

The original Syriac composition known as the *Cave of Treasures* (hereafter referred to as CT) is a representative of the loosely defined genre of “rewritten Bible”.<sup>1</sup> Presenting itself as a work of Ephrem the Syrian, it presents a peculiar account of Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, in which the narratives of the Old and the New Testaments are creatively merged into a new cohesive narrative that begins with the creation of the world and ends with the Pentecost. This new version of the sacred history features a number of remarkable innovations that are not found in the canonical narratives and that serve the particular agenda of its author.

Through careful reworking of the canonical version of the biblical past, the author of CT strives to forge and promote a distinctive version of Christian identity, tailored specifically to the needs of his Syriac-speaking community. There are several major lines along which he rewrites the biblical narrative to achieve that purpose. One of them is the strong anti-Jewish bias that characterizes the composition as a whole. Second important aspect of the reshaping of biblical material by the author of CT is his close engagement with Iranian culture. The two main avenues of its expression are polemic against Zoroastrianism and creative appropriation of several Iranian themes and images. Another line finds its expression in the great emphasis placed by the author on specifically Syriac themes and images.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the idiosyncratic nature of CT, it is not an easy task to situate this composition within the variegated world of the Syriac-speaking Christianity of Late Antiquity. Whereas most scholars agree in rejecting Ephremian authorship for this work, there is still no consensus as to when and by whom it has been produced. In what follows I would like to contribute to the clarification of this question, carrying out a reexamination of some scholarly assumptions about date and milieu of CT and offering new arguments that may help us to contextualize it with a greater certainty.

### *1. Date of CT*

Since the last decades of the nineteenth century when the original Syriac text of CT had been made available to the European scholars by Carl Bezold, a number of opinions on the date of this work has been expressed. In his edition, Bezold has suggested the sixth century as the time of the work’s composition, although without bringing any detailed argumentation to substantiate this claim.<sup>3</sup> His teacher, Theodor Nöldeke, in a review of Bezold’s edition accepts the latter’s opinion.<sup>4</sup> This date has been supported also by Ernst Wallis Budge, who in the preface to his English translation of CT notices that “it is now generally believed that the form in which we now have it is not older than the VIth century”.<sup>5</sup> The authors of the two most influential handbooks of Syriac literature, Rubens Duval and Anton Baumstark, also date CT by the sixth century.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For general information on CT, see VAN ROMPAY 1996, pp. 629-631. For a critical edition, see RI 1987. In what follows, the Syriac text of CT is quoted according to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> These aspects of CT are analyzed in MINOV 2013.

<sup>3</sup> See BEZOLD 1883-1888, v. 1, p. x.

<sup>4</sup> See NÖLDEKE 1888.

<sup>5</sup> BUDGE 1927, p. xi.

<sup>6</sup> See DUVAL 1907, p. 81; BAUMSTARK 1922, p. 95.

One of the first attempts to argue for an earlier date of the composition for CT was made by Jacob Bamberger, who related it to the fourth century on the basis of its supposed indebtedness to the Jewish Adam-literature and origins in the “Ephrem’s school”.<sup>7</sup> Later on, Albrecht Götze, the first scholar who undertook a thorough examination of CT, has suggested that an early version of this work, labeled by him the *Urschatzhöhle*, was composed around the middle of the fourth century in Jewish-Christian circles, while later on, during the sixth century, it has been reworked by an East-Syrian writer.<sup>8</sup> Götze’s main arguments for the fourth-century date of the *Urschatzhöhle* are the following: (a) closeness of the ideology of CT to Gnostics and Ebionites; (b) dependence of CT’s chronology on that of Julius Africanus; (c) influence of Aphrahat on CT; (d) Ephrem’s ignorance of this work. This theory enjoyed considerable popularity. Thus, for example, Albert-Marie Denis in his overview of the Jewish apocryphal literature claims that the core of CT existed in the fourth century as a polemical anti-Jewish work produced by Jewish-Christians.<sup>9</sup>

The hypothesis of Götze has been adopted and further developed by Su-Min Ri, who in a number of publications proposed that the core of CT was composed in the third century. In the preface to the French translation of CT, Ri has suggested that CT fits the context of “interfaith” discussion in the third century Caesarea Maritima, when Origen lived and taught there.<sup>10</sup> Later on, in an article dealing with the parallels between CT and Ephrem’s writings, Ri has come to the conclusion that the latter was dependant on the former and knew it “par cœur,” even before he became Christian. Support for this bold claim is found by Ri in the supposed connection between CT and such early Christian writers as Irenaeus of Lyon, Justin the Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Julius Africanus and Hippolytus.<sup>11</sup> That would point to an even earlier date of the text, than ca. 350 suggested by Götze. Ri holds on to this date in his most recent monograph on CT, where he gives the end of the second–the beginning of the third century as the time of the work’s composition.<sup>12</sup> Ri’s theory of the early origins of CT gained certain popularity among Syriacists.<sup>13</sup>

The theory of Ri has been recently put to a scrutiny by Clemens Leonhard, who exposed the weakness of his arguments in favor of the early dating of CT.<sup>14</sup> Leonhard has convincingly demonstrated that CT should be read as a coherent literary whole and that no distinct textual layer such as the *Urschatzhöhle* of Götze can be securely distinguished within it.<sup>15</sup> He has also examined from a diachronic point of view several important themes that appear in CT, such as the traditions concerning the burial of Adam on Golgotha and the death and burial place of the prophet Jeremiah, as well as use of the Peshitta text of New Testament, the millennial concept, influence of the cult of relics, and importance of Syriac identity.<sup>16</sup> As a result, Leonhard comes to the conclusion that CT could not be composed before the fourth century and that the most likely date of its composition would be the fifth or sixth century.

Finding the arguments brought forward by Leonhard against the theory of early origins of CT proposed by Götze and Ri fully convincing, I am not going to address

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<sup>7</sup> See BAMBERGER 1901, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> See GÖTZE 1922, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> See DENIS 2000, v. 1, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> See RI 1987, v. 2, pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> See RI 1998, pp. 82-83.

<sup>12</sup> See RI 2000, pp. 555-557.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. TUBACH 2003, pp. 193-194; WITAKOWSKI 2008, p. 815.

<sup>14</sup> See LEONHARD 2001.

<sup>15</sup> LEONHARD 2001, pp. 261-277.

<sup>16</sup> LEONHARD 2001, pp. 277-288.

them here and will take his suggestion of the fifth-sixth century as the probable date of the work's composition as the initial working hypothesis for my own investigation. In what follows I am trying to establish with an even greater certainty possible *terminus ante quem* and *post quem* for this work.

### 1.1. *Terminus ante quem*

The literary source that provides us with the most secure *terminus ante quem* for CT is another pseudepigraphic composition, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. This apocalyptic work was written in Syriac soon after the Arab conquest of Northern Mesopotamia, around the year 690 or 691, somewhere in the vicinity of Singār, the region about 100 kilometers southeast of Nisibis.<sup>17</sup>

There are several instances when the *Apocalypse* exhibits closeness to or acquaintance with CT. For instance, this work shares with CT the overall chronological scheme of *septimana mundi*.<sup>18</sup> Another example of this kind appears in the section of dealing with the abdication of the eschatological Last Emperor on Golgotha (*Apoc.* IX.8-X.2), where the author interprets the “middle” (ܡܬܬܝܠܐ) of 2 Thessalonians 2:7 in light of the notion of the “middle of the earth” (ܡܬܬܝܠܐ ܕܐܪܥܐ), which is identified as Golgotha and Jerusalem, found in CT XLIX.2-3.<sup>19</sup> However, the most striking instance of CT's influence upon the *Apocalypse* is the story of Yon̄on, the fourth son of Noah born after the flood, who is portrayed as the inventor of astronomy and teacher of Nimrod. This peculiar tradition that appears for the first time in CT (XXVII.6-20) is also used by the author of the *Apocalypse* (III.2-8).<sup>20</sup> These examples of the *Apocalypse*'s author being acquainted with CT give us the year 690 as a *terminus ante quem* for the latter.

There is another source that supports the evidence of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and allows us to push the date of CT's composition even further back, the anonymous Syriac cosmological treatise ascribed to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. This work, preserved in a single Syriac manuscript British Librray Add. 7192, ff. 57c-65b, has been published for the first time by Marc-Antoine Kugener.<sup>21</sup> Josiah Forshall and Friedrich Rosen, who first described the manuscript, dated it to the tenth century.<sup>22</sup> Later on, however, this opinion has been challenged by such an authority on Syriac paleography as William Wright, who dated it to the seventh or eighth century.<sup>23</sup> As for the date of the Pseudo-Dionysian work itself, Kugener relates its composition to the sixth century.<sup>24</sup>

This composition deals with a number of topics related to science, mainly to cosmological and astronomical matters. In order to avoid confusion, it should be underscored that it does not belong to the genuine Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, i.e. the four tractates and ten letters that were composed originally in Greek at the end of the fifth century. This work is an original Syriac composition, which represents a later

<sup>17</sup> For the critical edition of the *Apocalypse*, see REININK 1993. On the *Apocalypse*'s date and provenance, see BROCK 1982a, pp. 18-19; REININK 1993, v. 2, pp. v-xxix.

<sup>18</sup> See GÖTZE 1923-1924, #2, pp. 52-53; REININK 1993, v. 2, pp. vi-vii. For more information on this concept in CT, see LEONHARD 2001, pp. 285-287.

<sup>19</sup> See on this REININK 1992, pp. 176-177.

<sup>20</sup> On this tradition, see GERO 1980; TOEPEL 2006b.

<sup>21</sup> KUGENER 1907. Soon after that, it has been republished by FURLANI 1917.

<sup>22</sup> FORSHALL & ROSEN 1838, #51, pp. 83-84.

<sup>23</sup> WRIGHT 1870-1872, v. 3, p. 1206, #51.

<sup>24</sup> See KUGENER 1907, pp. 140-141.

There are several notions that are shared by this text and CT. Both works exhibit interest in the science of astronomy and wage a polemic against astrology.<sup>26</sup> In the cosmological systems of both, the earth is described as being perforated by the system of underground “channels” (ܐܚܬܐ) that serve for the passage of waters as well as of hot and cold air, and describe the lower part of the earth that rests on waters as having the structure of “sponge” (ܐܬܬܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ).<sup>27</sup> Even more striking is the fact that the unique for Syriac literature notion of such mythological figure of Iranian pantheon as Rapithwin, the “spirit of mid-day,” appears only in these two texts.<sup>28</sup>

It is this star that the Magi saw at the glorious mountain, where these offerings – gold, and myrrh, and frankincense, were placed; and this cave had been called the “cave of treasures”. And this star was their guide, when they went up from Persia.<sup>29</sup>

All this suggests that both the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate and CT stem from the same cultural milieu, in which similar cosmological and astronomical ideas were in circulation. It is not easy to establish with a sufficient degree of certainty the nature of literary relations between these two works. According to Sebastian Brock, who points at the verbatim agreement between them in the description of the underground channels, it was the author of CT who made use of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate.<sup>32</sup> In my opinion, however, it would be more logical to explain this stock of common vocabulary and motifs by suggesting that literary dependence went in opposite direction, i.e. that it was the author of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate who relied on CT. To that points out the use by the Pseudo-Dionysian author of the story of the Magi, which does not play an important role in his work, dealing mainly with cosmological issues, but is an integral element of CT's narrative. Taking into

<sup>32</sup> See BROCK 2008, pp. 555-556.

consideration Kugener's suggestion about sixth-century date of the Pseudo-Dionysian text, one is able to push the date of CT's composition even a little bit further back, to the middle of the sixth century.

One might add to these two literary sources the story, found in CT XXVII.4-5, that recounts the founding of a Zoroastrian fire-temple in Azerbaijan by the king Sasan.<sup>33</sup> This account is apparently refers to Ādur Gušnasp, the most famous Sasanian cultic center, known nowadays as the archaeological site Takht-i Sulaimān in West Azerbaijan, Iran. What seems to be relevant for our discussion of CT's date is that this temple was sacked and destroyed by the Byzantine troops under the command of Emperor Heraclius in the year 623, during his Persian campaign. It is noteworthy that in CT's description of the Zoroastrian sanctuary this dramatic event is not reflected at all. This fact seems to suggest that our author wrote before the destruction of the temple of Ādur Gušnasp by Heraclius and, thus, provides us with the second decade of the seventh century as the *terminus ante quem* for his work.

Taking into consideration all this evidence as well as significant use by the author of CT of Iranian ideas and images,<sup>34</sup> and the absence from CT of any references to the Arabic conquest, Islam or the Arabs in general, it seems reasonable to date this work by the pre-Islamic period and to propose the first two decades of the seventh century as the *terminus ante quem* for it.

## 1.2. *Terminus post quem*

To establish a secure *terminus post quem* for CT presents a greater challenge. The main obstacle for that is the peculiar manner of the style of its author, who while making use of a wide range of sources reworks them in such a thorough way that any traces of his indebtedness to the previous writers are erased. In my opinion, it is not an accidental feature of CT, but a consciously chosen and consistently pursued literary strategy of the work's author. All this notwithstanding, there are some hints that may help us.

First of all, at a relatively late date of CT's composition points the use by its author of the name of Sasanian monarch Pērōz. In CT XLV.19, where the story of the three Magi that came to worship the infant Jesus is related one of them is named after this monarch. While the form of his name varies in different manuscripts – Or<sup>M</sup> 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥, Or<sup>AELOPSUV</sup> 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥, Or<sup>BCD</sup> 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥, Or<sup>H</sup> 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥, Oc<sup>a</sup> 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥, Oc<sup>d</sup> 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥, its derivation from the name Pērōz can hardly be doubted, especially if we take into consideration that the names of two other Magi are also derived from the names of Sasanian kings – Yazdegerd and Hormozd. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to accept the suggestion made by Witold Witakowski that the rule of Pērōz (459-484) might serve as a *terminus post quem* for this tradition.<sup>35</sup> Thus, based on these considerations, Philip Wood has suggested that CT was composed “within a generation of the reign of Peroz, i.e. c. 480–520”.<sup>36</sup>

Another detail that points at a later date of CT is the mention of the “tunic” (𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥) of Christ.<sup>37</sup> According to CT L.8-12, this precious relic that would bring down rain during the times of drought was originally in possession of an unnamed soldier, from whom it was taken over by Pilate and sent to the emperor Tiberius. The

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed analysis of this tradition, see MINOV 2013a, pp. 208-219.

<sup>34</sup> See on this MINOV 2013a, Chapter 4.

<sup>35</sup> WITAKOWSKI 2008, pp. 815-816.

<sup>36</sup> WOOD 2010, p. 118.

<sup>37</sup> For the Scriptural reference to this object, see John 19:23-24.



In truth, Joseph circumcised him according to the Law. But he performed the circumcision, although nothing has been cut off from him. For like iron that passes through and cuts the rays of fire, while cutting off nothing, so likewise Christ was circumcised, while nothing was cut off from him.<sup>46</sup>

Whereas this suggestion leads us in the right direction, it is in need of certain correction and refinement. The main problem with Leonard's thesis is that although in Greek and Syriac sources the label "Phantasiast" was often applied to Julian and his followers, it had, in fact, a wider range of meanings, so that it is by no means certain whether in this letter of Severus it should be understood in such sense. First of all, it should be noted that it seems very unlikely that such a view of Jesus' circumcision was held by Julian himself. No discussion of Jesus' circumcision is found in the surviving fragments of Julian.<sup>50</sup> Even more significant is that neither in this letter nor in the voluminous polemical writings against Julian does Severus ascribe this opinion to his opponent. In what concerns Julian himself, there are enough reasons to suggest that he would oppose such interpretation of Jesus' circumcision. One might infer this from a testimony of Severus, who refers to a section of Julian's *Apology*, where the latter speaks against "the Manicheans and the phantasia of the Eutychians".<sup>51</sup> It is the second part of this sentence that deserves our attention.

<sup>46</sup> Or<sup>A</sup> – רחוקים הם המרחקים של המדינה הזאת. בזה לא ידעו המלכות. בזה לא ידעו המלכות. בזה לא ידעו המלכות.

<sup>51</sup> *Ṣāḥib al-ḥaṣṣa* ʿalā ḥaṣṣat al-ḥaṣṣa, ed. HESPEL 1969, p. 185 [Syr.]. Cf. Ibid., pp. 179-180 [Syr.].

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And when Solomon was passing the outskirts of the mountain of Seir, he found there the altars that Pirzaki, and Pirzami, and Yozdakar had built. These were they whom Nimrod the giant sent to Balaam, the priest of the mountain, because he heard that he was familiar with the signs of the Zodiac. And when they were passing the outskirts of the mountain of Seir, they built there the altars to the sun. And when Solomon saw it, he built there Heliopolis, the city of the Sun.<sup>69</sup>

The earliest dated appearance of the tradition about the building activity of Solomon in Heliopolis-Baalbek comes from the two sixth century Syriac works – the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene* (VIII.4)<sup>71</sup> and the *History* of John of Ephesus as preserved in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Book 3).<sup>72</sup> The crucial element that allows us to regard CT XXXV.18-21 as another variant of the legend found in these two sources is the connection between Solomon and Heliopolis.

What is significant for the dating of CT is that we seem to have the *terminus post quem* for the origin of the tradition connecting Solomon and Heliopolis. The necessary information comes from the so-called *Oracle of Baalbek*, an anonymous apocalyptic composition written in Greek. As it has been shown by the editor of the text, Paul J. Alexander, this text was composed between the years 502 and 506 by an unknown Christian author, on the basis of an older apocalyptic text, the *Theodosian*

<sup>70</sup> Several mss. of the Eastern group also have readings close to the Western recension – Or<sup>C</sup>: ⲁⲓⲙⲉⲛ; Or<sup>D</sup>: ⲁⲓⲙⲉⲛ.

<sup>72</sup> See ed. CHABOT 1927-1933, v. 2, pp. 129-131.

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*Sybil*.<sup>74</sup> Of particular importance for us is Alexander's convincing argument that the *Oracle* was written in Baalbek. This conclusion is based on the author's intimate knowledge of the city and the area close to it, as well as on some elements of local patriotism exhibited in his work.

At one particular moment the *Oracle* speaks about building of the pagan temples in Heliopolis that should take place in the Seleucid and Roman periods and is ascribed to the particular monarchs:

In the fifth generation three kings will arise, Antiochus, Tiberius and Gaius <...> And they will build up the temples of Heliopolis and the altars of Lebanon (ἀνοικοδομήσουσι τὰ ἱερὰ Ἑλίου πόλεως καὶ τοὺς βωμοὺς τοῦ Λιβάνου); and the shrines of that city are very large and shapely beyond any (other) temple in the inhabited world.<sup>75</sup>

The most important aspect of this account for my argument is that no mention of Solomon in connection with the building of the Heliopolitan temples appears in the *Oracle*. This is remarkable if we will take into consideration the fact that its author, although a Christian, does openly take pride in the grandeur and beauty of the pagan monuments, and otherwise is prone to indulge into local patriotism.<sup>76</sup> It seems highly unlikely that the author of the *Oracle* would miss such an opportunity to glorify his native city in case he knew about Solomon's connection to Heliopolis. Accordingly, the most reasonable explanation of this silence is that the tradition came into existence only after the time of the *Oracle*'s composition, i.e. the first decade of the sixth century. Additional support for this claim is provided by the fact that for the first time connection between Solomon and Heliopolis appears in the Syriac sources from the second half of the sixth century – Pseudo-Zachariah and John of Ephesus. Therefore, we may suggest that the author of CT, who made use of this tradition, could not compose his work earlier than the second decade of the sixth century.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there exists an additional venue for the future research on the date and milieu of CT, which is based on linguistic profiling of this work. This approach would entail an assessment of the vocabulary used by the author of CT and its further comparison with that of other Syriac authors. I was not able to pursue this line of research, because it should be based on a new critical edition of CT, which would take into account all its textual witnesses, and would also require a comprehensive and searchable digital corpus of Syriac texts from Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages that does not exist at the present moment.<sup>77</sup> There are, however, several preliminary observations, derived from the pioneering work of Sebastian Brock on the diachronic aspects of Syriac word formation,<sup>78</sup> that testify to the possible usefulness of this approach. For instance, the adjective ܡܪܝܬܐ, “priestly,” used in CT IV.1 to describe the heavenly ministry of Adam and Eve before

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<sup>74</sup> On the date and provenance of this work, see ALEXANDER, P.J. 1967, pp. 41-47.

<sup>75</sup> Ed. ALEXANDER, P.J. 1967, p. 13, ln. 76-80 [Gr.], p. 25 [tr.].

<sup>76</sup> Cf. his assignment of a particular (positive) role in the final eschatological scenario to the “king from Heliopolis”; ed. ALEXANDER, P.J. 1967, p. 21, ln. 205-208 [Gr.], p. 29 [tr.].

<sup>77</sup> An important step in this direction is the Syriac Electronic Corpus project, developed presently at the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, Brigham Young University. See HEAL 2012, pp. 73-75.

<sup>78</sup> See BROCK 1990, 2003, 2010.

their fall, is attested for the first time in a homily by Jacob of Serugh (6th c.) and becomes common among Syriac authors only during the seventh century.<sup>79</sup>

## 2. *Milieu of CT*

As has been stated above, I am not going to deal with the theory of the *Urschatzhöhle* proposed first by Albrecht Götze and stretched to its limits by Su-Min Ri. It has already been convincingly refuted by Clemens Leonhard and even more arguments against it could be easily added. Accordingly, there is no need to discuss here the hypothesis of Jewish-Christian origins of CT, as it is closely linked to this theory and is supported mostly by the scholars who accept the very early dating of CT.<sup>80</sup> Given the modern state of knowledge of Jewish-Christianity, there is nothing at all in the theological and socio-cultural outlook of our author that might be regarded as sufficient base for making such claim. In fact, it seems that the proponents of Jewish-Christian background for CT fell in the trap of the archaizing tendency and anti-Graeco-Roman cultural agenda that constitute literary strategies pursued consciously by the work's author.<sup>81</sup>

Putting the theory of Jewish-Christian origins aside, the most widely held opinion on the origins of CT is that it was produced in an East-Syrian milieu. This hypothesis was first set forth by Götze, who has suggested an East-Syrian provenance for the editor of CT, while proposing the sixth century as the time of the work's "final redaction".<sup>82</sup> This opinion was adopted later on by many scholars and until now is, arguably, the most prevalent point of view on the origins of this composition.<sup>83</sup> This theory, however, has its weak points. In what follows I am going to examine in details the arguments supporting the theory of East-Syrian origins of CT. After that I shall bring into consideration additional evidence that makes it possible to argue in favor of a West-Syrian provenance for the work.

### 2.1. *East-Syrian features in CT*

The main support for the proponents of the theory of East-Syrian provenance of CT comes from the explicit anti-Monophysite statements found in the two passages of the Eastern recension – CT XXI.19 and XXIX.10.

The longer of these passages, CT XXI.19, is found in the section retelling the story of Noah's drunkenness and cursing of Canaan. There, after the typological interpretation of the patriarch's lapse, based on Psalm 78:65, that likens Noah's drunken posture to that of Jesus on the cross, the following aside remark is found:

Let the heretics who say "God was crucified" be silent. Here he (i.e. David) calls him "Lord," even as Peter the Apostle said, "this Jesus, whom you crucified, has God made

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<sup>79</sup> BROCK 2010, p. 114. In a personal communication Prof. Brock has observed that the same might be applied to the adjective ܐܕܡܝܬܐ, "diabolical," in CT XI.10, which although found in the works of Philoxenus, becomes widely attested only during the late sixth/early seventh century. Cf. also Brock's observations on the phrases ܡܠ ܥܡ ܚܝܬܐ (CT III.3) and ܐܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ (CT V.8) in the Eastern recension of CT; BROCK 2008, p. 557.

<sup>80</sup> See GÖTZE 1922, p. 91; RI 2000, pp. 577-582.

<sup>81</sup> See on this MINOV 2013a, p. 321.

<sup>82</sup> See GÖTZE 1922, pp. 90-91.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. VOSTÉ 1939, p. 80, n. 1; DENIS 2000, v. 1, p. 31; TOEPEL 2006a, pp. 6-7.

Lord and Messiah.” He did not say “God,” but “Lord,” thus announcing the union of the two hypostases that were united in one sonship.<sup>84</sup>

Similar, although shorter, polemical statement appears later on, in CT XXIX.10, where the typological explanation of the lamb on the tree in the story of Isaac's sacrifice (Gen 22:13) as a symbol of crucified Jesus is accompanied by the following explanation:

Let the mouths of the heretics be stopped who in their madness ascribe passibility to the Eternal Being.<sup>85</sup>

These passages attack some unidentified “heretics” that, supposedly, ascribe to the Divine Nature a possibility of suffering. One immediately recognizes in them the accusation of *theopaschism*, a stock argument from the arsenal of anti-Monophysite polemic employed by East-Syrian polemicists.<sup>86</sup> Both these passages, thus, should be taken as expressions of the mainstream East-Syrian theology. This is more so, given the appearance of the Christological formula of “the two *qnōmē* united in one sonship” in CT XXI.19.

Now, the question arises whether this polemic should be regarded as authentic, i.e. pertaining to the original stratum of CT, or as later addition. There are several reasons that make us to prefer the latter option. Secondary nature of these passages is more obvious in the case of the first passage, CT XXI.19. First of all, it does not fit well within its literary unit, since it breaks the flow of narrative, where the call to wake up addressed to God in the quotation from Psalm 78:65 would be followed immediately by Noah's wake up from his sleep. Moreover, it goes against the general habit of the use of Scriptural quotations by CT's author, who generally does not pile them one upon another in order to make his point. Second suspicious feature of the first passage is the appearance in it of the "two *qnōmē*" Christological language, a distinctive attribute of the East-Syrian Christology. The problem with this formula in CT is that it entered the stock of East-Syrian Christological terminology relatively late, during the first half of the seventh century.<sup>87</sup> The first official adoption of the language of "the two *qnōmē* united in one *paršōpā* of sonship" comes from the profession of faith offered by the East-Syrian bishops to the Shah Khusrau II in the year 612.<sup>88</sup> However, even after that it took some time and efforts on the side of the hierarchy of the Church of the East to overcome resistance to this new-fangled formula and promulgate it among the wide masses of believers. This fact, taken together with the generally non-sophisticated and archaizing theological language of CT as well as our tentative dating of this work, would put its author rather ahead of his time.

The case of the second anti-Monophysite invective, CT XXIX.10, is even more revealing, as it provides us with a fascinating opportunity to observe how CT's text in the East-Syrian milieu underwent the process of gradual theological adjustment. This verse comes from the section dealing with the life of Abraham. It is situated within the passage that offers a typological interpretation of Isaac's sacrifice. In order to

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<sup>86</sup> See CHEDIATH 1982, pp. 71-75.

<sup>87</sup> See on this, REININK 2009, pp. 219-221.

<sup>88</sup> See ed. CHABOT 1902, pp. 564-567 [Syr.], 581-584 [tr.].

facilitate understanding of the following textological elucidations, I offer in the table below a synopsis of this verse in its immediate context that includes three main East-Syrian versions and one representative of the West-Syrian recension.<sup>89</sup>

	Or <sup>F</sup>	Or <sup>A</sup>	Or <sup>M</sup>	Oc <sup>d</sup>
XXIX.8	There Abraham brought up Isaac for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross of Christ, and the redemption of our forefather Adam.	And there Abraham brought up Isaac his son for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross, and Christ, and the redemption of our forefather Adam.	And there Abraham brought up Isaac for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross of his redemption, and the redemption of our forefather Adam.	And there Abraham brought up Isaac for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and the redemption of Adam.
XXIX.9	That tree of the Cross of Christ appeared to Abraham, (and) the lamb (was) the mystery of the killing of our Redeemer.	The tree was a type of the Cross of Christ our Lord, and the lamb in its branches was the mystery of the manhood of the Only-begotten Word.	That tree was a type of the Cross of Christ our Lord.	And the sacrifice of Isaac was a prefiguration of the killing of our Lord. And the tree of the lamb was declaring the Living Cross, upon which the Lamb of Life was sacrificed. And the True Lamb appeared to Abraham, the mystery of the killing of our Redeemer.
XXIX.10	Apostle Paul said that “Christ served circumcision”. He did not say that “he was circumcised,” but – “he served.” <sup>90</sup>	And, because of this, Paul cried out and said that “If they had only known, they would not crucified the Lord of glory.” Let the mouths of the heretics be stopped who in their madness ascribe passibility to the Eternal Being. <sup>91</sup>	And, because of this, I proclaim Our Lord. And apostle Paul, who takes pleasure in His humanity, cried out and said that “If they had only known, they would <not> crucified the Lord of glory.” Paul, the servant of God <and> apostle, said this in the beginning of the letter. And not like say the wicked Cyril and	For Paul, apostle and blessed one, said that “Christ, your God, served circumcision.” <sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> In the following discussion of CT XXIX.10 I am much indebted to LEONHARD 2004.

<sup>90</sup> .השם הזה נמצא רק בלשון חז"ל ונראה שהוא מן השפה הערבית

91. የጥቅም አጠቃቀም ማረጋገጫ፡ ለጥቅም አጠቃቀም ማረጋገጫ የሚያስፈልጉትን ሰነዶች ይጻፉ፡



	Moses did not say that Abraham had sacrificed the lamb, but “brought him up for a burnt offering.” How, however, something incorporeal could be slaughtered?! For this lamb was not a (regular) offspring of sheep, but the lamb of the type of the mystery of our Lord’s death.			nocent Abel; and while Abraham was depicting a type of the Cross of our Lord.
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Let us start with the anti-Monophysite passage in CT XXIX.10 as it appears in Or<sup>M</sup>, where the names of Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch, two main representatives of the Monophysite party in the eyes of East-Syrians, are brought up. There are several reasons to suggest that it cannot be original and should be regarded as a secondary development. Not only the names of Cyril and Severus are absent from the majority of the Eastern manuscripts, but their appearance stays in contradiction with the authorial strategy of CT. First of all, it goes against the general predilection on our author’s side to avoid mentioning any contemporary persons by name, be that authorities with whom he agrees or his opponents. Second, it is incompatible with the claimed Ephremian authorship of his work.<sup>94</sup> On the side of CT’s author it would be a blatant anachronism to present Ephrem in argument with the theologians, who lived more than a hundred years after him. The version of Or<sup>M</sup> emerges, thus, to be a result of the further and rather careless development of the anti-Monophysite polemic as it is found in Or<sup>A</sup> or other textual witness similar to it.

Let us turn now to the anti-Monophysite polemic of CT XXIX.10 in Or<sup>A</sup>. There, like in CT XXI.19, the charge of theopaschism is aimed against some unnamed “heretics”. An answer to the question of its authenticity is provided by comparing it with another important East-Syrian manuscript – Or<sup>F</sup>. The first striking difference between these two textual witnesses is that no anti-Monophysite sentiment whatsoever is found in Or<sup>F</sup>. This manifests a lack of agreement between the Eastern manuscripts and, thus, gives us a serious reason to doubt authenticity of anti-Monophysite polemic in Or<sup>A</sup>. If one claims that this polemic comes from the original stratum of CT, an answer should be given to the possible reason for removal by the East-Syrian scribe of Or<sup>F</sup> of the polemical rhetoric that does not contradict his beliefs.

Another significant disagreement between Or<sup>F</sup> and Or<sup>A</sup> is the different Pauline verses brought forward as scriptural proof-texts. While Or<sup>F</sup> quotes Romans 15:8, Or<sup>A</sup> quotes 1Corinthians 2:8. Between these two versions that of Or<sup>F</sup> should be preferred as the original reading. First of all, it is found not only in Or<sup>F</sup>, but is supported by the majority of West-Syrian manuscripts (Oc<sup>abcd</sup>). The second reason is that it fits much better the overall context of this pericope. Thus, in the following lines 11 and 12 a typology is offered, where the circumcision of Jesus is likened to the sacrifice of Isaac. This typology is found in all Eastern and Western manuscripts and, thus,

<sup>94</sup> More on this aspect of CT, see below in Section 5.1.



undoubtedly belongs to the original stratum of CT. However, in its most developed and consistent form it appears only in Or<sup>F</sup>. There the lines 10-12 form an integral unit, where both Romans 15:8 and Genesis 22:13 are interpreted in such a way as to provide scriptural proofs for the claim that Jesus was not circumcised in reality. In the line 10 the author of Or<sup>F</sup> explores the lexical ambiguity of the words of Paul in Romans 15:8, according to the Peshitta version, that Jesus “served/administered circumcision” (ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ). He claims that since the apostle does not use here a more straightforward expression like “he was circumcised” (ܝܠܕܐ ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ), no actual circumcision is meant here and, thus, it supports his case. This interpretation of Romans 15:8 is backed by exegesis of Genesis 22:13 in the line 12. The same hermeneutic strategy is applied to this biblical verse, where the sacrifice of the ram found by Abraham as a substitute for Isaac is mentioned. Again, on the basis of the fact that the biblical text does not use a straightforward term like “he sacrificed him” (ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ), but has the more ambiguous phrase “he (i.e. Abraham) brought it up for a burnt offering instead of his son” (ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ), the author of Or<sup>F</sup> claims that the ram found by Abraham was not slaughtered in reality. This ingenious and not attested elsewhere exegesis of Genesis 22:13 mirrors structurally and conceptually the interpretation of Romans 15:8. Both these exegetical arguments are brought forward to prove that contrary to the literal meaning of the canonical narrative, i.e. Luke 2:21, Jesus was not circumcised in reality.

I believe that these exegetical traditions are nothing but residual traces of the oldest recoverable stratum of CT that features elements of the radical “Phantasiast” Monophysite Christology, discussed above. In the case of XXIX.10-12 this ideology was preserved only by Or<sup>F</sup>, while having been censored out in the rest of manuscripts. This censoring can still be recognized in the fact that all Eastern and Western manuscripts have the mention of Jesus’ circumcision, i.e. XXIX.11, embedded into the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac. Such connection is highly unusual for the traditional West- and East-Syrian ways of handling the story of Isaac’s sacrifice and makes sense only in its longest version that appears in Or<sup>F</sup>. Furthermore, while in XXIX.11 the original Pauline quotation of Romans 15:8 was preserved in Oc<sup>d</sup>, in the Eastern tradition it was replaced by 1 Corinthians 2:8, enhanced by the anti-Monophysite rhetoric. Another trace of this East-Syrian “enhancement” can be recognized in XXIX.10, where different manuscripts attach different symbolic value to the ram caught in the branches. In Or<sup>A</sup> it is explained as “the manhood of the Only-begotten Word” (ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ). This reading that exhibits distinctively East-Syrian Christology is not supported by the majority of East-Syrian manuscripts and is inferior to the more general “the killing of our Redeemer” (ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܥܘܬܐ) of Or<sup>F</sup> and Oc<sup>d</sup>.

All these considerations bring us to the conclusion that none of the passages in the Eastern recension of CT that feature anti-Monophysite polemic could be taken as argument in discussion of the confessional background of the work’s original stratum. Both CT XXI.19 and XXIX.10 exhibit features that point at their heavy reworking during the process of transmission within the East-Syrian milieu.

To these two cases, more passages could be added that convey distinctive East-Syrian theological ideas and images in the manuscripts of the Eastern recension, but are absent from those of the Western recension. One of the most telling examples of this kind is found in CT LI.18-19, where a paraphrase of John 19:34 is offered. In all East-Syrian manuscripts of this passage, the blood and water that came out from

This divergence in the two groups of manuscripts reflects two different exegetical approaches to John 19:34, grounded in diametrically opposed Christological positions, East-Syrian and West-Syrian. If we turn to the East-Syrian tradition, Aḥob of Qaṭar, a sixth-century exegete, states in connection with John 19:16-42 that “all men saw water and blood mixed; but John saw it separated.”<sup>97</sup> Later, Ishodad of Merv in the *Commentary on John* offers a similar interpretation of this verse, while supporting it by the authority of Theodore of Mopsuestia.<sup>98</sup> In distinction from the East-Syrian authors, West-Syrians regarded the blood and water of John 19:34 as mixed. Thus, the author of the West-Syrian commentary on liturgy, composed in the sixth or seventh century, states that “the fact that we mix wine and water (in) the saving cup is a type of the blood and saving water which flowed from the side of our Saviour on the redeeming Cross.”<sup>99</sup> In the West-Syrian tradition this idea is, most likely, rooted in the thought of Cyril of Alexandria, who in the *Commentary on John*, while explaining the blood and water of John 19:34 as the types of baptism and Eucharist, explicitly states that they were “mixed”.<sup>100</sup> We find this view expressed in the *Homily on the Two Birds* by Jacob of Serugh, who at certain point says about the blood and water issuing from Jesus’ side that “the glorious stream was mixed of blood and water”.<sup>101</sup>

In light of the previous analysis of the explicit East-Syrian traditions in CT, it became clear that they cannot serve as a proof of the work's East-Syrian provenance and that new criteria for establishing the confessional affiliation of the proto-text, from which both the West- and East-Syrian recension derive, should be established. I believe that the safest avenue for such an enterprise would be to take into consideration only those traditions that (a) are attested in the manuscripts of both recensions, or (b) conform to the criterion of dissimilarity.

[illegible]

96 Oc<sup>abcd</sup> – הנהגת המנהל המנהל המנהל המנהל.

<sup>97</sup> Aḥob's scholia on the Gospel of John survived partially in the Ethiopic exegetical tradition. For this particular tradition, see COWLEY 1980, p. 337.

<sup>98</sup> Ed. GIBSON 1911-1916, v. 3, p. 3 [Syr.], v. 1, p. 278 [tr.].

<sup>99</sup> Ed. BROCK 1986, §40, pp. 389 [Syr.], 393 [tr.].

<sup>100</sup> *Comm. in Ioan.* XII – λόγχῃ διανύττουσι τὴν πλευρὰν, ἡ δὲ **μεμιγμένον** ὕδατι τὸ αἷμα διέβλυσε; ed. PUSEY 1872, v. 3, p. 103.

<sup>101</sup> ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ; ed. BEDJAN 1905-1910, v. 3, p. 240, ln. 15.

tradition on the circumcision of Jesus in the Eastern recension (CT XXIX.11; XLVI.16-18), including its best textual witnesses – Or<sup>F</sup> and Or<sup>A</sup>. Importance of this tradition for understanding the process of textual growth of CT cannot be overestimated. I will not repeat here everything that has already been said above, but underscore only some implications this fact has for reconstruction of CT's ideological background. Presence of this exclusively Miaphysite material in the Eastern recension cannot be explained as an isolated case of later textual addition, since it is attested in *all* manuscripts of this recension. Accordingly, we must assume that it was present in the lost prototype from which all East-Syrian manuscripts are ultimately derived.

This gives us a serious reason to challenge the consensus regarding the East-Syrian origins of CT. In fact, some scholars have already opted in favor of a West-Syrian provenance for this work. Thus, Ernest Budge was the first, who raised such a possibility. In the introduction to his English translation of CT he states that “the writer was certainly a Syrian Jacobite who was proud of his native language”.<sup>102</sup> As an illustration of his thesis, Budge points out several examples, where the author of CT affirms the priority of Syriac language (i.e. CT XXIV.9-11; LIII.25-26). However, important as they are for understanding the cultural background of CT, these passages by themselves can hardly be given the weight of definitive proof when it comes to the confessional profile of its author, since the priority of Syriac language was evoked not only by the West-Syrians but also by some Antiochene and East-Syrian authors.<sup>103</sup>

To that one might add a recent contribution of Sebastian Brock, who in the review of Alexander Toepel's book on CT has pointed out several instances of West-Syrian traditions that appear in our work.<sup>104</sup> Besides the identification of the spirit of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit, with which I am dealing in details further, Brock mentions two other cases: (a) appearance in CT V.8 (Or<sup>M</sup>) of a strikingly West-Syrian incarnational formula, i.e. the phrase ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ; (b) a peculiar syntactic form (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ), typical for the West-Syrian translation technique, that is used in CT III.3 (Or<sup>M</sup>) in order to describe Satan's separation from God. While both these cases conform to the aforementioned criterion of dissimilarity, since both of them appear in the manuscripts of the Eastern recension, their absence from the best Eastern textual witness, i.e. Or<sup>A</sup>, prevents us from giving too much weight to them.

Now, when implausibility of the theory of CT's East-Syrian origins became evident and a possibility of its West-Syrian provenance came to the forefront, I would like to bring into discussion several additional considerations that can assist us in developing a consistent and satisfactory theory of the work's confessional milieu. In what follows, I would like to propose two arguments that enhance even further the theory of West-Syrian origins of CT, one is based on its exegetical affinity, and another on the history of the work's reception.

## 2.2. Exegetical affinity of CT

A promising avenue that might help us to discern the confessional profile of CT's author would be to explore exegetical background of his work. Since the main task of our author was to rewrite the biblical narrative adapting it to the new circumstances, it comes as no surprise that he did not carry it out in a vacuum, but relied upon the

<sup>102</sup> BUDGE 1927, p. 22.

<sup>103</sup> For a detailed discussion of this subject, see MINOV 2013b, pp. 165-184.

<sup>104</sup> See BROCK 2008, p. 557.



Genesis 1:2 had a rich history of interpretation among Syrians.<sup>109</sup> One of the earliest attestation of the “spirit of God” of this verse to be identified with the Holy Spirit comes from the *Acts of Thomas* (3rd c.). In the fourth act of the *Acts* (§39), “the Holy Spirit that hovers over all created things” is evoked in the Trinitarian doxology that concludes the apostle’s prayer.<sup>110</sup> As has been pointed out by scholars, it seems very likely that this description presents an allusion to Genesis 1:2.<sup>111</sup>

One author, whose work might serve as a source for this tradition in CT, is Basil of Caesarea. In the *Homilies on Hexaemeron* he explicitly identifies the “spirit” of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit:

*And the Spirit of God was borne upon the face of the waters.* Does this spirit mean the diffusion of air? The sacred writer wishes to enumerate to you the elements of the world, to tell you that God created the heavens, the earth, water, and air and that the last was now diffused and in motion; or rather, that which is truer and confirmed by the authority of the ancients, by the Spirit of God, he means the Holy Spirit (Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ, τὸ ἅγιον εἴρηται).<sup>112</sup>

It is quite possible that the author of CT received this tradition from the Syriac translation of Basil’s *Homilies* that had been made not later than the fifth century.<sup>113</sup> However, even more likely seems the possibility that it reached him via mediation of the previous Syriac exegetical tradition. In favor of this proposal speaks the fact that already by the beginning of the sixth century the unnamed “Syrian man” (Σύρων ἀνδρὸς; ܣܝܪܝܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ), whom Basil mentions further as his informer on the meaning of the verb ἐπεφέρετο (LXX rendering of the participle מְרַחֵף in Genesis 1:2), was identified as Ephrem the Syrian.<sup>114</sup> This connection between the “Syrian” of Basil and Ephrem appears in the works of Severus of Antioch,<sup>115</sup> as well as in the Syriac *Life of Ephrem*.<sup>116</sup> I am inclined to think that one of the reasons for inclusion of this particular exegetical motif into CT might be the wish of the author to strengthen credibility of his pseudepigraphic project. Appearance in a composition, ascribed to the pen of Ephrem, of the motif that has already been widely associated with his name would perfectly fit this goal. There is a certain irony in the fact that the real Ephrem hold just an opposite view, as one can see from his genuine *Commentary on Genesis*.

What is important for us is that there is a relatively clear demarcation in the understanding of the “spirit” of Genesis 1:2 between the West- and East-Syrian exegetical traditions. While in the former it is usually interpreted as the Holy Spirit, there is a strong predilection on the side of East-Syrian exegetes to avoid such interpretation and to explain this “spirit” as a natural phenomenon.

One of the earliest cases of identification of the “spirit” of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit is found in Origen’s works.<sup>117</sup> Later on, Didymus the Blind makes the

<sup>109</sup> See BROCK 1999; JANSMA 1970; VAN ROMPAY 1992.

<sup>110</sup> ܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ; ed. WRIGHT, W. 1871, v. 1, p. 26 [Syr.].

<sup>111</sup> See BROCK 1999, p. 329.

<sup>112</sup> *In Hexaem.* II.6; ed. GIET 1968, p. 168; tr. JACKSON 1895, p. 63.

<sup>113</sup> The oldest manuscript of Basil’s *Homilies* in Syriac (BL Add. 17143) is dated by that time. See on this THOMSON 1995, v. 1, pp. v-vi. For the passage under consideration, see *IBID.*, p. 28 [Syr.].

<sup>114</sup> In fact, there seems to be a consensus among the modern scholars that it was Eusebius of Emesa, on whom Basil was dependent in this case; see on this VAN ROMPAY 1992; TER HAAR ROMENY 1997, pp. 174-183.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Against Impious Grammaticus* III.39; ed. LEBON 1929-1938, v. 3, p. 244 [Syr.].

<sup>116</sup> See AMAR 2011, pp. 62-63 [Syr.], 68-69 [tr.].

<sup>117</sup> *De principiis* I.3.3; ed. CROUZEL & SIMONETTI 1978, v. 1, pp. 148-149.





his faith in the midst of the wicked generation.<sup>131</sup> In a similar vein, the author of the *Book of Steps* evokes Noah as an example of lowliness and humility.<sup>132</sup> For Ephrem as well, Noah is mostly a paragon of righteousness.<sup>133</sup> Although Ephrem does on occasion use the figure of Noah to serve as a symbol or type of Christ, he never likens the story of the patriarch's drunkenness to the suffering of Christ. For example, in the *Commentary on Genesis* Ephrem justifies Noah's failure and explains it as caused not by the patriarch's intemperance in drinking, but by the long period of abstinence during his stay in the ark and afterwards.<sup>134</sup> In the *Hymns on the Nativity*, where Ephrem deals with Genesis 9:20-27 in a figurative way, drunkenness and the following nakedness of Noah are related to that of Adam, not of Christ:

The two brothers who hid Noah looked for the Only-Begotten of God  
to come and hide the nakedness of Adam, intoxicated with pride.  
Shem and Japheth, as compassionate [men] anticipated the compassionate Son  
Who would come and free Canaan from the servitude of sin.<sup>135</sup>

When one examines how Genesis 9:20-27 was treated by authors that belong to the Antiochene school of exegesis and dependant on it East-Syrian exegetical tradition, it turns out that no survived evidence from these schools applies the Noah-Christ typology to this passage. It does not appear in the *Commentary on Genesis* by Eusebius of Emesa.<sup>136</sup> Unfortunately, the part of Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Commentary on Genesis* that deals with the story of Noah and the flood did not survive. However, it is possible to get a glimpse of it from the later East Syrian exegetes, who often quote or refer to Theodore in their works. Yet, this typology is not attested there as well. Thus, Theodore bar Kōnī (8th c.) does not mention it in his *Scholion* (II.110), where the problem of why Canaan was cursed by Noah is discussed.<sup>137</sup> It does not appear in the *Diyarbekir Commentary*, whose author was personally acquainted with Theodore's commentary and made significant use of it in his work.<sup>138</sup> It is also absent from the *Commentary on Genesis* by Ishodad of Merv (9th c.), an important transmitter of Theodore's legacy in the East-Syrian exegetical tradition. While dealing with Gen 9:20-23, Ishodad brings out a variety of opinions on the subject of Noah's drunkenness, but neither Christ-oriented typology nor anti-Jewish polemic linked to the figure of Ham are found among these.<sup>139</sup> Neither does it appear in the *Commentary on Genesis* by 'Abdallāh ibn at-Ṭayyib (9th-10th cc.), another transmitter of Theodorean material among the East-Syrians.<sup>140</sup> This absence is not surprising but accords well with what we know about general reluctance on the side of Theodore to apply typological exegesis to Old Testament figures and events.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *Dem.* 1.14; 3.2; 9.1; 13.5-7; 23.14.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Liber Graduum* 21.13-14.

<sup>133</sup> For an overview of Ephrem's treatment of Noah, see KRONHOLM 1978, pp. 172-210.

<sup>134</sup> *In Gen.* VII.1-2; ed. TONNEAU 1955, pp. 63-64 [Syr.].

<sup>135</sup> *De Nativ.* I.23-24; tr. (modified) MCVEY 1989, p. 66.

<sup>136</sup> See ed. PETIT et alii 2011.

<sup>137</sup> See SCHER 1910-1912, v. 1, pp. 108-109.

<sup>138</sup> See VAN ROMPAY 1986, pp. 63 [Syr.], 80-81 [tr.].

<sup>139</sup> See VOSTÉ & VAN DEN EYNDE 1950-1955, pp. 127-129 [Syr.], 137-139 [tr.].

<sup>140</sup> See SANDERS 1967, pp. 56 [Arab.], 52-53 [tr.].

<sup>141</sup> Photius of Constantinople comments on Theodore's approach thus (*Bibl.* 38) – "The author avoids the use of allegory as much as possible (φεύγων δὲ τὸν δυνατὸν αὐτῷ τρόπον τὰς ἀλληγορίας), being only concerned with the interpretation of history"; ed. HENRY 1959-1977, v. 1, p. 23; tr. FREESE 1920, p. 33. On this aspect of Theodore's hermeneutics, see ZAHAROPOULOS 1989, pp. 130-132; KERRIGAN 1952, pp. 369-371.



Another representative of the Antiochene school, Theodoret of Cyrus, does not see anything extraordinary in the nakedness of Noah and explains the whole episode as a result of the patriarch's inexperience (*ἀπειρία*) in the matters pertaining to alcohol consumption, since he was the first viticulturist in human history.<sup>142</sup> In a similar manner, John Chrysostom, who is not alien to the idea of Noah to be a prototype of Christ,<sup>143</sup> in his discussion of Noah's drunkenness interprets it in a moralizing framework as an exhortation on the dangers of uncontrolled wine consumption, while trying to find excuses for Noah's behavior – such as his distress after the flood and grief over the dead people or his inexperience in drinking.<sup>144</sup>

We also find interpretation of Genesis 9:20-23 in the work of Cosmas Indicopleustes, a sixth-century Alexandrian traveler, whose strong indebtedness to the East-Syrian tradition of exegesis is a recognized fact.<sup>145</sup> According to him, Noah, who got drunk inadvertently (*ἀκούσιον μέθην*), had in this state of altered consciousness revealed to him the mysteries (*μυστήρια*) of future, namely that the descendants of Japheth and Canaan shall serve Christ, who descends from Shem.<sup>146</sup> Again, no typology or anti-Jewish rhetoric is linked to the biblical story, which is understood here historically, in agreement with the hermeneutical principles of the Antiochene school.

In addition to that, it should be pointed out that no Christological connection is attested in the Antiochene commentaries for the two verses from Psalms (44:23; 78:65) that were embedded by the author of CT in the story of Noah's drunkenness.<sup>147</sup> It is an additional example of dissimilarity between CT XXI.18-22 and the Antiochene tradition.

When it comes to the East-Syrian authors from Late Antiquity, the same predisposition to interpret the episode of Noah's drunkenness in non-figurative terms can be observed. For example, Narsai (5th c.) in the *Homily on the Flood* also regards it to be a result of the patriarch's inexperience in drinking and sees the purpose of the whole story to give a lesson on moderation in consumption of alcohol.<sup>148</sup> No symbolic value whatsoever is attached here to the biblical narrative. Furthermore, although Narsai does occasionally weave anti-Jewish polemic into his retelling of the flood, no such sentiment is evoked in connection with Genesis 9:20-27 in the *Homily on the Flood*, as well as in the *Homily on the Blessings of Noah* and the *Homily on the Tower of Babel*, where the curse of Ham is also mentioned by him.<sup>149</sup> In the manner similar to that of Narsai, Martyrius-Sahdona, a seventh-century East-Syrian theologian, while admonishing his audience to avoid wine, refers to Noah and his inexperience in wine-drinking that resulted in the curse of Canaan.<sup>150</sup>

Now, when the absence of typological interpretation of Genesis 9:20-27 from the repertoire of the Antiochene and East-Syrian exegesis has been sufficiently

<sup>142</sup> *Quaest. in Gen.* 61; ed. PETRUCCIONE & HILL 2007, v. 1, p. 116.

<sup>143</sup> See on this AMIRAV 2003, pp. 173-175.

<sup>144</sup> See *In Genesim homiliae* XXIX.2 (PG 53, col. 263); *In Genesim sermones* IV.2 (PG 54, col. 595).

<sup>145</sup> See on this WOLSKA 1962, pp. 37-111.

<sup>146</sup> *Topographia Christiana* V.86-88; ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 2, pp. 130-135.

<sup>147</sup> For Diodore of Tarsus, see OLIVIER 1980, p. 267; for Theodore of Mopsuestia, see DEVREESSE 1939, pp. 276, 538; for Theodoret of Cyrus, see PG 80, col. 1185, 1500.

<sup>148</sup> See FRISHMAN 1992, pp. 49-50.

<sup>149</sup> On treatment of Canaan's curse in these two works, see FRISHMAN 1992, pp. 61-62, 88. For an example of anti-Jewish polemic in the *Homily on the Flood*, cf. Narsai's explanation of why after the flood the ark was hidden from human eyes; see FRISHMAN 1992, p. 50.

<sup>150</sup> *Book of Perfection* II.7.18; ed. DE HALLEUX 1961, p. 80 [tr.].

demonstrated, we shall look for the possible origin of this tradition in CT. Whereas the general idea of Noah as a type or symbol of Christ is widely attested in the works of ancient Christian writers, comparison of Noah's drunkenness with the crucifixion of Jesus is found infrequently. The earliest example of such typology comes from the letters of Cyprian of Carthage (3rd c.). For this Latin Father, Noah

projected the figure of the Passion of the Lord there (*figuram dominicae passionis illic extitisse*) because he drank wine, because he was inebriated, because he was made naked in his home, because this nakedness of the father was noticed by his second son and reported outside, but covered by the other two, the oldest and the youngest, and other things which it is not necessary to follow up since it is sufficient to comprehend this alone: that Noe, showing forth a type of future truth, drank not water, but wine, and so expressed the figure of the Passion of the Lord.<sup>151</sup>

It might be noted here that no anti-Jewish sentiment seems to inspire Cyprian's treatment of Genesis 9:20-27. This biblical passage is interpreted in a similar manner by Hilary of Poitiers (4th c.), in whose version of its Christological typology Ham represents pagans and not the Jews.<sup>152</sup>

The earliest examples of this typological explanation of Genesis 9:20-23 to be infused with anti-Jewish rhetoric are found in the writings of Jerome. In the *Dialogue between a Luciferian and an Orthodox*, written before the year 382, he compares the drunken Noah with the crucified Christ, while drawing a parallel between Ham's behavior towards his father and the Jews mocking Jesus on the cross.<sup>153</sup> The Latin exegete resorts to this interpretation once more in the *Homilies on the Psalms*, one of his works that was written after his move to Palestine. As he discusses significance of the phrase *pro torcularibus*, "for the wine presses" in the title of Psalm 81, Jerome evokes the story of Noah's drunkenness as a prefiguration of Jesus' suffering upon the Cross and presents the following anti-Jewish interpretation of the figure of Ham – "the older brothers, the Jews, came along and laughed; the younger, the Gentiles, covered up his ignominy".<sup>154</sup>

Slightly later after Jerome, one finds a similar combination of the typological interpretation and anti-Jewish rhetoric to be applied to the story of Noah by Augustine. In his anti-Manichaean polemical tractate *Against Faustus the Manichaean*, written around the year 400, he presents the following explanation of the biblical story:

Again, the sufferings of Christ from His own nation are evidently denoted by Noah being drunk with the wine of the vineyard he planted, and his being uncovered in his tent. ... Moreover, the two sons, the eldest and the youngest, carrying the garment backwards, are a figure of the two peoples, and the sacrament of the past and completed passions of the Lord. They do not see the nakedness of their father, because they do not consent to Christ's death; and yet they honor it with a covering, as knowing whence they were born. The middle son is the Jewish people (*medius autem filius, id est populus Iudaeorum*), for they neither held the first place with the apostles, nor believed subsequently with the Gentiles. They saw the nakedness of their father, because they consented to Christ's death; and they told it to their brethren outside, for what was

<sup>151</sup> *Ep.* LXIII.3; ed. DIERCKS 1996, pp. 391-392; tr. DONNA 1964, pp. 203-204.

<sup>152</sup> *Tractatus mysteriorum* I.15; ed. BRISSON 1947, pp. 103-105.

<sup>153</sup> *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* 22; ed. CANELLIS 2000, p. 57.

<sup>154</sup> *Hom. 13 in Ps. 80(81)*; ed. MORIN 1958, p. 77; tr. EWALD 1964, v. 1, pp. 94-95.

hidden in the prophets was disclosed by the Jews. And thus they are the servants of their brethren.<sup>155</sup>

Although there are significant differences between the version of CT and that of Augustine, such as presence of the two verses from Psalms in the former and interpretation of Shem and Japheth as believers of Jewish and gentile origins in the latter, one can easily observe fundamental similarity between the interpretation of Genesis 9:20-27 by the two Christian authors.<sup>156</sup>

Having found that by the beginning of the fifth century the Noah-Christ typology combined with anti-Jewish rhetoric of the kind found in CT XXI.18-22 became well established exegetical motif in the Latin Church, where it was supported by the authority of Jerome and Augustine, I shall look for its traces in the Greek exegetical tradition. There, the earliest example of connection between the crucifixion of Christ and drunkenness of Noah seems to be found in the works of Asterius the Sophist (4th c.).<sup>157</sup> However, in distinction from the author of CT and the Latin authors, Asterius makes this connection on the basis of Psalm 5:2 and Matthew 25:41-43, and not on that of the Passion narrative.

The closest parallel to our passage in the Greek exegetical tradition is provided by the interpretation of Noah's drunkenness that belongs to an unidentified commentator, quoted in the Greek *Catena on Genesis*, edited by Françoise Petit. One of the fragments in this collection that pertains to Genesis 9:21-22 presents the following explanation of the biblical story:

The spiritual (sense): Noah *has planted a vineyard* – the most beautiful people in Christ; *and he drunk of the wine* – first giving a type of suffering; *and became drunk* – having accomplished his suffering; *and lay naked in his house* – crucified by the Jews. *Ham* – the Jewish people mocking at the cross.<sup>158</sup>

The original core of the *Catena on Genesis* to which this anonymous tradition belongs was written in Palestine around the middle of the fifth century.<sup>159</sup> It is confirmed by the fact that later on we find this interpretation incorporated into the *Commentary on Octateuch* by Procopius of Gaza (6th c.).<sup>160</sup> Although there it appears in a slightly more expanded form and with a quotation from Isaiah 53:2 added as a proof-text, it is most likely that Procopius, who used the *Catena on Genesis* while occasionally expanding material taken from it,<sup>161</sup> borrowed this exegetical tradition

<sup>155</sup> *Contra Faustum* XII.23; ed. ZYCHA 1891, pp. 350-351; tr. by R. Stothert in SCHAFF 1887 pp. 190-191.

<sup>156</sup> It is interesting that in *De civitate Dei* (XVI.2), written more than ten years after *Contra Faustum*, Augustine seems to change his attitude to this verse by having toned down to a degree the anti-Jewish component in this typology. Now, Ham symbolizes not the Jewish people, but Christian heretics.

<sup>157</sup> *Homilies on Psalms* VII.12; see KINZIG 2002, v. 1, p. 193.

<sup>158</sup> Ὁ νοητός Νῶε ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, τὸν κάλλιστον λαὸν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. Καὶ ἔπιεν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου πρῶτος ἔπαθε τύπον διδούς. Ἐμεθύσθη, ἐτελειώθη τῷ πάθει. Ἐγυμνώθη ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, ἐσταυρώθη παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, Χάμ ὁ Ἰουδαϊκὸς λαὸς ὀνειδίσας ἐπὶ τῷ σταυρῷ; ed. PETIT 1993, p. 177, #788.

<sup>159</sup> Modern scholars proposed two possible places of its composition – Caesarea and Gaza; see on this TER HAAR ROMENY 2007, p. 188.

<sup>160</sup> Ἀλληγορίας δὲ νόμῳ ὁ γεωργὸς Νῶε ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, τὸν κάλλιστον λαὸν τὸν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ· ἔπιεν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου πρῶτος, αὐτὸς ἔπαθε τύπον διδούς, ἐμεθύσθη, ἐτελειώθη τῷ πάθει, ἐγυμνώθη ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, ἐσταυρώθη παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις. Χάμ ὁ Ἰουδαϊκὸς λαὸς ὁ ὀνειδίσας ἐπὶ τῷ σταυρῷ, τὸ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως ἰδὼν ἀκαλλῆς ὡς πρὸς τὴν θείαν φύσιν κρινόμενον· “Εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ οὐκ εἶχεν εἶδος οὐδὲ κάλλος,” Ἡσαΐας φησὶν; PG 87.1, col. 305, C13-D7.

<sup>161</sup> For an overview of scholarly opinions on relationship between these two sources, see TER HAAR ROMENY 2007, pp. 179-183.

from this source.<sup>162</sup> Both in the *Catena* and Procopius we find present, albeit only *in nuce*, the two basic elements of CT's interpretation of Genesis 9:21-22 – comparison of the drunken Noah with crucified Christ and anti-Jewish interpretation of the episode with Ham. However, there are also significant differences between these two sources and CT, not unlike those in the case of Augustine, that prevent us from suggesting direct dependence of CT upon any of them.

Returning to the problem of the source of the Noah-Christ typology in CT XXI.18-22, I would like to suggest, in a way of speculation, that it was the anti-Chalcedonian Palestinian milieu that served as the mediator between the Latin exegetical tradition and the author of CT. It is not unlikely, given the Monophysite connection of the two Greek sources, where this tradition appears, i.e. the *Catena* and Procopius of Gaza. In what concerns the former, while it is not certain whether it was originally composed in an anti-Chalcedonian milieu, it is definitely known that it circulated there, since there is a stratum of quotations from Severus of Antioch added to the original body of the *Catena*.<sup>163</sup> The Monophysite connection of Procopius comes to foreground when one takes into consideration that he authored a panegyric to emperor Anastasius I and that his brother was Zacharias of Mytilene, one of the active figures in the anti-Chalcedonian movement.<sup>164</sup> Finally, when we also take into account the participation of the Julianists in the global Monophysite network as well as their presence in the sixth century Byzantine Palestine, it becomes easy to imagine how an exegetical tradition current in the late fifth – early sixth century Byzantine Palestine could reach Northern Mesopotamia.

In addition to that, there is evidence for circulation of this exegetical tradition in the Alexandrian milieu. It might be illustrated by the manner, in which Cyril of Alexandria interprets the figures of Noah's sons in the *Glaphyra on Genesis*, when he likens Ham mocking his father to the Jews mocking Christ, and identifies Canaan with the Jewish people, whose enslavement to sin is referred to in the words of Jesus in John 8:34-36.<sup>165</sup> It should be noted that this work of Cyril was translated into Syriac by Moses of Inghilene, a West-Syrian author, at the beginning of the sixth century<sup>166</sup> and, thus, might be known to the author of CT.

Whether the author of CT received the tradition that combines Noah-Christ typology with anti-Jewish rhetoric via the Palestinian Monophysite network or from the Syriac version of Cyril's *Glaphyra*, he did not leave it unchanged but modified it in accordance with his exegetical taste and polemical needs by introducing the verses from Psalms and stressing the cursing of Jewish people by Jesus after his resurrection. However, what is important for my argument is that the total absence of this exegetical motif in the Antiochene and East-Syrian tradition while considered alongside with its presence in the Monophysite and West-Syrian sources allows us to link CT to the latter cultural milieu.

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<sup>162</sup> EISENHOFER 1897, p. 23, mentions Cyril of Alexandria (*Glaphyra in Genesim* II; PG 69, col. 76A-77A) as the source behind this passage in Procopius, although without going into the details. He is, probably, right in that this passage from Cyril provided Procopius with the verse of Is 53:2.

<sup>163</sup> For the list of these quotations, see PETIT 1991, p. xxii; see also CARRARA 1988.

<sup>164</sup> For general information on Procopius, see also ALY 1957.

<sup>165</sup> *Glaph. in Gen. II*; PG 69, col. 76a-77a.

<sup>166</sup> See GUIDI 1886.





This case similarly to the two discussed above serves as another illustration of the difference between the author of CT and the Antiochene exegetical tradition as well as his affinity with the West-Syrian tradition.

In the second chapter, while describing creation of Adam from the four elements, i.e. earth, water, air and fire, the author of CT characterizes these as “the weak elements” (ܩܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ) (CT II.10). This expression appears in both versions of CT and, thus, most likely, belongs to the oldest stratum of the work. This characteristic evokes “the weak and beggarly elements” (τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα) of Galatians 4:9. What is remarkable is that while in the Peshitta version this part of Galatians 4:9 is translated as ܩܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ, in the Harklean version (or in the Philoxenian, on which the latter was based) it is rendered as ܩܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ.<sup>180</sup> It seems likely that the adjective ܩܠܝܬܐ in CT II.10 is taken from the Harklean version of Galatians. It is noteworthy that there seems to be a particular predilection on the side of Harklean version for translating the adjective ἀσθενής or derivatives of the verb ἀσθενέω using the adjective ܩܠܝܬܐ, in distinction from the Old Syriac and Peshitta versions that prefer the adjective ܩܠܝܬܐ in most of these cases.<sup>181</sup>

e) *Adam-Christ typology*

<sup>178</sup> Ed. HORN & PHENIX 2008, pp. 246-247.

<sup>180</sup> Ed. ALAND & JUCKEL 1995, p. 222.

<sup>182</sup> See on this BROCK 1981.





are based on the same hermeneutic principle of chronological correspondence between the life of Adam and passion of Christ.

Once more, the only close parallels to the first part of the typological scheme found in CT XLVIII.12-30 are provided by the Monophysite sources – Philoxenus and Pseudo-Basilian tractate that was composed by the author, who belonged to the so-called “Aaronite” fraction of the Armenian Julianist movement.<sup>187</sup> It might be noted that there are several East-Syrian authors, who also speak about Adam-Christ typological link in connection with the 6th and 9th hours of Jesus’ Passion,<sup>188</sup> but none of them does that for the 1st and 3rd hours as do Philoxenus and Pseudo-Basil.

That the typological correspondence between the events of Jesus’ Passion and Adam’s life was deeply rooted in the West-Syrian theological tradition can be also seen from the poetical compositions, known as *sedrē*, a distinctive liturgical genre attested since the first half of the seventh century. There are at least two texts of this kind, – *Sedrā for the Three Hours of the Friday* and *Sedrā for the Nine Hours of the Good Friday*, that draw close parallels between the details of Jesus’ suffering on the Cross and the events of Adam’s life in a manner very similar to CT.<sup>189</sup> It is remarkable that in the former poem the events in the life of Adam and Jesus that take place at the first and second hours correspond exactly to those found in CT.<sup>190</sup> Unfortunately, since both these works are still unpublished, nothing certain could be said about their relation to CT.

In order to understand better exegetical background of the author of CT in his use of this typological scheme, let us examine the hermeneutical principle that underlies it. In a concise form it is formulated by the author himself, when he addresses his readers with the following direct remark in CT XLIX.1 – “And know that Christ became like Adam in everything”.<sup>191</sup> That this saying was not a merely lip-service on the side of our author is corroborated by several examples of the use of Adam-Christ typology in his work.<sup>192</sup>

The connection between Adam and Christ goes back to the New Testament itself, to the Pauline notion of Christ as the second Adam (cf. Rom 5:12-19; 1Cor 15:21-22, 45-47). In later Christian theology and exegesis this idea was further developed and became one of the central Christological motifs.<sup>193</sup> However, while as a theological motif Adam-Christ typology was shared by virtually all streams of “orthodox” Christianity in antiquity, one can observe a marked difference when it comes to its use as a hermeneutical key for understanding Biblical text. And here a significant difference could be found between approaches of the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools.

When we turn to the exegetes of Antiochene school, it becomes apparent that this hermeneutical principle was fundamentally alien to them and they apply it on a much more modest scale than Alexandrian and West-Syrian authors. This agrees well with a well-known general tendency on the side of the Antiochene exegetes to exhibit

<sup>187</sup> See VAN ESBROECK 1987, pp. 388-390.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Cyrus of Edessa, *Explanation of the Passion* VI.6 (ed. MACOMBER 1974, p. 89 [Syr.], p. 77 [tr.]); Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographia Christiana* II.94-95 (ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 1, pp. 412-415); John bar Penkāyē, *Chronicle* XI (ed. MINGANA 1908, v. 2, p. 52\*).

<sup>189</sup> See THEKEPARAMPIL 1983, pp. 331-332.

<sup>190</sup> See THEKEPARAMPIL 1983, p. 332.

<sup>191</sup> Or<sup>A</sup> – ܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. CT II.15-16; V.1, 11-12, 17; VI.17-18. For analysis of this typology in CT, see SIMON 1970, pp. 67-70; VOGL 1979; THEKEPARAMPIL 1983.

<sup>193</sup> On these developments, see SIMON 1970.

certain restraint in applying Christological typology to interpretation of the Old Testament. Manlio Simonetti characterizes this tendency, while speaking about Theodore of Mopsuestia, as the “drastic reduction of the Christological interpretation of the OT”.<sup>194</sup>

Thus, no symbolic or typological exegesis in connection with Adam appears in those fragments of Theodore’s *Commentary on Genesis* that survived in Syriac translation, where the first chapters of Genesis are covered.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, it comes almost as a surprise that no Adam-Christ typology is employed in Theodore’s *Commentary on John*, where even the Pauline idea of Jesus as the second Adam is reduced to a barest possible minimum.<sup>196</sup> It is true that in the *Commentary on Romans* Theodore does mention Paul’s statement about Adam as the “type of the one who was to come” (τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος) from Romans 5:14, while explaining it as “what happens to Adam typifies what will come to pass in regards to Christ”.<sup>197</sup> However this Pauline idea seems to remain marginal for Theodore and bears no hermeneutical consequences for the way he is dealing with the Old and New Testament.

Later on, Theodoret of Cyrus does not resort to Christological typology even once in those of his *Questions on the Octateuch* that cover the story of Adam and Eve. It is also barely present in his commentary on Paul’s letters, save the inevitable exception of Romans 5:14-15.

When we turn to such Syriac author as Narsai, the same tendency could be observed: although the Pauline concept of Christ as the “second Adam” (ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܐܕܡ) plays prominent role in his Christological thought,<sup>198</sup> the Adam-Christ typology does not serve him as an important hermeneutic tool in dealing with the Old Testament. Likewise, Narsai avoids such general statements about correspondence between Adam and Christ as we find in the West-Syrian authors quoted above.

Now, in a striking contrast with this restrained attitude to the Adam-Christ typology among the Antiochenes, one observes a pronounced predilection for its use as an exegetical tool among the Alexandrian theologians and exegetes. The central figure in that relation is that of Cyril of Alexandria. The crucial role of this typology for Cyril’s thought has been stressed by Robert Wilken, who notices that in comparison with the earlier tradition “for Cyril the Adam-Christ typology plays an even more decisive role, for it is both a key theological concept and a versatile and plastic exegetical key”.<sup>199</sup>

This Cyrillian emphasis on Adam-Christ typology was continued and developed even further in the later West-Syrian exegetical tradition. The idea of *total* correspondence between Adam and Christ is well attested among the West-Syrian authors of the fifth and sixth centuries. For example, it is reiterated over and over again in the writings of Jacob of Serug:

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<sup>194</sup> SIMONETTI 2004, p. 820.

<sup>195</sup> Published by SACHAU 1869; TONNEAU 1953; JANSMA 1962. Some of these passages are translated in MCLEOD 2009, pp. 86-94.

<sup>196</sup> See VOSTÉ 1940.

<sup>197</sup> ἐγένετο δὲ τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἀδὰμ τύπος τῶν κατὰ Χριστόν; ed. STAAB 1933, p. 119; tr. MCLEOD 2009, p. 91.

<sup>198</sup> For examples and discussion, see MCLEOD 1979, pp. 22-29. Cf. also *Homilies on Creation* III.295; ed. GIGNOUX 1968, p. 602.

<sup>199</sup> WILKEN 1966, p. 142.



This greater openness of Ḥenana to the figurative exegesis makes Toepel to suggest a connection between his approach to Scripture and that of the author of CT. However, no examples of an exegetical problem that would be treated in a similar way by these two authors are brought to substantiate this claim. Indeed, it is difficult to support as well as to refute Toepel's suggestion, since the lion's share of Ḥenana's *œuvre* is lost due to the strong resistance to his unorthodox views by the mainstream of the East-Syrian scholarly tradition. Unfortunately, only several hortological treatises authored by him had survived in full.<sup>208</sup> In what concerns our subject, especially regrettable is the loss of Ḥenana's *Commentary on Genesis*, mentioned in the catalogue of 'Abdīšō' of Nisibis.<sup>209</sup> Only systematic comparison of this work with CT would provide a definite answer to the question.

However, notwithstanding the scarcity of available material from Ḥenana's pen there are several instances, when his opinions preserved and transmitted by the later East-Syrian exegetical tradition give us at least a certain possibility to compare his exegetical approach with that of CT and, thus, to assess probability of the scenario proposed by Toepel.

One such case is the way the two authors understand the "great dragons" (MT הַתַּיִם הַגְּדֹלִים; Peshitta ܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ) of Genesis 1:21. According to the *Diyarbekir Commentary* on Genesis, Ḥenana interpreted this verse as referring to the "great serpents" (ܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ).<sup>210</sup> Contrary to that, the author of CT in the description of the monsters created during the fifth day follows the version of Peshitta, while adding to it the figures of Leviathan and Behemoth – ܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ (I.22 Or<sup>A</sup>). The evident difference in the word stock used by the two authors makes improbable any connection between them in this particular case.

In CT XXVIII.16-18, the claim of Abraham that Sarah is his "sister" (cf. Gen 20:2,5) is explained by introduction of the figure of Terah's second wife, whom he took after the death of Abraham's mother and from whom Sarah was born.<sup>211</sup> Contrary to that, the genealogy of Sarah is handled in a different way by Ḥenana. According to the tradition preserved in the *Commentary on Genesis* by 'Abd-allah ibn at-Tayyib, Ḥenana held the opinion that Sarah and Milcah were "sisters of Lot", i.e. daughters of Haran, Abraham's brother (cf. Gen 11:26-27).<sup>212</sup>

Moreover, according to Ḥenana's interpretation of the parable of the leaven (Mt 13:33), preserved by Ishodad of Merv in the book 10 of the *Commentary on Matthew*, the "three measures" refer to the three sons of Noah, from whom the nations and the tribes have sprung.<sup>213</sup> Apparently, such a figurative understanding of Matthew 13:33 stands in contradiction with the basic genealogical scheme of our work, where Noah's progeny consists of the four sons – Shem, Japheth, Ham and Yonṭon (cf. CT XIV.15; XXVII.7).

Of course, these cases of dissimilarity between CT and Ḥenana when taken isolated cannot serve as an absolute proof of independence of the former from the

<sup>208</sup> They were published by SCHER 1911. Also, the collection of canons regulating life of the Nisibene academy preserves a number of rules introduced by Ḥenana; see VÖÖBUS 1962, pp. 91-102.

<sup>209</sup> Ed. ASSEMANI 1719-1728, v. 3.1, p. 83.

<sup>210</sup> Ed. VAN ROMPAY 1986, pp. 19 [Syr.], 26 [tr.].

<sup>211</sup> There is no agreement between the textual witnesses of CT about her name – in Or<sup>M</sup> and Oc<sup>e</sup> she is named ܠܝܬܐܢ; in Or<sup>AELPSUV</sup> – ܠܝܬܐܢ, in Or<sup>BCD</sup> – ܠܝܬܐܢ, in Or<sup>F</sup> – ܠܝܬܐܢ, in Or<sup>O</sup> – ܠܝܬܐܢ, in Oc<sup>a</sup> – ܠܝܬܐܢ.

<sup>212</sup> وحنانا يقول هما اخوات لوط; ed. SANDERS 1967, p. 61, ln. 8 [Arab.].

<sup>213</sup> ܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܠܝܬܐܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ; ed. GIBSON 1911-1916, v. 2, p. 99 [Syr.].

latter. However, in my opinion, when considered together with the absence of any positive evidence of CT's dependence on Henana's exegesis as well as with the discussed above cases of contrast between CT and East-Syrian exegetical tradition, they leave no sufficient ground for the hypothesis of Henana's influence upon the author of CT.

*g) CT and Theodore of Mopsuestia*

There is an additional aspect of the treatment of the Old Testament in CT that strengthens even further the claim of its dissimilarity vis-à-vis the East-Syrian exegetical tradition of the sixth-seventh centuries. It is the almost complete absence of recognizable influence from the side of such a foundational figure in the history of East-Syrian exegesis during this period as Theodore of Mopsuestia. Importance of Theodore for development of the East-Syrian exegetical tradition can hardly be overestimated.<sup>214</sup> His proficiency as scriptural exegete was widely recognized among the East-Syrians after his works have been translated into Syriac during the first decades of the fifth century and were studied in the schools of Edessa and, afterwards, of Nisibis. Theodore's supreme authority as "the exegete" (ܐܡܪܬܐ) reached its pinnacle after he had been formally recognized as such by the decisions of several East-Syrian synods (585 CE by Isho'yahb I; 596 CE by Sabrisho' I; 605 CE by Gregory I), where a quasi-canonical status was conferred upon his writings. That it was not merely a lip service is confirmed by the fact that Theodoret's impact is discernable in works of virtually all East-Syrian writers, who dealt with scriptural themes and issues, beginning with Narsai in the fifth century and later on.

In light of all that, one might expect to find in CT at least some traces of Theodore's ideas, while claiming East-Syrian origins for this work. However, contrary to such expectation, we are faced with the fact of absence from CT of several important for the East-Syrian theology themes that are deeply rooted in Theodore's thought and are distributed through the majority of the East-Syrian works from Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages.

The most telling example of this sort is, perhaps, the total absence from CT of the notion of God's pedagogical attitude towards his creation and, especially, human race. This idea was, without doubt, one of the cornerstones of the East-Syrian theological tradition, whose scholastic values and imagery were often projected back into the primeval history.<sup>215</sup> It is rooted in Theodore's conception of the divine education (παιδεία), whose goal is to prepare humans in this *katastasis* of mortality for the future *katastasis* of immortality. Depiction or understanding of the primeval history and God's providential care about humanity as a process of education is found through the writings of most East-Syrian writers from Late Antiquity, who dealt with the history of salvation, such as Narsai,<sup>216</sup> Cyrus of Edessa,<sup>217</sup> Thomas of Edessa,<sup>218</sup> Catholicos Giwargis I,<sup>219</sup> historiographer John bar Penkāyē.<sup>220</sup> This notion finds its

<sup>214</sup> See BECKER 2006, pp. 114-125; REININK 2009, pp. 239-240.

<sup>215</sup> See on this MACINA 1982-1983; BECKER 2006, pp. 119-125; NORRIS 1963, pp. 166-168; GREER 1973, pp. 203-206; HAINTHALER 2002, pp. 257-261.

<sup>216</sup> *Homilies on the Creation* III.328-333; IV.418-429; ed. GIGNOUX 1968, pp. 186-187, 218-219. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. *Explanation of the Passion* VII.3; *Explanation of the Resurrection* IV.3, VIII.1-8; *Explanation of Pentecost Sunday* IV.2-5; ed. MACOMBER 1974, pp. 92-93, 109-110, 121-124, 173-176 [Syr.]; 80-81, 96, 106-109, 153-156 [tr.]; see also MACOMBER 1964, pp. 18-22.

<sup>218</sup> *De Nativitate* V; ed. CARR 1898, pp. 28-32 [Syr.]; 26-28 [tr.].

<sup>219</sup> See his *Letter to Mina* in CHABOT 1902, pp. 230-231 [Syr.], 494-496 [tr.].

most elaborated expression in the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* by Barḥadbeshabbā Arbayā, where the event of creation is interpreted as a reading lesson given by God to the angels, and the whole subsequent human history from Adam up to the author's days is represent as succession of schools.<sup>221</sup> Emphasis on God's *paideia* is found also in the works of those authors, who were influenced by the East-Syrian tradition, most notably Junilius Africanus<sup>222</sup> and Cosmas Indicopleustes, according to whom from the beginning to end God leads human beings gradually through education and instruction to better things,<sup>223</sup> but also Jacob of Serug.<sup>224</sup> In my opinion, it is hardly conceivable that an East-Syrian writer from the sixth century would pass over this highly influential and widespread idea in his dealing with biblical history.

Another important feature of Theodore's exegesis absent from CT is the notion of Adam having been created mortal in the beginning. According to Theodore, the original state of Adam could not be that of perfection and immortality, and he was supposed to attain the state of immortality only in future, as a reward. Theodore explicitly states in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* that "Adam, the first among human beings, was mortal".<sup>225</sup> This view on the nature of Adam was shared by such representatives of the Antiochene and East-Syrian traditions from the fifth-sixth centuries as the author of the homily *On the Transgression of Adam*,<sup>226</sup> Narsai,<sup>227</sup> Cyrus of Edessa,<sup>228</sup> Babai the Great,<sup>229</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustes.<sup>230</sup> As has been noted by Gerrit Reinink, Barḥadbeshabba's description of the "School of Paradise" does also presuppose such understanding of Adam's nature.<sup>231</sup> This anthropological position was officially affirmed as orthodox at the synod of 596 of catholicos Sabrisho' I, who opposed opinions of those claiming that "in the beginning the nature of Adam was not created mortal" (ܠܝܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܐܕܡ ܕܡܪܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ).<sup>232</sup>

In distinction from the East-Syrian mainstream, several West-Syrian authors held just an opposite view, claiming that Adam was created immortal and lost this quality as a result of his transgression. In a most explicit manner it is expressed by Philoxenus of Mabbug, who on several occasions speaks about Adam having been created immortal.<sup>233</sup> A similar position was taken also by Julian of Halicarnassus.<sup>234</sup> Later on, we find in Daniel of Ṣalah's *Commentary on Psalms* the imagery of Adam being clothed into the robe of immortality and incorruption.<sup>235</sup>

<sup>220</sup> See REININK 2002.

<sup>221</sup> See ed. SCHER 1908, pp. 348-393.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis* II.3, 7; ed. MAAS 2003, pp. 180-181, 184-185.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. *Topographia Christiana* V. 93; ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 2, pp. 138-139. Cf. also III.36-38, 48-49; V.64, 74.

<sup>224</sup> *Homilies against the Jews* IV.145-174; ed. ALBERT 1976, pp. 120-123, 135. Cf. HAINTHALER 2006, p. 82, who holds this to be another instance of Jacob's Edessene academic background.

<sup>225</sup> ܠܝܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܪܬܐ ܕܐܕܡ ܕܡܪܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ; ed. VOSTE 1940, p. 78 [Syr.]. See on this JANSMA 1960, pp. 253-260; GIGNOUX 1968, pp. 488-495; MACOMBER 1964, pp. 18-28.

<sup>226</sup> See JANSMA 1960, pp. 165-172.

<sup>227</sup> *Homilies on the Creation* I.377-380; IV.45-58; ed. GIGNOUX 1968, pp. 130-131, 194-195.

<sup>228</sup> *Explanation of the Resurrection* IX.2-8; ed. MACOMBER 1974, pp. 124-127 [Syr.], 109-112 [tr.].

<sup>229</sup> *De unione* II.9; ed. VASCHALDE 1915, pp. 77-78 [Syr.], 62-63 [tr.].

<sup>230</sup> *Topographia Christiana* V.78-81; ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 2, pp. 118-123.

<sup>231</sup> REININK 2009, p. 244, n. 81.

<sup>232</sup> Ed. CHABOT 1902, p. 196 [Syr.].

<sup>233</sup> For the references, see DE HALLEUX 1963, pp. 494-495. Cf. also Babai the Great, *De unione* II.9.

<sup>234</sup> See DRAGUE 1924, pp. 124-125.

<sup>235</sup> See TAYLOR 2009, pp. 77-78.



that would allow us to identify religious affiliation of its author, there are several circumstantial arguments that speak in favor of its West-Syrian origins.

Thus, as the history of its reception seems to suggest, this work circulated among the West-Syrians, but not among the East-Syrians. For instance, it was known to the monk Severus, a West-Syrian compiler of a catena on the Old and New Testament from the ninth century.<sup>239</sup> In addition to that, the fact that authorship of this work is ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite does also in our opinion speak in favor of the West-Syrian direction. Even if the thesis of Ernest Honigmann about Miaphysite milieu of the original Pseudo-Dionysian corpus does not enjoy scholarly consensus, it is still significant that during the sixth century these writings were particularly popular among Miaphysites.<sup>240</sup> Thus, Severus of Antioch is the earliest known author, who quotes these writings explicitly, whereas Sergius of Reshaina is the first, who translated them into Syriac.<sup>241</sup> In distinction from that, it seems that the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus begins to be used by the East-Syrian writers only during the seventh century.<sup>242</sup> Accordingly, it does not seem very likely that during the sixth century an East-Syrian writer would use Dionysius as a pen name to propagate his ideas.

#### *b) Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*

Another composition that might provide us some clue on identity of the earliest readers of our work is the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, discussed above in connection with the date of CT. There are serious reasons to think that this composition was produced in a West-Syrian milieu. The main clue in that direction is that at some point the author of the *Apocalypse* polemicizes against those among his coreligionists, who interpret Psalm 68:32 (68:31 in Peshitta) as promising that deliverance from the Muslim yoke will be brought by “the kingdom of Cushites” (ܩܬܝܬܝܡ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ).<sup>243</sup> Many among the scholars of the *Apocalypse* consider this passage to be an indication of its West-Syrian provenance, since Ethiopia in the seventh century was still an important regional power, whose official religion was the Miaphysite Christianity.<sup>244</sup> Reinink, while noting difficulties involved in the attempts to obtain an unambiguous answer to the question of the confessional affiliation of the author of the *Apocalypse*, sees nevertheless the West-Syrian provenance as the most plausible historical context for this work.<sup>245</sup> Sidney Griffith has expressed a similar opinion about the possible provenance of the *Apocalypse*, claiming that “the author

<sup>239</sup> The relevant passage from *Catena Severi* has been published as an appendix in KUGENER 1907, pp. 165-166 [Syr.], 193-194 [tr.].

<sup>240</sup> See HONIGMANN 1952; his theory has been accepted later by VAN ESBROECK 1993.

<sup>241</sup> For the references and discussion, see ROREM & LAMOREAUX 1998, pp. 11-22. As the authors rightly point out, Chalcedonians made use of these writings as well during this period.

<sup>242</sup> See BECKER 2006, p. 178; BEULAY 2005.

<sup>243</sup> *Apocalypse* IX.7; ed. REININK 2003, p. 19 [Syr.].

<sup>244</sup> See ALEXANDER 1968, p. 1006; KRIVOV 1983, pp. 218-219. Lutz Greisiger has tried recently to challenge this theory by arguing that “Cush” of this passage should be understood as referring to the kingdom of Nubia and not to Axumite Ethiopia (see GREISIGER 2007). His argument, however, seems to be flawed, since (a) there are clear and unambiguous examples of the West-Syrian sources using “Cush” to refer to Axumite Ethiopia, as, for example, the *Book of Himyarites* (6th c.); ed. MOBERG 1924, p. 6 [Syr.]; (b) it would be more logical for Syriac Christians to imagine Ethiopia in the role of deliverer from the enemies of Christianity, as the memory of the Ethiopian military intervention on behalf of the Monophysite (!) Christians of South Arabia, who were persecuted by Jews, was still fresh and perpetuated in historiography as well as in liturgy.

<sup>245</sup> See REININK 2003, p. 177, n. 166. Cf. also REININK 1992, pp. 159-161.



was most likely a Jacobite.”<sup>246</sup> While one might still argue that the problem of the *Apocalypse*’s ideological milieu has not yet been sufficiently solved, important for our discussion is that no serious scholar raised a possibility of East-Syrian origins for this text.

Against East-Syrian authorship of the *Apocalypse* testifies also the fact that one of the earliest Syriac writers, who exhibits acquaintance this text, is the anonymous West-Syrian author of the so-called *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, another specimen of Syriac Christian apocalypticism that was produced in Edessa in the 690s.<sup>247</sup>

Finally, one could argue against East-Syrian provenance of the *Apocalypse* on the following base. It seems that for the East-Syrian Christians the Arabic takeover of the Middle East was not such a traumatic event as for the West-Syrians and Chalcedonians, especially at the initial stages of the conquest.<sup>248</sup> It is noteworthy that the author of the *Disputation between a Monk of the Monastery of Bet Hale and an Arab Notable*, an East-Syrian writer who was active in the first half of the eighth century and who used in his work the *Apocalypse*, was apparently uncomfortable with the idea of the last Roman emperor who shall destroy the Arab kingdom, which is central for the *Apocalypse* and which was shared by other Edessene apocalyptic works. Passing in silence this militant anti-Islamic notion, he promotes a depoliticized and non-conflicting message of the future kingdom of God that shall be inherited only by Christians.<sup>249</sup> This omission reflects different perspectives on the Islamic rule between the East-Syrian and West-Syrian Syriac Christians during the seventh-eight centuries.

Taking all these considerations into account, it might be concluded that although it does not bring a definite proof, the fact of the use of CT by the authors of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate and of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* strengthens the claim for a West-Syrian rather than for an East-Syrian provenance of this composition.

### Conclusion

In order to obtain reliable information on the date of CT a wide range of evidence, internal as well as external, has been examined. As a result of this investigation, I have come to the conclusion that the most likely date for this work’s composition would be the time span between the middle of the sixth century and the first decades of the seventh century.

In what concerns cultural and confessional milieu of CT’s author, several important points have emerged. First, speaking in cultural terms, the most likely geographical location for our Syriac writer is the part of Northern Mesopotamia that was controlled by the Sasanian empire. To that testifies the deep interest exhibited by him in various aspects of Iranian culture and religiosity as well as his intimate knowledge of Iranian realities.<sup>250</sup> Second, several aspects of CT made me to dismiss

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<sup>246</sup> GRIFFITH 2007, p. 34. It has to be noted, however, that Griffith does not rule out completely the possibility of Melkite provenance for the work.

<sup>247</sup> On the West-Syrian identity of this writer, see REININK 2008, p. 76, n. 5.

<sup>248</sup> On the initially good relations between East-Syrians and Muslims, see FIEY 1969-1970, pp. 30-32; Cf. also unusual for Christian sources positive references to Muḥammad in the *Chronicle* of John bar Penkāyē, a seventh-century East-Syrian writer; ed. MINGANA 1908, v. 2, pp. 141\*, 146\*; see also REININK 2008, p. 77, n. 10.

<sup>249</sup> See on this REININK 2008, pp. 85-86.

<sup>250</sup> This aspect of CT is discussed in MINOV 2013a, Chapter 4.

the theory of its East-Syrian origins as baseless. Thus, the unsatisfactory textual base of the distinctively East-Syrian polemical traditions that are found in CT has been demonstrated. Against this theory testifies also the striking dissimilarity between the exegetical background of the author of CT and the East-Syrian exegetical tradition, as well as his closeness to the West-Syrian tradition. The latter observation, taken together with the presence of distinctively Monophysite material in the best Eastern manuscripts of CT, as well as the history of the work's reception, give us sufficient reason to claim a West-Syrian provenance for CT's author.

It seems that the attractiveness of the theory of the East-Syrian origins of CT is closely related to the commonly held presumption of the Iranian provenance of this work. Upon the first thought, it may appear self-evident to suggest that if CT was produced by Syriac-speaking Christians of the Sasanian empire, they did most probably belong to the East-Syrian Church, which comprised the largest ecclesiastical body in Persia during the sixth and seventh centuries. However, this view is undermined by the compelling evidence about significant presence of the Syriac-speaking Monophysite community in Sasanian Iran during this period, to the degree that by the time of CT's composition it constituted an important social and cultural force.<sup>251</sup>

The very beginnings of the West-Syrian presence in the Sasanian empire are related to the policy of mass deportations of the Byzantine Christian population that was practiced by the Persians during their military campaigns against the Roman empire.<sup>252</sup> Thus, John of Ephesus relates in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (§58) about the forced deportation of the citizens of Amida, including the Monophysite monks of the monastery of Mar John of Amida, into Persia after the city was taken by the troops of Kavād in the year 501-502.<sup>253</sup>

Another important factor that facilitated significantly the growth of the West-Syrian community in Sasanian Iran were the anti-Monophysite persecutions in the Roman empire that were inaugurated by the emperor Justin I immediately after the death of his predecessor Anastasius I (r. 491-518), who was disposed favorably to the anti-Chalcedonian cause.<sup>254</sup> From that period on, one observes an influx of the West-Syrian refugees in the territories controlled by Sasanians. For example, Elias, the author of the *Life of John of Tella*, relates how this sixth-century leader of the Monophysite party fled to Persia, going into hiding in the mountains of Singar in Northern Mesopotamia, together with other Monophysite refugees from the Roman empire.<sup>255</sup> Likewise, the East-Syrian author of the *Chronicle of Seert* (II.21), while discussing the beginnings of the Jacobite heresy in the Sasanian empire, mentions the West-Syrians, who fled into the Persian territory during the reign of Justin.<sup>256</sup>

As a result of these developments, from the middle of the sixth century on there is a growing number of testimonies on the activities of Monophysite Christians in the Sasanian Iran, especially in Northern Mesopotamia. Importance of the Monophysite community of Persia finds a reflection in the fact of establishing in the year 628 in the city of Takrit of the *maphrianate*, i.e. the "secondary" patriarchate that enjoyed an independent ecclesiastical authority in governing the West-Syrian Christians under the

<sup>251</sup> See on this LABOURT 1904, pp. 217-246; FIEY 1970, pp. 113-143; MORONY 1984, pp. 372-380.

<sup>252</sup> See KETTENHOFEN 1996; MORONY 2004.

<sup>253</sup> Ed. BROOKS 1923-1925, v. 3, pp. 217-220. It seems that they were settled in Arragan in the province of Fars; see FIEY 1960.

<sup>254</sup> See VASILIEV 1950, pp. 221-250.

<sup>255</sup> Ed. BROOKS 1907, pp. 60-62 [Syr.]. See also Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene, *Hist. eccl.* X.1; ed. BROOKS 1919-1924, v. 2, p. 175.

<sup>256</sup> Ed. SCHER 1908-1918, v. 3, p. 142.

Sasanian rule.<sup>257</sup> Some of the West-Syrian Christians of Sasanian Iran have found their way up to the highest levels of Persian society and at times could exercise a considerable degree of influence, as the examples of Shirin, the famous wife of the king Khusro II Parvīz (r. 590-628), and Gabriel of Singar, his court physician, demonstrate.<sup>258</sup>

There are two features that connect the author of CT with this particular faction of Syriac-speaking Christianity of Iran. One of them, discussed above, is the appearance in the best manuscripts of CT of the imagery characteristic for the radical Monophysite Christology, espoused by some followers of Julian of Halicarnassus. Presence of the Julianists in Northern Mesopotamia during the late Sasanian period is well-attested in ancient sources. Thus, the author of the West-Syrian *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (8th c.) relates under the years 548-549 how certain Sergius, one of the Julianist bishops ordained by Eutropius, “rushed to Persia and to the land of the Himyarites,” where he had considerable success in recruiting followers.<sup>259</sup> In the *Life of John of Tella* we come across the mention of a Julianist monk, living on Mt Singar, who disclosed to the Persians whereabouts of John.<sup>260</sup> In the letter of the West-Syrian patriarch of Antioch Sergius I (557-561), sent to the bishops of Persia, the hierarch addresses the canonical question of how to receive those, who return to the orthodox fold from the “heresy of Julian the Phantasiast” (ܩܝܠܝܢ ܡܢ ܩܠܝܢ ܩܝܠܝܢ ܩܝܠܝܢ).<sup>261</sup> It is also noteworthy that George of Pisidia, a seventh-century Constantinopolitane poet, who accompanied the emperor Heraclius during his counter-offensive against the Persians, launched in the year 615, finds it necessary to attack “the error of Phantasiasts” (τῶν Φαντασιαστῶν ... τὴν πλάνην) in the poem describing this campaign.<sup>262</sup>

Another remarkable aspect of CT that connects this work with the West-Syrian milieu of Sasanian Mesopotamia is the peculiar polemical tradition found in CT XXX.12-13.<sup>263</sup> In this passage the author reproaches some unidentified “simpletons” (ܐܬܬܝܠܝܡ) for believing that the biblical Melchizedek was not a human being but God, basing on his description in Hebrews 7:3 as one “having neither beginning of days nor end of life”. It is obvious that the author of CT polemicizes here against the heterodox group, known in the heresiographical sources of Late Antiquity under the name of “Melchizedekians”. Attested as early as the third century, these Christians apparently regarded Melchizedek as a divine mediator figure, if one can trust reports of their hostile adversaries.<sup>264</sup>

At some point this teaching made its appearance in Syria, where its earliest mention is connected with the name of certain John of Apamea, who was active during the fifth or early sixth century.<sup>265</sup> Of particular relevance for our discussion is the evidence provided by several Monophysite sources, from which one infers that the Melchizedekians were present in Sasanian Mesopotamia during the sixth century and, moreover, were a cause for concern for the West-Syrians in this region.

<sup>257</sup> On this institution, see LABOURT 1904, pp. 236-241; FIEY 1974-1978.

<sup>258</sup> See on them LABOURT 1904, pp. 221-224; HUTTER 1998.

<sup>259</sup> Ed. CHABOT 1927-1933, v. 2, p. 124; tr. HARRAK 1999, p. 122.

<sup>260</sup> Ed. BROOKS 1907, p. 67 [Syr.].

<sup>261</sup> Ed. VAN ROEY 1975-1976, pp. 218-219.

<sup>262</sup> *Expeditio Persica* I.149; ed. PERTUSI 1959, p. 91.

<sup>263</sup> This tradition is attested in the manuscripts Or<sup>AF</sup> of the Eastern and all manuscripts of the Western recension and, thus, should be regarded as an integral part of the original stratum of CT.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII.36.1; Epiphanius, *Panar.* IV.55.1-9. For more information on this group, see BARDY 1928; STORK 1928.

<sup>265</sup> See VAN REETH 2000.

The most important of these sources is the letter of Sergius I to the West-Syrian bishops of Persia, mentioned above. In the second question of this letter, the patriarch deals with the canonical problem of receiving those, who turn back from the heresy of “Melchizedekians” (ܡܠܚܝܕܝܩܝܐ), characterized as those, who hold the opinion that “Melchizedek is the Son of God” (ܡܠܚܝܕܝܩܝܐ ܡܝܬܢ ܒܝܬ ܕܥܕܝܢ).<sup>266</sup> To that, one may add the evidence of the encyclical letter sent by the Armenian Catholicos Komitas to the West-Syrian bishops of the Sasanian empire in the second decade of the seventh century, in which the heresy of Melchizedekians, who “called Melchizedek God,” is anathematized.<sup>267</sup> The resurgence of Melchizedekian heresy in the late antique Near East during the sixth century finds an additional confirmation in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. While describing the ecclesiastical crisis that took place in Ethiopia, Himyar and “India” due to Justinian’s refusal to appoint non-Chalcedonian bishops there, the historiographer relates that

Thus because of the lack of a bishop, there too another heresy was born. And the error [of the Melchizedekites, who presumptuously] claimed that Melchizedek himself was the Christ, established itself.<sup>268</sup>

The residual traces of the Julianist Christology and the polemic against the Melchizedekians in CT, as well as serious engagement with Judaism and Zoroastrianism, allow us to situate its author and his Syriac-speaking community within the multi-confessional milieu of Northern Mesopotamia, where such diverse religious groups as the East-Syrians, West-Syrians of Severian and Julianist persuasion, Melchizedekians, Jews and Zoroastrians, lived alongside each other during the late Sasanian period. Whereas we do not have enough information to establish with a greater certainty the geographical context of our author, one can imagine it to be much like the region of Singar Mountains, 100 kilometers southeast of Nisibis, where most of these groups were represented during the sixth and seventh centuries.

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<sup>266</sup> Ed. VAN ROEY 1975-1976, p. 220.

<sup>267</sup> See the French translation in VAN ESBROECK 2001, p. 169.

<sup>268</sup> Ed. CHABOT 1927-1933, v. 2, p. 112; tr. HARRAK 1999, p. 115. It has been suggested by Witold Witakowski, that the author of the *Chronicle* derived this information from the *Church History* of John of Ephesus; see WITAKOWSKI 1991, p. 266.

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