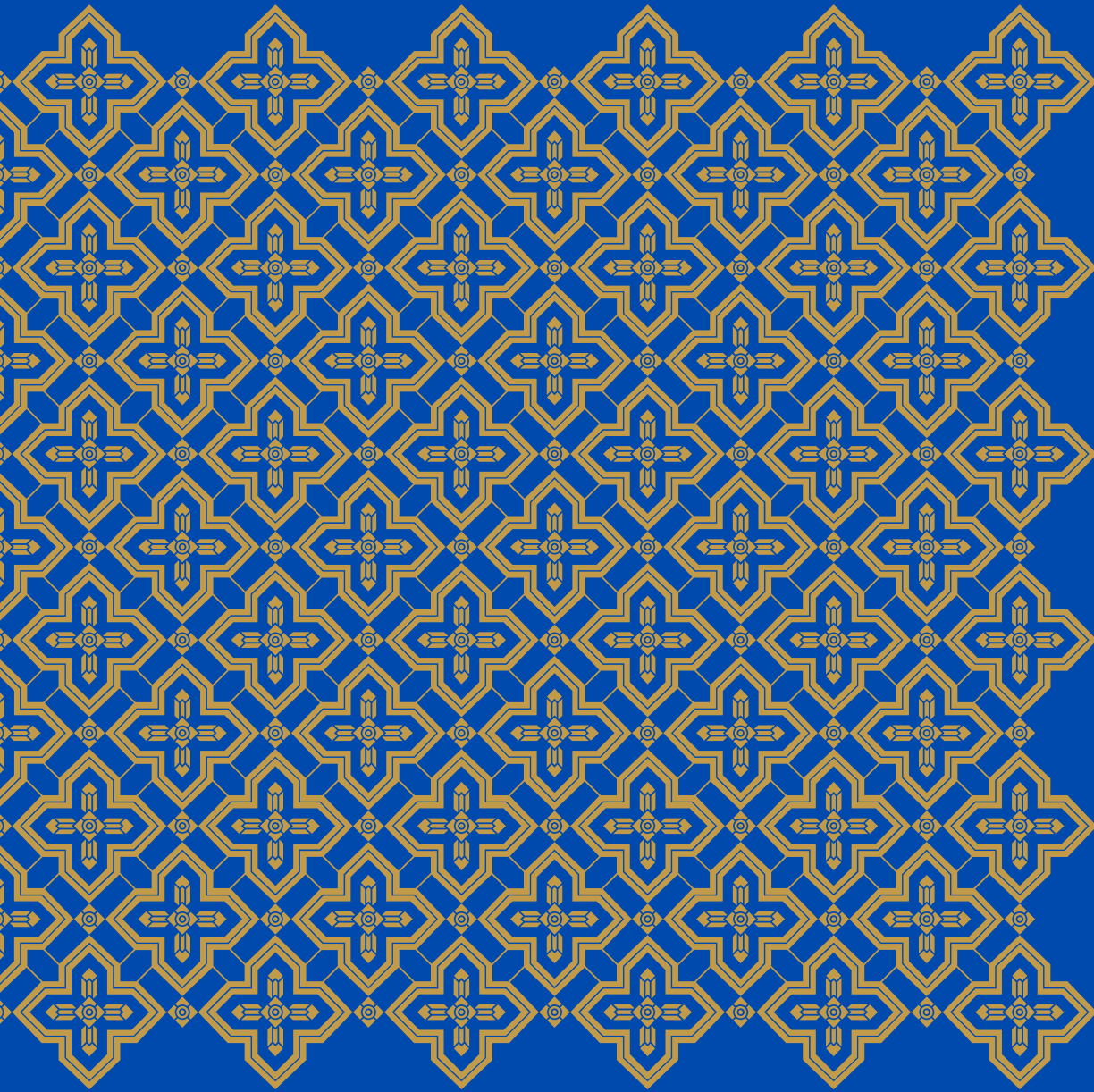


CONNECTED

REVVIVALS?



**Transregional Perspectives on the Syriac,
Copto-Arabic and Armenian Cultural Renaissances
(11th-14th Centuries)**

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
VIENNA, 6-8 JUNE 2024

CONVENERS:

Adrian C. PIRTEA | Austrian Academy of Sciences

Alice CROQ | Austrian Academy of Sciences

Benedetta CONTIN | Austrian Academy of Sciences

CONFERENCE ORGANISATION:

Philipp ABEL | Austrian Academy of Sciences

Ekaterini MITSIOU | Austrian Academy of Sciences

Larisa FICULLE SANTINI | Austrian Academy of Sciences

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This conference is organised in the framework of the project “Reviving the Ascetic Ideal in the Eastern Mediterranean *Entangled Memories of Early Egyptian Monasticism in Medieval Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian Christianity (969-1375 CE)*” (RevIdEM), funded by the European Union (ERC Starting Grant Nr. 101078631, PI: Adrian C. Pirtea). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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ERC Starting Grant 'RevIdEM' – International Conference

CONNECTED REVIVALS?

Transregional Perspectives on the Syriac,
Copto-Arabic and Armenian Cultural Renaissances
(Eleventh-Fourteenth Centuries)

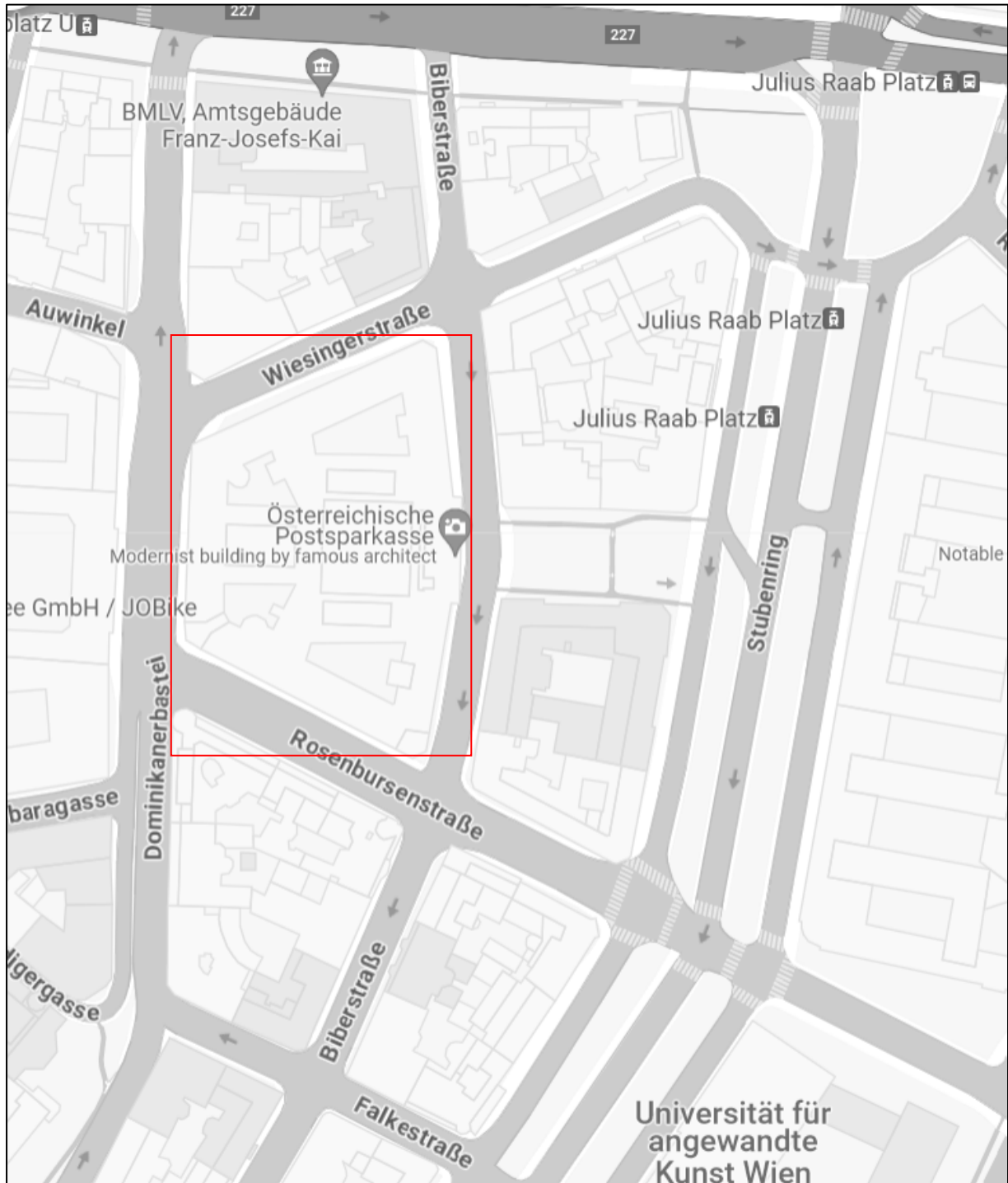
Austrian Academy of Sciences

Vienna, 6 – 8 June 2024

VENUE: AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL RESEARCH

DEPARTMENT OF BYZANTINE RESEARCH, LECTURE HALL 3A,

GEORG-COCH-PLATZ 2, 1010 VIENNA



SEVERAL PERIODS OF CULTURAL RENEWAL DURING THE MIDDLE AGES have been described by modern historians as times of “Renaissance” – from those of the Carolingians and Ottonians to the “Renaissance of the Twelfth Century” (Charles Haskins). Similarly, scholars have identified periods of such cultural flourishing in Byzantium (the “Palaiologan Renaissance”) and among the Christian communities of the Eastern Mediterranean. While some of these periodizations have been questioned and criticized, terms such as the “Syriac Renaissance” (Anton Baumstark, Jules Leroy), the “Copto-Arabic Renaissance” (Georg Graf, Adel Sidarus), or the Armenian “Silver Age” in Armenian Cilicia (also described in terms of a renaissance, e.g., by Seta Dadoyan) remain popular when describing the history of these communities in the 11th to 14th centuries.

The cultural and intellectual life of the Syrians, Copts and Armenians in this period have been mostly studied in isolation, even though there is extensive evidence that exchanges and interactions between these (and other) groups took place. In order to bridge this gap, the conference aims to bring together scholars working on the intellectual, cultural and religious history of the Eastern Christian communities in this period and to see to what extent these ‘renaissances’ were interconnected, if at all. While the topic is thus broader in scope than the precise focus of “RevIdEM” (i.e., the memory of the Egyptian Desert Fathers and the reception of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*), the conference will provide an ideal foundation for further research within the framework of the project. Moreover, the conference intends to highlight the important, yet often neglected contributions of Syriac, Coptic and Armenian Christians to the intellectual history of the Medieval Mediterranean.

The conference will seek to address the following guiding questions (among others):

- Is the use of the term ‘renaissance’ justified when describing the cultural life of Syriac, Armenian and Coptic Christians during this period?
- Which political, social and cultural factors helped (or hindered) these developments (doctrinal developments, demographics, linguistic shifts, military invasions, etc.)?
- Can we gain a better understanding of these cultural phenomena by adopting a transregional and comparative perspective? To what extent are the cultural interests and activities of these Christian communities connected and interdependent?
- What were the centers in which Syriac, Coptic and Armenian Christians were able to interact and exchange ideas with each other and with other Christian groups (Greek and Latin Christians, Georgians, Ethiopians, Melkites, etc.)?
- What are the sources (manuscript libraries, archives, documents, historical narratives) that can help us reconstruct the history of these interactions? Which books, texts, text collections, ideas and doctrines were at the center of these exchanges (Biblical and Patristic literature, monastic literature, philosophy, literature)?
- How did the interactions between Syrians, Armenians and Copts influence their relationship with the dominant political and religious groups of their time (Muslims, Byzantine and Latin Christians, Mongols, Mamluks, etc.)?

The contributions thus address various examples of interactions and exchanges in the areas of politics, diplomacy, religious polemics, monasticism, manuscript culture, literature, etc. between Syriac Christians, Armenians, and Copts, but also the encounters between these communities and other groups in the Medieval Mediterranean.

PARTICIPANTS

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Camille Rouxpetel | Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Herman Teule | KU Leuven
Madalina Toca | University of Vienna

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, 6 JUNE

13:30 **Registration**

14:00 **Welcoming Address**

Claudia Rapp

Andreas Rhoby

14:10-14:30 **Opening Remarks**

Adrian C. Pirtea

14:30 – 16:00 **Session 1: Paths to Holiness. Monastic Literature and Hagiography**

Chair: Maria-Lucia Goiana

Adrian C. Pirtea

The Age of Perfection. Memories of Early Christianity and Monastic Origins in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean

Benedetta Contin

In Search for Connection. Sharing Stories and Myths of Conversion and Sanctity in Twelfth-Century Armenia

16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee Break**

16:30 – 18:00 **Session 2: Contested Orthodoxies and Shared Ideals of Sainthood**

Chair: Ovidiu Olar

Bogdan Drăghici

Salt, Oil, and Leaven: The Case of Syrian Orthodox-Coptic-Armenian Polemics

Alice Croq

The Miaphysite Connection and the Medieval Cult of the Ascetic Saint Barsawma in Syria and Egypt

18:00 – 18:30 **Coffee Break**

18:30 – 19:30 **Keynote Address**

Introduction: Adrian C. Pirtea

Herman Teule

Syriac Christianity in the Syriac Renaissance: how to perceive one's Orthodox Self in relationship to the other?

19:30 **Dinner Reception**

FRIDAY, 7 JUNE

9:30 – 11:00 **Session 3: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Jerusalem**

Chair: Giulia Rossetto

Merav Mack

Manuscript Connections: Exploring Mamluk Jerusalem's Diverse Scriptorial Landscape

Camille Rouxpetel

Evidencing the Interactions between Christianities in Mamluk Jerusalem: The Contribution of Unpublished Islamic Legal Documents

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee Break**

11:30 – 13:00 **Session 4: History and Memory in Armenian Cilicia**

Chair: Tara Andrews

Marco Bais

The Pablawunis, the Renewal of the Catholicosate and the Return of Kingship to Armenia

Isabelle Augé

Un évêque-historien et son histoire, Step'annos Orbelean (v. 1250-1303)

13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch Break**

14:30 – 16:00 **Session 5: Syro-Armenian Political and Intellectual Exchanges**

Chair: Grigory Kessel

Samvel Grigoryan

The Syrian Contribution to State-Building, Power and Diplomacy in Mediterranean Armenia

Anna Ohanjanyan

The Syrian Orthodox Eliya the Syrian and the Armenian Translations of His Commentaries on Gregory Nazianzen's Orations

16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee Break**

16:30 – 18:00 **Session 6: Manuscripts, Scribes and Patronage**

Chair: Christian Gastgeber

Jesse S. Arlen

Royal Patronage and Scribal Activity in Armenian Cilicia: The Case of Yovhannēs Ark'ayeghbayr

Stephen J. Davis

Reassessing the Copto-Arabic Renaissance through Material Practices of Scribal Production and Patronage

19:30 **Dinner for Invited Guests**

SATURDAY, 8 JUNE

9:00 – 10:30 **Session 7: Biblical Philology and Multilingual Communities in Syria and Egypt I**

Chair: Madalina Toca

Marianna Mazzola

Bible, Massorah and Liturgy: Syriac Monastic Revival and Interconfessional Exchanges in Byzantine Melitene (10th-11th centuries) Through the Evidence of Manuscripts

Mina Monier

Ibn al-‘Assāl’s Multilingual and Cross-Denominational Research: The Case of the Pericope Adulterae

10:30 – 11:00 **Coffee Break**

11:00 – 12:30 **Session 8: Biblical Philology and Multilingual Communities in Syria and Egypt II**

Chair: Alice Croq

Dan Batovici

The Writings of Clement of Rome in Syriac Biblical Manuscripts of the 12th and 13th century and the Reception of the Clementine Legislative Corpus

Martina Ambu

Ethiopians in Dayr al-Muḥarraq (14th-15th centuries): an insight into their organisation

12:30 – 12:45 **Closing Remarks**

13:00 **Farewell Lunch (at own expense) - Optional**

14:30 **Visit to the Museum and Library of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna – Optional**

Thursday, 6 June, 18:30 – 19:30 CEST

Keynote Address

Syriac Christianity in the Syriac Renaissance: How to Perceive One's Orthodox Self in Relationship to the Other ?

Herman TEULE | [KU Leuven](#)

THIS PAPER WILL CRITICALLY ASSESS THE CLAIM that the “Syriac Renaissance” – *renaissance*, not to be taken in the usual European sense of a rediscovery of ancient traditions, but rather as a period of renewed vitality – would be characterized by a so-called ecumenical stance. Ecumenism is to be defined here as the (partial) acceptance of the validity of the Christological formulas of Christians outside one's own community, with concomitant ecclesiological implications. I will first analyze a few authors who have been labelled as ecumenical such as the Syriac Orthodox monk Yeshu‘, Bar ‘Ebroyō, Bar Brikhā, Bar Malkon, the priest Ṣalibā of Mosul and patriarch Yahbalāhā III and others, paying attention to the context in which they expressed themselves. Second, I will discuss some countervoices, not only Bar Ṣalibi, but also some of the writings composed by the ecumenical authors mentioned above. Next, I will try to offer an explanation, taking into account the sometimes shifting attitudes within the work of a same author: is “ecumenism”, as has been claimed, a matter of “united we stand, divided we fall”, an attitude understandable in a context of growing minorization in a world that, at least culturally, becomes more and more Islamic or Islamicate? Does the presence of Latin missionaries and the sustained contacts with Rome play a role? Is it true that “ecumenism” is characteristic of a perceived supra-denominational Christian Arabic theology or ecclesiology (Samir Khalil), implicitly assuming that this would be less the case for theologians still writing in the national idioms such as Syriac or other?

Ethiopians in Dayr al-Muḥarraq (14th – 15th centuries): An Insight Into Their Organisation

Martina AMBU | [FNRS – Université Libre de Bruxelles](#)

FROM THE 13TH CENTURY ONWARD, ETHIOPIAN PILGRIMS undertook journeys to the main monastic centres in Egypt and Jerusalem. Along these significant pilgrimage routes, Christian Ethiopians established communities and lived alongside other Christian groups, such as Copts, Syrians, Armenians, and others. These encounters and contacts occurred at various locations, including the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and, in Egypt, in Wādī al-Naṭrūn monasteries, in Dayr al-Muḥarraq, in Saint Anthony Monastery, and Ḥārat Zuwayla in Cairo. These Ethiopian communities were organised in an interconnected network that included an important Ethiopian community in Jerusalem. While these congregations have been treated as an ensemble in previous studies, a detailed study of each Ethiopian community in Egypt and the Holy Land has yet to be undertaken in terms of socio-historical and religious analysis. Therefore, this paper aims to reconstruct the organisation and activities of the Ethiopian community established in Dayr al-Muḥarraq (an important pilgrimage site, located on the Nile), from the mid-14th century onwards. To this end, several archival documents written in Gə‘əz, consisting of acts of donation, deliberations of the assembly, and monastic rules, dating from 1344 to 1432 CE, will serve as a basis for the present study and will help to portray its activities, functioning, and relations with other communities within the monastery (e.g. the Copts) and outside, especially in relation to the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem.

Royal Patronage and Scribal Activity in Armenian Cilicia: The Case of Yovhannēs Ark'ayeghbayr

Jesse S. ARLEN | [Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center at the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America / Fordham University](#)

THE ARMENIAN KINGDOM OF CILICIA FROM THE TWELFTH to fourteenth centuries is considered an area and period of artistic and literary flourishing and innovation across many domains: architecture, manuscript and scribal arts, literary genres, etc. Increased interchange with the cultures of the West (Frankish Crusaders), Near East (Byzantine, Syriac, Arab, Persian, etc.), and Central Asia (Mongols) contributed to the introduction and development of new artistic themes and literary texts, evident in the monumental ruins, precious items, and, more so, in the many manuscripts (~1,500) from Cilicia extant today. Cultural works were closely linked with the patronage of the noble and royal families and the church (particularly the Het'umid and Ārubenid) that governed Cilicia in this period. This paper takes as an illustrative example of these trends the case of Yovhannēs Ark'ayeghbayr (1220–1289), abbot and bishop at Gīner, the younger brother of King Het'um I (r. 1226–1269), and both a scribe and patron of monastic scribal activity. At least sixteen manuscripts, dated between 1263–1289, are related to his activities as either scribe or commissioner. These include manuscripts of the Scriptures and lectionary, works of exegesis and theology, homiletics, and other monastic texts, providing a picture of a thirteenth-century monastic library in the process of development. Extant in the 'library' of Yovhannēs are works from Armenian as well as Armenian translations of works originally written in Greek, Syriac, and Latin, a testimony to the heightened interchange between various Christian communities in this period generally and in Cilicia specifically. A close examination of the manuscript contents and colophons associated with Yovhannēs Ark'ayeghbayr furnishes a vivid and dynamic picture of patronage and scribal activity in one thirteenth-century scriptorium in Cilicia.

Un évêque-historien et son histoire, Step'annos Orbelean (v. 1250-1303)

Isabelle AUGÉ | [Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier](#)

STEP'ANNOS ORBELEAN, ÉVÊQUE DE LA PROVINCE arménienne du Siwnik', termine sa monumentale *histoire* par un chapitre autobiographique sur lequel il revient, par exemple, sur sa visite à l'Il-Khan de Perse Arghoun, en 1288, dans une période où existe une intense activité diplomatique entre le khan et Rome. A la cour d'Arghoun, en compagnie du catholicos nestorien Yahballaha III, Step'annos bénit l'église-tente érigée par le khan. Plus tard, il s'oppose farouchement à tout rapprochement entre les chrétiens arméniens et les Latins ou les Grecs, laissant même des écrits polémiques, un *Discours contre les dyophysites* et une profession de foi, insérée dans sa chronique, adressée au catholicos pour dénoncer un rapprochement avec les Grecs. Il laisse également, dans sa chronique, des informations importantes sur son rôle de mécène, de bâtisseur, commanditaire d'objets liturgiques précieux, comme les staurothèques décrites avec précision. A Tat'ew, les deux cloches qu'il a fait fabriquer et qui portent chacune une inscription à son nom, sont encore visibles. Il est également à l'origine de plusieurs inscriptions sur les murs des bâtiments des complexes monastiques de Tat'ew et de Noravank', pour certaines retranscrites dans sa chronique, dans lesquelles il emploie des termes arabes, persans ou turcs, en particulier dans les malédictions finales. Ainsi, un travail centré sur ce personnage ambivalent, qui, du fait de son insertion dans le monde complexe qui l'entoure, a fait des choix parfois décriés, permet de mettre en évidence l'importance et l'originalité de ses œuvres qui se nourrissent des contacts noués et participent au dynamisme intellectuel et artistique des Arméniens à l'orée du XIV^e siècle.

The Pahlawunis, the Renewal of the Catholicosate and the Return of Kingship to Armenia

Marco BAIS | [Sapienza Università di Roma / Pontificio Istituto Orientale](#)

AFTER THE ANNEXATION OF THE MEDIEVAL ARMENIAN KINGDOMS by the Byzantine Empire in the first half of the 11th century, the Armenians once again found themselves without a political center and the Armenian Church was exposed to new attempts at assimilation by the Imperial Church. The Byzantine attempt to prevent the appointment of a new Catholicos, thus beheading the Armenian Church of its leader and forcing it to submit to the Church of Constantinople, failed thanks to the intervention of the last Armenian king of Kars, who agreed to hand over his kingdom to the Empire also in return for the promise of the appointment of a new Catholicos, who was chosen from the Pahlawuni family. During the 12th century, the Pahlawuni family continued to ensure the succession to the Catholicosal throne, and, in the same period, Armenians began to regain political strength in the region of Cilicia, until they arrived at the creation of the Armenian Kingdom in the last years of that century.

The Writings of Clement of Rome in Syriac Biblical Manuscripts of the 12th and 13th century and the Reception of the Clementine Legislative Corpus

Dan BATOVICI | [KU Leuven](#)

STARTING WITH THE TWELFTH CENTURY A SERIES of Syriac biblical manuscripts include books attributed to Clement of Rome: three groups of Clementine writings, covering both pseudepigraphic works (the two letters on chastity and the so-called “Eight Books of Clement”), as well as the two works that are normally considered the oldest and most “genuine” but are themselves pseudepigraphic (1 Clement and 2 Clement). This paper explores the possibility that this development may be linked to the idiosyncrasies of the Syriac reception of the canonical list in the 8th Apostolic Canon: in Greek part of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, this canonical list that includes the entries “two epistles of Clement” and “the eight books of Clement,” was translated and included in the broader collection that is transmitted in Syriac as the *Octateuch of Clement*. The *Octateuch* is a composite including the *Testament of our Lord*, the *Apostolic Church Order*, as well as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and can be found in various configurations in other eastern Christian languages. In short, the paper discusses the earliest biblical Syriac witnesses that include Clementine writings (Cambridge, University Library ms. Add. 1700 [12th c.], Damascus, Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate ms. 39 (olim 2/11) [13th c.], and Cambridge University Library ms. Oo. 1.1,2 [13th c.]) in this broader context.

In Search for Connection: Sharing Stories and Myths of Conversion and Sanctity in Twelfth Century Armenian Cilicia

Benedetta CONTIN | [Austrian Academy of Sciences](#)

GRIGOR PAHLAWUNI THE MARYTROPHILE (1066-1105) EMBARKED ON a significant project in the early twelfth century to compile hagiographies of saints and martyrs, drawing from Greek, Latin, and Syriac sources, in order to revitalize Armenian religious and cultural memory. Influenced by his own experiences, which included pilgrimages to Egypt and Palestine and retreats in Armenian monasteries like Arekin and Karmir, Grigor collected texts for his compilation known as the Tōnamak. This initiative was supported by Kirakos Vardapet of Drazark (c. 1050-1127) and continued by Grigor III Pahlawuni (1113-1166) and Nersēs Šnorhali (1166-1193), who revised and translated texts into Armenian, notably collaborating with a Syrian priest named Michael. Beyond spiritual motives, the Pahlawunis' literary efforts were also influenced by political and social factors, responding to the geopolitical changes following the fall of Armenian kingdoms, which saw migrations and resettlements across Syriac- and Greek-speaking regions. The Pahlawunis aimed to establish a sense of unity among Armenians and other Eastern Christian groups through their textual work, forging connections and legitimizing the Armenian church's authority in these shifting territories. In this paper, I will focus on the hagiographies of St. George the General, St. Sergius the General, and Prince Nerseh as three pivotal case studies of this endeavor. The texts, translated from Syriac into Armenian during the twelfth century, were revised and adapted to resonate with the contemporary Armenian context, aiming to bridge cultural and religious divides and to affirm the Armenian church's standing amidst changing regional dynamics. This paper thus underscores the role of textual communities in shaping societal and political narratives during a period marked by diaspora, migration, and the consolidation of Armenian presence in new territories, demonstrating the broader political and social implications of these literary endeavors.

The Miaphysite Connection and the Medieval Cult of the Ascetic Saint Barsawma in Syria and Egypt

Alice CROQ | [Austrian Academy of Sciences](#)

FOR LATE ANTIQUITY, GARTH FOWDEN SPOKE OF a 'Miaphysite commonwealth', thus echoing the 'Byzantine commonwealth', but historians have yet to adopt this term. As far as the medieval period is concerned, I want to show that a 'Miaphysite axis' emerged through chains of interactions on institutional, social and personal bases. In addition to numerous monasteries and shared locations, the leaders of the 'Miaphysite' churches (Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Nubian and Syriac) maintained ongoing diplomatic relations facilitated by adopting Arabic as a lingua franca. The merchant and scholarly elites also met to work on joint projects, such as translating or copying scientific works. Unpublished Islamic legal documents bear witness to the fact that they willingly made pious foundations and donations for the benefit of each other. This socio-cultural framework encouraged interaction and the dissemination of texts and beliefs. The cult of the saint Barsawma is one of these phenomena: his Life gained popularity when the monastery dedicated to him near Melitene became the patriarchal residence and an important cultural centre for the Miaphysite Syriac Church. Prayers and poems were written for his glory, and many monasteries were dedicated in his name. At the same time, representations of this saint appeared on the walls of Egyptian monasteries, and a church was dedicated to him near Alexandria. He became part of the Coptic-Arabic synaxary, and his Life was translated into Arabic and circulated in Egypt. Finally, the Syriac name of Barsawma became very fashionable among the Copts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This paper will examine all aspects of the reception of the cult of Barsawma in Syria and Egypt, paying particular attention to the social, political and cultural context that gave this late-antique ascetic such an emblematic role.

Reassessing the Copto-Arabic Renaissance through Material Practices of Scribal Production and Patronage

Stephen J. DAVIS | [Yale University](#)

IN EGYPT, THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES have been widely characterized as a “Golden Age” of Copto-Arabic theological literature. In his multi-volume *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (1947), Georg Graf declared it a “literary heyday” (*literarische Hochblüte*) and “golden age” (*goldene Zeitalter*) for the Coptic Orthodox Church (vol. 2, 294). Graf’s principal criterion for such an assessment was the creative literary output of Egyptian Christian authors across a range of genres, but with special attention to dogmatic, theological, polemical, apologetic, and philosophical works. A half century later, in his influential article, “Translating the Tradition” (1996), Samuel Rubenson focused on the reception of Greek, Coptic, and Syriac patristic texts, characterizing it as a period of “more scholarly work on the sources” (p. 12), in contrast to the “popular,” “provisional,” and “necessary” translation work of the tenth through twelfth centuries. But by the thirteenth century, according to Rubenson, such translation work was “no longer at the centre”; rather, the “immense production” of original Arabic literature took cultural precedence (*ibid.*). In his scholarship, Adel Sidarus has similarly labeled this period as a “Coptic Arabic Renaissance,” the title of a 2002 article. Indeed, this was a historical narrative that I inherited and embraced in my book, *Coptic Christology in Practice* (2008), where I characterized the “Copto-Arabic ‘Golden Age’” as a flourishing of theological-literary expression that took place in the context of Christian-Muslim cultural encounter” (p. vi). During the last decade, however, my perspective on this period as a has shifted, in large part due to my project to catalogue the Coptic and Arabic manuscripts at Dayr al-Suryān in Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Egypt. This work has involved the comprehensive documentation of a prominent monastic library, and my methodological approach has emphasized not only the literary contexts of the library, but also the materiality of the manuscripts themselves, from the traces of scribes, patrons, owners, restorers, and readers, to the types of paper, quire organization, bindings, and covers used. These aspects have too often been overlooked by scholars studying Copto-Arabic literature. Accordingly, my contribution to the “Connected Revivals” conference will seek to “materialize” the so-called “Coptic Arabic Renaissance” by shifting our attention away from literary composition and toward localized patterns of scribal production and patronage, practices that served as the foundation for Arabic Christian textual culture in medieval Egypt.

***Salt, Oil, and Leaven:
The Case of Syrian Orthodox-Coptic-Armenian Polemics***

Bogdan DRĂGHICI | [Aga Khan University – Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations](#)

MOST OFTEN, THE “SYRIAC RENAISSANCE” HAS BEEN DESCRIBED as represented by unprecedented peaceful relationships towards other denominations whilst authors such as John Bar Šušan (d. 1072/3) and Dionysius Bar Šalībī (d. 1171) have been identified as outliers, as cantankerous conservative figures who opposed the prevailing ecumenism of their age. However, we notice a surge in polemical texts across the 11th to 14th centuries on both sides of the Mediterranean. As I argue in this paper, one of the shared developments of this period was an evolving interest in “ethno-religious” matters. Whilst theologians continued to produce lengthy treatises synthesising and rehashing conflicts of old – an equally renewed shared intellectual pursuit – they also engaged in ways more reflective of real-life interactions. In addition to contesting each other’s origins and precedence in Christianity, they developed intriguing critiques of each other’s liturgical practices. Thus, against this backdrop of heightened interactions between the various local Christian denominations more pronounced and, perhaps, more stable barriers were being put up. The paper will examine this understudied phenomenon through the lens Bar Šušan and Bar Šalībī’s polemical works. It will offer further insight into the actual connections between the Syrian Orthodox and Copts on the one hand and the Syrian Orthodox and the Armenians on the other. It will also shed light on the context of these developments highlighting how they may have further influenced Syrian Orthodox anti-Byzantine discourse.

The Syrian Contribution to State-Building, Power and Diplomacy in Mediterranean Armenia

Samvel GRIGORYAN | [Austrian Academy of Sciences](#)

THE ARMENIAN POWER AND CHURCH STRUCTURES DISPLACED from Greater Armenia to the Middle Euphrates region, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Isauria and Northern Syria during the so-called Great Armenian migrations of the 11th century appeared in the areas populated by various ethno-confessional groups including the Syrian Jacobites. At the initial stages of their co-living in the same regions (the 11th – beginning of the 12th century), the relations between the Armenian princes and clerics on the one side, and the Syrian ecclesiastical and secular leaders on the other side, were mostly competitive and sometimes even confrontational. A manifestation of this is the capture of important Jacobite monasteries located in the Middle Euphrates region and Cilicia by the *iṣṣans* Vasil Tlay and Tʿoros I Ārubenian in the 1110s. As can be seen from Armenian and Syriac sources, very soon after, the military-political situation in the above-mentioned regions encouraged both sides to put aside differences and disagreements and to join their forces. The support provided by Atʿanas, presumably a Jacobite metropolitan of Anazarba, to Tʿoros II Ārubenian marked the beginning of long-term political cooperation between the Cilician Armenians and Syrians which was an important factor contributing to the state-building process in the Ārubenian principality and foundation of the Kingdom of Mediterranean Armenia (1198). This period lasted for more than two centuries peaking between the middle of the 12th and the second half of the 13th century. The proposed paper contains our review and analysis of the involvement of Syrian leaders in the political life, diplomacy and defense system of the Kingdom of Mediterranean Armenia. It also highlights the status and importance of the Syrian population in this Armenian state and reveals the signs of Armenian-Syrian unity expressed and reflected in primary sources.

***Manuscript Connections:
Exploring Mamluk Jerusalem's Diverse Scriptorial Landscape***

Merav MACK | [Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz](#)

WAS JERUSALEM A SIGNIFICANT CENTRE FOR MANUSCRIPT PRODUCTION during the Mamluk period, and what insights can we glean about the writers and their intended audiences? This paper undertakes a preliminary analysis of a corpus of codices originating from Mamluk Jerusalem, exploring the manuscripts within the context of their respective communities. The inquiry delves into the nature of connections formed among scribes and across diverse communities. Jerusalem in this era witnessed a growing production of manuscripts from various religious and cultural backgrounds. Beyond religious texts like scripture, liturgy, hadith and exegesis, the city's manuscript production extended to include mystical works and poetry, treatises on geography, pilgrim guides as well as grammar books. The presentation will elucidate these observations through a discussion of specific case studies, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of manuscript production in Mamluk Jerusalem.

***Bible, Masorah and Liturgy: Syriac Monastic Revival
and Interconfessional Exchanges in Byzantine Melitene (10th-11th c.)
through the Evidence of Manuscripts***

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THE BYZANTINE RE-ANNEXATION OF SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA and northern Syria (mid 10th century) was crucial in reshaping the confessional landscape of these territories. Nikephoros Phokas' religious and fiscal policies facilitated the relocation of Syriac Orthodox from Abbasid Mesopotamia to the newly created thema of Melitene, which ultimately made it the ground for renewed contacts between Chalcedonians and Miaphysites. The economic and cultural thriving of this period is evident in the extraordinary flourishing of monasticism: Syriac Orthodox patrons subsidized the foundation and adornment of a number of rich and active monasteries in the Melitene region. In this contribution, I will analyze manuscript evidence from these monasteries to shed light on the nature of the exchange and interactions between Byzantines, Melkites and Syriac Orthodox in Melitene. I will contend that the new economic and socio-political circumstances helped Syriac Orthodox to find a breeding ground for proselytizing among rival confessions; on the other side, the new cross-denominational context exposed Syriac Orthodox to a process of cultural osmosis, and Syriac Orthodox propaganda shifted from traditional dogmatic theology to the accommodation of converts on a liturgical level.

Ibn al-‘Assāl’s Multilingual and Cross-Denominational Research: The Case of the Pericope Adulterae

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A MEMBER OF THE INTELLECTUALLY AND POLITICALLY INFLUENTIAL Coptic family Awlad al-‘Assāl (13th century), al-As‘ad was known for composing a widely copied translation of the Gospels into Arabic. During the translation process, al-As‘ad compared the text of his Coptic *Vorlage* against nearly a dozen manuscripts in Greek, Syriac, and Coptic that he consulted in Damascus and Cairo. His comparison resulted in the production of one of the most sophisticated apparatuses of the Gospels in his era. Besides this apparatus, al-As‘ad also composed a comprehensive Introduction to the Gospels and the Ten Canons which prefaced his translation in numerous manuscripts. In this paper, we will shed light on two important aspects of this work: multilingualism and paratextuality. I will illuminate the case of the *Pericope Adulterae*, which exhibits the climax of al-As‘ad’s performance in addressing cross-denominational and linguistic materials.

The Syriac Orthodox Eliya the Syrian and the Armenian Translations of His Commentaries on Gregory Nazianzen's Orations

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AMONG THE ARMENIAN COMMENTARIES ON GREGORY NAZIANZEN'S orations are those attributed to the unknown twelfth-century Syriac Orthodox theologian Eliya the Syrian (Eghia Asori), whose works seem to have survived only in Armenian. The syracisms in the Armenian translations indicate that the original commentaries were written in Syriac, although the author has remained unknown to the scholars hitherto. The Armenian translation of Eliya's commentaries became seminal, and had a profound influence on the composition of the authentic commentaries on Nazianzen's orations written by Eliya's contemporary Armenian authors, such as Vardan Haghbatets'i (d. 1193/95), Davit' K'obayrets'i (d. 1210/20), Vardan Arewelts'i (d. 1271). Drawing on the Armenian translations of Eliya the Syrian's commentaries on Nazianzen's orations on the Baptism and the Resurrection of Christ (Easter), the present paper aims to identify the historical climate, doctrinal needs, and ecclesiastical policies between 1169 and 1171 that led Armenian theologians to translate and appropriate Syriac commentaries on Nazianzen's *Orations*.

The Age of Perfection. Memories of Early Christianity and Monastic Origins in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean

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THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM have long shaped discussions on the legitimacy of organized ascetic practices within Christianity. From the divergent attributions of monastic founding figures—whether Antony, Paul the Hermit, or John the Baptist—different generations of Christians have grappled with validating the institutional framework of monasticism, be it during the Reformation in early modern Europe or in the Medieval Islamic world. In this paper, I will examine the strategies employed within Syriac, Armenian, and Christian Arabic sources spanning the 12th to 14th centuries to create an idealized memory of the earliest Christian monastic communities in Egypt and elsewhere. In particular, I will focus on the reception of Philo of Alexandria’s account of the *Therapeutai* (as transmitted by Eusebius of Caesarea) in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (12th century), in a short Syriac ‘History of Monasticism’ attributed to Maruthas of Maipherqat and embedded in the *Nomocanon* of ‘Abdīšō’ of Nisibis (ca. 1300), and in the medieval Armenian scholastic tradition of Cilicia. By exploring the contribution of these narratives to shaping notions of monastic legitimacy and continuity, the paper will show how in the memory of medieval Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean the narratives on the origins of monasticism were closely intertwined with the origins of Christianity itself. As part of the same approach to early Christian history, the concluding segment will discuss the reception of two seventh/eighth-century East Syriac ascetic authors (Isaac of Nineveh and John of Dalyāthā) in medieval Syriac, Arabic and Armenian monasticism. Both for Isaac and John, the lack of reliable biographical information was remedied by providing stories and images that linked their activities to the foundational era of Christian monasticism.

Evidencing the Interactions between Christianities in Mamluk Jerusalem: The Contribution of Unpublished Islamic Legal Documents

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OWING TO ITS CENTRALITY IN TERMS OF ARCHIVES AND PRACTICES, yet its marginality in relation to the locations of mother Churches (e.g., Rome, Constantinople, Cairo), Jerusalem is a unique laboratory to study the diversity of Christian communities in the medieval period, their construction and interactions with each other and the surrounding Islamicate society. Unpublished and reputedly inaccessible, the archives kept by the Christian institutions in Jerusalem (Franciscan Custody, Armenian and Greek Patriarchates, St Mark's Syriac Monastery) are now making it possible to uncover and study these interactions, which were often assumed and rarely proven due to a lack of sources. This paper aims to demonstrate if and how, in Jerusalem, inter-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations were more conducive to fluidity and heterarchy than to boundary-setting with the following question in mind: what are the places, actors and media of the connections between Christian communities and with the Mamluk authorities.

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