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‘Abdišō‘ of Gāzartā, Patriarch of the Chaldean Church as a Scribe

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Abstract

‘Abdišō‘ of Gāzartā, the second patriarch (1555-1570) of the East Syriac Uniate (Chaldean) Church, is known as a founder of its literary tradition, and an author of numerous liturgical and non-liturgical poems. He was also active as a scribe, of whose production several manuscripts survive that were never studied before. The present paper discusses them, in particular the historical and autobiographical information that is found in the scribe’s colophons and notes. This information is of a large importance for the history of the Christian communities in early Ottoman time.

Keywords

‘Abdišō‘ of Gāzartā – Chaldean Church – Syriac poetry – manuscript production

1 Introduction

‘Abdišō‘ of Gāzartā, the second patriarch (1555-1570) of the East Syriac Uniate (Chaldean) Church,¹ is known as a founder of its literary tradition, who composed numerous liturgical and non-liturgical poems, including descriptions of

* The author is grateful to Sebastian Brock, Amanda Gerber and Margherita Farina for their helpful corrections.

1 The dating of his death is disputable, and I follow the one established by Wilmshurst (D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318-1913*, CSCO, Subsidia 104, Louvain, 2000, p. 94), and Murre-van den Berg (H.L. Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures. The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500-1850)*, Eastern Christian Studies 21, Leuven, 2015, pp. 250-251).

the travels to Rome in a lengthy versified text.² Although in the recent years his ecclesiastical and literary activities have drawn more attention of the scholars, most of his poetic legacy remains unpublished and greatly understudied. Many of his works contain information on his contemporaries and display important features of the cultural life of the East Syriac Church in the early Ottoman time. Presently, I am planning a series of articles on his verse texts.³ Even less attention has been drawn to the manuscripts he wrote. This paper in turn is to discuss his scribal production, and the additional information found in the copies he scribed. It is well-known that both poetry and the production of manuscripts reached their high point in early sixteenth century, having been united under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ No less important is that scribal, owner's and reader's notes, both in verse and prose, became very popular as well. They contain extremely important information about the spiritual and cultural life of the Christian communities in that period, and about the manuscript circulation that accompanied them.

2 Manuscripts Written by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā: A General Overview

Seven manuscripts are testified to have been written by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā (see Table 1), of which three are still extant (nos. 2, 4, 5), one was destroyed (no. 8), and the present location of the two is unknown (no. 1, 3).

2 It was published only in French translation, no original text has been edited so far. See J.M. Vosté, "Mar Iohannan Soulaqa, premier Patriarche des Chaldéens, martyr de l'union avec Rome († 1555)", *Angelicum* 8, 1931, pp. 187-234; see also A. Pritula, "'Abdišō' of Gazarta, the first Literate of the Chaldean Church: Poems dedicated to the popes of Rome", *Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Востоковедение и африканистика* [*Vestnik of Saint Petersburg State University*], vol. 10, issue 3, pp. 374-391; <<https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu3.2018.307>>.

3 One of them has just come out: Pritula, "'Abdišō' of Gazarta, the First Literate of the Chaldean Church: Poems Dedicated to the Popes of Rome", pp. 374-391; one more is to come out soon: idem, "East Syriac Literary Life in the mid-16th Century: 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā and Older Contemporary Poets", *Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Востоковедение и африканистика* [*Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Oriental and African Studies*], 1, 2019 (forthcoming).

4 For instance, see Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 81.

TABLE 1 Manuscripts written by ‘Abdīšō’ of Gāzartā

No. of the MS	HMML source number/shelfmark	Present repository	Date of production	Place of production	Title of the text(s)
1	Vorlage of NDS (Vosté) 296 ^a	Notre-Dame des Semences	1552	Gāzartā	Book of splendors by Bar ‘Ebrōyō with explanation of ambiguous words
2	DCA 00065 ^b	Chaldean Archdiocese of Alqosh	1552	Mardin, Monastery of Saint Jacob (Mār Ya‘qūb)	Metrical Grammar by Bar ‘Ebrōyō
3	Diyarbakir (Scher) 130 ^c	Chaldean Cathedral of Mardin; formerly in Diyarbakir;	1554	Church of Mār Pētiōn, Amid (?)	Gospel of Mathew (Arabic translation by Ibn al-Ṭayyib)
4	SMMJ 116 ^d	St. Mark Monastery, Jerusalem	1554	Episcopal cell, church of Mār Pētiōn, Amid	Rites of consecration and ordination
5	Or. 196 (a folio attached to a different manuscript) ^e	Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence	1562(?)	Monastery of Ya‘qōb Ḥbīshāyā (the Recluse) near Seert (?)	Draft of a letter to Pius IV
6	SMMJ 159 ^f	St. Mark Monastery, Jerusalem	1566 or 1567	Monastery of Ya‘qōb Ḥbīshāyā (the Recluse) near Seert	

^a J.M. Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences près d’Alqoš (Iraq)*. Rome / Paris, 1929, p. 109.

^b Available online; vHMML permanent link: <<https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/500565>>. Most likely, it is the one described in J. Habbi (ed.), *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in Iraq*, Publications of the Iraqi Academy, Syriac Corporation, Baghdad, 1977-1981, p. 248, cat. 65.

^c A. Scher, “Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l’archevêché chaldéen de Diarbékir”, *Journal asiatique* x, 10 (1907), pp. 413-414. Scribal note on fol. 1r also mentions that the manuscript was donated to the church of Mār Pētiōn by the priest ‘Abdallah. The manuscript was not among those digitized by HMML team.

^d F. Yu. Dolabani, and G. Yo. Ibrahim, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in St. Mark’s Monastery (Dairo Dmor Marqos)*, Damascus, 1994, pp. 265-256.

^e See M. Farina, “A New Autograph by ‘Abdīšō’ Marūn”, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 70 (3-4), 2018, pp. 241-256.

TABLE 1 Manuscripts written by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā (cont.)

No. of the MS	HMML source number/shelfmark	Present repository	Date of production	Place of production	Title of the text(s)
7	Note in Vat. Syr. 184	Vatican Library	1568, November	Monastery of Ya'qōb Ḥḇishāyā (the Recluse) near Seert	
8	Seert (Scher) 15 ^g	Destroyed; formerly in Chaldean Archdiocese of Seert	1569, October 20	Monastery of Ya'qōb Ḥḇishāyā (the Recluse) near Seert	New Testament (Syriac)

^f See the description in Dolabani, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts*, pp. 339-344; Available online; vHMML permanent link: <<https://w3id.org/vhmmml/readingRoom/view/501291>>.

^g A. Scher, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes, conservés dans la Bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan) avec notes bibliographiques*. Mosul: Imprimerie des pères dominicains, 1905, pp. 10-12.

One could assume that the number of the manuscripts produced by this hierarch and literateur might have been much larger than those extant today. Their repertoire is very broad, some containing New Testament (no. 3, 7) and liturgical texts (no. 4), while at least two of them contain works of Bar 'Ebrōyō (nos. 1, 2).

No less important is that the extant copies scribed by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā contain texts in both Syriac and Arabic (no. 6), which reflects the bilingual character of the East Syrian Church in the early modern period. There is exact evidence that at least one manuscript (no. 4) was owned and used by the scribe and patriarch himself, as follows from numerous notes and additions made in his hand, which are the subject of discussion in the current publication.

The earliest known manuscript scribed by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā (the Vorlage of no. 1; not listed in the table) dated 1552 is not available at present. The only evidence of it is found in the colophon of a late copy made in Alqosh that used the patriarch's autograph as a Vorlage. Even the present location of this copy itself is unknown due the recent events in Iraq. Although Wilmshurst mentions that the Vorlage of the NDS 296 was scribed by 'Abdišō' while he was a monk in the monastery of Mār Aḥḥā near Gāzartā, referring to the record in the catalogue by Vosté. The latter in fact does not contain any indication of the place of production and only mentions its date.

Unfortunately, the library of Notre-Dame des Semences monastery in Alqosh was not digitized by the HMML team, and we can only judge about

most of its manuscripts from the catalogue by Vosté.⁵ There is some chance though that this Vorlage mentioned there is in fact the present DCA 00065 (no. 2). First, it contains the same text; secondly, it is kept in another library of the same town (Alqosh); thirdly, the date the Vorlage is reported to have been completed is very similar to the dating of DCA 00065 (1552 AD).

A very important document was recently discovered and published by Margherita Farina (no. 5).⁶ It is a text apparently representing a draft of the letter by ‘Abdīšō’, already a patriarch of the East Syriac Catholic Church, that he sent to pope Pius IV in 1562;⁷ it contains the famous list of the dioceses of the East Syriac Church over which he claimed his supremacy.⁸ This leaflet attached to manuscript Or. 196, now in Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana of Florence, was most likely written by the hierarch himself, being thus his autograph, unlike the final official version of this document in Vat. Syr. 99 written in West Syriac script. In the introductory paragraph, ‘Abdīšō’ mentions that he originated from the city Gāzartā and started his Church career as a monk in the monastery of Mār Ahḥā and Mār Yōḥannān in its neighborhood.⁹ This important biographic information fits very well the data from the colophon of the Vorlage of Alqosh NDS 296 reported by Vosté.¹⁰

The last three manuscripts scribed by ‘Abdīšō’ of Gāzartā (apart from draft attached to Or. 196)¹¹ were produced by him at the Monastery of Ya‘qōb Ḥbīšāyā (the Recluse) near Seert, his new residence, while already being a patriarch (nos. 5, 6, 7). The non-extant Seert 15 (no. 8), probably destroyed with the rest of this collection in 1915, contained a detailed scribal note by ‘Abdīšō’ describing his method of using vocalization based on the copies available to

5 Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences*, p. 109.

6 Farina, “A New Autograph”, pp. 241-256.

7 The final version of this text is known in the Latin translation published by S. Giamil in 2002 (see S. Giamil, *Genuinae relationes inter sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum ecclesiam nunc majori ex parte primum editae historicisque adnotationibus illustratae*. Rome, 1902, pp. 61-66).

8 The document directly refers to the Trent Council which ‘Abdīšō’ was not able to attend; thus, the epistle has a precise dating (see Farina, “A New Autograph”, pp. 247, 249). For the numerous confessions of faith made by him and his predecessor Yōḥannān Sūlāqā in Rome see H.G.B. Teule, “Les professions de foi de Jean Sullāqā, premier patriarche chaldéen, et de son successeur ‘Abdisho’ d-Gāzartā”, *L’union à l’épreuve du formulaire. Professions de foi entre églises d’orient et d’occident (XIIIE-XVIIIE siècle)*, ed. M.-H. Blanchet and F. Gabriel, Leuven-Paris-Bristol, 2016, pp. 259-269.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 245-247.

10 Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences*, p. 109; see also Pritula, “East Syriac Literary Life in the mid-16th Century”.

11 See Farina, “A New Autograph”, pp. 242-254.

protect it forever and ever) in the episcopal cell of the church dedicated to the glorious martyr lord Pētiōn ([let] his prayer for the believers be permanent) by the hand of the weak and unable – a worm, but not a man, unclean in soul and body, committing sins in the morning and in the evening, – ‘Abdīšō’, by the Grace surpassing his deserts Bishop and Metropolitan of Gāzartā of Beth Zabdai and its villages. Let everyone who reads (this) pray for him out of the love of our Lord (SMMJ 00116, fol. 113v).

The colophon provides a conventional Syriac dating system to specify the era, a system connected to the foundation of the Seleucid state in 311, but usually referred to as the one of Alexander the Great. The dating of this manuscript thus corresponds to 1554 CE, a year, when ‘Abdīšō’ was already ordained as the bishop of Gāzartā, but a year before his patriarchate. It is important that although his title connected him to this city, he was residing in Amid (Diyarbakir) until his patriarchal post was confirmed in Rome, when he moved his main residence to the monastery of Jacob the Recluse, near Seert. At the time, Gāzartā recognized the traditional line of the East Syriac Church (based in Rabban Hōrmīzd monastery near Alqosh) and did not support the Uniate Patriarchate. For this reason, ‘Abdīšō’'s seat was apparently based in Amid (Diyarbakir), which was also the center of the entire Uniate Church in its first years and the residence of its first patriarch, Yōḥannān Sūlāqā.¹⁵ This suggestion is confirmed by another of ‘Abdīšō’'s manuscripts written in this city in 1554, according to Wilmshurst's analysis of the existing manuscript collections.¹⁶

This new colophon establishes that his ‘bishop's cell’ was located in the Church of Pētiōn, which may have played a significant role in the early period of the first Chaldean Church history. Several extant manuscripts were either commissioned by this church or donated to it. Additionally, it obtained a considerable donation of lands in a nearby village during the early seventeenth century.¹⁷ In 1615, numerous priestly stoles and crowns were brought to this Church from Rome to be distributed between parishes. It is also important that deacon Gīwargīs, who initiated the donation of the lands to this church in 1603, also sponsored traditional gifts for the East Syrian Church in Jerusalem dedicated to Virgin Mary.¹⁸ Such contacts might explain why this manuscript

15 Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation*, p. 55.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

17 Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation*, p. 55-56.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

moved from Amid to Jerusalem. The activities of the East Syrian pilgrims in Jerusalem were studied in an article by Sebastian Brock.¹⁹

The same manuscript has a second colophon, written by the same person in the same hand, but already after he became a patriarch in 1555 (see Appendix 1). Unlike the first one, it is in verse and refers to ‘Abdišō’ in the first person, but already mentions his new Church position.

[7] ܕܥܡܘܨ ܥܡܘܨ ܫܘܦܠܐ: ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܝ ܕܘܒܝܠܐ.
 ܥܦܠ ܕܢܩܝܒ ܫܘܦܠܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ: ܟܬܝܒܘܗ ܕܘܡܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ
 [8] ܕܩܬܝܫܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ: ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܩܬܝܫܐ.
 ܕܩܬܝܫܐ ܕܩܬܝܫܐ ܕܩܬܝܫܐ: ܕܩܬܝܫܐ ܕܩܬܝܫܐ

[7] It was copied and written by the puny,
 limp and sickly,
 lowest of all people, foolish and fatuous,
 weak and feeble ‘Abdišō’,

[8] who is Catholicos of the East
 by the grace of the Lord Spirit.

May a reader pray for him with fervour,
 so that our Lord Christ may rescue him (SMMJ 00116, fol. 114v).

He might have added the poetic colophon to register his new authority, which was, obviously, a most important task of a colophon at this time. Furthermore, the colophon offered a poetical exercise for this author, being an almost literal rendering of the previous prose colophon. It is worth mentioning that poetical colophons became an important part of the Syriac manuscript tradition during this period.

From this colophon, it becomes clear that ‘Abdišō’ owned the manuscript for several years. Since the manuscript contains rites of consecration and ordination, one can suppose that the hierarch scribed it for his Church needs, as was common at the time, and used it at least while ordaining new priests and creating the new Church’s infrastructure. Vestiges of this long and intensive use appear as dozens of poems written in the same hand by the same person. They were never studied and still need a careful research. Some of these previously undiscovered poems can be considered a kind of poetic exercise, containing rhymes on certain names and historical epigrams for contemporary

19 S.P. Brock, “East Syrian Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Early Ottoman Period”, *ARAM* 18-19 (2006-2007), pp. 189-201.

historical figures. Besides, there are numerous notes in ‘Abdīšō’s hand, some of them are very informative.²⁰

4 Manuscript DCA 00065 of *Metrical Grammar* Written by ‘Abdīšō’ of Gāzartā

One more manuscript scribed by ‘Abdīšō’ of Gāzartā is now kept in the collection of Chaldean Diocese of Alqosh (see Table 1, no. 2), which is certainly a different one than the famous library of the Catholic monastery of Virgin Mary (Notre Dame des Semences) located near this town.²¹ The former that consists of around manuscripts was digitized by the HMML team, whereas the latter is still not available online, and the scholars have only old microfilms of selected manuscripts at their disposal.²²

This manuscript contains Bar ‘Ebrōyō’s *Metrical Grammar* alongside other poems and treatises, and was copied by ‘Abdīšō’ for himself. The colophons identify the circumstances of its scribing (DCA 00065, fol. 113r-113v). For example, ‘Abdīšō’ notes that he copied the text in 1552 in Mardin, while he was a bishop of Gāzartā (fol. 113r-113v), not in Diyarbakir as was the case when he was copying his other manuscripts before becoming a Patriarch (see Table 1, nos. 3, 4).

The colophon follows a complex structure, a sequence of certain sections or information blocks, common for East Syriac manuscripts of this period, recently analyzed by Heleen Murre-van den Berg.²³ The first section normally mentions the exact date of finishing the work, which is also the case in this manuscript:

20 I am planning to write a special paper discussing these short texts.

21 See Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences*.

22 On this text and the features of its copies see M. Farina, “La Grammatica Metrica di Barhebraeus (XIII sec.) e le sue glosse. Siriaco, greco e arabo in contatto”, *Rappresentazioni linguistiche dell’identità*. Edited by Benedetti, Marina. Quaderni di AIΩN, N.S. 3. Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”, 2015, pp. 107-125; M. Farina, “Barhebraeus’ Metrical Grammar and Ms. BML Or. 298: Codicological and Linguistic Remarks”, *Studi classici e orientali* 62 (2016), pp. 345-360; M. Farina, “The Syro-Arabic Glosses to Barhebraeus’ Metrical Grammar”, in *Language and Identity in Multilingual Mediterranean Settings: Challenges for Historical Sociolinguistics*. Edited by Molinelli, Piera. Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 310. Berlin / New York, 2017, pp. 157-170.

23 Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 113-143.

This book was scribed, drawn and copied by an effort and help of our brothers and our dear friends, Antonian hermits, and Pachomian cenobites, and choice monks and diligent workers, and true scholars Rabban ‘Abd al-Ġanī, and Rabban Šlibā, and Rabban ‘Abd al-Dā’im, and most of all, our lord Ni’mah [or: Na’amah], who drew out red lines that enclose the script (DCA 00065, fol. 113v).

The last name mentioned in the colophon is very likely to be an abbreviation for Ni’matallah, which is a usual practice in the Near East. The way it is written in the colophon, with the final *h*, is a usual way of rendering the Arabic *Tā’ marbūṭa* (ة), which was usually not pronounced, in the Garshuni texts. The reference apparently pertains to the famous West Syrian scholar and literateur of the same name, who was initiated as a monk in the Dayr al-Za’farān in 1535, meaning that he might have lived there at the time of ‘Abdīšō’s visit to Mardin. It is even known that the short form of the name, Ni’ma [or: Na’ama], was attested for him.²⁶

In Mardin, one of the most important cultural centers of West Syriac tradition, Ni’matallah studied history, logic, astronomy, medicine and the art of drawing. In 1555, he was ordained as a maphrian, and in two more years as Patriarch Ignatius of the Syrian Orthodox (West Syriac) Church, after the death of ‘Abdallah I. Despite his numerous important positions, his unique fate gained him renown. After Ignatius Ni’matallah established contacts with the Roman Church, the Ottoman authorities forced him to resign and convert to Islam under threat of death in 1576. He eventually fled to Rome, returned to Christianity, and participated in the Pope’s committee on the calendar reform. Contributing to this calendar, Ni’matallah made the works of the famous Arabic astronomers available to this committee. One year after introducing the Gregorian calendar to Catholic countries, he died.²⁷

By naming this famous hierarch and scholar, this colophon offers a unique case of collaboration between two future patriarchs from two different Churches to create one manuscript. The colophon specifies that the West Syrian monk’s supplied the red-ink lines that frame the text. Framing the text field (not the miniatures or colophons) in Syriac manuscripts was not as wide spread as in Persian and Arabic ones. It is met rather rarely, usually in cases,

26 See Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, p. 54.

27 See G. Kiraz, “Ni’matallah, Ignatius”, *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, Ed. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G. Kiraz, and L. van Rompay, Piscataway, NJ, 2011, p. 308.

of the local educated elite might have been the main reason for ‘Abdīšō’s visit to this city and his working in Saint Jacob monastery of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Moreover, his contacts with the hierarchs of this Church that might have had a rather constant and intensive character are reflected also in two odes composed by him, one dedicated to a hierarch, apparently a *maphrian* (CCM 00398, fol. 248r-248v), and another one, to a “*maphrian, who has become patriarch*” (CCM 00398, fol. 248v-149r); both were never published and survive only in CCM 00398. Both have acrostics with the name of addressee, the first one – Basilius, and the second one – Ignatius, both hardly giving anything for the persons’ identification, each of them being a standard part of an official name of anyone who had a corresponding Church position.³⁰

Such literary contacts and textual transmissions between two Syriac traditions are evinced by more than this manuscript. Such contacts occurred for centuries, indicating that their shared roots were never entirely severed. The link between them became stronger during the Syriac Renaissance, when both Churches’ hierarchs participated in the Mongol dynasty’s court ceremonies. For example, Grīgōriūs bar ‘Ebrōyō and Khāmīs bar Qardāhē, two outstanding literateurs from both Churches, conducted a correspondence in poetry.³¹ The latter, probably slightly younger, even dedicated at least two odes to his West-Syriac contemporary, odes that were recently studied and published by myself. These odes demonstrate that literary and personal contacts between the two Churches also existed in the sixteenth century, when multi-denominational literary circles became a standard model for the Syriac Renaissance. Writers from both Church traditions used this pattern to create historical parallels to contemporaneous events. The resulting poems especially focused on the movement to unify with the Roman Church, intensifying inter-Church contacts between most Eastern Churches during the sixteenth century.

30 *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G. Kiraz, and L. van Rompay, Piscataway, NJ, 2011, pp. 488-490.

31 For instance, see A. Pritula, ‘Zwei Gedichte des Ḥāmīs bar Qardāhē: Ein Hochgesang zu Ehren von Bar ‘Ebrōyō und ein Wein-Gedicht für die Khan-Residenz.’ *Geschichte, Theologie und Kultur des syrischen Christentums: Beiträge zum 7. Deutschen Syrologie-Symposium in Göttingen, Dezember 2011*, ed. M. Tamcke, and S. Grebenstein, Göttinger Orientforschungen, I. Reihe: Syriaca 46, Wiesbaden, 2014, pp. 315-328; A. Pritula, “‘One More Unknown Khāmīs’ Ode in Honor of Bar ‘Ebrōyō”, *Khristianskii Vostok*, 8 (XIV), (2017), pp. 187-195.

does not address an abuse and put blame on me – and if he does, a part of it would fall on him and a part on me; but it is appropriate that he corrects it with love and prays about my weakness, and would say from his entire heart:

“God, Lord of everything, forgive by your clemency the one who scribed [it], and pour out your love on him and his physical and spiritual fathers in the hour, when response is required, amen!”

Blessed is God forever, and glorious is His name for eternity! (fol. 110r-110v)

Thus, the copy was made a year after the Vorlage by ‘Abdišō‘ was completed. The copyist ‘Aṭāyā of Alqosh, worked mostly in the city of Gāzartā, and is probably the most well-known East Syriac scribe of the early modern period. Twenty-five manuscripts of his production have survived in the chronological range between 1536 and 1594.³⁴ Apparently, this manuscript was copied, while ‘Abdišō‘ was staying in this city, when he might have delivered his autograph for copying. It is not known for sure, who commissioned this copy and which patriarchal line he adhered to. ‘Aṭāyā himself is known as a priest of the traditional East Syriac (Rabban Hōrmīzd) line, which makes his mentioning of the Chaldean bishop ‘Abdišō‘ rather unusual and also requiring some explanations. This name appeared in the part of the colophon in connection with the manuscript’s pedigree – a reference to a Vorlage of the present copy, as it is very common for late East Syriac manuscript colophons. Granted, the owner and the scribe of the Vorlage is mentioned with his Church title as bishop of Gāzartā, which might have been in fact also a part of his name. If ‘Abdišō‘ originated from the same city, that could explain such close contacts between the two literates from the two rival lines.³⁵

As Murre-van den Berg has shown, the colophons of that period has a certain structure containing an obligatory (or almost obligatory) set of propositions,³⁶ where mentioning a Vorlage and its scribe or owner may be important for the designation of the text authority. Thus, referring to the name of ‘Abdišō‘ is meant here not as a Church authority to which the scribe belongs, but rather as a reference to the reliability of the manuscript’s text. And it is very likely that this literateur was well-known in this area as a writer and scribe, which might have increased the value of ‘Aṭāyā’s copy.³⁷

34 Hilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation*, pp. 114, 400-423.

35 More detailed, I discuss the relations of these two poets and scribes, as well as the origin of ‘Abdišō‘ in Pritula, “East Syriac Literary Life in the Mid-sixteenth Century”.

36 Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 113-143.

37 Moreover, the two manuscripts under discussion became a text authority for later copies of the text. Thus, a manuscript of the Metrical Grammar written in 1723 (now, in Tehran,

In the section of the colophon mentioning the Church authorities, ‘Aṭyā refers to the Rabban Hōrmīzd monastery line of the East Syriac Church and its hierarchs, such as traditional Patriarch Šem’ōn (apparently, Šem’ōn VII, 1539-1558) and Yawsep, bishop of Maṣūria and Gāzartā (ca. 1555-ca. 1558)³⁸ with appropriate honorific epithets (fol. 110r). It is well-known that the copyist of this manuscript was an adherent of the traditionalist patriarch line – as well as the city of Gāzartā itself at that period. So his mentioning this line in the relevant part of the colophon is quite natural, while the mention of ‘Abdišō’, the Uniate bishop of Gāzartā, refers to the aspect of the manuscript’s textual authority.

Nevertheless, similar or even more complicated cases of referring to two parallel East Syriac Churches’ hierarchies in one manuscript are already known in the East Syriac tradition of this period. Thus, Brock collected a few such examples in his article on the East Syriac manuscripts donated to the East Syrian church of Mārt Maryam in Jerusalem. Most of them were scribed in the sixteenth-seventeenth century and mention either two patriarchs of both the Qudshanis and Rabban Hōrmīzd lines or a patriarch of the one line and a bishop representing the other one at the same time.³⁹ Such cases apparently need a more detailed study, first of all, to register the exact place of all such references in the colophons. Some of them might belong to the paragraphs referring to commissioners, donors, or scribes of a Vorlage, i.e. in any functions, others than direct Church authority. On the other hand, the above-mentioned cases certainly demonstrate an extremely complex ecclesiastic situation in this period of the East Syriac Church history.

One should also question, what the “manuscript authority” in that period meant. As pointed out by Murre-van den Berg, it became an important component in the text transmission, stating its correctness and reliability.⁴⁰

The framing used in the copy written by ‘Aṭyā is much less careful and strait than that of its Vorlage, to which a few West Syrian monks might have contributed. Apparently, such a type of frame used for the *Metrical Grammar* by Bar ‘Ebrōyō was not quite usual for an East Syriac scribe. The rubric is written in Estrangela, in large letters very similar in shape to those in the Vorlage by ‘Abdišō’. The colour of the letters in this case are in alternating red and gold ink, which is common for East Syriac manuscript production. The space

source number TEH SJ 00001) mentions them both in the colophon (fol. 257rv) as its Vorlage; available at vHMML site; permanent link: <https://w3id.org/vhmmml/readingRoom/view/501321>.

38 Hilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation*, pp. 102, 103, 117, 351, 823.

39 Brock, “East Syriac Pilgrims to Jerusalem”, p. 197.

40 Murre-van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures*, pp. 113-143.

around the headings is not filled with paint, but rather left blank, unlike that of the Vorlage. All the decorative elements are worked in red and black ink, in contrast to the Vorlage whose decoration is in typical East Syriac tradition. Thus, the design of 'Aṭāyā's copy partially imitates the West Syriac tradition, but in most aspects the copyist follows the East Syriac one, to which he belonged. It is quite intriguing that the most famous manuscript produced by this scribe, the Gospel lectionary now in the Vatican library (Borg. Syr. 169) has a very elegant framing and extremely high quality design. This Evangelion was completed in Jerusalem in 1576.⁴¹ One may question whether these elements of the decoration were completed by the scribe in person, or by more decorators, possibly West Syriac ones, contributing to it. Both are quite possible: the chronological distance between the two copies produced by 'Aṭāyā is 21 years, during which his scribal and decorative skills could significantly develop. On the other hand, in Jerusalem, a traditional center of West Syriac Christianity, an active collaboration with the adepts of this tradition is very likely.

It is also interesting that not just the contents of the Vorlage itself, but even the short poems preceding the main text were copied by 'Aṭāyā, so that the general layout has been taken over from the source text.⁴² The contents and attribution of these verses I hope to examine elsewhere. At the same time, short poems present on front and rear flyleaves of the Vorlage written by 'Abdišō' (see Table 2, nos. 1-4, 17-27) are absent from the copy by 'Aṭāyā. This may mean that these small texts were written after the latter had made it: some of them by 'Abdišō' thereafter, and some in a different hand, which might be a latter addition.

TABLE 2 Contents of DCA 00065 and CCM 00024 containing *Metrical Grammar* by Bar 'Ebrōyō, and other texts⁴³

Number of the text	The Text Title	Foliation in DCA 00065	Foliation in CCM 00024
1	Quatrain on testing ink (in the scribe's hand)	3r	-
2	Two quatrains on studying grammar (in the scribe's hand)	3v	-

41 See J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient. Contribution à l'étude de l'iconographie des églises de langue syriaque*, Paris, 1964, pp. 404-408.

42 For instance, cf. DCA 00065 (fol. 5v) and CCM 00024 (fol. 2r).

43 The notes on the flyleaves are not mentioned. For more details see Pritula, "Abdišō' of Gazarta, the first Literate of the Chaldean Church: Poems Dedicated to the Popes of Rome".

TABLE 2 Contents of DCA 00065 and CCM 00024 containing Metrical Grammar (*cont.*)

Number of the text	The Text Title	Foliation in DCA 00065	Foliation in CCM 00024
3	Quatrain on books (in the scribe's hand)	4r	-
4	Title page of Metrical grammar by Bar ‘Ebrōyō (in the scribe's hand)	4v	-
5	Six short poems on grammar (in the scribe's hand)	5r	3v-4r
6	Four short poems on grammar	5v	2r
8	Notes on grammar (in the scribe's hand)	6r-7r	2v-3r
9	Metrical grammar by Bar ‘Ebrōyō	7v-112v	4v-
10	Colophon (in the scribe's hand)	112v-114r	
11	Note on overthrow Gāzartā by <i>amīr</i> Badrū (in the scribe's hand)	114r	
12	Explanations of terms + quatrain on wisdom and reading books (in the scribe's hand)	114v	111v
13	Poem about injustice of the world (in the scribe's hand)	115r	112r
14	Mēmra about the soul that is like a bird, by Bar Ma’danī (in the scribe's hand)	115v-121v	112v-118v
15	Mēmra about nobility the soul and its humiliation though breaking commandments, by the same one (in the scribe's hand)	121v-122v	118v-120r
16	Mēmra on the way of the perfect and their grades, by the same one (in the scribe's hand)	123r-129r	120r-126r
17	Madrāša by priest Ṭalyā on late his brother (later addition in a different hand)	129v-130r	-
18	Mēmra on divine wisdom, by a philosopher, i.e. by Bar ‘Ebrōyō (in the scribe's hand)	130v-138v	-
19	On wisdom that can be obtained only through journeys, by Khāmīs (in the scribe's hand)	138v-139r	-
20	Nine quatrains by Maphrian, i.e. Bar ‘Ebrōyō (in the scribe's hand)	140v-141r	-
21	Short poems in Arabic and Garshuni (in the scribe's hand)	141r-142r	-
22	Nine quatrains in praise of pastors by Maphrian, i.e. Bar ‘Ebrōyō (in the scribe's hand)	142v-143v	-
23	Five quatrains by priest Ṭalyā (later addition in a different hand) + ownership notes in Syriac and Arabic (in different hands)	142v-143v	-
24	Two quatrains by Yawsep (later addition in a different hand)	145r	-

TABLE 2 Contents of DCA 00065 and CCM 00024 containing Metrical Grammar (*cont.*)

Number of the text	The Text Title	Foliation in DCA 00065	Foliation in CCM 00024
25	Short poems (in the scribe's hand)	145v	-
26	Notes and comments (in the scribe's hand)	145r-148r	-
27	Two quatrains (later addition in a different hand)	148v	-

6 Bilingual (Syriac and Arabic) Manuscript SMMJ 00159 Written by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā⁴⁴

This manuscript was written by 'Abdišō' in 1566 while he was a patriarch (see Table 1, no. 6). As follows from the verse colophon (see Appendix 2), it was scribed for Mār Ya'qōb, the supervisor of the Ya'qōb Ḥbišāyā monastery, the patriarchal residence.⁴⁵ Like the versified colophon of SMMJ 00016, that of this manuscript has a strophic structure of 7-7-7-7 syllables in each stanza, with a regular rhyme. The manuscript contains a lot of varied texts, including *Questions and answers* by John Chrysostom (fol. 3v-46v); *Syriac-Arabic and Greek-Syriac vocabularies* (fol. 46v-55v); *Homily on fasting and on the Pentateuch* by Ephrem of Nisibis (fol. 138v-139r). Besides, the copy contains numerous hymns and poems by 'Abdišō' of Gāzartā himself, 'Abdišō' of Ātēl (later addition), Abrāhām of Bēt Slōk, and Israel of Alqosh (later addition).

It is the only extant autograph by 'Abdišō' that contains considerable texts in Arabic written in his hand; thus that we can learn how his handwriting in this script looks like. Besides, it contains numerous poems in both Syriac and Arabic in the same hands and a lot of notes. The Arabic and bilingual poems deserve a special research, since they were never studied before. In cases where they are attributed to 'Abdišō' himself, he should be treated as a bilingual poet, which reflects on the general linguistic and social situation the Christian communities were facing in Islamic times.

44 See the description in Dolabani, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts*, pp. 339-344; Available online; vHMML permanent link: <<https://w3id.org/vhmmml/readingRoom/view/501291>>.

45 Scher, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes, conservés dans la Bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert*, pp. 11-12.

who defeated the power of Satan.

[2] This poem was scribed
for the loved priest
Ya'qōb, the reverent monk,
who has revealed the guile of the rebellious one.⁴⁹

[3] It was drawn for the priest Ya'qōb,
the steward of the monastery of Mār Ya'qōb,
the teacher of the clergymen,
imitator of the those leaving Egypt⁵⁰

[4] under a canopy of the leader of the ascetics,
Mār Ya'qōb, head of the anchorites,
granting cure to the outsiders
and various healings to the insiders

[5] with the hands of an non-proper preacher
'Abdīšō', whose flame has got cold,
who is by the grace of Christ
Catholicos of the East,

[6] in year 1877 by the Greeks,
and 970 by the Arabs,
and 1567 by our Lord, the source of life,
according the Church reckoning.

[7] And to Him, who surpassed the ancient [times],
and surpasses the new and the middle ones,
numbering and numerals ,
be permanent glory.

[8] And also cheerful praises,
and uninterrupted chanting
to the Lord of the elevated guardians
and the Creator of those below,
now and as long as [one] respires,
and until the last breaths!

49 I.e. the demon.

50 ܠܡܫܘܬܐ (Lycos, Lycus) means the land Egypt; cf. R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxford, 1879-1901, col. 1916.