14. On the Margins of Empire: Confessionalization and the East Syrian Schism of 1552[1]

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The poet Sliba of Mansuriya composed a poem, probably in the mid-1510s, lamenting the sufferings endured by the city of Gazarta d-Bet Zabdai (Turkish Cizre) after unrest caused by Shah Ismail I's efforts to impose Safavid control on the region. He recounts repeated disasters inflicted on the city and its surroundings, first by the Safavid governor Muhammad Beg (Muhammad Khan Ustajlu), then by Kurdish chieftains and tribes and, finally and most devastatingly, by Safavid troops led by the brother of Muhammad Beg; these last, we are told, violated the women even of their allies the Kizilbash. Victims of the devastation included Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Sliba, who wrote his poetry in Syriac, was himself a Christian, and lamented in particular the martyrdom of the city's bishop, Yohannan, 'an elderly man, a wonder-worker, pure and full of the Holy Spirit'.[2] His poem reflects the diversity of this region of eastern Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia, home to urban and rural communities of varied religious, linguistic, tribal, and cultural backgrounds. It also reflects its instability: the region was a battleground for much of the first half of the sixteenth century, initially conquered by the Safavids but soon contested and

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[2] Scher, 'Episodes de l'histoire de Kurdistan', p. 124. Unfortunately, the only manuscript of this poem appears to have been lost, so we have to rely on Scher's French translation from the Syriac (I have based my English translation on this version).

ultimately won by the Ottomans. It remained, however, a frontier area, where Ottoman suzerainty was often mediated through local rulers, many of them Kurdish.[3]

Sliba himself was a member of the Church of the East. The Church of the East had its origins in the late antique Persian empire, and thus had always maintained a separate hierarchy from the other Christian churches. It professed a distinctive Christological position deemed 'Nestorian' (in reference to the widely-condemned fifth-century patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius) and heretical by the other churches, that Christ had two 'qnōmē', a Syriac word often, but not necessarily accurately, treated as equivalent to the Greek 'hypostasis' ('individual existence').[4] By the sixteenth century, most of the members of Church of the East lived in southeastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia: the patriarchate for most of the sixteenth century was based at the Rabban Hormizd Monastery, some fifty miles to the north of Mosul; important communities lived in the Hakkari mountains, and in and around the westerly cities of Cizre, Diyarbakır and Mardin; some also lived further east, around Urmia and Salmas, beyond the Ottoman frontiers for most of this period.[5] Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia were also home to the Syrian Orthodox Church, which, although it professed a very different, Miaphysite Christology from that of the Church of the East, shared much cultural heritage with it, including the use of Syriac as a literary and liturgical language.[6] The Syrian Orthodox patriarchs, despite bearing the title patriarch of Antioch, were based in Diyarbakır and the nearby Tur ʿAbdin area, although there were also important Syrian Orthodox communities in Syria, including in Aleppo.[7] The Syriac Christian churches of Mesopotamia have rarely received much attention in scholarly discussions of Ottoman religious culture and society. When these communities have been studied, it has often been in terms of the history of the individual, separate churches, but this approach can engender risks. First, as highlighted by Bernard Heyberger in an important discussion, such studies tend to present the churches and their members in terms of fixed and ontological identities, whereas in fact these identities were historically constructed and subject to change.[8]

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[3] For an introduction to the different groups living in this region, see H. Murre-Van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 25–39. For an important study of one city and its hinterlands, see Khoury, *State and Provincial Society*.

[4] On the general history of the Church of the East, see Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East*. On its early modern history, see Murre-Van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*. On its theology see Brock, 'The "Nestorian" Church', pp. 23–35; Brock, *Fire from Heaven*, articles I–III. The Greek term 'hypostasis' is itself ambiguous and has been used in several ways: on this see Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, pp. 1454–1461.

[5] For a full study of the ecclesiastical structure and of the geographical centres of the Church of the East, see Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East*.

[6] We lack a study of the early modern Syrian Orthodox Church comparable to those of Murre-Van den Berg and Wilmshurst for the Church of the East, but on its contacts with the Catholic Church see Hayek, *Le relazioni della Chiesa Siro-giacobita*, sections 2 and 3.

[7] On the geographical spread of the church, one important sixteenth-century witness is the missionary bishop Leonard Abel, on whom see below. His report on the Syrian Orthodox church is found in A[rchivio] S[egreto] V[aticano], AA.Arm.I–XVIII, 3095, fols 2v–10v.

[8] Heyberger 'Pour une "histoire croisée"', pp. 37–38.

In addition, these studies tend to look at the churches largely in isolation, as if their history were only tangentially related to those of the other communities around them. In reality, as Sliba's poem suggests, the Syriac churches were closely entangled both with each other and with the rest of Ottoman society.

They also had contacts with the wider world: in the sixteenth century both the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church sent emissaries to Rome and entered into discussions about church union.[9] This marked the beginning of the process whereby, over the next two centuries, the historically independent Syriac churches split into traditional and Catholic factions. The Church of the East experienced schism in 1552, when part of the church seceded from the current patriarch, Shemʿon VII bar Mama, and elected a new patriarch, Yohannan Sulaqa.[10] They sent Sulaqa to Rome to seek ordination from the pope, whom they seem to have told, falsely, that the previous patriarch had died. After the pope had confirmed Sulaqa in his role, he returned to Mesopotamia, but he soon was arrested by the local (Ottoman/Kurdish—the sources disagree) authorities, reportedly due to the machinations of Shemʿon bar Mama. He was killed at the orders of these authorities in 1555. His new church line, usually referred to as the Chaldean Church, did, however, continue for some generations in union with the papacy; his successor, ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta (patriarch until his death in 1570),[11] also received confirmation of his position in Rome. Most of what little scholarship exists on these events focuses on the difficult question of why Sulaqa and his supporters decided to secede from their mother church (a question which is still unclear, although one motivation seems to have been opposition to the hereditary takeover of the patriarchal line by Bar Mama's family). But other questions, too, deserve to be explored, including: how did the identities of the 'Chaldeans' evolve during and after the events of 1552–5? How did those East Syrians who remained loyal to Bar Mama respond in ideological as well as practical terms to the challenge posed by the Chaldeans? And how did these changes relate to wider religious developments in the Ottoman Empire and beyond?

Recent scholarship has begun to explore the possibilities of the term 'confessionalization', long applied to Habsburg Central Europe in the aftermath of the Reformation, as a way of approaching Ottoman religious culture in this period, as the Ottoman state began to enforce a more clearly defined Sunni orthodoxy, as a

[9] On the Syrian Orthodox church, see Hayek, *Relazioni,* sections 2 and 3; Borbone, 'From Tur ʿAbdin to Rome', pp. 277–287. On the Church of the East see the following note.

[10] Important studies on these events include Vosté, 'Catholiques ou nestoriens?', pp. 515–523; Vosté, 'Mar Ioḥannan Soulaqa', pp. 187–234; Habbi, 'Signification de l'union chaldéenne de Mar Sulaqa', pp. 99–132, 199–230; Murre-Van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 44–54; Parker, 'The Ambiguities of Belief and Belonging', pp. 1420–1445. Many important sources related to these events are edited in Giamil, *Genuine relationes*, and Beltrami, *La chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*.

[11] The date of his death is recorded in a colophon to a manuscript from Mosul: see Scher, 'Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques', p. 243, MS 63.

reaction, in part at least, to their rivalry with the Shi'ite Safavid Empire.[12] 'Confessionalization' in its most developed sense, with strong socio-political and state-building implications, was not possible for the Syriac Christian churches, which had restricted political agency (although in some remote Kurdish tribal areas it is likely that the Syriac communities were largely self-ruling).[13] But, as scholarship on Europe has shown, limited forms of confessionalization were possible even among communities with little or no political power; that is to say that they too could form stronger and more cohesive religious identities, on the basis of more clearly defined doctrines, tenets and practices, in dialogue and in rivalry with other communities. On both sides of the East Syrian schism of 1552, processes of identity reformation, boundary-making and confessional definition did occur which do bear some resemblance to this 'soft confessionalization'.[14] This paper will explore these processes, setting the internal developments of these two closely interconnected churches in the context of their relations with other Syriac churches, with Latin Catholicism, and with Ottoman society. Throughout, it will take into account the limitations of the surviving sources, which are not as detailed for the Syriac churches as for many communities in this period; evidence therefore needs to be pieced together from varied kinds of texts from poetry to manuscript colophons. Some of the most extensive surviving sources are written by European Catholic missionaries and envoys to the east, but these bring their own problems; in particular, it is likely that the Catholics have imposed their own confessional interpretative schema upon the eastern Christians whom they encountered. Whereas Catholic missionaries wrote that the Chaldeans had converted from their heresy and rejected Nestorius, surviving texts in Syriac written by the Chaldeans themselves convey no such clear sense of a change in religious belief. Indeed, the paper will consider the limitations of the concept of 'confessionalization' when addressing Syriac Christians' own understandings of the relationship between different religious communities; in some contexts, at least, they did not view different religious groups as strictly demarcated from, and necessarily hostile to, each other.

First, however, there is a problem of terminology to consider, which brings with it a danger of false teleology. It is typical to refer to Sulaqa, his followers and his successors as the Chaldeans, but, although sixteenth-century Catholic missionaries did label this community Chaldeans, there is very little direct evidence of the Syriac

[12] See Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*; Terzioğlu, 'How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization'.

[13] Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures,* p. 29, draws a contrast between the largely independent area of the Hakkari mountains and the more regulated regions around Mosul and the western cities of Cizre and Diyarbakır; Dina Khoury's research on the Mosul region has shown, albeit for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that members of the Church of the East appealed to Istanbul for relief from tax burdens and other exactions, suggesting integration into the broader political system. See Khoury, *State and Provincial Society,* pp. 195–200.

[14] For the concept of 'soft confessionalization', which he defines, drawing on Hanlon, as the formation of boundaries around religious groups, see Kaplan, 'Between Christianity and Judaism', p. 332.

Christians calling themselves by this term.[15] The Chaldean Catholic Church exists today as a Catholic, uniate church of the East Syrian tradition, and it is common for Sulaqa's schism to be referred to as the origin of this church.[16] Yet this later Chaldean Church had no direct link to Sulaqa. In the seventeenth century Sulaqa's patriarchal line fell out of communion with Rome and his successors moved eastwards to the Hakkari mountains and Persia.[17] Despite intermittent contacts with Catholics over the centuries, his ecclesiastical hierarchy has remained independent and now forms the non-uniate Assyrian Church of the East. The modern Chaldean Catholic church in fact arose in very different circumstances within the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Bar Mama line, Sulaqa's rivals.[18] By referring to the sixteenth-century followers of Sulaqa as 'Chaldeans', in the knowledge that eventually a Chaldean church with clearly Catholic beliefs would emerge, we risk projecting back this later history onto an entirely different series of events and historical actors, and thereby missing the ambiguities and complexities of the sixteenth century case, which should rather be seen in its own terms.[19]

There is a terminological problem, too, on the other side of the schism, for that part of the Church of the East which did not secede with the Chaldeans but remained loyal to Shemʿon bar Mama and his successors. 'East Syrian' (the adjectival phrase used for members of the Church of the East) is too vague and could apply to the Chaldeans as well; 'Nestorian' (although it was sometimes used by members of this church at the time) has historical baggage and polemical overtones, as well as being arguably inaccurate;[20] 'traditionalist' is perhaps the best option, since it is less loaded with specific doctrinal implications. Nonetheless, 'traditionalist' is also problematic,

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[15] For an example of a Catholic missionary claiming that the Syriac Christians referred to themselves as 'Chaldeans', see the comments of Antoninus Zahara below. The only example I have found of a contemporary Syriac Christian using the term is in an Italian report by the bishop Eliya Asmar Habib, edited in Beltrami, *Chiesa caldea,* p.203. Other scholars have noted that using 'Chaldean' to refer to Sulaqa's followers is anachronistic: Wilmshurst, for example, prefers to use the term 'Catholic' (Wilmshurst, *Ecclesiastical Organisation,* p. 4), but this too runs the risk of engendering false assumptions about the Syriac Christians' beliefs and practices, given that it is far from clear that they had embraced Catholic doctrines, as will be discussed below.

[16] The modern Chaldean Church refers to Sulaqa as its first patriarch, as discussed by Brock and Coakley, 'Chaldean Catholic Church', p. 92.

[17] For the places of residence of the patriarchs in this line, see Murre-van den Berg, 'The Patriarchs of the Church of the East', pp. 250–257. Sulaqa's brief patriarchate seems to have been centred on Amida (Diyarbakır); his sixteenth-century successors were based at the monastery of Mar Yaʿqob the Recluse near Siirt, but from the seventeenth century onwards they lived at various times around the Salmas region in Persia or at Qudshanis (modern day Konak) in Hakkari.

[18] For a narrative of these events see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures,* pp. 60–72.

[19] Parker, 'Yawsep I of Amida'.

[20] Brock, 'Lamentable misnomer', pp. 23–35, argues against the use of term, but for counter-arguments, see Treiger, 'The Christology of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus',* Appendix A at pp. 44–46; Seleznyov, 'Nestorius of Constantinople', pp. 165–190.

since it seems that in this same period the traditionalist part of the church was also in flux, evolving aspects of its traditions and defining and crystallising others more clearly, something which has rarely been recognised.[21] This article will refer to the Chaldeans and the traditionalists, in the absence of better alternatives, but it will seek to avoid any undue assumptions about the nature of and relationship between the two groups.

It is very difficult, in fact, to establish the boundaries between these 'churches'. In the absence of clear evidence for their membership, attempts have been made to trace allegiance to the different patriarchs on the basis of colophons: scribes often refer to the patriarch of the day, and this has been taken to show loyalty to the successors of either Sulaqa or Bar Mama, depending on which patriarch is named.[22] Even if the naming of a patriarch does usually suggest a tie of loyalty, it does not enable us to infer anything about that individual scribe's *beliefs,* particularly their doctrinal beliefs; many factors, including location, tribal or family allegiances, or local politics could conceivably influence a scribe's attachment to a particular patriarch. What is more, it is clear that some scribes had ties to figures on both sides of the schism, suggesting that loyalties could be mixed.[23] These methodological challenges may in fact help us to think more carefully about the different possible levels of 'confessionalization', from polemics, explicit or implicit, by rival religious leaders, to the development of more elaborate professions of faith, to the asserting of strict boundaries between different religious groups, and to the sincere uptake of a confessional mindset by lay believers. The Chaldean schism therefore becomes a useful test case for exploring the utility of 'confessionalization' as an analytical concept in cases of religious groups with little political power and for whom only limited evidence survives.

THE CHALDEANS

The fledgling Chaldean church was in a precarious position immediately after the schism of 1552. Its initiators had broken with centuries of tradition in sending their patriarch to seek ordination from the pope, who was a controversial as well as geographically distant legitimizing authority. Their rival patriarch, Bar Mama, had, in contrast, all the trappings of traditional legitimacy behind him, as well as, seemingly, the ear of the local authorities. The Chaldeans urgently needed, therefore, to cement their church and to confirm the loyalty of its followers by establishing a powerful justificatory ideology and narrative which could challenge their opponents' claims to unquestioned legitimacy. Their need to distinguish themselves from the church from which they had seceded might seem to provide an ideal context for confessionalization to occur, as boundaries were established between the communities. Scraps

[21] See below section 2 on the 'traditionalists'.

[22] This is the methodological approach of Wilmshurst's important study, *Ecclesiastical Organisation* (see p. 9 which refers to colophons as often providing the 'only evidence for…the allegiances of individual villages').

[23] See below.

of evidence suggest that the Chaldeans did endeavour to demonstrate the superiority of the authority of their church line, and to foster a communal identity. It is less clear from the sources, however, whether this process of distinction from their rivals and of identity formation took a fully confessional form, that is to say whether it related to the differentiation of beliefs and doctrines as well as to arguments over proper religious authority. The most lengthy and detailed Chaldean source from this period is a trio of poems written about Yohannan Sulaqa by his successor, ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta.[24] I have argued elsewhere that the first of these poems contains an elaborate apologetic for the decision to send Sulaqa to Rome, in terms which reveal the instability of the Chaldean position.[25] The other most extensive surviving body of Chaldean evidence consists of letters, petitions, and reports in Rome, but these are written for a Roman audience in western languages and therefore are of limited utility in assessing domestic debates in Mesopotamia. Similarly, sources written by Europeans about the Chaldeans can provide some insights, but they are affected by European confessional concerns. Apart from this, scraps of evidence from manuscripts, in the form of scribal notes and colophons, can add to the picture of evolving Chaldean rhetoric and ideology, which seems to have rested, in its initial phases, on a few key points.

First, and most importantly, the Chaldean case for legitimacy was predicated on papal primacy (something which long been debated within the Church of the East); on the traditional status of the see of Rome within the Church and on the pope's position as the heir of St Peter.[26] These claims are repeatedly backed up by references both to the Bible and to canon law. ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta emphasises this in the most explicitly apologetic part of his first poem on Sulaqa, noting that God made Peter the head of the disciples, and that his see is therefore the first see, and that the Council of Nicaea enshrined the authority of the papacy.[27] Elsewhere in this poem he also refers to the pope sitting on Peter's golden throne, and to the Roman ordination ceremony being directly transmitted from Peter.[28] ʿAbdishoʿ was not the only Chaldean to press this theme. The scribe of Borgiano Siriaco 21, one of the manuscripts of ʿAbdishoʿ's poems, copied in his manuscript an excerpted series of canonical texts

[24] I am currently preparing an edition and English translation of these poems. They are discussed and translated into French in Vosté, 'Mar Ioḥannan Soulaqa'. When I cite them subsequently in this article, I quote my edition, but with folio references to the oldest extant manuscript of the poems, today in the B[ibliotheca] A[postolica] V[aticana], Vat. sir. 45. All translations of texts quoted are my own unless specified otherwise.

[25] Parker, 'Ambiguities of Belief and Belonging', part IV.

[26] On earlier debates in the Church of the East about the position of the papacy, see Murre-van den Berg, 'The Church of the East', pp. 306–309; Teule, 'Autonomie patriarcale', pp. 65–82.

[27] Poem 1 verses 218–223, BAV Vat. sir. 45, fols 151v–152r.

[28] Poem 1 verses 210–213, BAV Vat. sir. 45, fol. 151r. I discuss this passage in more detail in 'Ambiguities of Belief and Belonging', pp. 17–18. Several shorter poems attributed to ʿAbdishoʿ in praise of popes survive, and have recently been edited by Pritula, ''Abdišō' of Gazarta', pp. 374–391.

relating to the primacy of the pope. One of these texts notes, for example: 'and just as the patriarch has the authority to do everything which he wishes to do rightly to those who are under his authority, thus the patriarch of Rome will have authority over all the patriarchs, like the blessed Peter over the whole community'.[29] The scribe, perhaps to be identified as another contemporary Chaldean bishop, Eliya Asmar Habib, appears to have collated these texts purposefully to strengthen the arguments contained in ʿAbdishoʿ's poem. This florilegium of pro-papal excerpts may have been intended as a manual for Chaldean bishops to draw upon in dialogue with rival clerics or with hesitant members of their own flock. Among the pro-papal texts we also find a canonical excerpt against hereditary succession, which must be intended to undermine the legitimacy of the Bar Mama line, particularly since the scribe seems to have changed the original wording of the canon to emphasise its relevance to Bar Mama.[30] At the beginning of another sixteenth-century manuscript, copied by ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta himself, someone, perhaps ʿAbdishoʿ, has copied a collation of Gospel passages taken from the ordination ritual for a bishop which all relate to the special importance of St Peter.[31] The texts in themselves are not exceptional, but the choice of the scribe to copy them, out of context, at the start of the manuscript suggests again an effort to marshal references to support arguments about papal primacy. The Chaldeans, then (or at least ʿAbdishoʿ and his close associates) drew selectively upon canonical texts from their own tradition to present a strong polemical argument that their church was founded upon legitimate authority.

They were not content, however, with drawing upon these theoretical texts, but also sought to show that ordination in Rome had historical precedents within their own church. Here they were in reality on much shakier ground, as there is no evidence for previous East Syrian ordinations in Rome. They seem to have resorted, therefore, to the 'invention of tradition'; to fabricating, or at least exaggerating and confusing, historical precedents for Sulaqa's ordination in Rome. ʿAbdishoʿ, within his first poem on Sulaqa, provides a list of East Syrian patriarchs of the church who had apparently been ordained in Rome or in Antioch (seemingly linked to Rome

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[29] ܘܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܫܠܝܛ ܦܛܪܝܪܟܐ ܠܡܥܒܕ ܟܠ ܕܨܒܐ ܠܡܥܒܕ ܒܬܪܝܨܘܬܐ ܒܗܠܝܢ ܕܬܚܝܬ ܫܘܠܛܢܗ ܗܘ. ܗܟܢܐ ܢܗܘܐ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܠܦܛܪܝܪܟܐ ܕܪܗܘܡܐ ܥܠ ܦܛܪܝܪܟܐ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܐܝܟ ܦܛܪܘܣ ܛܘܒܢܐ ܥܠ ܟܠܗ ܟܢܫܐ BAV Borg. sir. 21, pp. 204–229, quote on 220.

[30] Ibid., p. 219. The excerpt is from the '74th Canon of the Apostles' (according to the Syriac numbering of the translation of the Apostolic Canons as given, for example, by ʿAbdishoʿ bar Brikha), which asserts that bishops should not bestow offices on their relations. The original canon states that a bishop should not give his episcopate to his brother or son or another relation, but the scribe of Borgiano Siriaco 21 has changed this to state that a 'bishop or metropolitan or **catholicos [patriarch]**' should not bestow his office upon his 'brother or upon **the son of his brother** or upon another relation' [emphases mine]. The scribe's alterations, as highlighted, make clear that this rule applies even to patriarchs, while the reference to the 'brother of his son' must relate to the common East Syrian practice of consecrating the patriarchal nephew as designated successor (*nāṭar kursyā*) (on the origins of hereditary succession in the church of the East, see Carlson, *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq,* Chapter 8).

[31] St Mark's Monastery 116, fols 1v–2; their role in the ordination of the bishop can be seen in the same manuscript on fol. 84v. The passages are Matthew 16:13–8; John 21:15–18; and Matthew 16:19.

through the connection to Saint Peter). Some of these figures are identifiable with known fathers of the East Syrian church; in no case, however, is there known to be any historical connection between them and the Roman see.[32] The scribe of Borgiano Siriaco 21 copies a variant of this list after his collection of texts on papal primacy, with the caption 'anyone who doubts about the greatness of the honour and the ordination of the patriarch of Rome, let him know these things which are written'; he names the same figures as ʿAbdishoʿ, but adds Yohannan Sulaqa himself at the end.[33] Whereas ʿAbdishoʿ states that most of these patriarchs were ordained in Antioch, the scribe of Borgiano Siriaco 21 states that they were ordained 'by the see of the Romans',[34] glossing over the precise geographical location but certainly suggesting that they were a direct precedent for Sulaqa and his successors. They seem, perhaps deliberately, to have muddled the Antiochene and Roman sees to prove their apologetic and polemical point, that their actions had a long tradition within their church heritage.

Early Chaldean ideology was not only focused on the primacy of Peter. After Yohannan Sulaqa's apparently violent death, his supporters lauded him as a martyr. His martyrdom is the main theme of ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta's second and third poems on Sulaqa. ʿAbdishoʿ compares Sulaqa to many persecuted Christian heroes of the past, and even to Christ himself. He emphasises Sulaqa's sufferings, worthy of martyrdom: 'the sufferings and torments and afflictions and punishments, frightening and terrible, which this chief of rulers endured, are inexpressible in speech.'[35] He tells us that Sulaqa has been crowned with the double crown of martyrdom and of priesthood; that he has been purified by the furnace of trial; that he has offered his body and blood as a libation to the Lord; that his soul was resolute in the battle with Satan; that he will rest in heaven with those killed by the sword and will fly on high with the martyrs.[36] Blame for his death is placed squarely on Shemʿon bar Mama, his rival as patriarch, rather than on the local governor who actually ordered the execution; Bar Mama is compared to various historic oppressors of persecuted Christians.[37] As in some other contemporary martyr texts, therefore, Sulaqa appears not simply as a Christian martyr to an Ottoman oppressor, but as a victim of an internecine Christian dispute.[38] The Chaldean bishop Eliya Asmar Habib and the Dominican papal envoy Ambrosius Buttigeg both also described Sulaqa as a martyr in separate accounts to the papacy.[39] It is very difficult to assess, however, whether any cult of Sulaqa ever emerged domestically in Mesopotamia; no sign of this survives in the

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[32] On this passage, and for another explanation for the seeming confusion, see Habbi, 'Signification de l'union chaldéene', pp. 201–203.

[33] ܡܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܠܗ ܕܬܗܐ ܒܛܘܒܢܐ ܘܒܣܝܡܘܬܐ ܕܪܝܫ ܥܕܬܐ ܕܪܘܡܝ ܢܕܥ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܟܬܝܒ BAV Borg. sir. 21, p. 221.

[34] ܡܢ ܪܘܡܝ ܒܛܘܒܢܐ ܘܒܣܝܡܘܬܐ ibid.

[35] ❊ ܣܓܝ ܥܢܝܐ ܘܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܣܒܠ ܘܡܪܕܘܬܐ ܘܡܟܝܠ ܘܡܦܪܫ ܠܐ ܐܬܐ ܠܡܐܡܪ. ܗܠܝܢ ܕܟܬܝܒ Poem 2 Verse 69, Vat. sir. 45, fol. 165v.

[36] Poem 2, verses 80, 87, 90, 92, 97, 98, Vat. sir. 45, fols 166r–167v.

[37] Poem 2, verses 55–68, Vat. sir. 45, fols 164v–165v.

[38] Krstić, *Contested Conversions,* p. 148.

[39] They are edited in Beltrami, *Chiesa caldea,* pp. 149–150, 200.

sources. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Chaldean leadership, within years of the schism, had developed stories, traditions and rhetoric which had the potential to form a strong sense of identity and group loyalty.

It is much harder to assess the success and reach of these arguments: did their impact extend beyond the textual arena of polemic and apologetic to encourage a cohesive group identity? This is particularly difficult to establish given the limited scope of the extant sources, which mostly originate with ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta or his immediate circle. Reports written for the papacy by both Chaldeans and western envoys contain much relevant material here, but this must be treated with caution, as it was in the interest of their authors to present their efforts to promote loyalty to the papacy as much as possible. Yohannan Sulaqa himself wrote to Julius III after his return to the East in 1553. He claims that, upon stopping in Amida (Diyarbakır), he showed to the citizens the pope's letters, which they 'kissed and received graciously and rejoiced at as being like letters of the Apostles; and so they have preached your name in all the churches, and similarly announced it to all the bishops and to many other people'.'[40] Later reports by western envoys went further, in suggesting that a true Chaldean identity, sharply differentiated from the 'Nestorian' heresy of Bar Mama's followers, had come into existence. Antoninus Zahara, the other Dominican envoy sent by the pope to Mesopotamia with Sulaqa in 1553, reported, after his return to Rome in 1563, that

> 'in Mesopotamia, Assyria and Chaldaea, to which [the two Dominicans] had been sent in particular, they introduced obedience to the Holy Roman Church and to its Highest Pontifex, whose Most Holy Name is now held in the greatest veneration there; and staying there for three years...and teaching those people who professed the error of Nestorius, who were named from Nestorius, and educating them with sincerity in the Catholic faith, they purged them from the aforesaid error, so that they loathe the name of Nestorius, and want to be called Chaldeans.'[41]

A later Roman envoy, Leonard Abel, who was sent to Mesopotamia in 1583, reported to Pope Sixtus V upon his return in 1587 that Sulaqa's followers called themselves 'eastern Chaldeans of Assyria', and that before Sulaqa's untimely death he had 'confirmed all his people in the same obedience to the holy Roman church. He removed the invocation of Nestorius which the Deacon made in the Church. He published the profession of the holy Catholic faith brought from Rome, and he began already to draw other Nestorians to his devotion and obedience to the Apostolic See.'[42]

Zahara and Abel's reports are particularly interesting, in that they suggest not only that these eastern Christians had a distinctive 'Chaldean' identity and a strong

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[40] Beltrami, *Chiesa caldea,* p. 147 (translation mine).

[41] Vosté, 'Missio duorum fratrum melitensium O.P. in orientem saeculo XVI'; p. 271.

[42] 'Confermò tutti i suoi nella istessa obedientia della s[an]ta Rom[ana] chiesa. Fece levare la invocatione che faceva il Diacono in chiesa di Nestorio. Publicò la professione della s[an]ta fede cat[holi]ca portata da Roma, et incomenzava gia tirare delli altri Nestoriani alla sua devotione et obedienza della Sede Ap[osto]lica': Abel's report is preserved in the A[rchivio] S[egreto] V[aticano], AA. Arm. I-XVIII, 3095, quote at fol. 11r.

sense of loyalty to the pope, but that this involved a sharply defined theological and liturgical position, predicated on a Catholic profession of faith, clearly differentiated from that of the Nestorian Church. If accurate, this would suggest that a true Chaldean 'confession' had come into existence. There are, however, reasons for caution. Admittedly, few eastern sources survive to give insights into this question, particularly at the level of the lower clergy and of the laity. But the Chaldeans' own writings from this period do not suggest a straightforward adoption of 'Catholic' theology or liturgy even at the top of the church hierarchy. In Rome, orthodox Catholic professions of faith survive attributed to both Sulaqa and ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta.[43] But these were intended for a western audience, and domestic Mesopotamian sources offer a rather different picture: ʿAbdishoʿ's Syriac writings and manuscripts still refer to 'Nestorian' saints and contain 'Nestorian' liturgical elements.[44] There seems to have been a degree of ambiguity and complexity in the Chaldeans' response to Catholic doctrine; they may have been more willing to embrace some aspects of Catholicism than others.[45] Buttigeg and Abel, writing from a western Catholic perspective, may well have imposed more clear-cut confessional paradigms on the eastern Christians whom they encountered than those eastern Christians themselves would have recognised. ʿAbdishoʿ and his circle undoubtedly promoted a form of community belonging for their supporters based on Sulaqa's martyrdom and the historical primacy of the papacy as a source of Christian authority, but it is far from certain that this was a 'confessional' identity based on a clearly defined set of doctrines.[46] Processes of differentiation and identity formation do not necessarily take a confessional form. I will return to eastern Christian perceptions of confessional differences at the end of the paper, but, first, will turn to analysing that part of the East Syrian Church which did *not* in this period accept papal supremacy.

The 'Traditionalists'

Unfortunately, even less evidence survives from the traditionalist side of the conflict than from the Chaldean side, and nothing which deals with the schism directly. Nonetheless, telling fragments of evidence do point to significant developments in this period, as elements of the church's traditions were transformed, and others were defined more sharply. Professions of faith seem to have become a matter of concern, which might reflect an increasingly 'confessional' mindset. This probably happened, in part, in response to the challenge posed by the Chaldeans, but as aspects of it may have started before the schism, it may also relate to other underlying factors and to wider societal trends. The traditionalist church thus stands as an important reminder

[43] On the surviving professions of faith attributed to Sulaqa and ʿAbdishoʿ, see Teule, 'Les professions de foi de Jean Sullāqā', pp. 259–269; see also Parker, 'Ambiguities of Belief and Belonging', pp. 1429–1430.

[44] See Vosté, 'Catholiques ou nestoriens?', pp. 515–523.

[45] Parker, 'Ambiguities of Belief and Belonging', part V.

[46] For an important discussion of the nature and limits of Sulaqa's followers' sense of identity in this period, see Girling, *The Chaldean Catholic Church,* 101.8 to 110.8 and passim.

that eastern Christian identities, even among the antique churches, were historically determined and subject to change. The Chaldeans did not break away from a static, timeless church which preserved its eternal traditions unchanged; rather, both lines evolved and fluctuated, at least in part in response to each other.

One development, which is very clearly linked to the Chaldean schism, relates to the names of the patriarchs. Historically the patriarchs of the Church of the East had used a variety of names, but in the centuries preceding the Chaldean schism, two had become dominant: either 'Eliya' or 'Shemʿon.' After the schism, however, the use of these names divided: Yohannan Sulaqa and his Chaldean successors adopted the patriarchal name Shemʿon,[47] whereas the traditionalist successors of Shemʿon bar Mama switched to using, exclusively, the patriarchal name Eliya.[48] This must relate to some conscious or unconscious process of differentiation between the two parties, which became a new tradition. This distinction persisted even after the successors of Sulaqa fell out of communion with Rome, so that it becomes possible to speak of the Shemʿon line and the Eliya line. The 'traditionalist' party also seems in this period to have professed more assertively, in some contexts, its Christological profession of faith. At the important monastery of Rabban Hormizd, near Alqosh in northern Iraq, which became the patriarchal seat of the traditionalist line around the middle of the sixteenth century, there survives a series of finely carved funerary inscriptions for the patriarchs from the late fifteenth through to the early nineteenth century.[49] All these inscriptions contain a profession of faith attributed to the deceased patriarch, written in the first person, although they are largely formulaic; most of the text is the same across the surviving inscriptions. They contain a distinctively 'Nestorian' profession of faith, that is to say, they use the Christological formulation which was only accepted by the Church of the East, stating that Christ had two *qnōmē*.[50] The first inscription is dated to 1497; there is then a gap for the next two patriarchs, before the sequence resumes with the death of Shemʿon VI in 1538, to continue uninterrupted until 1804. Why did these professions, seemingly, start in 1497? A note of caution must be sounded, since it is not impossible that similar tombstones existed for earlier patriarchs who were buried elsewhere, but there is no evidence that this was the case. The tombstones seem to suggest a conscious effort to project East Syrian theology and to associate the patriarchs with a specific doctrinal position.

What is certain is that the funerary inscriptions on the patriarchal tombs changed, and became more elaborate, in the later sixteenth century, after the Chaldean schism. The first three extant inscriptions for Shemʿon IV (d.1497), Shemʿon VI (d.1538) and Shemʿon VII bar Mama (d.1558) all bear the same Christological

[47] Except, seemingly, for ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta, who continued to use his pre-patriarchal name.
[48] On the various patriarchal lines in the early modern period, see Murre-van den Berg, 'Patriarchs of the Church of the East', pp. 235–264.
[49] These were edited in Vosté, 'Les inscriptions de Rabban Hormizd', pp. 263–316 and have been re-edited in Harrak, *Syriac and Garshuni Inscriptions of Iraq*, vol. I, pp. 482–502. See also Harrak, 'Patriarchal Funerary Inscriptions', pp. 293–309.
[50] On Church of the East theology see above note 4.

formula. But from the inscription of Shemʿon VII's long-reigning successor, Eliya VI (d.1591), the profession is extended and altered, as a comparison of the two texts shows:[51]

Early formula (1497–1538)	Extended formula (1591 onwards)
As soon as I existed—I Mar Shemʿon the Catholicos [patriarch of the East]—God the First Light I came to know. I confessed and believed in His Son Jesus Christ: complete God and complete Man, two natures, two *qnōmē,* and one *parsōpā.* I loved His Spirit. I paid homage to His cross. I shared His Body and Blood. And I died in the hope that He may raise me up.	Since I—Mar Eliya Patriarch of the East by Grace—existed, I confessed the three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—One true God and eternal Nature. I believed in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, conjointly complete God and complete Man, two natures, two *qnōmē,* in one *parsōpā* of one Sonship and one Will—he suffered, was crucified and was buried, but he rose up on the third day as is written, and he ascended to Heaven to his Father. I paid homage to his living and life-giving Cross and partook his body and blood in the hope of the forgiveness of my sins.

The classical 'Nestorian' formulation of Christ's two *qnōmē* is retained (although someone has at an unknown date tried to erase it from Eliya VI's inscription),[52] but more details and elaboration are added. In general these might seem to tend towards emphasising Christ's unity ('conjointly' is added, as is the reference to the 'One Sonship' and the 'One Will'), but these are traditional Church of the East formulations fully in line with their two *qnōmē* theology.[53] It is tempting to associate this more elaborate formula with a heightened awareness about professions and doctrinal formulae in the aftermath of the schism, and in the context of direct contacts with Catholicism: during the patriarchate of Eliya VI (1558/9–1591) the traditionalist line had also entered into communication with the papacy and offered a profession of faith to Rome (which was, however, rejected as heterodox).[54] It could therefore be a strong assertion of Nestorian orthodoxy in the face of the Chaldean threat, or a demonstration to Eliya's followers that, despite conversations with Rome, he still professed their traditional faith, or, it could reflect more generally an interest in confessional details at this time.

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[51] The translations are from Harrak, *Syriac and Garshuni Inscriptions,* vol. I, pp. 483–489. I have made some slight changes (on the basis of the text edited by Harrak in the same pages).

[52] Harrak, *Syriac and Garshuni Inscriptions,* vol. I, p. 489.

[53] Although theologians from the Church of East refer as here to Christ's 'one will', this was interpreted as meaning two wills acting as one—they condemned the doctrine of monotheletism, the belief that Christ had only one will. For discussion see Rassi, 'Justifying Christianity in the Islamic Middle Ages', p. 168 and footnote 130.

[54] Eliya VI's letter and profession is edited in Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes,* pp. 492–510.

Also interesting in this context is a striking text published by Addai Scher on the basis of a now-lost manuscript from Siirt.[55] The text purports to be a profession of faith which Nestorian bishops had to recite before their ordination. No other version of this text, to my knowledge, survives. The oath, which is in a generalized format to be adapted by the particular person taking the oath ('I, the weak so and so, priest and monk in name, since I was chosen by the inhabitants of such-and-such the blessed diocese...'), combines a strong focus on a sincere faith in traditional East Syrian orthodoxy, and the anathematization of all those who did not profess this, with an emphasis on obedience and loyalty to the patriarch:

> I confess, the weak so-and-so, and I believe, in my heart and in my mind secretly, and in my mouth and my tongue openly, in one divine nature ... [Christ] has one will, one power, and he is proclaimed in two natures, and two *qnōmē*, one *parsōpā* of the sonship, as the holy Apostles taught, and as the spiritual fathers transmitted, [the fathers] Mar Diodorus, Mar Theodorus, and Mar Nestorius, who attained the truth, and according to the charge and permission of our blessed fathers: Mar Ephrem, Mar Narsai, Mar Abraham, with the rest of the orthodox Fathers, who excelled in this eastern region... I anathematise and I reject all the beliefs of other confessions/sects which are alien to this orthodox confession which I hold; and I do not accept any of the heresies, which are not in accord with the true doctrine of the orthodox easterners.
>
> I also say, with a free will, duly and fittingly, that I am the lowly disciple and true servant of our Father and our Lord, the holy and blessed Mar such and such, Catholicos Patriarch of the East...I am subject to his command; I perform his will; and I follow everything that he commands.

The end of the text, as published by Scher, runs: 'I wrote it in the month of Tamūz in the year 1859 of the Greeks (July 1548); or in the month so and so of the year such and such of the Greeks. Glory to God. It is finished, the confession of the bishops'. This date of 1548 may well reflect the date of composition of the text, although this is not certain, in view of the loss of the manuscript and lack of other copies of the oath. But it is very interesting that such a markedly confessional text, with an apparently proud pro-eastern rhetoric and a strong sense of division from other, 'heretical', confessions, survives attributed to a date shortly preceding the schism, at a time, judging from the Rabban Hormizd inscriptions, of a more extroverted assertion of confessions in Syriac.

One other feature of the longer Rabban Hormizd inscription deserves attention. The opening reference to the patriarch changes from 'the catholicos' or, in some versions, the 'catholicos patriarch' to 'the patriarch *by Grace* [emphasis mine].' This could be due simply to the more elaborate style of the longer inscription, but it is also possible that it fits into a wider contemporary proliferation of a legitimizing rhetoric based on claims about divine involvement in the selection of the patriarchs. The traditionalist patriarchs had not been forced, before the schism, to develop an

[55] Scher, 'Traités d'Isaï le docteur et de Hnana d'Adiabène', pp. 82–91.

elaborate ideology of legitimacy (even after they had turned towards hereditary succession, seemingly in the fifteenth century).[56] After the schism, however, and in the face of the Chaldeans' polemics in favour of papal authority and against hereditary succession, they and their supporters may have needed to justify their position more carefully. Certainly, although space will not permit a detailed exploration here, in some of the colophons written by traditionalist scribes in the later sixteenth century we find language which seems preoccupied with legitimacy. This includes repeated references to God being the one who had chosen the traditionalist patriarch and bishops (including one striking reference to a patriarch being chosen 'from the womb');[57] invocations of orthodox Nestorianism and the exalted status of the eastern see; and vivid horticultural language relating to descent and generation (sprouting, springing, from the roots).[58] Again, there is a risk in putting too much weight in fairly limited evidence, given the lack of any extended polemics or apologetics against the Chaldeans written by traditionalists, but it does seem possible that the traditionalists were forced to respond to the Chaldean challenge by developing a more comprehensive and assertive ideology of divinely-favoured patriarchal rule. Between these different scraps of evidence, it certainly seems that the 'traditionalist' party was also evolving in this period, largely in dialogue and rivalry with the Chaldeans, and that this involved processes of confessional elaboration, and the stronger assertion of intercommunal boundaries.

CONTEXT AND LIMITATIONS OF CONFESSIONALIZATION

The interconnected evolution of the Chaldean and traditionalist churches must be viewed in a regional and transregional context. It is clear that contact with Catholicism was crucial. Not only did the Catholic Church provide a source of support for the Chaldean leadership, but it may also have spurred the development of elaborate professions of faith and encouraged the assertion of 'traditional' beliefs against the Catholic threat. The traditionalist Eliya VI's initiative in the late sixteenth century to send a profession of faith to the Romans suggests that the possibility of papal support could encourage inter-confessional rivalry. The Ottoman setting is also important. At a simple level, the incorporation of Mesopotamia into the Ottoman empire may have enabled the Chaldeans to turn to Rome for support, since it facilitated long distance travel.[59] In addition, it is possible that, as has been discussed in other contexts, eastern Christians were motivated to turn towards western Catholics in the hope that they would provide a source of protection against possible Ottoman oppression.

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[56] On the beginnings of hereditary succession, see Carlson, *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq,* Chapter 8.

[57] Cambridge Add. 1988 (from 1558), fol. 168; see Carlson, *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq,* p. 218.

[58] MS Kirkuk Chaldean Archdiocese 56 (from 1568), available online at HMML.org, ACK 00056, colophon on fols 104v–107r.

[59] Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures,* p. 30, discusses the rise in pilgrimages to Jerusalem after the Ottoman conquests; Sulaqa travelled to Rome via Jerusalem.

Sulaqa reported in his letter to Julius III that the Venetian consul at Aleppo had come with him to meet the Sultan, and had helped to persuade him to issue an order to all the potentates 'who are in our land' that no one should do any harm to the Chaldeans, but should help and honour them.[60] The rival Christian confessions could also appeal to the Ottoman and Kurdish authorities against each other, as Shemʿon bar Mama allegedly did against Sulaqa. For minority communities in a potentially insecure societal position, competition for political support could undoubtedly heighten tensions further.

Less clear is how far the developments in these Syriac churches related to any kind of broader process of confessionalization across Ottoman society and beyond, in which all communities became increasingly exclusive and assertive in defining their beliefs and their differences from other religious groups. This is difficult to assess because of the paucity of extant sources and the necessity to rely on fragments which can give only glimpses into aspects of the development of the churches. Yet the sources that do survive suggest that, in fact, the Syriac Christians had not formed a fully confessional mind-set; they did not all view religion in terms of strict, clearly defined, and mutually exclusive religious communities. We must remember, again, that, despite the claims of western Catholic observers, the Chaldeans do not seem to have formed a coherent doctrinal position at this point that differentiated them from the traditionalists. No Chaldean writings contain any sense that they had 'converted' from their previous beliefs. This is very different from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the emergence of a Chaldean church in Diyarbakır under patriarch Yawsep I, when its members speak clearly of converting from the Nestorian heresy to the true Catholic faith: the Chaldean bishop ʿAbd al-Ahad, in a biography of Yawsep written in 1719, refers to Yawsep being moved by the holy spirit to overthrow the heresy of Nestorianism, of heretics being enlightened and converting to orthodoxy, and of Yawsep as a beacon of light who burst through the dark clouds of heresy; the text also contains sustained polemic against 'Nestorian' beliefs.[61]

None of this language has any parallel in the literature produced by the sixteenth-century Chaldeans in the context of Sulaqa's schism. Indeed, Sulaqa's

[60] Beltrami, *Chiesa caldea,* pp. 147–148.

[61] On the formation of the Chaldean Church under patriarch Yawsep I of Amida (d.1696) see Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom*, and Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures,* pp. 60–68. The principal Chaldean (as opposed to western Catholic) source for these events is the biography of Yawsep I by ʿAbd al-Aḥad, completed in 1719, and therefore an early, if not contemporary, Chaldean interpretation of events. Importantly, although ʿAbd al-Ahad may draw upon an earlier account of Yawsep's career written by a Capuchin monk (edited in Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer,* document XV, pp. 252–261), he appears to have added in these references to conversion and illumination himself, and they can thus be taken as a Chaldean perspective on the events. ʿAbd al-Ahad's biography is published in French translation by J-B. Chabot, 'Les Origines du patriarcat chaldéen', pp. 66–90; the autograph manuscript of the text is available on HMML, number CCM 00012 (see fols 274r, 287r, 289v–291v, for examples of language relating to conversion/illumination/heresy). For discussion of the text see Lampart, *Ein Märtyrer,* pp. 105–106. See also on the later Chaldeans Ghobrial's paper in this volume.

Chaldeans never make any explicit acknowledgement of a difference between their beliefs and those of their rivals; the main point emphasised is the greater legitimacy of their patriarch. Texts, manuscripts, and people seem to have crossed boundaries between the Chaldeans and the traditionalists, and sometimes also between other Syriac Christian communities. Contemporary manuscripts survive that contain both Chaldean and traditionalist texts, suggesting that their copyists and owners had interests that crossed these boundaries. The most prolific scribe of the period, Ataya bar Faraj, repeatedly refers to the traditionalist patriarch as the reigning patriarch in his colophons, and consequently has been taken to belong to the traditionalist hierarchy.[62] Yet he also had links to Chaldeans; he was commissioned to copy a Gospel manuscript for the 'Nestorian Church' in Jerusalem by the Chaldean bishop Eliya Asmar Habib;[63] he copied a manuscript on the basis of an autograph copy by ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta;[64] and in one colophon he appears to describe himself as a 'disciple' of ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta.[65] Personal links thus seem to have transcended church boundaries.[66] At least in some settings ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta himself seems to have had a fairly open-minded, even ecumenical, approach to members of other Christian confessions, including the Syrian Orthodox, who professed a very different Christology from the Church of the East and were traditionally viewed by them as heretics.[67] ʿAbdishoʿ owned two polemical books against the Syrian Orthodox—yet he seems himself to have composed poems in honour of some Syrian Orthodox figures.[68] He copied a grammatical treatise in a Syrian Orthodox monastery, seemingly with the

[62] Wilmshurst, *Ecclesiastical Organisation,* p. 114. Wilmshurst also suggests that Ataya worked for the traditionalist patriarch Eliya VI, on the basis that he was witness to his profession of faith sent to the pope in 1585, but this document only names 'the priest Ataya' so cannot securely be identified with Ataya bar Faraj (Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes,* p. 510).

[63] Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana Borg. sir. 169.

[64] The manuscript is preserved in Mardin and available online via HMML, number CCM 00024.

[65] The manuscript is preserved in Thrissur, India, MS Syr 57, fol. 118v; I thank István Perczel and Radu Mustaţă for bringing it to my attention.

[66] Anton Pritula has discussed links between Ataya and Chaldeans and argued more broadly that there were links in literary circles between Chaldeans and traditionalists: Pritula, 'East Syriac Literary Life in the mid-16th century', pp. 89–107; Pritula, ''Abdīšōʿ of Gāzartā', pp. 297–320, esp. 311–316.

[67] In the Middle Ages some members of the Church of the East and Syrian Orthodox Church had also, at least in some contexts, expressed fairly ecumenical attitudes towards the other Syriac Christian churches: see for the Syrian Orthodox, Teule, 'It is Not Right to Call Ourselves Orthodox', pp. 13–27; Hage, 'Ecumenical Aspects of Barhebraeus' Christology', pp. 103–109, and for the East Syrians, Rassi, 'Between *ʿAsabiyya* and Ecumenism', pp. 169–186. I thank Salam Rassi for bringing these articles to my attention.

[68] ʿAbdishoʿ wrote a list of his books in a manuscript of St Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem, MS 116, fol. 140v. MS. Diyarbakır 95 (now available digitally via HMML, number CCM 00398) contains several poems attributed to him with Syrian Orthodox subjects; on fol. 248v, for example, there is an acrostic poem on the accession of a new Syrian Orthodox patriarch.

assistance of some Syrian Orthodox monks.[69] He also, in his first poem on Sulaqa, described Sulaqa receiving blessings from the churches of many different Christian confessions in Jerusalem, including the Syrian Orthodox. In 1701 the Chaldean patriarch Yawsep I copied ʿAbdishoʿ's poems but omitted this verse as well as the poems' Nestorian references, suggesting that it was offensive to a more confessionally-rigorous Chaldean.[70] ʿAbdishoʿ's relatively open-minded attitude may help to explain how the Chaldeans could accept union with the Catholics without, necessarily, adopting all their views on liturgy, the sanctoral, and doctrine.

What is more, fear of the Ottomans and contact with Catholicism could encourage cross-confessional Syriac Christian cooperation, as well as rivalry. ʿAbdishoʿ of Gazarta, fearful lest he would meet the same fate as Sulaqa, successfully sought the protection of the Syrian Orthodox patriarch, Ignatius Niʿmatallah, from the Ottomans; Niʿmatallah claimed to be well-connected in Ottoman society (an important reminder that Christian-Ottoman relations were not always hostile).[71] In 1576 Niʿmatallah was forced to abdicate and flee to Rome, where he acted as a nodal point between east and west; he continued to communicate not only with members of his own Church but with both Chaldeans and 'traditionalists'.[72] He seems on occasion to have invoked some form of cross-confessional eastern Christianity identity; he wrote to the Chaldean bishop Eliya Asmar Habib, who was visiting Rome, to tell him to interact with the Roman Christians as little as possible and only to confide and trust in Niʿmatallah himself 'as you are not familiar with the habits of the people of this land and with their nature'.[73] Despite doctrinal and liturgical differences, and historical rivalry, the Syriac Christians could in some contexts feel—or at least plausibly claim to feel, if they felt it to be useful—closer to each other than to more 'distant' others, be they European Catholics or local Muslims.[74]

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[69] As attested in the colophon to a manuscript from the Chaldean Diocese of Alqosh, available online via the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, project number DCA 00067, fols 112v–114r. See Pritula 'ʿAbdīšōʿ of Gāzartā', pp. 297–320.

[70] Poem 1, Verse 75; BAV Vat. sir. 45, fol. 140r. BAV Vat. sir. 63 contains a version of the poems and was copied in 1701 by Yawsep I. For Yawsep's variations, see the notes to Vosté, 'Mar Ioḥannan Soulaqa'.

[71] In a document edited in Wicki, *Documenta Indica,* XI: *1577–1580*, pp. 866–867.

[72] On Niʿmatallah's career see esp. Levi della Vida, *Documenti,* pp. 1–113 and Hayek, *Le relazioni:* Part 2. Niʿmatallah was patriarch from 1557 until his abdication in 1576, whereupon he fled to Rome, and lived in Italy until his death in c. 1587. On his ongoing connections with members of various eastern churches, including also the Armenian church, see Krajcar, *Cardinal Giulio Santoro,* pp. 38, 49–50, 91; Borbone and Farina, 'New Documents', pp. 179–189.

[73] Borbone and Farina, 'New Documents', p. 182 (with slight adjustment to the translation by me).

[74] For further discussion of interactions between the Syriac churches, see Parker, 'Interconnected Histories'.

CONCLUSION

The bishop ʿAbd al-Ahad provided near the beginning of his biography of the Chaldean patriarch Yawsep I a garbled account of the schism of 1552, implicitly presenting it as the foundational stage of his own Chaldean church.[75] Sulaqa has in this way often been imagined as the first Chaldean patriarch.[76] But it is far from clear that the events of 1552 witnessed the birth of a new confession. The schism (which probably had its roots in still obscure internal disputes within the Church of the East) did cause a permanent fracturing of political control and legitimacy with the East Syrian tradition, and this did of necessity prompt some processes of differentiation and polemicising between the two parties. This may have encouraged a more active interest in professions of faith and the strong defense of 'Nestorian' beliefs, at least on the 'traditionalist' side. Ultimately, however, this process does not seem to have been accompanied by a clear crystallization of doctrines and confessional mindsets. Beliefs and boundaries remained fluid and changes reversible and subject to historical contingency. We must not forget that union between the successors of Sulaqa and ʿAbdishoʿ and Rome lapsed at the start of the seventeenth century, in a further indication that they had not fully embraced a Catholic confession. A Carmelite missionary, Dionysius of Thorns, who visited a later patriarch of Sulaqa's line, Shemʿon XI, in 1652, reported that this community, although respectful of the pope and open to the missionaries' overtures, had no memory of the terms of their union with the papacy and still venerated Nestorius.[77] This serves as a useful reminder that not only were the eastern Christian 'confessions' not historically fixed and unchanging entities, but fluid and subject to evolution and transformation, but also that boundaries and relations between communities could shift, harden and soften over time.[78] The processes of reversal, of the softening and blurring of boundaries, of the lapsing of confessional changes, deserve as much attention as does the hardening of confessional lines.

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[75] Chabot, 'Origines du patriarcat', p. 69.

[76] The process of the fashioning of a Chaldean lineage, by both western Catholics and Chaldeans themselves, deserves further study. As noted above (see note 70) Yawsep I himself copied ʿAbdishoʿ's poems in a manuscript now surviving in Rome, suggesting an interest in Sulaqa. See now Parker, 'Yawsep I of Amida'.

[77] Chick, *A Chronicle of Carmelites in Persia*, pp. 383–385.

[78] See Heyberger, as cited above note 8.

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