

Volker Menze

The *Regula ad Diaconos*<sup>1</sup>

John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment  
of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile<sup>1</sup>

1. Introduction

This article offers the edition and translation of an unpublished text (Ms. Cambridge Add. 2023 fols. 250b-252b) by John of Tella together with a liturgical commentary and historical analysis. The short text of which no title survives will be called *Regula ad Diaconos*.<sup>2</sup> Written in the 520s when the non-Chalcedonians bishops had left their sees, the *Regula* reflects the problematic situation of a church in exile: the non-Chalcedonian bishops could only communicate with their priests, deacons and communities through letters and instruct them via written canons or rules like John's *Regula ad Diaconos*.<sup>3</sup>

John of Tella remains most famous for his restless and uncompromising service for the Syrian non-Chalcedonians by ordaining thousands of priests and deacons in the 520s and 530s. The Syrian-Orthodox Church considers him an ascetic, "one of the greatest militant" for the non-Chalcedonian cause and "a true confessor of the faith".<sup>4</sup> Less known is his literary œuvre but the *Regula ad Diaconos* as well as his *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, *Canones ad*

1 I am indebted to the Graduate School of Princeton University and the Group for the Study of Late Antiquity which supported a research trip to the UK in 2003 where I could examine the original manuscript. I thank Adam Mosley for his hospitality at Trinity College Cambridge. Peter Brown notes on an early version of this paper were very insightful and helpful – as always. The ultimate version of this article owes a lot to Johannes Hahn who commented especially on the historical analysis. Edip Aydin read the paper and broadened my understanding of the Syrian Orthodox tradition. Hubert Kaufhold, the editor of *Oriens Christianus*, not only pointed out the Ms. Mardin 323 to me, but generously and selflessly noted all variants to the Cambridge manuscript as edited below. All remaining mistakes are due to my own intellectual limitations.

2 The title will be explained below; see p. 46.

3 The communication that survives is primarily drawn up by bishops, but a few letters written by abbots are preserved as well.

4 S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis. John of Ephesus and The Lives of the Eastern Saints*, Berkeley 1990, 100-105; I. Aphram I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls. A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, Piscataway/NJ<sup>2</sup> 2003, 274f [English translation from the original Arabic edition of 1943], 274f.

*Presbyteros*, and *Canones Monachorum* show John as a pastoral carer who was concerned about the instruction of the non-Chalcedonian clergy and communities.<sup>5</sup> Being bishop meant for John adhering to the apostolic faith (in other words rejecting Chalcedon) as much as it included meticulous observance of the tradition and canons of the church (*Orthopraxis*). Based on a eucharistic ecclesiology, John challenged Justinian's church of the empire by establishing and instructing in exile the first generation of clergy of the evolving Syrian Orthodox Church.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1 The Manuscript Cambridge Add. 2023

The text published here is preserved in a manuscript of the University of Cambridge Add. 2023 fols. 250b-252b.<sup>7</sup> The manuscript is written in a clear *ser̄ta* of the thirteenth century, and contains 317 folios with a large collection of ecclesiastical canons and extracts by various authors.<sup>8</sup> The *Regula ad Diaconos* is introduced by the heading "By the same to deacons" (ܕܠܝܢ ܕܠܝܢ ܕܠܝܢ ܕܠܝܢ)<sup>9</sup> referring back to the preceding canons by "John bar Qusos, bishop of Tellā dhē-Mauzēlath" on fol. 245a (ܕܝܘܢ ܒܪ ܩܘܨܘܨ ܒܝܫܘܦ ܕܬܠܠܐ ܕܗܝܡܐܘܙܝܠܬܐ). "Qusos" clearly is a misspelling of "Qursos" as already Wright indicated in his catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the library of the

5 For their editions and translations see pp. 49-51.

6 John challenged Justinian by refusing the emperor's request not to ordain priests; S. Brock, *The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian* (532), in: OCP 47 (1981), 115. John corresponded also with Byzantium's enemy, the Lakhmid king Mundir. See below p. 49.

The term "Monophysite" is avoided here and replaced by "Non-Chalcedonian." Already E. Schwartz, *Publizistische Sammlungen zum Acacianischen Schisma*, ABAW.PH 10, Munich 1934, 171 n. 1 has noted the insufficiency of the term "Monophysites." Now also the terms "Anti-Chalcedonian" or "Miaphysite" are in use. For the latter see D. W. Winkler, "Miaphysitism. A new Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology," in: *The Harp* 10 (1997), 33-40; idem, "Monophysites," in: *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar, Cambridge/Mass. 1999, 586-88.

As John of Tella was a Syrian non-Chalcedonian bishop, he stands at the beginning of an independent Syrian Orthodox tradition; for John's effort concerning the non-Chalcedonian cause see below.

7 William Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts preserved at the Library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge 1901, Vol. 2, 622. The text is also briefly mentioned in A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, Bonn 1922, 174 and in A. Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde* 1, Vol. 1, A, CSCO 307, Louvain 1970, 164.

8 Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts*, Vol. 2, 600. See also A. Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde* 1, Vol. 1, B, CSCO 317, Louvain 1970, 464-466.

9 Common abbreviations are tacitly corrected (here: ܕܠܝܢ to ܕܠܝܢܝܢ).

University of Cambridge.<sup>10</sup> Syriac texts often called “Tellā dhë-Mauzēlath” – a city in South Eastern Turkey (today: Viranşehir) with various names in Antiquity – just “Tella.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the thirteenth century copyist introduced the text with the heading “By the same to deacons”, the salutation at the beginning of the letter addressed just “our brother” (ܐܠܝܬܝܢ). Wright believed this text to be “extracts from a letter of the same [John], addressed to deacons, containing directions for the celebration of the holy Eucharist.” The very end of the text might be missing and several rubrics make it likely that portions of the text might have been lost. Therefore Wright rightly acknowledged the incomplete character of the text by, but it does not seem to be a letter. If regarded in the context of John’s *Canones* and his ministerial work of ordaining clergy this text rather looks like a general *Regula*. John did not mean “our brother” (ܐܠܝܬܝܢ) as a personal salutation, but personalized the precept like the “Obsculta, o fili, praecepta magistri” in the *Regula* of Benedict.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 The Author

Although the full name and title in the Cambridge manuscript is “John bar Qursos, bishop of Tellā dhë-Mauzēlath,” he will be called here just John of Tella. This is justified as John is better known as “John of Tella” through the two biographies by Elias and by John of Ephesus.<sup>13</sup> John’s own works are usually introduced as the works of “John bar Qursos, bishop of Tellā [dhë-

10 The usual writing is ܬܠܠܐ, but ܬܠܠܝܬܐ, ܬܠܠܝܬܐ, or ܬܠܠܝܬܐ are possible; see Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 161.

11 See for example John of Tella’s *Libellus Fidei* (or *Statement of Faith*), British Library Add. 14549 fol. 226b (but called “Constantina” on fol. 219b). Further names for Tella: Antiochia Arabis, Antoninopolis, Constantina and Maximianopolis; for its location see Barrington, *Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, ed. R. Talbert, Princeton 2000, Map 89 and the *Map-by-Map Directory* Vol. 2, 1270.

12 *Benedicti Regula*, ed. R. Hanslik, CSEL 75, Wien 1960, 41. Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 174 who calls John of Tella’s text a “Sendschreiben.” Rules could develop out of a personal communication into a general rule; see *Syriac and Arabic Documents regarding Legislation relative to Syrian Asceticism*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, Stockholm 1960, 52. Here, however, John’s original salutation (repeated later in the text) has survived and reveals no name of a potential addressee, but only the general “our brother.” The copyist thought of it as a rule for deacons in general as he used “deacons” in the plural in his heading (ܐܠܝܬܝܢ ܕܠܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܠܐܝܬܝܢ).

13 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, first edited (with Dutch translation) by H. G. Kleyn, *Het leven van Johannes van Tella door Elias*, Leiden 1882; edited (with Latin translation) from a different manuscript by E. W. Brooks, in: *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, CSCO 7-8, Paris 1907, 31-95 [23-60]. English translation by J. R. Ghanem, *The Life of John of Tella by Elias*, unpubl. PhD Diss. Madison/WI 1970.

John of Ephesus wrote the biography of John of Tella as part of his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, edited (with English translation) by Ernest W. Brooks, Paris 1924, 513-526.

Mauzēlath].” It seems somewhat odd that John’s biographers both did not record his full name, but the sources confirm that “John bar [Q](u)rsos” (*Chronicle of Zuqnin*, also called *Chronicle of Ps.-Dionysius*), “John bar Qurasos [sic], bishop of Tellā dhē-Mauzēlath” (*Chronicon Anonymum ad A. D. 819 pertinens*) and “John of Tella” (Elias, *Life of John of Tella*) died February 6, 538.<sup>14</sup> Therefore scholars do not doubt that the sources referred to the same John – “John of Tella.”<sup>15</sup>

John was born in 482 in Callinicum in the province Osrhoene on the eastern side of the Euphrates. According to Elias, John received a good education and was fluent in both Syriac and Greek. In his mid-twenties, he joined the monastic community of Mār Zakkai in Callinicum.<sup>16</sup> In 518 Justin I became emperor and changed the religious policy of his predecessor Anastasius I: He ended the so called Acacian schism between Rome and Constantinople that had

14 Incerti Auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum Vulgo Dictum, ed. Jean-Baptiste Chabot, Vol. II, CSCO 104, Paris 1933, 71 [The Chronicle of Zuqnin Pars III and IV A. D. 488-775, trans. A. Harrak, Toronto 1999, 87f. See also his note on the reading of ܐܡܘܢܐ in the manuscript on p. 343]. Although the chronicle is composed in the eighth century, the compiler based this part on the second part of John of Ephesus’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*; see also W. Witakowski, The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahrē. A Study in the History of Historiography, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensis* 9, Uppsala 1987.

*Chronicon Anonymum ad A. D. 819 pertinens*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot, in: CSCO 81/109, Louvain 1920/1937, 9 [6; here Chabot remarks in a footnote that there are variations of the name in the manuscripts: “Cursus, Curcus, Cyriacus”].

Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, ed. Brooks 94 [Ghanem, 108].

The *Chronicon Miscellaneum ad AD 724 pertinens*, in: *Chronica Minora II*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot, CSCO 3-4, Louvain 1960, 144 [111] wrongly dates the death of ܐܡܘܢܐ ܕܬܠܐ ܕܗܝܡܐ to February 9, 537 CE.

15 This is *communis opinio* among scholars: E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d’Asie antérieure au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Louvain 1951, 51f. Honigmann and X. Ducros in: *Cath. 6* (1967), 574 call him John of Tella/Jean de Tella whereas J. M. Fiey in: *DHGE* 26 (1997), 1269f, H. Kaufhold in the *LThK* 5 (1996), 882 and P. Bruns in the *Lexikon der Antiken Christlichen Literatur*, ed. S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, Freiburg<sup>2</sup> 1999, 351 call him “Johannes bar Qursos/Kursos/Jean bar Qūrsūs.” The problem of being consistent with the name is visible in A. Palmer, *Monk and mason on the Tigris frontier: the early history of Ṭur ‘Abdin*, Cambridge 1990, who calls the bishop sometimes “John of Tella” (24, 149, 153, 182), sometimes “John bar Qursos” (88, 257). A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient. A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, Vol. 3, CSCO 500, Louvain 1988 even differentiate in the index between “John of Tella” and “John bar Qursos” although he understood them as being the same person; see also V. Menze, *Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in sixth-century Syria*, in: *Hugoye* 7.2 (2004), n. 6.

16 The Mār Zakkai monastery might be identified with the monastery now excavated at Tall Bi’a; see M. Krebern timer, *Schriftfunde aus Tall Bi’a* 1990, in: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin (MDOG)* 123 (1991), 41-70. See also G. Kalla, *Das ältere Mosaik des byzantinischen Klosters in Tall Bi’a*, in: *MDOG* 123 (1991), 35-39. E. Strommenger, *Ausgrabungen in Tall Bi’a*, in: *MDOG* 125 (1993), 7-10; eadem, *Die Ausgrabungen in Tall Bi’a* 1993, in: *MDOG* 126 (1994), 24-31. The final report will be published as volume 6 of the Tall Bi’a/Tuttul excavation results.

lasted for more than thirty years. Justin agreed to Pope Hormisdas' terms and forced all bishops in his realm to sign a papal *libellus* which requested the subscriber to accept the council of Chalcedon.<sup>17</sup> However, many non-Chalcedonian bishops in the East refused to sign this *libellus* – among them John. He had been ordained bishop of Tella in 519, at a time when, according to his biographer Elias, “the persecution of the churches had not yet spread to the east of the Euphrates.”<sup>18</sup> Two years later John had to leave his see because he refused to accept the papal *libellus*.

He retreated first to the monastery of Mār Zakkai, and later to the “desert” in the region of Marde.<sup>19</sup> At a time when the persecutions by the Chalcedonians had disrupted the non-Chalcedonian communities and caused a shortage of non-Chalcedonian clergy, John's willingness and zeal to ordain non-Chalcedonian deacons and priests created his widespread fame.<sup>20</sup> Because of the great influx of people who came to him, the emperor Justinian I (527-565) organized a conference for which John of Tella went to Constantinople in 532/33 – probably as the head of the non-Chalcedonian delegation.<sup>21</sup> After John boldly refused Justinian's requests not to ordain anyone and the emperor's policy of rapprochement towards the non-Chalcedonians failed in 536, the Chalcedonians hunted John down and let the Persians capture him in the mountains around Šighar in Persia in early February 537.<sup>22</sup> He was brought to Antioch where he died February 6, 538.<sup>23</sup>

17 For the transition from Anastasius to Justin, their respective religious policy and the problems concerning the *libellus* see now V. Menze, *The Making of a Church: the Syrian Orthodox in the Shadow of Byzantium and the Papacy*, unpubl. PhD Diss. Princeton 2004, 8-107.

18 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 56 [Translation taken from Ghanem, 67]. John was likely to be ordained in November 519 as I argued in a paper given at the fourteenth International Patristic Conference/Oxford University 8/23/2003.

19 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 515. Elias does not mention John's retreat to the monastery of Mar Zakkai.

20 John may have been assisted by a few other non-Chalcedonian bishops; see Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60f [Ghanem 71] and Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 155-173.

21 For the conversation see Brock, *Conversations*, 87-121; see also Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 57-66 and 97-103. It is not persuasive that the non-Chalcedonian bishop Sergius of Cyrrhus was the leader of the non-Chalcedonian episcopal delegation as Jakob Speigl, *Das Religionsgespräch mit den severianischen Bischöfen in Konstantinopel im Jahre 532*, in: *AHC* 16 (1984), 273 and A. Grillmeier, *Jesus, der Christus im Glauben der Kirche II/2. Die Kirche von Konstantinopel im 6. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg 1989, 247 argue, based on the fact that the Syriac account of the conversations names Sergius first (Brock, *Conversations*, 113). It seems more likely that John of Tella was the head of the non-Chalcedonian episcopal delegation as he was not only the most active and prominent non-Chalcedonian bishop but also an able theologian; see his *Libellus Fidei*, BL Add. 14549, fols. 219b-226b.

22 The non-Chalcedonian bishops together rejected Justinian's request not to ordain anyone, but it seems obvious that this request meant first of all John of Tella; Brock, *Conversations*, 113. For Justinian's policy of rapprochement see Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 174-202.

23 For the date see above pp. 47.

## 1.3 John of Tella's Œuvre

John's literary œuvre seems to have consisted primarily of instructions in form of rules, canons and letters. The surviving portion is small, but as John's biographer Elias mentions that John wrote restlessly everywhere in matters of faith, John had been a quite productive author and anxious teacher who looked after his flock.<sup>24</sup> Most unfortunate seems the loss of his correspondence with the (probably non-Christian) Lakhmid king al-Mundir († 554) "who for some fifty years was the Byzantine empire's most dangerous Arab adversary."<sup>25</sup> As Severus, the non-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch (512-518), before him, John seems not to have succeeded in converting the king, but the attempt to convert this powerful ally of the Sasanians to non-Chalcedonianism must have alarmed the Chalcedonian emperor in Constantinople.<sup>26</sup>

The portion of John's œuvre that has survived is only partially published and not well known. John can be identified as the author of six texts which survive in total or in fraction. He co-authored two other texts, a letter and a statement of faith. The most common of John's text in the tradition of the Syrian churches are his *Canones ad Presbyteros* and his *Quaestiones et Responsiones*. Both concern church discipline and liturgy, and can often be found together in the same manuscripts.<sup>27</sup>

John addressed his 27 *Canones ad Presbyteros* especially to village priests, and admonished them not only to be steadfast in their non-Chalcedonian faith, but also to know or learn their duties as priests concerning the Eucharist etc.<sup>28</sup> It seems plausible to date the *Canones ad Presbyteros* to the

24 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 62 [Ghanem, 72f].

25 I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* I.1, Washington/DC 1995, 17; Procopius, *History of the Wars*, I.xvii.40 (ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing, LCL 48, Cambridge/Mass. 1914, 156f).

26 For Severus see now Pauline Allen and C. T. R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch*, London/New York 2004.

For Mundir, his position as ally of the Sasanian king and the religious implications involved see I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* I.2, Washington/DC 1995, 706-709 and 722-726.

27 Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*. Vol. 1, 156f and Vol. 2, 263-265.

28 John of Tella's *Canones* are easily accessible with English translation in *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, ed. and trans. Arthur Vööbus, 2 Vols., CSCO 367, 368, Louvain, 1975, 145-156 [Trans. 142-151]. They were first edited from other manuscripts by C. Kuberczyk, *Canones Iohannis bar Cursus, Tellae Mauzlatae Episcopi, e Codicibus Syriacis Parisino et Quattuor Londiniensibus editi*, Leipzig 1901; French translation: F. Nau, *Les Canons et les Résolutions canoniques*, Paris 1906; see also Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen* Vol. 1, A, 156-164. According to the *Canones* the non-Chalcedonian clergy was in a pitiful state, and apparently not every bishop had taken as much care as John of Tella in choosing able candidates; see Menze, *Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist*. John addressed

period when John of Tella started to ordain priests perhaps around 522/3 CE.<sup>29</sup>

John's *Quaestiones et Responsiones* answered questions which the priest Sergius posed to his teacher, John.<sup>30</sup> The emphasis among these 48 questions and answers was on the Eucharist, but John also clarified problems concerning deaconesses or generally women in the church, heretics etc. The text is usually dated to the time of John's exile 521-538.<sup>31</sup>

In the first half of the 520s, on the request of Severus, the exiled non-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, several exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops – among them John of Tella – in the patriarchate of Antioch composed a letter in which they warned non-Chalcedonian monks of the Julianist “heresy.”<sup>32</sup> The letter has survived in a couple of manuscripts, but has only been partially published.<sup>33</sup>

John certainly also co-authored the statement of faith which non-Chalcedonian bishops sent to Justinian when they came for the debate with

these canons indeed exclusively to priests. Only canon 11 appears to have been addressed to monks, but John probably addressed here monk-priests.

29 Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 188 argues for 523/4: John started to ordain clergy after Severus officially required that the non-Chalcedonians in the patriarchate of Antioch would find a suitable solution for the ordination of priests. However, according to John of Ephesus “a few things [had been done] in secret” (PO 18, 516). If John of Tella wrote his *Canones ad Presbyteros* for priests he had ordained, he could have done so as early as 522 because the reference concerning Philoxenus in Canon 1 of the *Canones ad Presbyteros* does not indicate that Philoxenus was dead (and it is usually assumed that Philoxenus died in 523). In other words, John of Tella started already ordinations before Severus initiated a synodical decision perhaps one or two years later.

30 John of Tella's *Quaestiones et Responsiones* survive in several versions; see Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, Vol. 1, B, 263-65. They were first edited with Latin translation by Th. Lamy in: *Dissertatio de Syrorum Fide et Disciplina in Re Eucharistica*, Louvain 1859, 61-97. A slightly different version which is more accessible (with English translation) can be found in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 211-221 [Trans. 197-205].

31 See Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, Vol. 1, B, 267f.

32 Severus, *Select Letters* V. 14, in: *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, 4 Vols., London 1902-4, 389-394 [345-350] is a letter to John (of Tella) and Philoxenus (of Doliche) and Thomas the bishops, confessors on the hill of Marde. From Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60 (Ghanem, 71) it is likely that this Thomas was Thomas of Dara. Sergius of Cyrrhus, Marion of Sura, and Nonnus of Circesium lived close by; Severus, *Select Letters* V. 15, Brooks, 394-405 [350-359]; Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60 [Ghanem, 71]. Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 159-161.

33 See R. Draguet, *Une pastorale antijulianiste des environs de l'année 530*, in: *Le Muséon* 40 (1927), 75-92 together with Arthur Vööbus, *Entdeckung neuer Handschriften des antijulianischen Pastoralsschreibens*, in: *OrChr* 66 (1982), 114-117 who identifies the subscribing non-Chalcedonian bishops. Both do not mention the partial edition and translation of the letter by I. Rahmani, *Studia Syriaca*, Vol. 1, Sharfeh 1904, 24f; see also Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 160f.

Chalcedonian bishops to Constantinople in 532/3. Pseudo-Zachariah preserves the full text in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but does not name the authors.<sup>34</sup>

Very few manuscripts preserve John's other works: his earliest writing that has survived (in only one manuscript) was a circular letter (*Libellus Fidei*) sent to the monks around Tella probably at the time when he became bishop of Tella in 519. In this highly interesting letter he laid down his faith, explained the foundation of the Church and admonished his addressees to be steadfast against the Chalcedonians.<sup>35</sup>

Difficult to date is John's *Hymnus de Trisagio*, a text which has survived in two manuscripts.<sup>36</sup> The controversy over the Trisagion and its addition "who was crucified for us" started in the second half of the fifth century.<sup>37</sup> John defended the non-Chalcedonian position in his *Hymnus* against Chalcedonian accusations. Perhaps John composed this hymn after he wrote up his *Canones* in which he required priests to recite the Trisagion with addition in the morning and in the evening (Canon 18). The *Hymnus* could explain priests, who knew of John's request to recite the Trisagion daily, the significance of the text and the addition.

Three manuscripts preserve a small portion of John's *Canones Monachorum*. John wrote these *Canones* for the monks of Mar Zakkai, the monastery in which John himself had once been a monk. As Vööbus rightly remarked, John probably wrote these *Canones* after he had been elevated to the see of Tella either while being bishop of Tella or in exile. Unfortunately only one of at least 48 canons has survived.<sup>38</sup>

34 Ps.-Zachariah, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX.15, ed. E. W. Brooks, *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, CSCO 84/88, Paris 1919-24, 115-122 [Trans. 79-84]. The non-Chalcedonian bishops are not mentioned by name, but as John of Tella was a member of the delegation, he must have been one of the authors.

35 British Library Add. 14549 fols. 219b-226b. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 175f and 198. Kleyn's statement in his *Het Leven van Johannes van Tella*, XI that this "geloofsbelijdenis verschilt op geen belangrijk punt van dergelijke geschriften van anderen" is not warranted; see now Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 91-95 and 108f who translates small bits of this otherwise unpublished text.

36 V. Poggi and Mar Grigorios (Hanna Ibrahim), *Il commento al Trisagio di Giovanni Bar Qürsūs*, in: OCP 52 (1986), 202-210.

37 R. Taft, *Trisagion*, in: ODB 3 (1991), 2121; J. Mateos, *La Célébration de la Parole dans la Liturgie Byzantine. Étude Historique*, Rome 1971; Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Vol. II/2, 334-336 [p. 334 in the paperback edition of 2004 differs significantly from p. 334 in the original hardcover edition of 1989]; Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 174-184.

38 Edited and translated in: *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, Vööbus, 60f. Vööbus mentions in his *History of Asceticism*, 179 that this portion of the *Canones Monachorum* is also preserved in Cambridge Add. 2023. The second half of this canon can be found in British Library Add. 17193; see W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. II, London 1871, 1001. For the date see also G. G. Blum, *Rabbula von Edessa. Der Christ, der*

John may have written his *Regula ad Diaconos* at the same time as he wrote his *Canones ad Presbyteros*.<sup>39</sup> John described the deacons' duties concerning the preparation of the Eucharist so that they would be able to do their work properly for which John had ordained them.<sup>40</sup> The text is preserved in Cambridge Add. 2023, and although Wright speaks of "extracts," the gaps remain visible at a glance: In the later part of the *Regula* some of John's original rules might have been only paraphrased ("Concerning the ...") rather than written out completely. The very end might be missing, but as the text ends after the liturgy is over and the deacon cleans the vessels, probably not much is lost, if anything at all.

This interpretation is supported by another tradition of John's text which is preserved in several (three or four) manuscripts, one of which is presented below in the edition: a modern manuscript from Mardin, a Syrian Orthodox metropolis in today south eastern Turkey, Mardin 323, pp. 368-371. It contains not only a few different phrases and vocabulary, but brings some additional material and offers the text in the form of six canons as ordered by "John, the bishop." The eldest witness of this tradition is an eleventh to thirteenth century manuscript from a Syrian Catholic monastery in Lebanon, Ms. Charfet 4/1.<sup>41</sup> Arthur Vööbus attempted to prove that this "John, the bishop" in the headline could not have been John of Tella as the Syrian Catholic patriarch Ignatius Rahmani and Paul Hindo had believed, and which has more recently been reestablished by Walter Selb.<sup>42</sup> However, Vööbus' conclusion becomes void if

Bischof, der Theologe, CSCO 300, Louvain 1969, 115 who believes that John wrote the text 519-521.

39 No title has survived for the *Regula* (as already noted above), but it seems reasonable to give the text a proper title. Thereby it can be placed in the context with John's other rules for monks and priests. They differ in form (with numbered rules), but admonish a clearly defined group of its duties like the *Regula*.

40 For the importance of the Eucharist see Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 152-155 and 165-173.

41 This manuscript is not available to me, but has been analyzed in scholarly works: the canons are described as "Explication des Sacrements de l'Eglise et du droit ecclésiastique;" see I. Armalet, *Catalogue des Manuscrits de Charfet*, Jounieh 1937, 70 [in Arabic]. According to W. de Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, Rome 1940, 8, the manuscript contains 750 pages. Armalet dates the first part of the manuscript dates to 1222/4, the second – from which this text is – to the eleventh/twelfth century, de Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, 8 believes that the second part must be written later than eleventh/twelfth century; Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 236 dates the whole Manuscript to 1222/4.

Description of the text in Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 236-240. There he notes that the text has survived in two other manuscripts as well which are both unavailable to me.

42 I. Ephrem Rahmani, *Les Liturgies Orientales et Occidentales*, Beyrouth 1929, 149f; P. Hindo, *Disciplina Antiochena Antica Siri III. Textes concernant les Sacraments*, Vatican City 1941,

one compares the two short passages of Ms. Charfet 4/1 which he published in his *Syrische Kanonessammlungen* with the text in the Mardin manuscript. They present the same text, and a comparison between the canons in the Mardin manuscript and the *Regula ad Diaconos* in the Cambridge manuscript show that – although different in form and a few details of content – they must be written by the same author, John of Tella.<sup>43</sup>

If one does not want to believe that John of Tella issued the same rules in two versions, scholars are challenged to decide which of the two versions comes closer to the original. Although John's original text cannot be restored with certainty, it seems that the composition in Ms. Cambridge 2023 retains more of the original. This can be concluded from the omission of the introductory notes of how John learned "this order" from his "fathers, the bishops and metropolitans" (end of fol. 251a in the Cambridge manuscript) and from the transformation of the text into canons in the Mardin manuscript. Both, the omission of these rather "circumstantial" notes by John as well as elevating John's rules into canons seem to be a later development. How John learned "this order" was of course crucial at his time in order to prove the lawfulness of his rules as being part of the apostolic and episcopal tradition, but they could be omitted later after these rules had become canonical – and presented as canons anyway. It is highly unlikely that it could have worked the way around. The Mardin manuscript, however, preserves a longer extract concerning the bread and wine on the altar. As this addition is somewhat repetitive about what deacons had to bring to the altar and oddly placed at the end of this (third) canon (already after John had warned deacons about what would happen if they did not follow his rule), it could be a later interpolation in order to specify John's original rule.

182. Partial French translations of canons 5, 1, 4 and 6 on pages 181f and 184; Hundo's numeration of Ms. Charfet 4/1 differs from Vööbus' numeration (Hundo: fols. 104b-105; Vööbus, 236 n. 1, 238 n. 17 and 239 n. 23: fols. 51a-52a/53a?); Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 237ff. De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, 8, believes that John of Mardin (twelfth century) wrote these canons, but does not explain how he reached this conclusion. According to Armalet's description of the manuscript the canons are followed by a text on the Eucharist by Jacob of Edessa, followed by the "Faith of Bar Salibi" which indicates a chronological order as the canons were written by John of Tella as shown below.

W. Selb, *Orientalisches Kirchenrecht* Vol. 2. *Die Geschichte des Kirchenrechts der Westsyrier (von den Anfängen bis zur Mongolenzeit)*, Wien 1989, 163. Selb refers also to Cambridge Add. 2023, but does not indicate what kind of relationship or dependence between these two texts he saw.

43 See also de Vries' description in his *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, 140, 142, 163.



3. Translation of Cambridge Add. 2023, fols. 250b-252b<sup>1</sup>By the same to deacons:<sup>2</sup>

First, O our brother, in fear, in trembling and with meticulousness that is remote from any kind of negligence you should draw near to this rational and holy service, being mindful and fearful of the precious and awe-inspiring saying (which is addressed) to those who belittled the decorum of this service, and would behave insolently (and) inappropriately, when the Lord of the service Himself spoke thus, *Those who honor me, I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt.*<sup>3</sup> May you be fearful and may you take care of the purity of your soul as well as your deeds. And [only] then you will attempt to enter the sanctuary of the Lord lest we<sup>4</sup> be blamed as those to whom it was said, *the priests defiled my sanctuary.*<sup>5</sup>

If, however, you show meticulousness and serve well the altar of the Lord to which you have been summoned and you have drawn near, you will be worthy of *the double honor*,<sup>6</sup> according to the apostolic word, recalling the saying of the Psalmist that points to the force [fol. 251a] of this service when he says, *He made the wind His messengers, and the fire of burning flame His ministers.*<sup>7</sup>

And again when you draw near to carry the awe-inspiring Mysteries and to hold in your hands the living body that gives life to all, you should remember the seraph when the bread has the *typos* and the (fore-)shadow of this body, it

1 Where it seemed necessary, variants in Ms. Mardin 323 are noted in the footnotes.

2 Ms. Mardin reads "Again canons on the orders of the holy mysteries, composed by holy Mar John, the bishop."

3 1 Sam 2:30.

4 Ms. Mardin 323 sticks here to the second person singular.

5 It is not clear to which Biblical verse John refers here, perhaps Zephaniah 3:4 or Leviticus 21:23.

6 1 Tim 5:17.

7 Hebr 1:7 (Psalm 104:4).



[sc. the seraph] did not dare to direct its glance at it, or to stretch out its hand towards it, but in awe and with tongues of fire it offered the coal to the mouth of the prophet.<sup>8</sup> And this, although it was fire and spirit, it trembled so greatly: look how much (more) it is right that we fleshly and soiled should draw near in trembling, in prayer and in continuous [*lit.* much] supplication for the ugliness of our sins.

And<sup>9</sup> now, our brother, because your love seeks from our unworthiness the order of the service and of the canons we are writing (it) down for you as something which (has been handed down) by our fathers, the bishops and metropolitans who brought me to this service, and raised me before their feet, and taught me this order: First you should be watchful lest you place anything that is alien [fol. 251b] to the altar in the sanctuary, as many often do who result in turning the altar into a place of defilement.

When<sup>10</sup> it is commanded<sup>11</sup> that you make preparations, and that you arrange the altar for the holy Mysteries, you should first enter, and if there is rubbish, sweep (it), and if there is something that is not at all related [*lit.* had not at all been set] to the service, you are taking it out. And then you should draw near to the holy table.

And you should untie [the altar vestments], take off, shake and wipe them clear with much zeal. Then you should spread [*lit.* dress up with] either these vestments or others again, being meticulous that you lay (them) out right and place (them) well balanced [*lit.* place in the middle] lest either side slip or cross over the other or the cross of the cloth be misplaced [*lit.* slip] by negligence, but as it is appropriate for the holy service.

As to how you should set apart the bread (for consecration):<sup>12</sup> If it is ordered to you by the priest that you should set apart and bring up the bread (for

8 See Isaiah 6:6-7.

9 Ms. Mardin 323 begins here with "Canon one", omitting the introduction until "... and taught me this order," but including the addressee "our brother."

10 Ms. Mardin 323: "Canon two: When the priest commands you ..."

11 Feminine form is often used impersonal; Theodor Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik*, Leipzig 1898 [reprint Darmstadt 1966], § 254.

12 Instead of the heading in the Cambridge manuscript, Ms. Mardin states here just "Canon three."



consecration), you should watch the people and accordingly things so that you know the [Eucharistic] body that will be needed from you, or that you be in need that it be left behind. And in this manner only you should bring up (that amount) lest you produce an excessive quantity and you bring (it) up at random [*lit.* as it comes], and one of two (courses) remain with you that would condemn (you) to Gehenna: either because it may be left over and become stale, or because you may desire greedily to eat [fol. 252a] of the awe-inspiring Mysteries inappropriately.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the laying out upon the altar:<sup>14</sup> Concerning the altar – if the altar is big, and the bread (for consecration) much, you should distribute (it) on the four winds<sup>15</sup> in the symbol of a cross. And if (the altar) is small, place one upon the other.

Concerning its position and its mixture:<sup>16</sup> You should place the chalice to the east of the bread. Concerning its straining and its mixture: You should be greatly meticulous lest you show negligence and pour at random [*lit.* as it comes], and either hair<sup>17</sup> sank in or something odious and be consecrated and afterwards it be thrown away and you condemn yourself.

Produce the mixture in this way: half wine and half water. And see lest Satan advise you, and you pour (too) much consecrated (element), so that you drink of it in the type of wine, and you be condemned by the blood and the body of the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

Afterwards<sup>19</sup> the service of the holy communion has been completed when the living body has been partaken, and you wish to cover (the vessels) and honor the (holy) service. You should be meticulous and watchful lest small

13 Ms. Mardin adds here: "And if there is much (Eucharistic) bread that comes to you, set apart one for ten [communicants]. And all the wine that comes, pour in one vessel; and from everything [of this wine] you should bring up [to the altar]. From the (Eucharistic) bread, when you place what is superfluous from your need, it is likewise. You should bring up [to the altar] from everything as you know that it is needed."

14 Ms. Mardin reads "Canon four" instead of the heading in the Cambridge manuscript.

15 Ms. Mardin: "sides."

16 Ms. Mardin: "Canon five" instead of the heading in the Cambridge manuscript.

17 Ms. Mardin: "part," maybe a particle or dust.

18 Ms. Mardin adds: "either you or everyone who drinks from it."

19 Ms. Mardin starts here "Canon six."

דדס <sup>92</sup> נפסע <sup>93</sup> פדחיה און און : און חל נכסא : און נפסע  
 [fol. 252b] דכסס כסו נן תארא . נכסס און : און דדס  
 כס נדס דדס : נן כחז דדס און נכסא <sup>99</sup> למסדס נכסא  
 און כס : מסדס נן : נכסא און

92 מ דלח

94 om. M

96 מ נן

98 מ add. מ

100 מ מ

93 מ און נפסע

95 מ דלח

97 מ add. מ

99 מ נכסא

101 מ add. מ

crumbs remain either on the altar or be attached upon one of the vestments. And again as far as the chalice is concerned: Watch lest [fol. 252b] anything remain attached to it, after you have first poured wine and have rolled (it) around (in the chalice), and after (you made use of) water, and after (you used) a sponge.<sup>20</sup>

20 Ms. Mardin adds: "The canons are finished."

## 4. Commentary

### 4.1 The Diaconate

Already the New Testament mentions deacons, but the characteristics of the diaconate in the early and late antique church were shaped in post-apostolic times.<sup>1</sup> In the time of the early church, the ecclesiastical hierarchy developed from a duality of bishops and deacons to the trinity of bishops, deacons and priests which present from then onwards the proper ecclesiastical ranks in late antique churches.

Although inferior in rank than priests, as confidants of their bishops, deacons could sometimes become quite powerful as the example of Athanasius of Alexandria illustrates.<sup>2</sup> Officially, however, the diaconate always constituted a lower rank than the priesthood. Canon 18 of the Council of Nicaea strictly limited the deacon's action to the assistance of his bishop or priest.

The *Traditio Apostolica*, maybe dating from the end of the second century, is the first source that offers detailed information about the church order, and presents the characteristic duties of the hierarchy – bishops, priests and deacons.<sup>3</sup> The deacon serves his bishop or priest and looks after the Christian community in social matters. He takes care of the offerings of the faithful, assists the bishop at the eucharistic service as well as he cares for the sick, the poor and widows.

Other church orders corroborate the image of the deacons as assistant of the bishop at the altar, but especially also as the caretaker for social obligations of the church. The fullest account about the deacon's duties that comes down

1 Th. Klauser, Diakon, in: RAC 3 (1957), 888-892. For an overview of this office and its many duties in the early church see Paul Philippi, Diakonie I, in: TRE 8 (1981), 621-644; S. Salaville and G. Nowack, Le Rôle du Diacre dans la Liturgie Orientale. Étude d'Histoire et de Liturgie, Paris/Athens 1962; J. Madey, Ministry according to the canonical sources of the Syro-Antiochean Church, Trivandrum etc. 1986, 51-71; I. Doens, Ältere Zeugnisse über den Diakon aus den östlichen Kirchen, in: Diaconia in Christo. Über die Erneuerung des Diakonats, ed. K. Rahner/H. Vorgrimler, Freiburg 1962, 31-56 and H. Brakmann, Zum Dienst des Diakons in der Liturgischen Versammlung, in: Der Diakon. Wiederentdeckung und Erneuerung seines Dienstes, ed. J. Plöger/H. Weber, Freiburg 1981, 147-163.

2 Athanasius of Alexandria accompanied as deacon his bishop Alexander to the Council of Nicaea and became later Alexander's successor.

3 B. Steimer, Traditio Apostolica, in: Lexikon der Antiken Christlichen Literatur, 610-613. For the reconstruction of the text, edition and French translation see La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte. Essai de Reconstitution, ed. and trans. B. Botte, Münster<sup>5</sup>1989. Text with German translation and introduction: Zwölf-Apostel-Lehre. Apostolische Überlieferung, ed. and trans. G. Schöllgen and W. Geerlings, FC 1, Freiburg 1991, 141-313. For other early Christian church orders see B. Steimer, Vertex Traditionis. Die Gattung der altchristlichen Kirchenordnungen, Berlin – New York 1992.

to us from the ancient church offers the *Testamentum Domini*, a church order from the fifth century that survives only in Syriac although originally written in Greek.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the tasks assigned to deacons in the *Traditio Apostolica*, the *Testamentum Domini* required the deacons to be a father to orphans, accommodate strangers, if necessary bury strangers, observe the church goers and be in general “the eye of the church.”<sup>5</sup>

None of the social components of a deacon’s duties for the Christian communities can be found in John’s *Regula ad Diaconos*. While presenting the deacon as angelic figure, John’s requirements for deacons comprise two aspects: 1. purifying and keeping in order the sanctuary and the altar in order so that 2. the deacon can then prepare the Eucharist.<sup>6</sup> The latter duty, the deacon’s assistance at the Eucharist, appeared already in one of the earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament, in a letter by Ignatius of Antioch who spoke at the beginning of the second century of “deacons of the mysteries of Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Also in a passage in the *Apologia* of Justin Martyr († 165) the deacon seems to have been responsible for the distribution of bread and wine.<sup>8</sup> According to John of Tella’s contemporary Pseudo-Dionysius the “chosen deacons, along with the priests, put on the divine altar the sacred bread and the cup of blessing.” Furthermore, Pseudo-Dionysius described in his *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* the deacons as “the order which purifies.”<sup>9</sup>

Referring to the canons of the fathers, John of Tella explained in detail the deacons’ tasks concerning the preparation of the Eucharist as well as their role

4 *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, ed. and trans. I. Ephraem II Rahmani, Mainz 1899. See also B. Fischer: Dienst und Spiritualität des Diakons. Das Zeugnis einer syrischen Kirchenordnung des 5. Jahrhunderts, in: Der Diakon. Wiederentdeckung und Erneuerung seines Dienstes, ed. J. Plöger/H. Weber, Freiburg 1981, 263-273 who offers a German translation of the important passages.

5 *Testmentum Domini*, I.33-I.38, here I.35 (Rahmani 83f).

6 See John’s quotation of Hebrews 1:7. For deacons compared to angels see for example Sebastian Brock, An early Syriac Commentary on the Liturgy, in: JThS 37.2 (1986), 391. See also the ninth century commentary on the liturgy by Moses bar Kepha who remarked: “The rank of deacons is the order of angels,” in: Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy, ed. and trans. R. H. Connolly and H. W. Codrington, London 1913, 35 [35].

7 Ignatius of Antioch, ep. ad Trall. II.3, in: The Apostolic Fathers I, ed. and trans. B. Ehrman, LCL 24, Cambridge/MA 2003, 258f. See also the spurious letter to the deacon Hero which, however, does not discuss the deacon’s liturgical duties. The problem concerning the life of Ignatius and the authenticity of the corpus (corpora) of texts which are preserved under his name see H. Paulsen, Ignatius von Antiochien, in: RAC 17 (1996), 933f.

8 Justin, *Apologia Maior* 65.5, ed. M. Marcovich, Berlin 1994, 126.

9 Pseudo-Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* III.2 and VI.3, in: PG 3, 425 and 536 [Trans. Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works, trans. C. Luibheid, Mahwah 1987, 211 and 248]. The work of Pseudo-Dionysius, at least his *De divinis nominibus*, was known to John of Tella and other non-Chalcedonian bishops; see Ps.-Zachariah, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX.15, Brooks, 119 [82].

in keeping the sanctuary pure.<sup>10</sup> John warned the deacons to behave improperly referring to 1 Sam. 2:30 – a passage which already Aphrahat used in his *Demonstrationes* several times in order to admonish priests to serve God without negligence.<sup>11</sup>

## 4.2 The Eucharistic Service

The Eucharist formed a central part of church life for the Christian communities in the early and late antique church.<sup>12</sup> Three aspects of John's text concerning the Eucharist shall be discussed here: the term **ܥܕܝܢܐ** used by John, the amount of bread and wine prepared for the service, and their arrangement on the altar.

### 4.2.1 **ܥܕܝܢܐ** as Term for the Eucharistic Bread

Ephrem, the great Syrian poet-theologian of the fourth century, wrote in one of his hymns:

The Seraph could not touch the fire's coal (**ܥܕܝܢܐ**) with his fingers,  
The coal only just touched Isaiah's mouth:  
The Seraph did not hold it, Isaiah did not consume it,  
But us our Lord has allowed to do both!<sup>13</sup>

According to Isaiah 6:6-7 the Seraph of the Lord flew to the prophet and offered him a living coal which it took from the altar with tongs. The Syrian fathers understood this passage as alluding to the Eucharistic service, and the

- 10 The most recent canon in the tradition of rules and canons on the duties of a deacon may have been written in John's lifetime and John might have known it first-hand: The anonymous *Canones de Ordinationibus* which Arthur Vööbus dates to the fifth/sixth century contain one canon that listed the duties of deacons; *Studia Syriaca III. Documenta Liturgica*, ed. I. Rahmani, Charfet 1908, **ܥܕܝܢܐ** [Latin trans. 59f]; Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 146-156. See also the almost contemporary note on deacons by the patriarch of Antioch, Severus, *Select Letters* I.60, Brooks, 209f [187f].
- 11 Aphrahat, *Demonstrationes* XIV, 17, 21, 27, in: *Patrologia Syriaca* I, ed. and trans. R. Griffin, Paris 1894, 616, 625 and 641-644.
- 12 For some introductory remarks on the Eucharist in the Early and Late Antique Church see the contributions by numerous scholars in *The Study of the Liturgy*, ed. C. Jones, G. Wainwright et al., London<sup>2</sup> 1992, 210-263.
- 13 Ephrem, *Hymnus de Fide* X.10, in: *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 154, Louvain 1955, 50 [Translation in S. H. Griffith, 'Spirit in the Bread; Fire in the Wine': The Eucharist as 'Living Medicine' in the Thought of Ephraem the Syrian, in: *MoTh* 15:2 (1999), 232 who took the translation from St Ephrem: a Hymn on the Eucharist (Hymns on Faith, no. 10), ed. and trans. S. Brock, Lancaster 1986 (the book was unavailable to me)].

term ܠܚܡܐ (= “coal”) as meaning (particles of) the Eucharistic bread.<sup>14</sup> In another hymn, Ephrem calls Christ “the Fire Who gave His body to those who eat. The coal drew near to sanctify unclean lips.”<sup>15</sup>

In the post-Chalcedonian period the steadfast non-Chalcedonian bishop Philoxenus, John of Tella’s older contemporary who died mysteriously while in Chalcedonian captivity, spoke of “the live coal of the Mysteries (ܠܚܡܐ ܠܝܬܝܐ), which in their nature are common bread, but faith seeth not as the eye of the body.”<sup>16</sup> The faithful carried “God incarnate in my hands in a fiery coal (ܠܚܡܐ ܠܝܬܝܐ) which is a body.”<sup>17</sup>

With his allusion to Isaiah 6:6-7 in the introduction of his *Regula ad Diaconos*, John of Tella stood therefore in a well-established tradition of interpretation of this passage by the Syrian Church fathers in Late Antiquity. John also used ܠܝܬܝܐ (= “Mysteries”) for the Eucharistic bread when he reminded deacons not “to eat of the awe-inspiring Mysteries inappropriately.”<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.2.2. The Amount of Bread and Wine

It was the deacon’s duty to take care of the bread and the mixing of the wine. John of Tella asked the deacon to check first how many communicants were present, and bring bread according to their numbers to the altar.<sup>19</sup> According to Ms. Mardin 323, the ratio of bread to communicants is specified as one

14 For this passage in Greek Patristic exegesis see the commentaries on Isaiah by Eusebius of Caesarea, in: PG 24, 427f; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Commentaire sur Isaïe*, ed. and trans. J.-N. Guinot, SC 276, Paris 1980, 266f; John Chrysostom, *Commentaire sur Isaïe*, ed. and trans. J. Dumortier, SC 304, Paris 1983, 272-277.

15 Ephrem, *Hymnus de Nativitate* XXII.14, in: *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate*, ed. Edmund Beck, CSCO 186, Louvain 1959, 111f [Translation taken from Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns*, trans. K. McVey, Mahwah/NJ 1989, 181f].

16 *The Discourses of Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabbôgh*, A. D. 485-519, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge, London: 1893/4, 56 [53].

17 A. Cody, *An Instruction of Philoxenus of Mabbug on Gestures and Prayer When One Receives Communion in the Hand, with a History of the Manner of Receiving the Eucharistic Bread in the West Syrian Church*, in: *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith. Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh*, O. S. B., Collegeville 1996, 56-79, here: 61 [trans. 63].

18 For ܠܝܬܝܐ/ܠܝܬܝܐ in Aphrahat and Ephrem see E. Beck, *Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephräm*, in: *OrChr* 42 (1958), 19-40; idem, *Zur Terminologie von Ephräms Bildtheologie*, in: *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. M. Schmitt, Regensburg 1982, 240-244. In general for the language of the body of Christ in the early Syrian tradition see Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge 1975.

Another term John used for Eucharistic bread is ܠܚܡܐ.

19 Perhaps the deacon made arrangements with the communicants before the celebration of the Eucharist; see K. P. Paul, *The Eucharist Service of the Syrian Jacobite Church of Malabar. The Meaning and Interpretation*, Piscataway/NJ 2003, 122.

bread for ten people.<sup>20</sup> The question why John was concerned about the quantity of the consecrated material finds an explanation in John's *Canones ad Presbyteros*:

This is why it is proper that that which suffices shall be consecrated. This is what we learned from the sacred books. The second book of the Law tells us about the lamb that is the type of that Lamb of Truth: 'A man according to the sufficiency of his eating shall make account for the lamb.' Also about the manna given to the sons of Israel in the desert which was the mystery of that bread of holiness that came from heaven. It says: "Gather of it from day to day a measure for each head of you; everyone shall gather for his family and do not leave until the morning." It thereby teaches us that only according to the quantity of the people present should we offer the oblation.<sup>21</sup>

John of Tella referred here to Exodus 16:11-30 concerning the Manna, arguing that no more Eucharistic material should be consecrated than necessary.<sup>22</sup> In the *Canones ad Presbyteros*, John nevertheless seemed to accept remaining particles as valid possibility: "When it happens that there are more [Eucharistic] fragments (left over), they shall be gathered carefully and collected and shall be given on other days."<sup>23</sup> As the Syriac term which Vööbus translates as "fragments" is ܡܪܕܝܬܐ (μαργαρίται = pearls, Eucharistic particles), John must have thought of consecrated elements.<sup>24</sup>

In the *Regula ad Diaconos*, however, John used drastic language in order illustrate forcefully that the deacons should never let this situation (of consecrated bread being left over) occur: according to John, the deacon who consecrated too much for the celebration of the mysteries would condemn himself to Gehenna because either the Eucharistic material would become stale or the deacon would "eat of the awe-inspiring Mysteries inappropriately."

Deacons, like other clergy, were allowed to take home part of the *Prospophora*, the bread that the faithful had offered to the church. However, they were

20 For Ms. Charfet 4/1 see Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 239, Syriac with German translation. See also Rahmani, *Les Liturgies Orientales et Occidentales*, 149f.

21 John of Tella, *Canones* 8, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 148f [145f]. For pictures of how the Eucharistic bread might have looked like in the Syrian Orthodox tradition see: F. J. Dölger, *Heidnische und christliche Brotstempel mit religiösen Zeichen*, in: *AuC* 1 (1929), 1-46 with plates 1-10; G. Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy. The Symbolism of Early Christian and Byzantine Bread Stamps*, Madison etc. 1970, 96f; G. Rabo, *Das eucharistische Brot ܡܪܕܝܬܐ in der Syrisch-Orthodoxen Kirche*, in: *Symposium Syriacum VII*, ed. R. Lavenant, OCA 256, Rome 1998, 139-147, especially the picture on p. 147.

22 See also canon of John of Tella in Bar Hebraeus, *Nomocanon* IV.1, ed. Bedjan, 35f; Rahmani, *Les Liturgies Orientales et Occidentales*, 69 and De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, 161.

23 John of Tella, *Canones* 8, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 149 [145].

24 The use of ܡܪܕܝܬܐ as metaphor for Christ goes back to Ephrem's five *Hymni de Margarita*: *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, ed. Beck, 248-262.

only allowed to eat it if it had not been consecrated.<sup>25</sup> If it had been consecrated the clergy was forbidden to use it as normal bread because according to 1 Cor 11:27-34 it would rather make sick than bless the consumer.<sup>26</sup> John of Tella encountered in the monastery of Mār Zakkai the practice that some fasters apparently lived exclusively on Eucharistic bread and wine. Here John spoke of “greedy dogs eating their Lord” referring back to bishop Rabbula of Edessa who had condemned this practice in the fifth century.<sup>27</sup>

In the same way John also admonished the deacon not to pour too much wine for consecration because it would be left over and might tempt the deacon to drink it afterwards. John’s harsh words conveyed the addressees that the practice to eat consecrated fragments was not at all praiseworthy. It was not allowed even if not viciously intended but caused just by the negligence of the deacon having miscalculated the communicants. The practice of eating the body and blood of the Lord as normal food presented a profanation of the Mysteries.

#### 4.2.3 The Arrangement of the Bread on the Altar

The arrangement of bread on the altar “in form of a cross” is valid until modern times in the Syrian churches.<sup>28</sup> The tradition goes back to John of Tella whose canon about the arrangement on the altar Bar Hebraeus (1225/6-1286) preserved in his *Nomocanon*.<sup>29</sup> The *Regula ad Diaconos* seems to present the most original form of the rule and the oldest witness of this custom.

An interesting sixth-century parallel from the West can be found in the third canon of the Council of Tours (567): “Vt corpus Domini in altari non imaginario ordine, sed sub cruce titulo componatur,” usually translated as “Let the body of the Lord be placed on the altar not in some arbitrary order, but in form of a cross.”<sup>30</sup> This canon became necessary as there seems to have

25 Doens, *Ältere Zeugnisse über den Diakon aus den östlichen Kirchen*, 35f.

26 See also Dölger, *Heidnische und christliche Brotstempel mit religiösen Zeichen*, 8.

27 See John of Tella’s rule against this practice: *Canones Monachorum* 48, in: Syriac and Arabic Documents, Vööbus, 60f. Unfortunately John did not present a detailed rejection of the practice like Rabbula; see Blum, *Rabbula von Edessa*, 114-122.

28 See Anaphoras. *The Book of the Divine Liturgies according to the Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, ed. Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, Lodi/NJ 1991, 9f n. 2; see also H. W. Codrington, *The Syrian Liturgy*, in: *ECQ* 1 (1936), 48f and Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonesammlungen*, Vol. 1, A, 238.

29 Gregorius Barhebraeus, *Nomocanon* IV.4, ed. P. Bedjan, Paris 1898, 44.

30 *Concilia Galliae* A. 511- A. 695, ed. C. de Clercq, CC 148A, Turnholt 1963, 178. German translation of the canons in Josef Limmer, *Konzilien und Synoden im spätantiken Gallien von 314 bis 696 nach Christi Geburt*, Frankfurt a. M 2004, 257. English translation taken from R. A. Markus, *The Cult of Icons in Sixth-Century Gaul*, in: *JThS* 29 (1979), 151-158 with older literature. Markus interprets the canon differently in the context of iconoclasm,

been a tendency in Gaul among the clergy to form a human body (of Christ) out of the Eucharistic bread – a custom forbidden by Pope Pelagius I (556-561). A sophisticated rite including the forming a cross with the Eucharistic bread can also be found in the middle ages in the Mozarabic liturgy in Spain.<sup>31</sup> The Roman tradition, however, never took up this practice.

#### 4.2.4 The Wine and its Mixture

John requested the deacons to “place the chalice to the east of the bread.” The Very Reverend M. Konat of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church explains this practice – which has survived in his liturgy in India – with the East being superior to the West: “By placing the Body on the Western side it signifies that the Word God took the body of man who had degraded himself by the deeds of the left (evil) and that God accepted humility.”<sup>32</sup>

John of Tella gave the same ratio of wine and water in canon 8 of his *Canones ad Presbyteros* as he did here in the *Regula ad Diaconos*.<sup>33</sup> He also put emphasis on the purity of the wine to be consecrated: the deacon remained responsible that no impure material would become consecrated and might interfere with the blood of Christ. This act would condemn the deacon!<sup>34</sup>

### 4.3 Purity and Cleaning

Pseudo-Dionysius’ dictum that the deacons formed “the order which purifies” becomes clear throughout the *Regula*. In order to purify the deacons needed

but this is not persuasive. Limmer does not seem to know Markus’ article and interprets the text as laid out here (255). See also C. J. Hefele – H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles III.1*, Paris 1909, 185 n. 6.

31 C. J. Hefele, *Der Cardinal Ximenes und die kirchlichen Zustände am Ende des 15. und Anfange des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen 1851, 159-161 with image on 160. For editions of this liturgy see H. B. Mayer, *Eucharistie. Geschichte, Theologie, Pastoral*, Regensburg 1989 (= *Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft* 4), 158f.

32 Paul, *The Eucharist Service of the Syrian Jacobite Church of Malabar*, 90 n. 29 quotes M. Konat whose book *Interpretation of Eucharist*, Pampakuda 1938 was unavailable to me.

33 De Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, 163 states that the Syrian Orthodox priests in the Near East today use more wine than water. Paul, *The Eucharist Service of the Syrian Jacobite Church of Malabar*, 110 says that the Syrian Orthodox in India still add an equal quantity of water to the wine. With respect to John 19:34 (blood and water flowed from the side of Christ when the soldier pierced his side with a spear) Syrian Christians believe that wine and water represent Christ’s divinity and humanity. Idem, 99.

34 See for the importance of pure Eucharistic material [John Rufus], *Life of Peter the Iberian*, ed. and trans. R. Raabe, Leipzig 1895, 113 [106]: the non-Chalcedonian bishop and holy man Peter the Iberian took great care in order to have pure bread especially baked for the celebration of the Eucharist and kept it in a clean vessel.

to be pure themselves as John reminded them: “may you take care of the purity of your soul as well as of your deeds.” Then the deacons could offer due reverence to the holy altar and the service of the Eucharist celebrated on it.

Deacons were responsible for the sanctuary and the altar. They needed to keep both clean and pure so that priests could celebrate the Mysteries. The altar should not become a *ܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ*, a “place of defilement.”<sup>35</sup> In his *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, John specified that this ban included – or especially concerned – bones of martyrs.<sup>36</sup> The problem of relics in the sanctuary conflicting with the celebration of the Eucharist is well known from the case of North Africa where the widow Lucilla used to kiss a martyr bone before taking communion. Here, at the beginning of the Donatist controversy (311), it was also a deacon – the archdeacon – who took care that Lucilla abstained from her habit – in order to give due reference to the body of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

The deacon had the duty to keep the sanctuary clean, and this part in John’s *Regula* reminds the reader of the depiction of John’s later contemporary Rade-gund (525–587), an ordained deaconess and former wife of the Merovingian king Chlothar. According to Venantius Fortunatus, the major Latin poet of the latter half of the sixth century, “Radegund herself would polish the pavement with her dress and, collecting the drifting dust around the altar in a napkin, reverently placed it outside the door rather than sweep it away.”<sup>38</sup> Venantius Fortunatus presented the idealized picture of a holy woman, but the requirement of care for a pure sanctuary comes also through in John’s *Regula*.

Nothing of the Eucharistic material was allowed to remain on the altar or on the vestments after the service, and also the vessels needed to be cleaned meticulously.<sup>39</sup> As the Syrians commingled the bread with the wine in order to show the inseparability of the Body and Blood of Christ, particles of the

35 *ܥܠܐ* was used in the sense of “to defile” before, but *ܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ* could also mean “storehouse of useless things.”

36 John of Tella, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 12, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 213 [199]. According to Codrington, *The Syrian Liturgy*, 16, the Syrian Orthodox do not keep relics under the altar or buried within – maybe because of John of Tella’s rule.

37 Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, I.16 (*Contre les Donatistes I*, ed. and trans. J. Labrousse, SC 412, Paris 1995, 206–208; English translation by M. Edwards, TTH 27, Liverpool 1997, 16f). See F. J. Dölger, *Das Kultvergehen der Donatistin Lucilla von Karthago. Reliquienkuß vor dem Kuß der Eucharistie*, in: *AuC* 3 (1932), 245–252.

38 Venantius Fortunatus, *De Vitae Radegundis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 2, Hannover 1888, 365f [Trans. *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, ed. J. A. McNamara, J. E. Halborg, with E. Gordon Whatley, Durham and London 1992, 71]. For Radegund see also I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751*, London 1994, 136–139.

39 In his *Quaestiones et Responsiones* John of Tella gave specific orders to what should be done if the priest handled the consecrated material improperly: John of Tella, *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, 4 and 6, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 211f [197f].

Eucharistic bread might have remained in the cup.<sup>40</sup> Therefore wine was used to wash the chalice and according to Codrington the priest or the deacon had to drink it.<sup>41</sup> Then John required the deacon to use water and finally a sponge (ܟܠܥܡܪܐ = σπόγγος).<sup>42</sup> If the sponge was worn out, it should be preserved or burned, but not be despised or thrown away according to John of Tella's *Quaestiones et Responsiones*.<sup>43</sup>

The holy vessels remain covered before and after the celebration in order to keep them pure from outside corruption. A veil for the Eucharist was and is still common in the Syrian liturgies in order to "honor the holy service."<sup>44</sup> The concern for ritual purity poses a main focus of the *Regula* – purity of the person who serves, purity of the place where the mysteries are celebrated, the vessels used in the ceremony, and especially of the Eucharistic elements.

#### 4.4 Résumé: Control and Authority

As pointed out in the introduction, John focused on the correct celebration of the Eucharist also in his *Canones ad Presbyteros* and especially in his *Quaestiones et Responsiones*. In his *Canones ad Presbyteros* he described with indignation the shortcomings of some non-Chalcedonian priests:

It came to our attention that [certain] people [i. e., priests] from the villages, not having learned completely the offering of the Eucharist, transgress boldly and ascend [to the altar] at the awe-inspiring moment: they offer the Eucharist, and when they pray they are confused and a cause of laughter and improper talk at [this] moment for those who are gathered for prayer.<sup>45</sup>

40 About the rituals of unity see: R. Taft, *One Bread, One Body: Ritual Symbols of Ecclesial Communion in the Patristic Period*, in: *Nova Doctrina Vetusque. Essays on Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter*, S. J., ed. D. Kries/C. Brown Tkacz, New York etc. 1999, 23-50, esp. 37ff. For a medieval explanation of the commingling of wine and bread see Moses bar Kepha, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, Connolly and Codrington, ܟܠܥܡܪܐ - ܟܠܥܡܪܐ [68f].

41 Codrington, *The Syrian Liturgy*, 98.

42 See also Rahmani: *Les Liturgies Orientales et Occidentales*, 58; for the Greek term see S. Brock, *Greek Words in the Syriac Gospels*, in: *Le Muséon* 80 (1967), 416.

43 John of Tella, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 14, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 213 [199].

44 Pseudo-Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* III.12, in: PG 3, 444 [Luibheid, 222]; John of Tella, *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, 5, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 212 [198]. If this veil was worn, it could be used for "the healing of the ulcers of the sick." See also Brock, *An Early Syriac Commentary*, 391. About covering and uncovering the Mysteries see Moses bar Kepha, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, Connolly and Codrington, ܟܠܥܡܪܐ [87f]. For twentieth century customs in Syrian Orthodox Churches in India: Paul, *The Eucharist Service of the Syrian Jacobite Church of Malabar*, 90f with picture on p. 61. For Syrian-Catholic rite see the pictures in N. Liesel, H. Kunkel, *Die Liturgien der Ostkirche. Die Eucharistiefeier der orientalischen Ostkirchen*, Fulda 1956, 43 and 51.

45 John of Tella *Canones* 13, in: *Canones Iohannis bar Cursus, Tellae Mauzlatæ Episcopi*, Kuberczyk, 29f; French translation: François Nau, *Les Canons et les Résolutions Canoniques*,

The obvious insufficiency of proper instruction of these priests appalled John (and he requested these priests to receive instruction – preferably in a monastery). Unable to offer the Mysteries of the Church these priests could not fill the spiritual and institutional authority required by the priestly office. In John's eyes this proved to be unacceptable considering the fact that the Eucharist formed the central ritual of the liturgy. The twentieth century cardinal Henri de Lubac remarks that the priesthood was instituted just for the purpose to offer the Eucharist. De Lubac concludes that God accepts the Church's sacrifice and prayer because "*l'Eucharistie fait l'Église.*"<sup>46</sup>

The priesthood was instituted in the early church because of the necessity to celebrate the Eucharist to the faithful.<sup>47</sup> Therefore instead of ridiculing himself at the altar, a priest needed to have the ability to administer this sacrament.<sup>48</sup> Severus of Antioch considered the epiclesis, the Eucharistic prayer spoken by the offering priest, as essential for the consecration of the Eucharistic materials:

It is not the offerer himself who, as by his own power and virtue, changes the bread into Christ's body, and the cup of blessing into Christ's blood, but the God-befitting and efficacious power of the words which Christ who instituted the mystery commanded to be pronounced over the things that are offered.<sup>49</sup>

Priests needed to assure the lay community that they knew the epiclesis and thereby controlled the central ritual of the Christian church in order to legitimate their position as the religious leaders of their community.<sup>50</sup> The priests depended

25. Translation mine from Kuberczyk's edition as Vööbus' edition and translation seems less reliable; see Menze, *Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist* with notes on Vööbus' edition.

46 H. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge. Étude Historique*, Paris 1949, here 104. See also P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church*. Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in *Dialogue*, Edinburgh 1993.

47 See also J. Martin, *Die Genese des Amtspriestertums in der frühen Kirche*, Freiburg 1972, especially 109f.

48 Fake priests or priests of dubious ordination add another dimension: according to several canons of the time this problem seems to have been quite widespread.

49 Severus, *Select Letters* III.3, Brooks, 269f [238f]. See F. Heiler, *Die Ostkirchen*, München - Basel 1971, 340f. The laity seems to have expected the priests to be morally impeccable. Apparently because of complaints about the suspicious character of some priests, Severus pointed out (in the same letter) that priests fulfilled a mere subsidiary function in the celebration of the Eucharist. Nevertheless it seems clear that the priest needed at least to be competent in the ritual of the Eucharist in order to fulfil his – even if subsidiary – function at the altar. For the position of priests in villages see Menze, *Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist* in sixth-century Syria.

50 For the interrelation of power and ritual see C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Oxford 1992, 169-181. But see also for religious authority P. Bourdieu, *Das religiöse Feld. Texte zur Ökonomie des Heilsgeschehens*, Konstanz 2000, 23-37. As discussed here, being in office did not necessarily mean to have institutional authority ("Amtsautorität").

on the “Amen” of their communities in order to celebrate the Eucharist.<sup>51</sup> In other words, only if the clergy could fulfill the duties of their office, institutional authority would be granted to them.

John of Tella insisted that non-Chalcedonian clergy offered a valid Eucharist, regarded necessary for salvation, through proper celebration of the Mysteries. To that end the priests and deacons needed to observe meticulously the canons of the church and ritual purity – as John requested in his *Regula ad Diaconos*.

## 5. Establishing the first Generation of Syrian Orthodox Clergy in Exile: John of Tella’s ordinations, his Ecclesiology and the *Regula ad Diaconos*

### 5.1 The Sacrament of the Eucharist

When John of Tella left his see for exile the non-Chalcedonian church, John’s Church, had lost its ecclesiastical structure. The competition for episcopal sees between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonian which had characterized the period after Chalcedon ended at the beginning of the 520s. The Chalcedonians had won the day and might have hoped for a biological solution concerning the exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops: when these bishops died eventually, also the non-Chalcedonian tradition which they transmitted through teaching to their flock and clergy might perish with them. John of Tella was at the forefront that this did not happen: he instituted a non-Chalcedonian hierarchy and instructed them according to the tradition he grew up in. As it seems that the reason for ordinations was especially a concern for the sacrament of the Eucharist and as this sacrament shows also prominent in his written instructions – among them the *Regula ad Diaconos* – his work probably presupposed a (pseudo-)eucharistic ecclesiological understanding of the Church as discussed below.

First of all it seems necessary to ask why John of Tella started to ordain priests and deacons maybe already in 522/3.<sup>52</sup> On a rather vague and superficial level John of Ephesus provides a reason for the ordinations in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*:

a murmuring on the part of those among the believers who had been banished from every quarter began to be stirred up against the blessed men [the non-Chalcedonian bishops] since

51 This works of course also vice versa: the community needed the “Amen” of the priest: see for the understanding of eucharistic communities the works of Nikolas Afanassieff; here: P. Plank, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche. Zur Entstehung und Entfaltung der eucharistischen Ekklesiologie Nikolaj Afanas’evs* (1893-1966), Würzburg 1980, 210. See also below 64f.

52 For the date see p. 50 with n. 29. Concerning ordinations of bishops by John see below 83f.

they had been reduced to great difficulties, while they spoke and sent messages to them all the times, asking them to give a hand of ordination to the church of the believers, 'because it is in great difficulties.'<sup>53</sup>

Banished believers can only refer to expelled non-Chalcedonian monks: the Chalcedonians had just expelled at the beginning of the 520s all – unruly (!) – non-Chalcedonian monks from their monasteries for insurrection against the new Chalcedonian authorities. Especially the Amidene monasteries (in one of which also John of Ephesus was a monk) suffered for their violent take over of Amida.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the Chalcedonians uprooted the non-Chalcedonian monks of several monasteries who had posed the only organized resistance in the East against the incoming Chalcedonian bishops. Any attempt to re-organize these groups of homeless monks in a new non-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical hierarchy must have highly alarmed the Chalcedonians.<sup>55</sup>

The "great difficulties" refer to the lack of non-Chalcedonian clergy who could administer non-Chalcedonian sacraments. If we are to ask which sacrament caused probably the most urgent problem, we very likely end up with the Eucharist. The monks were certainly baptized and the rites for a burial were something which did not bring the monks in daily or at least frequent difficulties.<sup>56</sup> John's newly ordained priests could also not help the non-Chalcedonian laity to have their children baptized by non-Chalcedonian clergy: a well-organized Chalcedonian bishop like Abraham bar Kayli in Amida registered his community, especially the pregnant women, thereby making sure that every new-born was baptized by him and not any non-Chalcedonian cleric.<sup>57</sup> Penitence was a concern, and sources from these decades deal with the

53 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 516.

54 Menze, *Making of a Church*, 114-123. A small (but prominent in John of Ephesus' account) minority of monks suffered severely by the strict Chalcedonian policy.

55 It explains Justinian's willy-nilly policy of rapprochement towards the non-Chalcedonians in the early 530s; Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 197-202.

56 Although not to be buried by a non-Chalcedonian priest is a concern in the sources; see John of Tella, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 26 and 28, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 216f [201f]. Concerning other church rites: only bishops could consecrate new churches and new altars, and should have been ideally the ones who baptize people. Priests could anoint altars, but the final act of consecration could only a bishop do; churches and martyria should be consecrated by a bishop, but if it would have been "difficult" for the bishop to do so, it was enough if the altar was consecrated and a priest commissioned to do the remaining rites. Priests most likely baptized people (and even deacons were allowed under very limited circumstances), but the sources imply that baptism was still considered the proper duty of a bishop; *Chapters which were written from the Orient* 4 (concerning baptism), 5, 8 (altars) and 12 (churches), in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 164-166 [158f].

57 *Incerti Auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum Vulgo Dictum*, Chabot, Vol. II, 34 [*The Chronicle of Zuqnin*, Harrak, 61].

question of how non-Chalcedonian clergy should receive Chalcedonians or non-Chalcedonians who defected (deliberately or probably more often compelled) and repented now.<sup>58</sup> However, this was only the pre-requisite in order to become a full member of non-Chalcedonian communities and take the sacrament of the Eucharist with them.<sup>59</sup> “The Holy Eucharist is the greatest and most exalted [sacrament]” and it appears prominent in John of Tella’s *Quaestiones et Responsiones* and is the main focus of his *Regula ad Diaconos*.<sup>60</sup> New non-Chalcedonian priests assisted by deacons could offer this sacrament and prevent believers to go to Chalcedonian churches and take the Eucharist there. According to the twentieth century Cardinal de Lubac this sacrament formed and forms the heart of the Church.<sup>61</sup> The Eucharist as the body of Christ was for the late antique monks the “life-giving blessing” which they wished to partake of regularly.<sup>62</sup>

Although the sources are remarkably silent about the christological implications of a Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian Eucharist, people in Late Antiquity certainly granted power to both of them. The Chalcedonian John Moschus recounts a story about a Chalcedonian monk who – in his pre-monastic life when he was married and of non-Chalcedonian persuasion – caught his wife taking the Chalcedonian Eucharist with the neighbors: Appalled by his wife taking the wrong Eucharist he “grabbed her by the throat and forced her to emit” it.<sup>63</sup> John of Tella advised faithful non-Chalcedonians to avoid a Chalcedonian *Qurbono* like the “poison of death” if they “find” (ܩܪܒܢܐ) it.<sup>64</sup> Apparently the life-giving sacrament of the Eucharist could become a lethal magic portion if it turned out to be the “wrong” Eucharist.

On a purely technical level John’s rule implies that a Chalcedonian Eucharist looked different from a non-Chalcedonian and could be avoided if a non-

58 See Severus, *Select Letters* V.14, Brooks 390f [347] and Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 193f.

59 For the importance of the Eucharist as sign of communion see W. de Vries, *Der Kirchenbegriff der von Rom getrennten Syrer*, Rome 1955, 82 and V. Menze, *Die Stimme von Maiuma: Johannes Rufus, das Konzil von Chalkedon und die wahre Kirche*, in: B. Aland/J. Hahn/Ch. Ronning, *Literarische Konstituierung von Identifikationsfiguren in der Antike*, Tübingen 2003, 215–232, especially 226–229.

60 Quotation from *Anaphora*, ed. Mar Athanasius, 471.

61 H. de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, London 1956, 113.

62 For the term see E. Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing. An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria*, Uppsala 1977, *passim*.

63 John Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale* 30, ed. Migne in: PG 87.3, 2877 [trans. by J. Wortley, *The Spiritual Meadow*, CS 139, Kalamazoo 1992, 22].

64 *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 44, in: Lamy, *Dissertatio de Syrorum Fide et Disciplina*, 94 [95] and *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 220 [204f].

Chalcedonian happened to come across it.<sup>65</sup> This could have been the case as Christians started to use bread stamps in the fifth century in order to mark the eucharistic bread, and Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian bishops might have used different shape of stamps, different motives and/or a different text on the stamps.<sup>66</sup>

Therefore not taking the Eucharist with the Chalcedonian hierarchy newly instituted in many cities in the eastern provinces separated the non-Chalcedonian faithful not only visibly from the Chalcedonian churchgoer, but also demonstrated his refusal of the Chalcedonian eucharistic authority. Taking the Eucharist from a priest who was ordained by John of Tella meant to accept John of Tella's eucharistic authority as the priesthood was not independent from its bishop. The bishop could delegate the right to administer the sacrament in his name to priests.

If John's priests administered the Eucharist on the bishop of Tella's authority it was in John's interest to have a qualified priesthood. The resistance of these new priests and deacons against the Chalcedonian faith of the empire was hardly sufficient to qualify them for their office. It was crucial to instruct them according to the canons of the church – the canons given “by our fathers, the bishops and metropolitans” as John pointed out in the *Regula ad Diaconos*.

## 5.2 John of Tella's ordinations: 170 000 ordained priests and deacons?

At first sight this interpretation does not seem to go along with the number of John's ordinations as mentioned by John of Ephesus in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. According to John of Ephesus, John of Tella ordained 170 000 persons.<sup>67</sup>

65 If received (صلّى) in a Chalcedonian church from a Chalcedonian priest, the question and answer in John's *Quaestiones et Responsiones* hardly makes much sense.

66 Rabo, *Das eucharistische Brot*, 139 states that bread stamps started to be used in the middle of the fifth century. The faithful brought their flour to a deacon, monk or priest who baked the bread using the bread stamp.

To the best of my knowledge there is no archaeological evidence for a eucharistic bread stamp that can be assigned specifically to Chalcedonians or non-Chalcedonians. For bread stamps (Eucharistic and others) see Dölger, *Heidnische und christliche Brotstempel mit religiösen Zeichen* and Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy*, passim. For further examples of bread stamps see for example G. Galavaris and R. Hamann-Mac Lean, *Brotstempel aus der Prinz Johann Georg-Sammlung in Mainz, Mainz 1979 and Ägypten. Schätze aus dem Wüstensand. Kunst und Kultur der Christen am Nil*, Wiesbaden 1996, 176–181 and 184. Four interesting and probably eucharistic bread stamps with inscriptions (for example EIC ΘEOC) dating to the fifth and sixth centuries can be found in: *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. K. Weitzmann, New York 1979, 627f.

67 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 523.

How could one bishop possibly instruct so many new priests and deacons properly? Scholars are critical with numbers and dates in John of Ephesus and have usually regarded his statement concerning the number of John of Tella's ordinations as ridiculously exaggerated.<sup>68</sup> Frank Trombley, however, has argued that another number given in John of Ephesus might actually be accurate: the number of 70 000 (or even 80 000) converts from John of Ephesus' missions to the pagans and "heretics" in Asia Minor.<sup>69</sup>

The discussion here will focus on John of Tella's ordinations. It is obvious that the exact total number cannot be figured out, but before dismissing the extraordinary high number it might be worth to ask for the significance of this number. Contrary to John of Ephesus' number concerning his converts in Asia Minor, John of Ephesus' statement about John of Tella's ordinations is not eye-witness information. He referred to people "who counted them [the ordinations]." The question must be how these anonymous people counted them.

If we consider the number of 170 000 ordinations as accurate for a moment, this would mean that John of Tella ordained an average of 33 persons every single day for 14 years!<sup>70</sup> This seems hardly possible even if John of Ephesus counted as "ordinations" also John of Tella's reception of Chalcedonian clergy into the ranks of the non-Chalcedonians (who he actually did not re-ordain), and also the making of sub-deacons, readers etc. who did not receive a proper ordination (χειροτονία).<sup>71</sup>

John of Ephesus presents not only the total number of ordinations, but he

68 W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 261 considers it as "greatly exaggerated." Also Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*, 103 gives the impression that John exaggerated tremendously.

69 F. R. Trombley, *Paganism in the Greek World at the End of Antiquity: the Case of Rural Anatolia and Greece*, in: *HThR* 78 (1985), 330f counted for 80000 converts. For the varying number of 70000 or 80000 see J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus. A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, unpublished PhD Thesis Groningen 1995, 31 n. 42. More recently Stephen Mitchell, however, dismissed Trombley's argument; see St. Mitchell, *Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor Vol. II. The Rise of the Church*, Oxford 1993, 118f.

70 If we assume that John started to ordain as early as 522, stopped ordination while in Constantinople for a year, and continued until he was caught in February 537, he ordained 14 years at most. As it is likely that the Chalcedonians made it impossible for him to ordain continuously throughout these years, the number of daily ordinations must even be higher than 33!

71 John of Ephesus explicitly used the term χειροτονία which referred to the ordination of deacons and priests (and also deaconesses), but not to lower church ranks; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: *PO* 18, 516 and 519f; for ordinations of priests, deacons and deaconesses see *Canones de Ordinationibus* 9, 10, and 14, in: *Studia Syriaca* III, Rahmani, 1-2 [Latin trans. 58-61]; Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen* 1, A, 147f (who numbers the canons differently; here canons 13, 14 and 18); for ordination of lower clergy see H. S. Alivisatos, *Die kirchliche Gesetzgebung des Kaisers Justinian I.*, Berlin 1913 [Reprint Aalen 1973], 70.

(or: his anonymous source) also estimated the number of daily ordinations: “companies of fifty and of a hundred in a day, and even now and again as many as two or three hundred a day.”<sup>72</sup> According to John of Ephesus “a flood that is produced in a river by thick clouds” came to John of Tella while he was in the desert, a monastery or a convent. As John of Tella decided to ordain “all expelled men,” it can be assumed that he often ordained whole groups of monks who had left their home monasteries for the desert or other monasteries. This assumption can be corroborated by John of Ephesus own ordination. He reported that John of Tella ordained him as deacon in 529 together with 70 fellow monks who had left their monasteries in the vicinity of Amida.<sup>73</sup>

If anybody – like the anonymous source for John of Ephesus’ account – counted these exceptional numbers of daily ordinations as average number of daily ordinations, he indeed could end up with 170 000 ordinations total. If he took the highest amount – 300 ordinations – John would have ordained 170 000 people in ca. 567 days. It cannot be taken for granted that John ever ordained 300 persons a day, but it is not unlikely: as he ordained whole groups of monks in mass ordinations, he might have just ordained the whole congregation of a monastery which could have easily consisted of 300 monks.

As John did not ordain 300 people on an average day, the number of 170 000 ordinations still remains too high as scholars have assumed. However, the discussion of daily ordinations can explain how John of Ephesus and his source came up with this number of priests and deacons instead of understanding it just as “Oriental lightheartedness in dealing with numbers.”<sup>74</sup>

### 5.3 Written Canons and the *Regula ad Diaconos*: Instructing a Church in Exile

The incorrectness of the total number does not devalue its significance. 70 ordinations a day – as in the corroborated case of John of Ephesus and his fellow-monks – could not be done without provoking the Chalcedonian authorities. John’s declared goal to ordain “all expelled men” caused a re-organization of the ecclesiastical landscape in the eastern provinces. If so many persons became non-Chalcedonian priests and deacons, John might have limited the pool of able candidates for a Chalcedonian ecclesiastical

72 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 518.

73 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 521. A decade later John of Ephesus was also an eye-witness when John of Hephaestu ordained “more than fifty priests” in Tralles; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 538.

74 A. Vööbus, *The Origin of the Monophysite Church in Syria and Mesopotamia*, in: ChH 42 (1973), 21.

hierarchy. However, it was not only the sheer numbers that mattered and threatened the territorial integrity of the Chalcedonian bishoprics. John realized that instituting a new ecclesiastical hierarchy meant more than just the laying of an episcopal hand. As bishop, John was also a pastoral carer who – according to Wendy Meyer’s and Pauline Allen’s definition of pastoral care – needed to provide “ritualized care, teaching/instruction, spiritual direction/guidance, charismatic ministry of prayer, administration, social welfare, and mission/conversion.”<sup>75</sup>

As the sources in John of Tella’s case are much more limited than in the cases of Severus of Antioch and John Chrysostom – the examples used by Allen and Meyer – it is not possible to examine every aspect of John’s pastoral care. The fact that John lived in exile and could not provide for example social welfare or administration to his flock limits the inquiry further. Bishops in Late Antiquity taught their flock through homilies, but an exiled bishop could hardly deliver homilies. However, John of Ephesus confirms that John of Tella took his office as bishop and its duties seriously: “I [John of Tella] for my part have received a gift [his episcopal office] from God, and with it I am trading and am not negligent.”<sup>76</sup>

John of Tella’s achievement concerning mission and conversion seems obvious as he attracted not only non-Chalcedonians who came to him for ordination, but also Chalcedonians who wanted to join the ranks of the non-Chalcedonian clergy.<sup>77</sup> He certainly provided ritualized care for the faithful in form of the Eucharist – as did the non-Chalcedonian bishop John of Hephæstu after him in the 530s who gave communion to non-Chalcedonians who came to him. Through letters John provided spiritual guidance as he did in his letter to the monks around Tella in which he laid down his faith and admonished his addressees not to defect from the non-Chalcedonian cause.<sup>78</sup>

John made instructions for newly ordained clerics a priority in order to teach them *orthopraxis*. The *Canones ad Presbyteros* demonstrate that the non-Chalcedonian clerics – and especially the village priests – were at least partially not able to do their duties according to the canons of the Church.<sup>79</sup>

75 P. Allen, Severus of Antioch as Pastoral Carer, in: *StPatr* 35 (2001), 355; see also P. Allen/W. Mayer, Towards a definition of Pastoral Care in Late Antiquity, in: *Aug.* 40 (2000), 345–397.

76 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: *PO* 18, 520.

77 For this see John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: *PO* 18, 520, but also the unpublished letter by the non-Chalcedonian bishop Thomas of Germanicia, *BL Add.* 14532, fols. 142a–143a.

78 His *Libellus Fidei* see above p. 51.

79 John of Tella was hardly able to remove all mismanagement among the non-Chalcedonian clergy. For the lack of instruction among village priests see Menze, Priest, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in sixth century Syria.

But proper knowledge of ecclesiastical duties and its applications according to the tradition of the Church were crucial in order to legitimize this new ecclesiastical structure as the Church.

Both hagiographers of John, Elias and John of Ephesus, emphasize John's careful selection of candidates for ordination and their instruction. John professionalized the recruitment of potential candidates: trustworthy men in all districts of the East received John of Tella's seal, selected candidates for ordination and sent them with a letter of introduction (probably sealed with John's seal) to John for ordination. No candidate could come without this letter. In other words, confidants of the exiled bishop pre-selected the candidates before John considered an ordination.<sup>80</sup> In the case of John of Ephesus and his fellow-monks this rule might have been suspended because John of Tella knew that they "came from well-known Amidene convents."<sup>81</sup>

This way of recruitment also meant that John considered for ordination not only frustrated non-Chalcedonian monks, but actively searched for qualified candidates for a non-Chalcedonian priesthood or diaconate who might have otherwise gone off to the next Chalcedonian see to pursue an ecclesiastical career there. John meticulously kept record about his ordinations, and when the Chalcedonians made the Persians catch him, "they also hunted for the documents that contained [...] the names of the believers who received the priesthood from him."<sup>82</sup> The Chalcedonians were aware of John's talent to organize his mission meticulously and grasped the danger that steamed from the dimension of his mass ordinations for their own church.

Although not explicitly mentioned in Elias or John of Ephesus, John of Tella could only cope with such masses of willing candidates if he did not work alone. Even when the Chalcedonians caught him in 537 some disciples remained with him. These disciples probably had helped him to test the candidates' abilities to read the Scriptures, recite the Psalms and write their signatures.<sup>83</sup> This scrupulous screening process of the candidates could only be done because John's recruiters had pre-selected the candidates and John had assistance for the final examinations before the ordination.

80 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 519.

81 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 521.

82 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 522. Records were necessary as fake priests and Julianists who pretended to be Severian non-Chalcedonians deceived Severian non-Chalcedonians. See *Chapters which were written from the Orient* 22, 24, 33, 40 and 42, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 168-171 and 174-176 [161-164 and 166-168].

83 For the disciples: Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 88 [Ghanem 101]; for the examination process: John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 518f. At some point John may have been supported in ordaining clergy by other non-Chalcedonian bishops; see Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60f [Ghanem 71].

According to Elias, John of Tella gave the newly ordained priests and deacons “words of advice.”<sup>84</sup> He probably did this in form of oral advice before he ordained them. However, John could not possibly instruct them in everything in a one day lecture. In order that they could still learn the canons or at least refer to instructions he must have given them also written up rules. This would corroborate the image of John as a bishop who organized his duty of ordination very professionally as described above.

His *Canones ad Presbyteros* and his *Regula ad Diaconos* present probably two of these texts of instruction.<sup>85</sup> The *Canones ad Presbyteros* addressed (village) priests in general, and might have been quite widespread as they touched on diverse issues and problems. In the last of these *Canones* John of Tella ordered that children – as the future generation of the church – should not be sent to secular schools, but should be instructed “according to the apostolic precept.” A few decades after John of Tella had written this canon, John of Ephesus modeled a saint who lived up to this ideal: Simeon the Mountaineer appeared in John’s *Lives of the Eastern Saints* as a teacher who actually took away children against the will of their parents in order to bring them up as faithful Christians.<sup>86</sup> This is not to say that John of Tella had an immediate impact on John of Ephesus’ writing, but it demonstrates that John of Tella addressed issues which troubled the church deeply.

Although no further evidence remains, John of Tella might have given his *Regula ad Diaconos* to John of Ephesus and his 70 fellow-deacons. Perhaps they all together received one copy of the text and learned the rules. A decade later John of Ephesus had ample opportunity to demonstrate what he had learned when, as a deacon, he assisted John of Hephaestu celebrating the Mysteries.<sup>87</sup> In case John of Ephesus had really been one of the addressees of the *Regula ad Diaconos*, John of Tella wrote it between 522 and 529 at the latest, but probably like the *Canones ad Presbyteros* rather 522 than 529.<sup>88</sup>

John’s *Regula* is a text that belonged to a church in exile as the non-Chalcedonians did not hold episcopal sees where they could educate and teach their novices at the local church. Furthermore, a written instruction was

84 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks, 63f [Ghanem, 74f].

85 John also wrote rather individual letters like the *Quaestiones et Responsiones* to the priest Sergius, but as the inclusion of this text in the *West Syrian Synodicon* shows, it was not just a private letter: it also reached a wider audience perhaps already in John’s time and became canonical later.

86 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 17, 241-246.

87 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 538.

88 The *Regula ad Diaconos* might have circulated also among the deacons who came with John of Ephesus to Asia Minor to assist him in his missionary work; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 43, in: PO 18, 658-660.

necessary because the huge number of ordinations did not allow John to instruct all new clerics personally. John wrote it for deacons whom he had ordained somewhere in the eastern dioceses, maybe in the “desert” or in monasteries as John of Ephesus remarked, but probably also in villages and small cities in which John of Tella dwelled for a while – or maybe just on the road. Some of these deacons returned to their home villages and started their duties as deacons there. But a good number of John’s deacons were probably expelled monks who could not return to their monasteries.

It is probably not a coincidence that the *Regula ad Diaconos* addressed the celebration of the Mysteries and purity of the sanctuary. As discussed for the *Traditio Apostolica* and the *Testamentum Domini*, under normal circumstances a deacon’s duty comprised especially social obligations. However, a deacon in exile was hardly able to fulfill these obligations. Therefore John focused on – in his understanding – the core duties for a deacon, the preparation of the Eucharist and purity of the sanctuary.<sup>89</sup> In exile, the non-Chalcedonians did not celebrate in their “home” or parish church, but maybe in a martyr shrine with which they were not acquainted and which might even be in the possession of the Chalcedonians.<sup>90</sup> The non-Chalcedonian priests might have brought their own altar to this martyr shrine, but they could not know if the sanctuary was held in proper order.<sup>91</sup> John’s *Regula* required the deacons to clean this sanctuary and keep it pure as a pre-condition to celebrate the Mysteries. He then took the deacon step by step through the process of how to prepare the Eucharist canonically even under the given circumstances.

#### 5.4 John of Tella’s Eucharistic Ecclesiology

As discussed above John started to ordain expelled monks, but later he ordained any qualified person and even searched for these men. The question must be then why did John ordain as many new priests and deacons as possible, and

89 However, when John speaks in the *Regula* of “the [Eucharistic] body [...] that you be in need that it be left behind,” he might refer to left-over bread from the *Prospora* which the deacon and other clergy usually ate or to bread to be consecrated and brought by the deacon to the sick and other faithful who could not attend mass. In the latter case John might here thought of an established village community in which the deacon had social obligation like taking care of the sick.

90 *Ecclesiastical Canons which were given by the Holy Fathers during the Time of Persecution* 2, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 160 [155].

91 About altars: *Chapters which were written from the Orient* 8, in: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 165 [158f]. See also below 82.

only them, not bishops?<sup>92</sup> What kind of understanding of the Church was behind John's ordinations? According to John of Ephesus, John of Tella believed that "a time is coming when men to give a hand to believers shall be wanting and shall not be found."<sup>93</sup> That explains on the surface why John ordained as many as possible, but it does not explain why he ordained priests and deacons rather than bishops.

First of all the case of bishops should be considered. The lack of episcopal ordinations might have just a technical explanation because three bishops were needed for the ordination of a bishop and John could not have done it alone. This explanation, however, can probably be dismissed: John had been together for a while with other non-Chalcedonian bishops from the patriarchate of Antioch and did ordain bishops for Persia.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, in times of persecutions bishops had been ordained by less than three bishops.<sup>95</sup> Another reason might have been that the non-Chalcedonians did not dare to build a new episcopal hierarchy against the existing Chalcedonian hierarchy because they were afraid of being regarded schismatic. The non-Chalcedonians might have feared the consequences – in other words persecutions as John of Ephesus wrote. However, also this explanation does not satisfy. John did challenge the imperial church profoundly, visible in Justinian's request in 532/3 to stop ordinations and in the merciless persecution of John beyond the empire's border in Persia in the deep winter of 537.<sup>96</sup>

John of Tella's biographer Elias could claim for the time when John was in exile "that the Diophysites had few followers, for the true Church of God was being built up."<sup>97</sup> This did not come about through John ordaining new and more non-Chalcedonian titular bishops who had no chance to claim their sees which Chalcedonian bishops had occupied. The non-Chalcedonians had already more than fifty exiled bishops anyway. If John ordained new – titular – bishops, they probably would have been targeted, too, and kept out of their sees and dioceses. John challenged the imperial church on an unexpected level.

92 At least inside the Roman empire he seemed to have limited his ordinations to priests and deacons; for ordinations in Persia and a possible episcopal ordination within the Roman empire see Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 194f.

93 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 521. As John of Ephesus wrote this down decades later, it sounds like a historicized prophecy, but his statement corresponds with John of Tella's missionary activity.

94 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60f [Ghanem 70f], Severus, *Select Letters* V.14 and V.15, Brooks 389-394 [345-350] and 395 [352].

95 [John Rufus], *Petrus der Iberer*, Raabe, 65f [65f]; Peter the Iberian and Eusebius of Pelusium ordained a new patriarch of Alexandria, Timothy, in 457 although a third bishop was missing.

96 See the description of the winter in Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 67 [Ghanem 77f].

97 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 63 [Ghanem 73].

Through the ordinations of deacons and priests he took away the foundation of the imperial church – the eucharist communities.

When Justin changed the religious policy of the empire, he may have been surprised by the strong and stubborn opposition of non-Chalcedonian bishops in the eastern provinces. But as the Roman Empire was a deeply aristocratic society, Justin believed he could crush this opposition from top to down: unruly bishops were expelled or left their sees wisely before the new authorities arrived in their cities. The goal of Justin's policy was certainly not to persecute these bishops and put them in prison – this would give them more attention than the emperor wished. He just needed to neutralize their influence by expelling them and instituting new Chalcedonian bishops who would then – again from top to down – force the clergy in their diocese into communion with their shepherds or install trustworthy Chalcedonian priests and deacons for the Christian communities. That means, in numbers, Constantinople expected that only several dozens non-Chalcedonian bishops would obstruct the enforcement of Chalcedon in the East.

The first set-back of Justin's policy occurred in Amida in 521/2 when maybe more than a thousand monks violently attacked the new Chalcedonian metropolitan, drove him out and took over the city.<sup>98</sup> With military reinforcement the Chalcedonians regained control, but the fear of insurrection of non-Chalcedonian monks lived on. Many of the monks were pushed around out of fear they could establish new stable monasteries which could become a breeding ground for intellectual non-Chalcedonianism.

These expelled monks were among the first of John's priests and deacons, but John aimed for more. Even if not 170 000 deacons and priests, John ordained thousands of priests and deacons who intruded Chalcedonian dioceses as village priests and deacons or as wandering monk-priests and monk-deacons. Non-Chalcedonian priests were allowed to remove an altar and fix it elsewhere if their bishop approved (and it seems likely that John of Tella approved this) which made them and the administration of their Eucharist geographically flexible. Maybe they sometimes carried just the altar-board (*tablitho*) with them on which they celebrated the Eucharist.<sup>99</sup> If there was a shortage of altars, a bishop could help out and consecrate them as John of Hephaestu did in Constantinople and had them shipped to the East.<sup>100</sup>

The emperors Justin and Justinian were helpless concerning the infiltration of thousands of non-Chalcedonian clergy in the eastern dioceses. Abraham

98 Menze, *Making of a Church*, 114–123.

99 *Chapters which were written from the Orient* 8 (altar) and 16 (*tablitho*), in: *Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 165, 167 [158f, 160].

100 John of Ephesus *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in: PO 18, 531.

bar Kayli in Amida registered whole neighborhoods and ensured that people came to him to “take the Eucharist.”<sup>101</sup> John of Ephesus’ image of this metropolitan as the “archvillain” of the Syrian Orthodox tradition seems to indicate that Abraham remained an exceptional case.<sup>102</sup> Many Chalcedonian bishops probably could not control their whole flock and many non-Chalcedonian Eucharist communities might have established themselves outside the episcopal churches and episcopal realm.<sup>103</sup> John of Tella’s strategy not to beg for the emperor’s favor and not to compete with the Chalcedonians for sees, but to work from the heart of the church, challenged the legitimacy of the imperial church. If the Chalcedonian bishops lost control over their communities and the Eucharist, on which grounds could they claim to be the Church?

The Chalcedonians had just overcome a schism between Rome and Constantinople and aimed to be regarded as the universal Church in East and West.<sup>104</sup> Against this universalistic claim of a hierarchically structured church John offered an understanding of the Church which resembled rather a eucharistic ecclesiology, a term first coined by the Russian Orthodox proto-presbyter and theologian Nikolas Afanassieff (1893-1966).<sup>105</sup>

Afanassieff lived through the Russian revolution and emigrated first to Serbia, later to Paris where he became professor of theology. Quarrels and schisms between the Russian Orthodox episcopal hierarchy frustrated Afanassieff and influenced his ecclesiology. In opposition to what he thought to be the ruling model of the Church, the universal ecclesiology, he tried to recover the original model of the “universal” (καθολική) Church, which he called eucharistic eccle-

101 Incerti Auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum Vulgo Dictum, Chabot, Vol. II, 34 [The Chronicle of Zuqnin, Harrak, 61].

102 Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*, 62.

103 Maybe in this context Justinian forbade any private religious assembly (παρασυνάξεις) in 530: Cod. Just. I.5.20 (in: *Corpus Iuris Civilis* Vol. 2. *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. P. Krueger, Berlin <sup>11</sup>1954, 58f) especially directed against Montanists. This law hardly changed the situation in the eastern dioceses. It is not the first of its kind as already the emperor Marcian (and Valentinian) forbade the Eutychians (by which the Chalcedonians meant in general the non-Chalcedonians) to assemble: Cod. Just. I.5.8 from 455 (in: *Codex Iustinianus*, Krueger, 52).

104 But even under Justin Egypt and the patriarchal see of Alexandria was still occupied by the non-Chalcedonians. Not before 537 did Justinian institute a Chalcedonian patriarch in Alexandria.

105 For his life and theology see Plank, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche*, passim. Only a few of his works are translated into western languages; see especially Afanassieff, *The Church which presides in Love*, in: *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. J. Meyendorff et al., London 1963, 57-110. For other important articles by Afanassieff see ns. 108 and 114. For a very short overview of eucharistic ecclesiology in the twentieth century see P. McPartlan, *Eucharistic Ecclesiology*, in: *One in Christ* 22 (1986), 314-331; see also idem, *The Eucharist makes the Church* (as n. 46).

siology.<sup>106</sup> He understood the universalistic model of the Church as being the sum of all local churches with legal ties and established hierarchies between them. In 1934 Afanassieff published his ideas on a eucharistic ecclesiology, the key-sentence for which he saw in Mt 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Afanassieff believed that this was the ruling model in the early church. He referred to Ignatius of Antioch who wrote in his letter to the Smyrneans that the congregation is where the bishop is, just as where Christ is, there is "the universal (καθολική) church."<sup>107</sup> For Afanassieff the universal Church manifests itself in the local church where the bishop celebrates the Mysteries for his community. In Afanassieff's own words: "là, où est une assemblée eucharistique, là demeure le Christ et là est l'Église de Dieu en Christ."<sup>108</sup>

John of Tella experienced exile as did Afanassieff 1400 years later, and having lost their former place within their churches probably sharpened their perception of what the Church should be. The experience of these two theologians, however, differed in one important aspect: Afanassieff left Russia because of political disruptions, and he developed his eucharistic ecclesiology in order to find a way which could unite the different Christian churches and schismatic branches. John of Tella went into exile because a new emperor brought about a change on the dogmatic position with the goal of erasing the non-Chalcedonian tradition.<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately, while in exile, John did not develop an ecclesiology in written form, at least no text has survived. Only the *Libellus Fidei* from probably 519 offers some hints of his understanding of the Church before he went into exile.<sup>110</sup> John speaks here of the spiritual foundation that Paul, "the divine master-builder," had built "so that everyone may build on it wisely a heavenly building according to the measure of the gift that he received from God."<sup>111</sup> Martyrs, ascetics, stylites and especially the apostles built on it: "it was on this [foundation] that Simeon built and John; on it Thomas completed in Chush, and in Egypt Marc, Addai, the house of Medians, and Persians and

106 For Afanassieff's understanding of the universalistic model which he saw developed by Cyprian of Carthage (ca. 200-258) see Afanassieff, *The Church which presides in Love*, 59-67; for eucharistic ecclesiology see especially idem, *The Church which presides in Love*, 73-81.

107 Ignatius of Antioch, ep. ad Smyr. VIII.2, in: *The Apostolic Fathers I*, Ehrman, 304f.

108 Nikolas Afanassieff, *Una Sancta*, in: *Irénikon* 36 (1963), 459.

109 For the non-Chalcedonian tradition and its development after Chalcedon see Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 67-107.

110 There seems also not to be much literature on a Syrian ecclesiology or understanding of the Church except de Vries, *Der Kirchenbegriff* (as n. 59) which collects many sources, but perceives the Syrian traditions from a strictly Roman Catholic point of view.

111 John of Tella, *Libellus Fidei*, BL Add. 14549, fol. 219b.

Parthians. And it was on this that the apostle Matthew built in Palestine, and Jacob, the brother of our Lord."<sup>112</sup>

Like the apostles and all (orthodox) bishops in the succession of the apostles also John of Tella stood on this foundation, and did "the work of an evangelist" as his biographer Elias wrote.<sup>113</sup> John understood the Church as the Church of all ages (including the apostles, martyrs, saints etc.) which manifested itself in his time in local eucharistic communities led by priests and deacons he had ordained. They formed together with the exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops an orthodox commonwealth in the apostolic succession, in opposition to the imperial church as their bishops had gone astray at Chalcedon. If the "Church is there, where the Eucharist is consummated," as Afanassieff wrote in 1935, John's biographer Elias could claim that the Church "was built up" by John in the eastern provinces.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless John's ecclesiology does not correspond with Afanassieff's in so far as John did not want each non-Chalcedonian bishop to establish his independent Church. Afanassieff's rather idealistic perception that each eucharistic community should have their own bishop and a bishop should not be the head of several eucharistic communities led by priests was inconceivable in John's world.<sup>115</sup> The universal ecclesiology in form of the imperial church had established itself as the sole model of the Church in Late Antiquity. Different groups of Christian competed for imperial favor, influence, benefices, sees and church buildings. Patriarchs of the important episcopal sees like Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome tried to be regarded as the leading patriarchal see. All these factors did not erode the universal model of the Church, they strengthened it. John himself was deeply immersed in a world ruled by the universal ecclesiology, but he shifted the priorities of the Church.

John created eucharistic communities which were legally bound to him (as he conferred his *sacerdotium* to the priests and deacons he had ordained), but which he had provided with his written instructions so that they were practically independent and could fully operate without him being physically present. These eucharistic communities seemed therefore to have been temporary independent cells of a non-Chalcedonian church in a hostile environment. None of these communities could claim to be the universal Church in Afanassieff's understanding as their bishop, John, was not present at the Eucharist. It might

112 John of Tella, *Libellus Fidei*, BL Add. 14549, fol. 221b.

113 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 58 [Ghanem 69] with quotation from 2 Tim 4:5.

114 N. Afanassiew (different transcription), *Das allgemeine Priestertum in der orthodoxen Kirche*, in: *Eine Heilige Kirche* 17 (1935), 337: „Die Kirche ist eben dort, wo die Eucharistie vollzogen wird.“ [The article is a German translation of a Russian text by Afanassieff]. Elias as quoted above p. 81 n. 97.

115 Plank, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche*, 135.

be appropriate to speak here of a (pseudo-)eucharistic ecclesiology which pre-supposed orthodoxy, apostolicity and orthopraxis.

By ordaining outside his own diocese new priests and deacons who could certainly not be assigned to one altar or one church, John deliberately overruled several long-established ecclesiastical canons.<sup>116</sup> His opponents, the Chalcedonian bishops, confronted him with this dilemma: “Which canon allows you to do this what you undertook?”, but John countered the bishops by stating: “When there is anarchy (ἀκαταστασία) [such as this], the Church cannot observe the accuracy (ἀκριβεία) of the canons.”<sup>117</sup> John reminded the Chalcedonians of the resistance of Nicene bishops against the Arian church in the fourth century by ordaining priests and deacons outside their respective diocese. When the Nicene bishop Eusebius of Samosata († 380)

apprised that many churches were now deprived (ἐρημούς) of their shepherds, he traveled about Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine, wearing the garb of war and covering his head with a tiara, ordaining priests and deacons and filling up (ἀναπληρῶν) the other ranks of the Church; and if haply he lighted on bishops with like sentiments with his own, he appointed them to empty churches.<sup>118</sup>

Eusebius of Samosata even ordained Basil the Great as bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia although this was outside his jurisdiction.<sup>119</sup> The Cappadocian fathers Gregory of Nazianz and Basil the Great highly praised him and Eusebius became a saint for Chalcedonians as well as non-Chalcedonians who both claimed the Nicene tradition for their side.<sup>120</sup>

116 For the prohibition of extra-jurisdictional ordinations see the Synod of Antioch (341), can. 22. However, according to Severus, it was allowed in times of persecution to overrule canons if the faithful benefited from it; see Severus' judgment concerning the ordinations of priests by a bishop outside his home diocese: Severus, *Select Letters* 1.59; Brooks, 197f [176f]; Menze, *The Making of a Church*, 186f.

For the proper assignment of clergy to one altar see the Synod of Antioch, can. 3; especially the Council of Chalcedon forbade in can. 6 clergy to be ordained at large who cannot be appointed to a certain parish church, martyr or monastery. It could be claimed that John ordained John of Ephesus, his fellow-monks and hundreds or thousands of other monks as deacons for their home monasteries (which were sometimes ruined and to which the monks could not return), but even if in function, monasteries hardly needed all their inmates to be ordained. See also Council of Chalcedon, can. 10 and 20.

117 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 75 [Ghanem, 86; here: my own translation].

118 Theodoret, h. e. IV 13.4, ed. G. Ch. Hansen, GCS N. F. 5, Berlin 1998, 233 [trans. taken from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 3, trans. B. Jackson, New York 1892, 116].

119 Gregory of Nazianz, ep. 44.4, ed. P. Gallay, GCS 53, Berlin 1969, 40.

120 Eusebius was also a regular correspondent of Basil the Great, but only Basil's letters have survived.

Whereas Theodoret presents the Chalcedonian tradition, a Syriac *vita* has survived in the non-Chalcedonian tradition, in the same manuscript (BL 12174) as John's life by Elias just after Elias' text; Wright, *Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1127; see *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, ed. P. Bedjan, Vol. 6, Leipzig 1896, 225-377; trans. P. Devos, *Le dossier*

In his reply to the Chalcedonians John of Tella called upon another saint of the Nicene tradition as well – Athanasius of Alexandria: Returning from his second exile to Alexandria in 346, Athanasius, the father of Orthodoxy for Chalcedonians as well as non-Chalcedonians, “performed ordination; which afforded another ground of accusation against him, because of his undertaking to ordain in the dioceses of others.”<sup>121</sup> If John could refer to sanctified Nicene bishops like Eusebius and Athanasius in order to defend his extra-jurisdictional work, how could the Chalcedonians accuse him of uncanonical ordinations without being regarded in the tradition of the Arians (an accusation brought forth by the non-Chalcedonians)?

Elias tried to justify John’s work by placing the bishop of Tella in this Nicene church tradition. In other words, Elias implies that although John overruled long-established church canons, he was allowed to do so because the Nicene fathers did the same in times of persecution. This, however, is only partially true: these Nicene extra-jurisdictional ordinations differed from John’s monumental work in terms of dimension and intention. Athanasius just seems to have established a network of loyal clergy in dioceses he passed through on his way back to power in Alexandria.<sup>122</sup> Eusebius’ ordinations were “underground ordinations” in dioceses probably occupied by bishops hostile to Eusebius and the other Nicene bishops, but Eusebius did not organize his undertaking like John and he ordained only in order to “to fill up” vacancies with Nicene clergy. John’s work, however, was not only extra-jurisdictional, but he undertook mass ordinations unknown to the Nicene fathers. John did not just strive to fill vacancies when he had the opportunity and could anticipate a Chalcedonian bishop’s ordination. John’s professional recruitment of priests and deacons might have deprived the Chalcedonian bishops of the pool of qualified candidates for a new generation of Chalcedonian clergy. John’s non-

syriaque de S. Eusèbe de Samosate, in: *AnBoll* 85 (1967), 195-240. The Syriac *vita* contains exactly the same story about Eusebius’ ordination as Theodoret’s account. See also F. Halkin, *Une vie grecque d’Eusèbe de Samosate*, in: *AnBoll* 85 (1967), 5-15, M. Spanneut, *Eusèbe de Samosate*, in: *DHGE* 15 (1963), 1473-1475 and F. Loofs, *Eusebius von Samosata*, in: *RE* 5 (1898), 620-622, who regarded Theodoret’s description of Eusebius’ ordinations as probably legendary, an assumption taken up by H. Ch. Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homöer. Der Osten bis zum Ende der homöischen Reichskirche*, Tübingen 1988, 234 n. 73. However, especially when compared to John of Tella’s work, it seems not unlikely that Eusebius undertook such underground ordinations for the Nicene church.

Eusebius is commemorated as saint on June 22, the probable day of his death in 380 as martyr of the Nicene church.

121 Socrates, h. e. II. 24.8, ed. G. Chr. Hansen, *GCS N. F.* 1, Berlin 1995, 133 [trans. taken from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. 2*, trans. A. C. Zenos, New York 1886, 53].

122 It is not entirely clear where he ordained clergy, but it seems likely that he ordained clergy outside Egypt – in Palestine for example.

Chalcedonian priests and deacons flooded Chalcedonian dioceses and established there Eucharist communities. Thereby John attempted to take away the breeding-ground for a Chalcedonian church life in the eastern dioceses and to bring the Chalcedonian church of the empire to its knees.

Not much can be said about how John's mass ordinations effected the regional distribution of non-Chalcedonian clergy. John tried to ordain people from all over the East, but in which area John was able to recruit many candidates and in which not, is difficult to answer.<sup>123</sup> In other words, it could be that his mass ordinations created areas with a high percentage of non-Chalcedonian priests and deacons whereas other regions might have still lacked a permanent non-Chalcedonian priesthood.<sup>124</sup>

John's model received its attractiveness from its simplicity and the charismatic nature of its leader, John: leaving aside the strives for episcopal sees which had become fierce politics about power in Late Antiquity, John's model referred back to the roots of Christianity, the Eucharist, which according to de Lubac "est elle-même, comme en résumé, le Testament nouveau."<sup>125</sup> John's apostolic activity in the wilderness, on mount Zion (as Severus remarked about John, Philoxenus of Doliche and Thomas of Dara when they lived on the hill of Marde), as "good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2:3) or as evangelist as Elias wrote, invoked motifs of the (Old and) New Testament.<sup>126</sup>

Compared to the charismatic non-Chalcedonian bishop of the desert, the Chalcedonians realized their weakness in spiritual matters – caused by their comfortable position of being in power. They accused John of dressing like a holy man with hair tunic, black robes and long beard in order to deceive the simple.<sup>127</sup> It seems fair to assume that many Christians did not follow the Chalcedonian assessment but regarded John's motifs and work as sincere. After having been caught in Persia, certainly without false hopes what his future would be, John of Tella could look back on his work and mock the

123 Obviously, there was an incline from East to West: in the coastal area and Antioch the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch had more influence than in the provinces closer to the Persian border in which John had probably a strong following – especially among the monks from around Amida.

124 Even under normal circumstances the density of priests in a certain area probably greatly varied. From the late Middle Ages we have data that shows that for example in the small German city Worms 10% of the population was ordained! However, such a high percentage of clergy was unusual in Germany at the end of the fifteenth century; see H. Eberhardt, *Die Diözese Worms am Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts nach den Erhebungslisten des "Gemeinen Pfennings" und dem Wormser Synodale von 1496*, Münster i. W. 1919, 26 and 51f.

125 De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 76.

126 Severus, *Select Letters* V.14, ed. Brooks 390 [346f] (see n. 32). For Mount Zion in the New Testament see Hebr 12:22. Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 58f [Ghanem, 86f].

127 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 77f [Ghanem, 89].

assembled bishops of the imperial church who had all come to see him finally at their mercy: "You have the gold; you have the freedom (παρρησία); you possess the entire earth, so to speak; and you are appointing the dignitaries and making promises! But even so, the people flee from you as from their enemies."<sup>128</sup> Although the Chalcedonians could offer positions (with beneficiaries) in their ecclesiastical hierarchy, many qualified candidates chose to be ordained by John. These newly ordained priests and deacons formed the first generation of the Syrian Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy which preserved a non-Chalcedonian church life even under Chalcedonian bishops and offered their non-Chalcedonian Eucharist to the laity in the eastern dioceses.

## 6. Conclusion

John's canons and rules are only part of a wider spectrum of this genre of texts which also other non-Chalcedonian bishops in exile used at this time in order to instruct their communities and clergy.<sup>129</sup> The *Regula ad Diaconos* edited and translated here is just one small text by John of Tella from an œuvre that once included perhaps more instructions for newly ordained clergy. The *Regula* remains a rather specific text, and therefore its reception in manuscripts is limited. John of Ephesus and his generation of deacons and priests formed the addressees of this *Regula* and John of Tella's other canons. As bishop in exile, John achieved the establishment of an ecclesiastical hierarchy against the ruling church, and through written texts John instructed the first generation of Syrian Orthodox clergy.<sup>130</sup> His life as pastoral carer and alleged martyr gave the new church a model saint at its disposal.<sup>131</sup>

With monks alone the non-Chalcedonians could not win the day as the insurrection of non-Chalcedonian monks in Amida demonstrated. But the potential of thousands of uprooted monks and other qualified candidates for priesthood was available, and John channeled and structured their force in an ecclesiastical hierarchy which opposed the new religious policy of Justin I and Justinian I. John's work was crowned with success if his priests and deacons could claim to be legitimate office holders by observing the well established canons of the church and undertaking their duties lawfully. If the non-

128 Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 77 [Ghanem, 88f].

129 The *Synodicon* in the West Syrian Tradition, Vööbus, includes several canonical texts from the sixth century, some of which I used here, too, but which still need to be explored further.

130 Nevertheless John might have not been able to eliminate every mismanagement in the church; see Menze, *Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in sixth-century Syria*, *passim*.

131 As presented in the two mentioned *vitae* by Elias and by John of Ephesus.

Chalcedonian clergy controlled the central ritual of the Church, the Eucharist, they could be regarded as the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the succession of the Apostles. John's emphasis on canonical procedure (according to biblical or patristic interpretation and tradition) concerning the sacraments as visible in his *Regula ad Diaconos* gave the evolving Syrian Orthodox church its legitimacy of claiming to be the Church.

John's establishment of a non-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical hierarchy implied also a disintegration of the church in the imperial structure and administration. The emperor Justinian made an effort to reintegrate non-Chalcedonians like John of Ephesus by sending him to Asia Minor for missionary work. This attempt of curry favor with non-Chalcedonian representatives certainly flattered John of Ephesus and other non-Chalcedonian bishops, but it could hardly cover the break John of Tella had brought about. The later development under Jacob Baradaeus who ordained bishops (many of whom had probably received their first ordination from John of Tella like John of Ephesus) gave John's ecclesiastical body its final shape which preserves the non-Chalcedonian tradition until today in form of the Syrian Orthodox Church.<sup>132</sup>

132 For Jacob Baradaeus see D. D. Bundy, Jacob Baradaeus. The State of Research, a Review of Sources and a New Approach, in: *Muséon* 91 (1978), 45-86.