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The sources of the *Chronicle of Seert*:
Phases in the writing of history and hagiography
in late antique Iraq

The *Chronicle of Seert* is a large composite history, written in Arabic and compiled around the turn of the second millennium.¹ Its sheer length, occupying four fascicules of the *Patrologia Orientalis*, and its incompleteness, with substantial lacunae in the beginning, middle and end of the text, have made it a problematic object of study. Additionally, much of the *Chronicle's* material is clearly false or legendary, which has made much of it unattractive for modern historians keen to create an *histoire événementielle*.

However, the *Chronicle* is also an important source for the Church of the East and the Sasanian Empire, even if for no other reason than the paucity of extant historical material for any period before the Arab conquest. The only real rival of the *Chronicle of Seert*, in terms of its range, is the disputed *Arbela Chronicle*, discovered by Alphonse Mingana and treated with great scepticism in many quarters since the middle of the twentieth century.² Because of this, the *Chronicle* has often been invoked in studies of the history, theology and hagiography of the Church, though without much consideration of how the source should be treated or how it was composed.³

The *Chronicle* has been used without much detailed assessment of its origins, of how material from the fifth and sixth century came to be embedded in a tenth or eleventh century text. In part, this has prevented assessment of the reliability of narratives that are not corroborated elsewhere (especially the histories of the catholicoi themselves, who are often only described in the *synodica*⁴ and in other medieval compilations). But allied to this is also the *Chronicle's* potential as a

- 1 The *Chronicle* is an Arabic text but it draws on an earlier tradition of historical writing in Syriac. Useful introductions and bibliographies are provided by M. Debié (ed.), *L'historiographie syriaque* (Paris, 2009) and in G. Kiraz et al. (eds.), *The Gorgias Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ, 2012).
- 2 J.-M. Vosté, 'Alphonse Mingana', *OCP* 7 (1941), 514-518. See now F. Jullien and C. Jullien, 'La chronique d'Arbèles. Propositions pour la fin d'une controverse', *OC* 85 (2001), 41-83.
- 3 E. g. M.-L. Chaumont, *La christianisation de l'empire iranien: des origines aux grands persécutions du IV^e siècle* (Louvain, 1988).
- 4 On the *Synodicon Orientale*, ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1904), see V. Erhart, 'The development of Syrian Christian canon law in the Sasanian Empire', in R. Mathisen (ed.), *Law, Society and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2001), 115-130, as well as J. Dauvillier, 'Chaldéen (droit)', *Dictionnaire du droit canonique*.

repository of a disparate historical tradition, that is reflected in the thirteenth century *Catalogue* of 'Abdisho' of Nisibis but has not survived in extant Syriac sources. And it is here that the *Chronicle's* greatest potential may lie, as a testimony to a once great literary tradition, which now only survives in epitome and abbreviation.

Previous studies have considered how the *Chronicle* might be used to reconstruct other famous histories, such as that of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre⁵ or Daniel bar Maryam⁶, or investigated the identity of the compiler of the *Chronicle* himself.⁷ These studies, while interesting and important, never consider the *Chronicle* as a whole, or attempt to develop a hypothesis for the composition of each level of this extremely variegated document. This study will not concentrate on issues of attribution, chiefly because the amount of significant information that can gleaned is extremely limited, and will focus instead on the characterisation of the different concerns of successive generations of historians. Their work *in aggregate* illustrates the changing political and theological agendas of 'Iraqi' churchmen as they interact with the historical traditions of their ancestors.

This study begins by setting out the available sources for these underlying histories, through which earlier material was transmitted to the medieval period. We can gain a fuller impression of the *Chronicle's* sources by seeing it as part of a wider movement to produce universal histories between c. 1000 – c. 1300. By comparing the different medieval compilations, I argue that it is possible to discern the parameters of the material that was shared between them, and the extent and agendas of these embedded sources.

Using these compilations together I isolate a core narrative that concentrates on the catholicoi that is shared by all the compilations. I analyse this patriarchal history [A] independently and suggest dates for this composition and continuations. Next I set out the additional material that has been drawn from other sources and subsequently attached to this patriarchal history in the sixth century and beyond, and situate these later historians in the expansion of the political awareness of the Church at the end of the Sasanian period. My analysis here concentrates on the first three fascicules of the *Chronicle* in Scher's edition: the earlier parts of the text allow us to see independent narrative strands, each focussing on different institutions and dramatis personae, which are isolated and discussed here. The final fascicule, which covers the period c. 585-640, is more complex and demands separate treatment in the future.

5 R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

6 E. Degen, 'Daniel bar Maryam. Ein nestorianischer Kirchenhistoriker,' *OC* 52 (1968), 45–80.

7 P. Nautin, 'L'auteur de la «Chronique de Seert». Isho'dnah de Basra', *RHR* 186 (1974), 113-126 and J.-M. Fiey, 'Īšō'dnāḥ et la Chronique de Seert', *PdO* 7 (1976), 447-459.

Part I

The medieval compilations: Bar Hebraeus, Mari and 'Amr

This reconstruction of the composition and content of a historical tradition in Iraq is dependent on five histories, dated between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, four of which are in Arabic and one in Syriac, but most of which rely on earlier Syriac sources.⁸ The dates of the final composition of these histories, the problems involved in translation from Arabic into Syriac, and the motives from altering the past history of an institution that still existed mean that we can never take the information included in these chronicles at face value. However, much of their material, especially their shared material, does not make sense as a tenth century invention. Instead, it is possible to isolate material in these chronicles pertaining to the catholicoi that is either related to known sources or fits into narrative strands that run through the history.

Each of these narrative strands may be linked by the succession of dramatis personae or to connected political or theological agendas. Of course, such texts could be subject to later alteration, but I suggest that many such inventions can be dated to the sixth or seventh centuries rather than later because of the individuals and places they praise or vilify. Additionally, three of these five texts include large amounts of additional material drawn from Roman ecclesiastical history, monastic saints' lives and the histories of the School of Nisibis. I will argue that this material represents later additions of the late sixth century and beyond. The earlier patriarchal histories of the late fifth and middle sixth centuries represented a single, connected tradition that can still be traced in the medieval sources that is distinct from these later additions.

The three most simple of the medieval sources are the Ecclesiastical Histories of the Syrian orthodox maphrian and polymath Bar Hebraeus, and of Mari ibn Sulayman and 'Amr ibn Matta of the Church of the East. Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) composed a detailed ecclesiastical history in three volumes, of which the first two describe the political history of the world and the history of the (Miaphysite) patriarchs of Antioch, while the third is dedicated to 'the east'.⁹ This history presents the early catholicoi as precursors to the late sixth century Miaphysite maphrians Ahudemmeh and Marutha of Takrit, the leaders of the Syrian Orthodox in 'the east'. He presents events under each catholicos in turn, with a narrative focussed

8 G. Westphal, *Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Glaubwürdigkeit der Patriarchenchroniken des Marī ibn Sulaimān, 'Amr ibn Mattai und Šaliba ibn Joħannān. Abschnitt 1 Bis zum Beginn des Nestorianischen Streites* (Kirchhain, 1901), 19 was the first to make this observation. A few passages in the *Chronicle of Seert* (such as those relating to Muhammad in II/ii, CI-CIV) may have originally been composed in Arabic, rather than Syriac.

9 On his career see H. Takahashi, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography* (Piscataway, NJ, 2005). Also note the general comments of W. Witakowski, 'The *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* of Gregory Bar 'Ebroyo', *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 6 (2006): 61-81.

upon their actions until the time of Barsauma of Nisbis. Bar Hebraeus presents Dadisho' (422-56) as the last 'orthodox' catholicos before the heresy of Barsauma destroyed 'orthodoxy' by introducing Nestorianism and perverted monasticism by removing clerical celibacy.¹⁰ Bar Hebraeus' vision of the catholicosate as an antecedent of the maphrianate, coupled with the oecumenism of his own theology, make him a credible transmitter of this tradition, especially since he presents it in Syriac, the original language of these traditions, rather than in Arabic.

Mari and 'Amr composed their respective histories around the 1140s and 1320s respectively.¹¹ Both histories were written as parts of a longer work, the 'Books of the Tower', encyclopaedic texts that described and defended the theology, liturgy and religious traditions of the Church of the East.¹² Both texts seem to rely on identical Syriac sources, often transcribing the Syriac directly into Arabic, though their translations are probably independent. Mari in particular complains at the lack of historical works and the paucity of manuscripts dealing with the catholicos and presents his effort as a work of original research written on behalf of the catholicos.¹³

Both works employ history as part of an encyclopaedic initiative that sought to defend the faith of the Church of the East and employed older records in doing so. The similarity of their accounts of the patriarchs to one another, and to that Bar Hebraeus, especially for the period between the fourth and sixth centuries, indicates the existence of shared Syriac sources for this information. All three accounts focus on the lives and deeds of the catholicoi, and Mari and 'Amr give the origins, burial places and reign lengths of the catholicoi (though their dating for their reigns do not always agree, which suggests that it was sometimes produced by later calculation). And all three accounts extend from the apostolic origins of the church to the martyr-bishops of the fourth century and the more historical catholicoi of the fifth century.

The principal differences between the accounts is that Mari supplements his accounts of the catholicoi with an additional narrative drawn from Roman ecclesiastical history, similar to the kind of material included in Eusebius or Socrates,

10 See esp. Bar Hebraeus, *HE*, ed. and tr. J. B. Abbeloos, and T. Lamy, Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* (3 vols, Paris, 1877), III, 67-73 on Barsauma and sites of resistance against him.

11 H. Gismondi, *Maris, Amri et Slibae: De patriarchis nestorianorum commentaria*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1897/1899).

12 B. Holmberg, 'A reconsideration of the Kitāb al-Mağdal', *PdO* 18 (1993), 255-273 suggests that the chronicle in the text attributed to Mari was written c. 1000 and embedded later in this religious encyclopaedia, because of the author's claims to be an eyewitness to these events and the text's theological vocabulary. He also questions the identification of the authors, though I refer to them by their traditional names because no other works are attributed to either man.

13 This description is based on G. Putrus, *Kitāb al-Mağdal* (Paris, Sorbonne, unpublished Phd, 1968), 8-12 and 51-65, who chiefly consulted MS Paris Arabe 190. Also see Assemani, *BO* IIIa, 554-555 and 582 and G. Graf, *La littérature nestorienne*, tr. J. Sanders (n. p., 1965), 140-143. All manuscripts of Mari are eighteenth century copies.

and the details of the lives of holy men. Mari begins to inject this additional material into his text in the reign of Shahlupha, the (probably mythical) predecessor to Papas, and intersperses this additional material into the lives of the patriarchs until the period of Acacius (d. 496) and Babai (d. 503). After this point Mari continues to include material peripheral to the lives of the catholicoi, but it tends to be drawn from East Syrian saints' lives (e. g. the life of the monastic founder Abraham of Kashkar)¹⁴, rather than from Roman ecclesiastical sources. 'Amr's history is much more closely focussed on the deeds of the catholicoi: where Mari attempts to splice two quite distinct narratives, 'Amr's focus is limited much more strictly to the catholicos. He restricts his additional information to eastern holy men who are somehow involved with the catholicos or restricts himself to simply listing churchmen, martyrs or heretics living at the same time as the catholicos.

The medieval compilations:

The Chronicle of Seert and the Haddad Chronicle

The three later chronicles are all structured around the lives of the catholicoi, and these provide the headings within their histories. The two earlier chronicles, the *Chronicle of Seert* itself and the *Haddad Chronicle* differ in that the catholicoi do not provide such an obvious core for the text. This more confused structure was caused by the accretion of large amounts of new material onto earlier records of the catholicoi in the production of several similar histories that incorporated this patriarchal tradition. All of these histories then provided material for later compilers, who juxtaposed sections drawn from earlier ecclesiastical historians, sometimes registering the differences between the historians and sometimes including contradictory accounts alongside one another.

As it has come down to us, the *Chronicle of Seert* is a dense, composite chronicle that covers the periods c. 251-423 and c. 483-650. Like Mari and 'Amr, its composer does not seem to have used any dating formulae for the whole text, though he leaves in dates, normally by the reign of the shah or emperor or by the 'year of the Greeks' (AG), where they have been used by the histories later embedded in the *Chronicle*. The chronological breaks in the text are purely accidental: the *Chronicle* was reconstructed from two manuscripts found in Mosul and Seert by Addai Scher around 1900, and the breaks in the pages leave the narrative hanging in mid-sentence. The text itself was probably composed in the tenth century since it employs the Melkite historian Qusṭā ibn Lūqā (d. 910) and refers to Isho'yahb III as 'the last catholicos of that name', placing it before the reign of Isho'yahb IV in 1020. There is also one reference in the text to the thirteenth-

14 E. g. Mari, HE, ed. and tr. H. Gismondi, Maris, Amri, et Salibae: De Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria II: Maris textus arabicus et versio Latina (Rome, 1899), 51-52/ 46.

century Fatimid caliph Al-Zaher, but this seems to be a later scribal addition.¹⁵ Its original coverage, then, probably extended at least to the tenth century, and probably began with the birth of Jesus in the same manner as the *Haddad Chronicle*.

The *Chronicle of Seert* begins in 'medias res' with successive narrative episodes on Roman emperors, Persian shahs, fathers of the church and famous heretics. Some of these seem to be drawn from different ecclesiastical histories, causing the material in different sections to occasionally overlap. These vignettes are particularly clustered around the council of Nicaea, the discovery of the cross and the foundation of Constantinople, where numerous historians of the Church of the East are cited. These vignettes more often discuss events in Roman, rather than 'eastern', ecclesiastical history.

In addition, the beginning section of the *Chronicle* contains several sections on 'doctors of the church', which are diagnostic for the compilation of the text and its treatment of sources. These sections are lists of churchmen 'at the time of x catholicos' and are similar in form and content to the lists of churchmen found in 'Amr and Mari. They resemble a list of section titles taken from a text similar to the *Chronicle* itself, but which differ in the order they give for these famous men and in the precise contents of the lists.¹⁶ Moreover, the second of these list-sections is entitled 'saints who were the contemporaries of Papas', which implies that this list was itself drawn from a history that, like Mari and 'Amr, organised famous people around contemporary catholicos. I suggest that the compiler of the *Chronicle of Seert* attempted to preserve this structure when he included both individual narrative episodes and lists of famous men. Especially for the sections before the sixth century, the *Chronicle's* sources probably shared a great deal of their content and structure with one another, but varied in the amount of detail they devoted to 'fathers of the church' who were extraneous to the central narrative of the catholicos.

Symeon Bar Sabba'e is the first catholicos mentioned in the text, but the long list-sections of church fathers also indicate that Shahlupha and Papas had been mentioned in the lost beginning section. Symeon, Shahdost and Barba'-shemin represent one cluster of catholicos. They are followed by Tomarsa,

15 See R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), 444; J. Fiey, *Jalons pour l'histoire de l'église en Iraq* (Beirut, 1970), 21; R. Degen, 'Zwei Miszellen zur Chronik von Se'ert,' *OC* 54 (1970), 76–95.

16 See *Chronicle of Seert* I/i, VIII (236); XXV (292); XXX (311); I/ii, LVII (305). The *Chronicle* is edited by Addai Scher in four parts, in *Patrologia Orientalis* 4, 5, 7 and 13, referred to here as I/i-ii and II/i-ii because of the major lacuna in the fifth century material. P. Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert. The Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford, 2013) is a cultural history of Christian Iraq seen through the lens of historiography. I will refer to its discussion for each of the blocs of sources I identify here. A certain degree of overlap has been inevitable given the focus of the article. I have followed the translations of Scher et al., with minor adaptations.

Qayoma, Ishaq, Ahai, Iaballaha and Ma'na in the section before the break in the middle of the text. This material too is interspersed with additional material, of the same nature as before, except that here the text also includes monastic founders in 'the east', such as the lone figure of Mar 'Abda, who is associated with the catholicoi Ishaq and Iaballaha and dated to the reign of Tomarsa.¹⁷

A similar pattern predominates after the *Chronicle* resumes, except that considerably more details are given for the actions of the shahs Kavad I and Khusrau I.¹⁸ This material is both included in the sections devoted to individual catholicoi and placed in independent narrative episodes. At around 550 the ecclesiastical histories from the West stop fairly abruptly, and after this point sections devoted to the catholicoi become much longer. After c. 580 and the reign of Isho'yahb I the *Chronicle* becomes very dense indeed. This expansion in material roughly corresponds to the expansion in the number of historians writing in the Church of the East, and the density of material for the period 580-630 may reflect historians writing about their own days. Here the chronicler seems to have been able to draw on a number of different eastern histories who discussed the rise and fall of Khusrau II from a number of different perspectives, including the contests at court, the disputed election of the patriarch Gregory and the reforms of Babai. This section of the *Chronicle* also uses hagiographic collections that commemorated Abraham of Kashkar and the monastic foundations of his successors, and pursues this beyond the Arab conquests. Several of the final sections of the *Chronicle* also discuss the Arab invasions, and some do so as a continuation either of the monastic foundation narratives or that of Khusrau II and the church.¹⁹

The second of the longer chronicles is a much more recent discovery: it was identified by Butrus Haddad from a collection of manuscripts in the Chaldean patriarchate in Baghdad before being published in 2000, and its similarities to the *Chronicle of Seert* meant that it was originally identified as a missing portion of the *Seert Chronicle*. There are many similarities to Seert in its selection of information, but the inclusion of different material, especially the use of Hisham al-Kalbi's history of Hira, shows that it was the work of a different compiler. The colophon dates the manuscript to 1137, but Haddad suggested a tenth century date of composition based on the references to catholicoi in the text.²⁰ The *Mukhtaṣar al-akhbār al-bi'īya*, referred to here as the *Haddad Chronicle*, is only the first volume of a longer text, and only extends from the birth of Jesus to the end of the fourth century.²¹ The compiler devotes around a third of the book to the activities

17 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ ii, LX-LXI (307-308).

18 E. g. *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XII-XIV (124-128); XVII (132); XXIV (146-147); XXVII (157-158); XXXII (185).

19 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ ii, C-CIV (598-618).

20 Letter from Fiey to Haddad (unpublished, 1988).

21 H. Teule, 'L'abrégé de la chronique ecclésiastique Muhtasar al-akhbar al-bi'īya et la chronique de Séert. Quelques sondages', in M. Debié (ed.), *L'historiographie syriaque. Études syriaques*

of the apostles, including several minor figures from among the 70 disciples, including Mari and Addai, apostles of the east. After this he describes the ranks of the priesthood and the organisation of the church, as well as the comparative standing of the patriarchs.²²

Part II

Acacius' history

The medieval sources all employ traditions built around the catholicoi and show traces, more marked in the later, simpler chronicles, that the catholicoi represented the principle criteria for dating material. Indeed, material drawn from dated sources (by year or by the shah's reign) has been re-positioned to fit into this sequence of the catholicoi. This structural primacy of the catholicoi shows that this sequence represented the principle model of East Syrian historiography from a relatively early date, and that a shared tradition underlies the more complex ecclesiastical histories composed in the sixth century and after, which are referred to in 'Abdisho's *Catalogue*. These in turn formed the raw material for the medieval compilations.

In addition to these compilations, our reconstruction can also use a series of lists of the patriarchs. These represent the kind of information on the patriarchs presented by 'Amr, except that they are frequently limited to length of reign, origin and place of burial. Three examples exist, composed in the fifth, ninth and eighteenth centuries.²³ I suggest that this composition of lists became linked to 'history proper' and shaped the way in which information from Iraq and beyond was recorded and analysed. Records of the patriarchs, whether stripped of extraneous narrative passages or not, came to represent the core of the historical tradition. We see this reflected in the surviving sources, which vary in brevity from these lists; to the sparse information on each catholicos that 'Amr and Bar Hebraeus include; to the inclusion of Roman ecclesiastical history alongside the lives of the patriarchs in Mari and finally to the much more expansive *Chronicle of Seert*.

But at what point was this patriarchal history first composed and what information did it include? After all, Mari, 'Amr and Bar Hebraeus record the deeds of patriarchs going back to Addai and Thomas, which cannot plausibly be taken as

(Paris, 2009), 161–77. The text is edited as *Mukhtaṣar al-akhbār al-bi'īya*, ed. B. Haddad (Baghdad, 2000).

22 Haddad *Chronicle*, LXXVII–LXXXIII (116–122).

23 I. Guidi, 'Nomina catholicorum', *Rendiconti. Reale Accademia dei Lincei* 2, ser. 4 (1885), 556–557; Solomon of Basra, *The Book of the Bee*, LI, tr. E. Wallis-Budge (Oxford, 1886), 116; R. Ebied and J. Young, 'A treatise in Arabic on the Nestorian patriarchs', *Le Museon* 87 (1976), 87–113.

historical.²⁴ Several pieces of information can be marshalled to find the 'core' of the patriarchal tradition, the earliest material was set down as part of a consecutive history of the patriarchs that was not simply invented to suit a later political agenda. Many of these derive from the *Chronicle* itself. Several figures from the fourth century, such as the famous monastic founder Mar Awgin, are only widely attested from the ninth century.²⁵ Their presence in the *Chronicle* seems to reflect the chronological retrojection of Iraqi monasticism, to make it seem more ancient, and therefore more orthodox. A hagiographical tradition does seem to have surrounded the martyred catholicoi of the early fourth century, such as Symeon bar Sabba'e, but the section in the *Chronicle of Seert* seems to have been heavily over-written to suit the agendas of the late sixth century and beyond.²⁶ His successors as catholicoi, such as Qayoma and Tomarsa, are 'cardboard cut-outs': we are only told how old and pious they were, but we are given very little substantive information.²⁷ Some of the 'Iraqi' material for the late fourth century does seem to have a higher level of detail: a cycle of a hagiographic vignettes relating to the monastic founder 'Abda, who created a school of Maishan where many of the fourth century catholicoi were trained.²⁸

The material for the early fifth century is quite different in form and content in its presentation of Iraqi material. It provides a coherent and detailed description of the deeds of the catholicoi Ishaq, Ahai, Iaballaha and Ma'na and their dealings with the Roman emissary Marutha of Maypherkat and the shah Yazdegard I, who, for a time, sponsored the Christians. This same period also witnessed the first synods of the Church of the East, held in 410, 420 and 424, and I suggest that it was a period when the greater confidence and powers of the catholicoi made a major impact in the textual production of the Church of the East, producing history and hagiography as well as synodical records that asserted the dominance of the bishops of Ctesiphon. The catholicos Ahai in particular is said to have collected stories of the martyrs, including the figure of 'Abda: it is the first internal reference to the composition of any kind of history within the *Chronicle*.²⁹

However, a glance at the history of Mari shows that there is a major lacuna in the historical memory of the church in Iraq between c. 424 (Dadisho's synod) and c. 484 (the death of the catholicos Babowai). The fact that the middle section of the *Chronicle of Seert* is missing obscures the fact that the middle fifth century (which is covered in the other medieval compilations) witnessed no continuous historical tradition, and possibly even a long interregnum in Christian leadership

24 Westphal, *Untersuchungen*, esp. 29-54.

25 Sims-Williams, 'Eugene (Marawgen)', in *EIr* (www.iranicaonline.org).

26 G. Wiessner, *Untersuchungen zur syrischen Literaturgeschichte I: Zur Märtyrerüberlieferung aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II.* (Göttingen, 1967).

27 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, LVIII (305-306); LXIII (313).

28 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, LX-LXII (307-312).

29 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, LXIX (325).

at Ctesiphon. Synodical records are resumed after a long hiatus under Acacius in 486, with a major reform of church affairs. I propose that it was the late fifth century that saw the first attempt to link together the period of historical writing that had flourished c. 410 with the barely remembered fourth century past. Notably, Acacius' reign witnessed the first episcopal list for the catholicoi, and it seems plausible that a new moment of church centralization was accompanied by an attempt to connect the age of Acacius to earlier golden ages, of predecessors gloriously martyred or honoured by the shah.

I propose that historical and hagiographical material was probably organised in at least three phases before it took the form of a sequential history organised around each catholicos in turn. The first was the raw material of the hagiographies of the martyrs, possibly supplemented by a bishops' list. These hagiographies were then collected, organised and expanded in connection with a developing relic cult in a process that began under the catholicos Ahai and continued under his successors. Significantly, this period also saw Ahai's composition of a life for the monastic founder, Mar 'Abda, whose monastery trained several of the catholicoi of this era, and probably the record of certain foundational events in Roman Christianity, principally the council of Nicaea, whose canons were reproduced at the 410 synod.³⁰ This second phase at the beginning of the fifth century also saw the elucidation of the life of Papas, the semi-legendary predecessor to Symeon whose contest with Miles of Susa would make him a controversial symbol of the authority of the catholicos in the synod of 424.

This rather disparate material was developed into sequential history towards the end of the century in a third phase, possibly under Acacius, whose reign saw the resumption of general synods in the church, following a long gap (424-86) and the re-assertion of patriarchal authority after the challenge made by Barsauma of Nisibis. Acacius' reign also produced the first extant chronological list of patriarchs, which makes the ordering of material around the lives of patriarchs more likely during or after his reign. It is unlikely that a structure based around patriarchal reigns was introduced much earlier, since the sources disagree how to place the same information from the early fifth century in terms of chronology: the act of re-ordering information around the reigns of catholicoi must have taken place when this chronology had already been forgotten.³¹ Similarly, sections on patriarchs after Acacius have a focus on the relationship between shah and patriarch which the earlier sections lack, which might also indicate a late fifth century watershed in the *Chronicle's* source material.

30 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, XVIII (276-281) presents a series of traditions on Nicaea, but these seem to have been subject to continual adaptation and alteration, making it very hard to judge the different layers of composition.

31 Compare 'Amr, *HE*, 22-24/ 13-14.; Mari, *HE*, 29-31/ 25-26; *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LXVI; LXIX; LXXI; LXXII.

A 1. The Acacian History

The late date for the compiled sources means that there always remains the possibility for later revision and the introduction of anachronism, but I suggest it is still possible to trace the outlines of earlier compositions and the inclusion of information for which there was little motive for later invention. In the sections that follow, I intend to reconstruct, as far as possible, the content of this early history [A1] and its sixth century continuators [A2-3]. The Acacian history compiled in the late fifth century was chiefly composed of an account of the early fifth century catholicoi (A1a) and an account of late fourth century holy men (A1b), which covered over the embarrassing lacuna in evidence for central leadership in this period.

There was also probably some coverage of the reigns of the catholicoi martyred in the fourth century, who are attested in fifth century martyr lists and hagiographies (A1c), and the controversial catholicos Papas, whose reign was the site of debates over central authority in the synod of 424. There may also have been some historical description of the Western councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), since Acacius was the first catholicos to try to set out his orthodoxy in terms of 'Western' theological language.³² However, it is probably impossible to reconstruct what form this material took, since these figures remained important and controversial in the sixth century and beyond, and the narratives were constantly revisited and reworked.

a. Succession of the catholicoi³³

The *Chronicle of Seert's* descriptions of the catholicoi Tomarsa and Qayoma are essentially without detail: both are merely paragraphs that describe the circumstances of their election and relate it to other events in terms of chronology.³⁴ It is only with Ishaq that we receive more information: the catholicos, 'good, virtuous and wise', is a major participant in the narrative that includes the Roman emperor Arcadius, Marutha of Maypherkat and the shah Yazdegard, all of whom are celebrated as the organisers of a new golden age that begins with the 410 Synod of Seleucia.³⁵ His successors Ahai and Iaballaha have brief sections devoted to them, but these are dense and seem to reflect larger passages that have been subsequently reduced. Ahai is remembered for his intervention in the royal pearl trade, his contests with Manichees and Marcionites³⁶ and his role in recording saints'

32 S. P. Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East in the synods of the fifth century to the early seventh century – preliminary considerations and materials', in *Aksum Thyateira* (London, 1985), 126-132.

33 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 74-75.

34 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LIX (305) and LXIII (313).

35 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LXVII (317-318).

36 On these groups note D. Bundy, 'Marcion and the Marcionites', *Le Muséon* 101 (1988), 3-32; J.-M. Fiey, 'Les Marcionites dans les textes historiques de l'église de Perse', *Le Muséon* 83 (1970),

lives, and Iaballaha is remembered for his confirmation of the Western decrees and his reception of a second Western emissary, Acacius of Amida.³⁷

An important reordering of source material is visible for the beginning of Yazdegard's persecution, when the shah turned against his former clients, initiating a period of instability in the church that would last for several generations. In the *Chronicle of Seert*, Iaballaha's reign witnesses Yazdegard's change of heart and the order to destroy the monasteries, and Iaballaha manages to delay the persecution by interceding with the shah. Iaballaha then prays that he should die before there is any further bloodshed.³⁸ By contrast, Mari places the whole persecution under Ma'na, and Iaballaha's request for an early death is caused by his *anticipation* of persecution, which does not occur in his lifetime.³⁹

In the account of Yazdegard's persecution, the compilers differ in where they place the same material. This may be connected to a wish to remove blame from persecution from Iaballaha and attach it more firmly to Ma'na, a figure with court connections instead of the monastic education of Iaballaha. Indeed, Iaballaha's prayer may be a device intended to underline the fact that the persecution only occurred *after* the reign of a pious catholicos, favoured by the original source. The *Chronicle of Seert's* presentation of numerous attempts to delay persecution by various figures is probably closest to the truth, a narrative that has been smoothed out in Mari's account. But, in addition to the manipulation of one individual's reputation, the differences in the allocation of the same events between different reigns shows that the material was not initially divided in this way. Material may well have been recorded at an early date, especially the complex accounts of the persecutions or Marutha's mission, but the structure is probably the work of the late fifth-century chroniclers, who may also be responsible for the variations in where material is placed chronologically.

b. The School of 'Abda hagiographies⁴⁰

A different kind of material is present in the period between Tomarsa and Ma'na that is less immediately focussed on the deeds of the catholicos, namely the *Life of 'Abda of Deir Qoni* and the activities of his disciples. The seventh century ecclesiastical historian Daniel bar Mariam reports that Ahai composed this life while he was catholicos, and the *Chronicle of Seert* also includes several related saints' lives that discuss his successors and 'Abda's school, to which Ahai and Iaballaha were closely connected.

183–88; S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (rev. edn., Tübingen, 1992).

37 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ ii, LXVII (324–325) and LXIX (327–328).

38 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ ii, LXXXII (328–329).

39 Mari, *HE*, 33–35/ 28–31.

40 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 75–78.

The section on 'Abda in the *Chronicle* is derived from a saint's life, beginning with the saint's birth 'to a woman of low origins', who gives the child to the church. The section describes how 'Abda was educated at his village school before founding the first monastery in 'the land of the Nabati', along with a 'school for all'. From here he converted pagans, eventually leaving for the village of Tella. At the end of the life, the compiler also adds a list of his miracles: creating bread for hungry monks, miraculously escaping from the Zoroastrians and defeating Marcionites and Manichees.⁴¹

This *Life of 'Abda* seems to be closely related to an original hagiography, but the section that follows it, on the monastery of Sliba, is only peripherally related and has been filled with additional information. This section describes how a miraculous cross was seen above the earth during the persecutions. The place where this occurred was then bought by one Sliba bar 'Ousia, the local chief, who built a monastery there, and that 'Abda performed miracles there and converted pagans.⁴² This story probably represents the later attachment of 'Abda to the monastery's foundation legend to emphasise its antiquity, since 'Abda's role here is secondary and the saint's life seems self-contained.

The third of these associated tales describes the missions of 'Abdisho' of Arphelouna in Maisan, who was trained at 'Abda's school. He is credited with the conversion of the village of Baksaya (possibly in Beth Arabaye), where he met the shah Vahram, and of the village of Rimioun in Maisan. Later he is briefly made bishop of Deir Mahraq by Tomarsa, before returning to his missionary work.⁴³

The fact that this cycle of stories was placed under Tomarsa probably reflects the lack of information about this catholicos. Indeed, Tomarsa's presence in the life of 'Abdisho' is probably a later attempt to link him into the narrative, and compensate for the embarrassing lack of information in the history of the catholicoi. A similar point might be made about the holy man Bokhtisho' whom the *Chronicle of Seert*, Mari and 'Amr all place in Tomarsa's reign:⁴⁴ lack of information on the catholicos meant that other information was used, and that the information to which the late fifth century historians had access was mostly hagiographic. Probably all that was actually known of Tomarsa and Qayoma at the time of Acacius were names in a bishops' list.

These hagiographies that described the late fourth century emphasised the missionary history of the church; its opposition to pagans, Manichees and Marcionites and the institutional backgrounds of several early fifth century catholicoi. Not only did this connection to contemporary catholicoi prompt Ahai's composition of the *Life of 'Abda*, but a later 'Life of Iaballaha' was composed and embedded in the

41 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LX (307-308).

42 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LXI (308-309).

43 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LXII (310-312).

44 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, LIX (305); Mari, *HE*, 28-29/24-25, 'Amr, *HE*, 21/12.

Chronicle of Seert, which describes him in his capacity as a disciple of 'Abda, as distinct from his position as catholicos: one section describes him as 'Abda's disciple and the other as Ahai's successor and catholicos in the traditional manner. The hagiography describes how he was educated at 'Abda's school and founded a monastery in the newly converted village of Daskart de 'Abdisho', where he established a tradition of continual psalm singing and performed rain miracles.⁴⁵ Thus Iaballaha was remembered in two different historical traditions (one focused on catholicoi, the other on missionary holy men), and both of these accounts have become embedded in the *Chronicle* via the patriarchal history.

The continuation of this narrative strand based around 'Abda and his disciples points towards one of the major focuses of historical and hagiographic composition at the start of the fifth century. Alongside an emphasis on the martyred bishops earlier in the fifth century, Ahai also celebrated a relatively recent monastic founder and his disciples, whose monasteries in southern Iraq might have been useful elements of the patronage network of the church in Ctesiphon and who was linked to Ahai and Iaballaha by ties of education. Moreover, this link was still celebrated after Iaballaha's death, when a record of his own reputation as a monastic founder in 'Abda's tradition was composed.

The material pertaining to Mar 'Abda and his school in the histories confirms a late fifth century date for the first composition of the patriarchal histories. After the time of Abraham of Kashkar and the re-foundation of celibate monasticism in Iraq there would be little need to remember Mar 'Abda. Stories of the antiquity of monasticism in Iraq were needed, but these would be provided by Mar Awgin, a fourth century figure with legendary connections to Antony and Pachomius in Egypt.⁴⁶ Notably, no Syriac saint's life survives for Mar 'Abda or any of his disciples: they are recorded only in the historical tradition, even though their provenance is undoubtedly hagiography. To my mind, this implies that these stories were embedded into a historical tradition when they were considered of central importance to the development of the catholicosate, before these hagiographies were rendered obsolete by the mid-sixth century monastic reforms.

A 2-3. Continuation of the Acacian History

Acacius' reign stands out as a brief moment of centralisation within the Church of the East. In spite of its aspiration to annual synods, Acacius' synod of 486 was succeeded by one under Babai in 496 and no further synods were held until Aba in

45 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ ii, LXVIII (321-2). This life was treated by the compilers as one of 'the famous men of the time': 'Amr, *HE*, 25/15, brackets him with John Chrysostom and places the reference to him in the reign of Ishaq.

46 A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient. Volume II: Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria* (Louvain, 1960), 266-272.

540. This period also seems to have seen a dearth of historical composition, implying that it was, at this stage, restricted to the 'patriarchal histories' composed under Acacius.

The medieval compilations include complex descriptions for the period 485-540, the 'anarchic' period that separated Acacius and Aba, implying that it was also seen as an era of importance for the generations that followed it. The material seems to have been subject to extensive re-writing, though this built on tendencies that were probably already present in the original source, the continuations of the patriarchal history.

The accounts of events before Babowai in the compilations divide the deeds of catholicoi from the acts of saints, shahs and emperors, the material that follows is much more mixed and the narratives of different institutions are much more integrated. The centrality of the catholicos across much of this material points to a continuation of the Acacian history that underlies these accounts in the medieval compilations. I suggest that a continuation was composed under Joseph (555-565) [A3], which incorporated earlier material written under his predecessor Narsai [A2]. But the medieval compilations also have numerous distinct narrative strands, relating similar events but with a different focus in their selection of material (such as the succession of shahs or the doctors of Nisibis). This represents the re-working of the patriarchal history by ecclesiastical historians in the late sixth and seventh century, who amplified themes already present in the narrative of the patriarchal history(s), such as the reform of the church or the involvement of the shah, and added new material.

A 2. Narsai's Continuation⁴⁷

A critical feature that divided the 485-540 period from the reign of Aba was the controversial abolition of monastic and clerical celibacy under Acacius. This meant that a large number of Acacius' successors were married. The distinctiveness of the catholicoi of this era is visible even in the brief lists of catholicoi discovered by Ebied and Young: Babai and Shila are both recorded as 'married', even though few catholicoi receive any note whatsoever. Mari and 'Amr too note their marriages and present Shila's marriage as the source of Elishe's claim to the see of Ctesiphon, and therefore a source of the 'civil war' that followed,⁴⁸ while the *Chronicle of Seert* provides a much more expansive account of both catholicoi. Here Shila is marked out for his avarice, which is associated with the influence of his wife, prompting a diatribe against evil wives in the Bible.⁴⁹ In addition, the

47 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 100-103.

48 'Amr, 35-8/ 21-2; Mari, 46-49/40-43.

49 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, XIX (136-137).

Chronicle of Seert is similar to 'Amr and Mari in linking Shila by marriage with Elishe and his own claims as catholicos.⁵⁰

Aba's reforms saw a complete volte-face on the Acacian position on clerical celibacy, but, interestingly, this position is not consistently reflected in the sources. The attack on married priests is focussed on the behaviour of one catholicos, Shila, and his role in providing Elishe with court connections during his struggle with Narsai in the 530s: notably, one of his married predecessors, Babai, is represented by the *Chronicle* as an ideal catholicos. This situation is best explained by dating a continuation of the chronicle to the reign of Narsai, Elishe's opponent in a decade-long struggle over the catholicosate, rather than to the reign of Aba.

The evidence for the composition of a history under Narsai also comes from several other points in the *Chronicle of Seert*. At the end of its account of the martyrdom of Barba'shemin, there is a note that 'a monastery and school', founded at that time, was enlarged and under Narsai, which suggests that this coda was added to the text during revisions in or shortly after his reign.⁵¹ This reference shows both Narsai's wish to appeal to monastic supporters in Ctesiphon and to present his building programme in an ancient tradition that stretched back to the golden age of the martyrs.⁵²

A second indication of the polemical use of history by Narsai's faction are the terms in which Elishe is condemned during his victory over Narsai: after giving many presents to the ministers of the king he obtained for himself 'the seat of the church of Mada'in [Ctesiphon], which was built by Mar Mari, peace be upon him'.⁵³ This too indicates the use of a legend of a past golden age, this time the story of the evangelisation of Ctesiphon by Addai's disciple Mari, to elucidate contemporary legitimacy and illegitimacy.⁵⁴

A 3. Joseph's Continuation⁵⁵

A major feature of Aba's claims against his predecessors was the earlier division of the church, which is just as prominent as his emphasis on celibacy: 'He [Aba] was chosen for the office of catholicos by all the metropolitans and bishops and

50 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/I, XXV (148).

51 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ii, XXXI (224).

52 Note that the author of this account did not select either the school of 'Abda or the school of Nisibis as a suitable ancestor for Narsai's foundation: the former seems to have ceased to have had any prestigious successors after its destruction and the latter may have only really become significant in circles around the catholicos in the era of Aba and his successors.

53 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, XXV (149).

54 Cf. *Acts of Mar Mari*, ed. and tr. F. Jullien and C. Jullien (Louvain/Paris, 2003).

55 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 104-105 and 117-118.

clerics and faithful laymen, though it was against his will ... for [in the past] many had been appointed to the office by the shah but did not tend the flock'.⁵⁶

All the compilations dedicate a long section to the civil war of Narsai and Elishe. At some points, the focus seems to be in favour of Narsai, condemning Elishe's tyranny, presenting him as a creature of the shah and claiming that only Narsai was properly consecrated. By contrast, another voice within the same section criticises both Narsai and Elishe, reporting that the bishops of Kashkar and Gundishapur represented a neutral faction, uncommitted to either party. In particular, this 'neutral' source also presents the monks as suffering during this era of strife and 'lamenting in the wilderness' (II/i, XXV). This language seems to evoke the synods of Aba and Joseph, when monasticism was restored in the cities of the empire and the Acacian legislation overturned. The source implies a connection between the divisions of the civil war and the abolition of celibacy, which is a product of a later era, in the wake of Aba's reforms.

It is probable that the 'neutral' source, which attacks both Narsai and Elishe in favour of Aba, is a product of Joseph's reign, since several medieval chroniclers associate Joseph with the collection or invention of history, which could have easily included a defence of his saintly predecessor Aba.

Bar Hebraeus openly accuses Joseph of forgery, pointing to a more 'interventionist' policy with regard to the earlier tradition, actively inserting new material to the reign of Papas to emphasise (invented) connections between the catholicos and the West, matching the greater role of the catholicos as diplomats for the shah and the claim of the title of 'patriarch' (in imitation of the leaders of the Western church), which occurred under Aba or Joseph.⁵⁷

The fact that Joseph composed a history is also recorded in the Abbasid period. Elias of Damascus' *Nomocanon* attributes to Joseph a revised list of his predecessors in the office of catholicos.⁵⁸ Slightly more detailed information can be gleaned from the epitomised chronological canons of the eleventh-century historian Elias of Nisibis, whose work is important for the light it sheds on the material that was used in the medieval compilations. For the years AG 863-865, he refers to the synod of Joseph the catholicos, for its correction of earlier canons and disturbances in the church.⁵⁹ This positive view of a catholicos, who is accused of tyranny in other sources, may stem from a chronology written from the perspective of Joseph and his supporters.⁶⁰ The Syriac *Letter of the Western Fathers*, the invented letter to Papas in the fourth century, emphasises that bishops can only be

56 Syriac *Life of Aba*, ed. P. Bedjan, *Histoire de Mar Yabalaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et de deux laïques nestoriens* (Paris/ Leipzig, 1896), 224.

57 Barhebraeus, *HE*, III, 31. For the title of patriarch see W. Macomber, 'The authority of the catholicos-patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon', *OCA* 181, 179-200 at 190 and 196-197.

58 Assemani, *BO*, IIIa, 435.

59 Elias of Nisibis, I, 121.

60 For accusations against Joseph see Barhebraeus, *HE*, III, 72.

ordained with the approval of patriarch and shah, whose authority is from God, is a stance that fits a royal appointee like Joseph, and the *Letter* may date from his reign.⁶¹ Furthermore, Elias of Nisibis' view of a catholicos 'correcting' earlier histories would fit both the accusation of Bar Hebraeus and the internal evidence of the *Chronicle of Seert*, which suggests the adaptation of the history of Narsai's reign.⁶²

Part III

The expansion of the tradition

The text of the *Chronicle of Seert* is clearly not the result of single strand of composition with periodic continuations. Material from new sources was added which did not always retain the catholicos as its focus. Additional sources were used that described the actions of Roman emperors and the church in the west, of the deeds of Persian shahs of monastic foundations in Iraq and the disciples of the School of Nisibis. This material all had its origins in discrete historical traditions, such as the Persian 'book of kings' or Roman ecclesiastical history, or in hagiographic collections and lists of saints. It accounts for some three quarters of all the material of the *Chronicle of Seert*.

The compilations vary in the amount of space they devote to this. For 'Amr in particular, this material is limited to simple lists of 'holy men who lived at that time', organised according under each catholicos' reign. But the *Chronicle of Seert* devotes considerably more space to the material and often integrates it into its description of the deeds of catholicoi. The general pattern in the *Chronicle of Seert* is that the deeds of the catholicoi are treated independently of most other events for the period before Babowai, i. e. before the break in the text. For the first half of the *Chronicle*, while there is a large amount of Roman ecclesiastical history, this is not directly connected to the catholicoi and the lack of precise dating often results in events being placed at the time of the wrong catholicos.

In the second half of the *Chronicle*, dedicated to the period after 485, the different strands of material are more fully integrated with the patriarchal history. The succession and deeds of the catholicoi clearly remains important component of this material. Sections dedicated to each catholicos give their origin, their reign length and their place of burial, and frequently describe the relationship between one catholicos and his successor. Moreover, the death of one catholicos and the succession of another is sometimes placed within a single section. This indicates

61 See further, O. Braun, 'Der Briefwechsel des Katholikos Papa von Seleucia. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der ostsyrischen Kirche im vierten Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 18 (1894), 163-182, 546-565. Note also Joseph's canon 15, which emphasizes the patriarch's role in confirming all ordinations (*Synodicon*, 104). For Joseph's court connections see ps-Zachariah of Mytilene, XII, 5p, tr. and comm. G. Greatrex, C. Horn and R. Phenix (Liverpool, 2011), 454.

62 Joseph's synod is also the first to include dates for events, which are given in AG.

that the structure of the narrative around catholicoi is not a creation of the medieval compiler but was a feature of his sources: thus the death of Acacius and his reign length begins a section dedicated to Babai.⁶³

But the 484-540 material also shows signs of how Joseph's material was re-worked by later hands. Sections in the *Chronicle of Seert* that describe the catholicoi often include large amounts of additional material. And narratives drawn from other sources are also linked to the catholicoi. Thus Peroz's death follows on from his destruction of the school of 'Abda and his killing of Babowai.⁶⁴ The section on Valash is linked to the Peroz account, but then uses Valash's rule as a context for the reign of Acacius.⁶⁵ Sometimes, by juxtaposing material from Persian history and the patriarchal histories, later authors could add additional levels of causation to both: the fate of the Christians was thereby bound into the fate of the shahs and vice versa. Even when the *Chronicle* does not explicitly link events in these two different traditions, sections on shahs often focus on their attitude to the church and are especially detailed during the civil wars and depositions of Kavad's reign, which coincided with the dispute between Narsai and Elishe.⁶⁶

The older sections of the patriarchal histories (i. e. before Babowai) also received new material from a variety of sources, but it is notable that this is much less integrated into the narrative of the patriarchs, perhaps because these earlier clergy were not very involved in matters of high politics and their lives did not present a very good 'hook' for new material. One result of the blending of a history based on the catholicoi and ones based on consecutive events is that a large amount of Roman ecclesiastical history is placed under the sections of little-known (and long-reigning) catholicoi, a process which is especially noticeable in the long notices on Papas and Dadisho' in Mari, which include relatively little data on the catholicoi themselves.

This trend of the inclusion of new material and the broader focus of the narrative continues throughout the second half of the text. For instance, the *Chronicle* juxtaposes an account of the plague of Justinian with the reaction to the same

63 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XV (128). Also see XXVI (153) for Paul's succession within the section dedicated to Narsai and Elishe. However, not all material on the catholicoi was originally composed as part of a continuous patriarchal history: the accounts of Aba and Sabrisho' in all of the medieval compilations derive from long Syriac hagiographies that are still extant (both edited in P. Bedjan, *Histoire de Mar Yabalaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et de deux laïques nestoriens* (Paris/Leipzig, 1896).

64 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, V (107-108).

65 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XI (122-123).

66 E. g. *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XII (124-125); XIV (127-128). The same is probably also true for XVII (132) and XXIV (146-147), Kavad's attack on Amida and the reign of Khusrau I, though neither are connected to the Persian royal tradition. XVII is from a West Syrian source similar to Pseudo-Joshua the stylite. On the fall of Amida, and its presentation in pseudo-Joshua the stylite, note M. Debié, 'Du grecque en syriaque: la transmission du récit de la prise d'Amid (502) dans l'historiographie byzantine', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96 (2003), 601-622.

plague under Joseph,⁶⁷ and continues to trace the connections between catholicoi and both the School of Nisibis and the shah.⁶⁸ This process of the accumulation of additional material onto a pre-existent narrative culminates in the period 590-640. Here the *Chronicle* includes a large amount of material that describes monastic foundations, drawn from hagiographic collections, as well as presenting fluid narrative histories that devote equal weight to the deeds of Persian shahs, Roman emperors, the catholicoi and Christian aristocrats. The material employed in the *Chronicle* for the period before 590, while diverse, was clearly drawn from different sources and does not reflect the fresh composition of a single integrated narrative: any links of causation between different 'spheres of interest' is achieved through later juxtaposition. By contrast, the material for 590-640 presents much more rounded personalities in its protagonists. This more literary composition is the original work of the later ecclesiastical historians, some of whom had also re-ordered and expanded much of the earlier material. These men were responsible for literary histories that described the destructive wars of Khusrau II, and their aftermath. But they were also responsible for the preservation of a large amount of earlier material, based around the patriarchal histories, which they added to in various ways before its inclusion in the medieval compilations.

The Identity of the Ecclesiastical Historians

This additional material will be our focus for much of the remainder of the article. But before we turn to this, we must first set out the information that can be gleaned on the men who performed the grafting of this material onto an older narrative that was focussed on the catholicoi. These were the Iraqi 'ecclesiastical historians' who developed the older tradition by including new sources and wrote detailed, integrated accounts and their own times.

The *Catalogue* of the thirteenth century theologian and scholar, 'Abdisho' of Nisibis, lists all the notable writers of the Church of the East. Within this list are a number of historians whose works have not survived: Elias of Merv, Isho'dnah of Basra, Theodore bar Koni, Bar Sahde of Karka de Beth Slouq, Simon of Karka, Simon the treasurer, Mshiha-Zkha, Mikha of Beth Garmai, Gregory of Shushtar, the catholicos Isho'yahb II and Daniel bar Maryam.⁶⁹ These works range from

67 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XXXII (185-186). Some of this passage is taken from the ecclesiastical historian Bar Sahde, and he in turn may have used John of Ephesus' description of the plague at Constantinople (ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot, *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum* (Paris, 1933), 79-100, with tr. W. Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: Chronicle, III* (Liverpool, 1996), 74-98), which Elias of Nisibis also employed, especially for records of natural disasters and portents (I, 117-122 for sections at AG 813, 814, 847, 868, 871 and 878).

68 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XXXVI (193-194) for Ezekiel accompanying Khusrau to Nisibis and Dara and XXXII (187); XXXVI (194) and II/ ii, XLII (438) for the connections of Isho'yahb of Arzun at the School of Nisibis.

69 'Abdisho', *Metrical Catalogue* (ed. and tr. in Assemani, BO, IIIa).

a 'short chronicon' by John of Beth Garmai to the three and four volume works by Isho'dnah and Daniel, whose work was also accompanied by an explanation of Eusebius' *Chronicon*. In addition, 'Abdisho' was also aware of the chronicles of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Socrates, though these may have been abridged, and the *Chronicon* of the 'Jacobite' Jacob of Edessa. And he also cites several figures who employed history without being historians, such as the liturgist Shahdost of Tirhan;⁷⁰ Symeon of Beth Garmai, who translated Eusebius' *Chronicon* into Syriac⁷¹ and Sergius, who gathered 'ancient traditions'.⁷²

There was, then, a wealth of historical production as well as the secondary use of history by translators and liturgists. And this production built upon earlier texts transmitted from Greek, in addition to the gathering of indigenous material. It is also noticeable that the earliest date that Assemani ascribes to any of these historians is the 590s (Mshiha-zkha) while the latest is the eleventh century.⁷³ The history of Barhadbeshaba 'Arbaya, that describes the history of the Roman church from a Dyophysite perspective before dealing with Mar Narsai of Nisibis and his disciples, terminates in c.569, but even if his history were composed this early, this still suggests a model in which the production of history in the Church of the East exploded at the end of the Sasanian period. These historians gathered, invented and juxtaposed earlier material as they wrote, and obscured any memory of independent authors of the patriarchal histories (if this had ever existed). This historical production persisted deep into the 'Abbasid period.

The *Chronicle of Seert* also provides important information from its own citation of sources.⁷⁴ In some cases this allows a general impression of the content and focus of the sources that the medieval compilers used. However, we should be aware that sources are not cited in a consistent fashion: when names of historians are mentioned it is often to confirm a point or provide additional information. Thus these citations can be used to give an impression of the range of the ecclesiastical historians without allowing us accurately determine which individual authors were responsible for passages that were embedded in the medieval compilations. The following paragraphs attempt to draw together some of the available data on the little-known historians used in the *Chronicle*.

The *Chronicle of Seert* cites the ninth century historians Isho' bar Nun and Elias of Merv for events at Nicaea and the events in the late sixth and early seventh centuries (the consecration of Aba and the death of the catholicos Gregory

70 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, XVII (273); XVIII (277 and 280), all on Constantine and Nicaea.

71 Assemani, BO, IIIa, 168.

72 Assemani, BO, IIIa, 171.

73 Assemani, BO, IIIa, 216. The attribution of the *Arbela Chronicle* to Mshiha-zkha is a twentieth century forgery. See J.-M. Vosté, 'Alphonse Mingana', *OCP* 7 (1941), 514-518.

74 L. Sako, 'Les sources de la chronique de Seert', *PdO* 14 (1987), 155-167 lists some of this internal evidence.

in 612).⁷⁵ The pattern of their compositions highlights one of the achievements of these ecclesiastical histories, which was to link the foundational events of the Roman church, especially the deeds of Constantine, with the Church of the East. This tendency is confirmed by the density of material around Constantine and Nicaea in the medieval compilations, which also refer ahead to events in the reign of Khusrau II, especially to similarities between miracles of the Cross, and to establish the origin of liturgical practice.

This interest in Constantine also meant that compiler of the *Chronicle of Seert* borrowed from a writer in the Melkite (Chalcedonian) tradition, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, to supplement his material. Perhaps such writers might have had better access to Greek sources and could help to shed light on a period that was seen as the foundation of the orthodoxy of both communities.⁷⁶ Thus the *Chronicle* refers to Qusṭā for Constantine's war with Maxentius, Helena's discovery of the Cross and Julian Saba's death at Sinai.⁷⁷

Other authors were employed to furnish additional details for the deeds of catholicoi. The compiler uses the seventh-century historian Bar Sahde to provide the lists of Aba's disciples, Joseph's reaction to the plague of Justinian and monastic foundations under Ezekiel.⁷⁸ These additions exemplify several of the changes in historical writing at the end of the Sasanian period, with an interest in juxtaposing the narratives of the Roman world and the Church of the East and an interest in intellectual and monastic chains of inheritance. Bar Sahde was also used by Elias of Nisibis for his sections on natural disasters in the reign of Peroz.⁷⁹ This reference supports the internal evidence of the *Chronicle of Seert* that the ecclesiastical historians re-worked the material they inherited from the patriarchal chronicles using external sources. Given the very precise chronology given in the section Elias takes from Bar Sahde, he may also be the source of the *Chronicle of Seert*'s section on Babowai, which, unlike other sections on catholicoi, has been carefully dated by the years of Peroz.⁸⁰

Finally, the most significant of the texts employed in the *Chronicle* was Daniel bar Maryam's mid-seventh century ecclesiastical history.⁸¹ 'Abdisho' identifies him

75 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XXIX (170); II/ ii, LXXIV (513). Isho' bar Nun may have composed hagiographic vignettes rather than a continuous history, since he is not mentioned by 'Abdisho'.

76 Qusṭā was born in Baalbek in the Lebanon and travelled widely in the Byzantine empire collecting materials for history before settling in Iraq, and translated texts from Greek into Arabic. He is known to have translated the Miaphysite philosopher John Philoponus and composed a refutation of the Qur'an. See B. Holmberg, *Israel of Kashkar- A Treatise on the Unity and the Trinity* (Lund, 1989), 61.

77 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, XVII (266, 267, 273) and XXVI (295).

78 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XXX (171); XXXII (185); XXXIX (198).

79 Elias of Nisibis, *Opus Chronologicum*, 2 vols. ed. E. W. Brooks and J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1910), I, 116: Bar Sahde probably provides the sections for AG 795 and 797.

80 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, I.

81 'Amr (56/ 33) gives his floreat as the reign of Isho'yahb III.

as the author of a four volume history and commentary on Eusebius' *Chronicon*. His importance is reflected in the five citations given to him by the *Chronicle of Seert*, two by the *Haddad Chronicle* and three by the ninth century work of ps.-George of Arbela on church administration and theological questions and answers (the *Expositio Officiorum*).⁸² Daniel provides a selection of material for the fourth and fifth century Church of the East, and seems to have represented a major conduit by which the material of the Acacian history was received by later historians. He is cited for the exile of Demetrianus of Antioch, for the miraculous appearance of a cross at the death of Symeon bar Sebba'e, for martyrs under Shapur II and their collection by Marutha and Ahai and for the marriage alliances of the same shah.⁸³ Daniel is also strongly associated with the history of 'Abda and Ahai's composition of the *Life of 'Abda*, and is probably also responsible for the reception of this work.⁸⁴

The *Haddad Chronicle* cites Daniel for his record of the Shapurian persecution, under a section dedicated to Shapur II as well as the story of the conversion of the Sasanian governor of Merv.⁸⁵ And the ninth-century *Expositio Officiorum* testifies to Daniel's treatment of material before the beginning of the extant *Chronicle of Seert*: George of Arbela cites him for his dating of the death of John the Baptist, the crucifixion and the revolt of the Jews in Jerusalem, as well as his use of the apocryphal correspondence between Christ and Abgar, king of Edessa, which had become famous through Syriac missionary narratives such as the *Doctrina Addai* and the *Acts of Mar Mari*.⁸⁶ In sum, Daniel presented a continuous history that went from the birth of Jesus to the middle of the seventh century, which prompted him to incorporate the patriarchal history, especially its treatment of the Shapurian martyria and the era of their collection.

82 See the reconstruction of E. Degen, 'Daniel bar Maryam. Ein nestorianischer Kirchenhistoriker,' *OC52* (1968), 45–80.

83 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, II (221); XXIII (289); I/ ii, XL (255); LXI (309–310) and LXIX (325).

84 The later emphasis on Awgin and the connection of monasticism in Iraq with Egypt later made the memory of this indigenous monastic founder irrelevant.

85 *Haddad Chronicle*, CXV (186) and CXXXIII (218).

86 *Expositio Officiorum*, ed. and tr. R. H. Connolly, *Anonymi auctoris Expositio officiorum ecclesiae, Georgio Arbelensi vulgo adscripta* 2 vols. (Paris, 1911), I, 38; II, 146. *Doctrina Addai*, ed. and tr. G. Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai* (London, 1876); reprinted with new tr., G. Howard (Ann Arbor, 1981) and tr. A. Desreumaux, *Histoire du roi Abgar et de Jésus* (Paris, 1993). Discussion of the *Doctrina* is provided in A. Mirkovic, *Prelude to Constantine* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006); S. P. Brock, 'The transformation of the Edessa portrait of Christ', *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004), 46–56; P. Wood, *We Have No King but Christ. Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest* (c. 400–580) (Oxford, 2010), esp. ch. 4. *Acts of Mar Mari* ed. and tr. C. Jullien, and F. Jullien (Paris, 2003), with discussions in C. Jullien and F. Jullien, *Aux origines de l'église perse: les actes de Mar Mari* (Louvain, 2003); eadem, *Apôtres des confins: processus missionnaires chrétiens dans l'empire iranien* (Paris, 2002) and J.-N. Saint-Laurent, *Apostolic memories: Religious Differentiation and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Syriac Missionary Literature* (Brown University, 2009, unpublished Phd), chp. 3.

Daniel wrote at the time of Isho'yahb III's reformation of the liturgy and this might have prompted his use of history to justify and explain liturgical features or provide the biographies of individuals to whom liturgies were attributed (such as Addai the apostle, Ephraem and Theodore of Mopsuestia).⁸⁷ George of Arbela cites Daniel as an authority on the importance of Jerusalem in the liturgy, and also used histories for other commemorations, such as the *Inventio Crucis*. I would argue that this interconnection of history writing and liturgical justification fits the 660s, with its interest in the antiquarian collection of sources as well as the production of history and the revision of liturgy.

I do not propose that we can reconstruct any of the ecclesiastical historians that are included in the medieval compilations. But we can analyse the introduction of new categories of historical material and the way it was combined with the patriarchal histories. In what follows I will examine the ecclesiastical historians' extension of historical inquiry back into the fourth century and before. Though the style of material is often very different, many seem to have been shaped by the changing relationship of the Church of the East vis à vis the churches of the West, in terms of the awareness and elaboration of a shared 'orthodox' history; Ctesiphon's new claims to patriarchal authority and the opposition between a church with a strong Dyophysite Christology and its 'Jacobite' adversaries.

B. The Histories of the School of Nisibis⁸⁸

The first of these external blocks of material is represented by a series of short biographies of East Syrian intellectuals, their training and their literary output, associated with the School of Nisibis.⁸⁹ These biographies conflict with the patriarchal histories (I and VIII) in their accounts of Barsauma, bishop of Nisibis. The patriarchal histories present Barsauma as an insubordinate enemy of the catholicos Babowai and Acacius, but the Nisibene account makes him a crucial figure at the School of Nisibis, credited with bringing Dyophysitism to the east, along with the theologian Narsai and the catholicos Acacius.

This kind of information about masters and disciples in an intellectual tradition and their literary production is quite different to the material used by the patriarchal histories and may belong to a distinct historical genre, the *Cause of Foundation of Schools*, the first of which was composed by Elisha early in the reign of Khusrau.⁹⁰ Elisha's text, from which this material may derive, has not survived.

87 On these liturgical reforms see S. P. Brock, 'Liturgical texts', in P. Khoury (ed.), *Nos sources: Arts et littératures syriaques* (Beirut, 2005), 238-251, esp. 238.

88 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 106-112. The history of the School is discussed in A. Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, PA, 2006).

89 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, IX and XIII.

90 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XIII (127).

But a later document, ascribed to one Barhadbeshaba in the 590s, does. This work relates the development of education from Creation, seeing all religious systems as schools that attempt to imitate God's own education of mankind. It relates the importance of the doctors of the past, of Eustathius, Jacob and Athanasius in Antioch, Nisibis and Alexandria, and of the intellectual succession of Theodore of Mopsuestia from Diodore of Tarsus.⁹¹ The *Cause* goes on to record how the school of Edessa transmitted Theodore's theology as well as that of Ephraem, and how the two were combined in Narsai and his successors.⁹² And it also gives a major role to Barsauma in persuading Narsai to emigrate to Nisibis. He tells him that Nisibis 'is a great city, set in the borderlands, and all people gather to it from all regions ... many will throng here now that heresy is looking around from its surrounds in Mesopotamia'.⁹³

This Nisibene material may have entered the central tradition in the wake of the expansion of Nisibis' daughter schools in the second half of the sixth century. In particular, the last quarter of the century saw a succession of catholicoi trained at Nisibis and the expansion of a school at Ctesiphon that carried on Theodoran traditions of exegesis (which was shown to visiting Roman dignitaries).⁹⁴ I suggest it was this expansion of the scholastic system that provides a context for the transmission of this intellectual history.

This Nisibene history may also have included biographies from 'orthodox' fathers of the Roman world, drawn out of saints' lives and Greek ecclesiastical histories, and the scholastic succession of the school system provides one avenue for this kind of material to reach the east. Stories relating to Aba's foundation of the school in Ctesiphon may also belong to this tradition, since they are notably absent in the Syriac *Life* composed soon after his death in c. 555.⁹⁵

C. Roman Ecclesiastical History

The *Chronicle of Seert's* coverage of Roman ecclesiastical history can be divided into two broad parts. Firstly, it contains a chronologically continuous ecclesiastical history drawn primarily from Eusebius' *Chronicon* [C1] and the fifth-century Greek ecclesiastical histories of Theodoret and Socrates [C2].⁹⁶ This extends from before the start of the extant *Chronicle* to some point in the break that divides the

91 *Cause of the Foundation of Schools*, ed. A. Scher, PO 4, 377-80. English translation in A. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*, TTH 50 (Liverpool, 2008).

92 *Ibid.*, 381-83.

93 *Ibid.*, 385-86.

94 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ii, LXVIII (496-497).

95 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XXVIII and XXIX.

96 Eusebius was important to the Iraqi ecclesiastical historians for his role in determining the date of Easter (*Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, XXI-XXII (285-287). His *Chronicon* was chiefly accessed through the translation of Symeon of Beth Garmai (c. 600): Assemani, *BO*, IIIa, 633.

middle. This material on Nestorius, which is preserved in Mari, represents a Greek continuation of Theodoret and Socrates written from a Dyophysite perspective [C3].

The second major section is a narrative based around the succession of the patriarchs of Constantinople and the Christological arguments before and during the reign of Justinian. This narrative strand begins with a commentary on ecclesiastical politics in the city until the second half of the *Chronicle* (i. e. the very end of the fifth century), and may represent a continuation of C3 [C4].⁹⁷ An alternative continuation is also included that emphasises the succession of the Jacobites in the west, which sets them in parallel to the Jacobite succession in the east as the arch-enemies of the Church [C5].⁹⁸ Both continuations represent attempts to understand the Jacobite 'invasion' of the east in the sixth century and the relationship of events in the west in the sixth century to the formative period of fifth century Dyophysitism.

C 1. Eusebian material⁹⁹

The beginning of the *Chronicle of Seert* blends data from ecclesiastical sources into descriptions of Roman and Persian secular history. Thus an account of the death of Valerian following his persecution of Christians is presented alongside an account of the foundations of his killer, Shapur I, and a dated note on the Sabellian heresy.¹⁰⁰ Next a long section on Mani, his death and the missions of his apostles, is followed by notes on the reign of Hormizd I, son of Shapur, on the refutation of Sabellius, on the succession Popes at Rome and on the expulsion of Paul of Samosata.¹⁰¹ The *Chronicle* at this point seems to be relying on a historian who has blended Persian and Roman secular history and ecclesiastical history and interspersed narrative material with notes drawn from an epitome that marked reign lengths of kings and priests: this historian has had access to a wide variety of material, in varying levels of detail, and has chosen where to focus his attention (in this instance on the theme of divine punishment for persecution of Christians).¹⁰²

Yet the *Chronicle* also had access to another historian who had arranged almost identical material in a different way. This second historian, who was responsible for a section dedicated to Paul of Samosata, mentions the Valerianic perse-

97 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, III; VI; XXXIV.

98 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, X (?), XX, XXI, XXII.

99 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 125.

100 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, II (223).

101 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, IV (228-230).

102 The historian also had access to an otherwise unknown source on Mani's apostles, which may be very old given its memory that Mani had an apostle named Addai, which may pre-date the latter's transformation into a *Christian* missionary. See further the comments of H. J.-W. Drijvers, 'Addai und Mani, Christentum und Manichismus im dritten Jahrhundert', in R. Lavenant (ed.), III Symposium Syriacum (*OCA* 221; Rome 1983), 171-185.

cution in passing and focuses on Paul, before giving a note on the short-lived emperors at the end of the third century, Florianus, Aurelian and Titus.¹⁰³ A similar process of composition, mixing epitomised material and more detailed narratives, is visible in the sections on Gregory Thaumaturgus and Vahram II. The first has a lengthy description of Gregory, connecting him to Paul's deposition, followed by brief notes on the beneficent rule of Vahram II, on the assassination of the emperor Florianus, on the plague in Rome and on the succession of Popes.¹⁰⁴ The section on Vahram provides a narrative of the shah's persecution of the Christians because of the Manichees, followed by a note on the reign of Carus and the formation of the Tetrarchy, and a paragraph devoted to Diocletian's persecution in Syria, Egypt and Nisibis.¹⁰⁵

The epitomised material used here all seems to derive from the same chronological source, probably an adaptation of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, and this terminates at around the end of Diocletian's persecution. 'Abdisho' recorded the importance of Daniel bar Maryam as a commentator on the *Chronicon* and this interest is also reflected in the internal evidence of the *Chronicle*, since two sections are devoted to Eusebius' calculations and his contribution to debates over the correct time for Easter.¹⁰⁶ The version in which the *Chronicon* was used was probably Symeon of Beth Garmai's Syriac translation, which is also known from 'Abdisho'.¹⁰⁷ Keseling studied the various versions of the *Chronicon* in the Syriac tradition and concluded that two translations were made into Syriac, of which the earlier was made by at least 636,¹⁰⁸ the concluding date of the *Epitome Syra*, part of the West Syrian historical miscellany, the *Chronicle of 724*. By comparing this text to the Eusebian material included in another West Syrian Chronicle, the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* of 778, Keseling also demonstrated that Symeon, or his sources, had augmented the Eusebian *Chronicon* by inserting expanded sections based on Eusebius' ecclesiastical history and data of 'local interest' such as the sequence of the kings of Persia.¹⁰⁹

The use of this epitome as a framework in the *Chronicle of Seert* can be demonstrated by comparing the brief notes of its first section of ecclesiastical history with the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. Their presence in both confirms the use Eusebius (via Symeon of Beth Garmai) for the chronological structure, especially for

103 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, V (231-232).

104 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, VI (233-234).

105 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, IX (239-240).

106 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, XXI-II (285-287).

107 Assemani, *BO*, IIIa, 633. *Haddad Chronicle*, LXXVI (115) uses Symeon to date the crucifixion of James the lesser.

108 Though given that the first known Syriac manuscript of his Ecclesiastical History is dated 462 (Baumstark, *GSL*, 59), it seems likely that much earlier versions of the *Chronicon* also existed.

109 H. Keseling, 'Die Chronik des Eusebius in der syrischen Überlieferung', *OC* 1-2, 3rd series (1927), 31-47 and 225-239 and (1928), 33-53.

knowledge of third-century Roman emperors.¹¹⁰ Such material was probably also used by the historians embedded in the medieval compilations for events in the Roman world in the second and third centuries, especially for the chronological inquiry into the birth of Christ and the events of Herod's reign.¹¹¹ Furthermore, it is clear that some of the sources of the *Chronicle* had continued Eusebius' original text.¹¹²

The longer descriptions of fathers of the church and heretics derive from full ecclesiastical histories rather than epitomes like the *Chronicon*. Thus the more detailed accounts of the persecution of Valerian may originate in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, a process of the amplification of the *Chronicon* using other Eusebian texts that Keseling also observed for the *Zuqnin Chronicle*.¹¹³ Alongside this, the *Chronicle of Seert* also used more detailed saint's lives drawn from independent hagiographies or descriptions of heretics, such as the descriptions of Mani and Gregory Thaumaturgus. In all of these cases, the historians embedded in the *Chronicle* take account of the *Chronicon*'s organisation of material and include the longer sections to provide extra details within the same chronological framework.

C 2. Socrates, Theodoret and the fathers of the church¹¹⁴

These fifth-century Greek ecclesiastical histories were written to enhance the prestige of the Theodosian dynasty, whose founder had organised the 381 council of Constantinople, which condemned the Arian theology of his predecessor Valens. These histories all terminated before the council of Chalcedon and form the basis for many of the hagiographic vignettes in the *Chronicle of Seert*.

The sections on church fathers that follow the Diocletianic persecutions are frequently based on Eusebius' successor Socrates.¹¹⁵ But instead of a continuous narrative, these Greek ecclesiastical histories have been mined to provide discrete biographies of fathers of the church and holy men: of Peter of Alexandria, Arius, Ephraem, Paphnutius, Flavian of Antioch and Diodore, Basil, Macedonius and

110 *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, ed. J. Chabot, *Incert auctoris chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum* (Paris, 1927-1933), I, 145-147, see sections at AM 2272, 2273, 2284 and 2291.

111 Cf. *Haddad Chronicle*, I-II (13-15). The Syriac *Chronicon* included additional material on Herod and the Jewish revolt, e. g. *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, I, 91-110.

112 R. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart, 1999), 121, citing *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, XXIII (288) and XXVII (297) suggests that the reference to Shapur's attack on Nisibis after Constantine's death should be ascribed to a fourth century Antiochene continuator of Eusebius. Also, on the use of continuations of Eusebius in Syriac see W. Witakowski, 'The Chronicle of Eusebius: its type and continuation in Syriac historiography', *Aram* 12 (2000), 419-437 and D. Serruys, 'Les canons d'Eusèbe, d'Annianus et d'Andronicos d'après Elie de Nisibe', *BZ* 22 (1913), 16-28.

113 Keseling, 'Eusebius Chronik', 38.

114 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 125.

115 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, X (247) cites Socrates directly, as well as Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (many of them 'Antiochene', Dyophysite theologians).¹¹⁶ The greater level of detail given to these hagiographic vignettes compared to earlier narrative passages of ecclesiastical history points to the continued theological relevance of these post-Nicene theologians and the deliberate assertion of a Dyophysite chain of inheritance back to Nicaea.¹¹⁷ Some of the more detailed sections may have been embedded in a work of the *Cause* genre or an *Ecclesiastical History* written at Nisibis, like that of Barhadbeshaba.

Traces of the origins of these biographical sections are frequently apparent from their dramatis personae. Thus the section on Flavian of Antioch and Diodore (XLIX) begins with a description of the origin and education of the saint, in the same style as all of the abbreviated biographies in the *Chronicle*. Many of these have been drawn from hagiographies and are often limited to a brief note on origins, deeds and death.¹¹⁸ But several of these sections on the church fathers also include their opposition to religious and secular opponents (the 'Arians' Valens and Eunomius in Diodore's case), summaries of their theology, references to church councils and a record of their intellectual heritage and disciples. This information is abbreviated from longer sources, but is still much more detailed than the biographies that describe monastic foundations in the same era. Furthermore, these sections also include figures who are only of peripheral importance to the theologians themselves, or to the theology of the church in later generations, but who would have been significant in the original narrative of Socrates and Theodoret.¹¹⁹

C 3. The Dyophysite continuation¹²⁰

This list of orthodox succession in the *Chronicle of Seert* continued into the middle of the fifth century. However, the break in the middle of the *Chronicle* obscures exactly how this chain of orthodox fathers might have continued into the controversies surrounding Chalcedon, the era of the fall of Nestorius at Ephesus,

116 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i-ii, IX (Peter of Alexandria- placed in a section on Vahram II); X (Arius); XI (Paphnutius); XXVI (Ephraem); XXX (Gregory of Nazianzus) XLIX (Diodore and Flavian); LI (Basil); LII (Macedonius); LIII (Theodore); LXIV (Epiphanius- though the section is titled for Arcadius); LXVII (Chrysostom). There are also simpler lists of fathers that may ultimately derive from similar sources at XXV and LVII (as well as numerous examples in 'Amr and Mari) and histories of emperors that must also come from Socrates and Theodoret, via later adaptors (e. g. XLV-XLVII on Theodosius I).

117 Only post-Nicene authors were translated into Syriac, S. Brock, 'Syriac literature: a crossroads of cultures', *PdO* 31 (2004), 17-35, at 22.

118 E. g. *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ ii, XXXVII on Awgin's disciple Rabban Sari.

119 E. g. The importance of Diodore's opponent Eunomius or his predecessor at Tarsus (XLIX), Silvanus, or the references to Meletius and Eusebius of Samosata in the section on the 'heretic' Macedonius (LII). Other sections may be drawn from Socrates but have been much more heavily epitomised, such as that on Basil (LI).

120 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 126-127.

the contest between Theodoret and other Dyophysites with Cyril of Alexandria and the council of Chalcedon. Mari's history provides an important point of comparison to the *Chronicle*. It shares many of the vignettes of the theologians of this era, often more heavily abbreviated. His history can provide us with an impression of how the missing section of the *Chronicle of Seert* treated the fall of Nestorius, which must have concluded its list of 'orthodox' Roman fathers.

Roman ecclesiastical history in Mari exists in a single narrative arc, which extends from the fourth century to the middle of the fifth and is split across the reigns of multiple catholicoi. It is focussed on the defeat of the Arians, as narrated in Socrates or Theodoret, and its aftermath in the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Like the *Chronicle of Seert*, much of this narrative focuses on individual theologians, and the material taken from Socrates and Theodoret was summarised with an eye to these vignettes of important individuals, and to the heretical opponents of the 'orthodox'

Mari's source sets out a narrative of ecclesiastical history that begins with the opposition between Arius and Peter of Alexandria, followed by an account of the career of Arius' great opponent and posthumous detractor, Athanasius, and his tumultuous relationship with the sons of Constantine. Mari appears to abbreviate information he had access to on Macedonius and Apollinarius, but gives a more full account of the accession of Valens, his baptism by Eunomius and the progress of the 'neo-Arians', followed by their defeat by Diodore and the Cappadocian fathers in the reign of Theodosius.

This Roman ecclesiastical material has probably been drawn from Socrates and Theodoret, since it shares their heavy anti-Arian focus, but Mari's *Chronicle* also uses a continuation of these histories that links this anti-Arian history to the time of Nestorius. Mari goes on to describe the alliance of the Roman Pope Celestine with Cyril and Cyril's attack on the memory of John Chrysostom, before narrating the failed attempt of John of Antioch to exile Cyril and defend Nestorius. Next, Mari provides three vignettes, each with a different focus, that present Chalcedon in 451 as a vindication of Nestorius and his opposition to Cyril.

Mari records how Marcian commanded the monks who supported Cyril to abandon their position and solicited the support of Pope Leo, whose *Tome* provided one of the major touchstones of Chalcedonianism, and a stumbling block to hopes of reconciliation with the Miaphysites.¹²¹ Next he describes the opposition of Dioscurus, Cyril's successor, and the extreme Monophysite Eutyches to Flavian of Constantinople, 'a disciple of Theodore'. Here he relates how Flavian was expelled to die in exile before Dioscurus and Eutyches were themselves condemned, and Flavian inscribed 'in the Book of Life', the lists of martyred bishops. Finally, in a third vignette, Mari describes the emperor Marcian, the convener of

121 On the *Tome of Leo* see W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1972), 212-213 and 217.

Chalcedon, as the man who restored the order of the church and praises his marriage to 'the sister of Theodosius' [Pulcheria]. This eulogy is even extended to provide a fictional link to Persian history, whereby Marcian demonstrates his Christian charity by ransoming the wicked shah Peroz from the Hephthalites (which must represent a later addition).¹²²

Mari has received his account of Nestorius from a Greek ecclesiastical history that, while it was violently opposed to Cyril, also had a positive vision of Chalcedon and represented Flavian as a prominent Dyophysite martyr. Nestorius is viewed sympathetically and prominently, but his fall is not the culmination of this narrative. The whole narrative of Nestorius and Flavian is all of the same style, with brief invented quotations by Cyril to justify his actions, and it is joined together by the depiction of Cyrilians' fight with the Dyophysites from Chrysostom to Flavian of Constantinople.

The sixth century ecclesiastical historian Evagrius refers to a little known history of Nestorius that he used for this period, and it may be this that has entered the Iraqi tradition.¹²³ Given the emphasis on Chalcedon in this account, it may have come from within a Dyophysite Chalcedonian tradition (even if some of the invective against Cyril and the references to 'Lord Nestorius' are later additions). There was considerable difference of opinion on the orthodoxy of the protagonists of the debates before and after Chalcedon well into the sixth century in Chalcedonian circles in the Roman Empire, as well as ongoing debates about Theopaschism. Some Chalcedonians accepted Chalcedon by emphasising its connection to Diodore and Theodore, while others (so called neo-Chalcedonians) emphasised the contributions of Cyril and argued for Theopaschism. These debates resulted in different florilegia of select fathers (or select quotations from fathers), as well as the production of ecclesiastical histories to defend these selections, such as that of Basil of Cilicia (d. 527).¹²⁴ In the 520s and 30s, Chalcedonians would increasingly emphasise their separation from Nestorius and attempt to reconcile Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions, but, before this date, some Chalcedonians continued to emphasise the connections between Chalcedon and the Antiochene theologians.¹²⁵ It is from sources like these that Mari's history of Nestorius likely derived.

122 Mari, *HE*, 36-40/32-35.

123 Evagrius, *HE*, I, 7.

124 P. Rorem and J. Lamoureaux, 'John of Scythopolis on Apollinarian Christology', *Church History* 62 (1993), 469-482; S. Harvey, 'Neochalcedonianism' in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd edn.); R. Janin, 'Basile de Cilicie', *DHGE*.

125 A. Outler, 'The Three Chapters. A comment on the survival of Antiochene Christology' in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus* (Chicago, 1977), 357-364.

C 4. Constantinopolitan patriarchs and Dyophysitism¹²⁶

The *Chronicle of Seert* includes several sections that continue Roman ecclesiastical history into the sixth century. This marks an important departure from Mari, whose 'Western' ecclesiastical historical terminates in the fifth century, and it may imply that the material used in *Seert* for events in the Western church in the sixth century was derived from a different source to the material used in C3.

One chain of sources focuses on events in Constantinople, and juxtaposes the actions of the patriarchs of that city with contemporary catholicoi and Roman Popes as enemies of the 'Theopaschites'. The section on the patriarch Anatolius presents him as a supporter of Pope Leo. It presents him acknowledging the orthodoxy of Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret and explains away their failure to rehabilitate Nestorius by saying they only condemned him for his conduct (i. e. not for his beliefs).¹²⁷ The author follows this by observing that Theopachism was not known in the orient at this time, and that 'it was alien to the faith of Addai and Mari', and connects its appearance in the East to the influence of 'the disciples of Dioscurus' at the School of Edessa.¹²⁸

The section on the patriarch Gennadius has a similar blend of information. Here the struggles of Barsauma and Babowai are seen in parallel with the struggles of the Miaphysite bishop Peter the Fuller against Gennadius and Pope Felix III.¹²⁹ Later material on the patriarch Euphemius is placed under a section on the shah Valash, but seems to derive from the same source, which was based around the succession of patriarchs at Constantinople. This too establishes the patriarch's connection to eastern figures, this time to Acacius, and presents him as suffering for the Dyophysite orthodoxy, and being expelled by the emperor Anastasius for his refusal to renounce 'Diodore, Theodore and Nestorius'.¹³⁰ This compressed material on the patriarchs is continued until the reign of Justin, and records Pope Felix's later condemnation of Euphemius for compromising with Anastasius and the condemnation of Severus issued under Justin I.¹³¹

This chain of events probably provided a continuation of the earlier scenes that described Chalcedon, where Mari and the *Chronicle of Seert* may have shared the same sources. Notably, the same *effect* is produced in the fifth century scene in Mari and these later scenes: Roman and Constantinopolitan patriarchs, and Chalcedonian emperors, are ranged against the Miaphysites and support the Dyophysite fathers, and the negative vision of Nestorius at Chalcedon is explained away. This material on early sixth century Constantinople only has two sections

126 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 134-135.

127 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, III (104).

128 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, III (105).

129 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, VI (108).

130 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XI (123).

131 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XIX and XXII (138 and 145).

dedicated to it and most of it is distributed in other sections, which focus on a catholicos, a shah and an emperor. The material has a coherent narrative based on the succession of patriarchs, so it probably derives from a single source, but its distribution across sections with such a breadth of focus shows that it was used by a number of different Iraqi ecclesiastical historians, whose work was then employed in the *Chronicle of Seert*.¹³²

C 5. Anti-Jacobite continuation¹³³

Some of these continuations of fifth-century Western ecclesiastical history focused solely on the Jacobites, and recount the *dramatis personae* of the Jacobite hierarchy in the sixth century, such as Philoxenus of Mabbug, Severus of Antioch and Jacob of Serug. This material has been placed in sections or sections dedicated to the emperors Anastasius and Justin in the *Chronicle of Seert* and in Mari. This association between heretics and emperors continues the earlier style of Socrates and Theodoret, and this ecclesiastical history seems to represent another continuation of the fifth-century ecclesiastical histories.¹³⁴ For this author, the West is a site of heresy, the origin-place of the Jacobites, and the more positive image of the Constantinopolitan patriarchs as Dyophysites is absent.

An eastern author has further developed this continuation by adding a final section about the Jacobite missions in Hira, centred on the attitudes of the Nasrid dynasty, which would remain a bone of contention between Jacobites and the Church of the East until the end of the sixth century.¹³⁵ Hira played host to a particularly important Jacobite community that threatened to convert the Nasrid king himself. This Hiran section indicates that this historian sought to correlate the appearance of the Jacobites in west and east, and provides a means of dating this continuation, which was probably composed, received in the east and adapted between the reign of Justin (c.520s) and the collapse in the fortunes of the Nasrid dynasty (c.604), most probably in the reign of the last Nasrid king, al-Nu'mān III, who converted to Christianity.¹³⁶ However a later *terminus ad quem* is also possible.

132 Note the parallel use of Melkite material from Qusṭā ibn Lūqā and the lives of the emperors, both of which are not reflected in the other medieval compilations of the Church of the East.

133 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 240.

134 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, X(?), XX(?), XXI, XXII.

135 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/i, XXII (143). The ruler in question is Mundhir ibn Nu'mān.

136 On this figure and the composition of history in his reign see P. Wood, 'Hira and her histories' (forthcoming). For Nu'mān's importance in later Muslim Arabic sources see I. Toral-Niehoff, 'Die Tauflegende des Lahmidenkönigs Nu'mān: Ein Beispiel für syrisch-arabische Intertextualität', in D. Weltecke (ed.), *Syrologentag II* (Constance, 2013), 99–115.

C 6. Jacobite sources¹³⁷

Finally, the *Chronicle* incorporates a small amount of material on the Jacobites that is 'neutral' in tone: a record of Jacobite bishoprics founded in the east and a brief life of the famous Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, Anthanasius the Camel-driver.¹³⁸ This material is not attributed, but its presence alongside markedly anti-Jacobite material may indicate that it has been included by the compiler himself.

D. The Sasanian Royal Histories¹³⁹

In a section on Hormizd IV, the *Chronicle of Seert* explicitly states that its account is derived from the Persian Royal Annals, the Middle Persian *Xwadāy-Nāmag*. This text is not extant, but survives through various, highly varied recensions in Arabic and New Persian (such as al-Tabari, al-Dinawari and Ferdowsi).¹⁴⁰ Indeed, these variations are so great that it may be better to think of it as a historical tradition rather than a single text. That said, all of these versions show signs of central, legitimist editing in the reign of Khusrau I, and provide the throne speeches, civic foundations and martial deeds of the Sasanian shahs.¹⁴¹

The presence of the explicit reference to the *Annals* in the section devoted to Hormizd IV implies that, like the other 'additional' strands of history that were added into the Christian Iraqi tradition, the 590s was a major moment for inclusion. Up to this point, sections on the Persian shahs was focussed on their civic foundations and wars, the traditional material of the *Xwadāy-Nāmag* that is shared across the different medieval historians. But after the accession of Hormizd, the Sasanian royal material is more focussed on the court and its dealings

137 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 241.

138 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ ii, LXXXVIII-LXXXIX; CX.

139 Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 172-174.

140 Z. Rubin, 'Ibn al Muqaffa' and the account of Sasanian history in the Arabic Codex Sprenger 30', *JSAI* 30 (2005), 52-93.

141 In a large literature, see P. Huyse, 'Late Sasanian society between orality and literacy' in V. Curtis and S. Stewart (eds.), *The Idea of Iran 3: The Sasanian Era* (London, 2008), 140-153 and S. Shahbazi, 'On the *Xwadāy-Nāmag*', in D. Amin and M. Kasheef (eds.), *Iranica Varia, Papers in Honor of Ehsan Yarshater* (Brill, 1990), 208-229. On local histories and their significance, see T. Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic* (tr. Bogdanov) (repr. Philadelphia, 1971), 12-19 and 66; C. E. Bosworth, 'Sistan and its local histories', *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), 31-48; Z. Rubin, 'Nobility, monarchy and legitimation under the later Sasanians' in J. Haldon and L. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Islamic Near East. Vol. 6: Elites Old and New* (Princeton, 2004), 235-273 and P. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London/ New York, 2008), esp. 49-52 and 85-91. T. Greenwood, 'A corpus of early medieval Armenian inscriptions', *DOP* 58 (2004), 27-91, at 42-43 for the use of Khusrau's reign as a dating formula in Armenia.

with Christian elites.¹⁴² The same tendency is visible in the Syriac *Khuzistan Chronicle* (composed c.660).¹⁴³ for historians writing under the last Sasanian shahs, and immediately after the fall of the dynasty, it seems that some Christians saw themselves as continuators of a Persian royal tradition as well as a 'patriarchal history' based on Ctesiphon. For two historians whose lost works are referred to by Elias of Nisibis in the eleventh century, Allahazkha and Mikha of Beth Garmai, the reign of Khusrau II even provided a dating reference for events, in a way that had not been true for any of his predecessors.¹⁴⁴

The use of Sasanian royal histories in the *Chronicle of Seert* before the reign of Khusrau II can be grouped under two broad tendencies.¹⁴⁵ The first is the straightforward transmission of material from the Middle Persian sources, which may contradict the Christian view of a shah. Thus sections on the short-lived reigns of Ardashir II (379-83) and Shapur III (383-8), or the account of Yazdegard I's murder, mirror the bias of al-Tabari's redaction of the *Xwadāy-Nāmag* and describe their quarrels with the nobility and Yazdegard's 'sinful' reputation (that, ironically, stems in part from his favour to the Christians).¹⁴⁶ Sometimes this material has been fleshed out with narratives that were readily available in other sources. Thus the section on Shapur II, though it calls him '*Dhū al-Aktāf*' ('he of the shoulders') in accordance with the other Arabic redactions of the *Xwadāy-Nāmag*, provides no explanation of his epithet and draws its narrative from Roman ecclesiastical history (his fear of Constantine and his attacks on Nisibis). He supplements this account with a list of the cities that Shapur founded in Khuzistan.¹⁴⁷

Occasionally, the narrative of the shah's deeds has been used to provide the chronological setting for events in church history, even though the events of the shah's reign and those in church history are often not related beyond a note to say that 'the shah favoured the Christians/ the catholicos'. This is especially notewor-

142 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ ii, XLIII (443-444). This material in the style of the *Xwadāy-Nāmag* (as preserved by al-Tabari) is continued at LVIII (465), which implies it was composed shortly after Khusrau II's restoration.

143 *Khuzistan Chronicle*, ed. and tr. I. Guidi, *Chronica Minora* I (Paris, 1903), 15-39 (text), 15-32 (translation). Sections are also translated by M. Greatrex in G. Greatrex and S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars. Part II: AD 363-630: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London, 2002). On the *Khuzistan Chronicle* see J. Watt, 'The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Historical Sources', in G. Reinink & B. Stolte, *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Leuven, 2002), 63-79; J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Seventh-Century Middle East* (Oxford, 2010), 128-135; P. Nautin, 'L'auteur de la "Chronique anonyme de Guidi": Élie de Merw', *RHR* 199 (1982), 303-313.

144 Quoted in Elias of Nisibis, I, 124-125. See also Assemani, *BO*, IIIa, 216. T. Greenwood, 'Sasanian histories and apocalyptic expectations: A re-evaluation of the Armenian history attributed to Sebeos', *LM* 115 (2002), 323-397, at 327-346 discusses the use and adaptation of the Persian royal histories within the almost contemporary Armenian history of ps-Sebeos.

145 This form of material is seen in *Chronicle of Seert*, I/i, IX; I/ii, XLIII; LIX; LXV; II/ i, V; XI; XII; XIV; XXIV.

146 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ ii, XLIII and LXV.

147 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ ii, XXIII (287-288).

thy during the reigns of Kavād and the short-lived shah Valash who ruled while he was imprisoned. The fact that church politics in this decade was especially important may have meant that the rapid change in the royal patrons whose record was preserved in the patriarchal history prompted later historians to explain these political events with what material they could quarry from translations from the Middle Persian.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Shapur I's reign seems to have prompted great interest because of his role in the population exchanges that led to the foundation of Gundishapur (a major Christian settlement), and Shapur's fame as the patron of Mani.¹⁴⁹ The material available to the author of this scene was primarily a list of civic foundations and buildings and a brief legend attached to one of these foundations, Hasa Shapur near Kashkar, and seems to have been selected from a longer account of his reign (such as those preserved in al-Tabari) to highlight his role in the population transfers.¹⁵⁰

The second pattern visible in the authors used in the *Chronicle* is to make causative associations between the actions of a shah and his attitude to the Christians or to other events in the Christian histories. For instance, Vahram II in the third century is said to have been favourable to the Christians, even learning Syriac, until he changes his attitude because of the Manichees, whose unpleasant reputation unfairly rubs off on the Christians and leads him to persecute them both.¹⁵¹ Opposition to the Manichees and royal persecution had both been important events in the patriarchal histories and in the fifth century hagiographies: here the historian seems to have connected the two events as part of a wider disassociation of Christianity from extremes of asceticism.

The variety in the deployment of the royal histories within the *Chronicle* points, therefore, to the variety of agendas of the different historians who used the deeds of the Sasanian kings to elucidate Christian history: to set the deeds of churchmen against an indigenous secular chronology, to describe acts of royal foundation, or to lament persecution. This variety also hints at the many different attempts to reconcile Sasanian history with that of the church, and the many levels on which the relationship between the church and its rulers could be read. There were, therefore, many different attempts to combine the royal histories with the Christian past.

148 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ i, XI-II (122-126).

149 Note E. Kettenhofen, 'Deportations ii. In the Pathian and Sasanian periods', in *EIr* and S. Shahbazi, 'Gundishapur' in *EIr*.

150 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, II (221-223).

151 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, IX (237-239).

E. The Melkite 'History of the Roman Emperors'¹⁵²

This chain of sources is unusual because it is dated by AG, 'the year of the Greeks', commonly used in West Syrian chronicles such as the *Chronicle to 819* or the *Chronicle to 846*.¹⁵³ Its contents tend to be simple and the sections are short. Coverage is limited to the characteristics of an emperor (Maurice is 'good and virtuous', Tiberius 'favoured the poor'); success or failure in war; a sketch of religious policy and the presence of natural disasters and eclipses. Interest in the emperors' position in religious affairs is probably the key concern, with other information included to adduce divine favour or displeasure at imperial policy. Sections also include a note of reign length, which suggests that this chronicler was also interested in establishing accurate chronology.

The coverage of natural disasters suggests a place of composition in Roman Mesopotamia or Syria, since the cities of Nisibis, Reshaina and Laodicea are all referred to, though the chronicler is certainly aware of wider events. However, the chronicler clearly favours Chalcedonian emperors such as Tiberius and Maurice and condemns Anastasius as a dupe of Severus, which implies composition in Syriac-speaking Melkite circles.

The range of this text is hard to determine. Details on fourth-century emperors in the *Chronicle* have been derived from the ecclesiastical histories rather than this source. This source only starts to give an expanded narrative account once it reaches the assassination of Maurice by Phocas. Constans II is the last emperor referred to, and this may imply a date of composition in the mid-seventh century. This material is rarely cross-referenced to other material, and it is absent from Mari and 'Amr, which suggests that it was a late inclusion in the Iraqi historical tradition, and it may have been a personal 'discovery' of *Seert's* author/compiler.

F. The Monastic Hagiographic Collection¹⁵⁴

The restoration of celibate monasticism under Aba was founded by a swathe of new monastic foundations. The champion of this monastic renaissance was the mid-sixth century leader, Abraham of Kashkar, whose monastery at Izla in the mountains of northern Iraq was the 'mother-house' for many of the monasteries founded in this region and elsewhere in the Sasanian world.¹⁵⁵

152 Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 240.

153 Useful translations and discussions in A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles*, TTH 15 (Liverpool, 1993).

154 Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 160-163.

155 On Abrahamic monasticism see further C. Jullien, *Le monachisme en Perse: la réforme d'Abraham le Grand, père des moines de l'Orient* (Louvain, 2008) and C. Villagomez, *The Fields, Flocks and Finances of Monks: Economic Life at Nestorian Monasteries, 500-850* (Los Angeles, 1998, unpublished PhD thesis).

The founders of these monasteries, beginning with Abraham himself, were commemorated in a series of biographies that have been included in the *Chronicle*. The terminus of these biographies is hard to establish because of the break in the manuscript, but comparison to the lists of monastic founders in 'Amr, which is concentrated 560-660, with a tail that runs into the eighth century, may suggest that this was indeed a golden age for the expansion of monasticism in the east.

The monastic foundations commemorated in the *Chronicle* are very similar to those celebrated by the ninth century *Book of Chastity*, a low-detail hagiographic collection produced by Isho'dnah of Basra. This similarity led Pierre Nautin to suggest that that Isho'dnah was the author of the *Chronicle*, but differences between the biographies (in order, form and content) suggest instead that they used similar, seventh-century sources but that they represent independent compositions and acts of collection.¹⁵⁶ Some saints of the fourth century may have also been part of this collection, and these hagiographies probably represent the invention of a suitably ancient past for Abrahamic monasticism.¹⁵⁷

The collection of the monastic hagiographies used by the *Chronicle of Seert* seems, like the *Book of Chastity*, to have occurred in the ninth century. A reference to the Abbasid capital of Samarra in a story relating to the deposition of a saint's body is a probably an intervention by the author/compiler of the hagiographic collection, who may or may not be the author of the *Chronicle*.¹⁵⁸ At any rate, the hagiographies are relatively discrete from the rest of the text of the *Chronicle* and are not integrated into the rest of the narrative, which implies that they are a late addition to the historical tradition from a previously separate tradition of monastic hagiographies. Some of the hagiographies seem to have been grouped by location, and a group of saints' lives from Hira in south-western Iraq may represent an earlier hagiographic cycle that was preserved by the collector.¹⁵⁹

The hagiographies themselves display several 'agendas' on the part of the compiler. Several of the saints commemorated here are also mentioned in other hagiographies, and this allows us to ascertain which details have been amplified or rejected.¹⁶⁰ In particular, the biographies play up connections between monastic

156 P. Nautin, 'L'auteur de la « Chronique de Seert »: Isho'denah de Basra', *RHR* 186 (1974), 113-26; J.-M. Fiey, 'Išo'dnāḥ et la Chronique de Seert', *PdO* 7 (1976), 447-459. The *Book of Chastity* is edited and translated by J.-B. Chabot, *Mélanges de l'archéologie et de l'histoire* 16 (1896), 225-290. The vast bulk of the monastic hagiographies in the *Book of Chastity* are set in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, which suggests that the extant *Chronicle of Seert* preserves most of the tales that would have been present in the *Chronicle* before the document's mutilation. Similar material in 'Amr is included at the level of lists of names at the end of lemmas (esp. 55-57/ 32-33), and follows a similar chronological pattern.

157 *Chronicle of Seert*, I/ i, VII; I/ii, XXXV.

158 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ ii, XLVII (450-451).

159 *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ii, XC; XCI; XCVII; XCVIII. This material will be discussed in P. Wood, 'Hira and her saints', (forthcoming).

160 E. g. *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ ii, LIV (459-461) and XCVI (584-585).

founders and the catholicoi, as well as the role of the monasteries as a bulwark against Jacobite 'heretics' from the west.¹⁶¹ Both of these themes seem to rely on data found in the compiler's seventh-century sources, but comparison to other ninth-century hagiographic collections reveals that they have been exaggerated in the *Chronicle*.

Conclusions

The *Chronicle of Seert*, and the other medieval compilations, provide us with important evidence for the constituent parts of a late antique historical tradition in Iraq, and for its continuation under Arab rule. A history of the catholicoi clearly lies at its core, but this tradition seems have broadened out at the end of the sixth century, when the deeds of the catholicoi were interwoven with events at the Sasanian court or wider international politics. The historians who wrote at this time, and after it, also inserted a series of foreign historical traditions into the pre-existing accounts of the catholicoi, sometimes using this act of juxtaposition to discern a moral message from history. The most important of these additional blocs of material was Roman ecclesiastical history, which various hands attempted to continue into the sixth century, but a significant amount of Sasanian history was also included, some of it adapted to suit Christian sensibilities.

This process of the inclusion of new historical material and its adaptation to an Iraqi audience did not stop with the fall of the Sasanians. Indeed, I do not think that we can precisely date any section individually, only observe broad trends in the treatment of this foreign material. That said, two blocs of additional material, the monastic hagiographies and the Melkite history of the emperors seem to be late additions, which do not seem to have been deliberately integrated with pre-existent forms of history-writing.

It is very hard to isolate the hand of the *Chronicle's* compiler himself in any of this. But we can still observe that two of the latest sources used in the *Chronicle of Seert* are of Melkite origin (the history of the emperors and the material from Qusṭā ibn Lūqā). He has also included the history of the patriarchs of Constantinople, which had probably been employed in the Iraqi historical tradition for some time. The absence of any of this information in Mari and 'Amr may suggest that the *Chronicle's* author/compiler was relatively broad-minded in his attitudes, and prepared to cite information that derived from other confessional traditions.

161 E. g. *Chronicle of Seert*, II/ii, XLVII; L; LVI; LXXXIV.

The Chronicle of Seert

I	Valerian [C1]	XXXVI	John of Beth Zabde [F]
II	Death of Valerian [C1]	XXXVII	R. Sari [F]
III	Young Roman martyrs	XXXVIII	Zarnouqa Monastery [F]
IV	Mani [C1]	XXXIX	Cyprian of Africa [C]
V	Paul of Samosata [C1]	XL	Barshaba of Merv
VI	Gregory Thaumaturgus [C1]	XLI	R. Shalita [F]
VII	Awgin [F]	XLII	Earthquake
VIII	Names of doctors of the church		<i>In Roman cities, including Nisibis and Constantinople</i>
IX	Vahram II [D]	XLIII	Ardashir, brother of Shapur [D]
	<i>ii) Peter of Alexandria</i> [C1]	XLIV	Valentinian and Gratian [E]
X	Arius [C2]	XLV	Theodosius I [E]
XI	Paphnutius [C2]		<i>Council of Constantinople.</i>
XII	Sergius and Bacchus	XLVI	The penance of Theodosius [C2]
XIII	Sylvester of Rome [C2]		<i>The massacre at Thessalonica.</i>
XIV	Sylvester and the dragon [C2]		<i>ii) Succession of patriarchs on Constantinople: Chrysostom follows Nectarius</i> [C4?].
XV	Constantine [C2]		
XVI	Discovery of the Cross [C2]		
	<i>A complex account with multiple narratives.</i>	XLVII	Destruction of the temple of Sarkis [Serapion] [C2]
XVII	Helena and Constantine [C2]	XLVIII	Doctors named Gregory [C2]
XVIII	Council of Nicaea [C2]	XLIX	Flavian and Diodore [C2]
XIX	Description of Constantinople	L	The heretical monks Symeon, Hermas, Dado and Eusebius
XX	Description of Rome		<i>Labelled as Messalians</i>
XXI	Eusebius' <i>Chronicon</i>	LI	Basil of Caesarea [C2]
XXII	Easter and the Resurrection	LII	The heretic Macedonius of Constantinople [C2]
XXIII	Shapur (II) Dhū al-Aktāf [D]	LIII	Theodore of Mopseustia [C2]
XXIV	Death of Constantine [C2]	LIV	Ephraem, the Syrian prophet [C2]
XXV	Eminent men contemporary with Papas	LV	Julian Saba [C2]
XXVI	Ephraem the doctor [C2]	LVI	Epiphanius of Salamis [C2]
XXVII	Symeon Bar Sebba'e, 9 th catholicos [A1c]	LVII	The martyrs and great men of this era
XXVIII	Sons of Constantine [C2]	LVIII	Tomarsa, 12 th catholicos [A1b]
XXIX	Shahdost, 10 th catholicos [A1c]	LIX	Vahram Farmanshah [D]
XXX	Untitled (<i>on Gregory of Nazianzen</i>) [C2]	LX	R. Mar 'Abda of Dayr Qoni [A1b]
XXXI	Barba'shemin, <i>nephew of Bar sabba'e</i> . 11 th catholicos. [A1c]	LXI	Convent of Sliba [A1b]
XXXII	Mar Qardagh		<i>Miracles that occur here are compared to the discovery of the Cross in the time of Claudius and to the death of the early seventh century martyr, Nathaniel of Shahrzur.</i>
	<i>Précis of the Syriac Life of Qardagh</i>	LXII	'Abdisho' who built a convent at Hira [A1b]
XXXIII	Julian the Apostate [E]		
XXXIV	Julian the Apostate [C2]		
	<i>Précis of the Syriac Julian Romance.</i>		
XXXV	(Yonan of Anbar) [F]		
	<i>Much of this text is dedicated to Yonan's master Awgin.</i>		

- LXIII Qayoma, 13th catholicos [A1a]
 LXIV Arcadius and Honorius [C2]
 LXV Yazdegard (I) [D]
 LXVI Ishaq, 14th catholicos [A1a]
 LXVII John Chrysostom [C2]
 LXVIII Iaballaha, later elected catholicos [A1a]
ii) Doctors of the church in this time.
iii) Nectarius patriarch of Constantinople [C2].
 LXIX Ahai, 15th catholicos [A1a]
 LXX Theodosius the Younger [E]
 LXXI Iabalaha, 16th catholicos [A1a]
 LXXII Ma'na, 17th catholicos [A1a]
 LXXIII Conversion of Najran
 LXXIV Death of Yazdegard [D]
 LXXV Jacob the Sliced
 LXXVI 'Aqbalaha of Beth Garmai
Ends with lacuna.
- Part two
 I Babowai, 20th catholicos [A2]
 II Leo [E]
 III Anatolius of Constantinople [C4]
 IV Zeno [E]
 V Death of Peroz [D]
 VI Gennadius of Constantinople [C4]
 VII Tale of the demon and the monk
 VIII Acacius, 21st catholicos [A2]
 IX Mar Narsai [B]
Scholastic account detailing education, academic composition and disciples.
ii) Ma'na metropolitan of Fars a contemporary of Narsai at Edessa. Similar scholastic account.
 X Anastasius [E]
ii) List of solar eclipses and earthquakes.
iii) Life of Severus and of the conversion of Jacob of Serug by Severus. [C5]
 XI 'Milas' king of Persia [D]
ii) Jacobite 'invasion' and response of Acacius the catholicos.
- iii) *Euphemius succeeds Acacius as patriarch of Constantinople. [C4]*
 XII Kavad [D]
 XIII Elisha the doctor, metropolitan of Nisbis [B]
Scholastic account. Author of On the Foundation of Schools
 XIV Zamasp [D]
 XV Babai, 22nd catholicos [A2]
 XVI Story of the mouse and the pearls
 XVII Kavad's attack on Amida
 XVIII Abraham the Great [F]
 XIX Shila, 23rd catholicos [A2]
ii) Anastasius exiles Macedonius the patriarch. [C4]
 XX Justin [C5]
ii) Account of natural disasters.
 XXI Jacob Baradeus [C5]
 XXII Heretics under Justin [C5]
Expulsion of Jacobites to Hira. Later Julianists come to Najran and Pairam, but the latter are later converted to Nestorianism.
ii) Succession of patriarchs at Constantinople. [C4]
 XXIII Justinian [E]
 XXIV Khusrau Anushirvan [D]
 XXV Narsai and Elisha, 24th and 25th catholicos [A2/3]
 XXVI Ephraem the doctor [C2]
 XXVII Simeon Bar Sebba'e, 9th catholicos [A1c]
 XXVIII Sons of Constantine [C2]
 XXIX Shahdost, 10th catholicos [A1c]
 XXX Untitled (*on Gregory of Nazianzen*) [C2]
 XXXI Barba'shem, nephew of Bar sabba'e. 11th catholicos. [A1c]
 XXXII Mar Qardagh
Precis of the Syriac Life of Qardagh
 XXXIII Julian the Apostate [E]
 XXXIV Julian the Apostate [C2]
Precis of the Syriac Julian Romance.
 XXXV (Yonan of Anbar) [F]
Much of this text is dedicated to Yonan's master Awgin.

XXXVI	Paul of Nisibis, 26 th catholicos [A3]	LIII	Mar Yahb [F]
XXXVII	Mar Aba, 27 th catholicos [A3] <i>Based on the Syriac Acts of Aba</i>	LIV	R. Sabor [F]
XXVIII	The catholicos and a Zoroastrian [B]	LV	Maurice [E]
XXIX	Questions posed to Aba [B]	LVI	R. Jacob of Beth 'Abe [F]
XXX	Aba's Disciples [B]	LVII	The priest and the demon
XXXI	Abraham of Netpar and his disciple Job [F]	LVIII	Khusrau Parviz <i>Account of his war with Vahram and his patronage of Christians.</i>
XXXII	Joseph, 28 th catholicos [A] <i>ii) In his wars Khusrau founds a city of Roman captives. [D?]</i> <i>iii) Plagues in Iraq and the Levant.</i> <i>iv) Justinian writes a book of theology and inclines to Julianism.</i> <i>Deputation of Paul of Nisibis and Isho'yahb of Arzun.</i>	LIX	The story of the apostate priest
XXXIII	Justin II [E]	LX	Nu'man son of Mundhir
XXXIV	Patriarch Eutychius [of Constantinople] [C4]	LXI	Yaunan founder of Bar Toura [F]
XXXV	Baboukabr	LXII	Jacob of Hbisha [F]
XXXVI	Ezekiel, 29 th catholicos [A] <i>ii) In this era Isho'yahb of Arzun, followed by Abraham, followed by Henana were interpreters at Nisibis. [B]</i>	LXIII	Jacobite patriarchs [C6]
XXXVII	Hormizd	LXIV	Titus of Hdatta
XXXVIII	The death of Khusrau I	LXV	Sabrisho', 31 st catholicos <i>Parallels to the Syriac Life of Sabrisho' in the early part of this section.</i>
XXXIX	Daniel the penitent [F]	LXVI	Sabrisho''s vision while bishop of Lashom
XL	R. Qoure [F]	LXVII	After Sabrisho''s election
XLI	Tiberius [E]	LXVIII	Miracle of Sabrisho' before Marutha [the Roman ambassador]
XLII	Isho'yahb (I) of Arzun, 30 th catholicos [A/D]	LXIX	Gabriel of Sinjar <i>Sabrisho' excommunicates Gabriel for bigamy.</i>
XLIII	The Royal Annals on the murder of Hormizd by Khusrau [D] Deeds that occurred in this era:	LXX	The murder of Maurice and Khusrau's change in opinion regarding the Christians
XLIV	R. Elia, who founded Deir Sa'id at Mosul [F]	LXXI	Death of Sabrisho'
XLV	R. Bar 'Idta [F]	LXXII	Events in this time <i>Complaints about the Hnani-ans and their expulsion from Nisibis.</i>
XLVI	R. Symeon [F]	LXXIII	Zinai [F]
XLVII	R. Giwargis [F]	LXXIV	Gregory, metropolitan of Nisibis
XLVIII	R. John, founder of Anhel [F]	LXXV	The struggles at Nisibis because of Gregory
XLIX	R. Haia [F]	LXXVI	R. Isho'yahb [F]
L	R. Babai of Nisibis [F]	LXXVII	R. Gabrona [F]
LI	R. Yaunan [F]	LXXVIII	Maurice
LII	Sahrona [F]	LXXIX	Theodore son of Maurice
		LXXX	Gregory of Pherat, 32 nd catholicos
		LXXXI	Christians in the service of Khusrau
		LXXXII	Heraclius [E]

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| LXXXIII | History of the heretics and the excommunication of Henana | C | R. Theodore [F] |
| LXXXIV | Babai the great | CI | Appearance of Islam, which God upholds, and its triumph |
| LXXXV | Henanisho' | CII | Pact of Muhammad bin 'Abdallah and the men of Najran and all the Christians of the earth |
| LXXXVI | Giwargis, killed by Khusrau | CIII | The document he [Muhammad] copied and wrote |
| LXXXVII | Heraclius and Khusrau | CIV | The death of Muhammad, peace be upon him |
| LXXXVIII | The Jacobite bishoprics and their new sees under Athanasius [C6] | CV | Death of Isho'yahb (II) the catholicos |
| LXXXIX | The spread of the Jacobites [C6] | CVI | Heraclius
<i>His retreat from Syria. The reigns of Abu Bakr and Umar. The defeat of Yazdegard.</i> |
| XC | Babai the scribe [F-Hira cycle] | CVII | Death of Heraclius [E] |
| XCI | 'Abda the old [F-Hira cycle] | CVIII | Maremmeh, the catholicos |
| XCII | The death of Khusrau and the reign of Shiroë | CIX | Sabrisho', metropolitan of Beth Garmai |
| XCIII | The catholicos Isho'yahb (II) of Gdala | CX | Athanasius the Camel-driver, Jacobite patriarch [C6] |
| XCIV | The correspondence of Barsauma of Susa with the catholicos | CXI | Malkisho' of 'Oumra Hadtha [F] |
| XCV | R. Oukhama [F] | CXII | Isho'yahb (III) of Adiabene
<i>No content: final lacuna.</i> |
| XCVI | R. Sabrisho', founder of Beth Qoqa [F] | | |
| XCVII | 'Abda b. Hanif [F-Hira cycle] | | |
| XCVIII | R. Khoudahwi of Beth Hale [F-Hira cycle] | | |
| XCIX | R. Hormizd [F] | | |