

Further remarks on the Arabic history of the patriarchs of Alexandria

by

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In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the works of the Coptic theologian and controversialist, Severus (Sawirus) ibn al-Muqaffa', bishop of Ašmûnain who flourished in the late 10th century¹. One work to which his name has become inextricably linked is the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*². In a recent article, F. R. Farag has attempted to examine Severus and the early HP from the viewpoint of historiography³. The purpose of the present article is to examine the foundations upon which such a historiographical analysis of the HP must be based. There are many questions which so far remain unanswered about the internal structure of the HP and Severus' role in its composition. For example, can Severus in any sense be called the author of even part of this work? What in fact was his specific role? What were his immediate sources and can it be determined who authored these sources? It will become clear as we proceed that there are no clearcut answers to all of these questions.

The evidence which will be used is drawn principally from a systematic and critical examination of the editorial notes to be found scattered throughout the text and from the prefaces found at the beginning of the work. This examination is limited to the first redactional unit ending with the biography of Shenute II (ob. 1044 A.D.). For such an examination, the edition of Evetts is not sufficient⁴. The Hamburg MS edited by F. Seybold must be consulted⁵. Also one has to search further on into the

¹ See especially K. Samir, "Un traité inédit de Sawirus Ibn al-Muqaffa' (Xe siècle): 'Le Flambeau de l'Intelligence'", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41, 1 (1975), 150-210, with its valuable notes. See also *The Lamp of the Intellect of Severus ibn al-Muqaffa' bishop of Ašmûnain*, ed. by R. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young, CSCO, vols. 365-66/ser. ar. 32-33 (Louvain, 1975).

² Henceforth referred to as HP.

³ F. R. Farag, "The Technique of Research of a Tenth-century Christian Arab Writer: Severus ibn al-Muqaffa'", *Le Muséon* 86 (1973), 37-66.

⁴ *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, ed. by B. Evetts, *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. I, pp. 103-214, 383-518; vol. V, pp. 1-215; vol. X, pp. 359-551, henceforth HPE, PO followed by volume and page numbers.

⁵ *Alexandrinische Patriarchengeschichte von S. Marcus bis Michael I (61-767), nach der*

two parts of the first volume of the Cairo edition which continues where Evetts leaves off and which brings us to the end of the first redactional unit⁶. Only such an investigation will yield a full picture of the structure of this redaction and enable us to determine Severus' role in the formation of the HP, to contrast his role with that of other figures involved with the work, and to determine his immediate sources.

As we have said, the notes are scattered throughout the first redactional unit. They are generally, though not always, at the beginning or end of the main divisions of the work. While some are attributed in the text itself to a specific individual, others contain only such vague identifications as "your poor brother" (إخوكم المسكين), "I the poor one" (أنا فقير) or "the poor wretch" (الناس الحقير). But careful comparison with other notes will enable us to identify even these vague references.

To begin with then, what do we know about Severus himself from the text of the HP? Unfortunately, very little information emerges. He is mentioned in four places. In the biography of Ibrāhīm (or Abrām) the Syrian (975-979), preceding an anecdote about him, he is characterized in this way⁷:

... and there was present among all the bishops a saintly, virtuous bishop of Ašmūnain, called Severus (Sawirus) and known as Ibn al-Mukaffa'. He had been a scribe and then became bishop, and the Lord bestowed upon him grace and power in the Arabic tongue, so that he wrote many books and mīmars and controversies. He who read his books recognized his excellence and the soundness of his knowledge. He (Severus) disputed many times with the kādīs (al-ḫudāh) of the Muslim elders (šuyūkh) by order of the king al-Mu'izz [the first Fatimid; ruled 972-975].

In the life of Philotheus (979-1003), we learn that he wrote twenty books which the author lists by title, and that one of these is a 'Book of Biographies', though the author does not mention of whom they are biographies⁸. Since it is the only work in the list that is neither canonical nor theological, it must be assumed that, if Severus had a hand in the

ältesten 1266 geschriebenen Hamburger Handschrift, ed. by F. C. Seybold (Hamburg, 1912), henceforth HPSH. This editor also produced an edition of the HP with the Arabic text only in CSCO, vols. 52 and 59, which covers the same material as HPE. But HPE is the preferred text.

⁶ *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church, by Sawirus ibn al-Mukaffa'*, vol. II, 1 ed. by Yassâ 'Abd al-Masiḥ and O. H. E. Burmester; vol. II, 2 ed. by A. S. Atiya, Yassâ 'Abd al-Masiḥ and O. H. E. Burmester, henceforth HPC. Cf. K. Samir's remarks on the title in *art. cit.*, p. 150, fnnt. 1.

⁷ HPC II, 2, p. 138. For all of the citations, I have followed the English translations provided by the respective editors. Square brackets [] indicate my own explanatory additions.

⁸ HPC II, 2, pp. 164-65.

composition of the biographies of some of the patriarchs, then this would certainly be that work.

Next, we have the third preface which is attributed in a short editorial note to Severus. This may well be the only original contribution he made to the HP if one accepts the attribution as authentic. The significant parts are as follows⁹:

Since I am one of those who are not fit to write down with their wretched, perishing hands any of the histories of these patriarchs, I requested the help of those Christian brethren with whose fitness I was acquainted, and begged them to assist me in translating the history that we found written in the Coptic and Greek languages into the Arabic tongue, current among the people of the present day in the region of Egypt most of whom are ignorant of the Coptic and the Greek, so that they might be satisfied with such translations when they read them.

After begging his readers' indulgence for his errors, he continues¹⁰:

And I copied that which I knew not from the men of old, in agreement with the canons of the Church, according to that which is now about to be related, besides what tradition and history teach. And I added to the rest what I knew of the histories of the fathers and patriarchs whom I myself had beheld.

The first two notes help to date Severus' productive period to at least the last half of the 10th century. The nature of the bibliography in the second note sounds like a final summation of his work, so that it is doubtful that he lived beyond the time of Philotheus¹¹. The fact that Severus is spoken about in the third person in both notes seems to indicate, though it does not prove, that he himself did not compile these portions of the HP. Nor is he likely to have described himself as "a saintly, virtuous bishop". As we shall see presently, Michael of Tinnîs claims the authorship of both of these biographies.

Is the third preface correctly attributed to Severus? There is no evidence in the text to counter the authenticity of such an attribution. Van Cauwenbergh says that the author of this preface is probably not Severus, but as usual he offers no evidence to support his conjecture¹². The contents of the preface certainly conform to the description of Severus' work as set forth in the first preface, composed by Mawhûb ibn Manşûr. The only difficulty arises where Severus claims to have authored some of the histories himself. Again this appears to clash with the claims of Michael of Tinnîs.

⁹ HPE, PO I, p. 115.

¹⁰ HPE, PO I, p. 116.

¹¹ Cf. Ebied and Young, CSCO, vol. 365, p. VI for their opinion on the date of his death and for further biographical details.

¹² P. van Cauwenbergh, *Étude sur les moines d'Égypte* (Paris, 1915), p. 55.

Severus, then, comes across to us much as Graf described him¹³. He is to be credited with the groundwork, the initial collecting and translating of scattered material dealing with the patriarchs. That this material consisted of some Greek sources, but mostly of Coptic sources, may well be true, but the preface makes no such distinction. It is probably safe however to assume that this long after the Arab conquest, Coptic books would be more readily available than Greek ones. Graf's assertion that Michael ibn Badîr was a collaborator of Severus is false, as will be shown in the very next section. He is nowhere mentioned in connection with Severus. Finally, Graf is quite correct in stating that Severus' work was not brought to a unified conclusion and that what he left could be characterized as 'rough drafts'. The finalization of Severus' work belongs to Mawhûb ibn Manşûr and his collaborators.

Moving now to the redactional level, we shall first identify the editorial notes of the redactor and then comment on them.

The first note, one of the key editorial notes on the redactional level, is found at the end of the life of Shenute II (ob. 1044)¹⁴. This comprehensive and synthetic note marks the end of the first systematic redaction of the HP which resulted in the work's assuming the basic form which has come down to us. It is attributed to the Alexandrian deacon Mawhûb ibn Manşûr ibn Mufarrij who, in 1088 AD., began to redact all the material relating to the histories of the patriarchs which he had been able to collect. First of all he states his goal: "I... yearned to collect [جمع] their (the patriarchs') biographies and to write them down so that this might be of profit to me and to him who shall read them after me". To accomplish this, he traveled to the monastery of St. Macarius in Wadî Natrûn where he met and enlisted the help of the deacon Michael ibn Badîr of Damanhûr¹⁵. Mawhûb and Michael agree to search wherever possible for the material necessary to compile the history. Mawhûb describes the search and the results:

We found in the monastery of the Mistress at Nahyâ the biographies of forty-two patriarchs from my lord Mark (Mâri Markûs) the Evangelist to Simon (Simûn) [ca. 65-701], and we found in the monastery of the venerable Martyr Theodore (Tâdrus) at al-Manhâ at Iblâğ the biographies of four patriarchs from Alexander (Alâksandrûs) to Khaêl (Khâyâl)

¹³ G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, vol. 2, Studi e Testi 133 (Vatican City, 1947), pp. 301-2.

¹⁴ HPC II, 2, pp. 241-44.

¹⁵ Graf, *op. cit.*, p. 301, links this man incorrectly with Severus. Here, he is clearly portrayed as a collaborator with Mawhûb, and subsequent appearances of his name in editorial notes will help confirm their dating. Farag, *op. cit.*, p. 40 repeats this error, and probably for this reason erroneously attributes the fourth preface to Severus.

[i.e., Michael I] who completes forty-six patriarchs [705-767]. We found also in the monastery of Nahyâ the biographies of nine patriarchs from Abba Menas (Anbâ Minâ) to Šenouti (Šanûdah) [i.e., Shenute I] who completes the fifty-fifth patriarch [767-880], and we found in the monastery of Abba Macarius (Abû Maḳâr) the biographies of the ten patriarchs from Khaêl, the fifty-sixth, to Šenouti (Šanûtiûs), the sixty-fifth [Michael III to Shenute II, 880-1044] which Abba Michael, bishop of Tinnis, wrote...

He concludes the note by saying :

Since I have these biographies complete, and I have transcribed them in my handwriting and have them with me at Alexandria, it is now necessary for me to begin to describe what follows...

He then begins his own continuation of the HP with the biography of Christodoulus.

The second note which must be attributed with some reservations to Mawhûb because it mentions Michael ibn Badîr, is found at the end of the life of Simon I (689-701)¹⁶:

Here ends the sixteenth chapter wherein the History of the Fathers is completed, as far as the life of Abba Simon, the forty-second patriarch... Hereafter will follow that which we have translated from the documents in the Monastery of Saint Macarius, namely the history of ten patriarchs, from Michael the Last to Sinuthius the First [i.e., from Michael III to Shenute II]. We also translated in this monastery the lives of nine other patriarchs, in the year of the Martyrs [= 1080 A.D.]. This is written by Apacyrus, the deacon, and Michael, son of Apater [ibn Badîr], of Damanhur... We have compared the manuscripts with one another, and found them corresponding with what we copied; and so we assured ourselves of their authenticity.

The third note which must be attributed to Mawhûb is found at the end of the fourth preface¹⁷. Again he mentions Michael ibn Badîr and states that Michael is responsible for making translations of some of the documents from Coptic into Arabic. He continues :

This was in addition to that which was found in the great city, and the abridgments of certain histories which were found, the first of them relating to Christ... For the first of these documents is that which is translated in the monastery of our Lady at Nahya, concerning the matter of the priesthood of Christ the Lord.

The fourth and final note is the first preface. The note is also probably Mawhûb's work, though it may be a later addition. It is certainly written

¹⁶ HPE, PO V, pp. 47-8. Cf. Evetts' notes on this passage. This might better be described as a remnant of Mawhûb's note. The date given here does not square very well with that of the first note. Nor does the material from Michael III to Shenute II follow after Simon. The note has the earmarks of later redacting. Again Farag attributes this note to Severus, *op. cit.*, p. 41; also p. 59, where the error introduces one of his major themes.

¹⁷ HPE, PO I, p. 120. Three MSS, C, D and E, omit this preface, but HPSH includes it. Farag uses this material to describe Severus' work, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

after the time of Severus, and its contents correspond to what Mawhûb says in the first and second notes. After a short introduction stating the general contents of the histories, Mawhûb concludes¹⁸:

These histories here given were collected from various places by the care of the celebrated father, Abba Severus son of al-Mukaffa, bishop of the city of Al-Ushmunain, who relates that he gathered them together from the monastery of Saint Macarius and the monastery of Nahya and other monasteries, and from scattered fragments which he found in the hands of the Christians. And when these documents were put together by your poor brother into a single volume, after research and trouble on his part, God gave him a long life, until a day came when he wrote out this history and set it in order; but it was not completed until the end of his eightieth year.

This is the only note in which Mawhûb mentions Severus by name.

The four editorial notes of Mawhûb are not without their ambiguities. But several firm conclusions can be drawn from them. The first and most important is that Mawhûb, together with his collaborators, collected already existing material for their redaction. An ambiguity arises when one tries to imagine just how this collecting took place. In Severus' own note, no topography is given for his collecting. But in the fourth of the notes attributed to Mawhûb, a topography is attached to Severus which is similar to that which Mawhûb claims to have followed in his own pursuit of the material. Is one to conclude from this that Severus left the material he found in the various monastic locations where Mawhûb then rediscovered it? Or was Severus' work somehow rescattered? Or did he perhaps leave only a list of the sources? Or, finally, did Mawhûb (or some later editor) impose some of the topography of Mawhûb on Severus? The notes seem ambiguous on this point.

Secondly, it is clear that this redaction contained not only the collected material in some form or other, but new material added by the redactors. The evidence for this is found in the third note where it is stated that Michael ibn Badîr was commissioned to translate material from Coptic into Arabic. Since Severus claimed in his preface to have translated his material into Arabic, it must be assumed that any translating done after his time was added¹⁹. Just what this material was is not altogether clear

¹⁸ HPE, PO I, pp. 106-7. Note that MSS C and E omit this preface, as does HPSH. MS D (Vat. ar. 620, 17th cent.) conflates the end of the preface by omitting the "poor brother" and making Severus responsible for both collecting and redacting. This is not the preferred reading. Graf, *op. cit.*, p. 302 states that Mawhûb placed his preface before that of Severus. He cannot mean the second preface, since there is no editorial material in that preface by which its author could be identified. All that can be said about the second preface is that, since it rhymes, it was composed in Arabic and is therefore probably written sometime after the 10th century.

¹⁹ See above, fnt. 9.

from the third note. The fourth preface as a whole seems to be an introduction to the 'Priesthood of Christ'. But the note at the end of the preface seems to count this piece among the items found. The note does not distinguish clearly whether this material is that of Severus or some further Coptic or Greek material that was found subsequently.

Graf states that Mawhûb added the biography of St. Mark to his redacted work²⁰. But this is not at all clear from the text itself. In the first preface, it may be possible to see a distinction being made at the very outset between the patriarchs and St. Mark, whose successors they are. Thus in writing a history of the patriarchs, one could separate off St. Mark's biography as the HPSH has done. However, according to Severus' own preface, the facts of St. Mark's life are known "according to the evidence of his biography"²¹. If Severus did not include a biography of St. Mark, he certainly knew of one and was able to draw on it for the initial remarks in his preface. But the matter must remain ambiguous on the basis of the evidence presently at hand.

At the end of the first note, Mawhûb tells us that he transcribed (نسخ) the completed work in his own handwriting²². This clearly refers to the final redaction after all the collecting and collating has been accomplished. In the second note, he uses a more ambiguous word, نقل, which Evetts renders 'translate'. Here, as opposed to Michael ibn Badîr's commission to translate (also نقل) from Coptic to Arabic, the word would be better rendered as 'transcribe' or 'transmit'²³. It refers to the work Mawhûb did with the already translated rough copy of Severus. In fact it describes the overall work of redaction.

Finally, Mawhûb clearly distinguishes his own work from that of Severus. Where Severus simply collected (جمع), Mawhûb collected Severus' material and put it together into a single book (جمع في هذا الكتاب).

Another solid piece of information is found in the first note where Mawhûb delineates the various blocks of material he collected along with their respective provenances. If this note gives an accurate picture, then the

²⁰ Graf, *op. cit.*, p. 302. Graf also says that the Hamburg MS, the oldest extant one, preserves the redaction of Mawhûb. But this MS, against all those used by Evetts, omits the biography of St. Mark, while stating that it can be found in another book.

²¹ HPE, PO I, p. 115.

²² HPC II, 2, p. 244.

²³ There is a note by Michael of Tinnis at the end of the "Canons of Athanasius" in which he uses نقل to describe his work. See Crum-Riedel, *The Canons of Athanasius* (London, 1904), p. 69, where the word is rendered as 'copied', but the footnote has 'or translated'. Cf. also Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (Leipzig, 1900), p. 58. Both editors favor 'copy' over 'translate'.

redactors seemingly were not faced with the chaotic condition of the sources as described by Severus. As we shall see below, these blocks correspond very neatly to the blocks either as described by the authors of the respective sources in their own editorial notes or as defined by process of elimination from the evidence of the text.

Among the blocks of material which Mawhûb delineates in the first note quoted above, only one is assigned to an individual author, namely Michael of Tinnîs. Just before the biography of Michael III is a note attributed, presumably by Mawhûb, to Michael of Tinnîs. After the usual introduction, he says²⁴:

I found what the biographies contained which had been set forth by the saintly fathers through the power of the Holy Spirit, which was adopted by the Church from the time of the saintly Father, the Evangelist, my Lord Mark (Mâri Markûs), the pure virgin, the martyr, down to the time of the father Abba Šenouti (Anbâ Sânuťiûs) who is the fifty-fifth, who was consecrated patriarch after Abba Cosmas (Anbâ Kûsmâ)... After him, down to the time of Abba Šenouti (Anbâ Sânuťiûs) the sixty-fifth [i.e., Shenute II], who ordained me... nothing was written of biographies. Then I, the wretched (one), Michael (Mikhâyil), wrote this with God's help to me...

Toward the end of the life of Shenute II, we learn that Michael while still a deacon was made secretary to that patriarch²⁵. Shenute also ordained him a priest, and he was consecrated a bishop by Christodoulus. He states that he finished his work in the year 767 of the era of the Martyrs (= 1051 A.D.)²⁶. Thus Michael's work according to his own testimony spanned the years 880-1044. This conforms to the period allotted to him on Mawhûb's list.

Before dealing with Michael's claims over against those of Severus who claims to have written histories covering the events of his own day — two seemingly unreconcilable claims — let us proceed first to the identification of the other sources on Mawhûb's list.

For the sources prior to Michael of Tinnîs, the note found at the beginning of the life of patriarch Menas (767-774) is crucial²⁷.

And so in every generation God has not left us without record. Thus there was the archdeacon, the spiritual parent of our father, the holy Abba Cosmas, patriarch of Alexandria, who was his kinsman. And Abba Macarius also, and Macarius the monk. And after them John, the spiritual son of Abba Moses, bishop of Wasîm.

The author of the note continues :

²⁴ HPC II, 2, p. 102.

²⁵ HPC II, 2, p. 235.

²⁶ HPC II, 2, pp. 240-41.

²⁷ HPE, PO X, p. 360.

And I, poor sinner, was ordered by my father the monk through a dream which he saw... and he bade me and commanded me to write the history of my blessed fathers, both what I have witnessed and what was reported to me by trustworthy persons. For I was ministering to my father Abba Joseph, and slept at his feet... And likewise the father patriarch Abba Sinuthius [Shenute I] bade me write.

This note accounts for five people who are portrayed as the authors of successive portions of the biographies of the patriarchs. The author of the note was privy at least to events of the reigns of the patriarchs from Joseph to Shenute I, i.e., from 830 to 880. Since this note forms the introduction to the life of Menas, it is safe to assume that he covers the period from 767 to 880.

From further editorial notes, it is possible to identify this "poor sinner" as a certain John. In one note, he clearly identifies himself as the author of the biography of Shenute I (858-880) and goes on to recount how, in a dream, he is reminded by the old monk, Ammon, that he is to start writing the 18th *sira* of the lives of the patriarchs²⁸. Ammon reminds him of the conversation which they had while Ammon was still living and the fact that he taught John to write. He then goes on to say that

none would write the eighteenth biography till he come, the first (letter) of whose name is eighteen... Thou shalt be the writer of the whole of his encomium, the first (letter) of whose name is eighteen, who is our father Sinouthius.

In response to John's apparent bewilderment, he explains :

If thou count from one to a hundred, which is from **A** to **P**, thou wilt find seventeen letters, and the eighteenth letter is **C** which is the first (letter) of the name of this father Šenouti (Šanūdah).

When John awakens, he is doubtful about his ability and worthiness to carry out this task. But, reassured by his companions, he continues :

From that time I began to write the eighteenth, the nineteenth and twentieth biographies, according to what I heard from the tongue of the trustworthy and faithful brethren who observed what I myself also observed with my eyes with regard to my holy fathers.

The information presented by John II in this note agrees with that found in the note at the beginning of the life of Menas. The "poor sinner" of that note mentions the dream and the role of the monk, Ammon. The note also fixes *sira* 18 at the beginning of Menas' life, according to John II's reckoning at any rate. That note also mentions that Shenute I

²⁸ HPC II, 1, pp. 49-50. Henceforth this John will be designated John II; the spiritual son of Moses will be designated John I. The monk Ammon's method of 'abjad' counting, which assigns letters for the units in the second decade, is based on the Greek form of Shenute's name which begins with **C** instead of **Ω**.

told him to start writing and thus anchors the composition of John II's *siras* in Shenute's patriarchate.

In the latter part of the life of Shenute I, John II mentions a John who is the secretary to Shenute. Even though he speaks of this man in the third person, the context makes it quite probable that he speaking about himself²⁹. A further piece of autobiography emerges when he tells us that he was taught to write by the monk, Ammon (the same man mentioned above), in the 10th year of the patriarchate of Joseph (i.e., 840)³⁰. He goes on to say that the old monk had in his possession the 17 *siras* of the Church and told him to write the 18th *sira* when he comes whose name is eighteen. We now have notes at the beginning, middle and end of this block of material, all attributable to John II. Therefore it is certain that this section of the histories is his work.

Besides the information that these notes reveal about John II, they also throw light on the structure of the HP in the 9th century. First, the habit of dividing the work into histories (*sira*) is already established by this time. It is most likely an imitation of the division into a series of histories (ἱστορία) of the Church found in the Coptic *History of the Church*, fragments of which have come down to us. An examination of the various MSS of the HP reveals some confusion about the organization of the *siras*. John II, as we have seen, claims to have begun his work with the life of Menas and designated it *sira* 18. However, in HPE and HPSH, it is *sira* 19. This discrepancy first shows up in HPE with the biography of Michael I which there is *sira* 18. According to John II's numbering, Michael should be *sira* 17. But the author of the biography, John I, states that he will now write the 18th *sira* of the *siras* of the Church. The confusion generated by this discrepancy is further aggravated by the ambiguity of several of Evett's notes in his *apparatus* dealing with the numbering. Suffice it to say that it is clear from John II's editorial notes that he thought he was composing *siras* 18 through 20. Otherwise, his whole explanation of the significance of the letter c would collapse. It may be also that the copy of the histories which the monk, Ammon, had in his possession led John II to base his numbering on that copy. Whatever the explanation might prove to be, it is clear that John II's numbering represents a different recension of the HP from that which HPE has chosen to follow.

Backing up on John II's list, we now come to John I, the spiritual son

²⁹ HPC II, 1, p. 76.

³⁰ HPE, PO X, pp. 531-32. Here Farag correctly makes a distinction between Severus and "one of the scribes", *art. cit.*, p. 41.

of Moses, bishop of Wasim. A John the deacon who wrote in the time of the patriarch Michael I (744-767) is mentioned by van Cauwenbergh³¹. It would appear from the sequence of John II's list that John I is that individual, the immediate predecessor of John II in terms of the composition of the biographies. He must then have been the author of the biography of Michael I. On examination of the editorial note at the beginning of Michael I's biography, it is possible to determine the very point at which John I starts his work. The note reads in part³²:

And for the history of the events subsequent to that, from the time of the Father Cyril when he was in the monastery of Ablah, down to the days of the father and confessor Alexander, we may consult the teacher and scribe in his time, who was the archdeacon and companion and secretary of the Father Patriarch Abba Simon, patriarch of Alexandria, namely the monk Abba George. For he wrote that history on the mountain of the holy Macarius in the Wadi Habib, and informed us of what happened in the time of Marcian, the unbelieving prince, and the trouble that overtook our fathers and those who came after them, down to the time of Sulaiman, son of Abd al-Melik, the prince of the Muslims after whom reigned Omar, son of Abd al-Aziz who drove away Usamah, the unbelieving governor...

From this, it can be inferred that John I began where George left off, namely at the point in time when Omar succeeded Suleiman. This point of transition can be located exactly in the life of Alexander II³³. John I is responsible for the completion of the life of Alexander II, and for the lives of Cosmas I, Theodore and Michael I. Nothing further is known about this man's life.

Skipping for the moment the two Macarii, we come now to the archdeacon. To identify the archdeacon, we refer to the note just quoted. George, the archdeacon, according to this note, wrote the biographies of the patriarchs from roughly the first quarter of the 5th century to the year 717, the accession of Omar. According to an earlier sentence in this same note, the biographies which preceded George's work were to be found written down in a book ending with the twelfth part of the histories of the Church. According to John II's list, the archdeacon is said to be the first to have continued the biographies contained in the twelfth part of the history of the Church, thus tying John II's archdeacon to George, the secretary of patriarch Simon³⁴. This is not inconsistent with his being described as the spiritual father of patriarch Cosmas. His association with Simon, who died in 701, would indicate that he was

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

³² HPE, PO V, pp. 90-1. Farag attributes this note to Severus, *art. cit.*, p. 41, ftns. 21, 25.

³³ HPE, PO V, p. 71.

³⁴ HPE, PO X, pp. 359-60.

probably senior to or at least a close contemporary of Cosmas, who ruled briefly from 730 to 731.

The two remaining names on John II's list, Macarius and Macarius the monk, are difficult to account for. They cannot be identified with any block of writing, since the authors already dealt with combine to cover the biographies of the entire period in question. No solution is forthcoming in any of the editorial notes. We are simply left to wonder who these men are and why John II included them on his list.

So far, we have accounted for the authorship of the various sections of the HP from ca. 425 to 1044 A.D. There remains the period from the beginning of the work to 425, or more accurately to the time of Dioscorus, because this is in fact where the Coptic *History of the Church* takes us. This history and George's section overlap. The two notes which mention this history say essentially the same thing. But the one attributed to John I has a much fuller description than the later note of John II. John I first summarizes the events connected with the spread of Christianity, not just in Egypt, but also in Rome, Antioch and Ephesus³⁵. He mentions the heresy of Nestorius and the role of patriarch Cyril in that struggle. He concludes :

This is shown to us by that book which begins with the names of the patriarchs as far as the true confessor and champion, Dioscorus, who anathematized Leo, the soul-devouring lion, as his name implies, and excommunicated the six hundred and thirty assembled at Chalcedon, and Marcian the prince and the vile princess Pulcheria, and all the followers of Leo, and was deposed by command of the princes and sent into exile, where he finished his fight. Dioscorus brought back many souls to the Lord Christ by his action. And all that happened was written down for us to that point in the twelfth part [*sira*] of the histories of the Church.

Does any editorial note mention an author for this first source? John II mentions someone who might well be a Coptic author in connection with the history when he says : "and those who wrote the history of the orthodox Church were Africanus and Eusebius and Sozomenus; and after them again Mennas the scribe"³⁶. The note of John I gives the same list but omits Mennas the scribe³⁷. John II probably copied his note from John I or from some other common source. The same information appears in a note found in the life of Dioscorus³⁸. This note includes Mennas but omits Sozomen.

³⁵ HPE, PO V, p. 90. This is the first part of the note quoted above in fnt. 32.

³⁶ HPE, PO X, p. 359.

³⁷ HPE, PO V, p. 89.

³⁸ HPE, PO I, p. 444. This note attributes specific material to Mennas the scribe, and it provides a strong case for attributing to him the Coptic *History of the Church* in twelve books. The note says that Mennas "wrote of the trials and persecution endured by the pastors and

It is tempting to round off the list of authors by simply attributing the Coptic *History of the Church* ending with the twelfth book to Mennas. He seems to fit that role very well. But nowhere in the notes is he linked to that specific book, although he is linked to its general contents. All we can say for certain is that he continued the history of the Church down to Dioscorus. That he is included among the 'orthodox' would indicate that he was anti-chalcedonian.

By way of summary, it will be helpful to schematize what has come to light from the evidence of the HP concerning the authorship of the various sections.

The Patriarchs of Alexandria

- 1) Mark to Dioscorus (?-451)
- 2) Cyril (at Ablah) to the first part of Alexander II
- 3) Second part of Alexander II to Michael I
(717-768)
- 4) Menas I to Shenute I (768-880)
- 5) Michael III to Shenute II (880-1044)

The Authors

- Unknown, perhaps
Mennas the scribe
- George the archdeacon
- John I
- John II
- Michael of Tinnîs.

If the analysis of the editorial notes as presented here is accepted, it becomes clear that there is no place for original composition on the part of Severus ibn al-Muqaffa'. Michael of Tinnîs claims to have found nothing written down after the life of Shenute I, while John II makes it quite evident that he wrote the material from Menas down to and including Shenute I. But, as has been pointed out above, in the third preface Severus claims that after copying from the men of old, he added to the rest "what I know of the histories of the fathers and patriarchs whom I myself beheld". It seems, then, either that Michael of Tinnîs claims credit for more than he actually wrote and that in fact he co-opted part of Severus' work, or that the third preface is spurious, perhaps written sometime after the first redaction and then conveniently attributed to Severus. This would leave Severus' role as a collector unchallenged, but his role of author would be forfeit. It does seem a bit strange if Severus

their flocks in the days of the patriarch Abba Cyril the Wise, and what passed between him and Nestorius; also of what Father Dioscorus after him suffered at the Council of Chalcedon". See T. Orlandi, *Storia della chiesa di Alessandria*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1968-70), for many of the Coptic fragments of this history. I hoped to publish soon some added fragments which cover the period from Nestorius' exile down to exile of Dioscorus. HPSH, p. 67 has a different explanation for the omission of the material on Dioscorus; it says that it has already been treated fully in another book. Cf. above, fnnt. 20, for a similar note with regard to the biography of St. Mark.

who was alive into the last quarter of the 10th century did not bring the HP up to his own time, but left this task to be taken up sometime after 1044 by Michael of Tinnîs. Thus, while on the basis of the third preface, both collection of material and original authorship must be claimed for Severus, it would still have to be determined just what this original material was. And here the evidence is wanting. Severus, then, becomes one of the more shadowy figures connected with the HP.

The final schematization of the sources given above, it should be noted, corresponds almost exactly to the list of sources and their provenances given by Mawhûb at the end of the redaction³⁹. The only difference lies in the failure of that list to indicate the divided authorship of the biography of Alexander II. But the list is close enough, and it reinforces the schematization that has been constructed on the evidence of the editorial notes. It also reinforces by implication the exclusion of Severus from the role of original author.

The conclusions, as well as the ambiguities, presented here form the startingpoint for any historiographical analysis of Severus or of the HP up to 1044 A.D. In many ways, the analysis seems too simple and clearcut⁴⁰. One possible avenue of further investigation would be a thorough stylistic analysis of the Arabic text in order to decide whether the evidence of the notes alone is sufficient to determine the general structure of the work. This has been attempted in this article only on the most superficial level.

³⁹ See above, fnnt. 14.

⁴⁰ It is certainly not in agreement with A. von Gutschmid, *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1890), p. 402. The contradiction mentioned at the bottom of that page has so far eluded me.