its production. An examination and contextualisation of the end matter in this manuscript demonstrate the nexus of theological debates, the translation of Greek literature, and the circulation of manuscripts.

The manuscript under question survives almost entirely intact and contains the third volume of the Syriac translation of Chrysostom's *Commentary on First Corinthians*, consisting of *Homilies* 34 to 44.[86] This manuscript, Add. 12160 (fols 1–108),[87] forms the first codicological unit of a complex manuscript. For the purposes of this study, I will focus only on this first codicological unit and not address the manuscript to which this unit was bound at a later time. The first quire of the unit of the manuscript under consideration consists of nine folios (fols 1–9) with the entire first folio and the recto side of the second folio originally left blank. The second through tenth quires

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84 Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Commentary on the Prologue to the Gospel of John* (de Halleux (ed. and tr.) 1977, vol. 1, 53, ll. 11–17; de Halleux (ed. and tr.) 1977, vol. 2, 52–53).

85 As noted in Calzolari 2016, 54–57.

86 On the surviving evidence for the Syriac translation of the *Commentary on First Corinthians*, see Childers 1996, vol. 1, 40–42.

87 For a description of the manuscript, see William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 472–473; Hatch 1946, 84, plate xxxiii.

take the form of quinions (fols 10–99). But the final quire takes the same format as the first quire, containing nine folios (fols 100–108). The producers of the manuscript must have realised that a whole quinion was not necessary to complete the text, as the commentary only stretches to the verso side of the sixth folio in the final quire (fol. 106ᵛ). This offered a generous amount of space to add further texts, while still leaving several folio sides blank for protection. It is also important to note that six folios, forming three pairs, have been replaced in the manuscript and were written in a slightly different Estrangela hand.[88]

A connection between the Syriac translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on First Corinthians* and internal Miaphysite debates can be demonstrated based on several marginalia found in Add. 12160. A debate between Severus of Antioch and Julian of Halicarnassus (d. *c.* 527) erupted in the 520s after Severus and Julian had been forced into exile in Egypt in the wake of Justin I's opposition and deposition of anti-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical leaders.[89] Severus and Julian disagreed on the nature of Christ's body: Severus held that Christ's pre-resurrection body was corruptible (φθαρτός) while Julian held that it was incorruptible (ἄφθαρτος).[90] The followers of Julian became known as Julianists and endured for centuries in Syriac and other anti-Chalcedonian communities.[91]

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[88] William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 472 notes that six folios are written in a different, slightly later hand. These folios in fact form three pairs (fols 54–55; 64–65; and 91, 98) which represent three bifolia: folios 54 and 55 as well as 64 and 65 form the fifth and sixth folios of a quinion, while folios 91 and 98 form the second and ninth folios of a quinion. The placement of the folios in the quires as well as the fact that the text on folios 55ᵛ, 65ᵛ, and 98ᵛ does not fill the final column suggests that these folios were simply added to replace missing or damaged folios.

[89] On the Julianist debate, see Draguet 1924; Moss 2016.

[90] On the doctrinal disagreement, see especially Grillmeier 1995, 79–111.

[91] On the legacy of the debate, see Kofsky 2013; Possekel 2013; Wierzejski 2016.
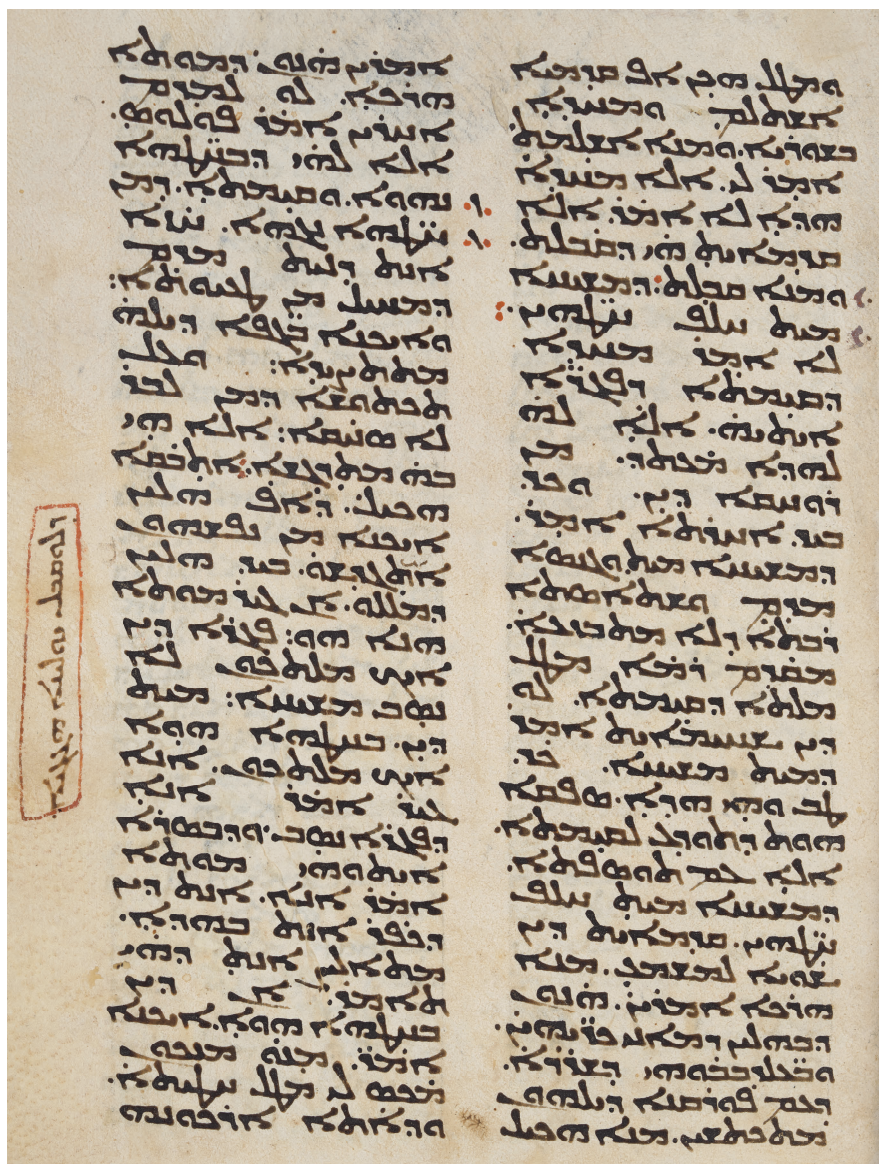
Fig. 1: Add. 12160 (fols 1–108), fol. 44ʳ. © British Library Board.

Six marginalia in Add. 12160 relate to the Julianist debate (see Fig. 1): five read 'Against Julian the Phantasiast' (ܠܘܩܒܠ ܝܘܠܝܢܐ ܗ ܦܢܛܣܛܐ; fols 44ʳ, 55ʳ, 62ᵛ, 78ᵛ, 86ᵛ); the sixth states 'On the body that it is mortal' (ܥܠ ܦܓܪܐ ܕܡܝܘܬܐ ܗܘ; fol. 45ʳ). Five

are written in the same Estrangela hand (fols 44ʳ, 45ʳ, 62ᵛ, 78ᵛ, 86ᵛ). The sixth appears on one of the folios replaced in the original manuscript (fol. 55ʳ; see Fig. 2). The scribe of this note has a slightly different Estrangela hand and may well have copied the note from a damaged folio.[92] The fact that all the notes are written in Estrangela and were probably added before the replacement of folios which themselves are written in an Estrangela hand suggests that the notes were likely added contemporaneously with or shortly after the completion of the manuscript. The notes and the text of the commentary next to which they appear are catalogued in Appendix 1.
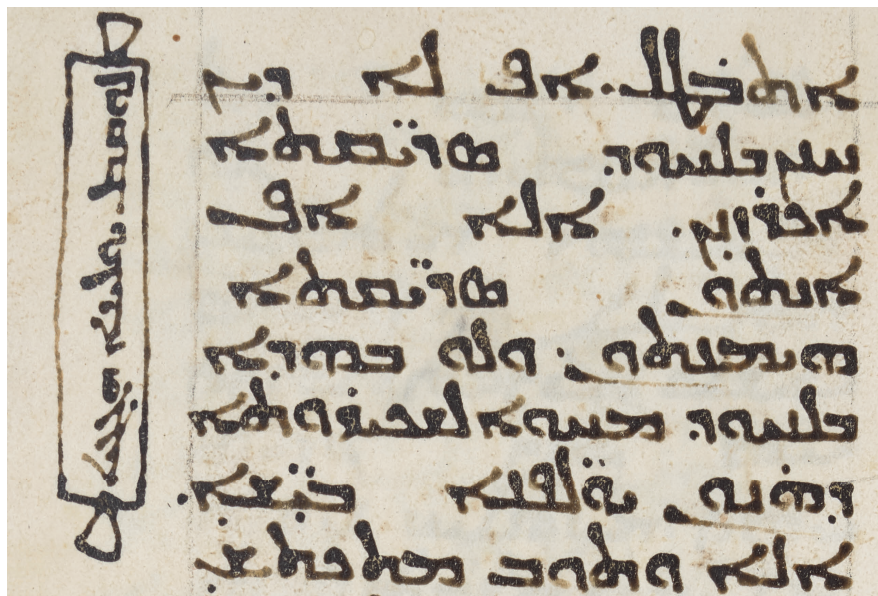
Fig. 2: Add. 12160 (fols 1–108), fol. 55ʳ. © British Library Board.

The polemical term 'Phantasiast' (*haggāḡāyā* ܗܓܓܝܐ = φαντασιαστής) found in five of the marginalia refers to the belief that Christ's body was merely an appearance. The term was used in the polemic against the followers of Mani (216–*c.* 276) and Eutyches (d. *c.* 456), and Severus applied it to Julian during their debate.[93] The

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92 On the hand, see especially the form of ܠܩܘܒܠ and the form of *hē* whose loop is closed in the note. The decoration here also differs from that on the other folios.
93 Moss 2016, 24.

marginalia identify places in the commentary that could be used as proof texts against the Julianist understanding of the body. To use a concept recently developed by Yonatan Moss, these marginalia are 'extrovertive' in nature, that is, they 'point outwards to a broader context, often more connected to the world of the scholiast and his imagined reader than to the world of the author upon whose work the scholia were written'.[94] John Chrysostom could not have commented on the Julianist debate which began some one hundred years after his death. But the scribe marked these six passages from Chrysostom's works as relevant for the current debates.[95] For example, the text in the commentary next to the first marginal note reads (fol. 44ʳᵇ; see Fig. 1):

ܐܪ ܠܓܝܢ ܗܘܘܐ ܗܘܘܐ ܗܘ ܗܘ: ܘܟܪܝܐ ܢܝ ܐܪܢ ܘܠܚܕܗ ܠܟ ܢܒܬ ܚܡܣܟ: ܚܒܕ ܢܝ. ܟܠܓܘܠܐ ܟܘܢ ܟܘܢ ܘܟܠܝܐ ܘܠܚܘܬ.
ܐܪ ܐܪ ܝܢ ܐܬܪ ܐܬܪ ܟܐܗܢ ܘܠܒܪܝܘܐ ܐܪ ܢܒܬ ܐܬܪ ܘܐܪ ܐܢܝ ܘܐܕܬ ܟܐܗܢ ܐܪܡ.

> For if this is death and Christ did not take a body according to what you are saying, he died in sin according to what you are saying. For I say that he took a body, and I say that the death was of the flesh.[96]

This quotation comes from a passage in the homily that polemicises against 'those who are sick with Mani's [teachings]' (ܗܢܘܢ ܕܒܣܘܠܗ ܕܡܐܢܝ ܚܝܘܗܝ), thus reinforcing the characterisation of Julianists as heretics like the followers of Mani.[97] Severus himself cited the *Commentary on First Corinthians* regularly in his debates with Julian,[98] and the commentary is also cited in a later anti-Julianist florilegium.[99] The present manuscript demonstrates how some Miaphysite communities continued to use this work in their ongoing debates with Julianists.[100]

The scribe and owners of Add. 12160 took advantage of the space for additional materials found at the end of the manuscript. The opening on which the commentary ends in the manuscript contains seven different texts (fols 106ᵛ–107ʳ; see

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94 Moss 2023, 80.

95 On the use of Chrysostom in debates of the sixth century, see Moss 2023, 96 for further bibliography.

96 John Chrysostom, *Commentary on First Corinthians (Syriac Translation)* 38 (Add. 12160 [fols 1–108], fol. 44ʳᵇ, ll. 17–26; Greek: Field (ed.) 1845–1862, vol. 2, 474, ll. 24–27).

97 John Chrysostom, *Commentary on First Corinthians (Syriac Translation)* 38 (Add. 12160 [fols 1–108], fol. 44ʳᵃ, ll. 28–29; Greek: Field (ed.) 1845–1862, vol. 2, 474, l. 17).

98 See the indices to the sources for the debate between Severus and Julian: Hespel (ed. and tr.) 1964, vol. 2, 241; Hespel (ed. and tr.) 1969, vol. 2, 305.

99 The florilegium has now been edited and contains seven citations from Chrysostom's *Commentary on First Corinthians*: Venturini (ed.) 2023, AJU 8.2–3, 32.1, 39.3, 54.3, 64.4, 102.1.

100 For a study examining annotations found in a sixth-century Chrysostom manuscript and their relation to florilegia, see Moss 2023.

Figs 3–4): (1) a subscription to the text; (2) a subscription to the volume; (3) a doxology; (4) a request for supplication for the scribe; (5) a commemoration of the scribe; (6) a colophon on the production of the manuscript; and (7) a warning to unscrupulous borrowers.[101]

These end materials, edited and translated in full in Appendix 2, offer a glimpse into the production of the translation and the manuscript. As Appendix 2 discusses in more detail, three different hands are discernible across these seven texts. Hand 1 matches the Estrangela hand of the main text and wrote the first three texts (Texts 1–3), Hand 2 wrote a request for prayer for the scribe of the manuscript (Text 4), and Hand 3 left behind a commemoration of the scribe and two texts related to the use of the manuscript in a library (Texts 5–7).

This end matter offers several details about the production of the translation, the copying of the manuscript, and its use in a library. While the first text forms a simple end title to the commentary (fol. 106va), the second text comprises a subscription to the volume as a whole and reads as follows (fol. 106vb):

ܫܠܡ ܠܡܟܬܒ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܬܠܬܐ ܕܝܠܗ. ܕܦܘܫܩܐ ܗܠܟ ܡܢ ܚܕܥܣܪ ܡܐܡܪܐ ܕܦܘܫܩܐ ܕܩܘܪܢܬܝܐ ܩܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܦܘܠܘܣ ܫܠܝܚܐ.

ܕܐܬܬܒܒ ܠܡܢܝܐ ܡܢ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܐܦܣܩܘܦܐ ܕܩܘܣܛܢܛܝܢܘܦܘܠܝܣ: ܐܬܦܫܩ ܗܘ ܡܢ ܠܫܢܐ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܠܐܪܡܝܐ: ܒܡܕܝܢܬ ܩܠܝܢܝܩܘܣ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ܀

Completed is the writing in this third volume of eleven homilies of the commentary on First Corinthians of the Apostle Paul which were composed by Saint John, the bishop of Constantinople. They were translated from the Greek language into Aramaic in the city of Callinicum.

The note that the translation of this work was undertaken in Callinicum forms the only information known about the location in which any of Chrysostom's commentaries were translated into Syriac.[102] The next two and a half lines of the text are erased, where perhaps further information about the translator or the date of the translation may have appeared. The remainder of the colophon asks for God's blessing for the producers of the manuscript, and the third text forms a doxology (fol. 107ra), marking the end of the materials added in the first hand.

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101 William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 472 includes the Syriac text, in full or in part, of Texts 2, 4, 6, and 7. Amiaud 1889, v–vi features the Syriac text and a French translation of Texts 4 to 7.
102 Childers 1996, vol. 1, 105, n. 2.

Fig. 3: Add. 12160 (fols 1–108), fol. 107ʳ. © British Library Board.

Fig. 4: Add. 12160 (fols 1–108), fol. 106ᵛ. © British Library Board.

The approach taken to biblical quotations in the titles of the individual homilies provides one indication of the date of the translation. Here the biblical citations do not reflect the Syriac Peshitta translation but appear to have been translated directly from the Greek commentary. Earlier translations of Chrysostom's works into Syriac, such as the *Commentary on Matthew* and the *Commentary on John* tended to insert the Syriac Peshitta text in these titles. A change to the practice, as found in the *Commentary on First Corinthians*, seems to have developed in the sixth century.[103]

The fourth text appended to Add. 12160 comprises a request for prayer for its scribe. It begins as follows (fol. 107ʳᵃ): 'Pray for Thomas, the deacon of Edessa, who wrote this volume' (ܨܠܘ ܥܠ ܝܢ ܬܐܘܡܐ ܫܡܫܐ ܐܘܪܗܝܐ ܕܟܬܒ ܠܟܘܪܣܐ ܗܢܐ). His identification with the city of Edessa links him to one of the major centres of the production of Syriac manuscripts in Late Antiquity.[104] The hand changes significantly between the first three texts and this text, marking a transition to a cursive script known from other colophons of the sixth century.[105] One may well ask whether Thomas wrote all four texts, changing his script from Estrangela to cursive when moving on to the request for prayer.

The final three texts appear to come from the owners of the manuscript after it had been deposited in a library. They have a similar cursive hand, but it differs in several regards from the hand of the fourth text, suggesting a different scribe. The fifth text (fol. 107ʳᵃ) forms a cruciform commemoration of the scribe and offers little in terms of contextual information, but the sixth text (fol. 107ʳᵃ⁻ᵇ) is a colophon that provides significant information about the production of this manuscript. It begins as follows:

ܐܬܟܬܒ ܕܝܢ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܚܪ ܐܝܕܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܟܬܒ ܘܟܢܫ ܐܫܠܡ ܗܘܐ ܗܕܐ ܗܕܐ ܗܘܐ ܟܘ ܐܝܟ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܗܘܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܐܝܬ
ܕܐܝܟ ܗܟܢ ܐܫܠܡ ܡܢ ܘܫܡ ܕܗܘܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܠܗܢܘ ܟܬܒܐ ܘܟܢܫ ܘܟܬܒ ܕܐܝܟ ܗܟܢ
ܘܢܚܘ ܐܠܗܐ. ܘܫܘ ܐܝܟ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܘܐ ܟܢܫ ܟܬܒܐ ܘܟܬܒ ܘܟܢܫ ܗܘܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܟܬܒܐ
ܘܟܬܒ ܥܠ ܟܬܒܐ.

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103 For a study of the initial citations in Chrysostom's commentary, see Childers 1996, vol. 1, 188–193 (Matthew), 208–210 (Epistles, including 1 Corinthians), 290–292 (John). Several Syriac translators of the sixth century defend their decision to translate directly from the Greek rather than modifying the quotations to match the Syriac Bible: Moses of Aggel, *Letter to Paphnutius* (Guidi 1886, 404, ll. 5–17); Symeon of the Black Mountain, *Letter to Barlaha* (Guidi 1886, 551, l. 25–552, l. 8); Anonymous, *Preface to Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Van den Eynde 1939, 73, l. 17–76, l. 5); Paul of Callinicum, *Preface to the Translation of Severus of Antioch's Anti-Julianist Writings* (Hespel (ed. and tr.) 1964, vol. 1, 2, ll. 9–16; Hespel (ed. and tr.) 1964, vol. 2, 2). This phenomenon is discussed in Fiori (ed. and tr.) 2014, vol. 2, lxxxv–lxxxvi.

104 Mango 1982, 4–5.

105 For more information on the use of a cursive hand, see the discussion in Appendix 2.

> This volume was completed in the month of Tammuz [July] on the twenty-ninth [day] in it, the year 895 [AG = 584 CE] in the holy monastery of Gubba Barraya. [The scribe] strove to write down this spiritual treasure for the reading and benefit of the whole company of the faithful: the virtuous, God-loving, and maintainer of the brotherhood in the love of his Lord Thomas, the abbot of the same monastery, with the rest of the priests, deacons, and the whole brotherhood with him.

This note thus specifies the date on which Thomas, deacon of Edessa, completed writing the manuscript and that he wrote it in a well-known monastery probably not far from Cyrrhus (modern-day Nebi Houri, Syria). The abbot of this monastery, also named Thomas, seems to have been the patron of the manuscript. This note concludes with references to monastic life and the Bible, and the seventh text follows (fol. 107rb):

ܟܠ ܕܝܢ ܕܫܐܠ ܠܗ ܠܡܩܪܝܗ ܐܘ ܠܡܦܚܡܘ ܐܘ ܠܡܟܬܒ ܘܐܚܘܕ ܠܗ ܐܘ ܦܣܩ ܡܢܗ ܡܕܡ ܢܕܥ ܕܗܘ ܡܬܒܥ ܀
ܘܡܢܗ ܝܗܒ ܦܬܓܡܐ ܩܕܡ ܟܘܪܣܝܐ ܕܚܝܠܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܘ ܕܫܒܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ ܀

> Everyone who requests to read, collate, or copy this volume and withholds it or cuts something out of it should know that he will have to give an answer before the dreadful throne of God like one who plunders a sanctuary.

The warning against unscrupulous readers seems to imply that the manuscript had already been placed in the library of Gubba Barraya.

In sum, the texts found at the end of Add. 12160 (fols 1–108) reveal a network of three places that led to the production of this manuscript. Edessa formed a major centre for manuscript production, and it is not surprising that a deacon from Edessa would be a skilled scribe who was given the task of copying this work. The production of the translation in Callinicum likewise does not prove surprising, as this city had long been a centre for translations. Indeed, a bishop of the city, Paul of Callinicum, was the translator of Severus's writings in his debate with Julian of Halicarnassus in the year 528.[106] Callinicum was also the birthplace of the Syriac Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch, Peter of Callinicum (r. 581–591). As Peter was not allowed to enter the city of Antioch, it is assumed that he resided in the monastery of Gubba Barraya.[107] The debates that took place during his tenure as patriarch may offer some hints about the production of a manuscript with the translation of the commentary at this time.

Two major debates characterised Peter's tenure as patriarch. An account of the first debate survives in a fragmentary Syriac historiographical work from the ninth

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106 King 2007; Van Rompay 2011b.
107 Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1981, 7.

century and runs as follows.[108] In 581 or 582, Peter travelled with two of his associates – Proba and John Barbur – to Alexandria to gain support from Egyptian hierarchs for the contested nature of his election as patriarch. These two associates encountered the sophist Stephen,[109] who convinced them of a neo-Chalcedonian position on speaking about the natures of Christ after the incarnation.[110] Proba was excommunicated by Damian, the patriarch of Alexandria (r. 569–605), for holding this view. John Barbur tried to convince Proba to relent, but then John himself insisted on this opinion and composed a text in favour of his newfound position. He brought this writing to a synod at Gubba Barraya around the year 585. He was excommunicated by Peter of Callinicum, and Peter is said to have written:

ܐ ܟܬܒ ܐܓܪܬܐ ܐܘ ܡܐܡܪܐ ܒܫܡ ܟܠܗ ܣܘܢܗܕܘܣ ܗܘ ܕܒܗ ܡܣܚܦ ܘܡܥܩܪ ܠܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܣܘܦܝܣܛܐ ܘܕܦܪܘܒܐ:
ܘܡܩܝܡ ܘܡܚܘܐ ܡܢ ܣܗܕܘܬܐ ܕܡܠܦܢܐ: ܕܫܘܚܠܦܐ ܕܟܝܢܐ ܗܢܘܢ ܕܡܢܗܘܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ: ܒܫܪܪܐ ܘܒܩܘܫܬܐ
ܘܡܬܢܛܪ ܐܦ ܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܚܘܫܒܢܐ ܕܚܕܝܘܬܐ: ܕܠܐ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܘܕܠܐ ܦܘܠܓܐ ܕܗܢܘܢ ܟܝܢܐ: ܘܫܕܪ ܠܟܠܗܘܢ
ܕܝܪܬܐ ܕܕܝܪ̈ܝܐ ܘܥܕܬܐ ܕܡܗܝܡܢܐ ܕܐܘܚܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ: ܗܢܘ ܕܝܢ ܒܟܠܗ ܣܘܪܝܐ ܕܬܚܝܬ ܐܝܕܗ ܀

a letter or discourse in the name of the whole synod in which he abolishes and uproots the opinion of the sophist and of Proba and establishes and demonstrates through testimonies of the teachers that the difference of the natures, from which Christ is, exists in truth and in reality and is preserved, even after the reckoning of the union, without number and without division of the same natures. He sent [it] to all the monasteries of the monks and the churches of the faithful of the jurisdiction of the East, that is, in all Syria under his control.[111]

The letter written by Peter unfortunately does not survive so that we might evaluate how he himself used 'testimonies of the teachers'.[112] But other texts that survive from the debate demonstrate two manners of argumentation: (1) using logic without citing authorities and (2) the compilation of patristic testimonies.[113] Peter may have composed works in both Greek and Syriac,[114] while Proba probably

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108 Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Ecclesiastical History* (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 219, l. 1–224, l. 17; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 151–154). On this account and the general narrative of these events, see Hainthaler 2004, 156–158; Fiori 2023, 197–203.

109 On the elusive identity of Stephen and for further bibliography, see Fiori 2023, 198, n. 33.

110 On the dogmatic position they adopted, see Hainthaler 2004, 160–170.

111 Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Ecclesiastical History* (Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 2, 222, ll. 16–24; Brooks (ed. and tr.) 1919–1924, vol. 4, 153). My translation draws on the partial translation in Hainthaler 2004, 157.

112 But see Fiori 2023, 202–203, on possible traces of Peter's use of patristic testimonies in a Syriac florilegium.

113 See here Hainthaler 2004, 163–164, 166–167.

114 A Syriac work attributed to Peter survives in an early manuscript: Ebied and Wickham 1975. Two of his Greek writings survive in Syriac translation: Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and

wrote in Greek.[115] For the Syriac ecclesiastics gathered at Gubba Barraya, having access to patristic writings meant being able to engage in the debates of the day.

The production of the commentary manuscript Add. 12160 occurred during the dispute between Peter, Proba, and John Barbur, but it is only in a subsequent debate that we gain a clear picture of how Peter himself argued. The Tritheist controversy emerged in the 550s and 560s centred around a claim that there were as many natures, substances, and godheads as hypostases in the Trinity. Damian, the patriarch of Alexandria, wrote a rebuttal of Tritheism around the year 585 and sent it to Peter of Callinicum. Both Damian and Peter opposed Tritheist teachings, but Peter found Damian's response wanting. This led to a conflict between Alexandria and Antioch that lasted until 616.[116] Peter undertook a trip to Alexandria in an unsuccessful attempt to meet with Damian, and while there he wrote an extensive treatise sometime after Easter of 588.[117] It is debated whether Peter's treatise, known today as *Against Damian*, was originally written in Greek and then translated into Syriac by the early seventh century or if it was originally composed in Syriac.[118] The treatise largely consists of citations of patristic authorities and interpretations of these works, including several quotations drawn from John Chrysostom's commentaries.[119]

Peter of Callinicum only began writing to Damian after the production of the commentary manuscript. But his writings offer insight into the manner in which anti-Chalcedonian communities argued in their internal disputes.[120] Works like Chrysostom's commentaries assumed an important role in proving the faithfulness of one's point of view to the tradition. That Peter himself drew extensively on patristic testimonies to address internal Miaphysite debates offers one potential

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tr.) 1981; Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1994–2003. Less certain is the attribution of a Syriac anaphora that survives only in much later manuscripts: Ebied and Wickham 2008.

115   Hainthaler 2004, 160.

116   On the Tritheist controversy, see Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1981, 20–33; Van Roey and Allen (eds and tr.) 1994, 122–129; Davis 2004, 108–112; Grillmeier 2013; Zachhuber 2020, 170–183. On Peter and Damian's disagreement, see Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1981, 34–43; Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1994–2003, vol. 1, xiv–xxvi.

117   Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1994–2003, vol. 1, xx.

118   Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1994–2003, vol. 1, xxxv–xxxvi. On the suggestion that it was composed in Greek, see Brock 2005, 704–705; Van Rompay 2022, 482–483, 491–492; Van Rompay 2023.

119   As evidenced in the indices to Peter's works from the controversy: Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1981, 124; Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1994–2003, vol. 1, 382; Ebied, Van Roey and Wickham (eds and tr.) 1994–2003, vol. 4, 504–505.

120   On this point related to the Julianist controversy, see Moss 2013; Moss 2016, 106–139.

use of the commentary manuscript produced in the monastery where he likely resided and hosted gatherings of ecclesiastical leaders. This is not to say that the commentary under question was translated specifically for Peter's debate with Proba and John Barbur nor for the Tritheist controversy. Rather, the types of patristic argumentation attested in these internal Miaphysite debates shed light on the reasons why patristic works underwent translation into Syriac and why manuscripts containing such translations continued to be copied. In this way, the manuscript of the *Commentary on First Corinthians* – which itself contains paratextual materials related to the Julianist controversy – forms a material witness to the translation of patristic works for the use of Syriac communities engaged in theological debates.

5 Conclusion

This paper has surveyed how theological debates intersected manuscripts and the production of Syriac translations in the sixth century. External forces – such as Justin I's measures against the anti-Chalcedonian movement – led to the relocation of several libraries. Anti-Chalcedonian bishops brought their libraries with them and acquired new ones while in exile in Alexandria. This opened up possibilities for the production of translations later in the sixth century after the codices had arrived in the centres of the Miaphysite movement in Syria. Internal Miaphysite debates – conducted in both Greek and Syriac – feature a style of argumentation that consists of stringing together patristic witnesses. This made translations of authoritative patristic authorities like John Chrysostom important for Syriac communities and must have led to the production of copies of these works.

The late antique Syriac literary and material evidence examined here offers glimpses into the historical contexts that prompted the exchange and circulation of manuscripts among Eastern Christian communities. Even as literary traditions in a great variety of languages developed in the course of Late Antiquity, translations helped ensure that there was a common basis for discussion and debate. Underlying the numerous translations of Greek works in languages such as Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Latin, Syriac, and other languages was a well-developed book culture that crossed linguistic boundaries. The anti-Chalcedonian movement sought to define itself over the course of the sixth century as hope for a reunion with the imperial church faded. This historical context led to the exchange of manuscripts across and within ecclesiastical communities to produce translations

that demonstrated their connection to the past even as they sought to carve out a path for the future.

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Appendix 1: Anti-Julianist marginalia in Add. 12160 (fols 1–108)

Six marginal notes appear next to the text of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on First Corinthians* in the manuscript Add. 12160 (fols 1–108). These notes identify sections of the text relevant for the debate over the incorruptibility of Christ's pre-resurrection body within the Julianist controversy. This appendix catalogues the marginal notes and the text related to the debate over Christ's body found in the text of the commentary. I have only included quotations from the commentary long enough to highlight key words – such as, 'body' or 'corruption' – that must have drawn attention to these passages. References to the Syriac text come from the present manuscript, while those to the Greek text refer to Field (ed.) 1845–1862, vol. 2.

Table 1: Anti-Julianist marginalia and the corresponding text from the commentary.

Fol.	Note	Commentary	References
44ʳ	ܠܘܩܒܠ ܝܘܠܝܢܐ ܗܘ ܓܠܝܙܐ	ܐܢ ܓܝܪ ܗܕܐ ܗܘ ܡܘܬܐ: ܘܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܐ ܢܣܒ ܠܗ ܦܓܪܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ: ܒܚܛܝܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܝܬ. ܐܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܕܦܓܪܐ ܢܣܒ. ܘܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܦܓܪܐ ܗܘܐ.	*Homily* 38 (1 Cor. 15:3) Syriac: fol. 44ʳᵇ, ll. 16–26 Greek: p. 474, ll. 24–27
	Against Julian the Phantasiast	For if this is death and Christ did not take a body according to what you are saying, he died in sin according to what you are saying. But I say that he took a body, and I say that the death was of the flesh.	
45ʳ	ܥܠ ܦܓܪܐ ܕܡܝܘܬܐ ܗܘ	ܗܘ ܓܝܪ ܕܐܬܩܒܪ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܦܪܘܣ ܦܓܪܐ ܗܘ.	*Homily* 38 (1 Cor. 15:4) Syriac: fol. 45ʳᵇ, ll. 2–4 Greek: p. 476, l. 4
	On the body that it is mortal	For that which was buried is by all means a body.	
55ʳ	ܠܘܩܒܠ ܝܘܠܝܢܐ ܗܘ ܓܠܝܙܐ	ܟܡܐ ܪܒ ܗܘ ܐܪܙܐ ܕܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ ܐܢ ܓܝܪ ܟܕ ܡܐܬ ܠܐ ܐܫܟܚ ܕܢܩܘܡ ܠܐ ܚܛܝܬܢ ܡܫܬܪܝܐ ܗܘܬ ܘܠܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܬܒܛܠ.	*Homily* 39 (1 Cor. 15:14) Syriac: fol. 55ʳᵃ, l. 29–55ʳᵇ, l. 1 Greek: p. 489, ll. 7–9
	Against Julian the Phantasiast	How great is the mystery of the economy! For if dying he had not been able to rise, our sin would not have been absolved nor death be abolished.	
62ᵛ	ܠܘܩܒܠ ܝܘܠܝܢܐ ܗܘ ܓܠܝܙܐ	ܠܐ ܓܝܪ ܕܢܦܫܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܐܡܪ ܗܪܟܐ. ܐܠܐ ܕܦܓܪܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܡܠܠ.	*Homily* 39 (1 Cor. 15:28) Syriac: fol. 62ᵛᵇ, l. 32–63ʳᵃ, l. 3 Greek: p. 499, ll. 20–21
	Against Julian the Phantasiast	For he is not speaking here about the soul's death but about bodily death.	
78ᵛ	ܠܘܩܒܠ ܝܘܠܝܢܐ ܗܘ ܓܠܝܙܐ	ܗܢܘܢ ܕܝܢ ܗܪܛܝܩܘ ܟܕ ܡܕܡ ܡܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܠܐ ܡܣܬܟܠܝܢ. ܩܝܡܝܢ ܘܐܡܪܝܢ. ܕܦܓܪܐ ܚܕ ܢܦܠ. ܘܐܚܪܢܐ ܩܐܡ.	*Homily* 41 (1 Cor. 15:37) Syriac: fol. 78ᵛᵃ, ll. 14–19 Greek: p. 519, ll. 16–17
	Against Julian the Phantasiast	But the heretics, not understanding any of these things, jump up and say, 'One body falls, and another rises.'	
86ᵛ	ܠܘܩܒܠ ܝܘܠܝܢܐ ܗܘ ܓܠܝܙܐ	ܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܩܝܡܬܐ ܓܝܪ ܥܓܠ ܥܠ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܝܘܠܦܢܐ ܐܥܠ܆ ܘܐܘܣܦ ܠܗ ܠܗܕܐ ܕܚܒܠܐ ܠܐ ܝܪܬ ܠܐ ܡܬܚܒܠܢܘܬܐ. ܗܢܘ ܕܝܢ ܒܝܫܘܬܐ ܠܐ ܝܪܬܐ ܫܘܒܚܐ ܘܦܘܪܓܝܐ ܕܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܚܒܠܢ.	*Homily* 42 (1 Cor. 15:50) Syriac: fol. 86ᵛᵃ, ll. 25–33 Greek: p. 529, ll. 26–29
	Against Julian the Phantasiast	After the resurrection he immediately inserted a teaching about the kingdom and added to this: 'Corruption [does] not [inherit] incorruption' [1 Cor. 15:50], that is, wickedness [does] not [inherit] glory and the enjoyment of incorruptible things.	

Appendix 2: Add. 12160 (fols 1–108), fols 106ᵛ–107ʳ

The final folios of the manuscript Add. 12160 (fols 1–108) feature seven texts which are mostly carefully marked out and distinguished from one another by ornamentation and that offer insight into its production and circulation (fols 106ᵛ–107ʳ; see Figs 3–4). William Wright included the Syriac text of most of these end materials in his catalogue description of the manuscript, but he abbreviated some, omitted others, and did not translate any of them.[121] Arthur Amiaud published the Syriac text and a French translation of Texts 4 to 7.[122] Since neither publication presents the texts in full, this Appendix includes the entire Syriac text accompanied by my English translation and brief comments. But first a few words on the palaeography of these notes are needed.

Palaeographic analysis

Hand 1: The subscription to the text, subscription to the volume, and doxology (Texts 1–3 below) all appear in rubrics and were written in the same hand as the commentary itself.

Hand 2: The request to pray for the scribe (Text 4) is written in a cursive hand that differs from that in Texts 1 to 3, as demonstrated by the forms of *ʾālap̄*, *dālaṯ*, *hē*, and *taw* in the phrase 'this volume' (ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ).

Hand 3: The forms of the *ʾālap̄*, *dālaṯ*, *hē*, and *waw* are quite similar in Text 4 (Hand 2) and Texts 5 to 7 (Hand 3). Yet the form of the medial or final *taw* where the final stroke sometimes extends below the baseline distinguishes the hand of Texts 5 to 7 from that of Text 4. This *taw* notably appears in Text 5 for which very little evidence survives. The ligature *taw-ʾālap̄* at the end of words found in Texts 6 and 7 also distinguishes this hand. Further, the left loop of *semkaṯ* in Texts 5 to 7 is always on the baseline, unlike that in Text 4.

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121 William Wright 1870–1872, vol. 2, 472 (no. 590).

122 Amiaud 1889, v–vi.

Table 2: Palaeographic comparison of the three hands on folios 106ᵛ and 107ʳ (all images in this table: © British Library Board).

	ܘܡܢ ܣܝܡܬܐ and *taw*	Initial/medial *semkaṯ*
Hand 1 (Title; fol. 2ᵛ)		
Hand 1 (Text 2; fol. 106ᵛᵇ)		
Hand 2 (Text 4; fol. 107ʳᵃ)		
Hand 3 (Text 5; fol. 107ʳᵃ)		
Hand 3 (Text 6; fol. 107ʳᵃ)		
Hand 3 (Text 7; fol. 107ʳᵇ)		

All three hands seem to be contemporaneous to the production of the manuscript. Hand 1 matches the hand of the commentary text. Hands 2 and 3 are similar, and Text 6 contains the note about the production of the manuscript in the Gubba Barraya manuscript in 584. Hands 2 and 3 match the cursive script that existed alongside the Estrangela script at an early date and is found in several sixth-century manuscripts written in Estrangela but with cursive colophons.[123] Some of these even feature a *taw* forming a ligature with the following letter as found in Texts 6 and 7 (see Table 2).[124]

Texts 1 to 3 must have been added by the scribe of the manuscript shortly after completing the commentary text. It is possible that Text 4 – a request for prayer for the scribe – was written by the same scribe of the commentary, who decided to use a cursive script for this note. Texts 5 to 7 seem to have been added by a different scribe shortly after the manuscript reached the library of Gubba Bar-

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123 Healey 2000; Briquel-Chatonnet 2001. See also the convenient summary in Briquel-Chatonnet 2019, 254–256.
124 Briquel-Chatonnet 2001, 86–87.

raya. Text 5 contains a call to remember the scribe Thomas who seems to have died after writing the manuscript, while Texts 6 and 7 already assume that the manuscript has reached the library of Gubba Barraya.

Edition and translation of the end matter on folios 106ᵛ to 107ʳ

Text 1: Subscription to the text (fol. 106ᵛ; in rubrics):

ܫܠܡ ܠܡܟܬܒ ܦܘܫܩܐ ܕܥܠ ܐܓܪܬܐ ܩܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܢܬܝܐ ܕܦܘܠܘܣ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܛܘܒܢܐ:

Completed is the writing of the commentary on the First Letter to the Corinthians of the blessed Apostle Paul.

Text 2: Subscription to the volume (fol. 106ᵛᵇ; in rubrics):

ܫܠܡ ܠܡܟܬܒ ܟܪܟܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܬܠܬܐ ܕܦܘܫܩܐ ܕܥܠ ܐܓܪܬܐ ܩܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܢܬܝܐ ܡܐܡܪ̈ܐ ܚܕܥܣܪ̈ܐ. ܕܦܘܠܘܣ ܫܠܝܚܐ. ܕܐܬܬܣܝܡܘ ܡܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܐܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ ܕܩܘܣܛܢܛܝܢܘܦܘܠܝܣ: ܐܬܦܫܩܘ ܕܝܢ ܡܢ ܠܥܙܐ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܠܐܪܡܝܐ: ܒܡܕܝܢܬ ܩܠܘܢܝܩܘܣ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ [erasure of 2.5 lines] ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܢ ܢܥܒܕ ܬܚܡ ܐܢܫܐ ܢܥܒܕ ܪ̈ܚܡܐ ܥܠ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܐܠܨ ܘܥܡܠ[ܘ] ܒܟܪܟܐ ܗܢܐ. ܘܢܥܒܕ ܐܢܘܢ ܠܛܘܒ̈ܐ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܚܠܦܝܢ. ܒܨ ܠܘܬܐ ܕܟܠܗܘܢ ܩܕܝ̈ܫܐ ܕܪܚܡܝܢ ܠܗ܆ ܐܡܝܢ ܘܐܡܝܢ. ܀

Completed is the writing in this third volume of eleven homilies of the commentary on First Corinthians of the Apostle Paul which were composed by Saint John, the bishop of Constantinople. They were translated from the Greek language into Aramaic in the city of Callinicum. [erasure of 2.5 lines] May God have mercy on humanity! May he effect mercy on those who laboured away at and wore themselves out through this volume! May he make them worthy of the blessings that do not pass away through the prayer of all the saints who love him! Amen and amen.

Text 3: Doxology (fol. 107ʳᵃ; in rubrics):

ܫܘܒܚܐ ܠܐܒܐ ܘܠܒܪܐ ܘܠܪܘܚܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܘܗܫܐ. ܘܒܟܠ ܥܕܢ ܘܠܥܠܡ ܥܠܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܘܐܡܝܢ:

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now, at all times, and forever and ever! Amen and amen.

Text 4: Request for supplication for the scribe (fol. 107ʳᵃ):

ܒܥܐ ܠܟ ܐܘ ܐܚܐ ܪܘܚܢܝܐ ܡܛܠ ܝܘܪ̈ܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܬܬܕܟܪ ܠܬܘܡܐ ܚܛܝܐ ܡܐ ܕܩܪܝܬ ܐܘ ܐܬܒܣܡܬ. ܘܐܡܪ ܐܒܘܢ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܣܦܩܐ. ܕܝܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܘܡܚܣܐ ܚܘܒ̈ܘܗܝ ܕܗܘ ܠܬܘܡܐ ܡܣܟܢܐ ܟܬܒ. ܐܡܝܢ ܘܐܡܝܢ ܀

Pray for Thomas, the deacon of Edessa, who wrote this volume, that God would have pity on him on the Day of Judgement like the thief on the cross[125] through the prayer of his whole sacred and holy church and through your [pl.] prayers, my Lord! Amen and amen.

Text 5: Commemoration of the scribe (fol. 107[ra]):

ܥܘܗܕܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܟܬܒ ܟܕ ܚܝ ܒܝܬ ܡܝܬܐ ܐܡܝܢ

[ܥܘܗܕܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܟܬܒ ܟܕ ܚܝ ܒܝܬ ܡܝܬܐ ܐܡܝܢ]

Memory of the one who wrote while living among the dead! Amen.[126]

Text 6: Colophon on the production of the manuscript (fol. 107[ra–b]):

[fol. 107[ra]] ܐܫܬܠܡ ܗܠܝܢ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܒܝܪܚܐ ܬܡܘܙ ܒܥܣܪܝܢ ...
[fol. 107[rb]] ...

[fol. 107[ra]] This volume was completed in the month of Tammuz [July] on the twenty-ninth [day] in it, the year 895 [AG = 584 CE] in the holy monastery of Gubba Barraya. He strove to write down this spiritual treasure[127] [fol. 107[rb]] for the reading and benefit of the whole company of the faithful: the virtuous, God-loving, and maintainer of the brotherhood in the love of his Lord Thomas, the abbot of the same monastery, with the rest of the priests, deacons, and the whole brotherhood with him, those who for the love of[128] Christ and the promise that he made left their parents and siblings[129] and loved the extended fast, the vigil, and all the hardships of the body, so that God, when he is revealed in his glory along with all his ho-

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125 References to the thief on the cross occur frequently in Syriac manuscripts from Late Antiquity: Brock 2015, 364.

126 As Amiaud 1889, vi, I am not fully confident in the translation of this passage.

127 The phrase 'write down [...] treasure' (ܣܝܡܬܐ) appears in a great number of early Syriac colophons: Brock 2015, 377. See also Alin Suciu's contribution in this volume.

128 The phrase 'for the love of' (ܡܛܠ ܚܘܒܗ) is shared with other early Syriac colophons: Brock 2015, 377.

129 See Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29.

ly angels, may give a good repayment for their deeds and make them worthy to hear that beloved verse, which states, 'Come, you blessed ones of my Father! Inherit the kingdom!',[130] which has been prepared for you from before the foundations of the world, through the prayer of the whole holy church. Amen and amen.

Text 7: Warning to unscrupulous borrowers (fol. 107rb):

ܟܠ ܕܝܢ ܕܫܐܠ ܠܗ ܠܦܢܩܝܬܐ ܗܕܐ ܕܢܩܪܐ ܐܘ ܕܢܦܚܡ ܐܘ ܕܢܟܬܘܒ ܘܚܒܫ ܠܗ ܐܘ ܦܣܩ ܚܕܐ ܚܕܐ ܡܢ [131] ܗܘ ܡܢܗ: ܢܕܥ ܕܝܗܒ ܚܒܪ ܕܢܘܠܐܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܚܝܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܘ ܕܚܠܨ ܒܝܬ ܩܘܕܫܐ܀

Everyone who requests to read, collate, or copy this volume and withholds it or cuts something out of it should know that he will have to give an answer before the dreadful throne of God like one who plunders a sanctuary.[132]

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130 Matthew 25:34.
131 The reading in the manuscript seems to be ܟܠܗ, but it is possible that the grammatically necessary diacritical mark above the *hē* has been damaged.
132 The warnings and penalties here are typical of Syriac manuscripts from this time. For an analysis, including this manuscript, see Brock 2015, 367–368.

Matthew R. Crawford

Mystic Contemplation of the Eusebian Canon Tables from Lindisfarne to Armenia

Abstract: This chapter examines the reception of the artwork adorning the Eusebian Canon Tables in the British Isles and medieval Armenia. Taking the Lindisfarne Gospels and Armenian commentaries by Stepʻanos of Siwnikʻ and Nerses Šnorhali as its focus, the chapter highlights a number of overlapping exegetical themes that appear in these two traditions, despite their distinct artistic modes of expressing them. In addition, these two manuscript cultures share the assumption that the visual domain can convey theological and historical truth and be used to theorise the nature of the worshiping community in which the gospel codex plays a central ritualised role. It is argued that this shared understanding of the artwork of the Canon Tables is due their inheritance of a common patrimony from Late Antiquity evident already in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea himself, most consequently the shift away from artistic naturalism towards mystic contemplation.

1 Introduction

As anyone who has spent any time at all with gospel manuscripts from the eastern Christian world will know, these codices are usually accompanied by a prefatory paratext known as the Eusebian Canon Tables. The Canon Tables apparatus comprises three elements: first, an introductory letter providing instructions for the use of the system (the so-called *Letter to Carpianus*); second, a subsequent series of ten tables of numbers highlighting similar and unique material across the four canonical gospels; and third, marginal notation throughout the pages of the gospels demarcating discrete units of text that are keyed to the enumeration in the aforementioned tables. As I argued in a 2019 monograph, the Canon Tables were a remarkable milestone in the scholarly study of the fourfold gospel and exemplify a broader revolution in information technology that occurred in Late Antiquity.[1] Although certain elements of the Eusebian system certainly had precedent, no

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[1] Crawford 2019. The classic study of Canon Tables is Nordenfalk 1938. More recent studies include O'Loughlin 2017; Strøm-Olsen 2018; Bausi, Reudenbach and Wimmer 2020a; Wallraff 2021; Coogan 2022.

other comparable paratext existed for any body of literature in the ancient world and, in less than a century, it had inspired further developments, specifically a similar cross-referencing system for the Pauline corpus.[2] In fact, the paratextual apparatus was so successful that it seems to have been translated into virtually every language into which the gospels themselves were translated, ensuring its spread throughout Eurasia and Africa.

The wide distribution of the Canon Tables apparatus renders it a fascinating topic for scholarly scrutiny, since one can trace developments in this tradition as it was adapted to local contexts across this wide geographic expanse and was appropriated by later scribes and artists throughout the centuries. The pages containing the Eusebian paratext are frequently decorated with a range of lavish motifs, including architectural frames and varieties of flora and fauna.[3] Although naturally there is some variation, Canon Table illumination displays a striking number of similarities across linguistic traditions. For example, the opening series of folios containing the *Letter to Carpianus* and the numeric tables is often concluded by a depiction of a round temple, known in the scholarly literature as a *tholos* or *tempietto*, a feature that appears in Latin, Greek, Armenian, and Georgian manuscripts, although the greatest number are found in Gəʿəz.[4] In a separate study, I have argued that the function of the *tholos* image within the Eusebian paratext can be illuminated by considering the way real sacred architecture was being used symbolically as a cognitive tool by Eusebius and others in Late Antiquity.[5] More specifically, Eusebius's own *ekphrasis* on the basilica at Tyre, delivered in 315, provides a model for how one could also use the architectural elements of an illuminated manuscript page as a way of contemplating abstract theological concepts.[6]

The word 'could' in the last sentence is crucial, for we do not have unambiguous evidence from Eusebius's own fourth century that anyone was viewing the Canon Tables in this manner. However, the situation is different if we move forward a few centuries. The present paper thus aims to extend that earlier argument by taking a comparative approach to two manuscript traditions that each developed a distinctive and sophisticated interpretation of the artwork adorning the Canon Tables. I have chosen to focus upon the Lindisfarne Gospels, created in

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2 Lang and Crawford 2017. Similarly, in the sixth century Victor of Capua adapted the Eusebian paratext to function as a tool for analysing a Latin Diatessaron. Cf. Crawford 2020.

3 On the use of prefatory, especially architectural images in ancient books, see Elsner 2020.

4 Gnisci 2020.

5 Crawford 2023.

6 Eusebius's oration at Tyre is also considered in relation to the Canon Tables in Strøm-Olsen 2018.

Anglo-Saxon England in the early eighth century, and the tradition of medieval Armenian commentary on the Canon Tables which also seems to have emerged by the early eighth century. The reason for choosing these two is, first, that they present unambiguous evidence of symbolic interpretation of Canon Table artwork occurring at roughly the same time, and, second, that they come from regions far removed from one another, with one being the western-most edge of the Christian world at the time and the other a thriving Christian culture sitting at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. A comparison of these two traditions will, I hope, help us to see the Lindisfarne Gospels, an extremely well-known manuscript, in a fresh way, while also recognising familiar themes in the comparatively less studied world of Armenian manuscript illumination.[7] I will examine each of these traditions in turn and will then conclude by proposing that, despite their differences, they share a common understanding of Canon Table artwork that stems from an important shift in the conception of art that occurred in Late Antiquity.

2 The Lindisfarne Gospels

The evidence I will consider from these two manuscript traditions differs in an important way. In the case of the Armenian manuscripts, we have explicit commentary on Canon Table artwork. In contrast, with respect to the Anglo-Saxon tradition, there is, so far as I know, no text that explicitly mentions the Canon Tables, either in terms of their use as a reading aid or their artwork, despite the fact that Anglo-Saxon gospels include the Eusebian apparatus as a staple feature.[8] Nevertheless, close scrutiny of the ornamentation of Canon Tables created in the Anglo-Saxon tradition reveals a sophisticated attempt to use the artwork to communicate symbolic truth, and this is especially true for the Lindisfarne Gospels.[9]

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7 Cf. Tilghman and Bongianino 2021, 45: 'The discipline of comparative art history […] can bear fruit in two different ways: by revealing what is familiar in objects that are unfamiliar, and by renewing scholarly interest in artefacts that have become subject to habitual seeing'. Similar to the present study, Benjamin C. Tilghman and Umberto Bongianino examine contemporaneous but geographically remote manuscript traditions, namely insular gospels and Kufic Qur'āns.

8 The situation is different, however, with respect to the Hiberno-Latin tradition which not only produced elaborately decorated Canon Tables but also numerous texts that comment specifically on the Canon Tables as a reading aid, though not their artwork. Cf. Mullins 2001; Crawford 2019, 195–227.

9 On the Lindisfarne Gospels, see Brown 2003 and Gameson (ed.) 2017 and on the wider cultural milieu, see Brown 2016. On the Latin translation of the Eusebian apparatus, see Wallraff 2021, 148–153.

Scholars have been analysing the Lindisfarne Gospels for decades attempting to decode the hidden meanings contained in such abundance in its decorative scheme.[10] Many of these messages are conveyed via the use of numerical patterns, in keeping with a wider interest in biblical numerology that appears as a defining feature of early insular exegesis. Biblical numerology was already a common topic in the patristic exegetical tradition, but insular scholars intensified this focus to an almost obsessive degree, dwelling at length on figures such as the six days of creation, the dimensions of Solomon's temple, the generations of Christ, the four gospels, the number of chapters in the gospels, and so on.[11] The relevance of numbers for understanding the artistic scheme of the Lindisfarne Gospels has been elucidated most recently in a 2017 study by art historian Heather Pulliam who examines the numerical patterns evident in the Canon Tables artwork in light of themes found in insular exegetical works.[12]

The overarching argument of Pulliam's study is that the decoration of the Canon Tables in the Lindisfarne Gospels 'conveys meaning through both numeric and mathematical forms of expression, portraying divine perfection through measure and proportion'.[13] After highlighting the 'stark and repetitive' ornamentation of the Lindisfarne tables, which stands out against the vibrant diversity of motifs evident in the wider corpus of Anglo-Saxon gospel books, she proposes that Lindisfarne, too, is in fact concerned with the theme of variety or diversity but conveys this theme through 'a restricted number of patterns which are subject to endless variation' rather than through the 'wide range of motifs' employed by comparable manuscripts.[14] Close scrutiny of Lindisfarne reveals that its artist Eadfrith had an 'obsession with rhythm and pattern' evident above all in his use of numbers.[15]

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10 Foundational is the study of Bruce-Mitford 1960, 176–185. See also more recently Brennan 2017. Tilghman 2017 pushes this line of analysis in a fascinating new direction by arguing that the manuscript itself theorises its own making as an emergent process in which meaning is not a product of human creativity but a divinely given reality.

11 This feature of insular exegesis is well documented. See e.g. Richardson 1984; O'Reilly 1998; Werner 1997, 35–38; Anlezark 2010; Tilghman 2017, 12–16.

12 Pulliam 2017. Cf. Tilghman 2017, 12–13 who similarly notes Pulliam's important study.

13 Pulliam 2017, 112–113.

14 Pulliam 2017, 119.

15 Pulliam 2017, 119.
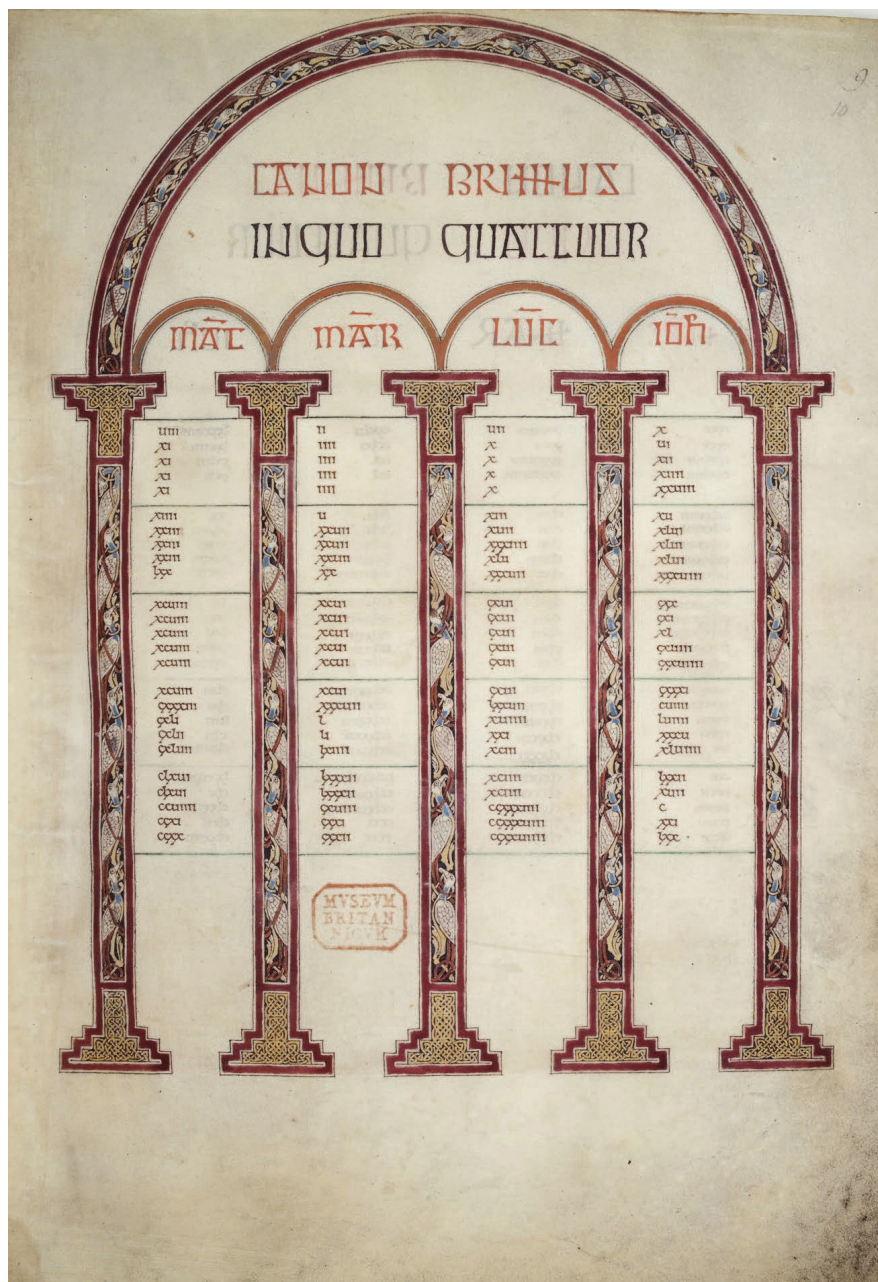
Fig. 1: Canon 1 in the Lindisfarne Gospels (eighth century); British Library, Cotton Nero D. IV, fol. 10ʳ
(© The British Library Board).

Fig. 2: Canon 10 in the Lindisfarne Gospels (eighth century); British Library, Cotton Nero D. IV, fol. 17ᵛ (© The British Library Board).

The numbers that appear most frequently in Lindisfarne's decoration scheme are forty-two and twelve.[16] For example, on five separate pages, the architectural frames housing the Canon Tables contain precisely forty-two creatures (fols 10[r], 10[v], 11[r], 16[r], 17[r]) (see Fig. 1), while the frames on two other pages have forty-two red knots and forty-two yellow ones (fols 11[v], 12[r]). All five of the pages with forty-two creatures and one of the pages with forty-two knots also use the number twelve by placing a dozen of the forty-two items in the spanning arch at the top of the frame. The number twelve is also evident in another page that has four columns with a dozen red beasts and a dozen blue ones (fol. 13[r]), which is followed by a page with columns containing twelve blue rectangles (fol. 13[v]); twelve beasts also appear on three later pages (fols 15[v], 16[r], 17[v]) (see Fig. 2). Finally, square numbers appear frequently: the sequence of Canon Tables occupies sixteen pages; one page has three separate motifs repeated sixteen times (fol. 13[v]); another two pages have sixteen knots in their spanning arches (fols 15[v], 16[r]). Other pages contain repetitions of four, nine, twenty-five, and one hundred. Of course, some repetition of numbers is bound to occur naturally and coincidentally. However, as noted by Pulliam, a comparison of the Lindisfarne Gospels with other Anglo-Saxon Canon Tables reveals a far higher degree of consistency in the use of repeated numbers. This implies the artist is aiming for 'a purposeful and ingenious arrangement of patterns to convey the perfection of divine space and place'.[17] The idea that these numbers appear in the decorative scheme by design rather than randomly is supported by the fact that other aspects of the manuscript's artistic scheme reveal a similar degree of intentionality and sophistication, such as the use of symmetry in the carpet pages, which suggests a kind of three-dimensional modelling one would expect of a 'pure mathematician in the making'.[18]

Why might these numbers be significant? The answer to this question, as Pulliam shows, is revealed when one considers exegetical literature in the West from Augustine to Bede. Of course, Christian authors were adept at finding a wide range of significance in virtually any number they might come across. However, the dominant theme that emerges from this particular cluster of numbers is the Church as the City of God, comprised of many diverse members united by Christ and his sacrifice, as foreshadowed by the history of Israel. For example, the num-

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16 For what follows, see the summary table on Pulliam 2017, 120 which lists the various number of items that appear on each page and their sums.

17 Pulliam 2017, 120–121.

18 Brennan 2017, 161. Similarly, Richardson 1984, 46 concluded that close analysis of the use of numbers in early Irish art reveals 'a vast world of ideas where measurements, numbers and motifs were used with specific intentions'.

ber forty-two probably is an allusion to the generations of Christ as recorded by the Gospel of Matthew, a theme that also appears in the artwork of the Book of Durrow.[19] As for the number twelve, it recalls the description of the heavenly New Jerusalem in John's Apocalypse, which has twelve gates inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel with twelve angels standing beside the gates and twelve foundations with the twelve names of the Apostles written on them. Similarly, the use of the number twenty-four may be an allusion to the twenty-four elders who surround the divine throne in Revelation 4:4.[20] Again, the emphatic repetition of the number twenty-eight on fol. 11[v] (columns containing twenty-eight yellow and twenty-eight red knots plus an arch containing fourteen yellow and fourteen red knots) is plausibly a reference to the command that the curtains for Israel's Tabernacle be twenty-eight cubits long (Exodus 26:1–2), with the Tabernacle understood as a prefiguring of the Church.[21] The use of square numbers likely evokes God's command in 1 Kings 5:17 that Israel build the Temple with squared stones as its foundation, a passage that Bede interpreted allegorically as referring, first, to the prophets and Apostles but secondarily to all Christians who make up the Church as the stones of a building.[22] Similarly, the heavenly Jerusalem is said to be a square in Revelation 21:16, a description that Bede again took as a reference to the moral state of the members of the Church.[23]

Finally, other aspects of the Lindisfarne decoration seem intended to highlight Christ as the one who unites the diverse members of the Church. On five folios, the spanning arch filled with creatures has, at its apex, two creatures who meet with bodies that intersect to form an X (fols 10[r], 10[v], 11[r], 14[v], 15[r]).[24] Similarly, on multiple pages of the series, red and blue elements within the parallel columns alternate to form a series of X's across the page, giving the impression that 'the X's are woven into the very fabric of the pages' design'.[25] Given the frequency of the Chi symbol in insular art and exegesis, this motif of repeated X's, both in the spanning arch and in the columns, would have been understood by viewers as a

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19 So Pulliam 2017, 121–122. Cf. Werner 1997, 35–36 who proposed that the forty-two animals that appear on fol. 192[v] of the Book of Durrow are meant to evoke the generations of Christ.
20 Pulliam 2017, 122.
21 Pulliam 2017, 122.
22 Pulliam 2017, 128, referring to Bede, *De templo*, 1.4.1–1.4.5 (tr. Connolly 1995, 14–17).
23 Pulliam 2017, 129, referring to Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, 3.37 (tr. Wallis 2013, 265), Revelation 21:16 and 21:17.
24 Pulliam 2017, 124–125.
25 Pulliam 2017, 126–127. Pulliam says this is the 'only design characteristic that occurs with absolute consistency on every page of the Lindisfarne Canon Tables' (p. 126), but it seems to me that a few pages lack this feature: fols 10[r], 12[v], 17[v].

symbol of Christ, the head or cornerstone of the Church who 'resolves the opposing movement and thrust, sealing the parts into a single, interdependent structure'.[26]

It seems unlikely to be a coincidence that the numbers that figure prominently in the decoration of the Lindisfarne tables are also highlighted in Latin exegetical literature and especially Bede's corpus. Rather, the illuminated pages of this famous manuscript are designed to communicate the same message presented in more explicit form in the exegetical tradition. Moreover, the medium is a crucial component of the message, since its abstract method of presentation, via repeated numbers that must be decoded, points towards the order and harmony in the cosmos, a prominent theme in the western exegetical tradition going back to Augustine. Moreover, the fact that it is the Church that is evoked by the biblical associations of these specific numbers suggests that the Church, like the cosmos, derives from a divine plan that can likewise be discerned through a process of contemplation, which this artistic scheme is hoping to elicit from the viewer. This is an incredibly rich and sophisticated decorative programme that invites the reader to consider their own identity as a member of the Church, with scriptural exegesis serving as the key to unlocking its hidden message. Yet, as stunningly original as the Lindisfarne tables are, they nevertheless present numerous parallels with the Armenian tradition we will now turn to.

3 The Canon Table commentaries by Stepʻanos Siwnecʻi and Nersēs Šnorhali

In the reception history of the Eusebian Canon Tables, the Armenian tradition stands out as unique by virtue of the fact that it developed a distinct tradition of symbolic or mystical commentaries on the artwork adorning the paratextual apparatus. A collection of thirteen of these commentaries was published in 1995, though thus far only two have been translated into English.[27] For the present study, I will restrict my focus to these two since they are more accessible. They are attributed to Stepʻanos of Siwnikʻ, who was active in the early eighth century, roughly at the same time the Lindisfarne Gospels were being made in Northum-

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26 Pulliam 2017, 126.

27 Łazaryan 1995. The two texts were translated into English by James R. Russell and published as an appendix in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 206–211. On these texts, see further Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 166–176; McKenzie and Watson 2016, 141–144; Crawford 2019, 228–284. On the Armenian translation of the Eusebian apparatus, see Wallraff 2021, 155–158.

bria, and Nersēs Šnorhali, who served as the Catholicos of the Armenian Church in the mid twelfth century. The commentary by Stepʻanos is only partially preserved and breaks off midway through the text, so a consideration of the commentary by Nersēs allows us to gain a more complete picture of this exegetical tradition. The two commentaries follow the same method of highlighting a range of artistic features of the Canon Tables' decorative scheme and offering a symbolic interpretation of them for the viewer/reader. These include specific motifs like species of birds and plants, the colour palette used, and the number of times certain elements appear. Moreover, both authors structure their exposition as an ordered progression through the ten pages and an overarching interpretation is given for each of the pages, focusing above all on its architectural frame, termed in Armenian a *xoran*. Much could be said about these fascinating texts, but for the present purpose, I want to draw attention to the fact that the dominant theme of both expositions is the same as what we have already seen with respect to the decorative scheme of the Eusebian apparatus in Lindisfarne, namely the Church made up of diverse members united by their common relation to Christ and prefigured in Israel's scriptures. To illustrate this claim I will examine, first, the theme of variety; second, that of sacred space and sacred history; and, finally, Christ and his sacrifice.

The opening sentence of Stepʻanos's text alludes no less than three times to the theme of diversity or variety in the decorative scheme of the Canon Tables, mentioning the 'varicolored houses of the ten *xorankʻ*', with their 'different colors and with paints of varying hues'.[28] Nersēs similarly highlights this theme early in his exposition, commenting on the 'luxurious herbs and multicolored flowers and various inventions' with which the 'compilers and founders of the Gospel illustrated (it)'.[29] Later he draws attention more specifically to the 'multicolored aspect of the columns', and the 'flower sculptures of multicolored hue of the ten mystical *xorankʻ*' (see Fig. 3).[30] Moreover, our authors highlight the theme of variety not only as an aspect of the artistic design but also with reference to abstract, theological truths as well. For Stepʻanos, the fourth *xoran* 'shows the face of the churches (which are) united in their thoughts but with various arches'.[31] Nersēs, for his part, looks forward to a day when 'all the forever changing churches unite and become one', and he speaks of believers 'gathering flowers from the meadows of manifold

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28 Stepʻanos, *Comm. xor.*, 1 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 206).

29 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 4 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 208).

30 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 11, 17 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 209, 211).

31 Stepʻanos, *Comm. xor.*, 5 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 206).

virtues'.[32] In addition, Nersēs acknowledges the diversity amongst the divine reve-lation in the Old and New Testaments with its diverse human authors, but asserts that they nonetheless have a 'unity and intimacy' and that the ancient prophets and the Apostles of Christ were 'preachers of a single religion'.[33] Thus, these two authors see variety in the decorative scheme itself, as well as in the worshipping community it signifies and in the history of that community stretching back to Israel's scriptures.

The theme of sacred space throughout sacred history is the key structuring element in these two texts. Nersēs, for example, assigns distinct interpretations to each of the ten *xorank'* that collectively cover the entire scope of redemptive his-tory, beginning with the eternal divine being and proceeding on to the heavenly angels, the Garden of Eden, Noah's ark, Abraham's sacrifice, the two sections of Moses's Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and finally the Church. The common fea-ture of these decoded symbolic references is their function as sites of the divine presence at which creation could encounter and worship its Maker at varying moments throughout history, a point that Nersēs himself highlights when he states 'there is the form of an altar in each of the *xorank'*' and 'it is the tabernacle that unifies' the various spaces throughout the sequence.[34] Moreover, Nersēs is explicit that the last item in the series is the most significant and, indeed, that which gives meaning to the entire preceding sequence: 'the holy and Catholic Church [...] contains within itself the mystery of all (the others)'.[35] Yet, in a further layer of complexity, the progression does not terminate at the Church of the pre-sent day, as one might expect, but looks forward to a further, final fulfilment. As he expounds on the meaning of the tenth *xoran*, Nersēs references the New Jeru-salem of John's Apocalypse that will descend from heaven and unite the disparate churches on earth both to one another as well as to Christ 'in the marriage cham-ber of glory'.[36]

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32 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 16, 17 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210, 211). This line takes on added significance when one considers that Nersēs himself was engaged in ecumenical dialogue with the Byzantine Church.

33 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 15 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210). Step'anos makes the same point at Step'anos, *Comm. xor.*, 5 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 206), that the 'same mystery' is conveyed in the Old Testament and the New.

34 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 9, 12 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 209).

35 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 6 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 208).

36 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 16 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210).

Fig. 3: Canons 6 and 7 in the Gladzor Gospels (*c.* 1300); Gladzor Gospels, Los Angeles, University of California, Charles E. Young Research Library, Library Special Collections, Armenian MS 1, p. 16.
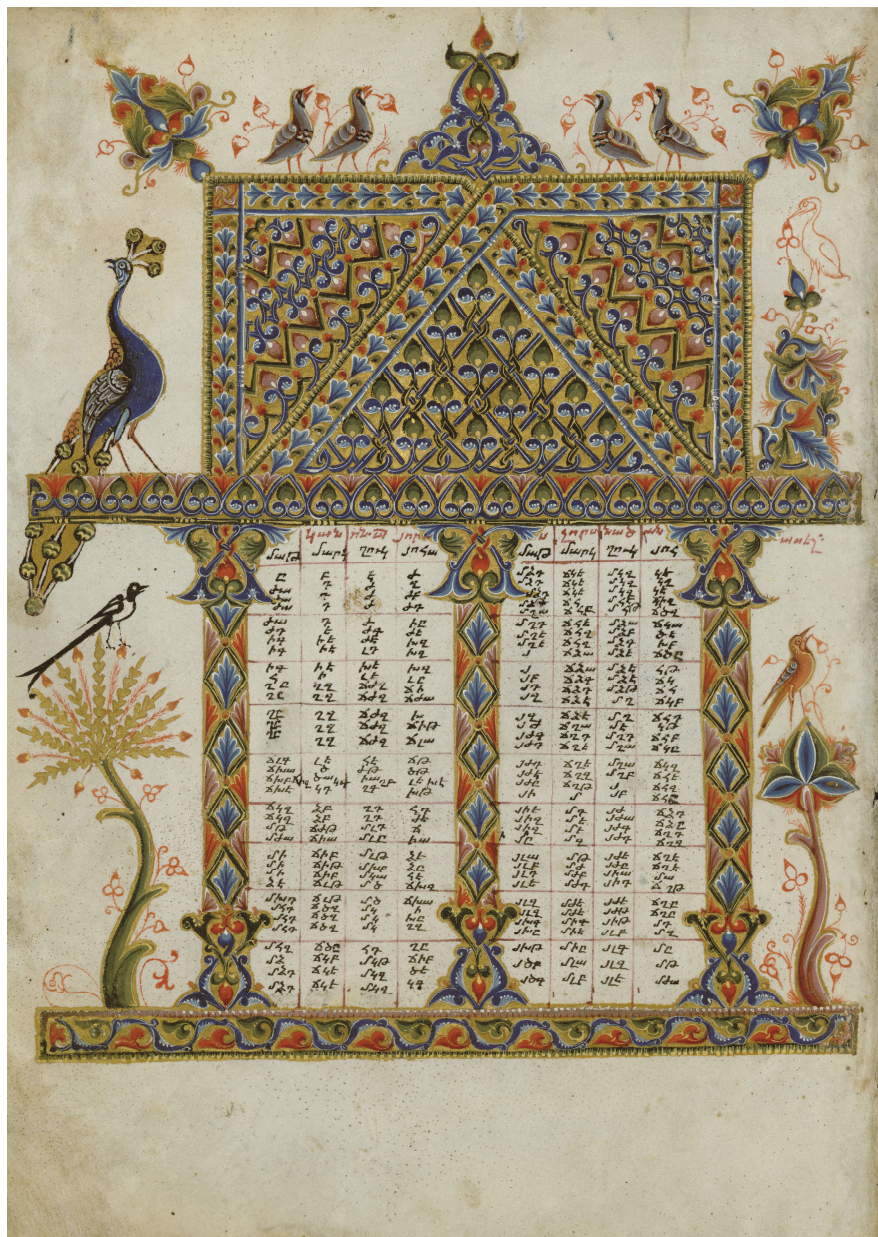
Fig. 4: Canon 1 in the Gladzor Gospels (*c.* 1300); Gladzor Gospels, Los Angeles, University of California, Charles E. Young Research Library, Library Special Collections, Armenian MS 1, p. 8.

But it is not merely sacred space that is signified by this sequence. Step'anos and Nersēs also regard these locations as a metonymy for the human worshippers themselves and use a variety of elements in the artistic scheme to convey this point. For Step'anos, the peacocks that sit atop the first *xoran* were the people of 'the Old Law' (see Fig. 4), while the doves above the fourth are 'those who have received the Holy Spirit', namely believers in the Church who are also represented by the roosters in the fifth *xoran*.[37] Nersēs gives a more specific interpretation of the roosters in the ninth *xoran*, seeing them as the Maccabean martyrs who were renown just prior to the emergence of the 'ineffable light' at Christ's incarnation, while on the tenth page the herons are the Apostles and the teals are the evangelists.[38] Similarly, the olive tree in the sixth *xoran* stands for the patriarchs while the lily on the same page signifies both the patriarchs as well as the church of the gentiles.[39] It is thus not merely specific historical *loca sancta* that these authors are emphasising but also the community gathered in worship at each of these sites throughout history, leading up to the liturgy enacted in the churches of the present day which itself anticipates the consummation of the New Jerusalem.

Finally, allow me to draw attention to the theme of Christ and his sacrifice. Like the Lindisfarne scheme, our Armenian authors allude to Christ's human genealogy, with both Step'anos and Nersēs identifying the partridges as the two prostitutes in his lineage.[40] They also refer repeatedly to the sacrifice of Christ. Step'anos observes that the colour red becomes brighter beginning in the fifth *xoran* because 'the cross has come near'.[41] Nersēs repeats this point, stating that with the ninth *xoran* 'the red has waxed brilliantly', while in the tenth blue is entirely gone and the entirety is 'resplendent and brilliant with rosy red paint', since 'all has become new, bedaubed with the blood of Christ'.[42] In addition, Nersēs says that in the tenth *xoran*, 'the splendidly adorned cross appears with shining rays', seemingly referring to an actual image of a cross, perhaps surmounting the spanning arch on the last page. Nersēs also makes the somewhat puzzling remark that in some of the *xorank'* 'in murky shape a cross appears palely beneath the canopies'.[43] It is hard to know what he means but one cannot

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37 Step'anos, *Comm. xor.,* 2, 5, 6 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 206, 207).

38 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 14, 15 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210).

39 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 11 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 209).

40 Step'anos, *Comm. xor.*, 6 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 207); Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 13 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 209). The genealogy of Christ is also mentioned at Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 14 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210).

41 Step'anos, *Comm. xor.*, 6 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 207).

42 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 14, 15 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210).

43 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 9 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 209).

help but recall the use of alternating blocks of colour within the Lindisfarne columns to produce an X across the page. Furthermore, Nersēs claims that Christ 'came and stood at the head of the upper arch' on the tenth page.[44] Although, again, it is unclear what he has in mind, his statement is reminiscent of the way the Lindisfarne artist has overlapped the bodies of his creatures to form an X in the spanning arch on several pages.

4 Conclusion

The concurrences between the message conveyed by the numerical symbolism encoded within the Lindisfarne artwork and the explicit commentary of these Armenian authors are striking.[45] Both focus above all on the community of worshippers who currently regard the codex as sacred and employ it in their rituals; both define that ecclesial community in terms of the history found in Israel's scriptures and the eschatological consummation of the New Jerusalem in John's Apocalypse; both see Christ as the one who has created this community and binds it together. Cutting across all of these themes is the motif of diversity or variety: diversity among the churches of medieval Christendom; a diversity of dispensations in God's dealings with humanity throughout history; diversity even in the four sacred texts that preserve the canonical narratives of Christ's life. Yet this diversity is not mere random chaos, but a rightly ordered harmony with an overarching unity. We should recall that the problem of diversity is what gave rise to the Eusebian Canon Tables in the first place. By the end of the second century, virtually all Christians seem to have settled on preserving four irreducibly distinct versions of Jesus's story, and Eusebius's paratext was designed as a technology for navigating and understanding the complex interrelations of this corpus. It seems entirely fitting, therefore, that later medieval artists discerned in the artwork of the tables a message of unity in diversity in these other domains as well, indeed, in the very communities they inhabited.[46]

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44 Nersēs, *Comm. Mt.*, prol., 15 (tr. Russell in Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 210). See also Stepʻanos's comment that red is used in the top portion of the second *xoran* 'on account of the blood of sacrificial offerings' (p. 206).

45 Pulliam herself briefly mentions the Armenian tracts as support for her reading of the Lindisfarne numerology (Pulliam 2017, 116). I hope to have expanded upon this point in the present study.

46 For an argument that the patterns of reading intrinsic to the Eusebian apparatus influenced various aspects of the decorative scheme of medieval gospel books, see Kitzinger 2020.

Furthermore, in addition to the specific ideas and motifs found in both these traditions, we must not miss their even more fundamental agreement with respect to the mode of viewing they think appropriate for the artwork of the Canon Tables. The artist responsible for Lindisfarne's decoration and the authors of the two Armenian commentaries together regard the decoration as symbolic and susceptible to a mystical interpretation that can reveal the deepest truths about history, the divine, and human identity. It may be unsurprising to us that they each engage in this kind of viewing, but in fact, this is evidence of them drawing from the common source of late antique Christianity. Jaś Elsner has argued persuasively that the shift from artistic naturalism evident in the early imperial period to the abstraction of Byzantine art was due to a fundamental transformation of the conceptual frame within which artwork was viewed, with a draining of the secular and the emergence of the idea that all of reality is redolent of the divine for those who have eyes to see.[47] These treatments of the Canon Tables wonderfully illustrate this point, since, in one sense, the tables of numbers that comprise the Canon Tables strike the modern viewer as exceedingly prosaic, while to the medieval eyes of Eadfrith, Step'anos, Nersēs, and countless others, they were saturated with symbolic meaning conveyed via the medium of abstract artwork. Such a mode of viewing had some isolated precursors in the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world,[48] but attained an unprecedented dominance and sophistication in late antique Christianity and thus became a defining feature of the Christian Middle Ages, as is evident in the preceding analysis of the Lindisfarne and Armenian tables. Moreover, these treatments of Canon Table artwork illustrate well Elsner's corresponding claim that 'all the arts of Medieval Christian culture came to be based on a brilliant and symbolic pattern of scriptural typology and exegesis',[49] since the various symbolic meanings they highlight almost without exception arise from scriptural interpretation. Indeed, the artwork in these two traditions is a visual manifestation of the overflowing abundance of beauty and truth their makers discerned in the sacred texts that narrated the history and ultimate destiny of their own worshipping community.[50]

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47 Elsner 1995. See specifically p. 88: 'My contention is that the transformation of Roman art from the first century to the sixth is deeply implicated with a transformation in viewing away from naturalist expectations towards the symbolism inherent in mystic contemplation'.

48 See, for example, Elsner's discussion of the *Tabula* of Cebes (Elsner 1995, 39–46).

49 Elsner 1995, 9.

50 In the course of her study of the adaptation of the iconography of the Eusebian apparatus for other purposes, Susanne Wittekind similarly observes that 'the canon tables often served as a visual cue for the idea of harmony in diversity and for the communion of the saints, the living, and the dead in Christ' (Wittekind 2020, 247).

In other words, these concurrences between Northumbria and Armenia are, of course, not due to direct influence of one upon the other but are evidence of a common patrimony each inherited from the world of Late Antiquity. In fact, the message conveyed by these two decorative schemes presents striking similarities to Eusebius's own aforementioned *ekphrasis* on the basilica at Tyre delivered in 315.[51] Celebrating the reconstruction of the church building that had been demolished in the Great Persecution, Eusebius's oration is the earliest written description of a church to have survived. Eusebius, however, did not content himself with a straightforward account of the building's layout and magnificent decoration but added a scripturally laced retelling of the recent persecution and a symbolic interpretation of the sacred architecture as representing various groups within the Church. The physical church in Tyre is, therefore, a symbol of the Church made of the souls of the redeemed, described by Eusebius as

> the great temple, which the Word, the great Creator of the universe, has established throughout the whole world beneath the sun, as he himself likewise in turn formed this spiritual image upon earth of those transcendent heavenly vaults.[52]

The artwork of the Lindisfarne tables and the symbolism of the Armenian tracts could be seen as but variations on this same theme, based upon the same mode of viewing and resulting subjectivity that had been fostered by the Christian liturgy for centuries by the time of Eadfrith and Step'anos.

This brings me finally to the aim of the present volume of reframing the history of the codex and its illustration in a globalised perspective. While it would certainly be misleading to pretend that the medieval Christian cultures across Eurasia and Africa possessed some sort of romantic uniformity, it would equally be a mistake to overlook the significant commonalities they present. The present chapter has taken as a test case two manuscript traditions separated by a vast geographic distance, which might be assumed to have little in common, and has revealed that they shared not only a common set of sacred texts (the Four Gospels), but also a common material form for those sacred texts (the codex), equipped with translated versions of the same paratext (the Eusebian apparatus), and that they fostered a common mystic mode of viewing the artwork adorning that paratext, through which one could discern a symbolic message that is in

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51 Eusebius's oration is found at *Historia ecclesiastica*, 10.4 (tr. Oulton 1932, 396–445), on which see Smith 1989; Schott 2011; Corke-Webster 2019, 54–57. On *ekphrasis*, see especially James and Webb 1991; Elsner 1995, 23–28; Webb 2009.

52 Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 10.4.69 (translation my own; tr. Oulton 1932).

broad outlines the same for both traditions.[53] These similarities stand in sharper relief when one considers how far they depart from other contemporary manuscript traditions, such as Kufic Qur'āns which rely on a very different visual ecosystem arising from a distinct theology of the sacred text.[54] There are, of course, distinctions between these traditions as well. For example, the Lindisfarne tables convey this message in a more abstract form than the Armenian tracts, using local artistic motifs to do so. They are also more riotous and seemingly disordered than the orderly progression of the Armenian treatments, though the theme of harmony and order is still present, as we have seen. Finally, while the Armenian tracts are overt and didactic, modelling for the reader how to view the artwork, the Lindisfarne tables are more elusive and require patient contemplation to unravel their mysteries.[55] Such divergences reveal the adaptation of the late antique Christian patrimony to local cultures, but hardly negate the unity that exists amidst these diverse modes of expression. In fact, one might say that the diversity evident in the interpretation of medieval Canon Table artwork exemplifies the principle of unity amidst diversity that Eusebius, Eadfrith, Step'anos, and Nersēs regarded as the message revealed by the Canon Tables themselves.

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53 Cf. the comment by Bausi, Reudenbach and Wimmer 2020b, viii: 'Canon tables can be seen as exemplifying a specifically Christian manuscript culture that formed, developed and spread across the East and West between 300 and 800 CE, not least because, as it is often mentioned, they are closely linked to the codex format, the medium preferred by Early Christians'.

54 See the stimulating study by Tilghman and Bongianino 2021 which compares early insular gospels with Kufic Qur'āns.

55 Cf. Tilghman 2017, 22 who proposes that the carpet pages in the Lindisfarne Gospels 'remind the readers of the active role they must take in making sense of the divine plan apparent in scripture'.

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Mat Immerzeel

Manuscript Illuminations and Mural Paintings: Medium Interactions in Christian Egypt

Abstract: It has been suggested that some illustrations in Christian manuscripts from the Middle East are derived directly from murals or mosaics in churches. The question is, however, whether this can also be demonstrated on the basis of surviving works of manuscript and monumental art. Assuming that an illustration can be linked to documented murals encountered at the location where it was produced, this paper examines two cases in Egypt. The first concerns the production of manuscripts in the Fayyum region, exemplified by the frontispiece representing St Theodore the Oriental from manuscript New York, MLM, M.613, written in the early tenth century at Tebtunis/Tutun, which is compared with a mural rendering the identical subject excavated at the same site. The second case focuses on the reused miniature in manuscript Arab N.F. 327 in the Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka in Saint Petersburg. Stylistic similarities allow one to connect this image to eighth-century murals in several monasteries in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn area.

1 Introduction

Kurt Weitzmann discussed several manuscript illustrations in his *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (1977) that he believed were based on wall paintings or mosaics in churches. Regarding the art of Middle Eastern Christianity, this particularly concerns the scenes of the Ascension and Pentecost in the sixth-century Syriac-written Rabbula Gospels (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1.56).[1] The first scene renders the ascending Christ extended with the wheels of the fiery chariot and the Tetramorph from the Vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1), above the Virgin between the Apostles (fol. 13ᵛ). This design obviously reflects the widespread double composition in the apses of altar rooms, consisting of Christ in the conch and the Virgin in the lower area behind the altar.[2] A further

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1 For the complex structure of the Rabbula codex, see Bernabò 2008, 2014.

2 Van Moorsel 2000.

indication of the type of model used is the rectangular frame of the image, made up of squares imitating *tesserae*, which reinforces the impression of a wall mosaic.[3]

The Pentecost scene leaves even less to the imagination (fol. 14ᵛ). Set in a semicircular niche with a shadowy arch and its spandrels filled with trees, it explicitly sketches the structure and ornamentation of a monumental setting.[4] Weitzmann suggested that this miniature was a copy of the mosaic in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Zion at Jerusalem. However, this hypothesis cannot be evaluated as the mosaic no longer exists. Only briefly mentioned in John of Würzburg's account of his visit to the Holy Land in the 1160s, it most probably did not even exist in the sixth century.[5] This example perfectly illustrates the point at issue here: despite the scholarly consensus on the artistic coherence between Byzantine monumental and manuscript art,[6] it is difficult to link miniatures to specific wall paintings or mosaics that served as their models.

The links between Middle Eastern Christian mural art and manuscript illumination are perhaps less obvious than one might be inclined to think. The illuminators, as daily churchgoers, were undoubtedly familiar with the images inside churches. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the decoration of these churches may have influenced their work. In practice, however, both media had to serve their own contextual purposes. Whereas the boundaries of monumental church art are usually set by the architecture and religious functions of the building, illuminations are inextricably bound by the textual content, folio size and layout of the manuscript in question.[7] Any scene copied from a church wall would normally be paraphrased and fitted into the established format of manuscript illustration rather than being faithfully reproduced on a smaller scale, possibly including details of the architectural setting. In this respect, the Pentecost in the Rabbula codex would be an exemplary exception, were it not for the fact that our knowledge of the proposed source of inspiration falls short.

It is equally unlikely to find miniatures and mural paintings that can be attributed to the same workshop or artist based on the shared formal features and brushwork: differences in scale and structure of the carriers imply medium-specific skills, knowledge and tools. Moreover, a muralist may not be the best

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3 Weitzmann 1977, 101, plate 36; see also Bernabò 2008, 108–110, table XXVI, with references to previous studies; Ziadé 2022, 128, illus. 124.

4 Weitzmann 1977, 105, plate 38; see also Bernabò 2008, 111–112, table XXVIII, with references to previous studies.

5 Pringle 2007, 265.

6 See e.g. Grabar 1953, 183–184.

7 Grabar 1953, 159.

person to devote himself to the fine-tuned elaboration inherent in manuscript illumination. But this is all theoretical; it cannot be ruled out that individual artists may have mastered more than one skill, although identifying matching works of art is usually a case of looking for a needle in a haystack.

Using common localisation, chronology and art historical criteria, such as iconography and style, as a starting point, two case studies focusing on Egypt are considered here to illustrate the complexity of researching such issues. The first concentrates on the Fayyum region (al-Fayyūm; Fig. 1) as one of the few recognised centres of production for both monumental art and illustrated manuscripts in Egypt between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. The second discusses the exceptional case of a miniature in the manuscript Saint Petersburg, Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka (Russian National Library), Arab N.F. 327, fol. 226ʳ, which, on formal grounds, bears comparison with eighth-century wall paintings in the monasteries of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn area between Cairo and Alexandria (Fig. 1). While the first case study concentrates on the analysis of iconographic aspects, the second focuses mainly on stylistic criteria.[8]

2 Miniatures and murals in the Fayyum

The art of the Fayyum, to the south-west of Cairo, offers an excellent opportunity to explore the possible links between wall and manuscript painting.[9] This region has produced an impressive quantity of manuscripts from the ninth to the early eleventh centuries, some of which contain miniatures that deserve our particular attention. A large collection was discovered in 1910 at the site of the former monastery of the Archangel Michael (Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl) near the village of al-Ḥāmūlī on the western edge of the Fayyum (Fig. 1).[10] Its library was apparently left unattended after the monastery was abandoned in the early eleventh century until its rediscovery.[11]

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8 I would like to thank Renate Dekkers and Lucas Van Rompay for their valuable advice and contributions.

9 For Christianity in the Fayyum, see Gabra (ed.) 2005.

10 Leroy 1974a; Depuydt 1993; Achi 2018.

11 Coquin and Martin 1991, 824a–825a.
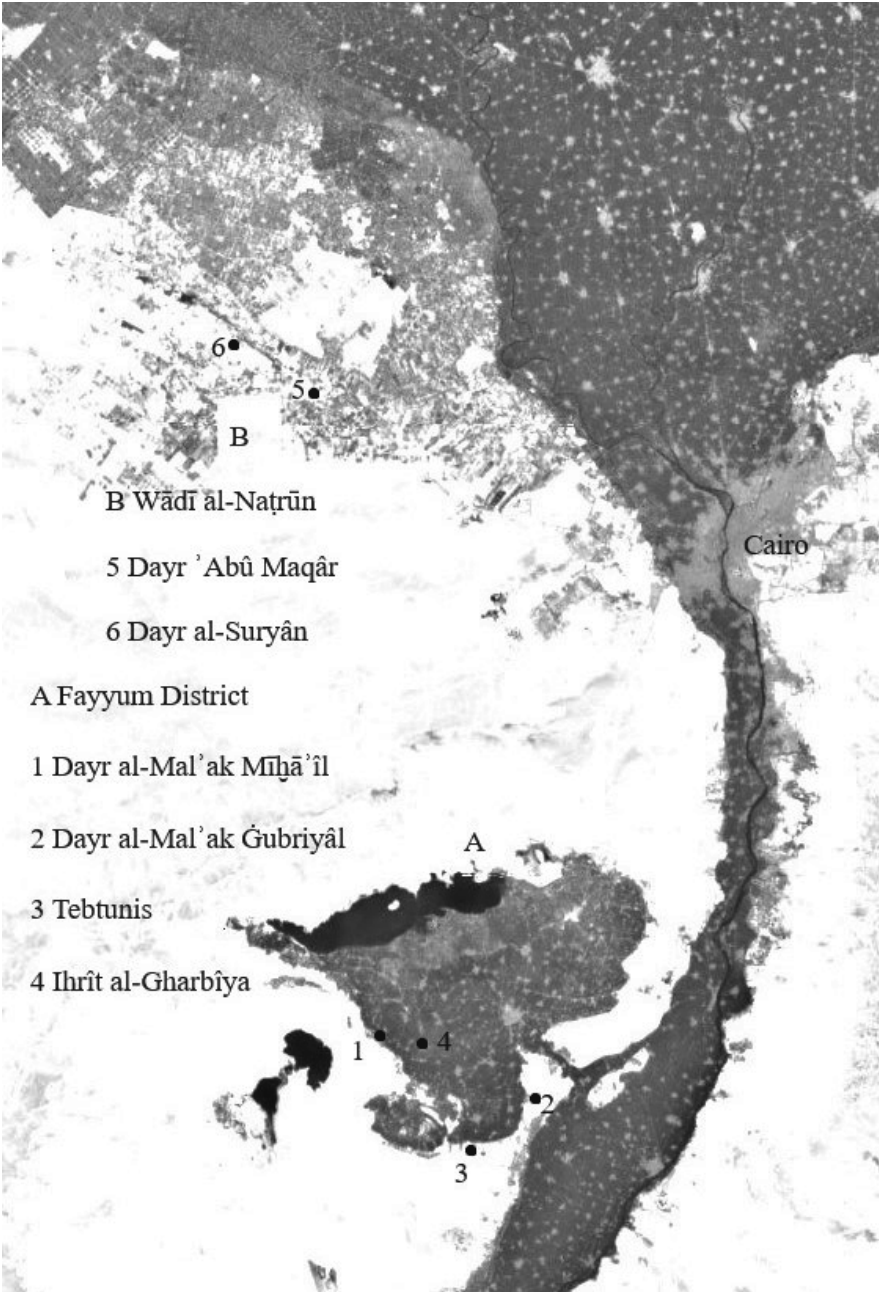
Fig. 1: Map of Wādī al-Naṭrūn and the Fayyum area.

As for wall paintings, the only surviving *in situ* examples in the region are those thought to have been painted between 1022 and 1032 CE in the monastery of the Archangel Gabriel (Dayr al-Malʾak Ġubriyāl, or Dayr al-Naqlūn), located nearly 30 km to the south-east of al-Ḥāmūlī (Fig. 1).[12] However, this estimate only applies to the scenes in the sanctuary, as the murals in the nave and narthex are stylistically different. This latter group of paintings, which includes a number of equestrian saints, can be tentatively dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century.[13]

Further wall paintings from the Fayyum, which unfortunately have not survived, came to light in a church excavated in 1899 at the archaeological site of Tebtunis (Greek) – Touton in Coptic and Ṭuṭūn in Arabic (hereafter: Tutun) – at ʾUmm al-Burayǧāt, some 25 km to the south of al-Ḥāmūlī (Fig. 1). Superficially documented by Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, their notes and photographs were first analysed and published by Colin Walters almost a century later.[14] A dated donatory inscription allowed Walters to suggest that the earliest scenes – such as several saints and the Resurrection – were applied in 669 of the Coptic Era of the Martyrs (Anno Martyrum; hereafter: AM), corresponding to 952/953 CE.[15] Walters argued that a second group of paintings, consisting of four dragon-slaying equestrian saints, such as Theodore Stratelates ('the General'), could be dated between about 950 and 1050.[16] Thematically, the presence of holy horsemen is in keeping with the prevalence of this motif in Coptic churches from about the eighth century onwards.[17] However, careful examination of various iconographic details in the Tebtunis murals, in particular the Turkish-style saddlecloths on and knotted tails of several of the horses depicted, suggest an even later date; both elements were introduced into Egypt after the Zengid conquest in 1169. The cortege of mounted saints rendered in the monastery of St Antony (Dayr ʾAnbā Anṭūnīyūs), executed in 1232/1233 CE, offers the best analogies.[18] If it is accepted that the second group of murals at Tebtunis were applied in the last quarter of the twelfth or thirteenth century, they could not possibly have served as a source of inspiration for any of the earlier illustrated manuscripts found near al-Ḥāmūlī.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the settlement of Tebtunis/Tutun also functioned as a centre of manuscript production from the ninth to the early elev-

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12 Godlewski 1997, 1999; Parandowska 2005.

13 See Bolman 2002b, 93, n. 19; Godlewski 2008, 47; Immerzeel forthcoming.

14 Walters 1989.

15 For the Era of the Martyrs, see Cody 1991.

16 Walters 1989, 206.

17 Immerzeel 2016, 102–105; Immerzeel 2017, 40–44.

18 Immerzeel forthcoming. For Dayr ʾAnbā Anṭūnīyūs, see Bolman 2002a; Bolman 2002b; Lyster 2002.

enth century.[19] Significantly, several al-Ḥāmūlī manuscripts were produced here and various inscriptions found in the excavated church also attest to the local community's contacts with Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl.[20] One of the volumes in The Morgan Library & Museum in New York (M.613) was copied and illustrated by the deacon Mouses and his brother, the subdeacon Khael of Tutun in the early tenth century, and subsequently presented to Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl.[21] The Sahidic Coptic text, which remains to be edited,[22] describes the martyrdom of Sts Theodore the Anatolian, or the Oriental (not to be confused with the widely venerated St Theodore Stratelates), Leontius, and Panigerus, all commemorated on 12 Ṭūba / 7 January in the medieval Coptic synaxarion.[23] The manuscript's only miniature arouses our full interest (fol. 1ʳ; Fig. 2). This simply drawn frontispiece depicts an equestrian saint and includes some additional narrative details.[24] A Coptic inscription identifies the horseman as the said St Theodore the Anatolian (ⲟ ⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲑⲉⲱⲇⲱⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲁⲛⲁⲧⲱⲗⲉⲟⲥ), who is shown slaying an androcephalous dragon called 'Demoniakos' (Δⲉⲙⲱⲛⲓⲁⲕⲱⲥ).[25] The demon wears a ring through his nose and is chained to a long white object between the horse's forelegs, divided into irregular brown and ochre cross bands and labelled 'the throne' (ⲡⲕⲁⲑⲉⲁⲣⲁ). Anthony Alcock's online article on this obscure and under-represented martyr focuses on two versions of his *Vita*: the chapter on 12 Ṭūba in the Arabic synaxarion[26] and an earlier, longer Bohairic Coptic text in the manuscript Vatican City, BAV, Vat. copt. 63, fols 28–54.[27] The more informative Coptic account, which introduces the future martyr as narrator, elaborates on Theodore's visionary encounter with the dragon as follows:

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19 For Tutun, see Coquin 1991. René-Georges Coquin rejects the term scriptorium, arguing that none of the scribes presented themselves as monks; they were deacons, subdeacons or occasionally a priest.

20 Walters 1989, 205.

21 <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/coptic/214172> (accessed on 7 December 2022), CLM 639. For an estimate of the age, see van Lantschoot 1929, vol. 1, 74–76, no. XLVII, n. 6. Arnold van Lantschoot based his conclusion on the mention in the volume of Abbot Elias of Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl, whose name is also found in several manuscripts dated to the early tenth century.

22 For the preliminary reading of the text by Renate Dekker, see Immerzeel forthcoming.

23 Basset (ed. and tr.) 1915, 577–581; Alcock 2018, 1–2.

24 Immerzeel 2016, 102–105.

25 Leroy 1974a, 188, plate 107,2; Depuydt 1993, vol. 1, 282–284, no. 144; 397; vol. 2, plate 19; Alcock 2018, 4–5.

26 Alcock 2018, 1–2; translation from Basset (ed. and tr.) 1915, 577–581.

27 Alcock 2018, 5; English version after the Latin translation in Balestri and Hyvernat 1907, 30–46. See <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.copt.63> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

In the morning I saw a path rising from the ground like a staircase of a cathedra, the top of which reached to the apses of heaven. I saw a young man of 20 with an incorruptible face sitting on the top of the staircase of the cathedra. There was great glory and great faces around the throne, on the right side the faces of a lion and a calf and on the left those of an eagle and a man. Their faces were veiled by many wings. In a wheel there were four saws, arranged in pairs above each other going round like a turbine. When I looked again I saw a great tabernacle on top of the cathedra. I was not told the secret of the cathedra and the tabernacle, but I was told: 'This place is the vision'. […] When I got to the last step, I saw a large dragon with an iron ring through his nose. It had the head and neck of a man, but the body of a dragon. It made me fear and tremble. It was lying on the bottom step of the staircase to heaven, preventing anyone from entering the presence of God.[28]

In a second encounter, Theodore plunged his lance through the head of the infernal creature, who was chained to the stairs and had revealed himself to be Demoniakos, the father of the persecutor Diocletian.[29] There can be little doubt that the miniature is based on the story told in Vat. copt. 63 or, more obviously, the text in M.613, which corresponds in part to this account.[30] The illustrator has faithfully reproduced the chained, nose-ringed Demoniakos at the foot of what appears to be the staircase or ladder leading to the throne mentioned in the inscription but not clearly depicted.

Interestingly, the same scene was also painted in the excavated church at Tebtunis, namely on the west wall of what was probably the nave (Fig. 3).[31] In the absence of further information, Walters was inclined to identify the largely effaced rider as St Sisinnius, whose name was copied in the excavators' notebook but without any indication of the scene's exact location within the building (ⲀⲠⲀ ⲤⲒⲤⲒⲚⲒⲟⲤ ⲠⲈⲤⲦⲢⲀⲦⲎⲖⲀⲦⲎⲤ; 'St Sisinios the General').[32] The photograph of the painting shows that only the lower half, showing the belly and legs of the horse and the dragon, was relatively intact when it was discovered. The latter is depicted as an outstretched snake with a human upper body, attached by a rope to a vertical wooden ladder on the left – the carefully crafted wood joints are clearly visible. The name Mastema (ⲘⲀⲤⲦⲈⲘⲀ), written above the creature's head, further helps to identify the rider; significantly, Mastema is also mentioned as another of the devil's identities in both Vat. copt. 63 and the text of M.613.[33]

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28 Alcock 2018, 13–14. The dragon at the foot of the ladder is also briefly mentioned in a Bohairic encomium in Vatican City, BAV, Vat. copt. 66, fol. 32ᵛ (ninth–tenth century); Winstedt 1910, 3–4, 75.

29 Fols 54–55; Alcock 2018, 17–18.

30 Immerzeel forthcoming.

31 Walters 1989, 195–196, plates XVI and XIX.

32 Walters 1989, 195; Immerzeel forthcoming.

33 Alcock 2018, 11; for manuscript M.613, see Immerzeel forthcoming.

Fig. 2: Illustration: St Theodore the Anatolian; M.613, fol. 1ʳ; early tenth century; photograph The Morgan Library & Museum. Purchased for J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1911–1912.

Fig. 3: Wall painting: St Theodore the Anatolian; church, Tebtunis; late twelfth/thirteenth century; photograph courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society, London.

It is difficult to assess the significance of the fact that two of the few documented medieval depictions of St Theodore the Anatolian were made in Tebtunis/Tutun.[34] The fact that the miniature is several centuries older than the mural does not detract from the assumption that the subject was circulating in

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[34] A recent discovery concerns a tenth-century mural in Dayr al-Suryān, which depicts the mounted saint, the ladder, and the dragon (Innemée 2023, 54–55, fig. 65). The saint was also represented in Dayr ʾAnbā Anṭūnīyūs (1232/1233 CE), but only a fragment of his name and the bust of Christ survive; Bolman 2002a, 40–41, fig. 4.4.

the area over a longer period. The possibility that the muralist may have consulted M.613 can also be ruled out; as mentioned above, the library of Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl had been abandoned since the early eleventh century. It is certain that the performance of St Theodore the Oriental as a horseman, a detail not mentioned in the written sources, should be understood as an adaptation of the saint's narrative to the customary iconographic format of the victorious equestrian warrior saint defeating an enemy of Christendom.[35] In a way, he was an offshoot of St Theodore Stratelates, the most famous of the holy dragon slayers at the time, who was also painted to the right of his namesake and companion in the excavated church.[36]

Vat. copt. 63 provides another fascinating insight into the dialogue between textual sources and church embellishment. It concerns the extended discourse on Christ Enthroned in Theodore's vision, quoted above. In particular, the text contains a surprisingly accurate description of the transcendent image of Christ in Glory in the conch of church apses, also found in Tebtunis,[37] which symbolically allows a glimpse into heaven from the position of the altar. The account further provides details of elements of the Vision of Ezekiel, namely, the Four Living Creatures and the wheels of the chariot, which were also depicted in various compositional variants in churches in Egypt and other parts of the Middle East.[38] As mentioned above, the Ascension in the Rabbula codex provides a perfect example of this visionary dimension in the decoration of sanctuaries.

The most recent Fayyum miniature is inserted in a *Book of Homilies* written and illustrated by the deacon Philotheos in 989/990 CE at Hrit, identified as Ihrīt al-Ġarbiyya, 11 km east of al-Ḥāmūlī (manuscript London, BL, Or. 6782, fol. 1ᵛ; Fig. 4).[39] The image depicts the Breastfeeding Virgin or *Galaktotrophousa* in the company of St John the Evangelist. It cannot be ruled out that the illustrator was inspired by another miniature representing the Nursing Virgin in the late-ninth- and early-tenth-century manuscripts from Dayr al-Malʾak Mīḫāʾīl nearby,[40] but

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35 Immerzeel 2016, 102–105.

36 Immerzeel forthcoming, plates 1–2; Walters 1989, 193–194, plates XVI–XVIII. On the various warrior saints named Theodore, see Walter 2003, 44–66. On the relationship between Sts Theodore the Anatolian and Theodore Stratelates in the Coptic tradition, see Winstedt 1910 (Vat. copt. 66).

37 Walters 1989, 192–193, plate XVII.

38 Immerzeel 2017, 46–49.

39 Leroy 1974a, 105–107, plate 29,1; CLM 182; Cormack and Vasilaki (eds) 2009, 349, 457, no. 305 (entry Vrej Nersessian).

40 The *Galaktotrophousa* is depicted in four al-Ḥāmūlī manuscripts written in Tutun, all in New York, MLM: M.612, fol. 1ᵛ = CLM 239 (892/893 CE); M.574, fol. 1ᵛ = CLM 213 (897/898 CE); M.600, fol. 1ᵛ

what distinguishes this depiction are the niches framing the figures. The curved lower edge of their conches suggests perspective, as if they were drawn from reality.[41]

This architectural setting is reminiscent of the monastic prayer cells in the monastery of St Apollo in Bawit and that of Apa Jeremias in Saqqara, where the Mother of God, breastfeeding or not, was repeatedly painted in apse-like niches behind the altar.[42] Although the *Galaktotrophousa* has not been found in Dayr al-Mal'ak Ġubriyāl and Tebtunis, we can safely assume that the subject was a familiar one in Fayyumic churches. The closest example was discovered in 1991 in the prayer cell of a rock-cut hermitage near the monastery of St Macarius (Dayr ʾAbū Maqār) in the monastic area of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, some 100 km to the north of the Fayyum (Fig. 5).[43] Dated in an inscription commemorating the foundation and decoration of the cave complex at the instigation of the ascetic Father Mena Panau (ⲙⲏⲛⲁ ⲡⲁⲛⲁⲩ) in 660 AM, corresponding to 943/944 CE, the double composition on the chapel's flat east wall consists of the *Galaktotrophousa* flanked by two archangels to the left of Christ in Glory engulfed in the flames of Ezekiel's fiery chariot, and, unusually because of the low ceiling, arranged horizontally.[44] Apart from the addition of the archangels and the mirrored design, the compositional analogies with the illumination painted forty-five years later are obvious.

= CLM 216 (905/906 CE); and M.597, fol. 3ᵛ = CLM 233 (913/914 CE). See Leroy 1974a, 94–95, plate 31; 96–97, plate 34; 101–103; plate 36; and 103–104, plates 35 and B, respectively.

41 The best examples of saints rendered either in a constructed niche or a painted architectural background (including the *Galaktotrophousa*) are in the sixth- to the eighth-century murals in the Red Monastery near Sohag; see Bolman 2016.

42 Bolman 2005; Higgins 2012; Immerzeel 2016, with references to previous studies.

43 van der Vliet 2009, 335–336; Immerzeel 2016, 98, figs 3–4; Immerzeel 2017, 46, fig. 19, plates 9–10; Immerzeel forthcoming; Kupelian 2018; Ziadé 2022, 216, 218, illus. 220.

44 For an eighth-century *Galaktotrophousa* in nearby Dayr al-Suryān, see Innemée 1998, 294–295; Ziadé 2022, 218, fig. 223.

Fig. 4: Illustration: *Galaktotrophousa* and St John; Or. 6782, fol. 1ᵛ; 989/990 CE; © British Library Board.

Fig. 5: Wall painting: *Galaktotrophousa*; hermitage of Father Mena Panau, Dayr ʾAbū Maqār; 943/944 CE; photograph: author/Paul van Moorsel Centre, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

3 Common artistry: The case of Arab N.F. 327

Although the results of the study of the relationship between wall paintings and miniatures in the Fayyum have revealed some interesting thematic links, we are still a long way from establishing a common workshop attribution, which also requires corresponding stylistic features and, ideally, identical brushwork. The most promising case in this respect is the miniature accompanying an Arabic Epistles of Paul preserved in the Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka in Saint Petersburg, Arab N.F. 327, fol. 226ʳ (Fig. 6).[45] The illumination is inserted after the colophon at the end of the text, i.e. behind the left cover. Its composition shows two frontal, nameless saints set against a dark blue and dark green background. Weitzmann, in his 1943 study of this representation, convincingly identified the bearded figure on the right as St Paul and the one on the left as his disciple St Timothy, whom St Paul consecrated as the first bishop of Ephesus and to whom he addressed an epistle.[46] The sheet is in reasonably good condition, except for some superficial flaking off of the colours and the blackening of St Paul's head. St Paul is dressed in a red tunic decorated with orange-yellow rosettes and a yellow *himation*; he holds a rolled scroll in his left hand and makes a blessing gesture with the other. St Timothy is rendered as a young bishop, holding a red codex in his left arm and also making the blessing gesture with his right hand.[47] His episcopal vestments consist of a crimson-brown *sticharion* decorated with orange-yellow rosettes, a blue *phelonion* and a white *omophorion* with modest black crosses. The latter is draped around his neck, the one visible end overlapping the overturned part and hanging down from his left shoulder to his knee.[48] The saints' nimbi are yellow and outlined in red with a thin black inner circle, and their feet are sandaled.

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45 27.8 × 19.8 cm; Leroy 1974a, 92–93, plate 28,1; Weitzmann 1943, 119–134, figs 1, 11; see also Immerzeel 2017, 102–103, plate 45.

46 Weitzmann 1943, 121–124.

47 Leroy interprets St Timothy's darkly shaded chin as a small beard ('un mince collier de barbe'; Leroy 1974a, 93), but this interpretation is questioned by the absence of a moustache.

48 For this use of the *omophorion*, which can also be found in medieval Coptic murals, see Innemée 1992, 52.

Fig. 6: Illustration: Sts Timothy and Paul; Arab N.F. 327, fol. 226ʳ; eighth century; after Leroy 1974a, plate 28,1.

Even at first glance, this colourful illustration is of a very different quality to its much simpler Fayyumic counterparts. The most striking feature of the scene is the classicising flavour of the saints' robes. This painterly style is particularly evident in the softly undulating patterns and voluminous drapery of St Paul's *himation*, which is rendered with strong contrasts of light highlights and dark shadows. Both figures are outlined in black with an additional white border. The best preserved face is that of St Timothy, which is rounded with large eyes, a sharp, straight nose and mouth, and a red flush on the cheeks. Its plasticity and contrast compensate for its lack of naturalness. Weitzmann compared the figures to those in the Saqqara wall paintings, but argued that the classical formulae of the miniature had no counterparts in Egypt.[49] This may have been true in 1943, but, as discussed below, more recent discoveries allow us to revise this impression.

The scene in the manuscript Arab N.F. 327 is framed by a vermillion border, which, in Weitzmann's words, 'nearly reaches the edges of the folio. This clearly indicates that the miniature has been cut, probably at the same time the codex was rebound and cut'.[50] He suggested that the leaf had originally formed the frontispiece of a Greek or Coptic volume, in which it preceded the text written from the left to the right. Remarkably, it was reused in the same position while disregarding the right-to-left writing direction of the Arabic script, implying that the illustration now came after the text.[51] Jules Leroy agreed in his discussion of the miniature with Weitzmann's analysis, but expressed doubts about its hypothetical reuse.[52] His caution is understandable; as early as 1901, Edvard Stenij argued that the Epistles of Arab N.F. 327 were translated from Syriac.[53] If the frontispiece had been taken from the Syriac manuscript consulted, it would logically have been placed directly behind the right cover, since Syriac is also written from right to left. Since this is not the case here, we need to dig deeper into the matter and look for an alternative explanation.

The known history of Arab N.F. 327 begins in 1853 with the return of the biblical scholar Constantin von Tischendorf from his second journey to Egypt, bringing with him the first 75 parchment leaves. He would collect the remaining 151 leaves on his next visit in 1859. Once completed, the manuscript was presented to Tsar Alexander II and deposited in the Public Library of Saint Petersburg, now known as the Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka. Heinrich Fleischer, who had the opportunity to study the first part in 1854, dated the manuscript on the basis of palaeography to the eighth or ninth century.[54] Seven years later, reading the colophon at

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[49] Weitzmann 1943, 128.

[50] Weitzmann 1943, 121.

[51] Weitzmann 1943, 122.

[52] Leroy 1974a, 92–94.

[53] Stenij 1901; see also Zaki 2020, 235.

[54] Fleischer 1854.

the end of the text, he was able to confirm his estimate; the writing was completed in Shaʿbān 279 AH, corresponding to October/November 892 CE.[55]

Von Tischendorf had been suspiciously discreet about the manuscript's provenance for unexplained reasons. His confrere Franz Delitzsch revealed that it came from an Egyptian monastery which he left unspecified, no doubt because he had been left in the dark or had been instructed to conceal its exact origin.[56] Looking at von Tischendorf's career, he became famous for his discovery of the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus in the Greek Orthodox St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, which he visited in 1844,[57] 1853 and 1859. But his first journey also took him to the four Coptic monasteries of Wādī al-Naṭrūn: Dayr ʾAbū Maqār, Dayr al-Suryān, Dayr ʾAnbā Bīshūy and Dayr al-Barāmūs (Fig. 1).[58] Given von Tischendorf's itinerary, there is every reason to explore the likelihood that the Arabic Epistles came from either St Catherine's or Wādī al-Naṭrūn.

3.1 St Catherine's Monastery

In order to investigate the possible Sinaitic provenance of the manuscript and the miniature, it is necessary, firstly, to establish the presence of comparable early Arabic manuscripts in the St Catherine' Monastery, and, secondly, to identify Sinaitic works of art with stylistic features corresponding to those of the illumination. Indeed, the monastery's library contains several Arabic manuscripts from the eighth and ninth centuries which, like Arab N.F. 327, are also dated according to the Islamic Hijrī era.[59] A nice parallel to the Saint Petersburg volume is the manuscript Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, Ar. 151, which contains the Pauline Epistles and Acts of the Apostles, but this manuscript was not written on Mount Sinai. As stated in the colophon on fol. 186ᵛ, the text was translated from Syriac by Bišr ibn al-Sirrī, who completed his task in Damascus in 253 AH / 867 CE.[60] When and under what circumstances the manuscript was transferred to St Catherine's remains unknown, but what matters for now is the conclusion that von Tischendorf may indeed have come across early Arabic manuscripts in the monastery.

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55 Fleischer 1861, 386. 'Finished is his epistle to the Hebrews which was written and sent from Rome. Completed are the fourteen epistles of Paul, thanks be to Christ. They are written as it is worthy of Him. Written in Shaʿbān of the year two hundred and seventy-nine' (Weitzmann 1943, 120).

56 Delitzsch 1857, 768.

57 von Tischendorf 1847, 95–110. Most of the manuscript is in London, BL, Add. 43725; see <https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/> (accessed on 28 September 2023).

58 von Tischendorf 1847, 45–56; Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 1, xxxii, xll; Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 2, 45 (Dayr al-Suryān).

59 Zaki 2020, 201, 218.

60 Zaki 2020, 208, 215. For this manuscript, see Staal 1983; Zaki 2022.

Fig. 7: Icon: Sts Paul, Peter, Nicholas and John Chrysostom; St Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai; seventh/eighth century; by permission of St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt; photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.

In the absence of relevant Sinaitic wall paintings and convincing analogies among the monastery's manuscript illuminations,[61] the art historical component of the investigation concentrates on four encaustic icons in the Sinaitic collection that share some notable formal similarities with the miniature: a panel showing the Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace;[62] a four-part icon representing Sts Paul, Peter, Nicholas and John Chrysostom (Fig. 7);[63] a more sophisticated panel depicting Christ as the Ancient of Days;[64] and a ditto triptych wing representing the Prophet Elijah.[65] Weitzmann considered the attribution of these specimens to Palestine in his study of the early Sinaitic icons, with Egypt as an alternative for the Christ panel. He dated the first two to the seventh/eighth century, and the better quality icons to the seventh century. Opinions have changed little since then, with Kathleen Corrigan recently attributing the Christ icon to Egypt, Palestine or Mount Sinai.[66] Although obviously painted by different hands, these pieces share a classicising rendering of the garments and white outlining reminiscent of that of the miniature. If we take the four-part icon, measuring 41.5 × 13.2 cm, and depicting figures of approximately the same size as the most attractive stylistic counterpart, the figure of St Nicholas shows the closest analogies to St Timothy in terms of appearance and pose (Figs 6–7). Other iconographic correspondences include the *omophorion* of Sts Nicholas and John Chrysostom, worn similarly to that of St Timothy, except that the wrapped part overlaps the loose end. These saints and St Paul also hold a red codex identical to that of St Timothy in the miniature. In all cases, the cover is ornamented with a lozenge enclosing a cross within a rectangular frame. Here, however, the similarities end; the coarseness of the icon contrasts with the delicacy of the miniature. The saints' features lack the expressive shadowing of St Timothy's face, and their eyes are more angular. In addition, the proportions of their bodies are significantly different, making the saints in the icon

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61 See Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990.

62 Weitzmann 1976, vol. 1, 56, no. B31; vol. 2, plates XXII, LXXXII–LXXXIII; <https://www.sinai archive.org/s/mpa/item/2757#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-722%2C0%2C5443%2C2681> (accessed on 28 September 2023).

63 Weitzmann 1976, vol. 1, 58–59, no. B33; vol. 2, plates XXIV, LXXXV–LXXXVII; <https://www.sinai archive.org/s/mpa/item/6915#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-2741%2C0%2C8118%2C3999> (accessed on 28 September 2023).

64 Weitzmann 1976, vol. 1, 41–42, no. B16; vol. 2, plates XVIII, LXII–LXIII; <https://www.sinai archive.org/s/mpa/item/6945#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-2623%2C0%2C8118%2C3999> (accessed on 28 September 2023).

65 Weitzmann 1976, vol. 1, 42–43, no. B17; vol. 2, plate XIX; <https://www.sinai archive.org/s/mpa/item/10701#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-836%2C0%2C2078%2C1023> (accessed on 28 September 2023).

66 Corrigan 2010.

more compact.[67] As far as the painterly approach is concerned, the icon's sharp highlights, composed of thin white lines, are in radical contrast to the smooth gradations of the brushwork in the miniature. Although the idea of a distant shared workshop tradition is probably not too far-fetched, the execution – not only of this panel but also of the three other specimens – differs considerably. It is also important to note that painted wooden panels are as portable as manuscripts. Since it has been shown that a manuscript such as Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, Ar. 151 was not written in the monastery, the same applies to the icons under discussion. They may well have been painted in Egypt or Palestine and then transferred to Mount Sinai at some point in history. Of course, such uncertainties do little to help our efforts to link the manuscript Arab N.F. 327 to St Catherine's Monastery.

3.2 Wādī al-Naṭrūn

Von Tischendorf's account of his stay in Wādī al-Naṭrūn in 1844 digresses briefly on the acquisition of Coptic leaves in Dayr ʾAbū Maqār and then refers to the Syriac and Ethiopian manuscripts he saw in Dayr al-Suryān, but remains silent on any other acquisitions.[68] Nor does he mention a possible follow-up visit in 1853 or 1859 in later reports. But Stenij's conclusion that the Epistles were translated from Syriac makes it worth exploring the possibility that this work took place in Dayr al-Suryān (Fig. 1). Initially an all-Coptic stronghold dedicated to the Virgin, from the early ninth century, the monastery also housed a colony of Mesopotamian Miaphysite monks originating from Tagrit (Tikrit in Iraq), who, in turn, maintained a steadily growing collection of Syriac manuscripts. Their library was greatly expanded in 931/932 CE when Dayr al-Suryān's abbot Moses (Mushe) of Nisibis returned from a journey to Mesopotamia with some 250 volumes he had collected along the way.[69]

Of the many Syriac manuscripts transferred from this monastery to London in the nineteenth century and documented by William Wright, three copies containing the Pauline Epistles and written well before 892 CE could theoretically have served as a source for the Saint Petersburg copy. The earliest is London, BL, Add. 14479, completed in 845 AG / 534 CE at the expense of an unidentified commis-

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67 For the icon, the head-to-body ratio is about 1:5–5.6 (Sts Paul, Peter, Nicholas) and 1:6.2 (St John Chrysostom), against 1:6.8 for both figures in the miniature.

68 von Tischendorf 1847, 52.

69 Leroy 1974b; Brock 2004.

sioner living near Homs on behalf of a monastery in Edessa.[70] This is followed by London, BL, Add. 14478 of 933 AG / 622 CE, commissioned by one John bar Sergius of Halūgā near Sĕrūgh (*dixit* Wright), now Seruç in central Turkey.[71] Finally, London, BL, Add. 14448 is dated 1012 AG / 80 AH, corresponding to 699/700 CE, thus, a good century before the establishment of the Mesopotamian community at Dayr al-Suryān.[72] These volumes were obviously not made in Wādī al-Naṭrūn. An additional note in Add. 14478 mentions that it was brought to the monastery by Moses of Nisibis (very probably in 931/932; see above), and it remains unclear whether the two other manuscripts had already been transferred well before 892. The only Syriac Pauline Epistles known to have been in the monastery at that time is a fifth- or sixth-century century copy, also preserved in the Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka in Saint Petersburg (N.S. Syr. 3). A Syriac note on fol. 2ʳ states that it was rebound by the priest Yuḥanon bar Maqari, or John the (spiritual) son of Macarius. This Yuḥanon was the abbot of Dayr al-Suryān between Maqari and Moses in the last decade of the ninth and early tenth centuries (see below).[73]

Significantly, notes in several Syriac manuscripts written in Dayr al-Suryān between 893/894 CE (1205 AG) and 903/904 CE (1215 AG) reveal that Yuḥanon not only participated in binding older manuscripts, but also translated texts from Coptic.[74] Against this background, it is difficult to see how the translation of a Syriac source into Arabic can be reconciled with the picture of a community that prioritised the expansion and preservation of its collection of manuscripts written in Syriac.[75] Another point of concern is the discrepancy between the age of the manuscript and the relatively late introduction of Arabic into Egyptian Christian writings in the tenth century – considerably later than in Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia.[76] Bearing these objections in mind, another possibility is that Arab N.F. 327 may have been written in another part of the Middle East rather than in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Vevian Zaki's observation that its text is 'known for its East Syriac readings and Qurʾanic extensions' supports this assumption.[77] From this perspective, the manuscript may be one of many that were transferred from Mesopotamia and

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[70] Wright 1870, CXXXV, 86.

[71] Wright 1870, CXLI, 90–92.

[72] Wright 1870, LXIV, 41–42.

[73] Innemée, Ochała and Van Rompay 2015, 174–175 (Van Rompay).

[74] Innemée, Ochała and Van Rompay 2015, 173–180 (Van Rompay).

[75] On the question of the translation of Coptic texts into Syriac in the ninth century and later into Arabic in Dayr al-Suryān, see Toda 2012, 64, 112.

[76] Rubenson 1996. For the earliest Bible translations in Arabic, see Griffith 2013, 97–121.

[77] Zaki 2020, 235.

Syria to Dayr al-Suryān over time and rebound there, in this case, with the addition of a presumably locally made, earlier frontispiece.

Dayr al-Suryān is also famous for the spectacular wall paintings in the church of al-ʿAḏrāʾ (the Virgin), dating from the seventh to the thirteenth century.[78] Given that the Arabic Saint Petersburg Epistles were completed in 892 CE, a recently discovered decoration programme in the nave of al-ʿAḏrāʾ with Coptic and Syriac inscriptions commemorating the death of Abbot Maqari of Tagrit in 1200 AG / 889 CE and commissioned by his successor Yuḥannon, mentioned above, deserves a closer look. The scenes include, amongst others, the usual double composition of Christ in Glory and the Virgin Enthroned; two equestrian saints, the deceased's patron saint Macarius, and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Paradise.[79] Although contemporary with Arab N.F. 327, there are no compelling art historical arguments to link this series of murals to its illustration. There are no convincing iconographic or stylistic analogies between the figures in the murals and those in the miniature: The wall paintings lack the latter's classicising flavour, being considerably flatter and more linear.

The church of al-ʿAḏrāʾ was extensively decorated in the eighth century, as evidenced by the remains of earlier Coptic-inscribed encaustic murals that have been gradually uncovered and restored by the Deir al-Surian Conservation Project since the 1990s. The combination of common formal features with a wide variety of brushwork, not to mention the considerable size of the decorated surface, suggests that the painting project was entrusted to a team rather than a single artist, or was spread over a longer period of time. The best preserved and most artistically appealing scene is located in the conch at the west end of the nave, depicting the Annunciation between the prophets Isaiah, Moses, Elijah and Daniel (Fig. 8).[80] The encaustic colours give the representation an incomparable freshness, enhanced by strong shadows, the intensity of which surpasses the comparable shadows in the miniature. It is striking that the garments of the figures in the wall paintings show similar drapery patterns to those of the miniature, including the combination of black and white outlines.

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78 For the restorations in Dayr al-Suryān, see the studies consulted, <http://deiralsurian.uw.edu.pl/>, and <https://www.facebook.com/DeirAlSurianConservationProject> (both accessed on 8 September 2023).

79 Innemée, Ochała and Van Rompay 2015. Some of the scenes remain to be published.

80 Innemée 1995; van Moorsel 1995; Immerzeel 2017, 101, plate 41.

Fig. 8: Conch painting: Annunciation; church of al-ʿAḏrāʾ, Dayr al-Suryān; eighth century; photograph: author/Paul van Moorsel Centre, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Fig. 9: Conch painting: Virgin of the Epiphany; church of al-ʿAḏrāʾ, Dayr al-Suryān; eighth century; photograph: author/Paul van Moorsel Centre, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Another fresh-coloured but more damaged depiction in the church is the Epiphany, located in the northern conch, within the space (*khūrus*) between the nave and the sanctuary (*haykal*; Fig. 9).[81] Although stylistically reminiscent of the Annunciation, some significant differences indicate that this scene was painted by other artists working in the same pictorial tradition. The lower *khūrus* walls display a number of saintly figures, but most of them are in such a poor state of preservation that their recognisability had to be enhanced by retouching and filling in the gaps. It is possible to discern the same classicising elements as in the conch scenes, but generally, too little remains to make a credible comparison with the illustration. Only the retouched depiction of Sts Luke (left) and Barnabas (right) on the north wall seems to retain enough original detail to meet this challenge (Fig. 10).[82] Rendered in full length and frontal view, the saints correspond compositionally with the figures in the miniature. Particularly noteworthy is the correspondence between the drapery patterns and white outlining, and, in terms of proportions, the head-to-body ratio is 1:6.8 in both cases is particularly noteworthy. The largely reconstructed faces of the Apostles are not considered here, but there is a striking similarity between the facial features of St Timothy and those of the Virgin in the Epiphany (Figs 6, 9). These similarities include the strong contrast between highlights and shadows, the large eyes, the narrow, straight nose bridge, the reddish blush on the cheeks and the triangular corners of the thin, brown-red mouths.

While the miniature perfectly mimics the stylistic formulae of Dayr al-Suryān's eighth-century murals, there are also tangible links with contemporary, though badly damaged paintings at Dayr ʾAbū Maqār, some 12 km south-east of Dayr al-Suryān. The features of St Timothy and the Virgin of the Epiphany reappear in the portraits of the Virgin and an archangel (Gabriel?) painted on wooden roundels, acquired from Dayr ʾAbū Maqār by the German prince Johann Georg Herzog zu Sachsen on the eve of the First World War and now in the Landesmuseum Mainz (Fig. 11).[83] The use of these extraordinary tondos can still be seen in the central *haykal* of the church of St Macarius, where similar 'head' panels remain attached to the faded images of the Twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse – an extraordinary application not found elsewhere.[84] In brief, Dayr al-Suryān's team of painters also seems to have worked in Dayr ʾAbū Maqār and undoubtedly

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81 Innemée 2011; Immerzeel 2017, 101–102, plates 42–43. The church originally had a triconch at the east end, which was transformed into the present *khūrus* and *haykal* in the early tenth century.

82 Innemée, Van Rompay and Sobczynski 1999, 173–176, illus. 6–10; Innemée and Van Rompay 2002, 246–248, plates 2–5.

83 Herzog zu Sachsen 1914, 69–70, figs 225–226; Immerzeel 2017, 102, plate 46; Leroy 1982, 25–26, fig. 4.

84 Leroy 1982, 23–27, diagram A.

also in other Coptic settlements in Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Against this background, the obvious suspicion that the manuscript was kept and rebound in Dayr al-Suryān may be too narrowly formulated: Dayr ʾAbū Maqār, where von Tischendorf had done good business in 1844, could be a no less serious candidate. In summary, our current state of knowledge allows us to attribute the illustration to Wādī al-Naṭrūn with a reasonable degree of certainty, particularly based on stylistic arguments. However, this conclusion does not necessarily imply that von Tischendorf himself took the volume from one of the monasteries in the area. He may also have obtained it from an unidentified intermediary source, such as an antiquities dealer or a priest of a church in Cairo.

Fig. 10: Wall painting: Sts Luke and Barnabas; church of al-ʿAḏrāʾ, Dayr al-Suryān; eighth century; photograph: author/Paul van Moorsel Centre, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Fig. 11: Panel painting: Head of the Virgin; from Dayr ʾAbū Maqār; Mainz, Landesmuseum; eighth century; photograph: archive Paul van Moorsel Centre, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

4 Conclusions

Our search for connections between monumental church art in the Middle East and manuscript illuminations has yielded several promising matches, but they do not stand up to critical scrutiny. The first case concerns the iconographic links between the scenes representing St Theodore the Oriental in the excavated church of Tebtunis in the Fayyum, and in the manuscript M.613, produced in the same city in the early tenth century. Given that the illustration predates the mural by several centuries, it may, at most, have been inspired by an earlier monumental scene that has not survived.

As discussed above, the Nursing Virgin scene in London, BL, Or. 6782, written in the Fayyum in 989/990 CE, probably reflects a wall painting because of the architectural background elements and its likeness to this scene in the hermitage of Father Mena Panau near Dayr ʾAbū Maqār (943/944 CE). Although the iconographic similarities are striking and the mural is the earliest of the two, a direct connection is unlikely because the sites are too far apart. In this case, the illustrator may also have been inspired by a nearby mural, also lost. On a more critical note, influences could theoretically also have been transmitted indirectly; the copying of miniatures from other manuscripts was undoubtedly common practice and it is

difficult, if not impossible, to establish when and where the hypothetical monumental prototype was created.

Regarding the Saint Petersburg manuscript Arab N.F. 327 of 892 CE and the possible links of its miniature to monumental ecclesiastical art, both St Catherine's Monastery and Wādī al-Naṭrūn have been investigated as possible provenances. Art historical considerations tip the balance in favour of the latter location. The best match is found in the eighth-century murals in Dayr al-Suryān, painted when the population was still entirely Coptic. Such an origin is all the more plausible given that the Pauline Epistles in question were translated from Syriac, the language of the Mesopotamian Miaphysite monks who lived in the monastery from the early ninth century onwards. However, this does not mean that the volume was written in Dayr al-Suryān; it is more likely that it had arrived there from Mesopotamia or Syria sometime after 892 CE. The time gap between the creation of the illustration in the eighth century and the writing of the manuscript supports Weitzmann's theory that the illustration was originally part of a Coptic (or Greek) manuscript. Going further, the current state of affairs allows us to shift our attention from the writing of the manuscript to the process of its care. To follow this line of thought, imagine that the book had to be rebound after its arrival in Egypt. At this stage of the process, a probably Coptic monk in charge of this task had the idea of reusing a contextually appropriate illustration taken from an earlier Coptic manuscript. Accustomed to placing the frontispiece at the beginning of a Coptic text, the bookbinder mistakenly inserted the page at the end of the Arabic text out of habit. It should be noted that it is conceivable that this person lived and worked in Dayr al-Suryān or one of the settlements nearby, such as Dayr 'Abū Maqār, where the same eighth-century muralists also left their traces. This suggests that the miniature may have been taken from a manuscript in the library of one of these monasteries. In view of the uncertainties above concerning the provenance and production process of the manuscript prior to the addition of the illustration and its subsequent whereabouts, it is advisable to provisionally assess Wādī al-Naṭrūn as the most likely origin of the rebound volume, without further specification of who brought it from there and when.

Within the broader perspective of Middle Eastern Christian art, the present study confirms that the process of identifying direct connections between specific miniatures and works of monumental art is indeed as complex as expected, although no stone has been left unturned. The main achievement is the well-founded contextualisation of the Saint Petersburg miniature within the artistic production of Wādī al-Naṭrūn in the eighth century, even if the history of the manuscript itself remains a mystery. However much it contributes to the discussion of the

connections between monumental and manuscript art, it is to be expected that this exceptional case will remain unique.

Finally, an interesting outcome of this research is the remarkable similarities between the Saint Petersburg miniature and the eighth-century murals at Wādī al-Naṭrūn, on the one hand, and the four Sinaitic panels mentioned, on the other. These analogies challenge us to further explore the possibility of artistic links between these works of art and consider, in the future, the attribution of the icons to an Egyptian atelier. However, one burning question remains unanswered. Given that the icons and murals discussed here had all been executed in the encaustic painting technique, one wonders whether the miniature was also encaustic. A conclusive chemical analysis of the pigments and binders would add much to our knowledge and pave the way for further evidence.

Abbreviations

BAV = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
BL = London, British Library.
CLM = Coptic Literary Manuscript.
MLM = New York, The Morgan Library & Museum.

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François Pacha Miran
Patrons, Donors and Workshops:
The Making of a Syriac Lectionary

Abstract: Illuminated gospel lectionaries stand out among the artistic productions of Syriac Christians during the Abbasid Period. The making of these luxurious books, however, remains partially shrouded in mystery. A series of clues shed light on the identity of patrons and craftsmen, the functioning of artistic command, the geographical location of workshops, and the materials employed by the scribes and painters. Based on the evidence of colophons, owners' notes, literary sources and material studies, this article aims to provide a synthesis of current knowledge about Syriac workshops and their practices.

1 Introduction: Spreading the lectionary

The many studies that have focused on Syriac illuminated manuscripts attest to the importance of transmitting sacred texts for the Christian communities of northern Mesopotamia. Unfortunately, literary sources rarely mention the technical conditions under which the books were written and adorned. The historian wishing to shed light on this essential aspect of Syriac culture must therefore rely on the testimony of the manuscripts themselves. Material evidence is indeed as precious as it is discreet. Yet, the scattered notes written by scribes and owners provide a wealth of clues as to the conditions in which manuscripts were commissioned and produced. Most of the Syriac copyists mentioned carefully the places and conditions in which they worked and the date of completion of their work; on the other hand, more than one book bears the marks of its successive owners. In doing so, both scribes and patrons provided precious clues to their social and religious status; what's more, they left enough traces to reconstruct, albeit partially, the genesis of luxurious manuscripts.

Such evidence coincides with a twofold revolution that occurred within the Syriac communities during the Abbasid era. From the early eleventh to the late thirteenth century, the unprecedented rise of lavishly illustrated manuscripts was indeed paralleled by the diffusion of a new type of liturgical book: the gospel lectionary. Usually referred to as 'gospel of the separate readings' ('*ewangeliyōn d-purrāš qeryānē*), this book consisted of a collection of evangelical pericopes intended for vespers, matins, and the Eucharist of Sundays and feast days, following

the ecclesiastical calendar.[1] By the end of the tenth century, the gospel lectionary had almost entirely replaced the Four Gospel book (*ṭeṭraʾewangeliyōn*) formerly used in the liturgy.[2] It is worth noting that this phenomenon affected simultaneously the two main Syriac churches that shared the vast highlands of northern Mesopotamia, i.e. the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church.[3]

Admittedly, the twenty-six illustrated Syriac lectionaries preserved today seem few in number compared with the dozens of undecorated specimens that were written during the Abbasid era.[4] When adorned with miniatures, or copied with gold and silver inks, the high material value of these books turned them into jealously guarded treasures, sometimes offered to eminent prelates or prestigious churches. But the sacred status of the lectionary did not depend entirely on its eventual ornamentation. As part of a symbolic microcosm that condensed the universe to the dimensions of the church, the book that contains the Word of God was ceremoniously displayed on a lectern before the doors of the sanctuary. By recalling the Lord on the Cross, the lectionary embodied the silent presence of the Logos in the midst of the faithful, and was thus solemnly incensed, venerated and proclaimed.[5]

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1 The oldest Syriac readings system is attested in Mārūtā of Maypherqaṭ's recension of the *Apostles' Doctrine*, canons 2–4, 6–7, 9, and also in the manuscript London, BL, Add. 14528, quoted by Burkitt 1923, 303–304; see also Rouwhorst 2017, 208–210. As underlined by Brock 2006, 270 and Rouwhorst 2017, 205–208, the chronological reading of the gospels had been replaced early by the proclamation of sequences of variable length, closely linked with the liturgical calendar that developed from this time. Concerning the Old Testament readings in the Syriac tradition, see also Baumstark 1921; Jenner 1993.

2 Brock 2006, 270; Rouwhorst 2017, 214. Similar evolutions have been observed in Mesopotamia, the Caucasus and Byzantium. On the genesis of Armenian and Georgian gospel lectionaries, see Renoux 2001; Janeras 2005, 73–79; on Byzantine lectionaries, Burns 1982; on the liturgy of Jerusalem and Constantinople, Engberg 1987; Janeras 2005, 82. According to Rouwhorst 2017, 212–216, the Syrian Orthodox Church maintained the ancient practice of indicating the rubrics in the margins of Four Gospel books at least until the twelfth century.

3 From the sixth century onwards, East and West Syriac manuscripts attest to the development of two independent and increasingly divergent liturgical traditions. It seems, however, that reading practices evolved more freely in the West Syriac tradition: medieval lectionaries attest to the development of several local usages each with its own variants. On the contrary, the East Syriac calendar had been definitively standardised by the seventh century by the catholicos Īšōʿyahb III (649–659).

4 An overview of the main collections gives an idea of this ample corpus, which includes manuscripts belonging to the West Syriac, East Syriac and Melkite traditions. See Appendix.

5 Concerning the role of the book in East and West Syriac liturgies, and its place within a cosmological conception of the church that spread throughout Mesopotamia from the seventh century onwards, see Loosley 2012, 88, 98–102.

Similar to any other liturgical book, making a lectionary involved various craftsmen charged with specific tasks that required long and patient training. Scribes, painters and binders, thus, formed a solid team which collaborated for weeks or even months, demanding an accurate and thorough organisation. A host of technical steps succeeded each other from the acquisition of the materials – parchment, inks and pigments – to the delivery of the book: the ruling of the pages, copying of the text, illumination, numbering of the quires and binding. Yet only eight of the twenty-six illuminated Syriac lectionaries preserved from the eleventh to the thirteenth century still contain a colophon or owners' notes that enable us to identify their authors, patrons or donors.[6] The origin, name and status of the craftsmen, just as their investment at each stage of the work, remain therefore difficult to determine. It is no easier to identify the patrons who commissioned the manuscripts or the places for which they were intended.

The scarcity of written sources encourages us to consider also some technical, iconographic and stylistic aspects of book illumination. Fortunately, the painted miniatures, frontispieces and quire marks provide additional clues about their authors, that sometimes confirm the colophons' evidence. Added to this is the occasional account of medieval chroniclers, who sometimes referred to renowned scribes or precious manuscripts. Taken as a whole, this diverse material enables a partial reconstruction of the issues revolving around the commission of liturgical books and the functioning of workshops.

2 The craftsmen: Monks, clerics or laymen?

2.1 The role of monasteries

Firstly, it is necessary to reconsider the widespread view of monastic scriptoria, shaped by the model of Western European monasteries. For almost a century, it was thought that monks were the main, if not the only actors in the production of liturgical books, be they copyists or painters.[7] Such an assertion can be explained by the prominent role played by the monasteries in the preservation and transmission of Syriac literature – as shown by the intense translation and editing activity that occurred in West Syriac circles from the seventh century onwards.[8]

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6 Leroy 1964, 225–233, 261–332, 350–396; Pacha Miran 2021b, vol. 2, 15–423.

7 Leroy 1964, 432.

8 Debié 2010, 146–147; Farina 2018.

Indeed, some scribes and painters undeniably belonged to monastic communities. This fact is attested by two lectionaries from the mid-eleventh century: London, BL, Or. 3372, and Berlin, SB, Sachau 304 (Figs 1–2).[9] According to their colophons, they were both written by a hierodeacon (*dayroyō wa-mšammšonō*) named ʿAmmanūʾēl, from the monastery of Qarṭmin, in the region of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn. A hieromonk (*dayroyō w-qaššīšō*) called Peṭrōs, member of the same community, was among the craftsmen who helped ʿAmmanūʾēl with the making of BL Or. 3372:[10]

ܚܕܬ ܚܛܝܐ ܕܝܪܝܐ ܒܫܡܐ ܐܢܬ ܟܬܒ ܗܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܦܪܝܫܐ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ܂ ܟܠ ܕܦܓܥ ܒܗ ܢܨܠܐ ܥܠܘܗܝ܂ ܘܥܠ ܦܛܪܘܣ ܕܝܪܝܐ ܘܩܫܝܫܐ ܐܠܘ ܡܪܝ ܢܝܚܐ ܩܫܝܫܐ ܥܠܡܝܐ ܐܚܘܗܝ ܕܥܡܠܘ ܥܡܗ ܒܨܘܪܬ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܘܒܟܪܘܟܝܗ܂ (fol. 135ᵛ).

ʿAmmanūʾēl, a sinner, monk [only] by name, wrote this book of the separated readings of the holy Gospel. May anyone who finds it pray for him, and for Peṭrōs, monk and priest, and Mor Niḥē the secular priest, his brothers, who worked with him in the illustration of this book and its binding.[11]

The lectionary BnF syriaque 356, written in the region of Melitene in the early thirteenth century, also mentions several members of the monastic community for which it was intended.[12] At the beginning of the volume, the interlace frame that surrounds a prophylactic cross (fol. 1ᵛ) includes a severely damaged inscription. The names it contains, no longer legible, frequently follow the monastic title *rabban* ('our master'). The frontispiece of the first reading (fol. 2ᵛ), better preserved, also attests to the involvement of a monastic team (Fig. 3):

9 On BL Or. 3372, see Lee 1831, 22, no. 113; Margoliouth 1899, 16; Buchthal and Kurz 1942, 17, no. 43; Leroy 1964, 261–267, plate 65–66; Hunt 1985, 130; Snelders 2010, 393; Smine 2017. On SB Sachau 304, see Sachau 1899, vol. 1, 27–32; Köhnert 1932; Fiey 1963; Leroy 1964, 367–371, plate 125, 1–4 and 126, 1–4; Hunt 1985, 130; Palmer 1986; Palmer 1989; Balicka-Witakowska 1999; Raby and Brock 2014–2016; Pacha Miran forthcoming a.
10 An interesting fact is that the Berlin manuscript belongs to the East Syriac tradition, while ʿAmmanūʾēl and his brothers, as nephews of the Syrian Orthodox bishop of Qarṭmin, belonged to the West Syriac Church. This unparalleled example suggests that members of both Syriac Churches could have been involved in the making of liturgical books intended for the rival community.
11 Translation adapted from Raby and Brock 2014–2016. Unless otherwise stated, all transcriptions and translations are the author's; most of them have been revised after Leroy 1964.
12 On this manuscript, see Nau 1911, 310; Leroy 1944; Leroy 1964, 409–411, plate 5, 2; 16, 3; 57, 2; Briquel Chatonnet 1997, 21–23.

ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܕܒܛܝܒܘܬܟ ܠܚܛܝܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܕܗܢܐ ܘܪܫܡ ܂ܘ ܝ ܘܫܒܘܩ ܒܚܢܢܟ ܠܪܒܢ ܒܪܨܘܡܐ ܘܠܪܒܢ ܕܘܝܕ ܘܠܪܒܢ ܨܥܝܕ ܘܐܦ ܠܗܘ
ܗܢܐ ܗܢܐ ܣܥܘܪܐ ܠܣܥܘܪܐ ܘܪ ܚܢܐܠ [...] ܘܢ ܚܕܐ ܠܟܠ ܘܠܟܠ ܕܥܕܪܘ ܒܡܠܬܐ ܘܒܥܒܕܐ ܘܟܠܡܢ ܕܥܕܪ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ܂ (fol. 2ᵛ).

Jesus God, sanctify by your goodness the sinner Īšōʿ who wrote and drew these things. And forgive, by your mercy, Rabban Barṣawmō and Rabban Dawīd and Rabban Ṣaʿīd and also the blessed Rabban Dānīʾēl [...], head of our monastery, and everyone who helped by word or in action. Amen, Amen.

Fig. 1: Ornament and colophon mentioning the scribe ʿAmmanūʾēl. East Syriac lectionary, Qarṭmin, Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, mid eleventh century. SB Sachau 304, fol. 195ʳ. © SB, Fotostelle.

Fig. 2: Ornament and colophon mentioning the scribe ʿAmmanūʾēl and his brothers Peṭrōs and Nīḥē. West Syriac lectionary, Qarṭmin, Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, eleventh century. BL Or. 3372, fol. 135ᵛ. After Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 48, plate 15.

Fig. 3: Interlace frontispiece with the signature of the scribe Īšōʿ. Fragment of a West Syriac lectionary, Melitene or Edessa, early thirteenth century. BnF syriaque 356, fol. 2ᵛ. © gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

The lectionary Midyat, MG, 5 (1226–1227 CE) was also signed by a hieromonk called Sohdō, who worked for the cathedral church of Mor Sobō in Ḥaḥ (Anıtlı).[13] His effort was apparently supported by the village's inhabitants, both clerics and laymen, who offered him gifts and help:

ܐܬܟܬܒ ܗܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܠܥܡܐ ܒܪܝܟܐ ܚܐܚ ܩܣܛܪܐ ܠܥܕܬܐ ܪܒܬܐ ܕܣܗܕܐ ܒܪܝܟܐ ܡܪܝ ܣܘܒܐ ܒܚܦܝܛܘܬܐ ܘܒܬܪܥܝܬܐ ܕܩܫܝ̈ܫܐ [...] ܬܘܒ ܦܥܡܗ ܐܬܟܬܒ ܒܝܘܡ [...]
ܗܘ ܕܟܬܒ ܓܒܪܐ ܚܛܝܐ ܕܡܠܐ ܡܘܡ̈ܐ ܘܟܐܒ̈ܐ ܣܗܕܐ ܕܘܝܐ ܘܡܚܝܠܐ ܣܢܝܐ ܒܟܠ [...] ܕܝܪܝܐ ܒܫܡܐ ܘܩܫܝܫܐ ܒܟܘܢܝܐ ܘܪܚܝܩ [...] ܡܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܟܘܢ̈ܝܐ ܒܣܘܥܪ̈ܢܘܗܝ ܘܒܢ̈ܝܫܐ [...] (fol. 322ʳ).

> This book has been written for the blessed village of Ḥāḥ Qaṣṭrō, for the great church of the blessed martyr Mor Sobō, thanks to the diligence and to the expenses and exhaustion assumed by the priests, deacons and faithful of this village. [...] [The one who] wrote is a sinful man full of faults and pains, the unfortunate and weak Sohdō, detestable in all things[14], monk [only] by name and priest [only] by his title, but far away from these titles through his acts and gestures.

Two years later, the lectionary Mardin, CFM, 38 (1229–1230 CE) was written in the same place by another hieromonk, whose name is unfortunately no longer legible.[15] He, nevertheless, asked for prayers for his brethren, the monks:

ܗܘ ܕܟܬܒ ܓܒ[...] [...] ܗܘ ܕܟܬܒ ܓܒܪܐ [...] ܕܡܠܐ ܡܘܡܐ ܘܟܐܒ̈ܐ [...] ܣܢܝܐ ܘܫܝܛܐ ܩܫܝܫܐ ܒܟ̣ܠ ܣܢܝܐ ܕܝܪܝܐ ܒܫܡܐ ܘܩܫܝܫܐ ܒܟܘܢܝܐ ܘܪܚܝܩ [...] ܗܘ ܕܟܬܒ [...] ܐܠܐ ܟܠ ܚܟܝܡܐ ܐܝܢܐ ܕܗܠܝܢ ܣܘܪ̈ܛܐ ܡܫܟܚ [...] ܘܒܨܠܘܬܐ ܕܚܘܒܐ ܘܕܚܟܡܬܐ ܢܨ̈ܠܐ ܥܠܝ [...] ܘܚܠܦ ܐܚܝ [...] ܐܚܝ ܪܒܢ ܐܝܣܚܩ [...] ܘܣܓܝ ܚܟܝܡܐ ܕܝܪܝܐ [...] ܘܡܦܪ̈ܢܣ ܠܝ ܒܟܠ ܡܕܡ. ܘܬܘܒ ܨܠܘ ܥܠ ܕܪ̈ܐ ܕܕܝܪ̈ܝܐ ܣ̈ܒܐ [...] ܘܪܒܢ ܡܘܫܐ ܬܘܒ. ܘܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܢܫܒܘܩ ܠܟ̣ܠ ܐܢܫ ܕܒܚܘܒܗ ܢܨ̈ܠܐ ܥܠܝ (fol. 295ᵛ) [...].

> [The one who] wrote, a [man] [...] full of impurity and pain [...], vile and despicable, priest hateful in that, is a monk [only] by name and priest [only] by his title, but through his acts and gestures far away from his names. But I beg and ask every wise man who finds or reads these lines, by the [...] of a loving and wise prayer, to pray for me [...] and for [...] my brother, Rabban Isḥoq, a [...] and very wise monk [who] [...] and spends himself and helps me in everything. And pray again for the generations of venerable monks [...] and Rabban Mūšē also, and may the Son of God forgive each one who, in his love, prays for me.

Finally, the lectionary Vatican City, BAV, Vat. sir. 559 (1260 CE) was written by a man apparently linked to the monastery of Mor Mattay, north-east of Mosul:[16]

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13 On this manuscript, see Socin 1881, 257; Armalet 1913, 672; Leroy 1955, 414–416; Leroy 1964, 321–332, plate 102–110; Harb 1980; Anschütz 1982, 329; Hunt 2001; Zibawi 2009, 149; Bernabò 2017, 262–266, 325–338; Braida and Pavan 2017, 214; Pavan 2017, 51–52.

14 Or 'guilty of all hateful things'.

15 On this manuscript, see Bernabò 2017, 262–266; Braida and Pavan 2017, 206; Pavan 2017, 53–67; Pacha Miran 2021a, 157, fig. 1.

ܥܠܡ ܠܓܡܪܐ ܗܘܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܡܢܐ ... (fol. 250ᵛ).

The writing of the separated readings of the holy separated and arranged gospel, of the four Evangelists, for the whole year, is achieved. It came to its end on Saturday, at the beginning of the month of ʾIyār, in the year 1571 of the Greeks [1260 CE], by the hands of Mūbārak, lesser among the servants of Mattiyē, son of Dawīd, son of Ṣalibō, son of Yaʿqūb, from the fortress named Barṭelli, around Nineveh.

Yet, the scribe modestly described himself as one of the 'servants' (ʿaḇdē) of Mattiyē – namely Mattay, the assumed founder of the monastery in the second half of the fourth century.[17] This unclear term might allude to a monk, but it could also refer to any other person working in the service of the monastic community, even temporarily.

Apart from lectionaries, other illuminated manuscripts intended both for liturgical and scholastic use were probably made by monks, though the evidence remains rare. The New Testament Paris, BnF, syriaque 30 (*c.* 1190 CE) and the Four Gospel book Paris, BnF, syriaque 41 (1188–1204 CE) were written and probably adorned by the hieromonk Šemʿūn, who belonged to a monastery of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn.[18] His name, status, and community are attested by the note he left at the end of the first manuscript and by the latter's colophon:

(BnF syriaque 30, fol. 243ᵛ).ܡܢ ܕܦܓܥ ܒܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܢܨܠܐ ... ܕܟܬܒܗ

May anyone who comes across this book pray, for God's sake, for the sinner Šemʿūn who wrote it.

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16 Concerning the dating of this manuscript and the deciphering of its colophon, see Brock 2012, 41–42. Other references can be found in de Jerphanion 1939a; de Jerphanion 1939b; de Jerphanion 1940; Leroy 1964, 280–302; van Lantschoot 1965, 78; Fiey 1975, 23; Hunt 1985, 120; Smine 1995; Zibawi 1995, 70–71, plate 6–7; Snelders 2010; Smine 2013; Balicka-Witakowska 2015.

17 According to the West Syriac tradition, the monastery was founded in the 363 by a hermit named Mattay who fled from the city of ʾAmid (Diyarbakır) to escape the persecution of Julian the Apostate. Honigmann 1954, 98, doubted whether this story was authentic; he supposed that the monastery was named after Amitay's, father of Jonah the prophet. According to the manuscript Berlin, SB, Syr. 178, Mattay is said to have been martyred in 311, as recalled by Sachau 1899, vol. 2, 575; Baumstark 1922, 193, n. 1; Krüger 1937, 33.

18 On the manuscript BnF syriaque 30, see Zotenberg 1874, 12; Nau 1915; Leroy 1964, 256–257; Chaigne 2012, 258; Juckel 2012, 143, no. 12n2; Balicka-Witakowska, Briquel Chatonnet and Borbone 2015, 263; Juckel 2017, 143. Concerning BnF syriaque 41, see Zotenberg 1874, 14; Baumstark 1915; Nau 1915; Buchthal and Kurz 1942, 19; Leroy 1964, 254–255; Hunt 1985, 129.

ܚܟܒܬ ܕܝ ܐܢܐ ܚܒܘܒܠܐ ܘܚ̈ܝܠܐ. ܥܒܕܐ ܘܝܩܒܪ ܕ ܒܝܫܐܒ ܒܥ̈ܕܐ ܕܝ ܠܐܘ. ܒܝ ܢܒܐ ܚܢܢܐ ܠܚ̈ܝܘܡܘ. ܒܪ ܕܝ ܚܒܘ
ܘܒܝܫܐܒܒ ܚ̈ܕܘܚܒܐܐ ܠܘ̈ܠܘܡܝܐ ܕܝ ܢܝ ܚ̈ܒܘܕܐ ܕܒܝܐ ܐܘ̈ܝ ܒܥ̈ܕܐ ܕܝ. ܒܥ̈ܝܘ ܩܐܝܘ: ܘܩܘܡܝܢ. (BnF syriaque 41, fol. 177ʳ).

[The one who] wrote it is a weak and sinful man, Šemʿūn, priest and monk by name but not by his acts, son of the late Ḥayyō, by his lineage from Middo Qasṭrō, blessed [city], but [attached] by his [monastic] profession to the holy monastery of Bēt Mor Šemʿūn in Qarṭmin.

The lectionary BAV Vat. sir. 559 indicates that the craftsmen who belonged to monastic workshops were not necessarily monks. Further examples are provided by different types of illuminated manuscripts, underlining the complexity of this issue. The psalter London, BL, Add. 7154 (1203 CE), the lectionary Damascus, SOP, 348 (1222 CE) and a collection of anaphoras in Oxford, BodL, Syr. Dawkins 58 (1238 CE), were all written in monasteries on the mountain of Edessa.[19] However, not a single scribe mentioned that he was a monk, nor whether he was linked to the community in anything other than a strictly professional way.

2.2 Deacons and secular priests

In light of these first examples, monks seem to have prevailed in Syriac manuscript production, at least as far as the most luxurious books were concerned. However, it seems that other clerics were sometimes involved. Regardless of whether or not they were also monks, the deacons particularly stand out for their role as copyists and painters. As previously stated, the lectionaries SB Sachau 304 and BL Or. 3372 mentioned above were written by ʿAmmanūʾēl, a deacon who belonged to the monastic community of Qarṭmin. However, we know of another manuscript that was written and adorned by a deacon: the lectionary Damascus, SOP, 353 (1054 CE).[20] The memory of its author, the deacon Peṭrōs of

19 On the psalter BL Add. 7154, see Rosen and Forshall 1838, 8; Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3, 1202; Leroy 1964, 259–261. On the lectionary SOP 348, see Baumstark 1904, 413; Baumstark 1906; Baumstark 1908, 29; Baumstark 1910; Baumstark 1911a, 106–107; Baumstark 1911b; Baumstark 1911c; Dolabani 1930; Hatch 1931, 64–81; Buchthal and Kurz 1942, 12, no. 15; Hatch 1946, 140, plate 90; Dolabani et al. 1994, 603–604. On the manuscript BodL Syr. Dawkins 58, see Payne Smith 1864, cols 229–231, no. 65; Buchthal and Kurz 1942, 18, no. 49; Leroy 1964, 338–341; Gulàcsi 2003; Doumato 2008.
20 On this lectionary, see Leroy 1964, 225–233; Dolabani et al. 1994, 604; Zibawi 1995, 65–67, plate 1–3; Zibawi 2009, 143–149; Snelders 2010; Pacha Miran 2021a, 158, fig. 3 and 159–162.

Melitene, has reached us by means of a note inscribed at the end of the Holy Week readings:

ܕܟܒ ܩܠܟܣܐ ܗܘ ܘܟܬܒ ܘܣܕܪ ܘܬܪܨ ܠܗܢܐ ܣܝܡܬܐ ܪܘܚܢܝܬܐ ܦܛܪܘܣ ܡ̈ܫܡܫܢܐ܂ ܟܕ ܡܢ ܬܪܬܝܢ ܫ̈ܢܝܢ ܕܐܬܓܡܪ ܐܬܩܛܠ ܡܢ ܗ̈ܓܪܝܐ ܡܪ̈ܝܪܐ ܙܒܢܬܐ ܩܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܐܬܘ ܠܡܠܝܛܝܢܝ܂ (fol. 347ᵛ)

> The deacon Peṭrōs, from the city of Melitene, has written, arranged, and put in order this spiritual treasure. Two years after it had been completed, he was killed by the ferocious Turks the first time they came to Melitene.[21]

Nearly two centuries later, the lectionary Paris, BnF, syriaque 355 was also painted by a deacon from Melitene, named Yawseph (Fig. 4).[22] His name appears in the colophon that opens the book (fol. 1ʳ), then reappears as a hidden ornament in the interlace framing the cross on the verso (fol. 1ᵛ):

[...] ܐ̈ܚܝܕܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܡ̈ܢ ܕܠܐܝ ܒܗܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܨ̈ܘܪܬܐ ܕܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ ܕܝ̇ܗ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܠܗܢ ܐܘܠܐ ܕܐ̈ܫܝܡܬ ܒܪܝܫܐ ܕܩܪ̈ܝܢܐ ܕܗܢܐ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܡܝܩܪܐ ܘܩܕܝܫܐ ܘ ܐܝܬ ܝ̈ ܘܡܢ ܡ̈ܢܝܢܐ ܓܒܝܐ ܕܥܣܪ̈ܝܢ ܘ ܥܒܘܕ ܡܨܘܪܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܝܘܣܦ ܡ̈ܫܡܫܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܡܠܝܛܝܢܝ܂ ܒܬܚܘܡܐ ܕܩܦܕܘܩܝܐ܂

> [May] God's mercies be upon all of those who took part in this volume of the images of the economy [of salvation] of Christ our God, which has been placed at the beginning of the readings of this venerable and holy Gospel, which are of the elected number of twenty-four, made by the painter Yawseph, deacon of the city of Melitene, in the confines of Cappadocia.

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21 Further references to this event are found in Michael the Great, *Chronography*, XV, I (ed. Ibrahim 2009, 575; tr. Chabot 1899–1910, vol. 3, 159) and Barhebræus, *Civil Chronicle*, X (ed. Bedjan 1890, 238; tr. Budge 1932, 212–213).
22 On this manuscript, see Scher 1905, 13, no. 17; Nau 1911, 310; Omont 1911; Khoury-Sarkis 1958; Leroy 1964, 268–280; Hunt 1985, 118, 130, 141; Hunt 1991, 345; Hunt 2001, 198; Kominko 2010; Snelders 2010, 175–176.

Fig. 4: Full-page cross framed with the signature of the deacon Yawsep[h] of Melitene. West Syriac lectionary, Melitene, early thirteenth century. BnF syriaque 355, fol. 1[v]. © gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Secular priests – who did not belong to any monastic community – may also have taken part in the making of illustrated liturgical books. Thus, the colophon of the lectionary BL Or. 3372 (fol. 135ᵛ) refers to the binder as a 'priest in the world' (*qaššīšō ʿolmoyō*), a term commonly used to designate secular clergy.[23] This mention was most probably intentional, since the scribe and the painter were respectively named 'monk and deacon' (*dayroyō wa-mšammšonō*) and 'monk and priest' (*dayroyō w-qaššīšō*). The title *mor* ('My Lord'), which precedes the binder's name, was usually given to bishops, but could also distinguish eminent members of the urban clergy.[24]

However, even if clerics were dominant, nothing excludes the possibility that laymen were also involved in the manuscript production. The only clue regarding this hypothesis, though, involves a short marginal note in the lectionary London, BL, Add. 7169, probably written in the early thirteenth century (fol. 8ʳ). According to this note, 'the codex was achieved by the hand of Mūšē, son of Dānīʾēl'.[25] Nothing indicates whether he was solely a scribe, or if he also painted the miniatures. This meagre testimony is admittedly insufficient to confirm that Mūšē was a layman, even though he was neither identified as a monk, nor as a deacon or a priest.

2.3 A craftsmen's family

The evidence above demonstrates that urban clerics – both priests and deacons – were significantly involved in Syriac manuscript production. But if they did not belong to a monastic community, the question arises regarding their social relations, especially when they worked together in the same workshop. In this respect, an exciting hypothesis has been recently formulated by Sebastian Brock, who suggested the existence of families, if not dynasties, of craftsmen. Such networks, nevertheless, seems to have been quite uncommon: they are only revealed through three lectionaries, made in the same workshop during the first half of the eleventh century. We have already mentioned the manuscripts BL Or. 3372 and SB Sachau 304. The third one is the lectionary Damascus, SOP, 12/21, dated to the year 1041 CE.[26]

All their colophons describe the scribe's family relationships in similar terms. ʿAmmanūʾēl is identified as the 'nephew' (*bar ʾaḥō*) of Yūḥannōn, bishop of Ṭūr

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23 Payne Smith 1903, 415.

24 Payne Smith 1903, 298.

25 Leroy 1964, 356.

26 Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 72.

ʿAbdīn and head of the monastery of Qarṭmin. More specifically, BL Or. 3372 emphasises the filiation between Yūḥannōn and ʿAmmanūʾēl, while his brothers Peṭrōs and Nīḥē are mentioned separately (fol. 135ᵛ). One can find a similar order in SOP 12/21: Peṭrōs is described as the 'scribe's brother' rather than the bishop's nephew (fols 201ᵛ–202ʳ). Admittedly, the polysemy of the term ʾaḥō (brother) might suggest that this fraternal relationship was rather more monastic than familial. The third colophon, though, invalidates this theory: Peṭrōs is clearly described as the scribe's 'brother according to flesh and spirit'.[27]

The fame of this brotherhood seems to have been significant to Syrian Orthodox communities, who kept their memory alive. In the late thirteenth century, Barhebræus (1226–1286 CE) mentioned ʿAmmanūʾēl, Peṭrōs and Nīḥē in his *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, turning them into a kind of archetypal workshop. According to him, Yūḥannōn would have restored the use of the ancient *esṭrangelō* script, which had been forgotten, and taught it to his nephews – maybe in the late tenth or early eleventh century.[28] Thus, the scribe's dominant role may have justified enhancing his name and strengthening his relationship with the head of the monastic community. But it should not be forgotten that the colophon of SB Sachau 304 was destroyed early and survives only as a note written in the late fourteenth century (fol. 195ʳ).[29] Since ʿAmmanūʾēl's talents as a calligrapher have remained famous – thanks in part to Barhebraeus's testimony –, it is not surprising that he was highlighted there as a privileged disciple of the bishop.

3 Monastic scriptoria?

The frequent mentions of monks and clerics might suggest that illustrated manuscripts were exclusively produced in monastic workshops, comparable to Western scriptoria. Such an assertion is supported by the large number of monasteries

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27 The last part of the colophon reads ܐܚܘ ܦܓܪ ܘܒܪܘܚ ܕܝܠܗ ܘܪܘܚܢܝܬܐ ('his brother corporally as well as spiritually').

28 Barhebræus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, I, 76 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 1, cols 417–418).

29 This note read as follows: ܟܬܒ ܠܗܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܥܡܢܘܐܝܠ ܕܝܪܝܐ ܘܡܫܡܫܢܐ ܒܫܡܐ ܒܪ ܐܚܘ ܕܝܘܚܢܢ ܐܦܣܩܘܦܐ ܕܕܝܪܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ܕܩܪܛܡܝܢ ܘܐܣܪܗ ܘܚܕܬܗ ܡܟܝܟܐ ܘܚܛܝܐ ܢܓܡܐ ܡܫܡܫܢܐ ܒܫܡܐ ܕܝܕܝܥ ܒܪ ܥܨܪ ܡܢ ܩܪܝܬܐ ܕܓܫܠܘܢܐ (ʿAmmanūʾēl, monk and deacon by name, nephew of Yūḥanon, bishop of the holy monastery of Qarṭmin and Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, wrote this book of the holy Gospel. The humble and sinner Nagmā, deacon by name, known as the son of ʿAsʿar, from the village of Gaṣlūnā, bound it and renewed it in the year 1697 [1386/1387 CE]. Pray for the scribe and the restorator').

mentioned by copyists, attesting to the essential role they played in the medieval book economy. At least six West Syriac manuscripts from the first half of the thirteenth century, including four lectionaries, were undoubtedly made in monastic workshops. Three of them come from the mountain of Edessa, one of the most famous centres of manuscript production since the fifth century.[30] The oldest one is the psalter BL Add. 7154 (1203 CE). It was written by the scribe Šemʿun in a monastery dedicated to the Mother of God, known as Bēt ʾAksnoyē (the 'House of the Pilgrims').[31] The lectionary SOP 348 (1222 CE) and the collection of anaphoras BodL Syr. Dawkins 58 (1238 CE) were both written by a scribe named Bākʰōs, working in another Edessan monastery called Bēt ʾĪḥīdoyē (the 'House of the Solitaries').[32]

Two lectionaries from the same period also attest to the existence of monastic workshops in the centre of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn. Their testimonies, however, concern one and the same place, which seems to have been of particular importance for manuscript production. Two lectionaries from the same period also attest to the existence of monastic workshops in Ṭūr ʿAbdīn: MG 5 (1226–1227 CE) and CFM 38 (1229–1230 CE). Both were written by the monk Sohdō in the monastery of Mor Yaʿqūb Ḥbīšoyō ('Saint James the Recluse'), near the village of Ṣālaḥ (Barıştepe).[33] Thus, although the activity of this workshop seems to have been relatively brief (1226–1230), the manuscripts written by Šemʿun and Bākʰōs on the mountain of Edessa suggest the dynamism of book production in this area during more than three decades (1203–1238).

The latest dated manuscript, the lectionary BAV Vat. sir. 559, testifies to the survival of certain monastic workshops even after the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258. Admittedly inspired by the very similar London, BL, Add. 7170 (1216–1220 CE), this luxurious book was achieved on the first day of ʾIyār (May) of the year 1260 CE, allegedly at the monastery of Mor Mattay, near Mosul. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether the scribe actually worked there. The colophon (fol. 250ᵛ) only suggests that the scribe 'served' the monastery, and states that the lectionary was intended for its church:

ܐܢ ܒܚܝܠܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܒܪ ܗܘ ܒܪ ܥܡܗ ܒܪ ܥܒܕ [...] ܘܦܢܩܝܬܐ ܐܩܬܝܢ̈ܐ ܕܩܘܫܬܐ ܚܠܦ [...] ܘܒܕܝܪܐ ܐܬܟܬܒܬ ܩܘܡ.
ܐܢ ܒܚܝܠܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܫܒܚܐ. ܠܡܐ [...] ܘܦܚܡܗ. ܠܚܕܥܣܪ̈ ܡܬܟܒܐ ܕܩܘܫ ܚܠܦ, ܗܘܐ ܘܗܘ, ܗܝ, ܐܠܡܬܝܪ̈. ܕܒܝܢܬ̈ ܗ(ܐ) ܐܬܝܗܒܬ. ܩ(ܠܦ).

(fol. 250ᵛ)

30 Brock (2012, 45) lists thirty-three manuscripts written in the mountain of Edessa out of five hundred and two manuscripts copied between 411 and 1238. Most of them were of West Syriac origin, while only two belonged to the Melkite tradition.

31 Leroy 1964, 259–261. One could also translate this as 'House of the Foreigners' (ܐܟܣܢܝܐ).

32 Leroy 1964, 318, 338–341.

33 Pavan 2017, 52, n. 197 and 53, n. 205.

Rabban ʿAbdō ʾAlohō, son of Kūšū, son of Šemʿūn [...] took care of this gospel with the diligence and firmness of the zeal in the works [...] of virtue, and he offered it [...] to the holy altar of Bēt Mattay, Mor Zakkay and Mor ʾAḇrohom, on Mount Alfaf.

The lectionary BL Add. 7170, whose similarities with BAV Vat. sir. 559 have been abundantly studied, was produced some forty years before (1216–1220). Its exact place of production, however, remains unknown since the colophon is now lost. Jules Leroy was inclined to situate this workshop in the monastery of Mor Ḥananyō near Mardin, in western Ṭūr ʿAbdīn.[34] Although this hypothesis is debatable, it tends to prove that Mor Mattay was not the only centre of manuscript production in northern Mesopotamia during the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, and regardless of the uncertainties about the workshops' exact localisations, the examples above attest that illustrated lectionaries could have been made directly in the place where they were intended to be used. The making of such liturgical books then benefited from the skills of one or several members of the community, but could also involve external craftsmen.

The prevalence of monastic workshops is confirmed by non-illustrated lectionaries, particularly those belonging to the East Syriac tradition. The monastery of Rabban Hormizd, near Alqoš, is attested as a place of production in the colophon of the manuscript London, BL, Add. 17923 (1073–1074 CE) as early as the second half of the eleventh century.[35] This monastery was mentioned again several times at the beginning of the twelfth century: firstly, in London, BL, Egerton 681 (1206–1207 CE), then in Diyarbakır, Chaldean Archbishopric, Cod. 10 (1207–1208 CE) and, finally, in Harvard, Houghton Library, Syr. 141 (June 1208 CE).[36] Thus, the revival of Syrian Orthodox workshops at the turn of the thirteenth century seems to have been echoed in the Church of the East, where few dated manuscripts predate the 1180s. At this time, the monastery of Mār Mīkāʾēl in Mosul must have played a decisive role in this new impetus for book production. Two lectionaries were indeed produced there: Mosul, Chaldean patriarchate, Cod. 13 (1189 CE), and Harvard, Houghton Library, Syr. 3 (August 1226 CE).[37]

Some lesser-attested localities also suggest the dynamism and diversity of manuscript production in several other regions of northern Mesopotamia. An East

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34 Also known as 'Dayrō d-Kurkmō', the 'Saffron Monastery' (Arabic Dayr al-Zaʿfarān, Turkish Deyrulzafaran Manastırı). Leroy 1964, 313, admitted the hypothesis that two experienced painters could have worked simultaneously at Mor Mattay, but on the other hand it seemed to him unusual that two such prestigious lectionaries were made for the same sanctuary.

35 Brock 2012, 29.

36 Scher 1907a, 335; Brock 2012, 31.

37 Scher 1907b, 231–232; Brock 2012, 32.

Syriac lectionary, once kept in the Chaldean patriarchate in Mosul, Cod. 12, was completed at the monastery of Mār ʾAwgēn on Mount Izlā in the year 1186 CE.[38] Its copyist Rabban Ṣlibā, helped by his brother Yaʿqōb, claimed to have written it at the time of Mār ʾĒliyā III ʾAbū Halim (1176–1190 CE) and Mār Yahbalāhā, metropolitan of Nisibis. He also mentioned the church 'of Mart Šmōnī and her sons, in the village of Telmahmad, in the diocese of Daqartā', as the place for which the lectionary was destined. Even if the fate of this manuscript is unknown, it offers a strong argument for the existence of East Syriac monastic workshops in southern Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, that fulfilled commissions intended for village churches during the last decades of the twelfth century. The latest mention of an East Syriac workshop, in the early thirteenth century, concerns the monastery of Mār Yaʿqōb d-Bēt ʿĀbē ('Saint James of the Woods') on the Upper Zab, north-east of Nineveh. This monastery housed the workshop where the manuscript Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Syr. 4 was written in 1217–1218 CE.[39]

However, monastic workshops could have gathered not only monks but also craftsmen of other origins and social statuses. Although part of these books were made by monks, it does not prove that their authors worked within the walls of the monasteries. While there is ample evidence of monastic book production, some lectionaries might have been written and adorned in urban workshops. The manuscript BnF syriaque 355 is an obvious example. This impressive West Syriac lectionary survives in two heterogeneous fragments that were later bound together: the text and reading tables (fols 6–285) are dated to 1514 AG (1202 CE), while the illustrated quire (fols 1–5) may have come from another book, probably made between 1208 and 1220 CE, whose text is almost entirely lost. The colophon (fol. 1ʳ) and the inscription surrounding the opening cross (fol. 1ᵛ) indicate that the full-page paintings were completed 'by the deacon Yawsepʰ in the city of Melitene'.

An additional quire, bound and preserved separately under the shelf mark BnF syriaque 356, contains the only remaining fragments of the original text (fols 2ᵛ–4ᵛ). The inscription hidden in the interlace that tops the vespers reading for the Sunday of the Sanctification of the Church (Fig. 3) mentions the scribe Īšōʿ as 'the sinner who drew and wrote' (ܡܥܡܕ ܕܝܠܟܐ ܕܝ ܪ ܘܟܬܒ). Īšōʿ has been convincingly identified as a famous Edessan monk who lived in the early thirteenth century and was elected as patriarch of Antioch under the name of Yūḥannōn XIV

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38 Scher 1907b, 230. On Mār ʾAwgēn monastery and it crucial role in the history of East Syriac monasticism, see Mahon 1980; Brock 1981, 1–6; Jullien 2008.
39 Brock 2012, 32.

(1208–1220 CE).[40] Considering that Īšōʿ lived on the mountain of Edessa, the fragmentary text preserved in BnF syriaque 356 (fols 2–4) must have been written there or at a monastery in the area. Furthermore, the colophon of BnF syriaque 355 (fol. 1ʳ) states that the text quires, once written, were sent to Melitene to be bound together with the miniatures painted by Yawsepʰ (Fig. 4). It seems, therefore, that two workshops, at least one urban, collaborated in this significant commission.

Once again, the evidence of non-illustrated lectionaries lends strength to the hypothesis of urban workshops. The most interesting topographical mentions are found in East Syriac manuscripts. The lectionary St Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, 22 (1243 CE) was produced in Urmiah, a town on the shores of the eponymous lake.[41] The lectionary BAV Borg. sir. 169 (1284–1285 CE) was produced at Sinjar, on the plain of Nineveh, and the lectionary London, BL, Add. 7173 (1288–1289 CE), in the city of Artok.[42] Of course, in such cases, the only evidence in favour of urban workshops is the lack of any mention of monasteries. Although caution is required, there is a high probability that the scribes would not have consciously forgotten to mention a monastery, if they had worked in such a place.

4 Bishops as patrons, scribes … and painters?

Along with the luxuriousness of the most prestigious lectionaries, some colophons and owners' notes occasionally suggest the involvement of bishops in the making of manuscripts. As heads of the local communities and eminent figures in the ecclesiastical networks, the bishops maintained close relationships with monasteries where they usually resided.[43] Being monks themselves, it would not be sur-

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40 According to several colophons, Īšōʿ wrote a lot of manuscripts before being elected to the patriarchal see. His life was reported by Barhebræus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, I, 93 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 2, cols 618–640), quoted by Leroy 1964, 411. He is not the only patriarch to have borne the name Īšōʿ prior to his election, nor even to have been titled as a 'scribe'. Michael the Great's *Chronography* (tr. Chabot 1899–1910, vol. 3, 171) also referred to Patriarch Yūḥannōn X bar Šūšan (1064–1073) as 'Īšōʿ the Scribe'. Similarly, Michael attributed to Bar Šūšan the copy of many manuscripts, among them a very valuable gospel. This manuscript, now lost, is presumed to have served as a model for the one once preserved in the Syrian Orthodox patriarchate at Ḥoms (1168/1169 CE).

41 Brock 2012, 33.

42 Hatch 1946, 225, plate CLXXIV; Brock 2012, 35.

43 From the exile of Severus of Antioch (518 CE), the Syrian Orthodox ecclesiastical authority turned gradually to an itinerant organisation. Patriarchs and metropolitans habitually stayed in

prising for them to take part in the writing or illumination of liturgical books, be it before, or even after, their episcopal ordination. Bishops, thus, are well attested as patrons and donors in the colophons of several illustrated manuscripts. The lectionary SOP 348 (1222 CE), for instance, was acquired after its achievement by the Syrian Orthodox metropolitan of ʾAmid (Diyarbakır):

ܡܟܐ ܠܣܝܡܬܐ ܗܕܐ ܪܘܚܢܝܬܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܗ ܠܩܕܝܫܐ ܘܛܘܒܬܢܐ ܡܪܝ ܐܝܘܐܢܝܣ ܡܝܛܪܘ ܪܝܫ ܡܝܛܪ ܐܡܝܕ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܡܫܒܚܬܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܢܗܪܝܢ. ܠܫܘܡܠܝ ܬܫܡܫܬܐ ܘܝܘܡܝ ܥܐܕܘܗܝ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܘܕܟܘܠܗ ܟܘܪܣܐ ܕܫܢܬܐ. ܠܕܘܟܪܢܐ (fol. 199ᵛ)

> This spiritual treasure belongs to the venerable saint [bishop] Mor ʾĪwānnīs, supreme metropolitan of ʾAmid, glorious city of Mesopotamia, for the accomplishment of the services and solemnities of the Lord's feasts, and of the whole cycle of the year, for his own liturgical commemoration and his lates', for ever and ever, Amen.

Similarly, at the turn of the thirteenth century, the Syrian Orthodox bishops of Aleppo, Rumnah and Melitene financed the lectionary BnF syriaque 355 alongside three monks and an Armenian nun. Their names, origins and statuses are mentioned in the colophon (fol. 1ʳ) with the sums of money they invested respectively. The monetary term used by the scribe, *zūzē naṣrāyē* (ܙܘܙܐ ܢܨ̈ܪܝܐ), might translate the Arabic *dirham nāṣirī*: a silver and copper currency emitted by the Zangid rulers of Syria from 1175–1176 CE, which was usually minted in Damascus and Aleppo.[44] According to the text, the first – and most important – donation was made by a certain ʾAbū al-Fataḥ of Aleppo, who gave the sum of forty *zūzē naṣrāyē*. The title he bears, *ʾalōnō* (ܐܠܘܢܐ), indicates that he was a bishop or prelate, and suggests that his generous donation was linked to his high ecclesiastical rank.[45] After this, Mor Gregorios of Rumnah – himself a bishop – offered twelve *zūzē*. The colophon also describes the participation of four other figures: three monks from a monastery near Melitene, and an Armenian nun from the same area.

ܡܠܡ ܕܝܢ ܝ ܒܝܬ ܐܠܘܢܐ [...] ܘܩܫܝܫܐ ܩܘܡܩܡܐ ܚܣܝܐ ܕܚܠܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܚܠܒ ܘܝܗܒ ܠܗ ܐܪܒܥܝܢ ܙܘܙܐ ܢܨ̈ܪܝܐ. ܘܒܝܕ ܐܝܕܐ ܕܝܢ ܚܣܝܐ ܡܪܝ ܓܪܝܓܘܪ ܪܘܡܢܐ ܘܝܗܒ ܬܪ̈ܥܣܪ ܙܘܙܐ ܢܨ̈ܪܝܐ ܚܣܢ. ܘܡܢ ܪ̈ܝܫܢܐ ܬܠܬܐ ܕܝܪ̈ܝܐ ܡܢ ܕܝܪܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܒܐ ܡܢ ܡܠܝܛܝܢܝ. ܐܝܕܐ ܕܝܢ ܘܚܕܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ܐܪܡܢܝܬܐ ܕܝܪܝܬܐ ܐܦ ܗܝ ܡܢ ܐܬܪܐ ܗܘ ܟܕ ܗܘ.

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the great monasteries of northern Syria and Mesopotamia, particularly in the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn. Among the main patriarchal residences, before the early ninth century, Briquel Chatonnet and Debié 2017, 78 mention the monasteries of Qennešrē (the 'Eagle's Nest'), on the Euphrates, Gubbō Baroyō (the 'External Cistern'), on the west bank of the river, and Spekulōs (the 'Watchtower'), near Rešʿaynā / Theodosioupolis.

44 Omont 1911, 204; Cahen 1984, 213.

45 Leroy 1964, 273.

These paintings [...] have been made at the expense of the bishop ʾAbū al-Fataḥ of Aleppo: forty *zūzē naṣrāyē*; and of the monk Ḥabbīb from the monastery of Mor Barṣawmō, and of the monk Qūpʰar: twenty *zūzē*; and of the monk ʾĒramyō from the same monastery: seven *zūzē*; and of Mor Gregorios, the saint [bishop] of the city of Rumnah: twelve *zūzē*; and of an Armenian nun from Bēt Ḥesnō, named ʾAškenūrī [ʾAšxenūhi]: twelve *zūzē*.

Finally, the commission was achieved in Melitene, by the entourage of Bishop ʾĪwānnīs. Even if the exact role of this prelate remains unclear, particularly concerning his technical involvement, he, at least, oversaw the last steps of the production and provided his own financial contribution:

ܘܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܗܟܢܐ [...]ܒ[...]ܟܬܝܒܬܐ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܝܗܒ ܟܬ ܟܬܐ ܘܟܬ ܟܬܐ ܡܫܡܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܐܐ ܙܘܙܐ ܢܨܪܝܐ. ܘܒܗܠܝܢ ܗܘܬ
ܟܠܗ ܗܘ ܗܝܟܠܐ [...] ܘܟܬܒ ܗܠܐ ܗ ܝܢ ܗܟ ܠܨܠܡܝܘܢ ܘܗܝܢ ܐ̈ܟܬܒܬܐ ܒܝ ܡܐܬ ܗܘܐ ܘܒ ܘܫܡ ܙܠܝ ܗܠܝܢ ܗܕܗ ܗ ܘܬ ܐ ܗܝ،
ܐܝܟ ܐܝܬ ܘܫܟܠܝ ܗ ܘܐ ܗ ܗ ܘܐ ܠܗܝܟܠܐ ܡܡܠܐ ܠܡܫܡܠܝܘ ܘܝ̈ܕܘ ܐ̈ܚܬܟܝܐ.

Then, after having obtained the complement of hundred *zūzē naṣrāyē*, which were for the paintings and the gilded inscriptions that are on all the quires, the one who had written them [...] and brought them to the painter, in Melitene, and there, they were achieved, in the presence of Mor ʾĪwānnīs, saint [bishop] of this city, God-loving, and he took charge of the achievement and took care of the texts' correctness [correct execution].

The last part of this text, which places the end of the creation process under the tutelary figure of the holy hierarch, raises another, far more complex issue: the possibility of a personal, technical involvement of bishops in the making of manuscripts. Some scholars have postulated the existence of a strong tradition among Syrian Orthodox dignitaries to be both scribes and painters.[46] However, such an assertion rests uniquely on a prescription attributed to the fifth-century patriarch Isaac of Antioch, who recommended that his monks 'write as if they were painting pictures'.[47] The fact that calligraphy was compared to painting seems likely: it is not surprising in the case of Syriac writing, whose mastery required a solid training coupled with long-term experience. This evidence, nevertheless, remains insufficient to suggest the existence of bishop-painters. It is more probable that Patriarch Isaac urged the scribes to keep a high standard of copying, so as to guarantee the proper transmission of texts.

Actually, the hypothesis that illustrated manuscripts were entirely produced by a single person, and, moreover, a bishop, is hardly supported by medieval sources. Despite the scattered information provided by colophons, the many at-

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46 Doumato 1999, 245–246, n. 18; Doumato 2001, 35–36; Mouawad 2010.

47 Mathews 2011a and 2011b. Several *mēmrē* and *madrāšē* have been attributed to this controversial author, whose name certainly combines two or three roughly identified writers: some chroniclers have confused him with Isaac of Edessa.

tempts to attribute luxurious books to bishops or patriarchs have rarely come to fruition. The sumptuous lectionary allegedly made by Patriarch Michael the Great (1166–1199 CE) is a famous example of such a literary tradition. According to the *Anonymous Chronicle of 1234*, Michael the Great would have copied and painted himself a gospel lectionary, whose text was written in gold and silver.[48] Later mentions of the patriarch's munificence, in the *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, said nothing about such a treasure; even though Barhebræus mentioned the financial support Michael granted to his own monastery.[49] Not a single trace of this manuscript has come down to us, and its identification with the lectionary Damascus, SOP, 12/7 (1169 CE) is hardly convincing.

Similarly, the miniatures of the lectionary Mardin, CFM, 41 have been repeatedly attributed to its scribe, Diosqoros Ṭeodoros. His name indeed appears on both sides of an elegant, framed colophon which follows the Easter readings (fol. 161ᵛ; Fig. 5).[50] Diosqoros presented himself here as the one 'who inscribed the narrative of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection' (ܢܘܫܡܝܬܐ ܕܟܬܒ ܡܬܢܝܬܐ ܗܝ ܩܘܡܬܐ ܘܗܝ), imploring God to 'receive the work he offers as the widow' (ܕܐܝܟ ܐܪܡܠܬܐ، ܩܒܠ ܥܡܠܐ، ܕܡܩܪܒ ܠܗ).[51] Several scholars, including Leroy, have identified Diosqoros Ṭeodoros as Mor Dionysios, metropolitan of Ḥesnō d-Ziyād (Kharput) from 1238 to 1273.[52] This figure is actually not unknown to Syriac authors. According to Barhebræus, he was reputed to be 'a learned man, an excellent scribe, and a friend of books', and many works of art were attributed to his hands.[53] However, the stylistic analysis of CFM 41 suggests that the miniatures were most probably produced by a team composed of different painters with varying expertise.[54]

48 *Anonymous Chronicle of 1234*, II, 221 (ed. Chabot 1917, vol. 2, 314–315; tr. Abouna 1974, 235), quoted by Leroy 1964, 428–429; Snelders 2010, 173.

49 Barhebræus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, I, 90 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 2, cols 571–572).

50 On this manuscript, see Leroy 1955, 412–414; Leroy 1964, 371–383; Anschütz 1982, 329; Hunt 1997, 296, 298, 303–304, 309, 319, fig. 11, 322, fig. 14; Zibawi 2009, 149; Kaplan 2013; Bernabò 2017, 266–288; Braida and Pavan 2017, 207; Kaplan 2017; Pavan 2017, 69–70, 121–122.

51 Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4.

52 Leroy 1964, 380, n. 2–3; Doumato 1999; Mouawad 2010, 274–275; Kaplan 2013, 32; Kaplan 2017, 235–236.

53 Barhebræus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, I, 94 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 2, cols 724–725), 96 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 2, cols 695–696, 757–759).

54 Kaplan 2013, 33.

Fig. 5: Colophon signed by Diosqoros Ṭeodoros. West Syriac lectionary, probably Ḥesnō d-Ziyād, mid thirteenth century. CFM 41, fol. 161ᵛ [HMML Pr. No. CFMM 0041]. Photo courtesy of the HMML, Saint John's University, Minnesota. Published with the permission of the CFM, Mardin. All rights reserved.

The involvement of bishops should not be totally excluded just because of this observation. However, the gap between literary sources and manuscript evidence requires us to challenge other obsolete attributions. Another illustrated lectionary: Mardin, CFM, 37 was indeed ascribed to the same Dionysios of Ḥesnō d-Ziyād. This hypothesis, first proposed by Leroy, rests on an inscription dated to 1272 CE that assigns the book to a certain Diosqoros (fol. 8ʳ).[55] Even if attractive, this attribution no longer holds. Palaeographical analysis reveals the intervention of at

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55 Leroy 1964, 387–389; Barsoum 2003, 462–463; Mouawad 2010, 267–270. The inscription commemorates the donation of the manuscript: ܢܛܘܪܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܢܘܡܝ ܗܢܐ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܚܛܝܐ ܒܢܦܫܐ ܘܒܦܓܪܐ ܕܝܘܣܩܘܪܘܣ ('Me, Diosqoros, humble of soul and body, I gave this gospel book – which is a copy of my hand – to the holy church of the monastery of the Mother of God, known as "Sons of Supplication", situated near to Ḥesnō d-Ziyād, in order that it be the property of the aforementioned church').

least two different hands and contradicts the idea of one scribe writing the two lectionaries. In addition, the stylistic study of the miniatures of CFM 37 suggests that this manuscript was produced long before the note was written – perhaps by the last quarter of the twelfth century, around 1180–1200 CE. The style of its miniatures and the geometric ornaments that intersperse the readings contrast sharply with the decoration of CFM 41, which was probably painted more than half a century later, around 1250–1275 CE.

The same painter, even if he was a bishop, could hardly have contributed to these two lectionaries: both palaeographic and stylistic features clearly betray the work of different hands. Despite obvious stylistic differences between the manuscripts they concern, such attributions, which are often conveyed by the colophons themselves, are neither accidental nor trivial. More than a white lie, the aim was undoubtedly to place the book under the patronage of a revered figure: who better than the bishop, pastor and head of the community? The honorific attribution of precious manuscripts to eminent spiritual figures remains, to this day, the most convincing hypothesis to explain the presence of prelates' names in the colophons. In this way, even the liturgical books entered a longstanding, firmly anchored tradition that considered the bishops as the keepers of the Syriac heritage.

5 Within the workshop

5.1 Roles and co-ordination

After having defined the status of the donors and craftsmen, their relationships and the places in which they worked, there remains the question of the distribution of roles within the workshops. Most of the surviving evidence, not surprisingly, concerns the scribes. Nevertheless, some elements reveal the collaboration of several, specialised craftsmen, at least, within the main workshops. In this regard, as stated previously, the colophon of the lectionary BL Or. 3372 (fol. 135ᵛ) is arguably the most important source. The scribe ʿAmmanūʾēl claims to have written the book and gives the names of his two collaborators: the deacon Peṭrōs and the priest Nīḥē, who were responsible for the 'illustration and binding of the book' (ܗܝ ܘܨܘܪܬܐ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܘܩܛܪܗ). However, although he mentions the material aspects they assumed, he does not give any precision concerning who oversaw each task.

Only a prudent deduction, based on a comparative study of miniatures and literary evidence, reveals that one of them has played a predominant role in the painting.[56]

Yet, Barhebræus, who spread the memory of this famous workshop, only mentioned one painter. According to the *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, Niḥē had been granted with 'the grace of illumination' (ܠܒܘܬܐ ܒܝ ܨܘܝܪܐ).[57] Therefore, it is most probable that he painted the cross (fol. 3ᵛ) and miniatures of BL Or. 3372 (fols 4ʳ–5ᵛ).[58] The manuscript's colophon, however, suggests that the brothers shared painterly skills, as it recalls how Peṭrōs and Niḥē worked together 'on the book's illumination' (ܒܝ ܨܘܝܪܗ ܕܟܬܒܐ).[59]

Consequently, following Julian Raby and Sebastian Brock's theory, it is most likely that Peṭrōs painted the frontispieces, headbands and quire marks, while Niḥē executed the figurative miniatures.[60] The activities of craftsmen have been described in a similar way in the colophon of the lectionary SOP 12/21 (1041 CE). This manuscript, which was made in the same workshop, is devoid of miniatures but preserves a rich set of illuminated ornaments:[61]

ܕܢܒ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܦܪܝܫܐ ܕܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܥܡܢܘܐܝܠ [...]. ܘܥܠ ܛܒ ܛܝܒܘ ܐܘܠܘܬܐ ܐܚܘܗܝ ܡܛܠ ܐܝܟ ܒܣܪܐ ܘܪܘܚܐ ܟܘܒܐ ܐܠܡ [...] ܕܥܠ ܨܘܝܪܗ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܘܐܣܪܘܗܝ.

'Ammanū'ēl wrote this book of the separate readings of the holy Gospel [...]. And [may the reader pray] for Peṭrōs, monk and priest, his brother according to flesh and spirit, who [worked] on this book's ornamentation and binding.

In this instance, it is clear that at least two craftsmen collaborated in the main stages of book production: the writing, the painting and the binding. It also seems that the same person could be responsible for both ornamenting and binding, as was Peṭrōs. The evidence from this lectionary, however, is rather limited. Most other illuminated manuscripts which have retained their colophon do not contain any clear mention of a painter. Therefore, the question remains open concerning the lectionary SB Sachau 304, which was produced in the same workshop. Since

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56 Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 63.

57 Barhebræus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, I, 76 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 1, cols 417–418).

58 Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 63–64.

59 SOP 12/21 (fol. 202ʳ); BL Or. 3372 (fol. 135ᵛ).

60 Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 59. We do not know whether one of them took on a more significant part of the work, or if they worked together at different stages of the illumination.

61 Since the painter Niḥē is not mentioned in this colophon, it is tempting to think that his career ended before 1041, and, therefore, predated the manuscripts BL Or. 3372 and SB Sachau 304. However, Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 63–64, did not consider this hypothesis relevant.

the colophon only mentions the scribe ʿAmmanūʾēl, only vague intuitions suggest that the miniatures were painted by someone else. The name of Peṭrōs has been proposed, as he was probably charged with the ornaments of BL Or. 3372.[62] Whatever one may think of this idea, obvious stylistic variations indisputably reveal that these lectionaries were illustrated by at least two different painters.

The colophon of the lectionary SOP 353 (1054 CE) claims that it was 'written and completed' (ܐܬܟܬܒ ܘܫܠܡ ܒܝܕ) in the city of Melitene (fol. 348ʳ). An additional note (fol. 347ʳ) states that the deacon Peṭros not only 'wrote' (ܟܬܒ) the text, but also 'put in order' (ܛܟܣ) and 'arranged' (ܣܕܪ) the book. This could mean that he also worked as a binder, or – more certainly – that he contributed to the layout of the readings. Once again, nothing was said about the painter. Nothing proves that the scribe painted the miniatures himself; nothing, on the other hand, proves that another craftsman was involved in the painting. All the more we can say is that the full-page miniatures must have been painted separately and added to the text after it was written: they form a separate quire at the end of the book, following the readings and the colophon (fols 349ʳ–351ʳ).

The opposite situation occurs in the manuscripts BnF syriaque 355 and syriaque 356, two separate codices which originally constituted one single book.[63] The colophon of BnF syriaque 355 (fol. 1ʳ) defines the deacon Yawsepʰ as 'the one who painted' (ܕܨܪ) the twenty-four miniatures that once adorned the volume. This assertion is confirmed by the inscription running around the majestic cross which opens the volume (fol. 1ᵛ). Yet, the frontispiece of the first reading (BnF syriaque 356, fol. 2ᵛ) contains another inscription which describes the scribe ʾĪšōʿ as 'the one who painted and wrote' (ܕܨܪ ܘܟܬܒ). This contradiction is not, however, as annoying as it sounds. The stylistic comparison of the manuscripts' decorations suggests, in fact, that ʾĪšōʿ probably did not paint the miniatures, but rather took charge of the geometric ornaments. Therefore, the same word (ܨܪ) could simultaneously refer to the person who painted the figures, to the one who drew the ornament, or even to the scribe. This confusion between 'writing', 'drawing' and 'painting' might be due to the influence of Greek terminology, which defines the making of an icon or miniature as 'writing' (γράφειν). By combining these three tasks in this way, the Syriac colophons thus underlined the equal contribution of scribes and painters to the genesis of illuminated books.

However, it is notable that most of the colophons give more importance to the scribe without ever giving the name of the painter(s). The emphasis on the main

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62 Raby and Brock 2014–2016, 58.

63 Concerning the codicological and palaeographical observation that led to this conclusion, see Pacha Miran 2021b, vol. 1, 160–171 and Pacha Miran forthcoming b.

aspect of book production – the writing – could certainly be explained by the extreme importance that the Syriac culture attached to the preservation and transmission of texts.[64] Yet, the high value of an illustrated manuscript could have justified the indication of the name of the artist who had created a decoration as prized as it was expensive. In some cases, it is possible that the scribe illustrated the book himself; but if he had undertaken such an ambitious task, he would certainly not have neglected to mention his feat. Does it mean that the scribes had little interest in being remembered as painters, or that they wanted to undermine the painters' involvement? The reality is undoubtedly more complex. As we shall see, it is quite probable that the miniatures, at least in some manuscripts, were painted after the text. Since the scribe wrote the colophon after completing his work, the images that were to be added afterwards did not yet exist – in some manuscripts, they were never executed at all.[65] This is especially true of certain manuscripts, which were copied and illustrated in different places and by different teams: so the scribe probably never knew the name of the painter.

5.2 Writing and painting

There is little evidence to suggest how the writing and illumination phases were co-ordinated. The problem is solved fairly quickly in the case of manuscripts whose paintings were produced separately and added to the text leaves when they were bound. Thus, the scribe of the lectionary BnF syriaque 355 records that the book was sent to Melitene after it was copied; once there, it was bound together with a quire of painted leaves (fol. 1ʳ). Since the colophon only mentions the gathering of the text and images, it is difficult to determine whether the miniatures were painted while the text was being copied, or if they were made afterwards, when the volume arrived in Melitene. In any case, Bishop ʾIwānnīs must have been responsible for the entire production process, for which he provided a sort of stewardship.[66] It is probable that a similar process was in place in the workshop that produced the lectionary SOP 353: although the miniatures appear at the end of the text, the various components of the book seem to have been produced in the same place.

By contrast, the succession of the writing and painting phases is particularly interesting in the case of lectionaries whose miniatures are scattered throughout the

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64 Mundell-Mango 1980; Debié 2010.

65 See, for example, the lectionary Damascus, SOP 356 (1212 or 1263 CE), which contains a set of painted frames that remained empty.

66 Probably more than the scribe himself, as stated by Snelders 2010, 175.

text, according to the liturgical calendar. Once again, because of the lack of literary sources, our conclusions must be deduced from the manuscripts themselves. The three main options available to the craftsmen do not seem to have changed based on whether the scribe and the painter were the same person or two different people. In the first instance, writing and painting followed one another step by step: the scribe wrote, then gave the leaves to the painter, who inserted the miniatures in the places left empty. The reverse is also attested, with the images being sometimes painted before the copying of the text. In fact, both methods could be employed simultaneously. Such a reciprocal progression can be observed in the lectionaries BL Add. 7170 (1216–1220 CE) and BAV Vat. sir. 559 (1260 CE). As noticed by Guillaume de Jerphanion and Jules Leroy, some of the letters extend beyond the writing surface and partly cover the frame of the images, suggesting that a part of the miniatures had been painted before the text was written (Fig. 6).[67] It appears, therefore, that the scribe worked passage by passage, handing the finished leaves to the painter before starting to copy the following ones. The overlap between writing and painting means that the opposite method was also used: in a few places, it is the painting that partially covers the text.[68]

Fig. 6: Unfinished miniature of the centurion's prayer. West Syriac lectionary, Mor Mattay, 1260 CE. BAV Vat. sir. 559, fol. 72ʳ.

Thus, the creation of a lectionary did not necessarily follow a set and immutable rule, which could vary itself throughout the work. However, there is no evidence to sug-

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67 de Jerphanion 1940, 22; Leroy 1964, 299–300; Snelders 2010, 177–180. See also BAV Vat. sir. 559, fols 88ʳ, 121ᵛ, 133ʳ.
68 See, for example, BAV Vat. sir. 559, fol. 150ᵛ.

gest that all the lectionaries which present a similar layout followed the same method. Most of the time, the frames surrounding the miniatures are far enough from the text that it is impossible to distinguish which were made first: such is the case in the lectionary CFM 38, for example. Only a few miniatures might have been made before the text was copied, or, at least, before the punctuation marks and the gilded letters were added. In the lectionary MG 5, the blue line framing the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* has been partially overlapped by the gilded rubric of the matins (fol. 44ᵛ). The punctuation marks sometimes went over the frames, as on the miniatures of the Nativity (fol. 26ʳ) and the Betrayal of Judas (fol. 198ʳ). Elsewhere, the frames seem to have partially covered the end of certain letters. Such is the case on the miniatures of the Annunciation (fol. 20ᵛ) and the Incredulity of Thomas (fol. 178ᵛ) in the lectionary CFM 41.[69] The same phenomenon might have occurred for at least one miniature of the lectionary Damascus, SOP, 348. The wing of the angel which appears to the myrrhophores (fol. 132ᵛ) goes beyond the red frame and covers the end of the preceding text, merging with the punctuation and diacritical marks: the image was clearly painted after the text was copied.

Overpainting and restorations seem to have sometimes disrupted the work. The image of Saint John the Baptist (fol. 350ʳ) in the lectionary SOP 353 bears the trace of a curious modification that might have happened during the painting phase (Fig. 7). At first glance, it seems that the initial composition was not correctly proportionate to its frame. The large blank circle of an unachieved nimbus in the upper third of the miniature crosses over the saint's face and shoulders, betraying the previous outline of a stocky, long-haired man. The restoration, consequently, was surely intended to give the figure a higher, slenderer silhouette. The painter then focused on the upper part of the body, i.e. his head, shoulders and chest, moving the nimbus closer to the frame, which was, thereby, partially covered. Unfortunately, the new outline caused the destruction of the lower part of the figure's face, perhaps because the preparatory bowl layer prevented the proper adherence of the successive pictorial layers. Despite its strange appearance, this miniature offers an incomparable example of the inconveniences with which a painter might have been confronted. His careful effort also gives an idea of the material cost of each illuminated leaf: it was better to do everything possible to rectify a mistake than to waste parchment, gold and pigments.

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69 On the contrary, the word that overflows the frame of the Prayer at Gethsemane (fol. 156ᵛ) was clearly omitted by the scribe and added by another hand after the painting.

Fig. 7: Reformed miniature of Saint John the Baptist. West Syriac Four Gospels, Melitene, 1054 CE. SOP 353, fol. 350ʳ. © SOP, Department of Syriac Studies, all rights reserved.

Fig. 8: Unfinished miniature of an Apostle. West Syriac New Testament, Mor Yaʿqūb Malpʰonō, Mount Izlā, 1188–1204 CE. BnF syriaque 41, fol. 177ʳ. © gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Further evidence regarding the painting is to be found in the manuscript BnF syriaque 41. The last two leaves bear two miniatures depicting Jesus Christ and an Apostle facing each other (fols 178ᵛ–179ʳ). The empty background, the austerity of the setting and the hasty treatment of the drapery indicate that these images were never achieved (Fig. 8). Yet, their unfinished state allows us to appreciate how the painter applied the colours. The colourful mosaic tesserae which constitute the frame were applied gradually, starting with the blue and brown pigments. These were the only colours used. Everywhere else, the surface of the frames was left blank, revealing the preparatory lines of the tesserae that should have been painted. There is every reason to believe that a sudden interruption to the commission, perhaps due to a lack of funds, put a stop to the painter's work. However, the sorrowful colophon that ends the manuscript could explain the incompletion of the paintings in a sadder way (fol. 177ᵛ). The one who wrote it was not the scribe Šemʿūn but his own brother, the priest Yūḥannōn, who was mourning Šemʿūn's death: perhaps this tragic event brought to term the making of the book.[70]

5.3 Dyes and pigments

The combined evidence of written sources and the technical study of manuscripts leave, however, an important lacuna: the chemical nature of the inks, pigments and dyes. Fortunately, recent advances in the physico-chemical analysis of ancient manuscripts allow us to shed a new light on these technical aspects of book production in medieval Mesopotamia. As part of the four-year research plan at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and a post-doctoral project supervised by the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (Paris), several campaigns of analyses have been carried out by an international team led by Maurizio Aceto.[71] Three main

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70 The last part of the colophon begins as follows: ܟܬܒܬ ܠܕܘܟܪܢܐ ܗܢܐ ܟܐܢܐܝܬ ܐܢܐ ܐܝܟܐ. ܝܘܚܢ ܕܒܫܡ ܡܩܪ. ܗܢ ܚܠܐ ܚܡܝܫܝܢ ܕܐܝܟܐ ܐܢܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܐܢܐ ܐܢܐ ܐܢܐ ܚܒܚܟܐ. ܗܐ ܚܢܢ ܟܠܗ ܕܚܟܐ ܘܚܒܚܟܐ ܚܒܘܝ̈ܩ ܘܡܝ̈ܟܐ ܚܢܝܢܒ ('I wrote this memory with my own hands, [me], Yūḥannōn, a priest [only] by name, after the death of my brother, Rabban Šemʿūn the scribe, when my eyes are full of tears, [with] lament in my mouth and sorrow in my mind').

71 Professor of analytical chemistry (Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale). Apart from the author, other members of this project are Guido Frison† (University College London), Angelo Agostino (Università degli Studi di Torino), Dafne Cimino (Università degli Studi di Verona) and Francesca Robotti (Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale). The equipment, methods and instrumental parameters are described in a detailed way in Aceto et al. 2012; Aceto et al. 2014; see also Pacha Miran 2020, 66–82; Pacha Miran 2021b, 334–354; Pacha Miran forthcoming b.

techniques were employed: ultra-violet visible diffuse reflectance spectroscopy,[72] fluorescence spectroscopy[73] and X-ray fluorescence spectrometry.[74] An optical microscope was also used to examine and photograph the pictorial layers.[75] Among a corpus of thirty-eight manuscripts dating from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries, three gospel lectionaries have already been analysed: BnF syriaque 355 and syriaque 356 (*c.* 1220 CE) and BAV Vat. sir. 559 (1260 CE). Although this work is still in its early stages, the first results gathered from 2018 to 2023 enable us to get a glimpse of the palette of the Syriac painters.

Blue samples particularly reveal the diversity and quality of the colorants used within the workshops. Thus, the different shades of blue in BnF syriaque 355 and syriaque 356 mainly use ultramarine, a costly pigment obtained from lapis lazuli.[76] Indigo, obtained from *Isatis tinctoria* (woad) or *Indigofera tinctoria* (dyers'

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72 Optic fibre analysis was performed with an Avantes (Apeldoorn, the Netherlands) AvaSpec-ULS2048XL-USB2 model spectrophotometer and an AvaLight-HAL-S-IND tungsten halogen light source; the detector and light source were connected with fibre-optic cables to an FCR-7UV200–2-1.5 × 100 probe. The spectral range of the detector was 200–1160 nm; depending on the features of the monochromator (slit width 50 μm, grating of UA type with 300 lines/mm) and of the detector (2048 pixels), the best spectra resolution was 2.4 nm, calculated as full width at half maximum. The distance between the probe and the sample was kept constant at 1 mm in all measurements. The probe contained a USB endoscope to visualise the area on the sample investigated. The instrumental parameters were as follows: 10 ms integration time, 100 scans for a total acquisition time of 1.0 s for each spectrum. The system was managed by means of AvaSoft v. 8™ dedicated software, running on Windows 7™.

73 An Ocean Optics (Dunedin, FL, USA) Jaz model spectrophotometer was employed to record the molecular fluorescence spectra. The instrument is equipped with a 365 nm Jaz-LED internal light source; a QF600–8-VIS/NIR fibre fluorescence probe is used to drive excitation light onto the sample and recover the light emitted. The spectrophotometer works in the range 191–886 nm; according to the features of the monochromator (200 μm slit width) and detector (2048 elements), the spectral resolution available is 7.6 nm calculated as full width at half maximum. Instrumental parameters were as follows: 2 s integration time, 3 scans for a total acquisition time of 6 s for every spectrum. The system is managed with SpectraSuite™ software under Windows 7™.

74 X-ray fluorescence measurements were performed with an EDXRF Thermo (Waltham, MA, USA) NITON spectrometer XL3T-900 GOLDD model, equipped with an Ag tube (max. 50 kV, 100 μA, 2W), a large area SDD detector, energy resolution of about 136 eV at 5.9 keV. Each spot analysed had an average diameter of 3 mm and was focused by a CCD camera, with a working distance of 2 mm. Total time of analysis was 120 s. The spectra obtained have been processed with the commercial software BAxil, derived by the academic software QXAS from IAEA.

75 A USB Dino-Lite (New Taipei City, Taiwan) AM411 3 T-FV2W model microscope was used to acquire digital images at 50× and 200× magnification ratios. The instrument is equipped with 375 nm and visible LED lights and a digital camera with 1.3 Megapixel resolution.

76 BnF syriaque 355, fols 1ᵛ, 2ʳ⁻ᵛ, 3ʳ⁻ᵛ, 4ᵛ, 5ʳ; syriaque 356, fols 2ᵛ and 3ᵛ. Concerning the characterisation of ultramarine in late antique and medieval manuscripts, see Frison and Brun 2016.

indigo), was only used marginally in the miniatures, but it is much more common in peritextual ornamentation as frontispieces and quire marks.[77] In much the same way, the painter of BAV Vat. sir. 559 used two different blue dyes. Ultramarine was favoured for the deepest shades, ranging from midnight to sky blue.[78] Although pure indigo was used more sparingly, a few mixtures of indigo and orpiment sometimes gave a pale blue tinged with green.[79]

A wide variety of green tones range from a pale almond to a dark forest green, including many shades of copper and emerald green with bluish undertones. However, this diversified palette used a limited range of mineral, vegetal or mixed colourants. The most frequent mixture that occurs in the miniatures of BnF syriaque 355 was made up of indigo and an undetermined yellow dye.[80] A similar combination of orpiment and indigo has been observed in BAV Vat. sir. 559.[81] On the other hand, two occurrences of pale green have been identified as verdigris in the liminar folios and peritextual ornaments of BnF syriaque 355.[82] This pigment, derived from copper, clearly differs from the mixture of indigo and yellow that was only found on the figurative miniatures. Verdigris, however, is entirely absent from the miniatures, frontispiece and quire marks of BnF syriaque 356, as well as the paintings of BAV Vat. sir. 559.

Shades of brown, orange and red also required both pure and mixed dyes. Both in BnF syriaque 355 and BAV Vat. sir. 559, the most common brown mixture combines indigo with cinnabar.[83] This bright red mercury sulphide attests to the financial wealth of the manuscript's patrons, since it was as expensive as lapis lazuli. The dark reddish brown in BAV Vat. sir. 559 also derives from cinnabar which occurs relatively frequently, sometimes associated with red and orange

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77 BnF syriaque 355, fols 1ᵛ, 132ᵛ, 205ᵛ, 219ʳ.

78 BAV Vat. sir. 559, fols 5ʳ, 18ᵛ, 94ʳ, 223ᵛ. On fol. 18ᵛ, the retouching of the damaged painted layer as made with Prussian blue, a ferric ferrocyanide attested by the concentration of iron (Fe), mercury (Hg), sulphur (S) and lead (Pb). Since this synthetic pigment had been discovered in the early eighteenth century, the restauration probably just predated the acquisition of the manuscript by the Vatican Library in 1938.

79 BAV Vat. sir. 559, fols 11ʳ, 223ᵛ.

80 BnF syriaque 355, fols 2ʳ⁻ᵛ, 3ʳ⁻ᵛ, 4ᵛ, 5ʳ.

81 BAV Vat. sir. 559, fol. 223ᵛ.

82 BnF syriaque 355, fols 6ʳ, 7ʳ, 14ʳ, 52ᵛ. Syriac ink recipes call this substance *zangārā*, borrowed from the Persian word *zangār* quoted in Gignoux 2011, 40. Boutrolle and Daccache 2015, 266, underline that the same term could refer to different substances: an artificial, basic copper acetate (which was used here) and a natural pigment, issued from the degradation of copper through contact with air and water.

83 BnF syriaque 355, fols 1ʳ⁻ᵛ, 2ʳ, 5ʳ; syriaque 356, fols 1ʳ⁻ᵛ, 2ʳ; BAV Vat. sir. 559, fol. 223ᵛ. Boutrolle and Daccache 2015, 263, mention this substance under the Syriac name *zngpr* (ܙܢܓܦܪ).

shades.[84] Similar to the lapis lazuli, variations in hue were obtained by diluting expensive pigments to a greater or lesser extent. It should also be noted that the painter of BAV Vat. sir. 559 used two red dyes: cinnabar and cochineal, which were sometimes mixed together.[85] Cochineal was also widely used to obtain different shades of pink, and appears in remarkable proportions in purple, purplish blue and brown tones.[86] On the other hand, red ochre, coloured with haematite, was frequently used in BnF syriaque 356, but is absent from the two other manuscripts.[87]

The identification of yellow and orange shades raises more uncertainties, while revealing further analogies between the manuscripts analysed. Generally speaking, it was not possible to determine with any certainty the nature of the pigment ranging from golden to pale lemon yellow in BnF syriaque 355 and syriaque 356. The use of pararealgar (As_4S_4), chemically close to orpiment (As_2S_3), remains the most probable hypothesis.[88] Yellow ochre could also have been part of the Syriac palette, although its possible occurrences are rare and difficult to characterise. Orange hues were apparently due to the use of ochre or red earths;[89] cinnabar also appears in the miniatures and peritextual ornaments of BnF syriaque 355, although it was only used minimally.[90] The identification of the yellow dyes in BAV Vat. sir. 559 has only given uncertain results, no matter the shade analysed. The pale, earthy yellow could have come from pararealgar, as suggested by the presence of arsenic and sulphur.[91]

Notwithstanding the likely cost of rare dyes such as cinnabar and lapis lazuli, gold and silver are the hallmarks of the most luxurious manuscripts. The somewhat poor state of preservation of the pictorial layers, in the lectionary BAV Vat. sir. 559, complicates the observation of gold. However, gold powder has been clearly detected several times, both in the miniatures and the text – the most important pericopes being entirely written in gold ink. On the other hand, it is gold leaf, not powder, that covers the background of the miniatures in BnF syriaque 355 and

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84 BAV Vat. sir. 559, fol. 223[v].

85 BAV Vat. sir. 559, fols 18[r], 26[r], 94[r], 223[v].

86 Generic name for several species of silkworm belonging to the genera *Kermes* or *Dactylopius*. The colouring substance could take the form of a mixture of alum and an organic dye, as indicated by Desreumaux 2015, 178.

87 BnF syriaque 356, fols 1[v], 2[r].

88 BnF syriaque 355, fols 1[v], 2[v], 6[r]; syriaque 356, fol. 1[v].

89 BnF syriaque 355, fol. 2[r].

90 BnF syriaque 355, fols 2[r], 3[r], 219[r].

91 BAV Vat. sir. 559, fols 1[r], 5[r], 11[r], 223[v].

syriaque 356.[92] The chemical composition of gold leaf betrays different techniques, sometimes used simultaneously. The gold samples analysed from BnF syriaque 355 contain either lead, barium and strontium traces,[93] or mercury, sulphur, lead, potassium and barium,[94] while BnF syriaque 356 mainly contains gold and sulphur only.[95] The use of silver leaf is also well attested in these two lectionaries, either on the figures' nimbus and on the backgrounds. This technique distinguishes them from the rest of the corpus, where silver was used exclusively for the writing of significant texts.[96] Similar to gold leaf, the silvered areas contain traces of either barium and lead,[97] or mercury and sulphur.[98]

As shown by these preliminary observations, the painters of the early thirteenth century active in Melitene (BnF syriaque 355 and syriaque 356) and in the Mosul area (BAV Vat. sir. 559) appear to have used a broadly similar palette. The composition of the main dyes identified in lectionaries is also confirmed by the other types of Syriac manuscripts analysed in Rome and Paris. The intensity of each colour seems to have reflected the importance of certain patterns, particularly in relation to the figure of Christ. Yet, expensive dyes were used throughout the whole iconographic programmes without any attempt to replace them with less costly substances – even to depict minor motifs. The massive use of precious materials, such as lapis lazuli, cinnabar, gold and silver, suggests that the brilliance of shades took precedence over their cost: as a genuine work of art, the commission of liturgical books must have involved wealthy patrons.

Although literary sources remain silent on the cost and circulation of dyes, the fact that rare materials are much more common in medieval manuscripts than in those of Late Antiquity also bears witness to the evolution of trade routes and economic networks after the Islamic conquest of Mesopotamia.[99] The scientific study of colours, moreover, reveals many common artistic practices between Syriac and neighbouring communities during the Abbasid era. Analyses carried out simultaneously on Arabic, Coptic and Greek manuscripts produced in Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean already attest to many technical similarities

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92 BnF syriaque 355, fols 1ᵛ, 2ᵛ, 3ᵛ, 4ʳ⁻ᵛ, 5ʳ, 52ᵛ, 53ᵛ, 205ᵛ; syriaque 356, fol. 2ʳ.

93 BnF syriaque 355, fol. 1ᵛ.

94 BnF syriaque 355, fol. 5ʳ.

95 BnF syriaque 356, fol. 2ʳ.

96 Silver ink was mainly used to write some of the rubrics, as well as certain readings for major feasts. See, for example, the lectionaries CFM 37, 38, and 41. An owner's note has been written with silver ink on a blue background in the lectionary SOP 353 (fol. 328ʳ).

97 BnF syriaque 355, fols 1ᵛ, 5ʳ.

98 BnF syriaque 356, fol. 2ʳ.

99 Bernabò, Fedeli and Garosi 2008; Lanterna, Piccolo and Radicati 2008; Pacha Miran 2020, 76–78.

between Byzantine, Eastern Christian and Islamic workshops.[100] Further research should enable us to refine these initial observations, by systematising the analysis of dated and located manuscripts and comparing the results already available.

5.4 The binding and the cover

The penultimate stage in the making of a lectionary was the binding of the quires into a volume. Mentions of bookbinders, however, are even rarer than painters' names. The deacon Peṭrōs probably oversaw this technical aspect of the production within the workshop of Qarṭmin in the first half of the eleventh century. The colophons of the lectionaries SOP 12/21 and BL Or. 3372 actually describe him as responsible for the 'binding' (*dūbōqō*). This task might have also included the acquisition of materials, such as parchment, inks and dyes. Both colophons agree on this point with the later testimony of Barhebræus: the *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* indeed reports that Bishop Yūḥannōn had sent Peṭros to Melitene to purchase parchment.[101]

The binding itself, however, can be perceived through a codicological study of the manuscripts. The leaves were certainly bound after being written, as we now assume that Syriac scribes usually turned the page to write the text vertically.[102] Binding in ten-leaf quires (quinions) was the most common use.[103] The first and last folios of each quire were numbered with Syriac letters, frequently surrounded by geometric patterns, in the middle of the lower margins. Such illuminated quire marks sometimes left discreet allusions to the binders' activity. In the lectionary BnF syriaque 355, an inscription was hidden in the meander which frames the mark at the beginning of the second quire (fol. 23ʳ). The text mentions the ones who 'finished the seams', i.e. the craftsmen who sewed the bifolios into quires and bound the quires into a volume:

<div dir="rtl">ܐܫܬܠܡܘ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܚܝ̈ܛܐ ܗܠܝܢ ܡܢ ܐܚܝ̈ܢ ܚܛ̈ܝܐ ܠܝ ܐܢܐ ܝܕܥ ܡܢ ܐܢܐ ܡܫܡ̈ܫܢܐ ܂ ܘܬܠܡܝܕܐ ܕܐܒܘܢ ܂</div>

> These seams were achieved by my brothers, sinners [brothers in sins], to me, namely a deacon, and disciple of our father.

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100 Such similarities are confirmed by current research led on Arabic manuscripts of the British Library and the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Concerning the analyses of the manuscript BL Add. 7170, see Clarks and Gibbs 1997. Paul Garside, from the Scientific Conservation Department of the British Library, describes the analyses of London, BL, Or. 2784 in Contadini 2012, 165–166.
101 Barhebræus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, I, 76 (ed. and tr. Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–1877, vol. 1, cols 417–418).
102 Briquel Chatonnet and Borbone 2015.
103 Briquel Chatonnet and Borbone 2015.

The binder's name, however, remains a mystery. One can only suppose that he was an Armenian since the quires were numbered in both Syriac and in Armenian characters. This hypothesis is amply confirmed by the close relations forged between the West Syriac and Armenian communities in Melitene and the surrounding region.[104]

A cover made of leather, wood or even silver, sometimes adorned with geometric patterns or biblical images, was finally put on the volume. The boards, mostly made from wood of various species,[105] were usually upholstered in leather, sometimes textile,[106] and stained in dark shades of red, tawny brown or black. Leather cover plates were stamped very soberly with geometric compositions, among which the cross on a pedestal was particularly popular.[107] The preserved decorations, which are relatively simple, seem to have received more or less attention depending on the book's destination and, in all likelihood, the financial resources of its patron. Thus, the existence of precious metal covers, such as silver or gilded silver, seems all the more attractive. Such pieces, which are attested in northern Syria as early as Late Antiquity, were actually widespread throughout Armenia and Byzantium during the medieval period.[108] Nothing excludes that Syriac lectionaries, displayed on a lectern at the entrance to the sanctuary, were themselves covered with a silver binding, possibly embossed with biblical images.

Though the surviving examples do not predate the seventeenth century,[109] some literary evidence attest to the existence of precious bindings even during the Abbasid era. The note written in 1272 CE at the beginning of the lectionary CFM 37 (fol. 8ʳ) states that the book was covered with an expensive binding, presumably

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104 Kominko 2010, 64; Greenwood 2017.

105 Dergham and Vinourd 2015, 279. Cardboard plates have been documented in recent times; see Dergham and Vinourd 2015, 283.

106 The distinction between different animal skins is not always obvious, but it seems to indicate the preponderance of *basane* (sheep) and goat, while calf remains very rare; see Chahine 2013, 109–110. Dergham and Vinourd 2015, 289, describe the calf binding of the manuscript Sharfeh, monastery of Our Lady of Deliverance, Rahmani 15, and the textile cover of Sharfeh, monastery of Our Lady of Deliverance, Rahmani 72.

107 van Regemorter 1969; Briquel Chatonnet 1998, 168. The manuscript London, BL, Or. 8729 (1230 CE) is the best example of a cover adorned with a cross that offers striking similarities with the crosses that illustrate the introductory leaves of many liturgical manuscripts. See, for example, BnF syriaque 30 (fol. 10ʳ), syriaque 31 (fol. 1ʳ), syriaque 40 (fol. 5ʳ), syriaque 41 (fol. 10ʳ), syriaque 154 (fol. 3ʳ), syriaque 355 (fol. 1ᵛ) and syriaque 356 (fol. 1ᵛ).

108 Brown 2006, nos 66–67, 230–231.

109 Leroy 1964, plate I, 1, reproduces a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century silver binding depicting two saints on either side of the cross against a background strewn with flowers. This cover was among the treasures of the church of Mār ʾAḥūdemmēh in Mosul.

at the time of its restoration. But this cover was not made for this particular man-
uscript: it had been taken from another book, under conditions that were murky,
to say the least. Although no trace of such covers remains today, the note attests
that they were made of silver plates:

ܡܛܠ ܕܗܢܐ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܗܘܐ ܡܟܣܝ ܡܢܢ ܒܚܕ ܟܣܝܐ ܠܐ ܨܒܝܢ ܕܢܬܥܠ ܐܠܐ ܚܠܦܢ ܠܗ ܒܗܘ ܕܗܘܐ ܥܠ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ
ܗܘ [...] ܕܥܒܕ ܕܝܪܝܐ ܗܘ ܕܡܬܩܪܐ ܨܠܝܒܐ ܡܢ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܥܘܡܪܐ [...] ܘܡܣܬܒܪܐ ܠܢ ܕܣܐܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܥܠ ܗܕܐ ܛܒ ܝܩܝܪ ܗܘ ܒܛܝܡܐ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܢܣܒܢ ܘܣܡܢ
ܥܠ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܝܠܢ.

> Since this gospel has been covered by us with a cover, we did not want it to be withdrawn,
> but we swapped it with the one which was on the gospel that the monk named Ṣalibō had
> made with the gifts from the convent. [...] [We feel] that the silver of [that which covers] this
> one is of a higher price than the one we have taken and put on our gospel.

Rather than a binding in the strict sense of the word, which unites the quires and
gathers them into a volume (*kūrōsō*) the polysemic word *pāṯō* refers simultaneously
to the 'face' or 'forehead', as well as the 'appearance' or 'surface' of any artefact.[110] At
the same time, the idea of 'dressing' and 'making visible' implies that the lectionary
was not only perceived as a vehicle for the text, but also as the face of the divine
Logos within the church. Only the mention of silver (*sēmō*) attests that this cover took
the form of movable metal plates, probably embossed. Fixed over the binding, they
could, therefore, be removed without damaging the book itself. As well as providing
evidence regarding the material used for the cover, the inscription shows that pre-
cious plates may have adorned several different manuscripts over the course of their
existence. Even though very few manuscripts prior to the ninth century retain their
original covers, the practice of adapting new bindings to older books seems to have
been widespread.[111] The Four Gospel BAV Vat. sir. 13 (736 CE), for example, was given a
gilded silver cover in the thirteenth century, which was later removed.[112]

 The book with its cover being a major piece of liturgical furniture, it must
have been one of the most prestigious items in church treasuries. Therefore, it is
no coincidence that the chroniclers emphasised the preciousness of such gifts to

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110 Payne Smith 1903, 433.
111 The leather binding of the manuscript Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 313 inf.
(sixth–seventh century), reproduced in Petersen 1954, 54, fig. 21, offers an interesting point of
reflection on this subject. Leroy 1964, 106, n. 1, was concerned about the presence of Greek in-
scriptions on its cover, made at Dayr al-Suryān, which made him hesitate as to whether it be-
longed to the Syriac culture. Nevertheless, the frequency of Greek inscriptions, both on minia-
tures and in the text of the lectionaries following the Harklean version, attests that the use of this
language was widespread among Syriac elites during the Abbasid Period.
112 Stefanus Assemani and Joseph Assemani 1758, vol. 2, 47.

celebrate the prodigality of major ecclesiastical figures. Thus, Michael the Great was told to have covered a gospel book he wrote with an awesome cover made entirely of silver.[113] Such a luxurious binding would have obviously caught the interest of looters: the author of the *History of the Convent of Mor Barṣawmō* lamented the fact that the silver plates were snatched from the book during the sacking of the monastery, towards the end of the thirteenth century.[114] Similarly, when Barhebræus accused the Kurds of stealing the gold and silver binding kept at Mor Mattay, he might have been inspired as much by historical reality as by the desire to endow the community with expensive liturgical objects, in order to demonstrate its financial wealth.[115]

6 Conclusions

The various ways in which liturgical manuscripts were produced, reflecting their iconographic and stylistic originality, reveal the extraordinary artistic diversity of Syriac Christianity during the Abbasid era. Although we cannot be certain of the exact organisation of each workshop, the elements gathered in this article give a clearer portrait of the people involved in the making of illuminated lectionaries. Nevertheless, the various situations examined here remind us that it is impossible, at this stage, to give a faithful vision of a 'typical Syriac workshop'. No single, uniform model can be applied to the many production centres we have encountered throughout northern Mesopotamia.

The predominant role of monks clearly emerges in light of written sources, though the contribution of secular clerics or even laymen should not be overshadowed. While most of the workshops seem to have been situated in monasteries, the colophons also suggest the existence of urban workshops. Some manu-

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113 *Anonymous Chronicle of 1234*, II, 221 (ed. Chabot 1917, vol. 2, 314–315; tr. Abouna 1974, 235). The *History of the Convent of Mor Barṣawmō*, a Syriac treatise of 1360 quoted by Leroy 1964, 428, reveals some technical aspects of this manuscript: 'in place of the wooden boards, there was silver; inside in the text, and outside on the frontispiece, there was only gold, without black ink, with the varied and multicoloured preparations of the royal painters'.

114 Leroy 1964, 428. According to Jean-Baptiste Chabot, this sacking probably occurred during the expedition of Baybars (1260–1277 CE) or Al-Ašraf Khalīl (1263–1293 CE), the Mamluk sultan who laid siege to Rumnah in 1292. In any case, the *History of the Convent of Mor Barṣawmō* reports that Yaʿqūb bar Ḥaddad, around 1360, described this manuscript as 'no more than a heap of leaves stripped of their binding'.

115 Barhebræus, *Civil Chronicle*, XI (ed. Bedjan 1890, 597; tr. Budge 1932, 508). The translator hesitated between a gospel 'bound' or 'inlaid' with gold and silver (ܟܐܦ̈ܐ ܘܕܗܒܐ ܒܣܐܡܐ ܡܒܪܩ ܟܕ ܠܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ).

scripts were also written, illuminated and bound in several different places, reflecting the three essential skills involved in the making of books. Yet, the scribe, the painter and the binder might have been the same person or even different people; it is unclear whether they worked simultaneously or in successive stages. The text seems to have been perceived as the essence of the book, which could include the presence of images, but not necessarily. Although the copy generally preceded the painting, the reverse was also possible. Thus, the scant mention of painters could indicate that the miniatures were mostly painted by the scribes, or that the latter attached little importance to the painters. This notable silence, in fact, might unveil the sequence of the writing and painting phases: most of the images were undoubtedly painted after the text had been completed.

What is sure is that the process differed from one workshop to another. Therefore, we cannot assume at face value the few sources that describe the bishops as scribes or painters – although their implication cannot be entirely dismissed. Everything shows that these prelates were regarded as tutelary figures of the manuscript production, which they often helped to finance and preserve. Whatever the case, commissioning an illustrated lectionary must have been a costly and important initiative: the material value added to the time required to produce the book, but also to its great spiritual significance. Embodying the presence of God during the liturgical services, adorned with miniatures and covered with a precious binding, the gospel lectionary took a privileged place amongst the church furniture. Dyes and pigments, gold and silver ink, parchment and luxurious covers thus contributed to turning sacred books into authentic treasures, preciously enshrined and piously revered.

Abbreviations

BAV = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
BL = London, British Library.
BnF = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.
BodL = Oxford, Bodleian Library.
CBL = Dublin, Chester Beatty Library.
CFM = Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs.
HL = Harvard, Houghton Library.
HMML = Collegeville, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library.
MG = Midyat, Mor Gabriel monastery.
SB = Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz.
SOP = Damascus, Syrian Orthodox patriarchate.

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Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz
– Syr. Diez A. Oct. 161, eleventh century (Sachau 1899, vol. 1, 19–20, no. 10)
– Sachau 304, eleventh century (Sachau 1899, vol. 1, 27–32, no. 14)

– Sachau 322, 1241 CE (Sachau 1899, vol. 1, 32–42, no. 15)

Damascus, Syrian Orthodox patriarchate
– 12/2, 1313 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 603–604)
– 12/4, 1149 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 604)
– 12/5, undated (Dolabani et al. 1994, 604)

– 12/6, undated (Dolabani et al. 1994, 604)
– 12/7, 1170 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 604)
– 12/9, 1099 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 604)
– 12/21, 1041 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 606)
– 348, 1222 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 603–604)
– 353, 1054 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 604)
– 356, 1212 or 1263 CE (Dolabani et al. 1994, 605)

Diyarbakır, Chaldean Archbishopric
– Cod. 13, 1196–1197 CE (Scher 1907b, 230)

Dublin, Chester Beatty Library
– Syr. 4, 1217–1218 CE (Hatch 1946, 222,
     no. CLXXI)

Harvard, Houghton Library
– Syr. 141, 1208 CE (Brock 2012, 31)

Jerusalem, Mor Marqos
– unnumbered manuscript, 1209 CE
     (Brock 2012, 31)

London, British Library
– Add. 7169, twelfth-thirteenth century (Rosen
     and Forshall 1838, 32–37, no. 25)
– Add. 7170, 1216–1220 CE (Wright 1870–1872,
     vol. 3, 1204, no. XXVI)
– Add. 7171, 1173 CE (Brock 2012, 30)
– Add. 7173, 1288–1289 CE (Hatch 1946, 225,
     plate CLXXIV)
– Add. 12139, 999–1000 CE (Wright 1870–1872,
     vol. 1, 154–159, no. CCXXIV)
– Add. 14485, 824 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1,
     146–149, no. CCXX)
– Add. 14486, 824 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1,
     149–152, no. CCXXI)
– Add. 14487, 824 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1,
     152–154, no. CCXXII)
– Add. 14490, 1089 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1,
     159–161, no. CCXXV)
– Add. 14686, 1255 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3,
     169–172, no. CCXXVIII)
– Add. 14687, 1256 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3,
     172–173, no. CCXXIX)

– Add. 14689, 1221 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 3,
     167–169, no. CCXXVII)
– Add. 17218, ninth–tenth century
     (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1, 154, no. CCXXIII)
– Add. 18714, 1214 CE (Wright 1870–1872, vol. 1,
     161–167, no. CCXXVI)
– Egerton 681, 1206–1207 CE (Hatch 1946, 220,
     no. CLXIX)
– Or. 3372, eleventh century (Margoliouth 1899,
     16)

Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs
– 37, twelfth–thirteenth century (Leroy 1964,
     383–389, no. XXVIII)
– 38, 1229–1230 CE (Braida and Pavan 2017, 241)
– 40, thirteenth century (Bernabò and Pa-
     van 2018, 407–408)
– 41, *c.* 1250–1275 CE (Leroy 1964, 371–383,
     no. XXVII)

Midyat, Mor Gabriel
– 5, 1226–1227 CE (Leroy 1964, 321–332, no. XXI)
– 6, 1201 CE (Pavan 2017, 50)

Mosul, Chaldean patriarchate
– Cod. 12, 1186 CE (Scher 1907b, 230)
– Cod. 13, 1189 CE (Scher 1907b, 230–233)
– Cod. 1225, 1237–1238 CE (Brock 2012, 33)

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France
– syriaque 51, 1138 CE (Hatch 1946, 132,
     no. LXXXI)
– syriaque 59, undated (Zotenberg 1874, 21)
– syriaque 289, 1206 CE (Chabot 1896, 239–240)
– syriaque 355, *c.* 1190–1220 (Nau 1911, 310)
– syriaque 356, *c.* 1190–1220 (Nau 1911, 310)
– syriaque 382, twelfth–thirteenth century
     (Briquel Chatonnet 1997, 21–23, 81)

St Petersburg, Hermitage Museum
– 22, 1243 CE (Brock 2012, 33)

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
– Borg. sir. 169, 1284–1285 CE (Brock 2012, 35)
– Vat. sir. 20, 1216 CE (Stefanus Assemani and
    Joseph Assemani 1758, 103–136)
– Vat. sir. 24, undated (Stefanus Assemani and
    Joseph Assemani 1758, 195–212)

– Vat. sir. 37, 1164–1165 CE (Brock 2012, 29)
– Vat. sir. 556, undated (van Lantschoot 1965,
    75)
– Vat. sir. 559, 1260 CE (van Lantschoot 1965, 78)

Gohar Grigoryan

Images of Christ Emmanuel and Christus Victor in British Library Add. 19548

Abstract: This article is a close study of the manuscript London, British Library, Add. 19548 from codicological, art-historical and liturgiological perspectives. The manuscript in question is an incomplete *maštocʻ* (the principal ritual book of the Armenian Church), which contains two canons for performing the rites of the Priest's Ordination and the Blessing of Water. The analysis of the manuscript's heretofore unpublished illustrations suggests a strong connection with the artistic traditions of the Cilician Skewṙa monastery and its adjacent scriptoria, which flourished in the last quarter of the twelfth century under the patronage of the influential Lambron family. After presenting the archaeology and history of Add. 19548 and identifying the artistic milieu in which it was possibly created, the article continues with discussions of the images of Christ Emmanuel and Christus Victor, depicted in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* and the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, respectively.

1 Introduction

In a 2011 article about the miniature painting of non-biblical Armenian manuscripts, the late Nira Stone observed that there is a completely unstudied tradition of illustrated *maštocʻ* manuscripts.[1] *Maštocʻ* is the name of the principal ritual book of the Armenian Church, similar to the Greek euchologion and the Latin pontifical.[2] Although Stone's article overlooked Edda Vardanyan's detailed study of a fifteenth-century illustrated *maštocʻ*,[3] her general assessment remains true one decade later. My own interest in this topic was sparked by a lucky coincidence when a few years ago, in the framework of other research, I had the occasion to see the elegant illustrations of the manuscript London, British Library, Add. 19548 (Figs 1, 4, 9–13, 16, 19–21).

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1 Nira Stone 2011, 256. In the present article, Armenian letters are transliterated according to the system available in TITUS: <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/caucasus/geoarmsc.pdf> (accessed on 8 November 2022).

2 Though spelled identically, the book *maštocʻ* has nothing in common with the name of Mesrop Maštocʻ, the fifth-century inventor of the Armenian alphabet.

3 Vardanyan 2003–2004.

In his monumental *Rituale Armenorum* published in 1905, Frederick Cony-beare included Add. 19548 in his collations of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* and the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*.[4] These are the only extant canons of this parchment *maštoc'*, whose first and only description was published by the same scholar in 1913, when it was kept in the British Museum.[5] On the strength of Cony-beare's careful philological work undertaken in the *Rituale Armenorum*, the man-uscript has never reappeared in scholarship. The present article allows the reader to appreciate the *maštoc'* Add. 19548 from an art-historical point of view, for its heretofore overlooked illustrations can clearly be associated with the artistic traditions of Skewṙa and its adjacent workshops, which, in the last quarter of the twelfth century, flourished under the patronage of the powerful Lambron family – later also referred to as Het'umids.

The art-historical analysis of the miniatures in Add. 19548 (Sections 5–6) is pre-ceded by a study of the manuscript's archaeology and afterlife, with a particular focus on its fourteenth-century textual spolia, which reflect ongoing liturgical devel-opments (Section 2). The discussion continues with structures of the extant canons (Section 3), followed by the scribal colophons (Section 4), which have preserved the names of the original scribe and acquirer (*stac'oł*),[6] identified as Kostandin and tēr Vardan, respectively. The paper does not set out to determine whether this Kostandin can firmly be identified as the twelfth-century scribe and painter Kostandin Skewṙac'i. Nevertheless, the analysis of the iconography, style and orna-mentation of the British Library's *maštoc'* will reveal eloquent analogies with the codices produced in the 1190s by two Het'umid masters: Kostandin Skewṙac'i and Grigor Mličec'i. The article is accompanied by three appendices, which present, respectively, the textual contents of Add. 19548 (Appendix 1); the structure of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* as preserved in the same codex (Appendix 2); and a synoptic table of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water* based on several manuscripts dating from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries (Appendix 3).

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4 Conybeare 1905, XX–XXI, 235–242 (*Priest's Ordination*), 165–178 (*Blessing of Water*).

5 Conybeare 1913, 88–90 (but also see Nersessian 2012, 11, who mentions an unpublished cata-logue of the British Museum Armenian manuscripts, completed in 1877 by Rev. Suk'ias Baronian. Here, Vrej Nerses Nersessian provides a list of manuscripts described by Baronian, in which we also find Add. 19548). The present article provides a more extensive description of the textual contents of Add. 19548 by identifying two more texts: *Prayer for Priestly Vestments*, extracted from the so-called *Sis Maštoc'* in 1372, and fragments of the apocryphal *Martyrdom of Apostle Philip* that were cut out from another manuscript and likely used as protective flyleaves for our manuscript. These texts, along with the two canons that constitute the principal content of Add. 19548, are discussed in Section 2 and presented in Appendix 1.

6 For the term and uses of *stac'oł* (lit. 'acquirer, recipient'), see Grigoryan forthcoming a.

Fig. 1: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 1ʳ; incipit page of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

2 Archaeology and history of the manuscript

As it stands today, the manuscript Add. 19548 begins with the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* (fols 1ʳ–27ʳ), whose incipit page contains the quire number Ը (eight) (Fig. 1). This means that seven quires preceded the current fol. 1ʳ in the original manuscript. An Armenian manuscript quire is typically composed of eight leaves, and the British Library *maštocʻ* is not an exception, meaning that originally fifty-six leaves, which are now missing, preceded the ordination canon. There are currently a total of fifty parchment folios from the original manuscript.

The text of the ordination canon ends on fol. 27ʳ and is followed, on fol. 27ᵛ, by two scribal colophons discussed below. Fols 28ʳ–29ᵛ, made of paper, were inserted – according to the colophon (see Appendix 1) – in 1372 by a certain Nersēs *abeła*, who, subsequently, offered the already incomplete manuscript to Archbishop Yovanēs from Melitene (in manuscript: 'Melitinē', which is the present-day Malatya, Turkey). The text that appears on these paper folios was written by the same Nersēs *abeła* and is not disconnected from the preceding content. It starts with an unnamed prayer, which corresponds to the *Prayer for Priestly Vestments* (Աղաւթք ամենայն քահանայական զգեստուց), known from the so-called *Sis Maštocʻ* (Սսեցւոց մաշտոց) or *mixed maštocʻ* (Խառնամաշտոց).[7] The *Sis Maštocʻ* is a mid-fourteenth-century mélange of 103 canons of Armenian and Latin rites, which is, so far, only attested in two manuscripts, the earliest of which was produced in 1345 in Sis for Bishop Yovhannēs – Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1173. The *Sis Maštocʻ*, according to Gēorg Tēr-Vardanean, did not enjoy popularity after the Cilician period, although various rites of its many canons penetrated the subsequently produced handwritten and printed *maštocʻ* books.[8] Given the rarity of the manuscripts containing that *maštocʻ* and the fact that its text remains unpublished, it seems useful to reproduce in Appendix 1 the vesting prayer that was inserted into Add. 19548 in a period when the short-lived *Sis Maštocʻ* was in use in Cilician Armenia.

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[7] My identification of this prayer is based on its comparison with that of the unpublished manuscript Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1173 (fols 120ᵛ–121ʳ), which is the oldest extant codex of the *Sis Maštocʻ*. Two detailed descriptions of this manuscript are available in Sargisean and Sargsean 1966, 143–192, and Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 804–813, which helpfully provide a list of the canons and prayers included therein. I thank Father Vahan Ohanian for making the Venice manuscript 1173 available for study.

[8] Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 19–25, esp. 22 and 24. For the *Sis Maštocʻ* and the Cilician ordination rite, see Gugerotti 2001, esp. 69–71.

The transcription of the *Prayer for Priestly Vestments* (see Appendix 1) reveals a remarkable difference from the earliest *Sis Maštocʻ* preserved in Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1173. In the London manuscript, that prayer is immediately followed by a slightly modified version of Prayer 34:2 of the tenth-century *Book of Lamentation* by Grigor Narekacʻi (Saint Gregory of Narek), which is adjusted for liturgical service.[9] Here, supplications are intended not for the person who says the prayer but for someone who is present. Thus, on fol. 28ᵛ, we read (I italicise the deviations from the original): Կառկառեա ի վերա *սորա* զամենամերձ աջ քո և զաւրացոյ *զսա* շնորհաւք գթութեան քո ('Extend over *this one* [me in original] your all-reaching right hand and strengthen *him* [me in original] with the grace of your compassion').[10] It is also noteworthy that the supplications appear in the plural, modifying the original text where these are said in the first person singular: for example, աղաչեմ ('I beg') of the original text is transformed into աղաչեմք ('we beg'). The ritual mise-en-scène becomes especially discernible in a self-initiated sentence about the person who is about to enter the church service (the italicised part is an addition to Narekacʻi's Prayer 34:2):[11]

Շնորհեա և *կոչեցոյս այժմ առ ի քէն ի գործ վերակացութեան տնտեսութեան խորհրդոյ եկեղեցոյ սպասաւորել և* համարձակութեամբ կենդանարար խորհրդոյ աւետեաց աւետարանիդ հետևել:

Grant also me, *who is now called upon by you to the duty of overseership, to serve the economy of the mystery of the church and* to follow with courage the life-giving mystery of the good news of your Gospel.

The sequence of the quire numbers of Add. 19548 indicate that the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, prior to the insertion of the bifolio by Nersēs *abeła* in 1372, followed the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*. The presence of these two canons suggests that the original manuscript was a *mayr maštocʻ* (lit. 'mother' or *grand maštocʻ*), that is to say, the manual containing the rites performed by both bishops

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9 The inclusion of Narekacʻi's prayers in liturgical services is not unusual. Prayer 33 of the *Book of Lamentation*, for example, is featured in the preparatory rites of the Armenian divine liturgy. See Russell 1996–1997; Feulner 2006. See also below, n. 53.

10 Translation adapted from Terian (tr.) 2021, 157.

11 Cf. Terian (tr.) 2021, 157: 'Grant event me, a sinner, to speak boldly of the life-giving mystery of the good news of your Gospel, that I might follow with swift mind the infinite course of the Testaments breathed by you.'

and priests.[12] The churchman for whom the manuscript was created was tēr Vardan. He was the brother of its scribe, Kostandin, and is mentioned alongside 'all ranks of priests' in the preserved colophon (see Section 4). The manuscript's size[13] and its fourteenth-century afterlife associated with an *abeła* and an archbishop, indeed, confirm that we are dealing with a *mayr maštoc'*.

In 1375, i.e. three years after Archbishop Yovanēs had acquired the manuscript, a new colophon was added on fol. 26ᵛ, which documents the takeover of the Armenian capital Sis (present-day Kozan, Turkey) by Yashekh Temur, the Mamluk commander of Aleppo. This event marked the end of the Armenian state of Cilicia (1198–1375), which seems to have been witnessed by our colophon writer, judging from the immediacy and precision with which the city's dire socio-economic situation is described.[14]

The subsequent history of the manuscript is poorly documented. We know from Conybeare's 1905 publication that it was brought to England from Aleppo.[15] A nineteenth-century handwritten note on the flyleaf, which is currently attached at the beginning of the manuscript, mentions that the codex was found 'in the region of Beria': Չերագիրս այս երկաթագիր գտաւ ի կողմանս Բերիոյ.[16] In 1853, it was acquired by the British Museum and was registered under the inventory number Add. 19548.[17] In the 1990s, the *maštoc'* was moved to its current place of residence, the British Library, along with the manuscript collection of the British Museum.[18]

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12 For the types of *maštoc'* books, see Terian 1998, 78–79, n. 4 and, more extensively, Połarean 1990, 96–120.

13 According to Conybeare 1913, 88, the external size of the manuscript Add. 19548 is 9.5 × 7 inches. This is close to the measurements of the *mayr maštoc'* manuscripts, listed in Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 35–38.

14 This colophon is published in Conybeare 1913, 89; Xač'ikyan 1950, 516 (based on Conybeare); Grigoryan 2021, 87–88. See also Sanjian 1969, 99 (based on Levon Xač'ikyan), which provides a slightly different translation than that proposed in Grigoryan 2021, 88, and misrepresents Nersēs as its scribe (Nersēs, as we saw, wrote his colophon in 1372).

15 Conybeare 1905, XXI.

16 Beria is the ancient name of Aleppo, used by the Armenians up until the modern times.

17 *Catalogue* 1868, 251, 214.

18 Email communication with Francesca Hiller, British Museum senior archivist (6 February 2020).

3 The structures of the canons of a *Priest's Ordination* and the *Blessing of Water*

In Add. 19548, the structures of the two extant canons of a *Priest's Ordination* and the *Blessing of Water* (Appendices 2 and 3) differ from those found in the oldest known *maštocʿ* manuscripts dating from the tenth and early eleventh centuries that present shorter and less elaborate versions of these rites.[19] Nevertheless, these structures also differ from those canons found in Cilician manuscripts created after the mid thirteenth century.[20] It is well-known that the rites of the Armenian Church underwent considerable elaboration in the Cilician period when the Armenian ecclesiastical and political authorities were engaged in active negotiations first with Byzantium, then with the Holy Roman Empire and the Pope. The political ambitions of Prince Lewon II (r. 1187–1198, then as king 1198–1219) accelerated the process of liturgical development that had already been under way for several years. By 1198, when Lewon's coronation – approved by the Pope and the Holy Roman emperor (also by the Byzantine emperor) – took place, a translation of a Latin pontifical was available in Armenian, prepared by Nersēs Lambronacʿi (1153–1198), the erudite archbishop of Tarsus. Lambronacʿi is known as a prolific liturgiologist, who authored an extensive commentary on the Armenian divine liturgy and was a protector of several ecumenically oriented rites that he himself was practicing despite the opposition of his compatriots.[21] Tēr-Vardanean mentions that the principal motivation for translating the Latin pontifical was the *Canon of a King's Consecration* that would have been used for the much-

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19 For the texts of these canons, as preserved in the oldest extant manuscripts, see Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 342–360 (*Blessing of Water*), 426–430 (*Priest's Ordination*). Cf. Conybeare 1905, 165–178 (*Blessing of Water*), 231–235 (*Priest's Ordination*).
20 The structure of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* in the manuscript Add. 19548 (Appendix 2) differs considerably from the ancient version, which prompted Conybeare to reproduce it separately (by collating it with the texts of two fourteenth-century codices): Conybeare 1905, 235–242. As for the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, it is enriched with chanted sections but omits the readings from Exodus and Joshua (Appendix 3), which became common in the manuscripts created after the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the gradual elaboration of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, see brief but useful comments in Sargisean and Sargsean 1966, 52. For the musical elaborations of the Armenian *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, see Arevshatyan 1986, 40–44. For a general overview of the chanted sections of *maštocʿ* books, see also Arevshatyan 1986–1987.
21 On Nersēs Lambronacʿi, see, for example, Gugerotti 2001, 185–197, 226–259; Schmidt 1997b, 121–137; Akinean 1956.

anticipated event.[22] Although scholars are uncertain of the actual extent to which the translated Latin rites were used in the Armenian Church, the consensus is that many elaborations incorporated into Armenian liturgical services were done in this period under the influence of Latin practices.[23]

Whether the two canons preserved in Add. 19548 are the result of the liturgical revisions introduced at the time of Nersēs Lambronac'i is not my principal concern here. Rather, I highlight this question to place the *maštoc'* of the British Library in a geographical and chronological framework which, as will be seen, is closely associated with the patronage of the Lambron family, and Nersēs Lambronac'i in particular. This ritual manuscript is, therefore, particularly significant as evidence for understanding the religious and liturgical milieu in which it was probably created. Conybeare, the only scholar who studied the London manuscript, drew the readers' attention to its old palaeography and orthography, cautiously dating the manuscript to the thirteenth century, but he did not raise the question of its provenance.[24] Unfortunately, the name of the acting catholicos, which was initially included in one of the litanies written on fol. 19ᵛ and could have helped in establishing the dating of Add. 19548, appears to have deliberately effaced at an unknown point in time (Fig. 2).[25]

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22 Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 20. The translation of this rite was, nevertheless, done by Nersēs Lambronac'i by incorporating some confessional revisions which stress the origins of Armenian Christianity. For the structure(s) of this rite, with references to its Latin analogue(s) that can be identified with two recensions of the tenth-century *Mainzer Krönungsordo*, see Grigoryan 2023, 107–111 (Appendix A1–A2: 'The structures of Cilician Armenian coronation rites').

23 The literature on this period is vast, but see the general remarks in Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 20–21, who also highlights the scarce scholarship on the transformations of the Armenian *maštoc'* over the centuries, including especially during the Cilician period.

24 Conybeare 1913, 90. On the British Library website (accessed on 8 November 2022), the manuscript is dated to the twelfth century.

25 It is to be hoped that the use of modern technologies, such as infrared reflectography, can reveal the effaced proper name.

Fig. 2: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 19ᵛ; *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, *maštoc'* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

4 The scribe Kostandin and the Skewṙa masters

The principal colophon of Add. 19548 is not preserved,[26] but there are two colophons at the end of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* which name the scribe and the acquirer (Fig. 3). The script of these colophons is *erkat'agir*, similar to but larger in size than that used for the main text.[27] The first colophon is written in gold and divided into two blocks that have, in their middle, the second colophon written in dark red-purple and in angular-looking *erkat'agir*. This second colophon asks the users of this book to remember the scribe Kostandi(n), whose brother Vardan – as we learn from the first, gold-written colophon – was the intended owner of the manuscript. The textual division of the colophons is visualised by not only different colours and forms of the script, but also inserting black-and-red wavy ornaments – a typical scribal feature in Armenian manuscripts aimed at marking the end of a textual unit. The two colophons, transcribed below, occupy the entire space of fol. 27ᵛ, creating an allusion to monumental inscription (Fig. 3).

> Colophon 1.1 written in gold, above: ՅԻՍՈՒՍ ՔՐԻՍՏՈՍ ՎԱՅԵԼԵԼ ՏԱՅՑԷ ՉՏԵՏՐԱԿՍ ԵԻ ՉԵՐԻՑԱՐԱՐՍ ՏԵԱՌՆ ՎԱՐԴԱՆԱՅ
>
> Colophon 2 written in red-purple, in the middle: ՉՏՈՒԱԻԴԴ Ի ՏՈՒԱԻՂԷՆ ԱՌԵԼՈՑ, ԸՆԴ ԱՌՈՂԻԴ ՆՈՐԱԿԵՐՏԵԱՑ, ՄԻԱՆԳԱՄԱՅՆ ԵԻ ՉԱՄԵՆԱՅՆ ԴԱՍՍ ՔԱՀԱՆԱՅԻՑ ԱՂԱՉԵՄ ՅԻՇԵԼ ՉՄԵՂԱՊԱՐՏ ԳՐԻՉՍ ԿՈՍՏԱՆԴԻ:
>
> Colophon 1.2 written in gold, below: ԲԱՉՈՒՄ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿՍ Ի ՆՈՒԱՍՏ ԵՂԲԱԻՐԷ ԳՐՉԷ ԸՆԾԱՅԵԱԼ:

Translation:

> (1.1) May Jesus Christ allow tēr Vardan to enjoy this book and ordinal (1.2) for a long time that was offered by (his) humble brother, the scribe.
>
> (2) You who will give [this book] to a recipient, also you who will receive it, renew it![28] Upon the whole, I beg all ranks of priests to remember the sinful scribe Kostandi[n].[29]

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26 In Armenian codicology, the term 'principal colophon' refers to the final scribal colophon, which is usually a lengthy and informative text, starting with a doxology for the Holy Trinity.

27 *Erkat'agir* is the name of Armenian uncial letters employed for parchment manuscripts. It fell out of use after the mid thirteenth century. See Michael E. Stone, Kouymjian and Lehmann 2002, 66–69, 100; Kouymjian 2015, 277–279.

28 This sentence, as already observed in Conybeare 1913, 89, is obscure in diction.
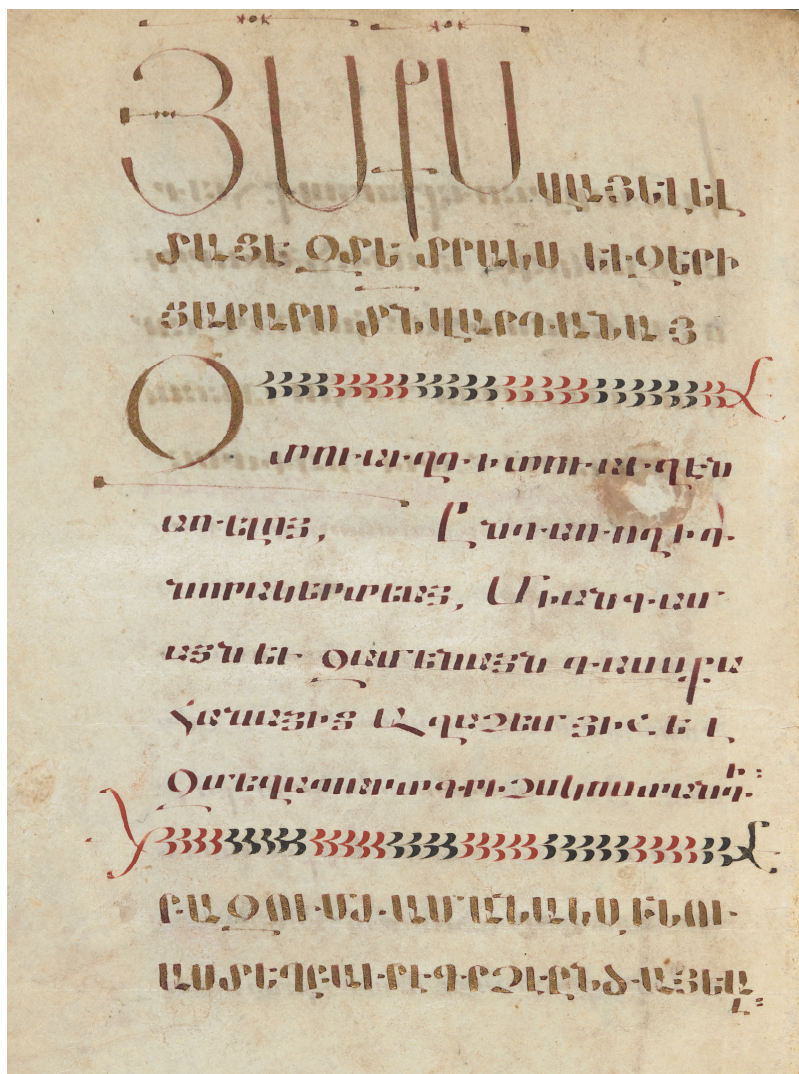
Fig. 3: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 27ᵛ; scribal colophons, *maštoc'* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

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29 These colophons do not appear in the published volumes of Armenian manuscript colophons. They were reproduced previously in Conybeare 1913, 89, and Conybeare 1904, 276 (although here, the first colophon is given together with the last sentence of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*). My English translation is adapted from Conybeare 1913, 89.

It is possible that the scribe mentioned in the second colophon, Kostandin, is the same person who, in the 1190s, completed several manuscripts for members of the Lambron family who owned Lambron castle and controlled its neighbouring territories. In the All-Saviour Monastery of Skewṙa, the Hetʻumids's protégé, Kostandin, copied and illuminated in 1193 a gospel manuscript for Nersēs Lambronacʻi and his brother, Prince Hetʻum Sewastos (i.e. honoured with the Greek title *sebastos*). This parchment manuscript, now preserved at the Mekhitarist library in Venice as no. 1635, contains a lengthy colophon, at the end of which 'the sinful scribe Kostandin' (cf. the wording of the London manuscript) asks Christ to have mercy on a certain Vardan, without adding any information about the latter's identity. Barseł Sargisean and Garegin Yovsēpʻean, when studying the colophons of manuscript Venice 1635, suggested that Vardan could be either a relative or a co-worker of the scribe.[30] If my tentative identification of the Kostandin who copied Add. 19548 with the Hetʻumid master Kostandin is correct, these scholars' suggestion appears accurate, because the colophon (1.1–1.2) of our manuscript transcribed above refers to Vardan as a brother of the scribe.[31] Moreover, as argued below and in Section 5), both codices share a particularly striking resemblance in terms of style, iconography and ornamentation (cf. Figs 4–5), which suggests they may have been decorated by Kostandin.

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30 Sargisean 1914, 558; Yovsēpʻean 1951, 565, 1238. For the principal colophon of Venice 1635, see also Ališan 1885, 82, 97–98; Der Nersessian 1937, vol. 1, 177–178 (text accompanied with French translation); Akinean 1956, 47–48, 73–74; Matʻevosyan 1988, 273–274. For an extensive analysis of its miniature painting, see Der Nersessian 1937, vol. 1, 50–86, plates XVI–XXXIII. See also Der Nersessian and Mekhitarian 1986, 30; Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 16–21, 24–25; Azaryan 1964, 66–72. Contemporaneous to Venice 1635 is the Gospel W.538 of the Walters Art Museum, executed in 1193 for Bishop Karapet in the Pawłoskan monastery. This manuscript, although it shares general artistic features with the so-called Skewṙa group of manuscripts, has often been associated with a workshop belonging to Hṙomkla, the catholicossal see. On illustrations of W.538 and its relevance to other twelfth-century manuscripts, see Der Nersessian 1973, 6–9, plates 12–29, also 85–86 (for the colophon text); Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 16–21. For the twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century manuscripts produced in Skewṙa and Hṙomkla, see Evans 1990, 49–74, also appendices I–II (155–167), which provide two useful lists of respective manuscripts.

31 Other clerics called Vardan are known from this period, although it can hardly be proven that these are the same tēr Vardan associated with our scribe Kostandin. In 1192, one of them copied in the Maškewor monastery the now famous manuscript Jerusalem, Aṙakʻelakan Atʻoṙ Srbocʻ Yakovbeancʻ, 121 – one of the three manuscripts of the published *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121* (see Renoux 1971, esp. 155–157; the colophons of this manuscript are reproduced in Matʻevosyan 1988, 266–267). Another Vardan from the region of Ĵahan is mentioned in a colophon written by Nersēs Lambronacʻi in 1192 (for this colophon, see Akinean 1956, 164). Yet, one more Vardan is mentioned in one of the colophons of the Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1568, where he is referred as priest who died in 1173 (see Matʻevosyan 1988, 210).
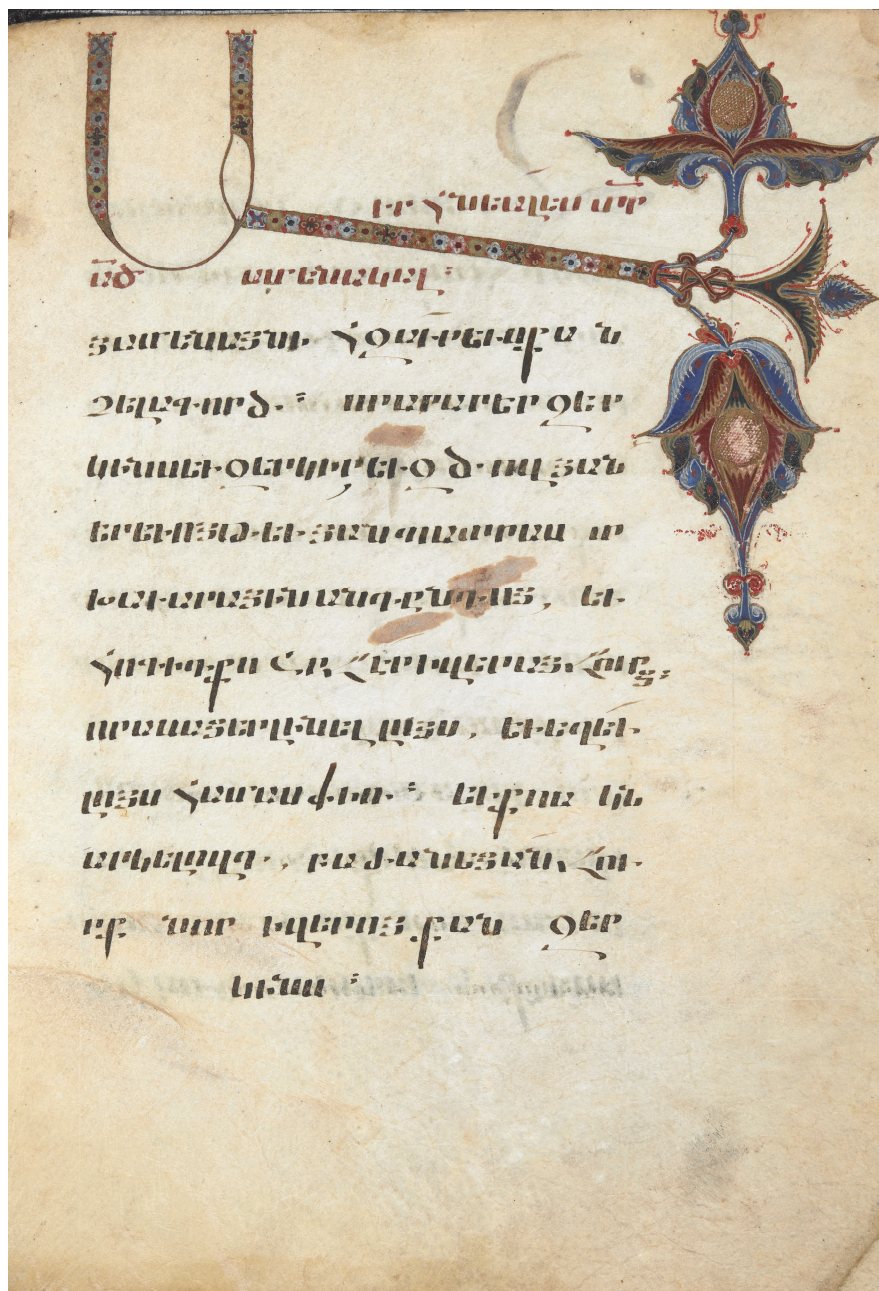
Fig. 4: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 39ʳ; *maštocʿ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.
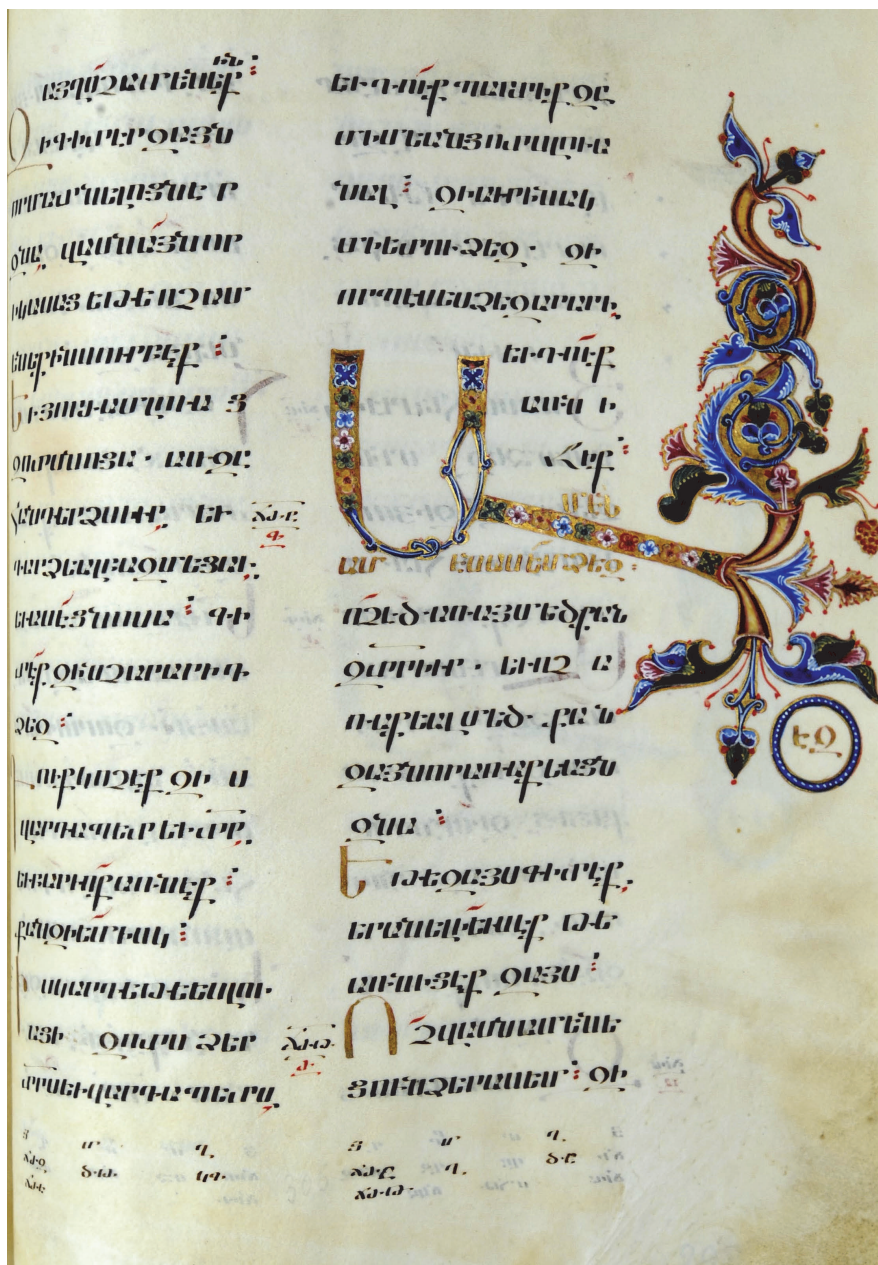
Fig. 5: Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1635, fol. 297ʳ; *Gospel of Nersēs Lambronac'i and Het'um Sewastos*, scribe and miniaturist Kostandin, Skewṙa, 1193 CE; © Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

Still on the subject of the scribe's identity, Sirarpie Der Nersessian had noticed back in 1937 that the individuals identified as Kostandin and Vardan in the colophon of Venice 1635 are the same people who assisted the scribe Grigor when the latter copied the *Gospel of Tigranakert* in 1173 and the *Gospel of T'oxat* in 1174 (Fig. 6).[32] In the colophons of these now-lost manuscripts, Grigor mentions with gratitude and respect the assistance he had received from the 'God-pleasing' Vardan and Kostandin – the latter 'nicknamed K.O.Š.I.K.' (Կոստանդին մականուն Կ.Ո.Շ.Ի.Կ.).[33] Significantly, Nersēs Lambronac'i was involved in the activities of this network of masters, since he supplied the model of the *Gospel of Tigranakert*.[34] Lambronac'i's direct involvement – now as acquirer – was also important in the production of what is now Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1568, the earliest extant manuscript of the *Book of Lamentation*, copied in 1173 by the scribe Grigor.[35] The latter's identity is sometimes conflated with his namesake colleague, Grigor Mličec'i, who famously illustrated in 1198 the *Skewṛa Gospel* (Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa, Rps 8101 III), a sumptuous manuscript that commemorates the coronation of the first Cilician king Lewon I, to which I will return later.[36]

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32 Der Nersessian 1937, vol. 1, 52.

33 The colophon of the *Gospel of Tigranakert* is reproduced in Sruanjteants 1884, 442–444; Ališan 1885, 97 (partially); Yovsēp'ean 1951, 445–448; Mat'evosyan 1988, 212–213. For the colophon of the *Gospel of T'oxat*, see Sruanjteants 1879, 114–119; Yovsēp'ean 1951, 453–460; Mat'evosyan 1988, 215–217; Schmidt 1997b, 129. Two old photographs showing the incipit pages of the Gospels of Mark and Luke are the only testimonies of the illustrations of the *Gospel of T'oxat*. These photographs were taken by Garegin Yovsēp'ean before the Armenian Genocide of 1915. They are reproduced and discussed in Izmailova 1961, 95–97 and figs 13–14; Yovsēp'ean 1951, fig. 26. In June 2019, I had the opportunity to work in the Archives of Garegin Catholicos Yovsēp'ean in Antelias, Lebanon, and view the original photograph of the *Gospel of T'oxat*, which is reproduced here with kind permission of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia (Fig. 6).

34 This is documented in the manuscript's principal colophon, as reproduced in Sruanjteants 1884, 443: Եւ որ զաւրինակն շնորհեաց զՆերսէս սուրբ եւ ընտրեալ քահանայ զորդի մեծազաւր Սեւաստոսի պատրոն Աւշնի, որ ամենեւին հանգիստ եղեւ գրչիս տկարութեան յիւր սեպհական անապատոն Սկեւռայ անուն կոչեցաւ, որ է մերձ յանառ դղեակն Լամբրոնու ('And (remember) also Nersēs, the saintly and virtuous priest, son of the mighty patron Awšin Sewastos, who offered the model [and] who was totally ignorant of my scribal incompetence in his own hermitage called Skewṛay, which is close to the impregnable castle of Lambron', my translation).

35 For the colophons of the Matenadaran 1568, see Mat'evosyan 1988, 210–221. The illustrations of this manuscript are studied in Evans 1990, 63–65; Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 12–13; Zakaryan 2006; Rapti 2009–2010, 467–468; Maranci 2018, 100–102; Manukyan 2021.

36 This manuscript is also known as the *Gospel of Lviv*, named after the city, where it was kept for a long time. It is currently preserved at the National Library of Poland and is available for consultation at <https://polona.pl/item/ewangeliarz-ze-skewry,NTU3NzE2OQ/> (accessed on 8 November 2022). For the colophons of this manuscript, see Akinean 1930, 6–10; Mat'evosyan 1988, 298–301; Schmidt 1997a
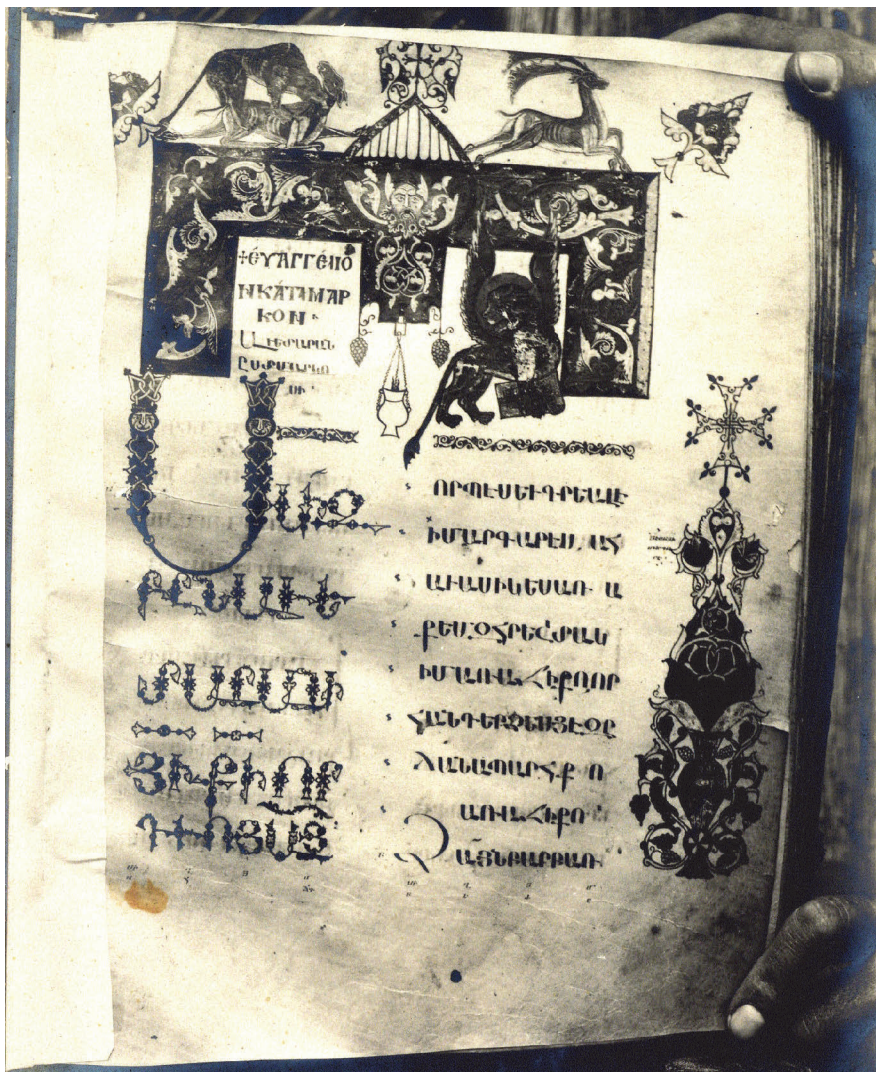
Fig. 6: Antelias (Lebanon), Katʻołikosowtʻiwn Hayocʻ Mecʻi Tann Kilikioy (Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia), Archives of Garegin Catholicos Yovsēpʻean, No 24-1-579, file 98; original photograph showing the incipit page of the Gospel of Mark in the now-lost *Gospel of Tʻoxat*, scribe Grigor, 1174 CE; © Katʻołikosowtʻiwn Hayocʻ Mecʻi Tann Kilikioy; Photo: Gohar Grigoryan.

(for German translation). The illustrations of the *Skewr̄a Gospel* are discussed in Akinean 1930; Azary-an 1964, 66–71; Der Nersessian and Mekhitarian 1986, 30, 33, 36; Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 16–18, 20–21, 39–40; Prinzing and Schmidt (eds) 1997; Chookaszian 2017; Maranci 2018, 102–103; Vardanyan 2023.

Collaborative practices, as shown by the colophons discussed above, were not uncommon for Cilician scriptoria, which explains the stylistic, iconographic and palaeographic similarities between the manuscripts produced by the above-mentioned masters and those who are not known by name. Moreover, Kostandin Skewṙac'i and Grigor Mličec'i, who were active both as scribes and miniaturists, were probably associated through a teacher–disciple relationship.[37] Grigor's artistic skills are praised in the principal colophon of the *Skewṙa Gospel*, written by the *stac'oł* (i.e. acquirer, recipient) Step'anos, who vividly describes the sensual experience of handling a gospel manuscript and also discloses some remarkable details about the production of this manuscript.[38] As for his elder colleague Kostandin, his responsibilities as a scribe and artist are mentioned on two occasions.[39] It is this Kostandin – 'the honourable old man' (պատուական ծերունի),

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37 For such approaches, see Połarean 1989, 5–9; Schmidt 1997b, 127–129; Azaryan 1964, 55. The identity of the scribe and painter Grigor, better known as Grigor Mličec'i, has been subject of debates, for his work was preceded and, then, continued by homonymous masters, who all share common artistic and scribal traditions. See Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 13, 36–37; Der Nersessian and Mekhitarian 1986, 30–36; von Euw 1997, 80–82; Azaryan 1964, 54–55. See also Der Nersessian's review of Levon Azaryan's book: Der Nersessian 1965, 396–397.

38 The colophon of the *Skewṙa Gospel*, fol. 421ᵛ, reads as follows: Սոյնպէս եւ ես զբանս նորա որ հոգի է եւ կեանք, աշխատութեամբ նաւելցի ի Կիպրոս եւ զտեալ նիւթ, զբանն ի մարմին փոխարկեցի. զի անյագաբար վայելեցից ուրախութեամբ ձեռամբ շաւշափմամբ համբուրիք եւ մտաւք, եւ հոգւով ի բանէն կենդանացայց. եւ զայս ոչ վայրապար, այղ ի ձեռն մեծահռչակ գրվեալ գրչի որ զեր ի վերոյ եւ անհաս զտաւ ի սեռս մեր ոչ մելանս միայն, այղ եւ երանգոց եւ դեղոց նկարագարդ վայելչութեամբ. ոչ ըստ զարդութեան եւ կարողութեան իւրոյ արուեստին, այղ ըստ իմումս զիջեալ աղքատութեամբ ('Likewise I, after having sailed with difficulty to Cyprus and having found [writing] material, transformed into flesh the Word of Him [cf. John 1:14] who is spirit and life, so that I may insatiably enjoy [the Word] through the touch of hands, through kisses and thoughts, and become again spiritually alive from the Word. And this [was done] not randomly but by the hands of the highly acclaimed scribe Grigor, who is considered excellent and unattainable among our [human] race not only for [mastering] the ink but also for the gracefulness of colours and picturesque paints. [Yet, this was undertaken] not due to the virtue and talent of his skill but because of my own indigence', my translation).

39 In the principal colophon of Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1635, written in 1193, Kostandin reveals his artistic skills in this sentence (fol. 320ʳᵛ): հրաման ետուն ինձ Կոստանդեայ հոգեւոր երկամբք ծնեալ որդոյ սատարութեամբ գրչի աւարտել եւ երանգաւք ծաղկող զարդարել. զի ի խորիրդական ժամու սրբոյ պատարագին աւրստաւրէ ի տաճարս Աստուծոյ ընթերցցին. եւ ես ըստ կարի տկարութեանս իմոյ յանգ հանի զպատուէր տերանց իմոյ եւ իշխողաց ('[Nersēs Lambronac'i and his brother Het'um Sewastaws] [...] commanded me, Kostandin, born in spiritual fear, to complete [this book] with the help of pen and to adorn it with the colours of flowers, so that at the solemn hour of the holy liturgy it might be read every day in the temple of God. And I, in the measure of my incapacity, carried out the order of my lords and rulers', my translation). In an earlier manuscript executed in 1190 (Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di

as Grigor labels him in the colophon of the *Gospel of T'oxat* – who administered the manuscript production of the Het'umid-controlled scriptoria for at least two decades.[40] According to Der Nersessian, Kostandin Skewṙac'i was 'the favorite artist of the Het'umids'.[41] His name appears for the first time in Grigor's above-mentioned colophon dating from 1173 and for the last time in 1195, in the colophon of the gospel manuscript 27/24, kept at the Armenian Holy Saviour Monastery of Isfahan (New Julfa). The figurative miniatures of the Isfahan manuscript were violently cut out (Fig. 7), but the principal colophon is fortunately complete and allows us to better appreciate the scope of the Het'umid patronage of Cilician scriptoria.[42] It appears, on its basis, that this manuscript was also acquired by a Lambron aristocrat – Prince Apirat, the brother of Nersēs Lambronac'i and Het'um Sewastos.[43] Noteworthy also is that the scribe of the Isfahan manuscript 27/24 writes his name as *Kostandi*,[44] just as the homonymous (same?) scribe of the colophon of the London *maštoc'* does.

Yet another late-twelfth-century manuscript, Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 92, has preserved the name of a certain *Kostandi*(n), who is referred to as the manuscript's miniaturist. I was not able to view the illustrations of this codex but its content and provenance, closely associated with Nersēs Lambronac'i, point at the same Kostandin Skewṙac'i as the most probable author of its miniatures. In fact, this codex was copied for Nersēs Lambronac'i by one of his disciples, Samuēl *vardapet* Skewṙac'i, in 1190 and contains Lambronac'i's own *Commentary on Psalms*. According to Sahak Čemčemean, it origi-

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S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 92), Kostandin inserted his name (եւ զնկարիչս կոստանդիս – 'also me, the painter Kostandi[n]') into one of the non-principal colophons that was written by the scribe Samuēl who hoped to be remembered by readers. This interlinear addition was likely done by Kostandi(n) when he completed the manuscript's illustrations (see below, n. 45).

40 Schmidt 1997b, 129, 122–123.

41 Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 16.

42 For the description and colophons of Isfahan (New Julfa), Sowrb Amenap'rkič' Vank' (Holy Saviour Monastery), 27/24, see Tēr-Awetisean 1970, 35–37; Mat'evosyan 1988, 288–289 (but see below, n. 44). For its miniature painting (mostly cut though), see Der Nersessian and Mekhitarian 1986, 30.

43 For the genealogical table of this family, see Schmidt 1997b, 128.

44 In Mat'evosyan 1988, 288–289, the scribe's name is given as *Kostandin* without editorial comments. This colophon is also reproduced in Tēr-Awetisean 1970, 36: Եւ ես գրիչս Կոստանդի աղաչեմ զոտերորդ իմ եւ եղբարող, որք վայելէք ի սմա, զնուաստութեանս իմոյ սպասաւորութիւն աստուածային մատենիս աստուածապարգեւ արհեստիւ յիշատակլի արժանի արարէք, զի զողից ողորմութիւն ի Քրիստոսէ ('And I, scribe Kostandi[n], beg you, my lords and brothers, who will enjoy this [book], make worthy of remembrance my unworthiness who accomplished this divine book with God-granted art, so that I may find mercy in Christ', my translation).

nally had high-quality marginal ornaments, which are now badly damaged because of natural and human hazards.[45]

Fig. 7: Isfahan (New Julfa), Sowrb Amenapʻrkičʻ Vankʻ (Holy Saviour Monastery), 27/24, fol. 139ʳ; beginning of the Gospel of Luke, showing the preceding folio of parchment (cut out) originally containing the evangelist's image; *Gospel of Prince Apirat Lambronacʻi*, scribe Kostandi(n), 1195 CE; © Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

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45 This manuscript was obtained by the Mekhitarists of Venice in 1882 and was described, for the first time, in Čemčemean 1996, 871–876 (which, however, does not reproduce the non-principal colophons but only the principal one). Previously, this codex was quoted in Ališan 1885, 98, n. 1 and 99, fig. 20), which helpfully includes a photograph of the colophon where Kostandi(n) is mentioned as the manuscript's artist (while the scribe is the 'sinful Samuēl') (see above, n. 39). On this manuscript, see also Połarean 1989, 5, and Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 16 (both based on Ališan 1885).

Fig. 8: Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1635, fol. 151ʳ; incipit page of the Gospel of Luke; *Gospel of Nersēs Lambronacʻi and Hetʻum Sewastos*, scribe and miniaturist Kostandin, Skewṙa, 1193 ᴄᴇ; © Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

Returning to the British Library *maštocʻ*, I attribute it to the network of Kostandin Skewṙacʻi and Grigor Mličecʻi, based not so much on the names of its scribe and acquirer (who are mentioned together in other manuscripts as well), but in light of stylistic and iconographic evidence preserved in this codex that is clearly relevant to artistic traditions of the masters of Skewṙa and its adjacent scriptoria.[46] Based on the

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46 A localisation in Greater Armenia is excluded as a possibility because of obvious differences in style and iconography. For Greater Armenian manuscript illumination in the last quarter of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, see e.g. Izmailova 1981, 95–99, figs 25–29; Izmailova 1984; Izmailova 1988.

considerations above and the art-historical analysis that follows, I would argue that Add. 19548 was created in the last quarter of the twelfth century in a Skewṟa workshop or, alternatively, in the first decades of the thirteenth century by an *émigré* artist trained in Skewṟa. The latter possibility is based on the knowledge that the activities of those artists who enjoyed the patronage of the Lambron family declined abruptly after 1201. In that year, this family's long-time rival King Lewon I Ṟubenid – encouraged by his recently obtained royal status and the absence of the influential Nersēs Lambronac'i (d. 1198) – imprisoned Prince Het'um, declaring that 'never again would there be a lord of Lambron'.[47] Der Nersessian has convincingly shown that, although some of the Skewṟa masters managed to find refuge and complete their works elsewhere (e.g. in Tarsus and Sis), the dynastic rivalry caused a temporal decline in the promising progress achieved in Skewṟa between the 1170s and 1190s.[48]

5   The image of Christ Emmanuel in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*

The decorations of the incipit pages of the two canons (Figs 1 and 16) in Add. 19548 follow the decorative system used for the incipit pages of Armenian gospel manuscripts, which, from the twelfth century on, consistently include three elements: rectangular or Π-like headpieces, large decorative initials and long marginal ornaments, often topped with a cross (see e.g. Fig. 8). The title on the opening page of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* is written in a quatrefoil frame, inserted into the richly ornamented headpiece, which also displays images of two birds facing each other (Fig. 1). Here, as on the frontispiece of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, the beginning of the main text is written in gold and continued with black on the following pages, except for the instructions, which are written in red. The pauses and new content throughout the text are mainly visualised with a gold-written first letter (see e.g. Fig. 2), richly decorated initials and/or elegant marginal ornaments (Figs 1, 4, 9–12 and 16). The marginal decorations occasionally transform into thematic images to accentuate, in visual terms, the culminating idea of the respective rite (Figs 13 and 19).

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47 Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 36 (with further references).
48 Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 36–38. For a more detailed analysis of the political context of these events, see Ter-Petrossian 2007, 264–267. It was only in the second half of the thirteenth century that Skewṟa emerged again as an important intellectual centre and scriptorium (on which see e.g. Badalyan 2013).
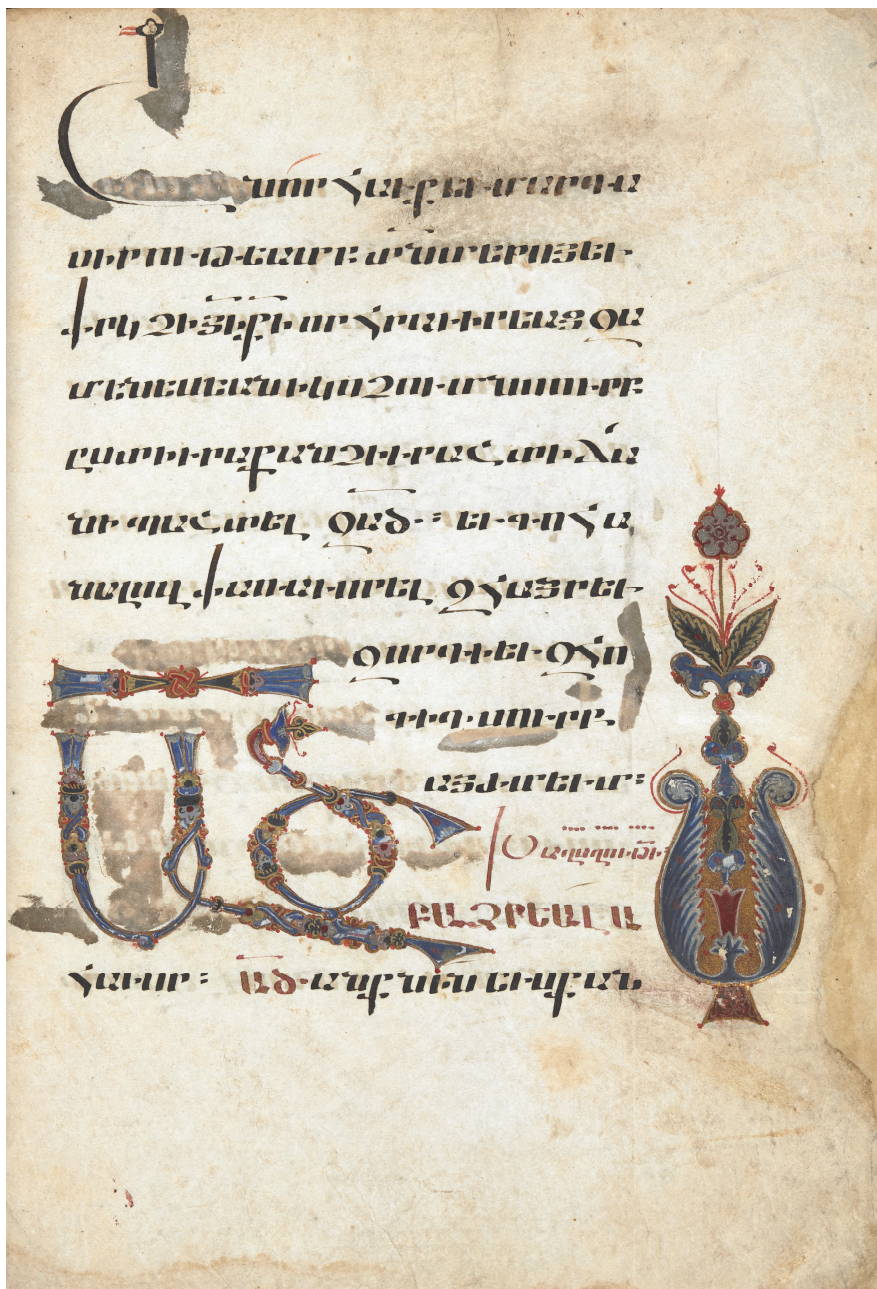
Fig. 9: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 2ʳ; *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, *maštocʿ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.
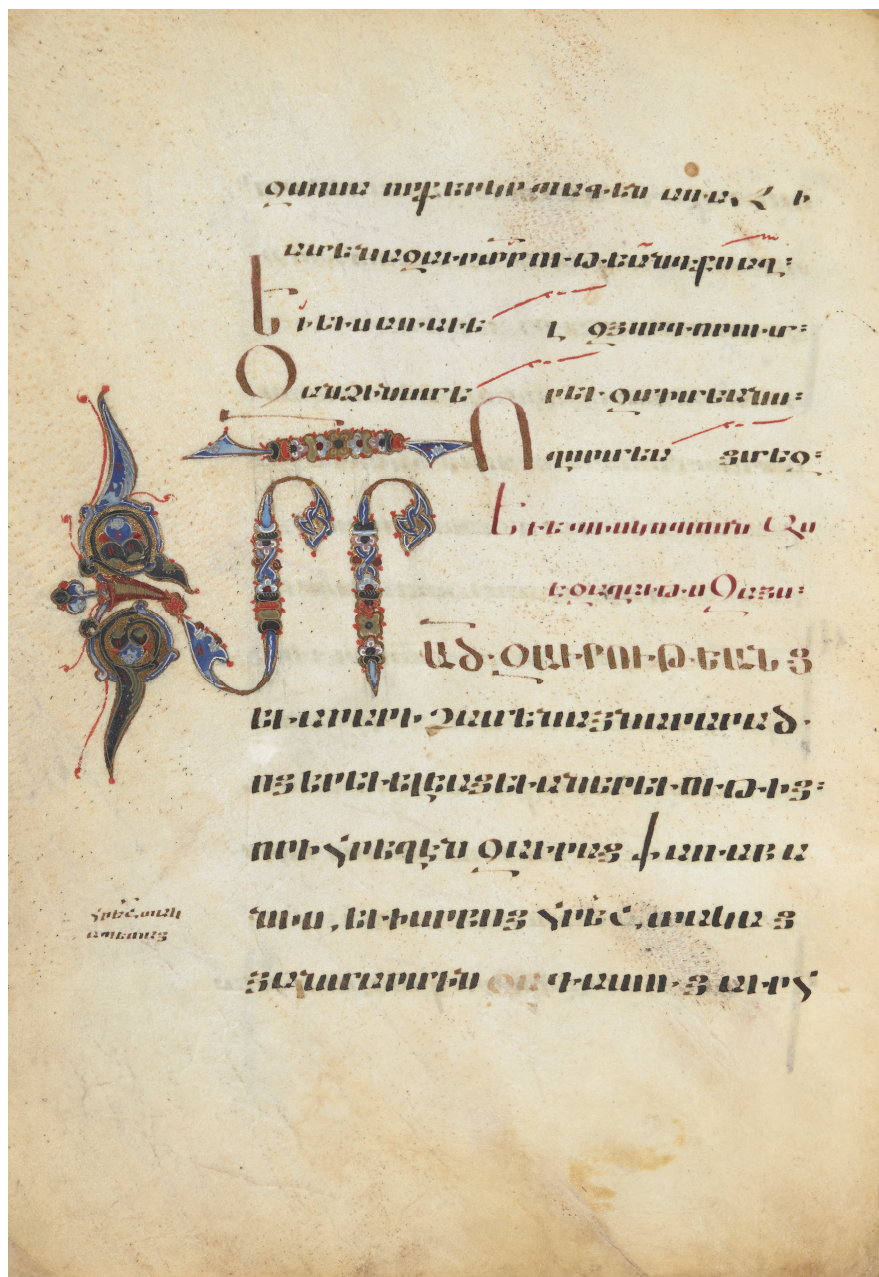
Fig. 10: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 20ᵛ; *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, *maštocʿ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.
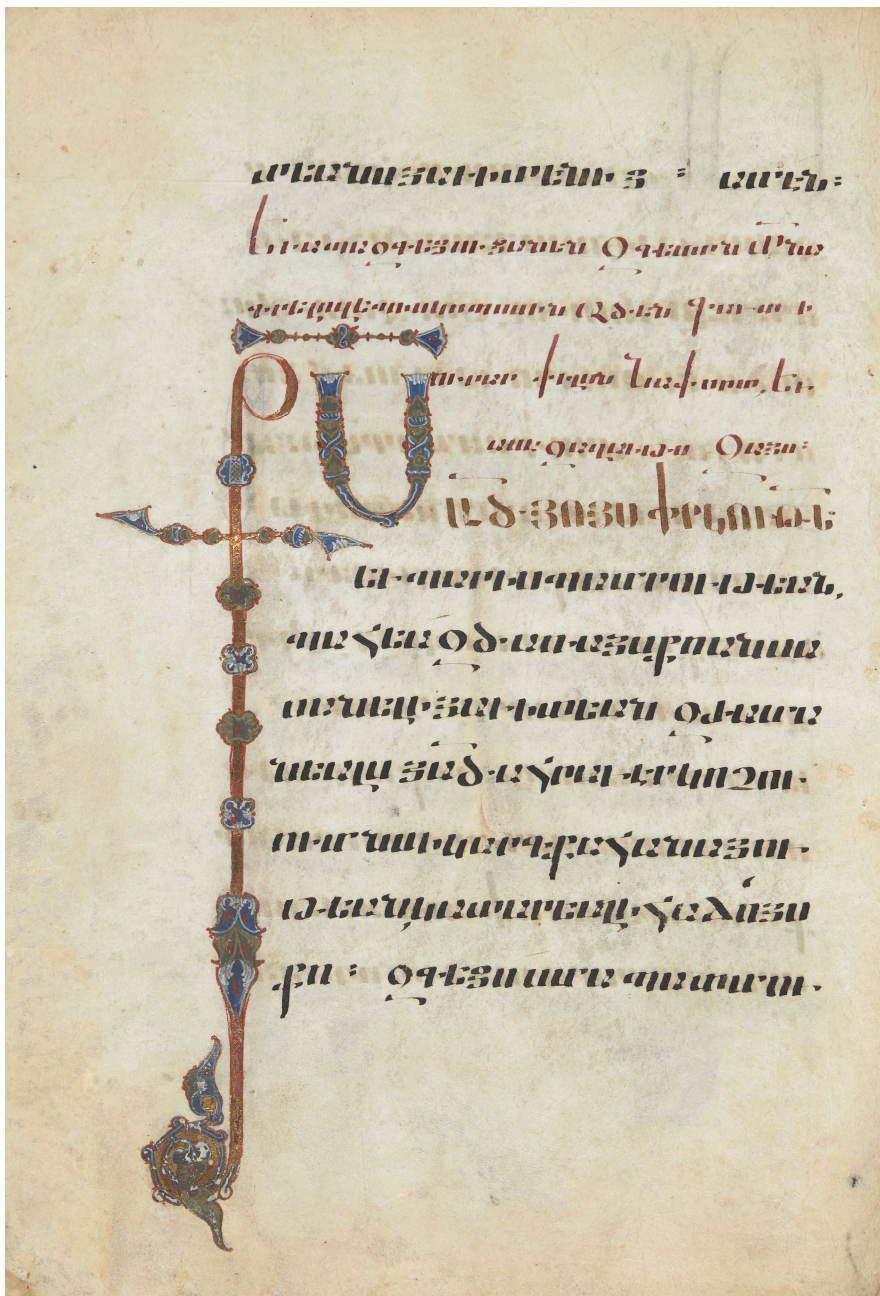
Fig. 11: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 25ᵛ; *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

Fig. 12: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 45ᵛ; *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.
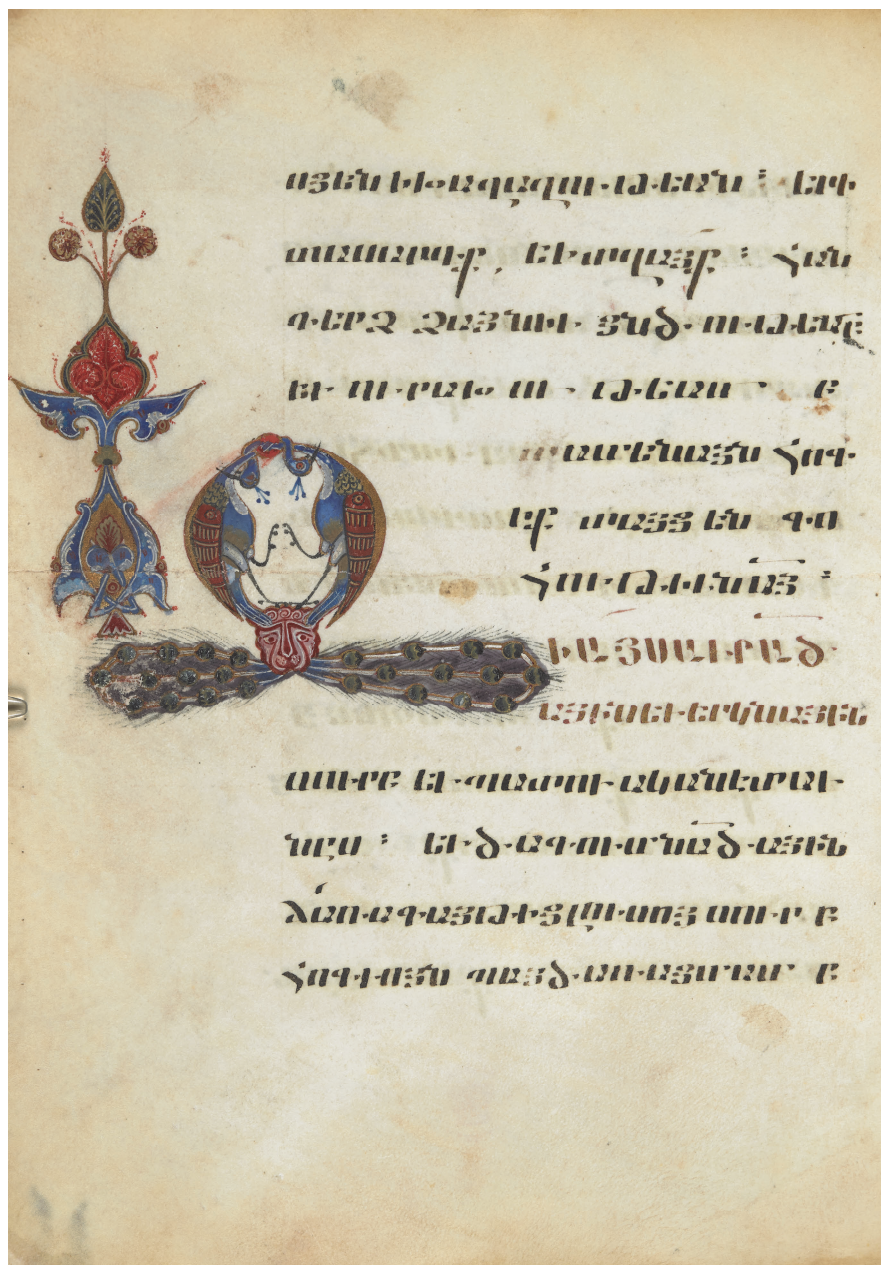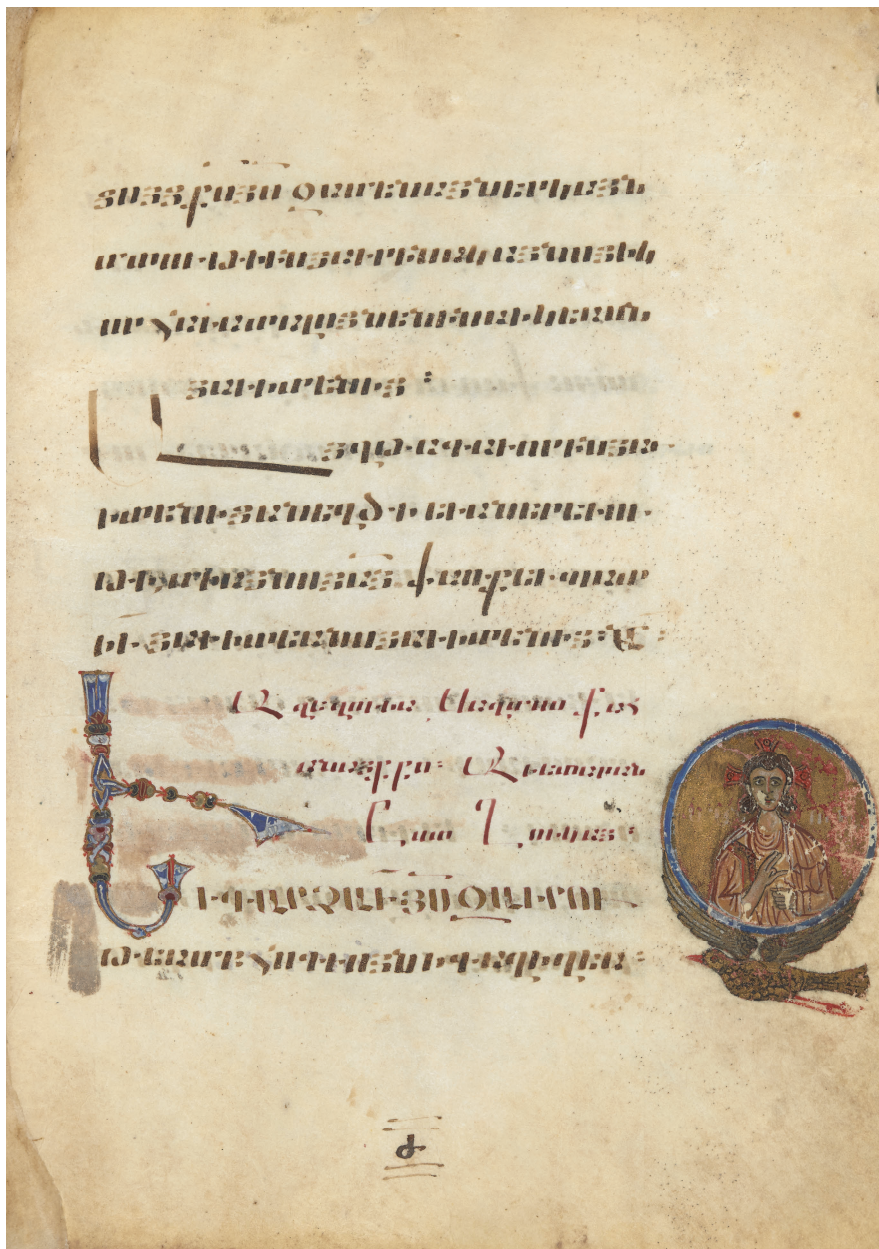
Fig. 13: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 17ᵛ; image of Christ Emmanuel marking the beginning of Luke 4:14; *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, *maštocʿ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

The most elaborate marginal image in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* represents Christ Emmanuel in a medallion that is held upon the wings of a dove that symbolises the Holy Spirit (Fig. 13). Here, a scarcely visible but legible inscription in white uncial letters labels Christ ՄԱՆՈԻԷԼ, i.e. Manowēl.[49] The image of the Christ Child marks the beginning of Luke 4:14–22, which is the only gospel pericope recited during the ordination ceremony (see Appendix 2).[50] In this gospel text, the youthful Christ reveals the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1–2 ('The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news'), which was also recited during the ordination rite.

An almost identical image of Christ Emmanuel, placed next to the same Lukan pericope, appears in the two gospel manuscripts discussed above originating from Skewr̄a: the gospel book of Nersēs Lambronac'i and his brother Het'um, copied and illuminated by Kostandin in 1193, Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1635 (Fig. 14), and the *Skewr̄a Gospel*, illustrated by Grigor Mličec'i in 1198, Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa, Rps 8101 III (Fig. 15).[51] In all three manuscripts, the dove that holds Christ's medallion is depicted flying towards the evangelical text, while Christ's static bust is shown en face, blessing with his right hand and holding a scroll in his left hand (Figs 13–15).

A comparable image of Christ Emmanuel in a medallion can be found in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century decorations of several churches from Cappadocia to Monreale, Sicily.[52] Due to their prominent location within the liturgical space, most of these images have been interpreted as bearing Eucharistic symbolism, which evoke the idea of the sacrifice of Christ Emmanuel, 'which means God is with us' (Matthew 1:23).[53] We find in the ordination canon of the Armenian *maštoc'* an allusion to the redemptive effects of the Eucharistic liturgy (e.g. when referring to Christ's flesh and blood as capable of liberating 'the race of men from

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49 The legend Մանուէլ/Manowēl placed next to the image of Christ Emmanuel can be read in other Armenian manuscripts dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, some of which are discussed in Rapti 2009, 791–793.

50 The earliest extant *maštoc'* manuscripts dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries (see above, n. 19) do not include the Lukan pericope in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*. There, the only gospel pericope is Matthew 16:13–19.

51 In her discussion of the mentioned two gospel manuscripts, Evans 1990, 66, misinterprets the bird that holds Christ's medallion as an eagle.

52 Schroeder 2008, esp. 35.

53 On the Eucharistic meaning of the image of Christ Emmanuel, see Schroeder 2008, esp. 35–38. It is noteworthy, in this respect, that Narekac'i's Prayer 33:4, included in the Armenian divine liturgy (see above, n. 9), refers to Christ as 'Emmanuel' – a designation which, according to Terian (tr.) 2021, 153, n. 22, is a hapax in the *Book of Lamentation*.

the curse and sentence of condemnation' and of reconciling them with the Father), with a special emphasis on the office of priesthood – the celebrants and distributors of the Eucharist.[54] The dove-held image of Christ Emmanuel placed within the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* (Fig. 13) alludes particularly to the holders of 'the grade and office of priesthood', who are empowered by the reception of the Holy Spirit upon their ordination.[55] Once anointed and graced by the Holy Spirit, the priests are ready to 'proclaim the good news' and conduct other tasks, as mentioned for Jesus in the accompanying Lukan text. This image was, thus, meant to underscore the beginning of a priestly ministry characterised by the imitation of Christ. In fact, the Lukan passage which accompanies the image marks the start of the youthful Christ's teaching in Galilea, which was comparably led by 'the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14).

It appears that the identical image of Christ Emmanuel in the *Skewṛa Gospel* (Fig. 15) similarly functions as an allusion to a new ordination. Edda Vardanyan has recently demonstrated that the thematic choice of the marginal images of the *Skewṛa Gospel* hints at the four different functions of Christ: as anointed, king, priest and prophet.[56] The images inserted into the margins of the Gospel of Luke, including especially the dove-held image of Christ Emmanuel, are interpreted by Vardanyan as symbolising Christ as the Anointed One, hinting at the ideas of anointment and ordination in general. Such a choice, Vardanyan argues, was motivated by the anointment and coronation of King Lewon I in 1198 – an event that is emphasised in the principal colophon of the *Skewṛa Gospel*. Although Vardanyan's iconographic analysis of the *Skewṛa Gospel* focuses on a different type of ordination from the one mentioned in Add. 19548, her conclusions are supported by the evidence offered by our *maštocʻ* manuscript.

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54 See Conybeare 1905, 240 (emphasis is mine): 'But because of your infinite love of man you did humbly stoop from your Father's bosom of your own will down to our nature, compassionate offspring of the Father. And you did put on flesh from the Holy Virgin and did free the race of men from the curse and sentence of condemnation; by the shedding of your incorruptible blood you made peace in heaven and earth and did reconcile the Father to his creatures. *But you have also chosen for yourself a special people of your own, your holy church.*'

55 This can further be seen in the bishop's prayer said over the priest-to-be, as preserved in the ordination ceremony of Add. 19548. See Conybeare 1905, 236: 'Grant to this servant of yours to receive the grade and office of priesthood, through calling and laying on of hands to become worthy of the reception of the Holy Spirit, to take the overseership bestowed on him in all worthiness thereof [...] Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit and bless this novice, who stands before your holy table, that he may take the office and grade of priesthood, and become an overseer of your people and a sharer of the throne of your Apostles.'

56 Vardanyan 2023, esp. 294, 295, 288.
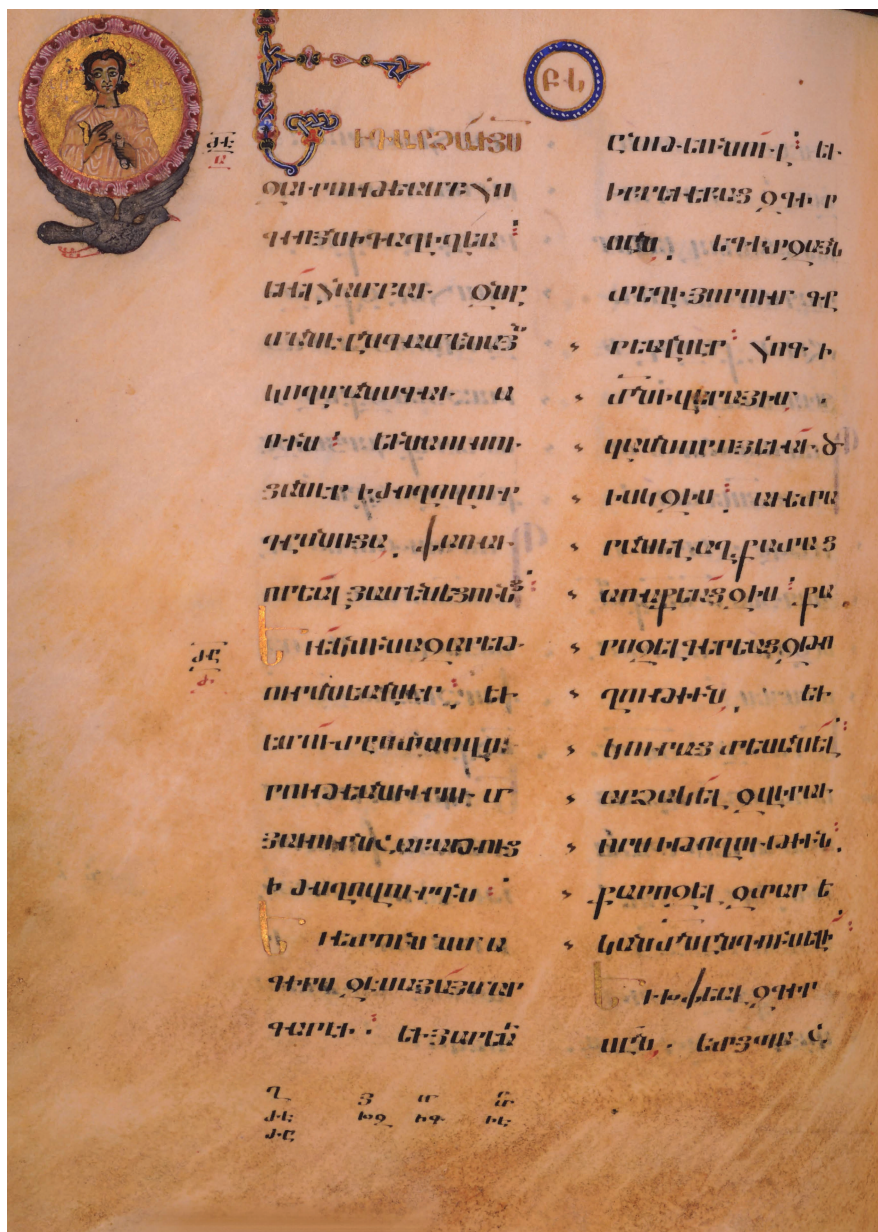
Fig. 14: Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1635, fol. 164ᵛ; image of Christ Emmanuel marking the beginning of Luke 4:14; *Gospel of Nersēs Lambronac'i and Het'um Sewastos*, scribe and miniaturist Kostandin, Skewṝa, 1193 CE; © Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni.
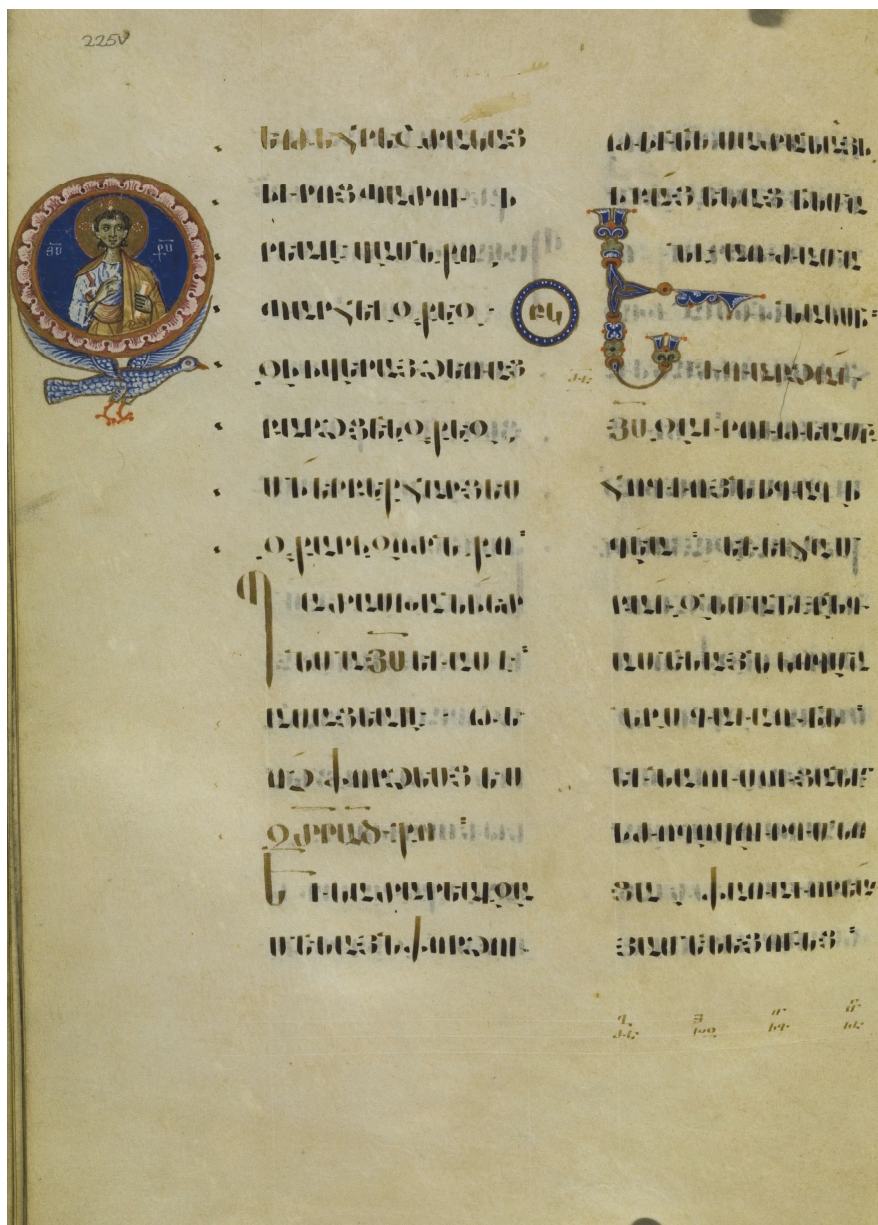
Fig. 15: Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa, Rps 8101 III, fol. 225ᵛ; image of Christ Emmanuel marking the beginning of Luke 4:14; *Skewṙa Gospel*, miniaturist Grigor Mličecʻi, Mlič and Skewṙa, 1198 CE; public domain image.

No less important to my argument is the evidence provided by the Armenian Church's *Canon of a King's Ordination*, which instructs a citation of Luke 4:14–22 before vesting the future king in his royal chlamys and cloak.[57] A similar structure is found in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* in Add. 19548, in which Luke 4:14–22 – the only gospel pericope of this rite – is followed by deacon's proclamation and bishop's prayer to be culminated by the vesting ceremony of the newly ordained priest (see Appendix 2). The associations of the ordinations of a priest and a king should come as no surprise because both were 'called' to their respective offices as overseers over a congregation and over people, respectively. Graced by the Holy Spirit, both were supposed to accomplish their duties with 'wisdom and justice' and in imitation of Christ – the high priest and the heavenly king.[58] The ideological parallel between the holders of the offices of priesthood and of kingship in Cilician Armenia was even reflected in their official vestments. The *coronation ordo* translated by Nersēs Lambronac'i, for instance, instructs that the king-to-be should be first clothed in priestly vestments before being clothed in his royal garments.[59] The priestly 'unbelted mantle' (զուեղյծ պատմուծան), as Lambronac'i explains in his *Reflections on Church Orders*, was to be seen as equally honourable as the king's unbelted mantle, for it signifies being a ruler and a supervisor of the people.[60]

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57 Grigoryan 2023, 112 (Appendix B: 'The Armenian *Canon of a king's ordination* as preserved in Jerusalem, Aṙak'elakan At'oṙ Srboc' Yakovbeanc', 2673'). This canon is different from the *Canon of a King's Consecration* mentioned previously, the Armenian translation of which was done from a version deriving from the *Mainzer Krönungsordo*.

58 Conybeare 1905, 240: 'Fill Your servant whom You have chosen and called to the guidance of this congregation and to the ministry of Your holy church with Your Holy Spirit. Strengthen him [...] to shepherd the flock with wisdom and justice.' The same qualities were required from an Armenian sovereign upon his anointment as king. For the model of the 'wise and just' king, as constructed in Cilician Armenian political theology, see Grigoryan 2023, esp. 97–104. For the king as 'shepherd over his flock', see Grigoryan 2017, 200, 278.

59 This is preserved in the version that is based on the so-called *Mainzer Krönungsordo*. The religious vestments worn by the king over the 'priestly linen cloth' are 'subdeacons' red silk and deacons' honourable red pallium with long-sleeves and left unbelted', see Grigoryan 2023, 110 (Appendix A1).

60 Unlike those whose cloaks 'should be bound with a girdle', which symbolises being in service. See Nersēs Lambronac'i 1847, 85. The ceremonial and theological significance of belts is discussed in Grigoryan forthcoming b.

Fig. 16: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 30ʳ; incipit page of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʿ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

6 An apotropaic image of Christ in the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*

The incipit page of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water* in Add. 19548 is decorated with the same principle as that of the previous canon, i.e. with the same three decorative elements: a headpiece, a marginal ornament and a large initial (Fig. 16). Here, the marginal miniature and the headpiece images are invested with meanings that convey notions revolving around the significance of water. In the right margin, a huge vessel is placed upon a pool of vivid water, which is depicted with wavy patterns. A comparable, but more eloquent, allusion to the rite of the Blessing of Water is visualised on the incipit page of another Cilician *maštoc'* dating from the twelfth or early thirteenth century, Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1159 (Fig. 17), where a large cross is shown emerging from the stylised water as if from a 'frothing whirlpool' – to borrow a phrase from Wilbrand of Oldenburg's description of the river in Sis, where he attended the Armenian celebration of the Blessing of Water in 1212.[61] Other images, such as the full-page illustration of Christ's Baptism, were also used by Armenian artists as frontispieces to the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, as showcased by an episcopal *maštoc'* – Jerusalem, Aṙak'elakan At'oṙ Srboc' Yakovbeanc', 2027 – which was lavishly illustrated by T'oros Roslin in 1266 (fols 131ᵛ–132ʳ) (Fig. 18). The relationship of this latter image to the *Canon of the Blessing of Water* is most evident since this rite is a commemoration and re-enactment of Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River, aimed at achieving the same regenerative effects as the rebirth through baptismal waters.[62] The blessing is performed on the day of the Epiphany, which Armenians celebrate together with Christ's Nativity and Baptism – a practice that earned Wilbrand of Oldenburg's surprise when he visited Cilician Armenia.[63]

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61 Pringle 2012, 79.

62 Winkler 1982, 446; Vidalis 2001, 237–238, 241, 256; Denysenko 2012, 24; this scholar also highlights the 'profoundly visual' nature of the Eastern traditions of the blessing of waters (p. 1), aimed at connoting Jesus's presence by plunging the cross (occasionally other items) into the water (pp. 2, 11).

63 On the origins of this combined celebration, see Renoux 2003, 56, n. 15. For Wilbrand's account on this rite, see Pringle 2012, 78: 'On the day, that is to say the feast, of the Epiphany, which the Armenians call the Baptism, we came to Sis, to which the lord king had invited us to celebrate his feast [...] During the twelve preceding days, which we spend in enjoyment and banquets, they spend in honour of their feast in penitence and fasts, abstaining from fish, wine and oil. On the holy eve itself, they abstained from these things all day, so that after dusk they might celebrate masses and while away the whole of that night in the divine offices without sleeping. On the day

Fig. 17: Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1159, fols 110ᵛ–111ʳ, with the incipit page of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), Cilicia, twelfth to thirteenth centuries; © Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

Fig. 18: Jerusalem, Aṙakʻelakan Atʻoṙ Srbocʻ Yakovbeancʻ, 2027, fols 131ᵛ–132ʳ; Baptism and the incipit page of the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Awetikʻ, miniaturist Tʻoros Ṙoslin, Hṙomkla, 1266 CE; © Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

itself they celebrate the feast of the Lord's Nativity, saying that on that one and self-same – and indeed, more distinguished – day the Lord had been born and, after His thirtieth year, baptized.'

The frontispiece to the *Canon of the Blessing of Water* in Add. 19548 displays another element that is associated with water: the pair of fish-hunting birds which, together with another pair of birds, flank the central cross of the headpiece (Fig. 16). In several Armenian commentaries on Canon Tables, the images of piscivorous birds are explained as symbolising the Apostles-fishermen, who were hunting men at the Lord's command 'with their magisterial (fishing) nets, thus saving them from the recalcitrant dragon that wants to hunt everyone with its own nets in order to cast them into the eternal fire'.[64] This interpretation can be extended to the fish-hunting birds depicted in the London *maštoc'*, although here it is the clergy – the intended owners of our codex – who are expected to triumph over the dragon, the symbol of evil.[65] This is explicitly referenced in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* as preserved in the same manuscript (fol. 25ʳ):[66]

> As you have given courage and liberty to all the faithful to tread upon asps and vipers, and upon the power of the enemy – so grant to him [that is, the priest-to-be] even now, Lord, victory by your all-conquering cross to walk upon asp and viper and to bruise the head of the venomous dragon.

The victory over evil is, thus, possible with the help of the cross, which, on the frontispiece to the *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, is prominently depicted between the birds (Fig. 16). The small golden circle that is painted at the intersection of the cross arms is likely a generic representation of the gold crown worn by the Son of Man (Revelation 14:14). This type of cross adorned with the golden crown was a beloved motif of the Skewṟa miniaturists[67] and reappears in the London manuscript in the apotropaic image of Christ, who slays a huge dragon in the Jordan River with his long cross (Fig. 19).

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64 Quotation taken from Grigoryan 2020, 105–106.

65 Furthermore, on one occasion, the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* refers to priests as 'sharers of the throne of Apostles' (see above, n. 55).

66 Translation adapted from Conybeare 1905, 241.

67 The 'Sign of the Son of Man' adorned with a gold crown is depicted e.g. in Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1635 (next to Matthew 24:29–30) and Matenadaran 1568 (fol. 266ᵛ, next to Grigor Narekac'i's Prayer 67), in both cases, over the empty throne. For the former image, see Der Nersessian 1937, vol. 1, 65, fig. 52; Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 1, 20–21, fig. 42.
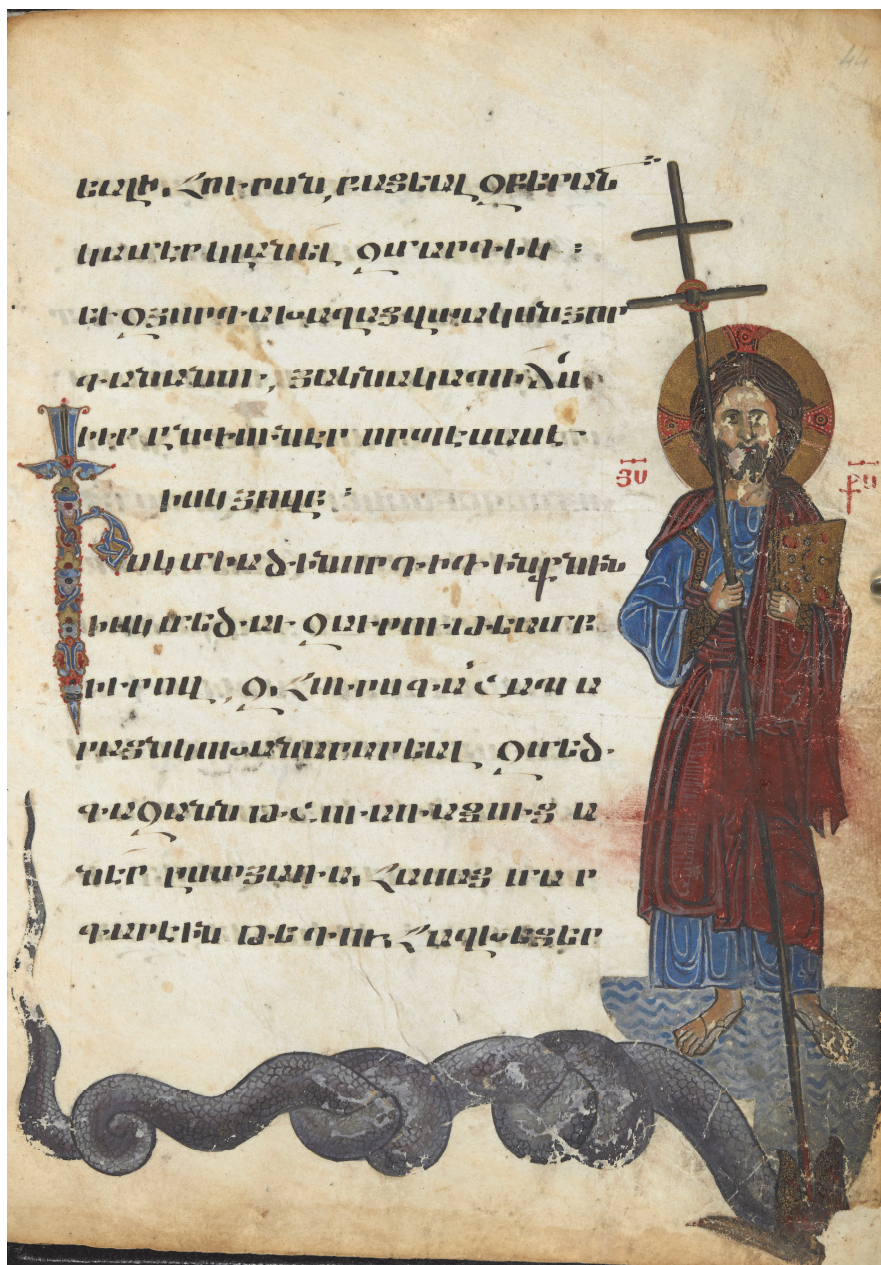
Fig. 19: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 44ʳ. The dragon-slayer Christ in the Jordan River, *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

The image of the dragon-slaying Christ is the largest and most remarkable illustration of Add. 19548.[68] Christ's static appearance, captivating gaze and careful hairstyle are reminiscent of the solemnly standing Christ depicted in the southern apse mosaics of the Cathedral of San Giusto in Trieste, traditionally attributed to Byzantine artists of the late twelfth/thirteenth centuries.[69] The Trieste image shares not only stylistic but also thematic analogues with the Armenian example, for it depicts Christ trampling under his feet two malefic animals, a basilisk and a lion. Inspired by Psalm 90:13, this image of Christus Victor appears also in the Pontifical of Chartres, an early-thirteenth-century Latin manuscript, where Christ pierces a basilisk with his cross-staff and tramples over it together with a lion.[70] The theme serves here as the frontispiece to the *Canon of Mass*, disclosing the Eucharistic symbolism invested in the iconography of Christus Victor. The same symbolism, as demonstrated by Marcello Angheben, is also evoked in some twelfth/thirteenth-century Mosan altar shrines that include images of the beast-slaying Christ.[71] The Cilician image of the Victorious Christ – although sharing some thematic and iconographic analogues with the Western examples mentioned above – was fashioned based on a different, non-biblical, textual source.

In our *maštocʻ* manuscript, Christ's image accompanies the *Prayer for the Blessing of Water*, attributed to Saint Basil of Caesarea.[72] The Armenian tradition, which does not question this attribution, claims that the prayer was composed by the Cappadocian father in the fifth or seventh year of his patriarchate; then Xosrov, one of the fifth-century Armenian translators of the Bible, found it in Jerusalem (a smaller group of manuscripts says 'in Caesarea') and brought it to Armenia at the command of Catholicos Sahak.[73] Whatever the authorship and origin of this

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68 The only legend accompanying this miniature is written in red near Christ's halo: ՅԻՍՈՒՍ ՔՐԻՍՏՈՍ, i.e. JESUS CHRIST.

69 For the mosaics of this cathedral, see Gioseffi 1975, 287–300 and figs 14–15; Rizzardi 1985, 151–175 and figs 97–98; Mason 2010; James 2017, 428–429 (for dating and further bibliography). For the standards for fashioning Christ's facial appearance, see Bacci 2014.

70 Angheben 2019, 91, fig. 4. The Pontifical of Chartres is available for consultation at <https://ccfr.bnf.fr/portailccfr/jsp/index_view_direct_anonymous.jsp?record=eadcgm:EADC:D18010952> (accessed on 9 November 2022). Analogous images of Christ trampling the beasts mentioned in Psalm 90:13 appear, for example, on the southern portal of the cathedral of Chartres and on the central portal of the cathedral of Bourges.

71 Angheben 2016. See also Angheben 2019.

72 For different authorship of this prayer, see Vidalis 2001, 245–249; Denysenko 2012, 75 (also 58–59 for the complexity of the Armenian attribution to Saint Basil); Renoux 2003, 60, n. 36.

73 This information, represented above synoptically, is described in the so-called *Orhnutʻaber tsutsak*, lit. *List of Blessings* (i.e. 'blessing rites'). This text, usually found at the end or beginning of *maštocʻ* manuscripts, is basically a narrative list of the canons included in *maštocʻ*, providing

prayer and rite, the central idea of the Armenian *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, as Nicholas Denysenko has summarised, is God's victory over humanity's enemies, 'punctuated by Jesus' baptism in the Jordan which destroys the dragon who personifies all evil spirits'.[74] It is exactly this culminating idea that is evoked in the apotropaic image of Christ in the manuscript Add. 19548. The prayer text nearby narrates how the only-begotten Son of God trampled the head of the great dragon in the Jordan River, revealing there his divine nature which, in turn, was confirmed by the descent of the dove-like Holy Spirit.[75] The dove is absent from the accompanying image of Christ, but it is depicted separately descending gracefully on the next fol. 44ᵛ (Fig. 20). A marginal image of a descending dove is also found on fol. 37ᵛ, at the end of the baptismal pericope Matthew 3:1–17 (Fig. 21). Here again, I shall refer to the iconographic tendencies of the *Skewṙa Gospel*, where fol. 223ʳ is occupied by a single image of a dove that flies down towards the text of Luke 3:21–22, which describes the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the newly baptised Christ.[76]

The accentuation on the dove of the Holy Spirit appears to find an eloquent echo in an actual performance of the rite of the *Blessing of Water*. In his aforementioned eyewitness account, Wilbrand of Oldenburg writes that in the final part of the outdoor ceremony, when the cross was baptised in 'the simulated River Jordan', a dove was also released, a practice that is not found in the instructions of the respective canon. The German traveller concludes his report by describing how the worshippers sprinkled themselves with the blessed waters – the Syrians even 'washed themselves completely naked' – apparently in the belief that the act would regenerate them.[77]

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brief information about the authors who composed one or another canon or prayer. Twenty-five versions of this *List of Blessing Rites*, preceded by a critical analysis and further references, are reproduced in Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 654–708 (see esp. 670–673 and 704 for the *Canon of the Blessing of Water* ascribed to Basil of Caesarea). While the date of the *Prayer for the Blessing of Water* remains undetermined, we know that its text inspired Bishop Stepʿanos Siwnecʿi in the eight century to compose the funeral prayer for the sealing of the grave. See Findikyan 2014, 197–212, esp. 206–212. Cf. Tēr-Pōłosean 1969, 152–155 (also 131–138 for a list of Armenian manuscripts containing the *Prayer for the Blessing of Water*).

74 Denysenko 2012, 33.

75 Conybeare 1905, 168–169.

76 The folio can be consulted at <https://polona.pl/item/ewangeliarz-ze-skewry,NTU3NzE2OQ/446/#item> (accessed on 8 November 2022).

77 Pringle 2012, 79.
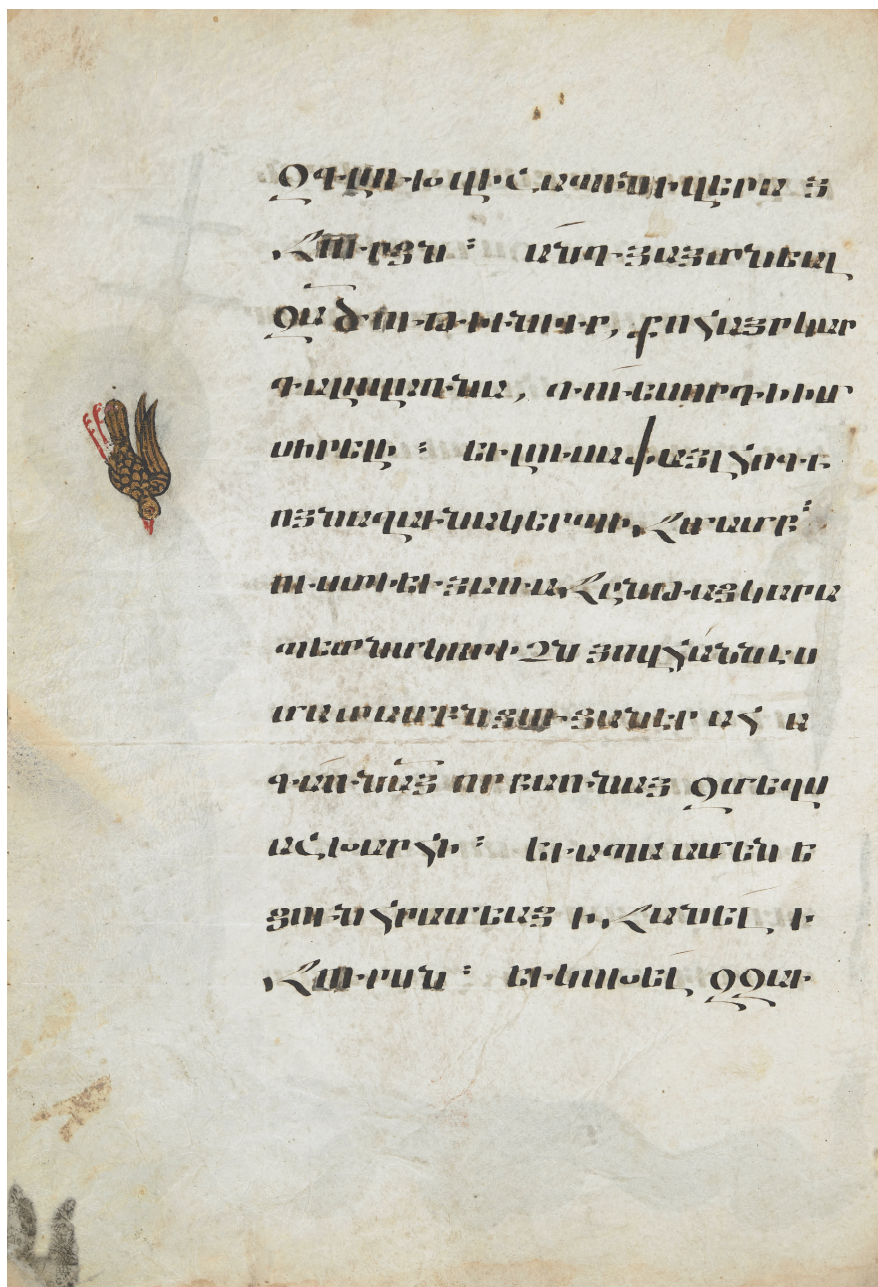
Fig. 20: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 44ᵛ. The dove-like Holy Spirit, *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.
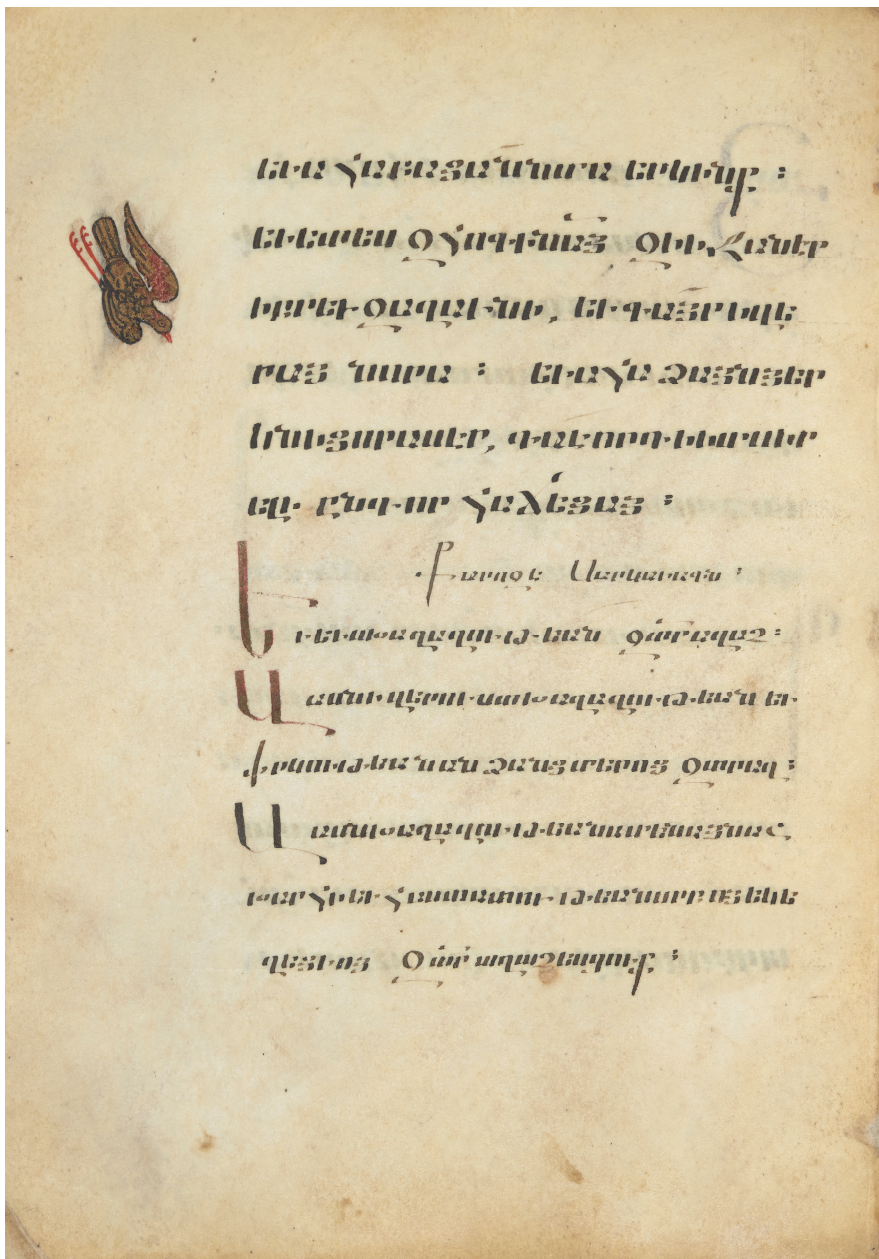
Fig. 21: London, British Library, Add. 19548, fol. 37ᵛ; the dove-like Holy Spirit marking the end of the baptismal pericope Matthew 3:1–17, *Canon of the Blessing of Water*, *maštocʻ* (ritual book), scribe Kostandi(n); © The British Library Board.

An element that captures the beholder's attention in the British Library manuscript is the remarkable size of the serpent and its bleeding head stabbed by Christ's cross-staff. This hearkens to a miniature in a twelfth-century Armenian homiliary – Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1522, where Bishop Atanagine bruises the head of the horned dragon to save the child from its enormous mouth (Fig. 22).[78] A vast number of theological writings and popular narratives in medieval Armenia refer to a malefic monster, often a serpent-like dragon, which lives in water.[79] The theologian Eznik Kołbac'i (Eznik of Kołb), for example, wrote extensively about the aquatic dragon in a fifth-century apologetic treatise, hoping to reject the apparently widespread belief that this imaginative animal was capable of taking an anthropomorphic form and causing troubles. This belief, Kołbac'i continues, is inspired by the evil one, the dragon's lord, who wants to make humans turn away from their creator.[80] Despite Kołbac'i's rejection of the material existence of evil, the image of the aquatic monster remained strongly present in Armenian tradition, as seen, for example, in a thirteenth-century miniature of Christ's Baptism, where the trouble-maker is depicted as half-human and half-serpent (Fig. 23). It is noteworthy, in this respect, that most Armenian illustrations of the Baptism, deviating from the respective Gospel narrative, include a depiction of the soon-to-be-defeated monster at the feet of Christ who is being baptised by John the Baptist.[81] In this way, the artists underscored the apotropaic power of Christ who, in Nersēs Lambronac'i's words, revealed his godly nature in the Jordan River by demonstrating 'his first victory and the innocence of our nature'. Lambronac'i also describes the evil defeated by Christ as a 'venomous old serpent', which was deceiving humans and hunting them down.[82]

78 Cf. Gevorkian 1996, 20.

79 Mahé 1980; Mahé 1994.

80 Mahé 1994, 181–182.

81 For Baptism images which include the aquatic monster, see e.g. Der Nersessian 1993, vol. 2, figs 36, 121, 199–201, 302, 324, 346 and 362–364. Some of these monsters are depicted holding a jug in order to collect the baptismal waters, on which see Nira Stone 1999, 168–169 (with an overview of the apocryphal approach to Armenian images of Baptism).

82 Terian (tr.) 2022, 108–109: 'He came to the Jordan to dedicate His most perfect impeccability to the Father, and was acknowledged by Him to be of equal honor, the beloved Son [Matthew 3:13–17]. Led by the Spirit, He went to confront openly the slanderous enemy [Matthew 4:1] and He recognized the treacherous darts of the venomous serpent who was deceiving (humans), so as to mislead them into the abyss of sin through the law of nature. [...] Right then the Lord, aware of the trapping pitfall, rebuked his machinations, exposed the hidden snare by which he used to hunt down people, unmasked him before His Father and the angels, and by His sovereign will chased the deceiver away [...] He trampled over the old serpent, demonstrating to His Father and to the angels His first victory and the innocence of our nature.'

Fig. 22: Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1522, fol. 56ᵛ; homiliary, scribe Yohannēs, twelfth century; © Matenadaran.

Fig. 23: Isfahan (New Julfa), Sowrb Amenapʻrkičʻ Vankʻ (Holy Saviour Monastery), 36/156, fol. 4ʳ; Baptism, gospel manuscript copied and illustrated by Ignatios, 1236 ᴄᴇ; © Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

Beliefs about a malefic serpent in medieval Armenia could have also been nourished by the legend of 'the huge dragon of Mount Tarsus' (not mount Tarpeus on the Capitoline Hill, as in the Greek version). According to the Armenian version of *Vita Silvestri*, this creature was imprisoned by Pope Sylvester, who, in this way, liberated a group of frightened pagans, who were subsequently 'baptised in Christ'.[83] The theme of baptism, as we see, is intermingled with the idea of salvific victory over dragon-looking evil. It was also this belief that inspired John Chrysostom to write, at the end of the fourth century, that those who are baptised in Christ are 'able to hold the serpent in check'.[84] There was, finally, the legend of the *Cheirograph of Adam* (CAVT 37), a popular apocryphal text, which narrates how Christ destroyed Satan's contract signed by Adam and trampled the dragons in Jordan at the time of his baptism.[85] Here again, as in our *Prayer of the Blessing of Water*, mankind's redemption and liberation from Satan were made possible through the Baptism of Christ.

The fight against the dragon in Add. 19548 is further underscored by Christ's attire (Fig. 19). In fact, beneath Christ's standard clothing, we see a military outfit, by which the artist aimed to portray him as a warrior.[86] Christ's weapon is the cross held in his right hand, while he displays the richly adorned gospel in his left hand. The latter detail is relevant to another image on the same folio: the sophisticated initial Ի (I) that is designed like a sword and most probably takes its inspiration from Hebrews 4:12 ('For the Word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to dividing soul and spirit'). The implementation of sartorial rhetoric, including especially the metaphorical evocation of items of military appearance, was a common practice in medieval Armenian spirituality,[87] whence comes the local artists' interest in giving visual forms to invisible ideas.[88]

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83 Tēr-Movsēsean (ed.) 1896, 704–708. On the Armenian versions of *Vita Silvestri*, see Shirinian 1997; Shirinian 2006 (for the legend in non-Armenian traditions, see esp. 72). That this was a popular motif, especially in circles around King Lewon I, is attested by the citation of this episode in the *Letter of Love and Concord*, where, however, 'Mount Tarsus' is not mentioned. See Pogossian 2010, 366–367.

84 Harkins (tr.) 1963, 169–170: 'After He anoints all your limbs with this ointment, you will be secure and able to hold the serpent in check; you will suffer no harm.' And soon after, when the catechumen is being baptised: 'There can be no serpent here, but Christ is here initiating you into the regeneration that comes from the water and the Spirit.'

85 Michael E. Stone 2000; Michael E. Stone 2002; Michael E. Stone and Timotin 2023.

86 An early but suitable analogue of this can be seen in the mosaics of the Archbishop's Chapel, Ravenna, where Christ is clothed as militant who tramples the beasts. The image can be consulted at <https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_10310196907> (accessed on 8 November 2022).

87 Cf. Brock 1982, which investigates the clothing metaphor in Syriac spirituality.

88 Yovhannēs Garnecʻi (*c.* 1180–1245), for example, in his *Daily Prayers for the Week*, employs a military image of an unprepared believer, whose spiritual dress code did not include the neces-

7 Conclusion

Relying on codicological, liturgiological and art-historical methodologies, this article has offered a close study of the British Library *maštoc'* Add. 19548, which contains important evidence on the art and rite of Cilician Armenia. The comparative analysis of the style, ornamentation and iconography allowed me to contextualize this manuscript within the artistic tradition of the Skewṙa monastery and its associated workshops. Having noted that caution is needed, the essay argues that its scribe Kostandin could be identified with the scribe-miniaturist Kostandin Skewṙac'i, who, in the 1190s, completed several manuscripts for the members of the influential Lambron family, including most notably Archbishop Nersēs Lambronac'i. This suggestion is further supported by the choice and placement of the manuscript's heretofore unknown illustrations, which resonate perfectly with the visual repertory of the Skewṙa masters and reflect the theological and liturgical realities in the time of Nersēs Lambronac'i.

It was further demonstrated that the image of Christ Emmanuel (Fig. 13), which marks the beginning of the gospel pericope Luke 4:14–22 in the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination*, was meant to underscore the beginning of the Christ-like priestly ministry. I suggest therefore that this image aimed to uphold the role of the office of priests, who were also the intended owners of the London *maštoc'*.

A very different image of Christ is analysed in the final section. Christ is shown here slaying a huge dragon in the Jordan River, which is, so far, the only known artistic interpretation of the *Prayer of the Blessing of Water*, which it accompanies (Fig. 19). By visualising the apotropaic power of Christ, the Cilician artist emphasised the culminating idea of the respective rite – namely, Christ's salvific victory over evil, which set humans free.

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sary items of protection (among them the sword of the Word of God), for which he tasks God to take the armament and come to his help. See St Nersess Armenian Seminary (ed. and tr.) 2001, 12: 'Stir up your strength and come to revive me. The seditious ones stripped me naked and inflicted wound upon wound, for I was not wearing the armour of justice, nor had I the helmet of the hope of salvation upon my head, nor was I carrying the shield of faith, nor the sword of the Word of God. O most powerful and mighty one, take your armament and buckler and come to my help.'

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Abbreviations

CAVT = Jean-Claude Haelewyck, *Clavis Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti* (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1998.

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Appendix 1: The Textual Contents of British Library Add. 19548

Fols 1ʳ–27ʳ: Կանոն ձեռնադրութեան քահանայի: Պարտեալ լինել Լ. ամաց եւ ապա կոչիլ ի յաստիճանս ('*Canon of the Ordination of a Priest, who must be 30 Years Old before being Ordained*').

Fols 28ʳ–29ʳ: *Prayer for Priestly Vestments* (copied by Nersēs *abeła* in 1372 on the subsequently added paper folios): Տէր Յիսուս կատարումն արհնաց և մարգարէից և բաշխատ ողորմութեան արհնեա զպատմուծան և զարտախուրակ սորա, որպէս արհնեցեր ի ձեռն մովսէսի զպատմուծան և զարտախուրակն ահարոնի, և որդոց նորա և որպէս ի նախնուման յակովբ յայրիներ զցաղկեա պատմուծանն յովսէփա, արհնեա՛ տ(է)ր զգեստ և զպատմուծան սորա, որպէս արհնեցեր զմաշկեական եղիայի յորոյ ձեռն հանգեաւ հոգին եղիայի ի վերա եղիսէի, արհնեա՛ հայր երկնաւոր զպատմուծան սորա, զի հանգիցէ ի վերա սորա արհինութիւն

ա(ստուա)ծաստեղծ պատմուճանի քո· անկեալ ի վերուստ, զորմէ նախագուշակեալ մարգարէին ասեր, ո՛վ է որ դիմեալ զա յեդովմայ գեղեցիկ պատմուճանաա և զաւրութ(եամ)բ, նոյն աւրինութ(իւ)ն հանգիցէ ի սա՝ և ի պատմուճան սորա լիութե(ամ)բ շնորհաց քոց, և մեք ամենեքեան[89] աղաչեմք զանփոփոխելի տերութին, ամենազաւր հոգդոյ հզաւրի։ Առաքեա տեր զցաւղ քաղցրութեան քո և բարեգործեա ի յանձին և յիշխանական ազդման զզայրութեան ջամենալից շնորհ բազմապարգև քո ողորմութեանդ ('Jesus Christ, fulfiller of laws and prophets [cf. Matthew 5:17] and dispenser of mercy, bless the garment and the headdress of this [priest-to-be], as you have blessed the garment and the headdress of Aaron and of his sons by the hand of Moses, and as, in the past, Jacob made Joseph's cloak of many colours [lit. flowers]. Bless, Lord, the garment and the cloak of this [priest-to-be], as you have blessed the mantle of Elijah, by means of which "the spirit of Elijah did rest on Elisha" [4 Kings 2:15]. Bless, Heavenly Father, the garment of this [priest-to-be], for the blessing of your God-created garment that came down from above shall rest upon him, of whom, in accordance with the prophet's prediction, it was said: "Who is this that comes from Edom with beautiful garment and strength?" [Isaiah 63:1]. May the same blessing rest upon this [priest-to-be] and upon his garment, filled with your graces. And we all[90] beg your immutable lordship, omnipotent spirit, send the dew of your delightfulness').[91]

Fol. 29ᵛ: unwritten.

Fols 30ʳ–51ᵛ: Կանոն ջուր աւրհնելոյ յաւուր Յայտնութեան Տեառն մերոյ ԵՒ Յիսուսի Քրիստոսի ('*Canon of the Bless-ing of Water on the Day of the Epiphany of Our Lord and Jesus Christ*').

Fol. 52ʳᵛ: The preserved part begins with: Փարատեա ի մէնջ զամենայն սատանայական մրտածմունս ('Dispel all satanic thoughts from us!').[92]

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89 See my next note.

90 Until here the prayer corresponds to Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni, 1173 (the oldest extant manuscript of the *Sis Maštocʻ*), where it ends with a doxology (fol. 68ʳ): *և ամենեքեան փառաւորեմք զքեզ ընդ հա՛յր և ս(ուր)բ հ*[ոգլոյ] ('and we all glorify You, together with the Father and Holy Spirit'). In the manuscript Add. 19548, the text continues with Grigor Narekacʻi's Prayer 34:2 from the *Book of Lamentation* (Terian (tr.) 2021, 156–157), which, as mentioned previously, is adjusted for ritual use.

91 Translation mine.

92 The previous and subsequent contents are not extant.

Fols 53ʳ–54ᵛ: Martyrdom of the Apostle Philip.[93]

Colophon:

Fol. 27ᵛ: By the scribe Kostandin (see Section 4).

Later colophons:

Fol. 26ᵛ: On the Mamluk takeover of Sis in 1375.[94]

Fol. 29ʳ: By Nersēs *abeła*, 1372:[95]

> Ով ա(ստուա)ծարեալ արհիեպիսկոպոս տէր յովանէս մելիտինոյ ընկալ զսակաւ զիրս
> և լիշեա զանարժան հողս զներսէս աբեղայս, ի թվ(ին) ՊԻԱ. հոկտեմբեր ԺԹ. աւրն:

> 'O, archbishop tēr Yovanēs of Melitinē, appointed by God, accept this incomplete book and remember this unworthy bit of dust, Nersēs abeła. In the year 821 [= 1372 ᴄᴇ], nineteenth of October.'

Appendix 2: Structure of the *Canon of a Priest's Ordination* (London, British Library, Add. 19548)

Canon of the Ordination of a Priest, who must be 30 Years Old before being Ordained

They cause the priest-to-be to kneel and they say:
- Psalm 24(25):2: *To You, Lord, I lift up*

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93 Cut out from another manuscript, these paper folios have likely served as protective flyleaves for our *maštocʻ* codex. The extant text of the apocryphal *Martyrdom of the Apostle Philip* begins with the following words: *որն բուրն հարեալ զհերաց կնոջն, քարշէր զնա ընթադրելով եւ ասէր.* Cf. Čʻrakʻean 1904, 302. On the Armenian version of the *Martyrdom of Philip*, see Calzolari 2022, 221–239.

94 For references to the text and translation of this colophon, see above, n. 14.

95 Cf. Xačʻikyan 1950, 506. In Conybeare 1913, 89, followed by Grigoryan 2021, 87, the colophon is erroneously dated to 1371. In Xačʻikyan's publication, although it is based on Conybeare's reproduction, the date is correctly calculated as 1372. My recent verification done directly from the manuscript Add. 19548 confirms Xačʻikyan's calculation.

- Psalm 25(26):1: *Judge me, Lord*
- Psalm 26(27):1: *Lord, my Light and my Life*
- Deacon's proclamation
- Bishop's prayer *Lord God Almighty, Creator of All Things*
- *Peace to All*
- Prayer *God, Exalted and Terrible*
- The priest-to-be turns towards the west, and the priests sing *Divine and Heavenly Grace*
- The congregation confirms the worthiness of the candidate, who turns towards the east and kneels before the holy table. The bishop lays his right hand on the head and says the prayer *The Divine and Heavenly Grace*.[96]
- *Peace to All*
- Prayer *Lord God of Hosts, God Mighty and All-Powerful*
- Psalm 131(132) *ktsurd*
- Ezekiel 33:7–9

    [Amos][97]

    Malachi 2:5–7

    Jeremiah 1:1–10

    Jeremiah 33:15–18

    Isaiah 61:1–6

    1 Peter 5:1–4

    1 Timothy 1:12–17
- Alleluia Psalm 131(132):9: *Your Priests*
- Luke 4:14–22
- Deacon's proclamation *God, Great, Mighty and Worker of Wonders*
- Bishop's prayer *Lord God of Hosts and Creator of All Creatures*
- *Peace to All*
- Prayer *Lord, Lord and God Almighty of All Existing Things*[98]
- Vesting (girdle, stole, *p'ilon*, cope)[99]
- Prayer of the new priest *Christ God, Hope of Salvation*

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96 This prayer (fols 4ʳ–8ᵛ) is the same as in Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 426–427 (ՃՁԷ. Աստուածային եւ երկնաւոր շնորհք), but has several variations in wording.

97 Despite the title *A Reading from the Prophet Amos* (Ընթերցուած Յամովսեայ մարգարէէ), the text reproduces Jeremiah 33:17–18 (fol. 11ʳ). Jeremiah 33:15–18 reappears on the folios 13ᵛ–14ʳ (see above).

98 This prayer (fols 23ʳ–25ᵛ) is an extended version of the bishop's prayer reproduced in Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 428 (ՃՁԹ. Տէր Աստուած ամենակալ ամենայն լինելութեանց ...). Cf. Conybeare 1905, 241.

99 In the manuscript, respectively: զաւտի, ուրար, փիլոն, նափորտ.

- *Peace to All*
- The new priest is conducted to 'the office of the hour'. Eucharistic liturgy, offered by the bishop.
- The new priest shall be greeted and blessed by the bishop and other priests.
- 'And he shall abide forty days in the church, and shall be taught the office, and shall come to know himself, in respect of the event'.[100]

Appendix 3: *Canon of the Blessing of Water* as preserved in several manuscripts dating from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries

Ancient *maštocʿ* manuscripts: Venice 457 (10th c.) and Matenadaran 1001 (early 11th c.)[101]	Add. 19548, *maštocʿ*[102]	Venice 1159, *maštocʿ*, late 12th / early 13th c.[103]	Jerusalem 2027, *maštocʿ*, dated 1266[104]	Matenadaran 979, *Lectionary of Crown Prince Hetʿum*, dated 1286[105]
Canon of the Blessing of Water on the Day of the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ	*Canon of the Blessing of Water on the Day of the Epiphany of Our Lord and Jesus Christ*	*Canon of the Blessing of Water*	*Canon of the Blessing of Water on the Day of the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ*	*Canon of the Blessing of Water*
Procession to water with the cross and the gospel book				

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100 Conybeare 1905, 242.

101 The structure is extracted from Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 342–360. Cf. Conybeare 1913, 165–178; Denysenko 2012, 32 (based on Conybeare's edition).

102 Cf. Conybeare 1913, 165–178 (version L).

103 I translate here the structure reproduced in Sargisean and Sargsean 1966, 51–52. I omit the ends of readings because these are not indicated in the given publication.

104 The structure is extracted using the digitalised manuscript (fols 132^r–155^v) available at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00271074086-jo/?st=gallery> (accessed on 15 November 2022).

105 The structure is extracted from Alekʿsanean and Łazarean (eds) 2019, 33–40. It is to be noted that the earliest Cilician lectionary dating from 1154 does not include the *Blessing of Water* in the eight-day celebrations of the Epiphany. See Renoux 2004, 86–89.

Ancient *maštocʻ* manuscripts: Venice 457 (10th c.) and Matenadaran 1001 (early 11th c.)	Add. 19548, *maštocʻ*	Venice 1159, *maštocʻ*, late 12th / early 13th c.	Jerusalem 2027, *maštocʻ*, dated 1266	Matenadaran 979, *Lectionary of Crown Prince Hetʻum*, dated 1286
Psalm 28(29):3 *ktsurd*: 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters'	Psalm 28(29):3 *ktsurd*: 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters'	Psalm 28(29):3 *ktsurd*: 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters'	Psalm 28(29):3 *ktsurd*: 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters'	Psalm 28(29):3 *ktsurd*: 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters'
–	–	–	–	Pʻox Psalm 28(29):1: 'Give to the Lord'
IV(II) Kings 2:19–22	IV(II) Kings 2:19–22	IV(II) Kings 2:19–	IV(II) Kings 2:19–22	Exodus 15:22–27
–	–		Exodus 15:22–27	Joshua 3:14–4:1, 16–18
			Joshua 3:14–4:1, 16–18	IV(II) Kings 2:19–22
Isaiah 12:3–6	Isaiah 12:3–6	Isaiah 12:3–	Isaiah 12:3–6	Isaiah 12:3–6
Ezekiel 47:1–12	Ezekiel 47:1–12	Ezekiel 47:1–	Ezekiel 47:1–12	Ezekiel 47:1–12
–	–	Exodus 15:22–		
–	–	Joshua 3:14–		
I Corinthians 10:1–7	I Corinthians 10:1–4	I Corinthians 10:1–	I Corinthians 10:1–4	I Corinthians 10:1–4
Alleluia, Psalm 92(93):1: 'The Lord reigns'	Alleluia *aruesti*, Psalm 95:11: 'Let the heavens rejoice'	Alleluia *aruesti*, Psalm 95:11: 'Let the heavens rejoice'	Alleluia *aruesti*, Psalm 95:11: 'Let the heavens rejoice'	Alleluia *aruesti*, Psalm 5:12(11): 'Let them be glad'
Matthew 3:1–17	Matthew 3:1–17	Matthew 3:1–	Matthew 3:1–17	Matthew 3:1–17
Deacon's proclamation	Deacon's proclamation * The same litanies as in the ancient version but adds 'For the descent of the Holy Spirit into these waters and rebirth of those who are baptised children of light and of truth'	Deacon's proclamation	Proclamation * The same litanies as in the ancient version but adds 'For the descent of the Holy Spirit into these waters and rebirth of those who are baptised children of light and of truth, let us pray unto the Lord'	Proclamation * The same litanies as in the ancient version but adds 'For the descent of the Holy Spirit into these waters and rebirth of those who are baptised children of light and of truth, let us pray unto the Lord'

Ancient *maštoc'* manuscripts: Venice 457 (10th c.) and Matenadaran 1001 (early 11th c.)	Add. 19548, *maštoc'*	Venice 1159, *maštoc'*, late 12th / early 13th c.	Jerusalem 2027, *maštoc'*, dated 1266	Matenadaran 979, *Lectionary of Crown Prince Het'um*, dated 1286
Prayer *Blessing of Water*, attributed to St Basil of Caesarea	Prayer *Blessing of Water*, attributed to St Basil of Caesarea[106]	Prayer *Blessing of Water*, attributed to St Basil of Caesarea	Prayer *Blessing of Water*, attributed to St Basil of Caesarea	Prayer *Blessing of Water*, attributed to St Basil of Caesarea
Peace to All			*Peace to All*	*Peace to All*
Prayer *Living God*	Prayer *Living God*[107]		Prayer *Living God*	Prayer *Living God*
The sign of the Lord is made with the cross and the myrrh, saying, 'Let this water be blessed [...]'.	One of the priests or the bishop makes the sign of the Lord's cross on the water. And the bishop pours out the holy myrrh, saying, 'Let this water be blessed [...]'.	The bishop makes the sign of the Lord with the cross, saying: 'Let this water be blessed [...]'. Then he pours out the holy myrrh, saying, 'Let this water be blessed [...]'.	The sign of the Lord is made with the cross and the myrrh, saying, 'Let this water be blessed [...]'.	One of the priests makes the sign of the Lord with the cross on the water. And the bishop pours out the holy myrrh into the water, saying, 'Let this water be blessed [...]'.
Dismissal			Dismissal	
–	(Canticle) *Sun, the Ally in Warfare of Angels*[108]		–	*Sun, the Ally in Warfare of Angels*[109]
–	Grigor Narekac'i's *Ode for the Blessing of Water* (*Good news!*)[110]		–	Grigor Narekac'i's *Ode for the Blessing of Water* (*Good news!*)

106 Several pages are missing between the present-day fols 50ᵛ–51ʳ, because of which the prayer attributed to St Basil is discontinued after fol. 50ᵛ (Այսաւր ի հին տրոմ[ութեանց]; cf. Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 355). On fol. 51ʳᵛ, we read the last part of the prayer *Living God* (the preserved part starts from qչար, qբիծ եւ զախստ; cf. Tēr-Vardanean 2012, 359–360).

107 See the previous note.

108 I could not identify this in the sources available to me. The English translation follows Conybeare 1905, 178 (version L). In manuscript: Եւ սկսանին Արեգակն. Հրեշտակաց զինուորու. կցուրդ.

109 In manuscript: Եւ սկսանին՝ Արեգակն. եւ ասեն՝ Հրեշտակաց զինու՛՛. See Alek'sanean and Łazarean (eds) 2019, 40. See also my previous note.

110 Cf. Terian (tr.) 2016, 4–7, also 3–4 for Terian's comments on the authorship and use of this ode.

Umberto Bongianino

The Vatican al-Ṣūfī and the Library of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī in Thirteenth-century Ceuta

Abstract: This article presents and contextualises an exquisite copy of the Arabic star atlas *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib al-thābita* ('Book of Configurations of the Fixed Stars') made in Ceuta, in 1224 CE, for the library of a local scholar and philanthropist. The first part of the article discusses some of the manuscript's distinctive illustrations, proposing some observations on how the figural repertoire associated with the constellations was transmitted and altered in the medieval Islamic West. The second part concentrates on the manuscript's patron, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī, his library and his intellectual pursuits, shedding some new light on the scholarly milieu of thirteenth-century Ceuta.

1 Introduction

The most remarkable manuscript of the Arabic star atlas *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib al-thābita* ('Book of Configurations of the Fixed Stars') to have survived from the Islamic West is today kept in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, under the shelf mark Rossiano 1033.[1] This profusely illustrated and illuminated paper codex actually contains two separate works by two different authors: the first is the *Kitāb* itself (fols 1ʳ–103ᵛ), a treatise on the constellations by the Persian astronomer Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī (903–986 CE); the second is a didactic poem on the same subject, in metre *rajaz*, composed by his son Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Ṣūfī and titled *Urjūza fī ṣuwar al-kawākib* ('Poem on the Configurations of the Stars', fols 105ʳ–120ʳ). The juxtaposition of these two Arabic works on constellations within the same book makes perfect sense, and is attested in at least one

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other medieval codex.[2] In the Vatican manuscript, the text of al-Ṣūfī's treatise is almost entirely preserved and enhanced with forty-six drawings of constellations – some rather simple, others more elaborate – which have so far received very limited attention, despite their value as a source for the study of Islamic visual culture and the arts of the book in the medieval Maghrib and al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia).

Although thematically related, the *Kitāb* and the *Urjūza* belong to two different literary genres, and in the Vatican manuscript, they were also penned by two distinct individuals, whose Maghribī scripts differ noticeably from one another. The colophon at the end of the *Urjūza* (fol. 120ʳ) – and, therefore, of the whole codex (Fig. 1) – states that the copy was completed in Ceuta in the year 621 of the Muslim calendar (1224 CE) for Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī (1176–1251), a known local scholar of Andalusī descent. However, there is no colophon at the end of al-Ṣūfī's treatise that may confirm that the first work was copied and illustrated at the same time and in the same place as the second. The patron's name does appear in the illuminated title page of the *Kitāb* on fol. 1ʳ (Fig. 2), but the chrysography here was clearly executed after the work had been transcribed, by the same calligrapher who wrote the title page of the *Urjūza*, on fol. 105ʳ, and probably also the final colophon. Thus, the text and images of al-Ṣūfī's treatise may conceivably be slightly earlier than 1224, and they could have belonged to a copy that was not originally made for al-Shārrī. Nevertheless, the paper support employed in both parts is very similar, and the manuscript, as a whole, displays a certain aesthetic unity. This was achieved through its illuminated elements of paratext, which make use of the same tripartite colour scheme of gold, blue and red featured in the constellation drawings. The evident care that went into the assemblage and finish of this codex for the edification of its patron speaks volumes about the bibliophilic culture of medieval Ceuta.

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2 Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MS.2.1998, copied and illustrated in Baghdad in 1125. This manuscript is possibly the most authoritative and earliest extant copy of both works: see Savage-Smith 2013. On Ibn al-Ṣūfī's poem and its transmission history, see Carey 2009.

Fig. 1: Dated colophon of Ibn al-Ṣūfī's *Urjūza fī ṣuwar al-kawākib*. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 120ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Fig. 2: Title of al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb*, with a dedication to Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Shārrī. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 1ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

This article delves into BAV Rossiano 1033 with the intention of shedding some new light on how astronomical knowledge from Classical Antiquity and the Islamic East was transmitted in the medieval Islamic West. In the first part, the focus will be on the figural repertoire associated with the signs of the zodiac and the other constellations. The most remarkable illustrations of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī will be examined in relation to those of the only other Maghribī copy of the same work known to us, an undated manuscript in Paris (BnF arabe 2488), probably from the fourteenth century.[3] Comparisons will also be drawn with Islamic celestial globes

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3 De Slane 1883–1895, 441–442.

and other iconographic sources, exploring the possible reasons and models behind some of the artist's choices. The second part of the article will concentrate on the scholarly and artistic milieu of medieval Ceuta, the library and collecting habits of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shārrī, and the reasons why the elites of the time seem to have cared deeply about manuscripts such as the Vatican al-Ṣūfī.

2 The illustrations of BAV Rossiano 1033

Al-Ṣūfī's treatise was meant as a revision and expansion of the star catalogue in Claudius Ptolemy's *Almagest*, compiled around 150 CE. The Persian astronomer updated the stars' ecliptic longitudes to the year 964, included a discussion of the star names used by the Bedouins of pre-Islamic Arabia, and corrected numerous errors of calculation (longitudes, latitudes, and magnitudes) that he identified in the astronomical literature of the day.[4] The purpose of the work is essentially didactic and, for this reason, the constellations are not simply described: they are illustrated. Each constellation in the extant manuscripts is always drawn twice: as it appears in the sky, and mirrored, as depicted on celestial globes. This was done to help readers and scholars recognise star formations from both direct observation of the firmament and scientific instruments. The Vatican al-Ṣūfī is no exception: its forty-six pairs of drawings illustrate all the classical constellations mentioned by Ptolemy, except for Cassiopeia, which is missing due to the loss of one folio between fols 23 and 24.[5]

BAV Rossiano 1033 opens with the author's lengthy preface (fols 1ᵛ–8ʳ), followed by the three canonical parts that make up the treatise. The first (fols 8ʳ–40ᵛ) deals with the northern celestial hemisphere and contains twenty illustrations: Ursa Minor (*al-dubb al-aṣghar*, 'the lesser bear', fols 8ᵛ–9ʳ), Ursa Maior (*al-dubb al-akbar*, 'the greater bear', fol. 10ʳ), Draco (*al-tinnīn*, 'the serpent', fol. 12ᵛ), Cepheus (*qayqāwus* or *al-multahib*, 'the blazing one', fol. 14ᵛ), Boötes (*al-ʿawwāʾ, al-ṣayyāḥ, al-baqqār* or *ḥāris al-shamāl*, 'the howler', 'the cowhand' or 'the sentinel of the north', fol. 16ᵛ), Corona Borealis (*al-iklīl al-shamālī* or *al-fakka*, 'the northern crown', fol. 17ᵛ), Hercules (*al-jāthī*

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4 Carey 2007, 65–66. For an extensive discussion of al-Ṣūfī's methodology, the structure of his treatise, and its impact on later literature, see Kunitzsch 1986; Carey 2001, vol. 1, 66–85; Brentjes 2021, 63–71.

5 The classical constellations mentioned by Ptolemy are forty-eight, but in al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, Ophiuchus is normally depicted together with Serpens, and Centaurus with Lupus, resulting in forty-six pairs of illustrations. BAV Rossiano 1033 lacks Cassiopea but features an additional illustration: a horse representing a Bedouin constellation on fol. 39ᵛ.

ʿalā rukbatayhi or al-rāqiṣ, 'the kneeling one' or 'the dancer', fol. 19ᵛ, here missing its mirror image due to the loss of one folio between fols 19 and 20), Lyra (al-lūrā, al-silyāq, al-awr, al-ṣanj, al-miʿzafa or al-sulaḥfā, 'the harp' or 'the tortoise', fol. 20ʳ), Cygnus (al-ṭāʾir or al-dajāja, 'the bird' or 'the hen', fol. 22ʳ), Perseus (barshāwus or ḥāmil raʾs al-ghūl, 'the carrier of the ghoul's head', fol. 25ʳ), Auriga (mumsik al-aʿinna or al-ʿannān, 'the one clutching the reins', fol. 27ʳ), Ophiuchus with Serpens (al-ḥawwāʾ wa-l-ḥayya, 'the snake charmer and the snake', fols 30ʳ–30ᵛ), Sagitta (al-sahm, 'the arrow', fol. 32ʳ), Aquila (al-ʿuqāb or al-nasr al-ṭāʾir, 'the eagle' or 'the flying vulture', fol. 33ʳ), Delphinus (al-dulfīn, fol. 34ʳ), Pegasus (al-faras al-aʿẓam, 'the greater horse', fols 35ʳ–35ᵛ), Andromeda (andhrūmīd, al-marʾa al-musalsala or al-marʾa allatī lam ta-ra baʿlan, 'the chained woman', 'the woman who did not see a husband', fols 37ᵛ–38ʳ), a second horse representing a Bedouin constellation partly overlapping with Andromeda (fol. 39ᵛ), Equuleus (qiṭʿat al-faras, 'portion of a horse', fol. 40ʳ) and Triangulum (al-muthallath, 'the triangle', fol. 40ᵛ).

The second part of the *Kitāb* (fols 41ʳ–74ᵛ) deals with the constellations of the zodiac and contains twelve illustrations: Aries (al-ḥamal, 'the ram', fols 42ʳ–42ᵛ), Taurus (al-thawr, 'the bull', fols 45ᵛ–46ʳ) Gemini (al-tawʾamān, 'the twins', fols 49ʳ–49ᵛ), Cancer (al-saraṭān, 'the crab', fol. 51ʳ), Leo (al-asad, 'the lion', fol. 53ᵛ), Virgo (al-ʿadhrāʾ or al-sunbula, 'the maiden' or 'the ear of wheat', fols 56ᵛ–57ʳ), Libra (al-mīzān, 'the scales', fol. 59ᵛ), Scorpio (al-ʿaqrab, 'the scorpion', fol. 62ᵛ), Sagittarius (al-rāmī or al-qaws, 'the marksman' or 'the bow', fol. 64ᵛ), Capricorn (al-jadī, 'the kid', fols 66ᵛ–67ʳ), Aquarius (sākib al-māʾ or al-dalw, 'the pourer of water' or 'the bucket', fols 70ʳ–70ᵛ), and Pisces (al-samakatān or al-ḥūt, 'the two fish', fols 76ʳ–76ᵛ).[6] The third part (fols 75ʳ–103ᵛ) deals with the southern celestial hemisphere and contains fourteen illustrations: Cetus (qayṭus, fols 73ʳ–73ᵛ), Orion (al-jabbār or al-jawzāʾ, 'the giant', fols 78ᵛ–79ʳ), Eridanus (al-nahr, 'the river', fols 81ᵛ–82ʳ), Lepus (al-arnab, 'the hare', fol. 83ᵛ), Canis Maior (al-kalb al-akbar, 'the greater dog', fol. 85ᵛ), Canis Minor (al-kalb al-aṣghar, 'the lesser dog', fol. 87ʳ), Argo Navis (al-safīna, 'the ship', fols 89ᵛ–90ʳ), Hydra (al-shujāʿ, 'the valiant one', fol. 93ʳ), Crater (al-bāṭiya, 'the jug', fol. 94ᵛ), Corvus (al-ghurāb, 'the raven', fol. 95ʳ), Centaurus with Lupus (qayṭawrus wa-l-sabuʿ, 'Centaurus with the predator', fols 98ʳ–98ᵛ), Ara (al-mijmara, 'the brazier', fol. 101ʳ), Corona Australis (al-iklīl al-janūbī, 'the southern crown', fol. 102ʳ) and Piscis Austrinus (al-ḥūt al-janūbī, 'the southern fish', fols 103ʳ–103ᵛ).

Among the striking features of these forty-six illustrations is the extensive presence of gilt, more generously applied than in any other extant manuscript of the *Kitāb* from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Gold paint (also known as

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6 Fols 73–76 are bound in disorder, which is why the illustration of Pisces follows that of Cetus. The correct order is fols 72, 76, 74, 75, 73 and 77.

shell gold) was not just used to mark all the stars inside each constellation, but also a wide variety of ornamental features and details, including the collars, cuffs, armbands and belts of male and female figures, as well as Boötes's turban, Perseus's sword, Auriga's reins, Aries's horns, the diadems on the heads of Andromeda and Aquarius, the mast finial of Argo Navis, the tail of Canis Maior, the feathers of Aquila's thighs and the plumes of Pegasus's wings. As has already been mentioned, the text of al-Ṣūfī's treatise was arguably the first part of the codex to be completed, before the *Urjūza* was appended to it with its illuminated colophon, and before both works were endowed with chrysographic title pages. Nevertheless, the use of gilt in the illustrations of the *Kitāb* was clearly planned from the beginning. That is demonstrated by the explanations given by the copyist himself, in order to facilitate the interpretation of certain drawings. At the end of the chapter on Ursa Minor and immediately before its visual rendition (fol. 8ᵛ), for instance, the copyists seamlessly added the following sentence to al-Ṣūfī's text:

المنقوطة بالذهب المعلمة بالسواد في الصورتين جميعا هي من الصورة والمنقوطة بالحمرة المعلمة باللازورد هي الخارجة عن الصورة والمنقوطة باللازورد بغير علامة هي التي لم يذكرها بطلميوس.

The stars marked with gold dots and numbered in black (*al-manqūṭa bi-l-dhahab wa-l-muʿallama bi-l-sawād*) in both images belong to the constellation; the stars marked with red dots and numbered in blue (*bi-l-lāzaward*) lie outside the constellation; and those marked with blue dots without numbers are those that Ptolemy did not mention.[7]

These legends are largely omitted from the latter chapters, by which point the reader is supposed to have become familiar with the colour code. This ingenious system noticeably improves on earlier and contemporary practices of marking stars in al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, which never include the colour blue. Whether devised by the copyist (who was probably also the draughtsman) or derived from the exemplar, this tripartite colour code speaks to the unusually high degree of integration between text and image in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī. In particular, the stars and asterism marked in lapis blue throughout the manuscript – those that 'Ptolemy did not mention' – immediately draw the reader's attention to the alternative cosmological views of pre-Islamic Arabia. Although al-Ṣūfī's treatise was certainly 'instrumental in displacing the traditional Bedouin constellation imagery and replacing it with the Greek/Ptolemaic system which ultimately came to dominate all astronomy',[8] BAV Rossiano 1033 is significantly preoccupied with highlighting Bedouin star formations within and around the Ptolemaic constellations, wherever possible.

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7 All translations from the Arabic, unless stated otherwise, are by the author.

8 Savage-Smith 2013, 153.

Fig. 3a: Illustrations of Cepheus. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 14ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

That can be seen, for instance, in the illustration of Cepheus (Fig. 3a). The constellation is depicted as a bearded man in motion, wearing a short tunic and pointed headgear, defined by al-Ṣūfī as a *qalansuwa*, the tall hat in the shape of a sugar-loaf used by the Abbasid caliphs and their viziers.[9] This image differs noticeably from those drawn in contemporary Iraq and Iran, and its low conical mitre resembling a helmet might reflect a Mediterranean or even Maghribī iconographic type, as it evokes the hat worn by Cepheus in some classical Roman globes and medieval Aratean manuscripts.[10] Although possibly inspired by Latinate representations, the hand that drew the Vatican Cepheus also cared to add, in lapis blue, two groups of stars specific to the Arabic-Bedouin tradition: *al-qidr* ('the cooking pot') near the figure's right forearm, and *kalb al-rāʿī* ('the shepherd's dog') between the figure's knees, near four other unnamed stars on his left thigh.[11] The latter name is explained by the fact that the Arabs called Cepheus's left-knee star *al-rāʿī* ('the shepherd'). These non-Ptolemaic asterisms are discussed in al-Ṣūfī's text and shown in the illustrations of other contemporary manuscripts of the *Kitāb*, but nowhere quite so neatly as in the Vatican codex.

3 Picturing the constellations in the medieval Maghrib

The only scholar to have succinctly compared the drawings of BAV Rossiano 1033 with those found in the other surviving medieval copies of the same work is Moya Carey, in her unpublished doctoral thesis.[12] According to Carey, the Vatican al-Ṣūfī features more 'classical' (i.e. Latinate) versions of some constellations when compared to Eastern manuscripts produced in Baghdad, Mardin, Mosul and Maragheh between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A compelling example is the iconography of Delphinus, depicted in the Islamic East as a composite animal with the body of

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9 Dozy 1881, vol. 2, 401.

10 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Cepheus-master-1a-Mar-2017-.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024); see also Nicolle 1988, vol. 1, 234. David Nicolle interprets Cepheus's headgear as a 'conical helmet of almost European form which has an extended neckguard', and he claims that this and other military features of the illustrations 'almost certainly reflect actual late twelfth- and thirteenth-century Moroccan military equipment'.

11 Left and right are always defined with respect to the constellation as it appears in the sky, not on a globe. Note that the text does not speak of 'knees' but of 'legs' (*rijl*). It was up to the illustrators to decide where to place the stars (on Cepheus's feet, calves, knees …).

12 Carey 2001, vol. 1, 159–160.

a fish and the head of a lion (or, in one case, a simurgh), while in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, it is simply represented as a fish, in line with the Aratean tradition.[13] The same naturalistic rendition of Delphinus is found in the Paris al-Ṣūfī manuscript, as well as on two celestial globes produced in Valencia at the end of the eleventh century.[14] These four sources – the two al-Ṣūfī manuscripts and the two Valencian globes – constitute what Carey called 'the Maghrebi group' of Islamic constellation iconography. However, while it is certainly possible that the Maghrib developed distinctive ways of depicting the stars due to 'its geographical distance from a "mainstream" of Islamic constellation iconography', the evidence in this regard is somewhat inconsistent. The same picture can vary considerably across the four artefacts: for example, Cepheus wears a *qalansuwa* in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī but a turban in the Paris al-Ṣūfī (Fig. 3b), and on the two Valencian globes he does not have any headgear at all (in fact, he is completely naked). Such discrepancies reveal two important problems that Islamic art historians should bear in mind when trying to classify celestial imagery into different iconographic traditions.

The first concerns the nature of al-Ṣūfī's treatise and the relation between its many extant manuscripts. As has already been mentioned, the *Kitāb* was conceived as an illustrated atlas since it first came out of al-Ṣūfī's pen in Shiraz, in 964. However, the earliest manuscript known to us dates from 161 years later: it was transcribed in Baghdad, in 1125.[15] By that time, we should imagine numerous copies (and copies of copies) of the *Kitāb* circulating throughout the Islamic world, illustrated in ways that had probably already departed noticeably from the original drawings by al-Ṣūfī, according to transmission patterns that are impossible to reconstruct. We do not know exactly when the *Kitāb* became known in al-Andalus and the Maghrib, but that probably had already happened in the eleventh century.[16] The circulation of al-Ṣūfī's

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13 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Delphinus-master-8-July-20172017.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024).

14 The two metal globes are in Florence, Museo Galileo, 2712 (dated 1080 or 1085), and Paris, BnF, Département des Cartes et Plans, GE A-325 (undated, but attributable to the same maker as the Florence globe): see Savage-Smith 1985, 217, 236.

15 See above, n. 2. Emilie Savage-Smith has convincingly suggested that the colophon of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 144, may not be contemporary with the main text and its illustrations, therefore, its date (1009–1010) cannot be considered reliable: see Savage-Smith 2013, 147–152.

16 It is worth mentioning here an Andalusī copy of the *Almagest* dated 1085, today in Tunis, Bibliothèque nationale de Tunisie, 7116, on which see Bellver 2021. The notes and colophon of this manuscript state that it was transcribed from a codex kept in an important library in Valencia, which had been collated with a copy of the *Almagest* owned by an Eastern scholar of astronomy (a certain Abū al-Qāsim al-Munajjim), which, in turn, had been copied from a manuscript owned by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī. This suggests two things: firstly, that al-Ṣūfī was known in al-Andalus before 1085; secondly, that between the death of al-Ṣūfī in 986 and 1085, the transmission chain of

treatise in the medieval Islamic West is attested only indirectly: at least one copy – probably sourced in Toledo – must have been available to the translators of Alfonso X of Castile (r. 1252–1284) for them to base on it the text and drawings of the first chapter of the *Libros del saber de astrología*, as well as some of the drawings in the *Lapidario*.[17] There is also evidence of a Latin adaptation of the *Kitāb*, possibly carried out in Sicily, between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century.[18] Then, of course, we have the two surviving Maghribī copies of the work, but since the earliest one dates from 1224, its illustrations may well reflect a late stage in the Maghribī iconographic tradition, always assuming that they were copied from a Maghribī exemplar.

Fig. 3b: Illustration of Cepheus. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 19ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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a work such as the *Almagest* could comprise up to four links of successive copies. It is probable that al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb* was transmitted according to a similar pattern. In fact, the 1125 manuscript of the *Kitāb* today in Doha was transcribed from a copy dated 1036, which, in turn, was transcribed from a copy that belonged to a pupil of al-Ṣūfī's, who checked it against his teacher.

17 Comes 1990; Fernández Fernández 2019.

18 Kunitzsch 1986, 74.

When considering the constellations depicted in any manuscript of the *Kitāb*, it is certainly useful to distinguish between essential iconographic features that are mentioned by al-Ṣūfī in relation to the stars' positions (such as Cepheus's *qalan-suwa*), and features that are not specified in the text (such as the aspect of Delphi-nus's head). The latter were more liable to variations dictated by the artists' incli-nations and the impact of other iconographic models. However, some striking variations are also found in the former. Despite the several references to the stars on Boötes's staff (*ʿaṣā*) in the text, for instance, the two drawings of Boötes in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī do not include this attribute (Fig. 4). Was it a conscious choice, or an omission dictated by negligence? Similarly, Virgo's wings are an essential fea-ture of the constellation as described in the *Kitāb*, but in our manuscript, Virgo is represented as a wingless woman, with the stars normally positioned on her wings distributed instead across her shoulders, arms and lap (Fig. 5). Wings were also omitted from the drawings of the Paris al-Ṣūfī, but this absence cannot be considered a Maghribī peculiarity: in contemporary manuscripts from the Islamic East, Virgo is also occasionally depicted wingless.[19] This fact has been interpreted as a sign that some illustrators were not themselves astronomers, but other ex-planations could be proposed: perhaps the scribe and artist of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī was bothered by space constraints, or maybe the exemplar he was copying al-ready featured a wingless Virgo, and he did not dare alter its iconography so dras-tically. Ultimately, it should be borne in mind that the *Kitāb* is not a treatise with a single-minded purpose: readers interested in the technicalities of each star's posi-tion and magnitude would have mainly consulted its co-ordinate tables, while its figures served as artistic approximations and visualisations of something that is ultimately invisible. Their presence, combined with al-Ṣūfī's discursive parts on star nomenclature and lore, is what made the work also popular with armchair astronomers, scholars of other disciplines and wealthy gentlemen.[20] Its prized copies were meant to educate but also entertain with their fanciful illustrations, often enhanced with ornamental details and distinct characters – bellicose, sen-sual, eerie, grotesque – imparted by the hand who drew them.

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19 A wingless Virgo can be seen, for instance, in a manuscript produced in Mayyafariqin in 1131 (Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Library, A. 3493), but also in BnF arabe 2489 (1266–1267), and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 144 (probably late twelfth century).
20 Savage-Smith 2013, 153.

Fig. 4: Illustrations of Boötes. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 16ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

The second iconographic problem concerns the relationship between the illustrations of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, the images engraved on celestial globes, and other kinds of astrological and mythological imagery from the broader visual culture. Some medieval Islamic globes bear inscriptions mentioning that the stars engraved on them were placed according to the information contained in al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb* (save the necessary updates to their longitudes).[21] There is also ample evidence to suggest that the *Kitāb* was used by readers 'who wanted to identify the constellations on their globes, for [...] every wealthy gentleman and prominent ruler would have had a globe as part of his library and collection of treasures'.[22]

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21 Savage-Smith 1985, 27, 31–32, 86–87.

22 Savage-Smith 2013, 153.

However, the illustrations of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts can sometimes depart noticeably from those seen on celestial globes, not least because of the difference between a flat and a spherical surface, and between the two techniques of drawing and engraving. Thus, the stark and naked human figures represented on the two Valencian globes from the late eleventh century have little in common with the extravagant and richly clad constellations of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī. Other factors such as different iconographic sources were equally at play: just to give one example, Lyra is depicted as a plant with three leaves in BAV Rossiano 1033, but as a tortoise in both celestial globes. It is probable that the maker(s) of these globes never had the chance to see an illustrated copy of the *Kitāb.* Yet, at least one interesting similarity can be found in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī and the two Valencian globes which hints at the existence of iconographic trends encompassing different media and contexts of production.

It is a well-known fact that, in the Arabic tradition, Perseus is represented holding not the head of Medusa, but of a male demon identified as the ghoul.[23] However, as has already been remarked by Carey, the artist of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī went one step further and depicted the ghoul as a three-faced head with three goatees and four eyes, held by the hair by a particularly combative Perseus wielding a large, gilded sword (Fig. 6a).[24] This three-faced ghoul is unique within the extant corpus of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, but finds a close parallel in the two Valencian globes, where Perseus holds not one but three heads joined at the back (Fig. 6b). While seemingly unknown in the Islamic pictorial tradition, three-faced demons and allegoric figures are attested in medieval Christian art, and especially in Romanesque sculpture: three instances from around 1200 are carved on the façades of the churches of San Pietro in Tuscania (central Italy), San Martín in Artáiz (Navarre) and on a capital in the cloister of the Tarragona Cathedral.[25] It has been suggested that such three-faced characters may embody medieval reinterpretations of classical triple deities or triune pagan gods such as Hecates, Mercury or Lugus.[26] Be that as it may, we are dealing here with an iconographic eccentricity that appears specific to the western Mediterranean.

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23 Wellesz 1959, 9.

24 Carey 2001, vol. 1, 102, 159–160.

25 Sastre Vázquez 1997.

26 <https://www.romanicoennavarra.info/imagen_trifronte_artaiz.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024).

جدول كوكبة العذرا بزيادة ... على ماية الجسم طولا

العرض			الطول			اسما الكواكب	
د	يه	د	ج	ط	د	الجزء من الانين الدريه طرف فله الراس	١
د	د	د	مد	ط	د	الضلع منهما	ب
د	جه	جم	كب	جم	د	الضلع من الانين التاليسلهما في الوجه	ج
د	ل	د	لب	لب	د	ميلها الى الجنوب	د
جم	و	جم	ىا	با	د	الذي على طرف الجناح الجنوبي الايسر	ه
جم	يب	ا	كز	ك	د	المتقدم من الاربعه الي في الجناح	و
جم	ىب	جم	له	له	د	التالي لها	ز
و	ىب	جم	كط	كط	د	التالي لها ايضا	ح
جم	ىب	ا	مح	مح	د	الاخير التالي للاربعه	ط
جم	ل	جم	ب	كز	د	الذي على الجنب الايمن تحت المنطقة	يج

صورة العذراء على ماىرىه السماء

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Fig. 5: Star catalogue and illustration of Virgo. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 57ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Fig. 6a: Illustrations of Perseus. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 25ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Fig. 6b: Perseus on a celestial globe made in Valencia, in 1080 or 1085. Florence, Museo Galileo, 2712. © Museo Galileo.

The sword of Perseus is a classic case of an accessory iconographic convention: since it does not include any stars, it is not mentioned in al-Ṣūfī's treatise, but there is not a single manuscript of the *Kitāb* that does not feature it as part of its illustrations. That can be partly explained by considering that, in the medieval Islamic world, the image of a swordsman holding a severed head was particularly rich in meaning, being equally associated with the warrior planet Mars (*al-mirrīkh*).[27] This iconographic rendition of Mars is attested in Greater Syria and Iraq from at least the twelfth century, but disappointingly not in the Maghrib or al-Andalus. However, its prophylactic and apotropaic properties would have expedited its diffusion through texts, and possibly also images, in both Muslim and Christian Iberia. Thus, in the Andalusī treatise of celestial magic *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* ('The Goal of the Wise'), attributable to Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 964), Mars is described as having 'the aspect of a man riding a lion, holding in his right hand

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27 Carboni 1997, 17; Carey 2001, vol. 1, 101–102; Caiozzo 2003; Caiozzo 2011, 66.

a sword and in his left hand the head of a man; his clothes are iron and silk'.[28] According to the same work, if this image is carved on a magnetic stone at a particular hour when Mars is in his Aries house, such amulet would work wonders for good and evil, but especially evil. Also,

> if the image of a standing, armoured man is engraved on one of the stones of Mars, he being girt with two swords, one of them drawn in his right hand, and with the head of a man in his left hand, at his hour, [when Mars is] in his house, such drawing causes its bearer to project awe and might upon everyone who sees him or associates with him. I have seen this drawing with my own eyes, on a carnelian set in the ring of one of the people who shared with me this method.[29]

Just like al-Ṣūfī's star atlas, the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* was translated into Castilian by command of Alfonso X, and it enjoyed an immense success in late medieval Europe.[30] It is probable that such planetary associations would have been familiar to the medieval readers of al-Ṣūfī's treatise, and perhaps to the very artist responsible for the Vatican manuscript.

Seen in this light, a wingless Virgo does not appear particularly problematic, because its iconographic treatment outside strictly astronomical contexts did not entail wings: the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* does not mention them, nor were they ever depicted in thirteenth-century Islamic metalwork and ceramics featuring zodiacal imagery.[31] In fact, in these other contexts the emphasis was put on the ear of wheat (*al-sunbula*) held by Virgo, the traditional name of its brightest star (Spica), while the anthropomorphic element was reduced to a non-gendered figure, a masculine one, or a male and female couple symbolising the maiden with Mercury, Virgo's planetary lord.[32] It is perhaps worth remembering that Virgo was considered the tutelary astral sign of Umayyad Córdoba, and that a statue associated with her was placed on the city's Bāb al-Qanṭara ('Gate of the Bridge'), also known as Bāb al-Ṣūra ('Gate of the Effigy').[33] In the chronicle of Ibn ʿIdhārī al-Marrākushī (early fourteenth century) we find the following entry for the year 397 (1006/1007 CE):

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28 *Kitāb ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Ritter 1967, 111. On the attribution of this work to Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, see Fierro 1996.

29 *Kitāb ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Ritter 1967, 123. This passage is discussed and translated in Graham 2020, 17.

30 *Picatrix*, ed. and tr. Attrell and Porreca 2019, 3–5.

31 See, for instance, Hartner 1973–1974, 116; Fehérvári 1973, 92, n. 12.

32 Carboni 1997, 35.

33 De Santiago Simón 1969–1970.

The astral conjunction occurred in Leo in this year, when the seven planets approached each other, and then it reached *al-sunbula*, which is Virgo (*al-ʿadhrāʾ*), the mistress of Córdoba, whose effigy was placed by the wise men of antiquity on the southern gate of the city, which is Bāb al-Qanṭara. Some claimed that Saturn was in the highest position, presaging the ruin of the [Umayyad] dynasty. The astrologers became very vocal, warning the oblivious population of terrible things to come.[34]

The original identity of this lost statue is unknown: it could have been either a Roman goddess or a Visigothic effigy of the Virgin Mary.[35] A similar statue was placed on the Bāb al-Ṣūra of the palatial city of Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ, 5 km to the north-west of Córdoba, in the mid tenth century, and a later source considers it a portrait of one of the caliph's concubines, al-Zahrāʾ, after whom the city was allegedly named.[36] The veracity of this account is questionable, and several scholars have argued that the statue (and the city as a whole) could have been associated with *al-zuhara*, namely the auspicious planet Venus who, according to the twelfth-century historian Ibn Ghālib, governed al-Andalus and endowed its inhabitants with a good temperament.[37] The semiotic and iconographic conflation of Virgo with Venus, similar to that of Perseus with Mars, should be taken into account when studying BAV Rossiano 1033, since its context of production must have been deeply influenced by the Andalusī tradition of picturing the sky and conceptualising cosmic forces.

But the Vatican al-Ṣūfī is also a manuscript where the personal style and preferences of the artist played a significant role. That can be seen, for instance, in the way Andromeda is depicted, with the Bedouin constellations of two fish drawn outside the main figure, and not overlapping it as described in the text (Fig. 7a). The stars forming the outline of the two fish are correctly positioned on Andromeda's chest, legs and lap, but the artist seems to have consciously sacrificed astronomical accuracy for compositional clarity, shrinking the two animals and positioning them below Andromeda's left arm and right foot. This is another unique instance within the extant corpus of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, including the Paris one, whose drawing was clearly based on a different model (Fig. 7b). An-

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34 Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, ed. Maʿrūf and ʿAwwād 2013, vol. 2, 305. A similar statue was placed above of one of the gates of Pechina (Almería), in imitation of the Bāb al-Qanṭara in Córdoba: see al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār*, ed. ʿAbbās 1975, 79. On the astral conjunction of 1007 and its symbolic meaning, see Samsó 2020, 160–162.

35 De Santiago Simón 1969–1970, and Calvo Capilla 2014, 15–16, argue in favour of a pagan goddess, while Ocaña Jiménez 1982 believes it to have been a statue of the Virgin Mary, as did Évariste Lévi-Provençal before him.

36 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. ʿAbbās 1968, vol. 1, 523–524.

37 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. ʿAbbās 1968, vol. 3, 150. On Venus (*al-zuhara*) as a possible eponym of Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ, see Acién Almansa 1995, 189–190, and Fairchild Ruggles 2004, 83–84.

dromeda is also depicted with the two fish across her chest and legs in the Al-fonsine *Lapidario*, indicating that the conventional iconography for this constellation did circulate in thirteenth-century Iberia (Fig. 7c). As for the precious diadem she wears in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, as well as the gilded bands on her collar and sleeves, they adhere to the same pictorial conventions for representing luxury and high status as those followed in the illustrated love story of Bayāḍ and Riyāḍ (Fig. 8), preserved in a roughly contemporary Maghribī codex also in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.[38] The physiognomy and hairstyle of some female figures (such as Virgo) in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī and the ladies portrayed in the Bayāḍ and Riyāḍ manuscript are equally comparable.

These stylistic parallels are hardly surprising, and admittedly not very useful for pinning down the specific models behind the iconographic trends and departures represented in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī. Because of their idiosyncratic postures, distinctive attributes and diagrammatic nature, the illustrations of al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb* fall into a category of their own, and can be related only loosely to the scenes and characters of the so-called princely cycle, the ubiquitous figural language of medieval Islamic art.[39] If, for instance, the image of two wrestlers, fronted gentlemen or seated cup-bearers was ever supposed to represent Gemini in a carved ivory casket from tenth-century Córdoba, or in the twelfth-century painted ceilings of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, then their model could not have been al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb*, where Gemini are always drawn standing, facing the same direction, with their inner arms linked and their outer arms raised.[40] On the other hand, zoomorphic constellations, such as Aquila, Leo or Lepus, are depicted in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī according to conventions so widespread across the medieval Mediterranean as to be indistinguishable from the eagles, lions and hares found in the broader visual culture of the period. In a recent article, Sonja Brentjes divided the extant corpus of al-Ṣūfī illustrations into four categories, based on their treatment of male bodily features: 'Mediterranean', 'western Asian', 'South Asian' and 'East Asian'.[41] BAV Rossiano 1033 is not explicitly mentioned in the article, but while only tangential comparisons with other iconographic sources may be possible, its illustrations should undoubtedly be placed at the core of the Mediterranean tradition identified by Brentjes.

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38 Vatican City, BAV, Vat. ar. 368. For a discussion, edition, Italian translation, and copious illustrations of this manuscript, see D'Ottone 2013.

39 The most complete catalogue of the characters, scenes, and themes in the Islamic princely cycle is found in Grube and Johns 2005.

40 Grube and Johns 2005, 161; Anderson 2015, 122.

41 Brentjes 2021, 74.

Fig. 7a: Illustration of Andromeda with the two fish. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 37ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Fig. 7b: Illustration of Andromeda with the two fish. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 59ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Fig. 7c: Illustration of Andromeda with the two fish, from the *Lapidario* of Alfonso X, *c.* 1270. Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, h-I-15, fol. 2ᵛ. Photograph © Patrimonio Nacional.

Fig. 8: Illustration from the *Ḥadīth Bayāḍ wa-Riyāḍ*, early thirteenth century. BAV Vat. ar. 368, fol. 13ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

One last question to be addressed here concerns the relationship between the Vatican and Paris manuscripts. Although copied in the same region and probably less than a century apart, most of their illustrations only bear a distant resemblance, indicating significant discrepancies between the models available to the two artists. If, for example, we compare the depiction of Hercules in both manuscripts, we would hardly see any similarities between the rubbery and schematic image of a youth in the Paris al-Ṣūfī and the richly clad old man portrayed in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī (Figs 9a–b). The latter was endowed with a dimension of sidereal solemnity that is completely missing from the former. His striped and elegantly draped tunic, so different from the garments worn by the other constellations,

may have been derived from the lion's hide carried by Hercules in some Aratean manuscripts from medieval Europe.[42] Both illustrations show Hercules without the distinctive club or sickle in his right hand, but this accessory is not mentioned in the text, and it is also missing from at least one Eastern manuscript, the codex produced in Baghdad in 1125.[43] The extended index of Hercules's left hand in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī is a unique feature, and a potentially significant one: it resonates with several medieval descriptions of the statue topping the ancient lighthouse of Cádiz, then identified with Hercules and believed to be endowed with supernatural powers.[44] According to the geographer and eyewitness Muḥammad al-Zuhrī (d. before 1161), the statue of Cádiz represented a man stretching his left arm, clenching his fingers in a fist, and pointing his index in the direction of the Strait of Gibraltar.[45] It was allegedly destroyed in 1145/1146, but its memory endured and may well have provided the inspiration for an artist living in thirteenth-century Ceuta. However, al-Zuhrī and other sources also claim that the statue held a staff in its right hand, while Hercules is frustratingly empty-handed in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī.

If the aspect, postures and attributes of most constellations in the Vatican manuscript differ noticeably from the Paris ones, there is, at least, one clear instance of a shared iconographic model: the illustration of Centaurus with Lupus (Figs 10a–b). The two figures are so similar as to be almost perfectly superimposable, which means that the two draughtsmen were probably copying from the same source, or from two sources that shared a common prototype.[46] The enhancements made to the illustration in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī – the gilding of Lupus's ears and Centaurus's belt and headgear, as well as the texturing of his equine body – are indicative of the artist's modus operandi, and they allow us to identify his personal touch elsewhere in the manuscript. It is worth noting that in both the Arabic *Almagest* and al-Ṣūfī's treatise, Lupus is generically named *al-sabuʿ*, 'the predator', and in most medieval copies of the *Kitāb* it was depicted as a lion. The Vatican and Paris al-Ṣūfī are the only manuscripts where Lupus appears as a wolf, a Maghribī specificity also attested in the two

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42 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Hercules-Master-2-22-April-2019.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024).

43 See above, n. 2.

44 Carracedo Fraga 1991.

45 Al-Zuhrī, '*Kitāb al-djaʿrāfiyya*', ed. Ḥadj-Sadok 1968, 217. Another twelfth-century author that describes the statue of Cádiz as pointing towards a specific direction is Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1169). See also al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār*, ed. ʿAbbās 1975, 448.

46 It goes without saying that the copyist of the Paris al-Ṣūfī could not have used the Vatican al-Ṣūfī as a model, since most illustrations in the two manuscripts differ considerably from one another.

Valencian globes.[47] Representations of canids are relatively rare in medieval Islamic art, with the notable exception of two Andalusī caskets datable to the twelfth century, featuring dogs or wolves hunting goats as part of their decoration.[48] Their stylistic affinity with the figures of Lupus, Canis Maior and Canis Minor in the Vatican and Paris manuscripts is evident, and it may reflect an iconographic cross-pollination peculiar to the Islamic West.

Fig. 9a: Illustration of Hercules. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 19ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

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47 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Centaurus-master-17-Oct-2021.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024). Lupus is also represented as a wolf in the Alfonsine *Lapidario*.
48 Madrid, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 51015 and inv. 51944: see Galán y Galindo 2005, vol. 2, 93–96, nos 03013 and 03014; see also Zozaya 2004. As shown by Juan Zozaya, the sketch of a dog was also drawn on the inner face of one of the wooden tablets forming the core of inv. 51944. Zozaya believed this drawing to depict a Sicilian breed of dog, the *cirneco dell'Etna,* and on this sole basis, he attributed the casket to Sicily.

Fig. 9b: Illustration of Hercules. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 27ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Fig. 10a: Illustration of Centaurus with Lupus. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 98ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Fig. 10b: Illustration of Centaurus with Lupus. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 142ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

4 A scholar's library in medieval Ceuta

The city of Ceuta, a strategic seaport and entrepôt on the Strait of Gibraltar, was also an important cultural hub in the western Maghrib, where manuscripts of all genres were copied and circulated, and astronomy was studied and practiced: suffice it to mention here the treatise on the astrolabe authored by Qāsim Ibn al-Shāṭṭ (1246–1323), a denizen of Ceuta.[49] The local historian Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 1422) reports that, already in the eleventh century, the city boasted several libraries (*khazāʾin ʿilmiyya*) assembled by families of notables and scholars in their own homes.[50] One of them belonged to the jurist Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-ʿAjūz (d. *c.* 1030), who had travelled extensively to Kairouan (in present-day Tunisia) and al-Andalus in quest of knowledge. In the twelfth century, important collections of manuscripts were owned by the local judge Ibn al-Daqqāq al-Tamīmī (d. 1110), who would dispense teaching in his own mosque, and by his pupil, the famous *qāḍī* ʿIyāḍ (d. 1149), who was also a prolific copyist known for his fine handwriting.[51] Among the most impressive manuscripts that survive from medieval Ceuta is a lavishly illuminated Qurʾan, transcribed by a certain Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shuʿayb al-Anṣārī in 1191.[52] If one compares its final page (Fig. 11) with that of BAV Rossiano 1033, completed thirty-three years later (Fig. 1), it is evident that they both employ the very same decorative vocabulary: from the glittering braiding of the colophons' frames, similarly outlined in lapis blue, to the foliated marginal vignettes and the gilded trefoils enhanced with blue and red dots used as verse markers and space fillers.

49 Samsó 2020, 404, 409–410. On the society, economy, and cultural life of medieval Ceuta, see Ferhat 1993 and Chérif 1996.
50 Vallvé Bermejo 1962, 415–417; Binebine 1992, 24; Chérif 1996, 176–177.
51 On these scholars, their activity and the manuscript culture of twelfth-century Ceuta, see Bongianino 2022, 202–203, 212, and bibliography.
52 Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, R. 27: see Bongianino 2022, 300, 321, 324, and bibliography.

Fig. 11: Final chapters and colophon of an illuminated Qur'an produced in Ceuta, in 1191. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, R. 27, fol. 196ʳ. Photograph © Milli Saraylar Başkanlığı.

The Ceuta Qur'an and the Vatican al-Ṣūfī were produced by skilled book artists trained in the Andalusī style of calligraphy and illumination, and they epitomise the cultural proximity of this part of North Africa to Muslim Iberia – a proximity that reached its zenith precisely in the thirteenth century, with the arrival of

countless refugees fleeing from the Christian conquest of Seville, Córdoba, Valencia, Murcia and Majorca.[53] It is for this reason that the illustrations and codicological features of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī should be considered primarily against the background of Andalusī manuscript culture. Knowledge did not just travel across the strait through the circulation of books: scholars-cum-copyists also travelled, in large numbers, from al-Andalus to Ceuta and vice versa. To take one example, the Ceutan traditionist Muḥammad Ibn Marzūq al-Taghmarī al-Sabtī (d. *c.* 1200) is reported to have studied in Seville, Málaga, Almería and Algeciras, and transcribed numerous books in his meticulous handwriting, which he presumably took back to his hometown at the end of his journeys.[54] The patron and first owner of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī (1176–1251), was a major player in this milieu of cultural interactions between the two regions.[55]

Al-Shārrī's father and grandfather were both *ḥadīth* transmitters from a prosperous Andalusī family – the Banū Yaḥyā al-Ghāfiqī – who had migrated from Murcia to Ceuta in 1166, looking for a politically more stable environment.[56] Al-Shārrī was born ten years later, in Ceuta. Here, he studied Qur'anic readings and *ḥadīth* initially under his father, then under the most prominent local teachers, some of whom were also Andalusī expatriates. He completed his education in Fez, so that by the 1200s, he was a fully-fledged intellectual, well-versed in Qur'anic studies, prophetic traditions, Islamic jurisprudence, as well as Arabic grammar, rhetoric and belles-lettres. Regrettably, al-Shārrī's biographers do not mention any formal or natural sciences (such as mathematics or medicine) among his fields of expertise, and the Vatican al-Ṣūfī is the only known evidence of his interest in astronomy. What the sources do mention, however, is al-Shārrī's insatiable bibliophilia. Not only was he a prolific copyist, but also an eager book collector: he would travel long distances in order to find rare or precious manuscripts for his library, and he would strive to acquire them whatever their price. Towards the end of his life, he decided to share his vast book collection with all local students and scholars, establishing what al-Anṣārī calls 'the first library

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53 Chérif 1996, 153–154.

54 Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, ed. Maʿrūf 2011, vol. 2, 381, n. 1731.

55 For a complete biography of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shārrī, see Liazid Haddu Bakiui and Rodríguez Figueroa 2012.

56 An illuminated Qur'an made to celebrate the birth of al-Shārrī's father Muḥammad in 1143 is today in the Istanbul University Library, A 6755: see Bongianino 2022, 300, 306–307.

endowed for the people of knowledge in the Maghrib'.[57] This institution was part of a *madrasa* founded by al-Shārrī in 1238, which housed all the 'ancient originals and rare works (*al-uṣūl al-ʿatīqa wa-l-muʾallifāt al-gharība*)' that he had amassed over the years.[58] It is most likely that the Vatican al-Ṣūfī was one of the manuscripts eventually endowed by al-Shārrī to his *madrasa*, which continued to function as a prestigious centre of learning even after its founder fell out of favour with the governor of Ceuta and was exiled to Almería in 1244. Seven years later, al-Shārrī died in Málaga, unable to fulfil his desire to see his hometown one last time.

Although we know the name of many young scholars who studied in al-Shārrī's *madrasa* in the second half of the thirteenth century, and even of some of their teachers, the holdings and scope of the *madrasa*'s original library are difficult to reconstruct. Because of its dispersal, we must rely entirely on the few references in the sources, and on the extant manuscripts that mention al-Shārrī as their owner or dedicatee. Besides the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, I have been able to identify seven such manuscripts so far. The first is clearly one of the 'ancient originals' mentioned by al-Anṣārī, a volume of the vast juridical treatise *al-Nawādir wa-l-ziyādāt* ('Rarities and Additions') by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (922–996), copied in Kairouan in 993 and checked against the author's exemplar.[59] More than two centuries later, al-Shārrī came by this book and inscribed his ownership statement on its title page. The second manuscripts is a volume from the famous *ḥadīth* collection known as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, an authoritative copy made in 1139 that al-Shārrī acquired and used for teaching a century later.[60] His ex-libris can be seen both on the title page and below the final colophon, written in his own hand. The third manuscript is a commentary on a work of Islamic law authored by an Egyptian

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57 Al-Anṣārī, 'Une déscription de Ceuta', ed. Lévi-Provençal 1931, 154: '*Hiya awwal khizāna wuqqifat bi-l-Maghrib ʿalā ahl al-ʿilm*'. For a Spanish translation of the whole passage, see Vallvé Bermejo 1962, 413–417.

58 Al-Anṣārī, 'Une déscription de Ceuta', ed. Lévi-Provençal 1931, 153. On al-Shārrī's *madrasa*, see also Martínez Enamorado 2002, 45–47.

59 Fez, Qarawiyyīn Library, 793/2/2 (*Kitāb al-iqrār*): see al-Fāsī 1979–1989, vol. 2, 434. Two other manuscripts in the Qarawiyyīn Library are said to bear al-Shārrī's ex-libris, but I have, so far, been unable to verify this: see al-Fāsī 1960, 22–23.

60 Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, a. IV. 18: see Bongianino 2022, 202, 219. This manuscript is mentioned by the Ceutan traditionist Ibn Rushayd al-Fihrī (d. 1321), who declares that his teacher 'had studied the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* under Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shārrī, and he auditioned it from the ancient exemplar of unequalled prestige, the master copy that belonged to the excellent transmitter Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Khayr, which was written in his father's hand': see Ibn Rushayd, *Ifādat al-naṣīḥ*, ed. Ibn al-Khawja 1973, 109.

contemporary of al-Shārrī, a scholar named Abū al-Ḥasan al-Abyarī (1164–1219).[61] The fourth is a multivolume copy of the renowned treatise on Islamic doctrine, devotion and mysticism, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* ('The Revival of Religious Sciences'), by the Persian philosopher al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).[62] Al-Shārrī left brief ownership statements on the title pages of all these books. That was probably also the case with the fifth manuscript, a polemic about the correct interpretation of selected Arabic poems from pre-Islamic Arabia, but because the codex is acephalous, all that remains is al-Shārrī's reading note at the end of the text, below the colophon.[63] The work was composed in the first half of the eleventh century by a certain Abū Ḥātim from Xàtiva (near Valencia), and its presence in al-Shārrī's library demonstrates his interest in literary disquisitions of the most rarefied kind.

The remaining two manuscripts are different, in that they were produced specifically for al-Shārrī and include his name in their colophons. One is a volume of the monumental Arabic dictionary compiled by the Andalusī lexicographer Ibn Sīda (1007–1066), copied in 1205 'for the library of the jurist Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī, son of Shaykh Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī, may God perpetuate his honour and beneficence'.[64] The other is a manual of style and rhetoric aimed at avoiding solecisms in writing and speech, *al-Madkhal ilā taqwīm al-lisān* ('Introduction to the Emendation of Language') by the Sevillian grammarian Ibn Hishām al-Lakhmī (d. 1181).[65] The manuscript was copied in 1210, but its rounded and elegant Maghribī script is so similar to that of the *Urjūza* in BAV Rossiano 1033 that it can reasonably be attributed to the same penman, perhaps a professional copyist employed by al-Shārrī (Fig. 12).

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61 Rabat, Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc, 338 K (*al-Taḥqīq wa-l-bayān fī sharḥ al-Burhān*). A later ex-libris on the manuscript's title page shows that it soon left Ceuta to enter the library of the emir of Menorca Abū ʿUthmān Saʿīd b. Ḥakam b. ʿUmar b. Ḥakam al-Qurashī (d. 1282).

62 Formerly in the London and Oslo, Schøyen Collection, 5321, various parts were repeatedly auctioned in London, Sotheby's, on 12 October 2005 (*Arts of the Islamic World*, lot 17), 7 October 2015 (*Arts of the Islamic World*, lot 211), and 27 October 2020 (*Arts of the Islamic World & India including Fine Rugs and Carpets*, lot 401). This manuscript was endowed to the library of the Qarawiyyīn Mosque, Fez, by the Marinid sultan Abū ʿInān in 1350.

63 Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Árabe 296. The work is titled *al-Tanbīh ʿalā al-mughālaṭa wa-l-tamwīh wa-iqāmat al-mamāl ʿan ṭarīqat al-iʿtidāl bi-l-Burhān al-kāfī wa-l-bayān al-shāfī*. On the correct identification of this work, see Martínez Antuña 1941, 271–276.

64 Tunis, Bibliothèque nationale de Tunisie, 18492. The work is titled *al-Muḥkam wa-l-muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam*, of which this is the eighth and last volume.

65 Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Árabe 99. The title page of the manuscript gives the name of al-Shārrī as the official transmitter of the work.
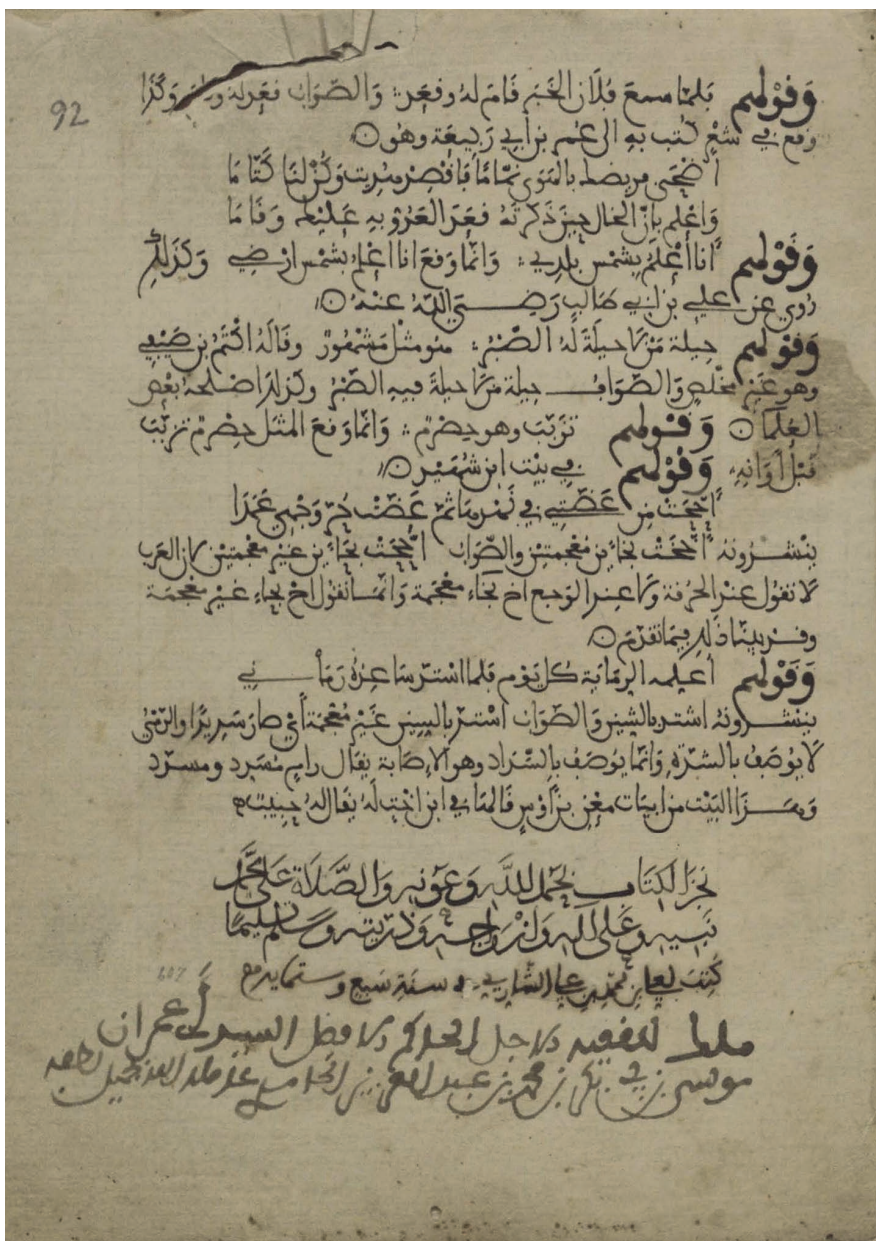
Fig. 12: Ibn Hishām al-Lakhmī, *al-Madkhal ilā taqwīm al-lisān*, final page and colophon with a dedication to al-Shārrī. Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Árabe 99, fol. 92ʳ. Photograph © Patrimonio Nacional.

The extant books from al-Shārrī's library paint the picture of a well-rounded intellectual concerned not only with *ḥadīth* or jurisprudence, but also with spirituality, lexicography, belles-lettres, pre-Islamic poetry and, of course, astronomy. Similar to most of the Andalusī and Maghribī notables of his time, al-Shārrī was proud of his Arab lineage and profoundly engaged with the history of the Arabic language and its literary tradition: for a man of his background and social status, eloquence and general erudition were as necessary as doctrinal competence and legal expertise. Al-Shārrī seems to have pursued in equal measure the two qualities that, according to Thomas Bauer, defined the Muslim scholars of the late medieval period: piety and refinement.[66] These values probably informed the teaching activities that took place in his *madrasa*, just like they dictated what books he acquired and commissioned for his library. As an illustrated and illuminated codex, the Vatican al-Ṣūfī must have been among the library's treasures; out of its surviving manuscripts, it is undoubtedly the most impressive. Thanks to this book, al-Shārrī, his family and his pupils could visualise the constellations as codified in the Graeco-Roman tradition, perhaps comparing them with the engravings of a celestial globe, and verifying them through their personal observations with an astrolabe. But they could also learn in the *Kitāb* how their own ancestors, the Arabs of pre-Islamic times, grouped the stars and what they called them, according to an altogether different tradition. These evocative Bedouin names and their lore would have been studied in depth, with the help of advanced dictionaries such as Ibn Sīda's, and of commentaries on pre-Islamic poetry such as Abū Ḥātim's. Then, they would have been used to make erudite references, improvise verses and captivate listeners during social gatherings of various kinds, held perhaps under a starry sky.

Abbreviations

BAV = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
BnF = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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[66] Bauer 2021, 151–169.

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Jacopo Gnisci

Imaging Sanctity in Early Solomonic Ethiopia: The Portrait of '*Qəddus*' ʾIyasus Moʾa

Abstract: The monastery of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos owns a richly illuminated gospel book that was commissioned by its founding abbot ʾIyasus Moʾa who appears in a prefatory portrait at the very front of the volume. The image is accompanied by a caption which identifies the figure as a 'saint'. Because it uncharacteristic for the Christian Ethiopian tradition to identify a living individual in such a way, scholars have debated whether this portrait was added to the manuscript after ʾIyasus Moʾa's death. The present contribution revisits this question to show that the image and the caption were part of the abbot's commission. The article then goes onto to demonstrate that the miniature deliberately blurred the distinction between ʾIyasus Moʾa and the other saintly figures in the volume and argues that this was done intentionally to legitimise his position as one of the most powerful individuals of his time.

1 Introduction

The illustrated Golden Gospel book of the monastery of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos (EMML 1832) is a most valuable document for the history of the Ethiopian empire in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.[1] In addition to the text of the Four Gospels, which is accompanied by paratextual and commentarial matter, the manuscript contains numerous notes by later hands in blank pages found at its beginning and between the gospels and their prefatory material.[2] These additions deal with some of the material transactions and possessions of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, including land and paraphernalia, and offer evidence of a network of relationships between its members and the outside world. The codex is also decorated with an extensive cycle of miniatures that embellish the Eusebian Appa-

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1 The manuscript was fully photographed in black and white in 1974/1975 by the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) project, and it was subsequently described in Getatchew Haile 1981, 293–301. For a digital copy of the microfilm, see <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/view/203663> (accessed on 1 July 2024).
2 Taddesse Tamrat 1970; Getatchew Haile 1981, 294–300; Kropp 1998.

ratus, illustrate episodes from the Old and New Testaments, such as the Entry into Jerusalem, and portray holy men and women, including the evangelists and martyrs.[3]

Among the additions to EMML 1832 is a note on fol. 24ᵛ, located between a prefatory cycle of illuminations and the *Synopsis of Classes* (*Gaṣṣāwe śərʿāt*, CAe 1548), that provides information about the circumstances and time of its making:[4]

> In thanksgiving to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I, the sinner and wrong-doer monk ʾIyasus Moʾa, have had this Gospel written for ʾƎṣṭifānos of Ḥayq in the year of mercy 465 (= 1280/81 CE). And I, ʾIyasus Moʾa have presented this Gospel to ʾƎṣṭifānos of Ḥayq, so that God may save me with his prayer, may remit my sins in his great mercy, and may (this Gospel) intercede with its God for me. I donated this Gospel (on condition) that it is not taken from this place or made to cross the lake and be taken elsewhere as a deposit, be it by any *ʿaqqābe saʿāt*, or by the *qasa gabaz* or by the archdeacon, or by the children of place (i.e. the monks), nor by one from the outside or from within. May anyone who takes this Gospel by force or under duress be excommunicated in heaven and on earth, forever. Amen.[5]

The text provides an *ante quem* date of 1280/1281 for the completion of the manuscript and tells us that it was commissioned by ʾIyasus Moʾa – the founding abbot of the monastery of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎṣṭifānos. It moreover tells us that the gospel book was destined for the monastery where it is still kept and where, in all likelihood, it was also produced. Thus, if the note is accepted as reliable – and, so far, most scholars have accepted its authenticity – it allows us to determine when, where, for whom, and possibly by whom the manuscript was made. Precious few manuscripts from the Early Solomonic Period (1270–1527) provide us with this kind of information, so EMML 1832 is a particularly important witness for the history of book illumination in the Ethiopian empire. The first miniature of EMML 1832, on fol. 5ᵛ, shows the patron of the manuscript, ʾIyasus Moʾa, standing beneath an arch surrounded by birds and between drawn curtains (Fig. 1).[6] He holds a cross in one hand and a manuscript in the other. The miniature is accompanied by a caption which reads 'Image of *Qəddus* (Saint) ʾIyasus Moʾa' and informs viewers

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3 The miniatures are listed in Getatchew Haile 1981, 300–301; and Heldman 1993, 176.

4 On the *Synopsis of Classes*, see Zuurmond 1989, vol. 1, 8–9.

5 Translation by Massimo Villa. Sections of this note had been edited and translated in Sergew Hable Selassie 1992, 245–246.

6 On the history of this abbot, see Taddesse Tamrat 1970, 88–91; Taddesse Tamrat 1972, 158–167, 177–178; Marrassini 1986; Derat 2003, 88–96. His hagiography has been edited and translated by Kur (ed. and tr.) 1965; it may have been composed in the fifteenth century, see Kaplan 1986; Derat 2003, 55; Brita 2020, 274–275.

that the figure they are beholding is comparable to other in the manuscript.[7] Except for a few details, such as his protruding ears and lack of halo, he cannot be distinguished from the other saintly figures in the manuscripts. His movements are constrained, his expression impassioned, and his vestments are flat so as to obscure his gendered features.[8] This lack of likeness was deliberate to strengthen association with the other holy bodies represented in this codex: in early Solomonic Ethiopia, as in other Christian contexts, 'in order to be lifelike, a portrait had only to be accurately defined in relation to the portraits of other saints'.[9]

The miniatures in the gospel book of ʾIyasus Moʾa are the earliest firmly dated examples of book illumination from the Early Solomonic Period, while his portrait offers the earliest surviving representation of a living individual in an Ethiopic manuscript. Despite its importance for the history of early Solomonic book illumination, EMML 1832 has not been the subject of a monograph, though its miniatures have been recurringly discussed by art historians since the 1980s.[10] As for the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa, while frequently mentioned in passing, it has been the subject of only one in-depth article by Claire Bosc-Tiessé[11] In this paper, I focus on hitherto overlooked features of ʾIyasus Moʾa's portrait to explore hitherto unconsidered issues of patronage and self-representation that throw light on broader questions about monastic leadership, canonisation, the use of the visual, church–state relationships, and the socio-religious role and significance of illuminated gospel books.

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7 While seldom used for living individuals, the term *qəddus* may have been used on occasion to refer to the patriarch of the Church. I am not aware of any studies of this topic, but I am grateful to Augustine Dickinson for drawing my attention to this possibility.

8 On holy men in Ethiopian art, see especially Tribe 2009. For a discussion on the representation of holy figures in other Christian traditions, see Maguire 2000; Miller 2009; Bolman 2016, 17–26; Tomeković 2011; for a wider discussion about body studies, see the essays collected in Turner 2012.

9 Maguire 2000, 5. I use the term 'portrait' in this context, but I do not wish to draw a rigid boundary between this image and the iconic images of saints that are found in the same manuscript. For some considerations of this question beyond the context of Ethiopian studies, see Marsengill 2013, 4; Belting 1994, 131. On the use of the term 'icon' in the context of Ethiopian studies, see Heldman 1994, 21.

10 Early art historical discussions include Heldman 1983; Chojnacki 1983, 33–35, 53–55, 74–77; Balicka-Witakowska 1992. More recent literature is discussed below.

11 Bosc-Tiessé 2010.
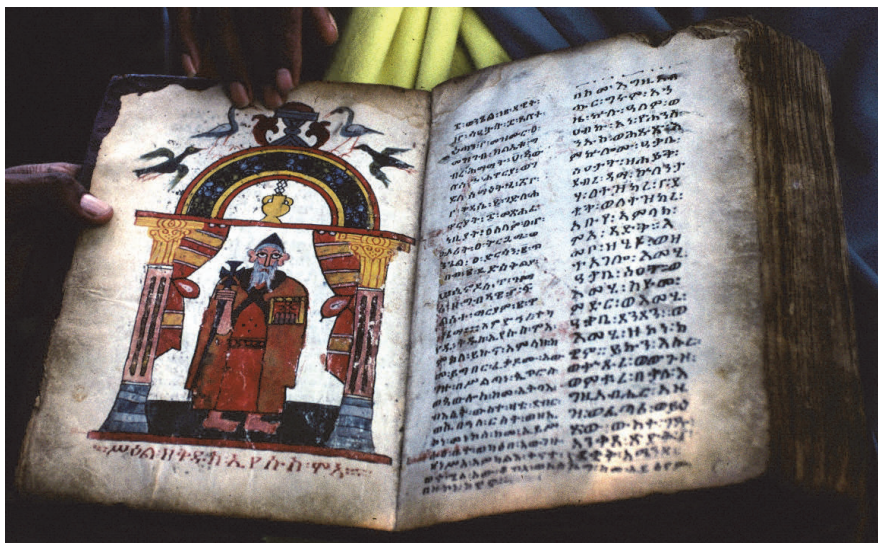
Fig. 1: Gospel book, portrait of the abbot ʾIyasus Moʾa and later notes, Ḥayq, Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, Four Gospels of Iyäsus Moʾa (EMML 1832), fols 5ᵛ–6ʳ, 27.5 x 30 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the Documents of Early England Data Set (DEEDS) project.

2 The date of the miniature

Most authors discussing ʾIyasus Moʾa's portrait have taken for granted that it is coeval with the other miniatures of the manuscript and that it was painted before the abbot donated the codex to Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos. For example, in his study of donor portraits, Stanislaw Chojnacki says that it was 'painted during his lifetime'.[12] Similarly, for Marilyn E. Heldman, the note on fol. 24ᵛ and the portrait 'leave no question concerning the age of the manuscript or the identity of its patron'.[13] Ewa Balicka-Witakowska is more cautious about the manuscript's illumination, noting that the inscription on fol. 24ᵛ may just refer to its texts and that a second note on fol. 338ᵛ records that Emperor Yāgbā Ṣəyon (r. 1285–1294) decorated EMML 1832 with gold and silver in 1293.[14] In her view, this note could be taken either as an

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12 My translation from the French, see Chojnacki 1999, 623.

13 Heldman 1993, 176.

14 Getatchew Haile 1981, 299; Balicka-Witakowska 1997, 123. The last digit of the date appears to have been rewritten at an undetermined point in time, but this does not prejudicated the attribu-

indication that the manuscript was illustrated at this later date or as evidence that the emperor had a treasure binding added to its covers. More recently, Jacques Mercier has also touched on the matter. He argues that the palaeography of the caption beneath the images is similar to that of the other figures, that the images and text are contemporary, and that the abbot 'was thus recognized as a saint during his lifetime, both by his community and himself'.[15]

To date, Bosc-Tiessé is the only scholar who has investigated the questions of the date of the illuminations of EMML 1832 and the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa in considerable detail and with methodological rigour. Bosc-Tiessé is more critical in her approach to the document on fol. 24ᵛ as a source for dating the miniatures in the manuscript, rightly noting that the manuscript has not been the object of a detailed codicological study and that the quires with the miniatures may have been added at a later stage.[16] Moreover, in view of the absence of information on the matter in this text, she points out, like Balicka-Witakowska, that the note on fol. 339ᵛ could be taken as an indication that Emperor Yāgbā Ṣəyon sponsored the illustration of the Gospel.[17] Ultimately, however, she thinks it unlikely that the manuscript could have been produced without the illuminated Eusebian Apparatus that typically decorates early Solomonic gospel books. Thus, she concludes that

> it is plausible that the image of ʾIyasus Moʾa – and its legend – were added in 1293/1294 by order of Yāgbā Ṣəyon who strove to have ʾIyasus Moʾa recognised as a saint, not as a martyr, but – as the image shows – because of his qualities as a priest monk.[18]

As I see it, the main problem with Bosc-Tiessé's otherwise convincing line of thought is that it rests on the opening premise that it would be 'inconceivable that ʾIyasus Moʾa would call himself a saint' or that those around him would address him in such a way during his lifetime.[19] In view of the belief that the portrait and its caption could have only been executed after the death of that ʾIyasus Moʾa in 1293, Bosc-Tiessé argues that they are not coeval with the production of the Gospel and its other miniatures. Several arguments go against this hypothesis. First, as Bosc-Tiessé herself recognises, the caption of the portrait appears to have been

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tion of the note to the reign of this sovereign. I am grateful to Jonas Karlsson for drawing my attention to this detail.

15 Mercier 2021, 82.

16 Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 220.

17 Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 205.

18 My translation from French, Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 222.

19 Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 199.

written by the same hand who penned down the gospel texts and the captions of the other miniatures.[20] Secondly, the portrait is executed in the same style and with the same colours used for the other illuminations. Moreover, while this can only be confirmed by a codicological analysis of the artefact, from the available images the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa seems to have been painted on the first page of the second gathering of the manuscript, a ternion (fols 5r–10v), and to have been executed on a bifolio that is decorated with Canons V (fol. 10r), VI and VII (fol. 10v).[21] It does not, in other words, appear to be an inserted folio, though it could well have been painted by the same artist/scribe on the blank pages preceding the Eusebian Apparatus at a later stage.

Nevertheless, the latter possibility seems to me unlikely, given the interval of over ten years between the donation of the gospel book to Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos in 1280/1281 and the death of ʾIyasus Moʾa. Even if the same artist/scribe had been alive, I find it improbable that he would have been able to execute a miniature with the same tones used for the earlier paintings, or that he or his patrons would have felt compelled to achieve such visual coherence. The addition of such an extensive cycle of illuminations to a manuscript long after its donation also seems doubtful. All of this suggests that the simplest explanation is also the most likely – namely that all the miniatures were executed at the same time and when the manuscript was commissioned by ʾIyasus Moʾa around 1280/1281. Other details point in this direction. Notably, the fact that the abbot does not have a halo, unlike most other holy figures in the illuminations, and, as I have argued elsewhere, that he is the only figure with an iron rather than a gold cross.[22]

If the above conclusion is correct, it follows that ʾIyasus Moʾa had some say in the creation of his portrait – though the exact relationship between him and the painter eludes verifiability – and that EMML 1832 must have had a number of blank pages at its beginning at the time of its donation. Empty pages, subsequently filled with notes, were also left throughout the manuscript between the prefatory

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20 Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 205.

21 This observation is based on the black and white microfilm of the manuscript and on available photographs of it.

22 Chojnacki 1999, 624; Gnisci 2022, 162 on the absence of a halo. On the use of black to represent iron, see Chojnacki 2006, 118; and Gnisci 2022, 161–163, where I argue that yellow was used in this period and in EMML 1832 as a way to represent gold; cf. the yellow cross held by an angel in the scenes of the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace (fol. 17r) and the Annunciation (fol. 17v) in this manuscript, but also with the chalice held by Stephen the Protomartyr (fol. 15v), with the jewelled cross of the Crucifixion (fol. 22v), and with the covers of the gospel books held by Christ (fol. 23r) and three out of the four evangelists (fols 35v, 184v, 269v).

matter, the evangelist portraits, and the texts of the Gospels.[23] We do not know for sure whether these pages were intentionally included to allow room for additions to the manuscript and whether the first quire of the manuscript, a binion (fols 1ʳ–4ᵛ), was added at a later stage. Nevertheless, the current evidence suggests that the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa was conceived as the first page with any content and as the first image of the codex.[24] This is a remarkable feature that has not yet drawn sufficient attention. Equally significant is the fact that ʾIyasus Moʾa is described as a 'saint', since the term was not systematically deployed to describe the other holy figures represented in this manuscript – it is not used, for example, for the Apostles Paul (fol. 13ᵛ) and Timothy (fol. 14ʳ). In the miniatures the title is only associated to the martyr Cyricus, Saint Mary, and the evangelists. Finally, it is worth noting that the arch under which ʾIyasus Moʾa stands is clearly meant to evoke those above the Canon Tables and evangelist portraits. All these aspects deserve further comment.

3 Legitimising ʾIyasus Moʾa: The visual cues

The inclusion of a portrait before the Eusebian Apparatus is not without some precedents in Eastern Christian art. In the Syriac *Rabbula Gospels* three images precede the *Epistle to Carpianus*: the Election of Matthias, the Virgin and Child, and Eusebius with Ammonius (fols 1ʳ–2ʳ).[25] All three scenes in this frontispiece are set under architectural canopies which present features, such as the plants and

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23 While it was not uncommon to leave the page behind the evangelist portraits empty in Ethiopic gospel books, some of the solutions in EMML 1832 stand out for their lavishness: the opening between the ending of the chapters of Matthew and Luke and their subsequent portrait were originally blank (fols 34ᵛ–35ʳ; 183ʳ–184ᵛ); more striking still is the fact that several folios before (fols 23ᵛ–24ʳ – with at least one leaf missing) and after (fols 25ʳ–29ᵛ) the donation note by ʾIyasus Moʾa on fol. 24ᵛ were left empty, were these pages not proven to be later additions by a codicological analysis of the manuscript.

24 If the first quire was presented in 1280/1281, it would have been empty as the notes are all associated with later abbots. Since the note on fol. 5ʳ is missing its beginning, some empty pages at the beginning of the manuscript must have been lost.

25 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1.56. On this extensively discussed manuscript, and its miniatures, key studies include Leroy 1954; Leroy 1964, 139–197; Cecchelli, Furlani and Salmi 1959; Bernabò (ed.) 2008; Pacha Miran 2020. The manuscript's illustrations have been frequently viewed in comparative terms with the Ethiopian tradition, starting with Monneret de Villard 1939; and including Lepage 1987, 177, 186; and, more recently, McKenzie and Watson 2016, 51; Gnisci 2020a, 22.

birds, that recall Canon Table decoration and the evangelist portraits found on their margins.[26] The Armenian Etchmiadzin gospel book has a similar set of images, showing Christ and the evangelists standing under a sequence of arches that recall those found in Canon Tables (fols 6ʳ–7ʳ) – though in this example the portraits are placed after the Eusebian Apparatus.[27] As for the Ethiopic tradition, the late antique gospel book of Garimā III, according to the reconstruction by Judith S. McKenzie and Francis Watson, originally featured an opening with Eusebius on one page and Carpianus on the other.[28] In this example Eusebius is placed in a laurel frame, rather than under an arch, but he does hold a codex like ʾIyasus Moʾa and he is positioned before the *Epistle to Carpianus*. The pose of three of the evangelists in this manuscript also bears comparison with that of the abbot of Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos.

26 On the evangelist portraits in the Rabbula manuscript, see Friend 1929, 4–5; McKenzie and Watson 2016, 70, 75–76. In the Syriac Four Gospel book of Diyarbakır, a portrait of Christ prefaces the Canon Tables, see Bernabò and Kessel 2016. On the circulation of visual prefaces to the Eusebian Apparatus, see also Zamparo 2018.

27 On this manuscript, see Strzygowski 1891; Macler 1920; Der Nersessian 1933; and Mathews 1982. This manuscript has also been frequently compared with Ethiopic works, again, starting with the seminal study by Monneret de Villard 1939. Other comparable late antique and medieval examples showing the evangelist under arches can be seen in various contexts, including Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna; the throne of Maximian; Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library, Garrett 6; Rossano, Museo Diocesano e del Codex, Codex purpureus Rossanensis; Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 540, all reproduced and discussed in Friend 1927, figs 17–20, 26, 31–40, 144–147, 173–176. Other comparable examples include the portraits in the Gundohinus Gospels, Autun, Bibliothèque municipale, 3, which are discussed in Nees 1987, 83–130, pls 32–35, alongside additional relevant versions of the motif; a Coptic gospel book in the Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. copt. 8, discussed in Leroy 1974, 154–155, pl. 38; and the Georgian gospel manuscript kept at Mt Sinai, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Georg. 38, discussed in Weitzmann 1973, 11–12, figs 8–9. For the Ethiopian tradition, research on the evangelist portraits in Ethiopic gospel books has been pioneered by Monneret de Villard 1939; other discussions include Lepage 1987, 162–163; and Gnisci 2018, 370–371, with further bibliography.

28 McKenzie and Watson 2016, 51, figs 55–56.

Fig. 2: Gospel book, Canon Tables X^1 and X^2, ʿĀdwā, ʾƎndā ʾAbbā Garimā, Garimā III, fol. 4^v, 33.2 × 25.4 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the DEEDS project.

Fig. 3: Gospel book, Canon I, ʿĀdwā, ʾƎndā ʾAbbā Garimā, Garimā I, fol. 2ᵛ, 35.3 × 26.4 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the DEEDS project.

The illuminator of EMML 1832 must have drawn on precedents like these when he painted the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa. The pattern that fills the arch above him evokes those seen in the Canon Tables and frames of the manuscript Garimā III (Fig. 2), while the birds and fruit-filled vase bring to mind late antique motifs and especially the Canon Tables of Garimā I (Fig. 3).[29] Some authors have viewed these explicit references to Aksumite models in early Solomonic images as an index of artistic conservatism or, worse, as evidence of an incapacity to develop new and independent visual ideas.[30] I have argued elsewhere that such approaches are open to criticism when they do not actively interrogate the social, religious, and political reasons behind the visual approaches of early Solomonic artists and patrons.[31]

In the case of ʾIyasus Moʾa's portrait, I would argue that the miniature's Aksumite tone lends authority to his image by including visual citations taken from earlier illuminated gospel books. The presence of the Eusebian Apparatus and of a frontispiece of full-page miniatures showing the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus in most illuminated Ethiopic gospel books from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries epitomise broader antiquarian interests.[32] Comparable attitudes can be detected in the inclusion of Aksumite regalia in later illuminated psalters.[33]

Arguably, the painter and patron of EMML 1832 – the exact roles of the two individuals in the creation of the pictorial scheme remains to be analysed – felt compelled to include references drawn from earlier illustrated Ethiopic manuscripts because of the value they attached to the codices in which they were found. After all, even if textual and visual transmission were not necessarily bound by the same principles, Christian Ethiopian illuminators operated within a culture that valued the reproduction of sacred texts, such as the Four Gospels, and attached particular significance to individual manuscripts as repositories of institutional records and objects for ritual or daily use that contributed to a sense of continuity and communion be-

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29 On the motifs in the Canon Tables of these two manuscripts, see Leroy 1962; Lepage and Mercier 2012; McKenzie and Watson 2016, 83–116; and Gnisci 2020b, with additional bibliography. For a more general discussion of the Canon Tables, see Nordenfalk 1938 and Crawford 2019.

30 Negative views of early Solomonic book illumination are found, for example, in Conti Rossini 1927 and Monneret de Villard 1943, 42. The question is more nuanced for the approaches deployed, e.g. in Lepage 1987, which still deserve greater scrutiny.

31 Gnisci 2020a. I am not aware of in-depth discussions about the possible roles of multiple actors in the articulation of the visual in manuscripts from the Early Solomonic Period, but there have been studies focusing on royal patronage and artistic personalities for Ethiopian icons, most notably Heldman 1994. For a discussion on the significance of patronage in Ethiopian society, see Bausi 2013.

32 There have been extensive discussions focusing on this group of images, frequently referred to as the 'short cycle', or on individual scenes from it, see in particular Monneret de Villard 1939; Heldman 1979; Heldman and Devens 2009; Lepage 1987; Lepage 1988; Lepage 2002; Lepage and Mercier 2012, 111–115; Balicka-Witakowska 1997; Fiaccadori 2003; Gnisci 2015a; Mercier 2021, 84–92, 159.

33 Juel-Jensen 1989; Heldman and Devens 2009, 81, n. 18; Gnisci 2020a.

tween the biblical church and the communities to which they belonged.[34] Biblical citations were also integral in Christian Ethiopian literature and are a manifestation of a culture that valued engagement with as well as the re-enactment of tradition.[35] The use of Aksumite motifs may have also been seen as a visual quotation of sorts.

Fig. 4: Gospel book, Matthew the Evangelist, Ḥayq, Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, Four Gospels of Iyäsus Moʾa (EMML 1832), fol. 35ᵛ, 27.5 × 17.5 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the DEEDS project.

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34 For general discussions about scribal practices in Ethiopia, see Lusini 2004; Bausi 2008; Bausi 2014; Bausi et al. 2015; Bosc-Tiessé 2014; on the use of manuscripts as repositories of land grants and historical information, including colophons, see, respectively, Crummey 2000; Bausi 2016. On the impact of these cultural and material practices on the visual realm, see Gnisci 2017; Gnisci 2020.
35 For a discussion about the use of biblical parallels in the canonisation of Ethiopian men, see Kaplan 1984.

In this regard, the portrait epitomises the desire to encourage meaningful interconnection between biblical times and the present: ʾIyasus Moʾa is associated with the evangelists by virtue of matching pose and setting. The arch surmounting the abbot rests on a pair of fluted columns with composite capitals that are especially similar to the ones that flank Matthew the Evangelist (Fig. 4, fol. 35ᵛ).[36] This suggests that the caption which invites the viewer to identify ʾIyasus Moʾa as a 'saint' reiterates a point that is just as clearly expressed in visual terms.

Moreover, by turning our attention to the attire of ʾIyasus Moʾa we discover that his portrait operates in a second and more subtle manner. The abbot dons several attributes that identify him as a monk, including the skullcap, staff-cross and belt.[37] His mantle and tunic are red. As Mercier has recently observed, this latter detail invites comparison with the portraits of St Peter (Fig. 5, fol. 14ᵛ) and St Mark (Fig. 6, fol. 132ᵛ) from the same manuscript, since both are shown with a hooded red over-vestment. Mercier concludes that 'the red of ʾIyasus Moʾa's garments seems to make him their equal in Ethiopia and, at the very least, constitutes the earliest evidence of the eminence of his status'.[38] In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that, according to local traditions, ʾIyasus Moʾa secured a favourable deal with the soon-to-be founder of the Solomonic dynasty, Yəkunno ʾAmlāk. In return for his support, Yəkunno ʾAmlāk granted land and privileges to Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos.[39] These included elevating its future abbots to the position of *ʿaqqābe saʿāt* ('keeper of the hours'), which has been described as 'the most important ecclesiastical official in court'.[40]

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36 The motif of the fluted columns is discussed in Mercier 2021, 82.

37 On the ecclesiastical vestments of the Ethiopian Church, see Hammerschmidt 1970; discussions about their representation in images, and especially the monastic garb of ʾIyasus Moʾa, are available in Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 212; Chojnacki 1999, 623; Gnisci 2020c; Mercier 2021, 82.

38 Mercier 2021, 82.

39 An English translation of the account of the pact between the two men according to the saint's posthumous biography is available in Kur (ed. and tr.) 1965, 19–28. This pact has been discussed elsewhere, including Taddesse Tamrat 1972, 67; Kropp 1998, 306, 318; Derat 2003, 88–110; Nabert 2012, 56. The tradition is also recorded in a slightly later (fourteenth century?) note found in the Gospel of ʾIyasus Moʾa aptly placed on the page opposite to his portrait (fol. 6ʳ), where it follows a list of manuscripts in the property of the monastery. Such tradition is not recorded instead in the saint's homely, discussed in Marrassini 1986, 177. The dating of these works remains an object of considerable scholarly debate, as discussed in Nosnitsin 2005, esp. 224–225.

40 Taddesse Tamrat 1972, 272. See also Kaplan 2003.

Fig. 5: Gospel book, Saint Peter, Ḥayq, Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, Four Gospels of Iyäsus Moʾa (EMML 1832), fol. 14ᵛ, 27.5 × 17.5 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the DEEDS project.

The juxtaposition of ʾIyasus Moʾa with St Peter and St Mark teases out connections between Ethiopia and Egypt, since the latter two figures can be said to embody the Church of Alexandria. The link is most evident with Mark, as the founder of the Alexandrian see. Heldman has convincingly shown that St Mark's miniature is different from those of the other three evangelist in the Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos Gospels. She observes that 'only St Mark wears a pointed cap similar to the *qob* or monastic headpiece worn by ʾIyasus Moʾa', an attribute that singles him out 'as a monastic scholar, the spiritual father of the scholars of the Egyptian Church, a figure with

whom ʾIyasus Moʾa and his successor abbots at Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos could identify'.[41] In her view, both the miniature of Mark the Evangelist before his Gospel and that of the relic head of this evangelist (Fig. 7, fol. 13ᵛ) from the same manuscript, are indicative of ʾIyasus Moʾa's desire to underscore and promote his personal ties with, as well as the Ethiopian Church's affiliation to, the Egyptian Church.[42]

Fig. 6: Gospel book, Mark the Evangelist, Ḥayq, Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, Four Gospels of Iyäsus Moʾa (EMML 1832), fol. 132ᵛ, 27.5 × 17.5 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the DEEDS project.

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41 Heldman 1983, 568.

42 On the ties between the Churches of Egypt and Ethiopia, see Munro-Hay 1997. On the impact of these connections on early Solomonic art, with reference also to some of the miniatures in the Gospel of ʾIyasus Moʾa, see Heldman 2007; on their impact on the literary culture, see Bausi 2020, with an extensive bibliography on the subject.

Fig. 7: Gospel book, head of Mark the Evangelist, Ḥayq, Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos, Four Gospels of Iyäsus Moʾa (EMML 1832), fol. 13ᵛ, 27.5 × 17.5 cm. © Michael Gervers, courtesy of the DEEDS project.

The connection of St Peter with Egypt is less readily apparent. Because he holds the Keys of Heaven, it is clear that he is the leader of the Apostles. However, the caption blurs his identity by describing him as 'Peter the archbishop, last of the martyrs'. Therefore, according to this caption, the figure standing before us is actually Pope Peter I of Alexandria (d. 311) who was martyred during the Great Persecution. Most likely, the author of this image consciously conflated the two

figures to strengthen the manuscript's figural connections with Egypt – a conclusion first drawn by Bosc-Tiessé.[43] Based on these observations, we may reasonably conclude that the portrait of ʼIyasus Moʼa invites observers to associate him with some of the most prominent figures of Egyptian Christianity, a strategy that occurs frequently also in Ethiopic hagiographic writing of the subsequent centuries, but also in the representation of Ethiopian saints.[44] As Antonella Brita puts it, such strategies were widespread and represented 'an anachronistic attempt to create an ideological connection with Egyptian monasticism in order to validate the authority of Ethiopian-Eritrean monasticism as its direct descendant'.[45]

To summarise my arguments, I set out to show that the portrait of ʼIyasus Moʼa is enriched by an array of visual references that confer legitimacy to its subject. The abbot's pose is almost identical to that of the evangelists Matthew, Luke, and John, as well as the Apostles Paul and Timothy, so as to assert transtemporal continuity with the apostolic past. The position of the image before the Eusebian Apparatus and its architectural frame were drawn from an earlier illustrated gospel book – possibly a venerated copy dating to Late Antiquity – in order to enhance its authoritativeness and present its subject as participant to a tradition dating back to the Aksumite Period. Finally, the abbot's attributes single him out as a prominent monastic figure and his red vestments elicit associations with the patriarchs of Alexandria that likely reflect his new-found prominence as a close ally of the emperor, his monastery's present connections with Egypt as well as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's historical, institutional, and theological ties with the Coptic Orthodox Church.

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43 Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 210.

44 Brita and Gnisci 2019.

45 Brita 2020, 281. Alexandrian traditions concerning Mark the Evangelist and Peter I of Alexandria circulated already in Ethiopia during the Christian Aksumite Period, as attested by an early Ethiopic manuscripts that preserves, among other texts, a copy of the *Historia Episcopatus Alexandriae* edited in Bausi and Camplani 2016. As Camplani 2015, 98, notes, the text aims, among other things, to 'support the prestige of Alexandria as an eminently Christian city, whose episcopal see is of apostolic origin (thanks to the mediation of Mark the Evangelist)' and 'has suffered martyrdom and persecution through its most illustrious representatives (Peter I and Athanasius)'. It remains to be established whether the illustrations of Mark and Peter in EMML 1832 were inspired by such early Ethiopic sources.

4 The perception of gospel books at Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos

Crucially, all these visual cues also enhance the status of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos as an institution founded and led by such an eminent figure as that which appears before us in the portrait. On this premise, we might further argue that the book held by ʾIyasus Moʾa is a mise-en-abîme of his gift which, in turn, stands in metonymic relationship with the monastic community for which and by whom it was created.[46] Central to my argument is the notion that Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos was an institution where manuscripts such as EMML 1832 were produced, scribed and painted – a view held by all scholars who have dealt with its collection – and the idea that the gospel book shared a symbiotic relationship with its users.[47]

In fact, while ʾIyasus Moʾa may have provided the input and funds for its creation, as a material artefact, the codex would have been the result of the coordinated labour of multiple individuals: some monks would have purchased the skins, while others would have prepared them for writing. The inks and colours may have been produced by one or more monks, but their sourcing was likely a collective endeavour, especially if some pigments were imported from other regions. Likewise, the ruling, binding, painting, and scribing had to be carried out by one or more individuals. In turn, the daily needs of all these individuals would have been supported by communal work of other monks.[48]

As a text-carrier of the Four Gospels, the manuscript commissioned by ʾIyasus Moʾa bears all those layers of significance that Christians derive from the narratives about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As an object that is a 'representation of the Word and the absent person of Christ', as Beatrice E. Kitzinger puts it for the medieval Latin tradition, it functioned as an icon.[49] Lastly, as a unique material artefact, the codex effectively represents the community of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos and its activities: the collective labour that went into its production reflects the monastery's organisation and social structure; the notes it con-

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46 On the significance of this detail, see also Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 212.

47 On the existence of a 'scriptorium' at this monastery, see Bausi 2006, 538; Bausi 2008, 518; Derat 2012, 69; Bosc-Tiessé 2014, 10–11. On the monastery's collection of manuscripts, see Sergew Hable Selassie 1992 and Hirsch 2004.

48 Ethiopian sources are frequently silent about the material activities involved in the production of manuscripts, but there is evidence suggesting that they were typically the result of 'teamwork' effort, as presented in Bausi 2014, 42–43.

49 Kitzinger 2019, 119. For discussions about the iconicity of manuscripts, beyond the context of Ethiopia, see, as examples, Lowden 1990; Lowden 2007; Parmenter 2006.

tains about its lands and possession record the monastery's wealth, property, and interactions and mention some of its most prominent representatives; and, lastly, because of its educative and liturgical uses, it both shaped and participated in the religious, daily, and spiritual life of the monastery.

If, as I believe, the book held by ʾIyasus Moʾa was meant to be read as a representation of the manuscript within which it is situated, which he presents as much to the viewers as to the holy figures that decorate the manuscript, then I would suggest that the monks of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos who gazed at the volume shortly after it was commissioned would reflexively view it as an instantiation of the community to which they belonged and for which they worked under the spiritual leadership of the abbot. Additionally, they would have also associated it with their sacramental activities, a connection that is further affirmed by the fact that the abbot stands under an arch, a motif which symbolises the sanctuary in the context of early Solomonic painting, and by the existence of a plethora of liturgical references in several of the other illuminations in the manuscript.[50]

The position of the portrait, at the very front of the codex, also calls for interpretation and, in my view, is open to two opposite readings. The first is that the image conveys a message of power and hierarchical authority by virtue of its preliminary position and that ʾIyasus Moʾa was so self-assured and confident about his new-found prominence that he did not object to having his likeness shown before that of the Apostles, the Virgin Mary and even Jesus. Such a display of hubris is all the more remarkable when we consider that in most subsequent examples of portraiture from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the donor is shown in attitudes of reverence towards the divine.[51] The second is that ʾIyasus Moʾa stands at the threshold between the earthly world outside the book and the sacred world within, positioned at a respectful distance from the most holy part of the manuscript and temporally removed and physically set apart from the sacred history represented within. And, yet, he is closer to that which is holy than the viewer and acts as a mediator between them

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50 Bosc-Tiessé 2010, 212–213, who mistakenly describes the arch above ʾIyasus Moʾa as a 'tempietto', puts forward the noteworthy argument that his cross is a large processional cross used in a liturgical setting rather than a staff cross. I am not convinced by this possibility, even if elsewhere, I have suggested that a number of miniatures from the Early Solomonic Period, including some found in the Gospels of ʾIyasus Moʾa, contain liturgical allusions, see Gnisci 2015a; 2015b; 2015c.

51 See the examples discussed in Chojnacki 1999; I discuss this point more extensively in Gnisci 2023, 130–131. One rare exception to this observation is a miniature discussed in Bausi 1994 [1996], 57–62, which shows an early-fifteenth-century prince surrounded by his retinue and represented as a saint on horseback except for the missing halo.

because of his liminality.[52] We may never be able to fully determine whether the placement of his image was informed by poised swagger or deference towards the sacred, but it may well have been a bit of both in some measure.

5 The image of ʾIyasus Moʾa beyond the confines of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos

So far, my analysis has focused principally on the patronage of ʾIyasus Moʾa, the strategies employed by the painter of his gospel book to encourage visual rumination, and the possible reception of his portrait within the confines of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos. This approach is informed by the belief that close-up viewing of the manuscript was always intended for a restricted audience within the monastery. However, it is also beneficial to widen the scope of this discussion and situate the portrait within the broader context of early Solomonic painting. My main argument in what follows is that although this image draws on local and coeval ideas about imaging holiness, it is also quite unique in several significant respects. In pursuing this line of inquiry, my goal is to go beyond simplistic readings of early Solomonic art that posit an undifferentiated system of attitudes towards the visual.

By its very existence, the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa affirms the possibility of comparing a living individual to a saint visually as well as in writing. This is not entirely unparalleled: authors like Steven Kaplan and Antonella Brita have shown in their research on hagiographic material from the Early Solomonic Period that it was not uncommon to find local saints compared or equated to angels and figures of the Old and New Testaments.[53] However, hagiographies were generally composed *after* the death of their protagonist and, among the dozens of illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts that survive from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, none bear a portrait like that of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos Gospels. The only comparable image is found in another, slightly younger, gospel book from Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos. The manuscript was commissioned by *ʿAqqābe saʿāt* Krǝstos Täsfanä, a successor of ʾIyasus Moʾa, and shows him in the latter's company alongside two other deceased monks from Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos (Fig. 8, fol. 16ᵛ).[54] This image speaks to the endur-

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52 For a discussion of the notion of liminality in medieval art history, see De Blaauw and Doležalová 2019.

53 Kaplan 1984; Kaplan 1985; Brita 2015; Brita 2020.

54 Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library Agency, 28. On this miniature and the manuscript, see Pāwlos Ṣādwā 1952 and Balicka-Witakowska 1997, 124–125, who describe the manuscript's visual features and provide additional references.

ing significance of the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa within the confines of his monastery, but it is of limited value for thinking about a wider context.

Fig. 8: Gospel book, abbots of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƏsṭifānos, Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library Agency, 28, fol. 8ᵛ, 29.5 × 20.5 cm. © Stanislaw Chojnacki, courtesy of the Beta maṣāḥǝft project.

In my view, the lack of comparable miniatures in a numerically significant, though admittedly slightly posterior, corpus of manuscripts suggests that the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa was somewhat unprecedented and did not inspire widespread imitation. The lack of other images of the abbot beyond the context of his monastery also suggests that his cult did not gather momentum across the Ethiopian empire after his death.[55] In this regard, I believe that the closest visual parallel to our miniature is a near-coeval wall painting showing Yəkunno ʾAmlāk between two ecclesiastical attendants in the church of Gannata Māryām.[56] I have recently discussed this image in considerable detail in another paper where I observe that, besides the emperor, the only other figure who is shown flanked by attendants and seated in full-frontal view is Jesus Christ himself. This consideration, and the lack of comparable examples of imperial portraiture in the following century, led me to conclude that the Christomimetic features of his portrait must have been 'scandalous' for those contemporary viewers that did not have strong ties with his court. I conclude by arguing that his imperial portrait was

> created to support his [the emperor's] devotional and political aspirations. [...] At least in the intention of its makers and sponsor, the image would sustain the emperor's legitimizing agenda and bolster the standing of the monastic community which operated within the church. [...] While the church's pictorial scheme is overall ingenious and multifunctional, the decision to show the emperor and some of his family members not as supplicants, but as powerful political figures with a right to be visually equated to Christ and the Virgin Mary may have ultimately backfired. This ambitious iconographic solution may have been adopted because Yəkunno ʾAmlāk needed to shore his status as a dynastic founder, but the lack of such blatantly panegyrical images in the centuries that followed his reign, strongly suggests that this type of image was not met with widespread approval.[57]

Despite the fact that they were painted on different types of supports, the images of Yəkunno ʾAmlāk and ʾIyasus Moʾa have a lot in common. In particular, they (1) show individuals who had acquired power thanks to the demise of the previous dynasty rather than because of their lineage (dynastic in the emperor's case and monastic in the abbot's); (2) were painted at a time when their subjects were still alive; (3) aggrandise their subjects by including visual details that encourage associations with holy models (e.g. saints, evangelists, Christ himself); and (4) did not, as far as the evidence goes, engender widespread imitation, in all likelihood

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55 This conclusion is bolstered by the limited copies of his hagiography, as discussed in Marrassini 1986, 175.

56 For details about this church and the literature about it, see Gnisci 2023.

57 Gnisci 2023, 131.

because they were out of the step with the deferential attitude that characterised Christian Ethiopian engagement with the sacred in the fourteenth century.

6 Conclusion

I have argued that the image of ʾIyasus Moʾa that decorates the beginning of a gospel manuscript he commissioned, as well as the caption which accompanies it and identifies him as a saint, were in all likelihood painted when this powerful abbot was still alive. The style of the miniature, the palaeography of the caption, and the fact that the abbot does not have a halo are among the elements that support such a conclusion. The placement of the abbot's image as well its iconography are remarkable. ʾIyasus Moʾa portrait occupies a liminal position between the viewer and the sacred content of the book and presents himself as a mediator between the two. Many visual elements in this miniature, such as the arch under which the abbot stands, appear in the portraits of other holy figures that decorate the rest of the manuscript and I have suggested that this was done to drive home the point that the founder of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos should be viewed as a saint.

Finally, pointing out that is unusual to find living people represented in Christian Ethiopian art in such a self-aggrandising way, I suggested that the closest parallel to the portrait of ʾIyasus Moʾa is offered by a wall painting that shows Emperor Yəkunno ʾAmlāk, the abbot's closest political ally. These two honorific images were probably emanations of the courtly milieu in which the two men played prominent roles. Moreover, both paintings were probably sponsored individuals who needed to consolidate their power: Emperor Yəkunno ʾAmlāk had to legitimise his position as the initiator of a new dynasty and ʾIyasus Moʾa needed to secure and validate the new-found prominence of his monastery as the site which appointed one of the most important ecclesiastical officials in the country. No doubt, both emperor and abbot faced considerable opposition from rival parties and may have viewed images as a means to strengthen their claims to authority. Retrospectively we can views the emperor and the abbot as two of the most successful political actors of their time. However, since there were almost no comparable portraits of living individuals produced in the decades after their death, I have suggested that their common approach to visual propaganda did not set a successful precedent to be followed by subsequent patrons.

Abbreviations

CAe = Clavis Aethiopica.
EMML = Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, deposited at Addis Ababa, National Archives and Library of Ethiopia, and at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, MN.

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Katrin Kogman-Appel
Hebrew Book Art in Shared Spaces: Perpignan, *c.* 1300

Abstract: A lavishly illuminated Hebrew Bible was produced in Perpignan in 1299. Around 1300, it served as a model for at least three other Bibles from the same region. While the predominantly aniconic decoration of these Bibles is anchored in Islamicate visual culture, its style and technique are Gothic. A recent discourse in cultural history, in part from a perspective of postcolonial theory, sheds a lot of light on the dynamics of transcultural interactions and entanglements. One aspect, however, has not entered the discussion, namely, how such encounters can be explained in terms of the spatial constellations in which they took place. This paper examines how these constellations shaped the decoration schemes of the 1299 Bible. These constellations were complex, as they imply agents of different cultural backgrounds – artists, scribes, patrons – living and moving about in various parts of the urban space. The paper shows that the producers of the Bible and its patron created a visual dialogue with the surrounding architecture by means of the decoration schemes, and, in a way, seem to have participated in the design of visual trends in the public space.

1 Introduction

In a forthcoming paper on the work of Joshua ibn Gaon, active from 1299 on in Tudela (Navarre, Spain), I describe the decoration of three Bibles with a focus on ornamental motifs that attest to transcultural entanglements that transpired in the specific spatial constellations observable in that city.[1] Around the same time, just after the Shavuot festival of 1299, in Perpignan (Roussillon, present-day France), the mainland capital of the Kingdom of Majorca, another, perhaps non-professional scribe, Solomon ben Raphael, penned a Bible for his own use: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 7 (henceforth, Paris 7).[2] Similar to many

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1 Kogman-Appel forthcoming.

2 A digitised version of the manuscript is available online: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10549487b> (accessed on 10 February 2022). For the colophon, see fol. 512ᵛ. For a very interesting discussion of the phenomenon of scribes copying their own Bibles as acts of piety, see Frojmovic 2014. Based on the observation that scribal errors abound in the manuscript, Fro-

of Ibn Gaon's works, this book was decorated with micrographic patterns for the Masorah, carpet pages and painted embellishments. Three similar Bibles soon followed in the early years of the fourteenth century: Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, T. 3.8 and M. 8.4 (henceforth, Modena 3.8 and Modena 8.4, respectively), and Copenhagen, Det Kgl. Bibliotek, heb. 2 (henceforth, Copenhagen 2).[3] The last has a colophon that dates it to 1301, but no location is given, and the name of the scribe, who also indicated that he copied the book for his own use, has been erased (fol. 521ʳ). By and large, these Bibles display similar decoration schemes and, thus, have been attributed to the same artistic 'school' or workshop, hence, to Perpignan or the larger Roussillon region.[4] This current contribution approaches these manuscripts (particularly Paris 7) and their decoration schemes with a focus on the transcultural dynamics they reflect in relation to the nature of the urban space of Perpignan around 1300. It attempts to understand the interactions between Jews and Christians within their spatial settings and is, thus, a piece of microhistory focusing on one specific locale at a certain point in time. It offers some insights which complement my parallel observations concerning Tudela, and yields a synchronic view of how specific settings shaped the cultures of the people living in these two cities.

Ibn Gaon's works feature types of decorations somewhat similar to those from Roussillon: abundant micrography with floral and animal designs, carpet pages (Fig. 1) and arch designs (Fig. 2). However, in contrast to the Perpignan group, Ibn Gaon's carpet pages display Mudéjar-style interlace patterns, and some of the arches have decorated spandrels in Mudéjar-style floral designs. Hence, despite their similarities, these illuminations diverge in the style and nature of the adornments. Both groups of illustrations feature elements typical of Islamicate art, along with those that are associated with Gothic style and techniques, but they combine these features in different ways. Thus, these manuscripts are vivid testimonies of the different cultural encounters that took place in the environs of their makers.

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jmovic 2015 suggests that Samuel was not a professional scribe but a man of wealth, who penned the book with pious intentions.

3 On these manuscripts, see Kogman-Appel 2004, 131–140, with earlier literature.

4 On the traditional notion of artistic schools as pertaining to Iberian Jewish book art, see e.g. Narkiss, Cohen-Mushlin and Tcherikover 1982, 13–16.

Fig. 1: Carpet page, Tudela, 1301, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 21, fol. 1ᵛ (image in the public domain).

Fig. 2: Calendric tables, Tudela, 1301, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 21, fol. 2ᵛ (image in the public domain).

I first introduce the manuscripts and follow with a brief discussion of the current discourse on transcultural entanglements and historical approaches to space. I then go on to deal with Perpignan's spatial constellations around 1300 and consider the close ties between the urban space and the transcultural dynamics that were in evidence there. In pursuing this study, I had at my disposal the copious archival resources from Perpignan that have been discussed extensively in the historiography of the city as well as several publications about recent archaeological campaigns that offer a great deal of information about urban development, the location of institutions and neighbourhoods, and their physical conditions. Similar to Tudela, the spatial constellations in Perpignan, among other considerations, determined the decisions that the artists and their patrons made in their choices of decoration patterns. It will be argued that what these people saw while attending to their daily business, the location of the Jewish quarter, the sites of public institutions and their design, all had major influences on the making of these Bibles.

2 The manuscripts

Analogous to many other medieval Hebrew Bibles, Solomon bar Raphael's codex (Paris 7) opens with a set of lists of Masoretic material arranged in columns of varying widths, either four, three or two columns on a page, which afforded framing designs incorporating architectural elements.

The first opening of Paris 7 features an arcade of eight elegantly shaped, narrow Gothic arches in blue, supported by slim, red columns. The spandrels appear in the colour of the parchment and feature modest pen decorations with small roundels (Fig. 3). The reader turns three pages altogether encountering such arcades of eight arches each (fols 2^v–5^r). This scheme is continued in a similar fashion with three openings showing broader columns and, thus, only four arches with larger spandrels adorned with trefoils (Fig. 4, fols 5^v–8^r). Three more openings follow with six arches each (Fig. 5, fols 8^v–11^r). Thus far, the reader has leafed through three sets of three such openings, eighteen pages altogether with fifty-four arches, which evoke an association with a walk through a space defined on three sides by arcades of slender columns supporting elegantly shaped, simple pointed arches, similar to a courtyard or a cloister.

Fig. 3: Masoretic Tables, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 2ᵛ–3ʳ (image in the public domain).
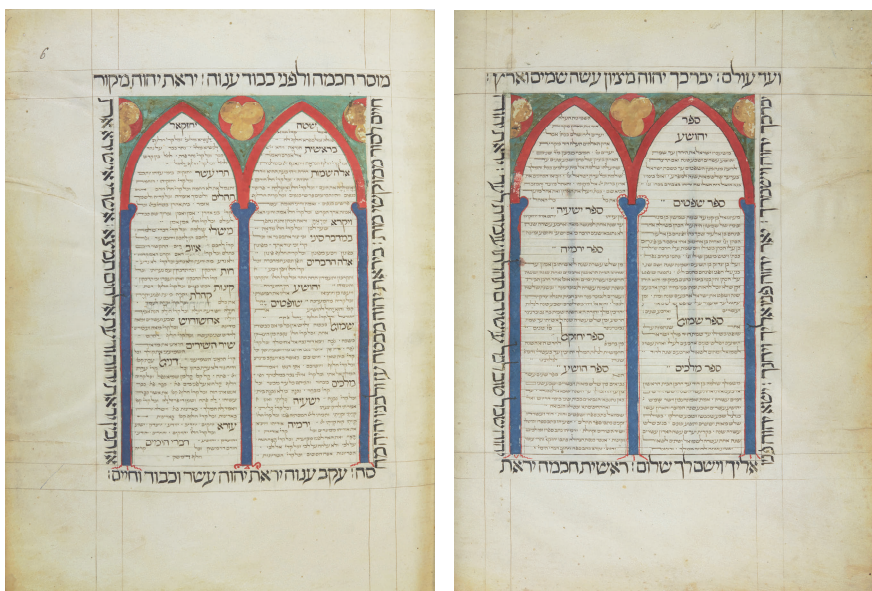
Fig. 4: Masoretic Tables, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 5ᵛ–6ʳ (image in the public domain).
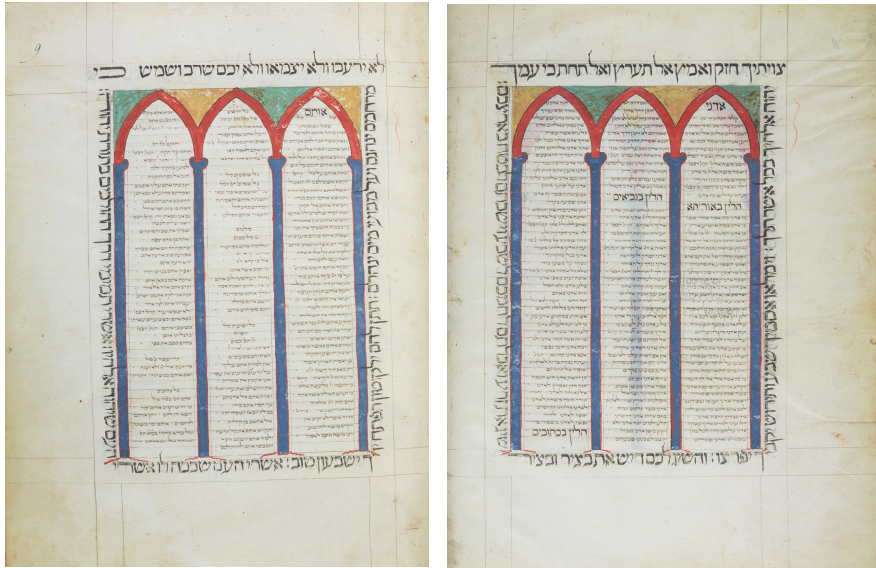
Fig. 5: Masoretic Tables, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 8ᵛ–9ʳ (image in the public domain).

Fig. 6: Carpet pages, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 11ᵛ–12ʳ (image in the public domain).

Fig. 7: Temple vessels, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 12ᵛ–13ʳ (image in the public domain).

The reader turns the page again and encounters a pair of micrographic carpet pages (Fig. 6). These are followed by yet another opening displaying the Temple vessels as golden silhouettes against the parchment ground (Fig. 7), an allusion to the understanding of the Bible as a 'minor Temple' and the first known such image in Catalonia, which introduced a design that would soon become quite popular.[5] Thus, the carpet pages could have been meant to serve as a passage from the courtyard into the 'minor Temple' as a marker of the transition into a sacred realm.[6] Architectural motifs abound in Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and are

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[5] Revel-Neher 1998, 61–120; the scholarship on the meaning of the vessels as a reference to the messianic Temple and the 'minor Temple' notion is rich and cannot be listed here; for a recent discussion citing the earlier literature, see Kogman-Appel 2023. The Temple metaphor in relation to the Bible was first discussed by Wieder 1957.

[6] Baker 2007, 30, regarding manuscripts of the Qur'an; see Kogman-Appel 2020 applying this notion to a Hebrew Bible. For recent suggestions that carpet pages in Hebrew Bibles carried iconographic meaning, see Cohen and Safran 2021, who read the carpet pages of the Kennicott Bible (Corunna, 1476) as symbolising the infinity of the divine; Harris 2021a and 2021b links thirteenth-century carpet pages to the Torah and its study. She suggests that the arch design symbolises gateways and the carpet pages allude to 'fabrics veiling the Temple Implements pages' (Harris 2021a, 135); I discuss some of these suggestions in the last section.

often interpreted as building metaphors, while arch designs are commonly associated with gateways.[7] I suggest that the careful design of these pages as three sets of differently sized arcades was meant to make readers feel as if they were walking through a large courtyard, rather than through gateways. A final star-shaped micrographic carpet page leads the reader to the first page of the Book of Genesis (fol. 14[r]).

The other three Bibles attributable to Roussillon reflect very similar schemes, even though the courtyard metaphor does not always function as perfectly as it does in Paris 7, the apparent archetype of this group. Thus, the pages with the tables in Modena 8.4 show irregular sets of openings (fols 2[v]–9[r]). Copenhagen 2 follows quite closely with a similarly irregular pattern of openings displaying not only pointed but also trefoil arches (fols 1[v]–10[r]). The spandrels above the arches are decorated with painted floral designs typical of Gothic book art (Copenhagen 2 also incorporates animals and dragons) in all the Bibles except for Paris 7. Modena 3.8 lacks the carpet pages. Unlike Paris 7, which shows the vessels against a plain parchment background, the other arrays of the Temple implements are set against a diapered pattern typical of Gothic illumination.[8]

The lack of figural representation in these Bibles with only extremely scarce humanoid elements,[9] a feature that is shared by almost all other Iberian Hebrew Bibles, has often been pointed out and is commonly associated with the artistic norms of Islamic religious culture. Eva Frojmovic describes the decoration in Paris 7 in terms of 'Mudejarismo' because of its leaning towards aniconicity.[10] She focuses elsewhere on the micrographic carpet pages and points out that Mudéjar-style elements are found in the Gothic palace of Perpignan on the painted wooden ceiling in a room in the queen's private chambers and once appeared on the no longer extant door of the chapel.[11] The painted ceiling displays a wealth of Gothic floral motifs, hybrid creatures on the beams, while interlaced decorations remotely inspired by Mudéjar style (but not genuinely Mudéjar) can be seen between the beams (Fig. 8). This type of decoration, often merging Mudéjar and Gothic motifs, abounds everywhere in fourteenth-century Iberia. More such mixed motifs can be seen on the walls of the king's private chamber.

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7 For Middle Eastern examples, see Milstein 1999; see also the references to Harris's work, n. 6.

8 Kogman-Appel 2023, 264–265, figs 10.3 and 10.4.

9 Frojmovic 2010, 250, identifies a *parashah* marker in Paris 7, fol. 115[r], with humanoid faces as cherubs. This is unlikely, as they accompany Numbers 33–36, describing the route of the Israelites to Canaan.

10 Frojmovic 2010.

11 Frojmovic 2014, 324–325, with references to the scholarship on these paintings; on which see also Alcoy Pedrós 2014.

Fig. 8: Perpignan, *c*. 1270–1295, royal palace, painted decoration on the ceiling of the queen's chamber (photograph: author).

However, there are only a very few Islamicate motifs in Paris 7, with the carpet pages displaying instead a variation of geometric designs found in Middle Eastern predecessors,[12] but no motifs that are typical of fourteenth-century Mudéjar art. I return to both Frojmovic's argument and the Perpignan palace further on. In terms of aniconicity, the Perpignan group shares a lot with Ibn Gaon's work. However, unlike most earlier Castilian examples, these Bibles are not fully aniconic: the Temple images are representational and not fully abstract and neither the animals nor the few humanoid elements can be defined as aniconic in the purest sense of the term. However, as the Temple imagery tends to be abstract and the animals and human facial traits have primarily decorative functions, the overall visual language is defined by minimal representationalism. Furthermore, the presence of carpet pages, which is the case for almost all the Bibles in question (except Modena 3.8), is a prominent feature of this approach.

However, looking at the styles and techniques of the ornamental motifs in detail, we can observe significant differences. The Perpignan group diverges from

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12 Kogman-Appel 2004, 69, 132.

Ibn Gaon's work in one striking aspect: whereas the latter's decorations are over-whelmingly Islamicate, a characteristic that is most clearly visible in the arch designs and the carpet pages (Figs 1 and 2), the former employs a wealth of Gothic motifs and limits the carpet pages to geometric micrographic decorations. Similar to Ibn Gaon's Bibles, the blend of Gothic and Islamicate elements in the Perpignan group speaks of entangled cultures, but the specific circumstances and constellations differ significantly. Even though all these books were produced at around the same time, earlier scholarship discussed them diachronically. According to that discourse, Ibn Gaon's work represents transcultural exchanges with Islamic Iberia, whereas the Perpignan group signals a transition to a predominantly Christian surrounding culture. All these Bibles, finally, were thought to carry some elements of an earlier tradition of Hebrew Bibles from the Middle East and northern Africa.[13]

3 Transcultural dynamics within space

The scholarship on the demography of medieval Iberia has yielded a set of termi-nologies designed to explain the cultural landscapes and complex relationships among the coexisting religious and ethnic cultures: Christians under Islamic rule were referred to as Mozarabs, Muslims under Christian dominance were known as Mudéjares, and 'Moorish' was a term for Muslims and objects of Islamic culture in general, both in al-Andalus and the Christian areas. The last term, naturally, went out of use in the wake of the postcolonial discourse of recent decades. Cul-tural interactions were often explained in terms of *convivencia*, a term coined in the 1940s by Américo Castro, but often criticised in subsequent discussions.[14] In the 1970s, Thomas Glick introduced the anthropological notion of acculturation, a process observable among minorities in their relationships with surrounding majorities, into the historiography of medieval Iberia. He argued that the accul-

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13 Narkiss, Cohen-Mushlin and Tcherikover 1982, 13–16; Sed-Rajna 1992.
14 Castro 1984. For critical revisitations of the term, see Nirenberg 1996, 9, 245, who shows that *convivencia* in its original understanding as coexistence implied many moments of intolerance and violence; with a focus on the Crown of Aragon, Catlos 2001–2002 notes that *convivencia* was not a given, but that intercultural interactions depended on changing mutual political and eco-nomic interests; Soifer 2009 argues not only that *convivencia* cannot be reframed, but also that the situation of the Jews in the Iberian kingdoms was, altogether, not so different from that in other countries as is commonly assumed; see also Novikoff 2005; Wolf 2009; and Szpiech 2013; all these titles also offer concise summaries of the critical approaches.

turation of the Jews in Islamic Iberia proceeded at a different pace from that in Christian environments.[15] Since the 1990s and especially the early 2000s, research into intercultural exchange and transcultural dynamics in general and in Iberia in particular has gained more theoretical ground. In 2004, I approached the decoration of Iberian Hebrew Bibles in the terms introduced by Glick and suggested interpreting the preference for Islamicate motifs and patterns as the result of the choices of Jewish patrons rooted in a centuries-old al-Andalusian heritage expressing their cultural-religious identity within a larger, diverse Jewish society.[16]

In 2010, Frojmovic studied some of the Iberian Hebrew Bibles in general and Paris 7 in particular and defined their art as 'Jewish Mudejarismo', as a cultural phenomenon taking place in a *zona de mestizaje*,[17] borrowing a term from the postcolonial discourse regarding the Americas, which is closely linked to the better-known notion of cultural 'contact zones'.[18] Luis Girón-Negrón defines 'Mudejarismo', a term coined by Castro, as 'the cultural engagement of Spanish Christians and Spanish Jews – respectively – with Arabo-Andalusian civilization'.[19] Thus, in recent scholarship, Mudéjar is not defined solely in terms of Islamic culture but used to describe the triangular setting of intercultural relationships in Christian Iberia. According to Frojmovic, 'Jews adopted Mudejarismo in order to distance their definition of visible holiness from the Christian one'.[20] With a focus on the arrays of Temple vessels in Paris 7 and other Iberian Bibles, she refers to their abstract style rather than their content.[21] As noted above, however, Paris 7 does not feature any kind of decoration that falls into the traditional category of Mudéjar style. It is only the almost complete lack of figural art and the presence of carpet pages that suggest Islamicate culture. The geometric design of the carpet pages in micrography has no Mudéjar parallels (Fig. 6).[22]

All these approaches speak of encounters and exchanges among different religious cultures as separate entities, even if those cultures lived side by side within the same political space. The more recent notion of transcultural entanglements

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15 Glick 1979, 3–18.

16 Kogman-Appel 2004, 10–33 and 171–202.

17 Frojmovic 2010.

18 These notions go back to Pratt 1992, 1–14; Bhabha 1994, 1–18.

19 Girón-Negrón 2005, 232–233.

20 Frojmovic 2010, 253.

21 She returned to Paris 7 and Copenhagen 2 in Frojmovic 2014 for further observations on their Mudéjar features offering links to contemporaneous Christian Mudéjar works of art from the region.

22 For a recent critique of attempts to associate the use of Mudéjar style among Jews as expressions of identity, see Gutwirth 2019.

offers an alternative perspective in which these cultures, different as they may have been, can be approached as ever-changing 'entangled' entities, where none remained as it was before coming into contact with the others. In such areas of entanglement, groups of different cultural background do not influence one another, and they do not create cultural hybrids, but they live in constantly changing constellations in which some elements are shared, and others create and maintain religious divides. 'Entanglement' is but one term in a whole set of metaphors discussed in the literature to define basically the same phenomenon.[23] Whereas past scholarship explained these blends of different styles diachronically either as an outcome of broad historical developments from Islamic Iberia to post-'reconquest' culture as passive influences or active expressions of identity (coping with the otherness of the majority),[24] I suggest a shift towards a synchronic perspective. That is, rather than looking at religious divides, I argue for a focus on the shared elements, which past scholarship has never regarded as factors, considering them more as symptoms to be taken for granted. By that, I do not necessarily mean to reject any notions of this art as expressions of identity, but to propose an additional angle, which influences the recent historical discourse: I look at entanglements as they emerged and developed in shared spaces.

Space as an analytical category began to lend itself to historical research at a moment when scholars sought ways of tackling cultural and social developments in other than chronological or diachronic terms. Modern historiography has approached space as an abstract notion in terms of political territories and modern nation-states. By contrast, recent definitions see space as concrete and physical but, at the same time, as a socially constructed and constantly changing reality.[25] The complex connection between social spaces as heterogeneous entities that seem to have grown organically and the authorities that govern them is among the central questions in this discourse.

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23 For a recent detailed discussion of these terms and their earlier history, see Christ et al. 2016, 25–80.

24 See also Shalev-Eyni 2017, who focuses on the earliest extant Hebrew Bibles from Toledo indebted to the Christian environment, on the one hand, and to Jewish traditions harking back to the early medieval predecessors from the Middle East, on the other. She argues that Islamicate elements are part of this Middle Eastern tradition. The strong presence of Mudéjar culture in Toledo is not considered a factor in her analysis.

25 Spatial theory goes back to Henri Lefebvre's 1974 triad concept of lived space, conceived space and perceived space (in English: Lefebvre 1991). For an introduction on the meeting points between geography and history, see Warf and Arias (eds) 2009, 1–10. Yet, the medieval perspective confronts scholars with specific challenges: see Hanawalt and Kobialka (eds) 2000, ix–xviii; Cohen and Madeline (eds) 2014, 1–20 (introduction, together with Dominique Iogna-Prat).

Whether defined as entanglements or in other terms, transcultural interactions have always been conceived of as abstract phenomena. Even when they were observed taking place in specific locales, transcultural phenomena (such as the Islamic and Christian conquests in Iberia) were explained only from the perspective of their political histories rather than in terms of the concrete physical constellations in which they took place. Urban spaces offered copious occasions for transcultural interaction, and, in the following, I suggest looking at the Hebrew manuscripts from Perpignan in the light of actual spatial settings, where some aspects of the culture diverged and others were shared. It is with an eye towards these spatial constellations that we can more easily understand the degree to which these cultures were actually entangled. These entanglements occurred despite the religious divides that constantly caused them to seek to express their different religious identities – expressions that, more often than not, put them into situations of religious polemic and hostility.[26] I build here on methodological premises of transcultural entanglement research, considerations of space and observations about specific locales at specific times. David Nirenberg set the stage for the latter approach regarding the Crown of Aragon in the 1990s in his discussion of the violent encounters between the different populations in the early fourteenth century. Writing at a time when big narratives tackling large questions were prominent, Nirenberg broke with the search for overarching schemes extending over long periods and dealt with the local contexts of specific historical events.[27]

Medieval societies lived within their immediate physical spaces, which were determined by a certain measure of territorial perception. At the same time, they also lived within deterritorialised spaces constructed by networks which the members of these societies maintained, whose spatiality can, in fact, only be grasped from a cartographic perspective.[28]

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26 For some observations about Jewish spaces as they were 'entangled and interconnected with their respective environments as well with other Jewish spaces throughout the world' (Lipphardt, Brauch and Nocke 2008, 3), see Lipphardt, Brauch and Nocke 2008, who, however, focus on modern and contemporary circumstances, and approach these Jewish spaces, again, as 'other' spaces.
27 Nirenberg 1996, 3–17.
28 Deterritorialised space is most often approached as a phenomenon of present globalisation and modern diasporas: see Appadurai 1991, 191–194. However, what I mean by deterritorialised space has more in common with the observations made by Lauwers 2008 regarding early medieval dioceses (while, of course, the power relationships in the dioceses differ largely from those between Jewish communities and their non-Jewish environs). On networks and co-spatiality, see also Lévy 2002, 137–140; Cohen and Madeline (eds) 2014, 6–7.

In most medieval cities,[29] the Jews lived in their own neighbourhoods, which grew out of their communal organisations, their cultural and religious cohesion, and a sense of 'belonging and identification'.[30] At the same time, these neighbourhoods were also spaces determined and assigned by the Christian authorities. Even when they did not emerge as assigned spaces, Jewish neighbourhoods most often turned into areas of restriction and confinement. These were spaces where the Jews could be segregated and marginalised, on the one hand, and more easily protected on the other. While they were, thus, areas of both exclusion and inclusion, none of the medieval Jewish neighbourhoods was hermetically sealed.[31] Hence, Jewish spaces were not only dynamic but also permeable, ambiguous and difficult to define or demarcate.[32]

Despite and beyond the religious divides, the medieval city offered plentiful opportunities for shared experiences:[33] Jews and Christians visited the marketplace, where they conversed in the same language, bought the same produce to make similar foods (even though *kashrut* laws did create a certain measure of self-segregation); Jews and Christians owned similar household objects,[34] shared similar tastes, and wore similar costumes up to the point that the authorities made numerous efforts to make sure that minorities would be recognisable by some element of clothing. Jews in Roussillon were required to wear long cloaks.[35]

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29 For a recent brilliant sketch of urban life and communal development in the Middle Ages, see Rubin 2020.

30 Baumgarten 2021, 246.

31 On Jewish integration in urban life, see the recent remarks by Rubin 2020, 56–59.

32 Ernst and Lamprecht 2010.

33 As Frojmovic suggests (n. 17), a medieval town such as Perpignan can, in a way, be defined as a contact zone in the sense of Homi Bhabha or Marie-Louise Pratt (s. above n. 18), while, at the same time, postcolonial concepts still call for redefinition towards making them fully applicable to medieval cultures in contact. However, neither Bhabha and Pratt nor Frojmovic conceptualised these zones in spatial terms: Bhabha 1994, 1–18, defines contact zones as interstitial spaces, but does not look at them in terms of specific spatial constellations, figuring them, rather, as abstract spaces; moreover, he is more concerned with the divides and the divergent aspects than with the shared elements of hybridities. Similarly, Pratt 1992, 1–14, speaks of contact zones as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other' (Pratt 1992, 4) in 'an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures' (Pratt 1992, 7), but while she focuses on the relationships of the subjects with one another, space remains an abstract notion.

34 This has been shown for Marseilles by Smail 2021, 423–428, analysing household inventories.

35 On sumptuary laws in Iberia, see Patton 2013, 33.

Jews and Christians were likely to have lived in similar houses, and their public institutions must have displayed similar architectural decoration.[36]

Moreover, and more importantly for the concerns discussed here, when working in similar crafts, Jewish and Christian individuals were tied together by a network that functioned across cultural divides. Professionals in the arts, the crafts and the construction industry working at the same time within the same space must have shared professional know-how, identity and practices. Concurrently, book owners and bibliophiles shared certain preferences in book design and decoration. The Jewish and Christian miniaturists of Perpignan (similar to those of any other communities, for that matter) belonged to different religions and worked for different religious institutions, authorities and patronage, but shared similar approaches to their craft. They used indistinguishable materials, which they purchased in the same shops and probably exchanged knowledge about techniques. Book trade professionals bought and used the same parchment and ruling tools and, thus, produced similar formats and page layouts.[37] They also viewed the same art in these shared spaces, and saw it not only from the standpoint of religious or cultural identity but also, or primarily, from the perspective of artists. At a more abstract and less material level, any illuminated Hebrew manuscript from anywhere in the Christian world shows eloquently that Jewish and Christian artists shared approaches to visual language, composition, and form and colour.[38] In short, they shared not only a similar professional know-how but also some sense of belonging that must have transcended cultural and/or religious divides. All these were elements that were not transmitted but rather shared.[39]

Similar dynamics have been observed in other fields. Sarah Stroumsa describes them in relation to Jewish and Muslim philosophers, scientists and poets within the Islamicate cultural sphere: 'Jewish intellectuals in the Islamicate world

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36 While there are no remains of the synagogue of Perpignan or its decoration, synagogues everywhere else in the Christian world display decorations similar to those found on churches or other public institutions, albeit significantly more modest in appearance and usually only ornamental.

37 The codicology of Hebrew manuscripts is described in great detail in Beit-Arié 2021.

38 There is hardly any publication on Hebrew illuminated manuscripts that does not point out these similarities, see, for example, with a particular focus on Christian parallels, Kogman-Appel 2006, 11–123.

39 It was often claimed that the medieval guilds functioned as yet another means of segregation and marginalisation. Yet, Shalev-Eyni 2010 and Halperin 2013 demonstrate that Jewish and Christian professionals could collaborate in manuscript workshops despite any social divides that the professional guilds were meant to establish.

(as elsewhere) breathed the same intellectual air as their Muslim neighbors, and they followed the same intellectual fashions'.[40] While my focus here is on a local community, Stroumsa speaks of a-territorial networks (employing the analogy of a 'Republic of Letters') and, specifically, of the exceptional ease in crossing community lines that was typical of philosophers, although she suggests that similar phenomena existed among other intellectual groups, such as poets. She asserts that these processes have to be defined differently for each profession.[41] In a way, Jewish book art can be looked at from a similar perspective, even though my approach diverges in two significant aspects: it considers a specific community on a micro level and a group of professionals that do not fall into the category of intellectuals.

Dwight F. Reynolds, who describes aspects of the musical scene in medieval Iberia with a focus on courtly music in both al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms, similarly asserts that neither the notion of influence typical of earlier cultural studies nor that of hybridisation is an appropriate delineation. He suggests thinking of 'complex genealogies' and promotes a discourse that would disregard any communitarian boundaries.[42] From an artistic perspective, the notion of professional networks across cultural and religious boundaries seems more suitable, for it implies that both artists and bibliophiles of different faiths shared a lot, whereas, at the same time, their interests and actions diverged at certain points.

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40 Stroumsa 2020, 168. Hughes 2017, 12, emphasises that the scholarly parameters for defining distinctions are modern and do not apply to how medieval people defined their identities. Both Sarah Stroumsa and Aaron W. Hughes focus on ideas and abstract concepts, while my observations deal, instead, with the material aspects of the craft of the (book) arts. I am indebted to Sarah Stroumsa for her conversation on this point and willingness to share material.

41 In a lecture delivered in May 2022. Stroumsa also points out that the cultural products of the different groups which emerged in a shared space were not often necessarily consumed in a shared space.

42 On the inadequacy of the notions of influence and hybridisation, at least in the medieval Iberian context and from the perspective of the history of music, see Reynolds 2009. I am indebted to Sarah Stroumsa for pointing out this reference.

4 The capital of the Kingdom of Majorca as shared urban space

The Jewish community or *aljama* of Perpignan lived in the *call*, as the Jewish neighbourhood was referred to in documents from Roussillon, Majorca and Catalonia.[43] At the same time, the Jews and the Christian citizens shared the urban space of the city. Around 1300, they belonged to the Kingdom of Majorca, which, unlike the urban space, was politically defined. The kingdom was a commonwealth of several geographically separate regions, and, hence, was some sort of deterritorialised space. The Jews of Perpignan also operated within the space of Western Christendom, where the Jewish communities created a network that functioned in another kind of deterritorialised space. Finally, Iberian Jews (and the Jews of Perpignan were certainly part of the cultural landscape of Iberia) looked back at an al-Andalusian heritage and, thus, lived within a space in which they were exposed to Islamicate art and culture. Their perception of manifestations of Islamicate culture was different from that of their Christian neighbours. Owing to that heritage, Iberian Jews participated in yet another deterritorialised Jewish space created by the networks of Jewish communities that reached beyond the peninsula into northern Africa and the Middle East. People and objects moved within these deterritorialised spaces and it is that movement, among other factors, that accounts for, shall we say, the affinities between Jewish art in Iberia and that of northern Africa. All these territorialised and deterritorialised spatial constellations had a determining effect on how Iberian and southern French Jews constructed their identities. Yet, the unique nature and history of every town and city also added their share.[44]

What, then, were the specific spatial constellations observable in Perpignan? The city had never been part of al-Andalus, neither did it ever house a Muslim community, which is, in Nirenberg's words (regarding Old Catalonia in general), 'not to say that the fourteenth-century residents [...] were unfamiliar

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43 In Assis 1997a, 199; the etymology of this term being either from the Hebrew *kahal* or from *calle* in various Iberian idioms is not quite clear.

44 Literature on Iberian Jewish culture in relation to the Islamic world is extremely vast and cannot be cited here. For examples with a focus on manuscript decoration, see Kogman-Appel 2004, 10–56, quoting a lot of the related literature, and Shalev-Eyni 2017.

with Muslims'.[45] In 1262, James I of Aragon, the Conqueror, had divided his do-
minions between his two sons, Peter and James, creating, thus, the Kingdom of
Majorca. James II, as the king of Majorca, received the Balearic Islands, Montpel-
lier and Roussillon. After the Conqueror's death in 1279, the relations between
the two brothers and their realms grew increasingly complex and tense, while,
at the same time, the Kingdom of Majorca entered a state of vassalage to and
dependence on the Crown of Aragon, ruled by Peter III. In this political constel-
lation, Perpignan became the political and economic capital of the Kingdom of
Majorca, while the City of Majorca functioned as what David Abulafia defines as
the 'ceremonial capital'.[46] Between 1285 and 1298, Majorca was de facto under
Aragonese dominance and only Roussillon and Montpellier were held by the
Majorcan king. Despite the tense political situation, the years around 1300 saw a
period of intense urban development in Perpignan, characterised by numerous
building campaigns. Owing primarily to its textile industry and trade, the city
had already been in a stage of economic boom for some decades. Perpignan, in
fact, served as a bridge between the kingdom and the European market further
north.

    As Abulafia points out, however, the Jews did not participate in that trade.[47]
In 1299, the *aljama* of Perpignan was relatively new.[48] Benjamin of Tudela, who
had travelled in the region in the 1170s, did not mention any Jewish population
in Perpignan,[49] but, by 1185, a small group of Jews were living there, and in the
thirteenth century, that group had grown into one of the largest Jewish commu-
nities in Catalonia.[50] In April 1243, perhaps at the initiative of the community of
weavers living in the parish of Saint-Jacques, the Jews were granted a privilege
to settle on the *puig*, an elevation at the northern edges of the medieval city. The
weavers, a crucial driving force of Perpignan's growing textile industry, who
had begun settling on the *puig* around 1240, apparently expected the presence of

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45 Nirenberg 1996, 22, n. 14. There were Muslim slaves who lived in Perpignan households: see
Winer 2006, 133–158.

46 Alomar 1976, 90; Abulafia 1994, 11; see also Tréton 2014, 24–25.

47 Abulafia 1994, 96, 126, and 165–187 dealing generally with the economic history of the king-
dom in the fourteenth century.

48 For historical scholarship on the Jews of Perpignan and references to archival sources that
attest to the information summarised here, see Saige 1881; Emery 1959; Vidal 1992; Daileader 2000,
115–154; Denjean 2004; and, recently, Catafau 2018, with a focus on recent archaeological cam-
paigns.

49 Daileader 2000, 115–154.

50 Winer 2006, 82.

the Jews to be economically beneficial. Until then, the *puig* had been inhabited by lepers, while prostitutes lived nearby (after the expulsion of the Jews from Perpignan in 1493, in fact, the prostitutes began to settle in the abandoned *call*).[51] Hence, the area, peripheral as it was, had been associated with marginalised groups for some time. In 1251, residence in the quarter became mandatory for the Jews of Perpignan. From 1263 on, the *call* appears in documents as a defined and named quarter for the Jews. Thus, for example, the royal *baile* (bailiff) was not allowed to enter the *call* with more than five people to avoid tension and disturbances.[52]
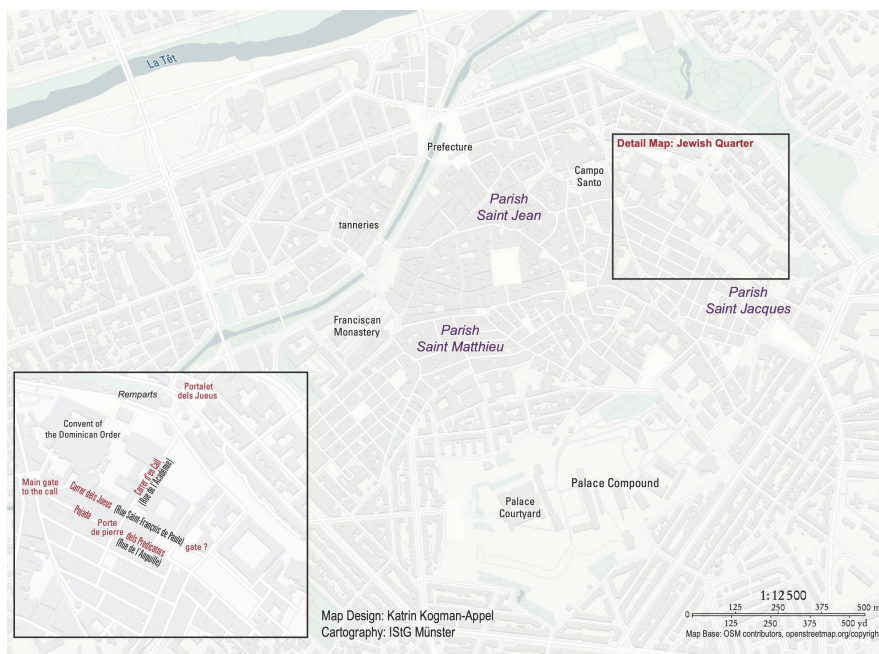
Fig. 9: Map of medieval Perpignan (cartography: Tobias Kniep, IStG, Münster).

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51 Abulafia 1994, 98.
52 Assis 1997a, 207.

Fig. 10: Perpignan, remains of the northern city wall (photograph: author).

Medieval Perpignan consisted of four parishes with the La Têt River running in a south-west to north-east direction to the north of them (Fig. 9; the small rivulet Basse west of Saint-Jean followed a different course than it does today).[53] The *call* was in the north-west section of the city, adjacent to the parish of Saint-Jacques. Its main street was located where we now find Rue de l'Académie. Walking in a north-east direction, one approaches Rue François Rabelais in the north running parallel to the city wall (Fig. 10), showing remains of the wall and making the elevated location of the *call* visible. In the west, the *call* reached the eastern end of the later Dominican church in Rue Saint-Joseph in the east, and in the south, the area between Rue Saint-François de Paule and Rue de l'Anguille. The community institutions are believed to have been sited to the east and the west of Rue de l'Académie, where remains have recently been excavated near the Dominican church and the Couvent des Minimes (founded in 1575). Geraldine Mallet suggests that the convent's apse was built above the former synagogue, and that the ritual bath was near the chevet of the Dominican church.[54] The *call* housed about one hundred families around 1300.[55]

The *call* of Perpignan adjacent to the northern city wall was long believed to have been walled on its other sides. However, recent archaeological work belies this notion, as no remains of a wall have yet been excavated. This observation suggests that the quarter was demarcated by rows of houses with blind walls turned towards the Christian areas and accessible only from within the *call*.[56] Hence, there were boundaries but no walls. A document from 1281/1282 talks about the *clausura* of the *call*, so these boundaries must have been clearly perceptible, but it also mentions that some Jews bought houses outside the *clausura*.[57] Moreover, there is documentation referring to Jews residing outside the *call* until the expulsion of the Jews from Perpignan in 1493.[58]

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53 For a brief history of the urban development of Perpignan in the thirteenth century, see Passarius and Catafau 2014. Today the historical *call* is part of the Quartier Saint-Jacques.

54 Mallet 2003 assumes that the *call* reached further to the south to the modern Rue d'Anguille; more recently, Catafau 2018, 116–125, takes into consideration recent archaeological campaigns and, hence, reached more accurate conclusions pertaining to the principal institutions as they must have appeared in the fifteenth century.

55 Emery 1959, 11–16; Mallet 2003, 17; Denjean 2020, 268, speaks of about 450–500 individuals.

56 Catafau 2018, 133, 153.

57 Vidal 1992, 115, n. 31; Catafau 2018, 101–102, 133.

58 Catafau 2018, 153. Jews could own houses outside the *call* but not reside in them, as Christians could own houses in the *call* but could not live there. Jewish residence outside the *call* was thus illegal, but nevertheless quite common.

The *call* could be reached through four or five gates (Fig. 9).[59] One of them was in the west near the modern Place de la Révolution Française and led to the neighbouring parish of Saint Jean, the oldest part of the city. Another gate was in the south, where we now find the corner of Rue de l'Académie and Rue Saint-François de Paule. Other gates were further to the east at the crossing of Rue Saint-François de Paule and Rue Saint-Joseph and in the north, the *portalet dels jueus* was found somewhat outside the actual *call*, near the modern Rue François Rabelais.

Intense construction work in the *call* began in 1277. The architect, Ponç Descoll, who, soon afterwards, was entrusted with the direction of construction works for the royal palace,[60] built a fortified gate and a tower.[61] Jews were involved in the development of the urban space in various ways. In 1276, for example, one Asher of Lunel willed some of his money to the city as a contribution towards the construction of a bridge over the river. The will was signed by four Christians and seven Jews.[62] Asher, thus, was involved in the design of the physical environment. The river did not run through the city, but the bridge would have significantly affected traffic and facilitated access to the city from the surrounding areas.

The considerations about the *call* being walled or not mentioned above raise questions about how secluded it was, its potential for marginalising the Jews, whether it was home to mixed populations,[63] and to what extent the artists and patrons of the Hebrew Bibles participated in the general urban space. The existence of the *call* enabled the authorities to protect the Jews, which became a particularly critical issue during the annual riots that took place everywhere in the Crown during Easter week.[64] At the same time, according to Philip Daileader, the *call* 'limited contact between Jews and Christians' and, thus, became a site of marginalisation. Similar to elsewhere in Christian Europe, various measures were aimed at minimising contact between Jews and Christians, but the degrees of segregation and marginalisation are by no means clear. On the one hand, some Jews who lived at the edges of the *call* received licences to install doors in the outer walls of their houses so that they would be able to enter and leave the

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59 Mallet 2003, 16, fig. 1; Catafau 2018, 125, fig. 4.

60 Durliat 1962, 177; Tréton 2014, 27.

61 Catafau 2018, 99–100.

62 Ben-Shalom 2017, 213.

63 As suggested by Catafau 2018, 103.

64 For a discussion of these riots, see Nirenberg 1996, 200–230. Things were stable around the time our Bibles were produced; they began to deteriorate under King Sanç, who began to rule in 1311; Abulafia 1994, 88–99 and 97.

call directly and not via one of the gates.[65] On the other hand, Christian women were not supposed to visit Jewish women.[66] An ordinance from 1299, the year the manuscript Paris 7 was copied, prohibited Jews from touching fruit in the market, a restriction that can certainly be interpreted as an act of segregation, and Maurice Kriegel even speaks of an attempt to define the Jews as 'untouchables'.[67] Daileader, however, argues that the point of such laws was not necessarily segregation in the marketplace, but that the prohibition against touching the produce was perhaps part of an effort to regulate prices and to prevent Jews from examining produce and purchasing the best goods early in the day.[68] Jews were allowed to slaughter animals only inside the *call.* Christians could sell food inside the *call,* but 'these could only be goods that they had been accustomed to sell there'.[69]

Considering to what extent the Jews were secluded naturally leads to the question of how common it was for Jews to leave the *call.* According to Yom-Tov Assis, who has studied documents from various regions of the Crown of Aragon, it becomes clear that it was economically disastrous when, for some reason, the authorities shut the gates of a *call.* As much as Jewish life depended on the infrastructure of the *call*, it depended economically on the possibility of leaving the quarter. The *aljama* was not a self-contained unit.[70] In 1959, Richard Emery suggested that the Jews of Perpignan were overwhelmingly engaged in moneylending with only a few individuals involved in crafts or other professions that were indispensable for maintaining Jewish life, such as butchers.[71] Given that acts of moneylending are more often recorded notarially than other economic activities, some scholars warn against too firm a judgement, arguing that the Jews of the Crown worked in a variety of professions.[72] Daniel L. Smail shows that for Marseille, looking at notarial material alone yields similar conclusions,

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65 Daileader 2000, 142; Catafau 2018, 104.

66 Vidal 1992, 46; Assis 1997a, 203; Daileader 2000, 132.

67 Kriegel 1976, 327–328; Ben-Shalom 2017, 217.

68 Daileader 2000, 146–147; for similar reasons peddlers were not allowed to talk to fruit sellers in the morning or buy fruit and resell it.

69 Daileader, 2000, 136, for the source, see n. 116.

70 Assis 1997a, 202–209; as much as Assis emphasised this point, he also spoke at length of the numerous dangers experienced by the Jews who left the *call.*

71 Emery 1959; on the dynamics of moneylending in the Crown of Aragon in general and the Kingdom of Majorca in particular, and the regulations pertaining to it, see Assis 1997b, 15–48.

72 Baer 1992, vol. 2, 44; Abulafia 1994, 92–95; Daileader, 2000, 115–154.

but when other types of documents are consulted, the picture changes towards more diversity.[73]

Several professions entailed interactions with Christians to a greater extent than others. There were two Jewish physicians in Perpignan in the late thirteenth century,[74] and the medical profession certainly implied contact. Scholars have shown for various locations in Provence that Jews were working as brokers and auctioneers, both professions also implying high degrees of interaction.[75] The same was true regarding crafts. Nirenberg points out that increasing professional specialisation in the regions of the Crown and elsewhere led to growing degrees of interdependence and cooperation among artisans who belonged to different religious groups.[76] Jewish craftsmen purchased commodities outside the *call*, and Jewish artists and scribes must have obtained supplies, such as parchment,[77] brushes and pigments. The production of parchment was linked with the making of leather, which was one of Perpignan's flourishing industries.[78] According to Gabriel Alomar's reconstruction of the medieval city plan, the tanneries were found outside the city on the other side of the river (Fig. 9).[79]

Finally, the nature of the moneylending business led to both tensions[80] and close relationships with Christian clients, the latter often extending over many years.[81] Whereas most Jewish loans were provided to peasants outside the city,[82] some were also granted to royal officials.[83] Significant archival information about Jewish courtiers in Perpignan is only available from the second half of the fourteenth century – after the breakdown of the Kingdom of Majorca[84] – but this does not necessarily exclude the possibility that Jewish courtiers had also

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73 Smail 2021, 417–421.

74 Emery 1991.

75 Drendel 1999; Kriegel 2006, 86–88; Smail 2021, 419–421.

76 Nirenberg 1996, 39.

77 According to Beit-Arié 2021, 229, Jews used locally produced parchment and did not produce their own. This does not apply to the parchment for Torah scrolls, which should be prepared by Jews; if a gentile prepares the parchment he has to be assisted by a Jew: see Hameiri, קרית ספר על הלכות ספר תורה תפילין, ed. 1957, *Kiryat Sefer* 1:3, 21–22.

78 Durliat 1962, 44.

79 Alomar 1976, 98–99.

80 Daileader 2000, 115–154.

81 Ben-Shalom 2017, 111–113.

82 Emery 1959, 43–61.

83 Abulafia 1994, 95; on Jewish courtiers in Catalonia touching also upon Perpignan, see Denjean 2012.

84 Ben-Shalom 2017, 670–671.

served the kings of Majorca. One document that has survived from 1323 grants a Jew named Bonjorn del Barri the privilege of travelling freely and exemption from sumptuary laws.[85] Nirenberg points out that the direct dependence of the Jews on courts engendered particularly close connections with high levels of acculturation.[86] Notarial documents from Perpignan mention one Vitalis Astruc (d. 1273) being involved in royal finances and speak of several loans made by one Jacob de Montepessulano to royal officers.[87] Vitalis Salamon Mayr, perhaps to be identified with the scholar Menahem ben Solomon Hameiri (d. 1315), was involved in several financial transactions and loaned money to the knight Bernardus de Ulmis (d. 1276).[88]

The spatial constellations and the degree to which Jews were involved in life outside the *call* described above must have affected the work of those who produced Paris 7 in many ways. Solomon ben Raphael copied Paris 7 for his own use while living in a place he referred to as '*migrash* Perpignan'.[89] The term מגרש היהודים (*migrash hayehudim*, lit. '*migrash* of the Jews') is not very common but it does appear in several rabbinic sources from Iberia. In the Bible and the Mishnah, a *migrash* is an area on the outskirts of a city intended neither as a dwelling place nor as a field but rather as grazing land.[90] In the 1160s, Benjamin of Tudela described the Jewish quarter of Constantinople as a *migrash*.[91] He apparently used this term to explain that it was outside the city, and, indeed, it was found in Pera, so, it was some sort of suburb.[92] In later sources, *migrash* could simply mean Jew-

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85 Perpignan, Archives municipales de Perpignan, B 94, fol. 45ᵛ, Régné, *History of the Jews in Aragon*, ed. Assis 1978, no. 3275. I am grateful to Ram Ben-Shalom for sharing this reference.

86 Nirenberg 1996, 28.

87 Emery 1959, 39–66.

88 Emery 1959, 46–47. On the possibility that Vitalis and Menahem are one and the same, see Emery 1959, 28, with references to earlier scholars. However, the name Vitalis Salamon suggests that this man's Hebrew name may have been Haim ben Solomon rather than Menahem ben Solomon, in which case, he may, in fact, have been Menahem's brother.

89 See above, n. 2; ׳כתבתי אני שלמה בר׳ רפאל זה הספר לעצמי וסדרתי בו תורה נביאים וכתובים בכרך אחד וסיימתיו כאן במגרש פרפיניאן בחדש סיון מחרת שבועות בשנת חמשת אלפים וחמשים ותשע לבריאת עולם׳.

90 Numbers 35:2–3; Mishnah, *Arakhin* 9:8.

91 Benjamin of Tudela, ספר מסעות של ר׳ בנימין ז״ל על פי כתבי יד עם הערות ומפתח, ed. Adler 1907, 16.

92 My thanks go to Pinchas Roth for pointing out Benjamin's use of the term and to Javier Castaño, who suggests the possibility that the *migrash* refers to the existence of two Jewish quarters, an older and a newer, the latter possibly referred to as *migrash* being located on the periphery of the city. According to Gabriel Alomar's city plan, there might, indeed, have been an older Jewish quarter further to the south-west, Alomar 1976, 98–99; Vidal 1992, 19, however,

ish quarter. Solomon ibn Adret mentioned the *migrash* of the Jews in Acre, and his student Yom Tov Asibili (Ritva, d. 1330) used the same term for the Jewish quarter of Zaragoza.[93] Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh, d. 1327) referred to the Jewish quarter in Toledo, where he resided after he had migrated from the Rhineland, as 'the large *migrash* of the Jews'.[94] He may have been familiar with the term from his time in northern Iberia/southern France prior to his arrival in Toledo. In a way, the use of the term *migrash* to define Jewish space seems to indicate a certain measure of peripherality and exclusion, which does not always have to do solely with its location within the city or on its edges but perhaps also with the social and the political situation of the Jews.

The *call* housed a number of important scholars. The most outstanding among them was Menahem Hameiri, a halakhist of the Maimonidean school, mentioned above, who completed his major work, *Bet Habeḥirah*, around the turn of the thirteenth century. In 1306, he wrote a halakhic handbook for scribes, *Kiryat Sefer*, which makes it clear that he had a great deal of interest in scribal work, particularly in connection with Torah scrolls. In this tract, he hailed a Bible by the Toledan scribe Israel ben Isaac as the most accurate model for Torah scrolls.[95] Another member of the same family, Haim ben Israel, penned a Bible, now kept in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma under the shelf mark Parm. 2668, which, in fact, may have been present in the *migrash* of Perpignan by the end of the thirteenth century. It features an array of Temple vessels strikingly similar to that of Paris 7, which suggests that the latter might possibly have served as its model.[96] Levi ben

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93 Responsa Solomon ibn Adret, תשובות הרשב״א, no. 272 (Responsa Project, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan); Responsa Yom Tov Asibili, *(הריטב״א) אברהם אלאשבילי*, no. 156 (Responsa Project, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan); Novellae Yom Tov Asibili, חידושי הריטב״א לרבינו יום טוב ב״ר אברהם אלאשבילי, ed. 1984 on *Ḥullin* 95b.

94 'החצר הגדולה של רבי טודרוס בן נחמיה הנזכר במגרש הגדול של היהודים יצ״ו בטוליטולה, Responsa Asher ben Yehiel, שאלות ותשובות הרא״ש, *Klal* 68, no. 21.

95 Hameiri, קרית ספר על הלכות ספר תורה תפילין, ed. 1957, *Kiryat Sefer* 2:2, 48. There were two scribes by that name, both from the same family in thirteenth-century Toledo: Kogman-Appel 2004, 62. Hameiri cites the colophon of that book, where Israel explains the connection to Meir Abulafia's prototype. Abulafia is mentioned in the colophon as deceased, hence it must have been penned after 1244. Israel the Elder is documented until 1248, and it is probable that he was the one who penned the colophon. Two Bibles signed by him survive: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Kenn. 7 (1222), and New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Lutzki 44a (1241).

96 Parma, Biblioteca palatina, Parm. 2668, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/viewerpage?vid=MANUSCRIPTS&docid=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000787980205171-1#$FL1

Abraham (d. after 1305), another Maimonidean, was living in Perpignan around the same time, and I have suggested elsewhere that it is probable that his scholarship had a strong impact on the display of the Temple vessels in Paris 7.[97] Among the other Perpignan scholars were the exegete and philosopher Joseph Caspi, still quite young in 1300,[98] and the poet Abraham Bedersi, whose exact life dates are unknown. Similar to Menahem Hameiri, he was a successful moneylender (under the name of Abram Mosse de Montepessulano) and lamented that his business did not leave him enough time for poetry. He acted, for some time, as the *aljama*'s scribe.[99] The group also included the philosopher Cresques Vidal, Moses ben Samuel, a student of Menahem Hameiri, Hameiri's nephew Abram Mayr and the poet Phinehas Halevi.[100]

The observation on the depiction of the Temple vessels mentioned above highlights two important factors involved in the production of Paris 7: firstly, the impact of the local scholarship – specifically Levi ben Abraham's impact – within the relatively intimate space of the Jewish *call* and, secondly, the impact of the Jewish networks – that deterritorialised space of the larger Jewish world inhabiting Iberia – and the possibility that Toledan codices copied by celebrated scribes were to be found in the *call*.

Moving outside the *call*, the carefully laid out arcade design on the initial pages of Paris 7 (Figs 3–5) and its relatives, finally, takes us outside the *call* into the urban space of Christian Perpignan. The economic upsurge experienced in the Kingdom of Majorca led to building campaigns all over the city and arcades in both secular and ecclesiastical contexts were particularly dominant features of local architectural taste during the reign of James II. Such arcades, whose function was primarily decorative and not fully structural, appeared repeatedly in the urban landscape of Perpignan in courtyards and cloisters, an observation that supports the suggestion that the arcades in the Bible were meant as architectural courtyard metaphors to lead the reader into the 'minor Temple', the biblical text. An example is the cloister of the newly built Franciscan church, a

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7768246> (accessed on 26 May, 2022); Gutmann 1976, 138–139, in fact, suggested that the Temple array was a later addition done in Catalonia, copied from the Perpignan Bible; on this with some scepsis, see Kogman-Appel 2004, 68–74. Either way, also according to Gutmann's scenario, the Bible might have been in Roussillon around 1300.

97 Kogman-Appel 2023.

98 About Caspi's connection to Perpignan, see Emery 1976, 29–32.

99 Emery 1959, 28; Ben-Shalom 2017, 71, 107. On scholars in the moneylending business, see also Denjean 2012, 203, and Iancu-Agou 2003 with a focus on the fifteenth century.

100 Ben-Shalom 2017, 538–554.

project that began in 1264 and was only completed in the early fourteenth century. The church was demolished in the nineteenth century, but the cloister is extant (for the location, see Fig. 9).[101] We find the large cemetery Campo Santo adjacent to the cathedral, established during the first building phase of the cathedral project from 1298 until 1302 (Fig. 11, for the location, see Fig. 9), quite near the *call*.[102] A nineteenth-century lithograph shows the courtyard of a secular building, known as the Hôtel d'Ortaffà and now incorporated into the prefecture. It shows a no longer extant arcaded gallery with similar simple Gothic arches (for the location of the prefecture, see Fig. 9).[103] Its design as a large courtyard is dominated by arcades.

Fig. 11: Perpignan, 1298–1302, Campo Santo (photograph: author).

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101 Barrenechea 2014, 63, fig. 22.

102 Barrenechea 2014, 57–59.

103 Poisson 2014, 99, with a reproduction of the lithograph.

The decision to build a royal palace was taken in 1264, immediately after the establishment of the Kingdom of Majorca. Construction began in 1270 and was directed by Ramon Pau, who disappears from documents in 1275 to be replaced by the mentioned Ponç Descoll. As noted earlier, the latter was also active in the construction of the Jewish *call.* The royal family resided in the new palace from the summer of 1283 on, and a judge held court within the palace starting in 1286. Most of the work (including the courtyard with its arcades) was finished by 1295, but construction work continued until well into the fourteenth century (Figs 12–15). Scholars have identified three building phases up until the end of the thirteenth century.[104]

The Franciscan cloister and the Campo Santo were not accessible to Jewish residents going about their daily business, but they might well have seen by them while they were being constructed. By contrast, the outer palace courtyard was a secular public space, where the townspeople assembled on various occasions. Upon entering the courtyard from the west, one faced one set of arcades in the gallery to the east on the right-hand side, which was constructed during the second building phase (Fig. 12). A nineteenth-century lithograph of the courtyard indicates that another set of arcades was found to the left.[105] There was a further set, which was erected during the first phase, above the entrance (Fig. 13). Thus, whoever stood in that outer courtyard was surrounded by arcades, an impression that can still be felt today (Fig. 14). Beneath the eastern gallery, one continued into the queen's courtyard with another set of arcades from the final construction phase (Fig. 15). The public spaces surrounded the main courtyard on the ground floor, while the private chambers were found on the first. A throne chamber was installed behind the western arcade at the end of the fourteenth century, but scholars assume that the king received audiences in that space from the very beginning. The palace was considered the zenith of the royal construction campaigns, a visual and material manifestation of the economic boom the kingdom experienced during these decades.[106]

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104 For the construction history of the palace, see Pousthomis 2014.

105 Sandron 2014, 255.

106 Abulafia 1994, 150.

Fig. 12: Perpignan, *c*. 1270–1295, royal palace, public courtyard, eastern side (photograph: author).

Fig. 13: Perpignan, *c*. 1270–1295, royal palace, public courtyard, western side (photograph: author).

Fig. 14: Perpignan, *c.* 1270–1295, royal palace, public courtyard, photographed from the eastern gallery looking west (photograph: author).

Fig. 15: Perpignan, *c.* 1270–1295, royal palace, inner courtyard (queen's chambers) (photograph: author).

Similar arcade designs appear slightly later in the City of Majorca. After the completion of the Perpignan palace in the 1300s, Ponç Descoll was entrusted with the construction of a royal palace at the site of the earlier Islamic citadel, the Almudaina, and its courtyard and front features similar arcades. Around the same time, Descoll was also involved in the construction of the Castel Bellver outside the City of Majorca, whose inner courtyard was surrounded by the same type of arcade (Fig. 16).[107]

Thus, the building metaphor of the arcaded courtyard emerged within the urban space shared by Jews and Christians and attests to the presence of Jews in the public spaces of the city. It may very well also echo an exchange among artists and designers, such as Ponç Descoll. Given that the *call* was rather crowded, it is unlikely that there was enough space anywhere in the quarter to build an arcaded courtyard. In a way, the copious use of arcades in the Hebrew Bibles copied during the time of the building campaigns seems to be a statement of participation in the urban space of Perpignan and its artistic and architectural tastes. Jews were present in the palace courtyard, when the townsmen assembled, but, more significantly, Jewish courtiers and financiers undertook business with the court, which implies their physical presence within the courtyard and the adjacent administrative quarters. The patrons of Bibles of the sort of Paris 7 might well have been among the financiers active at court. Not immediately relevant to a discussion of Hebrew Bibles from *c.* 1300 but, nevertheless, interesting is also the fact that during and after the 1391 persecutions, the Jews of Perpignan lived in the palace for three years, indicative in many ways of the dynamics between the court and the Jews.[108]

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107 On the career of Ponç Descoll, see Durliat 1962, 173–179, with references to archival documents.
108 Daileader 2000, 139.

Fig. 16: Palma, Majorca, early fourteenth century, Castel de Bellver, courtyard (photograph: author).

The micrographic carpet pages in Paris 7, finally, also tell a story. There are three such pages. One is an opening that features geometric diamond designs with roundels in the centre of each diamond (Fig. 6); another, which we find after the depiction of the Temple vessels and right before the beginning of the biblical text, has a centralised star design. As I have shown elsewhere, these pages, similar to other micrographic designs, attest to a continuous scribal culture from the early medieval Middle Eastern tradition via Toledo to early-fourteenth-century Roussillon. Both the diamond and the star design appear in the St Petersburg Bible ('Leningrad Bible') dated to 1008–1010 from Egypt, and the star design is also found in the Parma Bible.[109] Julie Harris, in her attempt to imbue carpet pages in Iberian Hebrew Bibles with meaning, links those of the Perpignan Bible with Kabbalah.[110] If that were the case and following the method pursued in recent micrography studies, one would have expected some kabbalistic elements in the text employed

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109 Kogman-Appel 2004, 132, with references and images.
110 Harris 2021a.

for the micrographic design. However, the texts on these pages are traditionally Masoretic.[111] Moreover, and more significantly, there is no evidence of any kabbalistic interest among the scholars of Perpignan during the years around 1300, nor is there any evidence of an earlier kabbalistic tradition. Rather, Perpignan scholars were famous for their intense defence of Maimonidean teachings; most prominently among this group were Cresques Vidal, Menahem Hameiri and Levi ben Abraham, the last, in fact, having found refuge in Perpignan after being 'hounded' by critics of philosophy.[112] Rather than being the outcome of kabbalistic speculations, these pages are echoes of a scribal tradition with early medieval roots. More importantly for our context here, although they do not testify to transcultural entanglement, these pages offer clear signs of the cultural dynamics within a deterritorialised Jewish space in former al-Andalus and northern Africa.

5 Conclusions

The foregoing observations elucidate a rather complex background of interaction. In terms of the spaces in which these interactions took place, we can think of the design of the manuscript Paris 7 as evolving in three different spheres. Firstly, there was the *call* with its scholars, a setting that yielded the imagery of the Temple vessels. Secondly, the arcades lead us into the larger urban space and confront us with the contemporaneous building campaigns that took place there. Did the artists of our Bibles simply stroll around the city, look at the arcades, and translate them into the small medium of book art because they shared the same visual culture? Or were there exchanges of a different kind? Did Ponç Descoll play any role in this scenario? What sort of interaction did he engage in with representatives of the *aljama* while he was at work in the *call*? Was the design of arcades something that Jewish and Christian miniaturists talked about when they met in

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111 I am grateful to Dalia Ruth Halperin for sharing her readings of the texts. On involving the content of the micrography in its analysis, see, among others, Halperin 2013, and the articles recently collected in Liss (ed.) 2021.

112 Albeit a traditional Talmudist, Cresques Vidal, who was involved in the actual outbreak of the conflict in 1303, was sympathetic to Levi ben Abraham (who at the time had already moved to Narbonne) and defended him: on this see in detail Ben-Shalom 1996, 171–176; on Levi ben Abraham, see Halkin 1966. On the dominance of philosophy and the absence of Kabbalah in southern France during Hameiri's lifetime, see in some detail Halbertal 2000, 11–21. While Kabbalah emerged in southern France (albeit not in Perpignan, but further north, in Posquières, modern Vauvert), it had moved to Catalonia and Castile by about 1250.

the parchment workshop or at the pigment sellers? In short – in what ways were these arcades popping out everywhere in the city talked about in the daily discourse of people of both cultures interested in design, art and the latest architectural fashion? We cannot expect that any of these interactions would have been recorded or documented and can only guess about their nature and effects. The Hebrew Bibles of Perpignan offer but a faint echo of the degree of cohesion that must have existed among the people engaged in these interactions. Thirdly, the carpet pages lead us into the deterritorialised space of the larger Jewish world that functioned within the Islamic sphere. Although Perpignan as a city never belonged to that sphere, owing to a collective heritage that they shared with Iberian Jews elsewhere, its Jewish inhabitants maintained strong links to Islamic culture.

Acknowledgements

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The Ethiopian Royal Family as Commissioners of Manuscripts and the Artistic Style of the 'Sad Eyes'

Abstract: This article sheds light on the period of peak manuscript production and the influence of the royal family through the examination of illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts from the Early Solomonic Period. A manuscript fragment of the *Miracles of Mary* and its illuminations, linked to the scriptorium of Gǝšan Māryām, provides a starting point for further exploration. The commissioning and donation notes of the royal family contribute to our understanding of their patronage of manuscript culture. Finally, the distinct artistic style found in the illuminations gives insights into the artistic developments of the period.

1 Introduction

The manuscript culture in Ethiopia and Eritrea saw the development of new features in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, partly on behalf of the emperors or actively encouraged by them, which is attested by the surviving manuscripts as will be highlighted in the following examples. Emperor Dāwit I (r. 1379/1380–1413) and his son, the eclectic Emperor Zarʾa Yāʿqob (r. 1434–1468), are surely among the most influential rulers of the early Solomonic dynasty regarding the manuscript culture. Both had a lasting effect on the Christian realm, but the latter especially was extremely influential not only as a ruler but also an author of religious texts during his time, and the number of manuscripts that attest to his involvement are yet to be counted.[1] A group of illuminated manuscripts which articulate a distinct artistic style and can all be connected to the royal family, including Dāwit, his sons and successors Yǝsḥaq (r. 1414–1429/1430) and Zarʾa Yāʿqob, as well as his daughters, will be discussed in the following.

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[1] The list of relevant publications for Zarʾa Yāʿqob is long, starting obviously with the chronicle published by Perruchon 1893 (for which Manfred Kropp is preparing a new edition, cf. Kropp 2017, 57–58), to numerous analytical articles, to name but a few, by Taddesse Tamrat 1974; Getatchew Haile 1980; Getatchew Haile 1981; Getatchew Haile 1992; Kaplan 2002; Kropp 2005a. One of the best English articles to sum up the motivation of Zarʾa Yāʿqob's politics is Derat 2004.

One item shall be the starting point to venture into this specific point in time and a particular scriptorium, often termed the 'royal scriptorium'. The example in question is in Munich's Museum Fünf Kontinente (MFK). The latter's MfVK 86-307647 contains the *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 2384),[2] and is decorated with lavish illuminations which link it directly to the famous scriptorium of Gǝšan Māryām, already known from Emperor Dāwit I's time.[3]

Starting from the MFK manuscript, this article takes a fresh look at a number of donation or commissioning notes that refer to members of the royal family, and the intentions that they expressed through these notes. Regarding certain members of the royal family, these notes are the only evidence of the individual's existence that we have so far. Several of the manuscripts discussed here can be linked through their illuminations, and I will present new material on the artistic tradition attested in the miniatures.

2 The royal family of Emperor Dāwit

It is known that the royal family in the late fourteenth century was vast, with the emperors marrying more than one woman and, having additional children from concubines, distant relatives occasionally made claims to the throne.[4] After Emperor Dāwit had passed away, no less than six different rulers sat on the throne between the years 1412/1413 and 1434.[5] Yet, only two of them, Yǝsḥaq and Zarʾa Yāʿqob ruled for extended periods. The men of the royal family, especially those who were crowned as emperors, are known from several sources; evidence for the female members, however, is usually scarce. Emperor Dāwit did not leave a chronicle, but several of his family members can be identified through notes in manuscripts or external sources, including, as discussed below, one of his wives and two of his daughters. The same accounts for Yǝsḥaq, for whose reign we have no chronicle, but rely on shorter notes in manuscripts. There is a chronicle only

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2 Reference is provided here to the Clavis Aethiopica (CAe) ID numbers of texts. This constantly growing repertory of textual units attested in Gǝʿǝz literature is being developed within the digital research environment Beta maṣāḥǝft. It enables users to refer unambiguously to a specific text/textual unit. For identification of a CAe number, type in the ID number (without any additions) here <https://betamasaheft.eu/newSearch.html?searchType=text&mode=any&work-types=work> (accessed on 22 August 2024).

3 Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 88–89.

4 Kaplan 2002.

5 Taddesse Tamrat 1974.

for Zarʾa Yāʿqob, however, his children were apparently so numerous that names which do not feature in the chronicle still appear in the notes.[6] Zarʾa Yāʿqob himself was a prolific writer, and several of his contemporaries, family members as well as opponents, are known through his writings.

A number of Emperor Dāwit's sons are known and a number of sources, which will be discussed in the following, shed light on other members of his family. The Four Gospels manuscript of Ṭānā, Kəbrān Gabrəʾel, Ṭānāsee 1 includes a note which commemorates his parents, Emperor Sayfa ʾArʿād (r. 1344–1371) and his mother Lazab Warqā.[7] The *History of the Monastery of Dabra Libānos* (CAe 2613)[8] recounts that Dāwit also conquered the throne thanks to his sister Dəl Sefā.[9] From the way the story is narrated, which is also incorporated in external sources such as the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church*, it seems that she was influential enough to exert some authority in this power struggle; though otherwise little is known of her. In the famous Gospel of Dabra Maʿār Giyorgis (digitised as EMDA 00463),[10] full of royal land grants and donation notes, Dāwit's wife Empress Magdalāwit is mentioned on fol. 235[va].[11] The fate of female family members unfor-

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6 Even the author of the chronicle admits that he does not know all the names, Perruchon 1893, 5.

7 Kaplan 2002, 74. For the notes, found on fol. 236[va–b], see the manuscript itself <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/Tanasee1/viewer?fbclid=IwAR3AgQlWo5T3K8HyET9kEt2L2tFKSKWCEVwUsFmFRe62_n3oJ9b_w06pWVw> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

8 The CAe entry for this number is void of any information, but it could be the correct identification. The text I refer to here was translated by Turaev (tr.) 1906.

9 All secondary sources on this matter refer to the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church* as the source for her name. However, this text seems to leave her without a name, referring to her only as 'sister'; cf. Khater and Burmester (eds) 1970, 252; cf. also Tedeschi 1974, 575–578. Her name, however, features in an account of the abbots of Dabra Libānos, in a sentence for Tewodros, its fifth abbot. This was indicated by Cerulli 1944, 139, who, in turn refers to Turaev (tr.) 1906, 356, who, in turn, translated the text from the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, d'Abbadie 108, fol. 5rb: a text that Antoine d'Abbadie had copied in Gondar from a much older manuscript, see d'Abbadie 1859, 122. I thank Nafisa Valieva for kindly confirming the correct identification in Turaev's Russian translation. A French translation is provided by Derat 2003, 329–345.

10 Manuscripts kept in repositories in Ethiopia and microfilmed or digitised by the EMDA, EMML, or DSAE projects are treated in the following way: city/locality/repository (i.e. the location of the manuscript reported during its microfilming/digitisation); and, in the slot intended for a shelf mark, the respective microfilming/digitisation project's identification number has been provided (e.g. 'Lālibalā, Beta Madḫāne ʿĀlam, EMML 6907'). The manuscript, digitised under the project number EMDA 00463 was catalogued by Ted Erho <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/601721> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

11 The manuscript contains further interesting notes, such as, on fol. 235[vb], the commemoration of the death of the Coptic pope Gabriel (V, 1408–1427) and the information that he had sent the

tunately has too often been a simple 'his wife' or 'his sister', both in the original source and in academic studies.[12] A careful examination of the additional notes in manuscripts may well reveal further names and/or information about people already known.[13]

A recent contribution I co-published with Vitagrazia Pisani and Jacopo Gnisci draws attention to the supplication notes found in the small copy of the *Miracles of Mary*, Munich, MFK, MfVK 86-307647.[14] The colophon on fol. 16[vb] informs us that the manuscript was a donation by Zarʾa Yāʿqob to an unnamed church. Furthermore, the note states that Zarʾa Yāʿqob's regnal name is Qʷasṭanṭinos, and that Emperor Dāwit was his father. There are several other notes throughout the manuscript that, next to Zarʾa Yāʿqob, also mention the names ʾAmata Māryām and Habta Māryām.[15] Thanks to another manuscript, a *Senodos* (*Apostolic Canons*, CAe 2317) manuscript from Dimā Giyorgis (digitised as EMDA 00342), we can identify ʾAmata Māryām as a sister of Zarʾa Yāʿqob.[16] In the colophon of Dimā Giyorgis, EMDA 00342, ʾAmata Māryām is named as the commissioner of the manuscript, and identified as the daughter of Emperor Dāwit. It can, thus, be assumed that she commissioned the manuscript while her father was still in power. The *Miracles of Mary* in manuscript MFK MfVK 86-307647 is accompanied by five full-page miniatures painted in a distinct style, which will be addressed below.

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head of the Evangelist Mark to Emperor Yəsḥaq, son of Emperor Dāwit (I am indebted to Jonas Karlsson for drawing my attention to this note). I discovered the same note in the gospel manuscript of Dabra Śāhl, DSAE 1, fol. 177[rb]; the manuscript is online, <https://w3id.org/vhmml/reading Room/view/501282> (accessed on 4 September 2023). Ewa Balicka-Witakowska has published an extensive analysis of DSAE 1, also including this note. She proposes that the 'head of Mark the Apostle [sic]' is to be understood in a metaphorical form, meaning in fact the Coptic pope (Balicka-Witakowska 2017, 203). However, considering that there is a second such note in Dabra Maʿār Giyorgis, it might just as well be a document regarding an important relic. After all, Yəsḥaq is known for his contacts with foreign countries, and, just like his father and his brothers, he was interested in acquiring relics; cf. Krebs 2021, 61–120.

12 The *Life of Giyorgis of Saglā* (CAe 1456), for example, contains an account of Giyorgis insisting that the queen of Dāwit stands up and comes to him to receive the Eucharist, while only the emperor would be allowed to remain seated, Colin 1987, 22–23. Unfortunately, the queen is not further specified in this narration.

13 Herman (2020) offers a wide insight into the position of women in Ethiopian societies, and the roles they fulfilled therein. Regarding the time frame relevant to this article, she touches only on Zir Ganela and Dəl Mangəśā (see below here for more information).

14 Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 88–89.

15 Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 68, 88–89.

16 EMDA 00342. The colophon is on fol. 96rb. It was digitised by Mersha Alehegne and catalogued by Ted Erho, and can be accessed at <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/view/533844> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

We learn of other royal family members in a gospel manuscript from ʾƎndāfare Māryām microfilmed as EMML 3879, which was also commissioned by Zarʾa Yāʿqob and given to a church dedicated to Qirqos, most probably the one that he had commissioned to be built in Dabra Bərhān.[17] The donation note further asks to bless his wife and children. The note was partly erased and overwritten with a short new note, referring to Dəl Samrā, his daughter – who is also known from his chronicle, as one of his family members who (allegedly) transgressed against him and was severely punished.[18] In a second note (fol. 3va–b), the time of the construction of Qirqos church is provided as 1460/1461 CE, and, in addition, some of the items with which Zarʾa Yāʿqob equipped the church are listed. There are many additional land grants and donation notes from several kings and queens after him, but, most importantly, from Zarʾa Yāʿqob himself, and from his wife ʾƎleni. Zarʾa Yāʿqob had at least three wives, out of whom ʾƎleni was surely the most renown. After his death, she served as queen regent for many decades and for two successive emperors – she was also active in the political affairs during her time. In one note in EMML 3879 (fol. 3ra–b), she portrays herself as the wife of Zarʾa Yāʿqob and lists her own endowments to the Qirqos church. We see the list of ʾƎleni's donations, followed by another list of donations from 'Zarʾa Yāʿqob's children, men and women' (fol. 3vb). There is a third donation note that mentions the name ʾƎleni. This note is intriguing, as it suggests that after the death of her daughter Barbārā, ʾƎleni donated items in her honour to Qirqos church (fol. 3rb):

እምድኅረ ፡ አዕረፈት ፡ ዘወሀበት ፡ እሌኒ ፡ ንግሥት ፡ ለወለታ ፡ ባርባራ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይኩኑ ፡ ለተሰካ ራ ፡ [sic] ለቤተ ፡ ቂርቆስ ፡ [...] ወተስከራሂ ፡ [sic] አመ ፡ ፳ወ፭ለታኅሣሥ ። ኢትርስዑ ፡ ዘንተ ፡ ቃስ(?)ውስት ፡ ወዲያቆናት ። በጊዜ ፡ ጸሎት ፡ በጊዜ ፡ ማዕጠንት ፡ ወመሥዋዕት ።[19]

(Things) that Queen ʾƎleni gave to her daughter Bārbārā, after she (Bārbārā) had departed, so that they may be to the memory of the church of Qirqos, [...] And her *tazkār* is on 25 Tāḫśāś. Do not forget this, priests and deacons, at the time of prayer, at the time of incense and of offering.

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17 The manuscript is available online at <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/205683> (accessed on 4 September 2023). The donation note is on fol. 2ra. There is also the detailed catalogue description by Getatchew Haile 1987, 207–209. Dabra Bərhan was possibly also founded by Zarʾa Yāʿqob and functioned as his capital, which would explain why the manuscript contains further notes from his family members, as it was part of the royal church of the court.

18 Perruchon 1893, 5, 98.

19 The note is somewhat unclear, as was remarked by Getatchew Haile (1987, 208). The spelling of the word *tazkār* ('memory, memorial, commemoration') as **ተስከራ** is interesting, but not uncommon. My own translation is presented here.

Queen ʾƎleni, whose regnal name was ʾAdmās Mogasā, was certainly an astonishing regent, known for her political involvement, foreign relations with Portugal and even as the author of religious hymns.[20] But so far, it had always been claimed that she was childless, except for one Portuguese source referring to a potential son.[21] It is, of course, possible that the word 'daughter' here in the note has a spiritual connotation, similar to the mother-like relationship that ʾƎleni engaged in with Emperor Baʾəda Māryām, Zarʾa Yāʿqob's son (from another wife) and successor. Still the note might indeed refer to a biological daughter of ʾƎleni who died in early childhood (even at birth?), or to a child from a previous marriage, although this is unlikely since it is known that she was married to Zarʾa Yāʿqob at a young age.[22] There are yet other possibilities to explain this mother–daughter relation: one of Zarʾa Yāʿqob's sisters was also called ʾƎleni; however, she would probably not be called 'queen'.[23] In any case, the reference in EMML 3879 is, at least, striking, and the description of ʾƎleni's barrenness might have been false.

3 Stylistic characteristics of the artistic features

These short references to the personal names of Zarʾa Yāʿqob, ʾAmata Māryām and Habta Māryām in the Munich manuscript MFK, MfVK 86-307647 invite us to delve deeper into the royal family as commissioners of manuscripts. However, it is also essential to investigate the artists who illuminated the manuscripts. The *Miracles of Mary* in manuscript MFK MfVK 86-307647 are accompanied by five full-page miniatures of two male saints each (Fig. 1).[24] They were painted in a unique style, of which several other manuscripts are known and can be traced back to the royal family. I have identified seven manuscripts which exhibit this artistic style and whose complex history will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

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20 Chernetsov 2005.

21 This is a difficult source; the original text narrates that a son of the queen escaped from royal prison, but does not specify the queen's name, only the translators did. Cf. Beckingham and Huntingford (eds) 1961, 245.

22 Possibly around the age of 12, certainly not unusual at that time. Cf. Chernetsov 2005.

23 This sister is mentioned in the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, Caquot 1955a, 95, 103, as well as in its copy in London, BL, Or. 481, see more on this below. It might also be possible that these two ʾƎlenis were confused in all the sources as one person, which might be an explanation for the exceptionally long life of Queen ʾƎleni if it was only one woman.

24 The miniatures are on fols 1ᵛ, 4ᵛ, 7ᵛ, 11ᵛ, 14ᵛ.

Fig. 1: The Apostles Peter and Paul, fol. 4ᵛ / Munich, Museum Fünf Kontinente / 1434–1468 / MfVK 86-307647 / Copyright: Museum Fünf Kontinente, München. Photo: Nicolai Kästner.

Table 1: Overview of existing witnesses.

	Repository	Signature	Main text	Commissioner
1	ʾAmbā Gǝšan	EMML 9002	*Miracles of Mary*	Dāwit
2	ʾAmbā Gǝšan	–	*Maṣḥafa ṭefut*	Zarʾa Yāʿqob
3	Beta Ləḥem	–	with *Dǝrsāna Māryām* (CAe 1750)	Dǝl Mangǝśā
4	Addis Ababa, NALE	Ms 27 (= UNESCO 2-27)	Pauline Epistles (CAe 3505)	?
5	London and Oslo, Schøyen Collection	Schøyen 2345	Acts of the Apostles	?
6a	Sorā ʾAmbā ʾAbbo	EMML 7220	*Miracles of Mary*	Zarʾa Yāʿqob
6b	Munich, MFK	MfVK 86-307647	*Miracles of Mary*	Zarʾa Yāʿqob
7	Private collection[25]	–	*Miracles of Mary*	Zarʾa Yāʿqob

The style is articulate but relatively easy to differentiate from others. It will also become apparent that only manuscripts with specific contents were illuminated in this manner. Interestingly, even though the miniatures on which I focus here have been used in several studies, they have never been investigated in a comparative form.[26] Based on one of the most striking features of this style, one could call it the style of the 'sad eyes'. All the figures depicted have what appear to be sad and melancholic eyes, with the drawing line of the corner of the eyes often left open. When depicting the deceased, the eyes are painted all black or all white, for example, in the crucifixion scenes. Almost all images portray people standing in half-portrait, with a specific placement of the feet of those depicted. Mary's feet, and the feet of some other holy women, are usually half-covered in socks or slippers, while all others are barefooted. The foot positioned to the back seems to be missing the big toe, or to have the toe tucked under the foot. This detail may just be an exaggeration of the ball of the foot viewed from the side. The feet often reach over the border frame enclosing the painting. Additionally, the ears are of a

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25 The manuscript's last known location is London.

26 Mercier (2021) simply calls it 'royal style', which I think is too generic, and, in fact, he includes manuscripts that have not been decorated in the style discussed here. While Heldman and Munro-Hay (1993, 178) do not use a specific term 'royal style', they connect them all to the 'palace scriptorium of emperor Dawit'. Stanisław Chojnacki's descriptions are of little use; he dated some of these items too late and placed them in the early sixteenth century (Chojnacki 1983, 58–59, 294), other manuscripts he correctly associated with Emperor Dāwit I (Chojnacki 1983, 192–194). However, at one point, he states that 'Stylistically, the miniatures in both manuscripts, that of Bethlehem and of Gešen Maryam belong to the same school and also date from the same period', contradicting his previous statements (Chojnacki 1983, 295).

pronounced shape and the noses are generally long and straight in some of the miniatures.

The miniatures of this style cover a full page. The images are colourful overall, and the background of each image is painted in a single bright colour, either blue, green or a yellow ochre. A few miniatures show architectural elements, or furniture, such as a throne on which Mary would sit. The images are surrounded by colourful frames in several different shades and, in most cases, decorated with interlaces. Many of the images depict one or two Apostles. When two, they are facing each other, usually holding a manuscript in one hand and a cross in the other. The clothes of those portrayed are vibrant, with intricate patterns, and often appear in a dynamic movement with zigzagged shapes. Captions are written both in the margins and inscribed into the coloured background; both are apparent in some manuscripts.[27]

As far as the available images of all witnesses allow us to say, the incipit pages of the texts of the codices are also decorated with elaborate interlaced headpieces executed in the same colour scheme as the miniatures. The text is laid out in two columns in all witnesses, and the headpieces on the incipit pages often extend down not only on the side margins but also in the intercolumnar space.[28]

The extraordinary miniatures of the 'sad eyes' style have been mentioned by several scholars before, however, without a comparative approach. Jacques Mercier selected individual witnesses, and simply referred to it as a 'royal style', while Marilyn Heldman emphasised the connection to the royal scriptorium of Emperor Dāwit.[29] Heldman also compared more than just one or two of the manuscripts available to her. Others have commented on the potential Byzantine influence of some of the miniatures, which is a discussion I do not want to repeat here.[30]

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27 Unfortunately, these are often hardly legible in black and white microfilms.

28 In this case, the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, discussed in the following, is exceptional.

29 Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, 178; Mercier 2021.

30 See, for example, the studies by Fiaccadori 1994; Bosc-Tiessé 2020, 351–353; Mercier 2021, 131–142, 177–179.

4 Description of the witnesses available

Seven manuscripts that attest to this specific painting style are currently known. Two manuscripts from the churches on ʾAmbā Gǝšan are the most famous. The first is a *Miracles of Mary* manuscript commissioned by Emperor Dāwit, which was microfilmed as EMML 9002.[31] The writing of the manuscript was finished in December 1400 (fol. 282[ra]), and it is known especially for the text it contains – most probably the first manuscript of this text translated from Arabic into Gǝʿǝz – as well as the use of gold ink in the miniatures and Mary's name.[32] The use of gold ink is extraordinary in the Ethiopian manuscript tradition and even made it into manuscripts itself as a story linked to a miracle of Mary. The paintings in this manuscript all centre around Mary, and show little variation in the style or arrangement of the figures (Fig. 2). Most of them depict the Virgin with the Child, flanked by the archangels Gabriel and Michael, who form a canopy with their wings. Remarkably, Emperor Dāwit is featured in several of the images, prostrating to the Virgin. Interestingly, he is portrayed with a halo, in the same yellow colour as the halos of the angels, whereas the halos of Mary and the Child are painted in the gold ink.[33]

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31 The black and white images is available at <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/201729> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

32 These two manuscripts from ʾAmbā Gǝšan, along with the history of this 'royal prison', have been studied for a long time regarding the artistic features; see Spencer 1967; Mercier 2004, 12–14, 35–37; Mercier 2021, 133–136; Gnisci 2022, 142–143. Both Kropp 2017 and Bausi 2022 (pages 141–144 have the full text of the colophon plus an English translation) point out that it is the oldest known copy of the *Miracles of Mary* found so far in Ethiopia. Given the context of the text, the colophon and the miniatures, it can be assumed that this was indeed the first translation of the text from Arabic into Gǝʿǝz.

33 Gnisci 2022, 142, 163.

Fig. 2: Annunciation of Mary, fol. 2ᵛ / ʾAmbā Gəšan / 1400 / EMML 9002 / Copyright/Photo: Diana Spencer with the permission of Michael Gervers.

The second manuscript from ʾAmbā Gəšan is the famous *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*. It may have been painted by two different artists, but a set of the images can quite certainly be attributed to the style of the 'sad eyes'.[34] This manuscript, which was commissioned by Zarʾa Yāʿqob, is famous for many reasons. It was used as a 'Golden Gospel'[35] of the church in ʾAmbā Gəšan and hosts numerous notes, partly copied from older manuscripts, from various emperors starting from ʿAmda Ṣəyon I (r. 1314–1344).[36] The fact that Zarʾa Yāʿqob commissioned the codex, and especially selected the three main texts therein – the Octateuch (*Orit*, CAe 2083), Four Gospels (*ʾArbāʿtu wangel*, CAe 1560) and *Senodos* (*Apostolic Canons*, CAe 2317) – to be copied into one is relevant for our study. The emperor expressed his intentions in the colophon of the manuscript, which is written on an additional short quire at the beginning of the codex.[37]

ወሀብኩ ፡ አነ ፡ ዘርእ ፡ ያዕቆብ ፡ ወልደ ፡ ዳዊት ፡ ወስመ ፡ መንግሥትየ ፡ ቄስጠንጢኖስ ፤ ዘነ ተ ፡ ኦሪተ ፡ ወወንጌለ ፡ ወሲኖዶስ ፡ ዘተጋብአ ፡ ውስተ ፡ አሐዱ ፡ ጽሕፈት ፡ ጸታ ፡ ሰለስታ ፤ ለ እግዝእትየ ፡ ወፍቅርትየ ፡ ማርያም ፤ ከመ ፡ ያንብቡ ፡ ካህናት ፡ በውስተ ፡ መርጡላ ፡ በበዓለ ፡ ወልዳ ፡ ወበበዓላ ፤[38]

I, Zarʾa Yāʿqob, son of Dāwit, and my regnal name is Qʷasṭanṭinos, gave this *Orit*, and Gospel, and *Sinodos* [sic] bound together into one script/writing, in threefold order, to my Lady and my Beloved One, Mary, so that the priests read it in her sanctuary on her Son's feast day and on her feast day.

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34 A lot has been said about this manuscript and its illuminations, usually in connection with its copy kept in the British Library, as Or. 481. See, among others, Spencer 1967; Fiaccadori 1994; Kropp 2018; Mercier 2021, 178.

35 Golden Gospel 'indicates a book of the Four Gospels in which notes regarding the institution (usually a monastery or a church), the place or the region where the codex is preserved, or where its owner dwells, are contained'; [the notes] 'are acts and grants declaring rights of exploitation, land prerogatives and benefits', Bausi 2010b, 1130b.

36 Especially useful for the overview of bibliography dedicated to this manuscript is Bosc-Tiessé and Derat 2010.

37 The full description of this manuscript and its important notes is beyond the scope of this article. The first report is by Spencer (1967), highlighting especially the illuminations. We owe the first description of its content to Caquot (1955a), with a focus on the notes, but he relied on information provided to him by others. Lastly, Manfred Kropp has published on various occasions on different notes from the codex. Most interesting in our regard is the colophon by Zarʾa Yāʿqob, Kropp 2018, 162–164. The note was also copied into the copy BL Or. 481, but with errors.

38 *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, fol. 1ra – see also Kropp 2018, 161 (image of the folios), 162 (text), 163 (translation). Images in a higher resolution are available at Mäzgäbä səəlat website <https://ethiopia.utsc.utoronto.ca/> (accessed on 4 September 2023), under the reference number MG-2008.081:002.

This combination of these three texts is a unicum in Ethiopia,[39] but beyond this, it is clear that Zarʾa Yāʿqob's intention was to create an object of high importance by also including the royal donation notes from previous kings. He himself left several extensive notes in the manuscript which attest to his church politics, both in creating new feast days, distributing land to churches and reordering the dioceses in the region of Təgrāy.[40] In addition to its texts, the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* is famous for its many illuminations of biblical scenes from Mary and the life of Jesus, as well as portraits of saints, which fit the stylistic oeuvre described in this study.[41]

The set of images is outstanding and differs from most of the other six manuscripts discussed here. While it is still the same style – sad eyes, the depiction of the feet, the colour schema – the scenes show much more variety as they illuminate scenes from the Octateuch and the Gospels. Thus, there are depictions of, for example, the Massacre of the Innocents by Herod, Jesus's Baptism in the Jordan River (Fig. 3) and how Moses received the Ten Commandments from God.[42] In addition, there are many scenes from Mary's life, and later, from the Gospels.

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39 Obviously, except for the (almost) exact copy BL Or. 481. Note another interesting multiple text manuscript, albeit combining Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Enoch, *Ascension of Isaiah*, *Testament of Our Lord*, *Didascalia,* and *Senodos*, kept in Dabra Bizan, was described in Bausi 2022, 163–167, see also n. 128.

40 Kropp 2005b.

41 The copy BL Or. 481 also quite faithfully copied the miniatures of the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, from which unfortunately just a few images are openly available. What is striking in Or. 481 are the excessive decorations in the margins and intercolumn space of all the text pages. Similar decorations can be found in another manuscript from ʾAmbā Gǝšan, digitised as EMML 9001, another Octateuch (*Orit*), thus, apparently an artistic feature applied to more than one manuscript in this scriptorium. There are two of the images Diana Spencer took of the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* which show some detail of decoration on text pages, but not enough to judge for the rest of the manuscript. My suspicion that the same type of marginal decorations is also to be found on all of the text pages of the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* has kindly been confirmed by Anaïs Wion, who is among the few who has seen more of the manuscript than just its miniatures. On the decorative features, see also Erho 2013, 80–81. EMML 9001 can be accessed at <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/201728> (accessed on 4 September 2023), judging by the palaeography, it might be older than the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, and a comparison of both *Orit* texts seems to be an interesting endeavour.

42 This was extensively discussed by Fiaccadori 1994.

Fig. 3: Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, from the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, folio unknown / ʾAmbā Gǝšan / fifteenth century / no shelf mark / Copyright/Photo: Diana Spencer with the permission of Michael Gervers.

As a text, the *Senodos* was of high importance at this time, and Zarʾa Yāʿqob commissioned and donated another copy of this work to the Ethiopian church in Jerusalem in the eighth year of his reign, 1441/1442.[43] He possibly intended to provide the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem with an updated version of the text, as they were probably still using an older, 'Melkite' version.[44] Similarly to the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, Zarʾa Yāʿqob had a long note in the first person singular included in the Jerusalem *Senodos* (fols 3ra–4v), in which he expressed his thoughts regarding the donation of this manuscript.[45] It can be assumed that he had similar intentions when commissioning the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*: to update the library of ʾAmbā Gəšan with a 'better' version of the *Senodos*. A similar goal probably led to the donation of a *Senodos* to Dimā Giyorgis (EMDA 00342) by ʾAmata Māryām, Zarʾa Yāʿqob's sister.

The *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* may also have been sent to ʾAmbā Gəšan because of the significance of the site. The plateau mountain in the shape of a cross is not far from the modern town Dase, in Wallo (northern Ethiopia), also goes by the name Dabra Karbe, and today hosts several churches. ʾAmbā Gəšan played an important role in the time of Dāwit and Zarʾa Yāʿqob when it functioned as a royal prison. It was customary that male relatives of the reigning monarch were held in custody there, either to protect them from rivals or keep them locked away so that they could not challenge the king's claim to the throne.[46] Zarʾa Yāʿqob spent almost thirty years on ʾAmbā Gəšan before he ascended the throne in 1434. ʾAmbā Gəšan is also famous for hosting the relic of the true cross that Emperor Dāwit sought to obtain for a long time, although he died before it arrived. Zarʾa Yāʿqob received the relic in 1456 and searched for a long time to find a suitable place for it. ʾAmbā Gəšan was shown to him in a vision, as worthy because of its cross-shaped mountain.[47]

ʾAmbā Gəšan was not only home to Zarʾa Yāʿqob personally, but also appears have had a scriptorium equipped for producing outstanding manuscripts, as the two examples mentioned here prove.[48] It is possible that other of the manuscripts presented here originate from ʾAmbā Gəšan's scriptorium.

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43 The manuscript is nowadays preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, as Borg. et. 2.

44 Bausi 1992, 19. For additional bibliography on this text see Bausi 2010a.

45 The full note and Latin translation in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935, 779–781, additional thoughts on the note in Cerulli 1943, 237–238.

46 The custom as royal prison might date back to the thirteenth century, Haile Gabriel Dagne 2003.

47 Caquot 1955a, 102–103.

48 Unfortunately, only a few manuscripts from ʾAmbā Gəšan have been microfilmed, among them EMML 9001, an Octateuch.

A third manuscript decorated in the style of the 'sad eyes' contains a collection of homilies, a *Dərsāna Māryām*, dedicated to the veneration of Mary,[49] among whose texts are also a number of Marian miracles. It was donated by Dəl Mangəśā,[50] daughter of Dāwit, as explained in a lengthy donation note, where her baptismal name Batra ʾAron is also provided.[51] The manuscript is still preserved in the church to which Dəl Mangəśā donated the manuscript, Beta Ləḥem in Gāyənt, a church that she herself had built and that is known thanks to two remarkable notes in another manuscript: the Four Gospels of Lālibalā, kept in Beta Madḫāne ʿĀlam church, which was digitised as EMML 6907.[52] Chronologi-

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49 The texts in this manuscript have often been called the *Lāḥā Māryām* (*Lamentation of Mary*, CAe 1750), which is, however, a title of a very specific homily on Mary composed by Cyriacus of Behnesa, and should not refer to the entire collection found in this manuscript from Beta Ləḥem.

50 Her name is found in different spellings, other than those presented here in the following, for example, her name is spelled Dəlma Nəgśa in the *Miracles of Libānos* (CAe 4717), Bausi (ed.) 2003a, 173 (text); Bausi (tr.) 2003b, 99, esp. n. 78. Her name is often rendered as 'Dəl Mogäsa' in secondary sources, for example, Wion 2017; Fritsch and Habtemichael Kidane 2020, 180, or in the form of 'Dəl Mängəśa' in, for example, Herman 2020, 373. See also the discussion in Bombeck 2022, 196–197. I choose the spelling Dəl Mangəśā as is found in the manuscript New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, M.828, fol 205vb.

51 This manuscript has also been studied several times before, again with excerpts of the miniatures, for example, in Jäger 1957; Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, 92; Mercier 2004, 84–86. The manuscript, in fact, contains a mix of texts venerating the Virgin Mary, among them a collection of fifteen miracles of Mary, Kropp 2017. The full text of the manuscript was translated into German by Bombeck 2010, cf. also Bombeck 2022. The manuscript contains the *gʷəlt* donation note by Dəl Mangəśā on fol. 2[r]. The full material is available on Bombeck's website <http://www.bombeck.de/stefan.html> (accessed on 4 September 2023). The full note is also presented and translated in Bosc-Tiessé and Derat 2011, 90–92. Tony Burke created an entry for this manuscript on the North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature (NASSCAL) website on 1 February 2020, <https://www.nasscal.com/manuscripta-apocryphorum/dabra-tabor-bethlehem-church-no-shelf-number/?fbclid=IwAR17g_3M_NtOva4TKf91Flxf8qznnPLdpHE_9AIF4FhVGG7rQNglP5CB1zE> (accessed on 4 September 2023), this also includes links to the images and full text of the manuscript. I thank Marcin Krawczuk for bringing this to my attention. Chojnacki also used the manuscript for his study of major themes in Ethiopian paintings, he indicates that Diana Spencer took photographs of the manuscript (Chojnacki 1983, 58), however these are not available.

52 This manuscript is remarkable on its own. The two notes written in 1410 possibly by Metropolitan ʾAbuna Bartalomewos himself, one in Coptic and one in Arabic, which inform us about Emperor Dāwit's land donations to the church Beta Ləḥem, which his daughter had built are relevant for our case here. The manuscript is accessible online, the notes are on fol. 61[v], <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/view/200535> (accessed on 4 September 2023). Many studies have used this manuscript including Schneider 1970; Bosc-Tiessé and Derat 2011; Wion 2017. See also Bosc-Tiessé 2020, 363. Jäger 1957 presented some colour images, but misidentified them, see his plates 3, 6, 9, 12, 15.

cally, this *Dərsāna Māryām* is actually older than the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, and similar in age to the ʾAmbā Gəšan *Miracles of Mary*.[53] The *gʷəlt* note of Dəl Mangəśā mentions not only her father, but also Metropolitan *ʾAbuna* Bartalomewos (who arrived in Ethiopia in 1398/1399, in office till 1436) and the Coptic pope (*liqa ṗāṗṗāsāt*) Mātewos (1378–1409), which allows for a precise dating of the note to the time between 1398/1399 and 1409.

Dəl Mangəśā was the ruler of Bagemdər and is known from a few other notes, for example, the Zir Gānelā Gospel, dated 1400/1401,[54] as well as from the Four Gospels manuscript of Ṭānā, Kəbrān Gabrəʾel, Ṭānāsee 1.[55] In the latter, two notes also mention her as the ruler of Bagemdər, the first note from the time of the reign of her father Dāwit, the second from her brother Yəsḥaq's time, which proves that she was the ruler for a considerable time span.

The artistic style of the twelve full-page images of the *Dərsāna Māryām* manuscript in Beta Ləḥem is close to the other manuscripts. They resemble the style of the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* in the sense that the miniatures often depict lively scenes with several people, while the miniatures in the ʾAmbā Gəšan *Miracles of Mary* usually only show Mary and the child flanked by the angels. The miniatures in the Beta Ləḥem manuscript depict mostly scenes from Mary's childhood (Fig. 4) and later life, accompanying the texts of the manuscript in her veneration, but also two portraits of single saints, *ʾAbba* Həryāqos (i.e. Cyriacus of Behnesa, p. 321), and Bāsəlyos (i.e. Basil of Caesarea, p. 393, Fig. 5).

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53 The manuscript was originally commissioned by a Gabra Krəstos, Dəl Mangəśā was only a later owner; the original name of Gabra Krəstos still survives on page [sic] 270 of the manuscript, thus, the manuscript antedates her colophon.

54 New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, M.828, fol. 205[vb]. On Zir Ganela, see Heldman 2014. Note that in the *EAe* article, or also in Mercier 2021, 159, Zir Ganela is described as a half-sister of Dāwit, and daughter of Sayfa ʾArʿād; the note in the manuscript, however, clearly states that she is a 'daughter of the daughter of King ʿAmda Ṣəyon' (**ወለተ ፡ ዋለተ ፡ ለዓምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ንጉሥ ፨**), grandfather of Dāwit, making them cousins.

55 Taddesse Tamrat 1974, 506–507, 510. For the notes in the manuscript, see <https://betamasaheft. eu/manuscripts/Tanasee1/viewer?fbclid=IwAR3AgQlWo5T3K8HyET9kEt2L2tFKSKWCEVwUsFmFRe62_ n3oJ9b_w06pWVw> (accessed on 4 September 2023), fols 3[ra], 237[ra]; in this manuscript her name is spelled Dəlmangaśā [sic], and the second note is from her brother Yəsḥaq, who ruled 1413–1440.

Fig. 4: Presentation of Mary at the Temple, p. [sic] 25 / Beta Ləḥem / 1398/1399 to 1409 / no shelf mark / Photo: Kai Beerman, image provided by Annegret Marx.

Fig. 5: Basil of Caesarea, p. 393 / Beta Ləḥem / 1398/1399 to 1409 / no shelf mark / Photo: Kai Beerman, image provided by Annegret Marx.

The depictions of the saints are specific, in frontal pose, with their feet neatly positioned underneath the body, as if they were standing on tiptoes. Both figures seem to wear a long, pointed hood, which extends high above their halos. This type of depiction of male saints only features in the manuscript from Beta Ləḥem and not in the other manuscripts ascribed to this style. A rare depiction is that of the Assumption of Mary (*Fəlsatā*) on page 271, which shows Jesus surrounded by his Twelve Apostles praying over the shrouded body of his mother.[56] The image of the Annunciation of Mary in Beta Ləḥem is similar to the one in the ʾAmbā Gəšan *Miracles of Mary* (Fig. 2), and, to a slightly lesser extent, to the Annunciation in the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*.[57] Mary is positioned on the right, spinning thread and faces Gabriel who stands on the left side, holding a long cross, and pointing his finger at her. The depictions of Gabriel's wings, painted in red and yellow, with blue vertical lines in addition are especially similar in these two manuscripts.

One of the images in the Beta Ləḥem codex, showing the Crucifixion (p. 213), might originate from another painter, as Mary has no halo in this one and her *maphorion* has an angular shape, without a cross symbol, while in all other miniatures, she has a halo, and the veil around her face is round-shaped and decorated with a cross symbol. In this miniature, she is also depicted without the typical small socks that she wears in almost all of the other images. Additionally, the background is left 'white', which is also a unicum, as the backgrounds are coloured in all the other miniatures. If this was indeed painted by another artist, this person paid great attention to following the overall style of the other images.

A manuscript with the Pauline Epistles (CAe 3505), kept at NALE as Ms 27, also digitised by the UNESCO as UNESCO 2-27, is next to be discussed here. Much less is known about this manuscript, and only a few colour images are accessible.[58] Yosef Demissie has studied the extensive text emendations that appear in this codex.[59] According to the UNESCO handlist, the manuscript came from Dabra Ḥayq

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56 For a depiction of this, see Chojnacki 1983, 318, for a description of the miniature, 294–295.

57 This becomes obvious when comparing the miniatures in both manuscripts directly, search for 'DS-1966.006:004' on <http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca/lightbox1.jsp> (accessed on 4 September 2023). In addition, the image '45' on <http://www.bombeck.de/stefan/bilder/bilder.html> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

58 In Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, cat. 68 with two colour images from the manuscript: portrait of the three saints: Paul, Silvanus and Timothy standing (fols 99ᵛ–100ʳ); portraits of Paul and Timothy standing (fols 54ᵛ–55ʳ). A black and white copy of the manuscript via the copy of the UNESCO microfilm digitised by EMIP is available online <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/NLA27/viewer> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

59 Yosef Demissie 2015.

ʾƎsṭifānos.[60] Heldman stated that it is rather uncommon in Ethiopia to illuminate Pauline Epistles manuscripts, so, again, we encounter a deliberate act of its commissioner.[61] Heldman notes further that there are presently twelve miniatures in the manuscript, but adds that 'five portraits of Paul are missing'.[62]

In this respect, Mercier suggests that a manuscript kept 'in private collection' constitutes the other half of the manuscript and he refers to the two as a 'collection of *Epistles* and *Acts of the Apostles*, in two volumes'.[63] This manuscript, which is kept in the Schøyen Collection, contains the Acts of the Apostles. Even fewer images of this are available. Mercier shows one image (a standing portrait of the Apostle James)[64] and two more are available in the Sam Fogg Catalogue 18 (the Twelve Apostles and St Paul, and a single portrait of St Jude the Apostle), where it is indicated that the manuscript contains a total of seven illustrations.[65] Curt Niccum consulted the manuscript, and describes it in a short note, where it is called 'ms. 2345'.[66] He notes that both this and the NALE Ms 27 were rebound, most probably still in Ethiopia, which caused the disarrangement of both parts of the text and the images.[67] In contrast to Mercier, Niccum does not believe that the manuscripts are a collection in two volumes but considers them as two individual codices that accidentally got mixed up. No text images are openly available from Schøyen 2345, but Niccum's description of a heavily redacted or corrected text clearly resembles NALE Ms 27, which shows extensive traces of use.[68] The measurements of the two manuscripts are close, but too far apart to be one and the same codex, NALE Ms 27 measures '35 × 25 cm';[69] and Schøyen 2345 measures

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60 UNESCO 1970. It does not further surprise that the monastery of Dabra Ḥayq ʾƎsṭifānos would hold a manuscript which shows a close connection to the scriptorium of the royal family, as its monks together with ʾAbuna Salāmā (metropolitan from 1348 or 1350 to 1388 or 1390) were probably influential in placing Dāwit on the throne, see Wion 2017.

61 Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, 178.

62 Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, 178.

63 Mercier 2021, 177 and especially 327, n. 1 for Chapter 5.

64 Mercier 2021, 177.

65 Fogg and Miller (eds) 1996, 79–82.

66 Schøyen 1999, 123; Niccum 2008. I thank Ted Erho for the information on the Schøyen Collection.

67 Niccum 2008, 1.

68 'Either the original copiest [sic] or a contemporary made a number of corrections', Niccum 2008, 2. The emendations are mentioned by Yosef Demissie 2015, who also shows sample images. In Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, cat. 68, bottom, some of this can be seen on the recto folio, next to the image of Paul and Timothy (fols 54ᵛ–55ʳ).

69 Heldman and Munro-Hay 1993, 178b.

'335 × 235 mm'.[70] We have seen very uncommon combination of texts in the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, combining the *Orit*, the gospels and the *Senodos*, illuminated by the artist under study here. Thus, it is not unprecedented in the early fifteenth century, and especially in the milieu of the royal court, to commission unusual manuscripts, however, the measurements of the two items are too far apart to indicate that they were once one codex. In addition, combining the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles into one codex happened only at a later time.

The miniatures in both manuscripts are executed in the style of the 'sad eyes', yet, their set-up differs from those discussed previously. The illuminated folios in the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles usually depict only one or two figures, mostly the Apostles or New Testament fathers that are mentioned in the texts. The only exception appears in Schøyen 2345, where, on fol. 77ᵛ, St Paul is depicted together with the Twelve Apostles.[71] In NALE Ms 27 there is one miniature with three figures, Pāwlos, Səlwānos, Ṭimotewos.[72] Architectural features are not visible in these two manuscripts. Unfortunately, for neither of the parts of the manuscripts is it clear who commissioned them. Since Schøyen 2345 is not easily accessible, this question will have to remain open. We can only draw tentative connections based on the origin from Dabra Ḥayq ʾƏsṭifānos, which, at some point in time, was close to Emperor Dāwit and, in addition, is not too far away from ʾAmbā Gəšan.

There are two more manuscripts, both containing the *Miracles of Mary*, that were commissioned by Zarʾa Yāʿqob and which are also illuminated in the style of the 'sad eyes'. The first manuscript encountered a tragic fate and currently consists of two parts: the first part has been microfilmed as EMML 7220 (from Sorā ʾAmbā ʾAbbo church) and the second is the Munich manuscript, MFK MfVK 86-307647, mentioned above.[73] The opening image in EMML 7220 displays the Virgin with her Child in the *Kykkotissa* style, flanked by two angels. Then follows a depiction of Mary in *orans* pose (Fig. 6, fol. 7ᵛ), executed in the same form as the two male saints in the Beta Ləḥem manuscript (see Fig. 5), in frontal depiction with her feet visible underneath her, as if on tiptoes, and, in this case, without her typical socks. The rest of the images in both manuscripts depict two New Testament figures each, always facing each other, the same as in both

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70 Fogg and Miller (eds) 1996, 79 (they already remarked on the similar size of the two manuscripts), the same measurements in Mercier 2021, 177.

71 Fogg and Miller (eds) 1996, 81.

72 The manuscript has not been foliated, and on the pictures, it is the verso page of the opening 97.

73 Ted Erho was so kind to bring EMML 7220 to my attention, we both hope to further elaborate on this manuscript in the future, which is why I limit the description of details here. The evidence that both parts formerly formed one codex, however, is indisputable. The manuscript is accessible online, <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/200792> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

NALE Ms 27 and Schøyen 2345. Four names are mentioned in the supplication formulas of these manuscripts. Next to Zarʾa Yāʿqob, there are ʾAmata Māryām, Habta Māryām and Zamada Māryām, the first of which can be identified as his sister, while the latter two remain unknown.[74] One may notice, of course, that they all contain the name of Māryām, and they might be baptismal names of Zarʾa Yāʿqob's siblings, however, just as likely, they might be unrelated people who cannot be identified.

Fig. 6: Mary in *orans* pose, fol. 7ᵛ / Sorā ʾAmbā ʾAbbo / 1434–1468 / EMML 7220 / Photo: image courtesy of the Sorā Ambā Abbo church in Wallo province, Ethiopia, and the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. Published with permission of the owners. All rights reserved.

Finally, there is yet another manuscript which is known only through a short reference and one image.[75] This manuscript also contains the *Miracles of Mary*, and, based on Mercier's description, was also commissioned by Zarʾa Yāʿqob.[76] The

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74 Zamada Māryām is only mentioned in the EMML 7220 half of the original codex. For the other names, see Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 89.

75 When Mercier showed this manuscript in 2000, it was owned by the art dealer Sam Fogg. Its current whereabouts are not known to me, cf. Mercier (ed.) 2000, 80.

76 Mercier (ed.) 2000, 80.

one image that Mercier reproduces allows us to again identify the same artistic style discussed here: this opening shows the Virgin with Child on the verso side, and the Apostles Peter and Paul on the recto side, thus, following an artistic arrangement that we observed in the previous manuscripts. I was able to compare further miniatures of the manuscript, which altogether number ten.[77] The codex opens with the Virgin and Child accompanied by angels, followed by eight portraits of two male figures each and, finally, a depiction of Mary in *orans* pose on tiptoes, virtually identical to the one in EMML 7220. What appears to be different in this private manuscript is that nine images follow each other on the first five folios of the manuscript, whereas in the other manuscripts, they are usually single miniatures in between text units. Here, only Mary in *orans* comes in between text units. This might be an indication that this manuscript has also been rebound at some point in time.

Similar to some of the others, this manuscript is incomplete, and its remaining half has not been identified. What is of interest is the particularly short invocation for Zarʾa Yāʿqob, for the protection of his soul and body, written in the first person singular. Mercier provides the following French translation of this note: 'Ceci est le livre des Miracles de Notre-Dame la Sainte Vierge Marie que j'ai donné [...] (espace blanc) afin qu'il soit une médicine pour l'âme et le corps du roi Zärʾa Yaʿeqob'.[78] Similar lines are found in other manuscripts commissioned by Zarʾa Yāʿqob, and attest to his great devotion to the Virgin.[79]

5 Manuscripts from other family members

It is interesting to see that three members of the royal family commissioned and donated manuscripts illuminated in the style of the 'sad eyes' over almost forty years. We saw the evidence for Dāwit, Dəl Mangəśā and Zarʾa Yāʿqob. There is,

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77 As has already been indicated by Mercier (ed.) 2000, 80. I am grateful to the owner of these images, who wishes to remain anonymous, for showing them to me.

78 Mercier (ed.) 2000, 80.

79 In addition to the long texts that the king authored, and which often include mention of him in the first person singular, there are other notes, especially in lengthy donation notes, such as for the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* (see above) or the *Senodos* now in the Vatican Library. During the conference talk from which this paper derives, I presented the manuscript London, BL, Add. 11678, which includes an identical line. I argued that this London manuscript potentially contains the text *Kaḥdata Sayṭān* (CAe 1711), which according to the chronicle, was composed by Zarʾa Yāʿqob (Perruchon 1893, 40, 77–78). This would argue against the claim by Fritsch 2013, and his identification of this text.

however, another son of Dāwit, Emperor Yəsḥaq I, who ruled in between Dāwit and Zarʾa Yāʿqob, and from whom some outstanding manuscripts are also attested. These are also illuminated manuscripts, which have a similar style, and might stand in some connection to a royal scriptorium, but there are noticeable differences that pertain to a different artist.

Unfortunately, in comparison to Zarʾa Yāʿqob, there is limited information about Yəsḥaq and his reign. There are, however, several manuscripts with donation notes and references to his reign. It is known that he was also an active regent, and part of his reign was dedicated to the fight against the Beta ʾƏsrāʾel, the Ethiopian Jews. Where he defeated them, especially in Wagarā province (north of Gondar town), he built churches to mark his victory, and equipped those churches with manuscripts and land grants.[80] In addition to the churches in Wagarā, there is one manuscript in Məṣ̌ale Fāsiladas, on the shore of Lake Ṭana, famous for its depiction of the death of Herodias, and the martyrdom of Saint Qirqos (Quiricus) and Julitta.[81] This was a donation by Yəsḥaq as is stated in the text, 'f. 254v: "This is the book that I, Yeshaq, have given, and my royal name is Gabra Masqal, to the place of Mary in Dabra Metselle"'.[82] Some of the stylistic features of its images are reminiscent of the 'sad eyes' style: the eyes are also shaped in a similar form, sad and droopy, and the ears are of similar shape, as are the feet, in the Məṣ̌ale manuscript. The general colour scheme and the way the garments are decorated are also close. Yet, it was clearly not executed by the same artist.

The artist who illuminated the Məṣ̌ale manuscript is also known from another manuscript, kept in Bərbər Māryām: a richly illuminated *Rətuʿā hāymānot* (CAe 2222) homiliary.[83] This manuscript contains not only lavish miniatures, but also elaborate headpieces and marginal decorations on the text pages, which are reminiscent of those in the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* and EMML 9001. Again, the features are similar to the 'sad eyes' style, for example, the wings of the archangel Gabriel in the An-

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80 The information is indeed limited. The latest study about Yəsḥaq's campaign against the Beta ʾƏsrāʾel and the foundation of churches is by Kribus 2023.

81 Mercier 2021, 129 (a stunning miniature of the forty martyrs of Sebaste), and 144–145. The image is also available from the collection of Chojnacki, hosted by the Vatican Library, <https://digi.vatlib.it/stp/detail/20035454> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

82 Quoted after Mercier (ed.) 2000, 327b, n. 21.

83 Mentioned in Chojnacki 1983, 117; Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 91. It was microfilmed as EMML 9084, but is unfortunately one of those films that can only be accessed at the NALE in Addis Ababa. Some images are available through the Mäzgäbä səəlat website, with the search terms 'Birbir' and 'Bərbər' <http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca/lightbox1.jsp> (accessed on 4 September 2023). There are some images available in publications, see Haberland 1976, fig. 1; Mercier (ed.) 2000, 150.

nunciation scene have almost identical patterns and colour arrangements as those in the manuscripts of Beta Ləḥem and the ʾAmbā Gəšan *Miracles of Mary* described above. In addition, the manuscript is decorated with several full-page miniatures of crosses, with lavish colours and interlaces.[84] Regarding the *Rətuʿā hāymānot* text, this is apparently the only manuscript known with illuminations.[85] Yəsḥaq, thus, acted like his other family members in ordering specific copies of illustrated manuscripts.

The church of Bərbər Māryām is a remarkable place, situated in the Gāmo province close to Abaya Lake, some 400 km south of Addis Ababa, thus, in the fifteenth century, really in the hinterlands of the Christian realm. The few studies dedicated to the church so far see its foundation in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, associating it either with Emperor Baʾəda Māryām (r. 1468–1478)[86] or Emperor Ləbna Dəngəl (r. 1508–1540).[87] The one manuscript from Bərbər Māryām, EMML 9092,[88] that includes donation notes from Baʾəda Māryām, however, also includes two much older notes and seems to have been used as a Golden Gospel of the church. One note on fol. 153ᵛ is from 'King Gabra Masqal'. There were several kings with this name as a baptismal name; however, there is also additional information in the note that lets us date it to Yəsḥaq's reign and, indeed, his baptismal name was also Gabra Masqal:[89]

በስመ ፡ ስሉስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ተፈነወት ፡ ዛቲ ፡ ክርታስ ፡ እምኃብ(?) ፡ ን(?)ጉ ሥነ ፡ ገብረ(?) […]ስ(?) ቀል ፡ ዘተሰመይኩ ፡ በጸ(?)ጋ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ትብ(?)ጸ(?)ሐ ፡ ኃብ ፡ ሕዝብየ ፡ ኢትዮ(?)ጵያ ፡ አ እረፈአ ፡ ብጹዕ ፡ ሊቀ ፡ ጳጳሳ ፡ [sic] አቡነ ፡ አባ ፡ ገብርኤል ፡ ወግበሩ ፡ ተዝካሮ ፡ ፱ ፡ ዕለተ ፡ እምአሚሩ ፡ ለታኃሣሥ ፡ [sic] እስከ ፡ እም ፡ ፲ለጥር ፡ ወዕለተ ፡ ዕረ(?)ፍ(?)ቱ(?) ፡ ይእቲ ፡ አሚ(!) ሃ ፡ ወዘ ፡ ተሰይመኒ ፡ ሊቀ ፡ ጳጳሳ ፡ [sic] አባ(?) ፡ ዮሐንስ ፡ ዝክሩ ፡ ስሞ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ተ(!)ዓርጥ ፡ ዕ ጣን ፡ ወመስዋዕተ ፡ ወለአለ ፡ ገበርክሙ ፡ ተዝካሮ ፡ [sic] ለአቡነ ፡ አባ ፡ ገብርኤል ፡ ጸሎቱ ፡ ወበ ረከቱ ፡ ወሃ(?)ይ(?)ማኖቱ ፡ ተሃሉ ፡ ምስለ ፡ ኩልነ ፡ ውሉደ ፡ ጥም(?)ቀ(?)ት ፡ አሜን ፡ ጸሎቶ ሙ ፡ ወበረከቶሙ ፡ ለሊቀ ፡ ጳጳሳ ፡ [sic] አባ ፡ ዮሐስ ፡ ወብዑ ፡ ጳጳሳ ፡ [sic] አባ ፡ በርተሎ ሜ(?)ዎስ ፡ ትንብልናሆሙ ፡ ወጸጋ ፡ ረድኤቶሙ ፡ ይዕ(?)ቀብክሙ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ትገብ(?)ሩ ፡ ፌቃ

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84 Yəsḥaq was a fan of crosses and there are many that he donated to various churches, see Mercier (ed.) 2000; Mercier 2021.

85 Erho 2024, 330, 375–376.

86 Deresse Ayenachew 2011, referring to a land grant in EMML 9092, fol. 7ᵛ.

87 Caquot 1955b.

88 The manuscript includes several royal notes, also from Ǝskendər (r. 1478–1494) and Ləbna Dəngəl. The manuscript is available online: <https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/201780> (accessed on 4 September 2023).

89 The manuscript was damaged by water, also the quality of the microfilm is low, even the colour images on Mäzgäbä səəlat do not help to clearly read all passages. The parts that remain unclear I marked with (?). Some parts are completely lost and marked with […].

ዶ ፡ ለቡ‑ክሙ‑ ፡ [sic] *ሰማ[...]ዊ ፡ በ(?)[...]ሉ‑ ፡ ጊዜ ፡ ወበኮ‑ሉ‑ ፡ ሰዓት ፡ እስከ ፡ ለዓለም ፡ አሜን ፡ ለ ይኩ‑ን ።*[90]

In the name of the Holy Trinity. This letter/book (*kərtās*) was sent from our king, Gabra Masqal, I who by the grace of God am called [...]. May it reach to my people, to Ethiopia, [that] 'the blessed (Coptic) pope (*liqa p̣āp̣p̣āsāt*) ʾAbuna ʾAbbā Gabrəʾel has departed'. Hold his *tazkār* for 40 days, from the first day of Taḥśāś until the tenth of Ṭərr. And the day of his departure, that is then. And he who was appointed is (Coptic) Pope ʾAbbā Yoḥannəs. Remember his name when you send up incense and offering. And you who perform the *tazkār* of our father ʾAbbā Gabrəʾel, may his prayer and his blessing and his faith be with all us children of the baptism. Amen. And may the prayers and blessings of (Coptic) Pope ʾAbbā Yoḥannəs and of our blessed Metropolitan ʾAbuna Bartalomewos, their intercession and the grace of their help, keep you as you do the will of your Heavenly Father, at every time and at every hour until eternity. Amen, let it be (so)!

The note commemorates the passing of the Coptic pope Gabriel V and informs about the appointment of his successor John XI, which took place in 1427 CE, providing us with a rough date.[91] If the note was coeval to the manuscript, it would possibly allow us to antedate the foundation of the church. The language here is not clear, 'a letter that was sent' (*ተፈነወት ፡ ዛቲ ፡ ክርታስ ፡*), might indicate that it was indeed a letter from Yəsḥaq, copied into the manuscript at a later time. But ክርታስ (*kərtās*) could also translate to 'book', and would, thus, refer to the manuscript itself. Eike Haberland, one of the few scholars who has visited the church, stated that indeed the manuscripts were prepared in the north of the kingdom and sent down to the south.[92] This is further supported by another note in this gospel manuscript. There is a note on fols 10va–11ra that was unfortunately erased in certain sections, therefore, the name of the king is no longer visible, but that appears to record gifts to the ruler (*śayyum*) of ʿAgāme ʾAgḥadom.[93] This ʾAgḥadom is known from several other manuscripts, and was a contemporary of Dāwit and possibly also of Yəsḥaq.[94] There is a short Arabic line in the upper margin of fol. 10v, difficult to

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90 Text transcribed and translated by myself.

91 The Synaxar mentions Gabriel on the fifth of Ṭərr. Yəsḥaq seemed to have a special connection to Pope Gabriel, maybe because the pope had sent him the relic of Mark's head?

92 Haberland 1976, 21.

93 ʿAgāme is a region in north-east Təgrāy.

94 ʾAgḥadom, sometimes also spelled ʾAkḥadom, was an important figure in the history of Təgrāy, and is mentioned in the oral tradition in ʾAgāme and its surroundings. He is also mentioned in a gospel manuscript from Māryām Māy ʾAbʾa in Təgrāy, now preserved in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Ms 1894 – more on this in Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023 – as well as in EMML 2514, a *Gadla samāʿtāt* manuscript in ʾAstit Kidāna Məḥrat church. While these two seem to be coeval to ʾAgḥadom's lifetime, there are also later reports on him, for example, in

decipher, which could say 'thanks be to God for the wealth/possession', i.e. thanks be to God for giving me this book (الشكر لله على المال).[95]

Additional evidence as to the time of the foundation of Bərbər Māryām might come from the illuminated *Rətu'ā hāymānot* mentioned above. It is illuminated in the same style as the Məṣ̣ale Fāsiladas manuscript for which there is a donation note from Yəsḥaq. Thus, it is possible that Yəsḥaq donated these two manuscripts to Bərbər Māryām when the church was established. Should this align with the commemoration note for the appointment of the Coptic pope John XI, the manuscript must be dated around the year 1427, possibly the year after. Yəsḥaq's manuscripts in Bərbər Māryām are a further source that proves how far south he expanded the Christian Solomonic realm.[96]

Yəsḥaq shows the same behaviour as his family members. After conquering a region, he founded churches therein to manifest his influence; this is attested by several churches stretching over a wide area of Ethiopia. In more than one of these churches, manuscripts have been preserved that go back to these foundations by Yəsḥaq, as he equipped them with essential manuscripts such as the Four Gospels. Some of these manuscripts have clearly been illuminated by the same artist. Also similar to his family members, we find texts richly illuminated which are otherwise not known to have been decorated, such as the *Rətu'ā hāymānot* in Bərbər Māryām.

6 Conclusion

The imperial Ethiopian family of the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century left a lasting impression on the Ethiopian and Eritrean highlands shaping its borders, intensifying Christian beliefs, changing the church doctrine and calendar, expanding international relations and also influencing the artistic expression of the era by commissioning the construction of churches and the production of icons,[97] crosses and manuscripts.

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the *Gadla Yāfqəranna 'Əgzi'*, Wajnberg 1936, 59; Tsegay Berhe G. Libanos 2003, or the *Gadla Libānos* (Bausi (tr.) 2003b, 55, 59).

95 The note is not easy to read due to water damage of the folio.

96 Other sources are the imperial songs which list all the regions in the south that brought tribute to Yəsḥaq, among them Gamo, cf. Guidi 1889, 55–58; Littmann 1914, 12–16; Haberland 1976, 17, who further presents a map ('Karte 2') with a few dozen churches in the southern regions, near Bərbər.

97 On the emergence of icons in Ethiopia and Eritrea, see Krebs 2024.

This article has examined references to members of the royal family in manuscripts in order to gather some new information about the patronage of female family members, who have often been ignored or simply referred to as 'his wife' or 'his sister' in the literature. In this regard, there are several noteworthy women who can be identified through manuscripts and other sources: Emperor Dāwit's wife, Queen Magdalāwit, in the Gospel of Dabra Maʿār Giyorgis; his sister, Dəl Sefa, who is credited with helping him ascend to the throne; and his daughter ʾAmata Māryām as a donator of a *Senodos* manuscript. His other daughter, Dəl Mangəśā, is featured in several notes, which attest to her power as ruler over the region of Bagemdər. One of the manuscripts that mentions her is the richly illuminated Gospel by Zir Ganelā, Dāwit's cousin.

Regarding Zarʾa Yāʿqob, Dāwit's successor, we have identified several family members in just one manuscript (EMML 3879), with notes of his wife ʾƎleni, her potential daughter Barbārā and other children who remain anonymous. His daughter Dəl Samrā, who in later years lost her father's appreciation, still features in this manuscript as a benefactor to the church of Qirqos.

Concerning Yəsḥaq, one of the two influential successors of Dāwit, manuscript evidence highlights his expansion politics into the southern region of Gāmo and places him in the same line as his relatives: founding churches and furnishing them with essential manuscripts. His name is found in many donation notes in important manuscripts, and there are at least three that mention the Coptic pope Gabriel, who passed away during Yəsḥaq's lifetime. It can be argued that Yəsḥaq received an important relic from the pope, assumedly before the year 1427. The manuscripts that Yəsḥaq commissioned are not only lavishly illuminated, but he also selected specific texts, such as the *Rətuʿā hāymānot*, which are not usually illuminated. While these manuscripts were illuminated in a similar style to the 'sad eyes' style commissioned by his family members, they were produced by a different artist and contain noticeable differences.

Finally, the article has presented the first systematic overview of the seven known manuscripts illuminated in the style of the 'sad eyes' (see Table 1). I have reconstructed the history of the objects, which have partly become dismembered and currently constitute eight units of circulation. It is remarkable that these seven manuscripts were produced over a period of almost forty years. One has to ask whether we are looking at the work of one artist – active for a long period of time – where the slight variations in style could be seen as a normal evolvement of any artist – or whether we are instead looking at an artistic school, with a distinct style, possibly based in the royal scriptorium.

What is clear is that the royal family had a strong preference for a distinct group of artists and hired them repeatedly. Many of the manuscripts that were

decorated with their miniatures contained either texts new to Ethiopia – such as the *Miracles of Mary* – or closely connected to Emperor Dāwit and other members of the royal family, three of them to Zarʾa Yāʿqob. In addition, several of the witnesses originate directly from or an area close to the royal mountain of ʾAmbā Gəšan. The hypothesis that the artists were actually based in a royal scriptorium is not farfetched, and, if so, this scriptorium was most likely located on ʾAmbā Gəšan.

The manuscripts were specific creations and contain texts that were not usually illuminated, such as the Pauline Epistles and *Rətuʿā hāymānot*. In the case of Dəl Mangəśā and the Beta Ləḥem manuscript, we learn from the donation note therein, that she searched particularly for this manuscript in order to donate it to the church. The case of the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut* commissioned by Zarʾa Yāʿqob, which presents a unique collection of texts, primary and secondary notes, and miniatures, is also striking. One of its texts, the *Senodos*, the most important canonico-liturgical collection of instructions 'dealing with various aspects of ecclesiastical practice, such as appointment and functions of the hierarchy (from the reader to the patriarch), liturgy (esp. baptism and mass), prayer, Biblical canon, moral teachings and disciplinary rules',[98] was donated more than once by him and other members of the royal family (cf. the manuscript Dimā Giyorgis, EMDA 00342, donated by his sister ʾAmata Māryām). In addition to the *Senodos* in the *Maṣḥafa ṭefut*, Zarʾa Yāʿqob commissioned another *Senodos* manuscript, now kept in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Borg. et. 2, which the emperor deliberately sent to the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem in 1441/1442.[99]

Overall, this article, based on the investigation of a limited number of illuminated manuscripts, offers insights into the important historical and cultural contributions of the ruling family of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century.

Acknowledgements

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98 Bausi 2010a, 623a.

99 Vitagrazia Pisani elaborates on this in her article in this volume.

Abbreviations

BL = London, British Library.
CAe = Clavis Aethiopica.
DSAE = Dabra Śāhl Agwazā monastery.
EAe = Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1: *A–C*; vol. 2: *D–Ha*; vol. 3: *He–N*; in coopera-
    tion with Alessandro Bausi, vol. 4: *O–X*; Alessandro Bausi (ed.), in cooperation with Siegbert
    Uhlig, vol. 5: *Y–Z, Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Ver-
    lag, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014.
EMDA = Ethiopian Manuscript Digital Archive, is an open collection of digitised Ethiopian manuscripts
    accessible through the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's Abbey and University,
    Collegeville, MN.
EMIP = Portland, Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project.
EMML = Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, deposited at Addis Ababa, National Archives and
    Library of Ethiopia, and at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's Abbey and Univer-
    sity, Collegeville, MN.
MFK = Munich, Museum Fünf Kontinente.
NALE = Addis Ababa, National Archives and Library of Ethiopia.

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Theo Maarten van Lint

Amir Pʻōlin between Tabriz and the Erznka Christian Brotherhood: Reassessing the Importance of Manuscript V103 (1336 CE) and its Commissioner-Copyist

Abstract: Manuscript V103, copied by Amir Pʻōlin in Tabriz in 1336 contains two parts, a homily by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi for the Christian brotherhood he had founded in 1280, and twenty-two poems by Kostandin Erznkacʻi, who was associated with this brotherhood. It also contains a colophon which gives us the identity of the copyist, who moreover was a friend of the poet, who devoted a poem to him. This contribution assesses the importance of this manuscript, of its copyist, as well as of the place of copying, the Sanjaran gate-house.

> What does he who is pure gold have to fear from the fire?
> Will he be broken up into two colours by the touchstone?
> The heart in which the light has risen cannot abide with the darkness,
> He whose eyes are blind can have no awareness of the light.
> (Kostandin Erznkacʻi, poem for Baron Amir)[1]

1 Introduction

In 1336, a man calling himself Amir Pʻōlin copied a manuscript for his own use in the Sanjarān gate in Tabriz (present day Iran).[2] It contains a homily by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi Pluz, a highly respected clerical authority and poet from Erznka (Erzincan, present day Turkey), and a majority of the poems (twenty-two out of twenty-

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1 Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the Armenian are by the author of this contribution.

2 Doubt has never been expressed about Amir Pʻōlin being the only copyist of the two main texts and the colophon of the manuscript. Whether the variation in hands that is perhaps discernible in the manuscript gives reason to reconsider this, must be determined in a separate publication. However, Amir sometimes inserts himself in the text of Kostandin's poetry, e.g. at the end of poem 2 (fol. 38ʳ): թողում զայս անցաւորս եւ Կոստանդինս և զամիրս որ գրեցի ի մենէ ի բաց, 'And I Kostandin leave this transitory world – and me, Amir, who wrote this – behind us', which removes any doubt there might be about his copying of the poems. On Azaria as collaborator to the formation of the manuscript, see below, with Fig. 3.

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six or twenty-seven known to exist) written by his compatriot Kostandin Erznkac'i, who is one of the most appreciated poets to have composed and performed in Middle Armenian, the vernacular of the time. This article will bring to the fore the importance of Amir P'ōlin's manuscript, preserved since 1759 by the Mekhitarist Catholic Armenian Monastic Order at San Lazzaro in the Venetian Lagoon under the shelfmark 103 (hereafter V103). It also seeks to throw further light on Amir P'ōlin and his relationship with the Christian brotherhood of Erznka, founded in 1280 by the same Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, as well as scrutinise his friendship with Kostandin, who devoted a poem to him.
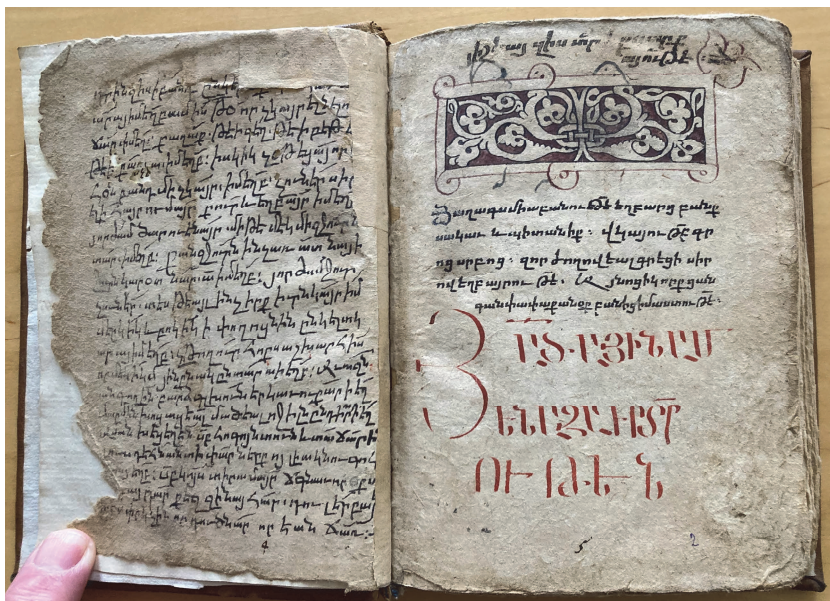
Fig. 1: V103, fols 1ᵛ–2ʳ.

2 Amir P'ōlin's manuscript

V103 is a cotton paper manuscript, consisting of ninety-one folios measuring 12 × 16.5 cm. It has one column per page, of seventeen lines.[3] It contains twelve

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[3] The description of the manuscript follows Čemčemean 1996, col. 783, with corrections from Poturean 1905, 8–10. Srapyan 1962, 110–111, follows Poturean. Van Lint 1996, 3–5 combines the

quires, each consisting of eight folios, except for the first and the fifth quire, each of which lacks the first folio, and the seventh, from which the final folio is missing. The final quire consists only of six folios, possibly having lost two. The folio numbering contains one error: the number 86 occurs twice. This means that the second number 86 must be read 87, and so on: the folio now numbered 90 is in fact fol. 91. Thus, out of a maximum of ninety-six folios, ninety-one are preserved.

The manuscript has two different sets of numbering. One counts its folios, the other its pages. But they do not start at the same place. Between the front cover and the first preserved probably original folio, two eighteenth-century paper leaves have been inserted. The first of these is unnumbered. The second leaf contains a table of contents of the manuscript on the recto side, which is numbered 1. The verso is numbered 2. No folio number is given. The table of contents indicates the beginning and end of the sections of the manuscript by page number, running from 5 to 181. The next folio, the first one preserved from the original manuscript is numbered as page 5 on the recto, page 6 on the verso, and in addition to that on the recto carries a folio number, 1. The last folio before the back cover is a similarly inserted eighteenth-century leaf. It is blank and does not carry any numbering. In this contribution the folio numbering, which does not take into account the later inserted two opening leaves and the end leaf, is followed.

Since the manuscript consists of cotton paper, it is worn, with the consequences of exposure to humidity also notable. Someone has marked many of the margins with ink. The manuscript reached San Lazzaro unbound. Here a modern binding was added, preventing further loss of leaves. The name of the binder remains unknown. Before fol. 32 (which is the second folio of quire number 5), the opening folio of quire number 5 is missing. This is clear because fol. 31^v carries the quire number 4 (Armenian :դ:), indicating that it is the last folio of that quire, while fol. 32^r does lack number 5 (Armenian :ե:), making clear that it is not the opening folio of that quire. A later hand (possibly by the eighteenth-century Mekhitarist father who prepared the manuscript for rebinding) has added a note in *notrgir* (late miniscule)[4] in the lower margin of fol. 32^r stating: 'The first folio of this quire is lacking'.[5] The last folio of quire number 7 is lacking as well: it belongs between the current fols 53 and 54. Fol. 54 is the opening folio of quire eight, with the quire number (Armenian :ը:) clearly drawn in the lower margin. Fol. 53^v has a

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information from Poturean with autopsy of the manuscript. The manuscript was consulted again and photographed during a visit to San Lazzaro in April 2024.

4 On *notrgir,* see AAP, 73–75, and Kouymjian 2015, 281–282.

5 պակասի սկիզբն տետրիս ե՛.

brief note in *notrgir* in the lower margin, stating: 'A folio is missing'.[6] The discontinuities in the texts provide further proof that two folios have fallen out of the manuscript. On fol. 85ᵛ, the last one of quire 11, a further note, in a (near) contemporary hand, drawn in very thin letters states: 'Poem by Kostandin for our spiritual brother Amir, (in full dedication of my) soul to his soul and from heart to heart'.[7] This is the title of poem 21 (on which see Section 5 below), the opening verse of which is the first line of fol. 86ʳ, with which quire 12 begins. This looks like the correction of an oversight (see Fig. 4).
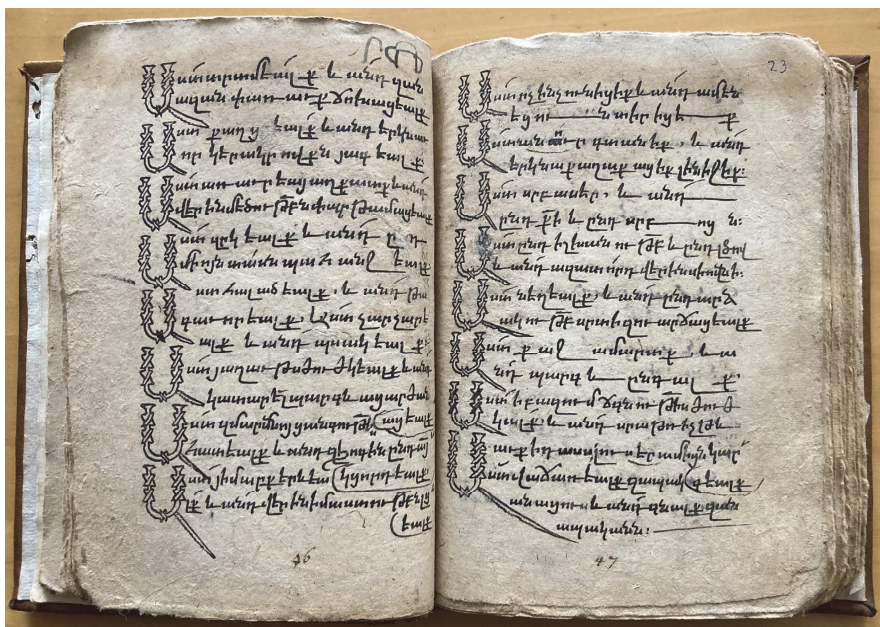
Fig. 2: V103, fols 22ᵛ–23ʳ; decorative initials, majuscule A (Armenian Ա).

The writing is a learned *bolorgir* (roundscript).[8] Decorative script occurs in various forms throughout the manuscript. The opening lines of the two texts are writ-

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6 The Armenian reads: (թուղթ պակասի).

7 The Armenian reads: Բան ի կոստրնդեայ առ /մեր հոգենոր եղբայրն ամիր/ հոգով ի հոգի և սրտէ ի սիրտս. For the writing, in particular the *h*, cf. AAP, plates 97 (M167, dated 1284–1335) and 114 (J1257, dated 1322).

8 On *bolorgir*, see AAP, 69–73, and Kouymjian 2015, 279–282. For a comparable hand in 'learned *bolorgir*', see AAP, no. 111 (M3589, dated 1319, fol. 60ʳ).

ten in red ink, the titles of the texts in black ink. Many initials opening paragraphs in the first texts are decorative capitals, stretching vertically over two or more lines, executed in black ink (see Fig. 2). The manuscript does not contain any marginal decorations, illuminations or *khoran*s, the richly coloured headpieces that take the form of a vault in a rectangle, often with an opening of various shapes on the lower end. Smaller, rectangular headpieces (*half-khorans*), measuring 2.8 × 8.2 cm, occur on fols 2ʳ and 36ᵛ. The first half-khoran is placed at the beginning of Yovhannēs's homily, while the second precedes the second of Kostandin's poems.

Over the half-khoran on fol. 2ʳ a memorial (usually also called colophon in Armenian studies) is written, stating: 'Remember me Lord, in Your Kingdom' (see Fig. 1).[9] While also written in *bolorgir*, it seems to be by a different hand. The half-khoran on fol. 36ᵛ is surrounded by a text, stating (see Fig. 3): 'Remember Azaria, servant of Jesus Christ in [Christ]. The marvelous writings will also be judged'.[10] The two texts seem to belong to the same hand. Perhaps Azaria drew the half-khorans?

Fig. 3: V103, fol. 36ᵛ, upper part: Azaria's colophon, half-khoran and, in red ink, the opening line of poem 2.

9 The Armenian reads: յիշեալ զիս տ՛ր [ի] քո արքայութեան:

10 Ազարիայ՝ յի քի՝ ծառայ՝ յիշեցէք ի [ք] / յատեան դնի և դպրութի[ւն]ք հրաշիգն:

The manuscript is dated ՉՁԵ (785 of the Armenian Era), that is 1336 CE. Amir Pʻōlin was its commissioner and also its copyist. A colophon is found on fols 89ʳ–89ᵛ, followed by a prayer directed at the Theotokos, the Mother of God, which mentions also Amir's name. On fol. 91ᵛ (erroneously numbered 90ᵛ), the last folio of the manuscript in its current state, a poem, partially preserved, addresses Jesus. As for the provenance of the manuscript, a secondary note on the flyleaf states '[Our] V. Father Mkrtičʻ *vardapet* [Ananean] brought this book with him from Constantinople, in the year of the Lord 1759, on January 30'.[11]
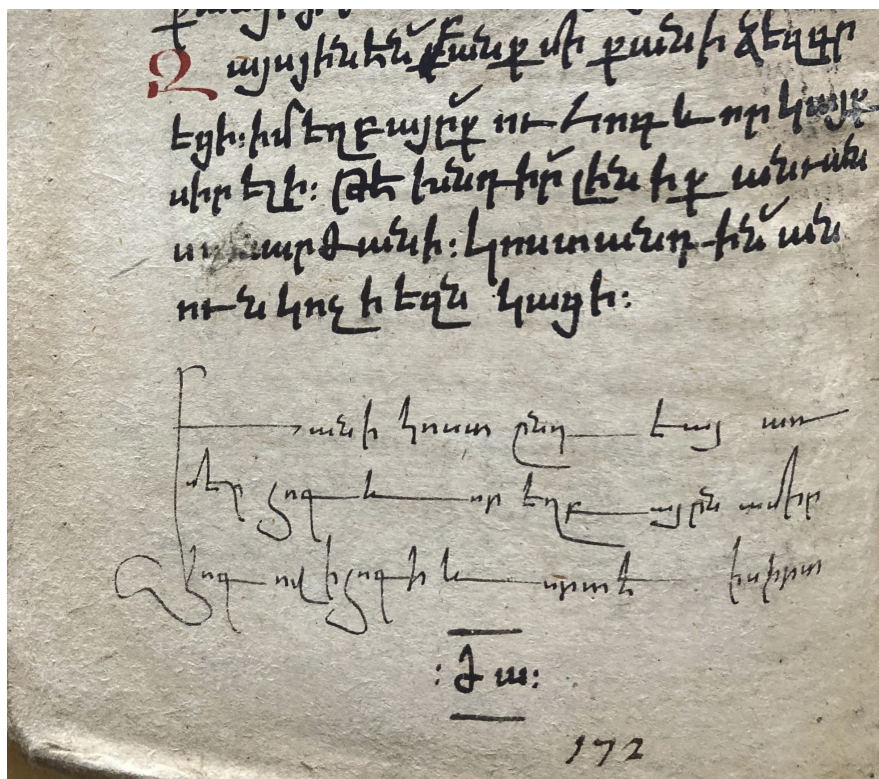
Fig. 4: V103, fol. 85ᵛ, the last of quire 11 (Armenian :ժ ա:), with title of poem 21.

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11 Զայս զիրս երեր ընդ իւր Վ. Հ. Մկրտիչ վարդապետն ի Կոստանդնուպօլոյ, յամի դ՝ն 1759 ի յունվարի 30: The English translation renders the text as given in the catalogue: the words between square brackets were added by Čemčemean 1996, col. 783 and do not occur in the original text.

This formal description of the manuscript may make one wonder what is special about it. A look at its contents may begin to shed some light on this.[12] This is limited to two textual units, followed by a colophon. The first comprises fols 2ʳ to 28ʳ and contains a homily by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi (*c.* 1230–1293). The second, occupying fols 28ʳ to 89ʳ (thus the numbering on the folio, in reality it is fol. 90ʳ), consists of twenty-two poems by Kostandin Erznkacʻi (*c.* 1240/1250–after 1304).[13] The colophon is followed by a prayer and poem, mentioned above, occupying fols 89ʳ–90ᵛ (90ʳ–91ᵛ). The colophon contains crucial information, about which more below. To begin to appreciate the saliency of this manuscript, we have to look at the combination of the works by the two Erznkacʻis it contains: Yovhannēs's homily and Kostandin's poems.

Manuscript V103 is irreplaceable as a repository of Kostandin's poems: twenty-two of the twenty-six or twenty-seven poems known by Kostandin are collected in it.[14] The Venice catalogue bears witness to this by the rubric it assigns to it: 'Kostandin Erznkacʻi'. Yet, this gives a one-sided impression. The poems are preceded by a homily written by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi, entitled 'A Few Useful Words on the Congregation of the Brothers'. This is an important document by one of the most influential *vardapet*s (doctors of the Armenian Church) of the time, that has not been sufficiently appreciated in the context in which its earliest preserved copy occurs.[15] It will be shown that this homily was addressed at a Christian, Armenian brotherhood in Erznka, for which Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi wrote a constitution in 1280, soon followed by another such text. Before addressing the texts contained in Amir Pʻōlin's manuscript, a few words about this brotherhood will trace its context.

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12 For a more detailed survey of the contents of the manuscript than can be given here, see van Lint 2019, 107–120; van Lint 2020 presents a description of the various types of poems Kostandin wrote.

13 van Lint 1996, 8–12.

14 Sixteen other manuscripts contain poems by Kostandin, offering at most four of them. Twelve manuscripts contain only poems absent from V103. The four manuscripts that contain poems present also in V103 are V258, dated to probably before 1270, which offers Բանք յաղագս չար կնոջ նախատինք և յաղագս բարի կանանց, 'An admonishing poem about the evil woman and about good women' (poem 20 in V103); M9053 (fourteenth century); V299 (dated 1469); and M3595 (fifteenth century). These three all contain V103's poems 11 and 12, 'Բանս վարդի աւրինական զՔրիստոս պատմէ, 'This poem speaks of Christ by means of the example of the rose' and Մեկնութիւն վարդին համարատ; Վասն անգիտաց շինեցի, զի կարծին եթէ վասն մարմանե(որաց) էր բանք վարդին, և վասն այն գրեցի, 'A short interpretation of the rose. I have written it for the ignorant, because they were under the impression that the poem about this rose should be interpreted after the body; therefore, I wrote it'. See van Lint 1996, 3–19.

15 M728 (1621, Šatax) preserves another copy of this homily. Published in a diplomatic edition in Bałdasarean 1996, the editor apparently wasn't aware of the text's presence in the nearly three centuries older V103.

3 The Erznka brotherhood and its constitution of 1280

The city of Erznka (nowadays Erzincan in the Republic of Turkey) was an important hub lying on a crossroad of trade routes between Constantinople and Tabriz, in Persia, and between Cilicia on the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea. Having come under Il-Khanid Mongol rule in the 1240s, it was a cosmopolitan city with many religious affiliations, Christian and Muslim. It was home to urban youth, both Muslims and Armenian Christians. These young people would gather for festive togetherness, including dancing, singing and wine drinking. The various religious denominations of the city would vie for their allegiance. United in brotherhoods, they would play an important role in the city's economic, social and military life, by being professional artisans and craftspeople, by looking after one another's well-being and offering hospitality to travellers, and by keeping the trade routes on which the city lay safe for the caravans that would use them. They could be a rough lot and the Armenian Church wanted to make sure that they would remain Christian and lead an if possible exemplary Christian life. *Vardapet* Yovhannēs Erznkac'i was instrumental in establishing the framework necessary to realise such a goal. He Christianised the ideals of manliness that were paramount in the Islamic brotherhoods.

Manliness, or male youthfulness, is a central element of the brotherhoods that flourished in Anatolia in the later thirteenth and first part of the fourteenth centuries. Key terms across languages involved are set out in Seta Dadoyan's following paragraph:

> Technically the Arabic *fata* (*fityān* is the plural, *futuwwa* is the abstract noun) *h'adīth, shabb*, the Armenian *manuk, ktrič* (brave young man), *eritasard* (young man), the Persian *jawanmard* or *juvanmard,* the Turkish *yigit*, *akhī* rather, *aqqī*) implied youth, courage, audacity, honor, generosity, toughness, and not a particularly ethical person in the religious sense.[16]

Yovhannēs Erznkac'i's second treatise for the brotherhood clearly states his purpose:

> Now, male youthfulness [Arm. *manktut'iwn*, Pers. *fotovvat*] is three things. One, someone keeps strong the good things received from God and doesn't lose them. Two, in the battle he

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16 Dadoyan 2003–2004, 119–120.

enters, he stands bravely and is not conquered. Three, he strives hard not to renege on the things he has promised.[17]

Research on Armenian Christian brotherhoods in Anatolia and their relationship with initiatives for reform of *futuwwa* confraternities taken by ʿAbbasid Caliph Al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh (575–622 AH / 1180–1225 CE) in the first quarter of the thirteenth century has made considerable progress in the last few decades.[18] Presented by Lewon Xačʻikean in 1951 and 1962, the *Statute and Rules* or *Constitution* for the Christian brotherhood of Erznka, written in 1280 by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi and supplemented by him with a second series of stipulations (*Rules and Instructions*) sometime later, was first placed into the Muslim Anatolian context of *futuwwa* and *akhī* by Dickran Kouymjian in 1975.[19] A study of this relationship was initially undertaken by Dadoyan, who emphasised that 'youth brotherhoods were essential parts of the medieval Middle-Eastern urban landscape' and that 'given the nature of the Middle Eastern world following Seljuk then Mongol invasions, the subject of urban youth in the entire region constitutes a singularity and should be studied as such'.[20] Rachel Goshgarian then studied the seven surviving Anatolian *futuwwa* texts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Armenian, and placed the Armenian texts in their Anatolian context.[21] James Russell argued for an Iranian substratum or inspiration in such Armenian Christian brotherhoods, and sees the *Constitution* as an example of wider church reform in Armenia.[22] Dadoyan stressed the originally – and persisting – secular character of these brotherhoods and devotes much attention to the moral, Christian dimension of the *Constitution* and its se-

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17 Արդ, մանկութիւն Գ. իրք է, մինն այն է, զի զբարին, որ յԱստուծոյ առեալ է, ամուր պահէ եւ ոչ կորուսանէ. Բ. ի պատերազմն յոր մտեալ է, արի կենայ եւ ոչ յաղթի. Գ. այնմ իրաց, որ խոստացած է չանք դնէ որ չզրկի (Erznkacʻi-Tēr-Srapyan and Bałdasarean 2013, 407–408). Cf. the translations by Goshgarian 2018, 182; and Dadoyan 2014, 92.

18 In particular Dadoyan 2003–2004; Dadoyan 2005; Dadoyan 2014; and Goshgarian 2013a; Goshgarian 2013b; Goshgarian 2017; Goshgarian 2018. Goshgarian 2018, 187–189 gives the *status quaestionis* at the time.

19 Xačʻikean 1951; Xačʻikean 1962; Kouymjian 1975. Xačʻikean 1951 briefly mentions *akhi* groups (see the reprint: Xačʻikean 1995, 206). The text of the first constitution was published in Xačʻikean 1962; both texts: Bałdasarean 1977, 220–228, 229–239; Erznkacʻi-Tēr-Srapyan and Bałdasarean 2013, 397–405, 406–416. Studies of the *Constitution* include Srapyan 1962, 21–29; translations into English of both texts are available in Goshgarian 2018, 196–211. Russell 1994, 32–37 and van Lint 2019, 123–131 give the first one.

20 Dadoyan 2003–2004, 117, 118. She returned to the subject in Dadoyan 2005, followed by Dadoyan 2014, 69–109, 111–132.

21 Goshgarian 2013b and 2018. Yıldırım 2018, on the transformation of the courtly *futuwwa* promulgated by al-Nāṣir to the *akhi-futuwwa* of Anatolia.

22 Russell 1994; Russell 1995; Russell 2004b, 1067.

quel, which sought to address excesses that had arisen since the original constitution was promulgated. Dadoyan also paid detailed attention to, and interpreted, the poetry both Yovhannēs and Kostandin Erznkac'i devoted to this brotherhood.[23]

Dressing them in Christian attire, Yovhannēs Erznkac'i modelled his texts on the *futuwwa* text written in Konya by Caliph Al-Nāṣir's emissary to Anatolia, Shehab al-Din 'Omar Sohravardī (1144–1234).[24] Yovhannēs's foundation of a Christian brotherhood aimed at inculcating Christian behaviour in an organisation not necessarily prioritising such tenets. It emphasises chastity and self-restraint, chivalrous and courageous behaviour. The second text addresses excesses arisen in the relationship between the *manktawag*, the elder, and the *manuk*, the younger member(s) of the brotherhood, and is also concerned with curbing sexual desire as well as with ceremonial matters. We may read the texts copied by Amir P'ōlin against the background of these two documents.

4 The contents of the texts Amir P'ōlin copied in his manuscript

This section briefly reviews the contents of Yovhannēs's homily, incontrovertibly addressed at the brotherhood, and Kostandin's poetry reflecting many of the themes addressed in the homily, including the didactic concerns addressed in the poem he wrote for his friend Amir P'ōlin.

4.1 Disambiguation: Text 1, V103, fols 2ʳ–28ʳ, Yovhannēs Erznkac'i's homily for the Erznka brotherhood

The homily's opening lines and a remark towards the end make it clear that a specific brotherhood is addressed:

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23 For scholarship on Kostandin Erznkac'i's poetry, K'iwrtean 1953, 152–168; Step'anyan 2005, 231–243; Thomson 1995, 145–146; Thomson 2007, 192. Abełyan 1970, 356–399 and Hairapetian 1995, 384–401 consider the poet in the framework of Armenian literary history. Relevant to this study are also Bardakjian 2014; Cowe 1988–1989; Cowe 1995, 35; Cowe 2005, 386–396; Cowe 2015, 89–90; Dadoyan 2003–2004, 150–153; Dadoyan 2005, 349–364; Dadoyan 2014, 119–130; Goshgarian 2013a, 242–244; Goshgarian 2017, 123–126; Goshgarian 2018; Russell 1987b; Russell 2001–2002, 83–91; Pifer 2021, 170–198; van Lint 1995; van Lint 1996; van Lint 2019, 111–122; van Lint 2020.
24 Goshgarian 2018, 192–193 with Goshgarian's transcription of the name maintained; cf. Cowe 2015, 95–96.

Յաղագս միաբանութեան եղբարց բանք սակաւ և պիտանիք: Վկայութեամբ զրոց սրբոց: զոր ժողովեալ գրեցի սիրով եղբայրութեան Այնոցիկ որք ցանգան փափաքանօք բանից իմաստութեան:[25]

A few useful words on the congregation of the brothers, with testimony from the Holy Scriptures, which I, after collecting them, wrote out of love for [the] brotherhood, for those who desirously long for words of wisdom.

Ողորմեսցի բարեգութն Աստուած այնոցիկ որք զհիմն և զսկիզբն միաբանութեանս են արկեալ, որք հրաժարեալք են, եւ որք կան[26]

May the compassionate God have mercy on those who have laid the foundation and the beginning of this congregation and who are deceased, and on those, who are alive.

This latter sentence proves that no abstract unity or a general moral category of brotherhood are meant, but a concrete institution, with founders, some of whom are no longer alive. The homily, then, is addressed to the members of the brotherhood, and it is unlikely that another such institution is meant than the one founded by the same Yovhannēs in Erznka. Moreover, it is copied by one of the members of this brotherhood, together with Kostandin Erznkac'i's poetry, which was performed for it and circulated at least among some of its members.

4.2 The themes of Yovhannēs's homily

The homily's aim is to help the brotherhood grow in love, as a 'temple for the Holy Spirit'.[27] Yovhannēs points to the useful words of Scripture, which 'are like pearls encased in gold'.[28] As sons of light they must engage in spiritual battle against vices: prostitution (*pořnkut'iwn*), including adultery, masturbation, gluttony, presumption, theft, slander, quarrel, hatred of one's brother. One must refrain from lying, giving false testimony, idle speech, jokes, comedy, laughter. Refusal to honour one's parents is serious. The punishment for these are death and hell. Bridling one's tongue, avoiding a 'false tongue', is an important means to prevent such an end. Yovhannēs then characterises righteous speech. Compassion and mercy are

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25 V103, fol. 2ʳ. Quotations from the homily are from V103. Only in case of a spurious reading, the text in M728, the only other copy currently known, will be adduced. The lines adduced here occur on fol. 2ʳ.

26 V103, fol. 27ᵛ.

27 V103, fol. 3ʳᵛ, տաճար հոգոյն / սրբոյ:. On the themes of Yovhannēs's sermon, see also van Lint 1996, 25–27; and van Lint 2019, 107–111.

28 V103, fol. 6ʳ, և իբրեւ զոսկի մարգարտի յեռեալ.

loving ways of treating others. One must refrain from pronouncing judgment. Compassion spreads and becomes a defining characteristic of the community.[29] Then follows the central commandment of faith, to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbour like oneself. Love is the basis of wisdom, virtue, and light, bringing humankind closer to God. The importance of the virtues of humility, meekness, and mercy are stressed, preparing one for the Kingdom of God in ever-lasting life. Difficulties and persecution when living a godly life are contrasted with the bliss that awaits one after death: the brotherhood is a loving community where God himself dwells, to be continued in a perfected way in the afterlife. Finally, Yovhannēs describes the brotherhood as part of the wider Christian community, including all ranks of the clergy, hermits and monks in his prescriptions for the Christian life, firmly anchoring the brotherhood within the Armenian Apostolic Church. He ends by asking forgiveness from God for his sins.

The homily traces a clear path for spiritual growth of each member of the brotherhood individually and in relationship to one another. Unsurprisingly, this all fits well with the precepts given in the *Constitution* for the brotherhood, and its sequel.

This homily must have had special meaning for Amir Pʻōlin, making it one panel of the diptych of his *vademecum* for the Christian life that manuscript V103 represents. He must have perceived the homily and poetry as intimately correlated.[30]

4.3 Text 2, fols 28ʳ–89ʳ (90ʳ): Kostandin Erznkacʻi's poems

The subjects touched upon in Kostandin's poems are similar to those addressed by Yovhannēs. Kostandin also opens by creating a framework against which his didactic poetry may be read.[31] This takes the form of a hundred-and-sixty-line biblical history, opening with a quatrain praising the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as an inseparable Trinity and one Godhead, omnipresent and all-powerful.[32] The final quatrain returns to Christ-God's all-powerfulness, who is being in essence and for ever without ending. The poem relates the beauty of the cosmos. All creation is dependent for its existence on God.

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29 The negative implication present in Paul's warning in Gal. 5:9 is clearly not involved in this imagery. Using the same metaphor, Paul there speaks of the corruption of the community of the believers even by a small tendency to untruth.

30 Van Lint 2019, 107–111 compares the themes of Yovhannēs homily with those of Kostandin's poems.

31 V103, fols 28ʳ–36ʳ.

32 One folio is missing from the manuscript. The complete poem will have been close to twenty lines longer.

Towards the end of a poem, the poet often addresses himself. On this occasion, he states in lines 153–156:[33]

Խնդրէ դու Կոստանդին ի սուրբ Հոգոյն քեզի բաժին,
Դու այլ լուսաւորէ լեր արժանի փոքր մասին,
Ջարդարէ դու զքեզ տաճար զեղեցկաշէն թագաւորին,
Եւ ապայ զալուն մնաս արեգական շառաւեղին.[34]

You Kostandin, ask for your part of the Holy Spirit,
Enlighten and be worthy of a small part,
Adorn yourself as a beautifully built temple for the King,
And then wait for the coming of the ray of the sun.

This readiness to be transformed through the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ permeates Kostandin's poetry. The didactic poems that follow can be characterised as examples and exercises on the way towards this goal. Kostandin writes about himself, but his experience and advice make it clear that he is an 'everyman' whose vicissitudes are applicable to other Christians' lives. They also chronicle some of the difficulties with which functioning in the environment of the brotherhood presented both himself, and his friend Amir Pʻōlin.

The second poem is 'like a pearl set in gold'.[35] It further strengthens the parallels with Yovhannēs's homily, continuing to prepare the audience for a Christian life. Love is the underlying principle of the cosmos, the reason for its creation, and the essence of God's being. A spiritual human being, someone whose 'eyes of the soul' are open, lives on this fundament of love, shown by Christ – here a beautiful flower – in his incarnation and crucifixion. Knowledge without love isn't wisdom. Since wisdom based on love is often unwelcome, one must know when to be silent: the theme of the bridled tongue resurfaces. A distinction between those accepting and those rejecting Christ's love and wisdom is drawn. Kostandin is clear about this choice for a *sobria ebrietas*, a drunkenness in which one retains one's sobriety, which is the result of being imbued with the Holy Spirit. He is set on a spiritual journey, and invites his audience, including Amir Pʻōlin to do the same.[36]

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33 In V103, the poems are written out as continuous prose. Line numbers refer to the editions of the poems in Srapyan 1962 and van Lint 1996.

34 V103, fol. 36ʳ.

35 V103, fol. 36ᵛ.

36 V103, fols 36ᵛ–38ʳ. Love is central too, in poem 13, 'Poem about the incomprehensible marvels of God, which I cautiously endeavour (to present) thus. Help me, Christ' (fols 64ʳ–66ᵛ).

The third poem has Christ's Second Coming as theme and is couched in the form of a poem about spring.[37] Christ is presented as the rose, king of the flowers. A number of Kostandin's other poems deploy the same imagery.[38] An intensity of colour, smell, and other sense perceptions characterise these poems, as well as an all-pervasive joy. These poems celebrate the abovementioned mystical inebriation, the union with God-Christ in *sobria ebrietas*. Further recurring themes are love as the essence of the universe, and the coupling of love with beauty. Poem 16 also features inebriation with the nightingale as cupbearer. Yovhannēs's reminder in the homily that where two or three are present in Christ's name, Christ will be there with them, is abundantly and joyously presented in Kostandin's poem. Kostandin is assured of, and grateful for Christ's love for him: 'you have become worthy of the rose / And have heard the voice of the nightingale'.[39] Kostandin's verses fit perfectly with Yovhannēs's precepts for the brotherhood.

Kostandin had experienced this mystical union himself. Poem 8, 'Some speak ill of me out of envy, saying, "How can he recite such a poem, as he has not had much tuition from a *vardapet*?" [...]', documents palpable antagonism against the poet and also relates how both his talent for writing poetry and his authority to speak were bestowed upon him in a vision he had when he was 15 years old.[40] The three last preserved stanzas of the poem give an insight in his continued mystical experience and his inner joy, and the danger that he is now exposed to.[41] The theme of conflict because of his choice for a life of faith, love and wisdom appears. A central stanza in Kostandin's oeuvre records his *sobria ebrietas*:

Այսօր հոգովս ուրախ եմ՝ և ի մեծ մուրատ հասայ,
Որ ես առանց շրթունք՝ կու խմեմ յայն գինուն շիշալ.
Սարխոշ եմ յայն սիրուն 'ւ է մինչսս ի հոն յուր ինք լինայ.
Չունիմ շատոց կարիք, ով է չարկամ ու զիս որսայ:[42]

37 V103, fols 38ʳ–39ᵛ.

38 Poems 11 'This poem speaks of Christ by means of the example of the rose' (fols 58ʳ–61ᵛ) and 12, 'A short interpretation of the rose. I have written it for the ignorant, because they were under the impression that the poem about this rose should be interpreted after the body [...]' (fols 61ᵛ–64ʳ). Poem 15 'A poem about the mystery of Christ, through the example of spring; do not interpret this poem after the flesh, but after the spirit' (fols 70ʳ–75ʳ), poem 16 'The same poem about the mystery [of Christ] and a vision in another way, which is allegorically presented as follows' (fols 75ʳ–77ʳ).

39 արժանի եղեր վարդին՝/ Եւ լսեցեր բլբուլի ձայն:

40 V103, fols 51ʳ–53ᵛ. Van Lint 1995; Russell 2001–2002; and Bardakjian 2014 address this poem.

41 Due to a missing folio, the poem remains incomplete.

42 V103, fol. 53ᵛ. Quoted are lines 53–56 of the poem.

> Today my soul is joyful, I saw a deep wish fulfilled:
> I am drinking without lips a glass of that wine;
> I am drunk with that love and my thoughts are there, where He is,
> I do not need the many men that wish me ill and pursue me.

Three poems deal with various forms of religious diversity, i.e. dissent, heresy, other faiths. Poem 4 is 'About evil friends and about avoiding some seducers, who oppose goodness'.[43] The fifth and sixth poems bear as titles 'A poem to be interpreted in two ways: after the spirit and after the flesh, thus spoken allegorically' and 'A poem about the Sun of Righteousness, which is also Christ, the Only-Begotten Son who rose from the Father, told in allegory'.[44] They return to the source of life and light: the loving God, manifest in Christ.

Hostility against the poet is never far away. It defines the seventh poem, 'About the ignorant who falsely speak useless words and their opposition against the wise'.[45] The oppositions found in this poem are central to Kostandin's work and reflect Yovhannēs's injunctions.

Poem 19, '[…] written in an hour of sadness, which I wrote because of the wounds which false brothers inflicted upon me', is an exercise in self-admonition. Kostandin moves from intoxication by sorrow through the pursuit of unworthy aims to the sobriety of the long-term goal, beyond life on earth.[46]

The final poem is entitled 'About brotherhood, good and bad'.[47] Gone is the jubilant mood pervading the poems on the rose and the nightingale – deafness to advice and hostility are the poet's part. The last three lines of the collection show a complete breakdown of communion: the brother has become a stranger.

Closely related to this theme, and pervasive also in Yovhannēs's homily, is the bridling of one's tongue and refraining from judgement. It appears in poem 9 and is explained in poem 10.[48] Kostandin's human nature is contradictory. He lives with unresolved tensions between the four elements of water, air, fire and earth. Not everyone forgives him: some consider him a madman, who ought to be killed. This is the nadir of the collection – and a reminder of Yovhannēs's warning in his sermon that persecution may await those who follow Christ.

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43 V103, fols 40ᵛ–43ʳ.

44 V103, fols 43ᵛ–45ʳ and 45ʳ–46ᵛ.

45 V103, fols 47ʳ–50ᵛ.

46 V103, fols 80ᵛ–82ʳ.

47 V103, fols 87ʳ–89ʳ.

48 V103, fols 54ʳ–56ᵛ and 56ᵛ–58ʳ. This is also the theme of poems 17 'A useful and advantageous advice to all' (fols 77ᵛ–78ᵛ) and 18 (fols 78ᵛ–80ʳ). Poem 17 stresses the need of a pure heart, employing images from alchemy absent from Yovhannēs's homily.

A further theme linking the poetry to the homily is the transitoriness of life, which in poem 14 contains the only instance of critique of laughter. Present in Yovhannēs's homily, Kostandin interprets it as a sign of pride and hybris.[49] An early poem describes, in the style of Proverbs, the dangers of a wanton woman – pointed out in Yovhannēs's list of vices – and the blessing of a good one.[50]

Kostandin's one but last poem in the manuscript is addressed to Amir Pʻōlin himself and will be discussed in the following section.[51]

Kostandin's poems have been interpreted in a variety of ways.[52] It is indisputable that Kostandin had a spiritual meaning in mind, rather than an almost mimetic rendering of the drinking parties that urban fraternities were known for. His explanations steer understanding of his poetry away from one 'according to the body', or 'the flesh' (*i marmin*, *marmnawor*), to a spiritual one (*i hogi*), making it very clear that they are meant to be spiritually educating through an engagement of the senses that afford an appreciation of the beauty of creation and of human companionship, worshipping the creator in mystical drunkenness. Not everyone could reach such an understanding of his work without being nudged in that direction. His lines in the vision poem 'I am drinking without lips a glass of that wine / I am drunk with that love and my thoughts are there, where He is', further underline such an understanding of his work.[53] It is a perspective that tallies with the title and opening line of Kostandin's poem 'For our spiritual brother Amir, made in full dedication of heart and soul. Lord Amir, our beloved brother in whom we take pride'. The fact that Amir Pʻōlin saw fit to juxtapose Yovhannēs's sermon with a collection of poems that is thematically so similar lends credence to the idea that the copyist must have understood the poems in this spiritual way, as well.[54] His experiences seem to have paralleled those of Kostandin's, a rejection of his authority, and a refusal to accept his advice, given in line with Christian teaching. When Kostandin addresses himself, Amir Pʻōlin often adds his own name.[55] Finally, this view preserves coherence in purpose throughout Kostandin's corpus: he does not contradict in the convivial poems of spring and joyful gatherings what he propounds in his more directly didactical ones.

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49 V103, fols 67ʳ–70ʳ.

50 V103, fols 82ʳ–85ᵛ.

51 V103, fols 86ʳ–87ʳ.

52 See n. 23.

53 Interpretation first proposed in van Lint 1995 and van Lint 1996; see also Cowe 2015, 89.

54 This is less convincing if the exemplar was similarly construed.

55 These instances are gathered and discussed in van Lint 1996, and in van Lint 2019, 120–122.

We have now formed an idea of both main texts in Amir P'ōlin's manuscript. They can indeed be read in parallel, both aiming at the deepening of love for God and one's neighbour, within the brotherhood and through the brotherhood with the wider world. The poetry allows for close emotional and individual identification, representing as it were the beating heart of the organism that the manuscript embodies, while the homily is a guide for the mind to tune one's instrument in the proper key, aiming at transformation to the likeness of Christ through practice of the precepts contained in it. The manuscript thus can be perceived as one whole, a personal companion, a *vademecum* on the road through life for a member of the Erznka brotherhood, in which he at one time played, or was still playing, a role of responsibility. Let us now look at Kostandin's poem for Baron Amir, the only one written for a named individual.[56]

5 A special poem, addressed to Amir P'ōlin, V103, fols 85ᵛ–87ʳ

(85ᵛ) Բան ի Կոստրնդեայ առ մեր հոգևոր եղբայրն Ամիր, հոգով ի հոգի և սրտէ ի սիրտ:

(86ʳ) Պարոն Ամիր, մեր պարծանաց եղբայր և սիրելի,
Զայս սակաւ բանքս ի կարգի, որ վասրն ձեր շարագրեցի,
Աղէկ մտիկ դիր ու ճանչէ. ուժով է բանքս և պիտանի,
Բայց յանգէտ մարդիքն ի մատ՝ է անսիտան դառն և լեղի:

5. Թէ յանգէտ մարդիքն ի մատ դու բան խասիս զերդ զոսկի,
     Նայ չկարէ զինք զիտենալ, տկար է միտքն որ ոչ տանի.
     Թէ լնուս դու մարգարիտ յառջև իշո կամ ի խոզի,
     Նայ չհամարի զամէնն ոչինչ, թէ Բե՛ր ինձի լերդ ու զարի:

     Թէ հիվընդին տաս կերակուր քաղցր ու անուշ նման շաքրի,
10. Նա մաղձով սիրտն է ի լի, նորայ թուի զահր ու լեղի.
     Թէ վառես ջահս հազար ու մոմեղ (86ᵛ) էսս արջս կուրի՝
     Նորայ թ[ու]ի ամէնն ոչինչ զբեզ այլ զերտ [զինք] կ[ո]յր համարի:

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56 For the text, an English translation, and brief commentary see van Lint 1996, 321–327; a translation is also given in van Lint 2019, 117–120. The text is preserved in V103 alone. Its edition here, including division into lines and stanzas follows van Lint 1996, 321–323, with corrections upon autopsy of the manuscript in April 2024. Where van Lint 1996 had o (following Poturean 1905 and Srapyan 1962), աւ is written, restoring V103's reading.

Ահայ շատ կսկիծ ու վեր է, ջաւհար ունի ի մեջ ծովի,[57]
Որ մտէ լատակ ծովուն և գտանէ իրբ պիտանի։

15. Եւ բազում աշխատանաաք ի դուրս բերէ ի ցամաքի,
Նայ անգէտն առնու ի ձեռն և չիհամարի զինքն ապիկի։

Թէ լինի մարդն խելաւք, որ անգիտաց համեմ լինի
Ու շատող անհամութեան է համեմող և պիտանի,
Թող սանձէ զարաց լեզուն, մեջ անգիտաց շատ չիասսի։

20. Թէ չէ՝ ադն անհամեցցի 'ւ այլ համեմող իր չգտանի։

Մէնքէն կանք տրտմել ի յաշխարհիս ով վաստ խասսի։[58]
Ով սուր ունի զլեզուն, կամ է շուն (86ʳ = 87ʳ) ու անիարկի,
Յուցանէ զլոյսն խաւար, նա լուսոյն երֆ խասսար կոչի
Կամ Մաղրիայի ոսկին որ մահաքովն դալլյ լինի։

25. Ով է խալյաս ոսկի՝ նա ի հրոյն լի՞նչ երկնչի,
Կամ մահաքին համար ի յերկու զոյն ինքն բացուի։
Ի վոր սիրսս որ լոյս ծագէլ նա ի մասո խասսար չաւթի,
Ով կոյր է ի յաչաց, նա ի լուսոյն խապար չունի։

Դու է՞ր կսա յանդիշայ խիսս թքլայքար ողորմելի,
30. Կամ ի ծովուս միջին դու նա ուզես անշարժելի։
Դու կա՛ց իմասսութեամբ՝ որ քեզ գտնուս հանգիսս բարի։
Ու թող մարդիկ ասեն՝ թէ խելէ նայ ու խելք չունի։

Գեմ բարձր (86ᵛ = 87ᵛ) է արեգակն ու լուսատու է աշխարհի,
Ի՞նչ մեղ կայ իր լը[ոստ]ի[ն], որ երֆ ամբով ինքն ծածկի։

35. Լուսինն որ է բոլոր ու խոռելով ինքն երևի՝
Չասեմ լուսոյն թերի երբ լիութիւնն յիրմէն լինի։

Եղի՛ր դու հուր վառել ի սուրբ սրտէ հոգով բանի։
Ով որ ինք չար կամաք ի քեզ դիմէ՝ սայ ինք երևի։
Ով սեր ունի սրտով ու զերդ զիող խոնարի լինի՝
40. Դու զիուրն ջուր զուզէ ի յիր դիմաց՝ ու հով քամի։

Զայս բանքս ի Կոստանդեա դապուդ արա, որ քեզ տրրւի։
Հայէ զինքտ մրտաւք ու հասկացիր հոգվդ ի լի։
Ցերակ յարթուն կացիր ի յաշխարհիս, բէտար կացիր,
Զի շատտ է սուտ խաբել, (87ʳ = 88ʳ) յետոյ ձգել յատակ ծովլի։

45. Ի յանգէտ մարդոյն փախիր, լիրմէն ի զա՛տ կաց ու ի հեռի։
Մի՛ իրենն հալատալ որ նենգութեամբ քեզ խոնարհի։
Ի սուրաքն մի՛ նայիլ որ յերևան կայ և յայտնի։
Սիֆաթին արա մրտիկ որ է խորին անգիտելի։

Ով ունի իմաստութին թող առ մարդիկ շատ չխաւսի։
50. Ով չունի սէր ընկերի՝ թող լեզուովն մարդ չչատի։
Ով չկարէ սիրտ մի տրտում ուրախ պահել՝ նայ է՞ր գովլի։

A poem by Kostandin for our spiritual brother Amir, made in full dedication of heart and soul.

Baron Amir, brother we take pride in and our dear one
Understand these few fitting words, which I have composed for you,
And pay full heed to them: this poem is powerful and useful,
But for ignorant people it is useless and bitter as gall.

5. If among the ignorant you speak a word which is like gold,
They cannot understand it, feeble are their minds and cannot grasp it;
If you cast pearls before ass or swine,
It considers it of no worth and says, 'Bring me straw and barley'.

If you give a sick man food, sweet and delicious like sugar,
10. While his heart is full of bitterness, it will seem to him poison and gall.
If you light a thousand torches and candles before a blind man,
It will all seem nothing to him, he will consider you as blind as he is.

Behold, this is a very sharp pain and suffering: somebody has a pearl in the sea,
When he enters the depths of the sea and finds a precious thing,
15. And with much effort brings it to land,
Then an ignorant takes it into his hand and considers it mere glass.

If a man is sensible, so that he is a spice to the ignorant,
A seasoning and of use for many a person's lack of taste;
Let him curb his quick tongue, let him not speak much among the ignorant,
20. If he does, the salt will become tasteless, and no seasoning will be found in its stead.

We are saddened by him[59] who speaks evil in this world,
Who has a sharp tongue or is a dog and shameless,

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59 See the previous note.

He pretends that the light is dark; now when is the light called dark?
Or when is it said that the gold of the West is false according to the touchstone?

25. What does he who is pure gold have to fear from the fire?
Or will he be broken up into two colours by the touchstone?
The heart in which the light has risen cannot abide with the darkness,
He whose eyes are blind can have no awareness of the light.

Why are you so pensive and miserable, so caught up in your thoughts –
30. Do you want a stable ship on high seas?
Be full of wisdom, that you may find true peace within yourself,
And let people say, 'He is mad and has lost his wits'.

Indeed, high is the sun and a bestower of light upon the earth,
How is its light to blame, when it is covered by a cloud?
35. The moon is round, and when it appears in diminished shape,
I will not say there is a lack of light, when it has fullness in itself.

Be a burning fire out of a pure heart through the Spirit of the Word;
Whoever turns against you with a bad desire will get burned himself.
Whoever loves with all their heart and is humble like the soil,
40. For them you must oppose fire with water and a refreshing wind.

Approve of this poem by Kostandin, which I gave to you,
Soften yourself with these thoughts and grasp them fully with your soul;
Always be alert in this world, be watchful,
Since the lie has deceived many and cast (them) to the bottom of the sea.

45. Flee from the ignorant man, stand apart from him and keep aloof,
Do not believe him when he cunningly humbles himself for you.
Do not mark the countenance, which is outward and visible,
Turn your thoughts to the character, which is hidden and inscrutable.

If someone possesses wisdom, let him not talk too much with people,
50   If someone has no love for his companion, let him not judge man with his tongue;
If someone cannot cheer up a saddened heart, why is he praised?

Kostandin's opening address reveals a close relationship between poet and addressee, and one of great respect.[60] It is unlikely that anyone but the commissioner-copyist is meant – we may therefore safely identify Amir Pʻōlin with Baron

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60 Scholarly comment on this poem includes Poturean 1905, 38; Tchobanian 1929, 14–18, with French translation; Srapyan 1962, 68–70; Dadoyan 2005, 259; Dadoyan 2014, 128–129; Goshgarian 2013a, 243. Van Lint 2019 contains a translation, without commentary.

Amir.[61] The title 'baron' indicates a man of some influence and, potentially, wealth. Kostandin calls him his brother and given the context of the manuscript – it is likely that he was a member of the Erznka brotherhood with which Kostandin was associated.

The poem repeats some of the core didactic themes of the collection. Conspicuously absent from it are the joyful spring gatherings in nature with nightingales warbling about their love for the rose and all being drunk with the rose's love for them. No mystical union among brothers, united in the love of and their love for Christ is intimated. The main advice the poem gives is not to speak with people incapable of valuing what Amir Pʻōlin might say to them. Kostandin points to Amir Pʻōlin's ill-advised apparent expectation of being understood and appreciated. He should accept that he is rejected by some and considered mad. It had happened to Kostandin as well. A complication here arises: if Amir Pʻōlin was, or had been, a man of standing in the Erznka brotherhood, a *manktawag* ('leader of ten or of forty'), he may have expected to be obeyed. While not the spiritual leader of the brotherhood – that was, initially at least, the old *vardapet* Grigor Sanahnecʻi[62] – he shared Kostandin's religious precepts and will have wanted to see them applied by those under his authority. The poem may thus have been written after a rift had occurred between Amir Pʻōlin and someone or a group of people under his authority in the brotherhood.[63]

Amir Pʻōlin's subjective approach doesn't reflect the reality of the situation, as Kostandin seems to say when he observes that it is not the sun's fault if it is obscured by clouds, nor is the appearance of the moon in its different phases a reflection of its true state: it is always round.

One must understand the ignorant as those who do not wish to live according to the Word of God, as interpreted along the lines of the Armenian Orthodox Church. This may well reflect the tensions in the brotherhood encountered at the time by Amir Pʻōlin and Kostandin alike. The abovementioned rowdy character of the young members and their gatherings were meant to be curbed by the constitution of the brotherhood and its sequel, but this poem, together with those where Kostandin is attacked, may well document its limited effect.[64]

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61 Thus already Abełyan 1970, 356–357 (first published in 1946).

62 Van Lint 2019, 124.

63 Dadoyan 2005, 259 and Dadoyan 2014, 128–130 stretch the evidence; cf van Lint 2019, 116–117.

64 Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi devotes a poem, written in about 1290, to a repentant *manktawag* whose behaviour towards the junior member under his care had been wanting. Srapyan 1958, 90–91, 171–182; Dadoyan 2014.

6 Amir P'ōlin's colophon, V103, folios 89ʳ–90ʳ

This section seeks to place the manuscript in the context of its copying. The colophon identifies Amir P'ōlin as the manuscript's copyist and commissioner.[65] What does its place of copying mean, and what does it tell us about the copyist's activity? No attention has been paid to this element of the manuscript nor of what one might call its copyist's testimony. Further, what can we learn about Amir P'ōlin's identity from his name?

The colophon consists of two parts, the colophon itself identifiable by a series of elements usually present in such texts, followed by an invocation of the Theotokos. A segment of a poem on Christ completes the manuscript as we have it.[66] Whether Amir P'ōlin regarded it as part of his colophon, is difficult to say. What it does show is his devotion to Mary, and to Christ. It is impossible to know whether any texts followed them, but this does not detract from the characterisation of Amir P'ōlin as a devout Christian. Let us read the text of the colophon.[67]

(Fol. 89ʳ [90ʳ]) Բայց գրեցաւ սայ ի թաւրէժ ի դառվազայի ունջայրանս, շնորհիւ և ողորմութեամբ ամենաաւրհնեալ տիրամաւր սուրբ աստուածածնին, ձեռամբ մեղապարտ և դատապարտեալ ոզոյ նուաստ գրչի Ամիրոս` մականուն Փօլին քալայմաչի[68] Յուսուփայ[69] որդուս Միթորի թոռն` ի վայելումն անձին իւրոյ և լիշատակ հոզոյ իւրոյ և ծնողացն իւրոյ: Տէր Յիսուս Քրիստոս Աստուած բոլ(fol. 89ᵛ [90ᵛ])որից համայնից ողորմեցիր մեզ և ձեզ ի կարդացողին և լսողին և այնոցիկ որք հաւ[ատով] զմեզ ի Քրիստոս լիշեն: Քրիստոս զիրմանբք լիշէ լիւր արքայութիւնն: Ի թիվս[70] ՋՁԵ ի նավասարթի: գրեցաւ այս զիրս ամէն:[71]

Ազաջեմ զամենաւրհնել տիր[ո]լին Մարիամ լիպավե ծնողդ աստուծոյ դուստր արքայի երկնայորդի մայր որբոց փառատր մսիթարութ[ե]անց վշտացելոց ճանապարհ մոլորելոց

ֆիրկութեան յուսայցելոցս ի քեզ: Կոյս զղով լառաջ քան զծնունդն: Կոյս ծնընդութեամբն և կոյս յետ ծնընդեանն: Աղբուր ողորմութեան և ֆիրկութեան շնորհացա[ւ]ղ, (fol. 90ͬ [91ͬ]) [աղբ]ուր զթութեան և քաղցրութեան, աղբուր մխիթարութեան և քաղցրութեան, աղբուր շնորհող և մխիթարիչ մեղաւորաց: Բարէխաւսեա վասն իմ մեղաւորիս քում ծառայիցս և Ամիրիս առաջի որդոյ քո միածնի, զի յիրով ողորմութեամբն և քոին բարէխաւսութեամբս շնոր[շ][հ]էսցէ ինձ ողորմելոյ ժամանակ առաջ քան զաւր վախճանի իմո որպէսզի մաքուր զղձման և ճշմարիտ խաստովանութեամբ և լիակատար ապաշխարութեամբ քաւեցից զմեղս իմ և ամէնայն հաւատացեղ կենդան[ե]աց և ն[ն]ջեցելոց կեանք և հանգիստ յաւիտենից ամէն: Փառք և երկր[ր]պագութիւն հաւր և որդոյ և սուրբ հոգոյն:

(Fol. 89ͬ [90ͬ]) But this was written in Tabriz, in the Sanjarān gate through the grace and the mercy of the all-blessed Mother of the Lord, the Holy Mother of God, by the hands of the guilty and condemned ignoble soul, the copyist Amir, whose nickname is P'ōlin, son of Yusup' Kalaymač'i,[72] grandson of Mit'oṙ, for his own convenience and for the memory of his soul and of his parents. May the Lord Jesus Christ, God of all (fol. 89ͮ [90ͮ]) and everything, have mercy on us and on you who read or hear this and on those who remember us in faith before Christ. Christ remembers his own in his kingdom. In the year 1336, in [the month of] Navasart,[73] this book was written, amen.

I supplicate you, most blessed Lady Mary, you perfect parent of God, daughter of the Heavenly King, mother glorified[74] by orphans, road of consolations for the afflicted, for those who have strayed from salvation and put their hopes in you. Virgin before giving birth, virgin in birth and virgin after birth. (Fol. 90ͬ [91ͬ]) Source of mercy and provider of salvation, source of compassion and sweetness, source of consolation and sweetness, source of granting pardon to, and comforter of sinners. Intercede on behalf of me, sinner, of your servants, and of me, Amir, before your only-begotten Son, that through his compassion and your intercession, He may grant me, miserable one, time before the day of my end, so that I, in pure contrition and sincere confession and complete repentance, may atone for my sins and [I supplicate] for all believers, living and deceased, eternal life and peace, amen. Glory and worship to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amir P'ōlin copied the manuscript in Tabriz. This is important information. We learn also that this took place in 1336, when the Mongol Ilkhanid empire was losing its power and integrity. Until then, Amir P'ōlin had known no other geopolitical situation. Tabriz had been

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72 One may also read: 'Amir, nicknamed P'ōlin Kalaymač'i – the son of Yusuf, the grandson of Mit'oṙ'. Poturean writes Փօլին Քալայմաչ ի Յուսիֆայ որդուն, deciding in favour for the attribution of Քալայմաչ to Amir, by making it part of his nickname.

73 Navasart was the first month of the Armenian calendar, according to the fixed calendar. It ran from 11 August to 9 September. It also may mean New Year's day, the first day of the month Navasart, 11 August (HAB III, 435–436; Russell 1987a, 50 and 68, n. 97).

74 փառաւոր for փառաւորեալ, see NBHL II, 934.

a cultural and economic centre and its transformation from a city on the political periphery of the late Abbasid caliphate into a major political, economic and cultural centre of the Mongol and Timurid periods, [...] contributed significantly to the cultural and intellectual achievements of this time.[75]

While Christians, among them Armenians, had relatively thrived under the Ilkhans, this changed after Ghazan Khan's ascendancy to the throne in 1295 and his conversion to Islam, when persecutions increased. Nevertheless there was still a Christian presence – both ecclesiastical and mercantile – in Tabriz in the 1330s, and Tabriz remained an important trading hub until the disintegration of the Ilkhanate after 1335.[76] Johannes Preiser-Kapeller has shown the significance of Tabriz as locality on the mental map of thirteenth–fourteenth-century merchants of various Christian denominations (Oriental, among these Armenian, as well as Greek Orthodox and Catholics) and the apocalyptic images associated with the city after gaining prominence in the Ilkhanid period.[77] Hakob Manandian explored the trading route from Ayas (Layazzo) in Cilicia to Tabriz via Sivas, Erznka and Erzurum.[78] To this may now be added Thomas Sinclair's minutely researched and carefully argued study of this route, taking as its point of departure the description made in 1330 at the latest by the fourteenth-century traveller and banker Pegolotti.[79] The route had its heyday in Amir Pʻōlin's lifetime. The location of both Erznka and Tabriz on an important international trade route may explain why Amir Pʻōlin copied the manuscript in Tabriz.

Amir Pʻōlin provides us with further information, indicating the precise locale in Tabriz where he had copied the manuscript – or at the very least the colophon, although the writing on the folios concerned is continuous and does not give the impression of having been interrupted (see Fig. 5): *i darvazayi snǰayrans*, an Armenian rendering of the Persian *darvāza-yi sanjarān*, 'in the Sanjarān gate', which I take to mean 'in the Sanjarān gate-house'.[80]

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75 Pfeiffer 2014b, 4.

76 On Tabriz's significance as intellectual, cultural, and Islamic religious centre, Pfeiffer (ed.) 2014a.

77 Preiser-Kapeller 2014.

78 Manandian 1965, 171–185.

79 Sinclair 2020.

80 Armenian ի դարվազայի սնջայրանս for Persian *darvāza-yi sanjarān* 'in the Sanjarān gate'. *Darvāza* 'a.o: gate; square; a market-place, or exchange where merchants meet', Steingass 1975, 514a; *sanjar* 'prince, emperor, king', Steingass 1975, 700b, but here a geographical indicator.
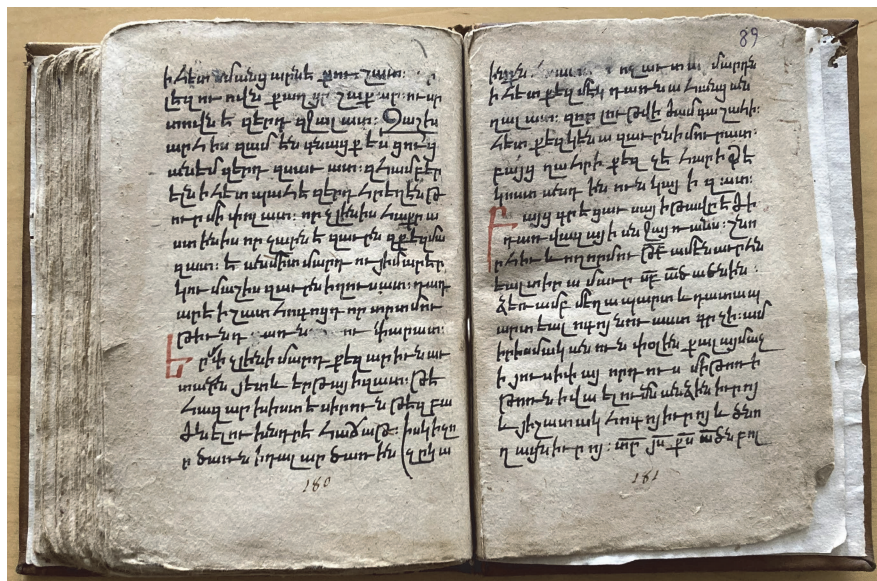
Fig. 5: V103, fols 88ᵛ–89ʳ [89ᵛ–90ʳ]; final part of poem 22 and opening part of the colophon.

The Sanjarān quarter was located in the north-west of the city, within the city walls that were to become an inner wall in Ilkhanid times, when the city was one of their capitals and expanded rapidly requiring much larger walls. The old city wall, rebuilt in 1043 after the earthquake of the previous year, had ten gates, of which the Sanjarān gate was one, opening onto the road to Erzurum and Sivas, the 'Rome Road', as well as the Šām road, leading to Aleppo via Marand, Van, and Diyarbakir.[81] The former road was part of the Ayaz-Tabriz itinerary on which

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[81] 'Rome Road': more precisely 'Rum Road'. Jafarpour Nasser 2018, 43, with map on p. 45, fig. 2; English language map (fig. 1 on p. 4) in 'Muslim Pious Foundations as Urban Nucleuses during the Sustainable Development of Ilkhanid Cities: A Case Study of Tabriz', A. Mohammad Moradi, Professor of Iran University of Science and Technology, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, m_moradi@iust.ac.ir; Sanaz Jafarpour Nasser, MSc Student of Iran University of Science and Technology, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, s.jafarpour.n@gmail.com. Paper reference number: 213, 0106-689. Name of the presenter: Sanaz Jafarpour Nasser. 5th Symposium on Advances in Science & Technology 2011, Khavaran Higher-education Institute, Mashhad, Iran, 12–14 May, PDF available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336775860_Muslim_Pious_Foundations_as_Urban_Nucleuses_during_the_Sustainable_Development_of_Ilkhanid_Cities_a_case_study_of_Tabriz>. There is contemporary confirmation of the name of this gate in the Rab'-e Rašīdi endowment charter of 1309, describ-

Erznka lay.[82] In Ilkhanid times, the outer walls of the much expanded city would have afforded access through the *darvāz-e hrum* 'the Rome gate', i.e. the gate to Anatolia and Asia Minor.[83] The Sanjarān gate would then be reached inside the city. If Amir P'ōlin came from Erznka, which we find more likely than that he was an inhabitant of Tabriz, his choice of location is no surprise from a geographical point of view.

That choice is significant also for another reason. Amir P'ōlin is not copying the manuscript in a church or monastery, but in a more secular location, one which afforded not only entrance to, in this case the old city, but which, given the word's meaning, may have comprised locations for mercantile transactions.[84] Amir P'ōlin might have copied the manuscript, or might have had it copied in a clerical environment had he so desired, since there were Armenian churches in Tabriz at the time, but, apparently, he didn't. We have a number of manuscripts that were copied in the city between 1331 and 1345.[85] Of the manuscripts listed, several were copied 'under the protection of the Holy Theotokos Mother of Light and the Holy Soldier Saint Sargis and his Son Martiros' as one formula states – similar formulae occur in other manuscripts locally copied at the time.[86] What is clear is that none mentions the Sanjarān gate. It is possible that Amir P'ōlin was a merchant, or that he had helped escort a caravan with a group of younger members of the brotherhood. However, on the basis of our current knowledge, we have no way of determining whether the brotherhood was still active in 1336, and if so, whether Amir P'ōlin was one of its leading members. The difficulties men-

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ing Rašīd al-Dīn's foundation for the large quarter that was to contain his tomb, and in Hamd-Allāh Mostawfi's *Nozhat-al-qolub* (740 AH / 1339 CE); Jafarpour Nasser 2018, 40 and 41, Table 1.

82 Sinclair 2020.

83 Maps (p. 6, fig. 2) in Mohammad Moradi's and Jafarpour Nasser's paper mentioned above (n. 82), giving 'Rome gate' for what must have been called the 'Rum gate', and Jafarpour Nasser 2018, 45, fig. 3.

84 Cf. n. 81 above.

85 HJH, 105, no. 539 (BZA470), containing the homilies of Bartholomeus of Bologna, copied in a Catholic Church in 1331; Nersessian 1986, 7–8, LOB Or. 5304; HJH, 194, no. 604 (M78), fragments of a New Testament (1334), with second colophon by editor, HJH, 420, no. 783 (1345); HJH, 241, no. 628 (M2776), a tractate in verse against the dyophysites (1335); HJH, 259, no. 645 (M5968), gospels, 1336; HJH, 261, no. 646 (M5019), gospels, 1336; HJH, 298, no. 673 (M212), gospels, 1337; HJH, 418, no. 781 (M731), a collection of dogmatic works (1345). Several of these manuscripts are discussed in Martirosyan 1982: M78, M212, M2776, M5019, M5968. The bibliography for these manuscripts, especially M212 is ever expanding.

86 HJH, 194, (M78, fols 289ᵛ–290ʳ) in the previous note. A similar formula, leaving out the military Saint Martiros, occurs in M5968 (fol. 243ᵛ), while M212 (fol. 310ʳ) has an even briefer formula 'under the protection of the Holy Mother of Light and Saint Sargis the General'.

tioned in the poems make it more likely than not that he was in Tabriz in matters other than those concerning the brotherhood, possibly including trade.

Why he would copy Kostandin's poems together with Yovhannēs's homily in Tabriz, rather than Erznka, is unclear. Did he come across (one of) the texts in Tabriz rather than Erznka? We also do not know whether the choice to combine the two was Amir's or was present in his *Vorlage.* It is tantalising to think that he may have had the poet's own manuscript in front of him (of which we know nothing), which may have contained also the poems not present in Amir Pʻōlin's copy.

The colophon then mentions 'the grace and the mercy of the Mother of the Lord, the Holy Mother of God' as the power by which the copying of the manuscript was completed. This is somewhat significant, as it does not mention any of the members of the Trinity but highlights the Theotokos instead. It does not fully tally with the formulae of other manuscripts copied in this period in Tabriz, but shares the prominence they accord to Mary. Following this, Amir Pʻōlin mentions himself in the self-denigrating terms that are usual for scribes of Armenian colophons, 'by the hands of the guilty and condemned ignoble soul', showing his acquaintance with the style of such texts. He then gives his name and pedigree.

The name Amir Pʻōlin consists of two elements. Amir derives from Arabic *ʾamīr*, meaning 'prince', which literally is 'he who commands, gives orders'. As male name it is attested in Armenia since the thirteenth–fourteenth century. It may be used as an honorific or a title.[87] The second part, Pʻōlin is unclear in meaning. Its sole attestation is in the manuscript under investigation. Ačaṙyan calls it a 'highly unusual name'.[88] An unsubstantiated guess might derive it from Paulin, a name that appears in England after the Norman conquest and which in a further unconfirmed hypothesis might be derived from Paulinus – but there is no proof of this. This would presuppose a Norman–French connection, probably through Catholic missionaries. However, Amir Pʻōlin clearly subscribes to the Armenian Church's tenets and knows Armenian well. His standard of copying is by no means worse than that of many copyists of undisputable Armenian descent. Non-Armenian progeny might, but need not, find support in the names of his father and grandfather: Yusupʻ and Mitʻoṙ. The former, of Arabic origin, is readily recognisable and was in use among Armenians 'from the twelfth until the eighteenth century'.[89] It may represent a variant of Yovsepʻ (Joseph). The name Mitʻoṙ does

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[87] Thus Ačaṙyan 1972a, 119.

[88] Ačaṙyan 1972a, 138.

[89] Ačaṙyan 1972b, 737. It occurs in a colophon in 1414 under the name Yusuf (Xačʻikean 1955, 168, no. 173, M2063, Grigor Tatʻewacʻiʻs book of homilies), and in the name Kara-Yusuf (Xačʻikean 1967,

not occur in Ačaṙyan's *Dictionary of Personal Names* – and seemed so unusual to Father Čemčemean, the author of the *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Mekhitarists' Library in Venice*, that he read մի թոռի թոռն (*mi t'oṙi t'oṙn*), 'the grandson of a grandson', which seems devoid of meaning, instead of Մթոռի թոռն (*Mit'oṙi toṙn*), 'the grandson of Mit'oṙ', the reading of Poturean, followed by K'iwrtean and Srapyan.[90] Čemčemean's reading was adopted also by the editors of the volume of colophons written between 1326 and 1350.[91] However, the name occurs in the form Mit'or (with *r*, not *ṙ*) in two thirteenth-century colophons.[92] The name contains a further term: քալայմաչի (*k'alaymač'i*), which so far resists translation or explanation.

The next phrase is self-explanatory: 'for his own pleasure'; Amir P'ōlin still valued Kostandin's poetry, and he clearly also valued Yovhannēs's homily. The colophon further cements the function of the manuscript as a spiritual *vademecum* and as a testimony to brotherhood literature, albeit possibly quite apart from that organisation's actual status. The next phrase places the act of copying in the religious realm, an act of piety, and is a staple phrase in Armenian colophons: 'and for the memory of his soul and of his parents'.

Further usual colophonic prayers follow, including the reciprocity of grace befalling those who pray for grace for the copyist and his readers and audience. The precise date and 'amen' end the formal part of the colophon.

The invocation of Mary provides further insight in Amir P'ōlin's intentions. It is some forty words longer than the colophon proper. Adoration of the Theotokos and daughter of the Heavenly King is given free rein here. One sentence is particularly striking. Amir P'ōlin wants to devote the remainder of his life to sincere contrition, confession, and repentance. This sentence places even greater importance on the contents of the manuscript. He will have envisaged it as an instrument through which repentance might ensue. The injunctions Yovhannēs Erznkac'i laid down in his homily, the spiritual depth of Kostandin's joyous poetry, and the sobering advice in his didactic ones, summed up in his poem dedicated to Amir P'ōlin himself, were instruments to prepare the copyist for his final journeys, here on earth, and then beyond.

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654), under the name Yusup' with reference to Kara-Yusuf, which remains unidentified outside the index of the book.

90 Poturean 1905, 10; K'iwrtean 1953, 162; Srapyan 1962, 111.

91 Čemčemean 1996, col. 788, followed in HJH, 262.

92 Mat'evosyan 1984, 165, no. 120, V129, fol. 138ᵛ, gospels, dated 1230; Mat'evosyan 1984, 842, no. 678, M8179, synaxarion, dated 1298.

7 Conclusion

Manuscript V103 presents an important witness about the Erznka brotherhood and three of its protagonists, the theologian Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi, the poet Kostandin Erznkacʻi and a potential *manktawag* or leader of it, the copyist (and merchant?) Amir Pʻōlin. If homily and poems were copied from an exemplar in which both were present, we have the beginning of a tradition of the reception of brotherhood literature. If it was Amir's deliberate act to combine the text, he represents a unique witness to it (as it is, that is the situation), and underlines his seriousness in interpreting these brotherhood texts as guidelines for his Christian life, at a point when he had come to a conversion involving contrition, confession and repentance. That makes it a unique personal document of a fourteenth-century layman.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

References to Armenian manuscripts follow Coulie 2020, adopted by the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes and increasingly representing the standard in Armenian studies. The sigla used in this contribution are the following:

BZA = Bzommar (Lebanon), Zmmaru Patriarkʻakan Miabanutʻiwn.
J = Jerusalem, Aṙakʻelakan Atʻoṙ Srbocʻ Yakovbeancʻ.
LOB = London, British Library.
M = Yerevan, Matenadaran [Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts].
V = Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni.
AAP = Michael E. Stone, Dickran Kouymjian and Henning M. Lehman, *Album of Armenian Paleography*,
    Århus: University of Aarhus Press, 2000.

HAB III = Hrač'ya Ačaṙyan, *Հայերէն արմատական բառարան* [*Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Language*], vol. 3, Yerevan: Erevani Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1977.

HJH = Lewon Xač'ikean, Artašes Mat'evosyan and Arp'enik Łazarosyan, *Հայերէն ձեռագրերի հիշատակարաններ, ԺԴ դար. Մասն Բ (1326–1350 թթ)* [*Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts (1326–1350)*], Yerevan: Matenadaran, 2020.

NBHL II = Gabriēl Awetik'ean, Xač'atur Siwrmēlean and Mkrtič' Awgerean, *Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան Լեզուի. Հատոր Երկրորդ Հ-Ֆ* [*New Dictionary of the Armenian Language*, vol. 2: *H–F*], Venice: San Lazzaro, 1837.

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Xač'ikean, Lewon [Xač'ikyan, Levon] (1967), *ԺԵ դարի հայերեն ձեռագրերի հիշատակարաններ, Մասն երրորդ (1481–1500 թթ)* [*Armenian Manuscript Colophons of the Fifteenth Century: Third Part (1481–1500)*], Yerevan: HSSṘ GA hratarakč'ut'yun.

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Vitagrazia Pisani

The Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church in Jerusalem during the Early Solomonic Period: Evidence from Ethiopic Manuscripts

Abstract: This article presents a few Ethiopic manuscripts coming from and around the so-called Early Solomonic Period (1270–1527), preserved nowadays in European institutions but presumably coming from Jerusalem, where they were produced or sent from the Ethiopian kingdom. They represent an additional witness of the historical presence of the Ethiopian Christian community in Jerusalem already during the fourteenth century, and the interest of some Ethiopian kings towards this centre, manifested through donations of copies of certain Ethiopic texts to enrich its book collection. The codices presented also help us conjecture the presence of an independent Ethiopic scribal production in the Holy City.

1 Introduction

Although Christian Ethiopians always perceived themselves to be very close to the Holy Land, passing down numerous traditional beliefs used to validate this connection,[1] we do not know exactly when the contacts between the two Christian churches started and Ethiopian Christian communities emerged in Jerusalem. Mention in Latin sources[2] regarding the presence of Christian 'Ethiopian' pilgrims in Bethlehem, together with the finding of the Aksumite coins[3] in Jerusalem, suggests early contacts between the Holy City and Christian Ethiopia and the existence of Ethiopian pilgrims[4] in Jerusalem already during the fourth century. Nev-

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1 Examples include the tradition that the Ethiopian kings of the Solomonic dynasty descend from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Makedda), the identification of the Ethiopian city of 'Aksum with Zion, or the tradition that Christianity came to 'Aithiopía' through the activity of an 'Ethiopian' eunuch (of Queen Candace) who was at the Temple of Jerusalem during the Apostles times. Cf. Stoffregen Pedersen 2007.

2 Mention given in two letters sent in the 380s CE by two disciples of St Jerome to friends in Rome; cf. Hilberg (ed.) 1910, 339–340; cf. also Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 1–2.

3 For a recent study on Aksumite coins, see Butts 2023.

4 Ethiopian pilgrimage abroad could be dated back to the foundation of the Ethiopian Church, i.e. to the fourth century, but a more regular movement of people between the Aksumite kingdom

ertheless, a more concrete picture of an Ethiopian Christian community in the Holy City, which began to flourish in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, derives from a variety of sources dating from the fourteenth century onwards. These sources include letters from foreign missionaries in Jerusalem, from Ethiopian kings or nobles, legal documents, and colophons or additional notes in Ethiopic manuscripts.[5]

Many manuscripts were probably brought to Jerusalem by Ethiopian pilgrims for liturgical or monastic purposes; some were also plausibly sent to the monks by Ethiopian friends, benefactors and kings; others were probably produced in the Holy City itself. While the majority of the Ethiopic manuscripts preserved nowadays in Jerusalem in the Ethiopian archbishopric,[6] which preserves the largest number of Ethiopic manuscripts in the city, date from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, many codices from earlier times, namely, from the fourteenth/fifteenth century, have supposedly been destroyed or dispersed in various ways.[7]

This paper briefly presents some Ethiopic manuscripts that are nowadays kept in European institutions but which, presumably, were produced in Jerusalem or were sent there from the Ethiopian empire, and attempts to conjecture possible contacts, connections or even parallels between the scribal backgrounds of some of them. This investigation concerns manuscripts created within and around the time of Ethiopian history commonly known as the Early Solomonic Period (1270–1527),[8] particularly between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, with a special focus

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and areas of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, as envoys, merchants, bishops and pilgrims, happened most probably from the sixth century onwards. On this, cf. the recent important book on the monastery of Santo Stefano dei Mori by Kelly 2024, particularly 31–32.

5 Cf. Stoffregen Pedersen 2007.

6 Ephraim Isaac 1984 gives a short inventory (with the title of the main work and dating) of the manuscripts kept in this archbishopric, and in the Ethiopian monasteries of Dayr as-Sulṭān (on this monastery, see Stoffregen Pedersen 2005) and Dabra Gannat Kidāna Maḥrat (on this monastery, see Stoffregen Pedersen 2007). The number of the inventoried manuscripts is 764, of which 569 manuscripts are preserved in the main library of the archbishop's residence, 33 in the monastery of Dayr as-Sulṭān, and 162 in the monastery of Dabra Gannat (cf. Ephraim Isaac 1984, 57). Other repositories in Jerusalem holding Ethiopic manuscripts include the Jewish National and University Library, with twenty-seven uncatalogued manuscripts; the Armenian patriarchate, with eleven manuscripts and nine fragments (mostly dating before the sixteenth century; on them, see in particular Ephraim Isaac 1976); the Greek Orthodox patriarchate, with nineteen manuscripts. On these repositories and on the related bibliography, see the online database <http://www.menestrel.fr/?-Jerusalem-&lang=fr#2190> (accessed on 7 November 2022). For a recent study of some archival documents of the Ethiopian archbishopric in Jerusalem, see Ancel 2018.

7 Cf. Ephraim Isaac 1984, 54.

8 This is the time span considered by the ITIESE project.

on some of the copies investigated by the project 'Demarginalizing medieval Africa: Images, texts, and identity in early Solomonic Ethiopia (1270–1527)' (ITIESE).[9]

2 Ethiopic medieval manuscripts to and from Jerusalem

Vatican City, BAV, Borg. et. 3 is an early and renowned example of an Ethiopic manuscript created in the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church at the court of an Ethiopian king but sent to Jerusalem, and from there moved to other destinations.[10] This is a fourteenth-century copy of the *Maṣḥafa nagaśt* ('Book of Kings'),[11] which was donated to the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem by the Ethiopian king ʿAmda Ṣǝyon I (r. 1314–1344), especially as a votive gift to the church of St Mary of Golgotha for its own usage.[12] In a final colophon on fol. 188[ra] we read in fact:

> ዘንተ ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ ነገሥት ፡ በዓዕኩ ፡ አነ ፡ ዐምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ ወስመ ፡ መንግሥትየ ፡ ገብ ረ ፡ መስቀል ፡ ንጉሠ ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ፡ ለአግዝእትየ ፡ ማርያም ፡ ለኢየሩሳሌም ፡

> I, King ʿAmda Ṣǝyon, and my regnal name Gabra Masqal, king of Ethiopia, gave this *Book of Kings* as a votive gift to my Lady Mary,[13] to Jerusalem.[14]

The codex is nowadays preserved in Rome, in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, but before it was kept in the monastery of Santo Stefano dei Mori,[15] where it was

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9 On the illuminated manuscripts surveyed by the ITIESE project, housed in public collections in Germany and the United Kingdom, see Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 82–83 and Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023.

10 Images of the manuscript are available here: <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.et.3> (accessed on 12 December 2022). The manuscript is described by Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 782–787. On the history of this manuscript, see Rahlfs 1918, 184–187, 198–200. See also Roupp 1902.

11 Text with CAe 1719, edited by Dillmann 1853–1894, vol. 2/1 and vol. 2/2.

12 On this note and this regnal donation, see Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 130–131.

13 According to Cerulli (cf. Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 130), this church, dedicated to St Mary, should be identified with the church of St Mary of Golgotha, property of the Ethiopian Church at the time of ʿAmda Ṣǝyon I. On this church, see also Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 120–121.

14 Transcription and translation of the note made by myself based on the image available online.

15 On Santo Stefano dei Mori, see Fiaccadori 2010. The Borgian manuscripts, that is, those manuscripts preserved at the Museo Borgiano, together with the remaining ones from Santo Stefano dei Mori, entered the Vatican Library in 1902 (cf. Fiaccadori 2010, 531; cf. also Grébaut and Tisse-

most probably present already before the year 1694.[16] In an additional and more recent note,[17] written at the bottom margin of the incipit page of the manuscript (fol. 3ʳ), a certain *ʾAbbā* Māḥṣanta Māryām from Māndāmbā writes that he himself brought this book, property of Jerusalem, in the year 1637, with the aim to bring it back again to the original place after having printed it. In the note, however, he does not specify exactly the place from where the manuscript was moved; we read: ‘በ፲፯፻፴፮[sic]፻ፃ[፥] እምልደተ ፥ ክርስቶስ ፥ ለዝንቱ ፥ መጽሐፍ ፥ አምጻእክዎ ፥ አነ ፥ አባ ፥ ማሕጸንተ ፥ ማርያም ፥ ዘማንዳምባ ፥ በእንተ ፥ አብነት ፥[sic] ማህ[sic]ትም ፥ ንዋየ ፥ ኢየሩሳሌም ፥ ንሚጠ ፥ እምድኅረ ፥ ሁተምነ ፥’,[18] ‘In 1637[19] CE, I, *ʾAbbā* Māḥṣanta Māryām zaMāndāmbā brought this book as an exemplar for print. It is the property of Jerusalem. Let us return it after we have printed it’. The name of Māḥṣanta Māryām appears among the Ethiopian monks who repopulated the monastery of Santo Stefano dei Mori after 1634, also bringing other books and maintaining ‘fruitful relationships’ with several scholars of the time.[20]

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rant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 21, and 21, n. 1). Again, on this monastery, its origin, organisation and pilgrims, etc., see Kelly 2024 mentioned above.

16 About this hypothesis, cf. Rahlfs 1918, 184.

17 The note is already discussed by Roupp 1902, esp. 303, and 303, n. 2 (he gives the German translation and the transliteration).

18 Transcription and translation made by myself directly from the manuscript, on the image available online. The same note is also found in the manuscript Paris, BnF, éthiopien 2, manuscript copied, together with manuscript Paris, BnF, éthiopien 1 by Johann Michael Wansleben from the manuscript Cambridge, CUL, BFBS 169 (on this manuscript see below), during his visit to Santo Stefano dei Mori, in Rome, in 1666 (on this copying cf. below n. 28). The note mentioning *ʾAbbā* Māḥṣanta Māryām was copied by Wansleben on the paper manuscript BnF éthiopien 2 on p. 410 (note transcribed by Zotenberg 1877, 3b; it is also visible on the manuscript’s images available on <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BNFet2/viewer> (accessed on 14 June 2024)), but with the variant of the year at the beginning, that is, በ፲፯፻፴፮ ፥ instead of በ፲፯፻፴፮ ፥, as it appears in the manuscript BAV Borg. et. 3 (on the date, as it is written in BAV Borg. et. 3, cf. also below n. 19). On a discussion about the presence of the same note in both manuscripts, i.e. BnF éthiopien 2 and BAV Borg. et. 3, see Roupp 1902, 335–336.

19 The date mentioned in the note is mistakenly written as 1736 but it should be read as 1637. This has already been reported by Rahlfs 1918, 185, where we read: ‘Im Jahre 1637 nach Christi Geburt’, and by Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 786, as ‘በ፲፯፻፴፮ (in cod. በ፲፯፻፴፮< ፥> perperam script.)’.

20 On this cf. Fiaccadori 2010. Santo Stefano dei Mori was an Ethiopian establishment until 1680, with a peak of the Ethiopian population, autonomy and influence reached in the first half of the sixteenth century. The monastery was affected by a lack of population in 1680; the library was temporarily closed in 1628 and the books gathered there were transferred to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (cf. Kelly 2024, 1–2; cf. also Fiaccadori 2010).

In addition to BAV Borg. et. 3, another well-known manuscript sent to Jerusalem from the Ethiopian kingdom is Vatican City, BAV, Borg. et. 2,[21] a fifteenth-century witness (before 1442) of the *Senodos*.[22] We learn from a donation note on the first folios of the book (fols 3ra–4vb) that this manuscript was donated to the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem by King Zarʾa Yāʿqob (r. 1434–1468) in the eighth year of his reign (i.e. 1441/1442), probably as a 'royal call to order, enjoining the community to use the standard text' of this work.[23] Alessandro Bausi hypothesises that a Coptic canonical collection was added to the first nucleus, after a first phase when the Ethiopic *Senodos* was composed only of Melkite canons, translated from an Arabic text circulating in the Melkite community of Egypt, creating an 'original mixture'. BAV Borg. et. 2, one of the manuscripts containing the Coptic addition, was, thus, sent by Zarʾa Yāʿqob to Jerusalem, where there was probably still a Melkite *Senodos*.[24]

The note, written in the first person of the king, starts with the following words:

(fol. 3ra) በስመ ፡ አብ ፡ ወወልድ ፡ ወመንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ አሐዱ ፡ አምላክ ፡= ፡ [...] ተጽሕፈት ፡ ዛ ቲ ፡ መልእክት ፡ ውስተ ፡ ዛቲ ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ ሲኖዶስ ፡ እምኀቤየ ፡ እምኀበ ፡ ዘርአ ፡ ያዕቆብ ፡ ወስ መ ፡ መንግሥትየ ፡ ቄስጠንጢኖስ ፡ እምአመ ፡ አንበረኒ ፡ አምላከ ፡ እስራኤል ፡ በብዝኀ ፡ ምሕረ ቱ ፡ ዲበ ፡ መንበረ ፡ መ(fol. 3rb)ንግሥተ ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ፡ በጽዓመት ፡ እንዘ ፡ ሀሎኩ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ሀገ ረ ፡ ሴዋ ፡ እንተ ፡ ትሰመይ ፡ ተጕለት ። ትብጻሕ ፡ ኀበ ፡ ፍቁራንየ ፡ ማኅበረ ፡ ቅድሳን ፡ እለ ፡ ይነ ብሩ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ሀገር ፡ ቅድስት ፡ በሰላመ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ አሜን ፨

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God. [...] This letter was written in this book of the *Senodos* by me, by Zarʾa Yāʿqob, and my name of reign Qʷasṭanṭinos [Constantine], from when the God of Israel placed me, with the multitude of His Mercy, on the throne of the kingdom of Ethiopia, in the year 8, while I was in the [or 'in

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21 For a description of the manuscript, see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 767–782; see also Bausi (ed.) 1995a, XVIII.

22 The *Senodos* is the most important canonico-liturgical collection of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Church (CAe 2317), which includes various writings, for example, prayers, Biblical canons, moral teachings and rulers. This text has been critically edited by Alessandro Bausi (Bausi (ed.) 1995a and Bausi (tr.) 1995b), who also used the copy BAV Borg. et. 2 for the edition. On this work, see also Bausi 1990; Bausi 1992; and Bausi 2010b.

23 Bausi 1992, 19.

24 For this and other details cf. Bausi 1992, particularly 16, 18–19.

a'?] region of Sewā, which is named Tagʷəlat.[25] Let it [the letter] arrive to my friends, the community of saints who live in Jerusalem, Holy City, with the peace of the Lord, Amen.[26]

The codex CUL BFBS 169 (= Cowley I)[27], containing a copy of the Octateuch,[28] is another gift that the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem received most probably during the fifteenth century.[29] The manuscript has an extensive colophon (fols 283[vb]–284[vb]) (Figs 1, 2, 3), which follows the explicit of the text and a row of coronis; this long note, if it seems to be written by the same hand as the main text, codicologically it appears instead to be divided into four different subparts.[30] I entirely report and translate[31] the colophon hereafter, dividing the text (and respective translation) into four sub-notes, also arbitrarily numbered (= 1, 2, 3, 4) according to their sequence on the leaves:

25 Tagʷəlat is a place name also mentioned in the *Chronicle of ʿAmda Ṣəyon* (CAe 4275); cf., for example, in the critical edition of the text by Marrassini (ed., tr.) 1993, 52, l. 15. On this area see Ege 2010.

26 Note transcribed and translated by myself directly from the manuscript (pictures kindly shared with me by Alessandro Bausi); for the entire note, with a Latin translation, cf. Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 779–781. On other elements of the letter, cf. also Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 237–238.

27 Cf. Cowley 1982, 68, 70.

28 CAe 2083. Copy, with siglum F, used in the edition of the text by Dillmann 1853–1894, vol. 1. Cf. also Cowley 1982, 70 and Rahlfs 1918, 166. As anticipated above (see n. 18), direct copies of manuscript CUL BFBS 169, reproduced in Rome by Johann Michael Wansleben, during his visit to Santo Stefano dei Mori, in 1666, are manuscripts BnF éthiopien 1 and éthiopien 2 (the description of both manuscripts is in Zotenberg 1877, 1a–4a). On Johann Michael Wansleben, see e.g. Bausi 2015; on the copying of these two manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, cf. particularly Bausi 2015, 213, and Zotenberg 1877, 1a).

29 This is one of the manuscripts from the United Kingdom public collections which has been photographed by the ITIESE team (Sophia Dege-Müller, Jacopo Gnisci, Jonas Karlsson) during April 2022; for the description of the manuscript made by them, see Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 164–168. They have kindly shared the images of the colophon with me, in order to be analysed for the present paper. For one description of the manuscript, see Cowley 1982, 70–72. For details on the history of the manuscript, see Rahlfs 1918, 161–184, 200–203.

30 They consist of a first part (1) with a few initial lines on fol. 283[vb], written at the bottom of the page, after the explicit of the text and a row of coronis; a second part (2) is represented by three lines written on fol. 284[r], on one column, under a note in Arabic, and framed by two horizontal black lines, one above and one below. After these lines, another part (3), always on fol. 284[r], is written in a bigger and white script ('negative' script) on a black background; this part in white script is preceded by a few lines (3?), which have been erased. The note also continues on a part (4), written on both columns of fol. 284[v], and left disrupted at the end of the page.

31 Direct transcription and translation which I made from the images of the colophon.

(1) (fol. 283vb, at the bottom, after the explicit of the text and coronis) ጽልዩ ፡ ለእለ ፡ ጻ[sic])ው‑ ነ ፡ ለዛቲ ፡ መጽሐፍ ፡ ወለይስሓቅ ፡ ገብርክሙ ፡ ዘወሀበ ፡ ዛቲ ፡ ለኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ቅድስት ፡= ፡³²

(2) (fol. 284^{r}, under the Arabic note)³³ ከመ ፡³⁴ ኢይበሉነ ፡ ጸላእትነ ፡ ሞእናሆሙ ፡ ኩ‑ኑ ፡ ለባዊ ያነ ፡ ወሀብናክሙ ፡ አባዕረ ፡ ተገበሩ ፡ ሐሪሰ ፡ ወዝርዑ ፡ በጐዕትያ ፡ ወታ[?]እርሩ ፡ <ወ>በፍሥ ሐ< ፡> [er.]³⁵

(3) (fol. 284^{r}, in 'negative' script) አነ ፡ ይስሓቅ ፡ ነዳይ ፡ በጸሎትክሙ ፡ ተፈጸመት ፡ በቤተ ፡ ገብ ዘ ፡ አክሱም ። በስምከ ፡ እግዚአ ፡ ተከልኩ ፡ ከመ ፡ ኢትሬስዮኒ< ፡> ሊተ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ካልእ ፡ መካ ን ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ በሀገረ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ሀገረ< ፡> ክርስቶስ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስትያን ፡ ወኢትርስዕኒ ፡ በጸሎትክ ሙ ፡ እለ ፡ አንበብክሙ ፡ ወሰማዕክሙ ፡

(4) (fol. 284va) ተወከፍ ፡ እግዚአ ፡ ዛተ ፡ አምኃየ ፡ ሊተ ፡ ለገብርከ ፡ ነዳይ ፡ ወተወከፍ ፡ ኮሎን ፡ መጽሐፍት ፡ እለ ፡ አቀርብኩ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይትናዛዙ ፡ አኃው ፡ እለ ፡ ይነብሩ ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ወይጸል ዩ ፡ ሊተ ፡ ወኢይርስዕኒ ፡ በቅዳሴ ፡ ወጸሎት ፡ እስመ ፡ ኮልነ ፡ ንቀውም ፡ ቅድመ ፡ እግዚአብሐ ር ፡ በግርምት ፡ ዕለት ፡ ወሰዓታትነ ፡[sic]³⁶ ለአኮ ፡ ለክመ ፡ ቀዳሚ ፡ ዘኢተጽሐፈ ፡ አመ ፡ ንፈቅ ድ ፡ ዘወሀብኩ ፡ ጎበ ፡ ገድለ ፡ ሰማዕት ፡ ስረዩ ፡ ወባርኩ ። (fol. 284vb) ወዓዲ ፡ ለበርየ ፡ ዜና ፡ አበ ው ። ወለቀኖስቋም ፡ ነገስት ፡[sic] ለደቂቅ ፡ ሐበሲ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይትናዛዙ ፡ ወእመሰ ፡ ገብኡ ፡ ብ <ሐ>ርነ ፡[sic] ወዓዲ ፡ ፈለሱ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ካልእ ፡ ብሐር ፡ ያግብኡ ፡ ለኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ለቀሮንዮ ፡ ለ ማርያም ፡ ጸልዩ ፡ ሊተ ፡ ይትወከፍ ፡ በከመ ፡ ተወክፈ ፡ ጸዖቀ ፡ መበለት ፡ ለዓለም ፡ ዓለም ፡ ኢይ ሲጡ ፡ ወኢወልጡ ፡ ወኢይምስጡ ፡ ወኢያቀምጡ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ካ<ል>እ ፡ መካን ፡ ወ[lac.]³⁷

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32 This note was copied into the paper manuscript, BnF éthiopien 2 (on p. 122), together with its main text (on this see above n. 28), by Johann Michael Wansleben in Rome in 1666. The Ethiopic transcription of this note is reported in Zotenberg 1877, 3b; on this information, cf. also Rahlfs 1918, 177). The images of the manuscript, with the note, are also available online on <https://betamasaheft.eu/ manuscripts/BNFet2/viewer> (accessed on 16 June 2024).

33 This Arabic note, written on the upper part of fol. 284^{r}, contains a supplication from the writ‑ er, who asks for prayers for a certain Isḥaq (the same Yǝsḥaq mentioned in the Ethiopic colo‑ phon?) and that his body will be buried at Mount Zion (on these details on the Arabic note, see Karlsson, Dege‑Müller and Gnisci 2023, 165, 167).

34 From here and on the entire fol. 284^{r}, the note, as anticipated above in n. 30, is written on one column and goes on after an Arabic note (also this on one column). Additionally, its first three lines (part 2) (from the word '**ከመ ፡**' until the word '**<ወ>በፍሥሐ< ፡>**') are framed by two hori‑ zontal black lines.

35 Here, as mentioned in n. 30, a few lines (probably corresponding to three written lines) have been washed out (er. = erasit).

36 For the word **ሰዓታት ፡** the accusative case is missing; the same applies to the word **ነገስት ፡** after it in the text.

37 The text is disrupted here (lac. = lacuna), it does not go on the following folio.

(1) (fol. 283ᵛᵇ, at the bottom, after the explicit of the text and coronis) Pray for us, who worked on this book, and for Yǝsḥaq, your servant, who donated this to the holy Jerusalem.

(2) (fol. 284ʳ, under the Arabic note) So that our enemies do not tell us 'We overcame them!', be intelligent; we gave you oxen, work on the ploughing and seed with hard labour; you will reap with joy. [*er.*].

(3) (fol. 284ʳ, in 'negative' script) I am poor Yǝsḥaq. By your prayer [the book] was completed in the house of the *gabaz* of ʾAksum.³⁸ I planted [myself?] in Your Name, o Lord, that You will not put me in another place other than the land of Zion, the land of Christ, the Church. And you who read and heard, do not forget me in your prayer.

(4) (fol. 284ᵛᵃ) Receive, o Lord, this present, for me, for your poor servant. And receive all books which I brought so that the brothers who live in Jerusalem might find consolation and pray for me, and do not forget me in the liturgy and prayer, because we will all stand in front of the Lord on the fearful day. And, moreover, I sent to you [the book of] the *Saʿātāt* [*Book of Hours*], which had not [yet] been written before, when we need [it] (?), which I exchanged with [lit. 'gave for'] [?] a [book of] *Gadla samāʾt* [*Acts of Martyrs*] – forgive and bless –, [fol. 284ᵛᵇ] and furthermore, to Barya³⁹ [the book of] the *Zenā ʾabaw*. And to Qʷǝsqʷām,⁴⁰ to the *daqiqa ḥabasi* [lit. 'the children of the Abyssinian', i.e. 'the Abyssinians'], the *nagast* [sic, biblical kings], so that they will find consolation, and if they will have returned to our region and, eventually, they will have moved to another region, let them bring back [the books] to Jerusalem, to Qarānyu [the Calvary], to Māryām. Pray for me, may it [the prayer] be accepted like the small coin of a widow⁴¹ was received; forever and ever. Do not let them sell and do not exchange, and do not let them dismember, and do not hide [the books] in another place and [*lac.*].⁴²

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38 On the *gabaz*, cf. below n. 43.

39 On this name, see below n. 56.

40 On this place see below n. 56 and n. 58.

41 On the biblical mention of the poor widow offering two coins, cf. Mark 12:42.

42 A few passages of the note remain of uncertain translation (interpretation); I thank Jonas Karlsson for his useful feedback on them, and especially Alessandro Bausi for precious remarks and suggestions.

Fig. 1: Explicit page and colophon (fol. 283ᵛ); CUL BFBS 169; fifteenth century; fol. 283ᵛ; © photo Cambridge, University Library.
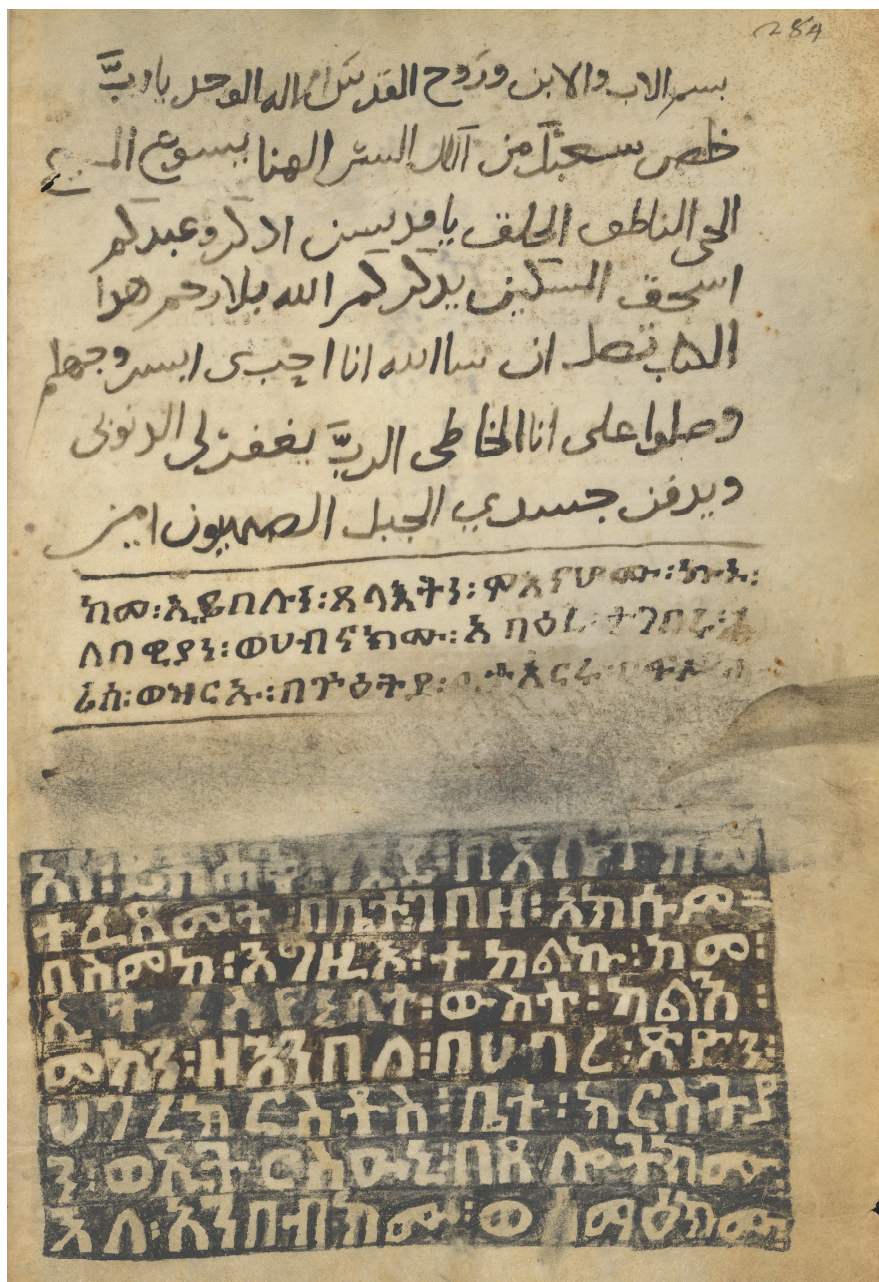
Fig. 2: Colophon (fol. 284ʳ); CUL BFBS 169; fifteenth century; fol. 284ʳ; © photo Cambridge, University Library.

ተወክፉ፡እግዚእ፡
ዘተ፡እምንጶ፡ቢታ፡
ለገብርክ፡ነደይ፡
ወተወክፉ፡ኵሎ
�፡ወጸሐፍት፡ኔ
ለ፡አቅረብኩ፡ክ
ው፡ይትናዛዙ፡ኔ
ንው፡እለ፡ይነብ
ሩ፡ኢየሩሳሌም፡
ወይጸልዩ፡ቢታ፡
ወኢይርስዑኒ፡
በቀዳሴ፡ወጸሎ
ት፡እስመ፡ኵሎ
ኒ፡ንቶውም፡ቀይ
ው፡እግዚእብሔ
ር፡በግርሥት፡በ
ለት፡ወሰሐታት
ኒ፡ለእኩ፡ለበው፡
ቀደው፡ዘኢተጸ
ሕፈ፡እወ፡ንፉቅ
ዩ፡ዘወህብኩ፡ኝ
በ፡ገድለ፡ሰሞአ
ት፡አሬዩ፡ወበግርኩ፡

ወነደ፡ለበ
ርዩ፡ዜና፡እ
በው፡ወለ
ቆስቁም፡
ነገስት፡ለይ
ቂት፡ሐበሺ
ክው፡ይትና
ዘዙ፡ወእስ
ስ፡ገብእ፡ብሔ
ር፡ወነደ፡ፉ
ለሱ፡ወክተ፡ክ
ልእ፡ብሔር፡ይ
ግብእ፡ለኢየሩ
ሳሌው፡ለቀሩን
ዩ፡ለማርያም፡
ጸልዩ፡ቢታ፡ይ
ትወክፉ፡በክ
ው፡ተወክፉ፡
ጸፈቀ፡መበ
ለት፡ለበስመ
ጸለመእ፡ይሺ
ኩ፡ወእይወለ
ኩ፡ወእ፡ይምሱ
ኩ፡ወእያቀወ
ኩ፡ውክተ፡ካስ
እ፡መክ ንኒ፡ወ
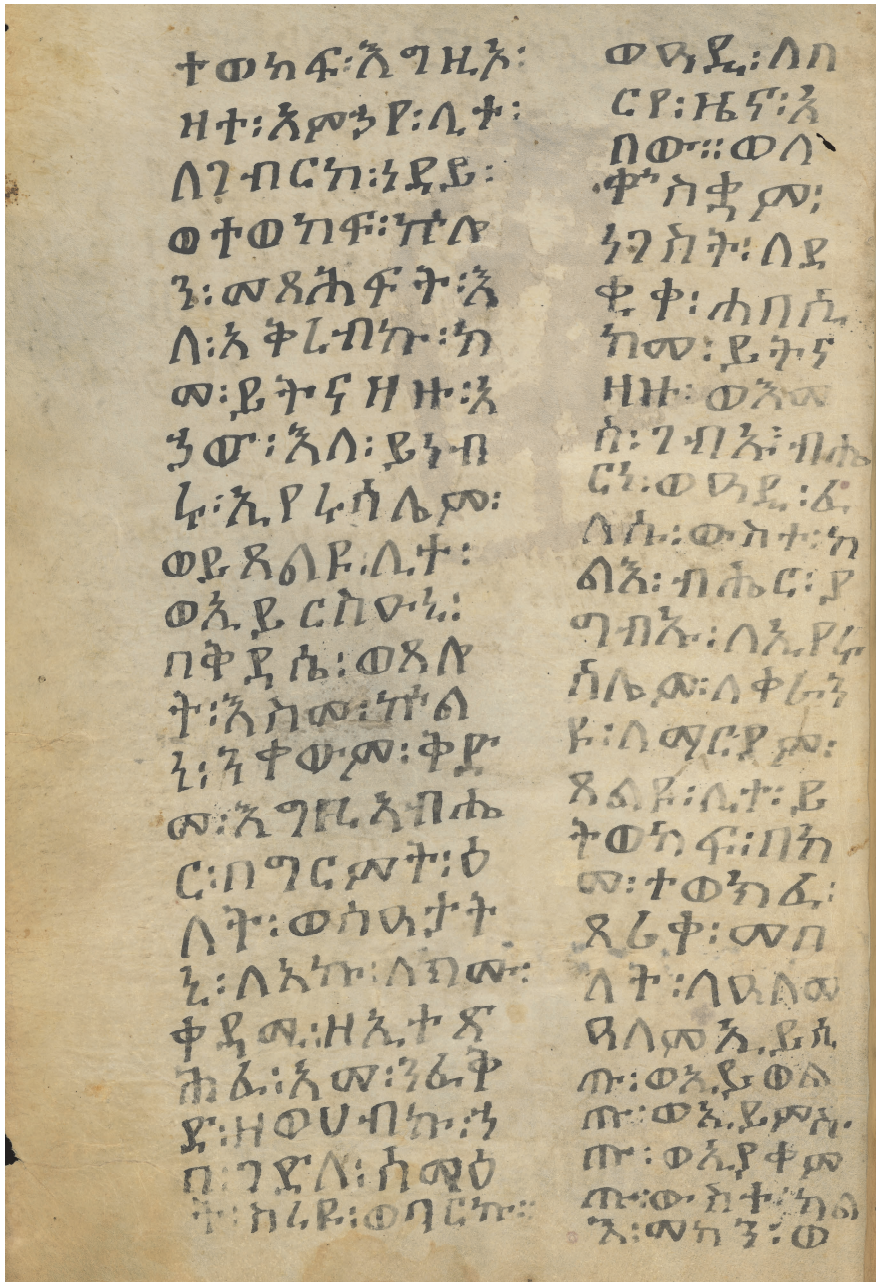
Fig. 3: Colophon (fol. 284ᵛ); CUL BFBS 169; fifteenth century; fol. 284ᵛ; © photo Cambridge, University Library.

We learn from the note above that the manuscript CUL BFBS 169 was originally written in ʾAksum (northern Ethiopia), apparently in the private house of the *gabaz* of ʾAksum (literally in the 'house of the *gabaza ʾaksum*'),[43] a clergyman who administrated the cathedral of ʾAksum; the book was subsequently donated to the Ethiopian Christian Church of Jerusalem by a certain Yəsḥaq, who writes the note in the first person. I am not sure this Yəsḥaq can be identified with the homonymous Ethiopian king,[44] who reigned at the beginning of the fifteenth century (r. 1414–1429/1430);[45] I, instead, consider him to be an Ethiopian pilgrim-monk,[46] who was sent by the Ethiopian kingdom in order to bring some Ethiopic codices to the Holy City. The palaeography of CUL BFBS 169, however, also suggests the fifteenth century as the period of the manuscript's production.

According to the note, the Octateuch CUL BFBS 169 was brought by Yəsḥaq, together with a few other manuscripts, namely, a *Maṣḥafa saʿātāt* ('Book of the Hours'[47]), a copy of the *Maṣḥafa zenāhomu la-ʾabaw* ('Book of the History of the Fathers'[48]), and a copy of the *Maṣḥafa nagaśt* ('Book of Kings'[49]). Additionally, regarding the *Maṣḥafa saʿātāt*, the note says that this copy donated by Yəsḥaq 'had not (yet) been written before', and this might refer to the second version of the *Book of Hours* attributed to ʾAbbā Giyorgis of Saglā,[50] which came into use during the fourteenth century, starting to replace the older version.[51] Hence, the copy of the *Horologium* mentioned in the note might represent a witness of this new recension. Again, according to what we read in the note, it seems[52] that this *Maṣḥafa*

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43 On the *gabaz* (Ethiopic **ገበዝ ፥**; word with the meaning of 'guard, protector, tutor, custodian, keeper'), see Habtemichael Kidane 2005.

44 The identity of Yəsḥaq as the Ethiopian king is already questioned by Rahlfs 1918, 179.

45 On King Yəsḥaq, see Kaplan 2014.

46 In the colophon (on fol. 284[va]), Yəsḥaq refers to the community of Jerusalem, to whom he brings the books, with the name 'brothers'. This reinforces the idea that Ethiopian pilgrims abroad were mostly monks, and for some supporting evidence, see e.g. Kelly 2024, 89–91.

47 CAe 1961.

48 CAe 2169.

49 As we have seen, another manuscript with the *Book of Kings* donated to Jerusalem is the manuscript BAV Borg. et. 3.

50 On Giyorgis of Saglā, cf. Colin 2005.

51 This old version of the *Book of Hours* was taken entirely from the Coptic-Arabic tradition and was the first one to spread in Ethiopia, probably from the thirteenth century onwards. It is not known exactly when the second version of the *Horologium* started to replace the first one; most probably this happened under the responsibility of Emperor Zarʾa Yāʿqob (on these and more details on the *Maṣḥafa saʿātāt*, cf. Zanetti and Fritsch 2014).

52 This passage of the note does not have a clear interpretation.

sa'ātāt was exchanged with a copy of the *Gadla samā'tāt* ('Acts of the Martyrs',[53] lit. 'Combat of the martyrs'). This means, therefore, that this hagiographical-homiletic collection was already in use in Jerusalem and specifically that the witness mentioned in the note was already in the possession of this Ethiopic community, but assumedly it was needed, for some reason, in the Ethiopian kingdom.

Concerning the exact destination of the gifts mentioned in the colophon CUL BFBS 169, I assume that some of these manuscripts, i.e. the *Book of the Hours*, together with our Octateuch, were probably brought by Yəsḥaq directly to Jerusalem, donated to the two places mentioned (at the end of the note): Qarānyu,[54] i.e. to Calvary, and the church of Māryām, identifiable with St Mary of Golgotha, a church also mentioned in the colophon of the manuscript BAV Borg. et. 3, and which the Ethiopian community was possibly occupying at the time. However, these books are not explicitly assigned to any of these places in particular in the note. On the contrary, the other two codices mentioned in the colophon were explicitly given by Yəsḥaq to two other communities, or possible 'hostel-monasteries', using a Samantha Kelly's definition,[55] that is, places located outside the city of Jerusalem, also organised on the monastic model, where Ethiopian pilgrims could briefly find restoration on their traditional pilgrimage route to the Holy City. According to the note, the *Book of the History of the Fathers* was specifically donated to a certain locality named Barya,[56] a place which has so far remained unidentified, and the *Book of Kings* to Qʷəsqʷām, presumably the Egyp-

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53 CAe 1493. The title of this work is mentioned in the colophon as *Gadla samā't*, instead of *Gadla samā'tāt* (wherein the word *samā'tāt* is grammatically a plural of the internal plural *samā't*). On this collection in general, see e.g. Bausi 2002; Bausi 2019; Brita 2020.

54 Qarānyu is also mentioned in a note (fol. 12ᵛᵇ) of the manuscript Cambridge, CUL, BFBS 171, dated to 1425–1500 (on this and other details on this manuscript and other notes, cf. Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 168–170).

55 See Kelly 2024, 33. Among the 'hostel-monasteries', those in Jerusalem (as the chapel of St Mary of Calvary), Qʷəsqʷām, and Cairo (with a church dedicated to St George, close to Ḥarat Zawīla, and the ascetic monastery of Wādī al-Naṭrūn in Egypt, centre famous from antiquity) are the most durable and had close contacts (on this and other details, cf. Kelly 2024, 32–33). On Ethiopian monastic communities in Cairo between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see, for instance, Ambu forthcoming.

56 This is an unidentified place name, which is also attested, together with Qʷəsqʷām, in an additional note, regarding gifts from Emperor Zarʾa Yāʿqob (r. 1434–1468) to the community of Jerusalem, on fol. 162ᵛ of the Four Gospels manuscript Saint Petersburg, RNB, Dorn 612 (on the manuscript, see the manuscript description by Turaev 1906, 11–13. A description is also available online at <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main> (cataloguer and encoder Denis Nosnitsin), accessed on 23 August 2023; see also below in the paper).

tian holy site where the Coptic monastery of Dayr al-Muḥarraq[57] is located, which was also the centre of an independent community of Ethiopian monks, existing since the fourteenth century.[58]

Alfred Rahlfs informs us[59] that the manuscript CUL BFBS 169, at an unknown moment, was moved from Jerusalem to Rome, together with other books; after being kept in Santo Stefano dei Mori and the Museo Borgiano, it was brought to London,[60] where, in 1817, it was sold by the bookseller J. Smith to the Church Missionary Society, then transferred to the British and Foreign Bible Society of Cambridge, and subsequently[61] it moved to the Cambridge University Library, where it is presently preserved.

It is interesting to compare the colophon of CUL BFBS 169 with an inventory of books and items (fols 161ᵛ–162ʳ) included in the Four Gospels manuscript RNB Dorn 612,[62] codex preserved today in the Russian National Library, but once preserved in the library of the Jerusalem patriarchate.[63] The inventory, written at the time of King Yəsḥaq, contains a long list of Ethiopic manuscripts and items preserved in a monastery supposedly located in Jerusalem[64] but whose name and

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57 On Dayr al-Muḥarraq, see Störk 2005.

58 The Ethiopian pilgrims had established a sanctuary in Qʷəsqʷām in honour of the Holy Apostles before the mid fourteenth century (cf. Kelly 2024, 32). On the existing of an Ethiopian community in Qʷəsqʷām, which was in contact with the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, cf. Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 2, 353, and 23, n. 2. See also Bausi 2010a. Qʷəsqʷām is mentioned, together with other communities of Jerusalem, in a donation note (fol. 13ʳᵃ⁻ᵇ) of manuscript CUL BFBS 171 (on this manuscript and this note, cf. in particular, Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 169).

59 Cf. Rahlfs 1918, 203.

60 It is not known when and how the manuscript moved to London, but it is certain that the book was still in Rome at the end of the eighteenth century (cf. Rahlfs 1918, 191).

61 The exact circumstance and moment are unknown.

62 On this manuscript and on another inventory contained in it, see n. 56 above. On this inventory, see the Italian translation in Conti Rossini 1923, 508–511, with some additional observations; the scholar particularly underlines the importance of this document in testifying to the circulation of some Ethiopic texts, those ones mentioned in the list, already before the time of Zarʾa Yāʿqob (cf. Conti Rossini 1923, 509).

63 The manuscript was given as a gift to Prince Georgij Avalov by Michael, metropolitan of Petra in Arabia in Jerusalem, on 2 April 1820. On fol. 163ᵛ, the manuscript contains a note in Georgian by Prince Georgij Avalov mentioning this donation. For an overview of the Ethiopian manuscripts in the state and private collections of St Petersburg, see Gusarova 2015.

64 As I say above in the text, the note does not reveal the name of the place hosting the collection of items and books listed, and it does not say explicitly that this place is a monastery and whether it is located in Jerusalem. However, some hints are given by note itself. This contains the description of the people living in the repository's place, followed by the list of books and precious items;

precise place are, however, not disclosed.[65] This inventory starts[66] with the exact mention of the time of its writing: the year 1426 ('በስመ ፡ ሥሉስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ መላኪ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ወነፍስ ፡ ተጽሕፈት ፡ ዛቲ ፡ መጽሐፍ[67] በ፸ወ፰ ፡ ዐመት ፡ ምሕረት ፡ በወርኅ ፡ የካቲት ፡', 'In the name of Saint Trinity, master of the body and spirit. This document was written in the Year of Mercy 78 (= 1426 CE), in the month of Yakkātit'), and, at the very end, it adds that this happened during the days of King Yəsḥaq and the Metropolitan Bartalomewos ('ወዘተጽሕፈ ፡ ዝንቱ ፡ በመዋዕለ ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ ይስሐቅ ፡ ስመ ፡ መንግሥቱ ፡ ገብረ ፡ መስቀል ፡ እንዘ ፡ ሊቀ ፡ ጳጳሳት ፡ አባ ፡ ገብርኤል ፡ ወእንዘ ፡ ጳጳስነ ፡ አባ ፡ በርቶሎሜዎስ ፡', 'And this is what has been written in the days of King Yəsḥaq, and my regnal name [is] Gabra Masqal, while the archbishop [was] ʾAbbā Gabrəʾel and while our metropolitan ʾAbbā Bartolo-

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it says: 'ኅቢረነ ፡ ኵልነ ፡ ፳ወ፪ካህናት ፡ ወ፳ዲያቆናት ፡ ወ፴ወ፭መነኮሳት ፡ ወ፲ወ፯መበለታት ፡ እንዘ ፡ ራይስነ ፡ ኖብ ፡ ወእንዘ ፡ ናይብነ ፡ ገብረ ፡ ቂርቆስ ፠ ረከብነ ፡ ፯ወንጌለ ፡', 'Having all of us agreed, twenty-two priests and twenty deacons and thirty-five monks and seventeen nuns, while our *rāys* [was] Nob and our *nāyb* Gabra Qirqos, we have found seven Gospels' (cf. the note on <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main> (accessed on 20 September 2024)). As we read, the note uses *rāys* to indicate the head of the monastery, i.e. *Rāys* Nob, along with the term *nāyb*, apparently another office name in this note used in the monastery and for a certain Gabra Qirqos. The term *rāys* was used as title of the head Ethiopian administrator in not only Santo Stefano, but also the Ethiopian hostel-monasteries of Jerusalem and Qʷəsqʷām (on this see Kelly 2024, 51). The title *nāyb* is also attested (e.g. in the *Gadla Yonās za-Bur* (CAe 1522); see Tedros Abraha 2015, 380, §86, l. 18 (text), and 381, §86, 20 (translation)) to indicate the local official in charge of governing the Eritrean coasts and eastern areas from the sixteenth and seventeenth century; on this use of the term, see Miran and van Donzel 2007.

65 Conversely, the other two inventories contained in the same manuscript are a list of Ethiopic books and items, mentioning them as gifts explicitly donated to the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem: in the inventory on fol. 162ᵛ they are gifts from King Zarʾa Yāʿqob, in the inventory on fols 162ᵛ–163ʳ they are from King Baʾəda Māryām I (r. 1468–1478). See the transcription of both inventories also here: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main> (accessed on 30 September 2024).

66 The images of the manuscript are not available: therefore, the note and the manuscript have not been visualised personally, and the exact points of this note on the folios of the manuscript is unverified. The Ethiopic transcription of the note, as well as the other notes present in the manuscript, is, however, available online <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main> (accessed on 30 September 2024) and in Turaev 1906, 12–13. On this manuscript and the inventories contained in it, cf. also Platonov 2017, 120–123. The transcription and translation of the passages given in this article are made by the author based on the online transcription of the note.

67 According to Denis Nosnitsin (see at <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main> (accessed on 2 February 2024)), the word መጽሐፍ ፡ has here the meaning of 'written document, writing', not of 'book', thus, referring only to the inventory, not to the entire manuscript; on the difference meanings of መጽሐፍ ፡, see e.g. Leslau 2010, 225.

mewos').[68] Concerning the items and books listed in the inventory, we read among them a few titles of manuscripts which we have also seen appearing in the colophon of the manuscript CUL BFBS 169, as the Ethiopic books donated and sent from the Ethiopian kingdom to the community of Jerusalem. The note in the manuscript RNB Dorn 612 mentions, in fact, among many others, three manuscripts with the *Acts of the Martyrs*, one copy of the Octateuch, one *Book of Kings*, two copies of the *Book of the History of the Fathers* and fourteen copies of the *Book of the Hours*: '፫ገድለ ፡ ሰማዕት ፡[69] ወ፩አሪት ፡፡ ፩ነገሥት ፡ […] ወ፪ዜና ፡ አበው ፡ […] ወ፲ወ፬ሰዓታት ፡፡'. Whether the manuscripts mentioned in this inventory are the same exemplars mentioned in the colophon of CUL BFBS 169 remains a mere hypothesis.

As an example of a manuscript copied in Jerusalem, we have Munich, BSB, Cod. aeth. 1.[70] This is a multiple-text manuscript written by different hands and with a few ornamental bands. It contains not only the Ethiopic psalter but also several supplicative prayers, hymns and excerpts from various texts.[71]

The manuscript does contain any dating colophons or notes; nonetheless, the palaeography suggests that its writing took place between the end of the fourteenth and – or during – the fifteenth century. Furthermore, this most probably happened in Jerusalem, according to a short scribal note on fol. 258[rb], placed after the formula of the completion and the stichometry of the *Maḥāləy maḥāləy* ('Song of Songs'). The colophon (Fig. 4) reads, in fact, 'ዘተጽሕፈት ፡ ዛቲ ፡ መጽሐፍ ፡

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68 On Metropolitan Bartalomewos, cf. Lusini 2003.

69 Note here the title of the work, *Gadla samāʿt*, instead of *Gadla samāʿtāt*, similar to that in the colophon of CUL BFBS 169 (see above n. 53).

70 One of the manuscripts from the German public collections on which the ITIESE project came across in the first phase (which I was part of); on these manuscripts cf. Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022.

71 The manuscript has not been examined and viewed entirely; the study here is limited to only a few digital images (i.e. the folios with *additio*, colophon and ornamental bands) that the project ITIESE had at its disposal (received from the library) and on the manuscript description (which includes a detailed description of the texts) by Six 1989, 20–26. According to Veronika Six's description, the psalter is on fols 6[r]–128[v], 189[va]–204[vb], 206[vb]–212[vb], 251[va]–258rb, and appears with its usual parts (*Psalms of David*, CAe 2000; *Canticles of the Prophets*, CAe 1828; Song of Songs, CAe 2362; *Praise of Mary*, CAe 2509; and *Gate of Light*, CAe 1113), although these are not written in the usual sequence (Six also reports that 'Die Anordnung der einzelnen Stücke weicht in dieser Handschrift von der sonst üblichen ab', Six 1989, 20), and not on continuous folios. From the sequence of the leaves of the psalter, similar to the other texts included in the manuscript, it seems to me that the folios of the manuscript are misplaced, having probably been wrongly rearranged; however, this remains a speculation, and can be ascertained only by examining the entire codex. On the Ethiopic psalter see e.g. Dege-Müller 2015; Delamarter and Gnisci 2019.

በኢየሩሳሌም ፡ በመካን ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ስብሐት ፡ ለአብ ፡ ወወልድ ፡ ወመንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡
ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ አሜን ፡፨፨', 'This book was written down in Jerusalem, in the Holy
Place. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Forever. Amen.'[72]
The book was, thus, originally accomplished in Jerusalem and then eventually
brought to Germany. Here, as Veronika Six informs us,[73] the codex was acquired
by Duke Albrech V (1528–1579) in the year 1571 for the Royal Library of Munich
from the private collection of Johann Jakob Fugger (1516–1575).[74] Approximately
during the same period as the manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1, another Ethiopic psal-
ter arrived in Germany. This is the manuscript Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 27,[75]
which the French diplomat Guillaume Postel (d. 1581) brought from one of his
travels in the East to Germany in the year 1555. The book was kept in the Biblio-
theca Palatina of Heidelberg till it was moved during the seventeenth century,
with many other codices, to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome.[76] In the
*Katalog zur Ausstellung vom 8. Juli bis 2. November 1986, Heiliggeistkirche Heidel-
berg*, the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 27 is presented as the first Ethiopic manuscript
that reached Germany.[77] We have also seen that the manuscript from Munich
must have arrived in Germany more or less in the same period. However, since
we do not know when exactly Jakob Fugger acquired BSB Cod. aeth. 1 and brought
it to Germany, we cannot state which of the two Ethiopic psalters, either manu-
script BSB Cod. aeth. 1 from Munich or manuscript BAV Vat. et. 27, had the prima-
cy to arrive in Germany.[78]

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72 I transcribed and translated the note (followed by a washed-out text) directly from the avail-
able image of fol. 258ʳ.

73 Cf. Six 1989, 25–26.

74 An ex libris from the library in Latin (copper print of Raphael Sadeler (1560–1632)) is on the
internal side of the left wooden board (cf. Six 1989, 26).

75 Cf. the manuscript description in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 132–134; this de-
scription is also available online on the Beta maṣāḥǝft's database, <https://betamasaheft.eu/
manuscripts/BAVet27/main> (accessed on 30 September 2024; cataloguer and encoder Massimo
Villa). The digital images are also available on the website of Universität Heidelberg, <https://digi.
ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_vat_etiop_27/0006/image,info,thumbs> (accessed on 27 January 2023).

76 On these manuscripts, see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 9–20; on BAV Vat. et. 27 cf.
in particular Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 15. Cf. also Fiaccadori 2010.

77 Cf. Mittler 1986, 96.

78 Cf. Six 1989, 25–26.
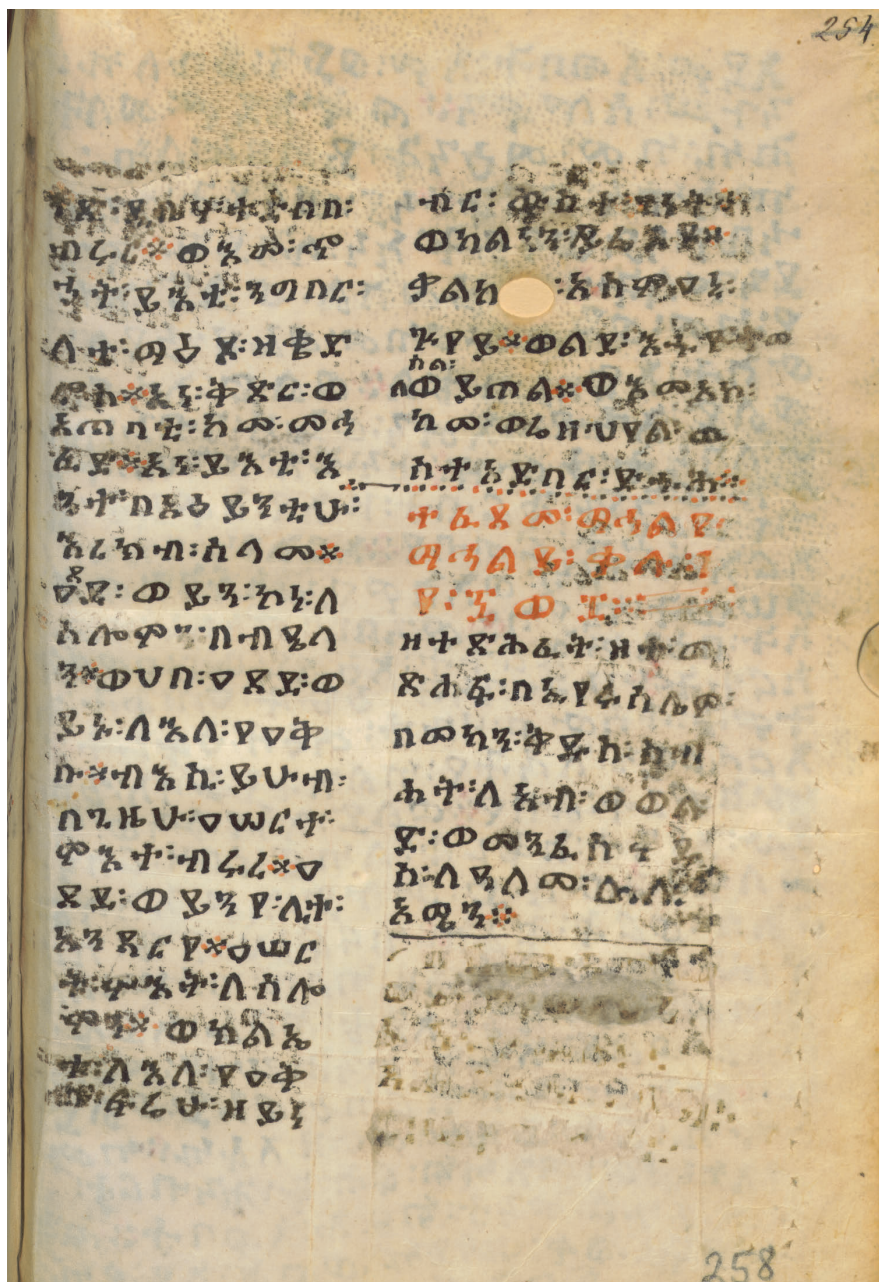
Fig. 4: Explicit of the Song of Songs and colophon; BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century; fol. 258ʳ; © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

Comparing the psalter from Munich (e.g. fol. 6ʳ (Fig. 5a) and fol. 128ᵛ (Fig. 6a)), with that of the Vaticana (e.g. fol. 6ʳ (Fig. 7a)),[79] I notice that, beside a similar hand,[80] both manuscripts share the scribal practice of completing long verses of the Psalms on the remaining space of the lines above or below and to encircle them (Figs 5b, 6b, 7b),[81] but also the peculiar preference to place the extra text, when this is too long, on the ruled empty line after it, in the middle or at the end of the space (Figs 5a, 6a, 7a). Unfortunately, we do not know the origin of the Vatican psalter, that is, from which Eastern Church, whether from Jerusalem or not, the diplomat Postel had brought it to Germany. Furthermore, its psalter is incomplete, ending abruptly within the text with the Song of Songs (fol. 160ᵛ); hence, we do not know if there was a colophon informing us about its place of production on the missing folios, as is the case with BSB Cod. aeth. 1. However, at this stage, even though the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 27 was probably accomplished a little later, between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century (before 1555),[82] I do not exclude a common scribal milieu and the same geographical origin of both manuscripts.

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79 Cf. this folio also e.g. on <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_vat_etiop_27/0015/image, info,thumbs-> (accessed on 27 January 2023).

80 As said before, BSB Cod. aeth. 1 from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich is a multiple-text manuscript; in addition, it is also a codex written by different hands (this is also stated in Six 1989, 20) and with different textual layouts. I could verify this from the pictures available; these are, however, very few; the palaeographical and codicological analysis of the codex is, therefore, limited to the observation of the pictures available; the visualisation of the entire codex remains a desideratum. The fol. 6ʳ and fol. 128ᵛ, containing the text of the psalter, show the same handwriting.

81 About this specific scribal tendency in the Ethiopic psalter, see Delamarter and Melaku Terefe 2009, 51.

82 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 132, date the manuscript to the entire sixteenth century. However, I specify that the manuscript should have been produced before 1555 (*terminus ante quem*), the year when Guillame Postel brought it to Germany.
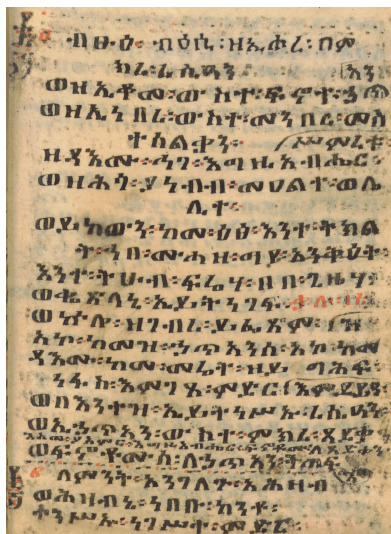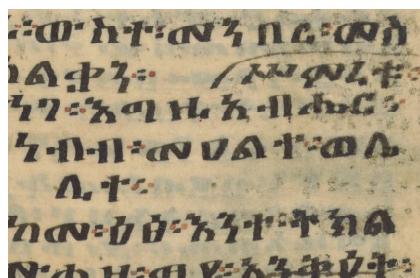
Fig. 5a–b: (a) BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century; fol. 6ʳ; (b) Particular of the handwriting on fol. 6ʳ © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.
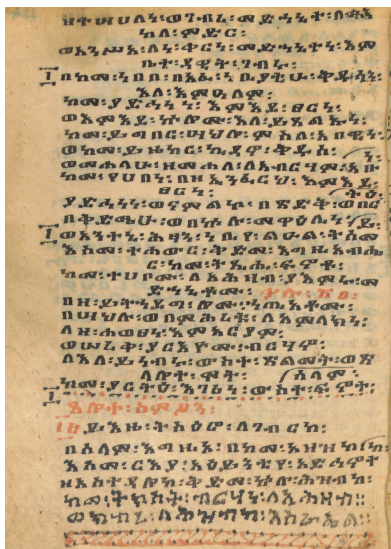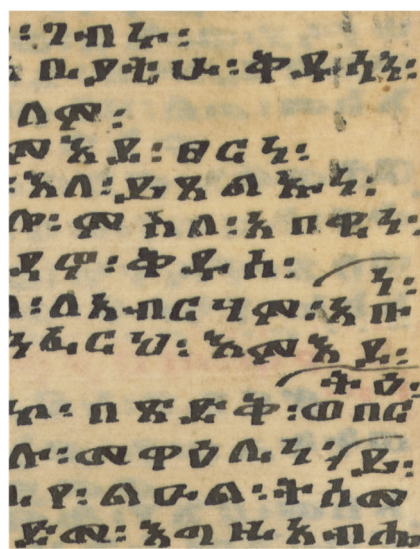
Fig. 6a–b: (a) BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century; fol. 128ᵛ; (b) Particular of the handwriting on fol. 128ᵛ © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.
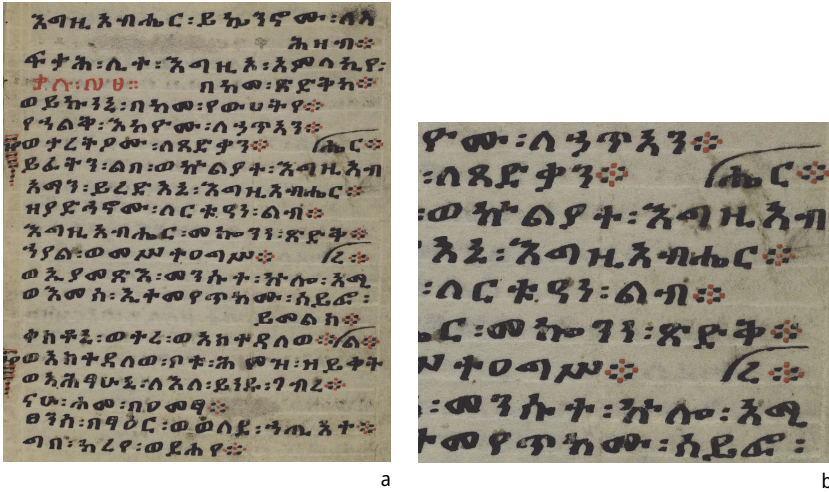
Fig. 7a–b: (a) BAV Vat. et. 27; fifteenth/sixteenth century (before 1555); fol. 6ʳ; (b) Particular of the handwriting on fol. 6ʳ © photo Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

One of the most ancient witnesses of the Ethiopic *Senodos*, seemingly written in Jerusalem and lastly moved to Italy, is Florence, BML, Or. 148.[83] This is a composite manuscript, consisting of four codicological units,[84] of which the second one, with the largest number of quires (twenty), comprises the folios with the canonico-liturgical collection (fols 5ʳᵃ–165ʳᵃ). This latter was possibly written by the same hand as a series of texts on computus and chronology (fols 174ʳᵃ–203ᵛ)[85] included in the fourth unit, and which, according to a colophon on fol. 181ᵛᵇ, is dated to 1426.[86] The third codicological unit, also datable, from a palaeographical observa-

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83 On this manuscript, cf. the description by Marrassini 1987, 90–97. For a recent and updated study and codicological analysis of the manuscript, cf. Bausi 2016. The manuscripts images are available online at <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BMLor148/viewer> (accessed on 6 February 2023). This codex of the *Senodos* was used by Bausi in his critical edition of some texts of the work (Bausi (ed.) 1995a and (tr.) 1995b; on it, cf. above n. 22).

84 The composite structure of the manuscript has been identified by Bausi and described in Bausi 2016, 116–118.

85 *Treatise on Computus and Chronology* is the title assigned to this collection by Nosnitsin 2022; as showed by the scholar, the *Treatise* is attested in manuscript BML Or. 148 and a few other manuscripts, such as the ancient 'Comboni fragment', which Nosnitsin described in detail in his study.

86 The date reported is Year of Mercy 6462; on this date cf. in particular Marrassini 1987, 92.

tion, to the fifteenth century,[87] is, instead, occupied only by one text (fols 166[ra]–173[vb]), consisting of the fourteenth-century theological text known as *Treatise on Those who Deny the Resurrection of the Dead*,[88] Ethiopic version of the Syriac *Demonstration 8: The Resurrection of the Dead*, attributed to the writer Aphrahat,[89] and 'a *unicum* in the Ethiopic literary and manuscript tradition'.[90] A short text (fols 4[vb], 3[ra–b]) from an earlier period is written on the initial folios of the manuscript (first codicological unit) preceding the *Senodos*, which consists of an Ethiopic document,[91] dated probably to 1336/1337,[92] on several monastic rules issued by the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem. This last text, together with a Syriac script on fol. 182[r],[93] suggests, therefore, the Jerusalemite origin of this manuscript[94] besides being the most ancient document of the Ethiopian monastic community of the Holy City.[95] Furthermore, the copy of the *Senodos* transmitted by this codex may also constitute, according to Bausi,[96] the first phase of the Ethiopic *Senodos*, when it consisted only of Melkite canons.

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87 Marrassini 1987, 90, dates the entire manuscript, with the exclusion of the text written on the first unit, to the fifteenth century. At least seven different examples of handwriting have been identified and dated on the database <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BMLor148/main> (accessed 25 June 2024). The dating of the handwriting of the *Treatise* on the third unit is also here dated to the fifteenth century, as it has been verified personally on the available images.

88 CAe 2041. This has been edited and translated by Cerulli 1964.

89 On Aphrahat, see Witakowski 2003.

90 Bausi 2016, 117.

91 Edited (with text and Italian translation) by Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 2, 380–382. This document has been newly edited (with French translation) by Martina Ambu in her dissertation, particularly Ambu 2022, 409–410, and commented, in particular, in Ambu 2022, 410–411, 426–429. I am very grateful to Martina Ambu to have shared with me her dissertation before its publication.

92 The calculation of the year 1336/1337 has been proposed by Martina Ambu in her dissertation, in particular in Ambu 2022, 409, and 409, n. 34, and agreed upon by Butts 2024, 56; for additional details on this date and different hypothesis, see also Butts 2024, 56–58, n. 29. Cerulli, instead, proposed the year 1331/1332 CE, reading the Ethiopic dating written in the document as Year of Mercy 524, instead of 521 (cf. Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 2, 381, n. 1). The Ethiopic dating present in the document, as I also verified, is 'በ፭፻፳፩ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ ምሕረት ፡' 'in the Year of Mercy 521' (cf. the original dating in the manuscript on the image of fol. 4[vb], containing the incipit of the text, here: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BMLor148/viewer> (accessed on 21 June 2024)), where the last numeral ፩ ('1') shows its archaic feature, looking very similar to the numeral ፬ ('4').

93 This Syriac script has been identified, reconstructed and commented on by Aaron Butts in Butts 2024, 61–66.

94 On this hypothesis, cf. Marrassini 1984, 83.

95 Cf. Bausi 2016, 116.

96 Cf. e.g. Bausi 1992, 19; Bausi 1990, 34.

Possibly, but still debated,[97] the multiple-text codex Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 1 (Fig. 8),[98] another witness of the *Senodos*, also comes from Jerusalem,[99] being, as Bausi assumes, a direct copy[100] of the manuscript BML Or. 148. According to a final colophon (on fol. 198rb), this codex was completed 'in the Year of ʾAdām 6585', i.e. according to a calculation made by Mauro da Leonessa, in the year 1549 CE.[101] We learn from the catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the Vatican Library by Sylvain Grébaut and Eugène Tisserant that another manuscript preserved in the same library, manuscript Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 2, containing the *Canons of the Council of Nicaea*,[102] was apparently written by the same scribe as manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1; we read in the catalogue description, in fact, 'e cod. Vat. 1 ab eodem librario transscripta'[103] and this can be verified by comparing the two very similar

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97 See e.g. the observations on this manuscript in Butts 2024, 69–74.

98 Cf. the manuscript description by Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 1–11; the description is also available, with images, on the Beta maṣāḥǝft's database <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet1/main#i8> (encoder Massimo Villa); the images are also on <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.et.1> (both accessed on 30 March 2023).

99 The Vatican Library cataloguers refer in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 11, to a note on the final folio of the manuscript, i.e. fol. 219[v], mentioning Jerusalem and Rome: 'notula plumbo exarata et partim evanida: ... እምነከ‹ ፡› ለአከ‹ ፡› ... | ማርአም‹ ፡›(?) ዘርማ ፡ ትብጸሕ ፡[sic] ኢ.‹የ›ሩሰሌ‹ም ፡›[sic] "... deputavit ... a Roma (ut) perveniat ad Hierusalem"'; this note is, however, hardly legible on the image available online.

100 On the assumption that manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 is a *descriptus* (direct copy) of manuscript BML Or. 148, cf. e.g. Bausi 2015, 215. On the hypothesis that the former one also comes from Jerusalem, similar to the latter one, cf. Bausi 2015, 215, n. 64. The *descriptus* BAV Vat. et. 1, however, does not contain all the texts of its antigraph BML Or. 148, but only the texts of the second (*Senodos*) and fourth (computus) unit; the document with the monastic rules preserved on the first unit and the Ethiopic version of the Syriac *Demonstration 8* contained in the third unit are not present in BAV Vat. et. 1 (on this and other details, cf. e.g. Bausi 2016, 116, n. 13). Butts 2024 also underlines that the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 does not contain the Syriac line which is contained in its antigraph BML Or. 148 on fol. 182[r]; on this and a discussion about it, see Butts 2024, 74–82.

101 See the colophon at the end of the *Senodos*, on fol. 198[rb], on the image available on <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet1/viewer> (accessed on 30 September 2024). The note states: '**ወተፈጸመ ፡ ዝንቱ ፡ ሲኖዶስ ፡ በየ**[sic]**ርን ፡ ግንቦት ፡ ፰ ፡ […] ፤የ ፡ ወዕፒ ፡ ፲፪ወ፭ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ አዳም ፨**', 'And this *Senodos* was completed on the 8th in the month of Gǝnbot […] in the Year of ʾAdām 6585'. According to Mauro da Leonessa 1943, 317, this date corresponds to the year 1541 Incarnation Era (= 1549 CE); for this and other systems used in the Ethiopic calendar, see Mauro da Leonessa 1943, 308. As also stressed by Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 409, the copying of most of the manuscript's content was completed by April 1549. On the colophon after the *Senodos*, and the reference to the explanation by Mauro da Leonessa, see also Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 409, n. 56. The sixteenth century is the dating given in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 1.

102 For the manuscript description see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 11–12.

103 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 11.

hands.[104] As assumed by Samantha Kelly and Denis Nosnitsin,[105] both manuscripts, BAV Vat. et. 1 and Vat. et. 2, along with other few manuscripts from the Vatican Library,[106] were most probably copied by the same scribe, namely, a certain Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre,[107] an Ethiopian pilgrim who was already the prior at Santo Stefano dei Mori in Rome in 1531–1532.[108] The manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 is a *descriptus* of the composite codex BML Or. 148, therefore, it can be supposed that at least the copying of this Vatican manuscript happened while this Ethiopian monk was on a pilgrimage in the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem, at some stage during the mid sixteenth century. This, however, remains speculative and to be ascertained; the information provided by Grébaut and Tisserant in the Vatican catalogue, about the Italian origin of the parchment, namely 'Fasciculi, ex membranis italicis',[109] may also suggest that the copying of BAV Vat. et. 1 happened in Rome, after the BML Or. 148 had already been moved there.[110] However, it could also have happened while the scribe Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre was on pilgrimage in

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104 The description of the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 2 is also available, with images, online on <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet2/main> (cataloguer and encoder Massimo Villa); the images are available also on <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.et.2> (both accessed on 30 March 2022).
105 Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017.
106 On the manuscripts from the Vaticana mentioning Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre, cf. Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 405–410. Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 35 (cf. the description in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 161–164) is the only manuscript with the explicit mention of this monk as scribe in a colophon on fol. 105vb (cf. Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 163–164). In the manuscripts Vatican City, BAV, Rossianus 865 (on it cf. Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 862), BAV Vat. et. 1 and Vat. et. 2 there is not any explicit mention; the hand has been attributed to Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre by the cataloguers Grébaut and Tisserant; on this observation, cf. Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, in particular 400.
107 On him, see Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, in particular 405–410. About the toponym Qanṭorāre, its written attestations and identification with the Ethiopian region of ʾAngot, see in particular Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 411–415. On Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre, see also Kelly 2024, 99.
108 Cf. Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 411. As added in Kelly 2024, the priorate of Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre started between February 1529 and July 1531 and is last surely attested in September 1551 (cf. Kelly 2024, 107). On a list of Ethiopic documents attesting the name of Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre, see Kelly 2024, 314–316 (Appendix B).
109 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 10.
110 In particular, Aaron Butts suggests that the *codex descriptus* BAV Vat. et. 1 has been copied or completed by Yoḥannəs of Qanṭorāre when he was already in Rome, at Santo Stafano dei Mori (cf. Butts 2024, 78). The manuscript BML Or. 148, along with other codices, belongs to the group of Oriental manuscripts collected in Rome for the 'Stamperia medicea' established in Rome in 1584, by initiative of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I (1549–1609), and which was moved, in a second time, to Florence, first to Palazzo Pitti (1627), and afterwards to the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (for this and other details on this history of the Ethiopic collection in the Laurenziana, cf. Marrassini 1984, 81–83).

Jerusalem, using a parchment of Italian manufacture previously sent to the Holy City or even transported by the scribe.[111]
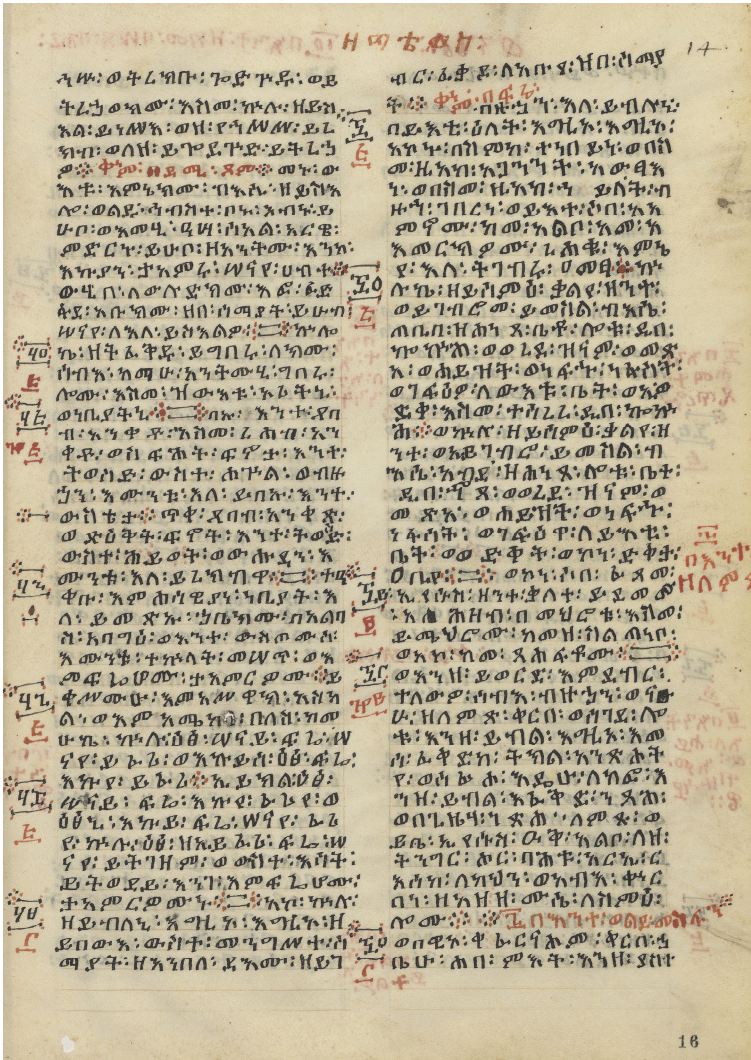
Fig. 8: BAV Vat. et. 1; sixteenth century; fol. 16ʳ; © photo Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

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111 The manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 was first in Santo Stefano, and then in the Vatican Library, in 1665 at the latest (cf. Bausi 2015, 215, n. 63).
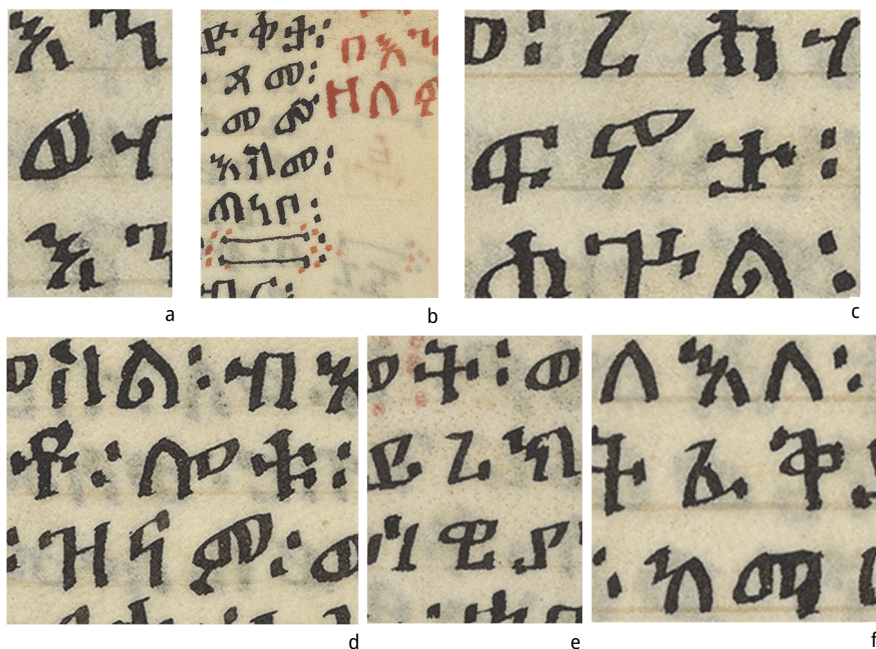
Figs 9a–f: Excerpts from fol. 16ʳ; BAV Vat. et. 1; © photo Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Furthermore, I have compared the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 with the manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 and realised a certain resemblance between the hand of one of the final texts (excerpts from the Song of Songs) of the multiple-text manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 (see fol. 258ᵛ (Fig. 10)), and the hand of BAV Vat. et. 1 (Fig. 8). Both hands look similar, even though the one in BSB Cod. aeth. 1 is probably a bit older than the one in BAV Vat. et. 1, namely, datable to the fifteenth century, as it still displays ancient features of the Ethiopic script, predominantly attested in manuscripts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, such as the angular shapes of some letters (e.g. መ, ዕ (Fig. 11a)) and the trait of the loops still attached (as in the letter መ (Fig. 11a)). Despite a slight discrepancy in the time of production, the handwriting in both codices looks similar, likewise, very carelessly and irregularly produced, and with parallel peculiarities of some letters. It is possible to observe, for instance, in both manuscripts: the horizontal top line of some letters, especially of መ ወ ገ, slanted down to the left side (Figs 9a, 9b, 11a, 11b, 11c); a peculiar shape of the loop in a few letters, such as ሉ ቲ, which appears sometimes very big compared to the main body of the letter (e.g. Figs 9c, 9d, 11d, 11e); and the hairlines extending from the top side of the letter toward the left side, visible

especially in the letters 𐩫 𐩫 𐩫 𐩫 𐩫 (e.g. Figs 9e, 9f, 11f), also characterises both hands. The palaeographical similarity between manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 and manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 (here particularly the hand of the final text, as visible on fol. 258ᵛ) may, thus, suggest that both BAV Vat. et. 1 and the manuscript from Munich were not necessarily written by the same scribes, nonetheless, within the same scribal context, wherein similar palaeographical and codicological tendencies were possibly spreading. The scribal milieu may, moreover, be identified with the Ethiopian Christian community of the Holy City, as is suggested by the aforesaid colophon on fol. 258ʳᵇ of BSB Cod. aeth. 1, mentioning Jerusalem, and by the fact that BAV Vat. et. 1 is a *descriptus* of the codex BML Or. 148, which, as we have observed above, most probably also originated in this city.

Fig. 10: BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century, fol. 258ᵛ; © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

Figs 11a–f: Excerpts from fol. 258ᵛ; BSB Cod. aeth. 1; © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

3 Conclusions

We have seen in this contribution how colophons or short notes added by the scribe, and marginalia or additional notes from a later time conveying various contents, such as prosopographical, historical or geographical elements, can provide useful information about the history and origin of a manuscript and help to trace a manuscript tradition and the travel from place to place that a manuscript frequently undertook.

In particular, the codices presented in this study, although very few, represent significant witnesses of the historical presence of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church in Jerusalem in the fourteenth century, and of the existence of specific places in which the Ethiopian community was located in the Holy City at the time, as well as of other probable locations, or 'hostel-monasteries', along the route of the Ethiopian pilgrimage. They also show the interest of some Ethiopian rulers, such as ʿAmda Ṣǝyon I and Zarʾa Yāʿqob, towards this religious centre, and their concern to enrich the manuscript collection of this Ethiopian community with certain Ethiopic texts. During the period between the fourteenth and the

sixteenth centuries, we also witness a migration of manuscripts, through Ethiopian pilgrims or European travellers, between Ethiopia and the Holy City, and from the Holy City to some of the communities of the European Christian world, especially Rome, Germany, the United Kingdom and Saint Petersburg, and we see Jerusalem as a crucial channel across the Mediterranean Sea.

Additionally, we have observed that, besides manuscripts originating in the Ethiopian kingdom and sent from here to Jerusalem, we have evidence of a few manuscripts being produced in Jerusalem, approximately during the same period, some of which were probably copied by the same individuals or by scribes sharing the same context. This may bring us to guess that the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem might have also hosted an independent centre of manuscript production at that time.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

BAV = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
BML = Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.
BnF = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.
BSB = Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.
CAe = Clavis Aethiopica.
CUL = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library.
EAe = Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1: *A–C*; vol. 2: *D–Ha*; vol. 3: *He–N*; in coopera-
⠀⠀tion with Alessandro Bausi, vol. 4: *O–X*; Alessandro Bausi (ed.), in cooperation with Siegbert
⠀⠀Uhlig, vol. 5: *Y–Z, Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Ver-
⠀⠀lag, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014.
RNB = Saint Petersburg, Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka.

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Alin Suciu

A 'Spiritual Treasure in Five Languages': Pentaglot Biblical Manuscripts from Egypt in a Global and Transregional Perspective

Abstract: This essay examines a set of pentaglot manuscripts originating in the diverse monastic communities of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Egypt, probably dating from the thirteenth century. These substantial paper codices feature biblical texts on parallel columns in five key languages of the non-Chalcedonian churches: Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian. Despite their importance for understanding Christian multi-ethnic communities in Muslim-era Egypt, these manuscripts have been largely overlooked. This article explores the pentaglot manuscripts through a multidisciplinary and transcultural lens, integrating philology, history and cultural studies. It aims to shed new light on the origins, purposes and uses of these manuscripts, which reflect the cultural hybridity and communal life of Ethiopian, Syrian, Coptic and Armenian monks in Islamic Egypt, by investigating the migration and diaspora communities in the region.

1 Introduction

A Jesuit mission from Goa arrived at the court of the powerful Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in 1580. Hoping to convert the great potentate to Christianity, the Jesuits presented him with a dizzyingly expensive copy of the Plantin Polyglot Bible, which they deemed a milestone in Christian scholarship. The Plantin Bible – which emerged from the presses in Antwerp between 1568 and 1573 – was financed by the Spanish king Philip II (r. 1556–1598) and published by one of the most famous printers of the time, Christopher Plantin (*c.* 1520–1589), with the assistance of many scholars, including kabbalists.

Indeed, the emergence of printed polyglot Bibles in the sixteenth century is widely viewed as one of the most salient accomplishments of European humanism. These publishing ventures are not mere scholarly triumphs; concomitantly, they stand paramount as marks of cultural encounters and interchanges. Agostino Giustiniani's *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum, et Chaldaeum, cum tribus Latinis interpretationibus et glossis*, for instance, printed in Genoa in 1516, features the Psalms in Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Syriac, accompanied by Latin translations. The so-called Bomberg Bible, which appeared off the press at Venice in

1516–1517, contains the Hebrew scriptures and the Onkelos Aramaic Targum surrounded by supplementary Rabbinical commentaries. The text was edited by a Christian convert from Judaism, Felix Pratensis (d. 1539), and, in addition to the Jewish scholars, it was addressed to the nascent group of Christian Hebraists. In a similar vein, the celebrated Complutensian Polyglot, printed between 1514 and 1517, but published only in 1522, constitutes the fruit of cross-pollination between Christian and Jewish learning.

But the roots of the polyglot Bibles extend far beyond the chronological and geographical confines of the European Renaissance. A small number of trilingual psalter manuscripts, which were copied hundreds of years before the arrival of the printing press in the fifteenth century, have survived from the Latin West. As the Psalms have a long history in daily prayers, both in Judaism and Christianity, the evident proclivity for this biblical book – in both printed and manuscript form – is hardly surprising. One of the earliest examples is the Harley Trilingual Psalter, a manuscript executed in Norman Sicily during the reign of Roger II (r. 1130–1154), containing the Psalms in Greek, Latin and Arabic.[1] As Muslims, Byzantines and Normans claimed authority over the south Italian island between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, the Harley Trilingual is a gateway to Sicily's cultural and political history, recording the major linguistic shifts on the island throughout this period. Another twelfth-century manuscript, the Leiden Trilingual Psalter, attests to a different selection of languages and versions: Hebrew, Greek, the *Vulgata* and the Latin Gallican translation. It has been suggested that this codex was produced in south-western France, probably in Aquitaine. Scholarly engagements with the Hebrew language were quite solid in England during the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, and it is permissible to believe that the influence of English Hebraists reverberated further south, reaching continental Europe after the marriage of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152.[2] This would offer a plausible justification for the somewhat unexpected occurrence of Hebrew in the Leiden Trilingual Psalter. Last but not least, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. lat. 9 provides a glowing example of not only *scriptura illuminata* but also the inquisitive concern for the multilingual versions of the Bible in Renaissance Italy. This handsome parchment manuscript – copied for the voracious Florentine book collector Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482) in 1473, duke of Urbino – displays the Psalms in Latin, Greek and Hebrew in parallel columns.

The fertile soil of the eastern Mediterranean, a melting pot of different peoples and cultures for millennia, also engendered polyglot Bibles many centuries

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1 O'Hogan 2022.

2 Olszowy-Schlanger and Stirnemann 2008.

before the European Renaissance. Just like their Western counterparts, these Bibles are not merely monuments of scholarship and ingenuity, but also testimonies to how people of quite distinct cultural backgrounds intersected, managed a shared space and found common ground by negotiating their differences.

The present essay is concerned with a group of pentaglot manuscripts that came from the multi-ethnic monastic colonies in the desert of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Egypt.[3] Probably hailing from the thirteenth century, they are large paper codices containing biblical texts in separate columns in the five main languages of the non-Chalcedonian churches: Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian. Notwithstanding their weighty significance for the study of Christian mixed-ethnic communities in Egypt during the Muslim period, these manuscripts have received scant consideration until now. Adopting a prismatic approach, this article avers that the pentaglot manuscripts from Wādī al-Naṭrūn can be constructively surveyed from a multidisciplinary and transcultural perspective that encompasses philology, history and cultural studies. Further light on the origins of these manuscripts will be shed by the investigation of migration and diaspora communities in Egypt. I shall begin with a survey of all presently known pentaglot manuscripts from Egypt and their subsequent transfer to Europe in the modern era. After this, I will propose a date for their production and address the question of the purpose for which they were assembled. What is the nature of these manuscripts and how do we understand their relationship to the environment in which they had sprung? Were they executed as scholarly tools for the study of different versions of the Bible? Or were they rather intended for liturgical use in the multi-ethnic Christian communities living in Muslim Egypt? Whatever the case, these pentaglot biblical manuscripts provide unvarnished evidence that the Ethiopian, Syrian, Coptic and Armenian monks who lived in Egypt under Islamic rule were exposed to cultural hybridity, worked and lived communally, and produced culturally mixed artefacts.

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3 During the Arabic period, this was the name of the monastic hinterland situated west of the Nile Delta, known in ancient times as Sketis in Greek and Shihet in Coptic. This area features prominently in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* of the fourth and fifth centuries CE. One of the earliest reports on the pentaglot manuscripts from Egypt can be found in Nau 1914.

2 The content of the Barberini Pentaglot Psalter (Barb. or. 2)

Codex Barberinianus Orientalis 2 can surely be counted among the hallmarks of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana's vast collection of Eastern manuscripts. What makes this codex remarkable is the fact that it comprises the Book of Psalms (fols 3ʳ–197ʳ) and the biblical Odes (fols 197ᵛ–224ᵛ) in no less than five languages, each using a specific alphabet: Ethiopic (Gəʿəz), Syriac (in the *serto* script), Bohairic Coptic, Arabic and Armenian (in the *bolorgir* script).[4] These are the languages of the Miaphysite churches, which reject the decisions taken at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Unlike the Chalcedonian Christians, who define Christ as having two natures united in one person and hypostasis, the Miaphysites propose instead a single nature, fully divine and fully human at the same time.

This imposing paper codex consists of 236 leaves measuring approximately 35 cm in height and 26 cm in width. The manuscript is mainly formed of quinions, i.e. bundles of five pairs of leaves.[5] The gatherings are usually numbered with Coptic, Syriac and Armenian numerals at the bottom of the first and last page. The manuscript is foliated – not paginated – in Coptic epact (i.e. cursive) on the upper outer corner of the verso pages.

The five versions of the Psalms are organised in parallel columns in the following order from left to right: Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian. The order of the languages is reversed on the verso pages, running from Armenian to Ethiopic. Since each language uses a distinct script, this configuration lends order and a sense of visual consonance to the pages when the manuscript is opened in front of the viewer. Thus, the Armenian text always occupies the farthermost columns and the Ethiopic the two innermost ones on two facing pages. Yet, the observers' attention is seemingly intended to concentrate on the Coptic columns, which invariably occur in the central position on the pages. The appealing physical outlook of the manuscript dovetails with a more resonant meaning that seems to lie behind the arrangement of the five columns. Thus, Coptic entertains the place of honour, positioned in the middle and flanked by Syriac and Arabic, which come right after it in distinction, and, finally, Ethiopic and Armenian at the edges,

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4 Description of the Armenian text in Tisserant 1927, 343; description of the Ethiopic text in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935, 859–861; description of the Coptic text in van Lantschoot 1947, 1–4; description of the Syriac text in van Lantschoot 1965, 165. A full set of digital photos of the manuscript is available at <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.or.2> (accessed on 13 August 2024).
5 For the codicological structure of the manuscript, see Proverbio 2012.

languages that were surely of portentous significance to the manuscript's target audience, and yet, subordinate to Arabic and Syriac. It is meaningful to remember that the role of Coptic is virtually symbolic. When the manuscript was assembled, this language had vanished irrevocably from current speech, evolving into a relic of a bygone era, which persisted in fossilised form only for liturgical use.

The Vatican manuscript includes some additional texts besides the Psalms and Odes, predominantly in Syriac and Arabic, to which we will now shift our attention. A Syriac scribe reproduced tables for the Psalms on the verso of folio 1, which serves as a flyleaf, extracted from the commentary on this biblical book by Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). The presence of a work by the leading light of the East Syriac Church in a Miaphysite environment is nothing short of extraordinary and definitely deserves more comprehensive investigation.[6]

Another Syriac text in *serto* script had been written as glosses in the outer, and not infrequently also in the upper, margins of the pages on fols 1^r–21^r. Although it is copied in a conspicuously distinct hand from the one that inscribed the Syriac columns with the Psalms, the two scripts are palaeographically akin; it is, therefore, quite plausible to assume that they hail from the same period. As the folio numbers are accommodated in the vacant spaces left by the Syriac marginal glosses in the upper margins, it is permissible to speculate that either the glosses are coeval with the execution of the manuscript, or the folio numbers were added later. The former case seems more feasible, as a codex devoid of pagination would be quite unusual.

The Syriac marginal text derives from the commentary on the Psalms written by the twelfth-century metropolitan of Amida, Dionysius Bar Ṣalībī (d. 1171).[7] This massive commentary incorporates an alternative series of spiritual and literal interpretations of each psalm. The Barberini pentaglot, however, indiscriminately mixes separate portions of the two sets of interpretations. The commentary commences from the beginning, but abruptly breaks off *in medias res* with the spiritual commentary on Psalm 17, (18):23, ܥܡܢܝ ܐܠܗ ܘܗܘܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܘܡ ('we are pleasing to him. "And I shall be blameless"').[8] Notably, a portion of the text is missing between these two sentences: the Barberinianus manuscript omits from Bar Ṣalībī's com-

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6 I owe this information to David Taylor (University of Oxford), who identified Theodore of Mopsuestia's text and is currently working on its publication.

7 The identification of the text has also been privately suggested to me by the same colleague, David Taylor, to whom I am most grateful.

8 Syriac text from Simpkin 1974, vol. 2, 380.

mentary a quotation from Exodus 21:2, which concerns the purchase of a Jewish slave.[9]

There is a last gathering of leaves at the end of the manuscript, mostly with Arabic writing, which presumably did not belong to the original codicological unit. These Arabic texts represent general postfaces to the psalter, all of which are fairly standard in other manuscripts from Egypt and beyond. Thus, folios 234ʳ–227ᵛ contain an anonymous preface or introduction (مقدمة) to the Psalms.[10] The same text occasionally appears in Arabic psalters, either anonymously or with an attribution to Athanasius of Alexandria. The Coptic Bishop Abū al-Barakāt, known as Ibn Kabar (d. 1324), mentions in his encyclopaedic work, *Light of the Darkness*, that Athanasius wrote a commentary on the Psalms, of which he knew only the introduction (المقدمة) in Arabic.[11] Although Ibn Kabar seems to be referring here to Athanasius's *Expositiones in Psalmos* (*CPG* 2140), he mistakenly associates the introduction with the same work. In fact, the preface in question, which is found in some Arabic psalters, has no relation to Athanasius's genuine writings.

The *Introduction to the Psalms* is followed, on fol. 227ᵛ⁻ʳ, by Gregory of Nazianzus's *Carmen morale 30* (*CPG* 3035), a twenty-four-line acrostic hymn. This text is identifiable in some Arabic manuscripts of the Psalms, but also in three ninth-century Greek and Greek-Arabic psalters from Palestine.[12] The same translation contained in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. or. 2 appears in Sinaiticus Graecus 36, fols 6ʳ–7ᵛ, a bilingual Greek-Arabic uncial psalter from the ninth century. As the Sinaitic manuscript is of Palestinian Melkite provenance, it can be safely assumed that the Miaphysites borrowed this version of Gregory's *Carmen* from Arabic-speaking Chalcedonians. Finally, Barb. or. 2 features an unfinished Arabic liturgical calendar for the first four months of the Coptic year that begins on fol. 227ʳ and ends on fol. 224ʳ.[13] A scribe copied – upside down compared to the Arabic text – the Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1–19) in Armenian in an empty space of one of the pages containing the calendar (fol. 226ᵛ).

Folio 234 of the manuscript was added to Barb. or. 2 at an even later date: in the seventeenth century. The recto of the leaf furnishes the beginning of the *In-*

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9 The passage omitted reads ܘܢܦܩ ܡܢ ܐܦܘܡܗ ܟܕ ܗܠܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܢܚܬܟܘܢ ܕܚܙܩܝܐܠ. ܟܝܦ ܗܝ ܕܟܐ. ܐܝܟ ܗܘ (Simpkin 1974, vol. 2, 380).

10 It should be noted that fol. 234 was added in the seventeenth century. Thus, the first part of the *Introduction to the Psalms* was recopied on this occasion; see infra.

11 See the Arabic text in Riedel 1902, 646; cf. also Graf 1944, 311.

12 For the Greek text, see *PG* 37, cols 308–310. For the occurrence of the same text in a Greek psalter from Palestine, see Parpulov 2014, 81, n. 25, 156 (open-source publication available at <https://archive.org/details/ByzPsalters>, accessed on 13 August 2024). On the Arabic, see Graf 1944, 331.

13 This calendar was published by Nau 1913, 223–224 [59]–[60].

troduction to the Psalms described in the foregoing analysis, while the verso accommodates a scribal colophon in Arabic. The colophon reports that since the manuscript had suffered severe deterioration, 'our father, Anba Yūʾannis, presently bishop and abbot of the monastery of St Macarius the Great in Wādī al-Aṭrūn [sic]',[14] had arranged for it to be repaired and refurbished. The colophon was written on the day when the restoration was completed, i.e. the 1st of Kiyahk, the year 1343 of the Martyrs, 1036 Era of the Hegira, which corresponds to 7 December 1626 CE, according to the Julian calendar. It is tempting to identify the Anba Yūʾannis cited in the colophon with the then Coptic patriarch John XV, who occupied the throne of St Mark between 1619 and 1629 CE.[15]

The content of the Barberini Psalter is, thus, eclectic, in both its linguistic and confessional aspects. Not only is the manuscript written in five languages and alphabets, but, although it originates from Miaphysite monastic communities, it also incorporates a text by Theodore of Mopsuestia, a distinguished author of the Antiochian School, who later became a luminary of the East Syrian Church, and an Arabic translation from Greek prepared in the Chalcedonian milieus of Palestine.

3 Spies, pirates and knights: The acquisition of the Barberini Pentaglot Psalter

Barberinianus Orientalis 2 is not only a paragon of erudition owing to its multilingual character and ponderous contents, but it also stands out on account of its gripping acquisition story, 'a romantic history' whose cinematic details will be recapitulated here.[16] The manuscript was acquired in the year 1635 at the monastery of St Macarius, Wādī al-Naṭrūn, by a French Capuchin missionary, Fr Agathange de Vendôme (1598–1638). He purchased it on behalf of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), a French polymath from Aix-en-Provence, who was on the frontline of Coptic studies in Europe and had an insatiable thirst for manuscripts written in languages mastered only by a handful of enthusiasts.

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14 Barb. or. 2, fol. 234ʳ: ابينا انبا يونس المطران والرئيس الان بدير القديس العظيم ابو مقار بوادي الاطرون.

15 This suggestion has been made by Soldati 2022, 73. However, the year of John XV's death is wrongly indicated there as 1634 instead of 1629.

16 The formula 'romantic history' belongs to Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 1, xxxviii. A thumbnail sketch of the acquisition story was traced by François Nau, based on the notes compiled by Eugène Tisserant, in Nau 1913, 217–222 [53]–[58]. A detailed account, based on more voluminous sources, is available in Miller 2015, 301–311; see also Volkoff 1970, 36–42 and Soldati 2022.

Before proceeding further with the particulars of the story, it is worthwhile considering the acquisition of the pentaglot psalter by Fr Agathange in a global historical setting, for the study of this manuscript cannot be relegated to its geographical origin. Fr Agathange was serving as head of the Franciscan mission in Cairo in 1635, the year the codex was purchased. This mission had been founded only a few years earlier, in 1630, by French Capuchin friars. The French Capuchins were able to settle in Egypt because of an alliance forged by France with the Ottoman Empire a century before. The diplomatic ties between France and the Sublime Porte were launched in 1525, when the French regent, Louise of Savoy (1476–1531), signed a treaty with Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566) against the Spanish Habsburg monarchy. Through this unholy alliance, Louise hoped to gain the sultan's support in rescuing her son, the French monarch Francis I (r. 1515–1547), who was captured and flung into jail by Charles V (1500–1558), king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor.

As an immediate political gain of this pact, France became the first European power to have a permanent ambassador in Constantinople in 1534. But the presence of a foreign diplomatic mission in the Ottoman Empire posed problems, as *shariʻa* law was silent on the status of foreign residents in Islamic lands. Therefore, the Sublime Porte and France subsequently hammered out a series of peace agreements, called 'capitulations' because they were tabulated in separate *capitula* (Latin for 'chapters'), which regulated the activities of French citizens living under Ottoman jurisdiction. Inter alia, these capitulations stipulated that French merchants could operate in the Ottoman Empire without paying customs duties. Merchants from France were also authorised to worship freely in Ottoman territory, which signified that Catholic priests could be deployed to serve their spiritual needs.[17]

The fact that the French friars could move unhindered across the borders of the Ottoman Empire stimulated, shortly thereafter, the interest of the Roman pontiffs, who perceived this as a prospect of expanding the Catholic jurisdiction zone in the East. A first step towards this objective was the foundation of the Greek College in Rome in 1576 by Pope Gregory XIII (*sedit* 1572–1585), with the aim of training Catholic missionaries who would bring the Levantine Christians under papal authority. But the crucial enterprise was the organisation of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide by Pope Gregory XV (*sedit* 1621–1623) in 1622, which was tasked with spearheading the eastward expansion of the Catholic Church.[18]

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17 On the capitulations and their significance for the early Catholic missions in the Ottoman Empire, see Frazee 1983, 67–69.

18 On the foundation of the Greek College and the Propaganda Fide, see Frazee 1983, 88–102.

The choreography of the Catholic missions in the Levant and Egypt was essentially the work of François Leclerc du Tremblay (1577–1638), a French Capuchin known as Père Joseph. A realist mystic deeply immersed in political manoeuvring, he was called the 'Grey Eminence' of Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642) by his adversaries. In 1616, Père Joseph besought Pope Paul V (*sedit* 1605–1621) and Charles de Gonzague, duke of Nevers (1580–1637), to organise a military confederation of Catholic and Protestant nobles, called the Militia Christiana, to carry out a crusade against the Turks. However, the Militia disbanded before the embers were cold in 1618 with the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, which engulfed Europe in a long and bloody conflict. Père Joseph's further efforts to advocate a crusade failed again when the pope's army and the French became entangled in the War of Valtellina (1620–1626).[19] Even if Père Joseph's dreams of a crusade hit one snag after another, his anti-Turkish machinations were in no way dampened. In the succeeding years, he was the prime mover in the formation of French Capuchin missions, whose prerogative was to convert the vast swathes of Christians in the Levant and Egypt to Catholicism, hoping in this way to weaken the Ottoman Empire from within.

As Père Joseph's missionaries crawled over the East, Capuchin outposts were established in Cairo and Akhmim in 1630.[20] The Capuchin friars sternly observed the Franciscan tradition of simplicity and poverty. But their destitute appearance could be misleading because, as Victor Tapié aptly observed, the Capuchins 'were often employed, far away from their monasteries, on difficult and ambitious missions [...] as if their humble habit, which made their passage unnoticed, concealed their secrets more easily'.[21] While the pretext for the presence of the French Capuchins in Egypt was the conversion of the heretical Copts, by virtue of their citizenship, they stalwartly served the political interests of the French monarchy, which evolved into an increasingly solid global player after Richelieu's ascent to power. In brief, the transfer of missionaries to Egypt by Père Joseph was not intended solely for the sake of converting the indigenous Christian population, but also to expand French colonial influence. As agents of the king of France, the Capuchins' sphere of action was never confined to Egypt; in effect, their ambition was to infiltrate further south to Ethiopia and Sudan,[22] from where they hoped to open a commercial route for the French Crown to West and west-central Africa, with its

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19 Malcolm 2019, 256–257.
20 On the Capuchin mission in Egypt, see Frazee 1983, 85–87; Meinardus 1987.
21 My translation from Tapié 1967, 85.
22 Aufrère 1990, 108–109.

rich gold resources and endless reservoir of slaves. France saw Ethiopia as a gateway to Sahel and Senegambia, because the other routes were blocked. The Barbary Coast of North Africa was dominated by Muslim fiefdoms semi-detached from the Ottoman Empire, while the Portuguese had controlled the Atlantic routes of West Africa since the late fifteenth century.

When Fr Agathange obtained the pentaglot psalter in 1635, Portuguese influence was waning, but the West African commercial sea routes were gradually enfolded by Dutch, English and Spanish merchants, complicating a French intrusion. The fort of Elmina in Ghana, a stronghold of Portuguese domination in the area, was captured firstly by the Dutch in 1637 and then by the English in the 1640s, who dispatched ships along the Gold Coast to access the slave trade routes. During this period, the French Capuchins based in Egypt attempted to penetrate sub-Saharan Africa by descending along the east coast of the continent. However, even here they were seriously challenged by the Portuguese Catholics and Dutch Protestants,[23] although a small group of Breton Capuchin recruits led by Fr Colombin de Nantes successfully insinuated themselves into Guinea in 1637. Nonetheless, the mission succumbed after less than a decade without any notable accomplishments, as most of the friars died of malaria and the survivors were chased out by the natives.[24] It was not until 1640 that the Portuguese lost their influence in Africa. Missionaries were then able to venture further south, primarily to Kongo, where, although the royal family had already embraced Christianity in 1491, conversion was still only skin deep in the early seventeenth century. But when these events occurred, the French missionaries had to deal with shifting circumstances, for they were no longer the only friars engaging sub-Saharan Africa. In 1640, for example, the Propaganda Fide entrusted the missionary activity in Kongo to the Italian Capuchins. Four years later, the mission in Sierra Leone and the Guinea Coast was assigned to the Spanish Capuchins; in 1647 the Capuchins from Aragon anchored in Benin.[25]

It was in this context of the struggle for African trade routes between the European powers that Fr Agathange was designated superior of the Cairo Franciscan mission in 1633. He succeeded Fr Gilles de Loches, an eminent scholar who knew all the Semitic languages pertinent to the study of the Bible, from Hebrew and Syriac to Ethiopic and Arabic.[26] The Capuchins had an *haut en bas* approach to

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23 See Hastings 1994, 95.

24 Miller 2006, 682–689; Planté 2012–2013, 38; Valsecchi 2016, 81.

25 Green 2019, 170–171, 175–177.

26 See Aufrère 1990, 112–113.

missionary work, judging that the conversion of Coptic plutocracy, clergy and monks to Catholicism would expedite the baptism of more ample swathes of the indigenous Christian population. Therefore, they frequently visited the Coptic monasteries in order to make converts among the monks. Under these circumstances, Gilles de Loches and the other Capuchin friars had the opportunity to observe that monasteries such as that of St Antony at the Red Sea or the monastic complexes of Wādī al-Naṭrūn possessed inestimable libraries.[27]

On the opposite side of the Mediterranean, in Aix-en-Provence, one of the most illustrious citizens of the Republic of Letters, a savant and arduous antiquary of all things Eastern was tirelessly chasing up manuscripts in bizarre languages. His name was Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc. For scholars such as he, the presence of the French Capuchins in the Ottoman Empire was a unique chance to obtain intensely desirable antiquities and manuscripts. Peiresc was an armchair scholar who never journeyed to the Middle East himself. But he made up for it by cultivating an outstanding Mediterranean network of merchants, diplomats and missionaries through which he secured manuscripts, antiquities and rare artefacts for his *cabinet de curiosités* in Aix.

Among Peiresc's countless agents and book hunters were also the Capuchin monks residing in Egypt. The surviving correspondence between Peiresc and Fr de Loches shows that the Provençal savant had endeavoured to approach the Capuchin friar in order to obtain manuscripts in 1630, the same year that the Cairo mission was inaugurated. In a letter to Peiresc, Fr de Loches voluntarily offered his services, informing him that 'there are in this country Egyptian, Ethiopic, and Armenian books, without counting the Arabic and the Turkish. [...] if you desire any of them, order me, and I will do my best to satisfy you'.[28]

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27 Meinardus 1987, 199.

28 'Il se trouve en ce païs des livres Ægyptiens, Æthiopiens, Arméniens, sans compter les Arabes, Turcz. [...] Si toutefois vous desirés des uns et des aultres, commandés moy, et je m'efforceray de vous satisfaire', in de Valence 1892, 1. The letter is dated 3 September 1631, but Fr de Loches begins by apologising that although Peiresc wrote to him a year earlier, he could not answer because he did not receive the missive in good time. All translations from French on the following pages are mine.
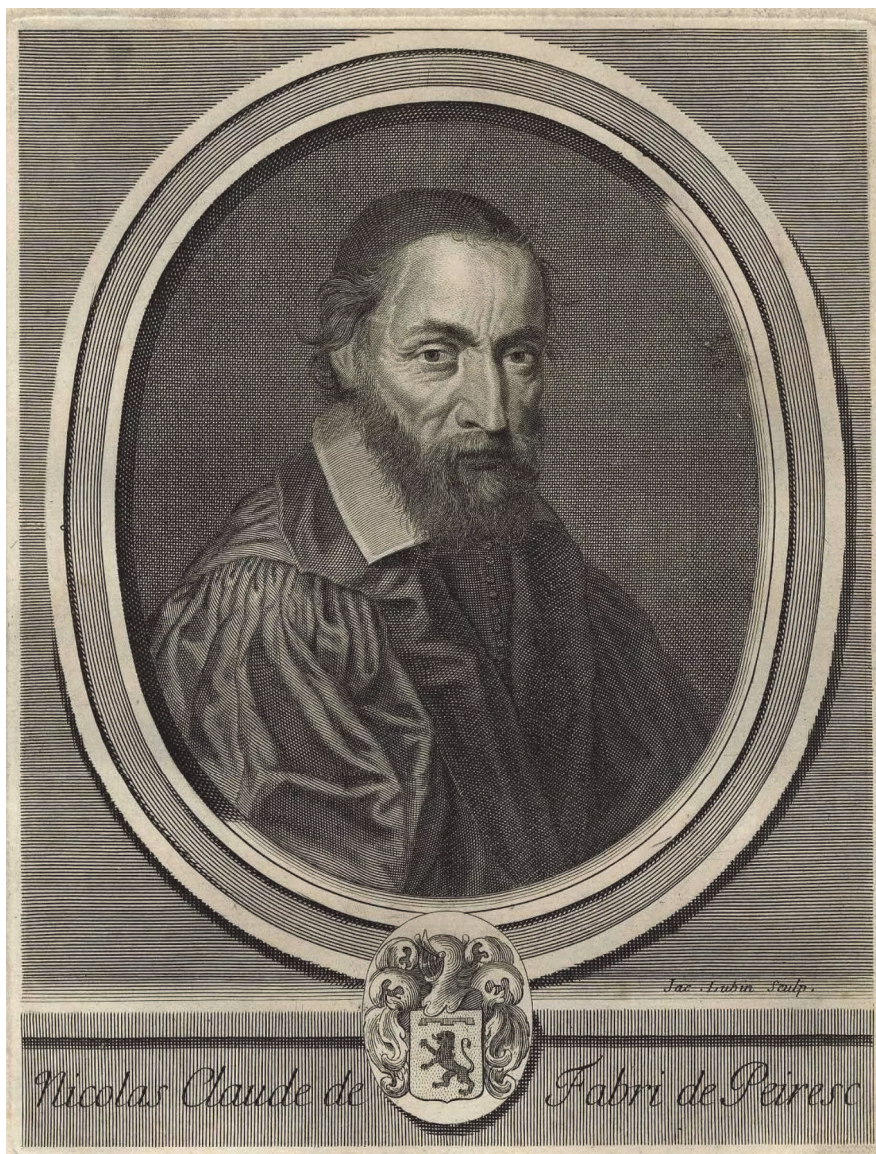
Fig. 1: Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc; late-seventeenth-century engraving by Jacques Lubin; Alin Suciu's personal collection

After Gilles de Loches was recalled and had left Cairo in 1633, two Capuchins of similar calibre, Frs Agathange de Vendôme and Cassien de Nantes, became the

most prominent liaisons between Peiresc and Egypt. Among other things, the two Capuchins complied with Peiresc's requests to compute the latitude of Cairo,[29] monitor a lunar eclipse through a telescope from the top of the Great Pyramid of Giza,[30] convert the old weights and measures used in Egypt,[31] and, above all, obtain Coptic and Arabic manuscripts for his private collection.[32]

Fr Agathange spoke for the first time of the polyglot psalter that he was about to fetch from the monastery of St Macarius in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn in a letter to Peiresc of 18 March 1634. However, he erred in holding that it was written in six languages instead of five: Coptic, Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Ethiopic and Syriac.[33] The superior of the monastery, Agathange explained further, was not willing to sell the manuscript, but was inclined to swap it for a silver Eucharistic paten and chalice that the monastic community desperately needed. As I already mentioned, the psalter had been restored and refurbished less than eight years earlier, in December 1626. From this, we can surmise that the Coptic monks still attached value to it and the transaction must have seemed fair to both parties. This indicates that the French were not in a position of strength, but that Agathange and the Coptic archimandrite of the monastery of St Macarius perceived each other as equals. It was only the weakening of Ottoman political control over the provinces in the early eighteenth century and the advent of the colonial age that conferred freer play on European travellers and missionaries to mercilessly plunder Egypt in order to satisfy their gluttony for antiquities.[34]

In another letter addressed to Peiresc, dated 25 July 1635, Fr Agathange notified him that, 'I am sending you, through Captain Baille, a Coptic, Armenian, Abyssinian, Arabic and Chaldean psalter that we have obtained from one of the monasteries of St Macarius'.[35] In his turn, Peiresc apprised Fr Agathange that he had ordered the silver chalice and the paten according to the instructions of the Coptic

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29 See the letters in de Valence 1892, 188, 211–212, 217–219.

30 See the letters in de Valence 1892, 6, 137–139, 141, 154, 168, 170, 188–189, 213–215, 216–217, 239–240, 243, 246–247.

31 See the letters in de Valence 1892, 134–135, 157–158.

32 See the letters in de Valence 1892, 22, 24–25, 52–53, 57–58, 62–63, 60–70, 71–72, 104–106, 107–108, 111–112, 123, 133, 154–156, 160–165, 210, 224–225, 237–239, 241–242, 244–246, 254, 269–270, 271–273.

33 'Je suis après à avoir un livre des Pseaumes de David en six langues: en cophte, arabe, grec, arménien, abyssin et syriaque', in de Valence 1892, 24.

34 Exemplarily, Raphael Tuki, a Copt who converted to Catholicism, criticised in the 1730s the removal of manuscripts from Egypt by missionaries, see Hamilton 2006, 97.

35 'Je vous envoye par le capitaine Baile un psaultier cophte, armenien, abyssin, arabe et chaldaïque, que nous avons eu d'un des convents de S. Machaire', in de Valence 1892, 154.

monks. Furthermore, he was anxious to receive 'this Psalter in six languages' that the Capuchin friar dispatched with Captain Baille's boat.[36]

But sailing in the Mediterranean during the first half of the seventeenth century was a perilous journey because the sea was infested with many pirates, both Muslim and Christian. The curious adventures of the pentaglot psalter after it had left Egypt reveal some of the complex interplay between the various forces engaged in seventeenth-century global history, for the problem of endemic piracy, to which the manuscript was suddenly exposed, did not lie in the Mediterranean Sea, but rather onshore. The European powers funnelled most of their trade through the colonial ports of the New World in the aftermath of the Battle of Lepanto (1571), while the Ottomans were preoccupied with securing their borders against the Habsburgs in the Balkans and the Safavids in the East. These commercial and political circumstances created a power vacuum in the Mediterranean, which ushered in the Golden Age of piracy during the seventeenth century.

It was in this era of rampant piracy that Captain Baille's ship, carrying Peiresc's psalter, set sail from the Egyptian littoral in the summer of 1635. However, the corsairs of the Barbary Coast ambushed the ship en route. Fearing for their lives, the captain and the sailors fled, abandoning the entire cargo, including the prized pentaglot manuscript. Peiresc lamented the loss of the polyglot psalter in a letter sent to Fr Agathange a couple of months after the incident, dated 29 September 1635, pointing the finger at Captain Baille for his pusillanimity,

> you loaded the volume of Psalms in so many languages on the ship of Patron Baille, which we now know was lost because of the great cowardice of the owner, who, seeing the corsairs approaching, abandoned his ship and fled on the skiff, not even being aware who had taken his cargo. One can imagine that he did not think to put the coffer in the skiff in order to save his papers, in which case my poor book might have escaped.[37]

Peiresc was greatly vexed because the loss of the multilingual psalter confirmed his darkest fears. Less than two months earlier, he had warned Fr Agathange not to dispatch the psalter on a French ship, but rather to find an English one, because in the event of a pirate attack, 'our Provençaux let themselves be taken like sitting

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36 See Peiresc's letter to Fr Agathange, dated 10 August 1635, in de Valence 1892, 160–165.
37 '[V]ous aviez chargé le volume des pseaulmes en tant de langues sur la barque de patron Baille, que nous sçavions desja estre perdue par la grande lascheté du patron, qui, voyant approcher les corsaires, abbandona sa barque et se sauva dans l'esquif, sans avoir seullement sceu qui c'est qui avoit prins ses moyens. Croyant bien qu'il n'aura pas songé de mettre la caisse dans l'esquif pour sauver ses papiers, auquel cas mon pauvre libvre auroit peu se sauver', in de Valence 1892, 184–185.

ducks; but catching the others would not be an easy matter, as they say'.[38] In a letter to Jean-Baptiste Magy, a French merchant from Cairo, Peiresc mournfully observed: 'we already knew that this Captain Baille has so little courage, and instead of getting ready to fight when he met the corsairs, he abandoned his ship near Malta'.[39]

But Peiresc had no time to spare and was determined to identify the culprits who went off with his polyglot psalter. He eventually learned that the pirates of Tripoli had stolen the manuscript. Moreover, a rumour that reached his ears appalled him: one of the pirates, who had been an apothecary in Algiers, retained all the books that were on Captain Baille's ship in order to wrap spices with their leaves![40] Peiresc mobilised hard and, in the ensuing month, through an efficient exchange of letters with various key people, was able to trace the erratic trajectory of the psalter after it was snatched by the pirates. He determined that the manuscript had passed through several hands, ending up in the possession of Mehmed Bey (r. 1632–1649), the pasha of Tripoli and implicitly the pirates' patron. Mehmed was a Greek convert to Islam from Chios, known for his tolerance toward Christians, and, therefore, Peiresc hoped to persuade him to return his much-treasured psalter. However, his repeated plans to regain the manuscript were encumbered by insuperable obstacles. It was not until the beginning of 1637 that Peiresc succeeded in ransoming the psalter from the pasha, with the help of the Bayon brothers, two merchants living in Marseilles and Tripoli. In a letter that he sent to Fr Gilles de Loches in January 1637, Peiresc triumphantly wrote,

> I am expecting any moment the volume of the hexaplaric Psalter in columns [...] I think I told you about the misfortune that caused it to fall into the hands of the corsairs. I had followed its trail with so much care that it has finally been found in Tripoli of Barbary, given over for ransom and recovered by an honest man who took it upon himself to bring it to me through his brother. It will not be too long before I get it.[41]

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38 '[N]os provençaulx se laissent prendre comme des canes sans deffence; mais ces autres là ne se prennent pas sans gantelet, comme l'on dict', in de Valence 1892, 164.

39 Miller 2015, 302–303 and 574, n. 32 (transcription of the French text).

40 Letter of Peiresc to Antoine Bayon, dated 30 September 1635, 'un de ces corsairs, qui avoit été apothicaire à Alger, avoir retenu tous les livres et papiers qui pouvoient servir à plier des épices', in Tamizey de Larroque 1898, 515.

41 'J'attends d'heure à autre le volume du Psaultier hexaple par colonnes [...] Je pense que je vous avois mandé le malheur qui l'avoit faict tomber ez mains des corsaires. Je l'ay faict suyvre à la piste avec tant de soing, qu'enfin il a esté retrouvé à Tripoly de Barbarie, et remis à rançon, et recouvré par un honneste homme qui s'est chargé de me le faire tenir par son frere. Il me tardera bien de l'avoir', in de Valence 1892, 308.

In April 1637, the parcel conveyed by Monsieur Antoine Bayon from Tripoli finally arrived in Aix. But Peiresc had a bad feeling when he realised that, unlike the large volume described by Fr Agathange in his letters, the book nestled inside the package seemed rather small and too light to hold. He hurriedly unwrapped it, and instead of his long-awaited pentaglot psalter, he held in his hands an ordinary Arabic-Latin dictionary, printed in Leiden at the beginning of the seventeenth century! Someone back in Tripoli – Bayon, the pasha or one of his acolytes – must be either a total *ignoramus*, incapable of distinguishing a printed book from a manuscript in multiple languages, or a scammer, he thought. For Peiresc, it was an unmitigated catastrophe, the last in a chain of unfortunate events: he died two months later, on 24 June 1637, without ever seeing the polyglot psalter that Fr Agathange de Vendôme bought on his behalf from the monastery of St Macarius.

Fr Agathange did not fare too well either, for he outlived Peiresc by slightly more than a year. It all began when a German Lutheran preacher sternly threatened the Capuchin monopoly over the Egyptian mission's field. Peter Heyling, born in Lübeck and educated in Paris, arrived in Egypt in 1633 with the bold ambition of evangelising the Copts all by himself.[42] In order to achieve proficiency in Arabic, a crucial step in his missionary endeavour, the Lutheran pastor asked for lodging from the monks at St Macarius. But during his stay at the Coptic monastery, he became embroiled in a bitter doctrinal tussle with the Capuchin friars, who, under the leadership of Fr Agathange, were already trying to convert the monks to Catholicism. The prompt outcome of the dissension was Heyling's expulsion from Wādī al-Naṭrūn.

Shortly after the incident, in 1634, the head of the Ethiopian Church passed away. Traditionally, the Ethiopian Abuna was an Egyptian metropolitan bishop appointed by the Coptic patriarch. The Egyptian pope, Matthew III (*sedit* 1631–1646), consecrated the superior of the monastery of St Antony at the Red Sea as the new metropolitan of the Abyssinian Church under the name of Marqos. Heyling, who was a friend of Marqos, accompanied the freshly-consecrated Abuna on his journey to Ethiopia, animated by the hope to harvest souls by converting this Christian country to the Protestant faith, a sure short cut to his own salvation.

Peiresc and the Capuchins had also long fermented a plan for a mission to Ethiopia, which was seen as a stepping stone towards a broader French colonial venture into Africa. After several unfruitful attempts, Frs Agathange and Cassien de Nantes were finally able to punch into Ethiopia in 1638, disguised as Coptic monks. But their arrival coincided with a drastic shift in Ethiopian religious policy, which led to the harsh persecution of the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries. The

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42 On Peter Heyling, see Meinardus 1969; Grafton 2009, 69–74.

new religious leader, Abuna Marqos, and Emperor Fasilides (r. 1632–1667) were probably incited to persecute the Catholics by Heyling, who achieved proximity to the Ethiopian monarch and was even rewarded with one of his daughters in marriage. When the two Capuchins – who had openly confronted Heyling a few years before in Egypt – arrived in Ethiopia, their fate was sealed. Frs Agathange and Cassien were convicted to death by Emperor Fasilides and were killed in Gondar in August 1638, hanged by the girdles of their Franciscan habit.[43]

But back in Europe, Peiresc was not the only scholar awaiting the arrival of the pentaglot manuscript. Because Fr Agathange had erroneously described the psalter in his early correspondence with Peiresc as being in six columns instead of five, rumours spread among European biblical scholars that the manuscript looted by the Barbary pirates was a copy of the Hexapla.[44] This was a philological tool compiled by the early Christian author Origen (*c.* 185–*c.* 253) during the third century, which comprised six versions of the Hebrew scriptures arranged in parallel columns.[45] Origen's work was long lost and, since the sixteenth century, European humanists attempted to reconstruct it from bits and pieces. The French classical philologist Claude Saumaise (1588–1653) wrote enthusiastically in a letter sent to Peiresc from Leiden on 2 March 1637:

> I am very glad that you have taken the psalter in six languages from the hands of the corsairs, and I very much look forward to seeing it, for I imagine that it is a Hexapla of Origen. If this is the case, it would be a priceless thing.[46]

Thus, the prospect of recovering Peiresc's manuscript surely struck chords among the coterie of biblical scholars in the Republic of Letters.

At this point in the story, the Knights of Malta enter the stage. Initially called the Knights Hospitallers, they were protectors of a hospice for Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem during the Crusades. However, after the defeat of the Outremer states by Saladin (*c.* 1137–1193), the purpose for which the order was created faltered, and the knights committed themselves fully to corsairing activities. They

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43 Agathange de Vendôme and Cassien de Nantes are considered martyrs of the Catholic Church and were beatified in 1905. Their lives are narrated in a hagiographical manner by de Vannes 1905.

44 See Mandelbrote 2010, 105–109.

45 These were the Hebrew text, its transliteration in Greek letters, the Greek version of Aquila, the Greek version of Symmachus, the Septuagint version and the Greek version of Theodotion.

46 'Je suis bien aise que vous ayés retiré de la main des corsaires le psautier en six languages, et me tarde infiniment que je le puisse voir, car je me suis imaginé que c'est un Hexaple d'Origène. Si cela estoit, ce seroit une chose inestimable', in Tamizey de Larroque 1882, 86; see also Mandelbrote 2010, 107.

became the Christian counterparts of the Barbary pirates, marauding Muslim ships and selling the captives as slaves. The knights moved their headquarters onto the island of Rhodes in 1310, but in 1522, they were expelled by Suleiman the Magnificent. Charles V bestowed Malta upon them in 1530, which remained their outpost until the end of the eighteenth century; the knights converted the rocky and unhospitable island into one of the splendours of Europe.

In 1637, shortly after Peiresc's death, the Knights of Malta finally ransomed the manuscript from the pasha of Tripoli, although the circumstances of the transaction remain largely obscure. In one of those intriguing quirks of history, that same year, two eminent scholars and protégées of Peiresc, Lucas Holstenius (1596–1661) and Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), were escorting Frederick, landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt (1616–1682), on a trip to Sicily and Malta.[47] Frederick belonged to a prominent German Protestant family, but the young landgrave converted to Catholicism shortly before the voyage in Italy and eventually became a cardinal. During their stopover at Valletta, the psalter was shown to Holstenius, who persuaded the Grand Master of the Maltese Knights, Jean-Paul Lascaris de Castellar (1560–1657), to present it as a gift to the protector of the order, Cardinal Francesco Barberini (1597–1679).[48] The cardinal, a nephew of Pope Urban VIII (*sedit* 1623–1644), was a well-educated man who became a cultural patron and exemplary exponent of the Counter-Reformation.

Thus ended the strange adventures of Peiresc's psalter. Pope Leo XIII (*sedit* 1878–1903) incorporated Cardinal Barberini's manuscript collection into the Vatican Library in 1902, where the pentaglot psalter still resides today. The codex was refurbished after the Grand Master of the Maltese Knights ceded it to Cardinal Barberini. It is now bound in vermillion leather, having the Barberini family coat of arms and the flag with the black cross of the Knights of Malta on the front cover. On each corner of the cover, a bee in gold can be observed, the symbol of the Barberini house, which still adorns many monuments commissioned by the members of this family in the Eternal City. This is how the prosperous Barberinis saw themselves: tireless bees gathering the sweet nectar of learning from all corners of the world.

To conclude the foregoing survey: the acquisition of the codex must be situated within the larger global and complex context of the seventeenth century. We

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47 Nau 1913, 221 [57], thinks that the landgrave of Hesse was Philip, but this is certainly a mistake. The same error occurs in Miller 2015, 309.
48 Nau 1913, 221 [57].

have seen that the stage for its acquisition was set by macro-forces competing for dominance in Africa and the colonies of the New World. In particular, the Ottoman capitulations stimulated contacts between the French and the Christians living under Islamic rule, thus, inaugurating new avenues for missionaries and travellers to acquire manuscripts. The 'barbarian' state formations and piracy also played a significant role in the story of the Barberini manuscript. The fact that the Knights of Malta ransomed the psalter from the Barbary corsairs bolsters recent scholarship arguing that early modern Muslim and Christian piracy should not be regarded as merely a religious conflict but also as a form of trade.[49] Lastly, to highlight the role of individuals in the story, the manuscript would not have become known to the West without the intrepid curiosity of an armchair scholar such as Peiresc or the bravery of the stoical monk and French agent Agathange de Vendôme.

4 The companion volume: The Ambrosiana Praxapostolos

A companion volume of manuscript Barb. or. 2, featuring the Pauline corpus, the Catholic Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles in five columns, is held in the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. Today, the manuscript is bound as two separate volumes kept under the inventory numbers B 20/A inf. and B 20/B inf. respectively.[50] The first volume, containing the Letters of Paul, is formed of 275 leaves, whereas the second, comprising the Catholic Epistles and the Acts, is composed of 186 leaves. However, the fact that the pagination and the quire signatures do not start anew with the second volume, but are numbered consecutively in relation to the first, suggests that they originally formed a single opulent book of over 460 leaves, that is double the thickness of the Barberini codex.[51]

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49 See e.g. Colás 2016.

50 Description of the manuscript in Horner 1898–1905, vol. 3, xvii–xx. See also Chabot 1947; Löfgren and Traini 1975, 3–4; Uluhogian 2008. Digital photos of B 20/A inf. are available at <https://digitallibrary.unicatt.it/veneranda/0b02da82801083c5> (accessed on 13 August 2024); photos of B 20/B inf. at <https://digitallibrary.unicatt.it/veneranda/0b02da82801083c6> (accessed on 13 August 2024).

51 The last quire signature, 47, is written in Coptic and Syriac numerals on the recto of B 20/B inf., fol. 180.

Yet, the Ambrosiana manuscript is precisely the same size as the Vatican psalter, 35 cm in height and 26 cm in width. Furthermore, the Milan polyglot Praxapostolos retains the sequence of the languages found in the Barb. or. 2: Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian on the recto pages and the reverse order on the versos. However, the Armenian breaks off on the verso of folio 175, at the end of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, and does not resume again. Nevertheless, the presence of an empty column through to the end of the manuscript clearly indicates that the initial choice was to offer a complete Armenian text, but the plan was aborted for some reason. The unknown vagary that brought the Armenian copyist's work to an abrupt end is just another of the many riddles that the Egyptian pentaglot manuscripts throw in front of us.

The Ambrosiana polyglot Praxapostolos also comes from the monastic milieus of Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Thus, one of its Arabic colophons specifically mentions that the codex belonged to the monastery of the Holy Virgin, better known as the monastery of the Syrians.[52] While this manuscript has a less intriguing story than the Barberini Psalter, it is also true that little knowledge of its acquisition can be gleaned from the sources available. Enrico Galbiati has convincingly argued that the manuscript was purchased in the early seventeenth century.[53] In 1609, Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564–1631) inaugurated the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, which was meant to serve as a vehicle for learning both about Western Europe and the distant cultures of the East. On that occasion, Borromeo had written to the authorities of the Maronite College in Rome to find a scholar versed in Arabic and Syriac, who could travel to the Levant to acquire precious manuscripts for the newly founded library. The one recommended to him was Michele Maronita, a Lebanese Catholic who was at that time teaching Turkish slaves on the island of Malta.

Michele embarked on a one-way trip to the Levant in July 1611 that would ultimately lead to his death. He perished at Aleppo during 1613 from an unknown disease contracted in Syria. Before his death, Michele visited Corfu, Crete, Syria, Jerusalem and Constantinople, delivering a number of manuscripts to Milan that he had acquired on Cardinal Borromeo's behalf during his sojourn in the Middle East. Among these, there are three manuscripts of Egyptian provenance: the famous Codex Ambrosianus, containing the Peshitta version of the Hebrew scriptures (Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B 21 inf.), the only copy of the

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52 This colophon appears on fol. 160ʳ, at the end of Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

53 Galbiati 1992.

Syro-Hexaplaric translation of the Septuagint (Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 313 inf.) and the pentaglot Praxapostolos.

Although all three manuscripts appear to stem from the monastery of the Syrians in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn, the circumstances under which they came into the possession of Michele Maronita remain largely obscure. Little evidence has been uncovered to date concerning his trip to Egypt; all we know is that, shortly prior his death, the Lebanese traveller was in Rosetta, an Egyptian port situated a short distance east of Alexandria.[54] Perhaps, on this occasion, he travelled further south to the desert of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, where he purchased the two Syriac manuscripts and the pentaglot Praxapostolos. If this was the case, the Ambrosiana manuscript was acquired in 1613, more than two decades before Fr Agathange bought the Barberini Psalter on Peiresc's behalf.

5 The leftovers: Pentaglot gospel fragments

Two paper fragments of the gospels in Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian probably both derive from a similar multilingual manuscript. The first of them is kept in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, as Copt. c. 2.[55] This Oxonian fragment retains only the upper part of a leaf, featuring Luke 7:37–39 on the recto and Luke 7:42–44 on the verso. Since this *membrum disiectum* preserves the original width of the leaf, which measures 26 cm, it can be estimated that the manuscript was probably of the same size as the Barberini and Ambrosiana codices.

Furthermore, similar to the two pentaglot manuscripts presented in the previous sections, this one also comes from the desert monasteries at Wādī al-Naṭrūn. The fragment was reportedly obtained at the monastery of Baramous by the famed English church historian Alfred J. Butler (1850–1936), who donated it to the Bodleian Library in January 1884.[56] Indeed, Butler had visited Egypt between December 1883 and January 1884 as one of the official envoys of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Coptic pope, Cyril V (*sedit* 1874–1924), and the Greek patriarch

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54 Pasini 2005, 27.

55 Description in Horner 1898–1905, vol. 1, cxxvi; Baronian and Conybeare 1918, 5–6 (= no. 4), but the writing support is wrongly indicated there as vellum instead of paper.

56 Baronian and Conybeare 1918, 6; Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 1, xxxviii.

of Alexandria, Sophronios (*sedit* 1870–1899).[57] With the consent of Pope Cyril, the Anglican delegates visited the Wādī al-Naṭrūn monastic communities. A pamphlet published upon the envoys' return to England specifically mentions the visit to the monastery of Baramous, during which the fragment was probably obtained.[58]

The British Library currently houses the second pentaglot fragment of the gospels under the call number Or. 1240a.[59]
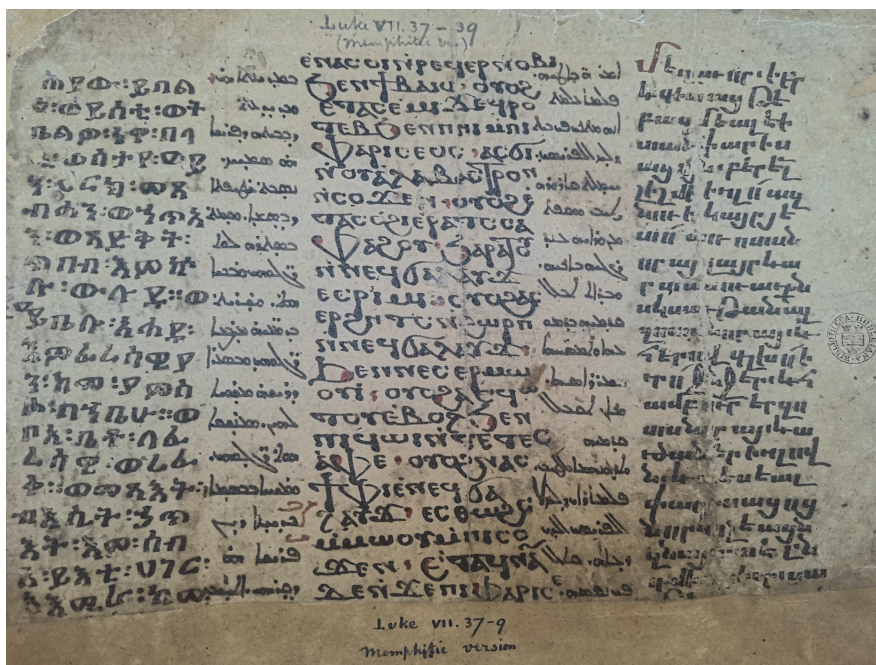
Fig. 2: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Copt. c. 2ʳ. © Bodleian Library.

57 This was the first mission of the Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt, founded by the Anglican Church in 1883 with the declared aim to educate the Coptic clergy. The report of the visit to Egypt is available in Marsh, Chapman and Butler 1884.

58 Marsh, Chapman and Butler 1884, 10 and 14–15 (Appendix C).

59 Description in Margoliouth 1899, 1; Crum 1905, 328–329 (= no. 757).
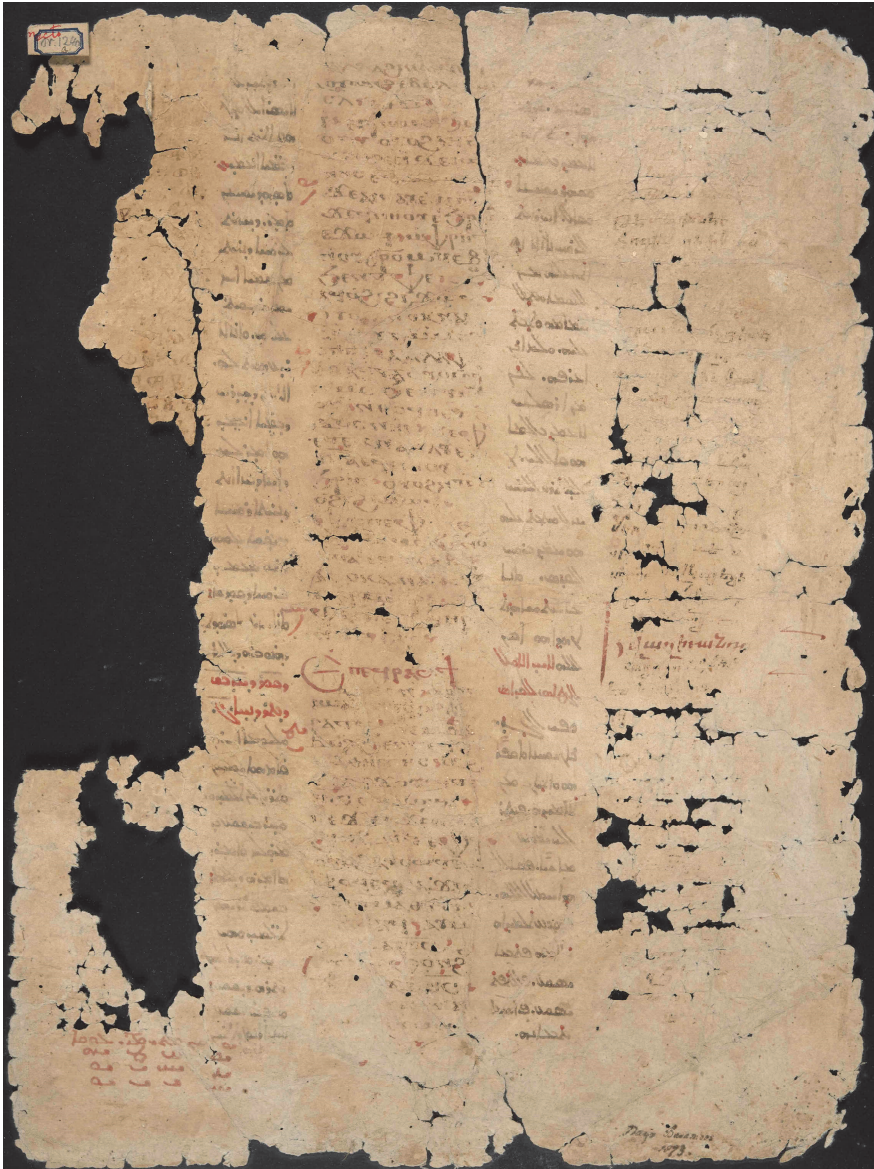
Fig. 3: London, British Library, Or. 1240aʳ. © British Library.

The London leaf (35 × 26 cm) contains a portion of the Gospel of John (1:31–45). The fragment was acquired by Greville J. Chester (1830–1892) in January 1873 at the

same monastic complex where Butler would receive the fragment of Luke a decade later. During that year, Chester visited the monasteries of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn, publishing a report on their state of preservation.[60] Describing the fortified tower of the monastery of Baramous, Chester notes that he saw 'a considerable collection of MSS. on cotton paper in excellent preservation, but of no great antiquity, and an adjoining room full of fragments of loose leaves'.[61] In all likelihood, the John pentaglot fragment was removed from this room during Chester's visit.

While the Luke and John fragments maintain the same order of the languages as the Barberinianus and the Ambrosianus, a notable difference is that their columns with Arabic text are in Garšūnī, i.e. Arabic written in Syriac script. Besides the common provenance, the occurrence of Garšūnī in both gospel fragments constitutes further evidence that they are *membra dispersa* cannibalised from the same manuscript, which probably included all four gospels in Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian. Such a large Tetraevangelion in five languages is not inconceivable, roughly requiring the same amount of space as the Milan Praxapostolos.

6 Troubling days in Jerusalem: Scribes, patron and date of the pentaglot manuscripts

The Egyptian pentaglot manuscripts described in this paper illustrate that monks in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn monasteries endeavoured to transcribe extensive portions of the Bible into the languages of the non-Chalcedonian churches. Perhaps the intention was not to create a complete multilingual Bible, since it is hard to imagine that the scribes had the entire set of biblical books available in all five languages, but rather to copy the most significant parts of the Christian scriptures, above all the Psalms, the gospels and the Praxapostolos.[62] Perhaps when this ambitious scribal undertaking was completed, the manuscripts were distributed among the monastic settlements in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn. For this reason, each of the three pentaglot manuscripts identified to date comes from a different locale.

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60 Chester 1873.
61 Chester 1873, 110.
62 Not even the entire Bohairic Bible is attested in manuscripts. Books such as Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Esther and others are either completely absent in this Coptic dialect or preserved only fragmentarily in lectionaries. On the preservation of the Bohairic Bible, see Feder 2020, 236–237.

The careful arrangement of the five-column page layout captures the minutiae of the scribal endeavour. Such a monumental undertaking peremptorily involved more than one scribe for each language. In effect, multiple changes of hands and writing styles are discernible even within the same manuscript. The scribes who copied the Barberinianus and Ambrosianus pentaglot codices added many mementos and notes, chiefly in Syriac and Arabic, in the margins of the columns.[63] Unfortunately, scant information can be garnered from these paratextual elements about the names and origins of the copyists who participated in the production of the manuscripts, as most of them preferred to remain unnamed.

The anonymous prayer petitions written in a highly formulaic style are prevalent: ܨܠܘ ܥܠ ܚܛܝܐ ܕܟܬܒ ܒܚܘܒܗ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ('Pray for the sinner who wrote in the love of Christ') reads one such Syriac note in the Ambrosianus.[64] Another unknown Syrian scribe promises divine rewards to the readers who will pray for him:

'O God-loving readers, pray for the sinner who scribbled (ܚܛܝܐ ܕܪܫܡ), and may the Lord have mercy upon everyone who prays for me and for my Fathers, and may the Lord repay you many times over, Amen!'[65]

An Armenian scribe left the following curt souvenir on the last page of the same manuscript, at the end of the Acts of the Apostles: Ես մեղաւոր ծառայս ('I, the sinful servant').[66] Yet another anonymous Syrian scribe penned a prayer request in the Ambrosiana Praxapostolos, in which he described the manuscript as a 'spiritual treasure in five languages':

ܐܢܐ ܦܐܬ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܕܩܪܐ ܕܢܨܠܐ ܥܠܝ، ܘܥܠ ܐܒܗܝ، ܘܥܠ ܡܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܝ ܗ[ܘ] ܣܝܡܬܐ ܪܘܚܢܝܬܐ ܐܝܕܐ ܕܐܝܬܝܗ ܒܚܡܫܐ ܠܫܢܐ

I ask everyone who will read to pray for me, and for my Fathers, and for the one who took care of this spiritual treasure in five languages.[67]

Occasionally, some scribes shared their names, thus, preserving their memory over the centuries. The Syrian monks Barṣūma and Abba, for example, left humble prayer requests: 'Pray in Christian love for me, the poor little-Barṣūma' (ܨܠܘ ܒܚܘܒܐ ܝ ܒܪ) and 'Pray for me, the poor Abba' (ܐܒܐ ܚܛܝܐ).[68] A brief 'forget-me-

63 Many of the Syriac scribal notes have been conveniently gathered by Vergani 2016, 275–279, and plate 6.

64 B 20/A inf., fol. 176ʳ; Vergani 2016, 276.

65 B 20/A inf., fol. 29ᵛ.

66 B 20/B inf., fol. 186ᵛ.

67 B 20/A inf., fol. 99ʳ; see Vergani 2016, 279, n. 67.

68 B 20/A inf., fol. 199ʳ, and B 20/A inf., fol. 258ᵛ. See Vergani 2016, 276, n. 56.

not' inscription in Armenian in the Barberini Psalter reads: զՄանուէլ անարժան երէց յիշեցէք ի տէր ('Remember to the Lord the unworthy priest Manuel').[69] A more detailed Arabic note provides information about the origin of a Syrian copyist, who appears to be from Amida, a city situated on the Tigris in Mesopotamia:

<div dir="rtl">

الله يرحم لمن قرا في هذه النسخة المباركة ويدعي للمتهم وللناسخ للضعيف يوحنا السرياني من المدينة امد المحروصة وليعزه على الله امين

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May God have mercy upon the one who reads this blessed copy and prays for the one who provided, and for the scribe, the weak Yūḥannā the Syrian from the city of Amida[70] the guarded, and may God bless him, Amen![71]

Such inscriptions, expressly written to serve as tokens of remembrance, capture names of long-forgotten scribes who lived in the Egyptian desert. Perhaps even more significantly, several annotations in the two complete pentaglot manuscripts divulge the name of their commissioner, who appears to be one Ṣalīb, a priest of Syrian extraction. The Ethiopic colophon in the Barberini Psalter, for instance, states:

ዛቲ ፡ መ[ጽ]ሐፍ ፡ ይ[እቲ ፡] ለቀሲስ[፡ ጸ]ሊ.ብ ፡ ሶር[ያዊ ፡] ትኩኖ ፡ [ለሕይ]ወት ፡ ወለ[መ]ድኅኒ ት[፡ አሜ]ን ። ይኩ-ን[።] ወሀሎ ፡ ው-[ስቴ]ታ ፡ Ṭ ፡ ወ፺[፡ ዳ]ዊት ። መማ[ኅሌ]ተ ፡ ነቢያት[፡ Ꭵ፭ ፡] ወተጽሕፈ[፡] ከመዝ ፡ ወቀዳሚ ፡ ኢ.ትዮጲ.ያዊ ። [ወዳ]ግም ፡ ሶር[ያዊ ፡] ወሳልስ[፡ ቅብ፡ጣ]ዊ ። ወራ-[ብዕ ፡ አ]ረምይ ። [ወኃ]ምስ ፡ አር[ሜኒ ፡] አሜን ፡ ሀ[ሎ ፡ በ]ዝንቱ ፡ [መጽሐ]ፍ ፡ ይ[ሰባሕ ፡] እግዚአ[ብሔር ።]

This is the book of the priest [Ṣ]alib the Syr[ian.] May it be [for li]fe and salvation, [Ame]n! So be it! It comprises the 150 (Psalms of) [Da]vid and [the 15] songs of the prophets, and it is written thus: first the [E]thiopic, second the Syr[iac], third the [Copti]c, fourth the language of the infidel,[72] [and] fifth the Ar[menian]. Truly is [in] this book. May the Lord be glorified![73]

Similarly, a scribe wrote the following note at the end of Paul's Letter to the Galatians in the Ambrosiana Praxapostolos:

<div dir="rtl">

اهتم بها القس صليب المهتم بدير السريان المعروف بستنا السيدة العذرى الرب يعوضه بشفاعها امين

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69 Barb. or. 2, fol. 193ᵛ; see Uluhogian 2008, 254, n. 12.

70 Hugely frustratingly, the name of the city is not easy to decipher in the manuscript. The reading المدينة امد ('the city of Amida') was proposed by Horner 1898–1905, vol. 3, xviii, but it is by no means certain.

71 B 20/A inf., fol. 150ᵛ.

72 አረምይ ፡, which is probably a corruption of አረማይ ፡, literally means the pagan language.

73 Barb. or. 2, fol. 224ᵛ; see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935, 861.

The one who took care of it [i.e. the manuscript] is the priest Ṣalīb the patron at the monastery of the Syrians, known as Our Lady the Virgin. May the Lord reward him through her intercessions, Amen![74]

On another page, a Syrian scribe requests prayers for the priest Rabban Ṣalībā, who is presumably the same person:

ܟܒ ܐܢܐ ܗܟܝܠ ܟܠ ܐܢܫ ܐܚܐ ܪܘܚܢܝܐ ܘܦܓܕ ܒܗܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܢܨܠܐ ܥܠ ܚܛܝܐ ܡܚܝܠܐ ܕܘܝܐ ܘܛܥܝܐ ܒܚܛܗܐ ܚܣܝܪܐ
ܕܟܬܒ ܠܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܣܘܪܝܐܝܬ ܘܥܠ ܐܒܗܝ ܘܐܚܝ ܘܪܒܢܝ ܘܥܠ ܩܫܝܫܐ ܪܒܢ ܨܠܝܒܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܝܨܦ ܘܩܢܐ ܠܣܝܡܬܐ ܪܘܚܢܝܬܐ ܗܕܐ
ܘܢܣܒ ܟܠ ܐܢܫ ܦܘܪܥܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܪܝܐ ܐܝܟ ܨܠܘܬܗ ܐܡܝܢ

I beseech then every spiritual brother who encounters this book to pray for the sinner, the weak, the wretched, and the one who has gone astray in sins, who copied the book in Syriac. And pray for my Fathers, my brethren, and my masters and for the priest Rabban Ṣalībā, who took care and procured this spiritual treasure. And may everyone receive reward from the Lord according to his prayer, Amen![75]

These notes reveal that the two complete pentaglot manuscripts were sponsored by the same patron, Ṣalīb or Ṣalībā. Regrettably, we have no further indication of who this person was. His name betrays a Syrian origin, but was he a monk from the monastery of the Syrians in Egypt? Or was he based elsewhere, perhaps in Syria, and commissioned the manuscripts from abroad? While no answer to these questions can presently be furnished, a more sustained investigation of the Syriac and Arabic colophons of manuscripts from the Wādī al-Naṭrūn might offer up new clues about the identity of the patron who financed the Egyptian polyglot codices.

But when did such a prodigious scribal endeavour, 'this spiritual treasure in five languages', as the aforementioned Syriac colophon calls it, take place? The established consensus, based on palaeographical grounds, is that the manuscripts stem from the fourteenth century. However, dating manuscripts through palaeography remains an arbitrary process, unless it is substantiated by other types of evidence.

At any rate, the manuscripts surely cannot be dated after the mid fourteenth century, for the Black Death reached Alexandria in 1347, and the following year, this plague swept through Egypt, killing roughly half of the inhabitants.[76] Cities and monasteries were affected the most because they were densely populated,

74 B 20/A inf., fol. 160ʳ; see Horner 1898–1905, vol. 3, xviii.
75 B 20/A inf., fol. 74ᵛ; see Vergani 2016, 277.
76 On the effects of the Black Death in Egypt, see Dols 1977, 60, 143–235.

and the Wādī al-Naṭrūn communities were no exception. The Mamluk historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 1441), for instance, offers a grim account of the severe decline of the monastic population in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn in the aftermath of the Black Death. According to Maqrīzī, only three monks remained in the monastery of John the Little, while other locations were completely empty and ruined in the first half of the fifteenth century.[77] A traveller from Tur Abdin found only one inmate in the monastery of the Syrians in 1413.[78] Thus, it is highly unlikely that such a colossal project as the production of the pentaglot manuscripts, which involved several scribes for each language, could have been accomplished after the outbreak of the Black Death.

Furthermore, the Armenian community is conspicuously absent from various reports on the condition of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn monastic colonies in the first half of the fourteenth century.[79] Thus, the accounts of the visit made by the Coptic pope Benjamin II (*sedit* 1327–1339) in 1330 and by the Western pilgrim Ludolf von Sudheim around the year 1340 mention only the presence of Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian monks. This suggests that the Armenian monastic community was already extinct, thus, setting a relative *terminus ante quem* for the production of the pentaglot manuscripts at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

An illuminating detail for dating purposes may be provided by a laconic Syriac note inserted at the end of the Epistles of Paul in the Ambrosianus manuscript, which reads:

ܠܐ ܬܬܥܕܠܘܢ ܠܝ܂ ܐܚܝ܂ ܥܠ ܕܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܟܬܒܬ ܐܢܐ. ܡܛܠ ܕܡܚܫܒܬܝ ܐܝܬ ܗܘܐ, ܘܡܬܥܝܩ ܐܢܐ ܥܠ ܕܐܘܪܫܠܡ܂

Do not blame me, my brothers, for my writing that is unpolished, because my mind is disturbed and I have been concerned on the account of Jerusalem.[80]

While the reference to Jerusalem is lapidary, the concern of the scribe should give us pause because we have no significant turbulence in the Holy City during the first decades of the fourteenth century. In fact, the last major event in Jerusalem prior to this date that may have prompted the anxiety of the scribe was the complete destruction of the city by the Khwarazmian army in 1244. In 1229, the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, al-Kāmil (r. 1218–1238), made a truce with the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220–1250), by which he peacefully ceded Jerusalem to

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77 Evetts and Butler 1895, 321–322.

78 Leroy 1967, 4; Innemée and Van Rompay 1998, 190.

79 Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 2, 394–400.

80 B 20/A inf., fol. 275ᵛ; see Vergani 2016, 278, n. 64.

the Franks for ten years.[81] The main purpose of the treaty was probably to create a buffer state between the two rival houses of the Ayyubid dynasty, which were engaged in a fratricidal war: one led by Sultan al-Kāmil, who ruled Egypt, and the other by his brother, al-Muʻaẓẓam (r. 1218–1127), who controlled Syria and Palestine from his capital in Damascus. But by the time the truce expired a decade later, the Franks had established a foothold in Jerusalem and could not be easily expelled. To liberate the Holy City again, the new sultan of Egypt, al-Salih (r. 1240–1249), summoned the Khwarazmians, a terrifying army of Turkish nomads from Central Asia who had recently been dislocated and pushed westwards by the irruption of the Mongols. July and August 1244 saw the Holy Land drift into chaos as the ferocious Khwarazmian warriors besieged and eventually conquered Jerusalem, slaughtering all the male Christian inhabitants and taking the women and children into slavery. No one was spared; such a brutal massacre had not been seen in Jerusalem since 614, when the Persian army devastated the city. Furthermore, the Khwarazmians destroyed most of the buildings inside the walls, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, leaving behind a shattered city. The skyline of Jerusalem was made a *tabula rasa*. Three years later, in 1247, Sultan al-Salih ordered the reconstruction of the ramparts,[82] but the annihilation after the Khwarazmian siege was so total that the Holy City had to be rebuilt from scratch, a process that dragged on for the next century under the Mamluks.

This dramatic event of the mid thirteenth century could constitute the motivation for the alarming note about Jerusalem left by the Syrian scribe in the Barberini Psalter. Therefore, I would place the manufacture of the pentaglot biblical manuscripts around the destruction of Jerusalem in 1244, i.e. in the last decade of the Ayyubid era, shortly before the Mamluks came to power in 1250.

7 Entangled communities in Egypt

The Syrian, Armenian and Ethiopian diasporas were well-established in Egypt in the thirteenth century when these stunning codices were presumably copied. The ties between Syrian and Egyptian Christians have a lengthy history; their churches have shared a communion of faith since the Council of Chalcedon in 451.[83] After

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81 On the historical background of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Khwarazmians in 1244, see the recent updates in Hillenbrand 2018, 224–229; Hosler 2022, 176–213.

82 Lemire 2016, 257.

83 On the history of the relationships between the Coptic and Syrian Church, see e.g. Fiey 1972–1973.

the repudiation of the Chalcedonian creed, the Syrians and Egyptians were confronted with the ruthless religious policies of the Byzantine emperors. The intensity of imperial persecution was unprecedented in Syria and Palestine particularly beginning with the reigns of Justin I (518–527) and his nephew, Justinian I (527–565). The escalation of violence was motivated primarily by geopolitical considerations; Byzantine emperors felt that dissent near the border with their Persian foes made them vulnerable because it increased the risk of treason.

A massive exodus of non-Chalcedonian monks from Syria and Palestine to Egypt followed the successive waves of Byzantine persecution. Among the Syrian monks who came to Egypt were some of the most prominent detractors of the fourth ecumenical council. The monastery of Enaton, located nine leagues from Alexandria, sheltered Peter the Iberian (411–491) and his retinue of Syrian monks, who emigrated from Gaza because of the persecution dictated by Emperor Marcian (r. 450–457) and Empress Pulcheria (399–453) immediately after the Council of Chalcedon. When Justin I came to power in 518, the famous Miaphysite theologian and polemicist, Severus (465–538), bishop of Antioch, was expelled from the patriarchal see and took refuge in Egypt.[84]

Owing to the large inflow of Syriac-speaking monks, some of the most significant translations of the Bible into this language were produced in Egypt. They were the work of two scholars active at the same time in the monastery of Enaton near Alexandria. In this monastic complex, the so-called Ḥarqlean version of the New Testament was completed in the year 615/616 by the Syrian monk Thomas of Ḥarqel. Thomas had apparently fled to Egypt to escape the persecution of non-Chalcedonians by Domitian, bishop of Melitene and nephew of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (r. 582–602). The Syro-Hexaplaric translation of the Septuagint was made in the same monastery by another Syrian monk, Paul of Tellā, around 616/617.[85] Paul was probably forced to move to Egypt by the Persian advance in Mesopotamia and northern Syria in 614.

The migration of Syrian monks during the eighth century was so sizeable that they occupied several Egyptian monastic settlements, including the monastery of the Holy Virgin at Wādī al-Naṭrūn, which, for this reason, became known as the monastery of the Syrians.[86] Besides this, the same desert area was honeycombed with several Coptic monastic clusters, the most significant of which were the monastery of St Macarius (Dayr Anbā Maqār), the monastery of the Romans (Dayr

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84 Maspero 1923, 69–70.

85 On this translation, see Vööbus 1971, 33–88; Brock 2006, 27–29.

86 According to Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 2, 317–318, the Syrians bought the monastery of the Holy Virgin in the year 710.

al-Baramūs), the monastery of John the Little (Dayr Yuḥanis al-Qaṣīr), and the monastery of Anba Bishoy (Dayr Anbā Bišāy). The proximity of the Syriac and Coptic monastic communities transformed Wādī al-Naṭrūn into a fertile ground for religious dialogue and continuous cultural exchange between the two non-Chalcedonian churches until the Late Mamluk Period. The monasteries of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn constituted veritable junctions of intellectual interchange between Syrian and Coptic Christians for many centuries. The monastery of the Syrians, for instance, was the nodal point that facilitated the circulation of monks and books from Syria to Egypt.

The Armenian diaspora also grew deep roots in Egypt at the time of the production of the pentaglot manuscripts. Latecomers to the non-Chalcedonian family of churches, the Armenians officially rejected the Christological definition of Chalcedon only at the second Council of Dvin in 555. Byzantine emperors and Muslim rulers frequently dislocated the unruly Armenians from their territories and resettled them elsewhere; this social engineering forced them to become one of the most mobile populations in ancient and medieval times. The Armenians were also renowned for their military prowess and were routinely deployed to shield the borders of the empire and caliphate from the blade of the advancing enemies. The oldest known Armenian manuscript, and the only one written on papyrus – discovered in Middle Egypt, at the Fayyum oasis – probably derives from such a military environment. The papyrus, currently held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris as arménien 332, dates back to the Byzantine period, perhaps no later than the first half of the seventh century.[87] What is really peculiar about this document is that it is actually written in Greek, but using Armenian script. It contains a glossary of words, phrases and verb conjugations, obviously intended for Armenians living in Egypt who wished to learn Greek.

But it was not until the eleventh century, the glorious era of the Fatimid caliphs, that a more sizeable migration of Armenians from the Caucasus to Egypt took place. This exodus was induced by the successive Byzantine and Turkish conquests of Bagratid Armenia, culminating in the destruction of the capital, Ani, by the Seljuk Turks in 1064. After settling in Egypt, the Armenian diaspora played a decisive role in the history of the country. This heralded the so-called 'Armenian period' in Egypt, during which the position of vizier was held by Armenians for more than half a century.[88] The influence of the Armenians in a region as distant from their country as Egypt after the conquest of their country by the Seljuks

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87 Brief description of the papyrus in Kevorkian and Ter-Stépanian 1998, 937; edition, translation, and commentary in Clackson 2000.

88 On this period, see Canard 1955; Dadoyan 1997.

illustrates well the entangled contexts and interconnected nature of global history. It is an example of how a historical event, in this case, the fall of Bagratid Armenia, could profoundly affect the inhabitants of far-off regions.

Although the Armenian Fatimid viziers were usually converts who embraced Islam, their compatriots remained Christians. The immigrants were so numerous that, under the first Armenian vizier, Badr al-Jamālī (*sedit* 1074–1094), Catholicos Grigor II the Martyrophile (Վկայասէր) (1065–1105) travelled to Egypt to appoint his nephew, Grigoris, as patriarch of his co-religionists there. The last Armenian Fatimid vizier was Bahram (*sedit* 1135–1137), a nephew of Grigor the Martyrophile and brother of Patriarch Grigoris. Since Bahram did not become a Muslim but kept his Christian faith, the Armenians enjoyed even greater privileges under his vizierate. But sliding steadily out of favour with the Fatimid caliph, Bahram was disgraced in 1137 and forced to retire to the White Monastery in Upper Egypt, where he was immured until 1139, shortly before his death.[89] Bahram's downfall marked the collapse of Armenian political influence in Egypt.

An Armenian monastery existed for some time at Wādī al-Naṭrūn, but the exact date of its foundation is irrecoverable. The *Chronicle* of Matthew of Edessa records that, when Catholicos Grigor the Martyrophile came to Egypt around 1077–1078, շրջեալ ընդ ամենայն անապատան առաջին սրբոց հարցն ('he travelled through the whole desert of the ancient holy Fathers'), by which is meant the wilderness of Wādī al-Naṭrūn.[90] However, we do not know if he encountered an Armenian monastic community there. Furthermore, no Armenian monastery is mentioned by the Coptic historian Mawhūb ibn Manṣūr ibn Mufarrij, who visited Wādī al-Naṭrūn in 1088 and made a census of the monks in the area.[91] Mawhūb records only one Armenian monk, who was resident in the monastery of John of Kame. It, therefore, seems likely that the Armenian monastery was founded after Mawhūb had visited Wādī al-Naṭrūn in the 1088.[92] Scholars are also dimly aware of the monastery's demise, although it must probably be placed before 1330, because, as I have already said, in that year, the Coptic pope Benjamin II travelled to Wādī al-Naṭrūn, and the Armenian monks are not mentioned in the report of his visit.

The Armenian monastic settlement was located within the environs of the monastery of John the Little, albeit the exact location is not known. A team of

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89 On Bahram, see Canard 1954, 1955.

90 My translation of the Armenian text in Matteos Urhayetsi 1869, 254. For the context of this passage, see the English translation in Dostourian 1993, 140.

91 Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 2, 360–361.

92 Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 2, 365–368.

Egyptian archaeologists excavated what is believed to be its foundation in 1989 and 1990, but unfortunately the results have not been systematically published.[93] Lacking archaeological data, we need to look for other types of evidence in order to verify the presence of the Armenians in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn. The pentaglot manuscripts undoubtedly demonstrate that the Armenian monastic colony had grown large enough by the middle of the thirteenth century to employ several professional scribes. Moreover, other hitherto overlooked sources confirm the presence of the Armenians at Wādī al-Naṭrūn around the time of the production of the pentaglot codices.

Among the manuscript fragments brought from the Wādī al-Naṭrūn monasteries that are currently held in the British Library under the call number Add. 14740, for example, one finds three parchment leaves with portions of the Gospel of Luke in Armenian.[94] Notably, although the scribe used the round uncial script (*erkatʿagir*), found in the most ancient Armenian manuscripts and inscriptions, the characters are square and blocky in appearance, foreshadowing the later minuscule (*bolorgir*). The intriguing palaeographical features suggest a *c.* twelfth-century transitional script from uncial to minuscule. Another manuscript evoking the presence of Armenian monks in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn is Göttingen, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Arab. 103, a paper codex containing the Arabic version of an exegetical Catena of the four gospels.[95] The Göttingen manuscript comes from the monastery of Anba Bishoy in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn, hailing from the thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Remarkably, although this manuscript is written in Arabic, it contains some features and marginal notes in Syriac and Armenian. The page numbers, for example, are typically written not only in Coptic epact numbers in the upper outer corner of the pages, but also in Syriac numerals in the lower margin. In addition, the tables of chapter titles (*kephalaia*) of the Gospel of Mark (fols 143ᵛ–144ʳ) are numbered with Coptic epact numerals and also with Armenian numbers. An inscription in Armenian in the upper margin of folio 144ʳ featuring the *kephalaia* of Mark reads համարք Լ–ԾԴ ('Numbers 30–54').[96] Such

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93 Brooks Hedstrom et al. 2010, 219. Some partial results of the excavations have been published in Grossmann 2012. However, Peter Grossmann is skeptical concerning the identification of the site as the monastery of the Armenians.

94 The three Armenian leaves currently stand as fols 90–92 in London, British Library, Add. 14740A, a volume bound in modern times that contains exclusively fragments of different Coptic Bohairic manuscripts from Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Description of the Armenian fragments in Conybeare 1913, 14–15 (= no. 90).

95 Description of the codex in Meyer 1894, 359–361. Another useful description of the same manuscript is available in Caubet Iturbe 1969, xxx–xxxii.

96 Other similar notes in Armenian appear on fol. 192ᵛ (համարք Δ) and fol. 303ʳ (համարակար իբ).

scribal interventions are evidence that the Arabic Catena manuscript was designed for the needs of the multilingual Christian communities in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Similar to the pentaglot biblical manuscripts, the Göttingen Catena illustrates the encounter of Coptic, Syriac and Armenian traditions on Egyptian soil.

Finally, the Ethiopians also had close ties to Christian Egypt. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church embraced the Miaphysite Christology professed by its northern neighbour, Egypt, as early as the Aksumite Period. In addition, the Ethiopian Church was under the jurisdiction of the Alexandrian patriarchate, the metropolitan of Ethiopia being appointed by the Coptic pope.

After the conquest of the Holy Land by the Crusaders in 1099 and the subsequent establishment of the Frankish states, Jerusalem was transformed into a Christian city. As pilgrimage took on a new momentum, Ethiopians soon became some of the most intrepid pilgrims to Jerusalem.[97] On their long and arduous journey from the Ethiopian plateau to Palestine, the Ethiopians established several stations for pilgrims in Egypt, which included not only the Wādī al-Naṭrūn, but also the White Monastery near Sohag, Dayr al-Muḥarraq (Qosqām), the monastery of St Antony at the Red Sea and Ḥārat Zuwaylah (Cairo).[98]

In the Wādī al-Naṭrūn, which they called 'the desert of Scetis' (ገዳም ፡ አስቄጢስ ፡), the Ethiopian monks congregated in several premises, including the Cell of Bähat and a monastery dedicated to the Prophet Elijah. Both sites were located near the monastic complex of John the Little, where we have seen that Coptic and Armenian monks also lived, and barely 3 km away from the monastery of the Syrians.

To sum up, the evidence reviewed in the foregoing pages points to the fact that the Wādī al-Naṭrūn was a space of entangled communities, non-Chalcedonian Christians who spoke different languages sharing the desert with Arabic-speaking Copts. By the time the multilingual manuscripts were assembled, Wādī al-Naṭrūn was a genuinely Mediterranean transregional territory.

8 Concluding remarks: The use of the pentaglot manuscripts

As the study of the Egyptian pentaglot codices amply shows, manuscripts furnish a scholarly pursuit with all the excitement of a gold prospector's life. It should be

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97 The best treatment of the Ethiopian pilgrimages to the Holy Land remains Cerulli 1943–1947.
98 On the presence of Ethiopians in Egypt, see Meinardus 2005.

kept in mind that a manuscript is not simply an artefact produced in a certain area and period but, as Michel Foucault once wrote, it is 'a node in a network' that transcends its internal configuration.[99] The Egyptian pentaglot manuscripts defy conventional wisdom, according to which the multilingual Bible is an invention of Western European humanism, which had an interest in the academic approach to the Christian scriptures. These manuscripts bring us closer to the decolonisation of knowledge by showing that Eastern Christians also produced similar artefacts long before the European Renaissance.

Furthermore, the Egyptian polyglot codices challenge the simplistic approach to manuscripts. How do we categorise such a codex? Is it a Coptic manuscript, since the monasteries in which it was produced are situated in Egypt? Or is it rather Arabic, the *lingua franca* of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn monks, in which many of the marginal notes are written? Or should we actually call it a Syriac manuscript, according to the origin of its patron, Rabban Ṣalībā? Notably, in this regard, the Barberini Psalter had benefited from an entry in no less than four catalogues dedicated to the Vatican manuscript collections: the Ethiopic, Armenian, Coptic and Syriac. However, a distinction between the five languages used in these manuscripts proves to be artificial, since, as the previous analysis hopefully shows, there are fluid linguistic and cultural boundaries between the communities who used these books. Like colours on a painting palette, languages mix in our manuscripts, transcending ethnic borders. They are quintessential transregional artefacts.

To conclude the present essay, I would like to address the question of the purpose of these manuscripts. Why did non-Chalcedonian Christians decide to create such splendid, yet somewhat trivial, multilingual artefacts, long before the appearance of printed polyglot Bibles in Europe during the Renaissance? The possibility that these polyglots were philological tools used for comparing different versions of the Bible can be eliminated at the outset, since they have no critical notes to suggest such a use. Nevertheless, multilingual manuscripts meant for philological purposes, probably mimicking Origen's Hexapla, did exist among Eastern Christians. One such example is the polyglot psalter in Cambridge (University Library, Or. 929), which contains the Psalms and Odes in four languages: Arabic, Syriac (the Syro-Hexaplaric version), Greek and Hebrew.[100] The scholarly purpose of this manuscript is evidenced by the copious interlinear and marginal glosses in Syriac. Yet, no such philological annotations are detectable in the Egyptian pentaglot manuscripts.

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99 Foucault 1969, 34.
100 See Brock 1982.

Scholars have speculated that it can be surmised from some marginal lectionary inscriptions in Arabic that the manuscripts were envisioned for liturgical services.[101] Hugh G. Evelyn White even proposed that they were used when foreign monks attended the liturgy at the monastery of the Syrians. This suggestion is not very palatable, however, because a single large manuscript would be more difficult to manipulate than separate smaller books in each language. Moreover, the liturgical notations are rather sporadic and probably secondary. They appear to have been added later and do not represent the original intention for which the manuscripts were created.

If these manuscripts were neither scholarly tools nor liturgical books, what were they meant to accomplish? In my view, they were designed to invest the communities who used them with authority and prestige. It is no accident that they are all biblical in character, for these artefacts construct community by appealing to a higher authority, the divinely inspired text of the Bible. The choice of languages includes and excludes at the same time: on the one hand, they contain biblical texts in the tongues of the non-Chalcedonian churches; on the other hand, Greek and Hebrew have no place in the Egyptian polyglot manuscripts, indicating that the communities using these languages – the Chalcedonians and the Jews – did not belong to the imagined community of kinship. The books are, thus, objects of differentiation, conferring power and status on their owners. But there is something more to it. With their intertwined languages, the manuscripts may hark back to a small archive of the Tower of Babel, yet, this is deceptive; in fact, those who could read at least one column – though most monks undoubtedly also understood Arabic – were supposed to know with whom they shared a common faith. Simply put, these manuscripts provided their owners with an unmistakable marker of their identity.

Coptic clearly holds pride of place in this extended community of believers, occupying the central position on the pages in all three manuscripts. Yet, the role of Coptic is purely honorary. When the manuscripts were produced in the thirteenth century, the Egyptian language was no longer used in current speech, but was already a vestige of the past. However, its presence in the middle of the pages points to Egypt as a crucible of non-Chalcedonian Christianity.

Ethiopians, Syrians, Copts and Armenians were, thus, united by a common non-Chalcedonian cultural identity. But the strategies of identity formation are complex processes. Identity is, in fact, an unstable cultural construction, being permanently rearranged in relation to sameness and otherness. While there is no denying that identity is based on a number of constitutive attributes, these are

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101 Evelyn White 1926–1932, vol. 2, 369; Brock 1982, 3.

filtered through various mechanisms of selection. A group may be bound by specific attributes at one point in time, but those same attributes may later lose their relevance and appeal, because identity is forged by cultural and political coercion. Rogers Brubaker challenged the essentialist view of a 'thick' identity, by showing that groups generate a fluid self-representation, which constantly evolves in dialogue and dispute with other groups.[102] In this light, 'non-Chalcedonism' as an identity marker is not an objectively existing fact, but rather a framework that satisfies certain political demands. The emergence of a cohesive multi-ethnic group self-defined by this identity marker is possible only when various political, social and cultural aspects converge. The pentaglot manuscripts from Egypt show how people from different cultural backgrounds managed their shared space and found common ground by negotiating their differences.

These manuscripts indicate that something must have fostered a sense of religious unity among the non-Chalcedonian groups living in Egypt at the end of Ayyubid rule because the relations between them were not always agreeable. Just a few years before the manuscripts were copied, for example, Copts, Syrians and Ethiopians experienced a major crisis when the Coptic pope Cyril ibn Laqlaq (*sedit* 1235–1243) appointed an Egyptian as bishop of the Christians in Jerusalem. His machinations infuriated the Syrian Orthodox patriarch Ignatius III of Antioch (*sedit* 1222–1252), under whose jurisdiction Jerusalem lay, and who wished to nominate the Ethiopian Abuna instead.[103] Similarly, when Grigoris, the newly-appointed patriarch of the Armenians arrived in Egypt, he met with the vizier Badr al-Jamālī and the Coptic pope Cyril II (*sedit* 1078–1092), signing an agreement between Armenians and the other non-Chalcedonians in Egypt: Copts, Syrians, Ethiopians and Nubians. But after the fall of Vizier Bahram in 1137, serious frictions arose between Copts and Armenians over the churches and monasteries they occupied. These disruptions are indicative that the mere non-Chalcedonian identity had not always been a strong enough social glue to hold the multi-ethnic communities from Egypt together.

It remains a desideratum for further research to explore the cohesion and division of such diverse languages and cultures in thirteenth-century Islamic Egypt. Be that as it may, a profitable way to conclude these thoughts is to say that cultures are not isolated monads, but they are, instead, a matrix of entangled neurons forming synapses that allow them to communicate with each other. The Egyptian polyglot manuscripts have played and will continue to play their part in

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102 See especially his essay 'Beyond "Identity"', in Brubaker 2004, 28–63.

103 On the frictions between Cyril ibn Laqlaq and Ignatius III, see Werthmuller 2010.

our knowledge of entangled cultures. Thanks to them, the voices of Eastern Christians from the desert of Egypt can be heard again many centuries later.

Abbreviations

CPG = Mauritius Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, 5 vols (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987; Mauritius Geerard and Jacques Noret, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum: Supplementum* (Corpus Christianorum), Turnhout: Brepols, 1998.

PG = Jean-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, 161 vols, Paris: Imprimerie catholique, 1857–1866.

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Index of Written Artefacts

This volume contains an index of written artefacts thematised or mentioned, arranged first by their present locations in depositories world-wide. Pages marked with an asterisk contain images of the respective manuscripts. Cross-references are given wherever possible; the duplication of information under different entries is intentional.

Francesca Panini

Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library
    Agency
– 27 (= UNESCO 2-27) 330, 341–344
– 28 270–271*

ʾĀdwā, ʾƎndā ʾAbbā Garimā
– Garimā I 260*–261
– Garimā III 258–259*, 261

ʾAmbā Gǝšan
– EMML 9001 335, 337, 346
– EMML 9002 330, 332–333*
– no shelf mark 330

Antelias, Katʿoɫikosowtʿiwn Hayocʿ Mecʿi Tann
    Kilikioy, Archives of Garegin Catholicos
    Yovsēpʿean
– No 24-1-579, file 98 170*

ʾAstit Kidāna Məḥrat
– EMML 2514 348

Autun, Bibliothèque municipale
– 3 258

Baltimore, MD, Walters Art Museum
– W.538 166

Bərbər Māryām
– EMML 9084 346
– EMML 9092 347

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußi-
    scher Kulturbesitz
– Sachau 304 110–111*, 115, 118–119, 129, 152

– Sachau 322 152
– Syr. 178 114
– Syr. Diez A. Oct. 161 152

Beta Ləḥem
– no shelf mark 330, 338–340*, 341, 343,
    347, 351

Beta Madḫāne ʿĀlam
– EMML 6907 325, 338

Bzommar (Lebanon), Zmmaru Patriarkʿakan
    Miabanutʿiwn
– 470 382

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library
– BFBS 169 6, 394, 396, 399*–400*,
    401*–404, 406
– BFBS 171 403–404
– Or. 929 459

Codex Ambrosianus see Milan, Veneranda
    Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B 21 Inf.

Codex purpureus Rossanensis see Rossano,
    Museo Diocesano e del Codex, cod. 1

Codex Sinaiticus 91

Copenhagen, Det Kgl. Bibliotek
– heb. 2 282, 289, 292

Coptic Literary Manuscript
– 182 see London, British Library, Or. 6782