

## Chronological Problems Concerning the Lives of Severus bar Mašqā, Athanasius of Balad, Julianus Romāyā, Yoḥannān Sābā, George of the Arabs and Jacob of Edessa

1.0 A mist of mystery is spread over the history of the West-Syrian Church at the end of the viiith centuries<sup>1</sup>. In modern literature uncertainty prevails concerning the chronology of some of the major events in the lives of the men who dominated Monophysite life between 680 and 710 A.D. No special study seems to have ever been devoted to this period. The lists of patriarchs in Spuler (1964) and Hage (1966) are at variance with each other<sup>2</sup>. Hage, whose dissertation remains the most informative study on the history of the West-Syrian Church in the viiith and viiith centuries, did not make use of all the material available. It did not fit into his plan, moreover, to discuss statements in the sources that are deviant from those of his main authority, Michael the Syrian. Brock (1976) has gathered essential information about all the regular sources that refer to the viiith century, but it was not his intention to discuss their contents. Nor could he pay attention to the casual remarks that can be found in some manuscripts. There is reason, therefore, to find out whether it is possible to clear up the chronology of this period, in the hope that in this way a basis is laid for a study that will do justice to all the aspects of its history. That study will not be written by me.

It may be helpful to begin with a survey of the patriarchs and "maphrians"<sup>3</sup> involved and of the initial and final dates of their pontificates, as given by Michael the Syrian (MS) and Barhebraeus (BH). All dates in this section are given according to the Seleucid era. More details will be provided below.

1 I am much indebted to Professor L. Van Rompay and Mrs. drs. Peri Bearman, who kindly commented on argument and style of this paper. For the remaining errors I am responsible. Dr. J. J. S. Weitenberg was willing to discuss with me the Armenian translation of Michael the Syrian. It proved to have no bearing on our subject.

The abbreviations used will be explained at the end of this article. Where Syriac sources are quoted, references to modern translations have been added.

2 Spuler (1964) 213, Hage (1966) Table A.

3 For this time the term "maphrian" is an anachronism; see Hage (1966) 25 n. 214 and Fiey (1974) 139-140.



Some obvious conclusions are drawn in § 2. The real problems are mustered in § 3. We will have a look at our resources in § 4. In § 5 an attempt is made to solve some chronological problems. Our conclusions are to be found in § 6.

### 1.1. *Patriarchs*:

Severus bar Mašqā — ord. 978 (MS?), 979 (BH), died 991 (BH), 995 (MS), having held his post 12 years (MS, BH);

Athanasius of Balad — ord. 991 (BH), 995 (MS, BH), died in September 998 (MS, BH), having held his post 3 years (MS, BH);

Julianus Romāyā — ord. November 999 (MS, BH), died 1019 (MS, BH), having held his post 20 years (MS), 21 years (MS, BH).

“*Maphrians*”: (only BH)

Bar ʾIšoʾ — ord. 980, died 17 December 995, having held his post 15 years;

Abraham — died after a short time;

David — died after 6 months;

interregnum — 6 years;

Yoḥannān Sābā — died January (999), having held his post 1 year and 6 months;

Denḥā II — ord. March 999, died October 1039, having held his post 40 years.

2.0. The Seleucid year ran from 1 October to 30 September. In order to find the corresponding dates in the Christian era, one has to subtract the number 312 (for the period 1 October - 31 December) or 311 (for the other months) from the number of the Seleucid year.

Some simple conclusions can be drawn immediately.

2.1. Patriarch Athanasius of Balad died on 11 September 998 Sel., according to MS IV 446<sup>a</sup>-447<sup>a</sup> 4 (II 474); the same month and the same year were meant by Barhebraeus, as appears from BH I 293-6<sup>5</sup>. The date corresponds to 11 September 687, not to 11 September 686, as e.g. Baumstark, Spuler, Ortiz de Urbina and Vööbus state<sup>6</sup>.

4 As is well known, Michael presented his material in either one, two or three columns. The terms *gawrā ʿellāyā*, ‘the superior column’, and *gawrā taḥtāyā*, ‘the inferior column’ (MS IV 377), do not refer to the right and left columns of the page respectively, as Chabot in his Introduction to MS (Ixxiv) says, but to the exterior and interior columns respectively. On the odd pages (= the recto side of the folios), therefore, the *gawrā ʿellāyā* is the left column, on the even pages it is the right one.

In the following, I will use the symbol <sup>a</sup> to refer to the outside column of Michael’s text, and <sup>b</sup> (and <sup>c</sup>) to denote the following one(s).

5 See further below, § 5.4.3.

6 Baumstark (1922) 256, Spuler (1964) 213, Ortiz de Urbina (1965) 183, Vööbus (1970) 202. Hage (1966) Table A has the correct dating. On Athanasius’ dates see below, § 5.4.



2.2. Two months after the death of Athanasius, George of the Arabs was ordained bishop, in November (MS IV 447<sup>a</sup>-II 474) 687, therefore. We find the same data in the text of BH I 293 (294)<sup>7</sup>. The consecration did not take place, therefore, in November 686, as was thought by Abbeloos-Lamy, Ryssel, Baumstark, Ortiz de Urbina and Vööbus<sup>8</sup>, but in November 687, as Hage and de Halleux saw<sup>9</sup>.

2.3. In the same month, MS IV 447<sup>a</sup> (II 474) continues, Julianus Romāyā was consecrated patriarch, that is to say in November 687, which corresponds to *Tešrin* II 999 Sel., the date mentioned in Michael's Appendix III (MS IV 752 - III 449). The same year is named by BH I 295 (296). It is clear that Hage is correct in placing Julianus' ordination in November 687, whereas Spuler's date (688) is based on an error<sup>10</sup>.

Julianus died, according to MS IV 448<sup>a</sup> (II 476), BH I 295 (296) and all the other sources, in 1019 Sel., i.e. in 707/8. In his Appendix III Michael holds that his pontificate lasted 20 years (MS IV 752 - III 449). This is correct. In his main text, however, Michael says that Julianus reigned 21 years (MS IV 448<sup>a</sup> - II 476). The source of this error is obvious. In the latter passage Michael subtracted 998, the last date he had mentioned (MS IV 447<sup>a</sup> - II 474) from 1019 (MS IV 448<sup>a</sup> - II 476), without realizing that by November the new year 999 had already started. Barhebraeus, who is wholly dependent on Michael here, simply copied this error (BH I 295-296).

We may now already conclude that the year of Julianus' death is correctly rendered by Hage. Spuler's date (708) is a little too exact<sup>11</sup>.

3.0. The real problems arise from the fact that MS and BH sometimes provide contradictory or inconsistent information, as a glance at our § 1.1. proves. Evidence that can be gathered from other sources makes the mist still denser. The problems involved have been noticed in the secondary literature, though they have never been discussed in relation with each other, as far as I know. In the following subsections they are presented more or less in the form modern scholars have left them.

7 See further below, § 5.4.3.

8 Abbeloos-Lamy in BH I 304 n. 4, Ryssel (1891) xv, Baumstark (1922) 257 (the specification that the consecration took place on 11 November is due to a misunderstanding of Chabot's "teshrin II (nov.)" in MS II 474), Ortiz de Urbina (1965) 183. Vööbus (1970) 219, who bases himself on Ryssel (= November 686), erroneously speaks of Barhebraeus as representing "Another tradition" (= November 687).

9 Hage (1966) 96, de Halleux in *Le Muséon* 94 (1981) 208. For another, incorrect, dating see below, § 5.3.

10 Hage (1966) Table A, Spuler (1964) 213.

11 Hage (1966) Table A, Spuler (1964) 213. See below, § 5.2.



3.1. According to Spuler, Severus bar Mašqā died in “680 (683/4?)”<sup>12</sup>. Hage states that his death fell in 683/4. In a note he adds, without discussion, that BH mentions the year 679/80<sup>13</sup>.

3.2. Abbeloos-Lamy point out<sup>14</sup> that, according to BH I 285 (286), Severus bar Mašqā wrote a letter to *Yoḥannān mapryānā d-madnhā*, whereas it is said in the second part of the *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* that Yoḥannān had been “maphrian” for only one year and a half when he died in January 688 (BH II 145-146)<sup>15</sup>.

The letter of Mar Severus makes up part of a collection of six letters that document the end of a conflict between the patriarchate of Antioch and some bishops. The letters have been preserved in MS IV 438-444 - II 458-468<sup>16</sup>. Fiey correctly observed that, whereas Severus addressed Yoḥannān in his letter as *mētrō d-purnāsā madnhāyā d-Bēt Parsāyē* (MS IV 438<sup>a</sup> - II 458), the formerly rebellious bishops gave him the title of *mētrō d-ʿumrā d-Mār(y) Mattay* (MS IV 438<sup>b</sup> - II 458) and Yoḥannān spoke of himself as *mētroṗ d-ʿumrā d-Mār(y) Mattay wa-d-Bēt Parsāyē* (MS IV 439<sup>b</sup> - II 460). Possibly, Fiey writes, there were some doubts whether the see of Tagrit was occupied legitimately at that time<sup>17</sup>. Hage puts it in this way: “der Metropolit Johannes Sabā, dem dieser Titel offiziell nur für die Provinz Aṭōr und Nineve zustand, (ließ sich) ... vom Patriarchen als ‘Metropolit Persiens’ anreden”<sup>18</sup>, but this formulation leaves the responsibility of the patriarch himself for this address out of account. In any case, the designations referred to do not contribute to an immediate understanding of the function Yoḥannān held at the time these letters were written<sup>19</sup>.

3.3. Abbeloos-Lamy make clear, furthermore, that Barhebraeus’ datings in BH II, referring to “maphrians”, are inconsistent with those in BH I, which relate to patriarchs<sup>20</sup>. According to BH II 133 (134), “maphrian” Abraham<sup>21</sup> was ordained by patriarch Athanasius (of Balad), but died after a short time. His death was approximately coincident with that of the patriarch (BH II 141-2), who died in September 687 (BH I 293-294)<sup>22</sup>. The pontificate of Abraham’s successor, David, lasted only six months, after which the see of

12 Spuler (1964) 213.

13 Hage (1966) Table A with n. 27. See below, § 5.5.

14 Abbeloos-Lamy in BH II 146 n. 2.

15 For the year see below, § 3.3. and 5.6.1.

16 For these letters see below, § 4.1.1.

17 Fiey (1974) 378.

18 Hage (1966) 38.

19 See below, § 5.7.

20 Abbeloos-Lamy in BH II 146 n. 2 and cf. R. Abramowski (1940) 91 n. 1.

21 See above, § 1.1.

22 See above, § 2.1.



Tagrit remained empty for six years (BH II 141-142), which brings us to at least the year 693. The next “maphrian” was Yoḥannān Sābā, who died, after a reign of one year and a half, in January of an unspecified year (BH II 145-146). By then we are in, say, the year 695. His successor, however, Denḥā II, was consecrated in March 688 (BH II 145-146). Hage notes the problem also<sup>23</sup>.

3.4. According to Vööbus (1970), no certainty can be reached about the year in which Jacob of Edessa was ordained bishop and the date of his death. In his view, the first event can have taken place in 675/6 or 680, as well as in 684, whereas Jacob's death can be placed in either 704, 708 or 710. Moreover, he held that our sources give rise to uncertainty as to the circumstances under which Jacob died<sup>24</sup>. In 1977 he was ready to accept the generally adopted view that Jacob died in 708, but he remained sceptic about the other issues<sup>25</sup>.

3.5. It is clear that the exact chronological setting of some events that took place around 700 A.D. is still problematic. Considered separately, none of the questions involved can be solved with the available evidence. The only way out is to discuss them in their mutual relationship.

4.0. Before treating the problems themselves, we have to inspect the instruments at our disposal. These are:

- 1) documents, preserved either independently or within the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian,
- 2) statements made by Michael the Syrian in his main text or in his Appendix III,
- 3) statements made by Barhebraeus in BH II,
- 4) data found in other Syriac or Arabic sources,
- 5) sound reasoning.

The first three items deserve a separate treatment.

4.1.1. An important part in our discussions will be played by a corpus of six letters, which has been preserved in MS IV 438-444 (II 458-468). The letters relate to the end of a conflict between a number of the most prominent Monophysite bishops and the patriarchate of Antioch. Peace was signed at the Synod of Reš'ayna<sup>26</sup>. The first of these letters is directed by patriarch

23 Hage (1966) Table B, n. 144. See below, § 5.6.

24 Vööbus (1970) 207-8 and 211-2; Vööbus bases his views on material that is assembled by Baumstark (1922) 248 n. 3.

25 Vööbus (1977). See below, § 5.1.

26 About this conflict see MS IV 436<sup>a</sup>-437<sup>a</sup> (II 456-457), IV 444<sup>a</sup> (II 470) and IV 469<sup>a</sup> (II 513-514), *Chron. ad ann. 1234* II 262-263 (197-198), BH I 283-288 and Hage (1966) 33.



Severus bar Mašqā to Yoḥannān Sābā, at that moment, as we will see, metropolitan of Mar Mattay<sup>27</sup>. Severus writes that his end is near and asks Yoḥannān to prevent the rebellious bishops from taking advantage of his death. One of his supporters, Severus makes clear, is Mar Gabriel (MS IV 438<sup>a</sup>-440<sup>a</sup> - II 458-462)<sup>28</sup>. The five other letters are written after Severus' death. In two of them the rebellious bishops express their wish to restore peace. They are willing to name Severus again in the diptychs and, though they object to the activities of Mar Gabriel of Reš'ayna, who was making arrangements outside his own diocese, they are ready to accept the latter's decisions. They ask him to come to them in Edessa and join them in the pursuit of peace (MS IV 440<sup>a</sup>-442<sup>a</sup> - II 462-465 and IV 442<sup>a</sup>-444<sup>a</sup> - II 564-468). Apparently, the bishops had struck the right note, for we find Mar Gabriel subscribing, together with his former opponents, to a fourth letter, directed to Yoḥannān Sābā, in which the bishops formally renounce their decision to depose patriarch Severus (MS IV 438<sup>b</sup> - II 458-459)<sup>29</sup>. The fifth and sixth letters, written by Yoḥannān Sābā and the joint bishops respectively<sup>30</sup>, announce to the whole Church and its worldly lords that peace has definitely returned.

From this survey it appears that, if we want to read these letters in a chronological order, we must first read the exterior columns of MS IV 438-444 and then the interior ones (corresponding to the left and right columns respectively of II 458-468)<sup>31</sup>, in this way:

1. MS IV 438 <sup>a</sup> -440 <sup>a</sup> - II 458-462	left c.	Severus
2. MS IV 440 <sup>a</sup> -442 <sup>a</sup> - II 462-465	left c.	bishops (– Gabriel)
3. MS IV 442 <sup>a</sup> -444 <sup>a</sup> - II 465-468	left c.	bishops (– Gabriel)
4. MS IV 438 <sup>b</sup> - II 458	right c.	bishops (+ Gabriel)
5. MS IV 439 <sup>b</sup> -441 <sup>b</sup> - II 459-464	right c.	Yoḥannān Sābā
6. MS IV 441 <sup>b</sup> -444 <sup>b</sup> - II 464-468	right c.	bishops (+ Gabriel)

27 See below, § 5.7.

28 The *Chronicon ad annum 1234* II 262-263 (197-198) erroneously makes Gabriel an opponent of Severus. So does, in his wake, Hage (1966) 33 n.305. The *Chronicon ad annum 1234* is dependent on the lost *Chronicle* of (the real) Dionysius of Tellmahre, cf. Fiey in the Introduction to the translation of *Chron. ad ann. 1234* II, p. ix.

Part of the letter is quoted in BH I 285 (286).

29 The fact that Gabriel subscribed to this letter together with the former rebels will have misled (Dionysius of Tellmahre and) the author of the *Chronicon ad annum 1234* (see above n. 28). Gabriel's signature meant no more than that the solidarity between the bishops was restored. Part of this letter is quoted in BH I 285-8.

30 The last letter is not quoted in its entirety by Michael. In the form we have it, it does not speak of the ordination of patriarch Athanasius, though the superscription announces that the subject will be treated (MS IV 441<sup>b</sup> - II 464), cf. below, n. 114. For other extracts in MS see MS IV 413<sup>a</sup> (II 417) and Chabot in MS I 255 n. 1.

31 The survey in Baumstark (1922) 256 needs correction.



This means that the remarks inserted by Michael himself between some of these letters should be read in the same order. The most interesting of them, for our purposes, are those after letters 3 and 4. After letter 3, Michael declares that this letter and the preceding one were copied (or published), with the bishops' permission, by Jacob of Edessa, when he resided in Edessa before being ordained bishop of that city: *hālēn tartēn 'eggrātā Ya'qob 'Urhāyā 'aṣṣah 'enēn men mappsānutā d-'epis(qopē) kad 'āmar (h)wā b-'Urhāy qdām d-nettasrah lāh 'epis(qopā)*<sup>32</sup>. Thereupon (*bātar hālēn*), Michael continues, the bishops went to Reš'ayna and held a synod there under the presidency of Yoḥannān Sābā (MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> - II 468). From the latter part of this note it appears that Gabriel had not accepted the bishops' invitation to come to Edessa. The bishops had to go to Reš'ayna, the see of their most prominent opponent. Letter 4, therefore, was written in Reš'ayna, 'at the request of Yoḥannān' (MS IV 438<sup>b</sup> - 458). It must have been this letter, in which the bishops formally renounced their rebellion, that persuaded Yoḥannān to make the long journey from Mar Mattay to Reš'ayna (MS IV 439<sup>b</sup> - II 460-461). After letter 4, Michael notes: *hālēn hway ba-šnat ṣṣh d-Yawnāyē* (MS IV 439<sup>b</sup> - II 459), which means that, according to Michael, the formal submission of the bishops, which led to the Synod of Reš'ayna, took place in 683/4 A.D. In the narrative part of his work Michael holds the same view: the Synod of Reš'ayna, in which peace was restored, was held in 683/4, after the death of Severus (MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> - II 470).

On this point Michael's communications are of special interest, as becomes clear when they are considered in the light of one of the Syriac texts we just quoted. According to that note, Jacob of Edessa copied (or published) some of the letters the rebellious bishops had written. Within the context of the attempt to reconcile the two conflicting parties this remark was utterly irrelevant. It is improbable, therefore, that Michael borrowed it, directly or indirectly, from any historian other than Jacob himself. The structure of Jacob's historical work, his *Chronicle*, forbids us to assume that Michael took the letters from that work<sup>33</sup>. Presumably, therefore, they stem from a private collection of Jacob, as Abramowski already supposed<sup>34</sup>. It cannot be proven that the notes which accompany the letters in Michael's text were copied from

32 Versions like 'à la demande des évêques' (Chabot) and 'im Auftrag der Bischöfe redigiert' (Baumstark [1922] 256) do not do justice to the Syriac text. By some error Tisserant (1947) holds that Jacob acted as the secretary of a synod in Edessa that was convoked by patriarch Severus. According to him, Jacob himself was at that time a priest. In reality, Jacob was a monk, by then, for all we know (cf. MS IV 445<sup>a</sup> - II 471). The bishops wrote the letters on their own initiative, when Severus was already dead, cf. MS IV 440<sup>a</sup> (II 468).

33 Michael extensively used Jacob's *Chronicle*, see below, § 4.2.1.

34 R. Abramowski (1940) 91. Michael was certainly interested in Jacob's literary legacy, see *Chron. ad ann. 1234* II 314 (235).



remarks by Jacob, but Michael can hardly have written them down if he had found evidence in Jacob's *Chronicle* or his collection of letters that ran counter to their contents. Presumably, therefore, the Synod of Reš'ayna was dated in 683/4 by Jacob himself. We will see below that there is other evidence which supports and specifies this dating<sup>35</sup>.

4.1.2. Michael has preserved still another document, an anonymous *Vita* of Jacob of Edessa. We will discuss this text below<sup>36</sup>.

4.2.0. To assess the historical value of the statements made by Michael himself in his narrative, we have to look at his sources. Fortunately, for our period Michael partly based himself on data that were provided, again, by Jacob of Edessa. Jacob himself took part in the events we are discussing here. It seems worthwhile to examine to what extent Michael depends on Jacob's historical work.

4.2.1. Michael himself asserts that he has incorporated into his work the whole of Jacob's *Chronicle* (MS IV 450-II 482). The *Chronicle* of Jacob of Edessa is to be divided into an introductory part, which treats of the chronology of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, and the so-called 'Canons'. The 'Canons' started where Eusebius' *Chronicle* ended, i.e. in 326 A.D. (JE 263 [200] and 288 [215]). They consisted of a central column, in which Jacob gave a synchronic survey, in tabular form, of the regnal years of the leaders of the most important empires, and two margins, in which he noted the major events that occurred in their years. These remarks were written in a very succinct style, if only because of lack of space. Brooks hesitantly assumed, on the basis of a note by Elias of Nisibis, that Jacob's *Chronicle* ended in 692 A.D.<sup>37</sup>. In this case there was no need for Brooks to be so cautious, for Elias' statement is confirmed by a remark made by Michael himself, who writes that Jacob's *Chronicle* covered the period from Adam to the reign of (the anti-)caliph Abdallah (MS IV 128<sup>b</sup>-I 255). Abdallah died in 692 A.D.<sup>38</sup>. A note by Theodosius of Edessa, preserved in MS *I.c.*, gives the same information<sup>39</sup>. It is beyond doubt, therefore, that the *Chronicle* of Jacob of Edessa ran to the year 692 A.D. Elsewhere, however, Michael states that Jacob's *Chronicle* extended to the year 709/10 (MS IV 450-II 483). We have to assume, therefore, with Brooks<sup>40</sup>, that one of Jacob's disciples continued

35 See below, § 5.1.3., 5.4.1., 5.5.1. and 5.6.1.

36 See below, § 5.1.

37 Brooks in the Introduction to his translation of JE, p. 197, and p. 255 n. 1; see Elias II 99 (111 Chabot, 304 Delaporte); cf. Baumstark (1922) 254.

38 Cf. H. A. R. Gibb in *EI* I 54-55 s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.

39 According to Theodosius, Jacob's *Chronicle* ended with the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian (II; 685-695 A.D.) and that of Abdallah. The caliph's name is here abbreviated to a simple 'Abd, but see Chabot in MS I 255 n. 2.

40 See above, n. 37.



his master's 'Canons' for eighteen years. Michael himself had reached a similar conclusion<sup>41</sup>. We may conclude that Michael had at his disposal an exemplar of the *Chronicle* of Jacob of Edessa, in which the author had come to the year 692 and a continuator to 709/10.

As we said just now, Michael writes that he has inserted the whole of Jacob's *Chronicle* into his own work. We can control this statement only partly, since the fragments of Jacob's *Chronicle* we have at our disposal do not go beyond the year 631 A.D.<sup>42</sup>. As for the introductory part, Michael's claim is on the whole justified<sup>43</sup>, though it is clear that he has abbreviated and omitted passages<sup>44</sup>. On the other hand, in MS IV 42<sup>b</sup>-44<sup>b</sup> (I 71-73) he quotes a passage from Jacob's *Chronicle* that cannot be found back in Brooks' edition of JE. This fact seems to have escaped the notice of Brooks, but it lends weight to his contention that ms. *London Br. Libr. Add.* 14,685, the sole source for his edition of JE, only gives "a series of extracts" from Jacob's *Chronicle*<sup>45</sup>. As regards the 'Canons', Michael could not simply reproduce them, in view of the different plan of his own work. He placed Jacob's central column at the bottom of the page, and the notes in Jacob's margins in suitable places in his own text, retaining the characteristic short notice style which distinguishes them from their context<sup>46</sup>. Chabot holds that in this way Michael succeeded indeed in integrating the complete text of the 'Canons' into his own work<sup>47</sup>. There is not much reason to question his view<sup>48</sup>.

41 In MS IV 450 (II 483) Michael holds, assuming that Jacob had kept working on his *Chronicle* until his death in 708, that a pupil of Jacob prolonged the 'Canons' for two years. As an alternative explanation he is willing to assume that Jacob died only in 709/10, a proposal that will prove to be superfluous, see also below, § 5.1.2. Michael seems not to have observed that his remarks here (Jacob's *Chronicle* ended in 709/10) and those in MS IV 128<sup>b</sup>-1255 (it reached the reign of Abdallah, i.e. till 692) are incompatible.

42 JE 327 (251). In his translation, pp. 252-255, Brooks has supplemented, borrowing from Michael's *Chronicle*, the 'Canons' up to 709/10.

43 Compare JE 261-264 (199-201) with MS IV 127<sup>ab</sup>-128<sup>ab</sup> (I 253-255), JE 278-283 (209-212) with MS IV 76-78 (I 118-120). Jacob's notes in JE 283-287 (212-214) are to be found back, *sparsim*, in MS IV 140 sqq. (I 278 sqq.) and in MS IV 129-130 (I 256-257).

44 See the remark of Chabot in MS I 255 n. 1 and the marginal note in MS IV 129 - I 256, which refers to JE 265-278 (201-209). Michael omitted in MS IV 130 (I 257) the last lines of JE 287 (214).

45 Brooks in *ZDMG* 53 (1899) 263; he did not repeat this statement in his edition and translation of JE.

46 See R. Abramowski (1940) 16.

47 Chabot in the Introduction to MS, I xxvi.

48 One could remark that Jacob's statement, according to which Constantine the Great wrote a letter to bishop Macarius of Jerusalem (JE 288 [215]), does not recur in MS. There may be other slight omissions, but they do not inflict serious doubt as to the correctness of Chabot's view.



From the fragments of Jacob's *Chronicle* that have been preserved it is clear that he used to note, in the right margin, the changes on the Monophysite thrones of Antioch and Edessa<sup>49</sup> as well as those in other prominent sees. We may conclude, therefore, that Michael, when dating the reigns of the successive patriarchs of Antioch in the period 680-692, utilized the notes Jacob of Edessa had made in his *Chronicle*. For the period between 693 and 710, he had at this disposal the notes of a man who had been tutored in the school of Jacob. In view of these facts, it is clear that, with respect to the sees of Antioch and Edessa, the chronology of Michael deserves much respect, at least for the period mentioned.

4.2.2. The foregoing makes clear that Jacob of Edessa was not Michael's only source for our period. On the contrary, apart from the short-style notes that are due to Jacob of Edessa, Michael's narrative about the events that took place between 582 and 842 is wholly dependent on the *Chronicle* of a ixth-century author, Dionysius of Tellmahre<sup>50</sup>. This circumstance compels us to be on our guard. We will see, however, that wherever we can verify him, Michael's statements are in harmony with evidence that can be gathered from independent sources<sup>51</sup>.

4.2.3. For the period between 680 and 710, our conclusion must be that the chronological data Michael supplies about the sees of Antioch and Edessa can hardly be wrong (§ 4.2.1.), and that in the narrative part of his work he is also to be considered a very reliable source indeed (§ 4.2.2.).

4.3. About the sources of the second book of Barhebraeus' *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* we have no information. As far as I know, nobody has yet discussed the question. Barhebraeus himself writes that he found much material in the libraries in Marga<sup>52</sup>. That could very well be true, but it is improbable that he found there any information about the succession of "maphrians" in the years 680-710. One may suppose that for that subject Barhebraeus made use of what he could find in the archives in Tagrit, Mosul and Mar Mattay, the successive residences of the "maphrians"<sup>53</sup>. The lists of "maphrians" that were preserved in these libraries contained at least, one

49 See e.g., JE 322-323 (244-245) and 324 (248, read *Athanasium* instead of *Anastasium*). In Hage's extremely rich 'Anhang' one finds a complete(?) list of bishops of Edessa who sat between 600 and 800, cf. Hage (1966) 98-99. Bishop Daniel is also attested to in ms. *Br. Libr. Add.* 12,181, cf. Wright, catal. Brit. Museum 564, in 668/9 A.D.

50 See R. Abramowski (1940) 16, 27-28.

51 In one case, Michael is right over against the *Vita* of Jacob of Edessa (see below, § 5.1.2.); another time he has drawn a wrong conclusion from a letter by Severus bar Mašqā (see below, § 5.7.).

52 Barhebraeus, *Chron. syr.* 2 (2).

53 The "maphrians" resided in Tagrit till 1089 A.D., then in Mosul, and from 1155 A.D. in Mar Mattay, see e.g. Kawerau (1955) 21.



may presume, the names of these prelates in a chronological order, and some indications about the dates of their ordination and death or the length of their pontificate. It seems reasonable, then, to assume that on these points the data in BH II can be trusted. The following, especially § 5.5.2. and § 5.6., will prove this surmise to be correct.

5.0. Now that we have seen something of the problems (§ 3.) and the means at our disposal (§ 4.), we can try to look for solutions. It seems best to work first in a retrograde way and to begin with Jacob of Edessa.

5.1.1. In the case of Jacob we have to do with two chronological problems: the year in which he was ordained bishop and the date of his death. An excellent discussion of the biographical data is to be found in Tisserant (1947)<sup>54</sup>.

An anonymous *Vita*, preserved in MS IV 445<sup>a</sup>-446<sup>a</sup> - II 471-472, supplies us with a rather detailed account of Jacob's life. The *Vita* does not speak of Jacob's birth date. It does not mention either the names of his parents nor his baptismal name. We will see that it dates Jacob's death incorrectly. Clearly the *Vita* was not written by one of Jacob's pupils. It must be dated some generations later. Vööbus did not think much of its historical value<sup>55</sup>, but for Tisserant (1947) it was an important and reliable document. We will have to discuss it in some detail.

According to the *Vita*, Jacob was ordained bishop of Edessa by patriarch Athanasius. At that moment, the author writes, he had already lived for some time in Edessa. Jacob remained in office for four years only, for he came into conflict with part of his clergy, whom he reproached with a too lax understanding of their duties. Because he did not receive sufficient support from the side of the patriarch, he placed his see at the disposal of Athanasius' successor, Julianus and withdrew to the monastery of Qayšum. In his place a kind old man, Ḥabib, was consecrated bishop<sup>56</sup>. At the request of the monks of Eusebona, Jacob moved over to that monastery, where he remained for eleven years. As a consequence of a new conflict, he parted again and took residence in Tell'adda. There he stayed for nine years, working on his revision of the Peshitta. When the old Ḥabib died, the citizens of Edessa wanted Jacob to be their bishop again. Thus Jacob ascended again the throne of Edessa,

54 The biography of Jacob of Edessa in K.-E. Rignell, *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite of Litarab Concerning Ecclesiastical Canons* (Lund 1979) 15-21, is dependent on secondary literature and refers, where it does make use of primary sources, to BH instead of MS.

55 Vööbus (1970) 207.

56 For an edifying story relating to Ḥabib see Ps.-D. 16-19 (15-17) (Chabot 1895), 160-163 (Chabot 1933).



but when he returned to Tell'adda, four months later, in order to recover his books, he died there on 5 June 704. So much for the *Vita*.

5.1.2. Let us begin with the year in which Jacob died. The *Vita* cannot be right in stating that Jacob died in June 704. Two manuscripts written only some years after Jacob's death, in 718/9 and 718/20, and containing Jacob's revision of I-II *Samuel* and *I Kings* and of *Daniel* respectively, inform us that Jacob finished the revision of these books in 1016 Sel., i.e. between 1 October 704 and 30 September 705. The former adds that he was working then in Tell'adda<sup>57</sup>. Jacob cannot have died, therefore, in June 704<sup>58</sup>.

There is no reason either to trust the statement in the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Dionysius, according to which Jacob died in 709/10<sup>59</sup>. The chronology of this work is notoriously unreliable<sup>60</sup>. In this case the author makes things even worse than usual by having Jacob succeeded in 709/10 by Ḥabīb. In reality Jacob was succeeded after his death by his disciple Constantine<sup>61</sup>. The cause of the dating error in Pseudo-Dionysius is rather obvious, as Baumstark and Tisserant pointed out<sup>62</sup>. After the *Chronicle* of Jacob had been prolonged till 709/10, it was a plausible inference that Jacob himself had lived up to that year<sup>63</sup>.

There is still a third tradition. According to MS IV 448<sup>a</sup> (II 476), Jacob died 5 June 708<sup>64</sup>. This statement is made in the succinct style that is characteristic of borrowings from Jacob's *Chronicle*. Presumably, therefore, this testimony directly originates from a contemporary, one of Jacob's own pupils<sup>65</sup>. The statement is confirmed, moreover, by two independent witnesses, Elias of Nisibis, and the *Chronicon ad annum 819*<sup>66</sup>. It is repeated by the latter's descendent, the *Chronicon ad annum 846*<sup>67</sup>, and by Barhebraeus in BH I 293 (294). Its accuracy can hardly be doubted.

57 Mss *London Br. Libr. Add.* 14,429, cf. catal. Wright 37-39, and *Paris. syr.* 27, cf. catal. Zotenberg 11-12.

58 Elsewhere Michael states that Jacob died in 708, see below in this section. Michael does not discuss the contradiction. See below, § 5.1.3.

59 Ps.-D. 12 (11) (Chabot 1895), 155-6 (Chabot 1933).

60 See Chabot (1895) xxxiii and the lists on pp. xxxvi and xxxviii, and Witakowski (1987) 28, 171-172.

61 Pace Chabot (1895) 11 n. 5 and Vööbus (1970) 212 n. 74, see MS IV 450<sup>a</sup> (II 480) and IV 769 (III 494). Constantine was in function in 726, whereas Ps.-Dionysius holds that Ḥabīb was bishop from 710 till 728/9, cf. Hage (1966) 98-9 with nn. 70 and 72.

62 Baumstark (1922) 249 n. 1, Tisserant (1947) 288.

63 See above, § 4.2.1. with n. 41.

64 Cf. also MS IV 450 - II 480 and IV 450 *ad finem* (II 483).

65 See above, § 4.2.1. One may presume that Jacob's continuator noted changes on the throne of Edessa, as Jacob did himself (see above, n. 49), especially in the case of the see being occupied by his own master.

66 Elias I 158 (76 Chabot, 98 Delaporte), *Chron. ad ann. 819* 14 (10).

67 *Chron. ad ann. 846* 233 (176; Brook's supplements prove to have been correct). This *Chronicon* does not mention the year 707/8, but places Jacob's death between the events related to the years 706/7 and 708/9.



5.1.3. Let us return now to the *Vita*. It held, incorrectly, as we have seen just now, that Jacob died in June 704. This error, together with the omissions mentioned above<sup>68</sup>, might lead one to the conclusion that the *Vita* cannot be relied on. This inference would be wrong, however. The testimony of the *Vita* proves to be in complete harmony with the information we can gather from other sources, if only one takes into account that Jacob died in June 708. Five arguments can be adduced for this thesis.

First, according to the *Vita*, Jacob was working on his revision of the Peshitta during a nine years' sojourn in Tell'adda and left this monastery only four months before his death. This means that, if Jacob died on 5 June 708, he must have lived in Tell'adda from 699 till about 5 February 708. This conclusion is in agreement with the fact that he was working on *Samuel*, *Kings* and *Daniel* in Tell'adda in 704/5, as two nearly contemporaneous manuscripts have taught us<sup>69</sup>.

Second, going backwards we read in the *Vita* that, prior to his stay in Tell'adda, Jacob had lived for eleven years in Eusebona and for an unspecified time (which I take to have lasted some weeks or months) in Qayšum. His conflict with patriarch Julianus and retirement as bishop of Edessa must be placed, then, in about 688, which is in accordance with the datum that Julianus was consecrated patriarch in November 687<sup>70</sup>.

Third, the first time Jacob was bishop of Edessa, he held the post for four years. His ordination, then, took place in about 684. This conclusion is in harmony with two notes, presumably originating, as we have seen, from Jacob himself, according to which he was not yet bishop when he copied the two letters that led to the Synod of Reš'ayna (683/4)<sup>71</sup>. It is also in agreement with a note that is written in the original hand in the margin of the words *l-Ya'qob 'episcopā d-'Urhāy* in ms. *Par. syr.* 62, fol. 273<sup>r</sup> (ixth cent., Letter of Jacob of Edessa on canonical questions): *d-hānā da-šnat šṣḥ d-Yawnāyē*. The most natural interpretation of these words is, of course, that Jacob wrote this letter (and was bishop, therefore) in 686/7<sup>72</sup>.

Fourth, a small detail, according to one of the notes after letter 3, Jacob was already resident in Edessa when he copied these letters<sup>73</sup>. The same information is provided by the *Vita*, which says that, when Jacob was consecrated bishop of Edessa, he had already lived there for some time.

Fifth, the *Vita* says that Jacob was consecrated bishop by patriarch

68 See above, § 5.1.1.

69 See above, § 5.1.2.

70 See above, § 2.3. and below, § 5.2.

71 See above, § 4.1.1.

72 See Renaudot (1847) II 380 and Lamy (1859) 214; cf. Vööbus (1970) 208.

73 See above, § 4.1.1.



Athanasius, which is in agreement with the fact that Athanasius was elected patriarch at the Synod of Reš'ayna, and was in function, thus, in 684<sup>74</sup>.

The above confrontation of data provided by the *Vita* and those originating from other sources proves that wherever the *Vita* can be controlled it is in accordance with external evidence, except for the fact that it dates Jacob's death four years too early, in June 704. That date is at variance with information we gathered from other sources<sup>75</sup>. It is also incompatible with controllable data furnished by the *Vita* itself. It would imply that the conflict with patriarch Julianus, which broke out, according to the *Vita*, some twenty years before Jacob's death, had to be placed in about 684, and his consecration by patriarch Athanasius, four years earlier, in about 680. Both dates are impossible<sup>76</sup>. Everything fits, however, if the chronological data we find in the *Vita* are tied in with 5 June 708, the date at which Jacob really died. It is clear, therefore, that the *Vita* provides a reliable and coherent picture of the main events in Jacob's life. The biographical details it contains are completely in accordance with the other evidence which we have at our disposal. We have only to correct the date it gives for Jacob's death. The date 704 in the *Vita* may be due to a scribal error of a copyist, of Michael, or of the author himself<sup>77</sup>. We will offer another suggestion below<sup>78</sup>.

5.1.4. The date at which Jacob was ordained bishop of Edessa<sup>79</sup> needs to be discussed more in detail. The material assembled in § 5.1.3. taught us that Jacob received the consecration in 683/4 from the hands of patriarch Athanasius, who was elected in that year by the Synod of Reš'ayna.

Baumstark registered two contra-indications<sup>80</sup>. The first of these is the information provided by a liturgical manuscript (now lost), which, according to Assemani, had been consulted by Antonius Marsilius Columna. This manuscript had Jacob ordained in 641 and his friend George of the Arabs in 647<sup>81</sup>. Since the latter was ordained in fact, according to Baumstark, in 686<sup>82</sup>, Baumstark concluded that the manuscript had Jacob be ordained

74 See below, § 5.4.

75 See above, § 5.1.2.

76 See above, § 2.3., and below, § 5.2. and 5.4.2.

77 The whole tradition of Michael's *Chronicle* depends on a single Syriac manuscript, according to Chabot in the Introduction to MS, Ixxxviii-li. The Arab translation also reads 704, cf. Chabot in MS II472 n. 9.

78 Baumstark (1922) 249 n. 1 too hastily blames a copyist: Barhebraeus could find the correct dating elsewhere in MS, see above, § 5.1.2.

79 See below, § 5.5.2.

80 In reality the man we are used to calling Jacob of Edessa was given the name of Jacob only when he was ordained bishop. We do not know his baptismal name.

81 Baumstark (1922) 248 n. 3.

82 *BO* I469.

82 In reality, George was consecrated bishop in 687 (see above, § 2.2. and below, § 5.3.), but the difference is unimportant for the reasoning in our main text.



bishop six years earlier, i.e. in 680. Here Baumstark applies a reasoning that is incorrect. We simply do not know whether the year 647 of the manuscript is equivalent with the year 686 of the Christian era. In the same way one could contend that the year 641 in the manuscript corresponds to, say, 584 A.D. and that George was, therefore, consecrated in 690, according to the codex. Moreover, there is no era known to us in which the year 647 corresponds to 686 (or 687<sup>83</sup>) A.D., as Baumstark himself admits. If Assemani's communication is correct, we can only conclude that, according to this manuscript, six years passed between both ordinations. The dates given prove that the author did not have a clear view of viith-century chronology.

Baumstark's statement that, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, Jacob was consecrated bishop in 676/7 is not correct either. We have not to do with a communication by Pseudo-Dionysius, who is himself a far from trustworthy witness<sup>84</sup>, but with a note that is introduced by an unexperienced hand in the margin of the manuscript<sup>85</sup>. Such a notice carries little weight, especially if it is contradicted by witnesses as reliable as ours have proved to be.

5.1.5. It will be clear that we do not share the views of Vööbus (1970) and (1977)<sup>86</sup>. The scepticism he displays proves to be unfounded. One point remains to be discussed. It relates to Jacob's last days. According to Vööbus, Barhebraeus holds, in contravention of what is said by other sources, that Jacob's second term of office also ended in a conflict. Moreover, Vööbus feels, Michael is causing confusion by stating that Jacob was succeeded, after his death, by Ḥabib<sup>87</sup>. In reality, Barhebraeus does not speak, either in the passage Vööbus refers to or elsewhere, about a conflict during Jacob's second time of office, and where Michael speaks of Jacob's successor he calls him Constantine<sup>88</sup>. Even in these cases there is no ground for Vööbus' scepticism.

5.1.6. We may conclude, with Tisserant (1947), that Jacob died on 5 June 708 and that he was consecrated bishop by patriarch Athanasius of Balad in 683/4, after the Synod of Reš'ayna. We will see below that the latter

83 Cf. above, n. 82.

84 See above, § 5.1.2 with nn. 60 and 61.

85 Ps.-D. 9 (9) (Chabot 1895), 153 (Chabot 1933). Chabot prints the note at the year 664/5, in both editions. According to Assemani *BO* I 425-6, Baumstark (1922) 248 n. 3 and Tisserant (1947), it belongs to the year 676/7. Chabot (1933) 153 n. 2 refers to a quite different Jacob. Assemani *BO* I 426 sub XXIV erroneously reports that, according to (Pseudo-)Dionysius, Jacob was ordained in 650/1. It was one of Jacob's predecessors, Cyriacus, who was consecrated in that year, according to Pseudo-Dionysius. Assemani's statement is at variance with the manuscript evidence, as reported by Chabot in both his editions and Assemani's own saying in *BO* I 425 sub XXIII.

86 See above, § 3.4. and 5.1.1.

87 Vööbus (1970) 211-212 and (1977). He refers to BH I 293 (294) and MS IV 446\* (II 472), resp.

88 It is Pseudo-Dionysius who states that Jacob was succeeded, after his death, by Ḥabib, see above, § 5.1.2.



conclusion is supported from quite different angles<sup>89</sup>. It will even prove possible to date the ceremony rather exactly<sup>90</sup>.

5.2. Patriarch Julianus Romāyā died in the same year as Jacob of Edessa, in 707/8. The coincidence is noted by the *Chronicum ad annum 819*, Elias of Nisibis, Michael and Barhebraeus<sup>91</sup>. The date itself is uncontested. Even Pseudo-Dionysius mentions his death under the lemma 1019 Sel.<sup>92</sup>. According to Elias, Julianus died in 89 Hegira<sup>93</sup>, that is to say, between 1 December 707 and 20 November 708. If we combine the Moslem and Seleucid data, we find that Julianus died between 1 December 707 and 30 September 708.

We have already collected some testimonies according to which Julianus ascended the throne of Antioch in November 687<sup>94</sup>. The same year is mentioned by the *Chronica ad annum 819* and *ad annum 846*<sup>95</sup>. This dating is confirmed by the *Vita* of Jacob of Edessa, which holds that four years after Jacob's consecration as bishop (683/4), i.e. in 687/8, he came into conflict with patriarch Julianus<sup>96</sup>. Over against these witnesses, there is no reason to pay attention to Pseudo-Dionysius, who places Julianus' consecration only in 703/4<sup>97</sup>.

5.3. In November 687, in the same year and the same month in which Julianus was ordained patriarch of Antioche, the old Sergius Zkunāyā<sup>98</sup> consecrated George bishop of the Arabs, executing in this way the last will of Julianus' predecessor, Athanasius of Balad<sup>99</sup>. The event is placed in the same year by the *Chronica ad annum 819* and *ad annum 846*<sup>100</sup>. A liturgical manuscript, now lost, dated George's consecration in 647, according to

89 See below, § 5.4.1. and 5.5.1.

90 See below, § 5.6.4.

91 *Chron. ad ann. 819* 14 (10), Elias I 158 (76 Brooks, 98 Delaporte), MS IV 448<sup>a</sup> (II 476), BH I 295 (296).

92 Ps.-D. 11 (11) (Chabot 1895), 155 (Chabot 1933).

93 See above, n. 91.

94 See above, § 2.3.

95 *Chron. ad ann. 819* 13 (8), *Chron. ad ann. 846* 232 (175).

96 MS 445<sup>a</sup>-446<sup>a</sup> (II 471-2), BH I 289 (290). See above, § 5.1.

97 Ps.-D. 11 (10) (Chabot 1895), 155 (Chabot 1933). See also below, § 5.3. and 5.4.

98 Sergius Zkunāyā was one of the chief opponents of patriarch Severus bar Mašqā, cf. MS IV 436<sup>a</sup>-438<sup>a</sup> (II 456-458), and for that reason became one of the *bêtes noires* of Dionysius of Tellmahre, cf. MS IV 516<sup>b</sup> (III 64-5) and *Chron. ad ann. 1234* II 264 (198). It is remarkable, however, that he was held in high esteem by Severus' successor Athanasius of Balad, who appointed him *rēšā d-epis(qopē)* (MS IV 447<sup>a</sup> - II 474), and by George of the Arabs, cf. Ryssel (1891) 109. Sergius was never "maphrian" nor bishop of Antioch, of course, *pace* Ryssel (1891) XV.

99 For the testimonies see above, § 2.2. See also below, § 5.4.3.

100 *Chron. ad ann. 819* 13 (8-9), *Chron. ad ann. 846* 232 (175).



Assemani. We have seen that this testimony has no value<sup>101</sup>. The date itself is impossible, since George was still active in the years 713/4-717/8<sup>102</sup> and died in February 724<sup>103</sup>.

5.4.1. Two months before the consecration of George and of Julianus, on 11 September 687 A.D., the latter's predecessor, patriarch Athanasius of Balad, expired<sup>104</sup>. His pontificate had lasted only three years, Michael informs us, both in his main text and in his Appendix III. Michael's statement is repeated by Barhebraeus<sup>105</sup>. His consecration must have taken place, then, in 683/4 A.D. This is, in fact, exactly the year in which he was elected patriarch by the Synod of Reš'ayna, according to the *Chronicon ad annum 846*, Michael<sup>106</sup> and Barhebraeus in BH I 289 (290). Independent information confirms this dating. We have already learned from the *Vita* of Jacob of Edessa that Jacob was ordained bishop by patriarch Athanasius. The ceremony took place in 683/4<sup>107</sup>. Secondly, a marginal note in many manuscripts that contain canonical decisions of a patriarch Athanasius says *d-hānā d-ba-šnat tša'm'ā wa-teš'in w-ḥammeš d-Yawnāyē*. The oldest of these codices dates from the viiith century. The only patriarch Athanasius the author of this note can have had in mind is Athanasius of Balad<sup>108</sup>. At the end, therefore, of 995 Sel., that is to say, before 1 October 684 A.D., Athanasius was sitting on the throne of Antioch.

These date enable us to refute two divergent statements. Pseudo-Dionysius makes Athanasius patriarch from 687/8 till 703/4<sup>109</sup>. A Nestorian source, the *Liber turris*, written in Arabic by Mārī ibn Sulaymān, declares that Athanasius succeeded Severus bar Mašqā during the pontificate of Ḥnānišo'<sup>110</sup>, whose accession it places, correctly, in the year 67 H. (July 686 - July 687)<sup>111</sup>.

101 See above, § 5.1.4.

102 See Wright, catal. Brit. Museum 986-8, Ryssel (1891) XV.

103 MS IV 457a (II 491), BH I 303 (304).

104 For references see above, § 2.1.

105 See MS IV 447<sup>a</sup> (II 474), IV 752 (III 449), BH I 293 (294).

106 *Chron. ad ann. 846* 231 (175), MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> (II 470-1) and IV 446<sup>a</sup>-447<sup>a</sup> (II 474).

107 See above, § 5.1.

108 See Vööbus (1970) 200-1 and Zotenberg, catal. Bibl. Nat. 28.

109 Ps.-D. 10 and 11 resp. (10) (Chabot 1895), 154 and 155 resp. (Chabot 1933).

110 Mari fol. 180<sup>r</sup> (56-7).

111 Ḥnānišo' ascended the throne of Seleucia/Ctesiphon in 67 H. (28 July 686 - 17 July 687), according to Mari fol. 178<sup>v</sup> (55), Elias I 149 (72 Brooks, 93 Delaporte) and BH II 135 (136). 'Amr and Šalība place his accession in 997 Sel. (= 685/6, see Amr-Sliba 59\* [34]; not in 995 Sel., as Gismondi translates; see also the text published by Ebied-Young (1974) 98). These data imply that Ḥnānišo' was consecrated catholicus between 28 July and 30 September 686. He died after a pontificate of fourteen years (BH II 139 [140]) and nine months (Mari fol. 180<sup>r</sup> [57] and Amr-Sliba 60\* [35]; not *cum mensibus septem* or *decem*, as Gismondi writes), in May or June 701, therefore. This date is in accordance with Elias I 55 (31 Brooks, 44 Delaporte) and 155 (74 Brooks, 96 Delaporte), according to whom Ḥnānišo' died in the



Both dates are impossible. Athanasius was already patriarch at the end of the year 683/4. Mārī's error is already corrected by Ṣalība<sup>112</sup>.

5.4.2. In one tradition Athanasius' accession is placed earlier than 683/4. This tradition is to be found in Barhebraeus. We have seen that in BH I 289 (290) Barhebraeus holds, in accordance with Michael, that Athanasius was elected patriarch in 683/4 by the Synod of Reš'ayna<sup>113</sup>. Some lines earlier, however, in BH I 287 (288), Barhebraeus writes that the Synod of Reš'ayna chose Athanasius in 679/80. To understand Barhebraeus' rather puzzling behaviour in this matter, we have to turn to his source, Michael's *Chronicle*. Michael starts his short biography of Athanasius by saying that *bāh* (sc. *ša(n)tā*) 'etkannšat sunodos ... da-hwāt b-Reš'aynā (MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> - II 470). In this text the word *bāh* (*ša(n)tā*) refers to the year in which, according to Michael, Athanasius' predecessor Severus bar Mašqā died, 995 Sel. = 683/4 A.D. It was in the Synod of Reš'ayna that Athanasius was elected patriarch, Michael continues<sup>114</sup>. He then gives a short survey of Athanasius' life before his election, after which he repeats that Athanasius was called to the primacy in 683/4. Barhebraeus copied Michael's note almost exactly, BH I 287-289 (288-290). With him, however, the word *bāh* (*ša(n)tā*) refers to another year, namely 991 Sel. = 679/80 A.D., for in the foregoing sentence he had stated that Athanasius' predecessor died in that year. But at the end of his note Barhebraeus repeats Michael's saying that Athanasius was ordained in 995 Sel. = 683/4 A.D. at the Synod of Reš'ayna<sup>115</sup>. In this way the resulting text states within a few lines that Athanasius was consecrated patriarch at the Synod of Reš'ayna in 679/80 and in 683/4. Barhebraeus leaves the inconsistency undiscussed. It is not difficult to see that it from an attempt to combine Michael's data with the view that Athanasius' predecessor Severus bar Mašqā died in 679/80. We will discuss the latter tradition below, in § 5.5.2. It will prove to be wrong. Both the death of Severus and the ordination of Athanasius at the Synod of Reš'ayna took place in the year 683/4. In § 5.6. we will see that it is possible to establish a more detailed chronology of that turbulent year.

year 82 H. (Febr. 701 - Febr. 702). Tisserant (1931) 262 (= Hage [1966] 94) and Spuler (1964) 209, who rely too much on the result of a calculation error of Ṣalība (see Amr-Sliba 60\* [35]), should be corrected. The excellent biography in Sachau (1908) VI-XVII could have been a trifle more exact in chronological matters.

112 Ṣalība does not speak of Athanasius, but has Severus die in 995 Sel. (= 683/4). See below, § 5.5.1.

113 See above, § 5.4.1.

114 This is confirmed by the superscription of letter 6 in MS IV 441<sup>b</sup> (II 464). The letter itself does not speak of Athanasius' election, see above, n. 30.

115 Barhebraeus adds some details (the monastery in which the ceremony took place, the bishop who laid hands on the new patriarch), which he borrowed from Michael's Appendix III (MS IV 752 - III 449), see also below, n. 130.



5.4.3. Barhebraeus ends his survey of Athanasius' pontificate by reporting that he died after a reign of three years. In the text as it is edited by Abbeloos-Lamy, he continues by reporting that in November, two months after the death of Athanasius, George of the Arabs was consecrated bishop and that Athanasius' successor was ordained in 687/8 (BH I 293-296). If this is the correct reading, it is clear that Barhebraeus dated the death of Athanasius, correctly, in 686/7. The oldest manuscript of Barhebraeus' *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, however, ms. *Vaticanus syr.* 166<sup>116</sup>, has a different text. After the words *w-ʿasraḥu(h)y* (sc. George) *b-tešrin* (ʿ) *ḥrāy bātar trēn yarḥin d-ʿundāneh d-patriyār* (= Athanasius), it adds *ba-šnat tšaʿ māʾ w-tešʿin wa-tmānē*. It seems reasonable to suppose that this is what Barhebraeus really wrote. The text is somewhat ambiguous. It is unclear whether the dating relates to the death of Athanasius or to the consecration of George. There can be no doubt, however, that Barhebraeus is wholly dependent here on Michael's *Chronicle*, esp. MS IV 447 (II 474). If the year refers to the death of Athanasius, Barhebraeus is in line with Michael (Athanasius died in September 687). If it relates to the ordination of George, we have to do with a simple error of Barhebraeus, who did not realize, then, that between the death of Athanasius (dated by Michael reports), a new Seleucid year had started. Even in the latter interpretation, this text cannot be adduced to support the view of those scholars who placed Athanasius' death and the consecration of George in 686 (see above, § 2.1 and § 2.2.). Since the publication of Michael's *Chronicle*, it is clear that Barhebraeus merely repeats what he read (or thought he read) in Michael.

5.5.1. Athanasius' predecessor on the throne of Antioch was Severus bar Mašqā. According to Michael, Severus died in 683/4 (MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> - II 470). This statement is supported, as we have seen, by a remark of, presumably, Jacob of Edessa, who was contemporaneous with the event<sup>117</sup>. Šalība, too, places Severus' death in 683/4, during the pontificate of catholicus Yoḥannān bar Martā<sup>118</sup>.

116 Comp. Abbeloos-Lamy *ad* BHI 294. They refer to *BO* II 335. It was ms. *Vat. syr.* 166 (written before 1356/7) that was epitomized by Assemani, cf. Assemanus-Assemanus, *catal. Bibl. Vat.* III 340, 341. Unfortunately, Abbeloos-Lamy left the manuscript out of consideration.

117 See above, § 4.1.1. and 5.1.3.

118 Amr-Sliba 58\* (34; for "Sajuri" read "Sīwirā" [Arabic *Sywy*] or, in Latin, "Severus"). Yoḥannān was catholicus from 681/2 till 683/4, *pace* Tisserant (1931) 262 (= Hage [1966] 94) and Spuler (1964) 209, cf. BH II 133 (134), Amr-Sliba 58\* (34) and the text edited by Ebied-Young (1974) 98 (Elias I 54 [31 Brooks, 43 Delaporte] is obviously an error). His predecessor Georgius still wrote a letter in the year 60 H. (October 679 - September 680), cf. Chabot (1902) 237 (490), and died in 680/1, cf. Šalība in Amr-Sliba 57\* (33). Modern scholars agree. See below, § 5.5.3.



Documentary evidence even allows us to be a little more exact. It is to be found in a letter that has been preserved by Michael in the collection we have discussed already<sup>119</sup>. In the first letter, written by Severus shortly before his death, the patriarch addresses Yoḥannān Sābā as *mētrō d-purnāsā madnhāyā d-Bēt Parsāyē*<sup>120</sup>. Head of the Eastern diocese was, of course, the “maphrian”<sup>121</sup>. Severus cannot have written this letter, therefore, before the death of Bar ʿIšoʿ, who was “maphrian” from 668/9 till his death on 17 December 683<sup>122</sup>. We will return to this letter below<sup>123</sup>, but we can conclude already now that Severus cannot have died before 17 December 683. We know, on the other hand, that Severus’ successor was in office on 30 September 684<sup>124</sup>. These facts enable us to conclude that Severus died between 17 December 683 and 30 September 684, that is to say in the year 683/4, just as Michael said. A more exact dating will be given below<sup>125</sup>.

5.5.2. In our texts we can find several divergent opinions. The most prominent of these is the one we have already met above<sup>126</sup>. According to Barhebraeus, Severus died in 679/80, after a pontificate of 12 years (BH I 287-288)<sup>127</sup>. Severus’ accession is dated by Barhebraeus in 667/8, the year following that in which his predecessor Theodorus died (BH I 281-284). Presumably that is correct. Michael and the *Chronicon ad annum 1234* report that Theodorus died in 666/7, after which Michael continues by saying *w-ettasrah Sēwērā d-men dayrā d-Pāgimtā d-metkannē bar Mašqā*. Nearly the same text is to be found in the *Chronicon* mentioned<sup>128</sup>. It is most probably here that both Michael and the *Chronicon ad annum 1234* omit a small detail that Barhebraeus chose to transmit, viz. that between the death of Theodorus and the consecration of his successor a new Seleucid year had begun. There is no reason to doubt, therefore, that, according to both Michael and Barhebraeus, Severus was ordained patriarch in 667/8. The difference between both authors consists in that Barhebraeus has Severus reign 12 years and die in 679/80,

119 See above, §4.1.1.

120 See MS IV 438<sup>a</sup> (II 458).

121 See e.g. Kawerau (1955) 21 and Hage (1966) 25.

122 See BH II 131-134.

123 See §5.7.

124 See above, §5.4.

125 See §5.6.

126 See §5.4.2.

127 Barhebraeus’ remark led to uncertainty with Spuler (1964) 213. It is the only deviant opinion mentioned by Hage (1966) 141 n. 27.

128 MS IV 435<sup>a</sup> (II 453), *Chron. ad ann. 1234* II 262 (197; unfortunately, the folio is missing in which the death of Severus is mentioned). According to the *Chron. ad ann. 819* 12 (8) and Ps.-D. 9 (9) (Chabot 1895), 153 (Chabot 1933), Theodorus died in 664/5. It is improbable that these *Chronica* are right over against the testimony of Michael and Barhebraeus. Pseudo-Dionysius, in any case, is wrong in his dating of Theodorus’ accession, cf. Hage (1966) 140 n. 16 and 142 n. 113. (the *Chron. ad ann. 819* is silent on the latter issue).



creating in this way, as we have seen, a hopeless muddle as to the dating of the Synod of Reš'ayna and the accession of Severus' successor Athanasius<sup>129</sup>, whereas Michael holds that Severus died in 683/4, i.e. after a pontificate of 16 (or 17) years. Barhebraeus' testimony proved to be untrue, but his opinion was not unfounded. Michael himself says, not in his main text, but in his Appendix III, that Severus' pontificate lasted 12 years (MS IV 752-III 449). Barhebraeus knew and used Michael's Appendix, as Chabot has already noted<sup>130</sup>. It appears by now that the inconsistency we found in Barhebraeus goes back to a discrepancy between Michael's main text and his Appendix III. Michael does not discuss the difference between his two statements. The discrepancy can be explained, however, if we are right in assuming, with Barhebraeus, that Severus ascended the patriarchal throne in 667/8<sup>131</sup>. In that case the difference between the two traditions amounts to four years. Perhaps there is a relationship between these four years and the fact that, during the last four years of his life, i.e., from 679/80 till 683/4, Severus was embroiled in a serious conflict with an important part of his Church, both in the East and in the West. During those years Severus' opponents did not acknowledge him as patriarch of Antioch and even went as far as to anathematize him<sup>132</sup>. In my view it is not a wild guess to suppose that the source of Michael's Appendix III, taking Severus' deposition seriously, did not consider him patriarch during the last four years of his life, thus reducing the length of his pontificate to twelve years<sup>133</sup>. Barhebraeus, then, interpreted this note incorrectly and assumed that Severus died after a pontificate of twelve years, i.e. in 679/80, and was succeeded in the same year by Athanasius. The same error may have been made by the author of the *Vita* of Jacob of Edessa. Placing Athanasius' accession in 679/80, he had to have Jacob die twenty-four years later, in 704 instead of in 708<sup>134</sup>.

5.5.3. There exist two other traditions about the year of Severus' death.

According to the *Chronica ad annum 819* and *annum 846*, Severus died in 682/3. The same statement occurs in Pseudo-Dionysius<sup>135</sup>. The mistake

129 See above, § 5.4.2.

130 Chabot in MS III 450 n. 13. In his Appendix Michael gives details which he omits in his main text, but which recur in Barhebraeus' text, comp., e.g., MS 752 (III 449) with BH I 279-282 (Theodorus), 281-284 (Severus), 289-290 (Athanasius), 295-296 (Julianus) and above, n. 115.

131 See earlier in this section.

132 See MS IV 437<sup>a</sup> (II 457) and cf. BH I 285 (286) (read with C *s'aw w-'ahrmu(h)y*, (*eum*) *anathematizare ausi sunt*, cf. *Lectiones variae* in BH II 879 and MS IV 437<sup>a</sup>. See above, § 4.1.1.

133 Possibly the source of the remark in Michael's Appendix III reflects the views of the monastery of Mar Gabriel in Qartamin. One of Severus' chief opponents, Ḥnānyā was bishop of Qartamin, cf. MS IV 436<sup>a</sup> (II 456) and BH I 283 (284).

134 See above, § 5.1.3., and below, § 5.6.3.

135 *Chron. ad ann. 819* 12 (8), *Chron. ad ann. 846* 231 (175), Ps.-D. 10 (10) (Chabot 1895), 154 (Chabot 1933). The *Chronicon ad annum 819* and Pseudo-Dionysius also agree in dating the



may be due to a calculation error. The *Chronicon ad annum 819* and its descendent, the *Chronicon ad annum 846*<sup>136</sup>, have Severus die in the same year (994 Sel.) as caliph Yazid b. Mu'āwiya. We know for sure that Yazid died on 11 November 683<sup>137</sup>, in the year 995 Sel. therefore. The chroniclers noted that he had reigned three years and five (or six) months after the death of his father<sup>138</sup>, which they correctly placed in 991 Sel.<sup>139</sup>, for Mu'āwiya died in April/May 680<sup>140</sup>. Adding three years and five (or six) months to the year 991, the authors of the *Chronica* assumed that Yazid still died in 994, without realizing that when Yazid died a new Seleucid year had started. The misdating of the death of Yazid will have brought about the misdating of Severus' death.

The other divergent tradition is to be found in the *Liber turris*. It states that Severus died during the pontificate of the catholicus Ḥnānišo'. We have discussed this view above<sup>141</sup>. Mārī has been corrected already by Ṣalība<sup>142</sup>.

5.5.4. We have stated our provisional conclusions in § 5.5.1.

5.6.0.. Thus far we have mainly occupied ourselves with the lives of men who lived in the western provinces of the Syrian Monophysite Church. It now seems opportune to discuss the problems that relate to the chronology of those who were entrusted with the administration of the eastern provinces, the so-called "maphrians". We will see that our discussions will enable us to be somewhat more detailed about events that occurred in the West in the year 683/4. Our sole source in this respect is the second part of Barhebraeus' *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*. In the following we will summarize Barhebraeus' narrative from a chronological point of view. Only here and there will we indicate by the symbol (...) that we are omitting a detail. These remarks will be treated in § 5.6.2.

5.6.1. We will begin with "maphrian" Bar Išo', who was ordained in 668/9 and died on 17 December 683<sup>143</sup>. After him, patriarch (...) ordained Abraham, who lived only a short time (*zabnā z'orā*) after his election<sup>144</sup>. When Abraham died, and the patriarch, too, the Oriental bishops did not await the

death of patriarch Theodorus in 664/5, see above n. 128. The *Chronicon ad annum 846* is deficient here.

136 See Chabot in the Praefatio of his translation of the *Chronicon ad annum 819*, p. i.

137 See H. Lammens in *EI* IV 1162.

138 Five months: *Chron. ad ann. 819* 12 (8); six: *Chron. ad ann. 846* 231 (175).

139 *Chron. ad ann. 819* 12 (8), *Chron. ad ann. 846* 231 (175).

140 See H. Lammens in *EI* III 618.

141 See § 5.4.1. with n. 110.

142 See above, § 5.5.1. with n. 118.

143 BH II 131-134. There is no reason to doubt Barhebraeus' chronology here, see above, § 4.3.

The synchronisms Barhebraeus establishes between the pontificate of Bar Išo' and the reigns of caliphs and Nestorian catholici are correct.

144 BH II 133 (134).



election of a new patriarch, but themselves ordained David “maphrian”. Six months later the western bishops invited David to take part in the election of a new patriarch: *w-kad ’ezal ’nad tammān*<sup>145</sup>. After his death, the see of Tagrit remained vacant for (...) years. During that time (*hāydeñ*) the monks of Mar Mattay urged their metropolitan Yoḥannān Sābā to appoint bishops for the dioceses that had become vacant in the East. Yoḥannān refused to do so, because it had been the privilege of the “maphrian” since 628/9 to ordain bishops in the East. The monks, disappointed, reported to the newly installed patriarch that, in view of his great age, Yoḥannān had retired from his post. They asked for a new metropolitan. The patriarch did not see what the monks were up to and sent a new metropolitan. Outraged, Yoḥannān left Mar Mattay for a monastery near Tagrit. A plague brought the monks to their senses again and drove the new metropolitan from the monastery. Yoḥannān forgave the monks, but refused to return to Mar Mattay. After that (*bātar hālēn*) he was elected “maphrian” by six bishops. Having held his post for one year and a half, Yoḥannān died on 2 January<sup>146</sup>, his successor, Denḥā, being ordained in March 688<sup>147</sup>.

The chronology of this passage is wholly clear. After the death of Bar Išo’ (17 December 683), the patriarch consecrated Abraham “maphrian”. The patriarch at that time was Severus bar Mašqā. Severus, therefore, was still alive in, say, January 684. After a short time, however, both he and Abraham died, in about February. Thereupon the Oriental bishops ordained David “maphrian”, without waiting for the consent of the new patriarch. This made David’s consecration, strictly speaking, illegal<sup>148</sup>. Nevertheless, the occidental bishops asked him to be present at the election of Severus’ successor. This event took place, as we have seen, in the Synod of Reš’ayna (683/4)<sup>149</sup>. There (*tamman*) he died, however. That is why his name is missing in the documents we have discussed above<sup>150</sup>. Barhebraeus says that he had filled his post for only six months. The Synod of Reš’ayna must have taken place, then, in one of the last months of the year 683/4, in August or September of that year. This conclusion is in accordance with what we would expect. The letters preserved in MS IV 438-444 (II 458-468) make clear that the discussions which ensued from the death of Severus (683/4) and led to the Synod of

145 BH II 141 (142).

146 *b-yom trēn b-kānon ’hrāy*, according to ms. *Vat. syr.* 166, cf. Abbeloos-Lamy *ad* BH II 145 and n. 7 above. The later codices add *yā* after *trēn*: ‘on the second day (of the week), 14 January’, which is in itself impossible, since 14 January 688 fell on a Tuesday.

147 BH II 141-146.

148 See Hage (1966) 27-28 and 143 n. 121. Hage is rather laconic about the canonical aspect of the matter.

149 See above, § 5.4.1.

150 See above, § 4.1.1.



Reš'ayna (also 683/4)<sup>151</sup> must have taken some time. David, therefore, died in August or September 684. Since David's successor as metropolitan of Tagrit, Yoḥannān Sābā, died on 2 January 688 after a pontificate of one year and six months, he must have been appointed in June or July 686. The throne of Tagrit was vacant, therefore, from August/September 684 till June/July 686, that is to say for nearly two years. It was during that time that the metropolitan of Mosul/Nineveh, Yoḥannān Sābā, defended the rights of the "maphrian", and, indirectly, those of the patriarch, against the monks of Mar Mattay, his own residence. The patriarch the monks appealed to, and who naively granted their request to send a new metropolitan, was Athanasius (684-687)<sup>152</sup>.

5.6.2. We have seen by now that all of the details furnished by Barhebraeus in his narrative easily fit into the chronological scheme we have sketched in § 5.1., 5.4. and 5.5. The two remarks we have passed over in silence thus far, marking them with (...), and which have yielded so many problems to modern scholars<sup>153</sup> can easily be explained now. We have seen that Barhebraeus, misled by a remark in Michael's Appendix III, supposed that patriarch Severus bar Mašqā died in 679/80, and was succeeded in that year by Athanasius (BH I 287-288)<sup>154</sup>. No wonder, then, that he assumed that it was Athanasius who consecrated, after the death of Bar Išo' (December 683), the new "maphrian" Abraham (BH II 133-134). In reality, the ordination of Abraham must have been one of the last deeds of Severus bar Mašqā.

The other place is not difficult either. We have seen, again, that after the death of David the post of metropolitan of Tagrit was not filled for a period of two years, from August/September 684 (beginning of the Synod of Reš'ayna) till June/July 686<sup>155</sup>. According to Barhebraeus, the throne of

151 See above, § 4.1.1.

152 It was not Julianus, as Abbeloos-Lamy *ad* BH II 144 and Hage (1966) on several places, esp. p. 38, assume. When Julian became patriarch (November 687). Yoḥannān was already metropolitan of Tagrit. The fact that the Oriental bishops omitted to ask Julian for his approval of the election of "maphrian" Denḥā II *b-'ellat hāy d-bel'ād šālmuthon šaddar mētrō l-'umrā 'al mellā d-dayrāyē ḥaššānē balhud* (BH II 147-148) does not oblige us to assume that it was Julianus who had sent a metropolitan so rashly. The Tagritans had simply lost their confidence in the patriarchate and feared that the interference of Athanasius with the affairs of Mar Mattay would prove to be the beginning of an attack on the relative independence of the Oriental part of the church. The position of their metropolitan could be forced into line with that of the western bishops, who had had to acknowledge, at the Synod of Reš'ayna, that they were not entitled to ordain bishops (comp. MS IV 436<sup>a</sup>-437<sup>a</sup>-II 457 and their submission, later, MS IV 438<sup>b</sup>-II 458-459). The sources on this conflict are MS IV 448<sup>a</sup> (II 475-476), IV 469<sup>a</sup>-470<sup>a</sup> (II 514), BH I 295 (296) and II 147-150, see also the note of Dionysius of Tellmahre in MS IV 517<sup>b</sup> (III 65) and *Chron. ad ann. 1234* II 264 (198). For another view see Hage (1966) 30 n. 268 and 38 n. 374.

153 See above, § 3.2. and 3.3.

154 See above, § 5.5.2.

155 See above, § 5.6.1.



Tagrit was vacant for six years (BH II 141-142). That need not amaze us, since we know that Barhebraeus had placed the Synod of Reš'ayna in 679/80 (BH I 287-288). The difference amounts to four years, the same number that separates the real date of the Synod of Reš'ayna from the one adopted by Barhebraeus.

5.6.3. It appears by now that Barhebraeus' decision to opt for the tradition according to which Severus' pontificate lasted 12 years brought him into difficulties at least two times. In BH I 287-290 he was obliged to state within a few lines that the Synod of Reš'ayna took place in 679/80 and in 683/4<sup>156</sup>. Here, in BH II 133-146, he had to squeeze the reigns of Abraham (a short time) and David (six months), an interregnum (six years) and the pontificate of Yoḥannān Sābā (one year and six months) between two fixed points of time, the death of Bar Išo' (December 683) and the enthronement of Denḥā II (March 688), a hopeless enterprise, of course<sup>157</sup>. He could have avoided the error by keeping to the data furnished by MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> (II 470), but he had to choose between Michael's main text and his Appendix III, without having an incontrovertible criterion. He chose wrong. The same error seems to have tricked the author of the *Vita* of Jacob of Edessa. It seems that some of the most intriguing problems we have discussed in this paper originate from a single source, a tradition that was hostile to Severus bar Mašqā<sup>158</sup>.

5.6.4. Now that we know that the Synod of Reš'ayna was held in August/September 684, we can also be slightly more exact in dating some of Athanasius' decisions. It must have been in the last weeks of 683/4 that he proceeded to ordain for the important see of Edessa a monk who was living there already, who had been tutored in Qennešrin, as he had been himself,

156 See above, § 5.4.2. and 5.5.2.

157 Hage (1966). esp. Table B, tried to make the best of it, but came into conflict with other hard facts, see his n. 144 on p. 143. There can be no doubt as to the dates of Denḥā II. He was consecrated in March 688 (BH II 145-146) and died in October 727, after a pontificate of 40 years (999 Sel. - 1039 Sel.; BH II 149-150). The dates of the "maphrians" in BH II have a solid base, comp. above, § 4.3. In this case, moreover, Barhebraeus is supported by MS IV 462<sup>a</sup> (II 503; the scribal error in the Syriac text is rightly corrected by Chabot, see MS II 503 n. 9, as the context and the Arabic translation prove; his suggestion in MS III 450 n. 4 is to be rejected, therefore). In BH I, it is true, Barhebraeus says that Denḥā died in 1051 Sel. (= 739/40), in the same year as patriarch Athanasius III (BH I 303-306; in BH I 306 *septemdecim* is to be corrected in *quindecim*). But here he is following Michael, except for the dating year. Michael held, *i.e.*, that Denḥā and Athanasius both died in 727/8. Michael (or his source) must have made a mistake here, for Athanasius was still in office in 735/6, see *Chron. ad ann. 819* 17 (12), *Chron. ad ann. 846* 235 (178), and is even mentioned in 739/40, see the inscription published by Palmer (1987) 60-61. He certainly died in the latter year, as the consensus between Elias I 168 (80 Brooks, 103 Delaporte) and BH I 303-306 proves. According to Michael's Appendix III, MS IV 752 (III 450), Athanasius died in 1055 Sel. (743/4). In my view we have to do with a scribal error: read 'n' (= 1051) in stead of 'nh (1055).

158 See above, § 5.1.3. and 5.5.2.



and who shared his penchant for Greek studies and strict views in canonical matters. He gave him the name of Jacob<sup>159</sup>.

In the same period he must have issued his canons, providing the marginal note we quoted is to be interpreted in the same way as the one that accompanies a canonical letter of Jacob of Edessa<sup>160</sup>.

5.7. Finally, the riddle of the titles applied to Yoḥannān Sābā in the famous letters of 683/4<sup>161</sup>. In the first letter, written by Severus bar Mašqā shortly before his death, the patriarch addresses Yoḥannān as *mēṭrō d-purnāsā madnḥāyā d-Bēt Parsāyē* (MS IV 438<sup>a</sup> - II 458). This title is normally reserved to the “maphrian” and Severus cannot have used it when there was a metropolitan of Tagrit in office<sup>162</sup>. It is improbable that Severus wrote the letter between the death of Bar Išoʿ (December 683) and the consecration of Abraham. The see of Tagrit ranked second only to that of Antioch, and one cannot see why Severus would have applied to the metropolitan of Mar Mattay for help in his struggle against the dangerous rebellion, when he could hope that the post of Tagrit would be filled with a loyal supporter. It is only when his hopes were deceived by the death of Abraham that Severus, feeling that his end was near, asked Yoḥannān to defend the rights of the patriarch when he would no longer be able to do so himself. By giving him the title of *mēṭrō d-purnāsā madnḥāyā* he made clear that he considered him the factual head of the eastern province. Officially, however, Yoḥannān was no more than the metropolitan of Mar Mattay, and thus is he called by the bishops assembled in Rešʿayna in letter four: *mēṭrō d-ʿumrā d-Mār(y) Mattay* (MS IV 438<sup>b</sup> - II 458). Moreover, a new “maphrian” had been elected, David. After the death of the latter, however, in Rešʿayna itself<sup>163</sup>, Yoḥannān was fully entitled to assume that he was again entrusted with the supervision of the eastern dioceses. That is why he could introduce himself in letter 5 as *mēṭrōp d-ʿumrā d-Mār(y) Mattay wa-d-Bēt Parsāyē* (MS IV 439<sup>b</sup> - II 460). The eastern bishops may well have been content with the factual situation, for Yoḥannān was a much respected man<sup>164</sup>. That would explain why they did not elect a successor for Tagrit. It would also make clear why the monks of Mar Mattay had some reason to expect that Yoḥannān would use his prerogative more amply by appointing new bishops. It was only after the outbreak of an open conflict between Yoḥannān and the monks of Mar

159 See above, § 5.1. For the views of Athanasius see Vööbus (1970) 200-202, for those of Jacob of Edessa Tisserant (1947).

160 See above, § 5.4.1. and 5.1.3. resp.

161 See above, § 3.2. and, for the letters, § 4.1.1.

162 See above, § 5.5.1.

163 See above, § 5.6.1.

164 See letter 6, in MS IV 443<sup>b</sup>-446<sup>b</sup> (II 464-468).



Mattay that six bishops decided to clear up the situation and elect Yoḥannān officially “maphrian”<sup>165</sup>. However that may be, the titles Yoḥannān is addressed with in the letters preserved in MS IV 438-444 (II 458-468) need not amaze us, providing we are ready to look at them in their historical context.

We can also understand now why Michael and Barhebraeus assumed that Yoḥannān was already *mētrō d-Tagrit* or *mapryānā* in 684 (MS IV 444<sup>a</sup> - II 468, BH I 285-286). Severus and Yoḥannān had not made it easy for later historians to interpret their letters correctly.

6. The chronological results of our inquiry can be summarized in the following table (Roman figures refer to the months according to the modern calendar; b. = bishop, c. = East-Syrian catholicus, m. = “maphrian”, p. = West-Syrian patriarch):

679/80		p. Severus bar Mašqā deposed by prominent bishops (§ 5.5.)
680/1		Death of c. Georgius (n. 118)
681/2		Ordination of c. Yoḥannān bar Martā (n. 118)
683	17 XII	Death of m. Bar Išo' (§ 5.6.)
683/4		Death of c. Yoḥannān bar Martā (n. 118)
684	ca. I	Ordination of m. Abraham (§ 5.6.)
	ca. II	Death of m. Abraham (§ 5.6.)
		Letter (1) of p. Severus bar Mašqā to Yoḥannān Sābā (§ 4.1.1., 5.7)
		Death of p. Severus bar Mašqā (§ 5.5.)
	II-III	Uncanonical ordination of m. David (§ 5.6.)
	?	Conciliatory letters (2, 3) of the rebellious bishops (§ 4.1.1.), copied by Jacob of Edessa (§ 5.1.3.)
	VIII-IX	Bishops in Reš'ayna (§ 4.1.1.)
		Death of m. David (§ 5.6.)
		Letter (4) of the Reš'ayna bishops to Yoḥannān Sābā (§ 4.1.1., 5.7.)
		Yoḥannān Sābā in Reš'ayna, Synod (§ 4.1.1.)
		Peace letter (5) by Yoḥannān Sābā (§ 4.1.1., 5.7)
		Ordination of p. Athanasius of Balad (§ 5.4.)
		Letter (6) of Synod of Reš'ayna (§ 4.1.1.)
		Ordination of Jacob as b. of Edessa (§ 5.1., 5.6.4.)
		Issue of canons by p. Athanasius(?) (§ 5.6.4.)
684/6		Conflict Yoḥannān Sābā - Mar Mattay (§ 5.6.)

165 See above, § 5.6.1.



686	VI-VII	Election of m. Yoḥannān Sābā (§ 5.6.)
	28 VII - 30 IX	Ordination of c. Ḥnānišo <sup>c</sup> (n. 111)
686/7		Canonical letter by Jacob of Edessa (§ 5.1.3.)
687	11 IX	Death of p. Athanasius of Balad (§ 5.4.)
	XI	Ordination of George as b. of the Arabs (§ 5.3.)
		Ordination of p. Julianus Romāya (§ 5.2.)
688	2 I	Death of m. Yoḥannān Sābā (§ 5.6.)
	?	Retirement of Jacob as bishop of Edessa; Jacob in Qayšum and in Eusebona (§ 5.1.)
	III	Uncanonical ordination of m. Denḥa II; beginning of conflict p. Julianus - m. Denḥa (nn. 152 and 157)
692		Jacob completes his <i>Chronicle</i> (§ 4.2.1.)
699		Jacob moves to Tell'adda (§ 5.1.)
701	V-VI	Death of c. Ḥnānišo <sup>c</sup> (n. 111)
704/5		Jacob working on <i>Samuel</i> , <i>Kings</i> and <i>Daniel</i> (§ 5.1.)
707/8	1 XII - 30 IX	Death of p. Julianus Romāyā (§ 5.2.)
708	ca. 5 II	Jacob again bishop of Edessa (§ 5.1.)
	5 VI	Death of b. Jacob of Edessa (§ 5.1.)

## ABBREVIATIONS PECULIAR TO THIS PAPER

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- Barhebraeus, *Chron. syr.* — see Bedjan (1890) (text) and Budge (1932) (transl.).
- Bedjan (1890) — *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. P. Bedjan (Parisiis 1890).
- BH — *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, edd. and trr. J. B. Abbeloos - Th. J. Lamy (Parisiis-Lovanii 1872-1877).
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