

Apostolic Memories: Religious Differentiation and the Construction of Orthodoxy in
Syriac Missionary Literature

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Curriculum Vitae

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I dedicate this dissertation to both my parents in thanksgiving for their selfless love.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>ACO</i>	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> , ed. Schwartz. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1924-40. New ed. J. Staub, 1971.
<i>AMS</i>	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum</i> , ed. P. Bedjan. 7 vols. Paris/Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890-97. Repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968.
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium Scrip. Syr. Scriptores Syri Sub. Subsidia
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>FC</i>	<i>Fathers of the Church</i>
<i>GCS</i>	<i>Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller</i>
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NPNF	Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>PG</i>	J. P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Patrologia Syriaca</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
SH	Subsidia Hagiographica
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

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Introduction

I. Introduction

This dissertation traces the gradual religious differentiation of the Byzantine Chalcedonian church, the “Nestorian” Church of the East, and the Non-Chalcedonian “Miaphysite” church through an analysis of Syriac missionary legends and hagiography from the third through eighth centuries CE.¹ My project argues that missionary literature gave Syriac-speaking Christians a genre of expression to craft idealized presentations of an apostolic past. My presentation of their mythmaking process delineates the production of distinction among late-ancient Syriac-speaking Christians.²

II. Syriac-Speaking Christians: Late-Ancient Religious Topography

The Church of the East, the Chalcedonians, and the Non-Chalcedonians used divergent formulae to define Christ’s humanity and divinity. Accounts of the conflicts and councils that led to the separation of these churches varied depending on the affiliation of the authors. Late-ancient historiographers and hagiographers used rhetorical strategies of legitimization to present their coreligionists as authoritative, apostolic, and “orthodox.”³ Modern historians have used sources from historiography, chronicles,

¹ The Miaphysites are referred to as “Monophysites,” but this term was coined by their detractors and is a misrepresentation of their theological position. *Mia* means “one,” as opposed to *mono* meaning “only.” See D. Winkler, “Miaphysitism: A New Term for Use in the History of Dogma and Ecumenical Theology,” in *The Harp* 10 (1997), pp. 33-40. In this dissertation, I will refer to the dissidents of Chalcedon from the fifth and sixth centuries as the Non-Chalcedonians. I acknowledge that it is problematic to refer to a group according to what they are not. When I use the term Miaphysite or Syrian Orthodox, I am referring to the Non-Chalcedonians from the eighth century on.

² My examination is through the lens not of history but sacred narrative. Late ancient hagiography is a genre of religious literature that yields insights into the texture of village life, lay piety, and social conflicts. An example of the careful use of such texts is S. A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). This remains the most important monograph on the *Lives* of John of Ephesus.

³ For an excellent introduction to historiography in the Greek and Syriac-speaking worlds, see J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit, 1995), 16-23. The Greek Chalcedonian historiographers included Procopius, Agathias,

ecclesiastical synodical reports, and letters to interpret the gradual crystallization of these groups.⁴ This dissertation focuses on the genres of apostolic narrative and hagiography to understand the role of stories in the process through which the Chalcedonian, Church of the East, and “Miaphysite” Syrian Orthodox churches emerged.

I have limited my study to texts written in Syriac, a dialect of western Aramaic that flourished as a literary language from the first century CE around the cities of Edessa and Nisibis. It reached a literary golden Age in the fourth century. The vast majority of written texts in Syriac were Christian writings.⁵ We cannot, however, speak of a single Syriac Christianity; the city of Edessa alone was home to a variety of Christianities: Marcionite, Manichean, Bardaisanite, Valentinian, Arian, and “proto-orthodox” Nicene Christians, among others.

This comparative literary study of Syriac narratives sheds light on Christian differentiation of the late-ancient religious map, from the Eastern Mediterranean to Mesopotamia. The seven stories of this dissertation, *The Acts of Thomas*, *Teaching of Addai*, *Acts of Mari*, the two *Lives of Jacob Baradaeus*, *Simeon of Beth Arsham*, and *Ahoudemmeh*, shared features with etiological myths and commissioning legends in

Menander Proctor (sixth century) and Theophylact Simoncatta (seventh century). Sixth-century Church historians wrote conflicting versions of the same stories, depending on Chalcedonian or Non-Chalcedonian associations. All the church historians, both Greek and Syriac, had the model of Eusebius of Caesarea and presupposed the involvement of the divine in history.

⁴ For the Acts of the general ecumenical councils, see *Acta Conciliorum oecumenicorum: jussu atque mandata Societatis Scientiarum Argentoratensis*, E. Schwartz, ed., (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1914). For the synods of the Sasanian Church of the East, see Chabot, ed. and trans., *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1902).

⁵ But the earliest extant Syriac texts are non-Christian. They are funeral inscriptions and legal documents. See H. J. W. Drijvers and J. F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene* (Brill: Leiden, 1999) and S. P. Brock, “Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria,” in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, A. K. Bowman and G. Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 140-66. See also R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, 2nd Ed (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 3-4.

ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean religious and philosophical traditions. These texts differed from their non-Christian counterparts, however, on account of their use of *apostolic discourse*: letters, preaching and material practices that created similitude between patron missionary holy men and Jesus' "original" disciples.⁶

The notion of *apostolic discourse* can be historicized through comparing the rhetoric of the missionary texts of this dissertation with the letters of Paul, the earliest Christian missionary documents. Paul wrote his letters twenty to thirty years after Jesus' death, circa 56-70. The New Testament specified that the apostle Paul led the mission to the Gentiles.⁷ Paul encountered opponents with divergent messages of who Jesus was and what would be required of his disciples.⁸ Paul is a main character of the *Acts of the Apostles*, but the Paul of *Acts* and the Paul of his *Letters* differed greatly. The historical mission of the first followers of Christ, as pieced through the letters of Paul, involved a messy picture of internal conflict and competition, unlike the story that we read in the Book of *Acts*. The missionary exploits of the first century become embellished and idealized in the second century, as evidenced in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Scholars now date the *Acts of the Apostles* to the second century.⁹ In that time, followers of Marcion, Irenaeus, and others competed in their claims to apostolicity. The

⁶ Concepts of mythic succession, overthrow, and continuity in divine and human religious hierarchies are prevalent in foundation myths across religious traditions. Christian roots in both the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophical traditions had embedded into their stories notions of succession and lineage as a way of legitimating one's authority.

⁷ Gal. 1: 15-17.

⁸ For an interesting analysis among the Paul of his letters, the Paul of *Acts*, and the Paul of second-century Christianities, see B. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 87-178.

⁹ See H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, E. J. Epp with C. Matthews, eds., J. Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and D. H. Juel, trans., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. xxxiii.

missionary stories of my text, therefore, stand in a longer line of Christian narratives that, like the *Acts of the Apostles*, mythologized a picture of the missionary life as a strategy of legitimization. Thus, when I say the texts of this dissertation created similarity between Syriac missionary saints and the “apostles,” that likeness is painted according to the image created not in the letters of Paul, but the legends of the apostles from the second-century onwards, including *Acts*. The appeal to Paul, found throughout these texts, is an appeal to how he was interpreted through second-century literature. The *Acts of Thomas*, is a text that was in continuity with a period in which the picture of the apostle and *apostolic discourse* were created and transmitted.

As Syriac stories, these texts belonged to a tradition of late-ancient Christianity that favored intertextual layering of biblical and natural symbols. Robert Murray demonstrated in his classic introduction to early Syriac Christianity, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, how authors like Ephrem the Syrian (fl. 350) used typological and poetic expressions to penetrate Christian theological mysteries, like that of the Incarnation.¹⁰ Syriac theology proceeded “not by exhausting topics successively, but with frequent *inclusio*, circling round on itself like a conversation round a fire, gradually advancing and going deeper.”¹¹ In Syriac sacred narrative, stories probed the paradoxical mystery of the incarnation. For Christians, God became human in the person of Jesus Christ as a sign of God’s love.¹² The genre of hagiography taught Christians that the manifestations of the Incarnation, the intersection of the human and divine, could be seen in the lives of those who imitated Jesus and his apostles. Sacred narrative was a means of expanding or

¹⁰ R. Murray, *Symbols*, 1-3.

¹¹ R. Murray, *Symbols*, 2.

¹² John 3:16.

commenting on the idea of salvation “history,” an illustration of the ramifications and implications of the paradoxical mystery of the incarnation.

Missionary stories probed the genealogical question of religious origins and used biblical imagery to craft foundation legends that legitimated claims to orthodoxy and antiquity. All Syriac missionary stories feature kings and scenes of miraculous conversions. What the terms “apostle,” *shliho*, “image,” *salmo*, “king,” *malko*, or convert, “*tlmd*,” evoked for different hagiographers depended upon their historical, cultural, and political circumstances. As authors advanced the pedigree of their particular Christianity, they shared a system of literary elements to present a memory of the missionary, “remembering” certain aspects of his story and “forgetting” others.

Some caveats here are necessary. First of all, the sources that I discuss in both the historical overview and summary of the texts were written by a group of elite males. They had specific agenda to advance, and their views cannot be said to represent all or even most of the events and people they purport to describe. Secondly, in an analysis that is as diachronic as this dissertation, it is lamentable but necessary to use categories like “orthodoxy” and “heresy.” It is difficult also to escape the modern connotations of these terms, to say nothing of the word “missionary” itself. Even “Christology,” as vital as that became in debates among late-ancient Christians, might seem an arcane debate to modern sensibilities.

While theological debates and Christological controversies admittedly took place among the educated and elite, their statements of anathema and unity, the forged alliances and violent vendettas among bishops and emperors mattered to all levels of Christian society. Conflicts among the religious elites affected most notably the administration of

the sacraments. If members of “the faithful” believed that they were not receiving valid baptism or Eucharist, religious anxiety, disruption and conflict erupted, as argued recently by Volker Menze.¹³

III. Apostolic Legends: *Acts of Thomas*, *Teaching of Addai*, *Acts of Mari*

The stories of this dissertation mythologized the idea of *apostolicity*. The *Acts of Thomas*, *Teaching of Addai*, and *Acts of Mari* belonged to the apostolic Acts genre. In these texts, Jesus commissioned apostles to go forth and baptize the nations, and he allotted to each apostle a different part of the world to convert.¹⁴ The apostles and their disciples performed miracles, preached, and baptized, and this resulted in the foundation of new Christian cities and ecclesiastical foundations. The stories of this dissertation shared motifs from the Greco-Roman novels, biblical stories of the prophets and patriarchs, Jewish and Christian pseudepigrapha, and the canonical book of *Acts*.

There is a wide body of scholarly literature on the apostolic Acts genre, and it is beyond the scope of this project to provide a detailed analysis of the literary features of this genre.¹⁵ The recent work by István Czachesz provides a useful counterpoint and supplement to my project. Czachesz delineated the main literary features of commission narratives among the canonical and non-canonical apostolic *Acts*.

¹³ V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.

¹⁴ Matt. 28:18-20. Other places of commission in the canonical Gospels include Jesus’ call of the twelve disciples: “he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons.” Mk 3:1-19, 6:7-11; Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16 and 9:1-6.

¹⁵ The earliest *Acts* from the Greek-speaking genre, dating to the second or third centuries, include the *Acts of John*, *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Acts of Thomas*. For a collection of these texts, see *New Testament Apocrypha*, E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, Eds. and R. McLWilson, Trs., (Trowbridge: SCM Press, 1973). For an excellent new study on the genre of commission stories, see István Czachesz, *Commission Narratives: A comparative Study of the Canonical and Apocryphal Acts* (Peeters: Leuven, 2007). It is worth noting, however, that among the early *Acts*, the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of John* are the only stories to describe the commission of their apostles. Czachesz, *Commission Narratives*, 92.

I begin in Chapter One with the third-century *Acts of Thomas*: an account of the Apostle Thomas' missionary activities in India. While the *Acts of Thomas* has major features in common with other canonical and non-canonical apostolic *Acts*, this story was distinct in its influence on Syriac-speaking Christianity. In chapter Two, I discuss *The Teaching of Addai* – an early fifth-century text that created apostolic foundations for Edessa's Nicene population. In chapter Three, I analyze a text of Syriac-speaking Christians in Persia: the *Acts of Mari*. This story presented apostolic foundations for Christians of Mesopotamia and Babylonia. This trilogy of Syriac missionary narratives imagined a landscape dotted with Christian cities joined together through their patron apostles Thomas, Addai, and Mari. Thus the first three chapters of my project show how these apostolic foundation legends created a map of mythic "Christian" Syria and Babylonia.

The *Acts of Thomas* established a paradigm for Syriac missionary stories that Christianity would come through royal households. The figures of kings prevail throughout Syriac missionary literature. It is perhaps on account of the changeability of imperial loyalty that kings were such powerful representations of potential "converts" in the missionary stories.

Below I outline the vacillating religious affiliations of imperial figures from the fourth-sixth centuries. The Emperor Constantine called the Council of Nicaea in 325, yet he was baptized (perhaps) by an Arian. The Emperor Constantius, his successor, promoted a semi-Arian "Homoian" Christology. In the fifth century, the Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria advanced the Christology of Chalcedon, but Emperor Anastasius in the early sixth century promoted the Non-Chalcedonian bishop Severus of

Antioch. Justin I had Non-Chalcedonian affiliations before he took the throne in 519, but he became a violent enforcer of Chalcedonianism afterwards.¹⁶ Emperor Justinian publicly espoused the Chalcedonian position, whereas his wife the Empress Theodora championed the Non-Chalcedonians. As this dissertation shows, the commonality among all these missionary stories – the interest in the missionary’s relationship to the ruler of the land – is accentuated and problematized in the texts, precisely because history had shown that rulers’ affiliations were mercurial.

IV. The Intersection of History and Legend: Emperors, Councils, Persecution, and Mission

In the second part of this dissertation, I discuss three hagiographies of historic personages: Simeon of Beth Arsham, Jacob Baradaeus, and Ahoudemmeh. Although these stories come from the sixth and seventh centuries, it will be helpful to give some background of Syriac Christianity to historicize my analysis.¹⁷

A. Third-Century Syriac Christianities¹⁸

Edessan Christianity in the third century comprised a variety of groups, among which the Marcionites were perhaps the largest.¹⁹ The city was home to cults of local

¹⁶ See V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). This book focuses on the time period of 518-553. For the vacillating affiliations of Justin I, see esp. 21-25.

¹⁷ The best recent study on that problematizes the issues basic to my investigation is L. Van Rompay, “Society and Community in the Christian Near East” in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239-266. In the same volume, see also P. T. R. Gray, “The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and their Significance,” pp. 215-238. Gray offers a good summary of the theological tensions behind the doctrinal controversies of the sixth century.

¹⁸ An excellent summary of third and fourth-century Christianity can be found in S. Griffith’s “Christianity in Edessa and the Syriac-Speaking World: Mani, Bar Daysan and Ephraem; The Struggle for Allegiance on the Aramean Frontier.” <http://www.sage.edu/faculty/salomd/nyssa/edessa.htm>. Searched 12/8/2008

¹⁹ The classic argument of W. Bauer was that Edessa was home to many Christian groups deemed “heretical” by later categories of orthodoxy and heresy. See W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im*

deities, astral cults, Manichees, proto-orthodox Christians, Jews and Bardaisanites.²⁰ The “orthodox” Christians were a minority.

The *Acts of Thomas* should be situated in this context. Original versions of the *Acts of Thomas* date to the third century and can be located in the milieu of Edessa in south-east Turkey, ancient Ourhay. Many parts of the *Acts of Thomas* were pre-Constantinian, and it shared themes and images found in other Syriac Christian texts of this time, like the *Odes of Solomon*.²¹ I discuss the *Acts of Thomas* as a template for Syriac missionary stories in Chapter One.

B. Fourth-Century Syriac Christianity

None of the texts of this dissertation, at least in their final form, date to the fourth century. Yet the issues of Christianity, Empire, orthodoxy, mission, and persecution all came into high relief during this time. Syriac Christian literature flourished in the fourth-century, and themes from authors of this time were recapitulated in missionary stories of the fifth, sixth, and seventh century.

The Emperor Constantine (ruled 306-37, sole emperor 324-37) established an important precedent for his successors: imperial heads would involve themselves in religious controversies of Christian leaders and bishops would seek imperial endorsement.²² Constantine’s association with the Council of Nicaea, his desire for a

ältesten Christentum (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1934). For an English translation, see W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, R. Kraft and G. Krodel, Trans., (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979).

²⁰ See H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co, 1966) and *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

²¹ J. Charlesworth, ed. and trans., *Odes of Solomon* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977).

²² Menze notes “Since Constantine in the fourth century, emperors struggled to define the belief of the church of the empire and to defend it against considerable minority beliefs,” *Justinian and the Making*, 6.

“single” Christianity, and the hagiographical account of his “conversion” as told by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (d. 339), set a model for future Roman emperors.²³ Harmony and communion of Christian bishops concerned Constantine and advanced his political purpose.²⁴

After Constantine, two other patterns unfolded and formed the memory of what the term “Christian Emperor” evoked. Constantine’s successors showed that the emperor himself was an unstable political support for “orthodox” Christianity. He could deviate from “Nicene” positions as had Constantius (d. 361), or like Julian “the Apostate” (361-3) could repudiate altogether.²⁵

In the fourth-century, Syriac-speaking Christianity reached a golden age with the hymns, homilies, prose, and commentaries of Ephrem the Syrian (303-373).²⁶ Ephrem was a deacon who lived in Nisibis and Edessa. He served the “Proto-orthodox” Nicene

²³ For Eusebius and Constantine, see Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, A. Cameron and S. Hall, trans., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). For the Greek, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini, Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantins*, F. Winkelmann, ed., GCS, Eusebius 1/1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975, rev. 1992).

²⁴ See T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA: 1981).

²⁵ See L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167-169. See the discussion by S. P. Brock, “Eusebius and Syriac Christianity,” in H. W. Attridge and G. Hata, Eds., *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1992), pp. 212-34. The impact of Julian “the Apostate” on late-ancient Christian memory is profound. See B. Daley, “Building the New City: the Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999), pp. 431-461. For the reign of Julian, see also G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). For the impact of Julian on Syriac religious memory, see the Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns Against Julian*, in K. McVey, trans., *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 219-258. For the Syriac edition of Ephrem’s hymns against Julian, see Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymnen de Paradiso et Contra Julianum*, E. Beck, ed. and tr., CSCO 174-175 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1957).

²⁶ For an introduction to the thought world of Ephrem, see R. Murray, *Symbols* and S. P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: the Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Press, 1992).

Christians.²⁷ Some of the themes established in Ephrem's works appear in the missionary literature in this study. Ephrem's work contributed to the importance of Nisibis and Edessa as centers of late-ancient Christianity in the Syriac world, and theologians of the Syriac tradition evoked his memory in future generations.

Although the *Acts of Mari*, which I discuss in Chapter Three, attributed apostolic beginnings to Babylonia, the origins of Christianity outside the Sasanian Empire came into purview in the third century, when merchants brought Christianity to northern Mesopotamia. Under the Sasanian shah Shapur I (239-270), Greek-speaking Roman captives (some Christian) were resettled in the eastern province of Khuzestan in the city of Gundashapur/Beth Lapat.²⁸ Other communities of Sasanian Christians were made up of ethnic Persians.

The writings of Aphrahat (270-345) "the Persian sage," *hakkima parsaya*, shed more light on the fourth-century Sasanian milieu. Aphrahat lived in Mesopotamia in a type of proto-monastic community with other ascetic and celibate men called the Sons of the Covenant: *Bnai Quyama*.²⁹ He composed 23 *tahwitha* or "Demonstrations" on

²⁷ His theological literature earned him a place among the great Christian poets and exegetes of all time. "Ephrem is able to weave a profound theological synthesis organized around a particular Biblical narrative . . . [b]y penetrating beyond the letter of the text he succeeds in drawing out its inner meaning, and in relating this to the Christian message as a whole; all this he achieves through the medium of poetry." S. P. Brock, "Introduction," *Hymns on Paradise*, S. P. Brock, tr. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1990). p. 8.

²⁸ See J.-M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Eglise en Iraq*, CSCO 310/subs. 36, (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1970), 56-59. As early as 117-138, a Greek bishop, Theocritus, was deported to Karka Beth Slokh (Kirkuk today) under the reign of the Arsacid Emperors Adrian and Arthaban IV. But the four great waves of deportations of Romans into Persia occurred under the Sasanian ruler Shapur I (244, 256 and 249-250). This permits the founding of two new cities: Gundishapur and Rew Ardashir, which becomes the seat of the Metropolitan of Persia.

²⁹ Aphrahat's sixth demonstration, "On the Covenanters," has been the object of much scholarly research. For the "Sons and Daughters of the Covenant," see esp. G. Nedungatt, "The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church," *OCP* 39 (1973), 191-215, 419-44; Sidney H. Griffith, "'Singles' in God's Service: Thoughts on the *Ihidaye* from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian," *The Harp* 4 (1991), 145-59; idem, "Monks, 'Singles', and the 'Sons of the Covenant': Reflections on Syriac Ascetic

scripture and the Christian life. Although these homilies are not verse, they have a poetic quality to them. Aphrahat showed no evidence of having known the Council of Nicaea (325), and his style can be likened to that of the Jewish communities of Babylonia.³⁰

During Aphrahat's life, there was a significant shift in the religious landscape of the Mazdaen Sasanian Empire, which had traditionally practiced policies of toleration toward religious minorities.³¹ Christians in Persia had lived alongside Jews, Manicheans and "Baptist" sects like the Mandaeans,³² while the rulers of Persia practiced Mazdaism.³³ When Constantine "embraced" Christianity for the Roman Empire, Christianity became the religion "of the enemy" in the view of the Sasanian court. Under Shapur II (309-379), Christians in the Sasanian Empire, especially clergy, were persecuted and in some cases martyred.³⁴ This began an important Persian literary tradition of Christian martyrdom accounts.³⁵

Terminology," in *Eulogema: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft*, E. Carr et al. eds., *Studia Anselmiana* 110/*Analecta Liturgica* 17 (Rome: Centre Studi S. Anselmo, 1993). For the daughters of the covenant, see S. Harvey, "Revisiting the Daughters of the Covenant: Women's Choirs and Sacred Song in Ancient Syriac Christianity," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* [<http://syrcom.cua.edu/syrcom/Hugoye>] Vol. 8, no. 2 (2005). For the Syriac edition of Aphrahaat, see Dom Parisot, Graffin, ed., *Patrologia Syriaca* I (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1894). For English translation of Aphrahat, see K. Valavlonickal (I. Changanassery, 1991) and P. Schaff and H. Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XIII, Pt. 2 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1905), 345-412. Another translation by Adam Lehto is forthcoming.

³⁰ J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth Century Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

³¹ For the impact of persecution of Christians under the Sasanians on Aphrahat the Sage, see T. D. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," *JRS* 75 (1985), 126-36.

³² Along with the Mandaeans, Manichaeism spreads through Beth Garmai and Beth Aramaye in the second half of the third century. See Fiey, *Jalons*, 49.

³³ Mazdaism enabled the Sasanian rulers to become more religiously intolerant than before. This harmonizes with the portrayal from Christian sources of the priestly caste of Mazdaism, the Magians, who rose to prominence within the Persian Empire. G. Fowden, *From Empire to commonwealth: consequences of monotheism in late antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 31.

³⁴ The earliest account of a Persian martyr dates to the reign of Vahran II (274-291), but the text itself is from the fifth century. See S. Brock, "A martyr at the Sasanid Court Under Vahran II: Candida," *Analecta Bolladiana* 96 (1978), 167-81. According to the "Myth of Constantine" by Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine wrote a letter to Shapur II asking that he grant protection or toleration of Christians in Persia.

C. Fifth-Century: Intersections of Greek and Syriac Christianity and the Age of Councils

In this section, I discuss some of the theological controversies that shaped fifth- and sixth-century religious history. One could write an account of the bishops, political leaders, events, and councils of the fifth and sixth centuries through investigating prosopography, doctrinal developments, religious authority, or a variety of cultural and social phenomena of this complex era. I do not intend to reproduce, revise, or shed new light on the history of the inner-Christian conflicts of the fifth and sixth centuries. The purpose of this brief, schematized summary is rather to outline some of the chief turning points of this era, since the decisions and dilemmas of these councils had a lasting impact upon Greek, Latin, and Oriental Christianities. In these events, political loyalties played a crucial role. The West Syrians oriented themselves to Rome and Constantinople, and the East Syrian oriented themselves to the Sasanian Empire.

Below I discuss the theological articulations and alliances of bishops and emperors formed in the wake of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. In the body of my dissertation, however, I will analyze religious differentiation in missionary stories, examining how hagiographers interpolated the labels, vocabulary, slogans, and groupist rhetoric of the religious elite into their legends. These narratives and hagiographies came out of contexts in which the literate crystallized and invented orthodoxy and heresy. They circulated among an audience that included both the elite of the monasteries and

See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, IV, 9-13. For context see, A. Bowman, P. Garnsey, A. Cameron, *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Crisis of Empire: 193-337* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) esp. 104-106. See also J. Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Ancient Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 111.

³⁵ Although a martyrdom account is not a commonality of missionary stories, it is a feature in some, including the *Acts of Thomas* and *Ahoudeemmeh*. A common tie of the stories in this dissertation, however, is imprisonment for converting peoples to Christianity. This motif, an apostolic allusion to Paul's imprisonment in the *Acts of the Apostles*, occurs in the *Acts of Thomas*, *Simeon of Beth Arsham*, and *Ahoudeemmeh*.

cities and the simple lay people of the churches. Myth-makers used the distinctions forged among the bishops and emperors to promote ideologies that a few created and packaged as a memory for many.

The Council of Ephesus met in 431 and articulated a formula expressing the relationship between Christ's divinity and humanity: Christ was *a single nature out of two, mia physis ex duo*.³⁶ The champion of the Council of Ephesus was Cyril of Alexandria. This *Sarx-Logos* Christology was built on the Nicene theology of Athanasius of Alexandria. The Word or second person of the Trinity *became* flesh; it did not *enter* into a human being.³⁷ At the moment of the Incarnation, Christ's human and divine natures were united inextricably; thus one could speak of Mary as the *Theotokos* or God-bearer. Cyril came from the tradition of Alexandrian Christology that emphasized Christ's divinity.³⁸

Bishops John of Antioch and Nestorius of Constantinople and their parties opposed the Council of Ephesus. Nestorius was exiled from his see through the efforts of Cyril of Alexandria. Those sympathetic with Nestorian Christology became lamentably

³⁶ For an English translation of the Acts Council of Ephesus see, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, trans H. R. Percival, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, P. Schaff and H. Wace, Eds., (repr. Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), XIV, pp. 192-242.

³⁷ "Jesu geistiges Vermögen ist der Logos und der Fortschritt des Herrn ist nichts anderes als geradeweise Offenbarung der Weisheit des Logos," A. Grillmeier, „Vorbereitung der Formel von Chalkedon,“ in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon, Geschichte und Gegenwart I-II* (Würzburg:Echter, 1951-53), pp. 5-202, esp. 164-176, hereafter *Konzil*.

³⁸ I am simplifying these matters for the sake of a summary. For an excellent overview of the Christological developments in the Early Church, see B. Daley, "Christ and Christologies," in S. Ashbrook Harvey and D. Hunter, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 886-906. The Alexandrian method of biblical interpretation that shaped their articulations of Christology were grounded in allegorical and typological interpretation of the School of Alexandria. Dyophysite biblical interpretation stood in the tradition of the Antiochene School, which focused on *historia*, a line-by-line analysis of text, influenced the schools of rhetoric. For methods in biblical interpretation of the ancient Christians, see F. Young, "Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis," in A. Hauser and D. Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Ancient Period* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003), 334-354.

known as “Nestorians.” They argued, following the Dyophysite or “Two-natured” Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, that Christ was one person united in two unmixed natures, human and divine. In this formulation, Christ’s divinity was not injured or affected by his humanity -- the level at which his suffering and experiences of humanity took place. Thus the emphasis was upon the distinction of the human and divine natures of Christ, rather than the unity of the two, as in the Christology of Cyril.

Those who accepted the Council of Ephesus aligned themselves to Cyril, but Syriac-speaking Christians were divided in their support of the council’s single-natured formula. Hiba of Edessa, for example, championed Dyophysite Christianity while Rabbula of Edessa ultimately supported Cyril.³⁹ Supporters of Cyril flourished in the West Syrian Christian groups loyal to the Roman Emperor, and supporters of Dyophysite Christianity grew in the Sasanian Empire, loyal to the shah.⁴⁰

Although the Dyophysite Church of the East acquired Nestorius’ name, the theological architects of this group were Diodore of Tarsus (d. 390), the founder of the School of Antioch, and Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428).⁴¹ It was expedient for Sasanian Christians to promote their Christianity as a religion loyal to the shah in order that the Mazdaen Persian kings not mistake them for spies of the Roman Empire.⁴² They

³⁹ R. Doran, *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa*, Cistercian Studies Series, 208 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2006).

⁴⁰ For an excellent orientation to the landscape and episcopal divisions of Christianity in the Sasanian Empire, see J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh*, 104-112.

⁴¹ See D. Winkler and W. Baum, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: Routledge, 2003). See also V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, 53-54.

⁴² The border areas of the Roman Empire were, from the second century onwards, areas of conflict between Rome and Persia. The always precarious and often hostile relationship between the empires of Rome and Persia shaped the multifarious nature of Persian Christianity. Jean-Maurice Fiey mapped out the expanse of the Persian Church through Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kuwait, and the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Iran, southern Turkmenistan and western Afghanistan. See J. M.

presented themselves as being independent from western political and ecclesiastical influences.

Empress Pulcheria and Emperor Marcian called the Council of Chalcedon in 451 to resolve Christological disagreements in the aftermath of the Council of Ephesus. The decisions at Chalcedon articulated a formula that Christ was *one person in two natures*, and this description seemed to its opponents to return to the Dyophysite “Nestorian” formula. Chalcedon attempted to reconcile the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The formula declared the unity of the Person (or Hypostasis) of Christ that existed in two unmixed distinct natures, fully God and fully man.⁴³ Pope Leo in Rome sent a letter known as the *Tome of Leo* to the Council of Chalcedon, claiming the orthodoxy of a two-natured Christological formula. Through the Council of Chalcedon, Pope Leo I asserted himself as a key player in the theological negotiations and resolutions that unfolded in early Byzantine history.⁴⁴ For the next seventy years, however, the Eastern Roman Empire vacillated in its support of Chalcedon. Many of the dissidents of the Chalcedonian position were Syriac-speaking Christians.

Fiey, *Jalons*, passim; See also idem, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Iraq des origines à 1552* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979).

⁴³ For a new accessible translation of the acts of the Council, see *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, R. Price and M. Gaddis, Trans., 3 Vols., Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005). This edition is based on the Greek text published in Eduard Schwartz, *ACO* II. 1 (1933-5) with supplements from the ancient Latin version in Schwartz, *ACO* II. 3 (1935-7).

⁴⁴ Pope Leo sent a text known as the *Tomus ad Flavianum* to be read at the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, and it presented a Dyophysite or two-natured Christology. Two years later, with the quick accession of Pulcheria, the *Tomus* was translated into Greek and received at the Council of Chalcedon. There is an English translation of the *Tomus ad Flavianum* in E. R. Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, Library of Christian Classics III (London: SCM Press, 1954). For the Latin version, see C. Silva-Tarouca, *Texta et Documenta*, Series Theologica 9 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1934), pp. 359-70. For further background, see A. Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, J. Bowden (trans.), 2nd edn. rev. (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), pp. 528-529.

The eastern bishops' acceptance of the Tome of Leo had symbolized political and ecclesiastical harmony between Rome and Constantinople for Emperor Marcian and Pope Leo I. After Chalcedon, several attempts at reconciliation were made before the ascent of Justin I in the sixth century. The most important of these was the Christological formula of the Henotikon of Emperor Zeno in 482. This brought no results, as it failed to mention Chalcedon – the crux of the conflict.⁴⁵ Non-Chalcedonian sources presented Emperor Anastasius' rule (491-518) as an epoch of attempts to bring peace between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians.⁴⁶ Christian bishops and theologians who disagreed with the Chalcedonian formula and the Tome of Leo, however, suffered a gradual estrangement from the political powerbases of the Roman Empire.

D. Sixth-Century Christianity

Three parties emerged after the Council of Chalcedon:⁴⁷ 1) the Chalcedonians; 2) the Non-Chalcedonian group of Severus of Antioch, and Philoxenus of Mabbug, who adopted a moderate single-nature Christology; 3) and the “Eutychians” who espoused a

⁴⁵ See W. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: chapters in the history of the Church in the fifth and sixth centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 143-183. See also E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, CSCO 127/Subs. 2 (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1951), pp. 4-9. Both Frend and Honigmann provide important background for this time period and the complexities of the loyalties of the respective Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian parties.

⁴⁶ See Harvey, *Asceticism*, p. 23; Frend, *Rise*, pp 194-220; and Honigmann *Évêques et évêchés*, pp. 11-21 and passim. Anastasius became the irenic champion of the Non-Chalcedonian position. The Non-Chalcedonian hagiographer John of Ephesus, for example, refers to Anastasius as the believing king, *ܐܢܬܝܫܝܘܣ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܬܝܡܢܐ*. See, for example, “Life of Simeon the Bishop [Simeon Beth Arsham]” in John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, Brooks, Tr., PO 17, p. 142.

⁴⁷ Dissenting parties of the Chalcedonian formula have been uncritically lumped together as “Monophysites.” But, as demonstrated from the letters of Severus against the more extreme “Monophysite” Sergius the Grammarian, Severus' party represented a *moderate* Non-Chalcedonianism. See I. Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006). For the Christology of Severus of Antioch see J. Lebon, “La christologie du monophysisme syrien,” in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht's *Konzil*, Vol II, pp. 425-580.

radically “high” Christology.⁴⁸ Philoxenus (Xenaias) of Mabbug (Hierapolis), a Persian born in Tahal from the province of Beth Garmai,⁴⁹ orchestrated the election of the monk Severus for the patriarchate of Antioch.⁵⁰ The Non-Chalcedonian texts from this dissertation came out of the second group, affiliated with Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus.

Severus, bishop of Antioch (465-53) spoke Greek, not Syriac, but because of his importance to Syriac-speaking Non-Chalcedonians, his corpus of homilies, hymns, and letters was translated into and preserved in Syriac.⁵¹ Severus articulated the single-nature Christology of the Non-Chalcedonians and based his views on the theology of Cyril of

⁴⁸ This was championed at the so-called Robber Council of 449, orchestrated by Eutyches, Bar Sauma of Nisibis, and Dioscorus. Evagrius wrote a *Church History* from the Council of Ephesus (431 CE) to the reign of the Emperor Maurice (killed in 602 CE by Phocas). From his telling of the story, Chalcedon represented the climax of God’s providential guidance of Church and State: God worked directly through the Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria. Evagrius’ history incorporates that of the Syrian Antiochene chronicler, John Malalas. Evagrius gave the impression that there were no doctrinal controversies among Christians by the turn of the sixth century. His Church history portrayed an imperial Church unified and at peace on account of its Chalcedonian identity. Evagrius, finally, depended upon a Non-Chalcedonian Greek historian, Zacharias Rhetor, whose *Ecclesiastical History* was preserved in an abbreviated Syriac version now known as “Pseudo-Zachariah.” Evagrius also made use of Zacharias Rhetor, whose *Ecclesiastical History* is preserved in an abbreviated Syriac version known as “Pseudo-Zachariah.” He is known as “Pseudo-Zachariah” because a later chronicler (mid-sixth century) finished his text. Pseudo-Zachariah, in contrast to Evagrius, presented the history of the sixth century from the point of view of the Non-Chalcedonian supporters of Severus of Antioch. See A. Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, I, pp. 525-6. See also Evagrius Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, M. Whitby, Trans. and intro., Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), I, 9-10, pp. 26-29. For a critical edition of the Greek text, see Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, Eds., (London: Methuen and Co, 1898), and Zacharias, Bishop of Mitylene, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, tr. (New York, AMS Press, 1979).

⁴⁹ Frend, *Rise*, 185, fn. 6.

⁵⁰ There has been lately a renewed interest in Severus of Antioch. See Pauline Allen and Robert Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London and New York, Routledge, 2004). For an extended bibliography on Severus, see P. Allen’s site: <http://www.cecs.acu.edu.au/severusresearch.htm> (searched 12/9/2008). Severus wrote volumes of letters, treatises, and hymns. His texts are theological, pastoral and personal, and liturgical.

⁵¹ Major treatises on Severus include, J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme severien: Etude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au Concile de Chalcedoine jusqu’à la constitution de l’église jacobite* (Louvain: J. Van Linthout, 1909 ; repr. New York : AMS Press, 1978); Lebon, “La christologie du monophysisme syrien,” in *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und Chalcedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, eds., 3 Vols, I: 425-580 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1951-4). Lebon initiated a “rehabilitation” of Severus of Antioch.

Alexandria: “Christ is one person out of two natures after the Union.”⁵² The Chalcedonians, however, also claimed to follow the theology of Cyril of Alexandria. Honigmann’s classic study on the Non-Chalcedonian bishops and bishoprics showed that the Severan branch of the Non-Chalcedonians, whom I discuss below, kept a strong foothold in the Syriac-speaking areas of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria.⁵³

Although there were attempts to reconcile the Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians,⁵⁴ the ascent of Justin I (518-27) marked the end of an era of peace for the Non-Chalcedonians. Justin I enforced the policies articulated in a document called the *libellus* of Pope Hormisdas, and this text demanded that all Christian groups be in union with the Chalcedonian Roman see. This *libellus* played a critical role in the gradual separation of the Non-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians.⁵⁵

Disagreements over the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon thus culminated in 519 with Roman imperial persecutions against Non-Chalcedonian leaders. Emperor Justin I and his nephew Justinian deposed bishops who resisted Chalcedon communion, and they replaced them with Chalcedonian supporters.⁵⁶ Chalcedonian enforcers evicted

⁵² See P. T. R. Gray, “Legacy,” p. 225-226.

⁵³ Chalcedonian or Non-Chalcedonian affiliation of a bishop often boiled down to the diocese whence he came. See E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, passim.

⁵⁴ Justin I abandoned the *Henotikon* of 482, a formula intended to bring reconciliation between the Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians.

⁵⁵ Volker Menze goes as far to say that the *libellus* was responsible for the separation of the Non-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians. V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making*, 16-17.

⁵⁶ “It is in the interplay of these different factors, among which the imperial policy of alternately controlling, oppressing, and negotiating with Non-Chalcedonians – thereby reifying Non-Chalcedonian sentiment – was a very important one, that the Non-Chalcedonian movement gained full strength and gradually established itself as a structure of authority and power, ready to be transformed into a full-fledged Church community once the Roman Empire had receded from the eastern lands after the rise of Islam.” Van Rompay, “Society and Community,” p. 255.

Non-Chalcedonians monks from their cells and drove stylites off their pillars.⁵⁷ The disputes between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians did not position the Non-Chalcedonians against the Byzantine empire itself.⁵⁸ Rather, conflicts exploded at the level of local Non-Chalcedonian sees when Chalcedonian bishops seized them.⁵⁹

According to Non-Chalcedonian sources, their most formidable adversary was the Chalcedonian Bishop Ephrem, Patriarch of Antioch, who, along with Abraham bar Kaili, hunted Non-Chalcedonian bishops for eighteen years.⁶⁰ Ephrem followed the decrees of Justin I and later Justinian that instructed him and the tribune Clementinus “to use force to make the inhabitants of the cities in the East accept the Synod [Chalcedon], as had been done by the natives of Italy.”⁶¹ Ephrem’s imperial mission strengthened the Non-

⁵⁷ The persecution of the Non-Chalcedonians was widespread initially, but the writings that survived were preserved in the monastic centers of the Orient. As Honigmann showed, outside of Constantinople the Non-Chalcedonian groups flourished where monasticism had flourished: Alexandria, Scete, Arabia, the Arabian provinces of the Ghassanid kings, northern Syria, Osroene, and Mesopotamia. E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, p. 159.

⁵⁸ Van Rompay, “Society and Community,” p. 255.

⁵⁹ This is consonant with John of Ephesus’ descriptions. We read of the plundering of the Chalcedonian Eutychius: “He let loose therefore upon them, on occasion of the celebration of their love feasts, the more violent members of his party, such as the officials of the ecclesiastical courts, and soldiers and civilians and clergymen and guardsmen, who attacking them, not like Christians but like murderers and barbarians, dragged them with open violence to prison, overturned their altars, threw down their oblations, and poured out the consecrated wine, while the sacred vessels, and every thing else of any worth, which they could find, with the service books, they plundered and stole,” John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Payne-Smith, p. 150. For the Syriac text of the Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus, see *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., CSCO 105/54, 106/55. (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1935-1936).

⁶⁰ Approximately 527-545 CE. Ephrem of Amida is represented in John of Ephesus as the nemesis of the Non-Chalcedonians. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 17, p 294, and “Life of John of Tella,” PO 18, 522; see also Zacharias Rhetor HE X. 2, (CSCO III, 6, p. 120). See also Harvey, *Asceticism*, pp. 62-63 and Frend, *Rise*, p. 274, fn 2.

⁶¹ Zachariah of Mitylene, *Chronicle*, 297-299. John of Tella was taken during this pursuit of 536-537. See also J. R. Ghanem, *The Biography of John of Tella (d. A. D. 537) by Elias translated from the Syriac with a Historical Introduction and Historical and Linguistic Categories*, unpublished PhD Thesis, (Madison/Wisc., 1970), p. 17.

Chalcedonians as they banded together in flight from a common enemy.⁶² Non-Chalcedonians experienced the most violence in the Oriental provinces; but they found haven in the numerous monasteries of their partisans.⁶³ The laity and clergy identified with particular leaders;⁶⁴ they did not see themselves as belonging to different “churches.”⁶⁵

In 532, Justinian hosted a meeting between Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian bishops to clarify and resolve the issues that divided them.⁶⁶ These consultations were ultimately fruitless.⁶⁷ Both Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian theologians of the sixth century claimed continuity with the christology of Cyril of Alexandria.⁶⁸ His language of “one nature out of two” was imprecise enough and evolved in his letters so as to be malleable by the Chalcedonians as well as non-Chalcedonians.⁶⁹

⁶² John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 18, Life 25, pp. 536.

⁶³ I discuss these areas in the Introduction to Chapter 4 on John of Ephesus.

⁶⁴ Thus they would say, “We are with John Serminus/Ephrem of Amida;” “We are with Theodosius;” “We are with Jacob.” E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, p. 232.

⁶⁵ See V. Menze, “Priests, Laity, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in sixth century Syria,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* [http://syrcm.cua.edu/syrcm/Hugoye] July 2004, vol. 7, no. 2. For the Chalcedonian “version,” stories of confused laity in the Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian rivalries, see John Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, PG 87.3, cols. 2851-3112; English trans. by J. Wortley, *Spiritual Meadow*, Cistercian Studies 139 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Press, 1992), pp. esp. 17-19.

⁶⁶ Justinian crafted a “one-nature” Christological formula. He asked the Non-Chalcedonians to lift their condemnation of the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, without explicitly insisting that they accept Chalcedon’s Dyophysite formula. Extant is a record of this council from the perspective of both sides, with very different views of the event. See S. Brock, “Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532),” *OCP* 47 (1981), 87-121.

⁶⁷ The meeting distilled the main point of contention between the two groups: the interpretation of Cyril of Alexandria’s Christology and Leo’s *Tomus*. Chalcedon had rehabilitated Theodore of Cyrhus and Ibas of Edessa, whom the earliest Non-Chalcedonians had anathematized and demonized as “Nestorian.” Gray, “Legacy,” p. 329, and Van Rompay, “Society and Community,” p. 246.

⁶⁸ See Menze, *Making*, 65-66 and Brock, “Conversations,” 108.

⁶⁹ By the mid-sixth century, the term “Neo-Chalcedonianism” is perhaps more fitting. C. Moeller articulates well the differences among the many theologians grouped together as “Neo-Chalcedonians.” The Neo-Chalcedonians used expressions like, “one of the Trinity who suffered,” and “The Word suffered

Justinian's policies suggested that he did not simply want a single "Neo-Chalcedonian" Christianity for the Roman empire -- he wanted *only* Christianity. He subjected the Samaritans, Manichees, and "heretics" of the Byzantine Empire to "severe legal disabilities."⁷⁰ Later, he condemned the Nestorians, Eutychians, and Montanists, and purportedly drove practitioners of traditional Greco-Roman religions to suicide.⁷¹ I discuss Justinian's commission of John of Ephesus (542) to convert the "Pagans" of the Empire in the introduction to Chapters Four and Five.⁷²

The Empress Theodora, as presented in the Syriac Non-Chalcedonian sources, supported the Non-Chalcedonian bishops exiled from their sees. This group comprised John of Ephesus and many bishops from northern Mesopotamia (Syriac and Greek-speaking). They lived in a house prison at the Palace of Hormisdas in Constantinople,⁷³ and she protected Non-Chalcedonian bishops Constantine of Laodicea, John of

in the flesh," to align themselves with Cyril. John the Grammarian, the most formidable Neo-Chalcedonian adversary of Severus of Antioch, claimed that (1) the Cyrillian "one incarnate nature" of Christ was the same as the Antiochene "one person" and (2) Cyril's single-natured Christology actually meant a "single-essenced" Christology, and therefore Chalcedon was not a departure from Cyril's theology. See C. Moeller, "La chalcédonianisme et le néo-chalcédonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VI^e siècle," in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, *Konzil I*, 637-720.

⁷⁰ Frend, *Rise*, p. 257.

⁷¹ By pagan, I mean followers of traditional forms of Greco-Roman religion. For paganism in the sixth century, see A. Cameron's *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-600* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) pp. 69-71, 79, and 143.

⁷² For this hagiographical collection, see John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., *Patrologia Orientalis* 17-19, Paris (1923-25) (17: i-xv; 1-307; 18: 513-697; 19: 153-285).

For these texts, see S. A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society*. This remains the most important monograph on the *Lives* of John of Ephesus.

⁷³ See S. A. Harvey, "Theodora the 'Believing Queen': A Study in Syriac Historiographical Tradition," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 4.2 (2001) par. 16 and passim. See also Frend, *Rise*, pp. 284-285.

Hephaistos, Peter of Apamea, Theodosius of Alexandria, and Anthimus of Constantinople.⁷⁴ These leaders curried favor with wealthy patrons of the capital.

The Ghassanid (Arab) federate king Arethas/Harith (529-69) played a pivotal role in the unfolding Non-Chalcedonian history of the sixth century.⁷⁵ His Arab tribe lived in the border lands between the Roman and Persian empires. Arethas, an Arab loyal to Byzantium and a general for its empire, represented a powerful and important figure for both the Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Byzantines. He traveled to Constantinople and approached Theodora in 540 to request bishops for his Arabic “flocks.”⁷⁶ The Ghassanids had lacked a bishop since 519, when the rise of Justin I sent Non-Chalcedonian John of Evaria into exile.⁷⁷ Non-Chalcedonian Theodosius of Alexandria, living in house prison in Constantinople, sent Theodore of Bostra and Jacob Baradaeus to Arethas.⁷⁸ Arethas’ Ghassanid tribe protected Non-Chalcedonians and spread Non-Chalcedonian Christianity among the Arabs in Medina/Yathrib.⁷⁹ Ghassanid

⁷⁴ As many as 500 monks stayed in the Palace of Hormisdas in house prison under Theodora’s care. See John of Ephesus, *Lives*, Life 47, *PO* 18, p. 677. See also E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, p. 158.

⁷⁵ See I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1 (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), [hereafter *BASIC* 1.1.], 34 and idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Volume I, part 2: Ecclesiastical History, hereafter *BASIC* 1.2, pp. 755-60.

⁷⁶ He was even raised to the status of *Basileus*. This was done to spite his Lakhmid counterpart, Mondir. The Lakhmids, another Arabic tribe, had tended to side with the Persians in their battles against the Byzantines. See I. Shahid, *BASIC* 1.2, p. 760 and E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, p. 159.

⁷⁷ Shahid, *BASIC* 1.2, 719-720.

⁷⁸ Van Rompay, “Society and Community,” p. 248. See also Shahid, *BASIC* 1.2, 850-860. Theodore was sent to Bostra, south of Damascus, to do the religious work for Christian Arabic tribes. Shahid notes how little attention Theodore received from biographers and Church historians, unlike Jacob Baradaeus, 850. Theodore himself was an Arab from the province whose see was Hirtah d’Tayaye. Shahid, *BASIC* 1.2, pp. 761-2.

⁷⁹ Shahid *BASIC* 1.1, 37. E. Key Fowden notes, “in order to maintain their territorial claims, both empires [Roman and Iranian] turned to military alliances with the Arab inhabitants of the region and to the construction of fortifications,” see Elizabeth Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain, Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley: University Press, 1999), p. 3.

identification with the Non-Chalcedonians caused a deep rift between them and the Byzantine Chalcedonians, and this manifested in political consequences for the leaders of both sides whose religious leaders competed with one another.⁸⁰

In 553, Justinian called the second Council of Constantinople. Justinian asked for the posthumous condemnation of Theodoret of Cyrrihus (393-457) because Theodoret, by supporting Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, had “blasphemed” against Cyril.⁸¹ Justinian anathematized Ibas of Edessa and Theodore of Mopsuestia as well. The names of these three fifth-century bishops represented an affiliation with the Dyophysite tradition that Justinian, although Chalcedonian, repudiated. Through condemning Theodoret, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Ibas of Edessa, Justinian elevated the memory of Cyril of Alexandria and claimed Cyril for the Chalcedonians. Sixth-century hagiography also featured the retrospective construction of lineages to defend orthodoxy. While the explicit invocation of Cyril’s name was absent from the missionary texts I will analyze in this dissertation, slogans of Christological loyalty were used nonetheless as groupist rhetoric to craft relationships of orthodoxy in the lives of *Ahoudemmeh* and the *Longer Life of Jacob Baradaeus*.

The emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora thus involved themselves closely in the Christological controversies of the sixth century. Non-Chalcedonian Syriac literature immortalized Theodora for her support, while portraying her Chalcedonian husband

⁸⁰ Later during the reign of Justin II (565-578), the Ghassanids withdrew their military support of the Byzantines from the border, separating the latter from the Lakhmid tribes, Arabs loyal to the Church of East. The Ghassanids were angry that the Byzantines had tried to arrest the king Mundir (son of Arethas). The disloyalty of the Byzantines was a product of their “antipathy” towards the Non-Chalcedonians. The Ghassanid leader Nu’man told the Chalcedonian Emperor Maurice explicitly that he would refuse to convert to Chalcedonianism. See Shahid, *BASIC* 1.1, 35.

⁸¹ “To speak against Cyril was now blasphemy!” *ACO* IV. 1, 13. Cited by Menze, *Making*, 66.

Justinian as a persecutor.⁸² The imperial family's close relations with the Non-Chalcedonians demonstrated that the conflict between the two parties was not one of the Non-Chalcedonians versus the Empire itself, but rather Chalcedonian bishops versus Non-Chalcedonian bishops competing for the episcopal sees of various cities. The Non-Chalcedonians, moreover, continued to hope until the end of the sixth century that their leaders could bring Non-Chalcedonian Christianity outside the Roman Empire.⁸³

From the Non-Chalcedonian point-of-view, the line of apostolic succession was sustained through those who dissented from Chalcedon and resisted the political benefits of siding with the Byzantine emperor. In response to Chalcedonian hostility, Non-Chalcedonian bishops John of Tella and John of Hephastopolis ordained a separate church hierarchy in the 530s to preserve the "purity" of their episcopal descent. As Chalcedonian bishops filled the sees of the eastern Roman Empire, Non-Chalcedonians sent missionary bishops to the Persian Empire and elsewhere beyond Roman borders to expand their communities on non-Byzantine, Non-Chalcedonian soil.

There were two types of Non-Chalcedonian missions in the sixth-century church: internal and external. Justinian and Theodora sponsored some of the external missions in order to gain political allies through Christianization.⁸⁴ Other missions were done at the

⁸² See S. A. Harvey, "Theodora the 'Believing Queen'". The anecdotes of Justinian and Theodora, including her past as a circus star, come from the notorious *Secret History (Anecdota)* from the historian Procopius of Caesarea. Procopius is a basic source for the military, religious, and political history of the first half of the sixth century, with a bias aimed at criticizing Justinian and Justin. See B. Baldwin, "Procopius of Caesarea" in A. Kazhdan, A-M. Talbot, *et al*, Eds., *Oxford History of Byzantium*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: University Press, 1991), p. 1732. For the Greek, see *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, ed. J. Haury, rev. G. Wirth, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1962-64) and English trans. *Procopius*, ed. H. B. Dewing, 7 Vols., (London-Cambridge, Mass., 1914-40). John of Ephesus also has a number of anecdotes of a different variety about Theodora and Justinian.

⁸³ Van Rompay, "Society and Community," p. 251.

⁸⁴ The most detailed study is I. Engelkerdt, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz. Ein Beitrag zur Strukturanalyse Byzantinischer Mission zur Zeit Justins und Justinians* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und

initiative of Non-Chalcedonian bishops trying to resurrect a dwindling religious labor force.⁸⁵

Jacob Baradaeus and Theodore of Bostra⁸⁶ brought the Non-Chalcedonians into direct interaction with the Christians and non-Christians in the Persian area as well as those of the Arabian Peninsula, Armenia, Northern Mesopotamia, and Nubia.⁸⁷ Justinian and Theodora appointed Non-Chalcedonian bishops in the imperial city and moved them to the boundaries of their empire where their religious labor would serve the promotion of the Byzantine state. There at the margins of the empire, the social and religious map was different, and the rules and practical understandings of distinction unfolded on a different social site. The Chalcedonian Justinian identified the Non-Chalcedonian missionaries as ambassadors for his Empire. Through them, Justinian forged new religious communities of Christians among the Nubians and the Arabs, using conversion to bring these peoples

Neugriechische Philologie der Universität München, 1974). This study is useful in how it points out important sources on the mission narratives of the sixth century. More interesting as an analysis, however, is S. Harvey's discussion in *Asceticism*, 94-107. Frend includes a section on these Missions also in *Rise*, p. 296-315. There is also an earlier study by H. G. Beck, "Mission und politische Propaganda im Byzantinischen Reich," in *Settimane di Studio del centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo XIV : La conversione a christianesimo nell' Europa dell' alto medioevo: Spoleto 14.4- 20.4, 1966* (Spoleto, 1967). Walter Stevenson's forthcoming book on state-sponsored missions is an important contribution to scholarship on missions and political power. I am grateful to Stevenson for allowing me to read his unpublished manuscript. See W. Stevenson, *Imperialism and Religion: State-Sponsored Missions in Ancient India, Iran and Rome*.

⁸⁵ The difficulties of the Non-Chalcedonians within the Byzantine world did not prevent them from expanding "not in an act of resistance against the empire, but ingeniously making their interest coincide with the emperor's broader concern for secure borders and reliable neighbors." Van Rompay, "Society and Community," p. 251.

⁸⁶ Although Theodore was bishop of Bostra, he probably never lived there. He most likely lived in Hirta d'Tayye (modern day Harra or El-Harra in Syria; this must not be confused with Hira in Iraq).

⁸⁷ For the missions to Nubia, see Frend, *Rise*, pp. 297-308. Some of the areas were thus under Persian control; others were governed by *foederati* of the Romans. Rome and Persia were the "two eyes" illuminating the late antique world. See Petrus Patricius fr. 13, Theophylact Simoncatta *Historia universalis* IV.11.2 and G. Fowden, *From Empire to commonwealth*, p. 17.

closer to New Rome.⁸⁸ Byzantine mission used competitive, sometimes violent coercion to gain political alliances and economic benefits to integrate groups onto Justinian and Theodora's map.⁸⁹

The Non-Chalcedonians established a strong foothold in the Arabian Peninsula. Arabic tribes lived in the areas north of the Arabian Peninsula: Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia, as well as western Persia.⁹⁰ Some of the Arabs were nomadic, and they adapted their culture easily to new circumstances.⁹¹ *Oriens*, the diocese in which these tribes lived, comprised an area ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and geographically distinct from Anatolia and Egypt.⁹² This was a rich tri-cultural landscape: Syriac/Aramaic, Hellenic, and Arabic.⁹³ The main groups of the

⁸⁸ Aloden tribes of Nubia were largely Christianized by the Non-Chalcedonian bishop, Longinus. He had, however, "lost out" to some Chalcedonian rivals who reached the Garamantes tribes before he could. The competition between the two groups was played out as they strived to convert the areas south of Egypt. Often, these efforts required the outward destruction or transformation of space dedicated to traditional gods of Greek and Roman religion into triumphant Christian monuments. Justinian's (Non-Chalcedonian) general Narses destroyed the temple of Isis at Phila in 535 (or 540?), and from that point on, according to Christian sources, the 'pagans' put up little resistance to Christianization. It took place in 579-580. His mission is discussed in the Third Part of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History*, IV. 49-53, Syriac (233-243) Latin (p. 175-183).

⁸⁹ As in the case of the Hunnish tribes living north of Constantinople in the Crimea, the missions consisted of the baptism of a king, the forging of a political alliance, and then the baptism of an entire tribe. Justinian himself was on occasion the "God-father" of tribal kings who had sought baptism, followed by political annexation. Grod, king of the Huns, lived in the sixth century across the Bosphorus. Grod traveled to Constantinople in order to be baptized, and then he received money from Justinian. Grod forced his tribe to become Christian, making them melt their "idols." His people resisted, Grod was murdered, and his people crowned his brother to take his place. See John Malalas, *Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. E. and M. Jeffreys, (R. Scott: Melbourne: Australian Association of Byzantine Studies, 1986), 431. See also Engelkerdt, *Mission*, 85-86.

⁹⁰ The Arabs mixed with the Aramaic-speaking people, and as they became "semi-settled," some adopted this tongue. The Arabs were herders, farmers, and peasants; they spoke several varieties of Arabic. See J. Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London and New York: Longman, 1979) p. 1.

⁹¹ The Arabic language distinguishes between the people who spoke the Arabic language "Arab," versus the word "A`rab" which gains the meaning "nomads." See Trimmingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, 2.

⁹² Shahid, *BASIC* 1.1, xxviii-xxix.

Arabic *foederati* included the Tanukhids (fourth century), the Salihids (fifth century), the Ghassanids (sixth century), Lakhmids and the Kindites.⁹⁴ The Kindite and Ghassanid regions served as “buffer zones” between the Persian and Roman worlds.

E. Which Non-Chalcedonian Christianity?

Internal divisions and conflicts among the Non-Chalcedonians began in the first quarter of the sixth century with a theological conflict called the *apthartodocetic* controversy.⁹⁵ This debate began in the time of Severus of Antioch. After Severus had been exiled from his see in 518, he fled to Egypt. There, he engaged in theological debate with Julian of Halicarnassus, a Non-Chalcedonian, yet one who professed more extreme views concerning Christ’s nature. Julian claimed that, even before the Resurrection, Christ’s body was incorruptible. For Severus, this denied Christ’s complete participation in humanity.

Non-Chalcedonian Patriarchs Timothy IV (518-535) and his successor Gaianus, together with the Christian populace of Alexandria, affirmed and perpetuated Julian’s high Christology among the Egyptians. When Theodosius, an adherent to the theology of Severus of Antioch, became Patriarch of Alexandria, he encountered so much resistance from the Egyptian Christians that Justinian appointed Paul of Tabennisi to replace him. The Egyptian Church was thus divided not just into Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, but further on the Non-Chalcedonian side into supporters of Gaianus

⁹³ Shahid, *BASIC* 1.1, xxix.

⁹⁴ The Kindites originated from the Saudi Arabian peninsula, and they had moved northwards towards Byzantine territory, out of the area of the Himyarites. Shahid, *BASIC* 1.1, xxx and 3.

⁹⁵ Van Rompay, “Society and Community,” pp. 252-254.

(Gaianites) and the supporters of Severus (Severans). Eventually, after Justinian's reign, the controversy was resolved in favor of the Theodosian/Severan party.

The differences among the Non-Chalcedonians, some of which were based on theology, others on episcopal leadership, climaxed in the 560s. Jacob Baradaeus, bishop of Edessa, and his counterparts in Alexandria, Syria, Constantinople, Mesopotamia and Arabia vacillated in their relationships with one another. Letters exchanged during this period reflected the social complexity of the loyalties among the Non-Chalcedonian bishops during their intense internal conflicts.⁹⁶

The sees of Constantinople and Antioch were empty after the deaths of Non-Chalcedonian Patriarchs Severus and Anthimus.⁹⁷ At that point, a fierce competition for the position of "patriarch" erupted amongst the Non-Chalcedonians. Patriarch Theodosius, exiled from Alexandria, resided in house prison in Constantinople under Theodora's protection. Jacob Baradaeus had chosen Paul "the Black" to be patriarch of Antioch.⁹⁸ But Paul the Black's election in 564 was met with much resistance among the Syrian and Egyptian clergy,⁹⁹ who had not been consulted about the decision.¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁶ For these letters, see J.-B. Chabot, ed. and trans., *Documenta ad origines Monophysitorum illustrandas*, [Latin], CSCO 17/ 103, Ser. Syr. 17/52 (Paris and Louvain: E Typographica Reipublicae, 1907-33).

⁹⁷ The best article on the Non-Chalcedonian schism of 575 is E. W. Brooks, "The patriarch Paul of Antioch and the Alexandrine Schism of 575," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXX (1930), p. 468-476.

⁹⁸ The first consecrated patriarch was actually Sergius, but his tenure lasted only a very short while.

⁹⁹ "And, when they had set up bishops for the various cities of Syria as has been described, afterwards they went up to the royal city, and in our presence they ordained a patriarch in Antioch, a man whose name was Sergius from the city of Thella, who was living in the royal city and was well-versed in religious learning. And, when he had completed three years, he departed from the world; and after a time again they ordained a man whose name was Paul from Alexandria. About this man many controversies arose (ܡܠܚܡܬܐ ܕܡܢܐ) and continue to the present time when these things were written." John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO XIX p. 156-157.

¹⁰⁰ The Schism between the Non-Chalcedonians that occurred in 575 is largely described in John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO XIX, 156-157.

second successor to Theodosius, Peter of Alexandria (who served as Patriarch until 578),¹⁰¹ declared Paul of Antioch deposed.¹⁰² Peter, however, forcefully persuaded Jacob to concede to Paul's deposition. The Non-Chalcedonians then divided themselves into the followers of Paul (the "Paulites") and those of Jacob, the "Jacobites."¹⁰³ Paul had many strong supporters in Syria, whereas in Mesopotamia the Non-Chalcedonians favored Jacob.¹⁰⁴ Paul the Black remained Patriarch of Antioch until 578.¹⁰⁵

The Non-Chalcedonian patriarchs of Antioch (Peter of Callinicum, 581-591) and of Alexandria (Damian, 578-606) experienced a second internal schism over what became known as the "Tritheist" controversy: a question concerning whether the three persons of the trinity had substances (*ousiai*) and natures (*physeis*) distinct from one another. The Tritheists distinguished two aspects of the word *physis* which seemed to its opponents (including Jacob Baradaeus and Theodosius of Alexandria) to invent three

¹⁰¹ Peter was chosen to be patriarch after Theodore, whom Longinus, converter of the Nubians, had elected. Theodore was rejected by the Alexandrines. See Brooks, "Paul of Antioch," p. 471.

¹⁰² There had long been hostility between Constantinople and Alexandria, ever since the former had replaced Alexandria as "the second" in the order of the primacy of the Patriarchates (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). With the Tritheism of John the Grammarian spreading in Egypt, Theodosius from Constantinople wanted to be sure that the Patriarch of Antioch would be his ally against Tritheism, since Jacob Baradaeus was reticent on the subject. Thus Paul the Black seemed a good choice. But not for the Alexandrians, who perceived his election as Constantinopolitan aggression against Egypt. This is rather ironic, given the fact that Theodosius was, although exiled, still Patriarch of Alexandria. See Brooks, "Paul of Antioch," p. 471.

¹⁰³ Van Rompay, "Society and Community," p. 252. See also E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁴ Brooks, "Paul of Antioch," p. 471.

¹⁰⁵ John of Ephesus laments the schism: "Unfortunately the schism was confined to no narrow limits, but spread from Syria into Cilicia, Isauria, Asia, Cappadocia, and Armenia; and especially to the capital, so that in this the 887th year of Alexander (AD 576), grief upon grief, and blow upon blow fell upon the persecuted and lacerated Church of the believers every where, by reason of the division, and quarrels, and schisms, and wrongs, and evil deeds which sprang up and multiplied between Jacob and Paul, and spread like an ulcer cruelly, and without fear of God. For the bishops and clergy and monasteries, great and small, joined some one side and some the other, as also did the people of the Churches, both in towns and villages, and in the country: and each faction eagerly set itself to injure, and ruin, and revile, and speak evil of the other, with barbarous and unmitigated violence, seeking the other's wrong, and slandering them." John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus*, tr. Payne-Smith, 268.

gods in the Trinity.¹⁰⁶ Only in 616, a decade and a half shy of the advent of Islam, would these non-Chalcedonian centers reconcile this question with one another.

V. Missionary Stories as a Counterpoint to Historiography

Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian historians differ in their versions of “what happened” in the troubled sixth century, but both Evagrius Scholasticus (Chalcedonian writing in Greek) and John of Ephesus (non-Chalcedonian writing in Syriac) remembered it as a period of conflict and turmoil.¹⁰⁷ The hagiographical framing dynamic of sixth-century Non-Chalcedonian missionary stories did not cover up the persecution, famine, war, and internal conflicts shown in the historiographical sources. Yet sacred narrative balanced these themes with motifs of expansion, divine conquest, and apostolic similitude. The construction of these myths helped the Non-Chalcedonians to forge a new hierarchy of heroes. I analyze three of these saints in this dissertation whose lives exemplified the Non-Chalcedonian effort to reconstitute itself in the wake of sixth-century turmoil: Simeon of Beth Arsham, Jacob Baradaeus, and Ahoudemmeh. The Non-Chalcedonians revitalized existing communities and created new ones through their

¹⁰⁶ One aspect refers to the sum of the common properties that all members of a species share, the other notion of nature is concrete and refers to the individual hypostasis. If Christ had a single nature, one hypostasis and one nature, then each hypostases of the Trinity also had concrete *physis*, too: ergo three hypostases and three *physes*.

¹⁰⁷ A commonality in the description of the Christian conflicts of the sixth century is the attribution of dissention and fractionalization in the Church to the work of the devil. See the Syriac text of John of Ephesus’ *Ecclesiastical History*, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae*, Book I, Ch. 2, p. 3-4. The trope that heresy and ecclesiastical dispute are the result of the “devil” is a motif that both Chalcedonian and Non Chalcedonian writers share. For a fresh analysis of the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus, see J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium*. This contains a useful introduction on the difficulties of using historiography (with the genres of ecclesiastical, annalistic, and narrative “political”) in reconstructing political and religious history of a time. I will discuss John of Ephesus in greater detail in the Introduction to Chapters 4 and 5.

missionary efforts.¹⁰⁸ In the dissertation, I will reveal how they were mythologized; here I outline their portraits in historical sources.

Simeon of Beth Arsham had been a dynamic church leader among the Persian Non-Chalcedonians. It was he who had brought the plight of the Christians of Najran, martyred by a Himyarite/Yemenite Jewish king Yusef, to the attention of the Byzantine imperial court.¹⁰⁹ Simeon gathered Byzantine, Ghassanid,¹¹⁰ and Ethiopian forces to fight the Himyarites and defend the Christians.¹¹¹ The Jews of Yemen sided with the Persians against the Christians, whom they perceived as “Byzantine,”¹¹² irrespective of their Arab ethnicity.¹¹³ I analyze his hagiographic portrayal in Chapter Four. His *Life*, by John of Ephesus, portrays Simeon as an ambassador who connected the diverse ethno-linguistic groups within which he operated: Greek, Syriac, Persian, and Arabic.

Jacob Baradaeus, Non-Chalcedonian bishop of Edessa, as mentioned above, revived communities through his pastoral attention and extensive travel to regions outside of his see. In chapter Five, I discuss the hagiographic traditions of Jacob Baradaeus. John of Ephesus’ portrait of Jacob characterized his work as pastoral ministry that also

¹⁰⁸ Full bibliographic information is given in the respective chapters on these missionaries.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter Four.

¹¹⁰ The military leader of the Ghassanids was “Jabala,” father of the Arethas are discussed above. Simeon petitions him for help: “We have written this letter to you, your Fatherhood, from the camp of Gabala (Jabala), in the month of Tammuz (July) of this year, eight hundred and thirty of *Alqsndr* (Alexander),” See Shahid, *BASIC* 1.1, 33.

¹¹¹ The hagiography of the martyrdoms of Najran in the early sixth century provide important evidence concerning conflicts over the control of trade routes. For the Ethiopian involvement in this campaign, see Frend, *Rise*, 307. The martyrs of Najran included a group of women, and their stories became widespread in Christian hagiographical imagination. See Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) pp. 100-121. See also S. Brock, “Saints in Syriac: A Little Tapped Resource,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 8 (2008), 181-196, here 185.

¹¹² Frend, *Rise*, 307.

¹¹³ In 571, Himyarite Jews asserted themselves again against the Byzantines with help from the Persians.

built an institutional infra-structure for the Non-Chalcedonians, ordaining new bishops for the borderlands between the Sasanian and Roman Empires. His later *Life* shows embellishments that demonstrate how seventh- and eighth-century Non-Chalcedonians viewed the heroes of the sixth century through a different lens.

Sixth-century Sasanian Christians constructed themselves to be in continuity with the first real and imagined Christians who had settled in Mesopotamia.¹¹⁴ Their foundation legend mentioned above, the *Acts of Mari*,¹¹⁵ attributed the Christianization of Mesopotamia to the Apostle Mari, who was ordained by Addai, apostle to Edessa/Urhay.¹¹⁶ Christianities in Persia imagined and promoted themselves as the “pure” Christianity that developed from apostolic beginnings, from which other sects and heresies broke off: “In the Land of the Persians, since the time of the apostles up to today, no heresy has appeared or arisen.”¹¹⁷

When Non-Chalcedonian exiles arrived (518-531) to flee Justin I’s imposition of Chalcedon, they asked bishops John of Tella and Thomas of Dara to ordain new shepherds for their communities that were surrounded by the Church of East.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ See S. P. Brock, “Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties,” in *Religion and National Identity: Papers Read at the Nineteenth Summer Meeting and the Twentieth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, S. Mews, ed., Studies in Church History 18 (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1982), 1-19. There is a large and important corpus of literature that pertains to the persecution of Shapur II (309-347) of the Christians.

¹¹⁵ *Acts of Mar Mari the Apostle*, A. Harrak, ed. and trans., Writings from the Greco-Roman World 11 (Boston: Brill, 2005). On Mari, see also Fiey, *Jalons*, pp. 32-44. See Chapter Three of this dissertation.

¹¹⁶ The *Doctrina of Addai* is a fifth or sixth century text relating how the Christians of Edessa imagined that their own beginnings could be traced to the earliest apostles of Jesus. See *The Teaching of Addai*, G. Howard (Chico, CA, 1981). See Chapter Two of this dissertation.

¹¹⁷ *Synodicon Orientale*, Synod 612, p. 585. See also Fiey, *Jalons*, p. 48.

¹¹⁸ Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, ed. Brooks, *Vitae Virorum*, 60. 22.-61.2 (Syriac text). “[T]o fight valiantly for the orthodox faith which already had become extinct there due to the error of the miserable Nestorius, the worshipper of the man. Elias. “Vita Ioannis episcopi Tellae,” *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., CSCO 7/8, (Paris: E Typographico Reipublicae, 1907), 29-

Philoxenus of Mabbug mentioned that the Persian Dyophysite Christians had been persecuting the Non-Chalcedonians.¹¹⁹ The interplay of religious identification, political loyalty, and competition amongst different forms of Christianity outside the Empire in the years before Islam resulted ultimately in a new group: a Non-Chalcedonian group composed of new converts from indigenous Arab tribes, Sasanian Mazdaeans, and “apostates” from the Church of the East. It is this community that produced the *Life of Ahoudemmeh: Apostle to the Arabs*, whose hagiography I analyze in Chapter Six.

These hagiographies of Non-Chalcedonian missionaries to the Christians living in the Persian Empire echoed the themes of earlier Syriac missionary narratives: the introduction of a new Christianity to compete with indigenous traditions, stories of healings, the catechizing of groups of people, and the ordination of new bishops and leaders to continue the tradition. These missionaries were depicted like Thomas and Addai, men who were ascetic, poor, homeless, and pursued by adversaries. By portraying their bishops as austere, itinerant preachers like the first disciples, Non-Chalcedonian hagiographers made themselves into the true descendents of the first Apostles.

These texts illustrate how the claim to validity through apostolic succession became critical in Christian competitions for orthodoxy among the Non-Chalcedonians, the Chalcedonians, and the Church of the East. The saints’ *Vitae* themselves became

95. English translation by J. R. Ghanem, *The Biography of John of Tella (d. A. D. 537) by Elias translated from the Syriac with a Historical Introduction and Historical and Linguistic Categories*, unpublished PhD Thesis, (Madison/ Wisc., 1970).

¹¹⁹ Philoxenus asked Abu Ya`fur that these Miaphysites might find a safe haven in Hira. This correspondence, however, created problems for Abu Ya`fur, as Hira was a Dyophysite stronghold. In the eyes of the Persians, moreover, Abu Ya`fur’s interactions with Philoxenus seemed suspiciously treacherous, as, for them, Philoxenus represented the Byzantine Empire. See discussion above.

symbols of the Church's story as a whole, idealized retellings of a past with conflict and expansion, pain and healing, side by side. This project demonstrates how Syriac missionary texts work together as a system that authors used to construct and represent their history.

VI. Theory and Method

My questions in this analysis are literary rather than historical. I am interested in how missionary stories did memory-making work for Syriac-speaking Christians. I analyze how writers inscribed religious and political agenda into legends about their patrons, and I examine intertextual commonalities and differences among these stories.

The narratives in this dissertation came from diverse peoples governed under Roman and Persian emperors and vassal kings, from bilingual Greek- and Syriac-speaking bishops from Constantinople, to Sasanian Christians and former Mazdaeans,¹²⁰ to descendants of Aramaean peoples of Northern Mesopotamia. The thread of the missionary legend tied them together and shows how stories were an area in which memory was contended, orthodoxy claimed, and ideologies set into narrative form. I turn to discuss briefly some theoretical and methodological sources that I have cited throughout this dissertation, and I have outlined here some principal ideas that I have extracted from these writings that shaped my project.

I assume that sacred texts tell us something about the peoples who produced them, yet I am aware that educated men wrote them with political agenda. I combined literary and historical theories of analysis to formulate my questions and search for points of continuity and discontinuity among these stories. Some of my theoretical models,

¹²⁰ This term includes the mainstream form of Iranian religion. G. Fowden, *From Empire to commonwealth*, fn. 35, p 20.

therefore, came from the study of the ancient world and others from scholarship on modern societies. The field of late ancient history and religious studies established a precedent for this. Theology played an important part in the conflicts underneath these stories. Critical analysis of the presentations of theological formulations and interpretations of debates were essential to understand the texture of late antique religion. An analysis of sixth-century Christianity cannot side-step the issues of Christology to understand the debates and conflicts that differentiated Christians from one another. Yet, as social theorists of religion have shown, the ways in which people created religious structures and passed down beliefs and practices, the memories that they forged in text and rituals, can be traced and studied as data apart from analyzing the truth of theological claims. The texts that authors produced can be read as literary works through the lens of theories of rhetoric, narrative, and myth. Following is a brief discussion of analytical models that shaped my dissertation.

The work of Averil Cameron shifted scholarly orientation to attend to rhetoric and modes of religious expression, and this study relies on her argument in her book *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* that Christianity spread through the exchange of stories.¹²¹ Her focus on modes of expression, the primacy of the “Word” in ancient Christianity, the rhetoric of paradox, and the impact of imperial sponsorship on Christian rhetoric helped me to situate these texts within the larger storied context of late-ancient religious literature.

¹²¹ The last ten years has produced excellent scholarship on Rhetoric in Late Antiquity and early Byzantium. The watershed book on how Christianity became a religion that was fashioned through the exchange of stories is A. Cameron’s *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). See especially pp. 89-119.

Just like the stories themselves, however, as Emile Durkheim and J. Z. Smith have shown, so religions themselves and the sacred were the products of human agency. In my analysis, I have read missionary texts through a lens that attends to the creation of religious similitude and difference, cultural commonality and divergence.¹²² Jonathan Z. Smith shaped my understanding of the notion of religious differentiation and categories of critical engagement for the study of religion. The focus on what *work* the stories do, rather than summarizing what they say, provided conceptual frameworks through which I have interpreted and redescribed these texts.¹²³ I used the term “sacred,” for instance, to describe stories, people, and space.¹²⁴ Yet in speaking of “the sacred,”¹²⁵ I have predicated not a *presence* but rather a *representation*.¹²⁶

One of the great distinctions between the late ancient and modern society was the absence of differentiation between religion, politics, and culture. In late antiquity, how one identified oneself, or the religious group with which one identified, became more important. This led to excellent scholarly work on notions of religious identity in late antiquity.¹²⁷

¹²² “What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in J. Neusner and E. Frerich’s, eds., *“To See Ourselves As Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, ‘Others’ in Late Antiquity* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 3-48; reprinted in J. Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 101-116.

¹²³ For the term redescription, see J. Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Jonestown to Babylon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 36-52.

¹²⁴ “Topography of the Sacred,” reprinted in *Relating Religion*, 101-116.

¹²⁵ This or that is made or designated ‘sacred. It is not a “human response to a transcendental act of self-display.” J. Z. Smith, “The Topography of the Sacred,” 103.

¹²⁶ J. Z. Smith, “The Topography of the Sacred,” 111.

¹²⁷ Recently, for example, a large volume on Syrian Orthodox “identity” has made an excellent contribution to the study of this church. J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre – Van den Berg, T. M. Van Lint, Eds., *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005).

Yet I intentionally avoid the term “identity” in my dissertation. In this, I follow Rogers Brubaker’s critique and rectification of this category in his book *Ethnicity Without Groups*.¹²⁸ Although his study is a product of sociological research on modern societies, he problematized the category of “identity” with correctives useful for scholars of late-ancient religion. He argues that “identity” evolved into a malleable and non-descript term. More useful is to shift this word into its *verbal* form, “identification.” In this dissertation, I ask how saints’ narratives perform the work of *identification*, giving Syriac Christian authors a genre and topic for telling their audience that they shared a social interconnection or sense of solidarity through a hero or holy man made common through the authors’ setting his memory apart. Many of the authors of these texts were episcopal or monastic dissidents,¹²⁹ and they used apostolic discourse to differentiate themselves as separate religious “groups” with “bounded collectivity . . . corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action.”¹³⁰

Brubaker’s categories illuminate how hagiography was a powerful way to produce “groupness.” I am not concerned with whether or not the groups presented in the stories or imagined as the stories’ audience actually existed. Instead, I see missionary stories as literary depictions of communities or groups, and the dissemination of these stories helped leaders of loosely-related populations of Syriac Christians to have a stronger boundedness.

¹²⁸ R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹²⁹ Brubaker’s definitions of social “groups,” “groupism,” and “categories,” moreover, for my project presented a more precise vocabulary for the redescription of Non-Chalcedonians in the sixth century.

R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, 8.

¹³⁰ Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, 12.

I read these missionary stories as *myths* that created and passed down memories of the past to interpret the present. I assumed that myth and religious memory worked together in what Elizabeth Castelli has called “early Christian culture making.”¹³¹ I have used Bruce Lincoln’s definition of myth, *an ideology in narrative form*,¹³² since this articulation illuminated hidden agenda embedded in sacred texts. Lincoln’s formulation explained what the narratives *do* or more specifically, what elusive authors accomplish through their stories.¹³³ When I use the term *myth* or *mythologization*, I do not mean “fictive.” The historicity of the stories’ events is not as interesting to me as the results of these stories on Syriac Christian memory.

As myths, these stories were written at a distance from the time and heroes that they described. The charisma and talents of the saint as remembered in the myth speak not to the historical location of the saint, but rather the ideologies of the hagiographer or author. Through embellishing the feats and holiness of the subject, the hagiographer emphasized the differences between his context and that of the saint’s. He appealed to his audience to return to an imagined “Golden Age,” to a time when their patron founders and holy fathers in the faith lived as the apostles, if they were not apostles themselves.

¹³¹ Elizabeth Castelli’s work on memory and Christian martyrdom offered a model for defining how literary memory created views of the past and how stories shaped the interpretation of the circumstances of later communities. E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹³² B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Lincoln summarizes Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, trans. Rodney Needham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963; French original, 1901-2), pp. 77-78: He explains how mythology is a *classification* of religious beliefs, not scientific ideas.

¹³³ Thus we should resist a positivistic interpretation of these texts, questioning the motives of the authors, however innocent the story might seem. Otherwise we “buy into” the rhetoric of the story: “[T]he capacity of narrators to modify details of the stories that pass through them, introducing changes in the classificatory order as they do so, most often in ways that reflect their subject position and advance their interests,” Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 149.

By reading these missionary stories as myth, thus, we arrive at the ways in which missionary stories produced effects on groups of people aspiring to be bounded communities with a shared past.

Like martyr texts, missionary stories elaborated on differing late-ancient Christian interpretations of the meaning of *discipleship*. As Elizabeth Castelli showed, martyr stories created memories from the experience of periodic violence against Christian leaders and translated suffering into imitation of Christ.¹³⁴ In the same way, Christian leaders clarified the uncertainty associated with their origins through crafting lineages back to Jesus' apostles. The ideologies of orthodoxy and apostolicity were set into narrative form through Syriac missionary literature.

¹³⁴ E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 25.

Chapter One: An Apostle of Great Price: Sanctification of Thomas and the Template of Syriac Missionary Legends

Introduction

The apostolic missionary narrative, the *Acts of Thomas*,¹ attributed the conversion of “India” to the apostle known from John 20:24 as Jesus’ twin.² The oldest extant literary traditions found in Eusebius’ quotation of Origen connected a mission of Thomas to “Parthia.”³ an area to which Edessa linked her past, both culturally and politically.⁴ Legends of the apostle Thomas circulated orally and were written down and compiled into the *Acts of Thomas*, probably beginning in the third century CE.⁵ In this Christian

¹ *Acts of Thomas*. For the Greek, see “The Acts of Thomas,” commentary, bibliography (including critical editions), and translations by H.J.W. Drijvers, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, rev. ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), Vol. 2, pp. 322-411. For an English translation of the Syriac text, see *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, Commentary*, A.F.J. Klijn, 2nd edn., (Leiden: Brill, 2003). In this chapter, I have translated the Syriac version of the Acts of Thomas from W. Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1871; rep. Hildesheim and New York, 1990) I, 171ff. (Syriac), II 146ff. Wright’s edition is the same that Klijn used for his English translation; my chapter numbers correspond with those in Klijn’s English translation. This text is based on BL add. 14 645, dated to 936 AD. It is a Syriac translation of Greek text that has been lengthened in some sections, including Ch. 113, “Song of Praise of Thomas the Apostle.” See Klijn, *Acts*, p. 16. As Drijvers and Klijn have noted, this text demonstrates a catholicising revision, but has preserved much of the original Syriac. See Drijvers, “Acts,” 323 and Klijn, *Acts*, 1-17.

² Whether North or South India is meant, or a combination of these, remains unclear. Other traditions will attach the apostle Bartholomew to India. See C. Jullien and F. Jullien, *Apotres des Confins: Processus missionnaires chrétien dans l’empire iranien* (Paris: Groupe pour l’étude de la Civilisation du Moyen Orient, 2002) p. 20. India, in the concept of Greek writers and ethnographers, was oft conceived as an exotic place on the edges of civilization. There naked wise men and monsters could be found, with “brutish” mores and sexual habits. See T. Harrison, *Greeks and Barbarians* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 295-296.

³ Eusebius cites Origen: ‘When the holy apostles and disciples of our Saviour were scattered over the world, Thomas, so the tradition has it, obtained as his portion Parthia.’ Eusebius, *HE* III. 1.1. See E. Junod, ‘Origène, Eusèbe et la tradition sur la répartition des champs des mission des apôtres’, in F. Bovon *et al.* eds., *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 233-248. Origen knew the *Acts of John, Peter, Paul, Andrew and Thomas*. See Jan N. Bremmer, “The Acts of Thomas: Place, Date, and Women” in Jan Bremmer, ed., *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 74-90, here 77. See also in this volume Lourens P. Van den Bosch, “India and the Apostolate of St. Thomas,” 125-148.

⁴ Edessa was known as the “Daughter of Parthia.” See Drijvers, 325, Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1967), 41.

⁵ In this study, I will not treat the redaction of the text, nor do I include an exposition on the versions of the *Acts of Thomas*. There is a large body of literature on the *Acts of Thomas* that has an independent life of its own. For the *Acts* as a composite text, see Y. Tissot, “Les Actes apocryphes de Thomas: exemple de

post-biblical adventure novel, Thomas converts people from every social stratum through miracles, exorcisms, and poetic discourse, as well as teaching rituals and beliefs to imaginary kingdoms.

The apostle Thomas receives a privileged place in Syriac religious memory and in Edessa in particular. The fourth-century Spanish pilgrim Egeria visited the shrine of his relics in Edessa.⁶ The trade routes connecting Edessa to India exchanged Thomas' traditions between India and Edessa.⁷ He made a lasting impact on the storied presentation of apostolic lineage in oriental Christianities as the missionary to the Syriac-speaking world par excellence.⁸

Agenda and Thesis

In this chapter, I will examine how Thomistic discourse⁹ -- linguistic and material practices associated with the apostle Thomas¹⁰ -- shaped the portrayal of the missionary

recueil composite" in Bovon, *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apotres*, 223-32. See also Klijn's introduction in the *Acts of Thomas*, 1-16.

⁶ Egeria, *Itinerarium* 19. 2. See *Itinerarium Egeriae*, Pierre Maraval, ed. and trans., rev. edn. (Paris: Editions de Cerf, 2002). See also J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels: newly translated (from the Latin) with supporting documents and notes*, 3rd edn. (Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1999) 224-5 and D. Caner, *Wandering Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 57.

⁷ I am not assuming that the traditions started in India or Edessa, nor do I think that the order or direction of the exchanges of narratives can be determined. The stories were probably oral in their earliest phases. The earliest "absolut unbezweifelbare Erwähnung südindischer Christengemeinde" is from Kosmas Indikopleustes (sixth century). See A. Dihle, "Neues zur Thomas-Tradition," in idem, *Antike und Orient: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, V. Pöschl and H. Petersmann (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1984), 61-77, here 63.

⁸ Indian Christians identify themselves as "Thomas Christians," and South Indian Catholics in Madras purport to have Thomas' body in their cathedral. See Lourens P. Van den Bosch, "India and the Apostolate of St. Thomas" in J. Bremmer, ed., *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 125-148.

⁹ I am influenced here by Averil Cameron's definition of discourse. She locates the place of discourse in late ancient Christianity in her book *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of Californian Press, 1991): "Rather than a single Christian discourse, there was rather a series of overlapping discourses always in a state of adaptation and adjustment, and always ready to absorb in a highly opportunistic manner whatever might be useful from secular rhetoric and vocabulary." By discourse, she means, "all the rhetorical strategies and manners of expression that I take to be particularly characteristic of Christian writing," p. 5.

figure in Syriac religious memory.¹¹ I will argue that the *Acts of Thomas* mythologized an apostle for the exoticized eastern frontiers and created a narrative template for future Syriac missionary legends.¹² I will demonstrate how early Syriac Christians used the apostolic story to interpret their beginnings, to map their origins, and to legitimate their practices and beliefs through attributing their origins to Thomas, the “twin” of Jesus.¹³ Scholars have not pinpointed a specific social situation conditioning the circulation of the stories.¹⁴ I will argue, however, that the *Acts of Thomas* advanced the interests of early Syrian Christians by creating and compiling a fictive history to link them to their biblical past and portray a Christian landscape grafted onto the trade routes between India and Edessa.

¹⁰ S. J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1993), esp. 121-57; G. J. Riley, “Thomas Tradition and the *Acts of Thomas*,” *SBL Seminar Papers* 30 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1991), 533-42. John D. Turner argued “all three [Thomas books] contain the ascetic theme, possess a dualistic anthropology, and regard Judas Thomas as the twin (*didymos*) of the Savior and recipient of his most secret revelations.” In view of these common themes and particularly of the Thomas-tradition central to all three works he hypothesizes “the existence of a tradition centered on the apostle Thomas, the twin of Jesus and recipient of his secret words, which increasingly regards Thomas as champion and contender in the cause of abstinence from all that is worldly, especially sex.” J. D. Turner, *The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 232-7, 233, 235. See discussion in P. Sellew, “Thomas Christianity: Scholars in Quest of a Community” in J. Bremmer, ed., *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 11-35, here 12.

¹¹ “Since we have studied the *ATh* against the background of newly discovered writings like the *Gospel of Thomas* and *Thomas the Contender*, we now realise that stories about Judas Thomas were spread over a considerable time and space with roots in Aramaic-speaking Christianity.” A. F. J. Klijn, “The *Acts of Thomas* Revisited,” in J. Bremmer ed., *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 1-10, esp. p. 7. See also B. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, (‘School of St. Thomas’) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 357-409; P. H. Poirier, “Evangile de Thomas, Actes de Thomas, Livre de Thomas. Une Tradition et ses Transformations” *Apocrypha* 7 (1996) 9-26; See also A. F. J. Klijn, “John XIV 22 and the Name of Judas Thomas” in *Studies in John. Presented to J. N. Sevenster on the occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 88-96.

¹² For a full scholarly review on Thomas literature, see the articles in Bremmer ed., *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, Drijvers “Acts,” and the Introduction to Klijn’s edition of the *Acts*, esp. 13-26.

¹³ For correlation of the rituals in the *Acts of Thomas* with Syriac practices, see A. F. J. Klijn, “An ancient Syriac Baptismal Liturgy in the Syriac Acts of John,” *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963), 216-28.

¹⁴ P. Sellew, “Thomas Christianity: Scholars in Quest of a Community,” 11-35.

The *Acts of Thomas*, the Greco-Roman novels, and other texts of the apostolic *Acts* shared themes and literary commonalities.¹⁵ I will argue that the *Acts of Thomas* created variants of episodes from the canonical and non-canonical *Acts* to fit the interests of early Syriac Christianity.¹⁶ The story reordered a pagan landscape into a Christian one with scenes of weddings overturned,¹⁷ Christian queens fleeing from their pagan husbands,¹⁸ dead women returning from the underworld,¹⁹ and donkeys revealing hidden knowledge.²⁰ The saint's wonderworking ability showed his access to the divine. The colorful coming of Christianity to India brought violence, chaos, abrupt interventions and social revolt as preludes to conversion scenes.²¹ The test of Thomas' legitimacy was his kinship with Christ, demonstrated through miracles and godly insight.

The particularizations of this story framed it as Syrian. The imaginary Indian setting placed Thomas' actions in the heart of the trade-route culture familiar to the regions of Osroene and Edessa, the areas in which Thomistic discourse and the *Acts*

¹⁵ For the importance of the Greco-Roman Novel for the study of early Christian narrative, see Ronald Hock *et al*, eds., *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). For the orality of stories like the *Acts of Thomas* see in this volume esp. Christine Thomas, "Stories without Texts and Without Authors: The Problem of Fluidity in Ancient Novelistic Texts and Early Christian Literature," 273-91.

¹⁶ Below I discuss some of these chief motifs. For an introduction to early Syriac Christianity, see R. Murray's *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* Edn. rev. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004) and S. Brock's *Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992).

¹⁷ *AT* 12-13.

¹⁸ *AT* 98-99.

¹⁹ *AT* 55-56.

²⁰ *AT* 39.

²¹ The *Acts of Thomas* shares this motif with other texts of that genre, such as *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the *Acts of John*, *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Acts of Philip*. Their similarities with the Greco-Roman Novel have been shown elsewhere: "there is a motley mixture of miracle stories, fantastic deeds of the apostle, conversions, nature miracles and stories of demons, which are akin to the novelistic narrative art of the ancient world," Drijvers, "Acts," 325.

circulated.²² The explicit presence of the apostle Thomas or allusions to his memory threaded later Syriac apostolic stories together, from the *Acts of Mari* to the *Teaching of Addai*. Thus, we begin our diachronic analysis with this template of Syrian missionary travel literature.

Summary and Background to the Text

The third-century Christian “novel,” the *Acts of Thomas*, can be distinguished from other texts examined in this dissertation on account of its romantic genre and early date. This text established a mythic paradigm that Christianity came to the Syrian Orient through the royal household. The cloaking of the missionary in the ascetic virtues of celibacy, poverty and social welfare neutralized and legitimated political and economic ideologies embedded in this narrative model of the missionary vis-à-vis the monarch.²³

The *Acts of Thomas* begin with Christ’s commissioning of Judas Thomas to be the apostle of India.²⁴ Christ sells him as a slave to a merchant Haban,²⁵ and Thomas unwillingly sets forth to work for the Indian king “Gundaphorus.”²⁶ He lands in a city

²² See A. F. J. Klijn, “Der Einfluss der politischen Lage auf die Literatur in Edessa in den ersten Jahrhunderten der christlichen Ära” in J. Irmscher, ed., *Die Literatur der Spätantike, polyethnisch und polyglottisch betrachtet: eine Aufsatzsammlung* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert Verlag, 1997), 135-44. See also J. Bremmer, “The *Acts of Thomas*: Place, Date, and Women,” in *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 74-90.

²³ These were particularly, but not exclusively, characteristic of the Syrians. See S. P. Brock, “Early Syriac Asceticism,” in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984) 1:, 1-19.

²⁴ AT 1.

²⁵ AT 12. This might allude to the merchant in the bible who bought the pearl, symbolic for the kingdom of heaven. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it,” Mt. 13:45-46. See Drijvers, “Acts,” 326.

²⁶ AT 1-3. Thomas tells Jesus that he does not want to go to India because he is a humble Hebrew. Jesus assures the apostle that grace will accompany him to India.

called “Sandaruk.”²⁷ After a series of loosely tied episodes and adventures, the apostle of the “new God”²⁸ travels farther to convert the general of the king, his wife, and his daughter. In the second part of the story, Thomas arrives in the kingdom of Mazdai, where the conversion of Mygdonia, wife of Karish, the king’s kinsmen, causes social upheaval and Thomas’ imprisonment.²⁹ By the end of the story, after Thomas’ martyrdom at the hands of Mazdai, the entire kingdom of Mazdai converts, often after miracles occur.³⁰ Adventures,³¹ riots,³² escapes,³³ and inverted ascetic romances³⁴ are peppered with scenes of prayer,³⁵ baptism,³⁶ anointing,³⁷ Eucharistic meals,³⁸ hymns,³⁹

²⁷ AT 4. “The apostle landed in India, the kingdom of Gundophar, at the port *Sandrôkh*, a slight clerical error for *Sindrôdh*, the river ‘Sindh’, hence modern Karachi, old Diabul.” E. Herzfeld, *Archeological History of Iran* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 61-62.

²⁸ AT 15, 20, 42, 82, 87, 98, 101, 137, and 150.

²⁹ AT 3-4.

³⁰ For example, when Thomas raises a boy whom a demonic snake has killed, the boy jumps up confessing Christ, AT 34. Likewise the miracle of the talking donkey occurs as a demonstration of the truth and power of Thomas’ religion, AT 34. The healing of a raped and possessed woman and her daughter are effected through baptism and culminate in their confession of faith, AT 48-49.

³¹ These include accounts of the underworld AT 55, royal feasts AT 62, and stand-off with demons, AT 30-32.

³² The funniest of these is perhaps the one caused by king Gundaphorus who hunts Thomas out of the city, since his daughter and son-in-law do not consummate their marriage on account of their conversion to Christianity: “When the king heard these things from the bridegroom and bride, he tore his garments asunder. He said to those around him, ‘go out immediately in the whole city and surround it. Bring the man to me, that sorcerer, and bring him up to my house. I asked him to pray for the fortune of my wicked daughter. The man who finds him and brings him to me will be given anything he wishes.’ They all went to look for him,” AT 16.

³³ Thomas is imprisoned by King Gundaphorus for not completing the building of the palace, since Thomas distributes the funds to the poor instead. AT 21, 24. Thomas is also imprisoned by king Mazdai, at the behests of his kinsman Karish, who is angry that his wife, Mygdonia, on account of her newly adopted religion, will no longer sleep with him. AT 106-109.

³⁴ Thomas intervenes on the night of the princess bride’s marriage to stop the young couple from having intercourse. AT 11-12. Mygdonia refuses to have sex with her husband, on account of her new Christianity, and she leaves him naked and alone. Mygdonia spends the night with her nurse. AT 98-99. Earthly marriages are redefined and turned on their head, when women wish to have a heavenly bridegroom in Christ. AT 124.

³⁵ See for example Thomas’ prayer in AT 37.

and healings.⁴⁰ Adventurous conflicts and overturned social hierarchies are resolved through liturgical orders, ritual formulae, and sets of beliefs that Thomas brings to his converts.⁴¹ Some of these scenes in the later Syriac version of the text featured more developed liturgies and creedal statements than what would have existed in the third century, and these parts of the text come from post-Constantinian interpolations.

³⁶ AT 27. The baptismal formulae from these texts are beautiful and unique in Christian tradition, not least of all because of the invocation of the Holy Spirit as Mother:

“Come, holy name of Christ.

Come life giving power on high.

Come fulfillment of mercies.

Come exulted gift.

Come participation of the blessing.

Come revealer of the hidden mysteries.

Come mother of the seven dwellers, for in the eighth house is your rest.

Come messenger of reconciliation. Have communion with the hearts of these young people.

Come holy spirit. Purify their entire hearts. I will baptize them in the name of the father and son and holy spirit.”

Other baptism scenes include Thomas’ baptizing people in a river: AT 49-50, AT 122. Elsewhere Thomas defines baptism: “He began to speak about baptism and he said, ‘baptism is remission from sins. This is the birth of new people. This is the renewal of minds. This is the *mingling of body and soul*. This is the resurrection of the new man and childhood. This is participation in the remission of sins. Praise to you, power hidden in baptism. Praise to you power hidden in baptism, sharing with us. Praise to you, power made visible in baptism. Praise to you joys renewed in baptism, approaching with love.’ ” AT 132-133.

³⁷ Anointing is called “sealing” or *roushmo*. Thomas does not use oil to lather up at the banquet, but he rather seals himself to shut off his senses from bodily temptations: “While they ate and drank, also oil and fruits were brought to them. Some were anointing their facing . . . Judas gave thanks to God, and in the middle of his head he sealed himself, and he moistened his nostrils, and set oil on his ears and his sealed his heart. And he placed a crown of myrtle on his head.” AT 5. In my chapter on Simeon of Beth Arsham (Chapter Four) and Ahoudemmeh (Chapter Six) I discuss sealing imagery further. Likewise later in the text the newly baptized are initiated with oil:

“While he [Thomas] said these things he placed oil on their heads and said, ‘Praise to you merciful fruit! Praise to you name of Christ! Praise to you, hidden power released in Christ.’ He said this, and they brought a great tub and baptized them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit,” AT 132.

³⁸ AT 29, 49-50. It is interesting to note that these are wineless Eucharists. The Eucharist in the Mygdonia section, part two, however, has wine. AT 133-4.

The Eucharist is called sorcery or magic by Thomas’ detractors, like King Mazdai: AT 152.

³⁹ The two most beautiful hymns in the *Acts of Thomas* are the hymn on the Church as a bride of light AT 6-7 and the Hymn on the Pearl with the Canticle of Praise to the Father, AT 108-114. The Hymn on the Pearly circulated separately from the rest of the text.

⁴⁰ See the section below “*Mission and Healing*.”

⁴¹ Part one [Acts 1-6] and part two of the text [Mazdai’s family, 7-13] form a literary unity in which “all the narratives and the liturgical sections connected with them, prayers, sermons, epiclesis and hymns, present the mystery of salvation and the way to become a partaker of it.” Drijvers, “Acts of Thomas,” 327.

The *Acts of Thomas* have generated a wide body of scholarly literature, notably from, A. F. J. Klijn, J. Bremer, and H. J. W. Drijvers. Scholars have examined this text from a variety of angles, ranging from the history of early Syrian asceticism to the text's influence in Manichean circles.⁴² My purpose here is to map out the mythological patterns of the Christian missionary in the *Acts of Thomas* that became standard types for future stories analyzed in this dissertation.

The *Acts* appear to have been written in Syriac, almost immediately translated into Greek, and then translated into Syriac again.⁴³ H. J. W. Drijvers argued that the *Acts of Thomas* originated most likely from the area around Edessa.⁴⁴ The internal evidence for this claim makes this plausible. Additionally, the *Acts* shared idioms and imagery found in the hymns and homilies of Ephrem the Syrian. The *Acts* also enjoyed an independent interpretative tradition in Syriac: the sixth-century Syriac hymnist Jacob of Serug wrote a homily on the heavenly palace that Thomas built.⁴⁵ The text's placement

⁴² I will not be entering into the question of literary influence or dependence upon other *Acts* traditions. Here I follow H. J. W. Drijvers who has noted, as in the case of the Syriac *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Paul*, that parallels and shared motifs, "can be better explained from the common background of tradition and milieu shared by the two Acts." Drijvers, "Acts," 323.

⁴³ See Fn 1. "[T]he ATh came into being at the beginning of the 3rd century in East Syria and were originally composed in Syriac. This original version, which was probably at once translated into Greek, as was the case with other writings in this bilingual area, has not survived." Drijvers, "Acts," 323. So also H. W. Attridge, "The Original Language of the Acts of Thomas," in idem *et al.*, eds., *Of Scribes and Scrolls* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990) 241-50 at 250: "It is, however, clear that the range of witnesses now available to us ultimately depends on a Syriac original." See Klijn, "Revisited," in *Apocryphal Acts*, p. 4, fn. 16.

⁴⁴ Drijvers argues also that the continual revisions, interpolations, and translations (between Greek and Syriac) are connected in part to the influence of Manichaeism in East Syria: "The manifold history of the text thus reflects the gradual stratification of orthodoxy and heresy which was set in motion in the East Syriac area particularly by Manichaeism." Drijvers, "Acts," 323.

⁴⁵ Jacob of Serug, "Memra on the Apostle Thomas, when he argued with the Lord and his disciples, 'I am not going to India;'" "Memra on the Apostle Thomas, when he was sold by our Lord to the merchant Haban and the cup-bearer who hit him;" and "Memra on the Palace on high that the Apostle Thomas built." See Syriac edition with German translation in W. Strothmann, *Jakob von Sarug: Drei Gedichte über den Apostel Thomas in Indien* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976).

of Thomas in India correlates with the cultural exchange between Edessa and India/Parthia in the third century.⁴⁶ The author flavored the text with historical details, of which the most strident is the character of the Indian king Gundaphorus, who is known from other ancient historical sources.⁴⁷ The addition of Parthian themes in the story might be based on the embassies between Rome and North India that passed through third-century Edessa.

Crafting Literary Patterns for Syrian Missionary Texts:

The *Acts of Thomas* established mythic persons as models that became literary symbols of apostolicity in later traditions. Kings,⁴⁸ apostles,⁴⁹ and merchants were linked together.⁵⁰ The apostle was a stranger,⁵¹ a healer,⁵² who announced⁵³ and imitated Jesus

⁴⁶ One of Edessa's most famous philosopher's and syncretistic thinker and ethnographer, Bardaisan, had written a book about India and its traditions, and he attributes his knowledge of India to his acquaintance with an embassy to the Roman emperor Elagabalus (218-222). He wrote about this and his work was used by Porphyrius who wrote on the Styx. Porphyry, *Fragments of Greek History* III, C 719, F.1. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp, 1966), 10, 173-5, 218. The *Acts of Thomas* fits into a context in which people in Edessa were interested in Indian customs and stories. The author of the novel *Kleitón and Leukippe*, Achilleus Tatios, seems to have borrowed motifs from Bardaisan's descriptions of Indian caves and lakes of ordeals. Achilleus Tatios would have known Bardaisan through Porphyry.

⁴⁷ King Gundaphorus, whose name means "May he find Glory," was an Indo-Parthian king (ruled 20-46 CE) in Drangiana, Arachosia (southeastern Afghanistan, northern Pakistan), and Punjab. He is known from Takht-I Bahi inscription and coin issues in silver and copper in his name: "Gondophores' dynasty represented the house of Suren, highest of the five premier families of Arsacid Iran, invested with the hereditary right of commanding the royal armies, and placing the crown on the king's head at the coronation." See A. D. H. Bivar, "Gondophares" in E. Yarshater, ed., *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol XI, Fas. 2 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1983), 135-136. Sten Konow, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* II/1: *Kharoshthi Inscriptions, with the Exception of Those of Asoka* (Calcutta, 1929, 57-62) esp. p. 62. A. Dihle, „Neues zur Thomas-tradition,“ *JbAC* 6 (1963), 54-70. *Idem*, "The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature," *Proc. Cambr. Phil. Soc.* (1964), 15-23.

⁴⁸ King/kingdom: *Malcho/malchoutho* occurs 150 times.

⁴⁹ Apostle: *shliho* – The authors though identify him as the "Apostle of the New God." This word "apostle" occurs 127 times in the Syriac text. ("Thomas" occurs 35 times, and Judas 20 (he is often "Judas Thomas"). This word also means messenger, emissary, or missionary. In that sense, as I mention in the Conclusion of this dissertation, all "missionaries" in Syriac could be called "apostles."

⁵⁰ Merchant: *thagro*. This word occurs 19 times.

⁵¹ Stranger: *nukroyo*. 23 times or the translated Greek, *xenios*, *axinoyo* (see p. 16 below).

and spoke about the freedom that Christianity brings.⁵⁴ The apostle converted all levels of society through his instruction,⁵⁵ teaching them how Christianity redeems⁵⁶ people to stand up⁵⁷ and glorify⁵⁸ the God who prepared heavenly dwelling places for those who wedded their souls to Christ.

The story shared intertextual themes with the Bible and the Greek and Roman novels. The *Acts* contained, for example, a variant on the myth of the resurrection narratives of Mary Magdalene and Jesus.⁵⁹ As the matron Mygdonia visits Thomas in prison, she did not recognize him: “[Mygdonia] feared and fell down. And he stood up [qom] before her and said, ‘don’t be afraid Mydgonia!’ Do not desert Jesus Christ. Do not desert your Lord to whom you have entrusted your soul.”⁶⁰ Novelistic elements were used in a paradoxical way as the text promoted asceticism and romanticized chaste relationships between men and women.⁶¹ Mygdonia fled her husband’s bed to visit the apostle.⁶² As in the *Acts of the Apostles*, this text featured a miraculous escape from

⁵² Healer: *Oso*. This word occurs 51 times.

⁵³ Announce/Preach: *kraz*. This word occurs 25 times.

⁵⁴ Freedom/or Free: *hayerto* : This word occurs 49 times.

⁵⁵ Convert: *tlmud*. This word occurs 10 times.

⁵⁶ Redeem: *shbaq*. This word occurs 17 times.

⁵⁷ Stand: *qom*. This word occurs 60 times.

⁵⁸ Praise: *shoubcho*. This word occurs 79 times.

⁵⁹ Mt 28:8-20; Mk. 16:9-20; Lk 24:13-49; Jn 20:11-21:25.

⁶⁰ AT 119-120.

⁶¹ To some extent, asceticism and chastity also characterize the Greek novels until the final marriage scene(s) at the end.

⁶² AT 93-94.

prison.⁶³ As in some of the non-canonical narratives about Jesus, including the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the *Acts of Thomas* included a “tour” of the underworld.⁶⁴

Twinning Apostolic Lineage and Binary Patterns of Contrast

The *Acts of Thomas* identified its protagonist as “Judas Thomas,” indicating that Syrian Christians identified Jude (the brother of James) and Thomas (the one called “the twin”) to be the same person. That created enormous interpretative possibilities for the story-tellers behind the *Acts*.⁶⁵ The *Acts* paired images of twins and slaves, masters and apostles, to elevate their patron’s lineage. The narrative expanded on the Pauline image of Christ’s *kenosis*.⁶⁶ The all-powerful Lord became a slave to redeem humanity, and he then sold his freeborn twin into slavery to further his mission.⁶⁷ The holy man *qua* slave motif, moreover, could be an allusion to the biblical patriarch Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery.⁶⁸ The *Acts of Thomas* blended discourse twins and family with the Christian rhetoric of paradox to construct an apostolic history for the Orient. The Syriac

⁶³ *Acts* 5: 17-26.

⁶⁴ See the “Gospel of Nicodemus or Acts of Pilate” in J. K. Elliot, ed., *The Apocryphal Jesus: Legends of the Early Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 164-205.

⁶⁵ “There evidently developed a form of Christianity in which the ‘twin’ motif was a constitutive factor. This central motif occasioned the characteristic naming of the apostle Judas, the twin brother of Jesus, or briefly Judas Thomas.” Drijvers, “Acts,” 325.

⁶⁶ This is an image from Phil. 2:11.

⁶⁷ Thomas distinguished his mission thus: “I am imitating you my Lord Jesus Christ. It was not just that I believe, but that that I endure many things! You made me worthy to be in the Lord’s image.” AT 107.

⁶⁸ Gen. 37: 25-36. Joseph was also seen as a type of Christ in Christian biblical interpretation. See, for instance, the typological analogy drawn between the suffering and endurance of Joseph and Jesus found in the writings of the fourth-century bishop Ambrose of Milan (339-97). See Judith H. Newman, “Joseph” in E. Kessler and N. Wenborn, eds., *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p 241-2.

version of the text enumerated the names of the apostles along with their missionary assignments. This specificity was absent from the Greek text.⁶⁹

Twin discourse elevated Thomas' status through blurring distinctions between the actions of Christ and the apostle. Thomas healed and exorcised as Christ,⁷⁰ and the characters mistook Thomas and Christ for each another.⁷¹ The story crafted themes based on biblical precedents: Thomas was a carpenter like Christ, who preached, healed, and shared meals with his disciples after he had healed them. Thomas, as Jesus, died at the hands of a political ruler. Yet a closer look reveals the stark differences between Thomas' deeds and those of the canonical Jesus: Thomas occupied himself with kings, queens, princesses, and the affairs of the royal bedroom.⁷² Jesus worked with fishermen, sinful women, lepers, and the affairs of Galilean peasants.⁷³ Thomas travels as a slave with merchants.⁷⁴ Jesus journeyed as a "marginal" Jewish teacher.⁷⁵ Thomas did not identify himself as Jewish nor was the text interested in talking about Jews or Jewish practices.⁷⁶ The twin language and Thomas' weaving of biblical verses into the text,

⁶⁹ See AT 1. Klijn's distinguished the Greek and the Syriac versions of the texts by using Italics for the sections in which the Syriac texts differs from the Greek.

⁷⁰ For example, Thomas resurrects a dead boy, AT 30-31.

⁷¹ AT 11.

⁷² See especially AT 11-12 and AT 117.

⁷³ Mt. 4:19.

⁷⁴ AT 1-3.

⁷⁵ I take this phrase from John Meier's book, aware of the hotly contested field of the historical Jesus. Meier, J. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. 3 (New York, Doubleday, 2001).

⁷⁶ The Hebrew flute girl recognizes Thomas: "This flute girl was a Hebrew (ܚܒܝܬܐ)."

While the rest were celebrating, she stood close to him." AT 5.

however, naturalized these divergences between Thomas and Christ, and this gave the story a biblical gloss and “India” an apostolic past.

The binary of Christ and Thomas corresponded with the construction of the text’s dualistic symbolic universe.⁷⁷ The story set up paired contrasts between the corruptible and the incorruptible, kings and servants, the demonic and this earth versus the divine and heaven, men and women, conversion of the heart and healing of the body, etc. Even earthly “goods” were poor imitations of their heavenly counterparts.⁷⁸ The binary hermeneutic emerged also in the narrative pattern of the hidden and the revealed,⁷⁹ the eye of the body versus the eye of the heart,⁸⁰ the temporal world versus eternal life.⁸¹ The ideology of this text, along with many in the Thomas tradition, is that Thomas uncovered the dual dimensions of the world hidden to most. Satan, as prince of the created world, beguiled human beings into a state of forgetfulness about their true origin; the earth was a neutral arena in which good and evil intermingled. The missionary won

⁷⁷ It is tempting to see this correlating with the twofold nature of Christ, but the Christology of the text does not have the reified language of Nicaea or Chalcedon. For the theology of Christ as presented in the *Acts of Thomas* see Klijn, “Revisited,” 8; P. Sellew, “Thomas Christianity: Scholars in Quest of a Community,” 34; Istavan Czachesz, “The Bride of the Demon, Narrative Strategies of Self-Definition in the *Acts of Thomas*,” 56, and Drijvers, “Acts,” 352.

⁷⁸ Thus Mygdonia notes “This is the feast of corruption and that the feast of eternal life. Those were the bridesmaids and groomsmen that pass away, but these are the groomsmen and bridesmaids that are betrothed forever.” AT 123.

⁷⁹ Thomas addresses Jesus as “Hidden Mystery that was revealed to me.” AT 47. “Come gift from on high! Come perfect mercies! Come Holy Spirit! Come revealer of the mysteries in the sight of the prophets!” AT 50. See also Judas’ prayer of praise in AT 80. Likewise Thomas preaches: “Believe the teaching of truth. Believe in the one who shows truth things. Believe in the revealer of hidden things. Believe in the search for life. Believe in the revealer of hidden things.” AT 79. These examples express much more than the theology of the “hidden and the revealed,” but I cite them only to demonstrate the dual patterns in the language of the story.

⁸⁰ AT 28, 35-37, 53, 80, 136.

⁸¹ AT 76, 97-98, 120, 121, and especially 124.

the world for his God and the Christians, and he replaced demons with servants of Christ to unify fragmented persons and communities.

The text created two contrasting lines of descent in two non-human biblical characters: a talking donkey descended from Balaam's ass,⁸² and the serpent sprung from the snake of Genesis.⁸³ The snake called himself a creeper and the son of a creeper,⁸⁴ and he enumerated his participation in evil events of biblical history. The donkey, who will carry Thomas on his back, claimed to be an heir from noble asses memorialized in scripture.⁸⁵ These animals were used to think through duality. Just as apostles divided into Judas Thomas' and Judas Iscariots, and incorporeal beings into angels and demons, so the text used biblical animals to construct twinned lines of descent in the created world. The donkey/serpent motif showed inversions of power: the snake tempted and poisoned; his authority came from his kinship to Satan. The nearness of the donkey to

⁸² AT 40.

⁸³ AT 32.

⁸⁴ "Judas said to him, 'from what lineage are you?' The snake said to him, 'I am a creeper and son of a creeper, and a hurtful one and son of a hurtful one.' AT 32.

"I am the son of that one to whom was given the authority of the created world and he disquiets it. I am the son of that one who is likened to God by those who obey him and do his will. I am the son of that one who has authority over all the things under heaven. I am the son of that one beyond the sea and its sealed mouth. I am the son of the twin of that one who shows reason, through the transgression of Adam against the command of God."

"I am that one who incited Cain to kill his brother. On account of this I was created and made to accompany the earth and stars that have grown within it. I am that one who brought down the righteous from one high. I destroy them through the desire for women. I bring to life princes of the body, and through them I do my will. I am that one through whose intent the heart of Pharaoh was hardened to kill the children of Israel, that through this deed of hardness he might crush them. I am that one who led the people of Israel astray. Then I enslaved them to create a calf. I am that one who incited Caiphas and Herod through the devil concerning the upright judgment. I am that one who bribed Judas while he was enslaved by me to hand Christ over to death. I am that one to whom authority over this world was given. The son of Mary himself drove me away from him under compulsion."

⁸⁵ "I am from the breed that served the apostle Balaam. And your Lord God rode upon my lineage. I was sent to give you rest and on account of the fact that those whom you converted believed," AT 38.

the divine, likewise, was revealed in the beast's prophetic speech and humble service to Thomas.

The kinship constructed between Thomas and Jesus gave a biblical texture to legitimize the ideologies of eastern Christians. By retrojecting the hymns and practices of early Syrian Christians onto the text and redefining their gestures and words to be Thomas,⁸⁶ the authors crafted sameness between themselves and the first followers of Jesus.⁸⁷ The text lengthened the practices of Syrian Christians back to the first generation after Jesus, differentiating apostolic roots for the trade route culture between Edessa and Parthia through Thomas' lineage.

Scriptural lineage played a vital role in the interpretation and creation of apostolic "history" through narrative expansion on biblical themes. The story's concern for origins and the teaching of ritual practices became pronounced features of later Syriac missionary texts. The *Acts of Thomas* stood out from later texts, however, in its focus on the divine origins of the individual believer.⁸⁸ Missionary stories like the *Teaching of Addai* and *Jacob Baradaeus* used ordination to present a clean line of descent from the

⁸⁶ The Syriac version of the *Acts* introduced unction after the baptism. This post-baptismal anointing is evidence of how the Syriac reworking of the Greek text, itself a translation of an earlier Syriac text, was refitted to align with later Syriac Christian practices. See Y. Tissot, "Les Actes apocryphes de Thomas: exemple de recueil composite," in *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apotres*, 223-32.

⁸⁷ I am influenced in my reading here by the J. Z. Smith's article, "What a Difference a Difference Makes," in the collection of his essays *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 253.

⁸⁸ The text portrays a "teacher" Christ: "an example of how man was intended to be, and how he can again become what he was in the beginning. The beginning and end of the human predicament (man's lostness) are an act of human freedom, the hence knowledge of the truth." Drijvers, "Acts" 329.

apostles to their communities. The genealogy of the missionary and his “church” will replace an interest in the salvation of a single convert, as seen in the *Acts of Thomas*.⁸⁹

Mission and Healing

In the *Acts*, Thomas prayed with his disciples to Jesus using healing rhetoric: “*You became for us a medicine of life (samm hayye) through your life-giving body and by the sprinkling of your blood.*”⁹⁰ The *Acts of Thomas* depicted Thomas as an itinerant healer, creating a literary type for the missionary saint in Syriac literature.⁹¹ Whereas other traditions presented Christianity as a “perfect philosophy” and crafted descent through their teachers, the Syrians portrayed themselves as the children of healers; the Syriac version of the *Acts* contained more healing rhetoric than the Greek translation.⁹² Teaching and divine insight were never “disembodied;” conversion of the heart began with a strengthened body.⁹³

⁸⁹ This is especially true in the *Teaching of Addai*, *Life of Jacob Baradaeus*, and *Ahoudemmeh*, and the *Acts of Mari*.

⁹⁰ AT 113.

⁹¹ An exception is John of Ephesus’ “Life” of Simeon of Beth Arsham. However, he uproots heresy, which is represented as a type of sickness or disease. See Chapter Four.

⁹² The Syriac version of Thomas’ prayer reads: “Rather, believe and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ who we are proclaiming, and live with him forever. He will be for you a harbor in a troubled sea and a source of living water in the place of thirst and he will be for you a full basket in the place of famine and he will be for you life for your souls. And he will be healing and life for your bodies,” AT 37. The phrase “healing and life for your bodies” is absent from the Greek text. See Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, p. 105.

⁹³ See Aho Shemunkasho, *Healing in the Theology of St. Ephrem*. Gorgias Dissertations, Near Eastern Studies 1 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 25-44. Susan Ashbrook Harvey has written extensively on this theme. S. A. Harvey, “Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syriac Perspective,” *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 43 (1999), pp. 105-30. See also her article “Healing the Christian Body: An Ancient Syriac Theme,” *Good and Faithful Servant: Stewardship in the Orthodox Tradition*, ed. A. Scott (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), pp.57-70. Harvey discusses the olfactory character of the healing theme in her book, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), esp. 36, 69, 74, 90-92, 120, 147-150, 202-219.

Healing miracles preceded conversion in the *Acts of Thomas*.⁹⁴ The saint's charisma was not his ability to debate or persuade with homiletic discourse.⁹⁵ Rather, Thomas forged new communities of healed people,⁹⁶ using miracles of exorcisms or resurrections to build Christian kingdoms in India, and he taught his followers that Christ was the divine healer.⁹⁷

Through the *Acts of Thomas*, the editors portrayed ideologies of early Syrian views of the body, sex, wealth, and work, and redefined them as “apostolic.” Sex corrupted,⁹⁸ and it belonged to the underworld.⁹⁹ Espousal to Christ as the heavenly bridegroom healed both men and women from the decay and mortality attached to marriage, and the text linked sex with murder and deceit.¹⁰⁰ The missionary thus “freed” the couple from the ills attached to family roles and sexuality. Thomas cured couples and sealed their bodies for Christ,¹⁰¹ as he preached about continence.¹⁰² Thomas then cured cities from poverty and social malaise.

⁹⁴ This is a commonplace generic to all in the genre of apostolic *Acts* narratives. As a specific example in the *Acts*, Thomas resurrected a boy whom a snake bites, *AT* 30.

⁹⁵ This is especially true of the missionary stories of *Addai* and *Simeon of Beth Arsham*. See Chapters Two and Four.

⁹⁶ An especially beautiful example of a unified body of healed Christians is in *AT* 26-27.

⁹⁷ The general of the king prays: ““I believe in you Jesus Christ God who are the living son of God. You became man and appeared as healer and life giver and savior for all who converted to you in truth.” *AT* 65.

⁹⁸ The bride, who chooses Christianity over sexual intercourse, tells her mother that the “veil of corruption” has been lifted away from her. *AT* 14.

⁹⁹ *AT* 56.

¹⁰⁰ *AT* 42-3 and 52.

¹⁰¹ The language of sealing is important in the baptismal formula. See *AT* 52-54.

¹⁰² *AT* 84-85. ܠܚܝܬܐ

In the *Acts of Thomas*, community welfare was sustained through programs of asceticism and social reform.¹⁰³ The text portrayed the advent of Christianity as the building of a new city structured on care of the poor, moderate asceticism, and a leveling of class distinctions. The missionary taught Christian labor to the city. Thomas, whom king Gundaphorus hires to construct a palace, gave the money meant for the edifice to the poor instead. When the king asked about the progress of Thomas' palace-building, the royal messengers responded:

He is not doing anything [with respect to the construction], but rather he goes around in cities and towns giving to the poor and teaching them a new God. Also he heals the sick, and he drives out demons. . . . We thought that he was a sorcerer. It was thought from his asceticism and his religion that he was a magician or an apostle of the new God. He fasts and prays a great deal. He eats bread and salt and drinks water. He wears a linen garment and takes nothing from anyone. Anything that he has, he gives to others.¹⁰⁴

The *Acts of Thomas* naturalized an ascetic view of the body, aimed at the restoration of an imagined original divine condition, using free will to attain an immortal (and asexual) state.¹⁰⁵

Rituals and Resolution of Social Upheaval

Late ancient Christian missionary stories often presented the apostle as a messenger who orders chaotic societies “threatened” by paganism or heresy. In the *Acts of Thomas*, a wandering carpenter attracted men, women, princes, slaves, and even donkeys to his movement; he forged a new hierarchy to resolve the chaos that his initial

¹⁰³ See S. A. Harvey, “The Holy and the Poor: Models from Early Syriac Christianity” in E. Hanawalt and C. Lindberg, Eds., *Through the Eye of the Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare* (Kirkville, Mo: Thomas Jefferson Press, 1994), 43-66.

¹⁰⁴ AT 16-17.

¹⁰⁵ Drijvers, “Acts” 328.

message created. The *Acts of Thomas* crafted a “Christian India” as the hero who resolved social revolts through converting kingdoms to his new God.¹⁰⁶

The story presented Thomas’ religion as one that undermined social distinctions based on birth, class, or gender. Thomas was a foreigner, *axinoya*,¹⁰⁷ who entered the social fabric of the kingdoms of India through the bottom, as a craftsman or carpenter.¹⁰⁸ The wandering apostle, homeless and uninterested in concerns of the world, directed people to their true heavenly home through assigning to them positions in the Christian earthly hierarchy that anticipated their lives in heaven. Christian baptism led to the break-up of noble families and the forging of new ones. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the apostle’s reordering of social groups flattened categorical attributes (gender) and relational ones (patron-client, slave-king) in order to replace these with a new category (Christian) that ties its members in a social web of which the apostle is the nexus. Thomas uses rituals to set the converted person apart for Christ.¹⁰⁹ Mygdonia, for example, freed herself from Karish’s control and handed herself over to the Christian community, trading her noble earthly status that enslaved her to her husband for a “heavenly master,” Christ, who set her free.

¹⁰⁶ After the conversion of Gundaphorus and his brother, followed by the prayers for the descent of the spirit, there is a representation of a unified Christian community “men, women and children” – a unified past, from king to child, and there is an absence of conflict. The king and his brother follow as they are unified in their obedience to the Christian God. Thomas’ authority is realized through God’s attestation of the treasures in heaven. *AT* 21-24.

¹⁰⁷ *AT* 6.

¹⁰⁸ So also Thomas endures a blow to the cheek from the serving man, as the servile Hebrew flute girl identifies him as one from her country. *AT* 7-8, 17-18.

¹⁰⁹ The matron Mygdonia asks Thomas to baptize her so that her body will show her new Lord: “Mygdonia said to him, ‘Give me the seal [*roushomo*] of Jesus Christ, that I might receive the gift from your hands.’” *AT* 150.

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the saint forged new Indian kingdoms glued together through Christian practices. Poverty, celibacy or marital continence, and faith in Christ bring sweetness, rest, eternal life, and transformed the body into a purified temple of God.¹¹⁰ Thomas' ascetic reforms fashioned bodies fit for liturgical work and "freed" from obligations of the household, battlefield, and court. Thomas undid the damage of societal norms and revealed to humanity their divine origins.¹¹¹ Thomas replaced sacrifices to the gods with prayers of thanksgiving, feasting with ascetic Eucharists, and families with communities of continent people united in his teaching.¹¹² The myth packaged prophetic and philosophical ideals of worldly detachment in apostolic garb and created a narrative icon of early Syriac Christianity.¹¹³

Part Two: Thomistic Discourse, Sacred Mobility, Sanctification of Thomas for India

Speech of Kings and Apostles

The *Acts of Thomas* situated Thomas' preaching within the setting of a royal court.¹¹⁴ In a cultural model that had both biblical and non-biblical precedents,¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ "Blessed are the bodies made worthy to become purified temples in which Christ might dwell." AT 94.

¹¹¹ After his ascetic wedding night with his bride, the prince proclaims: "He [Thomas] showed me how to find my own self." AT 34.

¹¹² All of the new practices that Thomas brings are divorced from practices that promote the reproduction of traditional Greco-Roman and Persian (Manichaeism excepted) religions. In J. Z. Smith's terms, the religions "There" are replaced with "Anywhere." See J. Z. Smith, "Here, There, and Anywhere," reprinted in the collection of his essays *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 323-334.

¹¹³ Ascetic models from the Bible include the prophets Elijah, Moses on Mount Sinai, Jesus fasting in the desert, and John the Baptist. The Greco-Roman schools, similarly, looked to Diogenes the Cynic and Socrates as models of discipline and detachment.

¹¹⁴ See H. J. W Drijvers, "Apocryphal Literature in the Cultural Milieu of Osroene" *Apocrypha* 1 (1990), pp. 231-47, here 233.

¹¹⁵ Bible: righteous prophet versus wicked king or queen (i.e. 1 Kings 21, Elijah before Naboth and Jezebel); Jesus versus Pilate (John 18:28-19:16). Non biblical: philosopher or poet versus the king or emperor, as in Alexander the Great and Diogenes the Cynic of Sinope. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of*

Thomas played the part of the holy man, detached from material cares, who spoke with parrhesia or frank speech, warning kings and their families about the transitory nature of their power.¹¹⁶ Despite Thomas' criticism of the transitory structures of the kingdom, Thomas' program took root through the royal court, structured over and against its institutions and accoutrements.¹¹⁷ The rhetorical dynamic of king versus apostle, however, had a different symbolic force because of the Pre-Constantian social context of its composition. The authors behind this text were not competing with other Christianities for the sponsorship of the king; rather, the king stood as a metaphor for temporal authority or empire to contrast with the heavenly ruler, Christ. Unity was imagined through a conversion of a king to Christianity, but it was not a single Eusebian Empire under one ruler and God.¹¹⁸ Rather, Thomas united kings under Christ without praising either a specific king or the notion of kingship.¹¹⁹

The narrative refashioned the roots of Christianity through Thomas to elevate the missionary-merchant-poet above the kings Gundaphorus and Mazdai.¹²⁰ The *Acts of*

Eminent Philosophers, Volume 2, R. Hicks, trans. Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1925), vi. 32.

¹¹⁶ This is a motif that becomes normative in late antique Christian discourse. See P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

¹¹⁷ "You are glorified with servants, possessions, garments, concubines and transient foods and abominations of every sort. I am glorified with poverty, asceticism, humility, fasting, prayer, great thanksgiving, fraternal fellowship, the spirit of holiness and brotherly asceticism." AT 139.

¹¹⁸ A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), esp. 124-127, for the evolution of political discourse for a Christian Empire.

¹¹⁹ There are three kings in the *Acts of Thomas*: the father of the bride and groom AT 13, Gundaphorus AT 17-81, *passim*, and Mazdai AT 82-170.

¹²⁰ Both kings required extra persuasion to be converted in comparison to the women and laity in the text. The name "Mazdai" symbolizes "The Mazdaean" or the "Zoroastrian." Herzfeld suggests that, if there would have been an historical personage linked to the contemporary king of Iran and "enemy of Christian propaganda," it could have been Gotarzes II Gewpuhr: "Gotarzes' son *Wezhan* and his wife *Manezha*, the heroines of the love-romance of the *Shahname*, in the *Acts of Thomas* are living at the court of Gundopharr," E. Herzfeld, *Archeological History of Iran*, 62.

Thomas replaced the authority of the king and his gods with that of the apostle and the Christian God. The conversion of the king was necessary to legitimate the power of the apostle and to differentiate Thomas' authority from the prince's. The story replaced the temporal hierarchy with an imagined divine one.

Thomas' rhetorical aggrandizement of poverty gained force as it contrasted to the earthly power and richness of his audience.¹²¹ Thomas' program of simplicity and asceticism was presented as a foil to the social complexity and decadence of the king and his family. The myth classified two opposing groups of social relationships: the king and his court versus the apostle and his Christian community. This stance of Thomas vis-à-vis the king granted his speech the same authority as that of the monarch's.

As Thomas gathered his group around him, the community resembled a new "kingdom," and the authority of a king endowed the words of the missionary apostle. Thomas was the sole religious specialist of the story, converting the king through his persuasion.¹²² No human rivals exceeded Thomas' eloquence. A talking donkey identified Thomas' apostolate for India,¹²³ and the paradox of his asinine insight was

¹²¹ There are several examples of this. Thomas helps the poor, Jesus is described as poor, and the poor are the first beneficiaries of divine blessings. Thomas' prayer in the bridal chamber: "Our Lord accompanies his servants and gladdens and governs those who believe in him. He is a place of refuge and a rest from pain and hope for the poor and salvation for the weak and healing of sick souls and eternal life and salvation of creation." *AT* 10. Thomas builds a Temple for the poor: "And he was providing for the poor and tending to their needs that their pains might be removed." *AT* 19. Thomas prays after he cast out the demon who raped a girl: "Jesus, poor man and hook of fish for the banquet and the feast, satisfying many ships from a small harbor." *AT* 47.

¹²² This sets an important pattern for future missionary stories. This reappears in *Addai*, *Jacob Baradaeus*, *Simeon of Beth Arsham*, and *Ahoudemmeh*.

¹²³ "Twin of Christ and apostle of the most high God, son of the hidden life giving Word, bearer of the hidden mysteries of the son of God, son of free men who became a slave, who bought his freedom in obedience to many, who went from having much to poverty, through whom the Lord stole many away, that there might be a cause for life for this region of India, he who came not in his own desire toward the people of India, who turned many through his appearance and through his divine words, get up and ride upon me and have a rest until you enter the city." *AT* 39.

contrasted with the un-baptized people who “lived in a desolate region and were led like animals who cannot speak.”¹²⁴ The myth subverted the hierarchy of rulers of the land who denied Christ through contrasting their blindness to the insight of beasts of burden who recognized Christ’s Lordship.

Apostle’s Heightened Speech: Hymn on the Pearl and the Inversion of the Missionary Story¹²⁵

King Mazdai imprisoned Thomas for bewitchment. While in jail, Thomas sang a song about a mission: the *Hymn on the Pearl*.¹²⁶ Thomas chanted about a king and queen who sent their son on an expedition to find a hidden pearl, giving him a royal tunic. The prince set out, but he lost his way in Egypt and forgot his royal heritage. His parents sent him a letter to help him recall his mission and royal lineage. The youth then regained his robe, retrieved the pearl from the serpent, and came home to rule his land with his brother.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ AT 37.

¹²⁵ This is a poetic section of the *Acts of Thomas* that circulated independently from the rest of the text. See P.-H. Poirier, *L’hymne de la perle des actes de Thomas. Introduction, Texte-Traduction, Commentaire*, (Louvain-la-Neuve, P. Pierier, 1981). The hymn is transmitted in one Syriac Manuscript (BM Add. 14645) and one Greek MS (B 35 of the Bibliotheca Vallicelliana in Rome). It probably also circulated independently under the name of Judas Thomas, and is therefore an important element in the Syriac missionary tradition. This didactic poem conflates and interprets the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Pearl of great Price. Luke 15: 11-32; Matt. 13: 45-46. See also Drijvers, “Acts,” 330-1.

¹²⁶ The freedom of Thomas’ poetic inspiration contrasts to his physical confinement. This is a common motif in classical literature. Odysseus is compared to a bard three times in the *Odyssey*. See Ruth Scodel, “Bardic Performance and Oral Tradition in Homer,” *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 119, No. 2, pp. 171-194.

¹²⁷ “The Hymn is a symbolic portrayal of the life of Adam, the man who of his own free will left his Father’s house, Paradise, with a part of his inheritance. His parents, God and the Holy Spirit, sent him out, and took from him the splendid robe, the image of God, which however they kept ready for him for the time when he had robbed the serpent of the pearl, that is deprived Satan of his power (cf. Gen. 3:15-24). Then the whole process is put into reverse: he recovers his splendid robe, the image of God, and will rule with his brother, his heavenly second self, Jesus (cf. Thomas and Jesus as twins) in the (heavenly) kingdom.” Drijvers, “Acts,” 331.

This story inverted a version of the missionary story itself, warning of the dangers that befall a traveler who forgot the intent of his mission. The type/anti-type patterning of the *Hymn*'s images related to themes from the dominant narrative. The values of the hymn contrasted to the ideals of the *Acts of Thomas*. Unlike Thomas, who reoriented himself to Christ through prayer,¹²⁸ and who was not distracted by fear of imprisonment, the prince of the hymn began with purpose but lost his way.¹²⁹ The hymn reunited a family broken apart; the *Acts of Thomas* broke up earthly family and discouraged marriage. The hymn celebrated royalty; the *Acts of Thomas* promoted earthly poverty. The prince of the *Hymn on the Pearl* must hold fast to his material possessions,¹³⁰ whereas the *Acts of Thomas* promised freedom through detaching the self from property. Thomas, though a pauper and magician in the temporal world, emerged as a superior double of the royal son.¹³¹ Both the prince and Thomas moved from freeborn social statuses into slavery. Both completed missions in service to a lord. Both fall into decadent societies,¹³² but Thomas resisted its temptations.¹³³ He, unlike the prince, never forgot his royal lineage.

¹²⁸ Thomas prays or is said to be praying at least 22 times in the text: AT 3, 10, 20, 29, 34, 53, 54, 67, 88, 94, 104, 108, 115, 117, 141, 144, 145, 156, 157, 160, 167, and 170.

¹²⁹ Overtly Christian imagery is absent from this hymn. Indeed the theme of a well-born son who goes on a journey, loses his way or forgets his mission, and must rediscover his true self is commonplace in ancient literature of the Mediterranean and Near East, from the *Odyssey* (one thinks of Odysseus with the Calypso or the Lotus Eaters in Book IX of the *Odyssey*), Luke's Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), to Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions*, which is in many ways an extended metaphor on this theme.

¹³⁰ The pearl and toga are symbolic for his royal birth. AT 108-110.

¹³¹ Thomas in his imprisonment has the freedom or *parrhesia* of Christianity in the paradoxical way reminiscent of the blind seers and poets of Classical Greco-Roman myth. AT 116.

¹³² The hymn discusses the theme of being a foreigner: "By the power of the offerings, they sensed me though I was not a companion of their country. And they mixed me into their traps. Also their food made me stray. I, the son of kings, wandered. I worked for their king. I lost the pearl that my family sent me. From the burden of their troubling, the deep evil marred me as it touched me." AT 109.

The interpolation of this *Hymn* into the *Acts of Thomas* both preserved a beautiful piece of literature and combined the image of the wandering missionary apostle with that of an imprisoned bard, painting an icon of the missionary poet. In later missionary texts, the intellectual practices involving speech, debaters, letter-writers, preachers, or hagiographers, continued the tradition of speaking charismata of the missionary holy man,¹³⁴ but the specific image of the poet apostle was unique to the *Acts of Thomas*.¹³⁵

Sacred Mobility: Wandering Holy Strangers and Trade Route Culture

In the *Acts of Thomas*, Jesus passed down apostolic succession through the ܚܝܒܐ or merchant, Haban, to whom Jesus sold Thomas.¹³⁶ The *Acts of Thomas* traced the spread of the Gospel through commercial deeds and trade routes. An idealized form of Christian life was realized on the roads between Jerusalem and India, sacralizing homelessness and mobility.

There were several layers to the representation of the apostle to India as a craftsman of the trade route, a wandering stranger who survived with his hands. It was a symbol that may be rooted in the cultural and commercial exchange of Edessa with North India.¹³⁷ It could also be an allusion to the apostle Paul, who worked with his hands as he

¹³³ “Judas did not lift his face but instead stared at the ground,” AT 6-7.

¹³⁴ Themes in the hymn itself, moreover, are recapitulated in future missionary texts. The *Hymn on the Pearl* brought the journey theme, the importance of dress, relationships to kings and queens, transformation, letter exchanges, and conversion, into high relief, and these resonate with the stories of John of Ephesus, to the Abgar cycle, to Ahoudemmeh.

¹³⁵ Given the importance of hymnography to the Syrian Christians, the mythologization of Thomas as a poet warrants further attention, but is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹³⁶ AT 2.

¹³⁷ Perhaps this points to an audience or authors familiar with or invested in the trade route culture so important to this geographical region. Drijvers notes that Edessa was a city through which numerous merchants would have passed, explaining the cogency of the merchant-apostle symbol for the local inhabitants: “Although not a typical caravan-city Edessa was situated at a junction of important high-roads leading to India and China. An Indian embassy on its road to the emperor Elagabal passed by Edessa and

proclaimed Christ.¹³⁸ The motif of the hero sold to an Indian merchant appeared also in the Greek novels.¹³⁹ The text's identification of Thomas as a slave and tradesman ideologically embellished the means through which Christian practices and beliefs were transmitted to the Syrian East.¹⁴⁰

This sacred fiction itself did not identify Thomas with any particular city or historical place. Instead, Thomas wandered in India and detached himself from the places of his works as soon as he completed his work there. Later Syriac missionary stories will also present their heroes as wanderers and travelers, but they eventually bring their saints back to a central city or monastery (Addai/Edessa, Mari/Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and Ahoudemmeh/Takrit) in order to set the foundation narrative in stone. The absence of a centralized holy city or foundation attributed to Thomas was thus a pronounced contrast with later missionary stories in the Syriac tradition that linked a patron founder to a specific location and legitimized his history in this way.

The literary memory of Thomas, with its elevation of detachment and homelessness, poverty and itinerant healing, reemerged in Syriac texts of the fifth and

informed Bardaisan about Brahmans, Indian laws of purity and cosmological concepts. He worked up all this information into a book on India that Porphyry knew of and from which he preserved some useful excerpts. Even knowledge of China and Chinese culture was available at Edessa. For it was an important station on the ancient silk-road and many travellers and merchants passed by Edessa on their way to or from the Far East and often sojourned there for some days," H. J. W. Drijvers, "Apocryphal Literature in the Cultural Milieu of Osroene" in *Journal Apocrypha* 1 (1990), 231-247.

¹³⁸ Acts 18:3.

¹³⁹ Xenophon of Ephesus writes of the Greek Heroine Anthea sold as a slave to a rich Indian merchant. For more on the theme of the wandering stranger in the Greek novels, see J. Teixidor, "L'Apotre dans la litterature syriaque" in *La Fable Apocryphe, Journal Apocrypha* 1 (1990), 269-277.

¹⁴⁰ The text promotes an ideology of the "holy stranger," furthermore, through the relocation of the story's narrative to a prison setting, from the king's court to the king's incarceration: with Thomas, Cypher and his family, Vizan, Mydgonia and Tertia gathered for the liturgy "Suddenly the prison itself was bright as day. All of the prisoners there were sleeping, and only those who believed in the Lord were awake." AT 153-154.

sixth century as a symbol of legitimacy for monks and Non-Chalcedonian bishops exiled from their sees.¹⁴¹ This does not reflect a difference in the genres of apostolic narrative and hagiography.¹⁴² The notion of holy itinerancy and homelessness in the *Acts of Thomas* might in fact have reflected an early period in Syrian Christianity when ascetics moved from place to place, in an unregulated and uncontrolled fashion.¹⁴³ By the fifth century, however, monastic detachment from a central place caused conflict with the church leaders in the cities.¹⁴⁴ In the sixth century, when dissident bishops like Simeon of Beth Arsham and Jacob Baradaeus, however, lost the support of the imperial Church, their hagiographer John of Ephesus gravitated to the itinerant model of the holy man in their Syriac religious memory, even after monastic rules had herded wandering ascetics into more structured institutions.

The *Acts of Thomas* sanctified the missionary life, as Syrian Christians imagined it, through demonstrating how the mobility of Thomas' simple practices liberated people from the entanglements of their household and court religions. The text distanced him from the social prestige of the Greco-Roman family or the operation of a temple economy. Thomas passed the lineage of Christianity not through animal sacrifice or

¹⁴¹ This sacred mobility was intrinsically connected to poverty and homelessness, a theme important for later missionary texts. Daniel Caner argued that the *Acts of Thomas* "casts its Christian exemplar as a wandering, begging ascetic." D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 59.

¹⁴² Caner notes: "The *Acts of Thomas* reflects an ancient Christology that emphasized Jesus' identity as a homeless vagrant 'who has nowhere to lay his head.' (Mt. 8:20)," *Wandering, Begging*, 59.

¹⁴³ Similarly the Persian Christian Aphrahaat urged his community of celibates in the fourth century to follow the model of Christ's homelessness. "Let us take our pattern, my beloved, from our Savior, who though he was rich, made himself poor, and though he was lofty, humbled his majesty, and though his dwelling place was in heaven, He had no place to lay his head." Aphrahat, *Demonstratio* 6.9 (PS 1275-78), trans. Gwynn 369. Cf. 6.1 (PS 1.242). I was led to these references by Caner, *Wandering, Begging*, 81.

¹⁴⁴ See Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 77-82.

kinship ties, but rather through rituals, like the Eucharist and Baptism,¹⁴⁵ that the faithful can perform in prison, at home, or on a road.¹⁴⁶ Thomas moved from the heart of the city of the king (building palaces, participating in weddings, king's courts and prison) to the limits of civilization (with trips to the underground and talking donkeys) where he encountered Satan governing the periphery. This mapped out a pattern for future missionary stories: the itinerant holy man brought his portable practices to convert rulers and sanctifies the wilderness for the worship of his Christianity, uprooting, when necessary, the remnants of the religious "other," whether "pagan" or Christian "heretic."

Edessa's Pearl of Great Price

The *Acts of Thomas* made the apostle Thomas the possession of the Christian Orient and created a sacred memory that set him apart for locations east of Antioch.¹⁴⁷ As noted above, Greek-speaking Christians or bilingual Greek-Syriac Christians translated the *Acts of Thomas* almost immediately.¹⁴⁸ Yet it is the Christians near Edessa who claimed Thomas and inscribed his apostolic memory into their civic lineage. The *Acts of Thomas* secured Thomas for the eastern areas of the trade routes to India, yet his martyrdom narrative (which also circulated independently from the rest of the *Acts*) sent his relics westward.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Mygdonia plays the part of deaconess, as she baptizes the women, AT 157.

¹⁴⁶ For the Eucharist performed in prison, see AT 121.

¹⁴⁷ The creation of the apostle's genealogy began with the text's classification of Thomas for India (ܐܝܢܐ). See AT 12-, and 16-17.

¹⁴⁸ For the bilingual environment of the *Acts of Thomas*, see B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 364.

¹⁴⁹ When Mazdai looks for the bones of Judas Thomas, he sees that they have been taken to the West. AT 170. The Indian Christians of Madras claimed that Thomas suffered his martyrdom there in their city that purports to have the grave of Thomas as well. See A. Dihle, "Neues zur Thomas-Tradition," 61.

The word “Edessa” is absent from this text. Yet Edessa’s claim to have Thomas’ bones differentiated her lineage from other Syriac-speaking areas “West of India.” Thus the correlation of the story’s reference to the dislocation of the bones from India, together with fourth-century evidence from Egeria and Ephrem that Christians venerated the martyr’s relics in Edessa,¹⁵⁰ suggest an alignment of relic and narrative traditions to forge a memory that advanced the city’s claims to antiquity and apostolicity.¹⁵¹

Edessa was a center for a multiplicity of Christianities and Manichaeism, and its position between the Roman and Persian Empires helped it to grow prosperous on the trade routes to India and Persia to the East and Palmyra to the West.¹⁵² This intermediary position, however, often put the city at the center of political conflicts, shifting loyalties, and wars. If the *Acts of Thomas* flourished in and around Edessa, it is interesting to note that Thomas’ ambiguous relationship to the rulers in the *Acts*, when compared to later missionary stories that locate the apostle as an adversary or client of the king, correlate with the unclear stance of Christians in Edessa to the Roman and Persian emperors, particularly before the Age of Constantine.¹⁵³ The Christians in these areas who constructed a lineage to Christ through Thomas promoted an apostle with whom they could identify: a merchant or at least one who traveled with merchants between the

¹⁵⁰ Ephrem, *Carm. Nis.* 42, E. Beck, ed. and tr., CSCO 102-103 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1963), p 37-40 (Syriac) and 28-31 (German). and Egeria, *Itin. Eger.* 17.1; 19.3. G. Garitte, “La passion arménienne de S. Thomas l’apôtre et son modèle grec,” *Le Muséon* 84 (1971), 171-195. See Drijvers, “Acts” 325.

¹⁵¹ The narrative of the “Martyrdom of Judas Thomas” appears for the first time in the *Acts of Thomas* and goes on to enjoy independent circulation. Drijvers, “Acts,” 325.

¹⁵² The third century, according to Drijvers, was a time of intense activity and exchange through these areas. Drijvers, “Acts,” 325 and *ibidem*, ANRW II.8, 893 ff.

¹⁵³ The same could be said for Christians living in other parts of the Roman Empire, but for those between the Persians and Romans, around Edessa and Nisibis, the instability of the borderlands was particularly pronounced. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter six on *Ahoudemmeh*.

Persian and the Roman Empires. Thomas moved from kingdom to kingdom. He did not forge an imagined Christian empire, but rather a Christian landscape tied by trade routes and moveable liturgies. The *Acts of Thomas* thus did not fit Thomas into the political ranks of the rulers of the land, but rather it showed how he transcended boundaries much like the merchants themselves who journeyed to India.

Conclusion

Although the text and parts of the text circulated in Greek, Coptic, and Latin-speaking circles, it is Syriac-speaking Christianity that primarily preserved Thomas' memory. The *Acts of Thomas* became a Christian novel for the Syriac-speaking world. The story remembered Thomas as a wandering apostle, a slave laborer and a healer, who associated with servants, merchants and kings on the routes to India as he converted them to Christianity. There is a wide variety of guises that the apostles wore in the *Apocryphal Acts* literature. Although rivaling versions of Thomas' story may have circulated in late antiquity,¹⁵⁴ the *Acts of Thomas* remembered him as a merchant apostle, and this persistent image connected him to the roads and people of India. This text engaged and reinterpreted biblical memories as it formed a rhetoric of Syriac missionary stories. This story mythologized Syrian Christian roots through constructing a biblical past through the tradesman and apostle Thomas.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ The survival of one story often means that another story was forgotten. Clark, *History, Theory Text*, 157.

¹⁵⁵ The connection between taxonomy, difference, myth, origins involves thinking through "the dynamics of religious persistence, reinterpretation, and change; to think through the ways in which a given group at a given time chose this or that mode of interpreting their traditions as they related themselves to their historical past and to their social and political present," J. Z. Smith, "Here, There, and Everywhere," in *Relating Religion*, 324.

The eastward gaze toward India served the interests of a community thinking through its position in between Rome and Parthia.¹⁵⁶ Through attributing the conversion of India to Thomas, the authors gained an apostle whose prestige reached beyond Osrhoene. Thomas' wanderings and conversion of India followed the pattern of wandering and return in the Hymn on the Pearl. Yet, just as the prince in the Hymn on the Pearl ultimately returns to his family, so Thomas' bones, Edessa's pearls of great price, come to rest in area west of India. This was the outworking of Syriac religious memory: adding relics to an earlier story tradition to invent an apostolic past to authenticate late ancient civic piety in Edessa.

Unlike other stories of the apostolic Acts genre, the *Acts of Thomas* created a mythic unified view of the past through the pairing of the king and apostle, earth and heaven or the underworld, the community of the baptized versus the hierarchy of the court. The author of the *Acts of Thomas* displayed an act of self-identification with the apostle, with heaven, and the community of the baptized in order to forge a genealogy for Christians who were probably converted by merchants, by people on the road, who brought the Christian religion to the villages around Nisibis and Edessa. The *Acts of Thomas* crafted a representation of Christianity that came through merchants. This itinerant symbol laid the groundwork for how future generations would remember their past and their apostle who did not forget his mission to the people of the East.

¹⁵⁶ There are many Persian loan words in the *Acts of Thomas*, as well as allusions to the Parthian kingdom and caravan routes in the region of Syria and Mesopotamia. All of this, as Drijvers notes, "is in harmony with the image of Parthia as the missionary field of Judas Thomas, and with an origin of the Hymn in Edessa, the daughter of Parthia." Drijvers, "Acts" 332.

Chapter Two: The Teaching of Addai: Icons of City, Apostle, and King

Walter Bauer argued that the Christianity of the first three centuries of the Christian era comprised a multiplicity of sects, many of which the post-Nicene church would brand as “heretical.”¹ Edessa, a small principality of Osroene east of the Euphrates River,² exemplified for Bauer how several brands of Christianity coexisted in a single city. In these early Christian centuries, Edessa was a center for literary culture and commerce for the Syriac-speaking world.³ The religious landscape of Edessa in late antiquity included Jews, traditional forms of Greco-Roman religion, Manichees and various forms of Christianity.⁴

The author of the fifth-century missionary narrative, *The Teaching of Addai*,⁵ presented an idealized legend of Christianity in Edessa that crafted, in contrast, an account of a seamless conversion of the city to orthodox Christianity. In forging a memory of Christian homogeneity in Edessa’s history, the author cultivated the

¹ W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, R. A. Kraft and G. Krodel, ed. and tr. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 1-43.

² See J. B. Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1970; rep. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005). Edessa lay on a trade route connecting the Syrian desert to the south and the mountains of Armenia to the north. The silk route that Jews controlled ran from Arbela in the East through Edessa, Zeugma and Antioch. H. J. W. Drijvers, “Edessa and Jewish Christianity,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (Mar. 1970), pp. 4-33.

³ See L. W. Barnard, “The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A. D.,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 22, No. 3, (Sep. 1968), pp. 161-175; See also H. J. W. Drijvers, “Edessa and Jewish Christianity,” pp. 4-33.

⁴ On the religions of Edessa, see H. J. W. Drijvers, “The Persistence of Pagan Cults and Practices in Christian Syria,” *East of Antioch: Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1984) 35-43.

⁵ The first English translation of this text was George Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai, the Apostle, Now First Edited in a Complete Form in the Original Syriac* (London: Truebner & Co., 1876). For this edition with a new English version, see George Howard, trans., *The Teaching of Addai* (SBL Texts and Translations, 16, Early Christian Literature Series, 4; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). I use the Syriac text of this edition. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. For an excellent edition with extremely useful footnotes, biblical references, and MS history, as well as a beautiful French translation, see Alain Desreumaux, *Histoire du roi Abgar et de Jesus* (Paris: Brepols, 1993).

differences between Edessa's lineage and that of other Christian centers as a defense of the legitimacy of the see.⁶

The authors or redactors of the text presented themselves as the descendants of an idealized apostle and king who established a sacred imperial city. The text crafted three icons for the reader: Christian capital, king, and apostle. Although parts of the *Teaching of Addai* might be earlier, the story in its final form dates to the mid-fifth century: a time of intense conflict in the Christian community and public displays of antagonism between two bishops, Rabbula and Hiba/Ibas. The fifth-century scribes who redacted the text could not have been unaware of this discord. In this chapter, I argue that the *Teaching of Addai* made a single myth of an imagined Christian history to resolve the religious dissension in fifth-century Edessa. The *Teaching of Addai* presented models of piety to demonstrate the purity of the city's apostolic origins and to merit the blessing of political protection that oral and written traditions had attributed to Jesus. Addai was Jesus' "apostle to Edessa" with a preexisting legend to which the city had already joined itself. The *Teaching of Addai* embellished him into a missionary who converted Edessa to a fifth-century Cyrillian brand of Christianity.⁷

⁶ I borrow the term "Cultivating Differences" from the title of the collection of essays in M. Lamont and M. Fournier, eds., *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷ The word for apostle in this text is *shlihâ*. Eusebius claims that Addai was among the 72 apostles whom Jesus commissioned, according to Luke 10:1. Similar passages in Mark 6:6-13 and Matt. 9-10 have led scholars to think that this a saying that came from Q, but only Luke mentions the number 70 or 72 in the commission. As S. Griffith notes, in many ancient MSS the number of apostles was 72, not 70. Griffith notes here, also, that the word *shlihâ* in its etymological use means "envoy" or "messenger," whereas in its technical sense means apostle. He argues that *Addai* uses it in the former sense. See his important article See S. Griffith, "The *Doctrina Addai* as a paradigm of Christian thought in the Fifth Century," *Hugoye*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2003), here fn. 14. The text in my opinion, however, confuses the terms, as shown in a later section in which the princes of Abgar ask Addai to tell them what Jesus was like, since Addai had known him, implying that Addai was somehow one of the original 12 apostles: "Avida and Bar Caliba approached Addai, princes and commanders who wore the crown of the king. They asked Addai to tell them the story

The presentation of these three idealized portraits advanced the agenda of the Edessan Church of Rabbula through composing an etiological myth that conquered religious competitors by erasing them from its religious memory.⁸ As visual icons instructed their viewers how to read them, so the *Teaching of Addai* passed down a way of interpreting an imagined Christian past. As holy images highlighted features of a saint to guide the memory of the viewer, so the *Teaching of Addai* selected vivid scenes to craft a specific ideology of the city. The *Teaching of Addai* presented its city as an earthly embodiment of the heavenly city and its apostle as a type of Jesus.

Summary of the Text⁹

The *Teaching of Addai* is a fifth-century narrative composed of many sources that described the Christian origins of Edessa. In this text, the city's king Abgar heard of Jesus,¹⁰ a great physician who healed the sick and raised people from the dead.¹¹ Abgar decided that Jesus was either "God" or the "Son of God." Abgar himself had a pain in his foot from gout, a *keevo medem*,¹² and he asked Jesus to come to his city to cure him. Abgar invited Jesus to share his throne, offering him political protection from the leaders of the Jews in exchange for Jesus' healing.

of Christ and how it was that he was God, as it seemed to them that he was a human being." *Teaching of Addai*, 66. See Desreumaux, *Histoire*, p 94, fn 140.

⁸ I am only tangentially concerned with the actual history of Christianity in Edessa. That has been treated thoroughly by many scholars.

⁹ For a review of the scholarly *status questionis*, see H. J. W. Drijvers, "The Abgar Legend," in Wilhelm Schneemelcher ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* rev. ed.; trans, R. McL. Wilson, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 492-499.

¹⁰ This possibly refers to Abgar V, the Black. The historical Abgar dates to 4 BCE-7 CE and 13 CE- 50 CE.

¹¹ See Howard, *Teaching*, vii.

¹² *Teaching of Addai*, 8. Syriac

Jesus wrote a letter praising Abgar for believing in him. Jesus promised Abgar that his pain would be healed by the apostle whom Jesus would send to him, Addai. Abgar's emissaries to Jesus included a painter/archivist by the name of Hannan, who met Jesus and carried Jesus' response back to Abgar.¹³ Hannan also made a portrait "with choice paints" of Jesus that he delivered to Abgar, much to Abgar's delight.¹⁴ This portrait of Jesus was hung in Abgar's palace and began the tradition of the sacred Icon of Jesus in Edessa, the Mandylion, which, after the ninth century, reached Constantinople and, from there, Turin.¹⁵

Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus to whom the conversion of India was attributed,¹⁶ ordained Addai to go to Edessa to meet King Abgar. When he arrived, he healed the king and baptized the royal family. He preached the story of Protonike, a fictive wife of Claudius who renounced her paganism and journeyed to Jerusalem. Through a resurrection miracle of her daughter, Protonike found the "True Cross" of Jesus. Addai then preached his message of Christianity and Christ's divinity to the people of Edessa, who were characterized as a large civic mass.¹⁷ Addai introduced early Syrian ascetic practices of the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant into the city. Just as

¹³ *Teaching of Addai*, 4.

¹⁴ *Teaching of Addai*, 8, 10. Syriac

¹⁵ See A. Cameron, "The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story," in C. Mango and O. Pritsak, eds., *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Sevcenko* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 80-94 and *eadem*, "The Sceptic and the Shroud," Inaugural Lecture, King's College, London (1980) in *eadem*, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London: Variorum, 1981), Chapter V. See also S. Runciman, "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 3 (1931), pp. 238-52.

¹⁶ See Chapter One.

¹⁷ This section of the *Teaching of Addai*, comprising half of the text as whole, is strikingly different, as Sidney Griffith has shown, from the rest of the text. It focuses on Christian doctrine and the civic reception of that doctrine.

the bodies of the new Christians were cleansed, sealed, and healed with the water and oil of baptism, so the social body of the new community was renewed by the values of moderate asceticism, care of the poor and liturgical worship. When Addai died, he left a converted city under the protection of a Christian monarch. Edessa mourned his loss and established a feast-day and cult by which to remember him.

The chief themes of this text included political protection in exchange for religious benefits, such as healing powers and access to divine blessings, the forging of networks through epistolary exchange, and a theological agenda that emphasized the divinity of Jesus as articulated by the Council of Ephesus (431). The story's ideologies affirmed the establishment of an apostolic, episcopal, ecclesiastical structure and formed the contours into which myth was painted.

Status Questionis

Scholars have combed this text for historical elements of the beginnings of Christianity in Edessa, linguistic evidence for Syriac as a separate eastern Aramaic dialect, the advancement of social hierarchy and devotional practices, and theological themes for the type of Christianity represented in the text.¹⁸ The tradition that there was a correspondence between Abgar and Addai existed in sources earlier than the *Teaching of Addai*, and scholars have focused on a search for a *Urtext* common to Eusebius and the author of the *Teaching of Addai*. H. J. W. Drijvers argued that parts of the *Teaching of Addai* may be as early as the end of the third century, written perhaps in response to the Manichees.¹⁹ A fifth-century author reshaped and reused this earlier material. I build my

¹⁸ I am following the lead of Sidney Griffith. See "Doctrina" Addai, *passim*.

¹⁹ See H. J. W. Drijvers, "Addai und Mani," *OCA* 221 (1983) 171-185. See also J. W. Drijvers, "The Protonike Legend," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 51, No. 3. (Aug., 1997), pp. 298-315, here 301.

argument on the thesis of Sidney Griffith that the author of the text intended to establish a paradigm of normative Christianity for fifth-century Edessa.²⁰ As we will see, the story served the memory-making work for Edessan Christians and differentiated and elevated Edessa's Christians through specific strategies of representing the city and her saint.

Collective Memory, Visual and Textual Aids:

The *Teaching of Addai* forged a memory of antiquity and unity for the city to promote a pure Christianity that never in fact existed. In her important work on the role of memory in the medieval world, Mary Carruthers notes that “*Memoria* unites written with oral transmission, eye with ear, and helps account for the highly ‘mixed’ oral-literate nature of medieval cultures that many historians of the subject have remarked.”²¹ The *Teaching of Addai* joined both oral and written transmissions and ways of knowing, as it juxtaposed sight imagery (icons, seeing miracles) with aural moments of divine revelation (Abgar hears of Jesus, the people hear Addai's preaching). The two come together in the practice of reading, as ancient reading comprised both dimensions. Reading as such receives a privileged place in this story, as Derek Krueger has shown.²² Indeed, the entire story teaches its readers to read one interpretation of the city's past. It paints the memory by collecting some elements (Abgar-Jesus correspondence) and

²⁰ S. Griffith, “Doctrina,” [3].

²¹ M. J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 122.

²² D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: the practice of authorship in the early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 12, 132, 152-155. In heaven, the bodies of the resurrection will be literate bodies.

leaving out others (presence of Christian others). This appeal to a memory blended of textual images struck a chord in those who received the story.²³

The joining of sight and hearing as equally trustworthy ways of knowing the divine extends to a parallel theme in the text between body and soul. Addai repeatedly stressed in his preaching to the Edessans that they are created in God's image and that their bodies will accompany them in the resurrection. After the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, which affirmed the entry of the divine Word into creation through the incarnation, the material world gained a new authority to represent images or types of the divine. This theological current bolstered the Edessans' tradition that claimed to have a portrait of Jesus, a material object with a painting of divinity. The text weaves anti-idolatry threads into this rhetoric, as if expressing and resolving the tension between veneration of images and idol worship.²⁴

Material objects, both pictures and letters, affirmed Edessa's genealogy to Christ. The text used them to portray its idealized representations of city, king and apostle, and the authors in the fifth century paint themselves into that lineage. The elevation of Addai promoted his "descendants:" the bishops of Edessa. Hannan's portrait of Christ protected the picture of Edessa portrayed in the text.²⁵

²³ There is an expansive MSS tradition joined to the *Teaching of Addai*. The text is preserved in a sixth-century MS of St Petersburg and partially in 3 MSS of London. See Desreumaux, *Histoire* 22-23. Parts of the story are scattered in many other texts and in several ancient languages.

²⁴ See for example Addai's sermon to the Edessans: "Do not delight in the evil habits of the pagans, your fathers. Do not distance yourself from the life of holiness and truth in Christ. Those who believe in it are those who have been faithful before him, who descended to us in his mercy that he might take from the land sacrifices of paganism and libations of idolatry, that creation might not be worshipped, and rather that we might worship him and his father and holy spirit," *Teaching of Addai*, 44.

²⁵ Jesus says to Abgar in *Teaching of Addai*, 8: "And your city will be blessed. The enemy will not be able to rule over it."

The *Teaching of Addai* shifted the hierarchy of the story's political and religious characters through the exchange of letters and pictures. Abgar wrote to Jesus and sent ambassadors to him. Jesus wrote to Abgar and gave him a portrait through Abgar's scribe as well as the apostle Addai. These epistolary representations unified the otherwise unrelated fictional characters in the *Teaching of Addai*. In the *Teaching of Addai*, the repeated narrative sequence of epistolary exchange foreshadowed changes in the status of writer and recipient. Through Abgar's faith -- expressed in his letter to a Christ whom he has never seen -- the text contrasted him to rulers in Jerusalem, shifting Edessa up to a city with which Christ preferred to associate. Abgar's letter to Tiberius forged an imaginary alliance between Edessa and Rome, elevating Edessa's rank above Jerusalem's.

Imperial Sponsorship of a City

When narratives about the divine introduced human rulers into the story and placed words in the monarchs' mouth, the text legitimized or challenged the authority of the ruler.²⁶ The author of a sacred fiction controlled a shift of status that occurred for the king or queen, moving him or her closer or farther from the divine, weaving its narrative into the biblical one to blur the distinctions between its story and others of sacred history. In the *Teaching of Addai*, the icon of the perfect king that the narrative crafted in Abgar elevated a model of sovereignty in which the earthly ruler used his authority to advance and protect the labor, constructions, and institutions of the civic Church.²⁷ The Teaching

²⁶ My ideas on how mythic characters legitimate and challenge authorities are shaped by the Introduction on the Pre-history of *mythos* and *logos* in Bruce Lincoln's theoretical analysis of how myths and ideologies work together. See B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 3-25.

²⁷ Thus in the *Teaching of Addai*, Abgar ordains that the clergy have no other labor but that of the work of the liturgy. *Teaching of Addai*, 64.

of Addai created, as Andrew Palmer and others have argued, a “Syriac Constantine,” a pious king, to unify one city in one faith, under the patronage of one apostle, blending the rhetoric of the *Acts of the Apostles* with what A. Cameron has designated “the rhetoric of empire.”²⁸

The beginning of the fifth century, following the legislation of Emperor Theodosius, signified a new waning phase of the practice of non-Christian religions in the Roman Empire. Just as the Empire was constricting its reins on the types of religions that it would tolerate, so the defeats by the Persians pulled the boundaries or limits of the empire inward. Ephrem himself left his home city of Nisibis to flee to Edessa with other Christians in 363. Edessa’s Nicene population celebrated its civic affiliations with the Roman Empire, and that pattern continued into the mid-fifth century.

As other Christian texts of the fifth century, (most famously, that of Augustine of Hippo’s *City of God*), the *Teaching of Addai* demonstrated the efficacy of the mythic representation of a Christian city. Human structures of kings and civic cult tied to a specific region were configured to model divine “cities” where Christ sits as king and his apostles and bishops governed the “people of God.”

In the same way that Constantine had sponsored the creation of his new city, Constantinople, so the authors of the *Teaching of Addai* created, textually, the equivalent of a new city in Edessa. This narrative bolstered Edessa’s status vis-à-vis other Syriac-speaking Christianities. The *Teaching of Addai*’s repackaged the Abgar/Addai story with

²⁸ See A. Palmer, “King Abgar of Edessa, Eusebius and Constantine,” in Hans Bakker, ed., *The Sacred Center as the Focus of Political Interest* (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1992), 3-29. Christianity’s insistence on the Incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, the Divine Word made flesh in the person of Christ, granted to the creation a new power to convey the divine. God had entered into the world, for Nicene Christians, in a new, intimate way. A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Paradox: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 68-74.

doctrinal sermons on Christ's divinity, the resurrection of the body, and an ancient sanctioning of the offices and monastic structures of the church. The text claimed orthodoxy through bundling its distinct theological and political agenda to Abgar and Addai. For the Edessan Christians, Addai represented them, as he was fully apostolic, fully imperial, fully orthodox, but uniquely Edessan.

It is commonplace to acknowledge that the Protonike legend (she is purported to be the wife of Claudius) represented a Syriac version of the finding of the Cross that Byzantine and Latin traditions attribute to Helen, the mother of Constantine.²⁹ Yet, if this text should be seen in its apologetic context, as Drijvers and Griffith have argued, then the political innocence of the insertion of this episode comes into question. Through inventing the figure of Protonike, and placing her story in Addai's mouth, the story claimed for Edessa priority over other traditions. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built in the second half of the 320s. Helen visited the Holy Land in 327 (as described in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*),³⁰ and legends about the finding of the cross date from the middle or second half of the fourth century.³¹ That story had become a social actor in late ancient Christian narrative imagination, and the Syriac-speaking Christians revised it to inscribe themselves into Jerusalem's lineage and the Christian imperial house.³²

Many empresses in the fifth century participated in pilgrimage to Jerusalem and in theological councils.³³ The *Teaching of Addai* presented Edessa's first Christian rulers as

²⁹ On the different versions of the legends of Protonike, see J. W. Drijvers, "Protonike," pp. 289-315.

³⁰ See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 4.42-47.

³¹ J. W. Drijvers, "Protonike," 301.

³² J. W. Drijvers, "Protonike," 304.

³³ Empress Pulcheria's personal identification with Mary the mother of God exemplifies this pattern. See J. Herrin, *Byzantium* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 18-19.

the initiators of this practice: Abgar himself, after all, wanted to make the journey to Jerusalem to see Jesus.³⁴ The resemblance of Protonike to Pulcheria, queen of new Rome and anti-Nestorian, are provocative, if non-verifiable.³⁵

Portrait of a Christian City

In the text, Jesus promised Abgar that Edessa would be blessed, and that political enemies would not have any power over the city.³⁶ The narrative explained the origins for this blessing that was widely known as a talisman.³⁷ The ideology, in other words, promised political safety and economic stability in exchange for Edessa's collective identification with the Christian God. As Abgar hung the icon of Jesus in his palace, it is symbolic of the conversion about to happen to the whole city.

Unlike Thomas, Mari and Jacob Baradaeus, missionary saints who, in their hagiographies, wandered from village to village, Abgar remained in one place, Edessa, once he arrived. He threatened itinerancy, should the Edessan community have rejected

³⁴ *Teaching of Addai*, 3.

³⁵ If this text in its final form dates to the 430s, after Ephesus (431) and before Chalcedon (451), it promoted an anti-Nestorian pro-Roman Christianity, yet resistant of the standardizations of liturgy imposed by Rabbula, most notably the replacement of the Diatessaron with the Peshitta form of the bible. See *Teaching of Addai*, "But many people every day on the day were gathering and coming to the prayer of the liturgy for the reading of the Old and New Testament of the Diatessaron," p. 72.

³⁶ Indeed, the blessing seems to have worked. Edessa is not sacked until the seventh century under the Persians.

³⁷ Segal notes: "[T]he legend of the correspondence between Abgar and Jesus became famous throughout Christendom. In the course of time it received various accretions. Probably the earliest was a sentence attached to 'the letter of Jesus': 'Your city shall be blest and no enemy shall ever be master of it.' " Segal notes that this blessing was not known to Eusebius or Ephrem the Syrian, but it was known to Augustine (mentioned in a letter from 429) and to Jacob of Serug (451-521). The sixth-century chronicle of Joshua the Stylite, finally, "considers [the blessing's] effectiveness proved by the ignominious withdrawal of the Persian king Kawad from the siege of Edessa in 503." J. B. Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970; Rep. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 73.

his message: “To those who do not heed me, I shake the dust from my feet against them as our Lord told me.”³⁸

Unity of Civic Cult

Walter Bauer characterized the early Christianity of Edessa as “heretical,” noting that the Christian population never represented a *Reinkultur*.³⁹ After Nicaea, however, the next two centuries in Edessa presented a gradual polarization between “orthodox” Christianity and “heretical.”⁴⁰ Although Christianity spread in a more complicated way, with conflicts pestering Church leaders from the beginning, Christian leaders throughout the late ancient world depended on a cleaner narrative of their origins to forget the dissonance of the past. As myth, in Elizabeth Castelli’s definition, the *Teaching of Addai* produces “a *unified* account of the past and a *unifying* account for the present and an imagined future . . . a dream about a complete and seamless story that has the capacity to structure the present (and the future) to the past.”⁴¹ They read and revised Edessan sacred history as a representation of how Christianity spread to the cities east and west of Jerusalem. Edessa’s conversion embodied an ideal of the civic city already in the first century, achieving this status centuries before Rome itself.

The *Teaching of Addai* enhanced the status of the Christians in Edessa, created orthodox roots for them, and constructed a portrait of the “conversion of the city” to smooth over the eclectic origins of Christianity in Edessa. The diversity of Edessa’s Christian landscape was notably absent from the text, yet we have evidence to suggest

³⁸ *Teaching of Addai*, 44. Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; Lk 10:11.

³⁹ W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit*, 27.

⁴⁰ Drijvers, “Edessa and Jewish Christianity,” 6.

⁴¹ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 30.

that fifth-century Christians would have known the struggles of Edessa's earlier Nicene communities. At that time, the Nicene Christians, the descendents of Ephrem the Syrian's community, gazed upon a religious landscape changed from that of their great forefather in faith. As in the time of Ephrem, however, Edessa's population comprised a wide spectrum of Christianities, Jews, and pagans in the Roman Empire. Unlike other missionary texts in the Syriac tradition, the *Teaching of Addai* had no explicit polemic with Christian "others." This absence is especially noteworthy, given the multiplicities of Christianities (including Manichaeism) that co-existed in Edessa at the time that the text was produced.⁴²

The promotion of a unified Christian history for Edessa extended to combining or harmonizing three apostolic traditions into one. The story of the exchange of letters between King Abgar, in the Eusebian rendition, claimed that Jesus had Thomas ordain one of the seventy disciples, Thaddeus, whom he sent to Edessa to cure Abgar's disease.⁴³ Yet as Jullien and Jullien indicated, as well as Desreumaux, one of the disciples of Mani was named Adda.⁴⁴ The city of Edessa by the fourth century claimed to have the relics of St. Thomas,⁴⁵ as well as the letters exchanged between Abgar and Addai. Here our argument becomes cloudy, and it is nearly impossible to discern if Thaddeus and Adda became conflated into "Addai," or if there was confusion in the translation of the names. Yet clearly the city wanted to unify a twofold apostolic lineage:

⁴² The fourth century Syrian hymnist Ephrem the Syrian writes against many of these groups, including the Bardaisanites, Marcionites, and Arians. See Griffith, "Doctrina," [36].

⁴³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1. 13.

⁴⁴ Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 25-28.

⁴⁵ Egeria mentions seeing these on her visit to Edessa in 384.

Thomas and Addai/Thaddeus whom he ordained. Both traveled to Edessa: Thomas through the translation of his relics, Addai through his missionary efforts. The text cleaned up these traditions to construct a purer line of descent.

Anti-types: Representation of Jews and Pagans in the Teaching of Addai

The text forged a unified foe with its imagined Christian ancestors of the past. In order to imagine that Addai had created a bounded early Christian community, the text portrayed religious “others,” Jews and pagans, and imagined them with what Rogers Brubaker has called “groupness,” discrete existence, boundedness, coherence, identity, interest, and agency.⁴⁶ Through repeatedly mentioning that this non-descript group, the “Jews” sought to kill Jesus, the text imagined a foil for their hero against which to contrast Addai’s actions. The “Jews” sought to kill Jesus; Addai spread the message of Jesus’ victory over death.⁴⁷ The Jews, murmuring in groups, feared people would recognize Jesus’ messianic status.⁴⁸ The text contrasted Abgar’s belief with the Jews’ disbelief. The blame of Jesus’ death repeatedly imputed to Jews as well as the persecution of followers of Jesus in the Holy Land.⁴⁹ In the text’s anti-Jewish rhetoric, the Jews were in possession of sacred things that “ought” to have belonged to the Christians: the narrative reclaimed the cross for the Christians through the Protonice

⁴⁶ For a discussion of “groupness,” see R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), esp. 12-16 and 45-58.

⁴⁷ Abgar says to Jesus: “Also this I have heard: the Jews have been mumbling about you and persecuting you. And also they are searching to crucify you.” *Teaching of Addai*, 8.

⁴⁸ “They saw also the Jews who were standing around in groups. They were considering what they might do to him. They were disturbed that people believed in him.” *Teaching of Addai*, 8

⁴⁹ *Teaching of Addai*, 22.

narrative,⁵⁰ and the text imagined a purgation of Jews as Caesar commanded that the Jews leave Rome.⁵¹

For the sake of narrative self-presentation, the pagans represented the “former self” as a contrast to the new “Christian” self. The *Teaching of Addai* mentioned principal cults of the city of Edessa as Addai cried out in horror:

Who is this Nabu idol made that you worship? And Bel⁵² whom you honor? For see there are those among you who worship the daughter of Nabeel⁵³ as those in Harran, your neighbors. As for Tartha whom those in Mabbug worship⁵⁴ and the Eagle⁵⁵ as the Arabs and the sun and the moon as the rest in Harran, do not be enslaved by their rays that shine out and by the stars that glow.⁵⁶

The text portrayed the native cults as a chaotic multiplicity of idolatry -- a degeneration of human beings reinforcing their distance from the divine through worshipping creation. The myth resolved the multiplicity of pagan cults, symbolizing human sinfulness, through an apostle who turned Edessa towards a single Christian God.

Protonice received the gift of divine revelation through renouncing the paganism of her parents’ family, and she prayed that her daughter, resurrected through Christ,

⁵⁰ *Teaching of Addai*, 22.

⁵¹ *Teaching of Addai*, 32.

⁵² The cults of Bel and Nebo are diffused among the Aramaean populations of the Near East up to Elephantine and are attested in the Roman period up to Palmyra and Northern Syria. Bel and Nebo are the chief gods before the Christian God. They are mentioned in the *Acts of the martyr Sharbil*. Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 120-121.

⁵³ Bart Nikkal means “Daughter of Nikkal.” Ishtar was identified with Venus. This cult was well-attested in Harran up until the Byzantine period and still at the beginning of the Islamic period. Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 84, fn 110.

⁵⁴ Tarantha is female divinity of fertility known in Greek under name of Atargartis. She had a strong cult in Hierapolis and is attested in Edessa. Baradaïsan said that this cult was forbidden by Abgar. Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 132-3.

⁵⁵ In Hatra – Arab cult. Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 84, fn 112.

⁵⁶ The first star preceding the sun: Al ‘Ouzza by the Arabs and cult is in Nabatea – identified with Venus.

would be a miracle for the sake of shaming them.⁵⁷ The text presented “pagan” religion as a religion of the dead.⁵⁸ The text purified Edessa’s pagan lineage through making the Edessans, once converted to Christianity, the beneficiaries of the blessings promised to the city.⁵⁹ Finally, the text used the notion that pagans worshipped the creatures instead of the creator to insert an anti-idolatry polemic.⁶⁰

The text’s representation of Jews and pagans then shifted midway through the narrative. Once Addai preached in Edessa, backed by Abgar’s sponsorship, the Jews, like the “pagans,” moved into a less antagonistic position. They joined a crowd of listeners, a part of the whole city or a category alongside soldiers, carpenters, and handworkers.⁶¹ The text has tamed the antagonist of the “other,” or the former self, and left the possibility that Addai would convert them too, to create a single religion to unify the city.⁶²

Reconfiguring Ranks: Cities, Rulers and Creed

The *Teaching of Addai* epitomized a textual icon of a converted Christian city united under the banner of a single faith, a single-natured Christ, a single king, and a single apostle. This packaging of a single religious memory for Edessa was achieved,

⁵⁷ Protonice prays after the death of her daughter for a miracle: “God who gave himself to death on behalf of all people, and who was crucified in this place and laid in this tomb, and as God who gives life to all rose and raised up with him many people, whom the Jewish crucifiers do not hear nor the erring pagans, those who blaspheme through their images and graven images and by their pagan religion.” Protonice fits into a literary type of the pagan woman-turned Christian/believer. See *Teaching of Addai*, 24.

⁵⁸ *Teaching of Addai* 44: “Do not delight in the evil habits of the pagans, your fathers. Do not distance yourself from the life of holiness and truth in Christ.”

⁵⁹ *Teaching of Addai* 18.

⁶⁰ *Teaching of Addai* 46.

⁶¹ *Teaching of Addai* 36.

⁶² For the Jewish community of late-ancient Edessa, see J. B. Segal, *Edessa*, 100-104.

however, through establishing a system of relationships, (familial, political, and theological) that divided up the work of creating a Christian city. As with other missionary narratives analyzed in this dissertation, the *Teaching of Addai* uses the apostolic figure to create relationships between cities. The text used the narrative to advance not only the orthodox pedigree of Edessa's Christians, but also to position Edessa's rank over that of other Christian cities.

The *Addai* story used the symbolic power of Jerusalem and Rome to create itself as a Christian Rome of the East, blending aspects of the two together through the repetition of the Protonice narrative. Both cities had statuses of lineage, one of religious import and the other of political, in which Edessa hoped to share.⁶³ Abgar of Edessa sent his emissaries to Jerusalem, and he gained a Jerusalem apostle, who preached about Protonice: a Roman monarchical pilgrim to Jerusalem. This built a triad of the cities, as Edessans used mythic and historically fictive rulers and saints of Rome and Jerusalem to inscribe themselves into their story and elevate their religious and political prestige.

Addai depicted Abgar as the client king serving under the Roman emperors Tiberius and Claudius. The text attributed to Abgar, not Constantine, the honor of being the first monarch to accept Christianity. As fifth-century authors from Edessa crafted a memory about Rome (Claudius, Protonike, Tiberius) and Jerusalem (Herod, Protonike, Bishop James), they organized the networks and social relationships through the words of their apostle Addai. The political relationships in this text set Abgar apart from the other rulers in the Roman and Persian Empires and supported the blessing that Jesus endowed

⁶³ The Edessans had not always been oriented to Rome. When the Seleucids were divided between Rome and Parthia, Osroene lay on the side of the suzerainty of the Parthian Empire. See L. W. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," here 162.

to Abgar and his city.⁶⁴ Political sponsorship and protection was a “good” woven into the text. Later Non-Chalcedonian missionary stories of the sixth and seventh centuries, in contrast, turned this model around and reconstructed themselves as a persecuted body.

Protonice’s story, words, and voice were placed into Addai’s mouth. Addai controlled how the Edessans would remember her story, and he constructed a view of Roman Christianity for Abgar. But she was a woman, and she did not usher in the conversion of Rome. The male sovereign Abgar, in contrast, converted. Through its more perfect “male” Christian lineage, Edessa outranked Rome.

Edessa’s Position in the Fifth Century: Rabbula and the Promotion of Cyril: the delineation of a clear memory⁶⁵

The formulation and compilation of missionary stories into texts, as shown throughout this dissertation, occurred during times of crisis in the arena of memory politics.⁶⁶ The *Teaching of Addai* advanced the interests of the episcopal leaders of mid-fifth century Edessa. The city’s bishops followed the patriarchal see of Antioch. In the wake of the Council of Ephesus and the formula of Reunion in 433, (which resolved the dispute between bishops John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria), Edessa needed to assert her orthodoxy. The School of the Persians in Edessa, or the School of Edessa, had

⁶⁴ Edessa geographically sat between these two Empires, and historically Edessa’s rulers until the third century had resisted Roman rule. Rome reduced Edessa to a Roman Province in 216 CE under Abgar XI. See Barnard, “Origins and Emergence,” 175.

⁶⁵ Griffith notes the text’s interest in promoting the orthodoxy of Edessa: “They are the themes discussed above: the Roman and Jerusalem connections; the apostolic tradition; the adversaries of record; the Christological profile; the moral imperative, especially the concern for evangelical poverty. As we have seen, these themes are clearly put forward anachronistically from the perspective of what could have been the case at the time of the evangelization of Edessa. The period that in the ensemble they most immediately suggest is the first third of the fifth century, and perhaps, more specifically, the time of Bishop Rabbula (d. 436),” Griffith, *Doctrina* [45]. See also H. J. W. Drijvers, “The Image of Edessa,” pp. 15-16.

⁶⁶ W. Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History and Theory* 41 (May 2002),” 179-197.

been a center for the Antiochene Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The absence of two-natured Christology and the predominance of one-natured prayers in the *Teaching of Addai* suggests that the compilers of the text wanted to purge the memory of Antiochene exegetical traditions from their past.⁶⁷

The era of bishop Rabbula of Edessa (412-436) represented a more concerted attempt to align Edessa canonically and liturgically and christologically with the imperial churches in other Christian centers.⁶⁸ The emperor Theodosius II (408-450) backed the Christology of Cyril and bishops who supported him, and thus it was in Rabbula's interest to side with Cyril.⁶⁹ As bishop of Edessa, Rabbula translated the works of Cyril,⁷⁰ and he championed the use of the Peshitta gospels in place of Tatian's Diatessaron.⁷¹ Edessa became a center for one-natured Christology, and the icon of Edessa constructed in the *Teaching of Addai* was a crowning jewel of these ideological productions.⁷²

⁶⁷ As J.W. Drijvers points out, in the Protonike legend of the *Teaching of Addai*, the empress prays, "God who gave himself to death on behalf of all people, [1 Tim 2:6; Mt 20:28; Mark 10:45; Gal 1:4.] and who was crucified in this place and lain in this tomb, and as God who gives life to all rose and raised up with him many people, whom the Jewish crucifiers do not hear and nor the erring pagans" *Teaching of Addai*, 24. See Drijvers, "Protonike," 305.

⁶⁸ For a new translation of the hagiographical *Life of Rabbula*, see Robert Doran, *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa*, Cistercian Studies Series, 208 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2006). For Rabbula as spiritual and secular authority, see H. J. W. Drijvers, "Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa: Spiritual Authority and Secular Power," in J. W. Drijvers and J. Watt, eds. *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: religious power in early Christianity, Byzantium, and the Christian Orient* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999), 139-154.

⁶⁹ Absent from Addai, to be sure, was any Marian language or mention of the Theotokos, the point of contention between John of Antioch and Cyril.

⁷⁰ Rabbula seems to have "switched sides" on the Christological debates, as he started on the side of Theodore of Mopsuestia (made famous at the School of the Edessans) but may have changed positions to support Cyril and maintain his see. See J. W. Drijvers, "Protonike," 306.

⁷¹ Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," p. 165 and 175.

⁷² Rabbula came into conflict with Hiba of Edessa, who supported Theodore of Mopsuestia. Hiba was sent into exile in 433, and he called Rabbula a tyrant. There was a conflict between Rabbula's followers and

The *Teaching of Addai*, like the monastic canons of Rabbula,⁷³ was a text in which Edessa's "Orthodox" Christians straightened, cleaned, and revised representations of their Christian history to harmonize their foundation narrative with the orthodoxy that their bishops, like Rabbula, claimed before other bishops in the Roman Empire. Certain aspects of their widely variegated Christian past were better left forgotten.⁷⁴

Models in Preaching

The *Teaching of Addai* joined the history of Edessa with biblical history through Addai's ordination by Thomas, one of the original apostles of Jesus, Abgar's correspondence with Jesus, and Addai's frequent paraphrasing of biblical quotations from the Old and New Testament.⁷⁵ The result was a text directly stitched to figures of the Bible, untouched by intermediaries. The pure descent of Edessa from the apostles is reflected in Addai's modeling of Jesus through his poverty and healing. Beyond the theme of healing and miracles, three other chief themes recur in the text: the participation

Hiba's followers of the School of Edessa. Drijvers notes, "It was during the episcopacy of Rabbula – probably in the 430s, when the conflict between monophysites and diophysites broke out in Edessa." See Drijvers, "Protonike," 307-309. See also R. Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*.

⁷³ For monastic legislation under Rabbula, see S. A. Harvey, "The Holy and the Poor: Models from Early Syriac Christianity" in E. Hanawalt and C. Lindberg, eds., *Through the Eye of the Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare* (Kirkville, Mo: Thomas Jefferson Press, 1994), 43-66.

⁷⁴ Or, they were transformed. Both Alain Desreumaux and Hans Drijvers have argued for the anti-Manichean polemic in the text. This is shown in Addai's constant reaffirmation that he, as Christ, did not heal with drugs or roots, a criticism leveled against the Manichees by their adversaries. Abgar greets Jesus, the divine Physician, in his letter that he sends to him: "Greetings, my Lord. I heard of you and about your healings. You heal without drugs and roots." See *Teaching of Addai*, 8 and 38.

⁷⁵ Mt 8:1, 13:2, 14:13; 15:30; 19:2; Mt 26:3-5; Mk 3:6; 11:18; Jn 11:47 – these are from only 2 pages of the text (4 and 6). Biblical allusions are on nearly every page. I was not aware of their prevalence (some are paraphrased) until reading Desreumaux's translation.

in creation's attestation to Christ's divinity,⁷⁶ biblical injunctions for ministers in the community, and Christianity framed as an antidote for the fragmented self.

The *Teaching of Addai* represented Addai as a homilist. Addai himself preached, and he preached about preaching.⁷⁷ As a text about texts with words about words, the *Teaching of Addai* granted narrative, both oral and spoken, a privileged place in the struggle or contention for orthodoxy, as I discussed above.

In his discussion between the changes of the meaning of *mythos* and *logos* in Greek epic and the pre-Socratic philosophers, Bruce Lincoln argued that the meanings of words did not "change glacially over time, as the result of impersonal processes" but were "the sites of pointed and highly consequential semantic skirmishes fought between rival regimes of truth."⁷⁸ In the fifth century, Christological formulations in the Greek-speaking world had begun to cut off the Syriac-speaking world, as the debates were fought in Greek.⁷⁹ Thus, the Syriac-speaking bishops and educated clergy of Edessa had a vested interest in advancing Addai as not only an itinerant healer, but also a biblical interpreter, theologian, and preacher. He knew the language of orthodoxy and provided a symbol with whom the literates of Edessa could identify.

The compilers of the *Teaching of Addai* created homilies and theological debates for Addai to articulate their creeds, their city's connection to Jesus, and conciliar decrees. Such discourses were absent from the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Acts of Mari*, *Ahoudemmeh*,

⁷⁶ Especially the earthquake at Christ's death in Matthew 27, repeated three times in *Addai* : "The earthquake that made creation to shake on the cross witnesses everything that was done by the power of that one who was its maker," *Teaching of Addai*, 50. See Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 76, fn 77.

⁷⁷ "I was chosen with my friends to be an announcer for the good news. . . so that [the whole region] might resonate with the glorious name of Christ who is worshipped." *Teaching of Addai*, 42, 44.

⁷⁸ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 18

⁷⁹ This is a rash oversimplification of the history, but it suffices for the purposes of polemics.

and the missionary stories of John of Ephesus, which contained short statements of beliefs and ritual formulae alone. The *Teaching of Addai's* placement of Christological discourse into homiletic form suggested that the final redactor of the *Teaching of Addai* was a trained bishop, monk, or theologian, with a more sophisticated audience in mind. Perhaps he forged in Addai a model for orthodoxy for fifth century Edessa bishops, who needed to identify with a different model of apostolicity than the authors of the other texts. Their missionary apostle was an icon of stability and apostolicity, of orthodoxy and biblical exegesis.

Detachment of the Apostle

The author who compiled the *Teaching of Addai* was preoccupied with the issue of Church leaders and their acquisition of wealth. He represented Addai as a religious laborer who had no interest in personal gain. Like the apostle Paul, Addai received no pay for his work.⁸⁰ The narrative exemplified how payment for religious labor detracted from the legitimacy of a religious tradition. The poverty and sacrifices of a founder added prestige to a new movement. When such legitimacy and prestige “accrues,” it can be called “capital.”

This capital, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu showed, can come in various forms: social, political, religious, or symbolic.⁸¹ It can be inherited or ascribed. In some cases, however, it can be achieved. The prestige that comes from purity of motives, rather than

⁸⁰ 2 Cor. 11: 7-11. “I did not acquire anything in the world. The Word that made me rich was sufficient for me.” *Teaching of Addai*, 92. For the significance of Paul working with his hands, see Ronald Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

⁸¹ Religious capital involves “the generative basis of all thoughts, perceptions, and actions conforming with [sic] the norms of a religious representation of the natural and supernatural world,” On religious capital, see P. Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” in C. Calhoun, ed., *Comparative Social Research* Vol. 13 (Greenwich, CT and London: Gal Press Inc., 1991), pp. 1-44, here p. 22.

inheritance, wins symbolic capital of “disinterest.” That advocates the legitimacy of both the leader and his message. Thus, as the author of *Addai* repeatedly applied rhetoric of “disinterest” to Addai, paradoxically he promoted Addai’s prestige as a genuine apostle through emphasizing the holy man’s disinterest in his own promotion. King Abgar, in contrast, symbolized political capital won not through merit, but inheritance. He embodied “attributed” authority rather than “ascribed.”

Thus, within the text there is a tension between the prestige granted to the king and that which Addai accrued through his disinterest in personal gain. The narrative, however, resolved this by emphasizing Addai’s role as a healer. This shifted the focus to the *effect* that Addai had upon the king, and suggested that Addai’s ability to heal was itself a sign of the purity of his intentions and similarity to Jesus. It resonated with the idiom of the Syrians that Christ was a divine physician. The text idealized Addai as an apostle who selflessly converted Abgar and his city to Christianity, following the model of his master, Jesus, who healed the blind and deaf and resurrected the dead. Addai’s access to divine power was granted through his relationship to Christ and his apostles in whose name he healed and then taught. As Thomas in the *Acts of Thomas*, Addai’s memory became blended and blurred with that of Jesus, the apostles, the Torah, Psalms, and Prophets through as this was reinforced by Addai’s frequent citation and paraphrasing of these texts. He communicated the healing that he represented for the people of Edessa, like the Eucharist or Medicine of Life itself. This sacramental role that the text attributed to him detached Addai from the political arenas in which he made his entrée, and crafted a sacramental and liturgical memory for him instead.

At the end of the story, however, Addai's ordination of Aggai to secede him also represented a shift in forms of power and capital. If Addai's disinterest became mixed up with the attributed social capital of the king, then that was further complicated by Aggai's inheritance of Addai's authority through the act of ordination. In other words, Aggai gained the capital of Addai through a simple ritualized gesture of Addai's ordination. Yet, Aggai himself, in the end, demonstrated his own disinterest in political power through the ultimate sign of the purity of one's motives: martyrdom. Thus the *Teaching of Addai* exemplifies how missionary stories pull in various forms of capital, symbolic, attributed, or religious, and negotiate them to create a hierarchy of Christian saints supported by the structures of inherited and attributed power yet validated and legitimated by the capital of disinterest.

Imagined Reception of City and Saint

In order to understand the effect of the *Teaching of Addai* on the collective memory of Syrian Christians, we shift the focus from the production of the text to the reception of the text. Wulf Kansteiner noted that the history of collective memory "should be recast as a complex process of cultural production and consumption that acknowledges the persistence of memory consumers."⁸² This text is unique among missionary stories in its presentation of the diffusion of Christianity and dissemination of its teachings and practices throughout an entire city.

The story portrayed a double reception of Addai's mission to Edessa, demonstrating a nuanced picture of civic conversion. First, Addai persuaded the city to

⁸² W. Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory", 179-197.

accept his teachings, and then he orchestrated the building of structures to transmit, reproduce and continue the practices that he had established.⁸³

Following the enthusiastic response to Addai's doctrinal sermons, the text presented a collective embrace of Christianity that offered an idealized portrait of the "Christian city": men and women, lay and consecrated, uniting the practices of the king with the local household.⁸⁴ Individual bodies were recreated as Christian bodies and "pagan" space rebuilt into Christian space. This church of a healed community passed on the Addai's apostolicity after he has died.

In the text's presentation of Addai, Addai's attempts to lower himself in the social hierarchy of the city resulted in the people's elevation of him. This inverse relationship mirrors the rhetoric of paradox that characterized Christian literature of late antiquity.⁸⁵ The text itself repeated a favored Christological motif of late antiquity: the eternal Word of God humbled himself and took on a body.⁸⁶ Addai, unlike Thomas, was not martyred.⁸⁷ He, as other founding saints, predicted the moment when he would die,⁸⁸ and

⁸³ After preaching the message of Christianity, Addai invited the Edessans either to follow him or to go home. *Teaching of Addai*, 62.

⁸⁴ To borrow the spatial terminology of J. Z. Smith, Addai brings the religions of the "Here," the sphere of domestic religions with the "there" of public, civic and state religions. See J. Z. Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," in S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler, eds., *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2003) 21-38, esp. 23.

⁸⁵ See A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 155-188.

⁸⁶ Addai preaches: "And I will sow the word of life through the proclamation that I proclaim before all of you about the coming of the Christ as it happened, and about his glorious power, and about the one who sent him, and why and how he sent him, and about his power and wondrous deeds, and about the glorious mysteries (*raze*) of his coming, the things that he said in the world and about the exactitude of his proclamation, and how he made himself small (ܐܬܝܠܥܡ) and humbled his glorious divinity into a body that he took upon himself," *Teaching of Addai*, 16.

⁸⁷ His successor, Aggai, however, is martyred.

⁸⁸ *Teaching of Addai*, 94 and 96.

before his death he gave a final sermon to his followers enjoining King Abgar not to wrap his corpse in fine linens.⁸⁹

The ideology expressed in the myth of Addai is reinforced through the introduction of a feast day by which to celebrate him. It was in the feast day that the three icons of Christian city, Christian king, and Christian apostle came together in civic ritual, as represented in the text. The holy man, who mediated Christ for the people of Edessa, ensured that they did not stray from the habits he enjoined upon them.⁹⁰ The feast day as shown in the text was the strongest evidence that a particular version of the Addai/Abgar narrative had become a social actor in civic religious practice. Addai's frequent returns to Edessa in civic cult created occasions for the retelling of the foundation myth, for recurrent inscription of Addai into the memory of the city.⁹¹

Protection of the Icon of Edessa and Addai

The collective memory of martyrdom, as Elizabeth Castelli has argued, crafted a model of sacrifice, violence and pain with which Christian communities living under Roman imperial law identified.⁹² Missionary memories and the architecture of a Christian city promoted a triumphal view of the expansion of Christianity that post-Constantinian Christians used to advance their theological and political agenda. The *Teaching of Addai*, by moving the oversight of the city, social welfare institutions, and

⁸⁹ *Teaching of Addai*, "Abgar sent him honored and choice garments in which to bury him. And when Addai saw them, he sent word to him that 'I did not take anything from you in my life, nor did I ever deceive you with respect to the message of Christ who told me not to take anything from anyone nor acquire anything worldly,' " 96.

⁹⁰ "[Addai] built churches and crowned and adorned them, and he ordained deacons and priests for them. He taught them to read the scriptures and the order of the liturgy," *Teaching of Addai*, 80.

⁹¹ *Teaching of Addai*, 98.

⁹² E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 28.

religious labor, under the banner of Christianity, imagined a legendary transferal of the authority invested in the king, his court, his pagan priests, and his city's populace to the Nicene Christians of Edessa. Yet the authors of the *Teaching of Addai* strengthened the prestige of their past by attaching a memory of pain and sacrifice to this triumphal portrait. Unlike the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, in which the missionary himself is martyred, the *Teaching of Addai* moves the martyrdom not to the missionary himself, but his successor Aggai, who suffers under the rule of Abgar's son:

[The people of Edessa] confessed Christ as king while glorifying God who had converted them. A few years after the death of Abgar the king, one of his rebellious sons arose who had no respect for truth. And he sent word to Aggai who was sitting in the Church, "Make me tiaras of gold just as you did for my fathers before." Aggai answered him, "I do not desert the ministry of Christ to which I have committed myself. I am a disciple of Christ, and I do not make evil tiaras." When he saw that Aggai was disobedient to him, he had his legs broken while Aggai was sitting in the church interpreting. While dying, Aggai made an oath to Palut and Abedashlam, "In this place, see, I die on account of his name. Place me in it and bury me, on your oath." And thus they placed him within the gate of the inner church between men and women. There was great and bitter wailing in the whole church and city, with suffering and wailing in the city, just as bitter as it had been when Addai died.⁹³

In myths from both the Greco-Roman and ancient Near Eastern traditions, a Golden Age of virtue and idealized moral behavior was often succeeded by moral decay and corrupt rule. Evil sons turn from the ways of their righteous fathers, and human beings no longer feast side by side with gods. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, forced to toil and endure labor pains.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Teaching of Addai*, 102-104.

⁹⁴ Gen 3. Later Christian tradition, most famously Augustine, saw the "sin" of Adam and Eve to be that of pride. Augustine himself, however, had appropriated this idea through reading Plotinus (204-270 CE): pre-made *anthropos* fell into bodies because of *tolma*, or being separated from their original unity.

Late-ancient Christians themselves had experienced their own “degeneration of kings” in the person of Emperor Julian “the Apostate,” (361-363) who had renounced the Christianity in which he was raised in order to return to a form of Neo-Platonism (Iamblichus). Julian forbid Christian intellectuals like Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil the Great from teaching the classics of Greek *paideia*.⁹⁵ The stir that Julian caused in the consciousness of Christian leaders is well-known. Ephrem the Syrian wrote a cycle of hymns against Julian, and in the Greek-speaking world Cyril of Alexandria is still in the fifth century writing treatises against Julian.⁹⁶ While we cannot argue that the scribe behind the *Teaching of Addai* had Julian’s fall from the Constantinian “Christian Golden Age” in mind when he wrote Aggai’s story, the myth resonated with the memory of late-ancient Christians: a public, civic, Christian city under the sponsorship of a Roman emperor was a fragile icon. Hanging Jesus’ picture in Abgar’s palace, the retention of the blessing for Edessa, the circulation and copying of the Abgar-Jesus correspondences, were symbols and relics from a golden past that never existed; these memories needed to be protected and, possibility, defended from outside threats.

Utility of the Missionary Figure

Addai was a widely diffused story in the late ancient world. A. Desreumaux’s excellent analysis of the manuscript tradition helps us see how later traditions used and reinterpreted the *Teaching of Addai*.⁹⁷ Traditions around the family of the king Abgar the Black of Edessa and the conversion of his city, Edessa or Ourhay in Northern

⁹⁵ See B. Daley, “Building the New City: the Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.3 (Fall, 1999).

⁹⁶ See introduction to this Dissertation, p. 12.

⁹⁷ Desreumaux, *Histoire*, 22-27.

Mesopotamia, radiated into several linguistic worlds of the ancient Christian world, Syriac, Greek, Latin, Armenian, and were translated into other languages, including Arabic.⁹⁸

Yet, as Averil Cameron showed, later Edessan traditions focused on different themes from the Abgar/Addai cycle of stories to legitimate their origins.⁹⁹ Whereas the fifth-century version concentrated upon the letter that Abgar sent to Jesus, Jesus' response dictated to Hannan, Addai's travels to Edessa, and the conversion of the king through healing, later Byzantine traditions concentrated only on Jesus' portrait painted by Hannan.¹⁰⁰ Yet rather than claiming that Hannan depicted Jesus, later stories claimed that Hannan was unable to capture Jesus' image, and so Jesus impressed a picture of his face onto a cloth which Hannan then brought back to Edessa.¹⁰¹ That cloth, not Addai's visit or healing, caused Abgar's conversion. This was the tradition of the Mandylion.¹⁰²

For the sixth century Edessene church, a cloth onto which Jesus had touched his sacred face was a more powerful sign of legitimacy than letters merely dictated by Jesus to a scribe. Texts of apostolic discourse gave way to images "painted without human hands."

Conclusion

⁹⁸ In 1891, R. J. H. Gottheil published a translation of an Arabic version of the Abgar legend. The legend contains none of the sermons of Abgar as the *Teaching of Addai*, but it does have an elaboration of the legend about the image of Jesus in the text. See R. J. H. Gottheil, "An Arabic Version of the Abgar Legend," *Hebraica*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Jul. (1891), 268-277.

⁹⁹ See A. Cameron, "The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story," in C. Mango and O. Pritsak, eds., *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Sevcenko* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 80-94.

¹⁰⁰ For the Greek *Acts of Thaddaeus*, see R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: 1891), pp. 273-78.

¹⁰¹ See the Greek *Acts of Thaddeus*.

¹⁰² *Mandylion* means "small cloth" or kerchief. See A. Cameron, "History of the Image of Edessa," 87.

The fifth-century date of the *Teaching of Addai* changes the lens through which scholars must interpret this text. This mythic history of the coming of Christianity to Edessa allowed the compilers to direct the gaze of their readers to ideologically framed textual icons of Christian king, city and apostle. The memory forged in the *Teaching of Addai* blended history, bible, and theological concerns into an attractive narrative that wrote Edessan Christian history as a miniature idealized narrative of the expansion of Christianity as a whole. In the fifth century, the bishops and intellectuals in the church appealed to their apostolic past as a Golden Age, and the *Teaching of Addai* reinforced a view of imagined unity in the past to help Edessa forget the divisions of its present.

Chapter Three: The Acts of Mari and the Construction of East Syriac Sacred Legend

Introduction

The sixth-century sacred *fiction* the *Acts of Mari* recounts the conversion of Babylonia to Christianity through the adventures of Mar Mari, apostle to Mesopotamia,¹ “ܠܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܐܡܪܝܢܐ.”² The authors stitched this text together from earlier legends about Mari and other holy men like him to defend the legitimacy of the Church of the East, whose position in the Persian Empire and Dyophysite Christology had isolated them from the rulers and bishops in the Roman Empire.³ In the tradition of Syriac apostolic narrative,⁴ the *Acts of Mari* created a patron to symbolize the monastic and intellectual history of Babylonian Christianity.⁵

¹ J.-B. Abbeloos first edited the *Acts of Mari* in “Acta Sancti Maris,” *AB* 4 (1885): 43-138. R. Raabe, shortly thereafter, produced a German translation as R. Raabe, *Die Geschichte des Dominus Mâri, eines Apostles des Orients* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893). I use the Syriac text from A. Harrak’s recent edition and translation. A. Harrak, *The Acts of Mar Mari the Apostle*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World II, S. A. Harvey, ed., (London and Boston: Brill, 2005), hereafter, *Acts of Mari*. In the introduction, Harrak notes that the other text that narrates Mari’s conversion of Mesopotamia is an Arabic source: “commonly referred to by its translated title *Liber Turris* (*Book of the Tower*).” See Harrak, *Acts of Mari*, xi and xvi. There is also a French translation of this text with a helpful introduction by Christelle and Florence Jullien, whose thorough work on this text has shaped my reading throughout this chapter. See C. Jullien and G. Jullien *Les Actes de Mar Mari: L’apôtre de Mésopotamie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), hereafter, *Les Actes*. For the Church of the East’s joining itself to traditions of Addai and Mari, see C. Jullien and F. Jullien, *Apôtres des Confins: Processus missionnaires chrétien dans l’empire iranien* (Paris: Groupe pour l’étude de la Civilisation du Moyen Orient, 2002). The Jullien twins, moreover, conduct an historical, contextual, literary, and theological analysis of the *Acts of Mari* in the published version of their dissertation: *Aux origines de l’église de Perse, Les Actes de Mar Mari*, CSCO sub. 114; CSCO 604 (Louvain: Peeters, 2003). For an overview of sources formative to the Christian identity of Christian Persians, see J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: narrative and Christian heroism in late antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1-13.

² Harrak, *Acts of Mari* 6, p. 10-11.

³ My reading of the narrative is informed by the theories of taxonomy, narrative, and differentiation in the work of J. Z. Smith. See J. Z. Smith, “When the Chips are Down,” in the collection of his essays *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 1-60.

⁴ For an excellent volume on this genre, see *Les Apocryphes syriaques*, M. Debié, A. Desreumaux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien, eds., *Etudes Syriaques 2* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Guenther, 2005).

⁵ Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 47. The Sasanian Empire reigned in Persia from 224- 636. See Harrak, *Acts of Mari*, xv. For a general history of Christians under the Sasanians, see S. Brock, “Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties,” in *Religion and National Identity: Papers Read at the*

Mari's story sacralized two centers of episcopal and monastic activity for Christians living under the Sasanians, Kokhe (a hillock southwest from Ctesiphon on the Tigris) and the nearby monastery of Qunni -- Dayr-Qunni. Although East Syrian synodical records had named Kokhe the seat of the Church of the East's patriarchate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon by 410,⁶ a myth to link this region to Jesus and his apostles was absent from this tradition, at least in written form.⁷ Although we cannot determine the exact origin or authorship of the *Acts of Mari*, the story was destined to grant Mari the privileged place of "missionary to the Babylonians."

The *Acts of Mari* may have begun as a local legend with parochial interests in promoting a prestigious genealogy for Dayr-Qunni,⁸ a monastic settlement adjacent to Kokhe where a tomb for a certain "Mari" lay.⁹ The text's appeal to an apostolic past,

Nineteenth Summer Meeting and the Twentieth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, S. Mews, ed., Studies in Church History 18 (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1982), 1-19. There is a large and important corpus of ancient literature that pertains to the persecution of Shapur II (309-347) of the Christians.

⁶ For the independence of the Church of the East from Roman jurisdiction, see Canon 12 of the *Acts of the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon*, which grants supreme ecclesiastical authority to the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Chabot, ed. and trans., *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1902), p. 266 (French) and 27 (Syriac).

⁷ The *Acts of Thomas*, *Teaching of Addai*, and the *Acts of Mari* formed of a trilogy of missionary legends associated with Syriac-speaking Christians. But the *Acts of Thomas* were tied to India and the *Teaching of Addai* to Edessa. The heart of Babylonia, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, had no legend. The city of Seleucia was on the right bank of the Tigris. Founded in 301-280 BCE by Seleucus Nicator in order to supplant Babylon, it was situated near a canal. Ctesiphon was on the left bank of the Tigris. Kokhe was south of Ctesiphon. Between 79-116 CE, the Tigris switched course. A necropolis south of Ctesiphon was submerged. The Tigris turned to the East, following a depression between Kokhe and Ctesiphon. The Tigris thus became the western and southern boundary of the city. Kokhe was also known as Mahuza. See J.-M. Fiey, "Topographie Chrétienne de Mahozé," *L'Orient Syrien*, XII, p. 397-420, esp. 397-401. The switching of the river's course was known to the author of the *Acts of Mari*, as Mari's building projects near Kokhe reflect the geography before the riverbed's shift. See *Acts of Mari*, 29, p. 66.

⁸ *Acts of Mari*, Chapter 1, p. 1.

⁹ This monastery of Dayr Qunni, 90 km south of Baghdad on the hillock of Koche south of Ctesiphon, claimed to have the bones of Mar Mari. Harrak attributes the authorship of the *Acts of Mari* to a monk of this monastery. See Harrak, *Acts of Mari*, xviii.

however, ultimately memorialized Mari for the entire Babylonian Church.¹⁰ The monastic and male social dimension of the text's production shaped the ideology of the text and formed in Mari a saint to compete with other religious rivals of the region. This missionary text raised the status of the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon¹¹ and its surrounding monastic communities, as it produced an idealized self-presentation of the origins of Christianity in Persia.¹²

Summary of the text and status questionis¹³

¹⁰ The *Acts of Mari* may have drawn on earlier narrative traditions that had attributed the conversion of Mesopotamia and Babylonia to the Apostle Mari. Other traditions crediting the conversion of Mesopotamia to Mari include the martyrdom stories of Karka beth Slokh (581-637): "*History of Karka d-Beth Slokh*": "The city (of Karka) remained pagan until the coming of the apostles Addai and Mari," AMS II: 507-35 (Syr. Text), p. 512. See also G. Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer, übersetzt und durch Untersuchungen zur historischen Topographie* (Leipzig, 1880; repr. Nendeln: Kraus, 1966), 45 tr., *History of Rabban Hormizd the Persian and Rabban Bar-Idta*, Vol. 1 (London: Luzac, 1902; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1976), 138:2 (Syr): "Mar Mari, the apostle of truth, who first taught the Orient the knowledge of the only God," p. 205. An Arabic version of the *Didascalia of Addai*, later than the initial Syriac one of the fourth century, made Mari the match for the southern apostolate of Addai. In this text, Mari obtained all of Mesopotamia, Mossoul, Babel, Sawad, islands and countries of the Arabs up to Najran. This text is translated into German by W. Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarcats Alexandrien*, (Leipzig: A. Diechert, 1900). Elie of Damas presents him as the first planter of Christianity in Babylon, but that is a ninth-century source. See J. S. Assemani, *BO III/2* (Rome: 1728), p. XVII. In Salomon of Basra's thirteenth century text, the *Book of the Bee*, Mari figures among the 72 disciples and he was present at the last meal of Christ on Holy Thursday. See Salomon of Basra, *The Book of the Bee: The Syriac Texts Edited from the Manuscripts in London, Oxford, and Munich* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006). See Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 48-49; *eaedem*, *Les Actes*, p. 19, 22-24 and *eaedem*, *Apôtres*, 77.

¹¹ This point has been argued thoroughly by Jullien and Jullien, "La Défense de L'Unité dans L'Eglise," in *Aux Origines*, 61-106.

¹² This paper is not concerned with the historicity of *Mari* nor with the evangelization of Mesopotamia per se. On the beginnings of Christianity in Persia, see esp. J. Labourt, *Christianisme dans L'Empire*, (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1904), Fiey *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Eglise en Iraq*, CSCO 310/subs. 36, (Louvain : 1972), and M.-L. Chaumont, *La christianisation de l'empire iranien des origines aux grandes persécutions du IVe siècle* (Louvain: Peeters, 1998). Fiey claimed that Mari was an historical person representing the missionary prototype of the Tigris valley, *Jalons*, 40-44. See also Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 18.

¹³ The MS of the *Acts of Mari* is found in the monastery of the Our Lady of the Seeds in the village of Alqosh in Iraq. The first MS was discovered by Abbeloos and is lost, but he made a copy of it in 1881 adding variants from the 13th century copy from of a MS from the Chaldean archbishop of Amida. Bedjan in 1890 reedited the text in AMS 1, 45-94. It appears in five other MSS that contain apocryphal texts including the *Acts of Thomas*, but not the *Teaching of Addai*. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes* 15-16, 31 and *Eaedem*, *Aux Origines*, 24-25.

The *Acts of Mari* recounts in 34 episodes the journey of Mari, who came to Babylonia to convert southern Mesopotamia, Susa, and Persia to Christianity.¹⁴ Some traditions included Mari among the seventy-two disciples whom Christ in the Gospel of Luke commissioned to convert the nations.¹⁵ The *Acts of Mari*, however, claimed that Addai, Edessa's apostle,¹⁶ sent Mari to convert the areas east and south of Edessa.¹⁷ Mari traveled thence to Nisibis, to Arzen, and to Babylonia,¹⁸ and as he turned native peoples away from their pagan ways, he acquired a group of disciples.¹⁹ In a patterned order, Mari built churches, monasteries, and schools, ordaining priests, deacons, and teachers.²⁰ The *Acts of Mari* included a summarized retelling of Addai's conversion of Abgar and Edessa, purporting to continue where the *Teaching of Addai* ended.²¹ Although some

¹⁴ Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 13.

¹⁵ Luke 10:1-24. Sometimes 70 apostles are mentioned, sometimes 72 apostles. Similar passages exist in Matt 9-10 and Mark 6, but only Luke mentions this number. It is curious that *Mari* used this tradition, in whatever form that they knew it, since Jesus said to go out only to the Jews in Galilee. This is an interesting example of harmonization.

¹⁶ See Chapter Two of this dissertation. Addai is also one of the seventy (or 72) apostles. See *Teaching of Addai*, 10-11.

¹⁷ In the *Acts of Mari*, Addai commissioned Mari on his deathbed. *Acts of Mari*, 6: 12-13. Addai places his right hand on Mari and sends him to Babylonia. In the *Teaching of Addai*, Judas Thomas commissions Addai to go to Edessa. See *Teaching of Addai*, 10-11.

¹⁸ *Acts of Mari*, 7.

¹⁹ They change names throughout the story. In Chapter 7 of the *Acts of Mari* they are called Philippus, Malkiso, and Adda. That Mari has a disciple named Adda is an important point to which I return below.

²⁰ See, for example, *Acts of Mari* 5, p. 10.

²¹ The main points of the *Teaching of Addai* that the *Acts of Mari* recapitulate include Addai's journey to the house of Toubono and Addai's healing of Abgar (*Mari* 4; *Addai* 9-10), Addai's healing of Abdou son of Abdou (*Acts* 5, *Addai* 10), Abgar's words addressed to the apostle (*Acts* 4; *Addai* 9), and the meeting of the Edessan laity (*Acts* 5; *Doctrine* 10). These are discussed thoroughly in Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 29 and *eaedem*, *Aux Origines*, 40-46.

historical sources credited the conversion of this region to Addai or Aggai,²² East Syrian sources attributed the honor to Mari.²³

In recent years, this text has received more attention from scholars on account of the philological and historical work of Florence and Christelle Jullien and Amir Harrak.²⁴ My analysis will examine how the framing dynamic of the missionary narrative gave the authors of the text a means of depicting a mythic conversion of Babylonia in the cultural idiom of East Syrian Christians.²⁵ The *Acts of Mari*, I will argue, narrated the replacement of a variegated Mesopotamian pagan landscape of the imagined past with a unified Christian Babylonia cleansed of religious rivals.²⁶ The *Acts of Mari*, finally,

²² Other traditions had attributed the conversion of Mesopotamia to Addai alone or to Aggai. The Chronicle of 846, E. W. Brooks, ed., *Chronica Minora* II CSCO T. 3/Syr 3; (Paris: E. Typographieo Reipublicae, 1903-1905) and Michael the Syrian (1:51, 147-151) attribute to Aggai the conversion of the area – including Persia, Athor, Armenia, Media, lands around Babylonia, Beth-Huzaye, Beth-Gelaye, as far as India. *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, 4 Vols., J.-B. Chabot, ed. and tr., (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1899-1901). Bar Hebraeus writes that Addai preached Christianity in Persia, Assyria, Armenia, Media, Babylonia, Edessa. The *Ecclesiastical chronicle* of Bar Hebraeus that goes up to 1285 relied on Michael the Syrian; it mentions Mari as one of the first apostles of the East together with Thomas and Addai. See Bar Hebraeus, *Gregorii Bar Hebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*. 3 vols. Abbeloos and Lamy, ed. and trans., vol. 2. (Louvain, 1872-1877). Mention of Addai as a an apostle to the East is found in the East Syrian *Synodicon Orientale*, In the synods of the Church of the East between 410-612, no mention is made of Mari, just an unnamed apostle to Babylonia. See *Synodicon Orientale*: 564 (Syr) and 581 tr. and 63-64; tr. 313; p. 319-320. See Harrak, *Acts of Mari*, xxxiii. See also Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 22-24.

²³ The additional sources tracing the conversion of Babylonia to a Mar Mari are all sixth-century and hagiographic. See A. Harrak, xxxv. I am not concerned with the exact origin of the story, just that the written tradition of *Mar Mari* is sixth century and consonant with the concerns of the Church of the East at that time.

²⁴ Moving away from a positivistic reading of the text as “history,” C. and F. Jullien have argued that this text serves primarily to reinforce the independence of the Church of the East, *Aux Origines*, 1-3.

²⁵ Unlike other missionary stories analyzed in this dissertation, this text enjoyed no western diffusion. Jullien et Jullien, *Les Actes*, 17.

²⁶ In his farewell speech (Mari dies a peaceful death, unlike Thomas!) Mari exhorts his disciples to create unity ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ. *Acts of Mari* 33, 76 (Syr) 77 (Eng). Jullien and Jullien emphasize how the text’s denunciation of heresies functions as a defense of the unity of the Church of the East, *Les Actes* p. 35 and *eadem*, *Les Origines*, passim.

granted both domestic and civic space, distinct spheres of competing forms of religious practice, to Christianity.²⁷

The transtextuality, “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts,” is an outstanding feature of *Mari*.²⁸ The *Acts of Mari* validated itself through biblical allusions,²⁹ the shared literary motif of “itinerant missionary healer” found in the *Acts of Thomas*, *Teaching of Addai*, and Manichean stories, and a version of Addai’s legend retold to fit the agenda of the East Syrians.³⁰ By the sixth century, however, the type of the missionary-holy-man has shifted to a level of institutionalization or canonization in Syriac hagiographic imagination.

The *Acts of Mari* did not focus on the poverty and chastity of the hero, but rather on his apostolicity, orthodoxy, and success with the political rulers of the land. As Harrak indicates, the lack of encratism is a stark contrast between this text and the *Acts of Thomas*.³¹ Unlike hagiographies about holy men, the *Acts of Mari* told us nothing about Mari’s childhood, personality, or practices (diet, sleep, or sexual renunciation), sacrifices for the Christian faith (Mari endured neither martyrdom nor persecution), or piety. Rather, the text explained, in the hagiographer’s own words, how Christianity came to the

²⁷ Through Mari, Christianity subsumes home and palace, the family and professional religious specialists, under one banner. J. Z. Smith’s work is formative for me here. See J. Z. Smith, “Here, There, and Anywhere,” In *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler, eds., (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2003), 21-38. Reprinted in the collection of his essays *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 323-334.

²⁸ G. Genette, *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*, Newman and Doubinsky, trans., (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 1. I came across this concept in E. Clark’s, *History*, p. 128.

²⁹ The *Acts of Mari* represented a contrasting interpretation of the Jesus’ injunction to go out and preach to the nations in Matt. 28: 18-20. As in the *Teaching of Addai*, the theme of the *Acts of Mari* is that salvation’s message went out among the nations, not just the Jews. *Acts of Mari*, 1-2, p. 1-7.

³⁰ Mari is also called a foreigner or ܡܪܝ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ, *Acts of Mari* 19, p. 45.

³¹ See *Acts of Mari*, xxxi.

land of Babel: “Thus these are the things of the conversion of Mesopotamia. Now let us turn and present how the faith of God flowed from there into *our* regions. *Since this story was not told clearly, I am setting down an ancient version [or tradition, mshalmanoutha] that is related in the books.*”³² Mari’s name is absent from this summary of the hagiographer’s authorial project. This strategy ensured that the actions and foundations of the hero would become the symbolic patrimony inherited by the authors of the text.

The *Acts of Mari* legitimized the independent authority of the Dyophysite Church of the East by illustrating how Mari, its apostle, superseded his predecessors and the Christian and non-Christian traditions they represented. In order to illuminate this point in this discussion, I am dependent upon Roger Brubaker’s work on attention to cultural idioms in the formation of stronger group cohesion³³ and Bruce Lincoln’s theories on how myths reconfigure religious hierarchies to raise their community’s status.³⁴

I. Mari and the Self-Presentation of East Syrian Christianity: Persian History and a Rhetoric of Royal Idioms

Missionary Rhetoric and Postures of Resistance

A textual community’s position vis-à-vis the dominant political power under which it lives shapes its self-presentation.³⁵ When authors of a minority group can take

³² *Acts of Mari* 6, p. 10-11, Emphasis mine.

³³ R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 27. He suggests this as a useful category for framing analyses of “variable groupness.”

³⁴ B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 147-151.

³⁵ For a model of how this applies in the study of early Christianity, see A. Jacobs, *The Remains of the Jews: the Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004). Jacobs notes, “when imperial subjects speak authoritatively, we cannot dismiss it as ‘mere rhetoric,’” 207. His study examines how “Christians enacted their own dominance through the idiom of the iconic Jew of the Christian holy land,” *ibid.*

an institutionalized form of authority, like that of king or emperor, and rework that symbol for their own advancement, they resist their subordinate status through the establishment of imaginary social relationships in narrative. The *Acts of Mari* came from a community resistant to the dominant Sasanian Mazdaen Empire and regnant Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Christianities in the West, and it gave the Church of the East an opportunity to strengthen its group cohesion through conceptualizing its origins as a total conquest of Christianity in Babylonia.

The authors cast the contests of Mari in a framework of his gradual elevation into the ruling classes of Babylonia through his converting of the region's royal households.³⁶ Unlike other Syriac apostolic texts that valorize indigence and care of the poor, the *Acts of Mari* presented Christianity as a religion for princes despite the simple garb of its messengers.³⁷ The text revised a statement in the *Teaching of Addai* concerning the diffusion of the Gospel, "The good news (ܐܝܬܐ) of the kingdom of heaven flew down not just to the common people (ܕܡܠܝܬܐ) but also to the king."³⁸ Unlike Addai, Mari did not fear that his association with the rich would detract from the validity of his preaching.³⁹

Such imperial rhetoric and imagery afforded the authors of the text a means of bettering the Addai-Abgar tradition of Edessa: Mari converted not one but several kings

³⁶ Conversion through royal households is a theme of both the *Teaching of Addai* [King Abgar] and the *Acts of Thomas* [King Mazdai], 95.

³⁷ Abgar, in the *Acts of Mari*, is clothed in rags, *Acts of Mari* 4, p. 8-9.

³⁸ *Acts of Mari* 1, 4 (Syriac) and 5 (English). The *Teaching of Addai*, in contrast, reads simply, "The good news flew down from heaven into the whole world with signs that the disciples, our friends, did on earth." (my trans.), p. 42.

³⁹ This theme is strong in the *Acts of Thomas* (62) and *Teaching of Addai*, p. 44 and 94.

and his healing demonstrations surpassed those of Addai.⁴⁰ Mari, like Abgar, paired his healing with doctrinal instruction. The *Acts of Mari*, however, embellished the risks and sacrifices the apostle made by framing his preaching in the contexts of heightened narrative-drama with scenes of deception and adventure.⁴¹ The narrative then moved kings into the position of Mari's servants. Mari persuaded the converted King Aphrahat of Seleucia to put pressure on Artaban, ruler of Ctesiphon, likewise to convert. For the authors of the text, Mari's story provided a symbolic framework for resisting the rivaling claims to orthodoxy from the West and assertions of imperial power under the Persians.

Yet East Syrian Christians never enjoyed imperial sponsorship as their western counterparts did. They endured sporadic times of persecution that produced a band of martyrs, and these stories shaped the memory-making work of East Syrian Christians. But the *Acts of Mari* belonged to a different narrative tradition that erased those tensions from their past. The text never mythologized Mari into a martyr, nor did it mention the martyrs of Persia.⁴² Two inventions of the *Acts of Mari*, the political sponsorship of Christianity and the absence of persecution against Christians, conflicted with the historical realities of the Persian Christians. The author's or authors' focus on political conversion, an imagined peace among rulers, religious leaders, and lay people,

⁴⁰ They include podiatric diseases as well as leprosy. The King of Arzen had a sore foot, *Acts of Mari* 7, p. 14. The king of Athor had leprosy, *Acts of Mari* 8, p. 16.

⁴¹ *Acts of Mari*, 20-23. In Seleucia, Mari hides his Christianity to infiltrate into the assembly and impresses them with his entertainers from Edessa. He bargains with the Seleucians: if they convert to Christianity, the singers will belong to them. They counter with the demand that Mari pass through fire to prove the truth of the Christian God, who according to Mari, can kill their goddess. *Acts of Mari* 23, p. 50-55. The ordeal to prove his innocence is also specifically Mazdaen. The leader of the army of Arbela in this section recognizes Mari. His name is Zaradush. This sounds like Zarathushtra who was the great prophet of the Mazdaeans. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, p. 27.

⁴² Given the importance of the cult of the martyrs in East Syrian Christianity and Thomas' martyrdom in the *Acts of Thomas*, this is a striking difference. For martyr cults in sixth and seventh century Christianity, see Walker, *Legend*, 246-279.

corresponded with the interests of the monastic and episcopal leaders of the sixth century.⁴³ They forged a myth that sewed the social fabric of Mesopotamia together, top to bottom, with the single thread of one Christian missionary: Mari.

Unlike depictions of holy men in West Syrian and Greek hagiography, in which the saint mediated and arbitrated between the ruler and the villager, between merchants, or between heaven and earth,⁴⁴ Mari directed his labor solely toward the center of protection and the compass which directed the religious practices of the people: the king. The *Acts of Mari* thus resolved two anxieties through the myth of Mari: 1) Christianity's position in Persia vis-à-vis the political rulers in the text; and 2) the legitimacy of Babylonia's bishops and monks in relation to the Sasanian emperor and to their counterparts in the Roman world who enjoyed political protection.

The kings and their families in the *Acts of Mari*, in the model I propose, symbolized types of the Persian rulers, and thus the text enacted an imaginary conversion of the royal households of the Persian Empire to Christianity.⁴⁵ Christians in the Persian Empire sought the graces of the ruler.⁴⁶ The *Acts of Mari* fused a construct of "Babel,"

⁴³ The author reveals his literate, educated status in many places in the text. One of the most important is through his knowledge of Mesopotamian geography. He maps out Mari's world from Karkā de Bēt Selōk to Kohke to create a plausible backdrop for the holy man's activity.

⁴⁴ P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80-101. Reprinted with expanded notes in Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 103-52. For revisions and retrospectives on this important article, see P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971-1997," *JECs*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (Fall 1998), pp. 353-376.

⁴⁵ As Harrak notes, the *Acts of Mari* ignores the fact that the Parthians were the masters of Persia and Mesopotamia by the first century, p. xv.

⁴⁶ Although the Christians in Babylonia never gain a majority, their relationship with the Persian emperors fluctuates throughout the sixth century. No Persian emperor converts to Christianity, but some, especially Kusro II, expressed interest in Christianity and its leaders. See my chapter on Ahoudemmeh, Chapter V.

home of Manichean, Mazdaen and Christian “others,” with a pattern of apostolic missionary trips to problematize Christian imperial status in Persia.⁴⁷

Figuring Conversion: Princesses and Access to Power

In the Church of the East’s self-presentation of a universal conversion of Babylonia to Christianity, the text brought together two loci of religious practice, the household and the city,⁴⁸ under the authority of their missionary.⁴⁹ The text differentiated Mari from the practitioners of the native Persian religion,⁵⁰ because Mari moved back and forth between domestic space and civic life, uniting them through his Christ-like healings.⁵¹

The biblical precedent of Jesus’ healing of Jairus’ daughter⁵² created a type that the author of the *Acts of Mari* imprinted onto the text in order to move Mari into the royal household of Shaquirt.⁵³ Phatia, the king’s daughter and an only child, was paralyzed

⁴⁷ The idea of “Babel” conjured up these notions. Yet surely nothing was exotic about Mesopotamia for the authors of the *Acts of Mari*. In the apostolic acts genre, often the heroic apostle is sent to a distant “East” representing the “limits of civilization,” a land of the unknown, an empty canvas on which hagiographers can paint their imaginative setting in which the human and the divine, the natural world and the supernatural, inextricably intertwine. See J. Teixidor, “Géographies du voyageur au Proche Orient ancien,” *Aula Orientalis. Revista de estudios delo Proximom Oriente antiguo* 7/1, p. 105-115. See D. Winkler and W. Baum, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: Routledge, 2003), esp. 7-41, and S. Brock, “Christians in the Sasanian Empire.”

⁴⁸ On the division of religious labor between the household and city, see J. Z. Smith, “Here, There, and Everywhere,” *passim*.

⁴⁹ See J. Z. Smith, “Topography of the Sacred,” reprinted in *Relating Religions*, 101-116.

⁵⁰ The magi, the priests of the Zoroastrian religion, are the principal agents of opposition to Mar Mari. Mari’s rivals are of the sacerdotal class. *Acts of Mari*, 10, 11, and 25. The text also contains references to the cult of fire in the *Acts of Mari* 23-24. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 26.

⁵¹ Abgar and Mari model Christ as they heal royal families in the texts. Abgar writes, in the version of the *Acts of Mari*, that Christ came to heal all creation. *Acts of Mari* 2, p. 4-5.

⁵² Mark 5:35-43. Jullien and Jullien discuss other important biblical references, *Les Actes*, p. 15. They include Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5:14); Exodus (Mari as the new Moses); and the youths in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3).

⁵³ *Acts of Mari* 12, p. 26-30. For another example of a daughter of king healed by Mari, see the narrative in *AM* 16: King Adar in the region of Darabad. His daughter is also healed.

with a disease that prevents her from moving or walking.⁵⁴ She could not perform the domestic work of the woman within the household. In the meantime, when the saint arrived, Phatia's father was sacrificing to the gods outside the home, tending to the religious practices of the civic cult. The saint, with his Christian message and his healing practices, coordinated both private and public spheres through healing the girl and restoring her to do the domestic work. He ordered her, however, to bake bread for the Christian Eucharist in place of pagan rituals. Her recovery also resulted in the conversion of the king. Mari cast out the demons living in the outer shrines of the king, just as he purified the girl within her home.

In his bringing an end to pagan rituals of both spaces, Mari created a new "family" of Christian laborers. In the *Acts of Mari*, however, household relations were asymmetrical:⁵⁵ the text mentioned no queen and only a few sons.⁵⁶ The favored models are Father-daughter (Kings and their daughters) and master-disciple (Mari and his friends). The genealogy of the monastery of Qunni itself was also mythologized back to a father-daughter pair of converts: Mari cured the Princess Qunni and her grateful father King Artaban built the saint a house of prayer "destined for greatness."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Acts of Mari* 12. This pattern has been noted by scholars: "The miraculous healing of the princesses always resulted in the conversion of the rulers and after them the populace in a systematic manner," Harrak, xxx.

⁵⁵ For family relationships in Syriac hagiography, see S. A. Harvey, "Sacred Bonding: Mothers and Daughters in Early Syrian Hagiography," *J ECS* 4, no. 1 (1996), pp. 27-56.

⁵⁶ The king of Athor has a son possessed by a demon which Mari cures. *Acts of Mari*, 8, p. 18.

⁵⁷ *Acts of Mari* 28-29, see fn 129, p. 63.

The text blended these relationships together in its configuration of new “Christian” families (kings, holy man, and daughters)⁵⁸ to correspond to the changed hierarchy that Christianity introduced and the new interstitial locations for the performance of its rituals.⁵⁹ Mari, as mediator between the laity and Christ, absorbed the leadership roles previously allotted to the king or the king’s priests. The myth’s reassignment of religious labor through conversion placed Mari at the top and closer to the divine. The king’s attempt to worship Mari reinforced this.⁶⁰ Mari admonished the king because he, and not the king, had the access to divine insight that allowed him to understand man’s fitting disposition toward God.⁶¹ Despite its attention to reforming of these relationships, absent from the text were ascetic rules, provisions about sexuality or gender, or encratic language.⁶²

II. Shifting Places:⁶³ Liturgy, Competition, and Lineage

Replacing the Pagans, Refuting the Manichees

As Jullien and Jullien have argued, the *Acts of Mari* created a foundation story to rival those of other religious competitors in Babylonia, both real and imagined.⁶⁴ The

⁵⁸ Female characters abound in the *Acts of Mari*. Another example of the daughter of a king being healed is *Acts of Mari* 16, 37-39. Here, the king of Beth Garmai is also absent (out hunting). The text shares this literary feature with other narratives in the apocryphal *Acts*. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, the apostle converts women of the royal household first, and it is a Hebrew flute girl who responds first to the apostle’s message. See *Acts of Thomas*, 4. The *Teaching of Addai* lacks such an interest in the use of women as representatives of piety or channels through which the apostle can reach the political rulers.

⁵⁹ J. Z. Smith’s construction of “Anywhere”: In archaic or classical formations, religions of ‘anywhere’ include religious clubs and other forms of associations, entrepreneurial religious figures (often depicted as wandering), and religious practitioners not officially recognized by centers of power,” 330.

⁶⁰ Mari’s correction of the king’s adoration and his instruction to the king that the king should worship God, in fact, serves to reinforce Mari’s authority.

⁶¹ Apostles mistaken for gods is a pattern set by the Acts of the Apostles, where the citizens of Lystra mistake Paul and Barnabas for Zeus and Hermes. See Acts 14:8-18.

⁶² This absence is noted also by Harrak, *Acts of Mari*, xxxi.

⁶³ I am borrowing this notion from J. Z. Smith, “Trading Places,” reprinted in *Relating Religion*, 215-229.

text enacted an imaginary Christian conquest of Persia, purifying the lineage of Christianity through imagining a total conversion to Christianity. In order for Christianity to take the place of the imagined pagan world and contend with the Manichean views on the material world, the text infused liturgical imagery to make a new world of Christian bodies and buildings, cleansed and healed with new Christian hierarchies in exchange for the old structures. Mari's creation of Christian communities was constructed through 1) destruction and exorcism; and 2) building and healing.⁶⁵

In order to build a landscape that reflects its new Christian status, Mari first destroyed the old gods and the earth of demons, exorcising the land as a body before Christian baptism, winning Babylonia for Christianity according to the ordered principles of liturgical practice.⁶⁶ He cast idols into the Greater Zab River.⁶⁷ There, expelling evil spirits from trees, streams, and fire, Mari contested the authority of the dominant Magian worldview, while not denying the demons' existence.⁶⁸ Mari fashioned the land into a vessel of the divine, in stark contrast to the largely negative view of creation that the Manichees espoused.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ See Jullien and Jullien, "Les Actes de Mar Mari : Travail de Réécriture de Relecture des Origines Chrétiennes dans L'Empire Perse," In *Aux Origines*, 41-60.

⁶⁵ Building and healing are central themes in the *Acts of Thomas*, too. Yet, in the *Acts of Thomas*, the building projects of the apostle are not actual "buildings" but a metaphorical building of the new community, *Acts of Thomas*, 20.

⁶⁶ For creedal formulae of the *Acts of Mari*, see Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 37, 61-65.

⁶⁷ *Acts of Mari*, p. 10, 21-22.

⁶⁸ When Mari reaches Darabad, for example, he exorcises a demon from a fig tree ܦܠܡ, worshipped by the local pagans, yet inhabited by a demon who stones anyone that tries to taste its figs. *Acts of Mari* 15, p. 32 (Syr) and 33 (Eng).

⁶⁹ A number of cities through which Mar Mari crossed are marked by the memories connected to the events of the personal life of Mani. The Manichean Psalter is attributed to a disciple called Tom (Thomas or Toumis). Mani himself identified his own circuitous missionary with the movement of the apostle Thomas towards India. The trajectory of Mari accomplished the inverse of that of Mani as described in the Coptic

Mari uprooted and demolished the structures of competing Babylonian religions.⁷⁰

The disgruntled people of Arbela⁷¹ called Mari the “destroyer of our gods” (ܡܪܝ ܡܫܬܪܝܢ) before he won them to Christianity as a divine healer. When Mari did not crush the structures of his competitors, he transformed them. After the king of Shaqirt pronounced his adherence to the Christian God, Mari turned the furnace used to cook sacrifices for idols into a well above which he built a baptistery.⁷³ The structure of the former cult remained, but Mari changed it to match the practices introduced by the new Christian order.⁷⁴

The presentation of these violent mythic origins of Babylonian Christianity contrasted, however, with the healing and restoration that Mari’s Christianity brought to

Kephalaia. When Mani left the baptist movement of the Mesenians where he spent his childhood, Mani gains India, a region of the apostle Thomas, and then he goes to Persia into the heart of the Sasanid empire. For Jullien and Jullien, the *Acts of Mari* is a type of narrative re-conquest for Christianity of lands thought to be Manichean. Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 42-43.

⁷⁰ Likewise the text often uses ܡܫܬܪܝܢ, ܡܫܬܪܝܢ, and ܡܫܬܪܝܢ to counter the language of building ܡܫܬܪܝܢ that ends each episode. See, for example, Chapter 7, p 12 (Syr) 13 (Eng) in which Mari first goes to Nisibis in order to plant (a word play, as Harrak indicates, on the root ܡܫܬܪܝܢ) Christianity. First, however, Mari destroys ܡܫܬܪܝܢ the idolatry indigenous to Nisibis. See also *Acts of Mari* 10, where a king and his family from the region of Ninevah/Mossul throw down their idols after a demon was exorcised from the son their military commander. *Acts of Mari* 9-10, 20 (Syr) 21 (Eng).

⁷¹ The *Acts of Mari* makes no mention of Mār Paqida, whom the *Chronicle of Arbela* claims was ordained by Addai to bring Christianity to Arbela. See *Chronicon Ecclesiae Arbela*, p. 2, 5-8, ed. Kawerau. Cf. also S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), p. 35. The authenticity of this text is highly disputed.

⁷² *Acts of Mari* 8, p. 16 (Syr) or 17 (Eng).

⁷³ *Acts of Mari* 13-14, p. 32.

⁷⁴ For this pattern in conversion stories, P. Brown notes: “In many cities, pagan temples had, indeed, undergone surgical ‘desacralization’ through the destruction of their *cella*, their holy of holies. But their facades remained intact for centuries to come. Polytheists still benefited from an ‘ideology of silence,’” P. Brown, “Conversion and Christianization in Late Antiquity: The Case of Augustine,” in C. Straw and R. Lim, ed., *The Past Before Us: The Challenges of Historiographies of Late Antiquity*; Bibliothèque de l’Antiquité Tardive (Brepols, 2004), 103-117, p. 109. I am grateful to Prof. Brown for a conversation on this point at the Dorushe Graduate Student Conference at Princeton University, April 14, 2007.

Mesopotamia (ܡܫܘܬܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ).⁷⁵ Healing miracles demonstrated the power of the Christian God and rituals, Mari's superiority to his competitors,⁷⁶ and the falsity of rival claims about the interaction of the human and divine in the world.⁷⁷

From the possessed to the paralyzed, Mari cured the sick with sacred oils, water, his hands, and heightened speech, including the Christian baptismal formula.⁷⁸ Mari's acts resembled, in type, a liturgy, with Mari serving as priest, the world around him providing the material goods he sanctified, and his followers symbolizing the congregation. They responded to his gestures with words of wonder, a disposition of piety required of communicants in the liturgy.⁷⁹ Once the people and natural world have been healed, Mari has forged a new social body.⁸⁰ Mari never left a group of newly converted communities without first ordaining a bishop, priests, and deacons to continue the ritual work.

Diversion: Thomas and Mani's footsteps transformed into monks

⁷⁵ *Acts of Mari*: Chapter 6, p. 10/11. The connection between healing and conversion is established in the *Acts of Thomas*. It is likewise found in the *Teaching of Addai*: "After these things he [Addai] placed his hand on him [Abgar], and by the power of Jesus all his illnesses were healed. Abgar wondered and was amazed." *Acts of Mari* 4.

⁷⁶ For example, in Beth Garmai Mari heals the daughter of King Shahgird from paralysis, *Acts of Mari* 12-13, pp 26-31.

⁷⁷ The Manichees, widespread in the East Syriac world, did not construe the human body as the creation of a good God. S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 7.

⁷⁸ His healing formulae also include anti-Jewish rhetoric. He heals the king of Arzen, "in Jesus' name, whom the Jews in Jerusalem crucified." *Acts of Mari*, Ch. 7, p. 16.

⁷⁹ The text uses Syriac words for wonder, miracles, signs and power in every chapter of the *Acts of Mari*; the author claims that he cannot name all the signs and wonders, ܡܠܚܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܡܪܝܐ ܡܪܝܐ that he performed. For example, see *Acts of Mari* Chapter 3-5, p. 8-10. The theme of signs and wonders is widespread in the Gospels, particularly the Gospel of John and the *Acts of the Apostles*.

⁸⁰ Each sequence in the text contains the pattern that the apostle heals ܡܪܝܐ converts ܡܪܝܐ builds ܡܪܝܐ and ordains ܡܪܝܐ. See, for example, *Acts of Mari* 7, p. (Syr) 16 (Eng) 17.

Jullien and Jullien have suggested that the *Acts of Mari* rewrote the story of Mani, clothing him in Christian garb.⁸¹ While this point may be difficult to prove, the presence of the Manichees and their shared veneration of the *Acts of Thomas* placed the authors of the *Acts of Mari* and of the Manichean literature in the same symbolic universe. Both shared interests in showing potential converts their suitability for the Babylonian world.

Manichaeism posed a formidable threat for the Christians, as the Manichean missionaries themselves enjoyed widespread success throughout the Persian Empire.⁸² The Manichean myth was well-suited to missionary activity, since it was grounded in a cosmic drama and not the story of a particular people.⁸³ The *Acts of Mari* attempted, similarly, to be both universal and particular. The practices, concerns, and modes of expressions in the story were meaningful to the Christians of Mesopotamia, while at the narrative emphasized and created links between Christian Persian communities and Christians in a larger world beyond Edessa: a world which extended back to Jerusalem and Christ himself.

Thomas himself did not appear in the *Acts of Mari*, but his converts met Mari on the latter's travels. In this way, the *Acts of Mari* connected Mari to Thomas not only through Addai (whom Thomas ordained) but also through communities of Thomas'

⁸¹ See Jullien and Jullien, *Apôtres*, 21.

⁸² S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 8. As Lieu shows, the main portion of Mani's canon comprises seven works: (1) the *Living Gospel*, (2) the *Treasure of Life*, (3) the *Pragmateia*, (4) the *Book of Mysteries*, (5) the *Book of the Giants*, (6) the *Letters*, (7) *Psalms and Prayers*. In Mani's sermon on the Light-Mind, he explains: "You have seen that the [kings] of the world with many graces and gifts with armor and military campaigns have hardly subjected the cities and mastered the lands. [I on the other hand have subdued without armor and with [military power] distant cities and far way lands through the word of God, and they praise my name and it comes to be exalted in all lands." *Keph.* XXXVIII, pp. 100, 29-101. As cited in Lieu, *Manichaeism*, p. 32.

⁸³ The text "Concerning the Origin of his Body" elucidates the missionary activity of Mani. See, for example, *CMC* (47.1). See also Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 32.

⁸⁴ *Acts of Mari*: 31, p. 75, when Mari reaches Beth Lapat, he notes that Christians have already “reached there.”

⁸⁶ To cite but one of many examples, Mari has a disciple named *Tumis* just as *Mani* has a disciple named Tom.

[illegible]

As Jullien and Jullien have argued, moreover, the text contains polemical language with baptizing movements in Persia⁸⁹ and “heretical” Christian groups, including the Marcionites.⁹⁰ Mari’s miracles resembled those of his rivals,⁹¹ but he cleaned up and unified the sectarian mess they created. The *Acts of Mari* borrowed from these literary traditions and inserted Mari into the ranks of the holy men of Babylonia.

Following and Surpassing Addai: missionary saints as symbols of Churches

The *Acts of Mari* revered the Addai tradition on two important levels. The *Acts of Mari* inserted a paraphrased summary of the *Teaching of Addai*,⁹² creating a disciple, Mari, whom Addai ordained. Addai was the apostle and Mari the disciple who succeeded him. This taxonomy shifted by the end of the myth. Mari gained a disciple,

⁸⁹ Some Christian baptizing movements were established in southern Babylonia, particularly Mesene, from the beginnings of the third century. According to the Manichean codex of Cologne, the father of Mani, Pattiq, was a member of this sect of the *Baptistai*. The Coptic *Kephalaia* mention baptizing movements as far as India. Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 24. See esp. Jullien and Jullien, “Les Actes de Mar Mari: Évangélisation d’un Substrat Baptiste?” in *Aux Origines*, 26-40.

⁹⁰ In the Middle Zab, Mari meets the boatman Dousthi. Handicapped by gangrene of the feet and hands, he cannot transport voyagers across the stream. This, for Jullien and Jullien, recalls “Dositheos” a hemero-baptist or someone who baptized himself everyday – disciples of John the Baptist and rival of Simon the Magician in the novel of the Pseudo-Clementine’s (*Homily* II, 24; *Recognitions* II, 8, 11). Mari heals him and baptizes him. The name Douthee, associated to Babylonia of the south, more specifically calls to mind a group of Baptists called “Dosthean.” Michael the Syrian, in his Chronicle, recounts the coming of this group to Persia in the fifth century under the reign of Zeno and the Sasanid Balash – 484-488. Theodore bar Konai, who wrote in 792 in Kashgar in Bath Aramaye, – bishop from the eighth century – dedicated a notice of his work in the Scholia – “Dosthean heresy that taught Ado, the mendicant.” See R. Hespel, R. Draguet, *Théodore Bar Konai. Liber Scholiorum*, CSCO 431, *Script. Syr.* 187 (Louvain: 1981); CSCO 432, *Script. Syr.* 188, (Louvain: 1982); CSCO 447, *Script. Syr.* 193 (Louvain: 1983); CSCO 448, *Script. Syr.* 194, (Louvain: 1983); CSCO 464, *Script. Syr.* 197, (Louvain: 1984); CSCO 465, *Script. Syr.* 198, (Louvain: 1984). Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 45. See also Griffith, S. H. “Theodore Bar Koni’s Scholia: A Nestorian *Summa Contra Gentiles* from the First Abbasid Century.” In *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, eds N. Garsoïan, Th. Mathews, and R. Thompson, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982) 53-72.

⁹¹ There are striking comparisons between the story of Dostheos and Mari and narratives about Ado, the founder of the Dosthean movement. Theodore bar Konai’s *Book of the Scholia* – presents Ado, the founder of the Dosthean movement – as an Adiabene who came as a beggar to the country of Mesene, and he arrived at the river Karun. Ado’s family entrusted him to a man met on the site. The disciples of Ado are not just called partisans of Dosthai but also Nazoreans (a name for one group of Persian Christians at an earlier date). See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, p. 45. See also Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 28-31.

⁹² *Acts of Mari*, 2-5. See Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 41-46.

Adda, who was docile to him.⁹³ The *Acts of Mari* legitimized the apostolicity and orthodoxy of the Church of the East through first connecting Mari to Edessa's Addai, and then through presenting narrative developments that elevated Mari to a higher status than Addai. The authors of the *Acts of Mari* borrowed from the prestige of *Addai* while separating themselves definitively from Edessa and her saints.⁹⁴ A critical comparison of these texts, their Syriac vocabulary, their hierarchies, and absences and additions, shows the reworking of the missionary figure for two important centers of Syriac-speaking Christianity, one in the East, the other in the West.⁹⁵ This *Acts* genre of Mari's story legitimized him, as it echoed others of its type and joined itself to the Addai/Abgar tradition of Edessa.

The *Teaching of Addai*, narrating the correspondence of Jesus with King Abgar of Edessa, set an important prototype for the *Acts of Mari*: scribal acts and epistolary exchanges lead to the conversion of a city.⁹⁶ In both stories, the act of writing made the holy men present to those seeking them. The *Acts of Mari* mirrored the *Teaching of Addai* in its scenes of the creation and exchange of verbal and visual icons.⁹⁷ In the *Teaching of Addai*, Jesus could not go to Edessa to see Abgar, so he sent him a letter, an

⁹³ Jullien and Jullien, 31. Adda is first mentioned in the *Acts of Mari*. 7.

⁹⁴ It is important to recall that Thomas is just as much a part of Edessa's tradition as Addai. Thomas' relics were the prized possession of the Edessan Christian community. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 20.

⁹⁵ The *Acts of Mari* names the commissioning of Christ a grace to go out and preach to the nations. Calling this a "grace" framed it as a gift, something open to be interpreted according to the needs of the communities. *Acts of Mari* 5, p. 10.

⁹⁶ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Two on the *Teaching of Addai*.

⁹⁷ *Teaching of Addai*, 10; *Acts of Mari* 6-7. In the *Acts of Mari*, we find an interesting interpolation concerning the statue of the hemorrhaging woman that might point to eight-century conflicts concerning iconoclasm. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 54.

apostle, and an icon. Addai could not go to Persia, so he sent Mari.⁹⁸ In the same way, the text of the *Acts of Mari* could not produce an image of Addai, Mari, or Jesus, but writing the story conveyed images of the saints to the imagination of its listeners. Both texts not only themselves created a memory of Christianity through a foundation story but affirmed that what they recorded is what they saw.⁹⁹ The self-conscious mirroring of the text to the *Teaching of Addai* positioned the Edessan tradition in an authoritative relationship to the Church of the East. Mari's "descendants," however, "rectified" this construction by glorifying Mari and diminishing Addai.

Though implying Mari's distinct authority with respect to Addai's, the monks behind this text still linked Mari to Addai and Edessa.¹⁰⁰ Mari built a church in Addai's name along with those of Peter and Paul.¹⁰¹ In so doing, he advanced Addai's rank to that of "founder." Mari wrote to the community of Edessa for advice on how to convert the obstinate populace of Seleucia,¹⁰² "an evil place full of thorns."¹⁰³ Yet, Mari, not Addai, acted, moved, and plowed the land of Mesopotamia: clearing it of its pagan

⁹⁸ *Acts of Mari*, 2-5.

⁹⁹ *Teaching of Addai*, p. 4. "They were there in Jerusalem ten days. Johannan the Tabularious wrote down everything that he saw that Christ was doing."

¹⁰⁰ The *Teaching of Addai*, while alluding to early Syrian ascetic traditions of the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant (p. 100), does not mention "monks" or "monasteries." The *Acts of Mari*, however, underscores that Mari built monasteries, as well as churches. The later authors of *Mari* thus reveal their knowledge of sixth-century East Syriac monastic traditions and their interest in promoting a view of their antiquity.

¹⁰¹ *Acts of Mari* 11, p 25-26.

¹⁰² They people of Seleucia are depicted as being wealthy, evil pagans. *Acts of Mari* 17, p. 39 and 22, *passim*.

¹⁰³ *Acts of Mari* 19, p. 42.

Sixth Century Competition with Non-Chalcedonians

The Dyophysite Christology and biblical interpretation of Theodore of Mopsuestia flourished within the Roman Empire in Edessa under the leadership of Ibas.¹¹³ When the school closed in 489 under the command of emperor Zeno,¹¹⁴ however, Edessa's Dyophysite population fled to Nisibis, and Edessa grew into a center of Non-Chalcedonian Syriac Christianity. The Persian Empire became largely Church of the East,¹¹⁵ and the Syriac-speaking areas of the Eastern Roman Empire became Non-Chalcedonian.¹¹⁶

In 518, however, Chalcedonian Emperor Justin I's persecution of the Non-Chalcedonian bishops pushed them increasingly outside the Roman Empire. This brought the Church of the East a new imminent religious rival: the Non-Chalcedonian community.¹¹⁷ The missionary work and ordinations performed by Jacob Baradaeus,

¹¹³ There was a disciple of Ibas also known as Mari. Ibas wrote a missive to Mari that he was sent to spread the thought of Theodore. This letter became the object of controversy. The letter was preserved in the conciliary *Acts*, but it is known altogether thanks to Simeon, Non-Chalcedonian bishop of Arsham from 503. This letter was written in 510, and it was concerned with the propagation of Nestorianism in Persia. I will discuss it further in my chapter on Simeon of Beth Arsham. It is an important historical document concerned with the closing of the school of the Edessans. See M. Van Esbroeck, "Who is the Mari addressee of Ibas' Letter?" *JTS* 38, 1987, 129-135.

¹¹⁴ The greatest portion of the Greek corpus of Theodore of Mopsuestia was translated from Greek into Syriac in the first half of the fifth century in the School of Edessa by Ibas and his group of disciples. The school's movement to Nisibis established a true break between Northwest Mesopotamia and the frontier regions across the Tigris. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 31.

¹¹⁵ Some areas were non-Theodoran; for example, the Non-Chalcedonian Philoxenus was from Persia.

¹¹⁶ This narrative is explained in more detail in the introduction of this dissertation.

¹¹⁷ See Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 53-55. See *Acts of Mari*, Chapter 18, ܡܪܝܡ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܠܥܒܕܗ ܟܢܝܐ : ܡܪܝܡܐ ܘܦܪܩܬܐ ܫܳܬܶܐܰܣܳܬܳܬܳܐܰܢܳܬܳܐ , p. 40.

Philoxenus of Mabbug (himself born in Persia), Simeon of Beth Arsham, and Ahoudemmeh strengthened the Non-Chalcedonian ecclesial and monastic foundations.¹¹⁸ As Non-Chalcedonian missionaries from Edessa stitched the apostles Thomas and Addai into their lineage, the Church of the East inscribed Mari into their own history,¹¹⁹ calling him “apostle to the apostles.”¹²⁰ The Non-Chalcedonians claimed authority through their connections to Edessa, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch and established their center in Persia in Takrit.¹²¹

In 410, however, when the Dyophysite see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon pronounced itself independent from the West, the Church of the East was positioned to flourish in the Persian Empire as the unrivaled form of Christianity until the Non-Chalcedonians came in the sixth century. With Non-Chalcedonians proselytizing other members of the Church of the East as well as Non-Christian Persians, the Dyophysites responded with competing claims to antiquity, and this *Zeitgeist* corresponds with the creation of Mari. Through superseding both the gods of Babylonian holy sites and Mari’s apostolic father, Addai, the authors from the Church of the East of the *Acts of Mari* forged an apostolic figure uniquely their own.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Unlike other apostolic *Acts* stories, to Mari is ascribed by tradition ܡܠܬܐ the foundation of 365 monasteries in Beth Aramaye alone. See *Acts of Mari*,

¹¹⁹ Mari does not seem to be in the Synodical records; rather, he appears to be a hagiographical creation. But whether devotion to a certain Mari (the name just means *my Lord*) came and the text followed, or whether he was invented by the monks, Synodical records do not mention his name.

¹²⁰ *Acts of Mari*, 26, p. 60.

¹²¹ Yet the authority of this see does not grow until the seventh century. This bishopric develops into the office of the *maphrian*, a Miaphysite catholicos in the Persian Empire. See Hage, W., *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit nach Orientalischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Horowitz, 1966).

¹²² Jullien and Jullien note the text’s “tacit rivalry” with Edessa: “The *Acts of Mari* constitute a correspondent of the history of Addai for the whole of Southern Mesopotamia,” 35 (my trans).

Rhetorical Strategies and Narrative Setting

The text advanced interests of the sixth-century Monastery of Qunni. Unlike Addai, Mari ordained monks.¹²³ Mari, an apostle buried in Qunni, was constructed as the place's founder, and Mari and his group of disciples represented a proto-monastery with Mari as abbot. The text recounted Mari's burial there,¹²⁴ and it stated that the Patriarchs of Seleucia-Ctesiphon were buried next to their "founder."¹²⁵ The interests of the *Acts of Mari*, thus, in defining monastic and episcopal lineages corresponded with the circumstances of the Church of the East in the sixth century. Although Addai had churches built in Edessa in the *Teaching of Addai*,¹²⁶ unlike Mari he built no monasteries. Although the *Acts of Mari* contained no discourse or depiction of the practices of sixth-century East Syrian ascetics, the authors presented themselves as the descendants of a missionary *monk*, not just an itinerant healer.¹²⁷

The authors of the *Acts of Mari* wrote an apostolic memory to attribute the reflection of a divine hierarchy to their human institutions. Mari's ordination of monks, bishops, and deacons portrayed structures absent from the earliest beginnings of Christianity in Persia. In spite of these anachronisms, the monks of Qunni claimed to recount an ancient story.¹²⁸ This revealed an authorial sense of literary conventions -- "how to write a missionary or foundation story" -- that placed a premium not on the piety

¹²³ *Acts of Mari*, 5, p. 10.

¹²⁴ *Acts of Mari*, 33, p. 76.

¹²⁵ Harrak, *Acts of Mari*, xviii.

¹²⁶ *Teaching of Addai*, 74.

¹²⁷ For foundation narratives in Syrian literature, see Jullien and Jullien, "Figures Fondatrices" in *Syriac Apocryphes*.

¹²⁸ *Acts of Mari* 6, p. 10-11. Citation above, see pp. 6-7.

of the saint but rather on the institutions that he began. In the contest for orthodoxy, Mari's building projects and ordinations connected the monasteries of Babylonia and lengthened their genealogy back to the second century.¹²⁹ In the competition for a myth of origins, East Syrians compiled sources and information on Persian religion and geography, as well as the early leadership of the Church in Babylonia, and created the *Acts of Mari* in the image of the apostles in the canonical and non-canonical Acts about the Apostles.¹³⁰

New Saint for an Ancient Church: Papa and Mari

The discontinuity between the actual past of the Church of the East and the apostolicity that the Church of the East ascribed to its past was resolved in the joining of an historical figure, Papa, an early bishop or Catholicos of Mesopotamia, and Mari, a holy person whose tomb lay in Dayr-Qunni.¹³¹ Through changing Mari into an apostle and Papa into his first disciple, the authors of the *Acts of Mari* closed the gaps in the clouded history of the patriarchate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon: "Papa fut en effet le premier prélat à imposer l'hégémonie et l'autorité morale du siège de Séleucie Ctésiphon sur tous les évêques de l'Église syro-orientale."¹³²

¹²⁹ The earliest Christian asceticism in Iraq that we know of is Aphrahaat's community (c. 330 CE), which seems to be a group that calls themselves the "Covenanters," in the tradition of the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant. This was not the structured monasticism of the fifth and sixth centuries.

¹³⁰ The geographical flourishes show the author's familiarity with the landscape. In one telling passage, he explains how Mari's building project in Kokhe would have been complicated by the humidity of the area. See *Acts of Mari* 29, p. 66.

¹³¹ Papa is mentioned in the earliest synods of the Church of the East. Bar Hebraeus dates his episcopate to 245-246 to 324-325. Additionally, Papos was the name of the first Manichean missionary of Mesopotamia and Egypt. See Fiey, *Jalons*, 17, 55, 64-5. For Papa as a Christianized form of Papos, see Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 87-90.

¹³² Jullien and Jullien, *Aux Origines*, 105.

The *Acts of Mari* promoted the interests of the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, ancient Kokhe: the administrative center of the East Syrian Church of the East.¹³³ At the second council of Constantinople in 553, Justinian reasserted the patriarchal sees of authoritative status: Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem.¹³⁴ Bishops from the Roman Empire had never included Seleucia-Ctesiphon in any list of this type. Earlier in Christian history, each city or region had claimed a patron apostle attached, Peter and Paul to Rome, Thomas to India,¹³⁵ Addai to Edessa.¹³⁶ The saints eventually represented images of the prestige of the see, recalling the literary motif from the *Apocryphal Acts* narratives of the divisions or allotment of countries to the apostles that Christ himself had governed.

¹³³ Other bishoprics in Iraq could have contended for this place, such as Beth Lapat and Kaskgar. Jullien and Jullien note that the *Acts of Mari*'s inscription of Papa's and Mari's name into the history of Seleucia-Ctesiphon served to valorize the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes de Mar Mari*, 53.

¹³⁴ See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes de Mar Mari*, 52. The Second Council of Constantinople famously condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ibas of Edessa (whose letter to the Persian Mari is mentioned in the *Acta* of the Council), and Theodore. The veneration or valuation of these important theologians by the Church of the East served to isolate further the Christians of Persia from those of the Roman Empire. See Hefele, *History of the Councils*, Vol. IV. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871-1896), p. 289.

¹³⁵ Magi traditions are also attached to these Thomas traditions. Both Rufinus and Socrates linked Thomas to Parthia, but Bartholomew to India. "In the division of the earth that was done by drawing lots by the apostles in order to preach the word of God, when the various provinces were entrusted to different apostles ... Bartholomew was attached to India according to what was determined by drawing of lots." See Rufinus of Aquileia, *Historiae ecclesiasticae in Eusebius Werke: Zweiter Band, Zweiter Teil*, E. Schwartz and T. Mommen, eds., GCS 6.2, Book X, chapter 9 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1907; rep. 1999), p. 971. So Socrates of Constantinople knew the tradition that Thomas had been in Parthia, but Bartholomew in "India." "Bartholomew obtained India, which is within the boundaries of Ethiopia. But before the epoch of Constantine, interior India which was neighboring multiple populations and diverse languages, was not yet illuminated by the light of Christ." See Socrates de Constantinople, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Greek text edited by G. Ch Hansen (GCS), tr. by P. Périchon and P. Maraval, Book I, Chapter 19, 2-3 (Paris: Cerf, 2004), p. 190-191. See Jullien and Jullien, *Apôtres*, 20 and 44.

¹³⁶ In some configurations, Bartholomew became the apostle to Armenia. The Greek-speaking Christians had Andrew, Philip, and John. In the Arabic and Semitic world, Simon went to Egypt and Jude to Mauretania. Matthew went to Hieropolis and Mathias to Ethiopia." See Jullien and Jullien, *Apôtres*, 20, 36.

The *Acts of Mari* created a different lineage for the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, next to Qunni on the hill of Kokhe,¹³⁷ through forging a new order of superordinates and subordinates.¹³⁸ In a synod of 585 in Iraq, Catholicos Isho'yaw rewrote the patriarchal order of sees to include Persia.¹³⁹ He deleted Jerusalem and replaced it with Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The *Acts of Mari* thus should be situated within a set of texts from the Church of the East, including historical synod records that resisted the imperially championed Chalcedonian bishops and replaced the hierarchy of saints of the west with those of the Sasanian Dyophysites. The Church of the East inserted itself back onto the map of the Christian world through writing the *Acts of Mari*.

This text demonstrates how missionary stories were used to make an area, in this case Babylonia, “inhabitable” for the sustenance of Christian institutions.¹⁴⁰ His story, the challenges and odds he faced, set him apart from those whom he calls in the text “his companions” -- the other apostles. By the end of the text, Mari had no superordinates, only subordinates. Mari’s status corresponded to that of the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, as he ordered Mesopotamia for Christians independently from the apostles of the Roman, Greek, and West Syrian churches. Mari’s text thus situated Seleucia in the

¹³⁷ The leaders of the East Syrian Church held synods in Kokhe and buried 24 Catholicoi there.

¹³⁸ J. Z. Smith, “Difference is seldom a comparison between entities judged to be equivalent. Difference most frequently entails a hierarchy of prestige and the concomitant political ranking of superordinate and subordinate.” See “What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in *Relating Religion*, 253.

¹³⁹ See the *Synodicon Orientale* (Chabot, 394; 132, ll. 23-29, and 133, ll. 1-2). See Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 52. On the Synod of 585, see also Walker, *Legend*, 93.

¹⁴⁰ For example, Mar Mari casts out the demons from the fig tree and sends them into a river called the Nile; it is renamed then Nahr-Mari after Mar Mari, *Acts of Mari* 15, 33-35, see fn 79 p. 35.

narrative setting of the *Acts of Mari* at the center of a new map, establishing a center and boundary of “civilization” that advanced Persian Christianity.¹⁴¹

As discussed above, Mari’s “hagiographers” sought to elevate the monastery of Dayr Qunni known as the monastery of Mar Mari.¹⁴² Many of the future patriarchs had been monks or students at Dayr Qunni.¹⁴³ When Mari ordained Papa at Dayr Qunni to be his successor, he aligned in apostolic succession all of Papa’s descendants, the Catholicos, back to Christ.¹⁴⁴ The text set Papa and Mari apart for Babylonian Dyophysites, a bishop and a monk, as prototypes of the religious specialists ordering the religious life of the Persian Christians. The text glorified the monastery by making the first successor of Mari to the seat of Seleucia-Ctesiphon a monk from their establishment. Mari’s tomb, which Qunni claimed to have, became a place of pilgrimage for future patriarchs of the Church of the East.¹⁴⁵

Just as it forged a myth for Sasanian Christian history, so the text ordered time for the Church of the East. It purified its past, contended with other Persian religions of the present, and lengthened its history vis-à-vis the “recent” Christianities of the sixth century. Mari’s feast day, announced at the end of the text, brought this chronological reordering to a close, fixing his memory to be recalled by the Church in the future.¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

¹⁴¹ Jullien and Jullien, *Apôtres des Confins*, 16.

¹⁴² Harrak, xvii-xviii. *Acts of Mari*, Chapter 33, 76 (Syr) 77 (Eng).

¹⁴³ Dayr Qunni and its school are associated with the primates of the Orient: Aha the first, 410-414 and Yahbalaha the First (415-420). Jullien and Jullien, *Les Actes*, 47.

¹⁴⁴ *Acts of Mari*, 33, p. 76.

¹⁴⁵ Harrak, *Acts*, xxxv.

¹⁴⁶ *Acts of Mari* 34, p. 78.

The writers of missionary stories, thus, used legends of their patrons to serve as miniaturized versions of their own idealized history. Mari, symbolizing the Church of East, broke away from Addai and never returned to the West. Monastic authors of the Church of the East, at the end of the sixth of the century, created a figure, Mari, through whom they re-centered the hub of Christian activity away from Rome, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and even Edessa, to Qunni in Babylonia, near the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Stepping out of the genre of hagiography,¹⁴⁷ the text did not sketch memories of Mari. Rather, the story functioned as a guide to a new world: Christian Babylonia.

In conclusion, the text of the *Acts of Mari* solved the ambiguity of the roots of Christianity in Persia through the creation of a story to claim apostolicity for the Church of the East. Mesopotamian Christians redefined their lineage through the composition of the *Acts of Mari*.¹⁴⁸ Just as the sixth century became, as Averil Cameron has argued, an age of “defining the authorities on whom one could rely for the totality of correct Christian doctrine,”¹⁴⁹ so, too, missionary narratives from this time, as *Mari* shows, focused on the delineation and creation of sacred history. Out of struggles and positions of subjugation and marginalization, the East Syrian Dyophysites wrote the *Acts of Mari* and retold their story. Monks of the sixth century wrote the *Acts of Mari* to present themselves as the heirs of Mari’s conversion, and they legitimized their relationships with the Persian imperial regime and Christians of the Roman Empire through this narrative.

¹⁴⁷ Some sections, however, remind one of hagiography. For example, at the beginning of the text the author invokes Mar Mari and his prayers, yet this, as Jullien and Jullien have shown, seems to be a later addition to the text.

¹⁴⁸ Here, I am following the set of questions for unpacking myths as B. Lincoln differentiates it in *Theorizing Myth*, 150-151.

¹⁴⁹ See Cameron, A., “Models of the Past in the Late Sixth Century: the Life of Patriarch Eutychius,” in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, G. Clarke, ed., (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1990), 205-223, p. 217.

Introduction to Chapters Four and Five: Between Constantinople and Amida: the Voice of John of Ephesus

Non-Chalcedonian bishop John of Ephesus (507-589 CE) wrote his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* to memorialize his group's heroes from the sixth century. Perhaps because of his own extensive missionary activity at the behest of Justinian and Theodora, John's hagiographical collection showed a penchant for missionary themes. He dedicated two substantial chapters to the missionary saints, Jacob Baradaeus and Simeon of Beth Arsham. I analyze Jacob in Chapter Four and Simeon in Chapter Five. John made their features iconic of the Non-Chalcedonian body as a whole: poor, persecuted, and divinely ordained to survive. John's apologetic voice defended the dissident position of the sixth-century Non-Chalcedonians.¹

While we have many historiographical sources that present this gradual schism of the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians,² hagiography was a literary genre in which Non-Chalcedonians like John of Ephesus imitated models of sanctity inherited from their literary past that harmonized with their politically and socially dissident

¹ J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (Groningen: Rijksuniversitet, 1995), 23-24.

² John's telling of sixth-century religious history presented a different picture than that of Evagrius Scholasticus. For the Chalcedonian side, see the *Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius*, J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, Eds, (London: Methuen, 1898); Procopius, *The Anecdota*, H. B. Dewing, ed. and trans., LCL 290, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935). For the Non-Chalcedonian side, see *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, 4 Vols., E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., CSCO 83/84/87/88, (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae 1919-1924). For the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus, see John of Ephesus, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., CSCO 105/54, 106/55 (Paris, 1935-1936). For a partial English paraphrased translation, see John of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephesus; Now First Translated from the Original Syriac by R. Payne Smith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860). The Second Part of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History* is preserved in Part Three of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin Parts III and IV: A. D. 488-775*, A. Harrak, Tr., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999), hereafter, *Zuqnin*.

religious affiliation.³ In his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* and *Ecclesiastical History*, John of Ephesus wrote about many types of holy people, lay and cleric. Although John himself was a monk and later a bishop, his favorite title for himself was “destroyer of the pagans.”⁴ He wanted his community to remember him for the part that he played in abolishing the traditional forms of Greco-Roman religion that had survived the Christianization of the Roman Empire.⁵

John of Ephesus wrote his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* between 567 and 569, four years after the death of Justinian and three years before Justin II reinstated persecution of the Non-Chalcedonians.⁶ He finished his other major work, the *Ecclesiastical History* during the reign of Justin II (c. 578), while imprisoned in Constantinople for Non-Chalcedonian loyalties. John blamed the sloppiness and frenetic tone of his writing on his incarceration. While he smuggled out chapters for circulation, he lamented the divisions in his Church. He wrote from his personal experiences in Constantinople, cobbling together letters and oral reports.⁷ The first section of this three-part history is lost.⁸ Much of the second part, however, was incorporated into *Part III* of the eighth-

³ John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and tr., PO 17-19, (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1912), 1-208. See S. A. Harvey's, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For an introduction to John's life and writings, see Harvey, *Asceticism*, 29-34.

⁴ See discussion below.

⁵ Yet the source for this missionary work is John himself, and thus he could embellish his deeds according to his agenda.

⁶ John of Ephesus' vividly described Justin II's persecution and fits of madness and portrays the Empress Sophia likewise in an unfavorable light. See *Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus*, Brooks, ed., Part Three, Book Three, Chapters 1-5, 120-129 (Syriac) pp. 88-95 (Latin).

⁷ Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 77 and 197.

⁸ The first part treated the History of Christianity from the days of Julius Caesar until the days of Justin II.

century Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, which addressed the persecution of the Non-Chalcedonians by the Chalcedonians and John's time spent in Constantinople (527-565).

The third part of John's history covered the period of 571-585, and it discussed the inner conflicts among the Non-Chalcedonians. John focused on the Tritheist controversy that had divided the Non-Chalcedonian group into the followers of John Ascotzantes and Theodosius of Alexandria in 557-570.⁹ Both his history and hagiographies emphasized the brutality of Chalcedonian "law enforcers" against the Non-Chalcedonians.¹⁰ John of Ephesus portrayed his "mainstream" branch of the Non-Chalcedonian Church to be the direct descendants of the apostles.¹¹

The disputed author of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* wrote in the eighth century in the monastery of Zuqnin, not far from Amida. *Zuqnin* preserved part of John of Ephesus' account of his conversion of the pagans of Asia Minor.¹² Part II of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History* was preserved in Part Three of this *Chronicle*. Parts III and IV of *Zuqnin* spanned three centuries of history.¹³ The straightforward form of the chronicle, although seeming more "historical" than hagiography, nevertheless shared themes found

⁹ I discuss this in the Introduction to this dissertation. John felt impelled to write the later part of his history on account of another persecution against the Non-Chalcedonians in 572.

¹⁰ In his "Lives of Simeon and Sergius" in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John writes intimate accounts of monastic and lay pillars of the community and their responses to the persecution of the Chalcedonians: "A short time before a persecution had been set on foot by those who served the synod of Chalcedon, and men who possessed the name only of Churchmen . . . [many] they arrested and imprisoned, many they drove to death by stripes inflicted with rods, and many again they greedily and mercilessly plundered; and others they reduced to submission by force, and, when men had eaten and drunk wine and meat, they would open their mouths with lashing and hides and rods, and stuff the oblation into their mouths." *PO* 17, p 95-96.

¹¹ "[John's] literary works were part of the propaganda-war against the Chalcedonians," Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 99.

¹² *Zuqnin*, p. 92-93.

¹³ 488 to 775 CE.

in sacred narrative and legends as well. These included the interpolation of non-human characters, miracles, and grotesque accounts of martyrdom.¹⁴

John of Ephesus was responsible for much of the information that comes down to us concerning the Non-Chalcedonian persecution at the hands of the Chalcedonians. His life and work were steeped in the conflicts and attempts at resolution that characterized the Non-Chalcedonian religious experiences of the sixth century.¹⁵

John was born in Ingilene near Amida in 507. After Maro the Stylite had raised him, he was educated in the monastery of St. John Urtaya. Although John had been born in Northern Mesopotamia, he spent much of his life in Constantinople.¹⁶ Jacob Baradaeus ordained John “Bishop of Ephesus” in 558, but he never was there. By 566, John became abbot of the Non-Chalcedonian monastery of the Sycae outside of Constantinople.¹⁷ Non-Chalcedonian presence in Constantinople remained considerable in the sixth century.¹⁸ Although the emperor Justinian promoted the Chalcedonians, his wife, the Empress Theodora, championed the side of the Non-Chalcedonians.¹⁹

¹⁴ Yet, a chronicle’s verisimilitude to history intensifies the suspicion with which one should read it because of the subtlety of its biases. “The Chronicler . . . was an ardent moralist for whom the purpose of history writing was not to furnish information *about* events, but to have his readers participate *in* them, in all their dramatic details.” *Zuqnin*, p. 21. Here I disagree slightly with Harrak, who admits that the Chronicler is not careful about chronology and sequence of events, yet is then willing to accept the Chronicler’s self-pronounced claim to truthful representation: “Nevertheless, there is no good reason for doubting that he tried hard to convey the truth, as is demonstrated by the fact that, from time to time, he insisted that his informers testify to him under oath,” p. 23.

¹⁵ For biographical information on John of Ephesus, see S. A. Harvey’s *Asceticism*, pp. 28-30. See also, van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 27-37. See also the Introduction to J. P. Margoliouth’s *Extracts from the Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus*; No. XIII, (Brill: Leiden, 1909), I-VI.

¹⁶ John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 18, 624. See Harvey, *Asceticism*, 29.

¹⁷ Non-Chalcedonian “refugees” stayed in the monastery of the Sycae. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 17, p. 298. See also E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés d’Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, CSCO 127/Subs. 2 (Louvain : Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1951), 158.

¹⁸ See H.-G. Beck, *Kaiserin Theodora und Prokop. Der Historiker und sein Opfer* (Munich: Piper, 1986); Daube, David, “The Marriage of Justinian and Theodora. Legal and Theological Reflections,” in: *The*

Chalcedonian persecution against the Non-Chalcedonians started under Justin I in 519, and John and his monastic brothers were exiled from their monastery in Amida for nearly a decade.²⁰ Relations between Non-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians improved in the early years of Justinian's reign. It was during that time that John of Tella ordained John of Ephesus a deacon in 529. By 536, however, the Chalcedonian Bishop of Antioch, Ephrem, had rekindled the persecution against Non-Chalcedonian clergy.²¹ The Non-Chalcedonian hierarchy was in danger of dying out, and their leaders hid and disguised themselves from the Chalcedonians.²²

The restructuring of a separate hierarchy for the Non-Chalcedonians fell upon the shoulders of many, but John of Tella, John of Hephaestopolis, Simeon of Beth Arsham (Chapter Four) and Jacob Baradaeus (Chapter Five) played critical roles in John of Ephesus' retelling of their stories in his *Lives*. In the years leading up to 540, when John left northern Mesopotamia for the imperial capital, he traveled to Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. On his journey to Egypt, he met John of Hephaestopolis, who ordained Non-Chalcedonian priests and forged a hierarchy of clergy for the persecuted Non-Chalcedonians.²³

Catholic University of America Law Review 16 (1968), 380-399; J. Evans, *The Age of Justinian. The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁹ I discuss this in the Introduction to my dissertation.

²⁰ The brothers moved from St. John Urtaya to the Monastery of Mar Mama and then to the Monastery of the White Poplars. The Chalcedonian bishops under whom this took place were Paul "the Jew" (519-521) and Euphrasius (521-526). See John of Ephesus, *Life* 35, *PO* 18, p. 621-623.

²¹ See John of Ephesus, *Lives*, *Life* 35, *PO* 18. See also Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 28-29 and the Introduction to this dissertation.

²² E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, 157.

²³ For the life of John of Tella, see *Life* 24, 513-426. For the life of John of Hephaestopolis, see John of Ephesus, *Life* 25, *Lives*, *PO* 18, 526-540.

In his hagiography, John of Ephesus fashioned in John of Hephaestopolis and John of Tella ascetic bishops of superhuman endurance. John of Hephaestopolis (originally from Gaza) escaped from Constantinople and spread Non-Chalcedonianism in the Aegean Islands. In Tralles, he ordained fifty Non-Chalcedonian clergy in the upper gallery of a Church while the Chalcedonians conducted their liturgy below.²⁴ John of Tella served Non-Chalcedonian laity by meeting their sacramental and pastoral demands.²⁵ His hagiographers claimed that he ordained 170,000 priests to revive the suffering Non-Chalcedonian clergy. His two lives distinguished two different aspects of his work: John of Ephesus narrated primarily his extensive ordinations, whereas that of Elias emphasized his asceticism and imprisonment by the Chalcedonians.²⁶

John's Self-Portrait as a Missionary

In the second part of his sixth-century *Ecclesiastical History*, preserved in the late-eighth century Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, John of Ephesus related how the Emperor Justinian, although a Chalcedonian, commissioned him to convert the last remnants of

²⁴ See *Life of John of Hephaestopolis*, John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 18, pp. 536-539. See also W. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: chapters in the history of the Church in the fifth and sixth centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 288.

²⁵ Susan Harvey argues that John of Ephesus's *Life of John of Tella* "exemplified all that John of Ephesus admired: he was ascetic, priest, hero, and martyr. He distinguished himself early in his career as a solitary but was raised to the bishopric of Constantina/Tella in 519. John of Ephesus tells us that John of Tella conducted his ecclesiastical affairs while continuing his severe ascetic labors." Harvey, *Asceticism*, p. 100.

²⁶ For John, it was incumbent upon him and his brothers to see that Non-Chalcedonian communities received their sacraments lest their salvation be lost through communicating with the Chalcedonians. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 24, PO 18, 521. For the *Life of John of Tella* by Elias, see "Vita Ioannis episcopi Tellae," *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and trans., CSCO 7/8, (Paris: E Typographico Reipublicae, 1907), 29-95. English translation by J. R. Ghanem, *The Biography of John of Tella (d. A. D. 537) by Elias translated from the Syriac with a Historical Introduction and Historical and Linguistic Categories*, unpublished PhD Thesis, (Madison/ Wisc., 1970).

“paganism” in the Roman Empire. He made a monastery at Tralles his missionary center.²⁷

In the year 542 the grace of God visited [the territories of Asia], Caria, Lydia, and Phrygia, through the zeal of Justinian the Victorious. And it emanated from him in abundance through the mediation of our humble self, -- that is [John of Asia] -- so that with the might of the Holy Spirit seventy [thousand of persons] might be instructed and convert from erring paganism, worship of idols [and exaltation of devils], to the knowledge of the truth. They converted and were confirmed in and baptized [in the name of our Lord Jes]us Christ. . . . So when God opened the minds [of all the people and enlightened] their intelligence with the truth, they uprooted with their own hands, along with us, [their sanctuaries, destroyed the ranks] of their idols, [overthrew] their rows of altars everywhere, brought down their [altars] made foul and unclean by [the stinky blood of sacrifices to the de]vils, and cut the countless trees of their worship, while mocking at the whole error of their fathers. The standard of the cross of salvation was planted among them everywhere, and churches of God were fashioned in every place.²⁸

John’s self-presentation as a “missionary” hearkened back to other models of the itinerant holy man in the Syrian past. Even before Justinian commissioned John to convert the pagans, John had journeyed widely with the Non-Chalcedonians (in flight from Chalcedonian aggressors) throughout Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia,²⁹ mapping out future Non-Chalcedonian territory. John applied the image of a missionary “bishop on the run” as a hagiographical defense of the Non-Chalcedonian position.

²⁷ This section exemplifies also how John aligned himself with the Emperor Justinian. The bishop of Tralles had opposed John’s oversight of the monastery, but Justinian (at least according to this account) sided with John against the bishop, giving the former stewardship over the monastery.

John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chap. 37, 171 (Syriac), 125 (Latin).

²⁸ *Zuqnin*, Years 541-542, p. 92-93. See also F. Nau, “Analyse de la second partie inédite de l’Histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d’Asie,” *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 2, (1897) 482. See F. Trombley, “Paganism in the Greek World at the End of Antiquity” in *HTR* 78:3-4 (1985) 327-352, here p. 333. See also John of Ephesus, “Of the Refugees in Constantinople,” *Lives*, PO 18 681 [479]. See also Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d’Antioche (1166-1199)*, 4 Vols., J.-B. Chabot, ed. and tr., (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1899-1901) IV, 288 [II 207-208].

²⁹ See I. Engelkerdt, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz. Ein Beitrag zur Strukturanalyse Byzantinischer Mission zur Zeit Justins und Justinians* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität München, 1974), 12.

The emperor Justinian, as I discussed in the Introduction, wanted a single Christianity (Chalcedonian) for the unity of his Empire. Adherence to Chalcedon had become an expression of loyalty to the Emperor in the sixth century. To identify with Chalcedonian Christianity meant to inscribe oneself into Roman civic life.³⁰ Justinian's law codes reinforced the exclusivity of religions in the late Roman Empire, and this made the question of one's religious affiliation critical. The practice of paganism was outlawed in the fourth century under emperor Theodosius (d. 395),³¹ and Justinian introduced new legislation to persuade practitioners of Greco-Roman religions to convert to Christianity.³² He stipulated the punishment for those who refused to give up their pagan practices.³³ The persecution of the pagans came in two waves (545 and again in 562).³⁴ Justinian (Chalcedonian) commissioned John of Ephesus (Non-Chalcedonian) to evangelize pagans and schismatic Christians in Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia.

³⁰ See K. Adshead, "Justinian and Aphthartodocetism," in S. Mitchell and G. Greatrex, eds., *Ethnicity and Culture in the Sixth Century*, (London: Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, 2000), pp 331-336. For loyalty to the Emperor Justinian as a defining aspect of Roman identity in the sixth century, see G. Greatrex, "Roman identity in the sixth century" in the same volume cited above, pp. 267-292.

³¹ See H. Bettenson, ed., "Theodosius I (379-395) on Catholic and Heretic" in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd edn., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 22. This extracts are taken from the *Codex Theodosius XVI*. i. 2 and *Codex Theodosius XVI*, vol. 6.

³² Despite Justinian's legislation, however, the canons of the Quinsextum Council in 691 indicate that pagan practices persisted over a century after Justinian's efforts. See G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone, eds., *Council of Trullo Revisited* (Rome: Istituto Pontificiale Orientale, 1995).

³³ The *Codex Justinianus* reads: "If any unholy and defiled pagan does not make himself manifest, whether living here or in the countryside, and run to the churches with his household, that is to say wives and children, let him submit to the aforesaid penalties, let the fisc confiscate their property, and let them be given over to exile." *CJ* 1. 11. 10. 3 P. Krueger, ed., *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1920), 2. 64. See Trombley, "Paganism," 328.

³⁴ See R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 26-27.

In the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in contrast to his *History*, John boasted that he had “converted” 80,000 people (10,000 more than he claims in his *History*),³⁵ built 98 churches in Asia Minor, 12 monasteries,³⁶ and transformed seven synagogues into churches.³⁷ The figures of John’s hagiographic embellishments are difficult to interpret, but the nature of his expression revealed his apostolic and imperial ideology. If we buy into his rhetoric, John spent much of his life (thirty years to be specific, from 536-566) completing missionary tasks.³⁸ In commemorating himself as a missionary, John placed himself in the larger tradition of Syriac wandering missionaries, (like Thomas and Addai), whose lives were canonized in Syrian religious memory. John applied the power of the missionary figure to himself as a strategy of ascribing legitimacy to his own, otherwise illegal, ecclesiastical loyalty.

John applied his missionary discourse in his description of the violent end of the last pagans in the royal city (545-546).³⁹ He did not demonize them as he did the rural pagans (to whom I will return later), because this group represented an upper class of *literati*, not “barbarians.” John called them “famous people,” grammarians, sophists, lawyers, and physicians. He did not elaborate on their practices or “heathen manners.” His rhetorical strategy was more careful. These pagans were brought or handed over to the churches that they might learn Christianity as was fitting for their learning and class. John introduced a certain Phocas into his narrative, a patrician whose devotion to the

³⁵ John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 18: 679.

³⁶ E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, p. 209. *Ecclesiastical History* 36-37; see also Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, II p. 320.

³⁷ John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 36-37.

³⁸ John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 17, 681. See Trombley, “Paganism,” 330-1.

³⁹ See *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, Years 540-541, p. 91-92. See also Engelhardt, *Mission*, 17.

traditional gods prevented him from converting to Christianity. Phocas, we are told, drank poison to avoid baptism. Lest John construct Phocas as a “noble martyr” of the traditional gods, John reported the ignominy of the lack of a decent burial for Phocas who was buried like a donkey. Phocas’ story functioned as “evidence” for John that human design could not thwart God’s divine plan of systematic extermination of the pagans in the Empire -- a project in which John himself participated.⁴⁰

The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* preserved John’s depiction of the pagan “*hanephe*”⁴¹ community in the Phoenician city of Baalbek.⁴² John wrote that lightning destroyed Baalbek’s temple. This edifice had been the pride of the pagan civic community. John’s narrative implied that God himself destroyed the “monstrosity” since God’s Christian servants could not:

Erring pagans, while misled by the strength of this building, were especially proud of it, and slaughtering, vows, and endless burnt sacrifices for demons used to take place continually in this temple. And indeed, no one was able to destroy it or to bring an end in it the error of idols. [*sic*] But God, who saw the deviation and erring of people because of the magnificence of this temple, suddenly kindled fire from Heaven in it.⁴³

John used this rhetoric of divine destruction to reframe a natural disaster through his hagiographic and apologetic lens.

⁴⁰ For this narrative, see F. Nau, “Analyse de la seconde partie inédite de l’Histoire Ecclésiastique de Jean d’Asie,” *Révue de L’Orient Chrétien* 2 (1897), pp. 481-482. This is cited also in M Maas, ed., *Readings in Late Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2000), 186.

⁴¹ Large groups of these peoples persisted in Edessa, Harran, Antioch, and Baalbek. See Trombley, “Paganism,” 346.

⁴² See *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, Year 554-44, pp. 126-127.

⁴³ *Zuqnin*, 126-127.

John's description of his missionary activities in his *Ecclesiastical History* described in more detail his missionary work in Caria, Phrygia, Asia, and Lydia.⁴⁴ He portrayed the mountainous inhabitants of Caria in his report of their pagan society. He bragged that he razed the temple there at Deira to the ground and had a monastery built in its place.⁴⁵ Archeological evidence in Troas in Asia Minor supported John's claim that lands once owned by pagan temple complexes were taken over by monastic communities.⁴⁶

In his description of the destruction and transformation of these pagan societies, John affiliated himself with Justinian through devising a common enemy. For the most part, John did not portray Justinian in a favorable light, saving his praise instead for Theodora. Yet through aligning his interests with the emperor's desire to eradicate paganism, John diminished the differences between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians. His exoticizing of the pagans allowed him to draw a strong boundary separating the Christians (whatever their Christological confession) from the pagans.

Through presenting himself as a missionary in Asia Minor, moreover, John presented the Non-Chalcedonians as a flourishing group whose commitment to asceticism and orthodoxy warranted Justinian selection of them to convert "pagans" and "heretical" Christians. His missionary tales drew on the motifs of the stories of the first apostles: mythological landscapes and divine intervention intertwined as heroes created new communities of Christians out of barbarians.

⁴⁴ Trombley, "Paganism," 329.

⁴⁵ See Trombley, "Paganism," 329. Honigmann notes that we cannot determine the exact location of this place. E. Honigmann, "Geographica: l'Histoire Ecclesiastique de Jean d'Ephese," *Byzantion* 14 (1939), 615-645, here 620-21.

⁴⁶ See Trombley, "Paganism," 330.

Just as John forged an alliance with the Chalcedonians through having a common pagan enemy, his rhetorical constructions of the Montanists allowed him to contrast *their* “heterodoxy” with *his* group’s “orthodoxy.”⁴⁷ Following Justinian’s bid, John claims that he stamped out what had once been a flourishing Montanist community in Phrygia.⁴⁸ He found the bones of Montanus, exhumed them, and he then burned the Montanists’ church.⁴⁹ Through portraying the divinely ordained demise of the Montanists, John identified himself as a servant of the Christian Empire. He established a continuum between them and his group: a link that was threatened as deliberations between his group and the Chalcedonians failed to yield any resolution.⁵⁰ When the Chalcedonian confession was selected as the particular type of Christianity for the Empire, Non-Chalcedonians like John of Ephesus downplayed their dissociation from the Empire through narrating their participation in Justinian’s missionary campaigns.

Thus in the mid-sixth century, John of Ephesus did not see himself as belonging to a different Church than the emperors. John’s missionary rhetoric contrasted to his narratives of the plagues, persecutions, and internal crises that threatened the Non-

⁴⁷ It is hard to see how the Montanists could have been seen as heterodox or schismatic. They were a charismatic Christian group that had survived since the second century CE.

⁴⁸ See Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 32.

⁴⁹ “At this time, the corrupting heresy of Montanus – the story of which and how it emerged was written down for us at the time of the Apostles – was ridiculed and uprooted. For through the exhortation of holy John, Bishop of Asia, the bones of Montanus – he who said about himself that he was the Spirit Paraclete – Cratius (his associate), Maximilla and Priscilla, his prophetesses were found.” In the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, which preserves Part 2 of John of Ephesus *Ecclesiastical History*, John relates his sweep across Phrygia to rid the countryside of this so-called “schismatic” group. See *Zuqnin*, Year 549-550, pp. 123-124. Cf. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, Vol. IV, 323-325; Vol. II 269-272.

⁵⁰ See the Introduction to this dissertation.

Chalcedonians throughout the sixth century. Future generations of Non-Chalcedonians transmitted John's description of himself as the "converter of the pagans," ܡܠܝܟܐ ܕܡܬܬܬܝܒܐ.⁵¹

The transmission of the historical and hagiographical works of John of Ephesus preserved his testimony and a Non-Chalcedonian memory. By the time that medieval chroniclers like Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus fashioned their versions of sixth-century Non-Chalcedonian stories, religious leaders of subsequent generations had already "consecrated" heroes (John of Ephesus, Severus of Antioch, Jacob Baradaeus) of their past as "holy."⁵² The "canonized" status of such men affected their representations by later authors whose inherited "sense of how the story should go" had changed. I turn now to an analysis of two of John's missionary saints, Jacob Baradaeus and Simeon of Beth Arsham.

⁵¹ We see this, for example, in the seventh-century hagiography *Life of Jacob Baradaeus*, as well as the twelfth-century Chronicle of Michael the Syrian. *Spurious Life of Jacob Baradaeus* in PO 19, 242. See Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, IV 288 [II 208]. See Zuqnin, p. 92, fn. 3.

⁵² The *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (1126-1199), for example, drew extensively on John of Ephesus' *History* for its discussion of the sixth century. Bar Hebraeus was a medieval polymath (1264-1286) and Mafrian of Tagrit, who wrote the *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* in 1285. Bar Hebraeus presented an account of the sixth century with the interests of a Post-Islamic Non-Chalcedonian religious leader. His brother also wrote a *Chronography* which provides important information on late antique, early medieval Iraqi Christianity. The great distance from the events that they have narrated necessitates caution from historians who use them. See J.-M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Eglise en Iraq*, CSCO 310/subs. 36, (Louvain: Secretariat du SCO, 1970), 14-15 and Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 81.

Chapter Four: Constructing Commonalities: John of Ephesus and the Myth of Simeon of Beth Arsham, Missionary to Persia

Syriac sources from the sixth century onward attributed the expansion of the Non-Chalcedonian community into Persia and the Sinai Peninsula to the efforts of the sixth-century bishop, Simeon of Beth Arsham (d. 540).¹ His hagiographer, John of Ephesus, called him the “Persian Debater.”² Traveling between Constantinople, Hirtha al-Numan, and the areas of Mesopotamia lying between the Persian and Roman Empires, Simeon created sustained pockets of Non-Chalcedonian communities in an area traditionally devoted to “Nestorian” or “Church of the East” Dyophysite Christianity. Simeon’s letters to the Roman emperor Anastasius brought attention to the plight of Christians living under the Jewish Himyarite king, Yusef, in Najran in Southern Arabia.³ Due to his

¹ There is a large body of literature on Simeon of Beth Arsham. There has been limited attention to his hagiographical tradition. Susan Ashbrook Harvey analyzed his story as it relates to the larger corpus of the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* by John of Ephesus. Harvey discusses Simeon’s mission in *Asceticism and Society in Crisis. John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990), pp. 33, 97-99, 176 n. 4, and 184-185, esp. n. 13. See also A. Baumstark, *Geschichte syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Weber, 1922), 145-146. Simeon of Beth Arsham’s letters on the murders at Najran are analyzed by Walter Stevenson in his larger study on state-sponsored missions, *Religion and Empire: State-sponsored Missions in Ancient India, Iran and Rome* (forthcoming). For the expansion of the Non-Chalcedonian group into Persia, see Lucas van Rompay, “Society and Community in the Christian Near East” in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239-266. See also I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Volume I, part 2: Ecclesiastical History (Washington D. C. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995) and *idem*, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1 (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995). See also Dauvillier, J., “L’expansion de l’Église Syrienne en Asie et en Extrême Orient,” *L’Orient Syrien* 1 (1956), 76-87 and Engelhardt, I. *Mission und Politik in Byzanz. Ein Beitrag zur Strukturanalyse Byzantinischer Mission zur Zeit Justins und Justinians* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität München, 1974) esp., pp. 153-155.

² Joel Walker also discusses Simeon of Beth Arsham and debating charisma as motifs of the Sasanian Christian milieu in his book on east Syrian hagiography, J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: narrative and Christian heroism in late antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 175-177.

³ *The Book of the Himyarites*, Moberg, A., ed. and tr., (Lund, C.W.K.: Gleerup, 1924). Simeon Beth Arsham, “La lettura di Simeone vescovo di Beth-Arsham sopra i martiri omeriti,” I. Guidi, ed. and trans., *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, ser. 3. Memorie della Classe Scienze Morali, storiche e filologiche* 7, (Rome), 475-515. See also “Letter-Giving: an Account of the Himyarite Martyrs by Simeon, Bishop of the Persian Christians,” A. Jeffery, Tr., *The Moslem World* 36 (1946), 204-216. I. Shahid has worked extensively on Simeon of Beth Arsham. “Simeon’s New Letter” in I. Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran*,

widespread missionary and pastoral activity, the memory of the historical Simeon of Beth Arsham was mythologized into a sacred legend. John of Ephesus's hagiography of Simeon, I will argue, represented an icon of the shifting social boundaries and convoluted imperial relationships of the sixth-century Non-Chalcedonians.

John of Ephesus wrote "the Life of Simeon" about twenty years after the holy man's death and included it in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*.⁴ Simeon, in John's memory, sustained the Non-Chalcedonian communities living in the "Nestorian" areas of the Persian Empire during the reigns of the Roman emperors Anastasius, Justin I, and Justinian. He described Simeon's conversion of the Arabic foederati tribes living between the Roman and Persian Empires.⁵ John narrated the defense of a single-natured Christology which Simeon presented in a debate with the Nestorian Catholicos Babai before the Persian marzban: a local Sasanian governor or margrave.⁶ John's presentation

Subsidia Hagiographica 49 (Brussels: Soc. des Bollandistes, 1971), 44-64. For background on the conflict in Najran, see S. Smith, "Events in Arabia in the Sixth Century," in *BSOAS*, 16 (1954), pp. 425-68. See also I. Shahid, "Byzantium and South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 233-94. For textual and chronological issues, see Christian Robin, Joelle Beaucamp, and Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, "La persécution des chrétiens et la chronologie himyarite," *Aram* 11/12 (1999-2000): 15-83.

⁴ I use the Syriac text from Brooks' edition of the "Life of Simeon the Bishop" in Brooks's edition, *PO* 17, 137-159. Translations are mine. For an historical introduction to this period, see W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), esp. 297.

⁵ Simeon is known for the role that he played in the conference in Ramla in 524. See Engelhardt, *Mission*, 153. The Ghassanid feudal king Arethas also played an important role in this sequence of events. See the Introduction to this dissertation and I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, 34 and idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Volume I, part 2, 755-6.

⁶ For an explanation of the term, see J. Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 118, no. 134. For an explanation of the theological debates of this period, see P. T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)*, (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

of Simeon shaped the later Syriac Orthodox memory. His narrative on Simeon was repeated in shortened form in the twelfth-century *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian*.⁷

This chapter contains three parts: a literary study on Simeon as a missionary saint, a problematizing of John's constructions of the Persian "others" in the hagiography, and an analysis of how Simeon's story mapped out John's vision for the Non-Chalcedonian leaders. John "storied" Simeon's work to interpret the Non-Chalcedonians vis-à-vis their future and their past.⁸ By "storied," I mean that John placed Simeon's memory in narrative so that the legend itself acted as a powerful myth for the Non-Chalcedonian interpretation of their past. As Simeon's hagiographer, John looked for points of commonality between Simeon's ministry and his own world in Constantinople.⁹ I will show how Simeon's hagiographic identification as a Persian, itinerant bishop, homilist, defender of orthodoxy, and converter of "heretics" mythologized Persian borderlands for the Non-Chalcedonian community, giving them a new setting in which to think through their shifting affiliations to the Roman Empire.

Background and History of the Text

⁷ See *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, J.-B. Chabot, ed. and tr., 4 Vols. (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1899-1910), Book IX, Chapter VIII-X, pp. 165-167 (French) 261-263 (Syriac).

⁸ See R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). Brubaker here discusses and partially revises Margaret Somers's work on narrative and ethnicity. See M. Somers, "Narrativity, Narrative Identity, and Social Action: Rethinking English Working-Class Formation," in G. Roberts, ed., *The History and Narrative Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 354-374. Somers and Gibson note elsewhere: "[I]t is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities." M. Somers and G. Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity" in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, C. Calhoun, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 37-99, here 58-9.

⁹ Brubaker notes the importance of developing "an analytical idiom sensitive to the multiple forms and degrees of commonality and connectedness, and to the widely varying ways in which actors (and the cultural idioms, public narratives, and prevailing discourses on which they draw) attribute meaning and significance to them," *Groups*, 48.

John of Ephesus' "Life of Simeon the Bishop" is Chapter 10 in the collection of his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, a text that dates to 566-8.¹⁰ John described Simeon as "a great wonder,"¹¹ a "warrior for the orthodox faith,"¹² whose labor spread the "good news" to the outer regions of the world in the image of Christianity's most famous missionary, Paul.¹³ Simeon was magnificently trained in the Scriptures and debate.¹⁴ His Persian background and rhetorical skills made him well-poised to fight the followers of Nestorius, Theodore, Mani and Marcion, the groups especially highlighted by John of Ephesus.¹⁵

John recounted Simeon's zealous travels from his home in Hirtha to help Christian and non-Christian Arabic tribes (the *Tayaye*),¹⁶ and he converted "Nestorians" and Magians to the Non-Chalcedonian position. Simeon baptized households and kingdoms and supported high-born Magian martyrs. He changed his appearance to protect himself, calling himself a "foreigner" as he went from place to place to debate theology.¹⁷ Simeon negotiated on behalf of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius with the Persian Shah Kusro I to help the "orthodox" Christians in Persia.¹⁸ His talent impressed

¹⁰ Brooks, "Introduction," *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, PO 17, p. vii. The Syriac text in the *PO* is the edition of Brooks based upon a late seventh-century MS from the British Museum, 14647.

¹¹ "Life of Simeon," 137.

¹² "Life of Simeon," 137.

¹³ "Life of Simeon," 138.

¹⁴ "Life of Simeon," 138.

¹⁵ "Life of Simeon," 138-139.

¹⁶ Hirtha al-Numan, not to be confused with Hira in Iraq.

¹⁷ "Life of Simeon," 144-146.

¹⁸ See J-M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Eglise en Iraq*, CSCO 310/subs. 36, (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1970), pp. 122-127.

the Persian marzban, and Simeon demonstrated through his arguments why the Non-Chalcedonians could be counted among loyal subjects of the Persian king.¹⁹ Simeon's followers, against Simeon's will, made him a bishop of Beth Arsham.²⁰ Simeon ministered to imprisoned bishops and traveled from king to king in various regions, gathering the seals of royal support for the Non-Chalcedonians.²¹ Simeon's resourcefulness even helped him to create protective bindings for the scriptures and carrying devices to guard them from wear and tear.

John thus portrayed a saint who took the "Orthodox" Christian message to the outer limits of the Empire, north, south, east, and west.²² John presented Simeon of Beth Arsham as a bishop on the run, writing letters, converting, preaching, and negotiating among rulers and Christian leaders from opposing Christologies. Simeon journeyed back to Constantinople where he died a noble death, surrounded by his fellow Non-Chalcedonian bishops in house prison in Constantinople under Theodora's protection.²³

Agenda and Thesis

¹⁹ "Life of Simeon," 147-148.

²⁰ "They seized him with force and made him bishop of a place called Beth Arsham," "Life of Simeon," 152. Beth Arsham was a town that was probably situated near Ctesiphon, south of modern-day Baghdad. See I. Afrām, A. I. Barsoum, Matti Moosa, C. A. Karim, *The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003) fn 3, p 90. See also J.-M Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne : contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq* (Beirut, Impr. catholique [1965]-68) 289:3.

²¹ "Life of Simeon the Bishop," 154-156.

²² "Life of Simeon the Bishop," 155.

²³ As many as 500 monks stayed in the Palace of Hormisdas in house prison under Theodora's care. See John of Ephesus, *Lives*, Life 47, *PO* 18, p. 677. See also E. Honigmann, *Evêques et évêchés d'Asie antérieure au Vie siècle*, CSCO 127/Subs. 2 (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1951), p. 158. According to the later Chronicler Michael the Syrian (dependant on John of Ephesus), she gave the monks under Theodosius of Alexandria asylum from 539-548. See his *Chronique*, II, p. 195. See also the Introduction to this dissertation, p. 20.

Simeon's hagiography showed marked congruities with earlier Syriac missionary narratives. John's circumstances in Constantinople, however, gave him an idiosyncratic schema that informed how he made the memory of this Persian bishop a model for his Non-Chalcedonian group. I will show how John conceptualized Simeon in the idiom of the missionary saint to persuade his readers that internal and external conflicts would not prevent them from expanding both within the Byzantine Empire and beyond it.

Side-stepping questions of the historical Simeon of Beth Arsham, I will focus on John's hagiographic presentation of Simeon's career. I argue that John, writing in a time of political conflict with Chalcedonian Byzantium, crafted Simeon's narrative to hearken back to the hopeful and comforting memory of the epoch of Emperor Anastasius.²⁴ I will show that John projected pieces of himself, a self-styled "missionary to the pagans," onto his subject, and that this point of commonality with Simeon framed John's remembrance of him.²⁵

Part One: Literary Themes

The template of missionary stories that evolved from the third- through late fifth-century gave Syriac authors of the sixth through eighth centuries a "transtextual" memory of how their ancestors answered the biblical injunction to go forth, preach, and baptize the nations in the name of the Christian trinity (Mt. 28:19).²⁶ For John of Ephesus, Simeon's missionary work modeled the ideals of an ascetic bishop: poverty, simplicity,

²⁴ Literary theorist Barbara Herrnstein Smith has shown that storytelling can serve multiple functions: 'to reflect reality or to supplement it, to reinforce ruling ideologies or to subvert them, to console us for our mortality or to give us intimations of our immortality.' Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 105.

²⁵ I discuss John's self-styling as a missionary of the pagans in my introductory chapter on John of Ephesus preceding this chapter and the one following it on Jacob Baradaeus.

²⁶ "Transtextuality" denotes "[t]he text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts," G. Genette, *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*, C. Newman and C. Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 1.

detachment, and a commitment to spreading the Gospel (ܐܘܪܝܢܐ). As he conveyed this picture of Simeon, however, John kept the memory of earlier missionary texts in mind. Apostolic legends, like the *Acts of Thomas* and *Teaching of Addai* continued to circulate orally and in written form. These stories gave John models to claim and reshape for his interests.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Syriac missionary literature showed a specific interest in illustrating the conversion of kings and queens, and the “Life of Simeon” exemplified this.²⁷ John’s story portrayed Persian, Arab, and Roman royal figures in a positive light, despite John’s own ambiguous relationship to the Roman emperors. In particular, the “Life of Simeon” reflected a Non-Chalcedonian idealization of the reign of Anastasius that presented his rule (491-518) as an epoch of attempts at reconciliation between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians, prior to their subsequent persecution under Justin I, Justinian and Justin II.²⁸

In John’s account, Simeon did not convert Anastasius, but rather cooperated with the power of the Roman court in order to promote Non-Chalcedonian Christianity in Persia and construct difference between Simeon’s group and the Church of the East.²⁹ John claimed that the bishops of the Church of the East had accused the Non-Chalcedonians of treason against the Persian shah, on account of their ties to

²⁷ I discuss this particularly in chapters 1-3.

²⁸ John refers to Anastasius as the believing king, ܐܢܬܐܣܝܘܣ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܬܠܡܕܐ. See, “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” *PO* 17, p. 142. See Harvey, *Asceticism*, p. 23; Frend, *Rise*, pp 194-220; and Honigmann *Évêques et évêchés*, pp. 11-21 and passim. Anastasius became the irenic champion of the Miaphysite position.

²⁹ “In our time, the Nestorian bishops of well-known cities came together. They told the Persian emperor about all the believing [Non-Chalcedonian] bishops there. Thus they said, ‘These are the traitors of your empire! How can you teach your religion and mysteries with these Romans!’ That Magi believed them. He ordered that a persecution begin against the orthodox in his empire,” “Life of Simeon,” 142. John calls the Church of the East heretics. “Life of Simeon,” 143.

Constantinople. Centers of West-Syrian Non-Chalcedonian Christianity grew in the Persian areas that had resisted Bar Sauma's "Nestorian" religious homogenization at the end of the fifth century. These same places received refugees from the Roman Empire who fled the persecution of Justin I, Justinian, and Justin II.³⁰ Simeon organized an embassy to the "faithful" Anastasius to help the Non-Chalcedonians.³¹ There was an exchange of gifts between the Roman emperor and the Persian shah, and the Non-Chalcedonians in Persia benefited from the peace that was brokered between the rulers through Simeon.³² John thus showed Simeon's diplomacy among rulers as key in combating his Christian rivals. The way to battle the Nestorian "other" was not only through doctrinal quarrels, but also through winning the favor of the Persian shah with the help of Byzantine imperial gifts.³³

Other themes in the "Life of Simeon" resonated with those of the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Teaching of Addai* and suggested that John had these paradigms in mind as he forged a new hierarchy of saints in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. Like Thomas, for example, Simeon's outward appearance changed to fit the necessities of different situations.³⁴ And like Thomas, Simeon never stayed in one place for long. Simeon's imprisonment in Nisibis also recalled Thomas' imprisonment in Mazdai's kingdom.

³⁰ I discuss this more thoroughly on my chapter on *Ahoudemmeh*, Chapter 6.

³¹ "Blessed Simeon with the acuteness of his zeal brought this to the attention of the believing emperor of the Romans, Anastasius, that [Anastasius] might show favor to the church of the believers in the region of the Persians. He said, 'Who will be able to appeal to the believing king about these things if I do not? Thus he left to ask the *believing king* for peace for the faithful in the region of the Persians.' Swiftly he reached the emperor Anastasius and made these things known to him. That emperor and *friend of God*, since he was faithful and a friend towards the faithful, did not delay in doing his request." "Life of Simeon," 142, emphasis mine.

³² "Life of Simeon," 139.

³³ "Life of Simeon," 143

³⁴ "Life of Simeon," 145.

Both missionaries met challenges of life on the periphery of civilization on the roads connecting the exotic kingdoms of their travels.³⁵

The *Teaching of Addai* also gave John of Ephesus a paradigm by which to fashion a “missionary saint” for the Non-Chalcedonians. Using a common hagiographic trope, John claimed that his narrative merely created an image or impression of Simeon’s many virtues – (ܡܝܬܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܝܬܐ),³⁶ and John’s comparison of his hagiographic enterprise to that of a painter of an icon, ܡܝܬܝܬܐ, shows a pronounced similarity to the “image language” of *Addai*.³⁷ Simeon, like Addai, forged networks together through epistolary exchanges. John’s construction of the missionary as a bearer of orthodoxy and a preacher was a theme shared with the *Teaching of Addai*, as we recall from the long discourses of Addai to the people of Edessa, after the conversion of Abgar’s court.³⁸

Although John’s text is shorter than other missionary narratives, it is also denser. John wove epic hero motifs, romantic themes, and miracles episodes into his contracted portrait of Simeon. While there was no trip to the underworld, Simeon journeyed all over the outer world. There were no long discourses on theology, but there were theological debates. John told us nothing of Simeon’s life before he embarked on his mission. But the things that John wrote were specific, precise, memorable, schematized, and idealized.

Movement and Poverty

³⁵ “Life of Simeon,” 154. See AT 21.

³⁶ “Life of Simeon,” p. 137.

³⁷ Recall that Syriac missionary texts show a pronounced interest in images. The word *salmo* is found through the Syriac texts of the *Doctrina Addai* (famous image of Christ), and in the *Acts of Thomas* we read *domoutho* or “likeness.” Christ spoke to the princess bride in her chamber in the image of Judas Thomas, See AT 11-12.

³⁸ See Griffith, S., “The Doctrina Addai as a Paradigm of Christian Thought in Edessa in the Fifth Century,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 6.2 (July 2003), <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol6No2/HV6N2Griffith.html/>.

The *Life of Simeon* recapitulated the theme of the wandering, itinerant saint from the *Acts of Thomas*.³⁹ Simeon traveled from place to place and declared himself a foreigner or *noukroyo* whose life embodied the zeal and energy of one driven to the extremes of the earth to accomplish God's plan:

[Simeon] entered one of the cities and he found clergymen sitting at the gate. Just as a foreigner coming from afar, they asked him, "Where are you from?" And he said to them, "I am a foreigner." They said to him, "Have you heard where that Simeon the debater is, who has been traveling from place to place?"⁴⁰

This topos in Syriac literature of attaching homelessness and itinerancy to holiness emerged with a different nuance, however, in the sixth century.⁴¹ Now traveling missionary saints must be clearly related to a greater ecclesiastical hierarchy, even one that was inchoate as were the Non-Chalcedonian ranks of the Justinian age. John framed Simeon's homelessness as a voluntary condition, and Simeon's charisma of the unattached wanderer was modified through his ordination to the bishopric of Beth Arsham. Simeon's investment in the bishoprics of Persia tied him to his Non-Chalcedonian coreligionists in the Roman Empire. Through tracing the pattern of Simeon's travels in narrative, John wrote himself and his circle in Constantinople into Simeon's Persian journeys.

What's in a Word: linguistic charisma and defender of Orthodoxy⁴²

³⁹ I discuss this in my chapter on the *Acts of Thomas*.

⁴⁰ "Life of Simeon," 145.

⁴¹ See D. Caner, *Wandering Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁴² "Life of Simeon," 143.

John wove several references to the apostles into his description of Simeon, comparing Simeon's conversion efforts to Paul's⁴³ and designating Simeon's work as "apostolic labor."⁴⁴ Yet John located apostolicity not in the healing capacity of the original twelve, but rather in their multilingualism. In the sixth century, John envisioned the Non-Chalcedonians an expansive group that was fit to translate their message for new peoples and debate it before distant leaders. The Non-Chalcedonians were not separate from the Roman Empire but ambassadors of it, and John projected that agenda onto his legend of Simeon.

Modern scholars have discussed the issues of language and power, Greek and Latin versus Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Arabic, as they have or have not related to the gradual development of a separate Miaphysite Church.⁴⁵ John's mythologizing of the Non-Chalcedonians into an expanding movement, transcending linguistic barriers, contrasts to such interpretations of the split between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians. John did not present his group as provincial, glossing over their linguistic differences and divergent political loyalties.⁴⁶ John detached Simeon from

⁴³ "Life of Simeon," 133.

⁴⁴ "Nor did he not fall short of the labors of the apostles nor did he grow weary ... as [he had] the gift granted to the apostles, that new tongues might speak." "Life of Simeon," 155.

⁴⁵ Indeed linguistic differences have been one of many reasons given for the development of a separate Syriac Orthodox Church in the seventh and eighth centuries. See, for example, Frend, *Rise*, 295. S. P. Brock, "Greek and Syriac in Late-Antique Syria," in A. Bowman and G. Woolf, *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 149-160; and B. ter Haar Romeny, "From Religious Association to Ethnic Community: a research project on identity formation under the Syrian Orthodox under Muslim rule," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Oct. 2005 (Vol. 16), Issue 4, pp. 377-399.

⁴⁶ Brubaker notes the role of rhetoric in identity politics: "to persuade people that they are one; that they comprise a bounded, distinctive, solidary group; that their internal differences do not matter, at least for the purpose at hand," Brubaker, *Ethnicity Beyond Groups*, 60.

wealth and attached linguistic prowess to him instead: a more precious commodity for the portrayal of the Non-Chalcedonians.

In his book, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, Peter Brown argued that the holy man in late antiquity replaced the role that the philosopher had played as a critic of social mores speaking with frank boldness, or *parrhesia*.⁴⁷ This motif recurred in Simeon's hagiography in a pronounced way.⁴⁸ John transformed Simeon's missionary story into a series of linguistic victories, as Simeon won followers not with miracles but with speech acts. Simeon converted both Christians and non-Christians. John's portrayal of Simeon with motifs that evoked the classical philosopher set Simeon apart from other missionaries in the Syriac hagiographic memory, yet it set him into relationship with another holy man of the same name, Simeon the Elder "the Stylite" (d. 451). Both Simeons were presented in their hagiographies as mediators among ethnically diverse peoples, intercessors for their flocks, and holy men purportedly detached from political advancement yet closely involved with rulers.⁴⁹

Whereas the holy man of apostolic missionary narratives worked wonders as he established churches, later Syriac texts depict him as a pastor of divine eloquence. In Simeon of Beth Arsham's hagiography, John combined two literary types in one person: the apostolic bishop, an emblem of hierarchy and stability, and the classical philosopher,

⁴⁷ See P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in late antiquity: towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

⁴⁸ John writes that it was not unlike Simeon "to speak with boldness, in the likeness of Saint Paul." "Life of Simeon," 138.

⁴⁹ For the hagiographies of Simeon the Elder, see R. Doran, Tr., *Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992). For the holy man in late antiquity, see P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 80-101. Reprinted with additional notes in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 103-152. See also S. A. Harvey, "The Stylite's Liturgy: Ritual and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (Fall 1998) pp. 523-539.

disinterested and liberated from constraints of social patronage. Simeon addressed emperors and kings and encouraged martyrs. His freedom of movement and speech, however, did not divorce him from his network of episcopal relationships. His journeys ended in visitations; he set his speech in stone with letters and seals. The shift in symbols of authority for the missionary bishop, from healing and miracles, to doctrinal clarity, rhetorical skills, and epistolary persuasion distinguished missionary texts after the fifth century from the earlier prototypes.⁵⁰

In the apostolic *Acts* genre, we often found scenes in which the saint asserted the validity of his religion vis-à-vis other competitors, whether pagan, Jewish, or “heretically” Christian, often with some display of divine protection or favor. In the case of Simeon of Beth Arsham’s story, the “adversaries” of the hero were the bishops of the Church of the East. Whereas Thomas and Addai healed and performed miracles to display their likeness to Christ and access to divine power and insight, John set Simeon apart from his Dyophysite competitors through accentuating Simeon’s linguistic gifts and theological acumen for debate, calling him the *dorosho* ܕܪܫܐ. Simeon spoke multiple languages, and John portrayed this gift as an apostolic charisma.⁵¹ Simeon, unlike other missionaries in this study, proselytized other Christians, such as those “blinded by the Nestorians,”⁵² and the Arabic tribes near Hirtha,⁵³ as well as non-Christians, including a

⁵⁰ As I discussed in Chapter two, the fifth century *Doctrina Addai*, a composite text as S. Griffith has shown, contains elements of both: healing and miracles (from the fourth century) and concern for orthodoxy and rhetorical skills (from the fifth century). For debate as a practice of the Church of the East, see J. Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, Chapter 3, 164-205.

⁵¹ “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 155.

⁵² “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 140.

⁵³ They are presumably the Lakhmids, who would have been Nestorians. See Trimmingham, J. S., *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1990).

Magian leader. In the text, Simeon brought both Magian prince and Arab king under his banner.⁵⁴

John described Simeon as a type of debating soldier who fought on behalf of the orthodox.⁵⁵ No other Syriac missionary is described as “armed.”⁵⁶ John, however, depicted Simeon with features that evoked the Pauline virtues of the “ambassador in bonds,” equipped for spiritual warfare, gifted with bold speech.⁵⁷ The shift in ideology from “healer” to “armed debater” constructed a different set of values for the audience of the text. John portrayed Simeon as vigorously, even militantly, orthodox in his “Non-Chalcedonian” theology so that no other group could claim him.⁵⁸ Simeon’s negotiations for the Roman emperor could have been seen as useful for the Chalcedonians. As Athanasius wrote the *Life of Antony* to affiliation Antony of Egypt (295-373) with the Nicene Christians, so John of Ephesus’ story joined Simeon of Beth Arsham to the Non-Chalcedonians.⁵⁹ John precluded the Chalcedonians from recasting Simeon as one of theirs. The saint’s memory was an area of contestation, a form of Bourdieuan “spiritual

⁵⁴ This places him in relationship with Mari, whose story is rife with interactions between Magians and Christians. See Chapter Three.

⁵⁵ “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 139-140.

⁵⁶ “Thus blessed Simeon bravely armed himself against these people [Nestorians], and he contended with them without ceasing.” “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 139.

⁵⁷ Eph. 6:10-20.

⁵⁸ A concern for orthodoxy is a prevalent theme throughout Christian literature particularly after Nicaea. “This holy Simeon showed an acute and bubbling zeal on behalf of the orthodox faith until death. Magnificently he was trained in the Scriptures. He set forth in his debating passionately as no other person I know, nor as any of the fathers before, since God’s gift was with him.” “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 138.

⁵⁹ See R. Gregg, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). For Anti-Arian polemics in the *Life of Antony*, see sections 69-70, 82, 86, 89 and 91; pp. 82-83, 91, 93, 95-7 in Gregg’s translation.

capital” to be kept.⁶⁰ John understood that Simeon’s life and works could have been as easily exploited by his Chalcedonian contemporaries to promote a Dyophysite Christology. Accordingly, John’s depiction of Simeon was a preemptive rejoinder to his Chalcedonian counterparts.

This hagiography created points of commonalities with Simeon that matched John’s needs to bond a group to a figure that could articulate theological differences from their counterparts in Constantinople. John’s audience was not in Persia, but in the imperial capital, and John crafted Simeon as an ambassador and missionary of the Byzantine court. The Byzantine rulers sent Non-Chalcedonians to expand in the Sasanian world. Simeon’s life idealized John’s agenda of presenting the compatibility of Non-Chalcedonianism with Byzantium. Through Simeon’s missionary story, John and his audience mythologized their loyalty to Constantinople and the Christology and bishops they saw as orthodox.

Part Two: Ambiguity of Imperial Affiliations: the Utility of Persia

During Simeon’s lifetime, two major shifts occurred in the orientation of the Roman and Persian rulers toward Christianity. In the west, the Byzantine Empire began to sponsor Chalcedonian bishops. In the East, the Sasanian Empire granted to the “Nestorian” bishops the privilege of being the only “tolerated” type of Christianity in the Persian Empire. The Non-Chalcedonians, therefore, needed to negotiate a relationship with the rulers of both empires and legitimate their orthodoxy.⁶¹ In the “Life of Simeon,”

⁶⁰ Religious capital involves “the generative basis of all thoughts, perceptions, and actions conforming with [*sic*] the norms of a religious representation of the natural and supernatural world,” On religious capital, see P. Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” in C. Calhoun, ed., *Comparative Social Research* Vol. 13 (Greenwich, CT and London: Gal Press Inc., 1991), pp. 1-44, here p. 22.

⁶¹ This Persian imperial political preference for the Church of the East began especially after the Catholicate of Bar Sauma of Nisibis (435-496). See J. Walker, *Legend*, 175.

the holy man's Nestorian "enemy,"⁶² an established "foe" for those who traced themselves to Cyril of Alexandria, provided John with a religious "other" against whom John could unify his bishops. The clarity of Simeon's enemies allowed John to circumvent the ambiguities and delicate complexities of John's co-religionists vis-à-vis the Roman imperial family, the Non-Chalcedonians in Egypt, and the Chalcedonians themselves.⁶³ In this section, I will argue that John's condemnation of the Persian bishops of the Church of the East helped him to increase for his Non-Chalcedonians audience what Rogers Brubaker has called "group cohesion."⁶⁴

In the hagiography of Simeon of Beth Arsham, John of Ephesus claimed the Persian area and the political buffer zones of the Ghassanid and Lakhmid tribes for the Non-Chalcedonians. John used Simeon's story to stake out areas between the empires and convert them to his group's position, while John remained entrenched in imperial life in Constantinople.

Constructions of the Other: Persians and "Nestorians"

Missionary texts depended upon constructions of the "other" to advance a saint as a replacement for a rivaling religious or political figure. John of Ephesus in his "Life of Simeon of Beth Arsham" identified his saint with multiple groups and affiliations, weaving in different social and linguistic designations in his description of Simeon's world: "Tayaye/Arab," "Persian," or "Roman," and religious groups such as "Nestorians," and "Marcionites." The framing dynamic of the hagiographic genre gave John the literary and mythic conventions to flatten distinctions or accentuate differences

⁶² Catholicos Babai, as well as the Nestorian groups whom he converts to the Non-Chalcedonian position.

⁶³ I discuss the internal crises of the Non-Chalcedonians in my chapter on Jacob Baradaeus.

⁶⁴ R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity Beyond Groups*, 47.

among these categories depending on his agenda. As John ascribed to Simeon multiple affiliations, he made sense of the relational predicaments of the Non-Chalcedonians in the Roman and Sasanian empires.

Through distinguishing the foes against whom Simeon debated, John mapped out a Non-Chalcedonian Persia, swept clean of Christian “others,” and he united his community with Simeon’s. John made Simeon a symbol of the best of “Roman” and “Persian” affiliations, bringing his flock and fellow shepherds together in their adherence to a single-natured Christology.⁶⁵ John distinguished four categories of “others” in his text: 1) pagans/heathens, 2) Jews, 3) rival Christians, Bardaisanites, Marcionites, and Manicheans, and 4) rival Christologies: Dyophysites and Eutychians. Simeon engendered an idealization of a bishop for John’s ranks, with his linguistic background and adaptability to ambiguously non-Roman groups like the Arab tribes, coupled with a strict sense of adherence to Non-Chalcedonian doctrine.

John described Simeon’s conversion of high-born Magians to Christianity. In this narrative section, John set Simeon into the tradition of Syriac missionaries who converted through the royal household. He also ascribed to these high-born converts the status of martyrs:

[Simeon] converted not just the heretics but also the Magians to God. Indeed, he converted one of the grandees of our time and a famous child of the Magians, and he baptized them. When their households heard the message, they abandoned their Magian religion and became Christians.

⁶⁵ John describes Simeon’s background and environment thus: “The fact that he was Persian met another demand, as he was especially active in that region. The teachings of Theodore and Nestorius ran rampant in that area. There were very few bishops and authorities with him. There also the teaching of Mani, and Marcion and Bardaisan were widely disseminated. For Mani had been in that region and overturned things there. They had flayed [Mani] while he was alive, and he died there. Bar Daisan and Marcion had been there since in the time of the school of the Persians in Edessa. These Persians were acutely keen for investigations. They were experienced in the ideas of Bardaisan and Marcion.” “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 138-139.

But they received a command from the shah that if it was, in fact, true that they had abandoned [their Magianism], they needed to renounce Christianity or else face the danger of death. Some of them became worthy of the crown of life. When they faced the threat of the sword of the king, they did not fear or tremble. The blessed one supported them by the fervor of his witness [ܚܕܝܡܬܐ] on behalf of eternal life. And they stood up [ܡܠܚ] against the command and threat of the sword that had gone out against them. They spoke thus, “Far be it from us to renounce the living God who made heaven and earth! Or his son our Lord Jesus Christ! He who summoned us and brought us near through the grace that is with him. Far be it from us to renounce him ever. Let us bear witness to him before his creation.” In this way, the blessed ones, only ten days after their spiritual birth, turned towards God in blessed martyrdom and received the crown of the sword through their death.⁶⁶

The Persian martyr tradition of Syriac Christian literature had flourished since the fourth century.⁶⁷ The conversion and martyrdom of high-born Magians was a well-loved motif of Syriac literature, and John interpolated it into Simeon’s story.⁶⁸ John brought martyr and missionary together, attributing to Simeon features reminiscent of Thomas and Addai/Aggai.⁶⁹ In his larger project of creating a Non-Chalcedonian hierarchy of saints, this episode showed how John’s hero brought both new Christians and high born convert-martyrs to the Non-Chalcedonians. Thus the twofold intertextuality of this episode showed how John’s story was in dialogue with literary traditions of the canonical and non-canonical apostolic *Acts* genre (conversion of royal households) and the Sasanian Persian martyr *Acts*.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ “Life of Simeon,” 141.

⁶⁷ I discuss this in more detail in chapter 3 on the *Acts of Mari* and chapter 6 on *Ahoudemmeh*.

⁶⁸ For an excellent introduction and bibliography, see Chapter Three, “Persian Martyrs,” of S. Brock and S. A. Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, 1998).

⁶⁹ See my chapter on the *Acts of Thomas*.

⁷⁰ That motif itself was patterned on earlier Roman martyrs, biblical and philosophical heroes, and the “noble death.”

In John's story of Simeon of Beth Arsham, the Mazdaen marzban mediated the debate between the Non-Chalcedonians and the Church of the East and ultimately "sided" with Simeon's group. Instead of highlighting the Persian leader's affiliation to a non-Christian group, John presented him as a neutral intermediary. Through mythologizing Simeon's Christological debate with the Nestorian Catholicos and through using the Persian ruler as a way to praise Simeon, John aligned the Non-Chalcedonians with the marzban. The Church of the East held the coveted position of being the favored or tolerated form of Sasanian Christianity. Through Simeon, John mythically deposed them from this status and elevated the Non-Chalcedonian bishops to replace them. The Non-Chalcedonian bishops prayed for the health of the Persian emperor, in an expression of loyalty to the Sasanian ruler: "In your wisdom and uprightness, may God grant you many years! May God double the things he pours out on you."⁷¹ John's rhetoric constructed an "alliance" between the Persian member of the Magian class and the Non-Chalcedonians.

Missionary and shah came together successfully in this myth, in contrast to the Non-Chalcedonians' failure to win Justinian's support in Constantinople. Through framing Simeon's successful Christological debate before another ruler, John memorialized the saint's doctrinal and missionary victories, forgetting the divisive theological quarrels John witnessed before the emperors Justin I and Justinian.⁷² Simeon's successful intercession and mediation symbolized a victory for the Non-Chalcedonians in the Sasanian empire that his coreligionists in Byzantium would never witness.

⁷¹ "Life of Simeon," 152.

⁷² See my discussion in the Introduction.

Persian Heresies and Lineages of Decay as a Strategy of Legitimization

Absent from the text was any discussion of Simeon's ecclesiastical lineage. Rather than establishing or defending his holy man's religious legitimacy, John, in the tradition of Ephrem the Syrian, presented a lineage of heretical decay that Simeon attacked. In his digression of the history on Christian heresies in Persia,⁷³ John conceptualized "Persia" as a place teeming with corrupted Christianities, Manicheans, Marcionites, and Nestorians. John mapped out an environment ripe for Simeon's missionary activity.

Unlike the hagiography of Jacob Baradaeus, which focused on ordinations and internal expansion of the Non-Chalcedonians,⁷⁴ Simeon won prestige for his group through gaining the support of Persian Magians. John covered the political ideologies of these episodes with the mythic language of miracles. Simeon fostered the Persian Non-Chalcedonians with help from the Non-Christian Persian rulers: "Thus it was divine providence that this would be done through the power of the pagans, that the true mystery of the orthodox faith be proclaimed."⁷⁵ The narrative's resolution through a non-Christian character, in a manner reminiscent of biblical prototypes,⁷⁶ established commonality with the apostles, whose limitations of language or mobility were resolved miraculously by God.⁷⁷

⁷³ "Life of Simeon the Bishop," 138-139.

⁷⁴ The same is true of John's hagiography of John of Tella.

⁷⁵ "Life of Simeon the Bishop," 147.

⁷⁶ This is a New Testament motif that outsiders proclaim divine truths. One thinks of the Roman centurion at the crucifixion proclaiming Jesus' divine Sonship: Mk 15: 39 or the Samaritan woman at the well, John 4:4-42.

⁷⁷ Acts 2:4.

Theological Idioms and Narrative Ideologies

Scholars have examined the theological debates and distinctions of sixth-century Christology and theology and searched for key moments in the divergence between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians.⁷⁸ John of Ephesus' *Lives* illuminated the importance that theological formulations played in the distinctions of the Non-Chalcedonian group. Hagiography also revealed, however, that there was widespread confusion and misinterpretations concerning what each of the respective groups believed.⁷⁹

John's presentation of Simeon's debates with the Catholicos represented a wholly "inaccurate" presentation of Dyophysite "Church of the East" Christology. He might have deliberately presented their theology as illogical, for the sake of elevating Simeon. In any case, the scene illuminated how John used theological slogans and ritualized debate to affiliate Simeon with his group and demonize the Nestorians.

Simeon's debate with the Catholicos Babai before the shah presented Christological formulations in narrative form. The Nestorian Catholicos, Babai, couched his argument in imperial language, using metaphors of kings and sons to explain and frame his defense of a two-natured Christ:

⁷⁸ There is a wide variety of literature on theological themes of the fifth and sixth century councils. See J. Lebon, "La christologie du monophysisme syrien," in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht's *Konzil*, pp. 425-580 and A. Van Roey "Les débuts de l'Eglise jacobite," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon : Geschichte und Gegenwart* II, Eds. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, 339-340. Traditionally, the beginning of a separate ordination of Non-Chalcedonian bishops has been given as a key moment, but this is a complicated long process. See the Introduction to this dissertation.

⁷⁹ Volker Menze has argued how Miaphysite and Chalcedonian hagiography and Eucharistic reception are important places for information on this process: often the laity cannot distinguish between the Chalcedonian and the Non-Chalcedonian liturgies. See Volker Menze, "Priests, Laity, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in sixth century Syria," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* [<http://syrcm.cua.edu/syrcm/Hugoye>] July 2004, vol. 7, no. 2.

Catholicos Babai said, “My lord, what are we to say about our faith, since you are a man like us, born of woman as we were? You have confirmed the orthodoxy and righteousness of the word of God. If the King of Kings should find the son of a beggar on a heap of dung, wearing rags, and should command that they raise him from the dung hill and strip off his rags to be clothed in royal garments, and if the king over all people should command him to be called his son ... so . . . *God wished to call him his son in grace, while he was not his son in nature.*”⁸⁰

This explanation did not impress the marzban who gave Simeon the chance to give a rejoinder.

Simeon used biblical proof texts to demonstrate the miraculous nature of Christ’s birth.⁸¹ Despite the opacity of his answer, Simeon debated persuasively to win the argument. When the marzban asked the Catholicos for his reply, Babai had nothing to say: “When the Catholicos was asked these things by the Marzban, along with the whole group of bishops, their lips were covered and their heads bowed low. They could not give an answer.”⁸² Two Christian minorities before the Persian throne, therefore, presented their positions in this schematized presentation of two-natured Christology.

In Simeon’s story, John portrayed a Non-Chalcedonian Christianity consonant with “Empire,” as he used the Persian ruler to think through the role that the Byzantine emperor played in the Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian debates. John, as a dissident bishop in Chalcedonian Constantinople, also stood in reluctant opposition to the Roman Empire, and this informed his presentation of the theological debates of Simeon and Babai. John’s construction of his group’s affiliation with Simeon, however, aligned his

⁸⁰ “Life of Simeon,” 148-149. Catholicos Babai (502-502) served as the secretary of the Marzban of Beth Arabaye. Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, 176, n. 45. See also Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 113.

⁸¹ “Life of Simeon the Bishop,” 149-151.

⁸² “Life of Simeon,” 151. This are gestures of grief.

group with the winner.⁸³ Although the narrative presented the Non-Chalcedonians as the imperial favorite, they were in fact socially, politically, economically, and religiously an insignificant minority, and there was no hope or expectation of that changing.

John presented Dyophysite Christology as a radical adoptionist Christology, which did not reflect the thinking of Theodore of Mopsuestia: the most important Dyophysite theologian.⁸⁴ Granted, Theodore was not John's adversary. Yet, John's misrepresentation of the "Nestorian" position, perhaps, reflected his attempt to disprove the two-natured Chalcedonians as well, without having blatantly to criticize the Chalcedonian Roman Emperor. He can project his critique of the proximate Chalcedonian "other" onto the distant Nestorian "other." Thus, as John constructed these differences, he relativized the distance between his group and that of the Chalcedonians, classifying the Nestorians as the more demonized foe.⁸⁵ In this way he is also more critical of the Chalcedonians by virtue of their proximity.

Part Three: From the Legend to the Hagiographer: John of Ephesus' Interpretation of a Future for the Non-Chalcedonians

⁸³ The mediation of imperial figureheads over Christological debates has an established historical precedent by the time of the sixth century. For the debate of 532 between Justinian and the Non-Chalcedonians, see S. Brock, "The Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)," *OCP* 47 (1981), 87-121.

⁸⁴ See McLeod, F. *The Roles in Christ's Humanity in Salvation: insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2005). See also S. P. Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations," in *Aksum-Thyateira: A Festschrift For Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira an Great Britain*, Carl Laga, J. A. Munitz, and Lucas van Rompay, Eds., (Louvain: Peeters, 1985), 35-45. Reprinted in Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature, and Theology* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum Reprints, 1992), XI.

⁸⁵ "[C]ulture itself is constituted by the double process of both making differences and relativizing those same differences. One of our fundamental social projects appears to be our collective capacity to think of, and to think away, the differences we create." J.Z. Smith, "Differential Equations," [1992], reprinted in *Relating Religion*, p. 11.

John of Ephesus presented stories to foster greater group cohesion among the Non-Chalcedonians, and his texts came from his struggle to represent them as a body of unified believing bishops. The social and economic situations conditioning the production of this text, however, contrasted with the hagiographic setting of the story of a poor and energetic bishop on the run. John of Ephesus wrote the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* from Constantinople, in the last years of the 560s, after the death of Justinian. By this time, he had lost imperial favor, and, in fact, was living in house prison. Moreover, the status of the Non-Chalcedonian leaders vis-à-vis the Empire had shifted to a more precarious position after the failure of the Second Council of Constantinople to reunite the Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, John wrote in the shadow of the Byzantine emperor, with an eye to promoting the leaders of his dissident party for his Non-Chalcedonian audience.⁸⁷ John's theological idioms and the framing dynamics of his story-telling were Syriac, yet his political ideology was Roman, or Byzantine.

John situated Simeon's story among the Persians and Arabs, speaking only briefly of Simeon's time in Constantinople.⁸⁸ At that time, Simeon had journeyed to the emperor Anastasius to bring the plight of the Non-Chalcedonian Sasanian Christians to the attention of the Roman Empire. John's focus on the limits of the empire and Simeon's activity there in the recent past created an escape for John and a wholly "other" landscape upon which he traced new beginnings for his group in crisis. John's creation of a

⁸⁶ See P. T. R. Gray, "The legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and their Significance," in Michael Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005).

⁸⁷ See van Ginkel, Jan J. van, "John of Ephesus on Emperors: The Perception of the Byzantine Empire by a Monophysite," in *VI Symposium Syriacum 1992*, OCA 247, (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1994), 323-333 and idem, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Diss. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1995.

⁸⁸ "Life of Simeon," 138, 142, 155.

memory for Simeon was simultaneously thus an interpretation of his position as a leader of the Non-Chalcedonian bishops.

John used hagiography to chart out his desires for his coreligionists. Restless homelessness and doctrinal confidence corresponded with John's desires for his bishops, and he projected these features onto his portraits of the Non-Chalcedonian heroes. Through the construction of Simeon as a missionary debater, John resisted Chalcedonian opponents through Simeon's theological intelligence and stressed Simeon's ascetic zeal to present the Non-Chalcedonians as an expanding group that transcended political boundaries.⁸⁹

John's emphasis on Simeon's affiliations with emperor Anastasius and the Roman Empire, as well as Simeon's diplomatic work with the Persians, suggested that John created in Simeon a bishop whose work could be useful to Byzantine imperial interests. John identified Simeon as a rival of the Nestorians, an ambassador before the Persian king and Arab foederati. Simeon represented a potential figure to reconcile Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians, because he worked in an area in which both Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians shared political interests and heretical rivals in common. He symbolized a potential place of alliance for the Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians.

Simeon's Hagiography: Discontinuity and Continuity

In a story written in a time of crisis, as Simeon's hagiography, we can extract the ideology of the text and shifts in cultural metaphors through focusing on mythic

⁸⁹ *PO*, 17 "Life of Simeon the Bishop, 140.

discontinuity as much as continuity.⁹⁰ I have been arguing in this dissertation that the missionary saint became a symbol through which Syriac Christians mythologized their past and interpreted their present. John's retelling of the historical events surrounding Simeon revealed how hagiography was used in ideological construction.⁹¹

By imprinting the missionary "type" onto Simeon's hagiography, John impressed traces of himself onto the subject of his story. The commonalities between John and Simeon were travel, missionary fervor, and political zeal. Simeon traveled around Persia and Sinai. John lived in Constantinople under confinement in house prison, but prior to that time he had traveled extensively and idealized his own travels in his literature.⁹² John styled himself as a converter of the pagans. He wandered a great deal and associated with imperial figures, just like Simeon. John's elevation of intellectual practices, particularly of speech and language, alluded to his agenda of forging models that combined the ascetic and intellectual virtues to construct an idealized picture of the Non-Chalcedonians.⁹³ Thus, as John described Simeon, his own image was reflected in the portrait of Simeon.⁹⁴

Reception of Simeon of Beth Arsham's Hagiographic Memory

Although the intent of this analysis was not to focus on the historical Simeon, but rather his construction in hagiography, Simeon's story exemplified the confluence of history and myth, and his hagiography introduced wider implications for the history of

⁹⁰ Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 62.

⁹¹ I borrow this phrase from Clark's *History, Theory, Text*, 95.

⁹² See the Introduction to chapter 4 and 5 on John of Ephesus.

⁹³ See S. A. Harvey, *Asceticism*, Chapter 2 and 5 and *passim*.

⁹⁴ Hagiography in this instance is, perhaps, a hermeneutic of self-understanding.

the Non-Chalcedonians. How did this analysis of Simeon's hagiography allow us to rectify and redescribe the gradual process by which the Non-Chalcedonians became a separate Church?

Simeon's story, as told through John of Ephesus, was passed down and incorporated into the twelfth-century *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian*.⁹⁵ Michael called Simeon a debater, firm in faith, who made the Nestorians, Marcionites and Manicheans tremble.⁹⁶ He remembered Simeon's baptism of three Magians and Simeon's trip to Constantinople to lobby on behalf of his co-religionists in Persia against whom the Nestorians were fighting. The lengthiest portion of Michael's summary concerned the debate of Simeon with the Nestorian Catholicos. One statement alluded to Simeon's missions, but it was vague and condensed.⁹⁷ Michael incorporated, however, the section of John's narrative that described Simeon's multi-lingual talents, as well as the book-covers that Simeon devised to transport holy books and creedal statements.⁹⁸

At the time of the *Chronicle*'s composition, the Syrian Orthodox community was a separate church from the Chalcedonian Byzantine church, with distinct sacramental life and ecclesiastical orders. It had by that time been distinguished from the Chalcedonians for at least 400 years. Michael's version of John's story "forgot" Simeon's work with the Arabic tribes and his conversion of the Sinai Peninsula. The reason for this incongruity with John of Ephesus' account might be explained in a few ways. With the coming of

⁹⁵ *Chronique*, Book IX, Chap. IX., 161-7 (French) 261-4 (Syriac).

⁹⁶ *Chronique*, Book IX, Chapter IX and X, p 165 (French), (Syriac) 263.

⁹⁷ *Chronique*, Book IX, Chap X, 165.

⁹⁸ *Chronique*, Book IX, Ch. X, p. 167.

Islam in the seventh century, many of these same Arab tribes converted to Islam, and thus Simeon's work among them was partially "in vain."

In contrast, the Syrian Orthodox community was indeed able to establish a new center outside the empire in a previously dominated Nestorian area.⁹⁹ This would become the center of the *mafrian*, with its own jurisdiction and authority.¹⁰⁰ Later generations of Syrian Orthodox, therefore, knew that the charisma and efforts of their *dorousho* helped to establish a Non-Chalcedonian center in Persia. The reception of John's hagiography, thus, by later generations was informed by the actual success of Simeon's efforts, and Michael remembered the victories of his forefathers.

Conclusions

As hagiographers created narratives for their saints, they ordered complicated lives into memorable mythological packages.¹⁰¹ John of Ephesus codified his saints in the collection of his *Lives* during a chaotic period of the sixth century. Through memorializing figures like Simeon and making their *Lives* the treasure of the Non-Chalcedonian community, John resisted the uncertainty that divisive councils, internal conflicts, and fragmentation had caused for his group.¹⁰²

This story contained a rhetorical polemic against the *Church of the East*. The absence of explicit condemnation against the *Chalcedonians* comported with John's

⁹⁹ See Chapter Six on Ahoudemmeh. *Histoires d'Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta: Métropolitains Jacobites de Tagrit et de L'Orient* (VI et VII Siècles), ed. and trans. Nau. in PO 3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1905): 1-96. See esp. W. Hage, *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit nach Orientalischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Horowitz, 1966).

¹⁰⁰ His is like a Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox church whose jurisdiction comprised areas in the Sasanian empire.

¹⁰¹ B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147.

¹⁰² I argue this point in my chapter on Jacob Baradaeus as well.

implicit argument that the victory of the Chalcedonian position was merely a temporary blip on the radar screen. The Non-Chalcedonian identification of John and his saints did not alter or affect their affiliation with the Byzantine court. Although John wrote this account in the 560s from Constantinople, he had not given up hope that peace would be met between his party and the Chalcedonians. By the end of his life, he would be much more discouraged.

Simeon of Beth Arsham's "Life" thus became a narrative idealization of the interests of the Non-Chalcedonians of the sixth century: "orthodoxy," political sponsorship by the Byzantine and the Persian Empires, and divine protection for adhering to the apostolic pattern of spreading the Good News to convert un-baptized kingdoms to Christianity. Despite the turbulence of the sixth century for the Non-Chalcedonians, hagiography provided a means for them to rewrite their own narrative with rhetoric and allusions portraying their biblical and apostolic past. Missionary hagiography enshrined leaders of a group not on the verge of dissipation but in the process of growth.

Through composing accounts of their heroes of the recent past, and clothing them in allusions to biblical and apostolic prototypes, the Non-Chalcedonians created their separate rank of heroes to validate their orthodoxy and unify their present. The missionary saint gave these authors an idiom that fit with their interests in creating narratives of expansion and divine protection for the Non-Chalcedonians.

Chapter Five: Hagiographical Portraits of Jacob Baradaeus¹

Introduction

The production and circulation of hagiographies on the sixth-century missionary saint Jacob Baradaeus – bishop of Edessa – served the memory-making work of the Non-Chalcedonian churches of Syria.² Stories about Jacob circulated during his life and evolved into embellished legends. Jacob’s career as a missionary began with a gesture from the imperial court. The Non-Chalcedonian Patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria, at the instigation of Empress Theodora and the Ghassanid federate king Harith bar Gabala, commissioned Jacob in 542 to ordain new priests, bishops, and patriarchs in order to resuscitate the dwindling numbers of Non-Chalcedonian religious leaders.³

¹ For the entire hagiographical collection, see John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, E. W. Brooks, ed. and tr., in *PO* 17-19, (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1912), 1-208. The translation that I cite from John of Ephesus’ *Life of James* (*PO* 18; Life 49; 690-697) and *Lives of James and Theodore* (*PO* 19; Life 50. 154-8 [499-504]) is Brooks’ translation. The spurious life of Jacob Baradaeus attributed to John of Ephesus is included in Brooks’ edition and translation of John of Ephesus’ *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, *PO* 19 228-268 [575-614]. I will refer to this longer *Spurious Life* hereafter as *The Longer Life*. The English translation is my own from the Syriac in Brooks’ edition. *The Longer Life* is contained in an eighth century MS, Berlin Sachau 321, a thirteenth century MS *Paris* 235, and a 12th c. British Museum Manuscript 12174, which is a paraphrase of the eighth-century text, see Brooks *PO* 17, vii-viii, xiii.

² Elizabeth Castelli discusses religious narrative as a form of cultural memory work: “Memories are processed through language, which provides the conventional and customary meanings that then refract back onto the memory . . . through discursive and embodied repetition,” E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 11-12.

³ For the sake of convenience, I will use “Non-Chalcedonian” to refer to dissenters from the Council of Chalcedon during the fifth and sixth centuries. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation the most important ecclesiastical figures of this party include Timothy the Cat, Philoxenus of Mabbug, Severus of Antioch, John of Ephesus, Theodosius of Alexandria, John of Tella, and Jacob Baradaeus. I will use “Miaphysite” or “Syrian Orthodox” to refer to their post-sixth century Non-Chalcedonian descendants, but I recognize that the development of a separate Miaphysite Church is a gradual process lasting several centuries. For orientation, see W. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: chapters in the history of the Church in the fifth and sixth centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) and L. Van Rompay, “Society and Community in the Christian Near East” in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239-266. Most ancient sources agree that Empress Theodora and Harith bar Gabala were instrumental in condoning the ordination of a Non-Chalcedonian hierarchy to replace those driven away by the Byzantine Empire’s embrace of Chalcedonian Christianity in 519 under Justin I. See John of Ephesus, *Lives*, *PO* 18, Life 49, p 693; *idem*, *Lives*, *PO* 19, Life 50, 153-8 [499-504]. One notable exception, however, is the Non-Chalcedonian *Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah*. This text, by a Greek rhetor Zachariah, was translated into Syriac, abbreviated and lengthened by a sixth-century Syriac Chronicler, “Pseudo-Zachariah.” This source

We have two hagiographies on Jacob Baradaeus, one two-part hagiography in John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (written in 566) and a longer, late seventh-, early eighth-century hagiography, *The story of the way of life of the holy Jacob Metropolitan of Edessa; and of the regions of Syria*, attributed to John of Ephesus.⁴ Brooks, in his edition of the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, refers to this text as the *Spurious Life of Jacob*, and for convenience I will refer to it in my study as *The Longer Life*.

Scholars have long held that John of Ephesus was not the author of the *Longer Life*, and David Bundy discussed the literary differences between the texts in more detail.⁵ These divergences, I will argue, indicated important shifts in the self-understanding and self-presentation of the Miaphysites themselves vis-à-vis their heroes of the sixth century. The authorial context of those who produced *The Longer Life* gave them a point-of-view towards their past that diverged from that of John of Ephesus. John wrote in sixth-century Constantinople and died in 588, not knowing how or if divisive

describes Jacob's consecration by a bishop named Cyrus: "and then after due deliberation they consecrated and appointed chief priests in Arabia; and these were Theodore the monk, a strenuous man, and James, the laborious and industrious, the very strenuous, who was then in the royal city. And he was to be found everywhere, visiting and exhorting with readiness. And he was a practiced poverty and asceticism, and swift on his feet, and travelled like 'Asahel. And he was a presbyter in the monastery of the Quarry in the village of Gamawa, which is on the mountain of Islo." Zacharias Rhetor, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, tr., (New York, AMS Press, 1979), Book X., Ch. 12, p. 314 in *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, 4 Vols. ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, CSCO 83/84/87/88. (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1919-1924).

⁴ See Brooks, "Introduction," *PO* 17, vii.

⁵ D. Bundy's article on the state of the research of Jacob Baradaeus is a vital contribution. On the differences between the two texts, he calls the longer life of Jacob a hagiographical fiction. See D. Bundy, "Jacob Baradaeus. The State of Research, a Review of Sources, and a New Approach," *Museon*, 1978, pp. 45-83. For his discussion on the differences between the two lives, see 52-53 and esp. 71-72. I disagree with his dismissal of the hagiographical tradition of Jacob, "It would appear, however, that Jacob Baradaeus never really caught the imagination of hagiographers or of his foes, for the life-story of Jacob is complicated primarily because of the lack of information, authentic or inauthentic, for his life," p. 60.

conflicts with the Chalcedonians would be resolved.⁶ When Miaphysite monks in the mid-seventh or early eighth-century, however, wrote *The Longer Life*, the changed ecclesiastical and political circumstances situated the hagiographers in a more hostile position with respect to their Chalcedonian counterparts. This stronger boundary in turn elevated the memory and myths of their sixth century Non-Chalcedonian forefathers, including John of Ephesus and Jacob Baradaeus.

Through authorial imitation of John, through the transformation of Jacob into a divine holy man, and through the accentuation of John's and Jacob's likeness to the missionary saints,⁷ *The Longer Life* forged a uniquely Non-Chalcedonian rank of heroes that placed both the hagiographer John and his subject Jacob at the apex. The memory created became the treasured possession of the emergent Non-Chalcedonian community to legitimize and inspire a group between two Empires: Roman and Sasanian.⁸

⁶ The best study on this complicated debate remains W. F. C. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*. Frend discuss Jacob Baradaeus on 284-285. See also A. Van Roey, "Les débuts de l'Eglise jacobite," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon : Geschichte und Gegenwart* II, A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, Eds., (Würzburg: Echter, 1951-3), pp. 339-340. For an important revised view, see L. Van Rompay, "Society and Community in the Christian Near East," 239-266.

⁷ John of Ephesus' title in *The Longer Life* is "Converter of the Pagans" or ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܬܝܒܐ. See *The Longer Life* 242 [588]. John calls himself this, too. See my discussion in this dissertation, Chapters III a and VI a.

⁸ Because, as I discuss below, the exact date of the text cannot be established, I cannot state "Persian versus Byzantine" or "Byzantine versus Umayyad." We cannot ascertain if *The Longer Life* is a pre-Islamic or post-Islamic text. For the interaction between Syrian monks in Mesopotamia and the Muslim invasion, the fourth section of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* is an important source. The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* contains, furthermore, the otherwise lost second part of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History*. See *Chronicle of Zuqnin, Parts III and IV: A. D. 488-775*, Harrak, tr., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999). For the Syriac, see *Incertis Auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum Vulgo Dictum*, (*Chronique de Denys de Telle Mahré*) ed., I. B. Chabot, CSCO 91/43 and 104/53 (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1927-33). The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (eighth century) writes that Edessa was invaded by the Arabs in 636-637, and that Dara near Mardin was attacked that same year. See *Zuqnin*, p. 143. Other dates for these incursions include the following: 636-637 [Elias I 132 : Elia of Nisibis, *Opus chronologicum*, Brooks and Chabot, ed. and Tr., CSCO 62/21-22; 63/23-24 (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1910) 948, 638-639 [Theophanes *Theophanes Chronographia*, Karl de Boor, ed., (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883) 340: A. M. 6130, 639-640], [Michael the Syrian IV 420-421 [II 426] *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, 4 Vols., J.-B. Chabot, ed. and tr., (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1899-1901), S. 951, 638 or 640], Al-Tabarī, IV 53: H. 17 and H. 19 in Al-Tabarī, C.E. Bosworth ed./trans., "The History of al-Tabari", vol. 5, (State U of NY Press, 1999)]. Based on comparisons with other sources, I surmise that Tella, if not

The Chalcedonian confession officially became the regnant Christianity in the Byzantine Empire by the seventh century. The Non-Chalcedonians, however, retained widespread support in Egypt, Syria, Armenia, Arabia, Nubia, Ethiopia, Northern Iraq and Osrhoene, the area surrounding Edessa where *The Longer Life* was written.⁹ Byzantium's Chalcedonian confession positioned Non-Chalcedonian bishops and monks in the Roman Empire beneath their Chalcedonian counterparts, as the latter gained the protection and sponsorship of the state.

The Non-Chalcedonians used hagiography to restructure this hierarchy and legitimize their estrangement from the Emperor's graces. They used narrative to identify themselves with Jacob and his hagiographer, John of Ephesus. They forged a genealogy of apostolic orthodoxy as they wrote themselves into Jacob's longer story. In this study, I side-step the question of the historical details of Jacob's life and focus instead on the dramatic symbols in his later hagiography that synthesized complex ideologies in story-form.¹⁰ I explain how particular cultural interests and Miaphysite theological agendas functioned together to produce the "Jacob" of *The Longer Life*. By expanding Jacob's story, Miaphysite monks diffused a symbolically powerful social actor -- the hagiography itself -- that imagined in Jacob a "savior" worthy to be the patron of the emergent Miaphysite "Jacobite" Church.

Textual Background and Narrative Framework

directly affected, would have learned of the Arab invasions some time between 636-640 CE. We cannot know for sure where this text fits into these important political contexts.

⁹ The spread of the Non-Chalcedonians into Persia grows in the second half of the sixth century. The hagiography of Ahoudemmeh recounts this. See my discussion in Chapter V of this Dissertation.

¹⁰ For "Myth" as "an ideology in narrative form" see B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 77-78.

John of Ephesus' edifying and rich account of Jacob Baradaeus -- a simple, energetic, and rigorous missionary -- brought disparate elements together in a single story to craft a view of the past for Miaphysites of the seventh and eighth centuries. Jacob lived fifteen years in Constantinople before he began his ordinations that revived the Non-Chalcedonians.¹¹ Although he became bishop of Edessa, Jacob spent little time there, as a rival Chalcedonian bishop occupied the see. But John of Ephesus in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* crafted a wider see for his beloved Jacob: with sacred swiftness and leonine confidence, Jacob journeyed throughout the Eastern Roman Empire and parts of Persia. John thus expanded Jacob's image from bishop of Edessa to missionary of the Non-Chalcedonians. In John's account, no one had the stamina to keep up with Jacob's energy. Jacob consecrated 27 bishops and 2 patriarchs and ordained priests; he ordained John to be bishop of Ephesus. Jacob trekked through Syria, Cilicia, Isauria, Pamphylia, Lyconia, Lydia, Phrygia, Caria, Rhodes, Chios, and Mitylene, as far as Constantinople.

John praised the speedy Jacob for his zeal, his vigilant ministry, his mission, and his cautious adherence to Church canons.¹² In his later *Ecclesiastical History*, however, John notes that Jacob suffered on account of his guileless nature -- Jacob's simplicity made him an easy pawn in the machinations of craftier, more ambitious bishops around him.¹³ John remembered Jacob as a steadfast, heroic, bishop, but an imperfect soul,

¹¹ John of Ephesus, Life 49, *Lives*, PO 18, 691. See fn 3.

¹² See John of Ephesus, Life 50, *Lives*, PO 19 154-156 [500-502].

¹³ John of Ephesus, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*. E. W. Brooks, ed. and tr., CSCO 105/54 (Syriac), 106/55 (Latin tr.) (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1935-1936). For the inner conflicts among the leaders of the Non-Chalcedonians, mediations efforts of Arabic tribes, and the death of Jacob and his friends, see Book IV, chapters 12-33, pp. 144-160 (Latin) and pp. 194-215 (Syriac).

whom others easily manipulated.¹⁴ Jacob was one apostolic servant among many shining lights; but John did not divinize Jacob.

The unknown hagiographer of *The Longer Life* (written between 628 and 741) claimed to be John of Ephesus.¹⁵ A certain priest and stylite, Mar Theodosius of the monastery of Phesīlthā, recopied the text in 741.¹⁶ Kleyn, Dyakonov, and Kuegner established that *The Longer Life* glorified the monks of Phesīlthā: the convent in which Jacob was purportedly educated.¹⁷ *The Longer Life* dated to roughly a century after John of Ephesus' account and the lifetime of Jacob Baradaeus.

The eighth-century text contained a further short story of the monks of Phesīlthā who stole Jacob's body from the monastery of Casion in Egypt and brought it to its final resting place in Tella: "Narration of Mar Cyriacus, bishop of Amida, concerning holy Mar Jacob."¹⁸ I will return to this burial account at the end of this study, but I pause here

¹⁴ The third part of the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus was written between 578 and 588 -- at least 14 years after John wrote his accounts of Jacob in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. The more critical portrait of Jacob stems doubtlessly from Jacob's involvement in the controversy surrounding Paul of Antioch and Peter of Alexandria. For dating the third part of the *Ecclesiastical History*, see J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Diss. Rijksuniversiteit (Groningen, 1995), 71-73.

¹⁵ This has been upheld since Kleyn's study. See H. G., Kleyn, *Jacobus Baradaeus. De stichter der syrische monophysitische Kerk* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1882), 105-110. A. Dyakonov, *Ioann Effisakiya* (St. Petersburg, 1908), 105. This is on account of historical inaccuracies and divergences with the "Life" of John of Ephesus. Brooks followed this lead. See Brooks, *PO* 17, xiii, for textual transmission of the Jacob traditions attributed to John of Ephesus. See also Bundy, "Jacobus Baradaeus," 52.

¹⁶ Pace Brooks, *PO* 17, xv. I am persuaded by A. Palmer regarding the recopying of the narrative on the relics, attributed to Mar Cyriac. See A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: the early history of Tur Abdin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 153-4, fn. 33.

¹⁷ See H. G. Kleyn, *Jacobus Baradaeus*, 105-110 and M. A. Kugener, "Récit de Mar Cyriaque racontant comment le corps de Jacques Baradeé fut enlevé du couvent de Casion et transporté de Psellthā" *Bibliothèque Hagiographique Orientale* 3, 1, 18-20. See also D. Bundy, "Jacobus Baradaeus," 52.

¹⁸ This text was edited by Kuegner in *BHO* 3, 1-20. It is included in Brooks' appendix, *PO* 19, "Narration of Mar Cyriacus, bishop of Amida, concerning holy Mar Jacob," 268-72 [614-18]. See also Bundy, "Jacobus Baradaeus," 72.

to consider Cyriac's authorship of this addendum in order to locate Jacob's cult in seventh-century Osrhoene.

Both manuscripts that contained Jacob's burial narrative¹⁹ placed it immediately after *The Longer Life*.²⁰ The ending of *The Longer Life* -- ܐܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪ ܥܝܪܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ --²¹ proceeded the title of the burial narrative -- ܐܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ.²² The eighth-century *Chronicle of Zuqnin* mentioned that the author of the narrative, Mar Cyriac, was "well-known," and succeeded Mar John as bishop of Amida in 577-578. This was the same year that Jacob Baradaeus died.²³ Mar Thomas succeeded Mar Cyriac as bishop of Amida in 622-623.²⁴ Thus, Mar Cyriac plausibly could have known about Jacob's death and the translation of his body to Phesīlthā. Yet the narrative, as Brooks noted, spoke of events that happen in 628, i.e., after Mar Cyriac's supposed death.²⁵ But *Zuqnin* also dated the Arab conquest of Palestine to 620-621!²⁶ Thus, either *Zuqnin* misdated Cyriac, or the later information was an interpolation. Jacob's burial narrative ended with a note

¹⁹ Berlin Sachau 321 (end of the 8th c.) and BM 12174 (12th c.), see Brooks *PO* 17, xiii.

²⁰ When Brooks included this narrative at the end of the *Longer Life*, he, following Kuegner who edited the text, was skeptical about the attribution of the text to Mar Cyriacus. See Brooks *PO* 17, xiii.

²¹ *The Longer Life* 268 [614]. "The narrative of bishop Jacob has ended, that I John of Asia wrote."

²² *The Longer Life* 268 [614]. "A text of Mar Cyriacus, bishop of Amida, concerning holy Mar Jacob."

²³ *Part III* of *Zuqnin*. The third part of the *Chronicle* is borrowed from Part II of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History*. *Zuqnin* calls Jacob "Mar James of (the monastery of) Pesilta," p. 137.

²⁴ *Part IV* of *Zuqnin*, p. 142-143.

²⁵ The text mentions Emperor Heraclius' conquest of Mesopotamia, which is in 628. See fn 33 in Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, p. 153-154. See also Brooks, *PO* 17, xiv.

²⁶ This is impossible: Muhammad does not emigrate to Medina until 622. Harrak notes this, too, in *Zuqnin*, p. 141, fn. 6.

that the priest and stylite Theodosius copied the account of Cyriac in 741,²⁷ so perhaps the copyist added the interpolation. It is possible that Theodosius wrote *The Longer Life* and then appended Mar Cyriac's story to his hagiography. It does not seem that Mar Cyriac wrote both *The Longer Life* and the burial story.²⁸

Elaborations on a Missionary Ancestor

The decision to revise and embellish John of Ephesus' account of Jacob signified how John's story appealed to Non-Chalcedonian monastic audiences. Jacob's "Life," more than others in John's *Lives*, especially attracted the author of the *Longer Life* because of his shared monastic ancestry with Jacob: both he and Jacob hailed from the monastery of Phesīlthā near Tella.²⁹ Jacob's genealogy made him an obvious choice for hagiographical recasting to celebrate Phesīlthā's most famous son, now from a retrospective vantage point to magnify his name and life's work.

Both accounts highlighted Jacob's missionary work. Yet, their differences strike even a casual reader. *The Longer Life*, in contrast to John of Ephesus' *Life*, embellished Jacob and forgot his flaws.³⁰ *The Longer Life* contained an infancy narrative: Jacob, in the tradition of other great ascetics,³¹ was a child born to a couple declared barren, whose

²⁷ Here I follow Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 153-154, contra Brooks, in reading ܕܥܕܕܐܪܥܐ as "copied" rather than "written." *The Longer Life* 273, [619].

²⁸ Why would he have attributed *The Longer Life* to John of Ephesus and claimed authorship for the addendum? This would have made sense only if Cyriac knew that John of Ephesus was no longer alive in the beginning of the seventh century.

²⁹ John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 18, Life 49, 690.

³⁰ This tendency to embellish early hagiographies is certainly not unique to the Jacob tradition. An interesting parallel to this phenomenon is the Syriac *Life of Antony*, a later translation of the Greek original. See the important article by D. Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac Versions of the *Life of Antony*," *Museum* (1994), 29-53, esp. 42-44.

³¹ On childhood and saintly children, see P. Hatlie, "The Religious Lives of Children and Adolescents," in D. Krueger, ed., *Byzantine Christianity, A People's History of Christianity*, Vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006), pp. 182-200.

parents entrusted him to the monastery at young age.³² *The Longer Life* presented miracle accounts and introduced “divine beings” into the story.³³ Jacob, in *The Longer Life*, was not just *bishop*, but now *metropolitan*, whom not only Theodosius, but Severus of Antioch himself ordained.³⁴ *The Longer Life* built on the tradition of Jacob’s expansive missionary travels, but in the *Longer Life* he began his travels in dreams to far-away places before he even left his monastery.³⁵ John of Ephesus’ “man of God” becomes a pure vessel of divine grace, impermeable to the temptations or struggles of an ordinary monk.³⁶ *The Longer Life* represented Jacob as a superhuman “savior” of the Miaphysite Orthodox faith.

What a difference a Name Makes: Reclaiming and Reusing “Jacobite”

Jacob’s name itself, Jacobus Baradaeus, helped both John of Ephesus and the author of *The Longer Life* to craft a taxonomy for their hero. The word “Jacobite” originated as a label to distinguish two groups of Non-Chalcedonians in 575, those who followed Jacob Baradaeus and those who followed Paul of Antioch.³⁷ The label signified

³² *The Longer Life*, 230-231 [576-577].

³³ Many of the miracles involve healings. I will discuss them in more detail below. When Jacob performs the Divine Liturgy in Amida, the congregation miraculously sees the angels standing around him. *The Longer Life* 258-259 [604-605].

³⁴ *PO* 19 228, 574.

³⁵ *Longer Life* 232 [578].

³⁶ Absent from the text is any implication that Jacob struggled to maintain his ascetic way of life.

³⁷ I discuss this conflict in the introduction to this dissertation. This controversy is discussed in detail in Book IV of John of Ephesus’ *Ecclesiastical History*. For a discussion of this controversy, see E. W. Brooks, “The Patriarchate of Paul of Antioch and the Alexandrine Schism of 575,” in *BZ* XXX (1930), 468-476. After the death of the Non-Chalcedonian Patriarch Sergius in 560, the see of Antioch was vacant. Patriarch Theodosius in Alexandria wrote to Jacob to recommend Paul from Alexandria. The Egyptian bishops were opposed to this because they were not consulted. In 575, with the see of Alexandria vacant, the Egyptians advanced Peter of Alexandria over Paul’s choice, Theodore. Theodore declared Paul deposed and persuades Jacob to approve of Paul’s deposition from Antioch. Paul had great support in Syria: the “Paulites.” Jacob had great support in Mesopotamia: the “Jacobites.” For a discussion of the

not religious creed but episcopal affiliation. “Jacobite” was a term that internal Non-Chalcedonian conflicts had generated.³⁸

Unlike the account crafted by John of Ephesus, *The Longer Life* referred to the followers of Jacob as “Jacobites.” It embellished Jacob Baradaeus into an icon of the apostle James, bishop of Jerusalem. Their “New James” carried the orthodox faith of the original twelve and transmitted it to those whom he ordained. The text associated the word *Jacobite* with the Syrian Non-Chalcedonians and *Theodosian* with the Egyptian Non-Chalcedonians. *The Longer Life* used the names of bishops to differentiate linguistically and geographically distinct groups of Non-Chalcedonians. This framing dynamic and groupist rhetoric brought Syrians, Persians, and Armenians under the apostolic banner of Jacob. The author of *The Longer Life* expanded Jacob, his monastic forefather -- to become patron of all the eastern Miaphysites. *The Longer Life* redefined the term, instead, as an expression of collective solidarity rather than internal conflicts:³⁹

For he [Jacob] stood up and protected the faith of the apostles that he had received from the first bishop Jacob in Jerusalem. He filled the entire Church with virtues. When the sides of the orthodox and the heretics met one another, they were asking, “Who are you?” The orthodox answered, “From the faith of Jacob, who was called the first among the apostles and brother of the Lord, which this divine Jacob [ܝܥܩܒ ܒܪܐܕܐܝܘܣ] also proclaims to us.” But those who were against him would say, “Of Ephrem in Amida” or “John Syrmia.” . . . And from there the word went out in all of Syria and the regions of Persia and Armenia, “We are from the faith of Jacob” and in Alexandria and in Egypt, the message went out, “We are of Theodosius” just as from there the faithful in Egypt were called Theodosians, and the Syrians Jacobites [ܝܥܩܒܝܬܐ ܒܪܐܕܐܝܘܣܝܬܐ]⁴⁰

exact areas and monasteries affected and involved in this temporary Non-Chalcedonian schism, see E. Honigsmann, *Évêques et évêchés d'Asie antérieure au VII^e siècle*, 177.

³⁸ See Brubaker, R., *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 29-30.

³⁹ My thinking on “groupness as an event” and my attention to rhetorical “framing dynamics” is indebted to R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 18-19.

⁴⁰ *Longer Life* 256 [602].

The origins of the title, *Baradaeus*, moreover, evidence how words and symbols in Jacob's hagiographical tradition act within the society in which the sacred fictions circulate. It is to hagiography that Jacob owes his "surname" *Baradaeus*.⁴¹ Jacob's hagiographies focused upon the rags he wore, playing with the ascription Bur'dana, "shabby":⁴² he tore his cloak in two to make the most of his garment.⁴³ The simplicity of Jacob's dress epitomized his perfect Christian discipleship, reminiscent of the poverty and simplicity extolled in Syriac literary imagination. Jacob's hagiography, promoting his ragged vesture by coining the word Bur'dana, sealed the adjective to Jacob's name. Even sources from the Chalcedonians and the Church of the East -- from the problematic *Chronicle of Seert*⁴⁴ to the late Chalcedonian *Ecclesiastical History* of Nicephorus Callistus (fl. 1320)⁴⁵ -- referred to him as Jacob *Baradaeus* because his hagiographical traditions had diffused this nickname.

The Longer Life built episodes in its narrative from this epithet, *Burd'ana*. Skeptical villagers mocked the holy man's attempt to raise a youth of their village from

⁴¹ As far as I have found, this epithet is absent from sixth and seventh historical (as opposed to hagiographical) sources that mention Jacob. No one seems to have asked the question before concerning the epithet. In the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, for example, he is called "Jacob of Pselto." See *Zuqnin*, 114, 124, 136-7. It is likewise absent from *Pseudo-Zachariah*.

⁴² John of Ephesus discusses the extreme poverty of Jacob, even in the midst of living in house prison under Theodora. *Life* 49, 690-1.

⁴³ *Life* 49, 690-2.

⁴⁴ *Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Seert)* ed., A. Scher, tr. R. Griveau, *PO* VII, 2, 140-142.

⁴⁵ Nicephorus Callistus, *HE*, PG 147, col. 437-446. This text contains three chapters on the "Jacobites," It gives a Greek translation of *Baradaeus* (meaning "with tattered cloak") into *Tzanlanlos*. "Therefore Jacob, who was the founder of heresy of the Jacobites and much celebrated also today, was of the Syrian race, of obscure and insignificant beginnings. He was also called *Tzanlanlos* on account of his utter shabbiness. This man was learned in the teaching of Eutyches and Dioscorus, as also Peter Cnephus, and he provided their works to be handed over to the Syrians." My translation, PG 147, col. 437, C-D.

the dead, “What do this man’s rags desire?”⁴⁶ Jacob’s rags became emblematic and metonymic of Jacob. They embodied the hagiography’s portrait of Jacob’s honorable simplicity. Like the *Acts of Thomas*, the text advances poverty and itinerancy as virtues.⁴⁷

In addition to symbolizing ideals of humility and simplicity, the valorization of Jacob’s poverty was a useful tool for self-promotion for Non-Chalcedonians whose position and hierarchy had been rejected by the Empire. Although famines, plagues, poverty, and political conflicts tended to signify divine disapproval in Greek and Syriac historiography,⁴⁸ the Non-Chalcedonians reinterpreted their disenfranchisement through a different lens. The model of the wandering itinerant missionary, who took nothing with him for the road,⁴⁹ proved useful for this strategy of legitimization.

Beginning with John of Ephesus and culminating in later texts like *The Longer Life*, the Non-Chalcedonians presented themselves as the Church that retained the Orthodox faith, uninterested in material gain.⁵⁰ The Non-Chalcedonian bishops, Jacob, John of Tella and John of Hephastopolis, were presented as ascetic and self-sacrificing; the Chalcedonians, or Melchites, in the rhetoric of the Miaphysites, were interested in

⁴⁶ *The Longer Life* 245 [591].

⁴⁷ See Chapter One *Acts of Thomas*. See also D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁴⁸ J.J. van Ginkel discusses this strategy at play in John of Ephesus’ *Ecclesiastical History*. See *John of Ephesus*, esp. 20, and 197-216.

⁴⁹ Mt 10:1, 7-11, 14. Mk 6: 6b-13. Lk 9: 1-6. It is interesting that in Matthew and Luke Jesus instructs his disciples to take no staff (Mt 10:10; Lk 9:3) for the road whereas the Marcan Jesus commands them to take nothing but a staff for the road (Mk. 6:8).

⁵⁰ P. Bourdieu has shown, however, that there is cultural capital in disinterest. For an explanation of “symbolic capital,” see P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. R. Johnson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 112-144.

political gain and serving the emperor, not God.⁵¹ Thus, the accentuation of the simplicity of Jacob's dress became a metonymy of the entire Church: he was Burd'ana, his followers are Jacoboye, participants through their genealogy in the holiness of Jacob. Through connecting Jacob to these notions of holy poverty and the "Gestalt" of the missionary apostle, his hagiographers ascribed to their heroes, and by extension to themselves, ideas of sanctity embedded in a complex and multi-layered system of references.⁵²

*Shifting missionary portraits: from Bishop to Patron of the Syrian Miaphysites*⁵³

Although Jacob was similar to missionary heroes of the Miaphysite past, *The Longer Life* produced a hagiography that set Jacob apart from his sixth-century contemporaries. *The Longer Life* showed how Miaphysites self-identified with Jacob's story more than other saints in John of Ephesus' repertoire. The miracle accounts in *The Longer Life* advanced the ideologies of Miaphysite theologians.⁵⁴ Jacob ranked in the highest echelon of their religious hierarchy, and the miracles in the text distinguished him from the laity and the monks in his midst. Jacob's miracles, as those of other holy men,

⁵¹ This became perpetuated and passed down in later Miaphysite apologetics. For example, the Coptic Patriarch Severus Ibn Al-Muqaffa (c. 987) in the *Réfutation de Said Ibn Batriq* speaks of the constant suffering and persecutions endured by the Jacobites. He contrasts them, his ancestors, to the Melchites, who preferred the benefits of imperial sponsorship to those of orthodoxy. See Ibn Al-Muqaffa, *Réfutation de Said Ibn Batriq: The book of the Councils*, Chébli, ed., PO 3, 204.

⁵² Averil Cameron's discussion of the rhetoric of paradox in Christian discourse illuminates my discussion and helps to situate the *Lives* of Jacob in relationship to the larger genre of late antique hagiography. Non-Chalcedonian poverty and disenfranchisement could be represented as holy because of the Christian paradox that the last would be first, death was required to live, God took on a form of a slave, and so on. See Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, esp. pp 155-188.

⁵³ The notion that the popularity of certain types of saints reflects and constructs values and concerns of the hagiographer and his audience is an important defense of the use of hagiography in historical studies. E. Patlagean suggested this in her article, "Ancienne hagiographie Byzantine et histoire sociale," in her *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance* (London: Variorum, 1981), Ch. V, 106-126.

⁵⁴ B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147-149.

reflected those of the canonical Jesus.⁵⁵ Yet they were also means for Jacob to win Miaphysite converts from the Chalcedonians and promote Miaphysite Christological slogans. Polemic with the Chalcedonians, to be sure, was embedded in both versions of Jacob's story. But its reconfiguration in the later text imagined a different Chalcedonian "other." Chalcedonian villagers, the "proximate religious other," symbolized for the later tradition potential converts to Non-Chalcedonian Christianity.⁵⁶

The Longer Life's Jacob traveled with texts as an itinerant holy man.⁵⁷ His orthodox speech had the power to heal; Miaphysite Christological definitions replaced rituals of healings. When he, mirroring Christ, raised a young boy and instructed him to get up and walk, he commanded him "in the name of Jesus Christ, *one nature without division*, who was crucified for our sake, get up and walk."⁵⁸ The healing formula was a Miaphysite Christological statement. Theological slogans mattered in the competition for apostolicity, and placing them in the mouth of Jacob legitimated and naturalized the formulae in "a memorable and attractive package."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ The blind man whom Jacob cures is called "Timaeus bar Timaeus: "There was a certain blind man among the people in the city. He heard about the marvels of the blessed one and went to him through one of his kinsmen. And he said to him, 'O Lord have mercy upon me as your Lord had mercy on the blind man Timaeus son of Timaeus. Give me in his name the light to see, so that his name on account of me might be glorified.' When the blessed one heard these things, he wept with suffering. He was strengthened in spirit and said, 'Approach me and see the glory of God.' He approached him and he placed his right hand on his eyes and said, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, fashioner of our creation, *undivided*, one, only-begotten, in your name, may his eyes see light so that this man might serve you.' And at that moment the blind man saw and the groups of people were amazed. They glorified God saying, 'Truly, this is a man of God.' " *The Longer Life* [610] 264. Emphasis mine. Note here, again, the insertion of the Miaphysite Christological formula. For an excellent discussion of the use of biblical narrative in hagiography, see D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), esp. 15-32.

⁵⁶ See *The Longer Life* 260 [606].

⁵⁷ *The Longer Life* mentions that Jacob traveled with a portable Bible. *The Longer Life* 236 [582]. Both traditions mention that he traveled with a portable altar. For the tradition of itinerant ascetics and bishops, see my chapter of the *Acts of Thomas*.

⁵⁸ *The Longer Life* [591], 245.

⁵⁹ B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147-149.

The Longer Life expanded the number of places that Jacob visited on his itinerary,⁶⁰ adding the monasteries of Quartmin and Mar John Quyumma.⁶¹ From Phesilthā, near Tella, Jacob sojourned in monasteries and interacted with their monks, ordaining some of them bishops.⁶² This rhetorical strategy promoted the authority of certain monasteries through inserting them into Jacob's itinerary. This differentiation of monasteries and cities and their consecration through Jacob's interaction with them demonstrated how the hagiographical memory of one saint became the shared possession of a larger network of communities.

Unlike other missionary figures, Jacob only occasionally converted people to Miaphysite Christianity. Jacob's longer hagiography remembered him, rather, as a bishop who forged networks of churches and monasteries together. Yet his itinerancy and his care to increase the numbers (ܠܬܥܕܝܬܐ in Syriac)⁶³ of Non-Chalcedonians made him a "variety" of the missionary type: "He enlarged and renewed (ܐܬܝܬܐ ܕܥܕܝܬܐ) all of the Orthodox."⁶⁴

The memory of Jacob's missionary activities thus was an idealized miniature portrait of the Miaphysites as a whole. Artists of miniatures select only a few traits to

⁶⁰ John of Ephesus mentions the monasteries of Aphthonia in Laodicea 156 [502], Mar Bassus in Kenneshrin 156 [502], Aphthonia in Charrhae 156 [502], Mar Bzy in Seleucia 156 [502], and Mar Haninina in Sura 156 [502], Monastery of John of Ephesus 158 [504], and Mar John in Amida 158 [504]. See John of Ephesus, *Lives*, Life 50.

⁶¹ For the relationship of the monastery of Qartmin with the *Life of Jacob*, see A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 153-154. Palmer argues persuasively against Brooks and Kuegner that the author of the appendix to *The Longer Life* is Mar Cyriac of the monastery of Phesilthā. Mar Theodosius recopied the text in 741.

⁶² The monasteries that the text mentions include Beth Aphthonia (241 [586]), Mar Bzy (241 [586]), the monastery of Mar Bassus in Quenneshrin (241 [586]), the monastery of Hannia of the city of Sura (241 [586]), Mar John in Amida, Qartamin, (242 [587]), Mar John Quyumma 246 [592]), and Casion near Egypt (612 [266]).

⁶³ *The Longer Life* [584], 238.

⁶⁴ *The Longer Life* [585], 239.

highlight, omitting some features and magnifying others, yet the new image is easier to carry and describe than a life-size likeness: “The miniature always tends towards exaggeration – it is a selection of detail that magnifies detail in the same movement by which it reduces detail.”⁶⁵ So with hagiography: the likeness of the mythologized Jacob was portable and memorable because of its vivid episodes, chosen on account of the interests and religious sensibilities of the monks who wrote the text.

Social Conditions, Political Postures, Intertexts

The Jesuit philosopher of history, Michel de Certeau, argued that the historian “must remain humble in the face of the absent.”⁶⁶ In looking for the conditions that enable the production of Jacob’s hagiography -- the context of history and traditions of religious imagination that connected him to the Miaphysite Church -- we search for a vanished past.⁶⁷ Still, through comparison with other texts and attention to narrative relationships, we discern an ascetic discipline of hagiographical rewriting and transmitting that produced Syriac missionary discourse. *The Longer Life’s* mythologized Jacob belongs to a larger Syriac literary tradition of missionary holy men.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ S. Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 101. This quotation is cited on p. 227 of J.Z. Smith’s article “Trading Places”, in the collection of his essays *Relating Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 215-229.

⁶⁶ Michel de Certeau, *Histoire et psychanalyse entre science et fiction : Michel de Certeau*, Luce Giard, ed.. and tr., (Paris: Gaillmard, 1987), p. 187 and “Histoire et mystique,” *Revue de l’Histoire de la spiritualité* 48 (1972), p. 69. E. Clark has a discussion of the use of de Certeau in pre-modern texts in her *History, Theory, Text*, 119-124.

⁶⁷ E. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 120.

⁶⁸ Religious leaders with their own theological and political interests forge myths to advance their self-serving ideology as a general, universal pattern of religious experience. See J. Z. Smith, “When the Chips are Down,” in *Relating Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), 16.

The Longer Life differentiated Jacob from the Chalcedonian *bishops* to contrast his piety with their boorishness.⁶⁹ But the text did not represent Jacob as a disobedient subject of the Byzantine emperor. Jacob, in both his early and later hagiographies, worked fully within the infrastructure of both the Persian and Roman Empires, acting as a bridge between them.⁷⁰ The political position, however, of the author of the later text had shifted significantly since John of Ephesus' time.⁷¹ In later Miaphysite imagination, the news of Jacob's holiness diffused like incense, and Persian and Byzantine emperors and distant peoples from Egypt to Arabia honor Jacob universally.⁷² The absence of blatant attacks on Justinian or Chalcedonian rulers was a noteworthy discontinuity of *Longer Life* with John of Ephesus' accounts in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. Admittedly, John of Ephesus wrote fully within the boundaries of imperial life in Constantinople. His construction of Justinian was ambivalent, especially in comparison to Theodora, whom he lauded.⁷³ *The Longer Life* relativized and passed over the difference or distance between Non-Chalcedonian bishops and Justinian.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ "Chalcedonian bishops from all sides were embittered against him and wanting to seize the holy man and threaten him. When they were altogether rushing after him with threats, he was concealed by divine grace. He was not handed over into the hands of his persecutors seeking his soul." *The Longer Life* 594 [248].

⁷⁰ John of Ephesus, *Lives*, Life 49, 690-697.

⁷¹ For an excellent analysis of the history of the conflicts between Rome and Persia, see M. Whitby, *Rome at War*, 292-696 (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003).

⁷² "So that on account of the miracles the news flew to all quarters in the likeness of choice fragrance. And victorious emperors of the Romans and the Persians and distant peoples heard the good news of the wonders of the holy man himself," *The Longer Life* [594] 248.

⁷³ In comparison to the Chalcedonian historiographer, Evagrius Scholasticus John of Ephesus is much more critical of Justinian. Yet John certainly did not want to represent his Non-Chalcedonian Church as anti-imperial, See Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 32, 124, 169, 178, 152. For the divergent ways in which Theodora is remembered in hagiographical traditions, see S. A. Harvey, "Theodora the 'Believing Queen': A Study in Syriac Historiographical Tradition," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 4.2 (2001).

⁷⁴ J.Z. Smith, "Differential Equations," 11.

The Longer Life used all political figures in the text, not just Harith and Theodora, as figures to consecrate Jacob's holiness.⁷⁵ When *The Longer Life* recorded Chalcedonian aggression, the blame of the violence rested on the bishops' shoulders, not Justin's or Justinian's. *The Longer Life* softened the *Kaiserkritik* of the sixth-century, as the different claims or stakes in the Empire had changed.⁷⁶ The hagiographer of the *Longer Life* inserted words and gestures of respectful admiration for Jacob into the mouths of *all* leaders, Persian and Byzantine.⁷⁷ These imperial declarations advanced a taxonomy that set Jacob into relationship with themselves and his other bishops. They fixed Jacob into a position that was higher than the leaders of the land. Yet, in order for this rhetorical strategy to work, the author was dependent upon the political power of the imagined rulers in the text to use *their* authority to affirm his.

From Hero to Holy Man Immortalized

John of Ephesus praised Jacob together with many bishops, like John of Tella and John of Hephastopolis, whose ministry and ordinations revived Non-Chalcedonian communities. John knew Jacob personally: Jacob had ordained him bishop of Ephesus.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ This is the "power to consecrate. I am using the term "consecrate" in a Bourdieuan sense. This refers to the ability of a person with economic or political power to declare the symbolic power or elevated status of another who operates in a different field of society. In the premodern world, fields were undifferentiated, unlike those of twentieth century societies that Bourdieu studies. Yet, the basic model of how a person of one sector of society attributes authority to another through his or her words is useful for this analysis. Thus, by consecration I mean the power attributed to a religious specialist to construct reality, to produce sacred social divides and orders: "Cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons, and situations it touches a sort of ontological promotion akin to transubstantiation." See P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 210, fn. 172.

⁷⁶ By 640, Umayyad forces will invade Asia Minor.

⁷⁷ "And victorious emperors of the Romans and the Persians and distant peoples heard the good news of the wonders of holy man himself," *Longer Life* 248 [594].

⁷⁸ John of Ephesus, *PO* 19, *Life* 50, p. 157 [503].

The author of *The Longer Life*, for his part, knew Jacob through John.⁷⁹ *The Longer Life's* temporal distance from the events it described also allowed the author to promote his ideological agenda and change Jacob into a “holy man” with *topoi* from the tradition of ascetic missionary heroes.⁸⁰ Jacob’s devotees side-stepped biographical details to inscribe themselves into Jacob’s story.

The Longer Life forged a Jacob that sacralized Miaphysite history.⁸¹ Emile Durkheim observed that communal or individual things become sacred when possession of them becomes exclusive.⁸² The generic mold of the holy man clothed Jacob in literary symbols of authority intelligible and transmittable to the larger cultural context in which the monks of Phesīlthā lived. Later Miaphysites identified Jacob’s *Non-Chalcedonian* motivation and labor as *Miaphysite*. By making Jacob’s memory exclusive to Miaphysite possession, his hagiographers produced a communal sacred entity. Jacob’s characteristics encapsulated the values of asceticism, simplicity, and selfless religious labor that later Miaphysites attributed to their group.

⁷⁹ It is not impossible that the author of *The Longer Life* did not know Jacob, if we are to date the text in the early seventh century. It seems that if he had known him or seen him, this would have emerged in the hagiography.

⁸⁰ I use the term “holy man” in the sense in which Peter Brown established it in his article, “Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *JRS* 61 (1971), 81-101. There has been a vast amount of literature on “holy men” in late antiquity and the hagiographical tropes that accompany their representations. An interesting parallel to Jacob’s reconfiguration in the later tradition into a Byzantine monk in Syriac literature can be found in the *Vita* tradition of Ephrem the Syrian. Ephrem, although a deacon of fourth century, is represented in sixth century Syriac hagiography as an ascetic Byzantine monk, mistaken even for a holy fool. See Joseph P. Amar, *The Syriac “Vita” Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian* (PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America: Washington DC, 1988) and *idem* “Byzantine Ascetic Monachism and Greek Bias in the *Vita* Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian,” *OCP* 58 (1992), 123-156. See also my MA thesis, “Models of Monastic Piety in the *Vita* of Ephrem the Syrian: An Historical and Theological Study of Early Christian Hagiography,” (University of Notre Dame, 2002).

⁸¹ I am influenced here by J. Z. Smith who, following Durkheim, emphasizes that the designation of the sacred is a product of human agency, “not the human response to a transcendental act of self-display.” See J. Z. Smith, “The Topography of the Sacred,” reprinted in *Relating Religion*, 101-116.

⁸² See E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Karen E. Fields, tr., (New York: Free Press, 1995), 142.

Hagiography and Miaphysite Self-Presentation

Later Miaphysites knew themselves as *Jacobites*.⁸³ Whatever the historical Jacob did or did not do, monastic hagiographers remembered him in story and language as a sacred founder. They neglected sad memories associated with Jacob and recreated Jacob in their own monastic image. Hagiographical retelling generated self-reflective narrative.

Chalcedonians and Miaphysites had differentiated themselves into separate Christianities by the eighth-century. Unlike John of Ephesus, the authors of the *Longer Life* interpreted Jacob's story from the standpoint of knowing that Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians never united. Various groups of Non-Chalcedonians nearly destroyed their communion in Syria and Egypt at the end of the sixth century.⁸⁴ The "historical" Jacob failed to keep unity with the Empire and among his fellow Non-Chalcedonians.⁸⁵ Fortunately for Jacob's memory, a changed cultural context of later literary traditions caused these events to lapse from hagiographical memory.

The Miaphysites behind *The Longer Life* composed this text in a cultural context that defined imperial Christianity as Chalcedonian. The Chalcedonians won the Empire, and later Miaphysites, unlike John of Ephesus, could not contest that. Through hagiography, however, they hid themselves behind John's authorship and challenged

⁸³ This is a safe assumption, as the late sixth- or early seventh-century Chalcedonian text, *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae*, names the followers of the Jacobites *Iakobitai*. *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae*. G. Garitte, *La Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* CSCO Vol 132, Sub. T. 4 (Louvain : 1952). This is an ecclesiastical history written from the Chalcedonian point of view, or a history of the Armenian Church in terms of its relationship with the Byzantine church. It mentions that Julian Halicarnassus and Jacob rose and separated from the Chalcedonians.

⁸⁴ See the Introduction to this dissertation.

⁸⁵ For an excellent discussion of these debilitating internal controversies, see L. Van Rompay, "Society and Community", 239-266. See also the introduction to this dissertation.

Chalcedonian claims to Orthodoxy.⁸⁶ Jacob's story located his descendants incontrovertibly on the side of "Orthodoxy," irrespective of their ambiguous or adversarial relationship to the Empire. These rhetorical claims reached an internal Miaphysite audience. Yet through advancing an ideology that Miaphysitism represented the true, ascetic faith of the first apostles, and that Chalcedonian Christianity sanctions "innovation by straying from holy tradition into heresy,"⁸⁷ the authors of *Longer Life* wrote from an empowered stance of resistance to the dominant form of Christianity in the Empire.

The Longer Life's narrator covered over the discontinuity of his world and that of the sixth century and forgot the pain of his Non-Chalcedonian ancestors.⁸⁸ Scholars of oral myth and memory have shown that narrators "remembered" details of the past more vividly when their tales are of happy times. The details of stories located within contexts of violence, duress, or loss, times of pain and stress, by contrast, tend to be more easily forgotten. As the sixth century was largely a painful period for the Non-Chalcedonians and for the Eastern Roman Empire as a whole, it was not surprising that *The Longer Life*

⁸⁶ Post-colonial literary theory, with its attention to systems of domination, and subordination, illuminates how the "dominated" create discourses of resistance within dominating structures. See Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 185. Using post-colonial theory, A. Jacobs has argued that late ancient Jews living in the Holy Land within a cultural context in which Christians wrote about the Jewish "other" also enabled the Jewish "other" to construct a posture of resistance: *The Remains of the Jews: the Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁸⁷ See S. A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis. John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990), 22.

⁸⁸ As E. Clark notes in *History, Theory, and Text*, the search for discontinuity is a valuable contribution from the structuralists (Derrida and Lévi-Strauss) to the study of premodern texts. See Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 62.

generalized the details of Jacob's life, and that his struggles, oversights and conflicts with other Non-Chalcedonians were absent from the text.⁸⁹

The Longer Life sutured his community to their celebrated bishop John of Ephesus, to Jacob, and through them back to the apostles and famed "Jacobs" of their past. *The Longer Life* called Jacob "the new James," the relative of Jesus, so prominent within the canonical *Acts of the Apostles*.⁹⁰ Moreover, Jacob's rescuing of Edessa from the attack of the Persian Emperor Khusro I Anushirvan (531-579) resembled the account in Theodore (reworked in Ephrem's *Vita*) in which another Jacob, Jacob of Nisibis, saved his city from the attack of the Persians.⁹¹ Hagiographical memories of "Jacobs" thus abounded in Syriac Christian literary imagination.

The hagiography made Jacob available to the community that sanctified his memory. In a twelfth-century periphrastic recension of this life, contained in BM 12774 (1197),⁹² the scribe, glossing the title of the text, shared his theory that his hagiographical copying brought Jacob's presence to his community. *The Longer Life* boosted Jacob to the position of a veritable savior of the Miaphysite Church, and this attributed authority lasted. For later medieval Miaphysites who read *Longer Life*, the recital of Jacob's story approximated his holy presence:

⁸⁹ See S.A. Harvey, *Asceticism*, passim, and *eadem*, "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches," in: *Byzantion* 58 (1988), 295-308.

⁹⁰ Acts 15.

⁹¹ *The Longer Life* [608-610] 262-264. Theodore of Cyrrhus, "James of Nisibis" in *A History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. R. M. Price (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1988), 12-22. For the siege of Nisibis, see section 11-13, pp. 18-20. For the *Vita* of Ephrem's version of the monk as civic defender, see Joseph P. Amar, *The Syriac "Vita" Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian*, Ch. 6.

⁹² See Brooks, *PO* 17, viii.

Praise to God who adorned His Church with his saints. He filled her with the riches and treasures of their relics. He surrounded her with the praiseworthy flowers of their ways of life that are written in their stories and formed before the eyes of the heart of the faithful. Whenever we read the way of life of one of them, we are consoled as if he were with us. In his love, our minds exalt, especially with respect to this saint, who adorned the Church with gifts as he filled her with grace. He handed himself over for her sake. Our discourse is not sufficient to narrate a small fragment of his way of life. For if the Lord had not had mercy upon His Church, and established him, she would have been destroyed by the evil persecutors, the Diophysites. This is the beginning of his story that we established in order to illuminate [what we learned of him] from investigation and debate. We ask him to help us by his prayers that we might speak and write these chapters on him. Thus from here we confirm that we shall bring forth a memorial of his story.⁹³

Because they themselves were known as the *Jacobites*, Jacob's life was a useful vehicle through which they epitomized themselves as a whole. They traced their own values and anxieties onto the hagiographical Jacob of the text, and the text advanced Jacob's "canonization process."⁹⁴

Story as Actor: Towards a Perfect Founder

The communal bond of the Non-Chalcedonians happened in part through the way in which sacred narratives themselves became social actors, shaping the social world in which they circulated.⁹⁵ This shows the "storiedness" of their process of self-identification with heroes of the past.⁹⁶

⁹³ See fn 1., *The Longer Life* 228-229 [574-575]. This is the translation of Brooks that I have modified where I thought fit.

⁹⁴ I am using this term figuratively.

⁹⁵ See Brubaker, R., *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 12-13. I am sympathetic also to Brubaker's argument that groupness is an event that *happens* processually as an event. For the storiedness of groups and the relational setting of their narratives, see 39-40. Brubaker here discusses and partially revises Margaret Somers's work on narrative and ethnicity. See M. Somers, "Narrativity, Narrative Identity, and Social Action: Rethinking English Working-Class Formation," in G. Roberts, ed., *The History and Narrative Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 354-374.

⁹⁶ Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 39-40.

The mythologized Jacob became a wonder-working ascetic and healer whose gifts both Byzantines and Persians honored. Although a missionary, Jacob began and ended his journeys in his cell: the hagiographer made his monastery of Phesīlthā the hub of Jacob's travels.⁹⁷ Jacob corrected Chalcedonian "heretics."⁹⁸ He debated theology before the court.⁹⁹ He was fluent in Greek and Syriac, and he read the Bible in both tongues.¹⁰⁰ He surpassed his contemporaries in his ascetic training.¹⁰¹ As the account of John of Ephesus emphasized, when Jacob performed his ordinations, he scrupulously obeyed the ecclesiastical canons.¹⁰² He combined intellectual talents with healing gifts, love of monastic community with a commitment to healing the urban communities around him. Jacob was utterly selfless in his desire to be present to Non-Chalcedonian communities throughout the Byzantine and Persian Empire, and when he could not reach groups on foot, he appeared in dreams or became present through epistolary exchanges.

The category of "missionary ascetic saint" into which John of Ephesus fit Jacob was expanded in *The Longer Life* into that of "founder," even "savior," of the Orthodox remnant. *The Longer Life* lacked apologetic rhetoric to argue Jacob's sanctity; the text

⁹⁷ While he fasted and kept a constant vigil, he was embracing the immaterial labor of the angels. Day by day he added to his divine practices. He did not wish that he be seen outside his cell. All the faithful wanted to come to him, having heard of his way of life. Even from the land of the Persians a variety of sick people gathered before him. The people at the monastery immediately began to be cured, without even seeing him. He visited many people in far-away places, for he saw them beforehand in a vision of the Holy Spirit. And he appeared to them in dreams and they were healed from their pain. *Longer Life* 232 [278].

⁹⁸ *The Longer Life* 244 [590].

⁹⁹ *The Longer Life* 255 [601]. For a discussion of the holy man as a debater, see J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: narrative and Christian heroism in late antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 164-205.

¹⁰⁰ *The Longer Life* 237 [583].

¹⁰¹ Even the Patriarch Sergius cannot measure up to Jacob. *Longer Life* 237 [583].

¹⁰² John of Ephesus, *Lives*, Life 50 155 [501]. *Longer Life* 239 [584]. This was an important point of anxiety for the Non-Chalcedonians, as Van Ginkel reminded me in a personal conversation 6/26/2007.

assumed it. John of Ephesus had established Jacob's apostolic lineage: "in accordance with the saying of the apostle he clothed himself in the breastplate of righteousness, and girded his loins with the perfection of faith."¹⁰³ John arranged for a place for Jacob Baradaeus in his ranks of the saints of the Non-Chalcedonians. *The Longer Life* heightened Jacob's status to that of a founder: "he established the faith of the Church that had almost disappeared. He fought against heresy strongly, and he restored the leadership of a depressed Church."¹⁰⁴

The Longer Life elevated Jacob's status from the time of his birth. His was not the story of a sinner turned saint or even an ascetic who, after years of harsh training, forged a perfect container for the Holy Spirit in his body. Rather, from birth to death Jacob was superhuman, outdoing all his contemporaries in his rigor. The static position of Jacob as a holy man from start to finish of the narrative pointed to *The Longer Life's* assumption of Jacob's "canonized" status, absent in John of Ephesus' account.

Forgeries and Access to the Divine

Our anonymous author hid behind the authority that John of Ephesus' hagiographical collection had received by the seventh or eighth century. The hagiography of John of Ephesus provided a narrative frame into which the author (who pretended himself to be John of Ephesus) of the longer life of Jacob Baradaeus molded his story. Our unknown author elevated John of Ephesus' authority and endorsed the composition of hagiographical forgeries as an ascetic act. Writing his own hagiography allowed him to imitate John of Ephesus, emulating and revising the scribal act that

¹⁰³ John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, Life 49.

¹⁰⁴ *Longer Life* 255 [601].

produced the first sacred memory of Jacob. The anonymous author became an image or icon of John of Ephesus.¹⁰⁵ The expansion of his life offered access both to Jacob's intercession and to that of John of Ephesus.

Imagined Expansion and Narrative Healing

The missionary story was perhaps the most ideologically powerful narrative for a group faced with the limits of political turmoil and shifting borders of the seventh and eighth century. Jacob's freedom of movement "in his simplicity and rapid zeal"¹⁰⁶ as well as "walking vigorously more than 40 miles while fasting enduringly and singing divine hymnody"¹⁰⁷ expressed the ascetic boldness of a "Golden Age." Internal debates were forgotten. *The Longer Life* fashioned painful episodes into the narrative, like the account of the plague of madness in Amida.¹⁰⁸ The text, however, shifted the focus from the event itself to Jacob's role in it.¹⁰⁹ *The Longer Life* revised the account of the plague recasting it as a punishment for the acceptance of the Chalcedonian confession, and Jacob

¹⁰⁵ For the notion of authorial performance, hagiography, and the cultivation of the Christian self, see D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, 1-10.

¹⁰⁶ *The Longer Life* 256 [602].

¹⁰⁷ *The Longer Life* 257 [603].

¹⁰⁸ *The Longer Life* 259-260 [605-606].

¹⁰⁹ The inclusion of the plague in *The Longer Life*, however, is surprising, given the impact of this debilitating memory. Harvey notes: "The particular tragedy of Amida, and the horrors leading up to it, epitomized that of the Monophysite Syrian Orient as a whole during the sixth century. In Syrian tradition, the memory of these years did not lose the sense of trauma. One would expect such times to raise the potency of the ascetic practice; but just as the lay populace would turn to the power of sanctity with particular urgency, so too would the ascetics be compelled to respond from their own suffering and involvement in the plight of the world. City and wilderness, the poles of ascetic experience, in these circumstances lost their distinctive boundaries and came to inhabit a realm of mutual crisis. It was this mutual realm that John of Ephesus elucidated in his accounts of the holy men and women of Amida." *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*, 65. For the account of the plague in the second part of his *Ecclesiastical History*, see Zuqnin, *Part III*, p. 117-119.

helped mad villagers after admonishing them of their heretical position.¹¹⁰ Thus later Miaphysites, who lost sponsorship in the Byzantine Empire, inverted the power relationships of the Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians, placing their saint on the side of divine power to counter the political favor that the Chalcedonians gained.¹¹¹

The story moved Jacob securely into the imagined hierarchy of Miaphysite saints as it elevated the prestige of the monastery of Phesīlthā. Both hagiographies portrayed Jacob as an apostle in rags, safe from the pursuit of his adversaries, whose fame follows him as he moves swift-footed.¹¹² *The Longer Life* adds, however, that after all of Jacob's missions of ordination, the saint always returned to his beloved Phesīlthā. The text's joining of Jacob's journeys to Phesīlthā crafted the particularity of the story that joined the saint to that later community,¹¹³ connecting them as beneficiaries of Jacob's efforts, the heirs to his divine authority, his children carrying his name. Jacob dies near Mount

¹¹⁰ *The Longer Life* 260 [606]. "The holy man answered and said to them, "How can you wish that the Lord might show mercy to you while you have denied his divinity and you divide the two natures of that one whose one nature is one?"

¹¹¹ The inversion of power relationships is common to hagiography and martyr texts. See Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 29. See also Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 150-151.

¹¹² John of Ephesus, *Life of James*, "And so in the upper and lower countries, while he was running the vigorous course without ceasing from the Persian frontier even as far as the royal city of Constantinople, and Alexandria and all the countries, and fulfilling the work of the ministry to all the orthodox believers, not only by organizing the clergy and the giving of the priesthood, but also by consoling and comforting and edifying and strengthening and teaching all the party of the believers everywhere; so that consequently his fame was carried over all quarters, and in every country and city," *PO* 18; *Life* 49; 690-697. Similarly in *Longer Life*: "He [Jacob] extended his course to not only the regions of Syria but also all of Armenia and of Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Isauria, and Pamphilia, Lyconia, and Phrygia, and Caria and Asia and the islands of the sea: Cyprus, Rhodes, Chios, Mytilene, up to the imperial city. He enlarged and renewed (ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲁⲓⲁⲓ) all of the Orthodox. He made priests and filled their orders. Not only did he arrange priests to fill all the regions, but also he did not neglect the churches in distant areas." *The Longer Life* 239 [584].

¹¹³ The monastery of Phesīlthā is mentioned 12 times in the longer life: *The Longer Life* 230 [576], 231 [577], 232 [578], 233 [579], 235 [581], 248 [594], 249 [595], 251 [597], 252 [598], 258 [604], 611 [265], 614 [268]. John of Ephesus in contrast mentions it only once. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, *Life* 49; 690.

Casion on the Egyptian frontier in 578, far from the monastery he loved.¹¹⁴ The people of Tella mourned the distance of his relics.¹¹⁵ This made the later tradition in Phesīlthā anxious to reclaim him.

Sacred Bodies, Sacred Texts

As I discussed above, the scribe Mar Theodosius attached to *The Longer Life* an anecdote attributed to Bishop Mar Cyriacus of Amida on the transfer of Jacob's body from the monastery of Casion in Edessa to that of Phesīlthā near Tella.¹¹⁶ This additional text shows how the hagiographical tradition of Jacob grew within a broader context of his cult.¹¹⁷

This entertaining vignette portrayed the capture of Jacob's body from its resting place in Casion by three deceptive monks of Phesīlthā. They, under orders from their archimandrite Mar Zakkay, visited the monastery of Casion, pretending to be ambassadors of their monastery on a trip bound for Alexandria. One of the monks feigned sickness and remained in the monastery with a friend, while the others continued their journey. The sick man slept close to Jacob's sarcophagus, took it, and wrapped it in silk. He then brings it back with him to Tella. There the bishop and the local church met the body with tapers, incense, and pomp, and it is laid into the monastery of Phesīlthā

¹¹⁴ See Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés*, 177. This story is embellished in *Longer Life* of Jacob's life: Jacob predicted the day on which he would die. *The Longer Life* [612] 266.

¹¹⁵ *The Longer Life* 267-8 [613-4].

¹¹⁶ See *PO XIX*, "Narration of Mar Cyriacus, bishop of Amida, concerning holy Mar Jacob," pp. 268-272 [614-8].

¹¹⁷ Krueger discusses the importance of seeing hagiographical authors situated in a larger cult of saints. *Writing and Holiness*, 11.

near Tella.¹¹⁸ As a foundation myth, this explained how Jacob's body came to rest in Phesīlthā.

The story evidenced that Jacob's body itself became a treasured possession. Jacob became sacred through John's hagiographic memory. *The Longer Life* embellished this memory to frame according to the interests of the later Miaphysites. John of Ephesus and the author of *Longer Life* set Jacob apart in the religious memory of the Miaphysites, and that recollection belonged exclusively to the emergent Miaphysite Church.

Conclusion

Non-Chalcedonian leaders self-identified with the missionary bishop Jacob Baradaeus. Later Miaphysites heightened his position in their tradition, and their narrative of his life became emblematic of how they wanted to see themselves: ascetic and poor, growing and indefatigable, protected by divine providence. Jacob's missionary narratives advanced later Miaphysite interests, as the monks of Phesīlthā elevated him into the echelon of their holy men. By differentiating Jacob from other bishops of their past, they sacralized Jacob's memory. Jacob Baradaeus' portrait embodied the traits of a saint who crossed borders, forged networks of monks, bishops, clergy, and lay. His two-part name denoted his apostolic Orthodoxy and zealous ragged asceticism, and the Miaphysites attributed these virtues to themselves: "the Jacobites."

The emergence of a Miaphysite Church was neither "a given," nor a fixed occurrence in time, but a processual event. Jacob's longer seventh or eighth century

¹¹⁸ *PO* XIX, "Narration of Mar Cyriacus, bishop of Amida, concerning holy Mar Jacob," pp. 268-272 [614-8]

narrative exemplifies how stories constituted important actors in this contingent and variable process.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ My perspective and vocabulary depend upon by Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, p. 27.

Chapter Six: Ahoudemmeh and the Making of Sasanian Non-Chalcedonian

Christianity

Introduction

This dissertation has shown how geographical and political boundaries shaped the differentiation of late-ancient Christianities. The “Nestorian” Church of the East expanded within the parameters of the Sasanian Empire,¹ and the Chalcedonian church flourished in the Roman Empire.² The West-Syrian Non-Chalcedonians expanded in the borderlands between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires.³ In Chapter five, I discussed the work of Jacob Baradaeus whose ordinations revived a dwindling ecclesiastical hierarchy for the Non-Chalcedonians. Historical sources claimed that one of the bishops whom Jacob Baradaeus ordained to work in Northern Iraq was Ahoudemmeh: consecrated bishop in 559 of Beth ‘Arabaye.⁴ The Non-Chalcedonians of the Sasanian Empire credited the conversion of Bedouin tribes of Northern Iraq to Ahoudemmeh.⁵

¹ See Chapter 3 on the *Acts of Mari*. See Canon 12 of the *Acts of the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon*, which granted supreme ecclesiastical authority to the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Chabot, ed. and trans., *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1902), 26-7 (Syriac): “*Canon Twelve, on the Honor that is due and owed to the Catholicos who sits on the throne of Seleucia and Ctesiphon.*” For context, see M. Morony, *Iraq Before the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 373.

² This delineation of the jurisdiction or extent of the Church and its correspondence to imperial borders has been noted by scholars. The toleration granted to the Church of the East from the Sasanians meant “the identification of the Nestorian Church with the Sasanian state . . . the adoption of Sasanian-style hierarchic titles and royal imagery, the regularization of the Nestorian hierarchy, and the definition of the extent of the church to coincide with the borders of the Sasanian Empire.” M. Morony, *Iraq*, 342.

³ Armenia and Egypt remained largely Non-Chalcedonian. Non-Chalcedonian bishops John of Tella and Jacob Baradaeus from the northern Mesopotamian areas around Amida and Edessa began to ordain a separate Non-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical hierarchy to counter that of the Chalcedonians, as I discuss in the Introduction to this dissertation and my chapter on Jacob Baradaeus. See L. Van Rompay, “Society and Community in the Christian Near East” in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239-266.

⁴ Our main historical sources on Ahoudemmeh come from John of Ephesus, in the third part of his *Ecclesiastical History*. See John of Ephesus, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, ed. and trans., E. W. Brooks, CSCO 105/54 (Syriac), 106/55 (Latin) (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1935-1936). I refer to this simply as his *Ecclesiastical History*. For John’s description of Ahoudemmeh, see 316-8 (Syriac) and 240-1 (Latin). For a later attestation, see Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, E. A. Budge, ed.

The seventh-century *Vita*, the *Life of Ahoudemmeh*, shared major literary motifs with other Syriac missionary narratives.⁶ As other stories of this study, *Ahoudemmeh* mythologized an historical missionary to craft an imagined apostolic past. The text encapsulated a picture of late-ancient Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians to remember an Iraqi landscape painted with monasteries, churches, and “apostolic” foundations.

Ahoudemmeh came out of a time of intense inner conflicts among the two major Christian groups of late-ancient Persia: the larger Dyophysite Church of the East and the Non-Chalcedonians.⁷ The former had identified with the Sasanian Empire since the fifth century, and the latter had grown in Iraq throughout the sixth century. *Ahoudemmeh* symbolized the ambiguities of the religious and political affiliations of the Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians vis-à-vis their coreligionists in the Byzantine Empire. It idealized a relationship that gave the church independence in jurisdiction, yet unity in the common

and tr., *The Chronography of Gregory Abul-Faraj: The Son of Aaron, The Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus*, 2 Vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932; Rep. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 2.99-100. For the Syriac text, see Bar Hebraeus, *Gregorii Bar Hebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, J. Abbeloos and T. Lamy, ed. and trans., Vol. II (Louvain: Peeters, 1872-1877), p. 97. The *Ecclesiastical Chronicon* of Bar Hebraeus dates his martyrdom to 575. See Bar Hebraeus, *Chron. Eccl.* 2.99-100.

⁵ This diocese would have been formed by Takrit in the south, Nisibis in the north, and the Khabur river (which flows into the Euphrates) in the West. Takrit is located approximately 180 km north of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and 140 km north of Pumbeditha, center of the Babylonian Rabbinic academy. For an excellent map of this area, see the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, ed. Richard Talbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Map 91. On the diocese of Beth ‘Arbaye, see Elizabeth Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: St. Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 121.

⁶ François Nau, trans., *Histoire d’Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta: Métropolitains Jacobites de Takrit et de L’Orient (VI et VII Siècles)*, PO 3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), 1-96. Nau’s edition and French translation of this text comes from a single MS from 936 in the British Museum, *add.* 14645. I will refer to the text hereafter as *Ahoudemmeh*, with the page numbers of Nau’s text. English translations are mine from Nau’s Syriac text. For information about the MS tradition and historical sources, see Nau, “Introduction,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 8-13.

⁷ When I use the term “Persian Christians,” or “Persian Christianity,” I am referring to their geographical location, not their ethnicity or language. In the sixth century, the Non-Chalcedonians in Iraq would have been composed mainly of native Aramaean, former Magian Persians, and former pagan Arabs. See M. Morony, *Iraq*, 373.

profession of a single-natured Christology. An important source on the gradual formation of the Syrian Orthodox Church, *Ahoudemmeh* reconfigured relationships among the Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians towards their rival and sister Christianities.

Agenda and Thesis

Historical sources characterized Ahoudemmeh as a sixth-century missionary bishop of the Roman/Persian borderlands, and they described a few episodes of his interactions and debates with prominent ecclesiastical and political figures of his time. His hagiography, however, portrayed a tableau of Sasanian Non-Chalcedonianism, blending literary commonalities from the Syriac missionary genre with particularizations suggestive of the circumstances of minority Christians in late-ancient Northern Iraq. As a tableau of Sasanian Christianity, it spoke to the distance between the seventh-century context of the text's composition and the sixth-century narrated context of the story.⁸ Its mythic elements suggested earlier eras of Syriac missionary saints and Persian martyrdoms. *Ahoudemmeh* framed its hero as an "apostle" in the center of a burgeoning Sasanian Christianity, and this produced a hagiographic memory distinct from that of the historical Ahoudemmeh. This tableau froze a picture of missionary life in Mesopotamia to give continuity in the midst of changed realities of seventh-century Iraq.

⁸ My interpretation of *Ahoudemmeh* has been shaped by Susan Stewart's excellent theoretical work on narratives and representation. In her essay on the *The Miniature*, Susan Stewart notes that there are two major features of the tableau: "the drawing together of significant, even if contradictory elements, and thereby the complete filling out of 'point of view'; and second, the simultaneous particularization and generalization of the moment. . . . The tableau offers a type of contextual closure which would be inappropriate to genres rooted in the context of their utterance; the tableau effectively speaks to the distance between the context at hand and the narrated context; it is possible only through representation, since it offers a complete closure of a text framed off from the ongoing reality that surrounds it." Susan Stewart, "The Miniature," in her *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 37-69, here 48.

This analysis examines *Ahoudemmeh* for its literary features and memory-making work for the Non-Chalcedonians of Persia.⁹ I juxtapose the story's historicizing elements and its common motifs with other Syriac missionary stories. I place these with the background of the *Spannungsfeld* between the Byzantine and Persian thrones.¹⁰ I argue that the text portrayed a tableau of Sasanian monastic landscape as a background for this apostle's travels and identified the Non-Chalcedonians with the Sasanian Empire through undermining Dyophysite claims to the Sasanian court. The narrative focused on Ahoudemmeh's work on the Arabs, a group that had both Dyophysite (Lakhmid) and Non-Chalcedonian (Ghassan) tribes.¹¹ It crafted an apostolic memory for both Takrit, the see of the *mafrian*, and Mossul/Ninevah, the center of Sasanian Non-Chalcedonian monasticism.¹²

Ahoudemmeh portrayed a founder who replaced Arabic tribal itinerancy with monasteries, converted tribes to build up the celestial army, and delivered his neck over to a wicked emperor. The clarity of the picture of this tableau and the roles played by the

⁹ No one has examined this text from a literary point-of-view, yet the text has received recent attention from historians of Iraqi Christianity. See Joel Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 178-9, 185, and Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984), 419-22, and *idem*, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Vol. 1, Part 2: *Ecclesiastical History* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 773, 842-43, 854-55, 924, 959, 1020, and E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, p. 122-127. Her interpretation of this text suffers from an overly positivistic interpretation of the hagiography.

¹⁰ For an orientation as to how these political events affected the religious history of the Non-Chalcedonians, see W. Hage, *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit nach orientalischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harroassowitz, 1966), 1-3.

¹¹ The Arab inhabitants of the borderlands had served as military allies on the side of both the Romans and Persians. Their intermediary position intensified the flexibility of the border: "In the great Syro-Mesopotamian spaces, these fixed places were flash points where all forms of human interaction – social, economic, political, and religious – tended to concentrate. Within this landscape, the political frontier between the Roman and Iranian empires acted as an artificial divide. In order to maintain their territorial claims, both empires turned to military alliances with the Arab inhabitants of the region and to the construction of fortifications." E. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 3.

¹² I discuss the *mafrian* below.

story's characters clarified ambiguities of later Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians and closed a view of their past, as their postures towards their political and religious rivals and supporters shifted continuously throughout the late sixth- and seventh century.

Historical Background

We might classify the Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians who produced *Ahoudemmeh* more accurately by calling them the Non-Chalcedonian/Anti-Nestorian Church, as they defined themselves against both Christianities.¹³ The “Nestorian” Church of the East emerged as the dominant Sasanian Christianity after Bar Sauma of Nisibis’ (fl. 488) harassment of “non-Nestorian” Christians of Iran and Iraq.¹⁴ This “Nestorianization” caused a schism among native Christians,¹⁵ and centers of West-Syrian Non-Chalcedonianism grew in the Persian areas that had resisted Bar Sauma’s religious homogenization.¹⁶ These same places received refugees from the Roman Empire who

¹³ Again, however, it is problematic to call a church by what they are not rather than what they are.

¹⁴ This impelled Emperor Anastasius, who favored the Non-Chalcedonians, to write to Shah Kawad to intervene and stop violence against the Non-Chalcedonians. In the *Codex Justinianus*, furthermore, we see how this year (488) was also a year that “Nestorians” were officially outlawed in the West: “We further decree that those who esteem the impious faith of Nestorius or follow his unlawful teaching, if they be bishops or clerics be ejected from the holy churches, but if laity anathematized.” Edict of February 17 488, *Cod. Iust.* I. 1. 3. *ACO* I. i. 4, no. 138, p. 66: 12-14; See M. Whitby, “Introduction,” *Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, tr. M. Whitby, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) p 33.

¹⁵ Morony argues persuasively that the previous descriptions of this group by Labourt and Fiey were unfounded or misleading: “Monophysites have tended to be identified with Syrians in the Sasanian Empire and be regarded as representing an intrusive ‘western’ element there. Most such assumptions have followed Labourt’s suggestion that the number of Monophysites in Iraq was increased by the Byzantine captives deported to Iraq by Khursaw Anushirvan [Khusro I, 531-579]. The most extreme assertions of a ‘western’ Greek or Syrian origin and cultural identity of Monophysites in Iraq have been made by Fiey, who makes several assumptions: the Roman captives who were settled at ‘Ukbara by Shapur I in the third century left Syrian influences there; that there were ‘probably’ clergy among them that ‘caused’ the later presence there of west Syrian Christians; and that they and ‘Greek’ exiles from Byzantine Syria in the late fourth century ‘probably’ were resistant to Nestorianism in the late fifth century.” See Morony, *Iraq*, 372. See J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l’Empire Perse sous la Dynastie Sassanide* (Paris: Lecoffe, 1904), 199 and J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, II, 822-23; III, 127-28.

¹⁶ Later West Syrian Historians retrojected an anachronistic landscape onto this time period to make their monasteries the “faithful remnant” that resisted Bar Sauma of Nisibis. See J.-M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l’Eglise en Iraq*, CSCO 310/subs. 36, (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1970), p. 118. See

fled the persecution of Justin I, Justinian, and Justin II. This combination of native Anti-Nestorian Persians and Non-Chalcedonian Byzantines grew into a new conglomerate in Northern Iraq with strongholds around Takrit and the monastery of Mar Mattai.¹⁷ When Jacob Baradaeus, Simeon of Beth Arsham, and later Ahoudemmeh conducted their missionary work in Northern Iraq, they had the cooperation of the indigenous groups around the monastery of Mar Mattai. They were a mixed population of “native” Persian Christians (Anti-Nestorians), Arab (Lakhmid) converts to Non-Chalcedonianism, and exiled Non-Chalcedonians from the Roman Empire (or their descendants).

The sixth-century influx of the Non-Chalcedonians into Persia alarmed the Church of the East, especially when the former won converts from the latter.¹⁸ Non-Chalcedonian loyalty to the Byzantine and Sasanian rulers fluctuated during the late sixth- and early seventh-century. Non-Chalcedonians won support from the shah Khusro II (590-628) whose court physician converted from Nestorianism to Non-Chalcedonianism,¹⁹ yet the alternating periods of peace and conflict between Rome and Persia made a definite act of affiliation with the Sasanians imperative for the survival of

also Walker, *Legend*, 117 and 175; Fiey, *Jalons*, 113-19, and Stephen Gero, *Barsauma of Nisibis and Persian Christianity in the Fifth Century* CSCO Vol. 426/Sub. 63 (Louvain: Peeters, 1981), 110-19.

¹⁷ “The monastery of Mar Mattai became the center of operations in the East where Jacob Baradaeus was received by the Christians of Takrit, and by those in Beth Garne, and Adiabene. A Monophysite bishop was ordained for Seleucia, and the new organization was joined by those who had fled from the Byzantine empire in the reign of Justin.” Morony, *Iraq*, 373.

¹⁸ A synod in 596 of the Church of the East forbade members from associating with the Non-Chalcedonian, “heretical,” Church: “It has been brought to our attention that there are those who wear the clothing of the monk (covenant / *مصحف*) who make heretical distinctions in their mind concerning the true faith of the Orthodox. They are standing in opposition to the true teachers of the church.” . . . “[I]f anyone dares to cause a schism and not receive this definition of the true faith, we will treat him as alien, excommunicated, abandoned, and removed from all participation with Christians, until he corrects his ways and adheres to the true faith of the Church.” “Synod of Mar Catholicos SabarJesu (*ܡܬܪܝܢܐ ܫܒܪܝܫܐ*).” In the *Synodicon Orientale*, J. Chabot, ed. and tr., (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1902), 456 and 459 (Fr.) and 196 and 198 (Syr.). I was led to this reference by Joel Walker, *Legend*, p. 94, fn. 26.

¹⁹ I discuss this topic in detail below.

Non-Chalcedonian foundations.²⁰ In this same time, the Non-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians became increasingly polarized, and the former group looked to areas beyond Byzantium to expand.²¹

The people whom Ahoudemmeh converted, the *Tayaye*, seem to have been Bedouin Arabs who lived between the Persian and Roman Empires. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to speculate about the historical overlap between the Christianization of these tribes and Ahoudemmeh's work in this process.²² For the sake of this chapter, however, we note that the ethnically-mixed group of Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians affiliated themselves with an apostle who brought an institutionalized form of Syrian monasticism to the tribal leadership of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Bedouin of Northern Iraq.²³ The meaning that the text produced and the ideological impulses it satisfied must be historicized in this context.²⁴

²⁰ Between 605 and 607, the Sasanian Empire conquered the Roman cities of Edessa, Dara, and Amida, all centers for West Syriac Non-Chalcedonian communities, whose positions on the borders had drained these areas of resources and enervated local inhabitants. The classic text describing the suffering of urban life in this region is the *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, preserved in the third part of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, although these events happened a century before this conquest. See *Chronicle of Zuqnin Parts III and IV: A. D. 488-775*, A. Harrak, tr., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999) and *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite, composed in Syriac A. D. 507*, W. Wright, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882).

²¹ We know especially from the third part of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History*. By the beginning of the seventh century, the likelihood of unification with the imperial Chalcedonian church had slipped away. I discuss this in the appendix of the dissertation, which contains an annotated translation of the letters of Jacob Baradaeus. See my forthcoming paper, "Letters of Jacob Baradaeus: In search of the Missionary Self," presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007.

²² For the spread of the Non-Chalcedonians among the Arabs, see J. S. Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London and New York: Librairie du Liban, 1979), 163-188. The first comment that Trimingham makes situates the Non-Chalcedonians in their missionary context outside of the Byzantine Empire: "Unlike the Nestorians, the Monophysites were not at first compelled to leave Byzantine territory, but like the Nestorians they were active missionaries, which led to a vast extension of peasant allegiance to Monophysite clergy," 163.

²³ E. K. Fowden notes the diversity of this geographical area's population: "Because of its size and diversity, the Syro-Mesopotamian plain could not be dominated by one group of its inhabitants. Instead, pastoralists, farmers, craftsmen, merchants, monks, and soldiers were joined in a network of symbioses. The eastern, northern, and western fringes were densely populated in many places, and their inhabitants,

Summary of the Story

This story has the longest introduction of any of our texts and contains a distinctly Miaphysite creedal statement.²⁵ Using a rhetoric of genealogy, the anonymous hagiographer appealed first to the universal “race of Adam” and how the example of holy people benefited them.²⁶ The author introduced Ahoudemmeh as the son of “unbelieving,” possibly “Nestorian,” parents.²⁷ He came from Balad in the region of Beth ‘Arabaye.²⁸ Ahoudemmeh was well-versed in the Scriptures, and after reaching maturity he left the religion of his birth. Ahoudemmeh chose the missionary life on

especially in the eastern half, were very diverse. They included Zoroastrians, Jews, polytheists, and Christians of Nestorian, Chalcedonian, and non-Chalcedonian (“Monophysite”) allegiance. Many of both the permanent and of the less permanent inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia were mobile by vocation – pastoralists, semi-pastoralists, merchants, teachers, students, and pilgrims.” E. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 2-3.

²⁴ Elizabeth Clark notes in her reading of Roland Barthes that narrative history, for Barthes, did not differ substantially from the imaginary narration of the novel or drama. Historical discourse is a form of ideological elaboration, as the historian organizes language to fill in an absent meaning. E. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 96-97.

²⁵ Following typical patterns of hagiography, the author speaks of his inadequacy to perform his task. *Ahoudemmeh*, 17.

²⁶ Like John of Ephesus, the hagiographer of this text likens the lives of the saints to shining lights. “He [Christ] willed that we human beings become his followers, in accordance with the authoritative message that Christ spoke, ‘may your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your father in heaven.’ Thus indeed the blessed Ahoudemmeh did, whose great things we now narrate, as is necessary, [telling of] his region, nationality, and his city, that he might be glorified,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 18.

²⁷ *Ahoudemmeh*, 19.

²⁸ The capital of Beth ‘Arabaye is Nisibis, a city that was always on the border between the Persian and Roman Empire: “Beth ‘Arabaye, with its capital, Nisibis, encompassed a wide swathe of territory on either side of the upper Tigris, including all five of the so-called Transtigritanian regions ceded by the Romans to Persia in the treaty of 363.” See J. Walker, *Legend*, 100. See also N. Pigulevskaja, *Les villes de l’état iranien aux époques parthe et sassanide: contribution à l’histoire sociale de la Basse Antiquité* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1963), 49-59.

account of his desire to follow the example of the apostle Paul.²⁹ An unnamed illustrious personage ordained him bishop of Beth ‘Arabaye.³⁰

Ahoudemmeh converted “barbaric” and “murderous” Arab tribes in the region of Gazirtha, although they had resisted his message at first.³¹ Demons heard Ahoudemmeh’s petitions to the apostles and chanting of the psalms, and they fought with him as he waited outside the Arab camps. Ahoudemmeh’s prayers cured the Arabic tribes from a plague of lepers besetting them. In striking similarity to the *Acts of Mari*, Ahoudemmeh then converted the tribe through exorcising a demon from the daughter of the tribe’s leader.³² He baptized and instructed these “pagans” in Christianity, and he then converted the Arabs of other surrounding areas.³³ Ahoudemmeh established an ecclesiastical structure for the tribes, ordaining bishops and priests, building altars, and teaching them to care for the poor.³⁴

The text was silent about the existence of other Christians in the Sasanian Empire,³⁵ yet it abruptly introduced the existence of monasteries on the northern Iraqi landscape: Shingar, Mar Mattai, and Beth Mar Sergius.³⁶ Ahoudemmeh connected his

²⁹ *Ahoudemmeh*, 20.

³⁰ The hagiography does *not* affiliate Ahoudemmeh with Jacob Baradaeus. I discuss this absence further below.

³¹ *Ahoudemmeh*, 21.

³² *Ahoudemmeh*, 25.

³³ *Ahoudemmeh*, 26.

³⁴ *Ahoudemmeh*, 28.

³⁵ Yet we know that the region of Beth Aramaye (area around Seleucia-Ctesiphon) already had five dioceses of (Dyophysite) Christians by 410. See J. Walker, *Legend*, p. 99, fn 46.

³⁶ *Ahoudemmeh*, 27-28. For an orientation on the history of monasticism in Beth Arabaye, see J-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, 3: 147-261, here 148. Shingar was located in Beth Arabaye, the area south of the Izla Mountains, approximately 100 km South-east of Nisibis. The monastery of Mar Mattai is 25 km northeast of Ninevah/Mossul. See *Barrington Atlas*, Map 89.

burgeoning communities to the cult of St. Sergius and Bacchus in Rusafa. He built a church to these saints at Ain Qone that resembled its counterpart on the west side of Euphrates, and it became a center of worship for the Arabs.³⁷ The story described the beauty of the church's hymns, the community's hospitality to the poor, and their shining works of asceticism. The text contrasted the disorder of the outside world with the peace of Ahoudemmeh's church.³⁸ Enemies of God burned the monastery, but Ahoudemmeh's community rebuilt it. Ahoudemmeh then constructed another monastery called Gatani, near an existing one at Aqrunta.³⁹

The story narrated that the son of the Persian Shah desired to be baptized, and so he fled his father's court in search of Ahoudemmeh.⁴⁰ The apostle perceived the prince's

³⁷ Some scholars believe that the remains of a small basilica named for St. Sergius, *Qasr Serij*, near Mossul is the same one mentioned in this text: Ain Qone. The main proponent of this position was Fr. Fiey. David Oates and E. K. Fowden agree with him, but I am more skeptical for several reasons. Oates himself says that the date of this church cannot be exactly determined. E. Fowden's great contribution has been to show the number of churches and shrines throughout this area that were named for St. Sergius, and thus the fact that this church was named for St. Sergius does not mean it is the same one to which the hagiography refers. Fiey's interpretation of the hagiography of Ahoudemmeh is to view the text as "history." Following this lead, Oates problematically calls Ahoudemmeh's hagiographer his "biographer," and he matches up the hagiography as "textual evidence" to correspond with architectural remains of an undetermined time period. Oates' reading of the hagiography is furthermore problematic, because he identifies nameless characters in the text with people to fit his model: "The *exact date of the foundation is uncertain*, but is further recorded in the life that *the monastery was burnt by jealous Nestorians*, and was subsequently restored with its contents by order of *Khusro*," D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 115, emphasis mine. The hagiographer calls those who burned the original church of Ahoudemmeh "enemies," but he does not specify "Nestorians," see *Ahoudemmeh*, 30. Moreover, nowhere in the text does he identify the shah in the story as Khusro. All of these conjectures stem from reading the hagiography as history. While it is certainly not impossible that the hagiographical attestation of a building project of a bishop like Ahoudemmeh can be traced to these remains, the matter is far from determinable. For this discussion see Oates, *Ancient History*, 106-117, E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 124, and J-M Fiey, *Sumer*, xiv (1958), 125-7.

³⁸ After the community is disrupted and destroyed by "demons," Ahoudemmeh repairs the damage and rebuilds a monastery on the site of the church. *Ahoudemmeh*, 32.

³⁹ This seems to have been located near Takrit, according to Bar Hebraeus. Nau references Bar Hebraeus' mentioning of this monastery, but he does not give the place of this reference unfortunately. See Nau, "Introduction," *Ahoudemmeh*, 12, fn 2.

⁴⁰ If there is any truth to this account, this would have been the son of Khusro I, "George," see Nau, "Introduction," p. 12.

righteousness, baptized him, and anointed him.⁴¹ After anointing his eyes with oil and bestowing crosses upon him, Ahoudemmeh sent the royal convert into “Roman country.” The flight of the prince spurred his father to chase after him. When the shah’s spies found Ahoudemmeh, they turned their hearts to Christianity and honored the holy man.⁴² They begrudgingly took Ahoudemmeh to the shah, and the Arabic tribes wept for the loss of their bishop. While being taken to prison, Ahoudemmeh encountered a camp of Arabs tormented by a plague. His guards allowed him to offer prayers and incense to lift the plague.⁴³ When brought before the Persian ruler, Ahoudemmeh identified himself as a bishop “appointed by God for the work of baptizing people, sending them from darkness to the true light, and [bringing them] from the error of paganism to the perfect knowledge of Christian work.”⁴⁴ The shah imprisoned him.

Ahoudemmeh lived without food or drink for twelve days, and people saw this as a sign that he was a servant of God. A series of miracles occurred through Ahoudemmeh’s intercession while the saint was in confinement.⁴⁵ Like the apostle Paul

⁴¹ For baptism in the Syrian tradition, see S. P. Brock, “The Transition to a Post-Baptismal Anointing in the Antiochene Rite,” in *The Sacrifice of Praise: Studies on the Themes of Thanksgiving and Redemption in the Central Prayers of the Eucharistic and Baptismal Liturgies in Honour of Arthur Hubert Couratin*, ed. B. D. Spinks (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1981), 215-225. In ancient Syriac baptism, there were two anointings before baptism: one of the head and one of the body, followed by a post-baptismal anointing (in the West) or a laying on of hands (in the East). But these two anointings, as Brock showed, represent a reduplication, as earliest baptism had a single anointing or *rushma* of the forehead alone. I discuss this important imagery below.

⁴² *Ahoudemmeh*, 36.

⁴³ *Ahoudemmeh*, 36.

⁴⁴ *Ahoudemmeh*, 41.

⁴⁵ A collective identity of the Arabs is crafted through their devotion to their “apostle” Ahoudemmeh and their desire to save him: “those who were taught by him and through him had entered the divine house, were very sad. Great suffering and sadness seized them truly on account of their brother. Many were crying out that they were deprived of his company; they were enflamed with great zeal and burned like fire. They considered how they could make provision to save him. . . . they said to him, “What are we to do, since we have no one except you? Are you leaving us orphaned? They were crying to him as a child that has been separated from its mother.” *Ahoudemmeh*, 37. This is a common hagiographic topos. See for

imprisoned in Rome,⁴⁶ Ahoudemmeh stayed incarcerated for two years, and people visited him and sought his intercession.⁴⁷ An angel of the Lord appeared to Ahoudemmeh in prison to comfort him, and Ahoudemmeh spent the night in prayer.⁴⁸

Ahoudemmeh died in prison. After his death, the guards cut off his head. His followers bribed his prison guards to give them the head of the holy man. The text likened Ahoudemmeh to John the Baptist whom Herod beheaded. Ahoudemmeh's sentinels decapitated Ahoudemmeh's corpse and cast the cadaver to the dogs. The beasts miraculously did not touch it, sensing the holiness of the body.⁴⁹

Ahoudemmeh's followers took his body first to the city of Mehouza/Seleucia-Ctesiphon and placed it in a church in a town called Rebibi. The body shone miraculously.⁵⁰ His disciples then moved his body to Beth Asa, next to the city of Aqrunta where Ahoudemmeh began his work. The abbot moved the saint's relics to the city of Takrit. There was a conflict over which city, Aqrunta or Takrit, would be allowed

example Gregory of Nyssa's "Life of Macrina." The sisters of Macrina lament for their spiritual mother like children orphaned. See Pierre Maraval, *Vie de Sainte Macrine [par] Grégoire de Nysse. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes et index*, SC 178 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1971), section 26, pp 229-233.

⁴⁶ Acts 28: 16ff.

⁴⁷ *Ahoudemmeh*, 44.

⁴⁸ *Ahoudemmeh*, 45.

⁴⁹ If the hagiography harmonizes with the historical accounts, the arrest of Ahoudemmeh would have happened in 573 and his death in 575. See Nau, "Introduction," 12. It is a common *topos* of hagiography that animals respond miraculously in the presence of a holy body. See for example the wasps in the story of Anahid, the Persian Martyress. Rather than stinging the holy woman's body, they act as a wall protecting her. See, "Anahid," in S. P. Brock and S. A. Harvey, trans., *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 82-99, here 98.

⁵⁰ The is a common hagiographic *topos*. See, for example, in the "Life of Macrina" by Gregory of Nyssa the body of the holy woman shines in the dark, even after her death. See *Vie de Sainte Macrine [par] Grégoire de Nysse*, section 32, p 246 (Greek).

to keep the saint's bones, and they decided to share them. Some of Ahoudemmeh's relics went to the monastery at Aqrunta and to the Church of Takrit.⁵¹

Historical Sources and Sacred Fictions

The significant contrasts between the historical and hagiographical accounts of "Ahoudemmeh" show how hagiography "disremembered" particularizations of the saint's life that did not speak to the needs or advance the interest of later mythmakers.⁵² The absence of Jacob Baradaeus' ordination of Ahoudemmeh, a prominent feature of John of Ephesus "historical" account, could suggest a more ambiguous relationship between seventh-century Sasanian Christians and their Roman "Jacobite" counterparts.⁵³ If our author had known of John of Ephesus' account and left Jacob Baradaeus out of Ahoudemmeh's lineage, this egregious contrast would be significant in its implications for the relationship between Sasanian and Byzantine Non-Chalcedonians.⁵⁴ Jacob

⁵¹ *Ahoudemmeh*, 49-51.

⁵² The hagiography dates Ahoudemmeh's death to 575 CE: a noteworthy instance of correspondence between hagiographical and historical portraits. *Ahoudemmeh*, 46.

⁵³ John of Ephesus explains that Ahoudemmeh, after his debate with the emperor Khusro I, "[R]eturned home with great *parresia* without fear. When all the orthodox in the region of the Persians received this message, they dared to do a great deed. Through the hands of blessed Mar Jacob, bishop of the Orthodox, they ordained him Catholicos. This had not yet taken place in the region. Thus, up until today there has been a Catholicos in the region of the believers," John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 318 (Syriac), 241 (Latin). Nau cites this excerpt in (Syriac with a French translation) in his "Introduction," *Ahoudemmeh*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁴ Bar Hebraeus (13th c. Syrian Orthodox church Historian, chronicler, Mafrian of Takrit) also knew the tradition (perhaps from John of Ephesus) that Ahoudemmeh was ordained a priest by Jacob Baradaeus, bishop by the Armenian Catholicos Christopher, and Metropolitan of the East by Jacob Baradaeus: "After the persecution of the orthodox in the east, there stood up Ahoudemmeh, Metropolitan of the East. Jacob first ordained him in the year 870 of the Greeks. It was said that Christopher, Catholicos of the Armenians, ordained him bishop for Beth 'Arabaye. Jacob then conferred on him the title of Metropolitan of the East. Mar Ahoudemmeh went to the people of the Tayye, tent-dwellers, and he converted many of them. God worked through his powerful and mighty hands. The number of priests and monks increased. He built them a monastery called Ain Qona and another monastery on the bank of the Tigris called Gatani. Also in Takrit he converted a large number of Magians. He also converted a child from the lineage of the Persian Empire. He baptized him and called him Georgi. When the king heard, he became angry and had Ahoudemmeh beheaded, on Friday, the second, in the month of Ab in the year 886 of the Greeks. The faithful demanded his body and wrapped it and buried it in Mehouza." Bar Hebraeus, *Gregorii Bar Hebraei*

Baradaeus, himself a prominent Non-Chalcedonian missionary, would have been a symbolically powerful means for the hagiographer to forge a commonality between his community and their Byzantine coreligionists. Perhaps Jacob's absence from *Ahoudemmeh* hinted at an interest to elevate the independence of the jurisdiction of the bishop of Beth 'Arabaye.

Historical sources on Ahoudemmeh highlighted the story of a theological debate between Ahoudemmeh and the Catholicos of the Church of the East before Shah Khusro I.⁵⁵ Both accounts explained that the Catholicos of the Church of the East [perhaps Joseph, 552-565] argued his Dyophysite position unconvincingly,⁵⁶ in contrast to Ahoudemmeh who was lucid and calm. Shah Khusro I promised Ahoudemmeh that the Non-Chalcedonians would "suffer no more harm at the hands of the dominant Church in Persia, the Church of the East."⁵⁷ This important vignette was absent from Ahoudemmeh's hagiography.

Chronicon Ecclesiasticum, Abbeloos and Lamy, ed. and trans., Vol. II (Louvain: Peeters, 1872-1877), p. 97. English translation mine.

⁵⁵ Two historical sources, John of Ephesus and the thirteenth-century *Chronicon of Bar Hebraeus*, relate this story. This is a striking similarity with the Life of Simeon of Beth Arsham. See John of Ephesus, "Life of Simeon the Bishop," in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Brooks, 147-52). Khusro was in fact more inclined than other Persian kings to be favorably disposed to Christianity, as his own Mobed mother, according to Christian tradition, was healed by a Christian monk.

⁵⁶ Oates thinks that this Patriarch was Catholicos Joseph. See D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq*, 115.

⁵⁷ They [The Non-Chalcedonians] received [Khusro's] blessing and they said, "[the Church of the East] persecutes us and assail us with weapons. They uproot our Churches and monasteries, and do not allow us to approach God with prayers and supplications to God for the sustenance and preservation of your life and kingdom." Therefore confidently [Khusro] commanded them, "Go and build your Churches and monasteries. No one will be allowed to harm you." At this, Ahoudemmeh's party worshipped him and prayed for him. They returned to their regions in great joy." John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 317-8 (Syriac), 241 (Latin). The expectation that Christian bishops living under Sasanian rule would pray for their Magian shahs appears in contemporary Church of the East sources as well: "Christians were expected to express their loyalty to the Sasanians by praying for the monarch, and by using the terms which he used for himself." Morony, *Iraq*, 337. I agree with Joel Walker that the historicity of these statements is dubious, as the sympathetic picture that John of Ephesus paints of Khusro I served John's apologetic interests. Walker goes as far as to believe that this debate actually happened: "Khusro's goodwill toward

Historical and hagiographical sources on Ahoudemmeh also diverged in their constructions of the “shah.” John of Ephesus identified him as Shah Khusro I and described him as a wise man, fond of learning, well-read in matters of religion, and reverent towards the belief systems of the Christians.⁵⁸ The hagiography, in contrast, condemned the unnamed shah.⁵⁹ This demonstrated the malleability of the literary symbol of “king” and the characteristic ambivalence of the Non-Chalcedonians towards imperial figures. In their own ways, however, both hagiography and historiography wove the Sasanian court into the texture of Christian life in Iraq. The hagiography introduced a fictive convert prince into the text,⁶⁰ whereas the historical sources cast Khusro I as a sympathetic “philosopher king.”

John of Ephesus’ “historical” construction of Ahoudemmeh as a debating Bishop bore striking similarities to his hagiographical portrait of Simeon of Beth Arsham. Likewise, Ahoudemmeh’s hagiographic depiction resembled not Simeon of Beth Arsham

the Jacobites was certainly of a more limited scope than John’s narrative claims. The apologetic finish of this vignette, though, should not lead us to overlook its basic value; the debate itself was a real event.” J. Walker, *Legend*, 179.

⁵⁸ “The Persian [Emperor] Khusro . . . was shrewd and wise. He was steadfast his whole life in the study of philosophy, according to what was said. He carefully gathered books of all the religions together. He read and pondered them to discover which were true and wise and which were despicable, full of babbling and vain amusements. He read and contemplated them all, and he especially perused the books of the Christians and said, ‘These ones are truer and wiser than all the other religions.’ Because of this, he was especially committed to reading their books. He read and believed their message. On account of this, he did not at all appear hateful to the Christians.” John of Ephesus, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, 316 (Syriac) and 240 (Latin).

⁵⁹ As Ahoudemmeh approaches his death, the king of the Persians becomes increasingly demonized, and Ahoudemmeh’s superhuman endurance grows. Ahoudemmeh, with calmness typical of hagiographic martyrdom accounts, remains calm and full of *Parrhesia* when the emperor questions him. This is a common trope in martyrdom accounts.

⁶⁰ There is nothing in the historical account suggesting that Khusro’s son apostasized from the Magian religion.

but rather Addai/Aggai in the *Teaching of Addai*.⁶¹ Whereas John of Ephesus from Constantinople forged a link among two Persian bishops (Simeon and Ahoudemmeh), both of whom used rhetoric to advance the Non-Chalcedonian position before their respective emperors, the Persian hagiographies attached missionaries to motifs specific to the Sasanian cultural milieu. The latter located their saints among Magians, and the holy men converted through their displays of divine power. These differences were relativized through the common narrative thrust that they shared: a reconfiguration of religious hierarchies to replace regnant authorities with an apostolic missionary.

Literary elements and mythic origin

This story drew together significant and contradictory literary elements (apostles, barbarians, emperors, and monks) to fill out a Sasanian Non-Chalcedonian way of viewing the past.⁶² *Ahoudemmeh* contained miracles accounts, travel, imprisonment, imaginary kingdoms, imaginary communities, a display of *parrhesia* before political figures, and a quasi martyrdom account. These similarities with other Syriac missionary texts illustrated how the author cloaked his saint in traditional “missionary garb.”

Ahoudemmeh contained variants on the actions of Jesus and the apostles from the canonical Gospels and the apostolic *Acts* genre.⁶³ As in the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Teaching of Addai*, the “Life of Simeon of Beth Arsham,” John of Ephesus, and the *Acts of Mari*, Ahoudemmeh converted through the royal households of Persia and Arabia.

⁶¹ We recall that the descendant of Abgar, a rogue king, breaks the legs of Aggai, the successor of Addai. See the *Teaching of Addai*, 103-104.

⁶² S. Stewart, “The Miniature,” 48.

⁶³ These include healings, prison escapes, and exorcisms. See the chapters in the dissertation on the *Acts of Thomas*, *Addai*, and *Mari*.

Ahoudemmeh was a healer,⁶⁴ as Thomas, Addai, Jacob Baradaeus, and Mari. As Thomas, Ahoudemmeh's glory shone while the saint was in prison.⁶⁵ Ahoudemmeh displayed authority over demons as had Addai and Mari.⁶⁶ As Mari, Ahoudemmeh uprooted pagans from the east Syrian landscape,⁶⁷ and his healing of the child of a pagan king brought the conversion of an entire tribe.

The story delineated Ahoudemmeh's apostolicity through modeling Ahoudemmeh's actions on biblical precedents. The hagiographer likened Ahoudemmeh's love for his community to Jesus' love of his beloved disciple.⁶⁸ The text set up a paired relationship in which the missionary became a type of Christ and his converted became the apostles.⁶⁹ Typological connections between Ahoudemmeh and John the Baptist created similarity between Ahoudemmeh and this scriptural model to bridge the distance between his foundations and the biblical past.⁷⁰

Civilizing a Barbaric Past: words, silence and saints⁷¹

⁶⁴ There are vivid narratives about his healing of lepers. See *Ahoudemmeh*, 24.

⁶⁵ His zeal to suffer on behalf of Christ was present from an early stage in the saint's career. "Ahoudemmeh, made complete by the hovering and settling of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect by the bishop who consecrated him. His enthusiasm for the Holy Gospel gave him zeal to suffer on behalf of Christ," *Ahoudemmeh*, 20.

⁶⁶ "Those demons whom the barbarian peoples worshipped perceived immediately that their authority had passed, and that [the people] ceased worshipping them, that light reigned, and darkness had dissipated," *Ahoudemmeh*, 23.

⁶⁷ These "pagans" are called *Tayaye*. *Ahoudemmeh*, 16, 23- 24.

⁶⁸ John 19:25.

⁶⁹ See the abundance of "apostle" language, for example, at *Ahoudemmeh*, 18 and 21.

⁷⁰ Both are righteous ascetics beheaded at the behest of a king. *Ahoudemmeh*, 47.

⁷¹ Corbet Stewart, in his interpretation of the poet Paul Celan's "Modes of Silence" in poetry, observed that silence and speech are felt not only as a negative situation in the poet's work, but also as a force at once "mutually hostile and mutually attractive." See Corbet Stewart, "Paul Celan's Modes of Silence: Some observations on 'Sprachgitter,'" *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan., 1972), 127-142, here 127.

The text called those whom Ahoudemmeh converted “barbarians,” introducing a new category of social classification to Syrian missionary stories.⁷² It demonized the tribes as idolatrous eaters of wild beasts, barbaric tent dwellers, and murderers living in darkness. Ahoudemmeh brought them, however, “to labor as cattle with the refreshing and gentle yoke of our Lord,”⁷³ and by the end of the story the narrative transformed “barbarian Arabs” into ascetic saints who had visited their pastor in prison.⁷⁴ The word “barbarian,” therefore, contained a multifold of significations to remember a caricature of mixed past that the text recreated into an icon of Christian transformation.

In *Ahoudemmeh*, moreover, Christianity brought speech. The hagiography recorded the words of the Arabic leaders only *after* Ahoudemmeh baptized them. Baptism not only moved the Arabic tribes into a higher position in an imagined celestial hierarchy, but rather also endowed eloquence, presenting conversion to Christianity as a replacement for barbarism.⁷⁵ This was also a motif of the *Acts of the Apostles*: Peter gained eloquence after the descent of the Pentecostal Holy Spirit.⁷⁶ “Speech” and “silence” motifs shifted the status of these Arabic converts from “barbarians” to

⁷² Some of the pagans are depicted as barbaric in the *Acts of Mari*, but they are called “evil pagans,” *noshe bishe d’hanouphouto*. See *Mari*, 19, p. 42-43. “Barbarians” appear elsewhere in Syriac literature: they are called Huns and Goths. See for example Cyrillona’s *Hymn on the invasion of the Huns* in Cyrillonas, *L’agneau véritable: Hymnes, Cantiques, et Homélie*, trans. Dominique Cerbelaud (Paris: Chevetogne, 1984) 72-87 and F. C. Burkitt, trans., *The Tale of Euphemia and the Goth* (London and Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1913), 48-77 and 129-53 (tr.) ܐܠܝܫܐ (Syriac text). Historians Walter Goffart has problematized this term for western scholarship. See, for example, W. Goffart, “Conclusion: The Long Simplification of Late Antiquity” in his *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Ages and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 229-239.

⁷³ *Ahoudemmeh*, 24.

⁷⁴ *Ahoudemmeh*, 41-42.

⁷⁵ *Ahoudemmeh*, 26. This is a theme that appears also in missionary literature of the west. See Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelization of Europe, 400-1050* (New York: Longman, 2002), *passim*.

⁷⁶ *Acts* 2.

participants in Ahoudemmeh's sanctification. Non-Chalcedonian Christianity became "civilization."

Ahoudemmeh distinguished itself as a specifically monastic narrative.⁷⁷

Ahoudemmeh transformed the 'barbarian lifestyle' through his construction of churches, monasteries, and the ordination of priests and deacons.⁷⁸ He created sacred space, religious labor, and, like Addai, forged a hierarchical order of workers to continue his foundations.⁷⁹ This included building projects, church dedications, saints' cults, and the ordination of clergy. Liturgies, hymns, and vigils replaced "uncivilized" behavior of the pre-Christian Arabs. Ahoudemmeh consecrated men and women for the monastic life, and they moved into a new Christian hierarchy to replace the disorderly barbaric tribal past.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ We recall from above that the center of resistance to "Nestorianization" had been the monastery of Mar Mattai near Mossul. It is not surprising, therefore, that the expansion of Sasanian Non-Chalcedonianism would place monastic foundations at the heart of this narrative of Christian missionary "civilization." In addition to Mar Mattai, the hagiographer mentions the monastery of Aqrunta on the Tigris, not far from Takrit, as well as the communities of Ain Qoni, Rebibi, and monks on the mountain of Shingar. These sites, however, were not yet built in the sixth century. The hagiographer anachronistically retrojects monasteries onto the Mesopotamian landscape in order to lengthen the lineage and prestige of these institutions. It was in Kokta, just south of Ctesiphon, that the Persian Christians had established their see, long before the distinction between Nestorian and Miaphysite existed. Later Christians of both varieties, however, recognized the authority of this early Christian site, and both had stories connecting their communities to it. Absent from the Miaphysite hagiography, however, is any mention of the presence of the Church of the East, which had long had a foothold in Mesopotamia. The magnification of these places is already present in the sixth-century *Acts of Mari*.

⁷⁸ *Ahoudemmeh*, 27. For Addai's ordination, see *Teaching of Addai*, 75-80.

⁷⁹ The Ahoudemmeh of history did actually participate in building projects, if Fiey's identification of the ruins at Qasr Sarij (east of Jabal Sinjar near Ahoudemmeh's purported birthplace in Balad) as Ahoudemmeh's complex is correct. If so, the hagiographical commemoration, and the emphasis that it placed on the saint's construction of holy space, makes sense. E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 124; Fiey, *Sumer* (1958): 125-127; and D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq*, 106-117.

⁸⁰ So at the synod of 585 contemporary Dyophysite counterparts likened the Christian hierarchy to what Michael Morony calls "a microcosm of the celestial order governed by a hierarchy of Archangels, Powers and Thrones," *Iraq*, 335. See *Synodicon*, 159-160, 419-420.

The interest in targeting the Bedouin Arabic tribes and inscribing them into the lineage of the Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians emerged in the text's affiliation with Rusafa, a center of the cult of Sergius and Bacchus.⁸¹ The cult of Sergius and Bacchus bridged the Christian Arabs between the Roman and Persian Empires.⁸² The hagiography mentioned that Ahoudemmeh had established a church to St. Sergius in Beth Arabaye, probably near his hometown of Balad,⁸³ the rocks of which were purported to have been taken from Rusafa's shrine itself.⁸⁴ This materialized the connection between the two shrines, as Ahoudemmeh erected a schematized version of the Rusafa center in Beth 'Arabaye.⁸⁵ In the same way that hagiographies provided miniature forms of a saint, compact and transportable, so the small rock of the greater shrine acts as a relic for the altar that it sanctifies.

The hagiographer used Ahoudemmeh as an "apostle" to organize Northern Iraq into Non-Chalcedonian monastic landscape. In previous missionary stories of this study, we observed how itinerant missionary bishops represented ideal types for Syriac religious memory. *Ahoudemmeh* redefined the itinerancy of the tribes whom Ahoudemmeh

⁸¹ St. Sergius also plays an important role in the hagiography of Mar Qardagh, appearing to the Persian military saint to persevere in his Christian loyalty: "But the blessed Qardagh traveled along his path, rejoicing and praising God. And while he was at a rest house along the road, there appeared to him in a dream holy Mar Sergius, the martyr, who said to him, 'Qardagh, my brother, you have begun well. Struggle bravely that you may become my brother for eternity.'" "The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh," tr., J. Walker in his *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, Sec. 30, p. 37.

⁸² This is the main argument of Fowden's book, *The Barbarian Plain*. Indeed, the emperor Khusro II dedicated a golden votive cross to the monastery of St. Sergius in Rusafa while in exile. See Morony, *Iraq*, 333 and P. Peeters, "Les ex-voto de Khosrau Apawez à Sergiopolis," *Analecta Bollandiana* 65 (1947), 5-56, here 18.

⁸³ See Nau, "Introduction," *Ahoudemmeh*, 12.

⁸⁴ See E. K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain*, 121-28, 78, 80, 93, 95, 118, and 159.

⁸⁵ E. K. Fowden called this building project "a deliberate attempt to interrupt the flow of local Arab pilgrims across the Euphrates to the Sergius shrine at Rusafa. Ahudemme carefully channeled their enthusiasm for local benefit. Not only its name, but the very plan of the new shrine imitated its rival at Rusafa."

converts as “barbaric.” Ahoudemmeh stopped their movement and fixed them in churches and monasteries. The rhetoric of demonization emphasized the “barbaric” nature of the tent-dwelling tribes before their conversion and connected this “barbarism” to itinerancy.⁸⁶ Ahoudemmeh’s divine helpers assured him that the intransigent barbarians would convert eventually, and the angels compare the tribes to cattle needing to be yoked and controlled.⁸⁷ Thus Ahoudemmeh’s story, like Addai’s, epitomized “orthodox” Christianity as fixed, stable, and ordered.⁸⁸

The monasteries that Ahoudemmeh established were presented as centers of thriving ascetic communities whose holiness and religious practices surpassed others. The text’s focus on specific Non-Chalcedonian Sasanian community revealed its ideology of promoting the orthodoxy of these locations:

The holy and divine monastery of Mar Mattai, of Kokta, and of Beth Mar Sergius, along with the assemblies of monks on the mountain of Shingar, with the all the rest of the holy nuns of the faithful in the land of the Persians and Romans gave grand gifts that were sold for a great price. They had not only gifts of the church and monasteries and poor and foreigners, but also they were delighting in fasting and asceticism, more than all Christians.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Ahoudemmeh*, 21.

⁸⁷ “The barbarians will obey you. They will labor as cattle with the refreshing and gentle yoke of our Lord,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 24. The Manuscript that preserves this hagiography was brought to the Monastery of the Syrians in the tenth century by Abbot Moses of Nisibis, a Mesopotamian transplanted to Egypt. Ahoudemmeh’s hagiography was a way for his Syriac-speaking Mesopotamia Miaphysites living now in Egypt to preserve a memory of their Christian origins between the Tigris and the Euphrates.

⁸⁸ In her article on the building projects of Marutha of Takrit, successor of Ahoudemmeh, Elizabeth Key Fowden discusses how Arabic monks competed with one another in the construction of monasteries [the houses of Al-Mudhir, Ghassan, Banu, and Harith (Najran)] to outdo the beauty of each other’s edifices. The construction of the Non-Chalcedonian buildings in Northern Iraq, together with importance of the monastery of Mar Mattai, correlates with the story of Ahoudemmeh and the use of narrative to defend the legitimacy of a nascent community. See E. K. Fowden “Monks, Monasteries, and Early Islam,” in Garth Fowden and Elizabeth Key Fowden, eds., *Studies on Hellenism, Christianity and the Umayyads, Melethemata* 37 (Athens, 2004), 149-174. See also Morony, *Iraq*, 373; Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, II, 327, 628-29, 765; III, 18; Trimmingham, *Christianity*, p. 169.

⁸⁹ *Ahoudemmeh*, 28.

This story thus contained significant and contradictory elements (Barbarian versus Monk; murder versus almsgiving; speech versus silence) to portray a point-of-view of an “uncivilized” past that Christianity redeemed. This tableau of Christian Beth ‘Arabaye dotted the landscape not with the tents of Arabic tribes, enslaved to idolatry, but with monasteries under the patronage of recognized saints.⁹⁰

Kings, Enemies, and Converts: Internal and External Voices

Throughout this project, we have explored the role of kingly figures in the missionary stories of the Syrians. The sixth century was a period when emperors involved themselves in the inner-Christian controversies among Christians. Both Justinian in the West and Khusro I in the East invited representatives from opposing Christian sides to debate against one another at their respective courts.⁹¹ The missionary saint vis-à-vis the king and his court, an established *topos* in Syriac literature, took on a new historicized force in *Ahoudemmeh*. Both historical and hagiographical sources memorialized Ahoudemmeh as a bishop who competed with priests of the Dyophysite Christian and the Zoroastrian religions: groups that had enjoyed the favor of the Persian shah. The legendary version of Ahoudemmeh’s life reflected the delicacies of political loyalty for Christians living under Sasanian rule.⁹²

⁹⁰ This myth of religious freedom was equivalent to Sasanian imperial toleration, from which their Dyophysite rivals had profited throughout the sixth century. “[T]oleration [from the Sasanians] . . . brought with it the requirement for royal permission to build churches and monasteries, to practice Christian burial, to promulgate monastic rules, and to elect the catholicos. Toleration was bought at the expense of interference by the state in church affairs,” M. Morony, *Iraq*, 339.

⁹¹ Walker, *Legend*, 179. I discuss Justinian’s involvement with the Christological controversies of the sixth century in the Introduction to this dissertation.

⁹² *Ahoudemmeh* supports Morony’s argument: “Christianity was spreading in Iraq in the late Sasanian period at the expense of Magians, Jews, and pagans. The relationship of Christians to the Sasanian state tends to be put on terms of persecution or toleration, but it seems more productive to describe it in terms of

As previously mentioned, the name of the shah was absent from the hagiographical account. Between the historical life of the saint and the hagiographical composition of his life, the nameless ruler could have evoked the memory of three distinct Persian shahs: Khusro I “Anushirvan” (531-579) who lived in Ahoudemmeh’s lifetime,⁹³ his successor Hormizd (579-590), or Khusro II (590-628): the only Sasanian sovereign who had venerated Christian saints.⁹⁴ Although Khusro II was amicable towards Christians in the beginning of his reign, his friendly posture shifts,⁹⁵ and by the 620s, the once tolerant Khusro II persecuted Christians of all stripes, both Church of the East and Non-Chalcedonian.⁹⁶

By the time of the sixth-century, systematic persecutions against Christians in Persia were over;⁹⁷ Persian rulers (or at least the Magian priests who served them) punished only upper-class converts to Christianity.⁹⁸ Yet the memory of martyr traditions in Persian Christianity circulated in liturgy and stories, and through the Ahoudemmeh narrative, Non-Chalcedonians inscribed their story into a longer tradition about Persian martyrdom. This story demonized the shah as the cause of Ahoudemmeh’s

political loyalty, the consequences of toleration, and the effects of factionalism among Christians,” in M. Morony, *Iraq*, 332.

⁹³ Shah Khusro I is almost an exact contemporary of Emperor Justinian.

⁹⁴ This gave Christians access to the relic of the “True Cross” from the Holy Land. It was presented to Christian minister Yazdin of Karka beth Slok. See J. Walker, *Legend*, 150, esp. fn 120 and 121 for a guide to the sources on the cult of the true cross in the East.

⁹⁵ This shift occurred primarily after the time of the emperor Maurice (602), the Persian capture of Jerusalem (614), and the counter-invasion by Emperor the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (626).

⁹⁶ See I. Guidi, *Chronica Minora I*, I, 21; II, 19, *CSCO Ser. 3*, Vol. IV. See also Morony, *Iraq*, 334.

⁹⁷ Morony, *Iraq*, 342.

⁹⁸ See Walker, *Qardagh*, 88-90. Fiey, *Jalons*, 95.

martyrdom and sponsor of the rival Magian priesthood.⁹⁹ Here again the martyrdom episode resembled the one found in *Addai*.¹⁰⁰ As in the stories of Simeon of Beth Arsham and Thomas, however, the imprisonment of the saint became an opportunity for the missionary to reveal his holiness, either through miracles performed in prison, gaining converts, or creating liturgical space within the confinement. This motif was patterned on Paul's imprisonment in the book of *Acts*.¹⁰¹

Yet the ideology of the "convert king," reminiscent of the *Teaching of Addai* or *Acts of Thomas*, was expressed in *Ahoudemmeh* through the conversion of the shah's son. Ahoudemmeh "purified [the prince's] soul from the ancient mire of paganism and anointed him with words of the holy books."¹⁰² Ahoudemmeh then sent the prince into the land of the Romans. Ahoudemmeh's baptism of this Sasanian prince ultimately caused Ahoudemmeh's execution. Ahoudemmeh's status as the missionary *par excellence* began as he converted the Arabic tribes. The story elevated him, however, in his contending and transgressing of the one law that the late sixth-century Sasanian Empire had established for its Christian minorities: they were not supposed to make converts among the Magians.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ "From its foundation in 224, the Sasanian dynasty allied itself closely with the Zoroastrian priesthood and promoted the 'good religion' of Ahura Mazda over all other faiths," Walker, *Legend*, 109. This suggests that the hagiography may be too closely knitted to the actual circumstances of the Christians in Persia: the conversion of the shah was sheer fantasy, the conversion of the shah's son less unlikely, as the court physician and the queen of Khusro II were Non-Chalcedonians. See below.

¹⁰⁰ See fn. 57 above.

¹⁰¹ See *Acts* 16: 16-38 and *Acts* 28.

¹⁰² *Ahoudemmeh*, 34-35.

¹⁰³ "[T]here was also a degree of official toleration in the late Sasanian period. According to the terms of the treaty between the Sasanians and Byzantines in 561, Christians living under Sasanian rule were to be allowed to build churches, exercise their cult freely, and bury their dead, in return for which they were not supposed to make converts among the Magians," Morony, 333. This peace treaty was to be binding on the Arab states in the borderlands as well. See Menander, *Fragmenta*, Teubner ed., 24, ll. 16-28, translated, P.

Ahoudemmeh thus ordered a chaotic time of shifting borders and loyalties, of emperor vis-à-vis Christian leaders, and rivaling Christianities among themselves. The Christian culture of *Ahoudemmeh* idealized Christian order against this turbulent landscape to give the Non-Chalcedonians a cogent defense of their apostolic legitimacy.

Inventing an Apostle: labels and lineage

By the seventh century, the Non-Chalcedonians had set up a center in Takrit,¹⁰⁴ and they maintained a relatively independent status from their mother church to the north and west.¹⁰⁵ Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians had delineated how their Christological position distinguished them from their Dyophysite opponents, both Church of the East and Chalcedonian.¹⁰⁶ *Ahoudemmeh* reflected this seventh-century distinction and retrojected it onto the mid-sixth century narrated context.¹⁰⁷

N. Ure, *Justinian and his Age*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 99. See D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq*, 113.

¹⁰⁴ On the Christian foundations in Takrit, see J-M. Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, 131 (discussion of the monastery of Beth Qoqa, where Maroutha, successor of Ahoudemmeh, founded a school), 137, 175, 178, 230, 329-333, 337-9, 352, 416-421, 429, 433, 438-9, 443, 452-3, 473, 484, 488, 559, 598, 614, 630, 662, 667, 762, and 826.

¹⁰⁵ The bishop of Takrit did not solidify his loyalty to the Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch until 629.

The bishops or archimandrites of Mar Mattai ordained each other up to 629. See Fiey, *Jalons*, 129.

¹⁰⁶ The creedal statement that opens the hagiography demonstrates this, and the hagiography provides a myth to support the ideologies and theology outlined in the introduction: "For our sake, he [Christ] was crucified according to divine dispensation. He ascended upon the cross in order to tear out the transgression of Adam from its roots, and in its place he planted the cross of victory. By the stripping of his flesh, he put to shame the principalities and authorities of this dark world. He entered the place of death to announce the message of joy to the souls there. He arose on the third day from the grave, and he raised us up with him in glory," *Ahoudemmeh*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ One of the important realities to consider is the fact that the union between the Non-Chalcedonians in Persia and their coreligionists in the Roman Empire, who called themselves the "Patriarchate of Antioch," grew together only after the mid-seventh century, in the time of the Patriarch of Denha, author of the life of Maroutha. For the "Life of Maroutha by Mar Denha," see ed. and tr. by F. Nau, *PO* 3, 52-96. For historical orientation, see Hage, *Die Syrische Kirche*, 28-29.

The author expressed his veiled interests in an autonomous jurisdiction for Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians through his arbitrary use of the word “apostle” as a title for Ahoudemmeh. He classified Ahoudemmeh as 1) saint or “qadisho;” 2) apostle or “shliho;” 3) and holy martyr or “sahdo qadisho.”¹⁰⁸ He arbitrarily attached the word “apostle” to Ahoudemmeh’s name to seal a coherent portrait of apostolic monastic stability to their nomadic and semi-nomadic past.¹⁰⁹

The hagiographer constructed commonality between Ahoudemmeh and the apostles Paul and Peter, as the former appealed to their asceticism and martyrdom: “I wish to occupy myself now with St. Ahoudemmeh, who, like Peter and Paul received the heavenly, exulted and praiseworthy crown of the call from above through asceticism.”¹¹⁰ The text emphasized the prayers that Ahoudemmeh made to the apostles for support.¹¹¹ The memory of Ahoudemmeh as an apostle was thus forged through his own self-identification with them.¹¹²

Seals, Soldiers, and Sanctification

¹⁰⁸ “The Narrative of Holy Mar Ahoudemmeh, Apostle and Saintly Martyr,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Memory-making and myth as concepts that craft a coherent portrait of the past is discussed in Elizabeth Castelli, *Memory and Martyrdom: Early Christian Culture-Making* (New York: Columbia, 2004), 30.

¹¹⁰ *Ahoudemmeh*, 18. The hagiographer elsewhere appeals to the apostles: “Let our service be in heaven according to the word of the apostle, ‘Let us seek the things above and not below on earth’” and “Thus the message of the holy apostle Paul was heard, ‘the Good News shines forth in every region,’” *Ahoudemmeh*, 17 and 20.

¹¹¹ “And he asked the company of the apostles that they petition God with him on behalf of the proclamation. He was mindful of Psalm 67 . . . ‘May God show mercy on us,’ . . . The holy apostles hymned this psalm beautifully and gracefully, so that through this they might cry out to God that he be with them and help them in their preaching of the Gospel,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 22.

¹¹² For instance, the text’s advances the “apostolicity” of Ahoudemmeh through inserting Psalm 67 into his mouth and reinterpreting this as a hymn of the apostles that the saint sings as he walks in their footsteps. The text presents the chant of Psalm 68 -- “God will arise and his enemies will be scattered” -- as a source of empowerment for Ahoudemmeh as he attempts to convert ‘idol-worshippers,’ see *Ahoudemmeh*, 21 and 23. This is a Paschal verse also used in the *Life of Antony* and still in the Orthodox Easter liturgy.

The Syriac narrative idiom showed a preference for typology as a mode of expressing relationships between the human and divine. In *Ahoudemmeh*, the author built on a multivalent understanding of baptism as “sealing” or *rushma* to elevate Ahoudemmeh’s authority over that of the shah’s. The text used this term in two distinct ways. First, *rushma* described the baptismal anointing that Ahoudemmeh bestowed on the converted.¹¹³ *Rushma* also signified the two brandings that the shah impressed upon Ahoudemmeh’s body: the first when the shah imprisoned Ahoudemmeh,¹¹⁴ the second when the guards branded the decapitated the saint’s head.¹¹⁵ Both played with the Syrian understanding of *rushma* as symbolizing ownership.¹¹⁶

We have seen throughout this dissertation that hagiographical composition made the memory of a particular missionary “sacred” through claiming exclusive communal possession of the saint’s memory in story.¹¹⁷ Such rhetoric came into high relief in *Ahoudemmeh* through the narrative’s word play and inversion of notions of sealing, possession, or enrolment as a soldier of Christ. In its first use of *rushma* to signify baptismal “anointing,” liturgical practice sealed Bedouin tribes and Sasanian princes

¹¹³ *Ahoudemmeh*, 34.

¹¹⁴ “They [the prison guards] carried an iron hook, threw it around his neck, and imprinted [on it] the seal of the shah,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 41-42.

¹¹⁵ “They cut off his head and set the seal of the shah upon it,” *Ahoudemmeh*, 47.

¹¹⁶ Brock notes the association of *rushma* with ownership: “Very frequently the mark of ownership is viewed as a brand mark identifying the baptized as sheep in Christ’s flock.” Brock notes that this pastoral imagery, *rushma* of Christ’s flock, is also present in the *Acts of Thomas* (Sections 25 and 131). It is also connected to circumcision: This idea is recurrent in texts of all periods; its equivalent under the Old Covenant was circumcision, a fact of which all early writers are very much aware: the East Syrian *ordo* indeed speaks of the baptized being ‘circumcized by it (*sc.* the oil) with a circumcision without hands, stripping off the flesh of sins with Christ’s circumcision.” See S. P. Brock, “Post-Baptismal Anointing,” 217.

¹¹⁷ I am influenced here by J. Z. Smith’s article, “The Topography of the Sacred,” in *Relating Religion*, 104-107.

together into one community. In its second use as “branding,” the symbol contained the complexities of conflicting loyalties that faced the Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians, while simultaneously shrinking them into a bodily tattoo that marked the savageness of the ruler.¹¹⁸

If the missionary motif symbolized expansion and cultural transformation from barbarism to civilization, the narrative froze this new order with military imagery: a counterpart to itinerancy that made boundaries and fixed social strata. *Ahoudemmeh* gave prominence to images of ownership and enrollment of Arabs in the celestial hierarchy, and it introduced military imagery into Syriac missionary literature. The hagiographer likened the hierarchy of saints to a celestial army,¹¹⁹ and this defined conversion as a means of populating armies for Christianity.¹²⁰ Although military rhetoric was especially common in Persian sacred stories, in *Ahoudemmeh* it spoke to the unique conflicts facing the Non-Chalcedonian population in Persia:¹²¹ people exchanged and displaced between the Sasanians and the Romans who served as buffer states between the empires.¹²²

Persian Non-Chalcedonianism – rivalries, kinships, and voice from Takrit

¹¹⁸ For the tattooing of Montanists and slaves, see S. Elm, “Pierced by Bronze Needles”: Anti-Montanist Charges of Ritual Stigmatization in their Fourth-Century Context,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (Special Issue) 4: 4 (1996): 409-439.

¹¹⁹ *Ahoudemmeh*, 17.

¹²⁰ *Ahoudemmeh*, 26.

¹²¹ This area, and the Arabic tribes within it, was often fraught with invasions and war in the mid sixth century. The Greek historian Procopius writes of Ghassanid Arabs, fighting for Rome against Persian under the phylarch Arethas, who inflicted great damage on the villages of Beth Arabaye, the area of Ahoudemmeh’s conversion work. This was one campaign of the Roman-Persian war of 540-545. In this conflict, the Ghassanid Arabs fought on the side of the Romans and the Lakhmids on the side of the Sasanians. See Procopius, *History*, II, xix, 15-18 (Wirth 233-234), translation by Dewing (423). See also J. Walker, *Legend*, p. 144-145.

¹²² “The church in the Sasanian empire became an agent of the state to secure the loyalty of its Christian subjects. Its extent came to be defined by the borders of the Sasanian empire,” Morony, *Iraq*, 334.

The kinship of the Church of the East to the Sasanian Non-Chalcedonians,¹²³ both Christian minorities under Sasanian rule, intensified their rivalry.¹²⁴ The similarity between these Persian Christianities necessitated a myth to differentiate the two Christianities and classify the Non-Chalcedonians as “Orthodox,” particularly before the eyes of their non-Christian rulers.

As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, the Church of the East had identified itself as the Christianity of the Persian Empire.¹²⁵ Although these so-called “Nestorians” experienced a monastic revival under a contemporary of the historical Ahoudemmeh, Abraham of Kaskar (fl. 588),¹²⁶ they perceived themselves to be under threat of the Non-Chalcedonians.¹²⁷ The two Christianities competed for converts and the blessing of the shah.¹²⁸

Ahoudemmeh focused on the theme of the conversion of prominent Sasanians from the Church of the East and Magian religions to Non-Chalcedonianism,¹²⁹ and this leitmotif resounded with recent advances of the Non-Chalcedonians before the Sasanian

¹²³ The seventh century Miaphysite *Chronicle of Zuqnin* mentions Ahoudemmeh as a bishop renowned ܐܘܕܡܗ among the Persians as Catholicos *Bibl. Or.*, III, p. 193.

¹²⁴ The competitors of the Non-Chalcedonians, the Church of the East, enjoyed the responsibility of keeping the Christians loyal to the Sasanian sovereign. See Morony, *Iraq*, 338.

¹²⁵ See Morony, *Iraq*, 4.

¹²⁶ Under his leadership, the school of Nisibis trained many future priests, bishops, and monks in the sixth century.

¹²⁷ See A. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 3.

¹²⁸ At the end of the sixth century, the actual involvement of Khusro II (590-628) in the inner conflicts of the Christians demands closer attention to how we think of *Ahoudemmeh*’s story, not simply as a pious fiction, but rather as encapsulating the desires of religious groups to compete with one another at the level of stories. See above.

¹²⁹ Ahoudemmeh himself moved from the religion of his family to Non-Chalcedonianism. *Ahoudemmeh*, 19-20.

government. The shah Khusro II (591-628) hired a Non-Chalcedonian as his court physician Gabriel of Singar, (fl. 612), a prominent convert from the Church of the East to the Non-Chalcedonians.¹³⁰ He organized a debate before Khusro II against the “Nestorian” George of Izla.¹³¹ Khusro II venerated the Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, the same pair to whom *Ahoudemmeh* consecrated a shrine.¹³² These links of Ahoudemmeh’s Christianity to the Sasanian court contrast with the hagiography’s pronounced silence concerning the Byzantine court or Chalcedonian church. Unlike the missionaries of John of Ephesus’ *Lives*, Ahoudemmeh’s hagiographers oriented their saints, bishops and monasteries to the Persian shah, not Constantinople.

Ahoudemmeh in its Broader Context

Ahoudemmeh constituted an important source in the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church, as it foregrounded the inner dilemma of the Non-Chalcedonians in Persia and their autonomy vis-à-vis their co-religionists in the Roman Empire. The real centers of leadership for the Syriac-speaking Non-Chalcedonians were in Edessa, Amida, and the monastic communities throughout this region, and this hagiography demonstrated how the Non-Chalcedonians used hagiography as an expression of their autonomy of jurisdiction. The hagiographer composed a different version of the conversion of Persia

¹³⁰ Gabriel of Singar and Ahoudemmeh were, in several senses, comparable figures, as both were Persian Non-Chalcedonians who rose to positions of prominence in their religious communities, a status shift that attracted the attention of their Dyophysite counterparts. Both had purportedly been a part of the Church of East and converted to Non-Chalcedonianism. Both had conflicts with the Church of the East in which the Persian Shah became involved.

¹³¹ For these debates, see Babai the Great, *Acts of Mar George the Priest*, 49, in Bedjan, *AMS* 2, 513-514 and the *Khuzistan Chronicle* in Guidi, *Chronica Minora*, CSCO Ser. 3, Vol. 4, 22-23 (Syriac). The Khuzisatan Chronicle presents the events from the point of view of the Church of the East.

¹³² See Peeters, “Les ex-voto de Khosrau Apawez à Sergiopolis,” 5.

than what we saw in the *Acts of Mari*, focusing not on Seleucia-Ctesiphon, but Takrit:¹³³ the seat of the *mafrian* or Patriarch for the Non-Chalcedonians outside of the Roman empire.¹³⁴

Ahoudemmeh's work was circumscribed to the area that became the center of the Non-Chalcedonian Sasanian Christianity. Takrit gained prominence at the end of *Ahoudemmeh*, as the text presented an extensive narrative about the body of Ahoudemmeh and its connection to a monastery called Aqrunta where the saint's bones came to rest. The bones moved from this monastery to Takrit by stealth. Takrit and its adjacent monastery gained relics of the saint to share. The narrative bound monastic and civic communities together.

Ahoudemmeh epitomized the "first mafrian," just as his story projected an idealized relationship between the Non-Chalcedonians in Persia and those within the Roman Empire. The two groups shared a clearly defined orthodox lineage, but the Sasanians asserted through their apostle a separate prestige and claimed a distinct martyrological and missiological heritage.¹³⁵

Conclusion

¹³³ While we cannot know whether stories about Mari circulated in Takrit, or vice-versa, the two traditions presented opposing, perhaps competing, stories about the conversion of Persia.

¹³⁴ The term *mafrian* does not appear until eighth century. The mafrian can be likened to Patriarch, only for the Non-Chalcedonians living outside the Roman Empire. He ostensibly enjoyed a wide jurisdiction and freedom in his leadership. See W. Hage, *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche*, 25-27. The Patriarch of the Non-Chalcedonians claimed Antioch as his see, although in fact no patriarch had lived there since the time of Severus of Antioch (exiled from his see in 518).

¹³⁵ There is no full length monograph on the history of the Mafrian in English, despite the fact that this office became so important to the Monophysite Church. Indeed, one of the most important polymaths of the medieval Church, Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) held this office.

As other missionaries that I have discussed in this dissertation, *Ahoudemmeh* became a microcosm that portrayed an idealized view of the past for an entire community. Rhetorical strategies of demonization against Dyophysite Christianities, both Chalcedonian and Church of the East, made *Ahoudemmeh* the most internally polemical missionary story of this dissertation. This text demonstrated the distance between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians in the seventh century and the gradual movement of the Non-Chalcedonians towards becoming a separate Miaphysite church, distinct from the Byzantine Chalcedonian church.

In *Ahoudemmeh*, the hagiographer forged a hybrid character, thoroughly Sasanian, yet authentically *Non-Chalcedonian* and *Anti-Church of the East*. *Ahoudemmeh*'s story gave his monks and their descendants a common sacred past, purified them of their barbarian cults, and constructed a system to draw them into a clearer relationship with their political and religious friends and competitors. *Ahoudemmeh* interpreted the circumstances of the Non-Chalcedonian community in Persia in the early seventh century through crafting an apostolic past for Sasanian Christians who were dissident to the dominant Nestorianization of Northern Mesopotamia. They constructed an apostle who connected them to their Byzantine roots in the canonized hagiographic garb of a Syriac missionary, yet who identified them with the Sasanian political and cultural milieu. This tableau froze a view of the past to be carried into a new epoch of separation from the Chalcedonians, with strength in numbers against the Church of the East and independence from the Non-Chalcedonian see of Antioch.

Conclusion

The missionary story had a privileged place in Syriac religious and literary memory. This dissertation concentrated on seven missionary narratives of late-ancient Syriac literature: the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Teaching of Addai*, the *Acts of Mari*, the “Life” of Simeon of Beth Arsham, two *Lives* of Jacob Baradaeus, and the *Narrative of Ahoudemmeh: Apostle to the Arabs*. These texts came from areas and authors of divergent political affiliations, cultural habits, and forms of Syriac-speaking Christianity. Nevertheless, they used similar images and literary conventions to write about their Christian beginnings. Thus we can speak of a Syriac missionary rhetoric.

These missionary legends forged memories of the past and legitimated the apostolicity and orthodoxy of particular regions, cities, and religious communities. Both Dyophysite and Non-Chalcedonian authors set their ideologies in narrative form through the mythologization of their saints, demonization of their religious competitors, and mythic association to political rulers. Each tale advanced or promoted the lineage of a community, and authors imitated the motifs of missionary stories handed down to them from oral and written traditions. Syriac missionary stories exemplified the intertextuality of late-ancient Christian literature.¹

Summary

In Chapter One, I argued that the third-century *Acts of Thomas* provided a model of the Syriac missionary story. The multiple levels of this text, translated back and forth

¹ In an important study on the notion of intertextuality, Harold Bloom questioned the possibility of writing without some conscious or unconscious sense of imitation: “You cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done, that person’s writing, or teaching, or thinking or reading. Your relation to what informs that person *is* tradition, for tradition is influence that extends past one generation, a carrying-over of influence.” H. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 32.

from Syriac to Greek, suggested the popularity of this story in both pre- and post-Constantinian Christianities. This legend attributed to Thomas the conversion of the kingdoms of India. It idealized the trade routes from the eastern Mediterranean to Northern India as thoroughfares for wandering apostles. Healing and liturgy resolved the civic disorder that the coming of Christianity brought to the Orient. The *Acts of Thomas* constituted a paradigm for missionary legends and hagiographies. It sacralized Thomas for the city of Edessa.

In Chapter Two, I showed how the *Teaching of Addai*, an apostolic narrative of the journeys, miracles, and preaching of Addai, mythologized the coming of Christianity to Edessa. I argued that the entire story presented an image of a Christian imperial city, an earthly “Jerusalem” in the Syrian east. King Abgar, whom Addai healed and baptized, represented an ideal type of a Christian king or emperor. The myth “blessed” the city from king to commoner, as it narrated how the apostle regulated civic life through ritual practice and the formation of ascetic communities. This legend forgot the pluralism of Edessa’s religious past as it recounted the conversion of the city *en masse*. The imagined religious homogeneity of Edessa’s Christian origins provided a defense of orthodoxy for Nicene and Cyrillian Christians of fifth-century Edessa.

In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that the sixth-century legend, the *Acts of Mari*, claimed apostolic roots for Dyophysite Sasanian Christians. It sanctified Seleucia-Ctesiphon for the Church of the East through the invention of an East Syrian missionary saint, Mari, whom Edessa’s patron Addai had ordained. While the *Acts of Mari* joined the Church of the East with the prestige attached to the community in Edessa, the story was also propaganda for the Sasanian Church. Through elevating Mari above his rivals

and his teacher Addai, the text affirmed the “Nestorianization” of the Church of Persia. It claimed the antiquity of the monastic communities of Mesopotamia and the primacy of the Catholicate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The story “cleansed” Babylonia of religious rivals. The *Acts of Mari* highlighted issues of political loyalty and religious identification for Christians in Persia.

With the sixth-century missionary hagiographies of John of Ephesus from his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, the dissertation shifted to an analysis of embellished accounts of historical figures, and I unveiled the complex social realities embedded in the simplicity of these schematized and idealized portraits. John of Ephesus wrote two such missionary tales, one on Jacob Baradaeus and another on Simeon of Beth Arsham. He modeled them according to images of sanctity inherited from his literary past and harmonized them with the politically dissident religious affiliation of the Non-Chalcedonians. These stories came out of a time in which the Non-Chalcedonians changed their posture toward the Byzantine (Chalcedonian) Empire and the Persian Empire (whose Christians were members of the Church of East). The Roman Empire’s espousal of the Chalcedonian Christological formula meant that Non-Chalcedonian bishops, many exiled from their sees, established new communities in the borderlands between the Persian and Roman Empires.

The narration of the Non-Chalcedonian missionary efforts provided a chance for John to present his group as Byzantine emissaries rather than imperial dissidents. John of Ephesus himself boasted that he participated as a missionary in Justinian’s campaigns to eradicate remnants of paganism in the Byzantine Empire. The support of the empress Theodora for the Non-Chalcedonian cause, in contrast to Justinian’s support of the

Chalcedonians, epitomized the delicacy of political loyalties and Christian affiliations facing bishops like John of Ephesus, who dissociated from Chalcedonianism, but not Constantinople.

John of Ephesus' portrait of the missionary bishop Simeon of Beth Arsham, I argued in Chapter Four, presented an icon of the shifting boundaries and loyalties of the Non-Chalcedonians. A native-born Persian, Simeon of Beth Arsham converted tribes of the Arabian Peninsula (Dyophysite Christians) and high-born Magians who became martyrs for the Non-Chalcedonian cause. Using motifs of missionary saints inherited from the literary past, John described Simeon's speed, adaptability, and rhetorical charisma. Through writing Simeon's hagiography, John bridged the Non-Chalcedonians in the Roman Empire with those in the Persian Empire, mythologizing the borderlands as a haven for Non-Chalcedonian Christianity.

I discussed two hagiographies of Jacob Baradaeus, one from the sixth century by John of Ephesus and a longer more embellished *Life* from the eighth century attributed to John. With the shorter life, I showed how John of Ephesus remembered Jacob Baradaeus as an itinerant bishop on the run, whose ordinations sustained a dwindling clergy of Non-Chalcedonians. John portrayed Jacob in the image of Thomas, Addai, and the apostle James. I argued that the eighth-century *Life* crystallized a view of the past that the Non-Chalcedonians had toward their sixth-century heroes, including both John of Ephesus and Jacob Baradaeus. I demonstrated how the later *Life* redefined the pejorative term "Jacobite."

The *Lives* of Jacob Baradaeus epitomized the cogency of the missionary figure for the Syrian Orthodox Church. The eighth-century *Life* of Jacob evidenced a definitive

social and religious differentiation between the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians. By the time that the seventh- or eighth-century text of Jacob's *Life* was written, Jacob had become a hero of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The saint whose name they bore was a missionary saint, an itinerant bishop and monk. His later *Life* illustrated the authoritative role attributed to Jacob Baradaeus and celebrated the ideals of asceticism and itinerant service that he embodied.

In Chapter Six, I analyzed a late sixth-, early seventh-century hagiography of Ahoudemmeh, "Apostle to the Arabs." Ahoudemmeh was a Non-Chalcedonian missionary in a region of Persia in which the Church of the East had flourished. The agenda of this hagiography, I argued, was to redefine Sasanian Christianity as "Non-Chalcedonian." It attributed to Ahoudemmeh the conversion of the Bedouin Arabic-speaking tribes. I showed how the creation and elevation of a saint's memory advanced the pedigree and legitimacy of the Non-Chalcedonians in the Sasanian Empire. This text contended the claims of the Church of the East to primacy in the Sasanian Empire. *Ahoudemmeh* promoted the independence of the Non-Chalcedonian community in the Sasanian Empire and the see of Takrit.

Literary Patterns and Intertextuality

Missionary stories were used in the Syriac tradition to craft an apostolic past. Both legends and hagiographies froze a picture of the "missionary life" of their founders. The missionary saint was an emblem of the intersection of human and divine power. Entertaining episodes of heroic missionary feats and conflicts of cultural and religious affiliations were stitched into the texture of these narratives. A missionary tied a group to

its past, and recounting the saint's story helped communities to legitimate circumstances of the present.

Despite the disparate contexts from which these legends emerged, the similarities in the stories revealed that they were variants of one another. Invented relationships of ordination joined apostles to one another just as mimesis and Syriac missionary rhetoric linked the authors of these stories. Thomas ordained Addai, Addai ordained Mari, Jacob Baradaeus ordained John "Bishop of Ephesus," John recounted Jacob's ordinations, and the anonymous hagiographer of Jacob's later life wrote in John's name.

Enumerating the common framing dynamics, similarities, and connections among these tales showed that Syrian Christians invented an apostolic past through crafting stories modeled on earlier paradigms. All of these missionaries healed; all of them spoke with *parrhesia*. Their converts came from pagans, Magians, and other branches of Christianity. Jewish converts were absent, except for a "Hebrew" flute girl in the *Acts of Thomas*. Sealing imagery recurred in the *Acts of Thomas*, *Simeon of Beth Arsham*, and *Ahoudemmeh* as a motif from liturgical practice that embodied the Christian community's "ownership" of the newly-baptized. The missionaries established networks among social, urban, and monastic or proto-monastic centers. The conversion of the imperial or royal household preoccupied these narratives. Religious rivals and political rulers challenged the authority of the holy men or caused their imprisonment or martyrdom. The saints' suffering raised their status, validated their mission, and attracted followers. The narratives legitimated the missionaries and placed them at the apex of a new hierarchy.²

² This exemplifies the work of the myth to place the saint closer to the divine than his rivals or the political ruler of the land. See J. Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, Eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Religion in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 3-27, repr. in *Relating*

From Thomas to Ahoudemmeh, the stories featured the mythic creation of sacred landscape, as the missionary transformed his region or city through the establishment of new edifices and institutions. Many of these texts promoted ascetic communities.³ Syriac foundation myths endorsed monastic forms of Christianity.

The *Acts of the Apostles* and the example of Paul, as well as the memory of the travels of Thomas, created an intertextual space in which a rhetoric of Syriac missionary legends emerged.⁴ In claiming the intertextuality of missionary stories, I have not argued that any one particular text was the basis of another story. My project did not focus on “source and influence” but rather religious memory. The circumstances and ideologies of each story were distinct. Yet the protagonists look like icons of one another, as authors used conventions from the tradition that they had received to depict saints, imitating styles, motifs and mythic forms from the biblical and hagiographic past.

Jonathan Culler used the term “intertextuality” to describe the energy released when authors “rub texts together,”⁵ and his image fits late-ancient hagiography. I could not prove whether John of Ephesus had the text of another hagiographer in his hand as he wrote his *Lives* of Jacob and Simeon. Yet John crafted his stories through “rubbing” his

Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion. J. Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 269-284.

³ The monasteries were the training ground for Non-Chalcedonian bishops. This is the classic insight and argument of Bacht. See H. Bacht, “Die Rolle des orientalischen Mönchtums in den kirchenpolitischen Auseinandersetzungen um Chalkedon (431-519), in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon, Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. II (Würzburg: Echter, 1953), pp. 193-314.

⁴ Intertextuality must be distinguished from source and influence. Jonathan Culler’s seminal article on intertextuality pointed out the danger in the use of notions of intertextuality: “it is a difficult concept to use because of the vast and undefined discursive space it designates. But when one narrows it so as to make it more usable, one either falls into source study of a traditional and positivistic kind . . . or else ends by naming particular texts as the pre-texts on grounds of interpretative convenience.” J. Culler, “Presupposition and Intertextuality,” *MLN*, Vol. 91, No. 6, *Comparative Literature*, (Dec., 1976), pp. 1380-1396, here 1383.

⁵ J. Culler, “Presupposition and Intertextuality,” 1387.

texts against earlier paradigms, making Jacob Baradaeus itinerant like Thomas and Simeon of Beth Arsham eloquent before kings as Addai.

The telling, writing and reading of the stories solidified, reinforced, and confirmed the distinctions among Syriac-speaking Christians just as the similarities of these legends suggested that their authors were in dialogue with one another. These myths used missionary discourse to construct differences among religious communities through expressions of Christological affiliations, conflicts with religious competitors, and postures of the missionaries toward their rulers.⁶

Typically Syriac

The stories included in this dissertation set into narrative form an idealization of the Syriac concept of apostolicity: ܫܠܝܗܐ or *shleehoyoutha*.⁷ The word for apostle in Syriac is the same as the word for missionary, messenger or emissary: ܫܠܝܗ. / *shliho*.⁸ In that sense, to the Syrian ear, all missionaries are “apostles.” Syriac missionary literature evoked the multivalence of the word *shliho*.

Missionary saints existed in every ancient Christian tradition. Yet, Thomas, Addai, Mari, Simeon of Beth Arsham, Jacob Baradaeus, and Ahoudemmeh typified Syriac Christianity in their idealization of poverty, healing, homelessness and asceticism. Their missionary stories reflected how Syriac-speaking Christianity spread through the

⁶ The same pattern can be seen in the historical chronicles of the Syrian Orthodox from the early eighth century on. M. Marony notes how history became a “vehicle to emphasize sectarian boundaries and to accommodate to Muslim rule.” See Michael G. Morony, “History and Identity in the Syrian Churches,” in J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre – Van den Berg, T. M. Van Lint, eds., *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 3-33, here 32.

⁷ J. Payne-Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, Founded Upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1903), 580.

⁸ See J. Payne-Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 580.

trade routes of the East. Authors sanctified motifs relevant to their merchant culture by attributing holiness to itinerancy.

The wanderings of Syrian missionaries orbited around kings. The saint embodied detachment from the world, modeled on Jesus and his apostles. Yet the missionary accommodated his ascetic ideals for the sake of converting the royal household and gaining an entrance to the rest of society. Even if the saint did not win the patronage of the king, he won the ruler's attention and earned martyrdom through his condemnation. The narratives appealed to the mythic tension between the poles of Christian discipleship and imperial power.

Weaving a seamless past

The councils and theological articulations of Nicaea, Chalcedon and Ephesus brought divergences among late-ancient Christians into high relief.⁹ The missionary of this dissertation presented a uniform view of the past that cleaned up the messiness of the religious origins of the Syrians and packaged a lineage unbroken and undivided since the time of the apostles. Each community forged a single myth out of many competing accounts. It is arbitrary that some legends remained while others did not.

Through conceptualizing stories as artifacts of the cultures that produced them, my analysis bridged hagiography and historiography. While we should take caution not to attribute too much meaning to these texts, I have shown that the mode of expression of the missionary story established legitimacy of origins and orthodoxy for Syriac-speaking Christians. Scholarly interpretations of the process through which the Church of the East

⁹ See the Introduction to this dissertation.

and the Syrian Orthodox distinguished themselves from the Chalcedonian Byzantine Church must take these texts into account.

John of Ephesus mythologized Jacob Baradaeus and Simeon of Beth Arsham in memorable, schematized, and idealized packages. When we juxtapose his stories with the synodical records from the sixth century, the differences in literary conventions guide us to read John's stories differently than the *Acts* of a sixth-century council. Such dissimilarity of genre was not lost on ancient readers. Both historical and hagiographical accounts of the same events and actors focused on different details to add verisimilitude to their portrayal of the past. Each genre recollected and disregarded certain aspects of the same episodes and thus produced accounts divergent in form and content. This dissertation illustrated how both hagiography and history were necessary for a more accurate portrayal of the sixth-century's religious landscape of both the Roman and Sasanian Empires.

Hagiographers of missionary literature revealed a preoccupation with distinguishing themselves from their rivals. This concern for delineations and boundaries prevailed also in historical sources. Both genres established or relativized differences among Non-Chalcedonians and Chalcedonians, Church of the East and Non-Chalcedonian, depending upon the agenda of the author. The record of Justinian's meeting with the Non-Chalcedonians and the Chalcedonians in 532 displayed definitions and statements of unity or anathema, painstakingly crafted, as Non-Chalcedonian bishops separated themselves from Chalcedonian "synodists."¹⁰ Similarly in the hagiography of the Non-Chalcedonians, John of Ephesus focused on a few details of a saint's life that

¹⁰ See the Introduction to this Dissertation, esp. pp. 18-19.

joined the holy man's memory to the context of the legend's circulation. Meticulous articulations of theology as found in historical sources contrasted with bold, memorable, hagiographic accounts of a saint's life.

Crafting distinct Heritages

Cities affiliated themselves with the Chalcedonian or Non-Chalcedonian position through their communion with particular bishops. Orthodoxy and heresy were conceptualized as something to be "caught" the way the modern mind thinks of catching germs. Bishops "infected" their cities with heresy through their relationships to other bishops.¹¹ The Non-Chalcedonians claimed purity of lineage through their missionary stories. Chalcedonian, Church of the East, and Non-Chalcedonian authors circulated competing stories of local saints to defend their orthodoxy.

Later Trajectories

By the time that Non-Chalcedonian chroniclers Michael the Syrian (1126-1199)¹² and Bar Hebraeus (1226-1286) fashioned their accounts of religious history, subsequent generations had canonized the memories of John of Ephesus, Severus of Antioch, Jacob Baradaeus, and other Non-Chalcedonian leaders. The elevated status of such men in the later Syrian Orthodox tradition affected how authors portrayed them. The *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian, for example, drew extensively on John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical*

¹¹ Volker Menze discussed the heresiology of the *Libellus* of Pope Hormisdas: "Hormisdas anathematizes also the eastern post-Chalcedonian past by condemning a number of eastern post-Chalcedonian patriarchs: the former non-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch (469/70; 470/1; 475/6; 485/8) as well as Acacius, former Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople (472-489) and those who remained in communion with them." Menze notes furthermore how "the *libellus* neatly shows how a heresiology was established step by step. From Eutyches and Dioscorus the 'disease' – in fact called a 'plague' by Hormisdas – infected the whole East . . . Antioch was infected through Peter the Fuller, Alexandria through Timothy Aelurus and his successor Peter Mongus, Constantinople because it was in communion with Peter Mongus." V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69-70.

¹² J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (Groningen: Rijksuniversitet, 1995), 81.

History for its discussion of the sixth century. As Michael composed and compiled his *Chronicle*, however, he inscribed his own later post-Islamic views into the text. Michael represented his forefathers as vigorously, unequivocally Non-Chalcedonian. But he knew that sixth-century Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians never resolved their conflicts, and this shaped his presentation.¹³

In the *Refutation of Said Ibn Batriq*,¹⁴ a Non-Chalcedonian defense of Dioscorus by the Coptic Patriarch Severus Ibn Al-Muqaffa (c. 987),¹⁵ Al-Muqaffa wrote a competing narrative of “Jacobite origins” that circulated in the early centuries of Islam and revealed how the later Non-Chalcedonian traditions venerated Jacob. Al-Muqaffa constructed the arrival of Islam to be “liberation” from Byzantine/Chalcedonian rule.¹⁶ He characterized his Non-Chalcedonian forefathers as selfless leaders. They, unlike the Chalcedonians, were uninterested in political prestige. Byzantine Chalcedonians in the Islamic Middle East were later known as the “Melchites.” Al-Muqaffa advanced his group’s legitimacy through an etymological exposition on the titles “Melchite” and “Jacobite.” He argued that the Non-Chalcedonian “Jacobites” had not traded their

¹³ “[L]ater authors knew that the reunification of had failed and selected excerpts from John’s work with the result in mind. The historical tradition was used by later chroniclers and historiographers to strengthen the resolve and identity of what had become the “Western Syrian” community and to encourage them.” Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus*, 198.

¹⁴ Severus Ibn Al-Muqaffa, *Réfutation de Sa'id Ibn Batriq (Eutychius): The book of the Councils*, P. Chébli, Ed. and Tr., PO 3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1905), 125-225.

¹⁵ Dioscorus was an Alexandrian bishop, adherent to Cyril champion of the “Robber” Council of 449. He was condemned at Chalcedon.

¹⁶ Ibn Al-Muqaffa framed Islam as a liberation: “Also the faithful remained in every place humbled, persecuted, and submitted to much worse treatment in the fifty years, that is to say until the time of the Muslim conquest, under the reign of Heraclius, the sixteenth day of Baouneh. *God delivered them then by freeing them from the Greeks, and by placing them under the domination of Islam* At the same time, the Copts, Syrians and Armenians persevered in orthodoxy. As far as the Greeks, and in terms of their language, they adhere to the Chalcedonian creed.” *Réfutation de Said Ibn Batriq*. Emphasis and English translation mine from the French translation of Chébli, p. 204.

orthodoxy to win favor with the king as had the “Melchites,”¹⁷ whose name derived from a word meaning “imperial.”¹⁸ The designations “Jacobite” and “Melchite” thus highlighted again the role of the emperor in the identification and self-presentation of rivaling Christianities. Whereas in the sixth century the king was an ambivalent figure in Syriac missionary literature, sometimes heroic or sometimes rogue, Al-Muqaffa evoked the image of the king to accuse the Chalcedonian Melchites of their corruption and infidelity to orthodoxy. His group, he proudly asserted, descended from Jacob Baradaeus, whom Al-Muqaffa identified as an icon of ascetic loyalty whose simple life replicated that of the apostles.

Closing thoughts

While scholars have analyzed the apostolic *Acts* and hagiographical texts separately, the contribution of this dissertation was to establish how Syriac missionary texts work together as a system that authors used to construct and present their history as a harmonious past. Missionary stories provide a lens for understanding how Non-Chalcedonian and Church of the East Christians presented themselves as distinct bodies. By tracing how Syriac missionary literature created apostolic memories and served to legitimize their orthodoxy, my project substantiated the claim that sacred fictions and their literary symbols mapped out shifts in the value systems of the communities that produced them. As Christians of the Byzantine Empire were distanced from their

¹⁷ “Those who merited injury and the blame, of the Jacobites who suffered constantly persecutions, who shed their blood for the defense of their faith, who saw their houses ruined and their bodies tormented for the preservation of this same faith; or of those for vain glory of the world and for the good pleasure of an earthly king, disobeyed the heavenly king, are therefore called Melkites in order to show their dependence on the emperor? God knows, who renders to each according to their deeds,” *Réfutation de Said Ibn Batriq*, p. 204.

counterparts and rivals living under Muslim rule, Syrian Orthodox authors of the middle- and late-Byzantine period shifted their posture and relationships to the heroes of the sixth century.

Apostolic Memories: Religious Differentiation and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Syriac Missionary Literature thus has shown that hagiography and apostolic legend were rich sources for understanding the diversification of late-ancient Syriac Christianity. The idealized presentations of missionary legends from the third through the fifth centuries gave Syriac authors from the sixth through eighth centuries a “transtextual” memory of how their ancestors answered Jesus’ injunction to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁹ Matt. 28: 19.

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